

Impact of early marriage on the rights of female children in South Sudan

Santa Jima Justin Ali

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University of Dar es Salaam, School of Laws, 2015

South Sudan is a new country, with a population 8 million people, 82% of the population live in rural areas and 51% of the population live below the poverty line, thereby making the country one of the poorest countries in the world. Currently South Sudan is facing a lot of challenges socially, economically and politically in all its sectors because of ethnic conflicts. In an effort to develop its legal system that incorporates international instruments which set standards for rule of law and human rights, the rights of female children remains one of the biggest challenges. The legal institutions in the country have not given adequate attention to the crucial issue of protecting children rights generally and female children in particular. This work examines the impact of early marriages on the rights of female children in view of the right to equality and non-discrimination, right to education the rights to health and the right to be heard. It explores the provision of these rights in international human rights instruments, regional human rights instruments and the domestic laws of South Sudan and customary law. Statute law of South Sudan widely provides for such rights but customary laws are not protecting the rights. The work recommends reform and harmonization of the laws to ensure that children rights, especially female children are protected. Other recommendations include the establishment of the Female Child Commission and increasing children rights awareness by more education campaigns.