



Seattle International Foundation's Central America and Mexico Youth (CAMY) Fund Launches Latin America and Caribbean-Wide Initiative on Child Marriage and Early Unions

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The [Central America and Mexico Youth Fund](#) (CAMY Fund), a program of Seattle International Foundation, will launch a Latin America and Caribbean-wide initiative focusing on child marriage and early unions (CM/EUs) with a sub-regional emphasis on Mexico and Central America. The initiative will receive initial funding support from the Ford Foundation, NoVo Foundation, and The Summit Foundation.

Recognition of the human rights violations implicated by child marriage and early unions has been limited and slow to catch on in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region where nearly 1 in 4 girls are married before the age of 18. Two countries in the region, Mexico and Brazil, are among the top 10 countries with the highest child marriage and early union burdens in the world. A study carried out by the Latin American Faculty for Social Sciences (FLACSO – Guatemala) in 2015 highlighted the high correlation between early marriage or union and adolescent pregnancy. The study also revealed disturbing data about the frequent age disparity between young girls and their partners.

In recent years, some countries in the region have made changes to their civil codes to elevate the minimum age of marriage to 18. However, girls and adolescents also require safe spaces, policies and programs that not only make them aware of their rights but offer them and their families' access to real choices and opportunities for their future.

Among the new initiative's aims will be to better network Latin American and Caribbean organizations with interest in ending CM/EUs to each other and to global efforts, to disseminate information, research and strategies and to coordinate advocacy, as appropriate. Additionally, this new initiative will target organizations in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua for grantmaking and technical assistance. The CAMY Fund will also support new research on child marriage and early unions in the region by linking local researchers with grantee organizations.

Based in Mexico City, the CAMY Fund has supported local, non-governmental organizations since 2014 with high-impact grantmaking and technical assistance focused on strengthening youth leadership, girls' equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

To achieve wide impact on this important issue, the CAMY Fund will partner with international organizations such as Girls Not Brides and relevant UN agencies to strengthen national and regional collaboration among key actors working to end child marriage and early unions. These collaborations

will benefit both the CAMY Fund and these organizations in understanding the ways that CM/EU manifests differently in Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to other regions.

“By working with various stakeholders and providing resources to civil society organizations, we will see girls’ rights prioritized and community norms begin to change” said Emily Barcklow, Senior Program Officer for the CAMY Fund. “Support to programs and research, and the resulting awareness and action, will contribute to reducing child marriage rates throughout the region. This is an important effort, critical to girls’ rights to health, to education and to determine their own futures.”

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