Enough with the Silence!
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A Report of the Adolescents and Youth Pre-Summit of the 2nd Africa Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage
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COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH PRE-SUMMIT OF THE 2nd AFRICAN GIRLS SUMMIT HELD FROM 21 - 22 NOVEMBER 2018 – ACCRA, GHANA ....... 15
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<tr>
<td>AGS</td>
<td>Africa Girls’ Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
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<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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<td>MGCSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection</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>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<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 African Union (AU) in collaboration with partners organized an Adolescents and Youth Pre-Summit in Accra, Ghana from 21-22 November 2018 ahead of the 2nd Africa Girls Summit. The Adolescents and Youth Pre-summit was inspired by the 1st African Girls Summit held in 2015 that recognized the engagement of young boys and girls in Pan-African interventions aiming to respond to harmful societal practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage. The Adolescents and Youth Pre-Summit also afforded the AU and its partners an opportunity to engage young delegates on key AU policies and instruments such as the 5th Strategic Priority of AU’s Strategic Plan 2014 –2017 and AU’s Agenda 2063 that relate to the rights of children and youth.

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 adolescents and youth pre-summit. It highlights key points from the opening and closing ceremonies as well as the main plenaries. A number of parallel sessions 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 pre-summit communique is also attached for reference and use.
2.0 EVENT SUMMARY

The Adolescents and Youth Pre-summit and Pavilion was attended by about 150 participants with 70% aged between 10 and 24 years old from 20 African countries. This included adolescent boys and girls; representatives of youth-led/youth-focused Civil Society Organizations working on issues affecting youth and children; Government Ministries responsible for children, youth and social protection; International Organizations working on youth and children issues; development partners; traditional and religious leaders; as well as government representatives. There were also representatives of media organizations and a number of child rights advocates.

The Adolescents and Youth Pre-summit offered young people the platform to voice their concerns in an open and friendly manner. The pre-summit also enabled government representatives and CSOs across the continent to share experiences, best practices as well as challenges faced in protecting child rights in their various countries and collate recommendations on how to address the challenges identified. The friendly nature of the discussions made the summit a big success especially as participants identified with their age mates. The event provided participants a very effective platform for networking and knowledge sharing.
3.0 OPENING CEREMONY

A brief ceremony was held to officially open the pre-summit on 21 November 2018 in Accra, Ghana. The guest of honour was the wife of the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E. Ms. Samira Bawumia. Welcoming participants to the Pre-Summit, Ghana’s Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection Ms. Cynthia Morrison said, “Child Marriage remains a major threat to Africa’s development”. She noted that the practice negatively impacts the growth of children and the community at large. The Minister noted that Child Marriage downplays the value and role of the child and her abilities. As a result, a child’s status as to where to go, what to do and how to do so becomes limited. She urged delegates to come up with a good communiqué as an important input into the main summit to help End Child Marriage in Africa.

A Child Rights Advocate, Ms. Aurelia Mensah, decried the non-involvement of young people with disability in decision-making processes. She charged governments and stakeholders to “move beyond talk and take action to address challenges facing girls and young people”. Ms. Mensah underscored the need to take advantage of education to advocate for the rights of children. Making her statement on behalf of the youth at the adolescents and youth pre-summit, she called on parents to let the voices of their girls be heard on issues that affect them.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator for Ghana, Ms. Christine Evans-Klock warned that, “Child Marriages could increase to nearly fifty percent in Africa by 2050 if steps are not taken to address the situation now”. Ms. Clock recommended the enforcement of relevant laws, holding governments accountable, engagement with young people, keeping girls in school and amplifying their voices as some of the ways to eliminate Child Marriages.

Mr. Lucien Kouakou, Africa Regional Director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) emphasised the need to engender formal and comprehensive sexuality education among adults and children. “Empowerment of people, communities and young girls through gender and rights based approach is needed” he added. He noted that good governance, youth employment, and investment in health and family planning are critical for success in the Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa. He highlighted that young people are the heart of IPPF programs while decrying the lack of support to the campaign. Stakeholders were encouraged to be proactive and action oriented in tackling the phenomenon of Child Marriages in Africa.

The Governance Advisor at the British High Commission in Accra, Ms. Jemima Gordon-Duff reiterated the United Kingdom’s commitment to empowering young people and preventing Child Marriage in Africa. She emphasised that it would be impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without the empowerment of young people. Investing in human capital is thus the best way to sustainable development. She called for the empowerment of young people to speak up and end the silence on Child Marriage.

The wife of Ghana’s Vice President, Ms. Samira Bawumia deplored the phenomenon of having over 15 million girls in Africa given out in marriage before their legal age to marry. Ms. Bawumia made this observation while delivering the keynote address at the opening of the Adolescents and Youth Pre-Summit. Welcoming participants from various African countries to Ghana, she encouraged the youth to familiarize themselves with policies of the African Union. Ms. Bawumia noted that education is key to reversing the tide of Child Marriages, highlighting that, the longer girls stayed in school, the less likely they would be involved in Child Marriage. Ms Bawumia advocated for equal rights to education for girls. She recommended that measures such as the creation of support networks and other economic incentives for women are critical in ending Child Marriages and other harmful practices such as fish for sex - a result of economic hardship and abuse of girls.
4.0 PLENARY SESSIONS

The Adolescents and Youth Pre-summit of the 2nd Africa Girls Summit hosted two plenary sessions. Speakers and participants deliberated on challenges faced by girls on the continent regarding early marriages and shared best practices on how to address the phenomenon.

4.1 The AU Campaign on Ending Child Marriage

Participants participated in a brainstorming exercise on their understanding of Child Marriage, available statistics and the AU campaign on ending Child Marriage. It was emphasized that globally 125 million boys and girls are married before their 18th birthday. The AU campaign started in 2014 with the objective of ending Child Marriage and 24 countries have launched national campaigns so far. The pillars of the campaign include advocacy, monitoring and technical support. Since the inception of the campaign 30 percent of member states have enacted laws to make Child Marriage illegal.

Aspiration number six (6) of the AU Agenda 2063 captures the strategic direction for the campaign:
1. Strengthen cooperation with development partners
2. Inter-departmental cooperation to End Child Marriage
3. Resource mobilization
4. Monitoring and evaluating processes by following up on Member States’ progress of implementation of the campaign.

4.2 Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

Panellists for this plenary included Ms. Naa Amy Korkor Wayne, PPA Ghana; Ms. Goitse Modimo Ditsele, SRHR Africa Trust, Botswana; and Ms. Sophia Nabulenya, Plan International, Uganda. Panellists emphasised the important role Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) plays in the field of Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for young people. They shared experiences on what motivated them to become SRHR advocates in their respective countries and institutions and encouraged more advocates and activists to come aboard. They interacted with participants and responded to questions

The following recommendations were made:
- Stakeholders must make effective use of social media for advocacy
- CSE issues must be properly termed and contextualized within culturally sensitive societies.
- Schools and informal meeting places are some of the platforms that can be used for CSE.
- Build strong relationships between stakeholders for effective collaboration.
- Build capacities of young people to enable them participate effectively in decision making and advocacy on issues of CSE and SRHR
- Harmonize laws relating to SRHR
- Stakeholders must consider using art (music, drama, poetry etc) to educate young people about SRHR
- Parents and faith-based organizations should be involved in discussions and decision-making.
- Policy makers should not only invite adolescents to attend programmes, they should be given opportunity to make their voices heard.
5.0 PARALLEL SESSIONS

5.1 Human Rights, Laws and Practices

Moderators for this session were Ms. Nana Yortey and Ms. Sheila Minka Premo. Panelists included Ms. Euphonia Edwards, Tanzania; Mr. Calistus Clerk Noyoru, Ghana; Ms. Florence Ayisi-Quartey, Ghana; and Ms. Patricia Humura, Uganda. The session discussed the concept and principles of human rights, laws and practices and its contributions in the campaign to End Child Marriage and Harmful Traditional Practices in Africa. It was underscored that, the proper observance of the laws and placing high premium on the rights of children will help curtail the practice. Participants called for harmonisation of laws and their enforcement to assist #EndChildMarriage in Africa.

The following recommendations were made:
- That young girls must get themselves informed about international treaties which deal with the protection of their rights
- That young girls must know their national constitutions and be conversant with provisions which protect their rights as well as the need to know other domestic legislation
- That legal literacy is necessary as a tool in curbing Child Marriage
- That there is the need to pay attention to redress systems when the rights of young girls are abused.

5.2 Access to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) Information and Services

The session was moderated by Mr. Joshua Atambinore and Mr. Joseph Kwee Armoo from UNFPA Ghana Country Office. Mr. Ishmael Kwesi Selasi of Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana led a discussion on the need for increased access to sexual reproductive health information and services as well as comprehensive sexuality education and its benefits to young girls. Best practices from the youth such as adolescent health literacy and community support were considered.

A number of recommendations were made:
- Strengthen integrated girl-centred education
- Governments should lay emphasis on youth with disability, street girls, empower parents on matters of adolescent reproductive rights
- Work with young people to design CSE and make youth friendly services accessible.
- Make information more attractive through music social media
- Mobilize and empower young people to speak up
- Build capacity and ensure full involvement of stakeholders - parents, teachers, legislators, chiefs, by adopting a bottom-top approach in designing SRHR
- Work with traditional leaders in a way which is not challenging this approach isn’t yielding results rather work together with them for a visible impact away from resistance
- Comprehensive sexuality education by uploading useful content on electronic gadgets
- Give parents the right information in other to transmit same to children
- Need to ensure sustainable models for victims of Child Marriage by psychosocial counselling
- Build resilient livelihood, stigmatization and marginalization
- Make Child Marriage a health issue instead of a sex issue.
Sensitization of young girls against Child Marriage is important.
Inclusion of social interventions to avoid girls dropping out of school
Encourage governments to implement sexual reproductive rights policies
Integrate sexual reproductive health into the educational curriculum
Young girls should be encouraged to freely talk about matters of sexuality

5.3 Role of Various Stakeholders in Curbing Child Marriage

Ms. Dhanishtha Kuruvilla and Ms. Macarena Espinar from Girls Not Brides facilitated the session. Participants explored ways to empower young people to End Child Marriage and harmful practices in their communities. The session focused discussions on the role various stakeholders in achieving this.

The following key messages and recommendations were made:

- CSOs should mainstream child programs in the program to End Child Marriages
- International NGOs should not only develop new policies but ensure young people are ready for the change
- Boys should be part of the education
- Strengthen budgetary allocations and implementation of Child Marriage policies
- Ensure young people partake in the preparation of the policies to end child marriage
- Media must raise awareness among the populace about the phenomenon of Child Marriage
- Donors should support initiatives at grassroots levels.
- Citizens should hold their governments accountable
- Governments should harmonize customary laws with statutory laws
- Education should involve persons with disability

5.4 Framework and Systems for addressing Child Marriage

Ms. Fatou Dia from UNICEF and Ms. Nancy Okoth from PLAN International facilitated the session on the Framework and Systems for addressing Child Marriage. The objective of the session was to discuss ways by which the various structures and organizations can harmonize the implementation of their interventions to effectively curb Child Marriage. These carefully thought out measures range from societal, community and country based approaches. Participants engaged the facilitators in a number of discussions and provided inputs into the presentations.

A number of recommendations were made:

- Governments and civil society groups should support the fight against Child Marriage.
- Encourage the formation of clubs and societies in schools to champion the cause
- Stakeholders should collaborate with civil society to train leaders on consequences of Child Marriage
- Increase budgetary, financial and other resource support to the campaign to end child marriage in Africa
- Establish youth functional services at health centres
- Adoption of peer counselling as a key methodology must be encouraged
- AU must hold member countries accountable
- Education of girls in other to break the cycle of poverty.
5.5 Key Messages to Stakeholders

At the end of all the parallel and plenary sessions, participants of the pre-summit developed recommendations for major stakeholders.

1. To Civil Society Organizations and Youth: Civil society should mainstream the issue of Child Marriage into their programmes, regardless of whether they have specific funding for it or not. In countries where civil society coalitions do not exist, this should be established to work collectively to End Child Marriage.

2. To International Organizations and UN Agencies: International organizations and UN agencies and civil society should not only come up with new policies but insist that the already laid down policies are implemented to minimize the social issues faced by young people. Young people should be ready for the change.

3. To Governments: Strengthen the implementation of Child Marriage policies and budget allocation, and ensure young people partake in the preparation of these programmes.

4. To the Media: Raise awareness among populations on the causes and consequences of Child Marriage.

5. To Development Partners: Support more grassroots initiatives and communities directly.
6.0 CLOSING SESSION AND COMMUNIQUE

The closing session had a number of dignitaries outlining some of the key messages and actions necessary to #EndChildMarriage. A communiqué was also read and adopted.

6.1 Closing Ceremony

Mr. Barima Akwesi Amankwah of the Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC) expressed disappointment at the sluggish approach to ending Child Marriage in Africa. He called on governments and security agencies to ensure that those who violate the rights of children are severely punished to serve as deterrence to others. He further called on governments to take steps to review laws that hamper the fight against Child Marriages in Africa.

Speaking on behalf of the AU Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage, Ms. Nena Thundu, Senior Policy Officer at the AUC urged all stakeholders to unite to End Child Marriage in Africa. She noted that the campaign to End Child Marriages can only succeed if each and every stakeholder play their part effectively. She thanked the Government of Ghana and all the development partners for their support in the fight to End Child Marriages in Ghana.

6.2 Summary of Communique of the Adolescents and Youth Pre-Summit

The pre-summit ended with a communiqué issued by participants. The communiqué called on key stakeholders to take steps aimed at addressing Child Marriage and related issues.

States and Governments are called upon to:
- Mainstream and strengthen the implementation of policies and budget that aim to End Child Marriage, provide support systems for survivors of Child Marriage and enforce laws that criminalize perpetrators and supporters of Child Marriage;
- Increase effective coordination and collaboration with UN agencies, communities, CSOs and advocates to empower young people as agents of change;
- Create platforms that meaningfully engage young people in programs and decision making processes that aim to End Child Marriages and other harmful practices;
- Strengthen integrated girl-centred Comprehensive Sexuality Education and adolescent friendly SRHR services for in and out of school girls with emphasis on prisons, refugee camps, conflict zones, youth with disabilities, girls on the street, etc.
- Recognise menstrual hygiene and health for young girls as a national priority and provide increased budgetary allocations towards products and services in line with this. Provide free sanitary towels especially to girls that have difficulty in accessing them.

CSOs, NGOs, UN Agencies, and the AU are called upon to:
- Prioritize allocation of resources to innovative, home-grown and grassroots initiatives towards ending Child Marriage and other harmful traditional practices. Community efforts to empower girls and provide technical, vocational and entrepreneurial careers paths must be recognized and fully supported towards the financial empowerment of survivors of Child Marriage.
Parents, Community Leaders, Teachers, Medical Professionals and the Media should:

Engage governments to enforce and implement laws and policies that protect children from Child Marriage. All key stakeholders particularly, policy makers, legislators, religious and cultural leaders, parents and teachers must be held accountable for their responsibility to safeguard the rights and dignity of their children especially the girl child.

Raise awareness and promote social behavioural changes that sustainably address the causes and consequences of Child Marriage.

Young people were encouraged to:

Actively participate and be involved in efforts to End Child Marriage.

Get informed and equipped with sound knowledge of laws and instruments that promote their fundamental Human rights.

Be at the forefront of the fight. Girls, especially survivors of Child Marriage must get actively involved in the campaign to End Child Marriage.

Mobilize and empower other young people to stand up, speak and challenge harmful socio-cultural, religious and traditional norms and promote positive Pan-African values that encourage a shift of the narrative around the role of girls in communities.

Bring innovative and creative ideas to promote the rights of girls and engage more people on the fight to End Child Marriage through media platforms, digital
ANNEX 1: COMMUNIQUÉ

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH PRE-SUMMIT OF THE 2ND AFRICAN GIRLS SUMMIT HELD FROM 21 -22 NOVEMBER 2018 - ACCRA, GHANA.

Her Excellency the First Lady of Ghana and other dignitaries present.
We, the young people of the youth pre-summit of the 2nd African Girls’ summit would like to thank the African Union, the government of Ghana, UN agencies, supporting partners and all young people, specially girls for being the reason we are gathered here.
The youth pre-summit was held on the 21st and 22nd of November, 2018 and it brought together over 150 young delegates with 70% of them aged between 10 and 24 years old. This pre-summit offered a chance for young girls and boys to discuss and deliberate on innovative ways of addressing Child Marriage and other harmful traditional practices. The discussions were based on human rights, laws and practices, access to SRHR information and services, role of various stakeholders and sectors, framework and systems for addressing Child Marriage.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Acknowledging the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the AU Member States that have not ratified it namely:

- Democratic Republic of the Congo,
- Morocco,
- Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic,
- Somalia, Sao Tome and Principe,
- South Sudan, &
- Tunisia,

In full awareness of the fact that the AU Agenda 2063 and the demographic dividend cannot be realised without strategic investments in young people especially young girls;

In line with the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum age for marriage and Registration of Marriage; and the provisions of the African Youth Charter;

Inspired by the protocol on the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on Women’s Rights and the Maputo Plan of Action 2016-2030 for the operationalization of the continental policy framework on SRHR; are resolved to continue playing a key role in the realisation of the African Common position on ending Child Marriage and its campaign, as pledged during the first Girl Summit of November 2015.

Excellencies, honourable delegates, ladies and gentlemen,
Out of the aforementioned, we the young people at the conference demand that our voices are heard and call for the following actions

- To States and governments;
  We call on governments to mainstream and strengthen the implementation of policies and budget that aim to End Child Marriage, provide support systems for survivors of Child Marriage and enforce laws that criminalize perpetrators and supporters of Child Marriage;
We urge government institutions to increase effective coordination and collaboration with UN agencies, communities, CSOs and advocates to empower young people as agents of change.

We urge government institutions to create platforms that meaningfully engage young people in programs and decision-making processes that aim to end child marriages and other harmful practices.

We demand that government institutions strengthen integrated girl-centred comprehensive sexuality education and adolescent friendly SRHR services for in and out of school girls with emphasis on (prison, refugee camps, conflict zones, youth with disabilities, girls on the street, etc).

Menstrual hygiene and health for young girls has to become a national priority with increased budgetary allocations towards products and services in line with it and the free provision of sanitary towels especially for girls that have difficulty in accessing them.

- To CSOs, NGOs, UN Agencies, the AU...
  We call on donors and funding organizations to prioritize allocation of resources to innovative, home-grown and grassroots initiatives to ending child marriage and other harmful traditional practices. Community efforts to empower girls and provide technical, vocational and entrepreneurial career paths must be recognized and fully supported towards the financial empowerment of survivors of child marriage.

- To key stakeholders that are our parents, community leaders, teachers, medical professionals and the media
  We call on community leaders to engage governments to enforce and implement laws and policies that protect children from child marriage. All key stakeholders particularly, policy makers, legislators, religious and cultural leaders, parents and teachers must be accountable for their responsibility to safeguard the rights and dignity of their children especially the girl child.
  We call on the media to raise awareness and promote social behavioural changes that sustainably address the causes and consequences of child marriage;

- To young people
  We call on young people to actively participate and be involved in efforts to end child marriage. Young people must be informed and equipped with sound knowledge of laws and instruments that promote their fundamental Human rights. Girls, especially survivors of child marriage must be at the forefront of the fight.
  We call on young leaders to mobilize and empower other young people to stand up, speak and challenge harmful socio-cultural, religious and traditional norms and promote positive Pan-African values that encourage the shift of the narrative around the role of girls in communities. Young people must bring innovative and creative ideas to promote the rights of girls and engage more people on the fight to end child marriage through media platforms, digital

Building on the experiences from the 1st African Girls summit where girls did not meaningfully participate in the decision-making process, we thank you for hearing our cry and engaging more girls meaningfully in this second summit. And just as you heard our cry for this, we urge you to expressly act upon our call for action and we will assess progress made in the implementation of these calls for action at the next summit.

Thank you!
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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/as2-2018