Definition of Child Marriage

What exactly is child marriage and why is this localized, traditional practice a global concern? Child marriage, also known as early marriage, is defined as “any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, psychologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing” (International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2006, p. 7). In various regions of Ethiopia and West Africa, some girls get married as early as age seven (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). Every day, approximately 25,000 girls become child brides, and it is estimated that one in seven girls in the developing world marries before she turns fifteen (Verveer, 2010a). These conditions have been directly identified by the United Nations’ (U.N.) Millennium Development Goals as key international priorities for eradication.

Forced and/or child marriage is deeply rooted in the social norms of many African (and worldwide) communities. Child marriage is a harmful traditional practice, and no excuse should be made for neglecting the most silent, invisible, oppressed population in the world: the young, uneducated, impoverished girls who lack agency for ensuring their rights are upheld. On a personal level, this amounts to no less than repeated, marital rape of young girls. Yet, sadly the term ‘child marriage’ does not provoke a righteous outrage due to the ubiquitous ordinariness of the term ‘child’ and ‘marriage’. Marriage becomes en de facto an impenetrable barrier: in which a harmful traditional practice is enacted on the powerless marital partner (girl child) without reaction and intercession by those outside. This practice denotes symbolic violence which in place is the mechanism that leads those who are subordinated to misrecognize inequality as the natural order of things and blame themselves for their location in their society’s hierarchies” (J. Crane personal communication, February 14, 2012).

International Instruments for the Protection of Girls Against Child Marriage

To fully understand the implications of child marriage, it is important to first review human rights doctrine and history. In 1948, driven by the leadership of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, the general assembly of the U.N. adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) without a single dissenting vote (Glendon, 2002). Monumental in scope and meaning, this was a radical departure from the entrenched, historical premise of a Westphalia system in which the state’s treatment of its own citizens was not subject to outside interference. The first line of the UDHR preamble affirms, “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (United Nations, 1948). The ‘never again’ rallying cries, emitted susequent to the Nuremberg trials dealing with war crimes, however left the “…issue of peacetime violations of human dignity untouched” (Glendon, 2002). President Harry Truman gave his first major speech as president upon the signing of the U.N. charter and emphasized “…how deeply the seeds of warfare are planted by economic
rivalry and by social injustice” and that “…economic and social cooperation are part of the very heart of this compact” (Glendon, 2002).

Child marriage, and arguably all human rights violations, demonstrate a codependent relationship of economic inequity and social injustice which is supported and sustained at the highest state level. The consequences are not only local, but global as well. Social violence is fueled by pathologies of power. Presciently, President Truman as well as the crafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights knew that in order to prevent individual human rights violations, states would have to begin intervening in each others’ affairs.

Numerous international conventions and laws have been put in place for the specific protection of children and girls on this issue of child marriage. These laws and conventions established the age at which a person is still considered a child as well as the legal minimum age for marriage. Article 1 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (United Nations, 1990). Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that marriage should be “entered only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses” (United Nations, 1948). If the marriage does not occur by coercion, it is reasonable to assume that young girls feel the burden of guilt and pressure from their families to marry; either as a sign of respect, fulfillment of duties, or expectations that the parents/guardians receive a form of bride payment. The Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, explicitly deals with marriage equality and family relations; outlaws child marriage, and stipulates eighteen years as the minimum age for marriage for males and females (United Nations, 1979).

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also reaffirms that “no marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses” (United Nations, 1966). The Declaration on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women strongly advocates that “child marriage and the betrothal of young girls before puberty shall be prohibited, and effective 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” (United Nations, 1967). The official registry is an important component, which will be further discussed below. The 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child forbids child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys; and calls on governments to take effective action, including legislation, to specify a minimum age of 18 years in order to marry (Organization of African Unity, 1999).

The Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and, The Convention on the Rights of the Child, should be sufficient safeguards for the rights of girls. Both conventions are mutually reinforcing (e.g., calling for the eradication of gender-based abuse and neglect of harmful practices; in seeking to empower girls through participatory rights; and in requiring equal access by girls to both education and health-care information and services). Human rights declarations and conventions already in place lack legitimacy and credibility if their principles are only declarations with no enforcement. In addition, when a powerful nation such as the United States (U.S.) does not sign these conventions, there appears to be little political will to acting on behalf of women’s rights. This is no less than state sanctioning of sexual abuse and exploitation.

There are significant differences between the U.S. and most other countries that sign these conventions. According to Steven Groves, a Heritage Foundation Fellow; and Jason Pielemeier (2011), Special Advisor with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor at the U.S. State Department.; made it clear that other countries sign and ratify the conventions as intentional declarations while the U.S. signs as an institutional declaration (S. Groves & J. Pielemeier, personal communication, September 14, 2011). In other words, the U.S. waits until all terms of any convention have already been fully implemented at the state and federal level, or ensuring no such contradictions exist, before signing such conventions. Thus, the terms of these conventions have already been institutionalized before being ratified. Because some of the statutes of these conventions might fall under the jurisdiction of U.S. state laws, the time it takes to verify and/or implement adherence with all fifty states can be lengthy.

For example, the jurisdiction for child protection, health care and reproductive laws fall under the states’ jurisdiction. This would explain, for example, the highly ludicrous position of the U.S. and Somalia being the only two countries not yet ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Amnesty International, 2011). Considering that Somalia currently does not have a functioning government to ratify an international treaty at this time, the standalone position of the U.S. is all
the more striking. The U.S. signed the treaty in 1995 indicating their intent to ratify. But, the political climate since 1997, when it was last presented to the U.S. Senate, has prevented the readmission of the bill (Amnesty International, 2011).

Geopolitical Analysis

A country’s geographical and political realities are important factors in how power structures are established and reinforced. These realities are critical for determining how conflicts and disparities continue to impact the hardest-hit communities in order to assess what solutions are viable and what key players are needed for implementing solutions. Child marriage is not merely determining the appropriate age for marriage and advocating for mutual consent and equal partnership. Poverty begets poverty and often the roots of social injustice and inequity are entwined with ignorance and traditional practices at the community level. However, poverty can also be the purposeful machination of a state manipulating foreign assistance and circumventing it towards a self-sustaining hold on power. Child marriage is sidelined at the crash of this intersection.

Ethiopia’s geopolitical realities also factor into the perpetuation of child marriage. Ethiopia is a landlocked country located in the Eastern region of Africa, called the Horn of Africa, bordered by six conflict-ridden countries: Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. An ongoing military dispute with secessionist Eritrea has blocked Ethiopia’s seaport access to trade. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook website presents a collection of information on Ethiopia’s statistical data. Twice the size of the state of Texas, Ethiopian population is nearly doubled at 91 million (by comparison, Texas’s population is 25 million) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). This makes Ethiopia the second largest population in Africa and thirteenth in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). This is paramount when considering that forty percent of the population is living under the poverty line (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). The population is on average very young with forty-six percent under the age of fourteen (compared with the U.S. average at twenty percent) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). With the birth rate of forty-three births per thousand population, Ethiopia ranks sixth in the world, following five other African nations: Niger, Uganda, Mali, Zambia and Burkina Faso. Eighty-three percent of the population lives in rural areas (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

Additionally, the CIA World Factbook demonstrates Ethiopia’s uniqueness among African countries in that it is only one to not fall under colonial rule, with the exception of a brief Italian occupation in the late 1930s. The long-standing rule of Ethiopian monarchy led by Emperor Haile Selassie, was overthrown by a socialist military coup in 1974. Twenty years followed with continuous instability between bloody coups and uprisings, major droughts and refugee problems, until the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) overthrew the socialist regime.

The first multiparty elections were held in 1995 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). However, political repression was particularly pronounced during the period leading up to parliamentary elections in May 2010, in which the ruling party won an unlikely ninety-nine percent of the seats (Human Rights Watch, 2010). How this occurred came at the expense of human rights issues such as child marriage, explained below.

The U.S. maintains strong economic ties with Ethiopia. This is due to the fact that Ethiopia is the world’s largest recipient of World Bank funds and foreign development aid. Ethiopia received more than three billion U.S. dollars in 2008 alone, and the U.S. provided 800 million of that money (Human Rights Watch, 2010). The World Bank and donor nations provide direct support to Ethiopia’s district governments for basic services such as health, education, agriculture, water, and food programs. Devolution of power from the national to local level may be necessary while implementing important capacity building of infrastructure and distribution of services. However, the ability and responsibility to enforce international conventions, laws, and human rights oversight is at great risk of dilution due to local and rural entrenchment of social customs and laws.

Civil society would normally provide the checks and balance of advocating for people’s rights and needs. The U.S. government and donor countries regularly provide money to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in other countries for building local capacity and overseeing human rights issues. However, in the beginning of 2009 the Ethiopian government enacted the Charities and Societies Proclamation Law barring NGOs, such as those, working on issues related to human rights, good governance, and conflict resolution, if they receive more than ten percent of their funding from foreign sources (Human Rights Watch, 2010). This effectively bans all foreign NGOs and foreign-supported domestic NGOs in Ethiopia working on human rights
issues like child marriage. At a minimum, organizations have to have scaled down their activities, narrowed their focus, or entirely shut down. According to an Amnesty International report put out in March 2011 “the impact of the law is that today human-rights organizations barely exist in Ethiopia” (Davison, 2012).

One such domestic organization, the Ethiopian Women’s Lawyer’s Association, had been working since 1995 on providing legal assistance to girls and women seeking to use the legal system to fight early marriage. The justification given by the Ethiopian government for the Charities and Societies Proclamation was to ensure transparency, accountability of NGOs, and the money they have received. However, the Ethiopian Women’s Human Rights Alliance believes the law’s repressive provisions are “an attempt by the Ethiopian government to conceal human rights violations, stifle critics and prevent public protest of its actions ahead of the expected National Elections in 2010” and it gives the government “discretionary power over civil society organizations…allowing surveillance of, and interference in, the operation and management of civil society (Ethiopian Women’s Human Rights Alliance, 2009).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) also had their NGO registration revoked due to the Charities and Societies Proclamation. They had been documenting how the ruling People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front government was misappropriating resources and aid to consolidate its power. In Human Rights Watch’s view, the intended and actual result of this law would be to make it nearly impossible for any civil society organization to carry out work the government does not approve of (Human Rights Watch, 2008). It also contravenes fundamental human rights guaranteed by international law and by Ethiopia’s constitution. Most notably, the law criminalized human rights-related work carried out by non-Ethiopian organizations while at the same time making it impossible for domestic human rights organizations to operate with any real degree of effectiveness or independence. The impact of this law explicitly prevents the campaigning for gender equality, children’s rights, disabled persons’ rights and conflict resolution (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

The World Bank and donor nations such as the U.S. are not blocked in providing funding directly to the Ethiopian government-supported agencies, but are unable to provide support to civil society. Human rights enforcement and oversight requires both government partnership as well as civil society’s independence. Funding the Ethiopian government directly has resulted in the concentrated focus on sustaining military goals while circumventing human rights goals.

Ethiopia is a strong ally of the U.S. being one of the ‘coalition of willing’ to assist in the Bush administration’s global war on terrorism. According to the online Ethiopian National Review (which is banned inside Ethiopia), Ethiopia received a substantial increase in military funding from the U.S. in the three years after 9/11 — from $928,000 in the period 1999-2001 to $16.7 million between 2002 and 2004 (Guevara, 2007). The U.S.’s arms export policy, which is codified in the Arms Export Control Act and Foreign Assistance Act, is intended to, along with numerous other provisions, “…prohibit U.S. weapons exports and military assistance that would …be used to commit human rights abuses. Yet since Sept. 11, 2001, the Bush administration has pushed aside these restrictions while providing countries with known appalling human rights records with weapons and military support” (Stohl, 2007). Dick Armey, the former majority leader of the House of Representatives, became an influential Washington lobbyist after leaving Congress. He worked on behalf of the Ethiopian government to secure foreign military funding despite congressional questions regarding Ethiopia’s human rights abuses and using military arms against its own people to quash pre-election dissent (Guevara, 2007). As we see in Ethiopia, the U.S. government plays an active role in the perpetuation of human rights abuses and stymies attempts of local NGOs to make real progress on issues such as child marriage.

These seemingly unrelated issues of the global war on terrorism and child marriage share a complicit relationship. The U.N. community and its major funder, the U.S., provide funding and support to both causes. The global war on terror has allowed the U.S.to essentially ignore Ethiopia’s ban on charities that are working tirelessly to raise awareness on human rights abuses and attempting to abolish the traditional harmful practice of child marriage. The priorities are such that, arming and supporting Ethiopia’s government and military to launch offensive into neighboring Somalia and Eritrea against Islamic insurgents takes precedence over internal abuses such as child marriage. This explains the growing trend of why people around the world are questioning U.S.’s credibility for its stand on democracy when its actions are contradictory. Furthermore, the actions of the U.S. in supporting the Ethiopian government overlooking human rights issues such as early child marriage is impacting the success of the U.N.
Millennium Development Goals program.

Socioeconomic Analysis

The Amhara region of Ethiopia is extremely impoverished; it is served by few roads, children rarely get more than a few years of education and those who do go to school often walk many miles. It also has one of the highest rates of child marriage worldwide: eighty percent of girls in Amhara are married by the time they are eighteen, half by the age of fifteen; and the most common age for a girl to marry is twelve (Brundtland, 2011). Child marriage is deeply embedded in the social, cultural and religious customs of Amhara, where forty percent of the population is Orthodox Christians followed by thirty-four percent being Muslims (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

Child marriage is rooted in religious and cultural traditions based around protecting a girl’s honor, since sex before marriage is seen as an extremely shameful act. A girl’s worth is therefore based on her virginity and her role of being a wife and mother. The practice of bride wealth, in which the girl’s family receives a payment from the groom’s family for her hand in marriage is still commonplace. Thus, there is a short-term economic gain for the parents of a girl being married. Things are changing due to growing awareness and education of the harm early marriage causes girls, including the increased likelihood to perpetuate poverty, not alleviate it.

The Orthodox Church and the Islamic leadership in Ethiopia publicly oppose child marriage — although getting the message out to local communities is taking time (Brundtland, 2011). According to Jennifer Hatley, founder of Christian Ministries in Africa, which provides housing and education for HIV/AIDS orphaned children in East Africa,

“…it is mostly about money. Girl children are commodities that parents can sell to get it…investment is made in the boys while the girls are given to men in exchange for an agreed upon dowry of money and goods. These practices are much more prevalent among the rural and uneducated. I suspect it will be quite some time, another generation at least, before the old traditions are completely abandoned” (J. Hatley, personal communication, November 21, 2011).

Following is a summary of how the cycle of poverty is exacerbated by under-aged girls getting married. In the first year of marriage, most girls under the age of eighteen are likely to drop out of school. In the Amhara region for example, only twenty-seven percent of girls continued with school after their first year of marriage (Gage, 2009). Without completion of secondary (and in some cases, primary) education, girls lack the economic opportunity to support themselves and their family. Sexual relations are dictated, and in many cases, forcible, demanded by husbands.

Girls are at greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases due to early stages of physical development of their body. Child marriage is linked to the “feminization of HIV/AIDS” in which studies conducted in Kenya and Zambia found that fifteen- to nineteen-year-old married girls are seventy-five percent more likely to have HIV than unmarried girls (Verveer, 2010a). Additionally, there is a strong association between child marriage and early childbirth, as young married girls often become pregnant numerous times because of the restriction on reproductive decisions. Due to lack of physical maturity, girls find their health compromised with routine physical pregnancy-related injuries and higher than average maternal mortality. Problems associated with pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death for girls aged between fifteen and nineteen worldwide; and girls below the age of fifteen are five times more likely to die in childbirth than females in their twenties (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). Babies born to under-aged mothers have higher child mortality rates and are more likely to be born underweight, which increases ongoing health issues throughout their lives. Young married girls often lack agency within their marriages and society, making them more likely to experience domestic violence, marital rape and other sexual abuse, and be isolated from family, friends and their community.

Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, 189 nations signed a pledge to focus world attention and nations’ resources to free people from extreme poverty and multiple deprivations (United Nations Development Programme, 2012). This pledge became known as the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which is targeted for achievement by 2015. Six of the eight MDGs are directly influenced by the harmful tradition of child marriage. Further details of the MDGs can be found on the U.N. website, however the goals are summarized:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The goal is to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than U.S. $1 a day and also halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, i.e., being underweight and feeling physical consequence of lack of
food. When girls get married early they have less education, which creates reduced economic opportunities for them to earn decent wages to support their family.

2. Achieve universal primary education. The goal is ensuring all children are able to complete their primary education. Research found that in the rural region of Amhara, only twelve percent of girls completed primary education (Gage, 2009). Studies show girls’ education boosts income later in life; an extra year of primary school increases girls’ future wages by an estimated ten to twenty percent and an extra year of secondary education increases future wages by fifteen to twenty-five percent (Verveer, 2010b).

3. Promote gender equality and empower women. Disparity among rural women in Amhara is seen across all social and economic indices. Business ownership, land rights, and political inclinations are other measures of inequities that are pervasive in Amhara and across Ethiopia. Girls’ lack of agency within marriage and lack of education that occurs in a high percentage of child marriages, excludes their participation and effectiveness in other areas of gender equity.

4. Reduce child mortality. This goal intends to reduce by two-thirds the under-five years of age mortality rate. Babies born to under-aged girls are more likely born premature and underweight resulting in more lifelong health issues and increased risk for mortality. Early child marriage perpetuates the generational cycles of health disparities.

5. Improve maternal health. Reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters and provide universal access to reproductive health. Studies show that girls under fifteen are five times more likely to die from pregnancy and birth related complications and girls under eighteen are two times more likely to die (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). Child marriage extends the view of girls as commodities and health care access is one serious consequence of not providing adequate resources for caring for girls. Young girls lack the education, awareness and agency for seeking out health care even if it is readily available.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. This goal seeks to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Studies show that young girls are biologically more susceptible to acquiring HIV (United Nations Population Fund, 2005). In addition to biologically vulnerability, again young girls lack the education, awareness and agency for protecting their health and seeking out healthcare assistance.

7. Ensure environment sustainability. This MDG of halving the proportion of people living without access to safe drinking water and sanitation is not directly impacted by child marriage but it is an issue that Ethiopia faces.

8. Develop global partnership for development. This MDG is focused on developing non-discriminatory trading and financial systems. As with the previous goal, there is no direct connection to child marriage but it is an important issue nonetheless.

The Millennium Project is a special advisory body to the U.N.’s Secretary General on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their focus is preparing scaled-up investment plan that would work with a subset of seven targeted countries, including Ethiopia, to meet the MDG targets (United Nations Country Team in Ethiopia, 2011). The process is for the government of Ethiopia to prepare this plan, which incorporates the MDGs into key policies and provide resources for making significant investments, building capacity and creating new structures and systems. Little has been made publically available so far in directly identifying the practice of child marriage as a key factor in the obstruction of MDGs. Progress towards achieving the MDGs therefore remains to be seen. Time is running out however for meeting significant goals by 2015.

Policy Recommendations

Child Marriage involves gender social arrangements, religious teachings, cultural traditions, geopolitical complexities, and socioeconomic disparities. In order to change this harmful cultural practice, the most ideal and effective approach is supporting the community programs already in place and building up comprehensive local activism involving all available civic, religious, educational, political, media and social organizations. This should be done with financial and capacity building support and partnership with foreign development aid (i.e., U.S.) directly to local non-government organizations with transparent reporting mechanisms. It is also important for the U.S. to not only sign and ratify conventions for the protection of all human rights, but also to implement the juridical processes for promoting these human rights conventions into laws that are then rigorously enforced.

With the Ethiopian government passing the Charities and Societies Proclamation, the above ideal environment cannot exist. Thus, the first strong
recommendation would be for the U.S. and the international community to strongly condemn this proclamation through whatever means necessary such as tying foreign military funding to the repeal of this law. It is imperative for Ethiopia, and any free society, to have a fully functioning, independent civil society that acts as a complimentary entity to the government provided services and also acts as effective checks and balance for the ruling party of the government.

A second recommendation is for the immediate implementation of a registration system that tracks all records of births, deaths and marriages. Ethiopia lacks a functional national or regional system for the registration and certification of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. This is important for safeguarding women’s basic human rights in choosing when and whom to marry, enforcing the country’s marriage laws, and reinforcing relevant international conventions that the country has endorsed (Gage, 2009). Those without a birth certificate are left without recourse for preventing or protesting against forced marriage. Without proof of age, government and community officials can easily overlook enforcement of legal age to marry. It is estimated that forty million children, or one-third of the world population, are born unregistered each year (Verveer, 2010a). Foreign development agencies can provide technical and financial assistance for building up this system which is a politically neutral area for development assistance and yet sets a foundation for which enforcement of many human rights activists can act. Once a registration system is in place, the next step then would be to vigorously enforce the already established legal minimum age at marriage law, which is currently set at eighteen. Religious leaders and those with the license to marry must be informed of the legal minimum age at marriage and be subjected to the legal ramifications if they were to illegally marry anyone without a birth certificate and who has not yet reached the age of eighteen.

Education is absolutely fundamental to the human rights of girls in achieving economic opportunities and it also greatly enhances a country’s ability for climbing out of generational poverty. Funding for providing accessible, free secondary education, must be made a priority with all governments and the international community. Economic stability, health status, mortality, and national security can all be linked to education. In addition, job and skill training should be made available at a secondary level so that families can see the short and long-term financial benefits to keeping girls in school. With a large portion of the young population already married, it is important to continue funding and maintaining programs that encourage and support girls to continue with schooling, even after marriage. Funding toward skills training and micro loans and savings programs, job placement services, helping families afford education fees are just as important for married girls, since survival and security of impoverished households is an important way of lifting households out of poverty.

The practice of harmful traditional practices such as child marriage should also be directly addressed. There needs to be coordinated child marriage education and elimination programs that can be replicated and shared among neighboring regions so that lessons learned can be best shared by those seeking to eradicate this harmful practice. Child marriage is a non-partisan, neutral-policy issue that can and should be funded by the international community as a cost effective, social imperative for reducing poverty, mortality, disease spread, economic deprivation, and boosting educational advancement. All countries benefit. Girls, parents, husbands, teachers, religious leaders, and local politicians all need to be aware of the harmful consequences of child marriage both to the girl being married, as well as the negative impact it has to the larger community. Only by engaging the community is change most likely to occur.

The U.S. (including the Senate, United States Agency for International Development, Department of Defense, Pentagon and other development funded agencies) should review funding priorities and oversight to ensure the U.S. remains faithful to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that military and political goals do not trump human rights concerns. The U.S. should also move swiftly to finally ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to show the international community its leadership in enforcing human rights. Specific political steps the U.S. should take, with respect to Ethiopia, is to push for Ethiopia to respect the international decision and treaty regarding the Eritrea-Ethiopian border demarcation; stop the military support for Ethiopian excursions into Somalia; push for repeal of Charities and Societies Proclamation; and insist on international monitoring for free and fair elections.
Conclusion

Moving forward with these U.S. policy recommendations would make great strides for assisting Ethiopia in implementing a stronger civil society with strengthened relationships with its neighbors. Foreign development aid could instead be focused on sustaining development and supporting human rights. Moral, social justice, and human rights arguments compel the eradication of child marriage. Ending child marriage is an important component of sustainable development since it undermines nearly every U.N. Millennium Development Goal. It is an obstacle to alleviating poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and, improving child and maternal health. This practice needs to be eliminated by addressing the value of girls within these broader developmental issues. The U.S. has the ability to play a pivotal leadership role in eradicating child marriage.

References


