

Forced and Early Marriage – A Severe Human Rights Violation

During the Session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, on May 24th, 2019 Véronique Bicu and I attended a seminar on „Forced and Early Marriage – A Severe Human Rights Violation”. The event was organised by Zonta International and the Vienna School of International Studies and was supported by the **NGO Committee on the Status of Women**.

Over the last years the fight for all people to be free to make decisions about their own lives and to end child, early and forced marriages has enormously increased.

A marriage under the age of 18 (child-marriage) is a human-rights violation that disproportionately affects young women and girls globally. More than 650 million women alive today were married off as children; 280 million more are at risk of becoming brides. The number of girls and women being married as children will reach approximately one billion by 2030!

Child marriage can be found in cultures, religions, ethnicities and countries around the world.

Child marriage is often the result of poverty. Parents believe that marrying off their daughters will secure their future. In countries where it is custom that the bride’s family pay a dowry to the groom’s family, young brides are “cheaper”. The other way round it is a source of income for the bride’s family.

Young girls are physically and mentally not prepared for marriage. When they marry they have to leave school and most probably will never have the chance to re-entry. This is a denial of their right to education. Girls who are out of the school-system have worse health-and economic outcomes than the ones who can finish any kind of education.

In most cases early marriage is directly followed by pregnancy and in countries with poor medical standards complications from childbirth may even lead to death.

International agreements like “The Convention on the Rights of the Child” and “The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)” outlaw child-marriage. In 1994 the “International Conference on Population and Development” called on countries to eliminate child marriage.

What can be done to eliminate and prevent child-marriage? Only a long-term strategy will lead to success and will ensure the desired outcomes. Governments, civil society organisations and other partners must work together to ensure that girls have access to learning-programmes, girls-oriented health information and services and life-skills training. Educated girls have better options to avoid child-marriage.

“YES TO EDUCATION – NO TO CHILD-MARRIAGE” !!

In order to end “Early Child-Marriage it is of utter importance that Service-Organisations (NGO’s like IIW) support the global programmes of “Girls-not-Brides”, “Plan-International”, “Care-International” or even better to become a partner. They should also use their wide-spread network for awareness-building and advocacy.

www.care-international.org

www.girlsnotbrides.org

www.plan-international.org

Cega Gregot-Hu 27th May, 2019