



International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Motherhood in the Americas

November 29th 2016

9:00am to 3:00pm

Hall of the Americas
OAS Headquarters, 17th Street and Constitution Avenue NW

Child, early and forced marriage is not well understood in the Americas region, although UNICEF estimates that 29% of girls in Latin America and the Caribbean, or almost 1 in 3 girls, are married before the age of 18.¹ Some countries surpass that figure at the national level (the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Brazil, Honduras and Guatemala), while others face the issue only within certain ethnic groups. One of the main problems in the Americas is the number of informal or “de facto” unions which may not be classified as marriage, with the result that the extent of child, early and forced marriage in the region is probably underestimated.

On the other hand, the issue of child, adolescent and forced motherhood has received growing attention in recent years due to an increase in the number of girls younger than 15 that are giving birth. UNFPA projects that these births will continue to rise through 2030,² and the data on girls who give birth does not include those that undergo risky and often fatal unsafe abortions.

A plethora of issues underlie the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage and motherhood in the Americas, including gender inequality, the concentration of women among the poorest segment of the population, continuing disparities between boys and girls in the minimum age for marriage, gender-based and sexual violence, including incest, restrictive abortion laws and a lack of access to contraception and sexual and reproductive health information and services

The objectives of this international event, which is organized by the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States, are to:

1. Review what we know about child, early and forced marriage and motherhood in the Americas and identify those information and data gaps that still need to be filled; and
2. Formulate preliminary legislative, policy and program recommendations, on the basis of existing good practices and lessons learned, in order to begin a joint, comprehensive and effective response.

During the event, the CIM will also launch its new “Hemispheric Report on Sexual Violence and Child Pregnancy in the States Party to the Belém do Pará Convention.”

¹ UNICEF (2014). *State of the World's Children 2015: Executive Summary and Statistical Tables*, p.89 (http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2015_Summary_and_Tables.pdf)

² UNFPA (2013). *State of the World Population 2013, Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the Challenge of Adolescent Pregnancy*, p.5 (<http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf>)

Agenda

9:00 Registration and breakfast

9:30 **Welcome and Introductory Panel**

Nestor Mendez, Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States

- Sarah Fountain Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Affairs Canada
- Susan Markham, Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, US Agency for International Development
- Heather Hamilton, Deputy Executive Director, Girls not Brides

10:15 **Keynote Address**

- Lorena Castillo de Varela, First Lady of Panama

10:30 **Round-table debate "Child, early and forced marriage in the Americas"**

Moderator: Emma Puig de la Bellacasa, Regional Specialist on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion for Latin America and the Caribbean, Regional Office for the Americas, Plan International

- Gabrielle Hosein, Head of Department and Lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies
- Daniela Ligiero, CEO, Together for Girls
- Giovanna Lauro, Deputy Director of International Programs, PROMUNDO-US
- Shelly N. Abdool-Zerezeghi, Regional Gender Advisor, UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean
- Rosalee Gonzales, North America Coordinator, Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA)
- Jeanne Smoot, Senior Counsel for Policy and Strategy, Tahirih Justice Center
- Paula Tavares, Women, Business and the Law, World Bank

11:45 Q&A

12:30 **Lunch and Keynote Panel "Girls Speak Out"**

Catherine Russell, United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues

- Khadija Sinanan, Co-Director, Womantra (Trinidad and Tobago)
- Wendy Faviola Ibarra Pop (Guatemala)
- Liza Villanueva, Girl Scouts' National Young Woman of Distinction 2015 and Founder of iDREAM Express (USA)
- Presentation of testimonies from "Stolen Lives" (Planned Parenthood Federation of America)

1:30 **Round-table debate "Child, early and forced motherhood in the Americas"**

Moderator: Andrew Morrison, Chief, Gender and Diversity Unit, Inter-American Development Bank

- Ximena Casas, Senior Advocacy Program Officer, Latin America Program, Planned Parenthood Federation of America
- Marcela Eternod Aramburú, Executive Secretary, National Institute of Women of Mexico (INMUJERES)
- Luz Patricia Mejía, Technical Secretary of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belem do Pará Convention (MESECVI/OAS)

- Andrés de Francisco, Director, Family, Gender and Life Course, Pan American Health Organization
- Hilda Morales Trujillo, Deputy Ombudsperson for Human Rights and Principal Expert of Guatemala to the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI

2:30 Q&A

2:50 **Wrap-up and closing remarks**

- Carmen Moreno, Executive Secretary, Inter-American Commission of Women (OAS)

Register to attend the event at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/child-early-and-forced-marriage-and-motherhood-in-the-americas-tickets-28707318362>

Follow the live Webcast at: http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/webcast_schedule.asp