

Contents

Flying Broom and child marriages.....	5
Child Marriages in the news.....	8
Flying Broom visits schools.....	17
Say No to Child Brides Platform.....	18
We are strong together: Girls not Brides.....	20
Yıldız Ecevit: "This is basically a problem of women's independence".....	21
Reasons behind early and forced marriages.....	26
Consequences of early and forced marriages.....	27
Yakın Ertürk: "The girl child: Born to be a bride?".....	28
Leyla Pervizat: "Honor is all Turkey cares about!".....	30
UNICEF: Turkish youth and early marriages.....	36
Bride: Casualty of marriage, by Selen Doğan.....	38
The current situation in Turkey, by Selin Berghan.....	42
Adem Arkadaş: "Early marriage is the new form of slavery".....	45
Optional Protocol to the CRC in 11 questions, by Adem Arkadaş-Thiber.....	50
Sema Kendirci: "New law on violence does not include child brides!".....	55
Şahin Antakyalıoğlu: The most common form of rights breaches are those committed against children.....	58
The Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men.....	60
What do numbers say about early marriages.....	61
To be transformed into a marriage blow-up doll.....	63
Derya Müftüoğlu: "An un-lived adolescence will have lifelong negative effects.....	64
I never found the time to fall in love, by Gözde Dağdelen.....	67
Migration and early marriages, by İşıl Bayraktar.....	70
What do we know about incest?.....	72
A campaign: Don't marry her off!.....	73
ECPAT says 'no' to child marriage, by Alessia Altamura.....	74
The dairy of migrant child brides in Germany, by Eda Özyurt Kılınc.....	75
Action plan against forced marriage in Norway.....	76
Child marriage: A global disaster.....	78
Six things you could do to prevent early marriages.....	83
Cinema and child marriages, by Özlem Kinal.....	84
The real face of a 'sacred family'.....	88
Child brides are all around.....	90
Child brides in 54 cities.....	92
In conclusion.....	94



18//



30//



44//



72//



NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

With the contribution of the Royal
Norwegian Embassy in Ankara

Owner

Ayşe Ürün GÜNER

Executive Editor

Halime GÜNER

Editor in Chief

Selen DOĞAN

Translators

Ceren KOCAMAN
Burç KÖSTEM

Graphic Design

Emre YILMAZ

Flying Broom Team

Sevna SOMUNCUOĞLU, Selen DOĞAN,
Özlem KINAL, Eda ÖZYURT KILINÇ, Sibel
GÜNEŞ, Gufran ELEMİN

Contributors

Adem ARKADAŞ-THIBERT, Alessia AL-
TAMURA, Asuman KÜÇÜKKANTARCI,
Derya MÜFTÜOĞLU, Eda ÖZYURT KILINÇ,
Esin KOÇ, Gözde DAĞDELEN, Işıl BAY-
RAKTAR, İlknur YÜKSEL, Leyla PERVİZAT,
Özlem KINAL, Selin BERGHAN, Sema
KENDİRCİ, Sevna SOMUNCUOĞLU, Şahin
ANTAKYALIOĞLU, Yakın ERTÜRK, Yıldız
ECEVİT.

Bilkent University Faculty of Fine Arts, EC-
PAT International, Girls not Brides, Turk-
ish Network against Commercial Sexual
Exploitation of Children, MYRA, No to
Child Brides National Platform, UNICEF.

Flying Broom

Büyükelçi Sokağı 20/4 Kavaklıdere-
Ankara

Tel: +90 312 427 00 20

Fax: +90 312 466 55 61

E-mail: ucanhaber@ucansupurge.org

www.ucansupurge.org

Printer

Mattek Matbaa

Ağaç İşleri San. Sit. 1354 (Eski 21. Caddesi)
1362. Sokak No:35 Yenimahalle - İvedik -
ANKARA

gtygy

Printing Date

15 November 2012

Type of Publication

Local Periodical Publication

November
2012



When we think of all traditions that globally recreate and perpetuate sexual discrimination, forced marriage undoubtedly ranks first on our lists. In a patriarchal society marriage takes on a form of fetish where the traditional equals the divine, which also means abolishing childhood. Unquestionably taking on a social heritage and putting it into effect means the victimization of women and children. The girl child, who is married off even before she can properly utter her name, is forced into the life of a bride with the child that she is, and the life of an elderly with the youth that she bears. She forever bears the pain and burden of finding herself in the arms of a man instead of playing in the streets, having to offer her body to someone else before even getting to know it herself, and taking captivity as her faith, let alone liberating her soul.

Early and forced marriages take thousands of girls' lives away, even if not in the literal sense. Their stories make up a wounded memory within the society. Victimization of women in multiple areas such as unequal relation between the sexes, firm lines of domestic roles, health problems, feminization of poverty and increased domestic violence are but an iron fist in their throats – it doesn't go away, nor can it stay.

Marrying children is sexual, economic and emotional exploitation. It is "institutionalized pedophilia" for some academics, and "the modern form of slavery" for some activists. Marrying children means accomplice to rape, legitimizing rights violence and perpetuating gender inequalities.

Flying Broom chose to bring this issue into the national agenda with the projects it conducted since 2006 and its publications instead of overlooking this major social problem. This journal is yet another one of these efforts. This issue brings together different aspects and views on one of the most important rights violations issue – child marriages – and offers articles, interviews and news pieces tackling the issue in such contexts as law, healthcare, education and much more.

We would like to present you with this issue which constitutes an archive for all those who are interested in and would like to find out more about child marriages, and would also like to thank everyone who has contributed.

Flying Broom



FLYING BROOM AND CHILD MARRIAGES: A BRIEF HISTORY

Having recognized early and forced marriages as a problem area as early as 2003-2005, Flying Broom started working on this social issue in 2006. Here is a brief account of all the activities Flying Broom Women's Research and Communication Association has conducted to combat child marriages in Turkey.

2003-2005

With its project entitled "Building Bridges" Flying Broom came together with thousands of women in 81 provinces of Turkey in order to see first hand the demands and priorities of women through film screenings and discussions. It was through this project which led Flying Broom to discover that the underlying reason behind violence against women and inequalities is early and forced marriages. The first steps towards taking concrete action in line with the experiences women conveyed in these cities began in 2006.



The poster says: "Early marriage is one size too big!"

early and forced marriages we were almost without any exceptions told that this was 'a problem specific to Eastern Anatolia', whereas we had already observed through our travels across the country and our detailed media search that this is a social problem that occurs in all regions of Turkey. We could even speak of marriage tourism. People from



2006

In 2006, we started 'Solidarity among Women and Motivation Seminars' with the support of the private sector for the first time. We wanted early and forced marriages to be the discussion topic in these seminars funded by Eczacıbaşı NIVEA. Same year, the movie entitled 'Iss Zucker und Sprich Süß' (Eat Sugar and Speak Sweetly) was screened within the scope of the 9th Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival. In this documentary, two female directors, Sigrid Dethloff and Renate Bernhard, tell the stories of women who were forced to marry at an early age in Germany. Thinking that we should also take a different path in the same year, we switched our route to Central Anatolia. When we brought into discussion the problem of

Turkey brought along this destructive tradition into Europe as they migrated. We saw that it was even the case that families came back to their hometowns in summer to 'look for a girl' for their sons, thus women became 'import brides'. Early and forced marriages are a moving problem and one of the routes for this problem is Germany, where many families from Turkey live. We conducted a pilot project entitled 'Early Marriages' with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany and German Embassy in Ankara in the last four months of 2006. We sent letters to each and every one of the governorships and municipalities of Central Anatolian cities, inquiring collaboration possibilities and whether they held any data on marriages. Among the cities which offered their kind support we picked Kırıkkale and Yozgat, and started preparations. Flying Broom visited Kırıkkale in November and Yozgat in December to meet up one on one with women in the neighborhoods selected with the help of the governorship, municipality as well as provincial directorate of social services. We also exchanged ideas on the possible preventive measures that can be taken with national education directorates, local representatives of directorate of religious affairs as well as local NGO's. Again, film screenings and discussions were organized with the participation of women from all ages. On the last day of 2006 Flying Broom organized a meeting to evaluate the outcomes of this project where women's NGO's, parliamentarians, governors and deputy mayors of Kırıkkale and Yozgat, representatives from local government of Ankara, human rights NGO's, bar association, directorate of religious affairs, security general directorate, representatives from the ministry of national education, general directorate of social services, journalists, and academicians were present. In the last session of this meeting several recommendations were laid down to prevent early and forced marriages such as rising compulsory education to 12 years, preparing local action plans. One of these suggestions was the establishment of a subcommittee under the Parliament with the purpose of conducting in-depth research into the matter, which was realized three years later when a sub-committee was established under Woman-Man Equal Opportunities Commission of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

2007

In 2007, Flying Broom used the festival as a tool in order to draw attention to the problem of early and forced marriages. The theme of the short film story competition was set as 'early marriages' in the 10th Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival. Over 300 short film stories were submitted to the festival that year. The first 10 stories, which were picked by the jury, were invited to a scenario-writing workshop by Işıl Özgentürk in Ankara. Some of the scenarios were filmed at the end of the workshop to be screened in next year's festival. Using the narrative of cinema was an influential way of addressing early and forced marriages. These films meant that if films, one way or another, tell real life stories and manage to touch our souls in different ways, then reflecting a social problem to the silver screen could at least drive people into thinking about the negative effects of early marriages all around the world.

2008



Flying Broom started the 'Child Brides' project in 2008, in cooperation with Dortmund Köln International Women's Film Festival and the support of the European Union. A short film synopsis competition was initiated within the scope of this project. Those synopses that made it to the finals were invited to a month-long workshop in Ankara as Flying Broom guests. Participants produced

two non-dialogue short films together with their trainers - Maren-Kea Freese and Bernadette Feiler from Germany, Leyla Özalp and Aylin Eren from Turkey. These short films were 'I Wish', written by Damla Köle and Breathe Alma, Breathe by Dennis Todoroviç, which premiered on October

24, 2008 at Şinasi Sahnesi in Ankara with the cooperation of Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Ankara State Theatre. Emine Bozkurt, member of the European Parliament made a speech at the opening emphasizing that it is high time we say 'no' as society at large to early and forced marriages. Upon request from the Hürriyet newspaper, the two films premiered in İstanbul at Hürriyet Media Towers on November 24, 2008. Vuslat Doğan Sabancı from Hürriyet, Nükhet Sirman from Boğaziçi University, psychologist Feride Güneri, lawyer Canan Arın, and actress Hülya Avşar each made a speech at the panel discussion following the film screening. The Child Brides project found wide coverage. 'I Wish' and 'Breathe Alma, Breathe' were screened at several national and international film festivals; moreover, were made part of activities of various NGO's through special screenings. 'Breathe Alma, Breathe' ranked third for best fiction the same year at the 1st Rotary International Short Film Competition in Ankara.



2009

In 2009, a sub-commission was established under the Woman-Man Equal Opportunities Commission of the Parliament, called the Sub-Commission to Inspect Early Marriages. This sub-commission met up with related public institutions and academicians. Flying Broom was asked to inform it on the organization's previous works in the field.

Along with the projects, we participated in countless radio and TV shows, wrote articles and made news explaining the negative causes of early marriages on women's lives, its physical and psychological effects, how it perpetuates gender inequality. It was during this period that we planned our next steps to further preventive works on the matter, generating ideas on organizing more film screenings and seminars, taking the issue to the local agendas through other activities. We believe that it would be an important step for us to receive the support of the Presidency in order to disseminate discussions on this social problem. After considerable efforts, Flying Broom managed to get a support letter from the Presidency, requesting local governments to facilitate the nation-wide organization of activities around the theme of early marriages. It was very pleasing to know that the top decision making mechanism

of the country recognized this problem and perceived it to be a question to address. The next step for Flying Broom was to determine which actors to take into consideration in addressing the problem of early and forced marriages, as it is a multi-dimensional problem, and also to see if there are any lacking points in our works so far. To this end, on April 13, 2009 we organized a search conference in Ankara. Participants to this conference were academicians Yakın Ertürk, Yıldız Ecevit, Sevil Atauz, Simten Coşar, Dilek Cindoğlu, Mine Tan, Serpil Sancar, Filiz Kardam, Ayşe Akın, Ebru Özberk, Gökçe Bayrakçeken, Sare Mihçioğulları, Süreyya Kavaklı from the Human Rights Presidency of the Prime Ministry, and activist writer Handan Çağlayan. Again in 2009, Flying Broom participated in a working group aiming to amend Articles 102, 103, 104, and 105 of the Penal Code in order to protect the rights of the child, define pedophilia and incest in the code, define early and forced marriages as a sexual assault against the child. Special emphasis was placed on 'sexual intercourse with a minor (statutory rape)' prescribed in Article 104 of the Penal Code. It was stipulated that aggravated punishment would be given since the act would be defined as sexual assault and is directed at a minor.

2010

Flying Broom's periodical Flying News discussed early and forced marriages in its 12th year, 26th issue. It was for the first time that a comprehensive journal was published in Turkey on early and forced marriages.

Also, the year 2010 was a milestone in Flying Broom's work in child marriages. We were found eligible for a grant by the prestigious Sabancı Foundation and started conducting the project 'Child Brides: The Victims of Destructive Traditions and a Social Patriarchal Heritage'.

Officially divided by 81 provinces, the Flying Broom team set out to visit 54 cities in Turkey. These cities were Afyonkarahisar, Ağrı, Aksaray, Amasya, Ankara, Ardahan, Artvin, Aydın, Balıkesir, Bilecik, Bingöl, Bitlis, Bolu, Bursa, Çankırı, Çorum, Diyarbakır, Düzce, Edirne, Elazığ, Erzincan, Eskişehir, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Hakkari, Iğdır, İzmir, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kırıkkale, Kırklareli, Kırşehir, Kocaeli, Kütahya, Malatya, Mardin, Muş, Nevşehir, Niğde, Ordu, Osmaniye, Rize, Sakarya, Siirt, Sinop, Şırnak, Tekirdağ, Tokat, Trabzon, Tunceli, Uşak, Van, Yozgat, and Zonguldak.

The field work of the project lasted 6 months with pauses in between travels. The project team went to each and every one of the 54 cities and organized meetings where local officials, related government offices and NGO's, academicians, experts on law, healthcare and social services, as well as the police force, local media members and women from all ages came together.

Two short non-dialogue films produced by Flying Broom were screened during these meetings. One of these films was 'I Wish' and the other was 'Breathe Alma, Breathe'. With the cooperation of the governorship and the municipality, women and students from different regions of each city joined the meetings.

Using the short films as a tool, Flying Broom started discussions with women and girls present at the meetings. Social service experts, psychologists, gendarmerie, lawyers, sociologists occasionally participated in these meetings emphasizing the preventive measures that can be taken against early and forced marriages. Participants were also informed about where to apply to in case of such a risk/threat. This way, deputy governors, mayors and deputy mayors, rectors and other university staff, representatives from related government offices, and local reporters were further enlightened about the issue of early marriages and became aware of possible measures that can be taken to prevent this social problem.

Flying Broom was invited to local TV shows, which enabled us to become more vocal and bring the issue to each city's agenda.

The project team had other guests at different stages of the field work. A documentary was shot following the travels of Flying Broom in Nevşehir and Niğde.

A 13-question long questionnaire was conducted with the participants to the meetings in 54 cities, which sought to find out more about basic topics such as thoughts on ideal age of marriage, actual age of marriage, age of first pregnancy.

A total of 100 in-depth interviews were made in 10 cities (Ankara, Aydın, Afyon, Kayseri, Hakkari, Elazığ, Edirne, Ardahan, Osmaniye, Kastamonu) within the scope of this project.

The positions/occupations of the people interviewed were as follows: Social services director, social services expert, journalist, muhtar, health director, psychologist, family doctor, family court judge, lawyer, mayor or deputy mayor, national education director, local representatives of directorate of religious affairs, head of bar association, president of the commission of women of bar associations, deputy governor, chief nurse, chief of police, women's shelter workers, imam, academican, kindergarten or school directors, NGO representatives, director of population and citizenship affairs, etc.

In 2012, "Child Brides" as a second step in this project, Flying Broom wanted to establish a National Platform which is a common platform fighting against the harmful traditional practice of child marriages with the institutions and the organizations around Turkey working in different fields and disciplines. On 11th of October, the day of the Girl Child, Flying Broom announced the establishment of the "No to Child Brides Platform" with a press meeting. We have now 52 members, including children's rights organizations, women's organizations, gender studies departments of universities and lawyers from 12 cities in Turkey. These are;

The Members of the National Platform

1. Adıyaman Kahta Kadın ve Çocuk Hakları Derneği Adıyaman Kahta Women and Children Rights Association – ADIYAMAN
2. Akdeniz Eğitim ve Kalkındırma Derneği – Association of Mediteranean Development - ADANA
3. Altı Nokta Körler Derneği Six Points Association of the Blind- ANKARA
4. Amargi Kadın Kooperatifi Amargi Women Cooperative – ISTANBUL
5. Ankara Barosu Gelincik Merkezi Ankara Bar Association Corn-rose Center- ANKARA
6. Ankara Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Çocuk Koruma Birimi Ankara University Medical Faculty Child Protection Unit– ANKARA
7. Ankara Girişimci Kadınlar Derneği Ankara Woman Entrepreneurs Association- ANKARA
8. Başkent Kadın Platformu Derneği Capital Women Platform Association– ANKARA
9. Başkent Üniversitesi Kadın Çocuk Sağlığı ve Aile Planlaması AUM Başkent University Centre of Woman And Child Health and Family Planning – ANKARA
10. Başkent Üniversitesi Sosyal Hizmet Bölümü Başkent University Social Service Department-ANKARA
11. Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı Başak Culture and Art Foundation- İSTANBUL
12. Cinsiyet Eşitliği İzleme Derneği / Kadın Sığınağı Kolektifi Gender Equality Watch Association/The Collective of Women Shelter- ANKARA
13. Çocuk Vakfı Child Foundation - ISTANBUL
14. Çoluk Çocuk Dergisi The Offspring Journal- ANKARA
15. Çocuklara Yönelik Ticari Cinsel Sömürü İle Mücadele Ağı Network on Struggle against Sexual Harassment towards Children- ANKARA
16. ÇOVAK Risk Altındaki Çocuk, Genç ve Ailelerini Koruma Destekleme Gönüllüleri Derneği The Volunteers Association of Protection, Support of the Children, Youngsters and Their Families under Risk- ISTANBUL
17. Çukurova Üniversitesi Kadın Sorunlarını Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Çukurova University Women's Studies Research Centre- ADANA
18. Çocuk ve Bilgi Güvenliği Derneği Child and Information Security Association- ISTANBUL
19. Ege Üniversitesi İzmir Atatürk Sağlık Yüksek Okulu Ebelik Bölümü Ege University İzmir Atatürk Health Vocational School of High Education Tocology Department- IZMİR
20. Fişek Enstitüsü Fişek Institute- ANKARA
21. Genç Hayat Vakfı Young Life Foundation - İSTANBUL
22. Göç Vakfı Foundation of Migration - DIYARBAKIR
23. Güven Eğitim ve Sağlık Vakfı Güven Education and Health Foundation- ANKARA
24. Gündem Çocuk Derneği Agenda of the Children Association- ANKARA
25. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Kadın Sorunlarını Araştırma Merkezi Hacettepe University Women's Research and Implementation Center- ANKARA
26. İstanbul Genç Adım Derneği Istanbul Young Tracks Association- İSTANBUL
27. İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Çocuk Çalışmaları Birimi İstanbul Bilgi University Unit of Study on Children - ISTANBUL
28. Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı Association of Solidarity with Women- ISTANBUL
29. Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği Association of Support of the Women Candidates KA.DER Genel Merkezi – İSTANBUL
30. Kadın Sağlığı Hemşireliği Derneği Association of Nurses working on Women Health- ISTANBUL
31. KAOS GL – KAOS Gay Lesbian ANKARA
32. Mersin Üniversitesi Kadın Sorunlarını Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Mersin University Women's Research and Implementation Center- MERSİN
33. Mor Çatı Purple Roof- ISTANBUL
34. Mor Salkım Kadın Derneği Wisteria Women's Association - BURSA
35. Muş Kadın Derneği Muş Women's Association- MUŞ
36. Özgürlüğünden Yoksun Gençlerle Dayanışma Derneği Association of Solidarity with the Youngsters without Freedom- ANKARA
37. Pembe Hayat LGBT Derneği Pink Life LGBT Association- ANKARA
38. Roman Gençlik Derneği Association of Roma Youngsters- ANKARA
39. Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Kadın Sorunları Araştırma ve uygulama Merkezi- Süleyman Demirel University Women's Research and Implementation Center- ISPARTA
40. Sakarya Barosu Çocuk Hakları Komisyonu Sakarya Bar Association Commission of Children's Rights - SAKARYA
41. Tatvan İnci Kadınlar Eğitim Kültür Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği Tatvan Pearl Women's Education, Culture and Social Solidarity Association- BITLİS
42. Türkiye Çocuklara Yeniden Özgürlük Vakfı Youth Re-autonomy Foundation of Turkey
43. Türkiye Gençlik Federasyonu Federation of the Youth of Turkey-ANKARA
44. Türkiye Gençlik Birliği Derneği Association of Union of the Youth Turkey -ANKARA
45. Türkiye Kadın Dernekleri Federasyonu Federation of the Women Associations of Turkey – ANKARA
46. Türk Üniversiteli Kadınlar Derneği Association of Turkish Undergraduate Women- ANKARA
47. Türk Psikologlar Derneği- Association of Turkish Psychologists İSTANBUL
48. Türk Tabipleri Birliği Turkish Doctors Union –ANKARA
49. Uçan Süpürge Kadın İletişim ve Araştırma Derneği Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association-ANKARA
50. Uluslararası Çocuk Merkezi International Child Center-ICC – ANKARA
51. UNICEF
52. UNIC
53. Van Kadın Derneği Van Women's Association- VAN
54. Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Kadın Sorunları Araştırma Uygulama Merkezi Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Women's Research and Implementation Center–VAN



Findings from the field study and temporary results of the 2010-2011 "Child Brides" project:

- Women and girls are not aware of their rights but demand to know them.
- Children who are under the risk/threat of a forced marriage do not know where to apply. The most they report they can do is to call the police.
- Girls demand that awareness raising campaigns to prevent early and forced marriages should target families, with a specific focus on the father.
- Most of the adult women contacted think that early marriages are not necessarily 'forced' and that some girls willingly get married.
- Young women point out that running away from home at an early age is common.
- Women blame each other for early marriages – 'Girls want it themselves', 'But mothers are those who bring up the children', etc.
- The experiences and testimonies told by women are the proof that illegal acts such as bride exchange, betrothing, and bride price are still recognized and common in the society.
- Proposals to solve early marriages starting bottom up are unrealistic due to social pressures. The social pressure that could be created through not attending the wedding ceremonies of individuals who are married at a young age, taking an attitude to families that facilitate such marriages, ending contact with families that send their children to wedding ceremonies instead of school, doesn't gather much approval.
- Women who experience early marriage do not want their daughters to experience the same thing. These women tend to say 'women should get married after the age of 25', 'when they have a job'. Some don't even want their daughter to get married in the first place.
- The problem of child brides is a caricature, marginalized, and made into a story; therefore, there are no 'real' data on people's mind maps. Everybody knows that such a problem exists in the society but only few can admit that it exists in their towns.
- Most people think of early marriages as marriages at the age of 12-13. The knowledge that marriage at the age of 17-18 is also a child marriage is not at all common.
- There is no agenda set throughout the country regarding early marriages.
- Public officials are unaware of the situation.
- There is lack of awareness in local governments as well.

In the News

It is only recently that we started to talk about visibility of child marriages in the media. Pioneer projects such as the Child Brides project of Flying Broom helped pave the way for increased visibility of the subject in the media as well as increased public awareness. At times, however, such awakenings can indeed hinder struggle against child marriages. Journalists are more and more enthusiastic about putting child marriage stories across; however, it is an apparent fact that they strive for, almost violently, to make more provocative and sensational news stories. They can become bold enough to ask for a girl married off at 15 to make an interview, or they look for “flashy” statistics. Such an approach to reporting does not prevent early marriages; on the contrary, it causes the reader to pity the victims. We know that the kind of news that will be of use is the

kind that empowers women, informs them of their rights, and leads them the way when they become victims. Unfortunately, this is not the case. After all, 18 to 19-year-old girls can show up at matchmaking shows watched by millions of women with the hopes of finding their true love. Yet, producers can't conceive the fact that these marriages are early, indeed.

Media is an effective tool for women's struggle for human rights. As long as media workers and decision-makers are aware of their responsibilities, all forms of discrimination against women, including child marriages, will be coherently struggled against. Let us take a look at how the issue has been represented in the media. Here is a reflection of child marriages in the media between 2010-2012.

2010

- A twin at the age of 21, who was to be forcefully married to her cousin, jumped off from the fifth floor, committing suicide. Her sister, who also jumped off with her, lost her life as well. *24 January 2010*
- A 40-year-old man living in the Sungurlu district of the province of Çorum forced his 12-year-old daughter to live with a 29-year-old man. The couple who moved to Ankara had a dead-born child. The couple divorced. Another man at the age of 20 offered 10 thousand TL to the father in return of marrying the girl. Two men were arrested for “sexual abuse of a small child”. *21 January 2011*
- It is discovered that a 13-year-old girl who was married off to an HIV positive man of 21 and was enslaved is also HIV positive. *5 February 2010*
- A woman who was forced to marry the man who raped her at an early age was murdered by her husband when she asked for a divorce. *7 February 2010*
- According to a research conducted in England, 54 girls who have not yet completed primary school got pregnant in the last 8 years. 15 of them were 10, and 39 were 11 at the time. 63.587 children under the age of 15 have given birth since 2002. England is the leading country in terms of pregnancy rates under 16 among European countries. These data were revealed to the media within the

framework of the Right to Information Act. *9 February 2010*

○ Upon the initiative of the states of North Rhine Westphalia, Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, the

Federal Parliament in Germany enacted a draft that stipulating the aggravation of the forced marriage sentence in the penal code. The new act foresees that those who force a woman or a man into marriage through the use of violence or threats are punishable by prison from six months up to ten years. *10 February 2010*

○ A 15-year-old high school student in Adana was kidnapped with the promise of marriage. Upon learning that his daughter eloped with a 20-year-old man, the father said: “How can a 15-year-old child be allowed to marry? It is a crime under the laws. I want my daughter to study. She is my only hope”. *19 February 2010*

○ A 35-year old man in Şanlıurfa with the criminal record of 18 separate crimes including drug abuse, physical injury and usurpation bought a Syrian girl at the age of 12 at a bride price of 32 thousand TL, five twisted golden bracelet and seven gold coins. The child returned home after 20 days, saying that she was being tortured. *17 March 2010*

○ Fundamental Islamist women rebelled as the Yemeni government attempted to prohibit the marriage of girls under 17. Thousands of women in veils gathered in front of the parliament in Sanaa with the Islamic opposition parties and unfurled banners calling “Do not ban what Allah permits”, “Do not violate Sheria Law under the guise of rights and freedoms”. Age of marriage in the country is still as low as eight. *22 March 2010*

○ Seda Küçük's novel “Black Gown” was published by Cinius Publishing. The book portrays the trauma of girls who were forced to become mothers before even becoming youngsters through the experiences of a family living in İstanbul- Eyüp between 1975-2000. *23 March 2010*



San Özübilgi / International Children's Center & Bilkent University Department of Graphic Design



o Turkish Lady Foundation, which carries out sports and training activities for women in Brussels, organized a discussion with the participation of research assistant psychologist Ertuğrul Taş from the University of Leuven on the topic of "Marriage Practices in the Turkish Community in Belgium". Taş, having stated that 'fake', 'gray', and forced marriages are prevalent in these communities, aimed at getting the message that forced marriages are wrong across. After the discussion Tülin Özdemir's "Notre Mariage" was screened. 30 March 2010

o A 17-year-old woman was married off in an arranged marriage, but despite her asking of it, an official marriage was not made. Upon finding out that the health report required for marriage costs 100TL, the husband's family terminated the process and soon after she was kicked out of the house. The Second Instance Family Court ruled that the woman would be paid compensation both by her husband and her father-in-law. The court also reached the verdict that she would be paid 3 thousand TL in return for her three-year work at the farm during her marriage. The decree reads as follows: "Despite employing an agriculture worker older than 16, the father and the son did not pay her; thus, they prospered unrightfully". 1 April 2010

o 71-year-old business executive Halis Toprak married 17-year-old N.T., who attempted suicide soon after. The couple divorced shortly after the incident. 5 April 2010

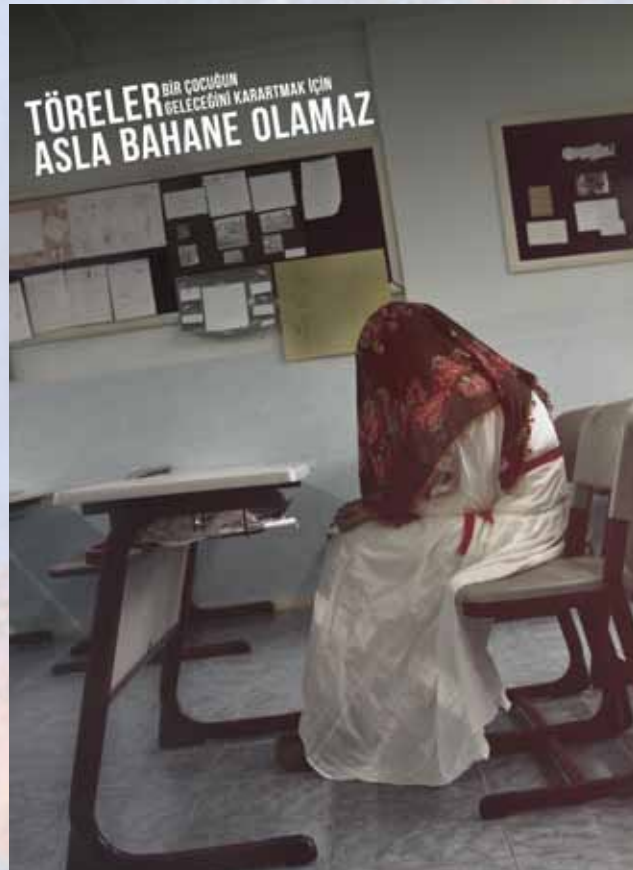
Married off by her parent, a 13-year-old girl in Yemen died due to excessive bleeding in her genital wound on the fourth day of her marriage. 10 April 2010

o A 10-year-old girl brings back the debate over abortion in Mexico, after being impregnated by her father. While abortion is legal in the capital, it is either prohibited or significantly restricted in many states. Abortion is legal up to 90 days of pregnancy in cases of rape in the state of Quintana Roo situated in the Yucatan Peninsula, State. 19 April 2010

o A senator in Nigeria, who has allegedly married

a 13-year-old girl, stated that he had done nothing wrong. The senator, who is 49, advocated that his fourth wife, an Egyptian girl, is older than 13 and that he recognizes no law that doesn't correspond to his religious beliefs. 29 April 2010

o Saudi Arabia prepares new marriage license in which the 'age of the bride' is included so as to prevent marriages to minors. The issue of child marriages has been one of the leading topics of discussion in the country in the recent years. 2 June 2010



Necmi Deniz / International Children's Center & Bilkent University Department of Graphic Design

o A report prepared by the Federation of Women's Foundations in Turkey stressed the prevalence of incestuous relationships in many regions as well as second wives in exchange of money. 6 June 2010

o A 14-year-old girl in Şanlıurfa fell faint in a village fight, which revealed that she was 2-months pregnant. It was found out that she was married off to a 25-year older relative. The gendarmerie took the 'husband' and the parents who gave their consent in this marriage under custody. 8 June 2010

o It was found out that a girl who took shelter at a hospital in the Siverek district of Şanlıurfa was seeking help as her family tried to marry her off. The police initiated investigation, and it was revealed that the child had started to live together with her cousin three months ago. She was placed under protection by the order of the prosecutor. 25 June 2010

o The report presented to the Committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men of the Turkish Grand National Assembly ascertains that the statement "A son brings prestige to the mother" placed in the research of Directorate General for Family and Social Researches, is approved by 34% of the society. 26 June 2010



o A 17-year-old girl, who was to be married off, ran away on her wedding day and took shelter in law enforcement, as a result of which she was placed under protection. The father of the groom, who did not want to cancel the wedding, married his son to his 19-year-old niece. 7 July 2010

o A short film competition with the title of 'Children whose Rights are Stolen' is initiated under the framework of Turkish Congress of Children Rights organized by Istanbul University, Social Services, Society for the Protection of Children and Child Foundation. 9 July 2010

o 17-year-old girl, who was married forcefully by her parents in the Tekkekoş district of Samsun,

sought help from the police on the account that she was locked home by her parents-in-law for wanting a divorce. 12 July 2010

o F.K., 22, who was betrothed in cradle to her 25-old cousin, hanged herself in the ceiling using a bathrobe strap. The allegations were that she begged her family saying "I cannot continue this marriage, save me" and the parents' reply was 'Commit suicide but do not come back home'. 2 August 2010

o A man at the age of 35 in Bengal, India married to his daughter, believing that he received a divine order. She got pregnant, and the father was taken under custody, but was later released. The girl, who never went to school, will be tested for her real age. 25 September 2010

o A questionnaire published on the website wow-Turkey.com asked 'Is a marriage possible at the age of 10?' 45% of the replies were 'It is not permitted in the religion, it cannot be'. The number of people who believe that religion allows child marriage is 8.5%. 7 September 2010

o The Solidarity Foundation for Youth Deprived of Their Rights (Özge-Der) organized a conference in Ankara within the scope of 'Child Ombudsman Project'. 26 October 2010

o The report of the Human Rights Monitoring Commission of the Parliament stipulates that 76 children under 18 gave birth in the province of Siirt between 2008-2010. One of these girls was 10 years old, and 15 of them were around the ages of 12-15.

o In Indonesia, A 46-year-old muslim religious official, who was married to a 12-year-old, was sentenced to 4 years in prison. Muslim men can marry up to four wives in the country. The lower limit for marriage for women is 18. 24 November 2010

o A 6-year-old girl, who was forced into marriage with a 23-year-old man, was rescued by the police during the wedding. 30 November 2010

2011

- The Council of Representatives in Tajikistan adopted the law amendment on increasing the age of marriage. According to the new law marriageable age is increased by one year and the marriage of girls under 18 is prohibited. The 'brides' were 17 in the 1.300 out of 38 thousand marriages realized last year. *1 January 2011*
- Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association was addressed in the television program 'Turkey's Changemakers' in the CNNTurk channel with its Child Brides project. *18 March 2011*
- A 14-year-old girl gave birth at a hospital in Şanlıurfa. The person whom she was forced to live with was taken under custody on the premise of having sexual intercourse with a minor. *4 April 2011*
- Two Romani children at the ages of 9 and 12 living in Montenegro were married off. The elders of the family advocated that Romani people marry at early ages and that "The children love one another. Their ages sum up to 21, they can marry" *20 May 2011*

- The National Geographic magazine reviewed the Child Brides project of Flying Broom in their latest issue. The article written by Selen Doğan covered the issues of reasons, results and solution suggestions for early marriages. *June 2011*
- The statistics of Diyarbakir Maternity and Child Diseases Hospital unveiled that despite all warnings, age of pregnancy dropped to 11. 415 children gave birth at around the ages of 11-17 in the first seven months of 2011. *5 July 2011*
- The data of Turkish Statistical Institute reported that 55 out of 1486 people who married in the first three months of 2011 in Kayseri were around the ages of 16-19. One third of the women were under the age of 19. *7 October 2011*
- The final meeting of the Child Brides project of Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association was held at the Turkish Grand National Assembly with the participation of members of the parliament, academicians, NGOs, representatives from public bodies, members of embassies and press members. *27 October 2011*

- According to the report prepared by the German Ministry of Family, immigrants from Turkey are top of the list in forced marriages with one out of every four 'victim' being of Turkish origin. Every year, more than 3 thousand young women are married off; 30% of them are under the age of 18. *10 November 2011*



- United Nations made a call to terminate the 'tradition' of 'bride kidnapping' which is practiced to this date in Kyrgyzstan. Every year, more than 15 thousand young women are kidnapped to be married off in the country, and some of them are raped to be talked into marriage. 80% of the kidnappings lead to marriage. *11 November 2011*
- The TV series 'Life Goes On' written and directed by Mahsun Kirmizigul is aired on ATV channel. The series tells the story of 15-year-old Hayat (Life) and her family, and her marriage to a very old man. *18 November 2011*

- The International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) made a desk research on early and forced marriages. According to the report, 10-12 million girls get married every year in developing countries. *19 November 2011*

- Married off at the age of 16, A.G. was raped by her step father in Adana and was forced to prostitution by her mother and her step-father after her husband's arrest. A.G. was rescued by the police and was placed in a dormitory. The mother was taken under custody, the man whom she was married off to was sent to prison. *25 November 2011*

- Y.B., who has five children from the man she eloped with at the age of 14 in Izmir, filed a case for divorce after having been exposed to vio-

lence for twenty years. The 40-year-old husband, who could not dissuade her, detained her for ten days and stabbed her to death twelve times. The prosecutor sued for aggravated life sentence. *25 November 2011*

○ The president of the Adana affiliation of Sexual Health Institute Foundation Dr. Taner Canatar asserted that one out of every four marriages in Turkey is made at early ages. Canatar further stated that "The patriarchal and traditional community structure renders early marriages normal and legitimate" and he asked for marriages under 18 to be prohibited. *29 November 2011*

○ United Nations has declared October 11 as the 'International Day of the Girl Child' establishing a day to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. In reserving a day for advocacy and action by and for girls, the UN has signaled its commitment to end gender stereotypes, discrimination, violence, and economic disparities that disproportionately affect girls. *19 December 2012*



○ 15-year-old S.F. was raped by four men at her house and was forced to live with one of the rapists. She was hospitalized after having been beaten by the 'alleged' husband. *28 December 2011*

2012

- In a village of Mudurnu in Bolu, it was found out that 11-year-old Z.C., who lives with E.D. (25) was 8-months pregnant. Doctors wanted to keep Z.C. her in the hospital as a result of the examinations, but the husband didn't allow it. 5 January 2012
- The parents who wanted to marry off their 15-year-old daughter was filed a court case for "attempt to sexual abuse". 5 January 2012
- A girl used a 16-year-old's ID while giving birth at a private hospital in the Nizip district of Gaziantep. It was revealed that she was 12. Later it was found out that she was married off to a 16-year-old. The prosecutor initiated an investigation for sexual abuse. 9 January 2012
- MP Aylin Nazlıca mentioned in a press conference at the parliament that one out of every three women in Turkey is married off while they were still a child and added: "We marry off our children for money and tradition." 9 January 2012



- The truth about A.Y., who was married off at 13 without official marriage in Gaziantep and returned home to her parents when her husband kicked her out of the house, was unveiled when her 1.5-month-old child got sick. The mufti of Gaziantep expressed that early marriages are not approved of in Islam. 19 January 2012
- According to the report published by the Iranian-Kurdish Women's Rights Organization (IKWRO) based in London, 30 girls are forced to marry in the Islington neighborhood alone in 2010. 5 of those children were aged around 9-11. Every

year, 3 thousand women are forced to marry in the UK. 2 February 2012

- The Minister of Family and Social Policies stipulated that the reasons for early marriages are underdevelopment, feudal structure and lack of education. Minister Fatma Şahin declared that amendments will be made to the Turkish Penal Code in order to prevent child marriages. Stating that early marriages cannot be prevented solely by making legal amendments, Şahin added "We need time". 4 February 2012
- Two families, who allegedly married their 13-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son, were filed a court case for "aiding sexual abuse of a child" with 7.5 years of imprisonment. 6 February 2012



Cartoon: Asuman Küçükkantarci

- A young woman called Rifla Stanesco who lives in the Investi village of Romania gave birth to her daughter when she was 12. Her daughter Maria had a child at the age of 11 despite all the efforts of her mother for her to continue education. 14 February 2012
- Flying Broom Women's Research and Communication Association collected 50 thousand signatures in their campaign demanding an amendment to the Civil Law which prevents early marriages. The signatures were submitted to the President of the Parliament with the participation of 80 people, including of students, representatives of women's associations, journalists, theatre artists and children. 8 March 2012



- Journalist Sultan Arınır prepared a mini-documentary for CNNTurk TV on child brides. She hosted institutions like Flying Broom and International Child Center as well as discussed the issue with Prof. Dr. Yakın Ertürk. The film was broadcast on 8 March International Women's Day. 8 March 2012
- Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç replied to criticisms raised against him on the draft law, which is to gradually increase mandatory education to 12 years, saying: "Which part of this law, which provision exactly is to lead to early marriages? There is yet time to talk about these issues." 12 March 2012
- A 16-year-old girl, who was wedded to her cousin in Sakarya, turned to prosecution as she was subjected to torment by her husband and his family. The child was placed under protection. 14 March 2012

○ Say 'No' to Child Brides Platform initiated with the leadership of Flying Broom organized a research meeting in Ankara. 30 representatives from women's and children's rights organizations and universities attended the meeting. 28 March 2012

○ The members of 'Girls Not Brides' based in London visited Flying Broom and held a meeting with the representatives of NGOs, which are members of the Say 'No' to Child Brides Platform initiated by Flying Broom. 23 April 2012

○ It was found out that a 12-year-old girl in Tokat was wedded to a 26-year-old man 8 months ago, and that she was 3.5 months pregnant. A criminal complaint was filed against the father of the girl and the husband for sexual abuse. 3 May 2012

○ Director Bingol Elmas shot a documentary about the causes and results of child marriages. 'Play House' (Evcilik) was screened at the 15th Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival. 11 May 2012



○ Sociologist Dolunay Şenol in a panel organized at Kırıkkale University stated that early marriages pose threat to the “the Turkish family structure” and that the media and the Directorate of Religious Affairs have significant roles to play in the prevention of these marriages. 22 May 2012

○ Republican People’s Party group deputy chair Emine Ülker Tarhan applied for the annulment of the “4+4+4” Law, which stipulates the gradual increase of the mandatory education period to 12 year with 4 year interruptions. Tarhan stated that “This law is against the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”. 8 June 2012



○ Reacting to the increase in the number of women married off against their wills, Prime Minister David Cameron stated: “Forced marriage is abhorrent and is little more than slavery. To force anyone into marriage against their will is simply wrong and that is why we have taken decisive action to make it illegal.” One of the most important reasons for kidnapping and forcing children to marriage those marriages is to receive residence permit in exchange of money. The Forced Marriage Unit under the Foreign and Commonwealth Office scrutinized 1468 cases last year. 8 June 2012

○ ‘Save the Children’ announced that 50 thousand girls lose their lives each year worldwide during pregnancy or delivery. In the report they published prior to the Family Planning Conference organized in London in July 2012, it was stipulated that each year more than 1 million young mothers lose their lives. The mortality risk for children whose mothers are under 18 is 60% more. 29 June 2012

○ According to the most recent report by Van Women’s Foundation, one out of every two women in the city is a ‘child bride’, married off at very early ages. Moreover, one of every two women in the city is illiterate. 6 July 2012



Flying Broom visits schools in district of Ankara to discuss early marriages with students



Having travelled 54 cities, Flying Broom Women’s Communication and Research Association have come back to Ankara and prepared a new project. It was necessary to conduct this work predominantly with girls and boys in their high school years. This was so because the children at this age are potentially subject to the risk of early marriages and in order to resist this crippling tradition it was most important that they were made aware of their rights and that they were informed on the harms of early marriages. Having realized the need for such a project during its fieldwork, the Flying Broom team, together with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, carried its Child Brides project to the schools at the different districts of Ankara. Film screenings and seminars were organized for young women and men at nearly 30 primary schools and high schools, chosen together with the advice of Counselling and Research Centres. Flying Broom has helped young people think and discuss the issues of marriage and gender equality at an early age, and has reminded teachers of their responsibilities in preventing early marriages. Flying Broom has made a short documentary using the camera footages from these schools and aims to continue visiting surrounding districts of Ankara.

Local solution to a global problem: “Say ‘No’ to Child Brides Platform”



In March 2012, Flying Broom Women’s Communication and Research Association made a call to children’s, women’s and human rights organization, local UN bodies, women and gender studies departments at universities as well as certain government bodies nation-wide for the establishment of a national platform – Say ‘No’ to Child Brides. Flying Broom sent invitations to 28 NGOs in Ankara, 13 in Istanbul, 2 in Diyarbakır, and 1 from Muş and Van as well as 28 women and gender studies centers and 2 children’s centers. With the participation of 30 institutions who agreed to take part in the platform, a search conference was organized in Ankara on March 28. Conducted with professional methods, the meeting aimed at raising awareness about the child brides issue in the country, prompting actors for solution and generating data.



The second meeting was held on April 23, 2012. Platform members and Girls Not Brides representatives were introduced in this meeting at the Flying Broom office. The topics of the meeting was how to introduced the platform at a global level, making the issue of child brides visible, and means of international cooperation. The Platform agreed that besides April 23, National Children’s Day, October 11, International Day of the Girl Child, could also be adopted to draw attention to the worldwide problem of child marriages.

After the two meetings, the Platform’s next step was to share the acquired information with the respective institutions and other members of these organizations so as to monitor the country’s child brides agenda and develop new ideas. Meanwhile, examples from other countries were scrutinized, and preparations were made to announce the establishment of the platform. Flying Broom will announce the initiation of Say ‘No’ to Child Brides Platform on October 11, 2012 in two separate press conferences in Istanbul and Ankara.

The Platform will be active in three fields:

Awareness-raising activities include:

- Organizing events and film screenings at public places and/or schools both inside and outside Ankara.
- Holding experience and knowledge sharing meetings among the members.
- Effectively using the media to ensure that the topic stays on the agenda.
- Informing related organizations as well as the press, sending e-bulletins to keep the discussions on the subject going.
- Contributing to the collecting and dissemination of works on the subject, such as reports, research results, thesis, books, films, etc.
- Monitoring and reporting national newspapers for news and articles on child marriages throughout the year.

Advocacy activities include:

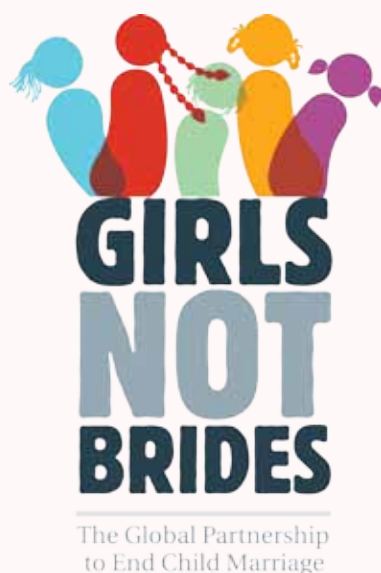
- Visiting related institutions to spread the message that this platform is the platform to be addressed on the subject matter.
- Preparing reports, letters and reminders that point out to the responsibilities of respective institutions and bodies.
- Responding to affirmative or encouraging statements by related institutions such as lawmakers and executive bodies and/or news that find coverage in the media.

Legal works:

- Forming pressure groups in the struggle to prevent early marriages in laws as women’s rights issues are taken to the Parliament’s agenda as well as giving opinions to the related commissions.
- Raising parliamentary questions to parliamentarians to inquire whether necessary precautions are being taken by the government against child marriages.
- Conducting detailed one-on-one works with related commissions and parliamentarians on draft laws.

Moreover, organizations member to the Platform, which are all experts in their fields, will also come together in experience sharing, opinion and strategy development meetings.





We are stronger together: Girls Not Brides:

Child marriage is a global problem that robs 10 million girls a year of their childhood. That's 25,000 girls everyday. Yet despite its sheer scale, there is little awareness of the problem among the general public and little acknowledgement from governments of the need to address it. Even in communities where child marriage is practiced, people are often unaware of its implications for health and development or its illegality. Child marriage cuts across religions, cultures and ethnicities, and child brides can be found in every region of the world. The impact of early marriage on their lives is severe. Neither physically nor emotionally ready to become wives and mothers, child brides are at greater risk of dying in childbirth than older women, are more vulnerable to sexually transmitted disease and more likely to suffer domestic violence than their unmarried peers. Child brides usually drop out of school and are

hard to reach with support services. All told, child brides are vulnerable, voiceless and isolated. Working to address this deeply embedded traditional practice, however harmful, is lonely work. Child marriage has long been regarded as 'taboo', a personal and family matter too sensitive to address. The activists working against the practice have had to act in isolation, with little way to coordinate with like-minded organizations, few eminent voices to speak out in support of their efforts, and minimal knowledge of the work of others facing similar challenges across the globe.

Taking inspiration from the commitment of these activists, The Elders, a group of independent global leaders founded by Nelson Mandela, initiated Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage. Having seen for themselves the innovative work of organizations in Ethiopia and India to support girls vulnerable to early marriage, the Elders saw the need for a common space to exchange ideas and information, and to amplify the voices of those working to end this harmful practice. Membership of Girls Not Brides has grown to more than 160 non-governmental organizations committed to ending child marriage. With a diverse membership, from grassroots groups working to end child marriage in their communities to international NGOs seeking to bring global attention to this neglected problem, each member brings unique experience and expertise to the global movement. Perhaps most importantly, Girls Not Brides provides a network of support between members, alleviating feelings of isolation. The partnership enables members to strategize together and explore how to scale up their work from the local to the national and international level. Bringing together organizations from Bangladesh to Burkina Faso, Turkey to Tanzania, the UK to Uganda, Girls Not Brides offers members the opportunity to meet other organizations facing similar challenges, to learn about the effective approaches used elsewhere and to consider how this could be applied in their own work.

There is no one single solution that will end child marriage. We need laws that set a minimum age for marriage to be enacted and enforced, we need to generate dialogue within communities and change attitudes towards the practice, and we need to empower girls, ensuring they fulfill their rights to health, education and the opportunity to fulfill their potential. This will take action from governments, international bodies, community leaders, and of course civil society. Together, Girls Not Brides members are working to mobilize all necessary policy, financial and other support to efforts to end child marriage.

The urgent need to act on child marriage is clear. If we do nothing, 100 million girls will marry as children in the next decade. But Girls Not Brides members are determined that we are stronger together. As Zainab Azmat, a member from Pakistan stated: "It's like different dots that you link and make a network. And the network covers a maximum area with maximum change."



Selen Doğan

We interviewed with Prof. Dr. Yıldız Ecevit, on child brides and development and need for researches on early and forced marriages.

Child brides are a result of patriarchy. They have many causes linked with tens of different topics such as traditions, customs, habits, miseducation, taboos and neighborhood pressure. What are the social motivations that encourage child brides from a sociological point of view? How do you explain these marriages being condoned and secretly approved through silence?

My response to this is very clear: the value of women. We could analyze many problems in Turkey through looking at the value women do (not) receive. In this context when you say that "child brides are a result of patriarchy", the patriarchy you are talking about is the visible side, the expression of this devaluation. So at the bottom of it lies the fact that women aren't viewed to be valuable in society. Those who are empowered by such an arrangement subordinate, scorn and oppress women through the support of the patriarchal system. If women weren't seen as being worthless in this society – and this goes for other societies too – would they be sold like slaves while they were still young by the very same people (fathers, brothers, uncles and sometimes mothers or other women in the family) who have discretion over them? The idea that men have discretion and disposition over women has such deep roots and is so entrenched and widespread that it's only consequences aren't early marriages but this idea forms the basis for murder, battery and injuring of women, robbing them of their right to life. Just today we heard of the stoning of a woman in Mali and again today a new campaign entitled "virginity=bekaret" started to flourish on YouTube citing many examples on women's murders in several other countries.

"This is basically a problem of women's independence."

Yıldız Ecevit

Member of Administrative Board of Flying Broom
Head of Gender&Women Studies Graduate Programme, METU

You ask, "Why does society condone these marriages?" There are certain news stories in the papers talking of uncles and fathers that have "sold their daughter" for such and such amount of money. Yet I don't think these are all that common. What is much more common are the arrangements that appear to be too "innocent" to be regarded as "selling a person", per se. For many parents, having a daughter who is of age but who hasn't married, who hasn't made her home and found her path is a failure when they face society. They may be judged for not having completed their duties as parents, they may be denounced for not having prepared their daughter's future. It is best for them to pick one of the existing candidates rather than to risk experiencing such a failure. Girls are always temporary guests in the family and this visit shouldn't take too long. When viewed from such a perspective, the society may approve families that organize early marriages for their children and may even congratulate them. This is why early marriages for girls hasn't become a significant "women's issue" in our lands and it continues to be so in certain regions. This is the reason why the society frowns upon calling this practice "problematic" in cities where early marriages are more common.

There is of course another dimension to why the society approves of early marriages. Take sexuality. A woman's "freshness" is very much desired. This situation finds so many expressions in our language! Descriptions such as, "tender", "unspoiled" and "maiden" increase the value of the bride-to-be when used among men. This is another reason why girls who have just entered puberty or still experiencing it is married off to much older men. Many times, although it isn't openly discussed or never even mentioned, we know that marrying girls who have just entered puberty is an advantage both in terms of sexual life and in terms of female fertility and this is why the society condones this situation. Women's human rights are breached but the society keeps silent.

Child brides are also an economic problem; it relates to development. As an academic who works on women's welfare and based on your experience from the Flying Broom's Child Brides project, how do you assess the relationship between child brides and women's participation and benefiting from equal rights in the labor market?

While I was conducting work on my doctoral thesis, my advisor Prof. Stirling advised me a book. The book was based on an anthropological study. It described how a factory opened in a town in Greece had changed the lives of the inhabitants, especially young women who worked in the factory. There were many changes in the social fabric of the town, its customs, traditions, the relationship between men and women, division of labor between the two sexes, how marriages are held and many other changes that came into being with the involvement of women in the workforce. Your question reminded me of this study. Later I started studying, with many similar investigations made in many countries in the world, how women's participation in the labor force effects changes in the family and relative relations, and also in the whole society. The answer to how and what kind of changes could be observed were very closely related to the work I had undertaken in Turkey. The study I conducted on women factory workers once again demonstrated how women's participation in paid work is vitally important in empowering them. If women's participation in the workforce weren't so low, if young women had the opportunity to find work outside of the house, if the patriarchal family structure hadn't been so stringent and the female and male worlds so removed from each other, early marriages wouldn't be so widespread. Another reason why girls are married early is of course because the families don't see a future beyond marriage for their children. Is it possible for a girl who couldn't attend school, who couldn't attain a profession, who can only rely on the care of the family she was born into in terms of sustaining herself to refuse an arranged marriage? Would she not have removed herself from the possibility of early marriage if she had the opportunity to work outside of the house and come back home beginning of every month with the money that she had earned? Could she not have said no? Set aside paid work outside the home, there are even sociological studies that demonstrate how young women weaving carpets inside the house for merchants experience a change in their relationships with male members of the family.

I could demonstrate a more pessimistic approach while answering this question. I could also say, "For many families the working environment isn't promising for women; even if children do find work, families think that they couldn't keep this work for long and they couldn't raise kids and work at the same time. Therefore, they prefer their children to marry as soon as possible rather than take up work." As a result I would take up ranks with many who side with reproducing the roles that are predetermined for women. Of course there may be families that follow such thinking patterns and prefer an early marriage rather than an opportunity to work for their own sustenance for their children. Yet it is my belief that an increase in women's employment will decrease the tendency to marry early especially in poor families. If nothing, a second or third income that enters the house will increase wealth. An increase of wealth prevents families from saying "good-bye" to a "burden".

There is yet another relationship between early marriages and employment. That is, women who have married quite early are very unlikely and almost never enter the workforce, because early marriage in most cases mean discontinuing school. Even if they do attend school, usually early marriages mean they haven't attained the skills and profession to enter into workforce. Furthermore, it is also important to remember that early marriages mean they are more likely to bear children at an early age. It is very unlikely that a woman who both hasn't attained the knowledge and skills the market expects of her and has become a mother at an early age will find employment. Therefore, the greater the amount of child brides, the less likely that these brides will find paid work. Of course when I say work, I refer to full time paid work not the temporary marginal jobs that housewives take.

Studies undertaken based on the National Institute of Statistics' time usage surveys show that in Turkey, women who are married with children and are working outside at a paid job experience no decrease in the amount of time they dedicate to work at home and are therefore under immense pressure for having to work both at home and outside. With regards to our subject, early marriages and having children at a young age or having many children will result in not being able to work or having to work in temporary jobs or jobs with no social security.

There are very few if any contemporary, independent and comprehensive studies of early marriages in Turkey. The lack of data creates problems both in identifying the problem and hinders efforts to plan possible solutions. Why do you think research in this field has been ignored and what could be done to accelerate research?

As you may well have guessed there are certain conditions for a topic to become the object of our studies. Researchers undertake studies on a certain field either because it raises their intellectual and scientific interest or because they are addressing a problem that is in need of a solution. In order to solve a problem there needs to be enough data about this problem.

For very long years, early marriages have primarily been the object of study for scientists working in the field of health. People researching on health, especially those specializing on reproductive health, evaluated this issue due to the fact that young girls who have married at an early age before fully maturing experience many health problems and experience childbirth at a very early age. The topic being research as a social problem by social scientist is of very recent date. The post-graduate theses published on the subject in the last few years have demonstrated how multi-dimensional this topic is. However comprehensive these studies are, they are undertaken with scarce resources. As you also indicated, they weren't comprehensive in the sense that they didn't cover a wide geographical space. Despite showing the multi-dimensional nature of the problem and the damage it inflicts on women, they don't license us to make statements about Turkey in general. However, we want to create a public discussion, form policies and for this to happen we need to be able to show that this is an important and widespread problem in Turkey. Furthermore, we need to illustrate that this problem takes on different aspects in different parts of Turkey. For example, we definitely need to show that the problem has a close correlation with the class attributes of the family that marries their children off.

Only comprehensive studies with satisfying budgets and multiple researchers could display

how ubiquitous a problem child brides is and how it hinders couples' lives. This kind of research will clarify things and will remove prejudices and generalizations that lead us to wrong conclusions. I can explain what I mean through an example. There is a "Demographic and Health Survey" prepared by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies. This study is normally undertaken to collect data on the health and fertility of women, but it also provides us with critical data such as family history, age of first marriage, age of first childbirth. According to this study, in 2008, 28% of women have married under the age of 18. However, a more important result that emerges from the research is that age of marriage for women varies according to regions and the highest rate of early marriages is in Central Anatolia. If it weren't for such a comprehensive and reliable study, the first region that one would think of when we talked about early marriages would be a South Eastern and Eastern Anatolian regions.

Even today if you were to stop someone on the street and ask, "Which region would you guess early marriages are most popular in?" they would probably tell you South Eastern or Eastern Anatolia. However, research has shown that one is most likely to observe early marriages in Central Anatolia contrary to previous assumptions. As you have stressed, the presence or the lack of data is very important when dealing with social problems. If data aren't enough and you aren't able to clearly define the problem, it prevents you from naming it too. On the other hand, a wealth of data is very helpful in defining the problem, removing pre-conceptions and prejudices and producing solutions.

I am looking at your question once again: Why have researchers not paid enough attention to this topic? Because this problem is a women's issue at heart and like all other women's issues, this too has been seen as unimportant until the women's movement in Turkey started and the discipline of Women's Studies developed. Whenever women's rights defenders, feminist activists focused on every aspect of women's lives separately, one by one, it was only then that these emerge as topics deserving attention and research. Yet women's studies is still very young in Turkey.

And what could be currently done to accelerate research?

The two most important preconditions for research are independence and access to resources. A social scientist should be independent so that they can freely research their topic of interest and can reveal the truth free from all kinds of influence. On the other hand, resources are limited and this makes it more difficult for researchers to conduct social studies as frequent as they would like. Apart from very few institutions such as TÜBA (Turkish Academy of Sciences) there aren't any institutions that can provide funding to researchers on a regular basis. This restricts both the number and the independence of researchers. Especially on matters where delicate issues such as early marriages, violence against women, or incest are involved, one or two limited studies aren't enough. These issues should be studied more frequently on a periodic basis and should be researched in a more comprehensive way. Moreover, findings of results should be compared both with previous years' results and with other countries' findings. For this work, both inside and outside the university has to be encouraged. There must be research units within public institutions, for example ministries. These research units should be supported through funding. The private could also contribute to enriching the research environment. For example, in its study on early marriages, Flying Broom was able to conduct a research comprehensive enough to identify the dimensions of the problem, with the support of Sabancı Foundation. Municipalities should also dedicate funds for research. Every municipality should encourage research on the social problems within its jurisdiction before trying to produce solutions to such problems. There are now universities in almost every city. I see no reason why municipalities and universities should not cooperate. Of course there is a critical note here. Municipalities should not only support researchers but also provide them with the environment to conduct independent research.

Centers and departments for women's studies are the first place people mention when we talk of studies that should be conducted on early marriages. What is the role of women's studies centers in this regard? Do you find the current efforts satisfactory?

The most suitable places for research around gender are of course universities and especially social studies departments. In Turkey, still only four universities offer master's programs on women's studies and the theses produced by the students in these programs examining gender through various dimensions are very important. For example, there have been at least two postgraduate theses on early marriages and we learned many new things. There are of course many more women's studies centers that have been set up in different universities. The primary advantages of these centers are their reach to local information in the field and their ability to easily access and gather such information. I'd like to emphasize that on a matter such as early marriages there are regional differences and these should be learned. So women's studies centers within universities have the ability to research more frequently how early marriages in their region take place and what affects these have on women and men because they can access local information more easily. I had previously mentioned how social scientists can't conduct research as often as they would like to due to the high costs and the need to access resources. Regional universities can be functional in this regard, both by providing less costly access to resources and creating the environment where local information can be recorded.

However, on certain matters it is not enough to increase the number of studies. On sensitive subjects such as early marriages there needs to be a more organized effort to raise awareness utilizing all resource. Flying Broom has played an important role in raising such awareness in recent years.

You have also volunteered to consult Flying Broom in its Child Brides project. Could you provide a more comprehensive analysis of Flying Broom's role in helping the issue occupy a space within Turkey's agenda and raising awareness?

It would be my pleasure. But first I should mention that the project conducted by Flying Broom in the last two years with the support of the Sabancı Foundation is not the first project the Flying Broom has undertaken with regards to early marriages. This project has been prepared and implemented as the result of a much earlier interest and necessity that arose. This is the reason for its success.

To present a clearer picture, Flying Broom didn't decide to take in interest in early marriages by itself. This decision was given between 2003-2005 during its frequent visits to different cities of Turkey as a part of other projects. Flying Broom met many women who have experienced early marriages and have sustained a lot of harm due to this. Our observations during our fieldwork and our relations with local women have heavily influenced the research. Especially during the lecture room meetings we held as a part of our Building Bridges project, we talked with many women who have brought early marriages to Flying Broom's attention. At this point, we could even say that the Flying Broom has been plunged into action by women themselves.

In 2006, Flying Broom decided to feature this topic in its festival program. Again, the same year a pilot study in Kırkkale and Yozgat was conducted researching the causes and affects of "import brides" sent to foreign countries from Turkey. Public opinion polls and interviews were held to raise awareness, movies were screened in big movie theatres and question and answer sessions were held. As women started to speak, it became obvious that they would provide the most accurate information and women would play a key role in producing information.

Obtaining the true information from women

and listening to women's experiences! This is the most important element that distinguishes feminist methodology from mainstream social sciences methodologies. Flying Broom, as a feminist women's organization, naturally found an approach that was suitable for such a methodology. It met with women from 2006 till now on every opportunity, it facilitated them to view films on child brides and it provided a platform where they could express how these movies related to their own experiences. This produced very valuable experiences and showed the consequences of being a child bride.

Flying Broom's activities to raise awareness on child brides wasn't limited to this. As a result of Flying Broom's activism on this topic, the Men and Women Equal Opportunity Commission under the Parliament formed a sub-commission on researching early marriages and a report was produced as a result of the studies of this commission. The final meeting of the project undertaken by Flying Broom and Sabancı Foundation was held in the Parliament and the issue was therefore carried here. Tens of newspaper stories were published and many TV programs were organized, which are also very valuable in terms of raising awareness for the general public.

Yet, perhaps the most valuable work Flying Broom has conducted on the problem of child brides is initiating a national platform. This platform brought together many NGOs and most importantly child's rights advocates, which has helped in both keeping the topic on the public agenda and in creating public interest on the topic. This platform is very new. It has introduced itself through a two day meeting in October. Flying Broom has multiplied the interest on this subject by bringing together many NGOs that could be interested on the issue of early marriages.

Therefore, I congratulate Flying Broom for playing a leading role on this topic, also I would like to thank you, the editor, as well as Ceren and Burç for their translations and also Emre for preparing this issue for publication.

Some

reasons

behind early and forced marriages

- ✦ Economic reasons are number one among the reasons behind child marriages. As men are assigned to “bring home the bacon”, women are seen as the primary “consumers” in the private sphere, which eventually determines the order by which people marry. In most cases, fathers and other decision-makers in the family want to profit from marrying their daughters off, since bride price is seen as an income for the family.
- ✦ Another reason is the social belief that a woman must be, throughout her life, protected by and belong to a man, a belief that is perpetuated by patriarchal traditions and religious beliefs.
- ✦ “Honor”, as defined for women by our culture, also has a role to play in early marriages, since marriage is seen to be the sole method of keeping a woman’s body under control.
- ✦ Role models also constitute a reason. Girls who are surrounded by women and relatives who got married at early ages, or whose mother was also a child bride goes on to assume that early marriage is a norm.
- ✦ It is also the case that parents involuntarily put emotional pressure on the child, which results in an early marriage.
- ✦ Although not as common as close-kin marriage, bride exchange and betrothal in the cradle persists in the society. The bride is usually very young in such marriages.
- ✦ Another reason for early marriages is the desire to change social status. The decision to get married is hastened for better life standards or to see a different side to the world.
- ✦ Marriage is also a hope for those girls whose mother has passed away and who doesn’t receive enough love from the mother. It is perceived as the way out from an unhappy and stressful environment.
- ✦ There are women who are married off to take care of family members with disabilities. This responsibility on a girl’s shoulder also increases physical and psychological load for her.

Some

consequences

of early and forced marriages

- ✦ Early and forced marriages, an obvious result of gender inequality, are one of the major obstacles before equal opportunities.
- ✦ Early marriages mean increased risk for physical, emotional, verbal and sexual violence against women.
- ✦ Early marriages perpetuate patriarchal gender roles and impose ideas of women’s dependency on their spouses, bringing up children and responsibility of housework.
- ✦ Abandonment of wives and second wife cases are much more common in early marriages.
- ✦ Violence and poverty may result in running away from homes.
- ✦ Running away is likely to increase a women’s possibility of being trapped in the prostitution sector as well as being subjected to violence.
- ✦ The dead-end for women within the household and the society, isolation and inability to cope with problems can increase suicide attempts.
- ✦ Early marriages interrupt girls’ schooling.
- ✦ Young women might be sent abroad to marry, which then turns into human trafficking at an international level.
- ✦ Early marriage means early motherhood in most cases. Mortality rates during birth for women between the ages of 15-20 are four times higher than in older ages.
- ✦ Early pregnancy increases risks of miscarriage, stillbirth, and premature birth.
- ✦ Couples who marry at an early age are exposed to increased risks of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- ✦ Women who are married off at an early age cannot benefit from employment opportunities or are made a part of the cheap workforce and are employed without social security benefits. The earnings of women, especially those who work in the household, cannot be considered as an element that increases their own welfare. Women’s prosperity lingers as the family prospers.
- ✦ Responsibilities such as family, household, children etc. at an early age increase the burden on women’s shoulders.
- ✦ Early marriages considerably increase the social pressure on married women. The woman is likely to be trapped in the house.
- ✦ Early marriages may result in various conditions due to incomplete psychological and physical development.
- ✦ Women who were married off at an early age tend to have difficulties in accessing healthcare services due to the fact that they are put under pressure and cannot claim their independency.
- ✦ It is an obstacle before girls and women that they are not fully aware of their citizenship rights. This prevents them from participating in the political life.
- ✦ Discrimination based on sexual orientation and identities is perpetuated. Homosexual individuals are forced to marry to avoid pressure.
- ✦ That marriage is a ‘must’ for women reinforces marriage demands, also because the society sees risks and threats in a woman living her life on her own.
- ✦ Threats of becoming a ‘spinster’, as an example of destructive behaviors internalized by the society, occasionally leads to early and forced marriages.
- ✦ Girls are likely to be married off at an early age in order for her to take care of a person with disabilities in that family, which increases physical and emotional load on a girl’s shoulders.

The Girl Child: born to be a bride?



Prof. Dr. Yakın ERTÜRK
UN Commission of Inquiry for Syria
Former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women

Control over and regulation of women within the context of patriarchal power relations have entailed numerous practices that have become integral with societal values, norms and laws. Child/early marriage, which by definition is forced marriage, is one such practice. The initiatives of women's groups to end forced and child marriages as a form of aggression on women's personhood often became entangled within a culture debate, delinking the problem from structures of unequal power, control and subordination. The rise and diversification of the global women's rights movement and its interaction with international jurisprudence has made it possible to address the "culture myth" and challenge the various ways in which inequality between the sexes is sustained in all societies. This has been particularly noteworthy in confronting both the historically rooted norms and customs that have normalized women's differential subordination around the world, as well as the normative blindness of the particularities in which violations of women's rights are manifested in different legal and cultural traditions, including international human rights law.

The creation of the United Nations (UN) during the first half of the last century corresponded to a time in recent history when women were not yet visible in public discourse. In many parts of the world women had little or no de facto or de jure rights that were either fundamental for societal membership, such as education and political participation, or rights that would allow for control and sustenance of personal life chances, such as access to property and decision making over matters related to marriage, divorce and child custody. The founding mothers, present at the inception of the UN (and the League of Nations before it), made significant contributions in 'engendering' the UN language and institutions. As a result, the UN gender agenda from the outset concentrated on the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

A number of Conventions were, thus, put forth under the sponsorship of the Commission on the Status of Women and adopted by the General Assembly early on in the history of the organization, among which are The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (1957), and Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962). While some progress has taken place with respect to women's political rights, internationally agreed norms and rights regarding marriage and citizenship remain unattainable for many women around the world. In many parts of the world, girls and boys are married off before they reach the age of 18, which according to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child constitutes a 'child'. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which enjoys near universal ratification with 187 states parties, recommends 18 as the minimum age of marriage and states, "The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage..." (Article 16.2)

Despite the adoption of numerous legal standards by the international community stressing the importance of minimum age of marriage, children continue to be married off in many parts of the world. It is well recognized today that child/early marriage is a violation of the basic rights of both girls and boys as it deprives them of their childhood and transgresses upon their physical, psychological and social development.

“Despite the adoption of numerous legal standards by the international community stressing the importance of minimum age of marriage, children continue to be married off in many parts of the world.”

However, due to gendered discrimination, the girl child is the primary target of this practice and in some societies marrying them off at puberty is considered quite normal and even necessary. Early marriage for the girl child not only deprive her of her childhood but it also strips her of the prospects to develop her potentials and obstructs her life chances; thus, condemning her to a life of subordination with risk of violence as well as high health risks due to early pregnancy and childbirth.

Child marriages can be traced back to early periods in history. Particularly during the pre-industrial era due to short life expectancies and biologically dictated passage from one cycle in life to another, demarcation of 'childhood' as a period in life that requires special care and preparation for adulthood was not known. It was also a period when death rates were high and the strength of families and armies were determined by their numerical size. Child bearing was, therefore, an essential component of being a female. Furthermore, notions of human rights, as understood today, were alien to these societies at large. Notwithstanding historic divergences, by and large all agrarian civilizations relied on labor of children of all ages for family sustenance. Likewise, the observance of strict patriarchal codes of conduct for differential sexual and reproductive roles for boys and girls was deemed necessary for the survival of the species. Within such a context, marriage at early ages was a natural part of life.

Times have changed; many of the underlying factors that historically supported early marriages no longer exist. Yet, the practice continues today and its victims are mainly female, poor, rural and disempowered. Some countries still lack provisions in their legislation on marriage age but even in countries where a minimum age of marriage is codified in law – such as in Turkey - child marriages take place for reasons related to poverty, honor and the like. Governments find it all too convenient to overlook this problem, which obviously has little political consequences for them. The plight of child brides are also rarely heard at the global level. After all, despite the rhetoric, particularly poor and young women are still perceived as subservient creatures, invisible and silent; therefore, can be sacrificed!

The data on child marriages, although scant and uneven, reveals that the problem is most acute in the economically and socially most backward areas of the world, where the majority of the population lives below the poverty line. It is estimated that the highest levels of child marriages are found in Niger (76.6), followed by Chad (71.5), Bangladesh (68.7), Mali (65.4), Guinea (64.5), Central African Republic (57.0), Nepal 56.1, Mozambique (55.9), Uganda (54.1), Burkina Faso (51.9). Although such data reveals a correlation between poverty and child marriage, it would be wrong to establish a causal relationship. In all parts of the world men of authority and wealth have access to young girls, not because of poverty but because of power. This need not be in the form of marriage as observed in the Global South. It also takes place in societies where men of rich and civilized countries access the sex of young girls through trafficking and other means. Exploitation of the girl child in this manner, whether in or out of wedlock, is nothing but servitude.

As the global women's movement and member states of the UN are contemplating the possibility of convening a Beijing +20, the rights of the girl child need to be ensured without further delay. Without putting an end to sexual exploitation and marriage of the girl child, equality and rights of women will remain to be a meaningless concept, enjoyed by privileged women only.

Leyla Pervizat*: "Let us not fool ourselves; 'honor' is all Turkey cares about!"



Photography: Canan Inal

Selen Doğan

Leyla Pervizat is the reference for how the United Nations and its committees work, lobbying, the functionality of international conventions and what women should do to effectively use these mechanisms. We have made an interview with Pervizat about UN's work to prevent early and forced marriages.

The question of forced marriages was for the first time brought to ECOSOC's agenda in 1995 and was discussed within the context of human trafficking. Forced marriages fall under the roof of violence against women since 2000 and are tackled within the framework of discrimination. More than 10 years from that decision being taken, what has been done in the UN in order to prevent early and forced marriages?

This might sound interesting but "marriage" has been on the UN agenda since the day of its foundation. In 1962, the first major general convention on marriage was signed and later, the issue was discussed several times within the framework of CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women). The convention of 1962 alone covers a wide range of issues in legal sense. Then there was the decision taken by the Commission on the Status of Women on girls. In 2009, I attended a UN expert group meeting on violence against women in Addis Ababa. There, the issue was also debated. Again, the government of the Netherlands, around the time of that meeting, organized a meeting on girls together with its five ministries and experts from the UN. The main debate there was about "forced marriages". So really, you can feel comforted. It is now very well known that forced marriages are a violation of women's rights. It is on top of the agenda. The problem is with politically accepting this as an issue and putting things into practice, like with other problems women are encountered with. The debating of the issue has progressed significantly in last years in Turkey. Some of it is thanks to your project. That's why I'm not so pessimistic about things for Turkey. The issue became a main debate subject in Turkey all throughout the media. However, sadly the situation on the ground became worse again fueled by the regional

“If you were to ask how the big picture looks, I would say pretty traumatic. We urgently need to put into practice what lies on papers. Now is the time to demonstrate political will.”

developments. Now, because of the internal war in Syria, men in the southeastern regions are taking their second and third child brides from Syria. The Syrian families are happily marrying off their fifteen years old daughters to the Turkish and Kurdish men since it contributes to the economy of their household. Yet at the same time, my recent trip to Urfa, also made me optimistic about how local women are getting organized and finding their voices. So the picture is getting worse but there are some uplifting developments as well.

Moving on with the UN, Turkey has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child back in 1994. Would you say that the convention is reflected on national legislation and that Turkey attributes importance to these conventions in bettering the situation of children and protecting their rights? How sincere are governments and the judicial system in this matter?

We are talking about a convention with a lot of signatories but no application to it! This is a convention that every country except for the USA and Somalia has signed. You would think everyone is greatly interested in children's rights. No one is sincere with what they do, neither the governments nor the judicial system, because if that was the case then the convention would have been put to practice. As for attributing importance to international conventions... Of course these constitute a basis of some sort, but then again, it is thanks to women's rights activists that this is the case. They take their experiences to the UN in the field of women's problems and shape the agenda. Then, with the reshaped agenda and the outcomes, they call for action. They demand the governments to take a step. These are all thanks to the efforts of women. It should not be forgotten that the women's movement has a major share in each document that is created in the UN. The achievements of the African Women's Movement in the UN alone are very inspirational. The problem is with putting things into practice, since behind it all is the hegemonic masculine order and the "genetic code" – the so called "sociobiological memory". We should cherish our accomplishments and our pace in achieving these so far in the UN. After all, UN has only been in existence for 60-70 years. On the other hand, if you were to ask how the big picture looks, I would say pretty traumatic. We urgently need to put into practice what lies on papers. Now is the time to demonstrate political will.

There is no social agreement on the fact that early and forced marriages are the violation of children's rights, human rights and women's rights as well as a form of violation against women. What is the reason behind this? Is it that we are not fully aware of our rights, that struggle for gender equality is still seen as a marginal movement or that there is a great controversy in the way people torture their children, whom they also attribute great importance to?

Violence against women is still not seen as a violation of human rights, let alone forced marriages. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic was the main sponsor of the UN decision on honor killings. This was the first example of Turkey's leadership attempts in the UN General Assembly and this was in 2004. It was a historical step taken jointly with the United Kingdom government. Turkey, first time in its history, did main sponsor a major document on women's rights. However, the then Minister of Justice Cemil Çiçek never uttered anything about such an achievement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the United Nations. The silence was deafening, if you ask me. Before the UN Commission on Human Rights ceased operation in 2006, Turkey had signed several decisions on forced marriages being a violation of human rights and that honor crimes is being an extrajudicial execution. Have we heard of this from any of the ministers of justice? No, none of them uttered anything regarding these decisions! This shows us that the matter is not one-dimensional. It's not only that things are not internalized, it's also that there's lack of awareness. On top of that, approaches are gender discriminatory. These all feed one another and take us to the point where we are – in a very vicious circle. I hold the view of the noted political scientist, Anne Phillips. Equality between women and men is a fragile and an unsettled issue.

Deep down we believe that women and men are not the same. I, as a radical feminist, believe that even if women and men are not the same they can still be equal. Going back to your question, violence against women is a crime as well as a violation of human rights. There's always some sort of resistance both in uttering this and in its application. And claiming that all but children matter to us the most is simply hypocrisy. Handan Coşkun of Diyarbakır once told the story of an eight year old girl taken to the hospital after being severely raped, her ribs broken in multiple places. And the only thing that the family cared about was whether their daughter was still a virgin! She'd better be dead if she's not a virgin! Let us not fool ourselves; "honor" is all we care about.

There's very few up-to-date research in Turkey concerning early and forced marriages and a majority of the research done was in the Southeast. As a researcher, what do you think is the reason behind this lack of interest? Would you say that early and forced marriages are concealed by traditions, customs and certain social/feudal routines? Would you say that this is the reasons why it is not considered to be a problem area?

Working in fields related to women, struggling against violence against women is one of the most radical and dangerous things to do. As we advocate that forced marriages are violation of women's rights and fight against it, we stab a dagger right in the heart of this male-dominated system. Of course, there will be those to prevent the issue. They will be made insignificant or talked down. The issue will not get enough support, which is not surprising. We should remember that honor killings were at the same level of importance with the question of Palestine in the United Nations at one time, but not anymore. The reason, I believe, why early and forced marriages are not dealt with by those who work on women's issues is because the number of feminist researchers or simply the number of people working on women's issues is far below average. On the other hand, when we compare the quality of the work in the field with the general quality in Turkey, the results are very promising. We have seen a good example of this in a meeting organized by Koç University in late 2008**. The studies presented were all top quality. Female researchers and academicians in Turkey tend to present a top quality material compared to their male counterparts. Plus, it's not the same thing to have an issue in the UN agenda and Turkey's agenda, which is why the work of the women participating in UN meetings is doubled. We should be writing articles to magazines and newspapers as much as we can. We can say that forced marriages are directly related to honor crimes. The women's movement took a holistic approach while discussing honor and included forced marriages in the debates. I believe that this is a positive thing to make the issue clearly perceived.

Of course, the most important problem is that a full definition of forced marriages has not been made yet. For instance, when my mom was at a certain age my grandmother told her that it was time she got married and among the options that she was presented, and she had multiple options, my mother picked my father. It wasn't as if anyone had put a gun in her head, we can't say that she was forced in the conventional way. But what options did she actually have to choose from? Not having any options is also being forced. Another example, a close friend of ours has a daughter, who received her education abroad. That woman got married in a so-called "modern arranged marriage". Now, this young woman received her education in one of the top universities in USA. She holds a very important position in an international company in Istanbul. And when she wanted to get married she went to a certain Ms X in the friends of the family circle, and said "Can you find me a husband; the men around are not worth anything." And that certain Ms X found her a husband. She is now married with children. I shared this example with feminist friends of mine in Scandinavia. They thought the marriage was forced. But, how come? Instead of finding someone for herself on-line, she chose to do this. So I think we should be really careful. We need to respect women's choices, which they personally make, in a world that is constantly changing.

I would also like to touch on bride exchange (berdel) and homosexuality here. I believe that bride exchange is not only forced marriage but also the contemporary form of slavery. All these that I have been talking about are discussed in the UN mechanisms, too. As you have also formulated in your question, we shouldn't be restraining us with a single idea. A form of violence against women is never the violation of a single thing, and shouldn't be either. We should have as wide a perception as possible. This is a must if we want to transform what is learned and thought to be "normal". Forced marriages are also an issue when we come to think about homosexuals. The woman is a lesbian but her family does not understand her, they do not accept it. They think it will go away should she get married. They say she will get better, that she's only slightly sick. To what extent is this issue uttered in Turkey, really? Lambda voiced it some, KAOS-GL voiced it some more, but that's it. This is a very serious violation of personal rights. You can't forcefully marry a lesbian off to a man just like you can't forcefully make me a lesbian.

Maybe I can conclude my remarks with a call: young researchers writing their master's thesis or dissertation can focus their studies on this subject. They don't necessarily have to go all the way to the other side of the country to start their research. They can, for example, start with studying middle income families in Izmir or Ankara to see what the marriage practices are in their surroundings.

You have worked on honor killings and you also link early marriages with the issue of honor. What is this "honor" really? What happens to it when we get married?

Honor is a set of rules and restrictions on female body, sexuality, mind, soul set by the male-dominated system. Violating these rules, attempting to violate or even the thought of violating them brings along punishment. Now, this would be my somewhat academic definition. Let's go outside and ask the passer-bys what they think is honor. Do you want to know what happens then? They can't even properly make a sentence on the one thing that shapes their lives and affects them deeply. I always ask the people I interview: "What is honor?" The first reply I almost always get is that I am the expert and that I would know better, why should I ask them? I say, of course, I would like to learn your definition, so they start thinking. They utter maybe one or two sentences. Then they pause for a while, and say "Let me think for a bit more and get back to you". This is the case for both men and women. Don't you also find that interesting? Do you know why? The concept of honor is not inborn. On the contrary, we are born into it. It is something that we are inside of, something we eat, drink, and breathe in. Let alone honor diffusing us, it is some sort of a balloon what we exist in. We eat and breathe through it. What we need to do is to rip that balloon and get out of it. We need to create new worlds. This is really hard to accomplish but it is not impossible. As for getting married, once you're married nothing happens to your honor. It's transferred from the father to the husband. It's only the guardian that changes, that is of course if you're a virgin, or if your virginity has been proved with a drop of blood. The case of the bloody sheet, I mean. Oppression remains. The number of oppressors increases. The list just gets longer and longer – the in-laws, husband... Let us not forget the other women here also. The mother-in-laws exert serious level of violence on younger women in Turkey.



Sculpture: Esra Sağlık

How does the fact that this problem, too, moves around, migrates in a way, affects the actions taken by the United Nations?

This is exactly what I have been working on. Early and forced marriages are one of the most frequent issues I encountered whilst doing research on honor crimes in the Netherlands and Sweden. The issue has a lot into it, it is multi-layered. That's why it needs to be tackled with care. It is not very hard to commit honor crimes in Sweden. There is a serious social reaction to it. On the other hand, forced marriages change form and continue being a social problem. "Bride and groom importing" from Turkey is less now; however, young people still choose spouses that their families would approve of. For instance, a woman gets married to a man she meets at a wedding in Germany, to whom the family gives the green light. Young women go through the toughest, of course. I've met several of them. They have been excluded and risked being a "victim" of honor crimes for having married a "stranger", that is, a white European Christian male. This is one of the most serious problems, which is also on our agenda. Professor Ayhan Akkaya successfully explains the underlying reasons in his book *Islam, Migration and Integration*, Palgrave Macmillan Publishing. The reason why early and forced marriages peaked among the Turkish population in Europe is in reaction of the existent racist policies, exclusion and islamophobia. People are talking about "being full-blooded" and maintaining that "full blood". Men define his manhood the only way he knows how, through women, upon whom he can have power. Professor Ayhan defines this as diaspora nationalism, and I totally agree with him. Women are the ones to be oppressed and exposed to violence in any case. You get a better understanding of "manhood" when you study migration and nationalism. But let us not fool ourselves. When we change these variables, violence against women does not come to an end, on the contrary, it transforms and lives on. As for what to do in the UN... All these issues must be laid on the table. That islamophobia and the reactions to it play a role in forced marriages should be discussed. And it should be discussed despite the unwillingness of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the racist approaches of the European Union. It is of utmost importance that the issue is taken to the EU, OSCE, and the Council of Europe, and to use all the related mechanisms.

Does the UN conduct any work on overcoming the resistance governments have regarding the implementation of the international conventions that they sign? What do you think can be done for this?

What can be done is a rather extensive topic to discuss. The main conventions have their optional protocols. Each time a person or an organization applies to these optional protocols, the systems starts operating. CEDAW has an optional protocol for instance. We can actually put pressure on the government with complaints on the disfunctionality of the government on the matter. I, however, still hold the opinion that the mainstream mechanisms should be profoundly put in function – the Racism Committee or any other committee that doesn't have the word 'woman' in its name. I started lobbying activities at the Human Rights Commission after the Beijing meeting of 1995. I participated in the Commission on the Status of Women only three times. Two of them were Beijing +10 and Beijing + 15 anyway. The other one was the meeting in 2003 where women's human rights were discussed. A first was achieved in this meeting. There were no agreed conclusions. This was a first in the UN history. The topics that couldn't be agreed on were honor killings and reproductive rights. I always favored mainstream mechanisms, including the UN General Assembly. Now all these sound like a history back in the old days. Unfortunately, for women in Turkey, the picture got worsened since then. There are more honor killings now than when we had our debate on women's rights in 2003. It is sad...

Going back to the United Nations, if you ask me there is one thing that we can do – start discussing women's problems right in the middle of the agenda where it is most likely to be of grave disturbance to people. There is also a lot of discussion surrounding the reason why the Commission on the Status of Women is in New York whereas the majority of the other committees are in Geneva. I am of the opinion that this commission should also be in Geneva. As you know, In July

2010, the United Nations General Assembly created UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. It is a historical step in gender equality and the empowerment of women all around the world and, of course, at the United Nations as an organization itself. We need to remind the younger generation feminists and women's activists about this entity, and how we were to achieve this entity during our lifetimes.

What more do you think can be done?

I would suggest our young friends to start beating the path to the International Criminal Court in Hague. Because as this court was handling important crimes such as genocide, it also put into words the matter of gender and women's problems. We need to look at those documents from a wider angle and come up with a decision for women, which can only be achieved by a group of feminists who devote themselves to this. By definition this court is entitled to call governments to account for their actions.

I was in the UK a few years back when a group of young feminists from our organization was going to be visiting the UN Human Rights Council for the first time. I pull these women aside and train them on lobbying. They listen to me out of courtesy as I try and tell them some key points. I don't think they get much of it, but deep down, I know that they are interested. So this group of activists went into the meeting and stayed there for a week. Their flight back to London landed early in the morning. The first thing they did when they came back was to pay me a visit. They said "Now we understand what you mean. There is a lot to do there". This is what it's like to be lobbying and using the UN. It's only after you go see it for yourself that you realize how much there is to do. Later, you start working. Don't expect them to promise you a rose garden. What's at hand is a cramped pretentious discussion that is as political as diplomatic.

I must say that it is very important to influence and direct these discussions. The young generation still lacks information and motivation for lobbying. Some of my students are still ambivalent about using the UN for their activism. Although much of this lack of motivation stems from lack of information, I still believe that the main issue here is what UN is not. Everyone has serious problems with this institution. They are cross because of the question of Palestine, because the UN is slow and inefficient, because of the latest Syria failure, and because of many other things. I say let's invade the organization and lead it where we want it to go. I don't know if we'll be able to take it all the way to where we want it to go, but I'm sure we will seriously change the agenda, which will then transform political will.

What do you think about the latest declarations of the Prime Minister Erdoğan on the abortion and calling it similar to the atrocities lived in one of the Kurdish villages (Uludere) six months prior to his statement? Clearly, all of these are violations of women's rights and we are losing our ground significantly.

Yes, I agree. Not only are the words of the Prime Minister a violation of our gained rights it is also a threat before us that we lose these rights if we continue on this path. After he uttered his words, the debate in the media centered on the causes and consequences of a ban that might prohibit abortion. We all can imagine the disastrous and sad consequences of this for the women in the country. However, I would like to point to something far more interesting as a political scientist in this debate. The Prime Minister's declaration on abortion is not random or coincidental. Whenever men go against each other in a power play, struggles of power plays bring about gender violations simultaneously. The Prime Minister was in a highly sensitive place in his power having dealt with the leakage of Oslo meetings (where the details of the peacemaking of Kurdish Turkish armed conflict took place), suffered few inside blows from his 'inside supporters' but still came at the top at the end, and he went through two major surgeries for his colon cancer. Let us look at the issue through the glasses a political scientist; in these kinds of situations power holders of hegemonic masculine order do attack the women to feel "manlier and more powerful". There is a lot one can learn from studying the masculinities discipline. And also, once again, at the time of this interview, we are tackling the Syria question and the Kurdish question. We need peace now. Now means as in this moment. Not tomorrow. Not yesterday. Peace now.

*Feminist researcher and advocate of women's rights.

Related Documents:
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0192/71/PDF/NR019271.pdf?OpenElement>. Addis Ababa toplantısı web adresi
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-egms-gplahpaw.htm>

Adolescence and youth is for many people a time when long lasting relationships are formed and life companions are chosen. This process is rarely devoid of anxiety and is sometimes traumatic. The legal age of marriage in Turkey is 17 for both boys and girls. Children under 18 require the approval of their parents. In extraordinary circumstances, marriage may be permitted at 16 with the approval of a judge. The minimum age at which a child can be deemed to have consented to sexual intercourse is 15. However, by tradition, marriage has come early, especially for women.

NGOs and the media have raised concern in recent years that early marriage, including very early marriage, usually for girls, persists or may even be increasing. Many cases have been reported from numerous regions, including poorer and less educated social groups, particularly those living in rural areas or are of rural origin. Early marriage for both girls and boys also occurs among the Roma. Early marriage is, in most cases, an infringement of a girl's reproductive health rights and denies her the chance to choose her own partner and future; it is also likely to lead to her withdrawal from education and so increase her risk of poverty. It turns girls into housewives at an age when they have not completed their physical, emotional and social development, and should be learning and playing. It paves the way for early childbirth and for multiple pregnancies as well as high fertility, which can have negative health consequences for both the mother and the child, and further exacerbate the cycle of poverty. In addition, girls who marry early are likely to face domestic violence due to their lack of status and in some cases legal rights. Early marriage sometimes has secondary consequences as well, such as the non-registration of babies born, or the prosecution of the 'husband' for sexual assault (and of others for aiding and abetting).

Data on the prevalence of early and very early marriage in Turkey is mixed. The 2008, Demographic and Health Survey showed that 9.7% of women aged 18 had either given birth or were already pregnant with their first child. The age was 4.4% for 17 year-olds, 2.2% for sixteen year-olds and 0.4% for fifteen year-olds. According to the same source, early child-bearing (mother or pregnant by the age of 20) appears to be most widespread in rural areas and among the second-lowest socioeconomic quintile. Out of twelve regions, it is most widespread in Central East Anatolia, but also relatively common in the Aegean, West Black Sea, Central Anatolia and West Anatolia regions.

Under-age marriages take the form – at least initially – of unofficial religious marriages, since living together without a marriage ceremony of any kind remains very rare. The provision of the Penal Code forbidding religious marriages in the absence of a parallel civil registration has not been enforced. Under-age marriages may or may not be formalized through civil ceremonies when the under-age bride (or groom) reaches the legal age of marriage.

In May 2009, the Parliamentary Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men set up a sub-committee of five members to conduct research on child marriage. The committee reported back in early 2011 with a series of detailed findings and recommendations, headed by a recommendation to enforce the law. Nevertheless, the causes and consequences of early marriage in Turkey may not have been fully expounded. The fact that the marriage of children – especially girls – before the age of 18 was commonplace in the past and that it is still regarded as acceptable, normal or even desirable in many parts of society helps create a climate favorable to early marriage.

An estimated 14 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth each year. Child marriage also threatens the health of a young mother. A girl giving birth at 15 is five times more likely to die in the process than a girl of 19 or older.

However, early marriages may not merely reflect the persistence of this and other harmful traditions; they may also point to their revival or reinvention under new social conditions. Families in economic difficulties, including urban families of rural origin, may hope that their daughters' new families will be able to provide for them better economically, or may simply be glad of one less mouth to feed, and be pleased to receive the bride price. This potentially paves the way for daughters to be sold into marriage. Marriages of young girls from southeast Turkey to men from central Turkish cities and of young girls from neighboring Syria to men on the Turkish side of the border have occasionally come under the spotlight in the press. In some cases, "demand" may come from older men who are already married, possibly signifying increased acceptability or tolerance of polygamy in some parts of society. Families with traditional values finding themselves in new urban surroundings may see marriage as a way of safeguarding their daughters' safety and/or their own family honor by preventing premarital sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Early marriages, including very early marriages, may also be linked to the various forms of arranged marriage mentioned above. For example, the only member of a family "available" for an exchange marriage may be a child.

All efforts to reduce poverty and gender disparities, to establish the rights of women, to ensure full participation in secondary education and to empower the most vulnerable groups in society are likely to reduce early marriage. In order to tackle child marriage more specifically, the current situation needs to be mapped and analyzed further, since causal factors vary from place to place and from social group to social group. It may also be necessary to increase commitment among politicians and opinion leaders, to raise awareness among public officials, professionals, parents, men and others, as well as among children and adolescents themselves, and to ensure the support of all government sectors, community leaders, community-based NGOs and the media. There is also a need for debate on the existing legislation and its enforcement, including how the law on religious marriages should be enforced without harming the young people concerned, and how religious officials can prevent rather than facilitate early marriages. The possibility of abolishing or combating the bride price needs to be considered. Meanwhile, girls and boys who are already in union and married before the age of 18 need to be supported.

Further reading:

http://intranet.unicef.org/imu/intheknow/june2011/who_speaks_for_me.pdf

http://intranet.unicef.org/imu/intheknow/oct2011/Early_marriage_HD784.pdf

<http://intranet.unicef.org/pd/childprotection.nsf/0/f1145041f4f2dbe585257168005a72af?OpenDocument>

“Bride”: Casualty of Marriage

Selen Doğan

Imposed on many women, marriage finds various sacrificial forms in different cultures. Leaving women with almost no choice, we come to perceive marriage as an inevitable part of our life cycle, adorned by breathtaking offerings, whereas the “happiest day of her life” is not so happy after all. Once what’s done is done, all that remains is to get used to a married life, or rather get used to a life of monotony, unhappiness, having to live together in lovelessness, and being ignored, if not completely wiped off the face of this earth. There is also growing together as one and being accustomed to the sustainability of love, but then again, this is only a very rare encounter.

One can easily analyze the sociology of “growing accustomed” in marriages. From cradle to grave, the “society” fixates women onto one target, which should explain the obsessions around dowry. A woman’s secrets are confined to her mother, whereas her “honor” is confined to her father. She is desirable as long as she behaves herself, and respectable if she is able. She cooks well, just so that her husband doesn’t get cross. She is alright with an extra shift in bed, because the husband must not be encouraged to abandon. And as time goes by, growing accustomed becomes much harder than loving in the first place. A woman from any country in this world is unhappy because of the holes marriage digs in her life. In a life where is born and raised as a bride, she remains in the same starting point forever. She is the dispossessed. The lucky ones survive; the unlucky ones are burnt and destroyed. The male dominant “haven” that she is granted to in gift wraps becomes her hell. As her blood spills in the mouth that turns crooked out of lust, her soul is plundered. After all, she is a premier servant, or much rather a victim.

It should be made obvious that marriage is politics of wrongful vows women make by reassuring that getting married was the best decision of their lives and that they are happy. These vows should be broken. It should actually be taken a step further and advocated that “marriage is a form of violence” for those women whose souls are plundered and injured, who are actually in millions. Some of these brides actually have adjectives to define them that can be easily spotted internationally. Let us take a look at the unfortunate terminology of brides and handle marriage from a completely different angle.

Child Brides

A common hell and the ultimate fate of women of this world, who become ‘women’ before even having the chance to grow up, whose childhood and youthfulness is but a bitter pale memory, and whose futures are sealed with the myth of family. Bound by the male desire, thousands of women find out about the ‘real-deal’ behind the fancy doors of the ‘happiest day of their lives’. First times of most of these women end up being cases of rape, leaving them under the shadows of trauma. Not quite having the chance to discover their own bodies, they greet their first real disappointments as they reluctantly offer their bodies to the hands of another, not so happy to have met them indeed. They expect to get some loving kindness, some understanding only to find out that their husbands gives them some, if not any. And are they only married to their husbands? No. They are married off to the whole country. At times these women are left in their solitude under the same roof. They no longer have a roof to nest under. They can’t stay, neither can they leave. These women are “child brides” – the subject of each sentence that defined a victim.

Each year, thousands of girls are forced to marry men who are usually much older than them. Latest reports show that the number of ‘child brides’ will reach to a hundred million all over the world in ten years. Girls are being dragged into marriages with the promise of a make-believe game of house.

With each passing year, Turkey sets a new record of child marriages. According to a report published by Hacettepe University, Institute of Population Studies, there are 5.5 million child brides in the country. Although the figures are alarmingly high, it has been known to us for a long while now that those who have the authority to stand against child marriages are deaf to the sound of these alarms. The Civic Code in Turkey stipulates that the age of marriage is seventeen. It was not long ago that this limit was fifteen for girls and seventeen for boys. Although the legislative changes of 2002 brought this limit up, it is still the case that the final decision is up to the mercy of the courts. Sixteen-year-old individuals are allowed to get married in the event that they have the consent of their parents. No one says ‘Stop!’ to neither the parents, nor the judges that turn a deaf ear to gender related problems, and instead judges put into force the laws as if it were a holy scripture of some sort. Despite it all, there are judges who stand against those parents that try to bargain with the law saying ‘The kids are rushing to get married. Wouldn’t you do us a favor?’ These positive examples, for now, have a long way to actually change the whole system, for it is not at all easy to transform traditions in one go.

It will take a few generations, at the very least, before a decision-maker comes to their senses and does something to topple the power of destructive traditions. Until then, the society at large will continue to fool itself with the false belief that ‘education’ is the secret key to all troubles, as if there is equality within the system of education, as if the system brings up individuals and not slaves, as if people will stop marrying their children off once all of us turn into diploma-freaks! The deep-rooted teachings are the very embodiment of culture codes. The reason of a fake immunity to child marriages does not fall under the vague category of education. ‘Honor’ is what should be aimed at; it is what should be sapped.

Import Brides

Our love for import goods is a mere memory of colorful shops located in the countryside of our childhoods. Back then, it wasn’t the case that thousands of imported goods ranging from soup bowls to party decorations, voice recorders to salad dressings were common in the household. The experiences of the “import brides”, who were probably called by some other name back then, however, can’t be too fancy despite the supposed coolness of the word “import”. Women who enter the international marriage markets with the purpose of changing their status, living a prosper life or simply for the adventure of it, who are most of the time put into the market completely unaware of what’s going on, are now a subject matter for academic research. Research indicates that 98% of women and 92% of men from Turkey living in France are married to people from Turkey. Such marriages in Germany constitute more than 60%, whereas each year in Belgium, 1300 people become citizens of the

country through these marriages. These three examples alone demonstrate the gravity of the situation. Setting foot outside of their country-side homes for the first time, the encounters of these women sent off to a completely new country is not at all easy. These women are surrounded by a web of unjust treatment such as risking to find themselves on the streets in the event of a disagreement, not being allowed to go back to their home country even if they have the financial and emotional strength to, being deprived of the right to have guardianship over their children. Uninformed about their rights, without any social security or knowledge of language, soon enough these brides find themselves in a dark ride as they try to make a living for themselves. And then? Is it happily ever after? No, not really – not in many cases anyway. Identity crisis combined with the terror in the house makes the cycle of violence permanent, leaving ‘import brides’ with fading hopes as they wait for rescue.

Bride Burning

In the kitchen, known to be the homeland of women, she dies with a pretend accident or suicide, yielding no suspect behind. Traditions – their bitter ‘angel’ of death... The tradition of dowry in India corresponds to the amount the father of the bride has to pay to the family of the groom, contrary to the tradition in Turkey. In case the family cannot afford the dowry in cash, the amount can be turned into an estate or assets. And should the groom’s family not find this sufficing, the bride is always there to be blamed. She becomes the sole means of threat for the groom’s family as she is burnt down with boiling oil. The groom’s family either gets more dowry, or she gets burnt and burnt. Most women do not survive this “accident”. India’s present to the universal violence literature, bride burning takes the lives of thousands of women, most of which go unrecorded. The country’s Penal Code does penalize dowry and in 1961, the government passed the Dowry Prohibition Act. However, just like with most other crimes against women, the act goes unpunished once disguised properly. Bride burning cases, or “kitchen fires” as reported, were around 400 in the ‘80s, whereas the number reached up to 6000 in the ‘90s. Fooled by the gravity of the horrific ritual, the police opened shelters in the country for the victims. Thus, the “survivors” were forced to tell their stories. Every day, three out of five women appearing at the hospital doors have complaints of burnt in their bodies. The government unveiled in early 2000s that 7000 women were murdered by their in-laws because of unsatisfactory rates of dowry. Women’s organizations, meanwhile, strives to put across the fact that the police simply cannot protect women. Women who were burnt to death were recorded under “dowry death”. The tradition of bride burning is considered to be an important public health problem in India. Each year almost 1000 women lose their lives because of this tradition. The emotional abuse, torture and force to suicide to top it all...



Mail-Order Brides

With her sale price on the marriage market set, her “merchandise value” determined by the seller and the buyer’s conscience and trying not to lose her hopes on the way, the mail-order bride sets off a rather unpleasant journey. She is selected in the catalogue she is listed in, with only luck having a part to play in where she will end up, whether she will be safe there or be properly treated by the awaiting husband. The majority of the women listed in the catalogues are from Asia. They are the modern time slaves of sex trafficking. Determined to see where the road will take them, they end up in much different places with the hopes of leaving behind a life full of poverty and deprivation. Mail-order brides, who are dislocated with the promise of marriage, hand their dreams to the mercy of those who turn hopes into trade.

Human trade is one of the biggest violations of human rights in the 21st century, with millions of women victimized. Woman trafficking constitutes a big portion of human trafficking which is the third biggest organized crime in the world after drug and arms trafficking. Each year great numbers of women, the majority of whom comes from South Asia and former USSR countries, are being sold and bought as a part of this trade and are forced into sex work. UN and UNICEF reports draw attention to the fact that even girls as young as 8 become victims of this wheel of misfortune. Each year 700,000 to 4 million people become subjects of

trafficking, 66% of which are women and 22% children. Apart from enabling us to reach to a rare book, an organic tomato or information of all sorts, internet also becomes the tool of the trafficker/matchmaker. The fact remains that the price of women naively wrapped by women traffickers under the label of matchmaking is only as expensive as organic tomato!

Marriage as an Accident

We are surrounded by thick walls of shame built by sad women’s stories, which cannot be seen unless it suits one’s book. There are cultures that go insane to marry women off, with endless interests in their minds, constant lies in their words - cultures sworn not to break their vows to marriage. There’s no need to look too far, they are right here, right next to us. A sword hangs by women’s heads who are expected to find blessing in a box full of rags throughout their childhoods. Knives line up behind their backs as they are expected to commit with their very beings first to their countries then to their husbands. Afraid of becoming a “spinster”, they are cursed with each passing year.



After all, marriage is the societal orgasm in that little hole called “honor”. Sex in the absence of a license issued by a registrar means the violation and occupation of that hole, and those who can’t give a piece of their mind to the perpetrators simply riddle women’s bodies and souls with holes beyond repair. Women are the tools to achieve a comforted male mind, and marriage is its embodiment.

To the reader: This piece is not against marriage. For proof, one only needs to read it from the right angle.



International Mechanisms for Struggling Against Early and Forced Marriages, the Current Situation in Turkey



Selin BERGHAN

Sociology Department METU, PhD

Early and forced marriages are widely prevalent as the most humiliating dominance of patriarchal ideology based on gender and age. Although, the concept of 'childhood' and 'marriage' have transformed substantially like other aspects of life through modernism, children are still forced to get married for the sake of traditions in both developed and developing countries of the world, especially in South Asia and Africa.

Generally, girls are the target of these traditions. For 'child brides', these marriages mean sexual and economic slavery along with domestic violence that will continue throughout their lives. Divorce, abandonment, poverty and serious health problems like HIV/AIDS are among the problems that these children are faced with. Being exposed to cheap labor market and involuntary sex labor is one of the most disgraceful offenses to humanity.

"Empowering women and the girl child is, indeed, a long-term investment that will be beneficiary for all."

The beginning of menstruation means for the family that the girl has begun to endanger the 'honor' of the family. Virginity becomes the sole concern for them. It should be protected from sexual intercourse, which may dishonor the family. The more the female body is protected from 'chastity' the more fragile it becomes within the privacy of the family. Honor of the family is maintained by hurting the daughter's body, soul and mostly her childhood through marriage.

Another factor that weakens these children is economic poverty, because it is believed that a daughter means an extra economic burden for the family. In developing countries, child marriages are a way of getting rid of this burden and even turning it into cash through commerce. As long as 'chastity' remains as a commodity in the patriarchal market, all the efforts made for the sake of human rights will be useless.

Although there are researches claiming that preventing these children from early marriages can deteriorate their economic conditions¹, we should not forget that economical rights can not exist without civil, political and cultural rights. Empowering women and the girl child is, indeed, a long-term investment that will be beneficiary for all.

As Cook² indicates, marrying and starting a family is the right of an adult and not a child. Early and forced marriages fall under the category of child abuse and violation of the basic rights of the child. States, private or civil institutions that are unwilling to struggle against child marriages take part in this crime.

The fact that child marriages have become visible recently in the international arena, especially under the body of UN³, is closely related with the struggles of the global feminist movement. Violence against women has been discussed in the public sphere since 1980s as a result of this movement⁴. Perpetrator will no longer be able to hide away their crimes of domestic violence, for domestic privacy too, now, is a subject of law.

The Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979 and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 are legal mechanisms that constitute a base for struggle against child marriages. UNICEF emphasizes the complementarity of CEDAW and CRC in its report called "Child Marriage and the Law" in 2008. Although CRC does not openly prevent child marriages, when read under the light of CEDAW, it does outlaw early marriages (UNICEF 2008:3). Article 16 of CEDAW directly prohibits child marriages:

The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

According to Article 1 of CRC, "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years." This convention defines how standards should be set for children in the fields of civil rights and freedoms, family environment and alternative caring, health and nutrition, education and cultural activities in leisure time. States and parents are in charge of providing these standards and protecting the rights of the child.

According to CRC and CEDAW, early marriages mean the breach of:

- ◆ The child's health care rights (Article 16-24), right to live and grow (CRC, Article 6; CEDAW, Article 12), since pregnancy at early ages may result in maternal and infant mortality;
- ◆ Right to education (CRC, Article 28; CEDAW, Article 10,11), since children are forced to drop out of school to get married;
- ◆ The child's right to freedom of expression (CRC, Article 12-13);
- ◆ The rights to protect from all forms of neglect and abuse (CRC, Article 19-34).

"States have to act against cultural practices approving child marriages."

The violation of these rights also mean the breach of 'to the best interest of the child' principle (CRC, Article 3), and protection against all forms of discrimination (CRC, Article 2) regardless of their sex.

According to these conventions, states have to act against cultural practices approving child marriages. Compulsory education, marriageable age and working age have to be set so as to hinder early marriages.

Turkey has signed and ratified CEDAW and CRC. Important legal arrangements were made thanks to activists struggling for the rights of women and the child.

Pursuant to Article 1 of CRC, 35%⁵ of Turkey's population is children. However, there are various definitions of the period covering childhood in the Turkey's laws. The age for adulthood varies according to such conditions as marriage, working, getting a passport, being a voter or appearing in the court.

A person, regardless of their sex, has to turn 17 before getting married (Civil Code, Article 124). However, the court can allow marriage at the age of 16 under certain conditions. Should the opportunity arise, the judge hears the parents or the legal guardian prior to reaching a verdict. In cases of forced marriages, the person has the right to apply to the court (Article 149); however, the law stipulates that the application should be made in time (Article 152). In addition to this, those who are involved in polygamy, religious marriages without an official wedding and such are to be given jail sentence (TPC, Article 230).

⁵TÜİK 2008.

Along with regulations on marriages, UNICEF (2008) indicates that education systems should be arranged so as to hinder child marriages. Education is one of the basic rights of the child and also a good means to prevent the girl child to be married off at an early age. With the compulsory education in Turkey children are guaranteed education until the age of 14. Therefore, the period of compulsory education should be extended. Although Turkey has recently made a progress on the matter in primary schools, schooling rate in secondary schools is still 69.9% , which is below satisfactory levels. In any case, schooling rates for girls remain lower than that of boys .

Article 233 of the Turkish Penal Code, although it is not directly related to child marriages, punishes parents who put their child's morality, security and health at risk to jail sentence starting from three months up to a year.

In spite of legal reforms and progress in some areas, Turkey lags behind ideal conditions for women's and children's rights. Let alone the practices like bride exchange, child marriages and bride price, as Hoşgör reveals (2008), the violation of registration to the state, which is a basic citizenship right, continues to establish grounds for early marriages.

Bunting, A. 2005. Stages of Development: Marriage of Girls and Teens as an International Human Rights Issue, *Social & Legal Studies*, 14 (1), 17-38.
 Çocuk Hakları İzleme, 2009. Türkiye'de Çocuk Haklarının Durumu, www.cocukhaklariizleme.org
 Ertürk, Y. 2005. The Un Agenda for Women's Rights and Gender Equality, *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, 10 (2), 91-113.
 Gündüz Hoşgör, A. 2008. Kadın Vatandaşlık Haklarındaki En Temel Sorun: "Nüfus Cüzdanım Yok ki!", *Toplum ve Demokrasi*, 2 (4), 27-38.
 Snyder, M. 2006. Unlikely Godmother: The UN and the Global Women's Movement, içinde M. Ferree & A. Tripp (eds), *Global Feminism*. New York: New York University Press.
 UNICEF, 2009. The State of the World's Children
 UNICEF, 2008. Child Marriage and the Law.
 UNICEF, 2007. Children and the Millennium Development Goals.



Tuğçe Doğruyol/ International Children's Center & Bilkent University Department of Graphic Design

“Early Marriage is the New Form of Slavery”



We talked with Adem Arkadaş-Thibert of the International Children's Center, a long time activist in the field of children's human rights, on policies around children's rights.

Do you agree with the suggestion that early marriages mean a lost childhood?

I definitely do. Childhood is a very special period; you don't get to be a child more than once in your life. This is the period of our lives where we get to actualise our potential, to become our self, to determine who we will become. A person's brain and body change incredibly fast during adolescence. However, physical change doesn't always go in tandem with intellectual and cognitive development. Because usually girls' anatomies develop earlier than that of boys, people view this as to mean that "they are ready for marriage". People who think this commit a grave error because the physical and mental development of these children still continues. These children are still learning more, their minds are still developing. When we talk of early marriages, we talk of a violence committed towards the development of the child. Early marriages affect the development of children to a very significant degree. It keeps the

child from using her inherent potential, from becoming the type of person she wants to become. There are no more opportunities left for the child. In this sense, early marriages are also an important indicator of violence against women; they cause inequality of opportunities and absolute inequalities.

This is why you suggest there should be a period in the child's life where the child should be provided with special protection?

The child needs to be protected especially well during the adolescence period. Children experience marriage without being informed on any issue. Many girls enter into a legal institution without understanding what it is. The burden that is loaded on your shoulders in adolescence is a big obstacle to your whole life settling in place. Later on, people try to overcome this obstacle by working a lot and requiring a very empowering environment but often this isn't enough either.

How do you define early and forced marriages in the simplest terms?

I think this is a new form of slavery. I see this as commercial sexual exploitation. To define it in broader terms, it reduces women to a tradable commodity and destroys human dignity. It constitutes physical, emotional and sexual violence against women and children. This is a serious breach of human rights and a serious obstacle in the development of countries. Early marriages are an expression of violence against women.

It is the state's responsibility to prevent such marriages. How do you think Turkey approaches the issue of children's rights?

Turkey has gotten an F on its report card when it comes to this issue. It is one of the countries where early pregnancies are the most frequent; it ranks either first or second in Europe.

Are binding international agreements also being disregarded?

There is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is a legal guarantee. Turkey is a party to this convention since 1995. There is an optional protocol to this convention with regards to sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and Turkey is a party to this additional protocol since 2002. It has expressed that it will sign another additional protocol soon. This is a protocol under which children are recognized as right bearing individuals and the right of children to seek justice at the international level is guaranteed. We hope that this will be signed and ratified. This Convention on the Rights of the Child signed by 193 countries enjoys a level of acceptance greater than any other convention in the world. This means Turkey has promised 193 countries that it will solve problems about early marriages one by one, that it will create the circumstances in which the prevailing interests of the child are sought. As long as it doesn't sign and ratify the latest additional protocol, Turkey won't be fully complying with this promise.

As a result the will to prevent early marriages isn't formed?

A mechanism that will enable international accountability with regards to child brides is formed through this mechanism. We have to accept that these marriages affect and destroy the human dignity of the child. Turkey has to stop these marriages.

Does Turkey really have a policy plan about children?

The policy is one that is very sporadic, that doesn't connect with each other and as a result cannot affect a healthy change and transformation. Some of this is written and some of it is oral. But there is no integrated policy. This is because none of these policies have passed the parliament. As a result there is no policy instrument of the state as a whole – I am not talking of a policy instrument of the government here – that is at the very least approved by the members of parliament, the representatives of the people, despite not reaching every aspect of the society. Some things can be perceived to be a policy when they aren't explicitly announced; when events repeat themselves, when this is reflected in the legislation, when we observe the effects this has on all the applications of the legislation, we can say there is a silent policy. There is a policy that doesn't acknowledge the child at all, that sees it as a site on which to provide its services, that doesn't acknowledge the ego and the agency of the child (every person has an agency, as long as the person is alive, as long as she defines herself through her own drain and presents this to the other side).

"As long as early marriages aren't stopped using legal, political and social preventative measures, it is one of the biggest obstacles to justice and development in Turkey"

How do we save policy makers from this blindness with regards to human rights of the child?

Recently a "children's rights strategy document" was written. It was compiled by Istanbul University Children's Foundation or SHÇEK with its old name. This was a document created with the efforts of many NGOs; however, some of us disagreed with its conclusions. We said that the document isn't acceptable. It doesn't see the child as an individual, it doesn't acknowledge the rights of the child and it disregards a century old fight in child's rights. It diminishes the legal force of a piece of legislation created with the combined efforts of every civilization on earth which took 10 years to write and to which Turkey is a party to – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

How so?

When you construct legislation on love and compassion, you decrease the agency of the child. Only the newborn or children between 5-10 years of age are seen as "children". However, children are defined as individuals under the age of 18, as required by both law and pediatric development. Every age brings about different problems and needs. You cannot create a strategic document by disregarding adolescence, the period defined on average as from 10 years onwards. Many policies that seemingly have nothing to do with children actually concern them very much. This strategic document created last year has been presented as the first child policy document and it is still being presented this way. We object to this very strongly. We plead that this document ought not be one that presents children as innocent little flowers to be protected with no agencies of their own. It must be a document that acknowledges and includes all the realities of a child, shaping itself from a rights based perspective. We created a document that lists the indispensable elements of a strategy document and sent this to 7 other NGOs. It is essential that this kind of work be undertaken basing itself on the human rights of the child.

The lack of an integrated child policy is both a cause and a result of the legislation. There are also documents you can take as a basis; there are binding international treaties. Are these enough?

No, they're not. If they were, we wouldn't need to call for additional protocols and other treaties. There are documents that legally bind Turkey. These documents carry statutory force as per Article 90 of the constitution. States cannot act in a discretionary way with an attitude of "I'll do it if I want to do it". It is important to remember that these documents are laws for our purposes. One of the reasons why legal prevention isn't implemented in real life is because people think of the laws as descended from heaven, with little opportunity for citizens to utilize these laws and very expensive procedures. You have to consider these infrastructural and technical realities within the field while making laws.

Don't you think there also seems to be a perception that all the work is done after the law has passed the parliament? The problems with enforcing the legislation aren't identified and dealt with in advance.

The Children's Rights Committee has met with representatives of Turkey on 1 June 2012 in Geneva. In the concluding observations that emerged from this meeting, it was noted that the courts in Turkey do not attribute the Convention on the Rights of the Child statutory force and do not apply this treaty as law. This was indicated to be a worrying trend. It was especially worrying that the court didn't consider whether it was acting in breach of this convention while coming to its decision.

Does this mean Turkey hasn't changed its internal laws in accordance with the conventions?

The laws definitely have to be amended, the state has to look at laws and acknowledge that "These laws aren't compatible with the treaties, and we will make them compatible". There has been a lot of work done till now; however, all of these efforts have been underscored with the same mentality. Therefore, applicable legislation didn't emerge. The legislation has to be applied in such a way so that it will both be enforced in the courts and satisfy a range of different principles of human rights such

as accountability, transparency, integration and access to information. If the court finds a breach of child's rights, there needs to be both legal and political accountability no matter who the perpetrator is. We don't see these happening. Sometimes the situation is understated and played down. Many books that overtly disregard the gender perspective, women's rights and children's rights are being circulated free of charge in many circles. If a politician witnesses the racism and enmity, a kid shouldn't simply dismiss this by saying, "These are just jokes". They mustn't look at the book and think: "I can get away with such crimes." Children and everybody else should be educated about their legal rights. Otherwise, we can never truly say that the laws are being enforced and that international treaties are adequate.

ICC conducts monitoring work as well. Could you tell us a little about this?

It is really difficult to conduct monitoring work in Turkey. When I arrived in Turkey six years ago I saw that there was no organization that conducted periodic and systematic monitoring work on child's rights. The monitoring work that is being conducted isn't easily entrenched and made lasting. To do this you need resources; it is very expensive to conduct research and so on. Approximately six months ago we started collecting news stories from online sources. We analyzed these news stories within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and determined whether they contain a right violation or express a positive development. We transformed our results into monthly bulletins and disseminated this information. One of our goals was to inspire others to conduct such monitoring work. After 5 years of work, at this point we can observe that other organizations are also conducting such works – Child's Rights Agenda Foundation and the Migration Foundation have each published one report. They also undertook this work using newspaper reports.

You aren't conducting your work by exclusively analyzing newspaper reports, are you?

Any reports on child's rights in Turkey, any research, all international and national documents... We follow them all. We collect other material too that doesn't explicitly refer to child's rights but nevertheless might contain information related to the issue – all reports related to work about human rights or democratization etc., some regional research reports and publications, master's and doctoral theses.

Does this monitoring also work to audit the Parliament?

Of course, we also monitor the Parliament. Which laws are passed, how are they passed, did NGOs contribute, what has been done with regards to children, what has been omitted? We look at all these. Monitoring isn't the sole purpose of the ICC. The real purpose is to be a catalyst, work with other NGOs and strengthen their capacity. We learn from them, too. We created three NGO reports based on analysis. Also through desk review we worked together with some other partners to turn our joint monitoring efforts into reports. We have made some reports more available while with others, due to the nature of these reports, we targeted specific groups that could make a real impact. To be honest, some times this has worked but at other times it hasn't. Many NGOs, at least in the field of child's rights, are now talking of indicators, and reporting. Of course these are important gains. We believe however, that this will yield a return to children by also bringing about a sense of advocacy.

"There is a difference between a piece of paper and a human being. This is why there are concepts such as human rights and human dignity. Early marriages constitute a serious assault to human dignity and are a serious breach of human rights."

What do you make of the child's rights monitoring committee in the parliament?

It used to be more functional when it was first established. Its mission statement is rather uncertain. The UNICEF office supports this initiative. At least the fact that child's rights are being discussed within the walls of the parliament, that such a committee was formed with the participation of all political parties is inspiring. Yet there are many steps to be taken. This is almost a committee formed through personal initiative. We want this to be a permanent commission. There is a need for a structure that will analyze the child's rights impact of all the legislation that comes to parliament and communicates with child's rights NGOs and children. The committee in question doesn't have such a structure. For example, even legislation on the construction of roads affects children directly. In the concluding observations of the meeting held on June 1 between Turkey and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, it was demanded that an impact assessment be made on a wide range of decision-making from decisions with regards to the business world to those with regards to the Ilisu reservoir. Whatever we do we must consider how children's rights may be impacted by this. You are a child only once. You may have many opportunities in life as an adult, but as a child you only get one shot.

What are the views of the ICC on child brides? What are your personal comments?

By forcing an institution concerning adults into a child's life, you directly tear apart all her rights to personal development and right to life. This is also the ICC's view. Early marriages, child brides... These are quite romantic concepts. ICC is also thinking of a new concept that can strip away this romanticism. Personally, I have always expressed my view that early marriage is the new form of slavery. An individual being married at an early age completely satisfies the elements of human trafficking. Legally, marriage brings together with it the duties and responsibilities of being an adult. If you are married, you are now considered "of age". Early marriages also present themselves as one of the worst forms of child abuse and neglect. A form of slavery unseen to this day... People have turned a blind eye to this; thus, completely ignoring the selfhood of the child. This is something that disfigures and destroys humanity altogether, turning it into some sort of commodity. Do we really want to create such a world? Or would we rather live in a world where everyone is equal and happy, where each is to her own, where nobody is subject to violence or exclusion simply for being themselves? The situation with regards to child brides is a moment where all of these converge. It is a rare field in which many forms of human rights breaches intersect and reveal one of the worst forms of human rights abuse. It is loaded with different forms of human rights abuse.

The Ministry of Family and Social Policies has stated that the legal age of marriage will be raised. Would this be preventative?

The Minister has stated this during the meeting with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva as well. Many promises are made, but we must pursue these promises. The minister also states that early marriages in Turkey have dropped significantly, to 9%. I don't know where she got that figure; however, if it is accurate, than this is certainly good news!

We couldn't reveal the full and real picture without conducting a very comprehensive and independent research. Do you also conduct mapping work at the ICC?

Yes we do form a map of early marriages using our monitoring work. We started monitoring many categories of violence – including early marriages – three years ago. You can observe where in the country incidents of sexual violence have become more frequent, where there are increased arrests all on this map. We send the results to MPs also. We needed to integrate the public into this monitoring as well, so we added an interactive feature to the map and you can now report incidents using the website. Tools such as this also demonstrate the power of democracy. This monitoring easily reveals which areas need more work and investment.

Adem Arkadaş-Thibert
International Children's Center

Purpose of this 11 questions and answers section is to promote an understanding of the optional protocol and provide advocacy messages for NGOs working to combat sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography affects children throughout the world, in both industrialized and developing countries. Children are subjected to prostitution, forced into marriage or illegally adopted; they provide cheap or unpaid labor, work as house servants or beggars, are recruited into armed groups and are used for sports (e.g. camel jockeys). Such practices expose children to violence, sexual abuse and sexually transmitted illnesses including HIV/AIDS and undermine their human dignity, violate their physical and mental integrity, breach their fundamental human rights to be protected, grow up in a family environment, and have access to education, health, welfare services. Many of the information used here are excerpts from the handbook on OPSC.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) in 11 questions

1 What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)?

The CRC (1989) is the main international instrument for the protection of children's rights, including all forms of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation. The CRC obliges States to take "all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form" (Article 35) and to "promote physical and psychological recovery and reintegration of a child victim" (Article 39). With the 1996 World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, it became increasingly clear that additional efforts were needed to address the true extent of sexual exploitation, including the extraordinary and devastating impact of globalization and accelerated human mobility on the protection of children's rights. Modern technologies have also led to new challenges and concerns, with disconcerting worldwide dimensions. The explosion of these technologies, particularly the Internet, has brought many benefits to humanity, but the consequences of their misuse are now evident. At the dawn of the 1990s, the exchange of files on the Internet was just beginning. As widespread and uncontrolled online access became commonplace, countless pedophile websites appeared, and child pornography made its way into the global and connected world on the screens of personal computers.

2 What is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC OPSA)?

The main premises of the OPSC are that:

- all children must be protected,
- such exploitation is criminal in nature, and
- the perpetrators must be identified and punished.

The Optional Protocol was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 May 2000 and entered into force on 18 January 2002.

3 What does sale of children entail?

The sale of children is defined by Article 2 of the Optional Protocol as "any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration." While Article 2 of the OPSC defines the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Article 3 identifies specific acts that must be criminalized. In so far as sale is concerned, Paragraph 1(a) prohibits the "offering, delivering or accepting" of a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, transfer of organs for profit, forced labor and adoption in violation of applicable legal instruments. Sale of children includes trafficking of children as well as early/forced marriage of children. A child victim of trafficking is any person under 18 who is recruited, transported, transferred, harbored or received for the purpose of exploitation, either within or outside a country.

4 What does child prostitution entail?

Article 2 of the OPSC defines child prostitution as "the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration." Meanwhile, Article 3 obliges States to criminalize "offering, obtaining, procuring or providing a child for child prostitution." The term "any other consideration" means that prostitution includes the provision of sexual services in exchange for goods, services or favors, as well as money. This would cover, for example, the exchange of sexual services for necessities such as food and shelter, or for drugs. The issue of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism has often been raised by the Committee. Although this phenomenon is not identified as a distinct offence under Article 3 of the OPSC, it is referred to in the Preambles as well as in Article 10, which deals with international cooperation. 'Sex tourism' is directly related to the offences covered by the Protocol, since it often involves child prostitution and child pornography (as those who exploit child prostitutes often record their activities on film), and may also involve the sale of children.

5 What does child pornography entail?

Article 2 of the OPSC defines child pornography as "any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes." Article 3 requires States to criminalize "producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling or possessing for the above purposes child pornography as defined in Article 2." Pornography can, among other forms, be represented in live performances, photographs, motion pictures, video recordings and the recording or broadcasting of digital images. The Committee is particularly concerned about the widespread distribution and accessibility of child pornography through the Internet. OPSC obliges States to punish the possession of child pornography.

6 Is Turkey party to CRC and OPSA?

Yes. Turkey is party to CRC since 4 April 1995 and to OPSC since 19 August 2002.

What are the criminal, civil and administrative responsibilities borne by the States?

7

General international legal obligations of a State party to the CRC OPSA are:

- respecting the child's rights by not violating her/his rights,
- protecting the child from third parties violating her/his rights, and
- fulfilling her/his rights by:
 - o creating social, economic, political, criminal, civil and administrative conditions for respecting and protecting children, and
 - o promoting the CRC and CRC OPSA.

Specific international obligations of a State party to the CRC OPSA are:

- undertaking a law reform to harmonize domestic law with CRC and OPSC including criminalizing acts;
- establishing independent oversight mechanisms (like ombuds offices, commissioners, institutes);
- establishing transparent, accessible complaints mechanisms sensitive to realities, developmental needs and rights of children;
- establish redress mechanisms;
- providing budget and other resources to address sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution (human resources, training, services to victims, public awareness, and the like);
- provide education to professionals and children; integrate OPSC and CRC into curriculum from preschool to higher education;
- identify, prosecute, and punish perpetrators;
- provide services for protection, rehabilitation, reintegration, recovery to victims.

What are the rights of child victims?

Procedures that recognize children's vulnerability and special needs, as witnesses and in general (Article 8.1(a)) are as follows:

- Be informed of their rights, their role, the scope, timing and progress of the proceedings and of the disposition of their cases (Article 8.1(b));
- Have their views, needs and concerns presented and considered in proceedings where their personal interests are affected in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law (for child victims) (Article 8.1(c));
- Appropriate support services throughout the legal process (Article 8.1(d));
- Privacy and the confidentiality of information concerning their identity (Article 8.1(e));
- Safety and protection against intimidation and retaliation (Article 8.1(f));
- Procedures free from unnecessary delays (Article 8.1(g)).

Article 8 assigns States the duty to:

- investigate, even when the age of the victim needs to be clarified (Article 8.2);
- consider the best interests of the child victim as a primary consideration (Article 8.3);
- provide appropriate training to all those who work with child victims (Article 8.4).

Paragraph 5 of Article 8 recognizes the right to protection of those who work with child victims or are involved in efforts to prevent sale, prostitution and pornography affecting children. One of the Committee's main concerns regarding treatment of such children is that they are not treated as offenders as a result of the exploitation they have suffered due to prostitution or other offences covered by the Protocol. The Committee also insists that 'double victimization' must be avoided. In one instance, for

example, it urged a State "to apply child-sensitive procedures to protect children from hardship during the justice process, inter alia, by using special interview rooms designed for children, child-sensitive methods of questioning, and by reducing the number of interviews, statements and hearings."

The Committee also stresses compliance with the obligation to assist children in social reintegration and physical and psychological recovery. In particular, it calls for ensuring that the relevant services are accessible throughout the country to all children who need them and that those persons providing such services have the necessary training.

The ability of children who have been involved in sale, prostitution and pornography to bring their situation to the attention of agencies or to access services for assistance is another concern for the Committee. Telephone hotlines have been an important measure recommended in this regard. More generally, the Committee recognizes the usefulness of independent human rights institutions for children and similar institutions that can help ensure respect for the rights of child victims of sale, prostitution and pornography.

How should the CRC OPSA be implemented?

9

The implementation of CRC OPSA can be realized through the following:

- Prevention of exploitation
 - Combating vulnerability,
 - Ensuring Internet safety,
 - Reducing demand in the sex trade, travel and tourism, sale of children, and international adoption
 - Law reform and law enforcement
 - Assistance to survivors as well as NGO programs for survivors
 - Frameworks for implementation
- Article 10 of the OPSC is devoted to international assistance and co-operation.

- Quantitative and qualitative indicators
- Disaggregating data
- Mechanisms for monitoring and data collection
- Other sources of data
- Independent monitoring

How CRC OPSA is being monitored?

There are two bodies that monitor OPSA:

- The Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

10

How should the CRC OPSA be implemented?

Implementation of an international human rights treaty means that:

- the treaty is used to harmonize national laws (law reform) to the letter and spirit of the treaty;
- the treaty is being executed in national courts, actively used and referred in courts the way national laws are;
- the treaty is enforced by the public administration, law enforcement, all public and statutory agencies.

This requires an approach to prevent before the incidence of sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography happens. Prevention of exploitation is the key to implementing OPSC. It requires first and foremost combating vulnerability of the child and children as a constituency as well as groups of children in need of special protection (children who are discriminated against). This means that children should be provided with opportunities to learn their rights, protect their rights, and understand how to reach protective services. Children should feel free and secure everywhere including on Internet. This means that there are accessible and child sensitive systems with variety of protective mechanisms including dedicated telephone hotline for complaint as well as support measures for all children, disabilities, language, learning and other characteristics in mind. There are free and widely available legal aid services, human rights and legal education with dedicated sections on CRC and OPSC provided to children and all professionals including safe Internet practices. There are regularly refreshed public information campaigns including safe Internet practices for children in order for them to protect themselves and build resilience. There is budget and other support to NGO programs for awareness raising and prevention as well as protection, rehabilitation, recovery and reintegration. There are efforts to reduce demand in the sex trade, travel and tourism for sexual purposes, and sale of children in the form of international or national adoption.

If there are cases where children fall victim to crimes covered under OPSC, then following actions are required for implementation of OPSC:

- Assistance to survivors for redress, rehabilitation, recovery, and reintegration;
- NGO programs for survivors for redress, rehabilitation, recovery, and reintegration;
- Speedy prosecution, deterrent punishment for perpetrators.

If the State party does not have resources to address effectively OPSC implementation requirements, Article 10 of the OPSC is devoted to international assistance and cooperation.

Early Marriage and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 1: A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Article 6: Maximum support for survival and development.

Article 24: The right to health, and to access to health services; and to be protected from harmful traditional practices.

Articles 28 and 29: The right to education on the basis of equal opportunity.

Article 36: The right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child's welfare.

Article 12: The right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child, in accordance with age and maturity.

Article 34: The right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Article 2: Freedom from discrimination on any grounds, including sex, religion, ethnic or social origin, birth or other status.

Article 19: The right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, guardian, or any other person.

Article 3: In all actions concerning children ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 35: The right to protection from abduction, sale or trafficking.

11

"New law on violence doesn't include child brides!"

The Law on Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women has been put into force by the Parliament in March 2012. Women's organizations and activists have protested the fact that the law defines women within the family and that it isn't drafted as a separate bill that could help women defend themselves against violence. The bill's conceptual framework also leaves the issue of preventing early marriages unaddressed. We spoke about the new law with lawyer and women's rights activist Sema Kendirci.



This law passed the Parliament not in the way we, women's organizations, demanded but in the way patriarchal political forces demanded. You also participated in this struggle, what do you think of the new law?

The 1998 Law on the Protection of the Family was amended in 2007. As women's organizations working in the field and experiencing legal obstacles while trying to protect women's rights, we had said that the new law should be named properly, be expanded in scope, and content wise should be applicable for the next 20 years. Despite having worked together with lawmakers during the drafting stage our views weren't taken into consideration. The language we used during our rights advocacy activities was very different from the bureaucratic language of lawmakers. I had insisted that judges in family courts ought to be invited while the law was being drafted yet the assistant undersecretary of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies told me, "But we are also lawyers, Ms Kendirci". I was indicating a difference in experience and use of language, not lack of lawyers; however, they couldn't understand this. As a result, the views of the women's organizations didn't feature much in the bill. This year, a new law on protection against violence was on the agenda. We, as women's organizations have made a draft law, the government also had a draft, we tried to find middle ground but it just didn't happen.

You mean to say the law still protects the "family" and not the "woman"?

Yes. After the law passed I wanted to obtain an injunction from the court in order to protect a woman in a divorce case. The judge refused. I asked the reason. The judge answered, "Shouldn't our priority be protecting the family?" The law is named as such! When you name the law "protecting the family", the priority becomes protecting the "family" and not the "woman".

So the process that started in 1998 continues exactly as it is? That first law also protected the family, nearly 15 years have passed. Has nothing changed?

I was there when the first law was being prepared in 1998, it wouldn't have passed the Parliament if it didn't stress the "family" in its name. Till then there was only one sentence in the whole of the criminal code, vaguely referring to "mistreatment of family members". That vague article too, had never been engaged. With that Law on the Protection of the Family, the state accepted for the first time that violence against woman is a separate issue and heading. It is now 2012. When you name the law "protecting the family" the police tries to impose some sort of mediation, the judge tries to find a "middle ground". The law defines women not as individuals but only within the family.

"I had taken part in the drafting of the social policy law. An 18-year-old girl needs to pay an insurance premium in order to benefit from social security. She cannot benefit from her father's or anyone else's social security. The kid doesn't study or work. The father makes minimum wage. How could he pay the premium? This is another reason why children are wedded before they are 18. Put yourself in that father's position. There are 7 children in the house, he wants one less. He thinks at least her husband will take care of his daughter."

This was the most important issue in the Criminal Code, wasn't it?

Crimes against women were also collected under the heading of crimes against society in the criminal code. We expressed with all our strength that we didn't accept this. The law changed in 2005. Currently the primary logic of the law is that women are individuals and not the property of the family or the society. However, this year we witnessed the passing of a new law that regressed from all the achievements women have gained. Once again we are defined within the framework of the family. The concept of gender equality is once again combed out of the text. However, we had suggested gender education. Without this, without giving women their rights as individuals, how will you implement the law?

The new law doesn't contain an article about "mediation" practices either. You had objected to this but it seems to have not been taken into account?

When the law was being prepared I had said that an article expressly prohibiting the authorities from encouraging mediation between the perpetrator and the victim must be included. They told me that "if we write in the law which practices will be undertaken, it will become obvious that what's not included cannot be implemented". Yet that's not how things work. As long as you don't say "this shouldn't be done", people

keep on implementing such practices. There is no single article in our laws that say "The police have a responsibility to mediate between women who have been subject to violence with their perpetrators". And yet the police tell couples to "make up and go home". Who told the judge to reunite and not divorce? Yet, alas. You have to write in detail that they aren't allowed to do so. This is very important. They didn't include these in the law.

Does the law on violence have provisions towards women who were married at a young age or who are under the threat of early marriages?

As women's organizations we have been very insistent that the law includes girls that are under the age of 18. They provided us with another legal obstacle. They told us that people below the age of 18 are within the scope of the Child Protection Law. But then, if we do consider people under 18 as children why does the Civil Code permit marriages at 17? First, they should amend this article. Turkey ought to have removed this discrepancy within the Civil Code, when it became a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Istanbul Convention also includes girls; it expressly states that early marriages are a form of violence. Yet the Law on the Protection of the Family and Preventing Violence against Women doesn't feature this issue at all.

Child marriages are regarded as a form of violence against women in the UN and yet Turkey has still not shown the will to accept this. How could we break this reluctance?

We have to abide by international treaties. According to our constitution they carry legal force as acts of Parliament. We have to remove the discrepancies in our national laws with these treaties. The problem of violence merits a special law. The law has to be so inclusive as to elicit change in our society. Today we can freely discuss that the issue of child brides is a serious form of violence. Child brides are the most critical indicators of a pressing need to urgently obtain gender equality. They are both the results and the causes of inequality.

What should be done?

Preventing child brides should be ensured by a legal groundwork. Gender equality should enter the curriculum of all schools starting from primary school until the end of university. Kids themselves must also learn that they ought to object. Girls and boys, together they will learn their rights. I think that even if we lose two generations, the third generation will say "sorry but you cannot do that". Once the laws have passed we should monitor and supervise them. We can't move forward without establishing these two mechanisms. You can't conduct such a thing with a number of activists that you can count with your fingers, with a handful of heroes. There are also other individuals who publicly make an effort

but these aren't enough. The central and local budgets should allocate money to be spent in efforts to prevent all forms of violence against child brides and all women.

Is a new law necessary?

Definitely! The fact that the current law on violence doesn't refer to early marriages isn't an obstacle before passing a new law, since this is a very special situation. We do need a separate law. We should also amend the Civil Code, but increasing the age of marriage will not in itself prevent this serious form of violence against girls. Perhaps there could be a separate part on early marriages within the criminal code. It is important that the judges and prosecutors who will be appointed to family courts have a gender perspective. In "2012-2015 National Action Plan on Fighting Violence against Women", which was published recently, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies announced that it had terminated its gender education for judges, prosecutors and the police force and that it will instead educate religious officials. This is an action plan prepared without the prior knowledge or contribution of women's organizations. Will religious officials warn people who want to marry their 15-16 years old children off? I don't think so, because religion does allow this. They have to devise a separate legal mechanism for the girl child. We cannot say "the criminal code already protects everyone", we have to open a new chapter under the heading "violence against women".

"Although the new law cites the Istanbul Convention and mentions CEDAW, it isn't enough. There isn't a trace of CEDAW in the provisions of the new law."

Lawyer Şahin Antakyalıoğlu, coordinator of the Association for the Struggle against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:

interview

ÇİTCS MÜCADELE AĞI
ÇOCUKLARA YÖNELİK TİCARİ CİNSEL SÖMÜRÇÜLÜK MÜCADELE AĞI



“The most common form of rights breaches are those committed against children”

Association for the Struggle against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children is one of the most active groups of recent years in Turkey. You have shown an increasing interest on the issue of child brides. What sort of work do you undertake?

The Association has created a new vision with regards to child brides in particular. We encourage people to think about the commercial sexual dimension of marriages at an early age. Through the Youth Group we established earlier this year, we try and keep this aspect of early marriages at the forefront both in the material that we publish and in the

meetings we attend. Some organizations we have worked together with on the issue of child brides, such as the police, have lately started to strengthen and sharpen their tone against early marriages. People can now easily point out that these marriages are unlawful and that they constitute a breach of rights. The genie is out of the bottle! This topic is featured more frequently in conferences and symposiums. Experts are writing articles, the topic is being debated in television channels...

However there is still a significant amount of reluctance. There still are individuals and institutions that continue to condone child brides as a normal phenomenon.

Yes, we do encounter an equally reluctant structure despite all the work being undertaken on this issue. There is particular resistance to the issue in the public. There is resistance in institutions – public institutions especially – that ought to provide preventative services with regards to child brides. No matter how preventative the law is, if the person to implement the law doesn't believe in it, unfortunately the struggle will remain frail. In this context we ought to create a change within individuals. They even confess this sometimes. They say: “The buyer is happy, the seller is happy, what business do we have?” Yet another indicator of the strength of this resistance is the content of the case files that are being heard and the attitude of the judge panel in cases that we monitor. The smallest decision we receive makes us happy, yet such decisions are exceptions. However, the structure and mentality that condones early marriages ought to be the real exception. It makes us happy to see people objecting to this because they really are few in number. Although lawmakers are very vocal about expressing their opposition to this in the panels they hold and the work they undertake with NGOs and the like, and although they possess the power to legislate on this matter, they have not taken any steps on this issue. This reveals a certain attitude and disingenuousness on their part. Every political party expresses their opposition yet we haven't seen a material progress from any of them. There are draft bills that pay lip service to the issue but that's about it. Of course there are political, religious and traditional aspects as well. Traditions, customs and habits have a strong effect on people. When I sometimes visit villages or towns and tell fathers, “Don't force your children to marry at an early age”, I can see how distant and removed such an expression seems to them. “What are you on about?” they tell me. They haven't considered the negative consequences of this because they don't know and they haven't been told. Nobody has warned them, “What are you doing? She's only a child. You can't marry her off; that would be a crime.”

“No matter how preventative the law is, if the person to implement the law doesn't believe in it, unfortunately the struggle will remain frail.”

The smallest decision we receive makes us happy, yet such decisions are exceptions. However, the structure and mentality that condones early marriages ought to be the real exception.

Would you say that child brides are closely correlated with sexual crimes?

Not only that, it also inflicts a great deal of damage on the child's sexual integrity. People have been talking about this issue for years; however, nobody seems to be in a hurry and there doesn't seem to be any political will! Of course, there are some steps being taken but they remain limited to Ankara and a few other cities. However, with the numbers being pronounced, there is a pressing need to urgently implement a comprehensive project that reaches every child. It isn't enough to legislate. Protection doesn't begin with passing legislation but with the law actually reaching that child and the child becoming aware of and being able to access the avenues through which she can seek her rights. Because even the existing preventative laws do not reach the child, we can't say that children benefit from their rights.

Is it also that there are problems with the Children's Protection Act?

Children's Protection Act ought to really be an act protecting children. In its current state, it appears to be a piece of legislation focusing on the procedural and evidential formalities for children who have been led to committing a crime. However, it ought to be a bill that accommodates a serious protective mechanism, assumes a holistic perspective and features all the aspects that relate to the child. There needs to be something that organizes the sporadic provisions in bits and pieces of different acts of parliament. Child prostitution is under a different piece of legislation, pornography under another one, human trafficking also under another act, sexual crimes yet under another one. Each of these crimes has been defined under separate acts. We still have a legal system that condones a marriage at the age of 16 under the current Criminal Code. After these laws have been reformed and the necessary legal arrangements completed, there ought to be an action plan that parallels this process and undertakes and implements preventative measures that are alongside punitive ones. What kind of a procedure will be followed when a child becomes a victim, how will a second abuse be prevented? These have to be spelled out under administrative regulations and implemented. A new institution called Child Watch Center has been established. It is an exceedingly inadequate place in the corner of a hospital. What is more is that it only exists in Ankara and not in other cities. No doubt it will be expanded and will become more available; however, it must do so without any faults, because there is no compensation for such a crime. We must act fast and do the best we can. This is so, because as the Ministry of Family and Social Policies has also expressed that there are 29 million children in this country!

What needs to be done to solve this problem?

There needs to be periodic trainings that are of a higher quality. This is why we need political will. There needs to be effective legislation. Moreover, we need legislation that is feasible to implement, that authorities are aware of and that citizens know and can easily access. On top of this, we also need a judicial system in which justice can prevail. If these are missing than rights aren't actualized. As a citizen you end up not benefiting from rights provided in international treaties. Turkey doesn't currently have a program, a project, an active struggle or a campaign against child brides and neither did it have such a program in the past. It doesn't even have a unified voice against child brides. The most common forms of rights breaches are those committed against children. For example, there are campaigns against child workers, however no such campaign exists against early marriages. The ones that do exist are weak and local in scope. Public authorities have a role to play in this. There is a segment of the population who would stop forcing their children into marriage, if one public authority would openly say: “Don't marry your children off”. There are a great number of people who would stop doing this if the prime minister uttered these words only once. It is that simple. Because there are families who don't know that this is a very harmful practice.

THE COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN AND MEN



The feminist movement in Turkey had strived for the establishment of a Commission for the Equality between Women and Men for over a decade. Some of the women parliamentarians had also given their support to this struggle, when finally in February 25, 2009 the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men (KEFEK) was established under the Parliament. It would be misleading to assert the idea that the feminist movement is one hundred percent satisfied with the commission, despite its permanent status, because for the women's struggle to achieve its ends, the name of the commission should have been "equality between women and men" instead of "equality of opportunities for women and men". In any case, us women attach grave importance to the commission and seek common grounds of cooperation.

The first president of KEFEK was the Istanbul MP GÜldal Akşit. Having also served as the Minister of State for Women, Akşit had maintained close ties with women's organizations throughout her time in the office. Following the general elections of 2011, the members of the commission were changed parallel to the changes in the new cabinet. Azize Sibel Gönül, Kocaeli MP, was appointed as the new president of KEFEK and the members of the commission as off the publication date of this journal is as follows:

Justice and Development Party (AKP) MPs: Öznur Çalık, Tülay Kaynarca, Mehmet Kerim Yıldız, Fatma Salman Kotan, Nurdan Şanlı, Gökçen Enç, Canan Candemir Çelik, Nurcan Dalbudak, Kemalettin Aydın, Alev Dedegil, Gönül Bekin Şahkulubey, Mehmet Kasım Gülpınar, Zeynep Armağan Uslu, Dilek Yüksel, Safiye Seymenoğlu, Azize Sibel Gönül.

Republican People's Party (CHP) MPs: Binnaz Toprak, Gürkut Acar, Nedret Akova, Sabahat Akkiraz, Sedef Küçük, Hülya Güven.

Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) MPs: Sadir Durmaz, Ruhsar Demirel, Mesut Dedeoğlu.

Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) MP: Sebahat Tuncel.

The law that establishes KEFEK stipulates that the commission is responsible for the protection and promotion of women's rights, monitoring the developments both in Turkey and in the international arena regarding equality between women and men and reporting these to the Parliament, as well as delivering opinion on the draft laws and law proposals that are referred to it.

One of the first actions taken by KEFEK after its establishment was to take to its agenda the problem of early marriages; thus, the commission formed a sub-commission to investigate into the issue. The sub-commission held a total of seven meetings, within the framework of which the members came together with representatives from NGOs, government officials and universities to seek their opinions regarding early marriages. Flying Broom was one of the first organizations that was invited to present its opinion, expertise and suggestions for solutions.

Flying Broom took the leading role in bringing the issue of child marriages to the agenda of the parliament, emphasizing the important place law-makers have in preventing these marriages, and while doing so received the support of KEFEK. The final meeting of the 2010 "Child Brides" project conducted by Flying Broom was held at the parliament with the organizational contributions of the commission. Attended by around 250 representatives from NGOs, academicians, journalists, MPs and lawyers, the meeting made public the results obtained from the fieldwork of the project. KEFEK also gave its support during the submission of the 50 thousand signatures under the "Say No to Child Brides" petition to the speaker of the parliament, Cemil Çiçek, and as the signatures were handed, 80 people were present to advocate an increase in the legal age of marriage. Among the participants were women's NGOs, children's rights organizations, actors and actresses, journalists as well as representatives from local government offices.

What do numbers say about early marriages?

İlknur Yüksel

According to the TNSA 2008* results, only 1% of women aged between 45-49 years are unmarried. This number demonstrates how ubiquitous marriage is in Turkey. The same study reports that women aged between 15-49 are married to husbands who are on average 4.2 years older and 1.6 years more educated than them. Numbers from the National Institute of Statistics show that while the percentage of women who join the workforce stands at 23.5, for men the same number is 69.1%. These indicators are a testimony to the fact that men are more present in the public sphere while women are more present in the private. A big part of a woman's life is spent in a marriage. Therefore, certain indicators with regards to marriage, which are very important for women, have been evaluated within the context of traditional marriage. These are early marriages, the family deciding on the marriage, marriage to first degree relatives, taking bride price or marriages realized solely by religious ceremony.

The numbers obtained during the TNSA 2008 study have been based on the registered-address-based census put together by the National Institute of Statistics for women between 15-49 years old. The number of women who correspond to the percentages calculated have been estimated. This was done by estimating how many women corresponds to the percentage obtained each time a new topic is presented; thus, aiming to make the problem more visible. These estimations have been based on the fact that there are 13.701.178 married women in Turkey between the ages of 15-49. While many differentiations can be observed on the topic of traditional marriages, the presentation has mainly focused on education and regional discrepancy and demonstrated graphs with regards to this subject.

Early Marriages

The presentation has drawn attention to the fact that early marriages persist despite the amendments to the civil code passed in 2001. As per Article 124 of the Civil Code "A man or a woman cannot marry before completing their 17th year. However, in extraordinary circumstances or under very special circumstances the court has authority to permit the marriage of people who have finished their 16th year. If possible, before such a judgement is given, the court shall listen to the mother, father or legal guardian." According to the TNSA-2008 study results, 39.7% of married women have reported that they were 18 or younger when they got married.

Furthermore, the study has made a comparative analysis of the data from the previous studies of the TNSA in 1993, 1998, and 2003 with regards to age of marriage and age of giving birth. The median age of marriage has risen from 19 in 1993 to 20.8 in 2008, which goes to prove that half of these women marry before the age of 20.8. Despite the rise in the age of marriage, the fact that the gap between the age of marriage and age of giving birth has stayed the same demonstrates that the society expects women to first marry and immediately after deliver children.

While the average age of marriage for women who have not received any education or have only attended primary school stands at 19, the number of women who have attended high school and above has risen to 24. It is also possible to observe changes between different regions.

The study also features other consequences of early marriages in women such as dropping out of school at an early age, decreased possibility of joining the workforce, being subject to more violence, pressure and control by their partners and their partners' family, negative health consequences for them and their children due to early pregnancy, negative consequences for their physical health as well as their mental health due to the big burden they have undertaken at an early age.

The decision to marry

The research by the TNSA-2008 indicates that the decision to marry is taken to a greater extent by the family, regardless of whether the woman gives consent. 52.3% of women between the ages of 15-49 have stated that their families decided on their marriage. If the education level is lower this rate goes up to 71%, above Turkey's average. A similar discrepancy can be observed between regions.

Bride Price

Bride price, a traditional practice put in place for women to marry, is still in use today. Bride price covers the amount of money, property or wealth paid by the groom to the bride's family. The TNSA-2008 results show that 14.6% of families receive bride price during their daughter's marriage. The highest rates of bride price practice are exercised towards women who are not educated at all or who have graduated from primary school (40%). Similarly, the practice of bride price is more common in the Eastern region of the country compared to other regions.

Inbreeding

12,4% of women between 15-49 years of age contacted within the TNSA-2008 research have reported marrying first degree relatives (uncle's daughter/son, aunt's daughter/son). The study also mentions that cousin marriages among high school graduate women or above fall to around 4% and are seen least in the Western Marmara region.

Marriage solely by religious ceremony

The majority of marriages in Turkey take place both by religious and official marriage ceremonies. The countrywide percentage of marriages conducted solely through religious ceremony among women of 15-49 years of age is 3,3. Marriage solely by religious ceremony creates a serious obstacle for women to use their legal rights. This percentage also changes through level of education and regional differences. The study has found that marriages solely by religious ceremony are far more common in Eastern regions.

Polygamous marriages

The study has drawn attention to the fact that there are few studies on this subject in Turkey and that polygamous marriages are regarded as a natural result of failing to bear male children. A 2008 study, entitled Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey has asked women between the ages of 15-59 whether they have "ever had a 'co-wife?'" According to this study 1,1% of women between the ages of 15-59 have expressed having a co-wife. Furthermore, the issue of polygamous marriages has been taken up in a study in 1998 entitled Turkey Fertility Research, where 1.6% of women in the study expressed having co-wives. While one may evaluate an improvement in these numbers, because they have stayed at a certain percentage, these numbers are important in terms of demonstrating that polygamous marriages influence negatively women's self-confidence and also their relation to their bodies.

Priority areas for solution

At the end of the presentation, it is stressed that the illegal violence women are subjected to, which is also a violation of their human rights, such as early marriages, forced marriages and engagements, bride price, bride exchange and polygamous marriage ought to be eliminated. The presentation also draws attention to the fact that the social structure which controls women's bodies and the discrimination and inequalities caused by this structure persist through such traditions and culture. Basing our argument on the idea that for women's organizations to change such regulations is a long-term effort and that such a transformation would take time, the presentation expresses that while these measures alone are not enough, new efforts could be made in the topics of raising women's level of education, participating in the work force and increasing their political representation.

In order to eliminate traditional and cultural practices that maintain in itself discriminatory and unequal practices against women, related efforts should be made at every level. Within this framework, the report emphasizes that regional differences ought to be evaluated and regional mechanisms that can attract women's attention and empower them ought to be instigated and supported at every level.

**Turkey Demographic and Health Survey, (TNSA) is a comprehensive research jointly organized between the Hacettepe University Population Research Institute and the Ministry of Health, compiled once every 5 years. This journal has been put together by taking the 2008 TNSA numbers as reference.*

To be transformed into a married blow-up doll...

Leyla Rendekar

When one speaks of forced marriages that homosexual and bisexual women are subject to, the first thought that springs to many people's mind is that of women who live in provincial areas, who do not live their identities openly or who aren't even aware of their own identities, who have been married without their consent and with their family's coercion. Of course, the aforementioned situation is the most striking and dramatic example of this subject. However, does a lesbian carrying out an arranged marriage with a gay or heterosexual friend to escape the coercion from their family not count as a forced marriage? Aren't the seemingly willing attempts to live free of social pressure, to live a life although limited as one wishes free from the social pressure that is exerted through the family, not impositions of the heterosexist and patriarchal system? Being subject to questions such as "when are you getting married, why aren't you getting married?", or to various jokes on account of one having reached the "age of marriage", when one chooses not to marry and to stay single, are also different manifestations of the heterosexist imposition of marriage. It is unthinkable that a woman should refuse marriage voluntarily. Homosexual and bisexual women are under more pressure on this subject, as with other subjects, compared to heterosexual women or homosexual men, because they have been besieged both by heterosexism and by patriarchy.

Seçin Varol

Homosexual and bisexual women experience problems not only due to their sexual orientation but also due to them being women. In a field study undertaken by Lambdaistanbul Association in 2005, 64 percent of the female participants had been coerced into marriage by their families or environment. Today, a lot of homosexual and bisexual women escape social pressure by pretending to be heterosexual in school, work place, house and the streets; they can't speak out against incidents they witnesses, they can't approach associations for socializing or solidarity. They are subjected to countless incidents of physical/verbal/psychological violence and discrimination. They are sentenced to silence by reasons such as not having any social security or being subjected to social pressures. The discrimination suffered by homosexual women, being locked up in their houses or coal bunkers by their fathers, being beaten up and forced to change, being subjected to physical and psychological violence is often pushed under the rug by the patriarchal system and its protectors. Many incidents are prevented from reaching judicial bodies by law enforcement officers of the state in order to protect the so called the institution of the family.

Nevin Öztop

Objects that are simply swinging about, without any knowledge on where they come from, appear quite wobbly to us. Every swing sinks deeper yet. Homosexuality in women, which has just these properties when viewed from the lenses of masculinity, is an unyieldingly elusive and perplexing matter; for this reason it is not preferable for them to roam quite in the vicinity – that is of course, if they are not a part of pornographic material. Perhaps I should say that women's homosexuality is one of those rare national parks which men have still not gotten their hands to. It is to anchor male rule upon somewhere where every heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual women is taunted and befitted with a man. The homosexual body and soul, which stipulates woman-on-woman sex and being loved by woman, turn into a silent married blow-up doll in the man's arms. What is official and appropriate according to the state, is already this.

Buse Kılıçkaya

When it comes to marriages, the first incident I remember is a family fording their child into marriage, believing she would "straighten up" if she was married. A trans male friend of ours is forced into marriage by his family to a person much older than he. Our friend, who cannot take the pressure anymore, agrees to marry and is forced to bring two children to the world with the person he was married to, despite being unwilling. While he is meant to be undertaking the struggle of creating his existence in the male body, instead he is subject to 2 children and formal, obligatory rape during the 5 years of his marriage, in his male body. This is only one example that we know of and is a reality that should question a lot of things. Although we hear of people who have committed suicide, or who run away from their homes seemingly for no reason in spite of having no troubles, the reason why these people who had "no troubles" have committed suicide or ran away will continue being a mystery. We never want to consider that they have been forced to marry on account of being an LGBTT individual and have committed suicide on account of not being able to resist the hardships enforced upon them in such a life.

I conceive the institution of marriage as the institutionalization of the patriarchal mentality and the enslavement of women. Therefore, as a transsexual woman I oppose marriage.

"We couldn't say that early marriages cause vaginismus. There aren't any scientific researches on the sexual problems of women and the correlation between the two on a national level. However, vaginismus is commonly encountered in the society."

Dr. Derya MÜFTÜOĞLU:

"An un-lived adolescence will have lifelong negative effects."

Ceren Kocaman

Founder of Liman Family Counseling, expert psychological counsel Dr. Derya Müftüoğlu works on the topics of psychological problems of adolescents and adults, sexual therapy and vaginismus. We have talked with her about the influence of early marriages on the physical, mental and sexual health of women.

How do early marriages affect women's mental health?

Marriages that take place around adolescence are undoubtedly problematic in terms of psychological development and structures. Each individual's physical and mental development continues until the ages of 17-18. Completing the adolescence period and also their personal development in a healthy manner enable individuals to form their personalities. Adolescence for an individual with a problematic childhood background is a kind of a recuperation period; adolescents are in a period of expressing their sexual and self identities, achieving academic success, and finding themselves attractive as well as attracting others. A marriage performed during this period will, thus, be unhealthy for an individual who has not completed her biological development for motherhood. It is inevitable that an un-lived adolescence will have lifelong negative effects on the individual. Apart from fact that these individuals will have to set a home, a family and engage with a spouse, there is also the fact that she will be embarking upon her sexual life at an early age in cases of early marriages. Becoming sexually active at an early age, and marrying at an early age, and becoming a mother are two separate things. It would be wrong to hold the view that those who have not yet reached the age of fertility are apt for it anyway. It is, however, important to note here that there aren't many social and demographical researches that provide us with figures and factual data on the matter.

Early marriages pose threats to sexual health. For instance, vaginismus is referred to very often recently. What is vaginismus?

Vaginismus is the contraction of the muscles on the entrance of the vagina in a way that involuntarily makes sexual intercourse impossible. Vaginismus not only prohibits the entrance of the penis through the contracted muscles, but it also causes the woman to close her legs with such for that the man is pushed away. Intercourse is refused due to fear of pain. As a result, it cannot take place, and the woman suffers from incredible ache and pain.



Is early marriage a cause of vaginismus?

There aren't many studies on the age factor; however, vaginismus can be prevalent in women who are married off at an early age out of her will. Vaginismus is observed in relatively older women, also. The first step in handling vaginismus cases is to find out whether it is an organic disorder through a gynecological examination. The causes are usually psychological. We cannot refer to early marriages as the primary cause of vaginismus. There aren't any nation-wide researches stipulating that. Nonetheless, vaginismus cases are, indeed, common in our country. For example, a 28-year-old newly wed woman may experience vaginismus. It can develop in people with strict upbringing with grave fear of sexuality, and also in women who have gone through sexual abuse or such traumas. Such painful memories embedded in the subconscious can cause women to avoid sex. A woman may avoid sex and develop vaginismus on the outset of her relationship even with a man of her pick whom she loves, due to fears established prior to her marriage. This is called primary vaginismus; it reveals itself throughout marriage or during the first attempt to have sex. Secondary vaginismus can present itself in women who have not had such problems or traumas before but due to psychological reasons between partners.

There is also the fear of the first night...

Yes. Bringing the children up with fear of sex, concerns of losing virginity, being extremely afraid of sexual intercourse... These are possible causes for fear in the first night. Secondhand information plays an enormous role. Girls are alienated from sex during the course of their upbringing. This fear is also de-

pendent on the approach of the partner even if there is no underlying trauma or psychological problem. Intercourse takes place the first night no matter what. If the man makes it happen forcefully, without uttering nice words, without convincing her or by ignoring her concerns, the woman, who is already very much afraid of sex, becomes a potential candidate for vaginismus. A woman with high concerns for sexual intercourse remembers her first night experience with fear and pain later on as well. We have counselees saying that they felt like they were being raped during intercourse. If the person has a healthy mental structure with no personality disorders vaginismus can be treated in short time.

Can vaginismus be a result as well?

Of course. If there is an underlying self of personality disorder or a trauma... For instance if a woman was raped, vaginismus may develop. We look for such factors when women refer to us. Are there any possible experiences of trauma, abuse or rape? The woman may not remember it. These facts need to be checked one by one. If none of them are prevalent, if vaginismus has developed due to strict and prohibiting behavioral approaches during the upbringing, therapy comes as a solution to vaginismus. There is also secondary vaginismus. A married woman who has gone through all stages of fertility and has children may develop vaginismus even when she is twenty years in her marriage. So there is the emotional aspect as well. It seems like vaginismus would not occur in a marriage full of love, but it might. Issues such as conflicts with the spouse, emotional problems, refusal of the spouse, cheating and being cheated on might result in vaginismus.

Do people consider the issue to be private? Can women come to seek counseling with ease?

Some couples never refer to physicians to ask for treatment. The problem stays hidden until a relative or friend persistently asks why they won't make children, asks if one of the spouses is infertile, or when parents want to become grandparents. An interesting encounter in vaginismus is that, mostly, the husband also has sexual problems. As there is no intercourse between the couple, the male partner starts to develop problems as well. And sometimes, women who are prone to vaginismus subconsciously match with spouses who also have sexual problems. In this case the spouse does not place any pressure on her, approaches understandingly to the issue and waits patiently until the problem is solved. Intercourse in such cases, sometimes, never take place. Spouses love and respect one another and they just hug each other to sleep for months and sometimes even for years.

Is sexuality still a taboo in Turkey?

Yes, it is a taboo for a significant part of our society who still possesses traditional family structures due to cultural codes, although it is not as common as it used to be. People are much more informed compared to past. Sex education started to be included in the curriculum, more or less. Sexuality is discussed in women's talk shows, but we seem to fail in putting what is acquired into practice. Even though the importance attached to virginity in our society has diminished to a certain extent, it is still considered to be very valuable and has primary value in the establishment of marriages and family bonds.

We know that girls who are forced to get married at early ages are confined to the house later in life. What kinds of effects are there on older women in this regard?

If a woman is married off around the ages of 14-17 and becomes a mother, if she serves both her children and her husband that young, or if she is in a position where she has to serve for a big and crowded family, it would be unlikely to expect

a healthy development. She will expect a lot of love and attention from the primary relative – her spouse. If it is the case that there is no emotional or sexual exchange, it is very likely that problems will occur between the spouses. As this woman could not complete her education, she might feel inadequate and unhappy about her life, about the fact that she is not making money. It is likely that she will feel useless and incompetent. If, on the other hand, this woman is supported, she will continue developing psychologically. If a girl at the age of 15 is forced to marry while her friends are still at school, graduating from high school and on to university, it will be upsetting for the girl to watch her friends from afar. Naturally, she will feel sad and inadequate.

You also attend to matters of homosexuality within the context of sexual therapy. What is your opinion on homosexuals being forced to marry so as to be “cured”?

It is a fact that both male and female homosexuals are forced into heterosexual marriages. This is a problematic matter in any case. People may engage in such marriages due to social pressure, approval-seeking from the families or to make them happy. But if there is one thing we know from sexual therapy researches conducted in the USA is that a person's sexual orientation does not change. Although sexual identity defines a person as male or female, and gender roles are shaped accordingly, sexual orientation is unaffected by these. So even if a woman is forced to marry and she bears a child, she keeps on living according to her own sexual identity.

What would be your suggestion as a solution to all these problems?

It is very important to include sexual education to the curriculum. We know that some steps have been taken, but we also know that it is not at an advanced level. I wish for a more useful education process for individuals, and a society in which sexuality can be talked about and counseled. I hope for a healthy future and a healthy society.

“I never found the time to fall in love”



Gözde DAĞDELEN
phD Candidate, METU

We are meeting mother Elif at the new flat she has recently moved in to. It has been six months since she stopped squatting, and she isn't altogether happy. Due to a disagreement between the contractor and the municipality, there still isn't any natural gas connection to the house. Mother Elif is angry at this backset, she protests to being locked into a single room that she keeps warm using an electric oven: “I was also sitting in a single room while squatting, has anything changed?”

She is now 64. They ‘gave her away’ while she was 14, getting her to marry by raising her age. Visits to the doctors started when she couldn't bear any children for four years. The diagnosis was obvious but they heard it from the doctor too: “She's too little”. At 18 she had two children one after the other. 7 years later she had two more boys. After the grandson in her care falls asleep we softly start our conversation.

“So the reason for my early marriage... When I became a bride, went away, got married I felt as if I were a child. I mean the picture of me being a housewife and having been married never really crossed my mind. I'd gotten married as an illiterate, a kid. Don't play, don't laugh... So I was married but we were always like a group of friends with them [her husband's brothers]. We played games, we played hide and seek.”

Don't laugh and don't play... The situation, which she describes as the feeling that something is missing, being unaware, being ignorant is precisely the predicament that the child bride finds herself in. Her husband is 20 years old than her, the weight of the age gap adds to the gravity of the violence she is subjected to. To top it all, there is also the workload that the 4 brothers of her husband bring, whom she calls the orphans of my husband.

“There used to be the stick, there was beating and torture, I don't know... Women were forced to spend their time in torture. In a house every job depends on the woman. Eight inhabitants depended on one person. I looked after his brothers for 10 years and didn't get as many rights as a herdsman afterwards.”

The existence of that house depended on the labor of mother Elif, of course on condition that this labor was for free. In Delphy's book ‘The Main Enemy’ she discusses at length how the house-oriented work that women perform are never seen as a productive labor force. However, these services have a significant monetary value in the market place. The word ‘family’ derives from the Latin word ‘familia’, which means the totality of the land, women, children and slaves liable to the patriarch of the family. This situation of being answerable to someone else also entails women forgoing any discretion over their own labor. So what mother Elif captures in the phrase “I didn't get as many rights as a herdsman” is the natural condition of the family.

Her father's uncle's son was chosen as a partner for mother Elif. Her father doesn't have his heart set on the marriage either, but he succumbs to his brother's pressure. “They said she will marry our uncle's kid. My father looked at me and asked me what I thought. I told my father, stick a nail in my coffin if you send me away. I mean, I told him I could get along with the little orphans but I could never spend time with that man.” Her passiveness in this process is reflected by the language she uses: “I'm a victim of fate; I was too young to be give away.” And she asks: “What was my fault, what is my fault?” With such a frame of mind she asks her father to nail her coffin, the victim of fate whose voice is not heard yearns for eternal silence.

"Who new of 'age' in the old time? How did these happen? My father would say, this girl has grown up; let's wed her to a boy." The category of childhood is really a relatively new one. Unlike in modern societies, the lack of a lower age limit for work, a long education period, and a legitimate groundwork for sexual experience outside of marriage in traditional societies are reasons that fail to delay the age of maturity. Children aren't viewed as a consumer category who should be supported psychologically and whose nutrition and education should be delicately treated for their development. The little girls whose breasts have become visible are delivered as free family workers to other households, together with all the dreams they have been deprived of.

"I was grown, I was plump, I was pretty. I became a victim of my own beauty." The family wants to get rid of the duty of policing the 'honor' of their eye-catching daughters. Mother Elif, who had been given away with worries of being a 'disgrace' to the family, of making sure she experienced the first stages of adulthood with a husband, is constantly subjected to violence.

"I was last beaten up by my husband at the age of 55." Taking for granted the man's right to beat, she asks: "What is the fault? What is the trouble?" Early marriages make women more open to being subjected to violence. Mother Elif was also subjected to violence from the very beginning to the very end; she realizes that the violence, which till then remained inexplicable to her, is actually the result of her husband's jealousy. "I was young. I was very beautiful too. People spoke of me a lot."

The fact that she could not share the same bed with her husband, of whom she said *"his shadow hung heavy over me"*, within an early marriage – which is itself a form of violence – shows what kind of violence she was subjected to. In deed violence is not only defined as a physical attack or an illegal form of injustice but also includes exerting pressure with the purposes of obtaining consent under duress. She describes the super-human effort she showed to resist violence: *"I used to say to myself, now I am an iron door, I am a stone wall. I resisted this. A stone wall isn't knocked down easily; an iron door is not torn away by water or flood. I mean I am this."* And she takes refuge in the universal weapon of all the underprivileged people, divine justice: *"I had become so resentful and bitter, I said to my self, God, Dear God! I said I*

hope you lie under knife and are cut and torn into little pieces while shouting to God for help. I hope you die looking into my eyes. Winter past, summer came and he had it coming for him. He had a heart attack. They lay him under a knife to be cut and torn to pieces. The wounds wouldn't heal. His body wouldn't function below the waist. My smallest one told me, 'Mom, please take your oath back.'" After 45 days in intensive care her partner dies, in mother Elif's words, leaving both himself and mother Elif better off. Their antagonism being exposed to the scrutiny of the outside world is a different source of worry: "My uncle's son had a guest come over. The man had looked at me and looked at my husband. He apparently said 'Has this girl done something wrong that made you given her to this man?' He asked 'what is her fault? How can you give her to him? Has she done something wrong?' he said. My uncle's son described my situation. The man starts beating his knees. It was such a thing. God damn beauty, it is like a curse. I have lost my beauty now."

The only consolations of her unhappy marriage are her children. She has worked in many jobs from door-keeping to domestic work, from being a porter to working at construction sites in this town she has moved to 36 years ago. *"I was still carrying the smallest child back then. The neighbor had their coal delivered. They said come and carry it for us until your husband comes back. My husband hadn't entered a job yet. Back then there was cannel coal. They gave me a chair and two bags. Carry with this. I packed up and carried. But then, the rain started and I was all wet. What luck! The rain stopped. The man said I brought a ton of wood as well. Would you also carry that? I said I would. I carried that too. I was wet from head to toe. I was still full and bearing the child. They, the woman then gave me a bag of coal and two bags of wood. There were bags of pasta and rice. There were red lentils, solid oil and liquid oil. I brought hem inside the house, and I was so happy I didn't feel tired. I started to go into labor and my birth pains kicked in. There was a moment. In that moment the kid fell between my legs. I didn't feel it. He was like a fish when I first conceived him. If you are ever happy in the future, if you are able to make something of yourself, you will never remember the banality of all this hard labor. I have worked so much and have suffered such hardships but I never remember those because I made it out by myself, I helped my children fly away from home. I go and watch them and I am happy."*

Mother Elif says that if she had a daughter she would make her have an early marriage too. At first, it is difficult to comprehend such an attitude. How could someone who has suffered so much from an early marriage say that they would make their daughter have an early marriage as well? Perhaps Deniz Kandiyoti's concept of a patriarchal bargain can help us understand such an attitude. Deniz Kandiyoti explains that the patriarchy creates fields of bargaining for women in order to generate their consent. Instead of being viewed as absolute and passive victims, women are rather seen as active subjects who could sustain certain gains in such a system that also oppresses men. To give an example, the pledge that makes a marriage bearable for a newly wed woman, who is being oppressed in her marriage, is that she too will have a bride one day and will experience power. She internalizes the violence she is subjected to while waiting for her turn with this hope. This internalization can help us explain mother Elif's situation. Mother Elif has no doubts over whether a married woman would face oppression, endure all kinds of difficulties and lose her reproductive rights. She is just occupied with how to avoid such a situation with the least amount of loss. *"How can I make the inevitable bearable"* is the fundamental question. The fact that she has four sons, therefore four brides, means that she has experienced the amount of power that falls to her share, which is also a factor in her attitude.

As upset as it makes her in her worldly life that she is alone, she finds the meaning of marriage in her children. Mother Elif wanted to be a police officer or a teacher but she couldn't even learn the Latin alphabet because the imam of the village objected to it. She was deprived of even this, to exert even greater control over her, with the fear that she will learn the world and will have an opportunity to move by herself. Let's let mother Elif have the last word:

"I never had the time to fall in love".



How Migration Affects Early Marriages? Notes from a Study on Turkish Marriage Migration to Germany¹



Işıl BAYRAKTAR
Social Policy Expert

"I was planning to go to high school in Turkey. However, I thought, in any case, I could go to high school in Germany. After I got engaged, I dropped out of school. I started to work in a store, although my pay wasn't that high. Now, I am not working. I quit my job in order to take German classes. After going to Germany, I want to learn the language, graduate from high school and work there."

These are the words of 18-year-old Fatoş from Ankara, who is taking German classes to receive a certificate, which will be her ticket to her marriage migration to Germany. She is only one example among the many who wish to do family-forming migration. Fatoş was struggling to learn German when I met her, because she had expectations from the marriage migration. This migration would cover her whole life, result in her dropping out of school and work in an unqualified job. So learning German was a step that she had to complete. She was 18 at the time of the interview; however, her marriage plans had started while she was still 15. Her marriage migration decision affects her life in a negative way even if she isn't aware of this with the belief that everything will be wonderful when she marries and migrates. She goes on saying:

"I married my husband not only because I love him, but also because I could live with him in Germany. As far as I know, Germany is more beautiful than Turkey. I heard that Germany is better than Turkey in terms of life standards also."

Fatoş has made a close-kin marriage and she says she loves her spouse. However, in her narrative, marriage and migration are intermingled; marriage is not mentioned separately. Also, migration has directly affected her life. She left school and started to work because of her expectations from marriage migration, which means that her expectations weigh stronger than anything else in her life, such as continuing her education and working. What she found in Germany or whether she continued high school are questions unanswered still. One thing she doesn't consider is the fact that because she has worked only as an unqualified employee and received only limited education, her chances of getting to a better paid job is much lower in the country she has immigrated to. Moreover, enrolling to high school may not be an individual decision for her because, inevitably, her spouse and her in-laws will get involved in her life in Germany.

Just like Fatoş, 19 year-old Feraye from Mardin did not enroll in high school. But unlike her, Feraye didn't get involved in the labor market.

"I graduated from secondary school and because I didn't complete my education I'm not working. I probably would have worked if I had gone to high school. Girls do not work in my hometown; none of our female relatives work. My father doesn't trust men so he doesn't let me work."

"At first, my mother told me that he would come to Turkey to marry me. Because I didn't know him, I rejected this. Then, my mother insisted on the subject a little and I started to like him. My mother didn't know him or see him before either."

¹Transnational Marriages: Family-Forming Migration from Turkey to Germany. M.Sc. Thesis. Işıl Bayraktar. (2011)

How gender roles are internalized can be observed in Feraye's words. Gender roles are determined by her cultural environment, which is undoubtedly patriarchal. If she had stayed in Turkey, she would have experienced a similar marriage story that her family values would have led her to. In the context of migration, she carries her culture through her marriage onto Germany. Her story is a proof of how an arranged marriage can be realized within and outside of a country's borders:

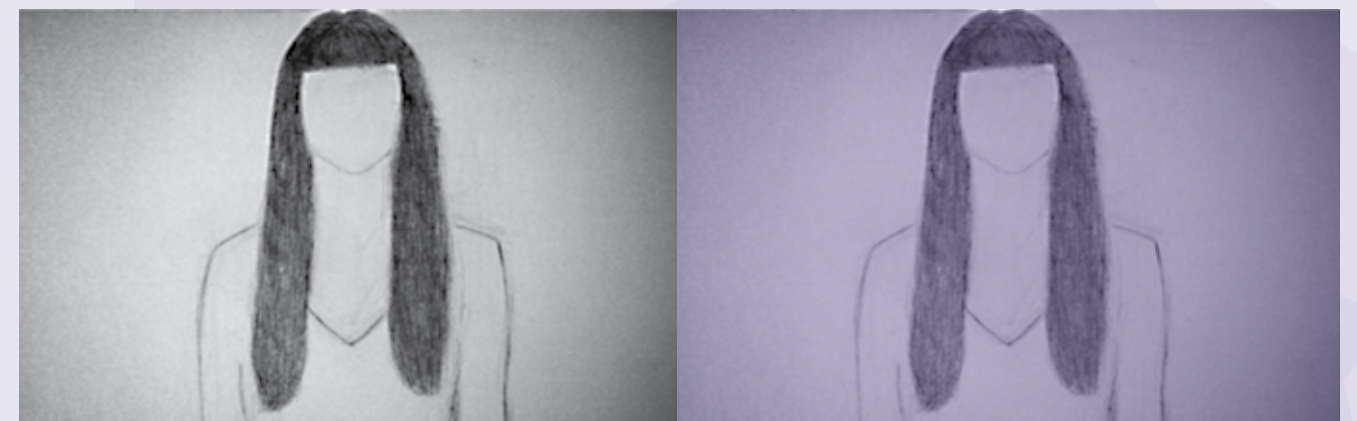
"My husband is my mother's sister's son, so he is my cousin. However, I had not seen him before. He and his family were living in Germany. They would come to Izmir for summer vacations but not to Mardin. He saw my photograph on the computer and liked me. At first, my mother told me that he would come to Turkey to marry me. Because I didn't know him, I rejected this. Then, my mother insisted on the subject a little and I started to like him. My mother didn't know him or see him before either. However, my grandmother, who lived in Izmir, knew him from his visits. She told my mother that he was a nice person and that I should marry him. I thought about it and so I accepted to marry him. My family's approval of it are the most important things in my life. In the end, whom they didn't know either."

"The problem of early marriages as a result of marriage migration starts in the home country and is carried on to the host country. Problems stemming from early marriages are experienced within and outside of the boundaries of both countries, putting women into disadvantageous positions."

Taking into account Feraye, it can be said that migration is a family project rather than an individual decision. For women in Turkey in the context of arranged marriage migration, all factors should be taken into consideration in a preference, who lives in Germany, of school and work instead, arranged marriage migration is a family project rather than an individual decision.

Feraye's marriage migration story provides a background for her marriage decision. Although she was several years to get married, which led to her dropping out of school, provides a background for her marriage decision. Another factor that should be taken into consideration is the husband's preference of a wife from his home country. All in all, of migration, it is apparent that marriage

What do these two stories tell us? These are examples from a qualitative study on Turkish marriage migration to Germany. They are different from one other in terms of marriage types, which goes to indicate the various forms of early marriage – love, arranged, forced, and others with or without the consent of young women. Behind the reasons of early drop-out from school, which can both be a reason and a result of a girl's early marriage, are also marriage migration. The resulting low education levels in women later manifest itself in unqualified jobs. Marriage migration also further perpetuates absence of women in labor market, traditional gender roles and patriarchal dominance. As a result, women end up living in closed communities without getting involved in the social and economic life of country they migrate to. The problem of early marriages as a result of marriage migration starts in the home country and is carried on to the host country. Problems stemming from early marriages are experienced within and outside of the boundaries of both countries, putting women into disadvantageous positions.



Esra Sağlık



What do we know about incest?

Since 1980s, incest has been described as the sexual abuse of a child by the people who hold power and authority within the family. Domestic abuse and rape begin while the child is still in the cradle and usually continue for years. Average age for being exposed to such abuses is 9.

The girl child becomes the target of sexual assaults within the family at earlier ages compared to boys. It is usually the case that girls are subjected to domestic abuse while boys are subjected to abuse outside of the family.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates of 2002, 150 million girls and 73 million boys were either forced to sexual intercourse or exposed to different forms of sexual violence.

The first ever nationally representative statistical data on sexual abuse has been produced based on the findings and data of the Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey, 2009. According to the research outcomes, 7% of women were victimized by sexual abuse

before the age of 15. In 75% of clinical samples and more than half of the nonclinical samples, it has been observed that the child is abused more than once.

Sandra Butler articulated in her piece "The Trauma of Incest" that "sexual abuse has a gender, and it is male". Data confirm Butler's assertion. Research shows that majority of the incest perpetrators are fathers. Older brothers and close relatives come next in the line of criminals of incest. Research also indicates that cases of abuse stay hidden for long periods. Children first open up to their mothers. They might also confide in people close to them that they trust. Among those who hear first about such cases are also counselors at schools. Incest is an incident difficult to legally prove. The incident takes place secretly, and very often the only witness is the victim itself.

It was revealed in 2008 that a father raped his daughter for 24 years in the city of Amstten in Austria. DNA tests, as ordered by the court, proved that Josef Fritzl is the father of 6 children

of his daughter whom he raped systematically. Elisabeth had been abused by his father since the age of 18. Another case which was unveiled in 2011 in Austria was that 80 year old Gottfried W. had raped his very own daughters for 40 years and locked the two in a room to alienate them from social life.

That the events found coverage in the media encouraged people to think, talk and research on incest. These stories are not exclusive to one country, on the contrary, is found all over the world. Incest cases in Turkey are widespread; however, it does not become a topic of discussion, for it is still a taboo, which is also the reason why research on the issue is difficult to conduct.

There is also a relationship between incest and child marriages. Sometimes families try to cover up cases of incest by marrying the child off at an early age. Similarly, there is also the case that girls, especially in larger families, who are thought to be under the risk of incest, are married off at early ages as a solution to a possible problem.

Don't Marry Her Off!

Youth Network/Association for Struggling Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

In Turkey, child neglect and abuse is a social problem that urgently needs to be addressed. This problem, which doesn't feature frequently in public discussions, isn't particular to Turkey and is encountered in many parts of the world, especially in developing or less developed countries. Sexual, commercial and physical damage inflicted on children, which has its crippling effects, destroys the brains that will shape the future of our society through stigmatization and leaving them impotent.

The basic and interrelated forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children are prostitution, child pornography, early marriages, sex tourism and child trafficking. Child brides are the most widespread and invisible ones amongst these forms of abuse. Turkey is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and accepts any individual under the age of 18 as a child. As a result, all marriages under the age of 18 should be regarded as a "child marriage"; thus, making these marriages unlawful. It is a normative marriage, legitimized through religion and customs. It is the most widely accepted form of child abuse.

In Turkey, one out of three children is a child bride. However, when the fact that this figure is obtained using court judgements with regards to early marriages is considered it becomes obvious that this number doesn't reflect the real situation. The existence of children in Southeastern and Eastern Anatolia of which the state has no record, goes to prove that this number is in fact much higher.

The average age of marriage and childbirth have fallen to 12 and 13 respectively for girls in our country. Through imposing the responsibility of marriage at the most critical period of their personal development, children are being refrained from completing their physical and mental development in a healthy manner. This results in increased rates of suicide in children; thus, drawing the society into a spiral that is very difficult to avoid.

Child brides do not get enough attention within the public agenda. The reason for this is that the society views this situation as a custom and not as a problem. This robs girls of their right to participation, threatens their right to life, hinders their self-confidence and social status, and condemns them to a life of being dependant on somebody else's money, discretion

and mercy. The Association for Struggling against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children has started the "Don't Marry Your Child Off!" campaign to tackle this social problem that is legitimized under the banner of "marriage".

The Association led by its General Coordinator lawyer Şahin Antakyalıoğlu is a member of the international organization End Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT). The youth branches of this organisation have also started to operate more actively with the increasing number of young volunteers that participate through university organizations.

A core group based in Ankara holds meetings every other week. In these meetings we practice writing directives to help institutionalise the mobilization of this Youth Network, as well as organizing yearly and monthly schedules in order to ensure that the network will operate in a planned and efficient manner. In the coming period we plan to open summer workshops that will explain commercial sexual exploitation and children's rights to children through different plays, stories and other materials. In order to draw attention to "Child Sex Tourism", we plan to organize a new campaign that will ascertain the ethical standards in this issue and will ask significant travel agencies to sign these standards, thus raising awareness.

There are many projects underway that aim to promote the "Don't Marry Your Child Off" campaign and to support the struggle against commercial and sexual exploitation of children. Various strategies and ideas are being developed to reach different target audiences to raise social awareness and sensitivity with regards to this issue. Placards, posters, pamphlets, articles, music and video material are prepared in cooperation with NGOs and media to make the campaign more visible and to help the campaign reach a wider audience. Lastly, in order to increase the campaign's visibility as well as increase social awareness a flashmob event has been held in Ankara-Kızılay with banners that wrote: "A child cannot be a bride", "Early marriages steal from life", and "Child marriage is rape".

In a country where every year hundreds of children are married off in exchange for money, it is within our strength to end this commercial and sexual exploitation committed under the guise of marriage. Let us protect our girls. Let's not marry our children off!



ECPAT says NO to child marriage and trafficking for sexual purposes

Alessia Altamura
ECPAT International



Forced child marriage is a violation of human rights affecting millions of children worldwide. Whilst it is difficult to obtain accurate data on the extent of the phenomenon, UNICEF has estimated that over 64 million women across the world now aged between 20 and 24 years were married before they turned 18. According to ECPAT International, the marriage of children and adolescents under the age of 18 can be considered a manifestation of commercial sexual exploitation when the child is used for sexual purposes in exchange for goods or payment in cash or in-kind. Normally, in such cases, parents or a family marry off a child in order to gain benefit or to support the household. Child marriage also intersects with the concept of child trafficking when children are recruited, harbored or transported, transferred or received with the intent to exploit the child in slavery-like conditions, such as servile marriage or domestic and sexual slavery.

Research conducted by ECPAT over the years has confirmed that child marriage as a form of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking concerns mostly girls from Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Middle East, although a presence in Eastern Europe and Latin America has also been reported. In Western

Europe, a study published by ECPAT UK in 2009 documented 48 cases of children who were trafficked in and out of UK for forced marriage, including cases where there were strong suspicions of an impending forced marriage involving the movement and potential sexual exploitation of the child. According to SANLAAP India (ECPAT member group in the country), "child marriage is accepted in the South Asia region and is one of the more common methods to procure young girls for prostitution."

Most literature suggests that child marriage is practiced mainly in rural areas and within poorer communities. But poverty is only one of the multiple causal factors behind child marriage. A report by ECPAT on child marriage as form of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Africa attributed its prevalence to numerous causes, including inadequate laws, the observance of traditional, cultural or religious practices (such as payment of bride price and female genital mutilation), civil conflicts (with some families giving their daughters to militia members in order to defend family honor or secure 'protection' for themselves and the girl), existence of family ties and debt bondage, fear of HIV infection (which has encouraged men in many countries to seek younger partners) and gender inequality.

Typically, early marriage de-

prives children of numerous rights, raising protection concerns. In many cases victims are exposed to violence and maltreatment by their adult spouses or their spouse's families. Furthermore, early marriage is often linked to wife abandonment, plunging young girls into extreme poverty and increasing the risk that they will be forced to enter the commercial sex trade in order to survive.

E C P A T strongly advocates for a world where no children are forced to get married before 18, and calls on States and other relevant stakeholders to enhance collaborative efforts against this demeaning practice. In doing so, ECPAT recommends the implementation of multi-faceted measures which should comprise, inter alia, the adoption of clear national policies that protect children from forced marriages, initiatives to discourage the demand, poverty alleviation strategies, education for the general public and communities with the aim to question the harmful traditions as well as the religious and cultural practices that help perpetrate child marriage, and programs to retain girls in school and provide support to children forced to marry early.



The Diary of the Migrant Child Brides in Germany

Eda ÖZYURT

Import brides are an important element of carrying out the Turkish culture abroad. They are the best possible alternative to keep the Turkish ethnic culture of the new generation in Europe. This is why German-Turks go to their homeland/village and find the most 'decent girl' for their family to ask for her hand in marriage. This is profitable for the family of the girl. After all, there is money and residing in Germany. This is conceived as a sign of being rich and thus, such an opportunity cannot be rejected. That a girl, who is already deprived of her right to education after primary school, has to wait until the age of 18 in these village means becoming a spinster. Therefore, families are willing to send their children abroad through marriage, also with the thought that they will become rich.

Through the qualitative interviews that I held in Berlin in 2010, I came across a child bride story. A 16-year-old girl had lost her parents during the tragic Maraş events, so was married off to her cousin by the decision of his family and went to Germany. She tells her own story as follows:

"Once my uncle's son came to our village; he saw me and liked me. That's why I was married off to my cousin and we went to Germany. When the German government knocked on my door to take me to school, I was pregnant. I was 17 years old. There was nobody around us to tell us what marriage means and what birth control methods are. It was because of ignorance that I got pregnant at the age of 17."

Germany was important for these girls. They could, in a way, be the future of Germany. However, the bilateral agreement signed by the two governments stipulated that the "Turks" were "guest workers" and because they would be returning to their countries, learning German was not deemed necessary. So for the children, going to school without having to learn German meant was nothing but waste of time.

The German government, during the first years of the labor migration, hadn't conducted any studies on the pedagogy of persons of other cultures. Integration seemed useless since the "guest workers" would be returning to their homeland. However, through family unification, the migrant workers' families started to move to Germany and have children, which inevitably changed the fate of Germany and the Turkish immigrants. Integration would become a policy for the German government and the Turkish migrants would regard any change as a war against their culture.

The universal acceptance of the European culture as the model of civilization brought about a fear of threat against the existence of Eastern cultures. Europe, in this regard, was criticized by hu-

man rights defenders. Would a civilization which turned a cruel tradition of early marriages into a cultural phenomenon not be interfered with?

The child brides issue is more critical for migrants as it is for most other social problems. Migrants can accept fundamental changes or paradigm shifts in their cultures as long as they themselves do it. But in the case of the Turkish population in Germany, the conditioning of certain changes for integration proved to be an example of assimilation, which may have led to attachment to the Turkish culture among this population.

The reason why the German government did not prevent the migration of child brides into Germany through family unification despite their young age was because the workers were citizens of Turkey working in Germany and that the decisions of Turkish citizens were based on the age of marriage as stipulated in the Turkish laws.

Not accepting a married couple into Germany through family unification would be against universal human rights. However, these brides were, indeed, children. With already the stigma of racism hanging over their heads, trying to change this "culture" could have attracted more attention to the country; therefore, the legal gap was left untouched.

With the new legislation in 2007, such conditions of statement of property ownership for the person living in Germany and knowledge of the German language by the future "immigrant" were set before "import brides and grooms". Although the set conditions could be viewed as violation of human rights by the migrant community and the human rights defenders, it would be wise to handle the issue from the child bride's point of view also:

Despite setting marriageable age to 18 in its law, due to a legal gap in the country's legislation, Germany seems unable to prevent early marriages as a form of violation of human rights. Such a law could have been a lifeline for girls who were forced into marriage and as a result could not complete their physiological development, nor their education, which inevitably pushed them into a life between four walls with no experience of childhood, waste of efforts and the stigma of ignorance. It is obvious where the lives of these child brides are led to – lack of a family home when she is subjected to violence, nobody around to complain, lack of knowledge of the language to go to the hospital, not being taken seriously, for the same reason, by hotline personnel, and again, difficulty in defending herself before the court – a forever unhappy and incapable life!

Action Plan against Forced Marriage in Norway

Legislation prohibiting forced marriage must be effectively enforced

Measure No. 1 Improve expertise and organisation in police districts (JD)

Measure No. 2 Update the handbook for domestic violence coordinators (JD)

Measure No. 3 Establish a central team of police experts (JD)

Forced marriage must be prevented

Measure No. 4 Establish a system of minority counsellors in upper secondary schools (AID)

Measure No. 5 Develop resource material on forced marriage for use by pupils and teachers (KD)

Measure No. 6 Improve the socio-educational counselling service in schools (KD)

Measure No. 7 Use parent networks (KD)

Measure No. 8 Help to ensure that municipalities have good procedures for following up pupils who fail to return after school holidays (KD)

Measure No. 9 Update information material adapted to different target groups (BLD)

Measure No. 10 Establish a campaign website and a question-and-answer service (BLD)

Measure No. 11 Raise awareness of the issue of forced marriage among participants in Norwegian language training programmes (AID)

Measure No. 12 Make active use of the parental guidance programme in efforts to combat forced marriage (BLD)

Measure No. 13 Establish networks of resource persons (BLD)

Measure No. 14 Assist young people who request help to avoid breaking with their family (BLD)

Measure No. 15 Involve religious communities in efforts to combat forced marriage (KKD)

Measure No. 16 Include information on forced marriage in training programmes for leaders of religious communities (KKD)

Measure No. 17 Increase support for the awareness-raising efforts of voluntary organisations (AID)

Measure No. 18 Establish girls' and boys' clubs (BLD)

Expertise and cooperation must be increased

Measure No. 19 Strengthen and maintain the Expert Team for the Prevention of Forced Marriage (AID)

Measure No. 20 Increase the regional resource centres' expertise on forced marriage (BLD)

Measure No. 21 Prepare handbooks and provide training for support agencies (BLD)

Measure No. 22 Help ensure that health services follow up cases of forced marriage (HOD)

Measure No. 23 Establish local cooperation projects at the regional level (BLD)

Measure No. 24 Establish annual network seminars (BLD)

Measure No. 25 Increase the expertise of National Population Register staff (BLD)

Help must be effective and readily available

Measure No. 26 Investigate the quality of current housing and treatment services (BLD)

Measure No. 27 Establish more accommodation for young people over the age of 18 (BLD)

Measure No. 28 Establish more accommodation for young people under the age of 18 (BLD)

Measure No. 29 Continue to provide support to help young people in crisis situations (BLD)

Measure No. 30 Strengthen the family counselling service in order to increase treatment and counselling services in forced marriage cases (BLD)

International efforts and cooperation must be intensified

Measure No. 31 Establish positions for Integration Attachés (AID)

Measure No. 32 Improve procedures for dealing with forced marriage cases (UD)

Measure No. 33 Improve competence in the Foreign Service (UD)

Measure No. 34 Continue to refund the costs of repatriating victims of forced marriage (UD)

Measure No. 35 Promote cooperation between authorities and voluntary organisations in Norway and in the parents' country of origin (UD)

Measure No. 36 Bring up the issue of forced marriage in political discussions with other countries (UD)

Measure No. 37 Strengthen Nordic cooperation (BLD)

Measure No. 38 Contribute to European cooperation (AID)

Knowledge and research must be reinforced

Measure No. 39 Strengthen research and evaluation (BLD)

Measure No. 40 Establish procedures for systematic registration of forced marriage cases (BLD)

AID - Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion

BLD - Ministry of Children and Equality

HOD - Ministry of Health and Care Services

JD - Ministry of Justice and the Police

KD - Ministry of Education and Research

KKD - Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs

KRD - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

UD - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

For the whole text: <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/BLD/Action%20Plan%20Forced%20Marriage.pdf>

Child Marriage: A Global Disaster

Child marriages are a global problem. Here is an account of what this destructive tradition means in different countries.

Niger: Selling Daughters

For girls in Niger poverty is not limited to scarce financial resources or a day without food. Poverty to them may mean being married very young to men three times their age. Poverty to them means no or very narrowed opportunities for an education. Poverty to them means being pregnant in their teens, and being exposed to fatal injuries during childbirth and even a heightened risk of dying during delivery. The relationship between poverty and child marriage in Niger, especially female child marriage is one that links several of the countries' problems into an intricate web. To the Niger people, child marriage is a way out of destitution, often with families selling their daughters for the price of a few cattle. Niger ranks number one with the highest rate of child marriage with around 75% of women married by 18, and one out of two girls are married by the age of 15 years. According to the organization Save the Children, Niger is described as the worst country to be a mother in, a title previously held by Afghanistan. Girls attend school on average for 4 years and once married hardly ever return to continue their education.

Egypt: The tourist's bride

Apparently the occurrence of child marriages doesn't limit itself to situations where young girls are married off to older men for means of financial sustenance; in Egypt the phenomenon occurs as a disguised form of women trafficking. Recent reports show that hundreds of girls in Egypt are sworn into marriage to tourists, largely from the Gulf region, a marriage often lasting only the duration of the holiday. Although these girls are forced, some even consent to the

marriage, in order that their families can make an income through dowry payments, the events are also largely a result of intermediary managers who thrive on the business. Termed as "summer brides" these women are mostly under aged and are usually left behind when their husbands return to their home countries, being left for rejection and humiliation by their society. The consequences of these marriages are many. If these marriages result in children, the young mothers helplessly deliver their children to orphanages, trying recklessly to readjust into a society after a few life-changing months of deceit and fraud.

Nicaragua and Dominican Republic

Child marriages seem to be normality in certain regions of South Asia and Africa, but the global issue spans as far as Central America and the Caribbean, where the country of Nicaragua ranks 18th and the Dominican Republic as 21st with the highest rate of child marriages. 43% of women between the age of 20 and 24 were married by the time they were 18 in Nicaragua and 40% in the Dominican Republic. But the issue is not limited to just these two countries in the Caribbean, Guyana, Haiti and Suriname are amongst the others that bear the heavy burden of gender discrimination and child marriages and these are not all. Several other countries in the region are supposedly dealing with similar issues, but research in the area lacks due to insufficient data. The results are however apparent; girls married young have no opportunities to attend school, are exposed to the risks of early maternity including maternal mortality and hazards to the child's health as well.

India: Half the girls are married

India ranks amongst the world's top 30 countries with the highest rates of child marriage. 47% of girls (between 20 and 24) are married by the age of 18, and 18.2% by the age of 15 even though legally a girl cannot be married before she turns 18.

US: Teen pregnancies

Teen pregnancies in the West are very common, particularly for the US. In fact, according to one article, the country has the highest rate of teen pregnancies for the "developed world." The article cites a report which summarizes that around 400,000 girls between ages 15 and 19 give birth every year. Recent reviews on the issue blame the trend on the lack of an effective form of sex and contraception education to adolescents, who out of ignorance, tend to become pregnant at a very young age. According to an American organization working for sexual and reproductive health and rights around the world, one third of teenagers do not get any real education about contraception. Between 1990 and 2008 the rate fell about 40% as reported by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics. Reasons outlined for this decreasing trend include increased use of contraceptives and the fact that girls now want to pursue careers and find it important to obtain a degree, causing them to postpone getting pregnant.

Early Marriages of the Roma People

In Europe where the Roma people gather to live a very elementary lifestyle, often begging to earn an income, the culture of child marriages is a norm. Like most child

marriages around the world, the Roma people too have financial reasons to marry their children off at a young age. For some, marrying their daughters even before they reach their teens means an opportunity for their daughters to have a house, a necessity that is not typical for the Roma people. However a duty towards following tradition also creates a strong motivation for these marriages. Additionally, the Roma people also hasten the marriage process by arranging weddings for children as young as five years old, as virginity is an important virtue that increases the chances of the bride being chosen by a suitor. In countries where the Roma people form their settlements, it becomes difficult for the home authorities to tackle events in which the Roma people's cultural values and traditions are concerned. Likewise dealing with the prevalent domestic violence in the community also becomes a difficult challenge to overcome, despite efforts from different NGOs and women rights agencies.

UK: New Laws in Europe

Recently this year Prime Minister David Cameron passed a law that made forced marriages illegal in the UK. In the UK around 8000 women are forced to marry without consent every year, a number that may come as a surprise to many, considering such events are more common in Africa and South Asia. The PM labeled the practice "slavery" and "abhorrent," claiming that even if such marriages were rooted in culture, the country would not allow it and passing a law criminalizing forced marriages would hopefully prevent them. Switzerland is another country working to criminalize forced marriages. According to the legislation victims could rely on the law rather than having to file complaints themselves, which could lead to around 5 years in prison for the guilty. At the zwangsheirat.ch advice center 4 calls are received per week, reporting forced marriages, which increases to 9 calls a

week during the summer. In Switzerland, like in the rest of Europe and the USA, forced marriages are intricately linked to failed integration of immigrant families into the West. By forcing their children into marrying within their respective communities, these families believe that their original culture and traditions could be preserved. (abc.net)

Bangladesh: The story of Iva



Mine Oktay/ International Children's Center & Bilkent University
Department of Graphic Design

The Bangladeshi government is attempting to register birth data online to combat high levels of child marriage. On 8 June 2012 in Bangladesh's western Khustia District, local media reported that 15-year-old Iva Parvin was to be married off by parents hiding her age, but local officials challenged the marriage and demanded proof that she had reached the legal marrying age of 18. When her parents could not provide documentation, the marriage was not approved. "We feel the situation is improving but it is still not acceptable," said Amy Delneuve, a child protection specialist at the UN Children's Fund in Bangladesh. "In visits by our staff to the field, we are still finding unacceptable numbers of girls being married with the approval of the kazi [a person who conducts the marriage] and par-

ents." Everyone should "soon" have a birth certificate. Limited birth registration data is already online, with a full roll-out expected by June 2013. "Once it is fully online it will be easy to stop child marriage when parents marry off their daughter hiding her age," said A K M Saiful Islam Chowdhury, director of the government's Birth and Death Registration Project, which is supported by UNICEF. The government launched a campaign to reach the estimated 90 percent of the population that did not have birth documentation in 2006. Today, an estimated 114 million of the country's 150 million inhabitants have birth certificates, according to officials. The 2007 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey recorded that 66 percent of women aged 20-24, mainly in rural areas, were married before they were 18 years old. Zinat Afroze, a social development adviser at Plan International, a child rights NGO working in Bangladesh, said it was impossible to end child marriage without addressing its root causes. The Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association noted that almost 90 percent of girls aged 10-18 have experienced what is known locally as "eve-teasing", where boys intercept girls on the street, shout obscenities, tease them and grab their clothing. "Parents feel insecure... [they fear the] sexual harassment [of their girls] and marry off their girl child," Afroze said. Local human rights groups have reported girls committing suicide as a result of such harassment. The dowry is another problem, Afroze said. "Many parents believe that they have to give high dowry money if they [wait and] do not marry off their girl at their early age," she said. The younger the bride, the lower the dowry. Experts note that birth certificates are only one tool for preventing such marriages. Since 1982 the Female Secondary School Assistance Programme has used cash incentives paid to families to keep girls in secondary school and out of marriage. Guardians receive a

stipend of up to \$9 per month, depending on which grade the girl is in at school, on condition that she attends at least 75 percent of her classes, and remains unmarried until she completes her exams. Tuition, books and public exam fees are also covered. Afroze said some guardians have tried to collect the stipend without sending the girls to school. "The government stipend program for female students should continue, and should be strongly monitored so that the right person gets it." (Source: Integrated Regional Information Networks)

Tajikistan: Age of marriage increased

Tajikistan House of Representatives increased the age of marriage for women with a new law that passed in the first days of 2011. It is now the case that marriage before the age of 18 is illegal, whereas before, 17-year-old girls could get married. Speaker of the parliament Şukurcan Zuhurov has reported that in 2010 38,000 women got married, 1,300 of whom were 17 years of age.

Kenya: Marriage of Masai girls

In traditional Masai culture, fathers often promise their young daughters in marriage to older men. Most girls are between the ages of 12 and 14, with some even younger. Not only are their bodies too immature to deal with sexual intercourse and childbirth, but they are also usually forced to drop out of school. One Masai woman is on a personal quest to rescue these girls from early marriage, in addition to helping her community understand the benefits of educating their daughters. Priscilla Nangurai knows the hardships faced by Masai women. Her older sister was forced into marriage at a young age, but insisted that Nangurai be given an education instead of taking the same path. As a result, she was able to become a teacher, allowing her to rescue other girls from forced marriage. Officially retired since 2005, Nangurai runs Grace -the Girls' Rights, Attention,

Care and Education Rescue Center- from her backyard in Kajiado, Kenya. There, she ensures the girls receive an education. Nangurai says that the problem begins when the girl is very young -and sometimes not yet even born. She explains the concept of 'booking' a wife. "Booking is when a parent, or a man, wants to marry from a certain family. So he can go to the family and if there are little girls there, he will book," she explained.



Erman Özkargin/ International Children's Center & Bilkent University Department of Graphic Design

"If one of the wives is expectant, he will say, 'I want something from this womb.' And he's allowed to do that."

Roseline, 14, has been at Nangurai's rescue center since 2008. She was four years old when she was booked to a man she estimates was about 60 to 70 years old. "Yes, I was booked. But when I knew the person they had booked me, I just talked to Mrs. Nangurai and told her the whole story and then (s)he told me, 'I will come and take you,'" Roseline recalled. In Masai culture, once the booking has been made, the man starts paying dowry to the girl's father. Traditionally the payment is made in cows, although today, money can also be exchanged. Once the girl's father and the husband-to-be determine that the marriage will soon take place, the girl must undergo female circumcision, otherwise known as Female Genital Mutilation. Priscilla,

13, was brought to the rescue center when she was five, thanks to her mother who was adamant that her daughter receive an education. Priscilla says that health concerns alone make her thankful that she didn't have to undergo circumcision. She is especially concerned with HIV - another threat. "They don't circumcise one person with one razor blade. Maybe when we are two girls, they can use this one to the first girl and then they use it again to another one. So that's why I don't want that," she says. Priscilla says that sometimes the circumciser doesn't even have a razor blade, instead using a piece of scrap metal. Once married, girls continue to suffer the physical toll. "Physically, the child is not ready for sexual intercourse, for giving birth and I've seen that most of the girls that get married early, give birth to still babies," Nangurai explained. "We have records from the district hospital. Then, giving birth, is very, very difficult for them. And, most of them have to have a Cesarean section, when they are giving birth, the first birth. Because they are very young, 13 years, 14 years. Really, these are children, giving birth to children."

Traditionally, the practice of early marriage was used to cement bonds between families and to protect and increase wealth, which was measured in cows. "Let me say, in the olden days, the Masai were very wealthy. They had huge numbers of animals. So he brought in many wives, to take care of his wealth," she said. "But now there's nothing to take care of, because they are diminishing. Because of poverty, and because of persisting droughts, the animals are dying. So they don't have that kind of animals now. But they still want to be recognized at [the] village level, by your age-mates. 'Oh, I have five wives,' 'I have six wives.' The more wives you have, the wealthier you are." Priscilla says that the Masai should educate all the girls, who will later find good jobs and be able to support their families. She says the dowry payment of cows

is only short-term gain. "The cattle can come, you have given [them] away, and your future is over. But now, if you're educated, you can continue to help your village and help your family," she said. Nangurai says that it is not easy to change deeply engrained cultural views. But she refuses to give up. "When I retired, the men really rejoiced, I hear there were celebrations. Because 'Oh, she has retired, we can do what we want,'" she recalled.

Nangurai has rescued more than 700 girls since 1986. She now has 15 girls at her center and is building a dormitory to house up to 80 girls. (Source: Jill Craig, woanews.com, July 18 2012)

Switzerland: Banning forced marriages

Switzerland will soon have legislation specifically banning forced marriages, a social issue involving violence and isolation which raises tough questions about the integration of minorities from abroad. Marriage "is not, has never been and cannot be a private matter", wrote the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. For centuries, endogamy -the practice of marrying within a specific ethnic group, class or social group- was the dominant practice in almost all communities. In Europe until a few decades ago, young people could be forced to marry for economic, cultural or political reasons. Today in Western countries, such compulsory unions are forbidden by law, but this does not mean the phenomenon has disappeared. In 2005, the Council of Europe approved a resolution against forced marriages, and since then a number of states - Britain being the first - have adopted specific measures to combat the practice. Under pressure from parliament and humanitarian organizations, the Swiss government published draft legislation on the issue early last year. Now being studied by the two houses of parliament, the bill would make marriages contracted under compulsion a criminal mat-

ter. Victims would therefore no longer have to take legal action themselves and anyone responsible for such a criminal act could be imprisoned for up to five years. Forced marriages are currently lumped together with acts of coercion, which are subject to a penalty of three years. No precise statistics on the phenomenon of forced marriages exist in Switzerland, and most scientific studies are at an early stage. In 2006, the "Surgir" foundation estimated that there were 17,000 cases, but the methodology used was questioned by other sources. So researchers are reluctant to name a figure. At the zwangsheirat.ch advice centre, up to four calls come in a week about alleged cases of forced marriage, nine during the summer holidays. It can be young people of any age from 13 to 25, first- or second-generation immigrants. The debate on forced marriages in Switzerland was launched in 2006 by Trix Heberlein, then a senator for the centre-right Radical Party, who brought forward the initial motion in parliament. Since then several cantons - prompted by the Federal Migration Office - have introduced programs of prevention and aid to victims. To combat the phenomenon, there is a need to understand it fully, Lavanchy and Sivaganesan agree. The major difficulty lies in the very definition of forced marriage and the thin line between a union imposed by violence and one that is arranged but agreed to. The research done by Lavanchy in Vaud suggests the professionals themselves have difficulty distinguishing forced marriage from other kinds of coercion, like domestic violence or human trafficking. "This new law has an important symbolic value, but in order for it to succeed in its aim, the issue needs to be depoliticized, seeing as it is regularly either trivialized or regarded as something absolutely barbarous," Sivaganesan said. "The problem of forced marriages needs to be seen for what it is: a violation of human rights, and not [an excuse for] some new strategy to drive

foreigners from Switzerland."

**Abridged from Stefania Summermatter's article of July 23, 2012 published on swissinfo.ch.*

Morocco: Who killed Amina Filali?

Angry Moroccans are demanding a change to the country's strict Islamic penal code after a 16-year-old girl killed herself after being forced to marry her rapist. An online petition, a Facebook page and countless tweets expressed horror over the suicide of Amina Filali, who swallowed rat poison on Saturday in protest at her marriage to the man who raped her a year earlier. Article 475 of the Moroccan penal code allows for the 'kidnapper' of a minor to marry his victim to escape prosecution, and it has been used to justify a traditional practice of making a rapist marry his victim to preserve the honor of the woman's family. Amina, 16, was triply violated, by her rapist, by tradition and by Article 475 of the Moroccan law, tweeted activist Abadila Maaelaynine. Abdelaziz Nouaydi, who runs the Adala Association for legal reform, said a judge can recommend marriage only in the case of agreement by the victim and both families. "It is not something that happens a great deal - it is very rare" he said, but admitted that the family of the victim sometimes agrees out of fear that she won't be able to find a husband if it is known she was raped. The marriage is then pushed on the victim by the families to avoid scandal, said Fouzia Assouli, president of Democratic League for Women's Rights. "It is unfortunately a recurring phenomenon" she said. "We have been asking for years for the cancellation of Article 475 of the penal code which allows the rapist to escape justice." The victim's father said in an interview with an online Moroccan newspaper that it was the court officials who suggested from the beginning the marriage option when they reported the rape. "The prosecutor advised my daughter to marry" he said. In many societies,

the loss of a woman's virginity outside of wedlock is a huge stain of honor on the family. In many parts of the Middle East, there is a tradition whereby a rapist can escape prosecution if he marries his victim, thereby restoring her honor. There is a similar injunction in the Old Testament's Book of Deuteronomy Morocco updated its family code in 2004 in a landmark improvement of the situation of women, but activists say there's still room for improvement. In cases of rape, the burden of proof is often on the victim and if she can't prove she was attacked, a woman risks being prosecuted for debauchery. 'In Morocco, the law protects public morality but not the individual,' said Assouli, adding that legislation outlawing all forms of violence against women, including rape within marriage, has been stuck in the government since 2006. According to the father's interview, the girl was accosted on the street and raped when she was 15, but it was two months before she told her parents. The penalty for rape is between five and 10 years in prison, but rises to 10 to 20 in the case of a minor. (Source: Lee Moran, Daily Mail, 14 March 2012)

Germany: One third of the victims under age

According to a report prepared by the Ministry of Family in Germany in 2011, immigrants from Turkey rank number one on forced marriages. Each year, more than 3000 girls are married off at an early age. 83% of these women come from a "Muslim" family, 9,5% are of Yazidi origin, 3,4% are "Christian" and asds 1,3% are of Indian origin. 30% of the victims were under age. It was also reported that a 9-year-old was forced to marry.

44% of those who were forced to marry dropped out of school. One out of four victims are of Turkish origin. In other works, forced marriages are the most common among immigrants from Turkey. Turkey is followed by Serbia, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh and Iraq.



Engin Ünal/ International Children's Center & Bilkent University Department of Graphic Design

Armenia: Early marriage and Yazidi girls

The traditions of her Yazidi community dictate that she cannot speak, sit or eat in the presence of her new in-laws. Sona met her husband Omar, 16, for the first time at someone else's wedding. After marriage, she will stop going to school and will move in with his family. "It is shameful for a married woman to go to school," Sona's mother explained. "Anyway, what young man would want his wife to go to school?" Sona's story is common among young Yazidi women in Armenia, who regularly finish school as early as 14 to prepare for marriage. Boys stay on a little longer before leaving to become

shepherds, a traditional Yazidi role within Armenian society. Activists worry that it is a practice which risks marginalizing another generation of Yazidi women, but traditionalists say that marrying off girls young is a time-honored tradition. "It is a commonly-accepted law, and it's going to continue like that. If a girl is mature, then I'm in favor of her getting married at 16," Aziz Tamoyan, head of the National Union of Yazidis, said.

Even when mothers are unhappy about their daughters repeating their own experience, they say they are unable to stop the custom. Lilia Avdoyan, 38, one of the guests at the wedding, said she always dreamed of becoming a doctor. When she was 16, however, her grandfather forced her to leave school and get married. The same prospect now awaits her 14-year-old daughter.

"My husband made our daughter leave school, and I was powerless," she said. "The children often complain that they have to go and live in a different family. They are still too young, and everything is piled onto their shoulders," she continued.

"Teachers at Armenian schools often try to persuade the parents of Yazidi children to rethink and not make their children leave school or at least postpone it for a while. But parents always have a ready-made answer, like 'my child is ill' or 'she isn't suited to school and doesn't want to study,'" Avdoyan continued.

The Yezidis are a tightly-knit group who practice a unique faith and speak one of the Kurdish languages, are a growing community in Armenia, with families often having eight or ten children. In the 2001 census, they numbered 40,000, accounting for just over one per cent of Armenia's population, but according to Tamoyan the figure has reached 60,000.

Things You Could Do to Prevent Early Marriages

- 1 **Get the idea that marriage is an inseparable part of human life out of your head. Marriage is a part of the life cycle but individuals may also choose not to marry.**
- 2 **While talking with girls refrain from using phrases such as "Do you want to go to holiday? Well your husband can take you to holiday once you're married", "Are you complaining of the ironing? Well once you get married your husband can get you a housemate to do the ironing for you". Remove such phrases from your vernacular. Such phrases strengthen the perception that for female children marriage is the only future.**
- 3 **While talking of a marriage ceremony stop saying "This is our daughter's happiest day". Perhaps her happiest day will be the day she wins the Nobel Prize or the day she embarks on a holiday trip with her friends, how could you say?**
- 4 **Keep conservative remarks that sexuality should only be condoned inside marriage away from your children. Such an attitude may cause children who are just exploring their sexuality to marry before they have come of age, and run away from the house in the process because it isn't legal.**
- 5 **Warn government to ammend or change laws that condone the breach of children's rights. Seek support from NGOs, members of the parliament, children's/women's/ human rights activists to this end.**
- 6 **As wedding ceremonies increase over the summer, don't forget that when you are invited to a wedding ceremony if the woman being wed is not of age, do not attend that ceremony and explain why you refuse to attend the ceremony so as to create a pressure on the family and shame the parents who willingly let their children marry.**

Reflections of Children's Rights Violations on the Silver Screen

Filmmakers have also started to draw attention to violations of children's rights. Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival has been featuring a section in its program on 'children's rights' for the past four years, presenting to its audience a selection of films on child marriages, incest, etc. both from Turkey and from around the world. Flying News brings you a compilation of these films.



CHILD BRIDES (ÇOCUK GELİNLER)

TURKEY, 2011, documentary
DIRECTOR: Onat Esenman

The documentary is the final product of the "Child Brides" project conducted by Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association in 54 cities. It reflects the causes of early marriage on women, such as an unhappy life, physical and emotional problems, as well as its negative effects on gender equality. Flying Broom brings together the views of non-governmental organizations, public officials and different occupational groups such as doctors, lawyers, etc. and, of course, women and men who were married off at an early age.



I WISH (BENİ GERİ ÇAĞIR HAYAT)

TURKEY, 2008, short
Flying Broom's Child Brides Project

Ayla, whose dreams are bigger than herself leaves the house together with a kid (Leyla), completely unaware, trying to recognize life. They pass through the streets of the city and come to a playground. This short journey portrays the disappointments of a lost childhood one after another. For Ayla, a merciless life's realities have substituted toys, cotton candy and the other childhood images. Ayla dreams of being a little girl again, while Leyla keeps growing.



BREATH ALMA, BREATH (NEFES AL, ALMA; NEFES AL)

TURKEY, 2008, short
Flying Broom's Child Brides Project

On the day of her husband's funeral, old Alma withdraws from the mourners to her own bedroom and remembers her past. She remembers the time when she was married as a child against her will and how she tried to commit suicide by drowning herself simply by holding her breath and going under water. Unable to kill herself, she lives her life holding her breath nevertheless.

PLAYING HOUSE (EVCİLİK)

TURKEY, 2012
DIRECTOR: Bingöl Elmas

Portraying the story of women who have been married off at an early age through their own narration, 'Playing House' is the product of a two-year work by director Bingöl Elmas. The director focuses her lens on the stories of four women, one of whom lives in Germany, who experienced early marriages; thus, seeking to create visibility around this global problem through local stories. Director Elmas notes in all her interviews that she was mused by the 'Child Brides' project of the Flying Broom.



NIGHT OF SILENCE (LAL GECE)

GERMANY, 2012
DIRECTOR: Reis Çelik

Girls who become brides without having the chance to grow, who are forced to sleep in the same bed with men they don't know, who usually have their first sexual encounter with a man much older, who cannot overcome the trauma of an early marriage until the day they die... Shot in the Northeastern city of Ardahan, the film handles the issue of child marriages through an intriguing story.

YUVA (HOME)

TURKEY, 2011
DIRECTOR: Ebubekir Çetinkaya

"While defining the gender of harassment and rape as a male, it was not easy to meet so many women, who had gone through traumas, to be in contact with women's organizations or to make them believe that I, as a male, could share their feelings." says director Çetinkaya about his film. It would be enough to lend an ear to the stories told in 'Home' which are never easy to tell and are, therefore, kept as a secret, in order to understand the harassment and rape lived within the family, behind closed doors, in a place considered as the safest and the most peaceful. The narrations of five adults and a 6-year-old child reveal the truth.



A DOLL'S LIFE

UK, 2011, short
DIRECTOR: Natalia Andreadis

Amanda seems to live a happy life with the doll that she never lets go of, unaware of the bigger game that she's in. She is exposed to the not-so-innocent parts of this bigger game as well. A film about incest in a 'modern' family.

SHIFT

ESTONIA, 2010, short
DIRECTOR: Anu Aun

When Miina is caught shoplifting, Mare, a female police officer treats her with obvious contempt. Mare is disturbed by the fact that her male colleague seems to feel sorry for the beautiful thief. She considers Miina as a rival and decides to teach her a lesson. However, neither of the two women realize that in their seemingly different lives, there is something dreadfully similar; everyday psychological violence.

**SWING (SALINCAK)**

TURKEY, 2009, short
DIRECTOR: Bilal Çakay

Swing, came first among 34 films that competed in the Short Film Competition in "Children Whose Rights Have Been Stolen" as a part of the 1st Children's Congress, Turkey. Since the director himself has witnessed stories of early marriages in his family, his film may be considered a requiem for their stolen lives.

DODGEBALL (YAKANTOP)

TURKEY, 2011, short
DIRECTOR: Fatma Yağızoğlu, Sedat Özğan

This film tells the story of a very young girl and her forced marriage. She is 'in' and 'out' of the game, meaning she gives birth to a child and then loses her life, for she is subjected to violence throughout her marriage. The film discusses 'child brides'; those who are 'out' are several.

OUR MARRIAGE

BELGIUM, 2010, documentary
DIRECTOR: Tülin Özdemir

With a focus on Ayşe's life, 'Our Marriage' tells the story of the lives that early marriages has been a part of, a tradition that the society from Turkey chose to take with them to Europe. Even though it can be regarded as a personal film in many ways, 'Our Marriage' is a common story, especially when we come to think about the negativity that marriage brings to the lives of many women.

NOT WORTH A FIG (İNCİR ÇEKİRDEĞİ)

TURKEY, 2009, feature
DIRECTOR: Selda Çiçek

The film tells the story of Heda, a young woman who is married off the husband of her dead sister, and is inspired by the director's encounter with in Batman. Through Heda's story, the film also questions the lives offered to girls as their fate.

**DEATH DRESS (ÖLÜM ELBİSESİ: KUMALIK)**

TURKEY, 2009, documentary
DIRECTOR: Müjde Arslan

Based on the life story of Emine, the film analyzes the "death dress" of being a second wife, and the feelings of women forced to wear that dress. It portrays how being a second wife devalues women, and ends up being their death trap.

WINTER OF LOVE

THE NETHERLANDS, 2010, documentary
DIRECTOR: Gülşah Doğan

The history of an arranged marriage between cousins in a Kurdish village in Turkey addresses the question of whether an arranged marriage can result in true love. For director Gülşah Doğan, her elderly uncle Cemal and aunt Emine are the embodiment of true love. In a quest to find out more about their love story, the film takes us to Turkey as well. We meet other members of the Doğan family and as it turns out, most of them had arranged marriages. For some it has worked out well, whereas others were less fortunate.

**NILOOFAR**

FRANCE-IRAN-LEBANON, 2008, feature
DIRECTOR: Sabine El Gemayel

Niloofar is a twelve-year-old Iraqi girl whose dream is to read and write in a village where education is only for boys. While assisting her midwife mother during a delivery, Niloofar meets a woman who allows her to secretly study. In the meantime, Niloofar's father arranges her marriage to an older man, waiting for the day she becomes a 'woman'.

LITTLE BRIDE

POLAND, 2010, short
DIRECTOR: Lesław Dobrucki

She was thirteen. She was taken from Turkey to Germany at the request of her family in order to get married to her cousin. Her childhood ended when she was 'owned' by a husband who tried to discipline her by insults and torture. With this short-length film, Polish director Dobrucki draws attention to the full-length misery and trauma women who are married off too young, as well as the violence and discrimination that they are subjected to.

Evciilik Playing House

The real face to a 'sacred family'

Selen Doğan

Can we really speak about a "sacred family" when children are being married off at early ages or are being abused by those very men that they call 'father' or 'brother'? What other can it be than being rascal if children are mistreated under false pretenses? Films on early marriages and domestic abuse were featured in the "Family: Scene of the Incident" section of the 15th Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival, one of which was the documentary "Playing House". Through making visible the trauma early and forced marriages create in women's lives, director Bingöl Elmas underscores the complexities that web around the issue of child marriages. Elmas answered Flying News' questions after the festival:



What was your motivation in making this film?

The starting point of this film was the "Child Brides" project conducted by Flying Broom. Back then, I used to think that the issue of early marriages had long been discussed and taken care of; however, through the works of Flying Broom I found out that early marriages are still a major social problem and that it is the source of almost every problem we know of women and girls. We see mothers and fathers married off at early ages not only in the villages and suburbs but also in big cities. Child brides are all around us; it's either our friend, our neighbor, or us who is the child of a child bride. When I look around me I see that most of the women I know – my sisters, neighbors, my friends' mothers – have all gotten married at an early age and I am a witness of what these child brides have lived through. There were things sitting inside of me that I wanted to bring to discussion, raise awareness and simply inquire about. I had set it as a goal before me to deem visible the trauma "playing house" creates in a child's world, also to push parents into pondering these decisions taken on behalf of their children and to even facilitate transforming them. In doing so, I wasn't seeking a person to dump all the guilt on, or make judgments about experiences. What I truly tried to do was to understand the case as it is, its reasons and consequences.

What kind of a role do you think cinema plays in unveiling gender inequalities, eliminating it and creating a utopia of equalities?

It is important to identify which cinema we are talking about. Are we talking about a sexist cinema that recreates inequalities with each production or are we talking about a rare kind that is attentive of such inequalities? We can easily see the social reflections of the former. The male and female characters portrayed in these films are very much sexist and full of clichés. I strongly believe in the role cinema plays in creating an alternative worldview. However, again in the former kind cinema falls back



into the pawns of the system that it generates from. This is why we need to be fair, sincere, genuine, and egalitarian. A filmmaker should have the interest to tune into their surroundings, the geography and the society they live in. A filmmaker, in my view, is a person of intellect. And a person of intellect is bound to take an interest in the inequalities women are subjected to. I personally feel close to the problems of women and children and thus try my best to contribute.

You have listened to many stories while making your film. How easy or hard was it for women to put their stories across?

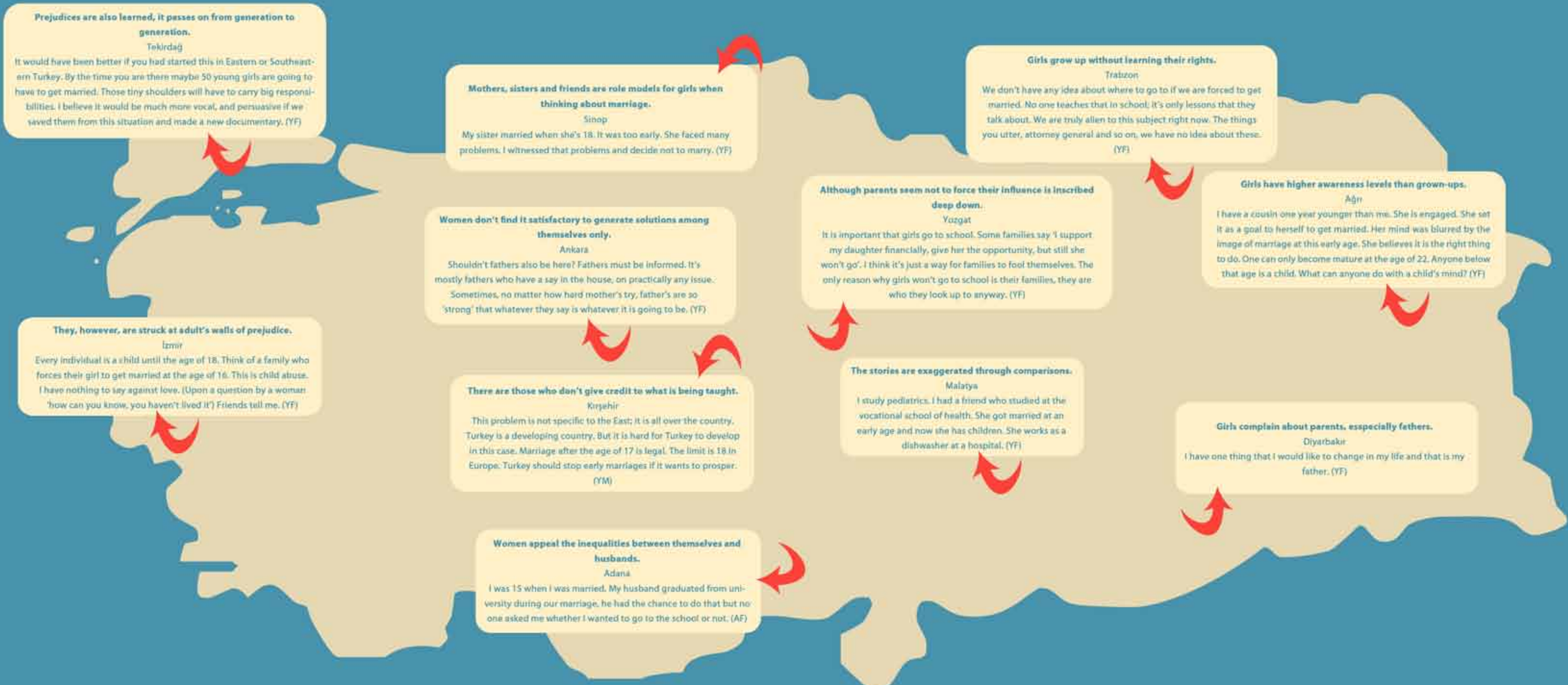
This woman who speaks in the film says: "Marriage? Were people lining up to torture me or something else, I still don't know to this date." This cry is a clear indication of what all of us are doing to our children in this country. It shows us how lives get out of hand with our laws, negligence and settlements. And these lives end up being so far from our reach that we have to start our journey as soon as we can. The same woman concludes by saying "When someone dreams of the future, they see something. But I, I see nothing. I

am 19 and have a daughter of 5." The child brides who shared their stories with me were telling these stories so as to set an example before others, so that others don't go through the hells that they have.

Did you play house when you were a kid? What do you think about marriage?

Yes, I used to play house. I actually really liked the game. But it's very fortunate that it remained only as a game for me. I might as well have become a child bride myself bearing in mind the current social circumstances. I see the current wedding practices to be seriously problematic as well. It is a state of giving up on one's self, and a state of complete devotion for women, which results in the violation of her rights. Marriage is an institution that systematizes sexism. I wish there was another way to be, a way through which people wouldn't be exploited, and they wouldn't have to stand violations or give up on themselves. I truly wish there was a way of true cooperation between spouses with an added value of sharing, which could result in a life lived happily ever after.





Flying Broom's Child Brides Project in 54 Cities



in conclusion...

WHICH RECOMMENDATIONS DOES FLYING BROOM

THE IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING OF EARLY MARRIAGES

-The data collection method currently used to generate statistics on marriage isn't meaningful or effective. The information obtained from registrar offices using ADKNS, doesn't contain data on marriages for people less than 18 years of age. It's necessary to create alternative sources of data. It's important to create a database that doesn't overlook marriages under 18.

-Health institutions should fulfill their obligations to determine and report early marriages.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MONITORING, RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

-It is difficult to both establish the situation and also develop proposals that will help solve the problem, while there are exceedingly insufficient statistical data. Therefore healthy statistical data should be obtained.

-Scientific research should be replicated in areas where high levels of early marriages are observed, the data from this research should be analysed and interpreted.

PROVIDING LEGAL ARRANGMENTS AND TAKING PRECAUTIONS

-The Civil Code has regulated the legal age of marriage. Together with this, if the courts exercise more care while granting permission for marriages of people 17 years old, this can generally help decrease the number of marriages under 18.

-The deterrent element of the sentences should be increased under the Turkish Penal Code. The discrepancy between the Turkish Civil Code Act number 4721 and Protection of the Child Act number 5395 should be reconciled.

PROPOSE TO HELP DECREASE EARLY MARRIAGES?

INCREASING THE SENSITIVITY OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

-Special programs and activities should be held to help public officials, who will have the most direct and immediate relationship with early marriages, show greater care towards this subject: Teachers and school directors, doctors and nurses, muhtars, religious officials are the primary among these professions.

-A strategy towards the subject of early marriages should be determined by The Directorate of Religious Affairs and publicized among all religious officials.

REACHING SOLUTIONS THROUGH MULTILATERAL EFFORTS

-Local officials and centralized government representatives should work together with local stakeholders.

-In the local level, joint efforts should be conducted with chosen individuals and opinion leaders such as "prominent members of society", "esteemed representatives of a profession", "managers".

MOBILIZING THE MEDIA, INCREASING SENSITIVITY

-Mobilizing the media: Increasing the sensitivity of printed and visual media towards early marriages.

- Mobilizing the media, using radio programs, TV spot movies and similar means to help inform people on the damages early marriage inflicts on women's health, raising awareness.

RAISING AWARENESS AT EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

-Awareness should be raised among employees working on every area of the education industry, the critical roles played by teachers and school directors should be considered and special training should be conducted with them.

-Helping girls become aware of their rights by including gender equality in school curricula.

-The amount of regional boarding schools should be increased to help girls complete their education.

The background features a stylized magnifying glass with a circular lens and a handle that ends in a brush-like shape. The entire graphic is rendered in shades of orange and yellow against a solid orange background. The magnifying glass is positioned in the upper right, and the brush is in the lower left.

www.ucansupurge.org