Introduction

Forced and early marriage deprives women and young girls of their basic human rights. Forced marriages are marriages that take place with no consensus between the bride and groom. Young girls do not get a say in whether or not they want to take on this life that can be very hard for them both physically and emotionally. Forced and early marriages violate numerous human rights. The idea that both husband and wife have to agree to marry each other is rooted deeply in many international, national and local laws. However only a few countries have made forced marriage a criminal act. Despite heavy opposition from many countries and institutions who condemn early and forced marriages, they still take place all over the world.

In this research report will be discussed the major parties involved; the countries in which child and early marriages are most prevalent, institutions that have taken a stand against the issue and the UN. Furthermore we shall describe what actions have been taken in the past and what actions are planned to be taken in the future. All to help and encourage delegates to come up with decent resolutions on how to prevent child, early and forced marriages all over the world.

Definition of Key Terms

Forced marriage: A marriage in which one or both of the parties is married without his or her consent or against his or her will.

Arranged marriage: A marriage in which both parties consent to the assistance of their parents or a third party (such as a matchmaker) in identifying a spouse.

Child marriage: A marriage in which at least one of the parties is a child. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”.

Early marriage: A marriage involving a person aged below 18, in countries where the age of majority is attained earlier or upon marriage. Early marriage can also refer to marriages where both spouses are 18 or older but other factors make them unready to consent to marriage, such as their level of physical, emotional, sexual and psychosocial development, or a lack of information regarding the person’s life options.
General Overview

Some quick facts on child and early marriage:

- Every year, millions of girls—some as young as five years old—are forced into marriage.
- One in every three girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18. One in nine marries before the age of 15.
- Complications in childbirth are the leading cause of death among girls between the ages of 15 and 19 in the developing world.
- Globally, between 2004 and 2014, an estimated 100 million girls will have been forced to marry before their 18th birthday.
- Girls with higher levels of schooling are less likely to marry as children. In Mozambique, some 60 percent of girls with no education are married by 18, compared to 10 percent of girls with secondary schooling and less than one percent of girls with higher education.

Timeline of Events

Child marriage is a traditional practice that in many places happens simply because it has happened for generations – and straying from tradition could mean exclusion from the community. It has been happening for hundreds of years and has been decreasing in severity over the last few decades. Some breakthroughs have been made, for example when Syria banished child marriage completely in 2008 or when Saudi-Arabia did the same in 2009. But still a lot of progress has to be made and major resolutions tackling the problem on a global level have not yet been made.

Major Parties Involved

Countries where child and early marriage is most common

10 Countries with the Highest Absolute Numbers of Child Marriage*

1. India 10,063
2. Bangladesh 2,359
3. Nigeria 1,193
4. Brazil 877
5. Ethiopia 673
6. Pakistan 600
7. Indonesia 458
8. Democratic Republic of the Congo 291
9. Mexico 260
10. Niger 244

* Women age 20-24 years old who were married before they were 15, in thousands.
Girls not brides: A global partnership of more than 400 civil society organisations from over 60 countries committed to ending child marriage.

Plan-International because I’m a girl: Plan’s Because I am a Girl campaign aims to support millions of girls to get the education, skills and support they need to transform their lives and the world around them.

The United Nations: The UN has been dealing with this issue in cooperation with national governments and NGO’s for decades.

Previous Attempts to solve the issue
States are increasingly taking legislative measures to address child, early and forced marriage. These include amendments to laws to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 for both girls and boys, prohibition of child and forced marriage, sanctions against the perpetrators of child, early and forced marriage and implementation of compulsory registration of all marriages. The Syrian Arab Republic, for instance, reported that a ministerial committee, established to study articles in all Syrian laws which discriminate against women and children, had proposed amendments to the legal age and prevention of child, early and forced marriage. Sweden also reported that it was in the process of strengthening legal protection against forced marriage and child marriage. The Committees on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and on the Rights of the Child have welcomed instances of such progress in their recent reviews of States parties’ reports, including those of Albania

Possible Solutions
When delegates come up with resolutions to solve the issue they should take into consideration the following aspects:

• National legal frameworks should be enforced, which take into account the age of majority, which should be 18.

• National and international laws on marriage should be intertwined. Existing laws should be changed to remove legal obstacles girls now face regarding child marriage. Laws regarding the ending of marriages should be made easier to adapt for children under the age of 18 in many states.

• Young girls should be encouraged and able to attain a good-quality education, where they learn about the consequences of child marriage and should be learned to take their own decisions regarding marriage. Schools should be subsidized for educating young girls properly on child and early marriage. This education should be age-appropriate, relevant to the place and religion of the girls it is taught to, based on experience, not shy away from sexual difficulties, teach children valuable life-lessons and girls should be
made aware of the abilities they have to claim and carry out their rights in marriage

• The social acceptance of child and early marriage in many states has to be stopped. A resolution which raises awareness of the harm it does to its victims and how it deteriorates society as a whole. And which involves religious leaders and older women to join in the discussion will certainly have a good chance of succeeding

• A network between young women and girls could be established so they can share their information and experience on how to deal with this complicated issue

• Government officials in developing countries should be informed on the legal procedures regarding child and early marriage. Social service workers and people who work in healthcare who also deal with the issue should know what to do when they are confronted with the consequences.

• Money should be made available to support programmes which help in preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage. In cooperation with the UN, NGO’s, civil society organizations and regional and national governments.

• Research and data-collection on child and early marriage should be improved, so the agencies dealing with this issue are better aware of the exact situation regarding child and early marriage

Useful documents
UN research report on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage:
Recommendation on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages:
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/RecommendationOnConsentToMarriage.aspx
Factsheet on child and early marriage to help understand the scale on which it occurs:
A theory provided by girls not brides on how to end child and early marriage: