Enough with the Silence!
A Report of the 2nd Africa Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACERWC</td>
<td>African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</td>
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<td>ACHPR</td>
<td>African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights</td>
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<td>AGS</td>
<td>Africa Girls’ Summit</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIEFFA</td>
<td>AU International Centre for Girls’ and Women’s Education in Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSE</td>
<td>Comprehensive Sexuality Education</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
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<td>IPPF</td>
<td>International Planned Parenthood Federation</td>
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<td>JGC</td>
<td>Joint General Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAFLA</td>
<td>Organisation of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS</td>
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<td>PPA</td>
<td>Planned Parenthood Association</td>
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<td>SRHR</td>
<td>Sexual Reproductive Health Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Second African Girls’ Summit (AGS) on Ending Child Marriage took place from 23-24 November, 2018 in Accra-Ghana under the theme, “Enough with the Silence”. The summit was a sequel to the First African Girls’ Summit (1st AGS) held in Lusaka, Zambia in November 2015. The 2nd AGS aimed at addressing the core need of investing in adolescent education, specifically, access to services such as sexual health care, sexuality education and rights protection. It also provided an opportunity to review progress on commitments, interventions, measures and recommendations of keeping girls in school and facilitating Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). The 2nd AGS afforded stakeholders a platform to share experiences and best practices, highlight significant problems affecting the girl-child in Africa and engender the change that needs to happen to prevent continuous violation of the rights of children. Stakeholders renewed their commitment to remove legal and policy barriers for adolescent and child brides to gain equitable access to SRHR and institutionalize age-specific Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and adolescent friendly SRHR services.

The African Union Commission (AUC) considers Child Marriage a cross-cutting issue and recognizes that it is, among others, a development, cultural, health, political and a religious issue. The AU specifically promotes policies related to young people’s rights as mandated by various instruments focusing on the rights of children and youth. The AU has equally promoted the adoption and implementation of these instruments at regional and national levels and conducted monitoring of implementation by Member States to ensure accountability. Through the framework of the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage, the AUC has worked to promote quality education and sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) services including meeting the unmet needs of married and unmarried adolescents for family planning. Through the campaign, stakeholders also work on strengthening the evidence base needed to design and implement effective policies and programmes for ending Child Marriage.

This report summarizes the discussions and recommendations on the two-day summit. It highlights key points from the opening and closing ceremonies as well as the main plenaries. A number of parallel sessions and high-level side engagements were also held. The report captures a summary of the discussions as well as key recommendations from these sessions for reference by stakeholders. The final summit communique is also attached for reference and use.
2.0 EVENT SUMMARY

The 2nd AGS was held in Accra Ghana from 23-24 November, 2018. It was attended by over 1,000 delegates from across 30 countries including ministers of state responsible for social development, gender and children, First Ladies from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Niger and Liberia, religious and community leaders; victims and survivors of Child Marriage, and youth advocates. The AGS also attracted representatives from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), media, development partners, UN Agencies as well as bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies.

The Summit provided the opportunity for various stakeholders to review their roles in the Campaign to End Child Marriages and renew their commitment to the same. Delegates used the opportunity to network and share their experiences on best practices and challenges on Ending Child Marriage at the national, regional and international levels.
3.0 OPENING CEREMONY

The summit was officially opened by H.E. Rebecca Akufo-Addo, First Lady of the Republic of Ghana with remarks from S.E MME. Aissata Issoufou Mahamadou, First Lady of the Republic of Niger; H.E Fatima Maada Bio, First Lady of Sierra Leone; H.E Clar Weah, First Lady of the Republic of Liberia; Hon. Cynthia Morrison, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana; and H.E Amira El Fadil, AUC Commissioner of Social Affairs. Other speakers included Ms. Natasha Chibesa Mwansa, Youth Activist, Zambia; H.E. Fatoumata Ndiaye, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director; and HRH Princess Mabel Van Oranje, Chair of Girls Not Brides. A presentation on the progress of the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage was made by Dr. Jane Marie Ongolo, Head of Social Welfare, Vulnerable Groups and Drug Control, AUC. Below is a summary of remarks made.

Ten-Year Strategic Plan to End Child Marriage in Ghana

Hon. Cynthia Morrison, Ghana’s Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection announced that the Government of Ghana has developed a 10-year strategic plan to end Child Marriage in Ghana. The Government of Ghana is also implementing a Child and Family Welfare Policy and the Justice for Children Policy to ensure a safe environment for girls.

Involve Children with Disability in Decision Making

A child rights advocate from Zambia, Ms. Natasha Chibesa Mwansa presented the outcome statement from the youth pre-summit and called on governments and other stakeholders to involve children with disabilities in decision making on issues that affect them. Ms. Mwansa commended the AU and its partners for organizing the pre-summit which gave delegates, particularly youth, the opportunity to discuss and make input into strategies for Ending Child Marriage in Africa. The communique called on African governments to: mainstream policies and increase budgetary allocations to help End Child Marriage; provide support systems for Child Marriage victims; enact legislations to prosecute those who engage in Child Marriages; create platforms that engage young people to End Child Marriage; strengthen Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for adolescents in-and-out of school and make menstrual hygiene and health of girls a priority.

Education is the antidote to Child Marriage

The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Madam Fatoumata Ndiaye stressed that education is the antidote to Child Marriage in Africa. She urged stakeholders to take education seriously the phenomenon is to be stopped. Madam Ndiaye called on all stakeholders to take a critical look at social norms that support Child Marriages in Africa. She called for more participation and empowerment of girls as a necessity for achieving the #AfricaWeWant.

AUC Institutes Scholarship Scheme for Girls

The Commissioner for Social Affairs at the AUC, H.E Amira El Fadil announced that the AUC has instituted a scholarship programmes for girls to stay in school. She emphasized that, if children stayed in school up to the age of 24 years, this would drastically reduce the possibility of being married before 18 years. The Commissioner observed that the more years girls stayed out of school, the greater the possibility of them being married and subjected to several forms of abuse. The AU Campaign to End Child Marriage was officially launched in Addis Ababa in May 2014 and 30% of the 24 AU countries that have launched the campaign have enacted laws to strengthen its implementation in their respective countries.
Be Committed to the Implementation of Policies
The Chair of Girls Not Brides, HRH Princess Mabel Van Oranje, called on African governments to show leadership and be committed to fulfilling their promises. Many governments introduce policies but fail to show commitment to their implementation. She called on governments to put in place laws to protect girls from early marriage.

Government of Ghana Commits 3 percent of budgetary allocation to end Child Marriage
The Summit was officially opened by the First Lady of Ghana, H.E. Rebecca Akufo-Addo. She announced that the Government of Ghana had committed 3% of its budgetary allocation to end Child Marriage in Ghana. Mrs. Akufo-Addo noted that the future of the continent is dependent on how governments are able to harness the continent’s human and natural resources for the good of the continent. Mrs. Akufo Addo further highlighted that empowering girls is one of the most important things to do to promote and sustain a healthier and more prosperous society. She decried the spate of child abuse and Child Marriages on the continent and said, “this constitutes a great loss to Africa”.
4.0 PLENARY SESSIONS

4.1 Regional Perspectives, Programs and Lessons on Ending Child Marriage

At a panel discussion with First Ladies of Sierra Leone, Ghana and Niger to share lessons from programmes on Ending Child Marriage, the First Lady of Sierra Leone, H.E. Fatima Maada Bio stated that it is simply “unacceptable to force girls into marriage”. Mrs. Bio observed that Africans hide behind power, culture and tradition to engage in certain unacceptable practices such as paying school fees for someone in anticipation of marrying her later. She stated that as a Muslim, she was encouraged to marry early by 14 years but added that there is nothing in the Holy Quran that promotes Child Marriages.

The Head of Social Welfare, Vulnerable Groups and Drug Control at the African Union Commission (AUC), Dr. Jane Marie Ongolo gave an overview of the AU Campaign and its progress and stated that Child Marriage affects many other children apart from the immediate victim. Dr. Ongolo added that about 125 million African children are married off before they are 18 years old. She called for effective advocacy, monitoring, evaluation and capacity building as the surest ways to address the issue. She indicated that the summit sought to among other things, promote a adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

H.E. Mrs. Aissata Mahamadou Issoufou, First Lady of the Republic of Niger cited poverty as the major contributor to Child Marriages in Africa. Mrs. Issoufou stated that the government of Niger had set up a national committee for eliminating Child Marriages. She called on her fellow First Ladies in Africa to intensify their advocacy to ensure that Child Marriage becomes a thing of the past within the shortest possible time. She urged African governments to change the legal age for sex from 16 to 18 as a means to Ending Child Marriage.

Ghana’s First Lady, H.E. Mrs. Rebecca Akufo-Addo noted that the future of the African continent depends on the youth hence, the need to empower girls to put Africa in a better position to become prosperous. She observed that there was the need to reduce maternal mortality and this could be achieved by Ending Child Marriages. She emphasized that the rights of women must be respected.

4.2 First Ladies High Level Side Event

A high level side meeting on the theme ‘Empower a Girl, Secure the Future of Africa’ was held with First Ladies resulting in a communique presented by H.E. Fatima Maada Bio the First Lady of Sierra Leone. The First Ladies agreed to advocate for the reform of legislation regarding Child Marriage in their respective countries. They pledged their commitment to advocate for the translation of regional and national level laws and policies into concrete changes at the grassroots.

The communique further called on Member States to

- enact legislations that explicitly prohibit harmful practices;
- ensure 18 years is the minimum age for marriage and remove all legal loopholes regarding full and free consent and other issues that allow for exceptions;
- guarantee the full and free consent of marrying parties and that the legal age of marriage applies to all marriages, including customary and religious marriages;
- allocate financial resources, and put in place institutional bodies and mechanisms for implementation, including the monitoring of progress;
• ensure access of girls and young women to education, comprehensive SRHR services and comprehensive information and education on SRHR, harmful practices, sexuality and rights; and
• strengthen youth and especially girls and young women’s leadership and participation on human rights and in ending of Child Marriage.

4.3 Experiences in Providing Services for Girls’ Reintegration Back into School and Society

A traditional ruler from Zambia, Chief Chamuka indicated that Africa has had enough of hiding under culture and tradition to engage in harmful practices that negatively affected youth. He stated that marriages were being registered to prevent Child Marriage in his traditional kingdom and called on state authorities to punish perpetrators of Child Marriages. Chief Chamuka also recommended dissolution of Child Marriages and taking the survivors back to school. Chief Chamuka stated that one of the challenges being faced is funding since a lot of funds are required to take care of survivors in school. Secondly, he noted that the difference between constitutional marriage age and traditional marriage age was a problem. The constitution for instance says children could have sex at age 16 and marry at age 18. This according to him also created a problem. He finally called on all traditional leaders in Africa to form a movement to end Child Marriage.

Ms. Niyi Oluojape, UNFPA Country Representative, Ghana recommended the establishment of girls clubs, safe places and adolescent and youth friendly clinics in communities and schools for girls to seek help and advice. Stakeholders should also facilitate engagements with community leaders to seek their support in advocating for change of laws on Child Marriage so that perpetrators will be punished. She called on all stakeholders to advocate and speak to parliamentarians and lawmakers. According to her, teenage pregnancy should not lead to Child Marriage. There should be punitive actions against perpetrators to discourage such acts. She concluded that UNFPA was engaging men and boys to help prevent Child Marriages across several communities in Africa.

The Chair for Girls Not Brides, HRH Princess Mabel Van Oranje stressed the need for alternative services to End Child Marriage and also work on changing social norms through education. According her, people who take such bad decisions should be made to change their mind-set. She asserted that Ending Child Marriage might not be easy until stakeholders learn to be open and work together.

Mr Lucien Kouakou, Regional Director of IPPF-ARO recommended the use of movies and pageants as effective means of domesticating the message about Ending Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) because they invoked the feelings and emotions of people. He emphasized the need to domesticate the message by getting all the stakeholders involved.

Mr Samuel Norgah, Director of Plan International, AU Liaison Office, stated that FGM and GBV violate girls’ rights and that medicalization was not a substitute to restore the rights of affected girls. He asserted that the lack of implementation of several policies was a betrayal by policy makers. According to Mr. Norgah, the real challenge was not lack of resources but rather inadequate prioritization. He therefore called on all stakeholders to channel their resources to fight harmful practices against young people, especially girls.
4.4 Educating Girls and Ending Child Marriage: A priority for Africa

Mr. Quentin Wodon, an Economist with the World Bank emphasised that Africa was the region with the highest prevalence of Child Marriage in the world. He noted that education was important for all children. While primary education is necessary it is not sufficient since it does not make much difference.

He highlighted the following:

1. **Earnings**: women with primary education (partial or completed) earn only 19 to 30 percent more than those with no education at all. Women with secondary education make more than twice as much.
2. **Child Marriage/early childbearing**: each year of secondary education reduces risks of children marrying and early childbearing by about 7 percent.
3. **Fertility**: universal secondary education could reduce total fertility rate by a third. Lower population growth could usher the demographic dividend.
4. **Health, nutrition and wellbeing**: universal secondary education could increase women’s ability to make decisions about their healthcare and knowledge of aids.
5. **Agency**: universal secondary education could increase women’s role in decision-making by 10%.
6. **Social capital**: universal secondary education could enable more women to play active roles to the benefit of society.

He concluded that there was a strong economic case for investing in education of girls and Ending Child Marriage. He called on all stakeholders to provide evidence-based solutions to support the campaign on Ending Child Marriage in Africa.

4.5 Overcoming Social Norms to Address Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and to End Child Marriage

The session was moderated by Mrs Mahawa Kaba-Wheeler, Director of the Gender Directorate, AUC. The panel was made up of Ms Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, AU Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage in Africa; Mrs. Marie Christine Bocoum, ACERWC (Special Rapporteur on Ending Child Marriage); Mr. Nathan Yilma, Project Officer and Youth Expert and Ms Doris Mpoumou, Director of the Save the Children International Liaison to the AU and Plan African Office.

Key issues raised in the discussions included the fact that cultural norms are not only traditional but also religious and political; social norms are not static but transient; and Child Marriage is the accumulation of multi violations, it is not a single narrative. The issue of Child Marriage is anchored on violence against women and gender inequality hence the need to address issues of gender inequality. There is the need to ensure justice since normally perpetrators go unpunished people hide under the guise of culture.

The following recommendations were made:

1. Allocation of more resources to support SRHR and Child Marriage is commendable however, there’s the need for effective global coordination.
2. Victimization and blaming of girls is unhelpful and must end.
3. There is a need to include CSOs, traditional leaders and religious leaders, fortunately a lot of them are currently educated.
4. Girls as well as boys should be given equal opportunities for education.
5.0 PARALLEL SESSIONS

5.1 Gender Based Violence: Addressing the Exploitation of Children Particularly In Conflict Zones

The session discussed Gender Based Violence (GBV) and how stakeholders can address issues relating to exploitation of children especially those living in conflict zones. Panellists for the session included Ms. Eleanor Khonje Martin, Youth Activist and Blogger, Unravelling The Mind; Ms. Grace Ikoki from South Sudan; Ms. Sagal Ali Mohamoud, Save The Children Somalia, and Ms. Frederica Donati, Coordinator of Equality, Non-Discrimination and Participation. The session was moderated by Ms. Nwanneakolam Vwede-Obahor, OHCHR Regional Representative for East Africa Regional Office.

Panellists shared experiences from their countries. Lessons from programmes and initiatives by various institutions were also shared and discussed.

The following recommendations were made:
1. Perpetrators of GBV should be prosecuted and brought to justice
2. Stakeholders should collect and analyse more data on Child Marriage to ensure adequate policy response.
3. Legal, psychological and economic assistance are required to address issues of GBV.
4. Stakeholders should adopt an integrated approach towards addressing the challenges of GBV.
5. Provide girls with technical skills to improve their livelihoods.
6. Create opportunities for the economic empowerment of girls.

5.2 Addressing the Psycho-social Trauma of Child Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Other Harmful Traditional Practices

Ms. Danae Leger, UNICEF Regional Representative, Senegal; and Ms. Doris Mpoumou, Director, Save the Children were the moderators for this session. The panellists were Mr. Sam Ntelamo, Resident Representative, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Liaison Office to AU & UNECA; Hon Joseph Kabamba, MP Zambia; and Ms. Victoria Quaynor, Youth Advocate, Ghana.

Discussions revealed that more than 200 million girls have been subjected to FGM and more than 15 million girls under 18 years undergo FGM each year. Most victims are young people because they and their parents or older family members were not well informed on the risks and lack of any known benefits of FGM. Young people were vulnerable and need people who would counsel them, not people who would judge them. Safe spaces need to be integrated with literacy, education and training activities. In building the resilience of young people, perpetrators should be punished and justice served. There is the need to accelerate efforts in the Campaign to End Child Marriage faster than it was being done. Chiefs, traditional, social and religious leaders are key partners in accelerating the needed change.

The following recommendations were made:
1. Accelerate efforts to end Child Marriage by involving all partners at all levels
2. Train service providers especially in providing psychosocial support
3. Create safe spaces for victims and those at risk
4. Ensure the successful prosecution of perpetrators
5.3 Youth and Children as Opinion Moulders across Society Using Social Media and ICT

Panellists for this session were Ms. Patricia Humura, Peer To Peer Uganda, PEERU; Ms. Chimwemwe Kaonga, Commonwealth Network Against Early and Child Marriage, Malawi; Ms. Geraco Biz; and Moozambia and Mavis Aryee of Curious Minds, Ghana. The moderator was Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, AU Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage in Africa.

Panellists underscored the fact that Africa was experiencing a youth bulge and that the young people are keen and feel more comfortable using ICT to expand their knowledge. Young people are also leading in technological inventions. Thus, the role of young people in shaping the future is becoming increasingly evident in challenging modern practices that have re-defined traditional concepts of social interaction, means of communication and participation, development of ideas and involvement with issues of global significance. Examples of available ICT platforms and applications for youth in the fight against Child Marriage include Mzinda platform, U-report, WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages, Tune Me mobicite supported by UNFPA, PaMawa App, Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) and Tithandizane Child Help Line-Toll free line. Young people were using such platforms to advance their advocacy agenda; circulation of petitions for signing; report and dissemination of information about various abuses; and a quicker way to circulate information to a wider audience. There are however some challenges including accessibility - issues of connectivity, awareness, affordability and attainability. Some information on internet especially on social media could also be misleading. There are numerous instances of cyber-crime as well as misrepresentation of information. Lack of knowledge on how to use some social media results later in sharing personal or private information that may be harmful to children.

The following recommendations were made:
1. Establish hubs for youth to access information.
2. Build capacity of young people in accessing and utilizing various technologies ethically.
3. Establish ICT innovation centres to promote youth involvement in ICTs.
4. Enforce cyber security measures and protect children from cyber-bullying.

5.4 Building Young Women’s Leadership through Marketable Skills Building and Entrepreneurship

The session was moderated by Ms. Evelyn Wambui, Plan International, West & Central African Region. The panellists included Dr. Afisah Zakariah, Chief Director, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana; Ms. Bless Wormenu, Youth Advocate, Plan International-Ghana, Ms. Hibatu Adams, Youth Advocate, Plan International; Mr. Solomon Tesfamariam, Country Director, Plan Ghana; and HRH Mamaga Nyebu, Paramount Queenmother of Akroful, Volta Region Ghana.

The session explored means by which stakeholders can build the capacities of young women through marketable skills and entrepreneurship. Panellists and discussants highlighted the need for society to move away from cultural practices that negatively impact girls and retard their development. Commendations were given to various governments promoting girl child education and taking active steps against Child Marriage. Some of the government interventions in Ghana include Free Compulsory Basic and Secondary Education; the Education Capitation Grants, Science and Mathematics education programmes for girls among others.

The following recommendations were made:
1. Governments should empower traditional rulers with training, information and resource materials to assist them in the campaign to end Child Marriage
2. Girls should be given equal opportunities to compete with boys in education and all social endeavours
3. Women with the same skills as men should have the same salary as their male colleagues
4. Girls should be equipped with soft skills like communication skills and critical thinking skills to make them more empowered in the fight against Child Marriage.

5.5 Inclusive Development for Vulnerable Children and Adolescents with Disability

Panellists for the session included Hon. John Majisi, Member of Parliament Of Ghana and a Community Based Rehabilitation Practitioner, Ms. Marlise Montcho, from Republic Of Benin, an Engineer, Women and Disability Advocate, Retta Getachew, Programme Manager, Child Development and Protection; and Ms. Florence Ndagire, a Lawyer. The session was moderated by Mrs. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame, CRPD Committee Member-Sight Savers Global Advocacy Adviser on Social Inclusion and Ms. Rosina Pobee, Advocacy Officer, Sight Savers.

The session discussed various ways by which vulnerable children and persons with disability will be empowered and integrated in programmes and decision-making processes.

The following recommendations were made:
1. The AU must build capacity of parliamentarians to effectively address issues of inclusive development for vulnerable children and adolescents with disability through legislation and executive oversight.
2. The AU and governments should support and motivate organizations championing the cause of the disabled.
3. The AU and African governments should make policies on persons with disability rights-based and harmonize national laws with international instruments.
4. Service providing institutions need to make their services accessible and available to persons with disability.
5. Build capacity of disability organizations to enable them hold governments accountable.

5.6 Breaking the Silence: Improving Menstrual Health Management in Africa

This session was moderated by Mr. Patrick Mwesigye, Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum. Ms. Maja Hansen, Program Specialist, Adolescent and Youth, UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), emphasized the need to break the silence on menstrual health as a first step towards addressing it. Delegates at the session noted that between a quarter to a third of the world’s population (over 800 million women and girls between 10 and 50 years) are menstruating on any given day, with over 350 million in Africa. This must therefore stand as one of the global, regional and national human rights and development priorities.

The session was the first event organized by the African Coalition on Menstrual Health and Management following its launch at the African Symposium on Menstrual Health Management which took place in Johannesburg, South Africa in May, 2018. Since the launch, the coalition has grown in membership with more than 400 professionals from different backgrounds and affiliations, all united to see better menstrual health management in Africa. With more the experts, policy-makers, government representatives, CSOs and young people joining from Central and West Africa, the coalition is expected to be stronger.
The economics of menstruation posit that many women patronize products for menstrual health periodically but key gaps exist in the educational sector on menstrual hygiene. The primary school is the right stage to educate young people on menstruation. It is important to start the education early in order to reach more children. Teachers, if properly trained and given the required information and methodology are the best resources for delivering menstrual health education. School infrastructure needs to improve to support efforts in this area. Schools should have separate washrooms for girls and boys with running water and adequate waste disposal.

**The following recommendations were made:**
1. Stakeholders must collaborate to address menstrual health matters since it can contribute significantly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa’s Agenda 2063.
2. There’s the need to build a competent health sector workforce to help address menstrual health challenges.
3. Negative stereotypes around menstruation must be broken through effective education and sensitization.
4. Governments must remove taxes on all menstrual products as a way to promoting of making the products available and accessible to users.
5. Menstrual Health issues need to be addressed through the lifecycle approach - from menarche to menopause.

5.7 Accelerating an End to Child Marriage and Change through the Involvement of Community, Traditional and Religious Leaders

The session was moderated by Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, AU Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage in Africa. Panellists included Mr. Sheik Abubaka; Ms. Faustina Fabiliiano Nkboma, Young mother; HRH Boresah Iddisah Jeduah, Queen Mother; Ms. Nanatana Sakabilo Chinyana, Mother; and Alhaji Mohammed Sheriff Conteh, Sierra Leone.

The panellists took turns to share experiences on various initiatives they have been embarking on in their various communities to end Child Marriage. Traditional leaders have been holding one-on-one discussions with young people on community engagement against Child Marriage. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of efforts to end Child Marriage are also conducted to ensure that traditional areas reduce the prevalence of Child Marriage.

Some challenges highlighted by traditional leaders in the fight against Child Marriage however included the need to reconcile age of consent for sex and age for marriage, high levels of illiteracy and parental irresponsibility.

**The following recommendations were made:**
1. Stakeholders should increase resource funding and capital to the campaign to end Child Marriage
2. Establishment of educational funds in Africa to promote education for boys and girls
3. Increase collaboration between religious and traditional leaders to exchange knowledge on best practices in Ending Child Marriage.

5.8 The Role of Media and Civil Society in Raising Awareness on SRHR Practices in the Fight against Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies

The session focused on the critical role of media and civil society in raising awareness on SRHR practices in the fight against Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy. The panelists for this
session were Ms. Chimwemwe Kawonga, Commonwealth Network against early and Child Marriage, Malawi; Ms. Joyce Chimbi, IPPF Award for Excellent Coverage on SRH; Ms. Fatimata Ouedraogo, Girls Not Brides, Burkina Faso; and Mr. Godfrey Bangiriana, Girls Not Brides, Uganda. Ms. Carolyn Seaman, Founder of Girls Voices Initiatives, Nigeria moderated the session.

The following recommendations were made:

1. Governments should limit taxes and control on the media in order to enable them engage the community more on issues of Child Marriage and Harmful Traditional Practices.
2. Media practitioners must understand their critical role in capturing successes in the campaign to end Child Marriage and be consistent in messaging.
3. CSOs must budget for media in their campaigns to broaden outreach on Ending Child Marriage.

5.9 The Role of Schools and Educational Institutions in Teaching and Strengthening Education for Adolescents

Panelists for the session were Dr. Raymonde Agossou, Senior Program Adviser at the The African Union International Center for Girls’ and Women’s Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA); Mr. Gilles Fagninou, Deputy Regional Director for UNICEF in West And Central Africa Region; Dr Kwabena Bempah Tandoh, Deputy Director-General of Ghana Education Service (GES); Ms. Abigail Teye, Youth Activist, Plan International Ghana; and Ms. Chipkaou Mariam, Director of The Promotion of Girls’ Schooling Enrolment at the Ministry of Primary Education, Literacy, and National Language Promotion. Ms. Anne-Claire Dufay, UNICEF Representative in Ghana moderated the session.

The session commenced with a short documentary on the topic. Dr Agossou observed that a lot remained to be done in terms of creating linkages between Child Marriage and education. She highlighted that education in schools is not meeting the needs of girls and observed that educational curricula does not girls’ needs like reproductive health and skills training.

According to Mr. Fagninou, available statistics indicate that a girl with higher education is three times less likely to be married off than the uneducated one. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), in countries where all girls complete secondary school, Child Marriage drops by 64%. World Bank data also showed that a number of countries lose 64 billion dollars annually due to Child Marriage. Education is not only needed to End Child Marriage, it has a positive economic impact as well. He concluded that the #AfricaWeWant depends on the investments we make today – one that targets girl child development.

Mr. Tandoh shared Ghana’s innovative strategies in dealing with Child Marriage. He observed that the prevalence rate in Ghana stood at 21%. UNICEF supported Ghana to develop a national strategic plan to help address issues of Child Marriage. There is a strong correlation between keeping girls in school and Child Marriage. The education sector strategy has been tabled before cabinet to ensure reduction of Child Marriage. Further, the government of Ghana has introduced the Free Senior High School Policy, which has reduced financial barriers as a challenge to dealing with the phenomenon. There is also a secondary education improvement project with support from the UN which provides sanitary pads to adolescent girls. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was being scaled up whiles plans are afoot to promote science, technology, mathematics to young girls in school. With support from the UNICEF, there are safe school resource parks to equip and engage teachers and students in dealing with sexual reproductive rights to ensure that young boys and girls are kept in school.
Speaking on Niger’s experience, Ms. Chipkaou noted that only 3.9% of girls get to High school in Niger. It is harder for girls in Niger to complete their education resulting in a high dropout rate. The causes identified included unplanned pregnancy; weight of sociocultural burdens, religious biases, early marriage and poverty. The biggest danger is early Child Marriage and the best way to deal with it is education and empowerment. Education delays marriage and builds girls’ capacity for life. Niger’s strategy is therefore to create an enabling environment for girls to stay in school by organizing extra classes for them. So far, 5,000 scholarships had been awarded to girls from vulnerable homes. There is also reintegration of unschooled girls by organizing special classes for them. Niger intends to harmonize its municipal laws with regional and other protocols as well as including the SDG 4 in national laws.

**The following recommendations were made:**

1. Guidance and counselling centres should be reintroduced in basic schools
2. There should be enough punishment for perpetrators of sexual harassment, especially against girls.
3. The Disciplinary committees in school should be very active in handling cases of sexual harassment.
4. Quality education must go beyond just building classrooms; it must include hygienic washrooms for adolescent girls.

5.10 Promoting and Strengthening Interventions for Increased Access to Sexual Reproductive Health Services and Maternal and New Born Health

The session was led by Dr. Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Head of Division for Health, Nutrition and Population, AUC and Ms. Niyi Ojuolape, Country Representative, UNFPA Ghana. It was noted that a third of girls in developing countries married before age 18, and a fifth became pregnant before they got married. Health service delivery is therefore especially important for adolescent girls. Child Marriage is a complex problem that has devastating and long term effects on the life and future of girls and communities. SRHR encompasses rights and freedoms of any individual to make decisions about their sexual activity and reproduction free from discrimination, coercion and violence. These rights among others, rest on the recognition of the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, as well as the right to access sexual and reproductive health services. Differences in policies and lack of cohesion amongst ministries in member countries were some of the challenges identified. Several communities also lack safe spaces for counselling for girls and this increases stigmatization.

**The following recommendations were made:**

1. Communities and schools should have professional counsellors to assist girls. Training of youth peer educators and champions and mentors are also critical
2. Capacity building is required for young girls and boys in fighting against Child Marriage
3. Deliberate steps should be taken to properly address issues of Child Marriage beyond social and cultural taboos and norms
4. Efforts must be made to reduce unsafe abortion
5.11 Taking the ACHPR and ACERWC Joint General Comments on Ending Child Marriage Forward as a Framework for Action

This session was moderated by Ms. Sara Tabit, Girls Advocacy Alliance Project Manager, Africa Regional Program, Plan International AU Liaison Office. The discussants included Ms. Marie Christine Bocoum, African Union Special Rapporteur on Ending Child Marriage (ACERWC); Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage in Africa; and Ms. Selam Abraha, Project Coordinator, Pan-Africa State Accountability Project, Plan International AU Liaison Office. Ms. Samrawit Getaneh, Legal Research Officer, African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) emphasised that the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration on Ending Child Marriage in Africa in April 2014 during its 23rd Ordinary Session. The Declaration enjoins member states of the African Union to undertake legislative measures to prohibit Child Marriage and to undertake sensitization to change societal attitudes. The African Union also launched a Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa in 2014 with a view to accelerating the elimination of Child Marriage on the continent. The campaign aims to enhance awareness about the negative impacts of Child Marriage as well as mobilizing social movements against Child Marriage at the grassroots level. As part of the Campaign, the AU appointed a Goodwill Ambassador and a Special Rapporteur on Ending Child Marriage who undertakes sensitization and investigation missions as well as provide recommendations to governments.

A number of gaps have been identified in efforts towards eliminating Child Marriage in Africa. Some of the gaps exist in laws. Even though the African Union has adopted 18 years to be the minimum age for marriage, a number of countries have not revised their laws to conform to this. In certain African Countries there are exceptions that allow Child Marriage with judicial or parental consent. In some countries, religious and cultural laws provide exceptions that allow Child Marriage, even though the act may be prohibited in national laws.

The Joint General Comments (JGC) is comprehensive guide to ensure the implementation of various laws on Ending Child Marriages in Africa. The ACERWC presents implementation reports especially on what the states are doing to End Child Marriage. CSOs dealing with children’s rights also complement these efforts by putting out reports and other publications on eliminating Child Marriage. Field missions also report on the implementations of the provisions. It clarifies and specifically defines Child Marriage in precise terms without ambiguity; the notion of full and free consent; the best interest of the child; and on issues of birth and death registration among others.

The following recommendations were made:
1. Dissemination of the JGC to many stakeholders is important to ensure effective implementation in this regard the document should be translated into various AU languages for dissemination.
2. CSOs should develop monitoring mechanisms to follow up on the state of implementation of the JGC at the national level.
3. Countries need to integrate the JGC into the implementation of strategic plans.
4. Countries that are yet to launch the campaign on Ending Child Marriage should also use the JGC as a guide.
6.0 CLOSING CEREMONY

At the closing ceremony, Mr. Paul Smith, DFID Country Director for Ghana underscored that the Youth pre-summit created a safe space for the youth to talk about sexuality issues. He added that empowering young boys and girls should be a priority. Mr. Smith emphasised that it was refreshing to hear the Government of Ghana committing 3% of its 2019 budget to End Child Marriage. He called on other African governments to emulate such an example and urged civil society to push harder on the discourse for the campaign to #EndChildMarriage to become a success.

H.E. Amira El Fadil, AUC Commissioner for Social Affairs appreciated the commitment of all stakeholders in making the summit a success. She encouraged stakeholders to implement their respective commitments made and urged everyone present to take ownership and join in moving beyond the rhetoric to truly #EndChildMarriage. She observed that young people were enthusiastic and want to be involved in the decision making process. The important role of media was emphasized and called on all partners to involve the media in their campaigns.

During her remarks, Hon. Cynthia Morrison, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Republic of Ghana appreciated the efforts of Ghana’s President and First Lady, Second Lady and Chief of Staff at the Presidency for their presence and support to the summit. She pledged Government’s support in ensuring that the physically challenged are equally considered in all decisions. She thanked all staff and partners who ensured that the summit was successful and declared the 2nd African Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage and Harmful Traditional Practices closed.
APPENDIX

COMMUNIQUÉ: HIGH LEVEL EVENT AT THE 2nd AFRICAN GIRLS’ SUMMIT ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN AFRICA

“EMPOWER A GIRL, SECURE THE FUTURE OF AFRICA”

23 November 2018

We, the African First Ladies, members of the Organisation of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) meeting at the 2nd African Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa in Accra, Ghana on 23 November, 2018:

- **Concerned** that twelve million girls are still married each year i.e. globally one in six adolescent girls (aged 15-19) is married or is in union; that 38% of women aged 20-24 in Sub-Saharan Africa were married before age 18.

- **Concerned** that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is concentrated in 27 African countries from the Horn of Africa to the Atlantic coast with prevalence rates of higher than 80% in eight African countries and where Child Marriage is prevalent in countries where FGM is practiced;

- **Recognising** that Child Marriage is a violation of children’s rights and that there is limited legal frameworks addressing Child Marriage, as well as poor enforcement of existing laws;

- **Cognizant** that article 21(2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, states that *Child Marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited, and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and to make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory*;

- **Cognizant** that of article 5 of the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, on Elimination of Harmful Practices that states *Parties shall prohibit and condemn all forms of harmful practices which negatively affect the human rights of women and which are contrary to recognized international standards. States Parties shall take all necessary legislative and other measures to eliminate such practices*;

- **Agree** to advocate for the reform of legislation regarding marriage and Child Marriage in our respective countries;

- **Commit** to advocate for the translation of regional and national level law and policy into concrete changes at lower levels of policy making and at the grassroots level;

- **Recommit** to a closer collaboration with key AU specialized Technical Committees such as Gender, Health, Education, and Youth;

- **Call** upon all Member States of the African Union, the Heads of States:
- Enact legislation, in constitutions or statutory law, that explicitly prohibits harmful practices.

- to ensure 18 is the minimum age of marriage and remove legal loopholes regarding full and free consent and other issues that allow for exceptions

- to guarantee the full and free consent of marrying parties and that the legal age of marriage applies to all marriages, including customary and religious ones

- to include a provision in the country’s constitution that customary and religious law cannot contradict fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution, and in particular cannot infringe on women’s and girls’ rights.

- to allocate financial resources, and put in place institutional bodies and mechanisms for implementation, including the monitoring of progress

- to ensure access of girls and young women to education, comprehensive SRH services and comprehensive information and education on SRH, harmful practices, sexuality and rights

- to strengthen youth and especially girls and young women’s leadership and participation on human rights and in ending of Child Marriage

- **Reaffirm** our commitment to leverage our unique position to support the rollout the ‘State of the African Woman Campaign,’ aimed at securing, realizing and extending the rights of young women and adolescents in African Union policies.
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Follow the conversation online using our twitter handle @OurGirlsAU and our hashtags #EndChildMarriageNow to spread the word.
Download summit photos at www.bit.ly/ags2-2018