



June 17, 2022
Vol 1 | Issue 2



Calls Over Governments To End Child Marriage

- Speed up the amendment of Child Protection and Welfare Act 2011 to include Child Marriages.
- 16% of girls are married before the age of 18 and 1% are married of before their 15th birthday.

Bafokeng Mahase

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SYMPOSIUM ON

Eliminating Harmful Practices Affecting Children:
Progress on Policy & Practice since 2013

DATE: 16th June, 2022

VENUE: Maseru

TIME: 08:45- 16:30

Calls Over Governments To End Child Marriage

// It would be such a shame if I am married early and I get pregnant. I would have a hard time facing my parents, teachers and let alone going for a checkup at the health Centre.

“They trust me and I would not want to disappoint them. I imagine the shame I would have to carry meeting my peers - the pressure, stress and depression,” says the 17 year old Bafokeng Mahase from Teyateyaneng in the districts of Berea.

“One of the ways that can help us as girls to avoid early marriage and teenage pregnancies is creating women and girl empowerment clubs to help us stand on our feet to say ‘no!’ to peer pressure.

“Again if there can be programs that help restore the broken relationships between us and our parents, so that they are able to talk to us and we also can talk to them freely about the challenges we face as teenagers.” She emphasised.

She believes that at the helm of it all, the government must ensure the enactment of



Bafokeng Mahase addresses delegates during the commemoration of the African Union - Day of African Child held in Maseru Lesotho this year.

the amendment to Child Protection and Welfare Act 2011, and its implementation so that perpetrators of child marriage and abuse in general can face the full might of the law.

According to Lesotho Youth and Child Survey of

2018, 16% of girls are married before the age of 18 and 1% are married before their 15th birthday, 2% of boys are married also before their 18th birthday and it is up to government and its stakeholders to ensure that concrete measure are taken to protect the children. **END**

CHILD MARRIAGE

Related Articles

Food Insecurity Aggravated By COVID-19 Pushes 14-Year-Old Into Marriage

// I could not bear it anymore. Each day my mum had to worry about what we will eat and has to literally knock door-to-door asking for food, and if no good Samaritan comes our way, we go without food. I felt that staying in a home where at least there is food was better than that." Lerato reveals.

The worsening food insecurity situation in Lesotho due to drought –and aggravated by loss of jobs for caregivers as a result of COVID-19– is pushing girls into early marriage. Fourteen-year-old Lerato (not her real name); third-born in a family of five, ran away from home with a much older boyfriend because there was no food to eat at home. She shares her heart-breaking story of hunger-driven desperation and broken dreams.

Since the start of the COVID-19 lock-down which got schools closed, Lerato's family has been struggling to make ends meet and find food to eat. Her

brother and sister were working in the neighbouring Republic of South Africa but are currently out of work due to the pandemic. The two used to provide for the family on a regular basis, but now that they have gone silent, life for Lerato and her mother has become extremely difficult.

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OPINION POLL:

Harmful Practices Affecting Children



SELLO MAHLOANE
Ha Foso, Berea

“ I know of harmful practices where children are married off so the parents or guardians can get bridal price. This is usually fuelled by poverty. Child marriage keeps girl child realising their full potential, through education. They are exposed to the risk of unplanned children owing to lack of knowledge on family matters. This renders the children born in such families vulnerable because their parents themselves will be inexperienced and children.”



SENIOR INSPECTOR PETJE TEKE
Police Headquarters, Maseru

CHILD LABOUR

Let me mention three - one of them involves the hiring of children. This is a practice popular amongst Basotho where a child from a poor family drops out of school to be hired for the benefit of their family. The direct beneficiaries are usually parents themselves and other children who remain at home. Sometimes these funds are used to pay for the school fees of the same children.

INITIATION OF CHILDREN

Initiation is a tradition we Basotho are proud of. This becomes harmful to children when they are initiated at a young ages, and also drop out of school to attend it. Even though schools accomodate children from initiation schools, their rate of return is very low.

CHILD MARRIAGE

This affects the development of children biologically, socially, economically.”



BISHOP MONAHENG SEKES
Ha Matala, Maseru

“ Child marriage is an issue that is perpetuated by economic, social and cultural norms.

The reasons behind these marriages are varied, some parents arrange the marriage without the knowledge to the child and many are arranged for economic purposes as it can mean one less person to feed.

However in an attempt to escape poverty, many are only perpetuating poverty. Married girls often leave school, so they then lack the skills to lift their families out of poverty.

As well as poverty and education, child marriage is also heavily linked with ill health, pregnancy rates, domestic violence and sexual abuse.”

Food Insecurity Aggravated By Covid-19 Pushes 14-Year-Old Into Marriage



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She remembers when schools were still open. Life was better because she would get her first meal at school. Now that they have been closed for some time, getting food has been a major problem. Lerato's mother also used to get piece jobs as a domestic worker before the pandemic, but now

even such small jobs are no longer available.

"I think it is because people are struggling to make ends meet since COVID-19, and what they have they want to keep to themselves because no one knows what this pandemic holds." Lerato's mother shares. "I have a feeling that Lerato was pushed into this marriage by the food insecurity

situation we find ourselves in, and she was hoping that things would be better in her new home."

The chief of the village, Mrs. Masoleng, reveals that the closure of schools has been a major source of increasing child abuse cases, including child marriage: "It has exposed children to a number of problems, including early marriage and teenage pregnancy; just to mention a few. I wish Government could do something fast, because by the time coronavirus disappears, Lesotho will have lost so much of its youth."

In response to the problem, World Vision combined efforts with the police department of Child and Gender Protection (CGPU) along with community structures to return Lerato back home, and have the perpetrator brought to book.

"The reason we pushed for her return is because we realised that several older men are taking advantage of young girls because of the problems families face during this pandemic. We've had to remind our community of their responsibility to protect children against all forms of abuse," remarks Community Development Facilitator, Mr. Kalele.

Lerato's case provides a glimpse into the effects of a seemingly deep-rooted challenge of poverty, now worsened by COVID-19.

Lesotho is one of the 20 African countries which have committed to ending child marriage by 2030 under the ministerial commitment on comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health services for adolescents and young people (Help Lesotho Reports, 2017) . With all efforts directed towards COVID-19, youth –especially girls–, are likely to suffer abuses that can damage their future.

.....[read more](#)

THE REALITY OF: Harmful Practices Affecting Children



[Click to watch on Youtube](#)

IN THE NEWS | Giving Progress on Child Safe Bills

World Vision Lesotho joins the government's ministries of social development, tourism, gender, and law at the lobbying session spearheaded by Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights committee at the Lesotho parliament premises.



[Click to watch on Youtube](#)

IF HE WAS OLDER, SUICIDE COULD BE ON THE CARDS | Project Saves The Day

The story of a young man who was left by his parents at an early stage, left with his grandmother to take of him, and later his younger brother was brought to stay with them by the same parents without any financial support. The boy, subject of the story was saved through the PEPFAR funded project - Faith Communities Initiative using a model known as Coaching Into Men.



[Click to watch on Youtube](#)

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE | Community Voice

The story for 'Masontaha is a common story of a vulnerable girl child in Lesotho and beyond. She shares some of the challenges she has had to go through at the time she was on her period. She lived only with her brothers who were oblivious of what support to offer to their only sister when she was on her periods. She was left to wonder by herself. She tells the story.

The Perils of Child Labour - Child Lens

// Imagine a child loading or offloading a truck full of cement bags. Child labor forces us out of school and that puts our future at risk." Reminisces a 16 year old Patliso Moroa.

He recalls boys back in his community, Ha Mafura in the district of Quthing, who are forced out of home to go work as herd-boys in the mountains.

"...it often snows during Winter, boys find themselves trapped, hoping for passersby to rescue them. If they do not come the herd-boys' lives are at risk. I feel sad for children who experience such because their chances of dreaming about their futures in school are compromised." he added.

"My appeal to government is that child protection laws must be amended and implemented accordingly so that children can feel safe and secure. I also want

the laws to made harsh on the perpetrators of the crime. I also think that our parents must be sensitized on these crimes and laws that apply to those who do not abide.

"To other youth, I want to urge them to stand united in one voice to report these crimes. We should not wait for tomorrow because it never comes.

// My appeal to government is that child protection laws must be amended and implemented accordingly so that children can feel safe and secure. I also want the laws made to be harsh on the perpetrators of the crime can be booked. I also think that our parents must be sensitized on these crimes and laws that apply to those who do not abide."

Patliso Moroa

The United States Department of Labor 2020 report indicates that in Lesotho, children's education suffers because they are exposed to extreme forms of labor. The report titled, "2020 Findings On The Worst Forms Of Child Labor" children as young as five years old are victims of harsh forms of labour such as herding cattle, crop cultivation, field spraying using harmful pesticides.

These parents need to be aware that if they force children do all these, they are punishable by law.

Patliso Moroa at the preparatory sessions for the upcoming Day of African Child to be commemorated by the African Union in Lesotho





World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Our vision for every child is life in all its fullness.
Our prayer for heart is the will to make it so.

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