

#### **Sample 4: Response Paper on Child's Marriage (pdf)**

A girl under the age of 18 is married every two seconds, while an adolescent boy marries every five seconds." This statistic came from a 2010 UNICEF state-of-the-world report. It shows that child marriage is still very prevalent in today's society whether it be in developed or developing countries. Many cultures throughout history have allowed for young children to marry, especially girls. Sometimes it was due to their physical maturity and ability to reproduce, other times it may have been due to social class structure or political advantage. Child marriage has also occurred in developed societies, even among royalty. Perhaps the most well known example is that of Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's wife who was 12 when she became engaged to the 48 year old King.

In modern times, child marriage is even more prevalent in developing countries due to poverty and lack of education. Families sometimes marry their young daughters off to be relieved of the financial burden; these girls will then provide for them by establishing a new household with her husband. A UNICEF factsheet states that, "Poverty remains the main reason for child marriage." Undoubtedly then, economic development can play a crucial role in reducing child marriages. Indeed, some believe there is hope on the horizon for developing countries;

according to one article , "With greater access to information about health and family planning, evidence suggests delaying early pregnancies saves lives, increases opportunities and reduces childhood poverty." However while this may seem like an ideal solution it does not take into account that poverty is still often the leading cause for child marriages.

Many first world countries, such as the U.S., have laws prohibiting marriage before a certain age. However other first world countries do not prohibit underage marriages; in fact they even recognize them if it's considered legal by their country of origin like France or Australia . One example is that of 9 year old Sara Balogun who was married off to an 11 year old boy in Nigeria under Sharia law. After arriving in France with her husband she sought help from anti-slavery groups since she became trapped between conflicting French and Nigerian laws which did not take into account her age at the time of marriage. Despite this story having a happy ending, many other girls are not as fortunate.

In conclusion, child marriage is still very prevalent in today's society whether it be in developed or developing countries and economic development can play a crucial role in reducing child marriages.