

Parliamentary Seminar on Combating Early and Forced Marriage

La Palm Royal Beach Hotel

Accra, Ghana

March 3-4, 2014

With the financial support of

*Department of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Development
Canada*

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Compiled by
WiLDAF Ghana
P. O. Box LG488
Legon –Accra
Ghana

Introduction

The Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) in collaboration with Parliament of Ghana held a two-day seminar on Combating Early and Forced Marriage in Ghana for Members of Parliament across Africa on 3-4 March, 2014. Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF Ghana) facilitated the process and helped in the organization of workshop.

The seminar was organised with intention to seeking to prevent the occurrence of early and forced marriages through coordinated actions by Members of Parliament of Ghana to improve access to quality education and other socio-economic opportunities in order to realise the fullest potential of both girls and boys.

As a measure to determine the implementation and enforcement of the law and general knowledge and capacity of key stakeholders particularly members of Parliament a survey was conducted to ascertain some basic information that influenced input into the discussions during the seminar.

Goal of Seminar

Enhance the capacity of Members of Parliament in Ghana to effectively address structural elements that lead to a 25% rate of early and forced marriages in Ghana despite national legislation fixing age 18 as the minimum legal age for marriage for girls and boys.

Objectives of the seminar

The specific objectives of the include;

- a) To assess current legislation and national policies on early and forced marriage
- b) To discuss the trend and scale of practice of early and forced marriages in Ghana.
- c) To address root causes of early and forced marriage
- d) To review and make recommendations for strengthening laws and policies on early band forced marriage
- e) To discuss practical recommendations that contribute to respecting, promoting and protecting rights of victims of early and forced marriage and soliciting from the participants their recommendations.

Participation

The seminar attracted participants from Parliament of Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Liberia; and law enforcement and human rights institutions such Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, Ministries such as Ministry of Justice, and Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Domestic Violence Secretariat. Other participants include civil society organisations such as The Gender and Human Rights Documentation Centre

(Gender Centre), The Ark Foundation, WILDAF Ghana, The Christian Council of Ghana, African Women Development Fund. The following UN Agencies also participated: UNICEF and UNFPA.

Key topics discussed include

- a) The Ghanaian Case: Assessment of current Legislation and National policies on Early and Forced marriage – Gaps and opportunity
- b) Addressing Root Causes of Early and Forced marriages
- c) Overcoming Challenges to Improving Maternal and Reproductive health
- d) Role of Parliamentarians in Addressing Early Marriages: Legislators, Community Leaders and Facilitators of Positive Change
- e) Strengthening the Law: Recommendations for Effective Implementation
- f) Exchanging Best Practices and Effective Tools to combat Early and Forced marriage
- g) Discussion and Adoption of commitment on ending Early and Forced Marriages

Day 1: Monday, 3rd March, 2014

2.0 Opening and Welcome Statements

2.1 Welcome Address

Participants were welcomed to the seminar by Hon. Irene Naa Torshie Addo the first Deputy Minority Whip of Parliament of Ghana, who used the address to also express profound appreciation to the PGA, participants and Speaker of Ghana's Parliament for contributing in various ways towards the actualisation of the seminar. She alluded to the timing of the seminar as appropriate.

Hon. Alban Sumana Bagbin (MP), and the chairman of the Ghana local chapter of PGA National Group who also doubled as the chairman of the occasion also acknowledged the enormous contribution of PGA to parliamentary work and other developmental issues being undertaken by PGA. He as well acknowledged the Department of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Development of Canada and MacArthur Foundation for their efforts and support in making the seminar a reality. The speech also brought to light how the topic is gaining global attention and what have been done in a bid to find solutions to the problem. For example, in September 2013, the UN Human Right Council in Geneva adopted a resolution to combat early marriage. According to him the resolution recognised child, early and forced marriage as human rights violation and stressed the need to empower and invest in women and girls as a means of "breaking the cycle of gender inequality and discrimination, violence and poverty" and to bring about "sustainable development and economic growth". He added that the practice occur in practically every region of the world and the rate remains very high in some regions such as sub-Saharan Africa (37%) and Latin America and Caribbean (29%). In West Africa, the prevalence rates of early marriage remain high especially Niger, Mali and Chad as major hotspot areas.

He also mentioned that the practice is widespread in all the ten (10) regions of Ghana and according to the UNFPA report in 2010, 277,000 women in Ghana aged between 20-24 were married/in union before age 18. If the present trend continue, 407,000 of young girls born between 2005 and 2010 will be married/in union before age 18 by 2030 (47% increment).

He explained the purpose of the seminar as follows:

- ❖ the seminar seeks to add its voice to the global efforts by drawing attention to the problem of early and forced marriage in West Africa
- ❖ It affords the participants the opportunity to collaborate and forge ahead as legislators to eliminate the menace.

- ❖ To develop and adopt commitment on ending Early and Forced Marriages
- ❖ To exchanging best practices and effective tools to combat Early and Forced marriage

Hon. Bagbin in his address also brought to light the effects of early and forced marriages on the health of the young girls and its implication for national development called on all the legislators to be at the forefront of combating early marriages in their respective countries and communities they represent.

Ms Diedrah Kelly of the High Commission of Canada to the Republic of Ghana gave a short remark on behalf of Canada, stressing in her remarks how early and forced marriage could negatively affect development and human rights. She mentioned that the phenomenon deprives girls of their rights; increase the maternal mortality rate, health risks of the young girls and conduit for spread of STIs, among others. She further called on all participants to look at these negative effects to strive to acquire new knowledge, skills and tools in combating early and forced marriages in their respective countries. She mentioned Canada as leading the promotion of elimination of violence against women and girls with focus on supporting most vulnerable groups.

There were solidarity messages from Hon. Dominic Nitiwul (Deputy Minority Leader) and Hon. Alfred Agbesi, Deputy Majority Leader both of Parliament of Ghana.

Professor Fred Sai, a guest speaker, a long time friend of PGA and expert in sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) also made a statement in support of the PGA and appreciate the timeliness of the seminar. Prof. Sai acknowledged the role of PGA international and Ghana for their immense contributions to nation building and protection of human rights and reiterated the need to combat the practice. He held the view that the laws are not helping since different laws have different demands at different stages. He called on legislators to involve other stakeholders especially the Traditional Authorities and religious leaders in the fight against the practice since these practices are culturally and religiously rooted.

2.1 Keynote Address

The first deputy Speaker, Hon. Ebo Barton Oduro gave the key note address on behalf of the Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Doe Adjaho. The speaker believed the seminar was timeous. He noted that the early marriage which refers to marriage involving a person below the age of eighteen (18) years occurs more frequently among girls who are the least educated, poorest, vulnerable and living in rural areas. According to him, the practice is inimical to the child's development because it denies the young person the opportunity of being physically, psychologically, emotionally and financially ready for the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing. He added that education of such children (victims) may be terminated thus

compromising their chances of being economically empowered and a major consequences for public health, social and economic development of the country.

The Hon. Speaker of Parliament of Ghana further mentioned some efforts made by Parliament to address the problem including ratification of conventions and treaties, and enacting the appropriate laws. He mentioned that aside enacting the Children's Act 1998, Act 560 there has been some amendments to the Criminal Code Amendment (Act 554) 1998, making it illegal to force a person into marriage under duress or without the person's consent.

While acknowledging the need for more work to be done, he called for effective well-funded educational programmes that teach women, adolescents, social workers, law enforcement officers and journalists about laws relating to early and forced marriage. He added that it is crucial for society to take the necessary steps to keep all young persons in school to the highest level. He recommended re-integration of victims of the act into schools and society by (i) re-admitting them into the school system, where possible or enrolling them in other programmes designed to provide literacy and life skills that will enhance self-esteem; and/or (ii) provide alternative income generating activities, apprenticeships or livelihood training.

The following were some suggestions from the key note address. Legislators strengthening their advocacy and sensitisation at the constituency level, improved budget allocation to relevant sectors, upholding women's rights, strengthen legal regime and policy formulation, and rolling out targeted programmes to curb the practice. Participants were further advised to adopt comprehensive but workable plan of action and commit to implementing such action in their respective countries.

3.0 Presentations

There were 3 sessions held on the first day of the seminar and under each session were 3 presentations followed by discussions:

3.1 Session 1: The Ghanaian Case: Assessment of Current Legislation and National Policies on EARLY AND Forced Marriages – Gaps and Opportunities

This session was moderated by Hon. Alban Sumana Bagbin and speakers were Hon. Gifty Kusi, Member of Parliament for Tarkwa Nsuaem, Ghana, Ms Angela Dwamena Aboagye of The Ark Foundation, Hon. Gershon Gbediame, and Member of Parliament for Nkwanta South with Dorcas Coker-Appiah as a discussant.

Hon. Gifty Kusi, Member of Parliament of Tarkwa-Nsuaem Constituency, Parliament of Ghana, started by affirming the existence of early and forced marriage in Ghana and quoted UNFPA statistic on early marriage in 2010. She defined early and forced marriage, brought some causes and effects of the practice on girls, women and the entire country. She went ahead to acknowledge steps taken to address the situation.

For instance, the existence of laws, policies and social services aimed at addressing the menace. She also identified some gaps, opportunities and recommendation.

Mrs. Angela Dwamena Aboagye, on her part acknowledged the existence of the laws, policies and international treaties and conventions ratified by the state which directly and indirectly addresses the issue of early and forced marriages. According to her, Ghana's national laws are effective to address early and forced marriages but effective implementation of the law is what is need necessary. She held the view that early and forced marriage bothers on human rights violations and constitute criminal acts against women and girls. However she also held the opinion that political will is necessary to curbing the situation especially through application of the law.

Hon. Gershon Gbediame (MP) from endemic area in Ghana, also defined early and forced marriage, mentioned some existing legal and policy frameworks in Ghana that aimed at addressing the issue and gave the picture of the prevalence rate in Ghana. He also identified some key challenges and opportunities in the fight against the menace.

Discussion Session

After detailed discussion of the topic the following key outcomes were considered:

That early marriage is where “a marriage occurs before a person reaches the age of consent (18years) or as “a practice where one or both spouses are below the age of 18 years”.

And forced marriage was defined as “marriage that occurs without the consent of either one or both of the parties”. In many cases the party whose consent is not sought is the girl-child although boys can be affected, this is also not limited to only those below 18 years but adult too.

Basing their arguments on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments panel members held the common view that early and forced marriage (EFM) are classified as negative traditional practices and do not make marriage contractual since there is fundamental factor of duress; as families put pressure or force the girls into marriage against their wishes.

Key issues of interest

Causes of Early and Forced Marriage

Gender Inequality – the female often occupies a lower status in society as a result of social, culture, and traditions practices, aggravated by attitudes and beliefs which deny them their rights and stifle their ability to play an equal role in their homes and communities.

Poverty – in families on a low income, girls may be viewed as an economic burden. There is a perception of girls' potential as commodities to be sold to earn an income hence comparatively the poor pushes their girl-child out of their homes and into marriage for dowries which might bring some economic fortunes and income to the family

Negative Traditional /Religious Practices – in many countries the importance of preserving family “honour” and girls' virginity is such that parents push their daughters into marriage well before they are matured. There is a belief that marriage safeguards against ‘immoral’ or ‘inappropriate behaviours’.

Failures to enforce Laws – sometimes families are not even aware they are breaking the laws of the land. In some countries early marriage is so prevalent, but prosecutions will seldom take place because there are weak mechanisms for enforcing the law.

Conflicts, Disasters and Emergencies - disasters and emergencies increase economic pressures on households and many families that would not previously have considered early marriage turn to it as a last resort.

Effect of Early and Forced Marriage

- ❖ Early marriages are a big threat to the human rights and well-being of children denying the young people opportunities to grow and empower themselves.
- ❖ It challenges the basic rights of children to education, health, protection and development.
- ❖ It denies girls and women the right to liberty and security.
- ❖ It abrogates a girl's right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- ❖ Owing to their tender age, some teenage girls are sexually exploited by other men in the family and they are too scared to go out and complain. Some of the girls who marry young also join the bandwagon of perpetuating cruelty against women – leading a cycle.
- ❖ Inability to plan or manage families. The victims have less influence and control over their children and less ability to make decisions about their nutrition, health care and household management.
- ❖ **The Next generation of child wives** – children whose mothers were married early tend to marry early; thus creating generations of child wives since the family may not see it as a bad practice because “it has been what we do” syndrome.

- ❖ **Marital Instability** – because of the age difference and the attendant poor communication, many early marriages ends in early divorce or separation. The scenario may create further problems of care, nutrition and increase the poverty level.
- ❖ **Physical and Sexual Abuse** – Out of fear for their parents and the social stigma as well as poverty associated with being single; many child wives are compelled to remain in a loveless and violent marriage resulting in abuse physically, sexually, emotionally and economically. This could also contribute to unregulated birth due to levels of power and control.
- ❖ **Inability to read and write** – the majority of the child wives have not gone to school or left school before completion of a full course of primary education making them entirely dependent on their husbands in practical aspects of everyday life. Illiteracy therefore compounds the problem and does not allow assertiveness and limit growth.
- ❖ **Having many children early** – this exposes the mother and her children to psychological and other health problems including fistula related problems and complications with child birth.
- ❖ **HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)** – the child wife cannot negotiate for safer sex practices; thus exposing her to risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections/ diseases

Existing Laws/Policies of Ghana and Treaties/Conventions ratified that seeks to address the issue

The session also identified some key national and international laws and policies which Ghana is a signatory. Ghana has also made progress internally in enacting laws and policies that are progressive on the subject matter.

Some of these international conventions and treaties include:

- The UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, *Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage*, (1964)
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

- UN Human Rights Council Resolution: Strengthening Efforts to Prevent and Eliminate Child, Early and Forced Marriage published September 25, 2013. A/HRC/24/L.34

Domestic Laws include:

- ✓ The 1992 Constitution of Ghana – defines a child as a person below the age of 18 and stated in article 26 (2) that “all customary practices which dehumanise or are injurious to the physical and mental wellbeing of a person is prohibited”. Article 12 (1) of the constitution also requires enactment of legislation or other measures to give effect to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed in the document. The constitution mandates that all fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution “shall be respected and upheld by the Executive, the legislature, the judiciary, all other organs of government
- ✓ The Criminal Code Amendment Act (Act 554)
- ✓ The Criminal Code (Act 29) 1960
- ✓ The Children’s Act (Act 560) 1998
- ✓ Domestic Violence Act, (Act 732) 2007

Other Opportunities

- The establishment of Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the Police and other relevant law enforcement agencies.
- Establishment of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service.
- A host of NGOs/CSOs who are working vigorously to combat EFM – For example The International Federation of Women Lawyers, Ghana, The Ark Foundation, WiLDAF Ghana among others.
- The establishment of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to lead the Government’s response to the phenomenon by making intervening policies and programmes.

Gaps

Although legislation and policies exist to safeguard the welfare of women and girls:

- the country does not have a specific policy aimed at eliminating early and forced marriage.

- Enforcement of laws in Ghana banning early and forced marriages, remains a big challenge.
- Most of these practices are entrenched and widely accepted in rural communities thus offences are not reported for the law to take its course.
- Ignorance of laws on the part of rural dwellers.
- Current body of laws does not make provision for a shelter for girls who have escaped forced marriages. No funds earmark for the upkeep of the escapees. It is the case that most of these victims run to the cities and work as head porters without any proper shelter. They are thus subjected to all kinds of inhuman treatment such as rape, teenage pregnancy, robbery and streetism.
- No deliberate allocation of funds to support awareness creation on the existing laws and policies.
- Collusion and condoning of the practice with the support of some traditional leaders.
- Inadequate sanction – though early and forced marriage had been criminalised, it is only a misdemeanour. Offenders can only be sentenced to a term of up to three years imprisonment.

The session made the following recommendations

- ❖ Government develop strategies that will enhance girls’ empowerment, social and cultural norms change, legal reform and policy action such as keeping girls in school, redesigning of curriculum to make programmes provide life skills, health information and services and social support.
- ❖ Married girls (victims) need access to sexual reproductive health services, including family planning and maternal health services.
- ❖ Sensitization and encouragement of community members to report such practices.
- ❖ NGOs and CSOs should undertake advocacy and educational campaigns to break traditionally entrenched practices that tend to fuel this act.
- ❖ Include in school curriculum provisions on existing laws to sensitise primary and second cycle institutions so that young girls can be made aware of their rights.
- ❖ Awareness creation by Members of Parliament on the existing laws.
- ❖ Tightening the national laws and strengthen the law enforcement agencies to deal with this social menace.

- ❖ Advocacy and sensitization programmes for the Regional and National house of chiefs.
- ❖ Improve the capacity of agencies including social welfare department, the police, ministries of education, health and courts to work together to address cases of coerced marriages.
- ❖ Effective engagement with Christians and Muslims faith leaders and faith-based organisations in community awareness programs.

3.2 SESSION TWO: Addressing Root Causes of Early and Forced Marriage; Economic realities, Keeping girls in school and Addressing social pressure and norms

The session was moderated by Hon. Esther Obeng Dapaah, MP, Parliament of Ghana and the speakers were Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai, MP (Parliament of Sierra Leone), Mr. Birima Fall (Senior Trainer, Community Empowerment Program), TOSTAN, Senegal and Hon. Dr. Susan Chebet, MP (Parliament of Kenya).

The speakers touch on root causes of early and forced marriages, analysed the situation in their perspective countries, some good practices, programs, activities and strategies to combat the situation, impact and challenges.

Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai (Minority Leader, Sierra Leone Parliament) in her presentation explained the situational analyses of early and forced marriage in Sierra Leone and effort being made to address it. According to her, 41% of the population of Sierra Leone were under the age of 18 years. 27% of the girls marry before age 15 and 62% before age 18 years.

She attributed the root causes of the early and forced marriage in Sierra Leone to poverty, social, economic, religious and legal factors. She further zero in on the eleven year civil war as a major contributing factor, stating that girls as young as 8 years and women were abducted by the rebels and forcefully taken as wives and concubines. This according to her contributed to unwanted pregnancies.

Mr Birima Fall on the other hand mentioned the following as the root cause of the practice:

- i. Mundane strategy by communities to prevent sexual intercourse before marriage
- ii. Intention to avoid the shame of early pregnancy
- iii. Reinforces family ties (often viewed as paying a debt of gratitude)

- iv. Assumption that families protect their young girls by placing them under the responsibility of an often older man
- ✚ An African way of ensuring families extend their lineage since the African cherishes extended family system but also large family size
- ✚ Poverty as root cause of early and force marriage
- ✚ Lack of quality education in many countries that leads to girls not excelling in school
- ✚ Silence around the taboo of speaking about marriage and sexuality. Further absence of a safe space to have a genuine dialogue about issues surrounding marriage and sexuality
- ✚ Lack of knowledge about human right/child rights
- ✚ Lack of medical information about the risks of early pregnancy

The final speaker on the topic, Hon. Susan K. Chebet, MP Kenya National Assembly, also acknowledged the existence of the phenomenon and shared some impact story on the “Tumndo Ne Leel Program” implemented in Kenya for the past ten years. According to her, the program helped in maintaining girls in school longer, reduced teenage pregnancy, and reduction in FGM among others.

Discussion Session

Participants analysed some of the issues raised by the panellists and supported the fact that the many civil wars that have plagued the African continent have contributed to worsen the situation. It was also revealed that some unscrupulous teachers engage their students’ girls in sex which sometimes results in pregnancy, so it is not always the case that the school environment is a safe haven; though the advantage of being in school outweighs the opposite.

The revelation by Hon. Dr. Benedette Lahai (MP) Sierra Leone that war and/or conflict contribute to early and forced marriages was supported by other participants. Another participant cited the current phenomenon of illegal mining in many countries in Africa which has enriched some young men and therefore are applying their ill-gotten worth to attracting young girls into early marriages.

Recommendations

The following are some of the recommendations made under the session:

- Decentralized unit of the state institutions should be used as foundation for the fight against early and forced marriage.

- Engaging the media, traditional authorities and religious bodies to join force to eliminate the canker.
- Formation of committees (Parliamentary Committees) to start awareness creation activities in the various countries especially Ghana.
- Spread of recreational and social amenities to rural communities to provide entertainment and provide opportunities for girls to learn.
- Economic empowerment of families especially those living in the rural areas where early and forced marriages are prevalent and persistent.
- Girls must be retained in school to complete primary, secondary and even advance to the tertiary institutions.
- Situating the strategies for combating early and forced marriages within the human right-based framework with focus on those at risk.
- Review of existing laws and strengthening legal and policy frameworks.
- Inclusion of young girls and women in designing and implementing of policies and programmes that seek to address the phenomenon.
- Members of Parliament should strengthen their oversight responsibilities.

3.3 SESSION 3: Overcoming Challenges to improving Maternal and reproductive Health; (i) increase quality, information and access to reproductive health care and (ii) best practices, strategies and interventions used by colleagues in other parliaments

The speakers for this session were Dr. Friday Okonofua (Program Officer, The Ford Foundation) and Hon. Bernice Heloo Adiku, MP, Hohoe (Parliament of Ghana). The moderator was Hon. Juliana Azumah Mensah MP, (Parliament of Ghana).

The first speaker Dr. Friday Okonofua's speech touches on maternal and reproductive health, components of maternal and reproductive health, implications, international and African regional commitments to maternal and reproductive health, maternal mortality, contraceptive prevalence rate, HIV eradication programmes, political commitment and recommendations. Hon. Dr. Bernice Heloo Adiku on the other hand touched on recognition of reproductive health care as a human right and a global development priority, HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality and recommendations. The session also focused on discussing the health implication of such early marriages and in this case reproductive and maternal health.

Dr. Okonofua and Bernice Heloo-Adiku both tried to give some explanation on key health issues. Relating to reproductive health and in reference to ICPD,

1994 they defined reproductive health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.

It was also explained that **maternal health** refers to the health of women during pregnancy, child birth, and the post-delivery period. Further to this reproductive health according to the experts includes fertility regulation, infertility prevention and treatment, safe motherhood, prevention and management of unsafe abortion, reproductive tract cancers, family planning, among others whilst **maternal health** is intertwined with reproductive health and encompasses pre-conceptual counselling, pre-natal and post-natal care in efforts to prevent maternal morbidity and mortality.

It was a common knowledge that there had been global and continental efforts and commitments to addressing maternal and reproductive health problems through conferences, conventions and treaties among them International Conference on Population and Development, ICPD; Cairo – 1994, the 4th World Conference on Women; Beijing – 1995 and Millennium Development Goals – 2000. At the African Regional level there had been commitments through the following Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; Continental Policy Framework on SRHR by AU Heads of Governments, and the adoption of the Maputo Plan of Action – 2006; Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) – 2009.

It was also seen that early and forced marriage could lead to maternal mortality. The resource person went further to define maternal mortality in accordance with WHO standard as “the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy, from any cause aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes”. It was a relief to know that globally, maternal mortality declined by 50% between 1990 and 2010 but still more than 99% occur in the developing countries with nearly half of these in sub-Saharan Africa. It was also noted that Nigeria has the second highest absolute number of maternal deaths, despite a reported decline in MMR of nearly 41% between 1990 and 2010. According to a recent WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA mortality rate estimation (2000), Ghana's maternal mortality rate was estimated at 540 maternal deaths per 100,000. Currently, the ratio is 350 per 100,000 live births.

The low progress in Sub-Saharan Africa had been attributed to poverty, harmful cultural practices – e.g. early and forced marriage, lack of information, proximity to health facilities, inadequate services, poor integration of RH into regional developmental agenda, low capacity to carry out RH interventions, poor country ownership, with RH agenda driven by international interests, limited understanding of RH and the lack of political will to make effective policies and take decided actions.

Recommendations

Country ownership in RH policies and programming

Strengthening the capacity of countries to carry out research and innovation in RH that addresses their specific needs

Building and sustaining RH leaderships

Building political commitments to address RH

Increased budgetary allocation to maternal health

Championing free maternal health care

Refurbishing tertiary health institutions to be able to operate efficiently

Instituting midwifery services scheme

Need to complete the policy reform cycle and technical design of the reform process

Agenda setting

Legislative consideration and passage of reform bill and implementation of the adopted international policies

Deepening the reform to include institutions, ideas, interests and ideology

Elimination of the three (3) delay to maternal health – delay seeking appropriate medical help, delay in reaching an appropriate facility for reasons of distance and delay in receiving adequate care when facility is reached

Legislature should place more importance on Reproductive health just as they do for others like education, funerals and unemployment

Educating constituents on pieces of legislations relating to violations and reproductive health rights

Review and amend constitutions to make specific reference to reproductive health rights as found in the South African case instead of just mentioning it as a general rights

Enduring adherence to all legal foundations like the Cairo and Beijing document of 1994 and 1995, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Use of tricycles in the remote areas to transport pregnant women with some minimum first aid on board as found in Nigeria

Adoption of behavioral change communication approach in the fight against early and forced marriage

Effective engagement with stakeholder – the media, traditional authorities, CSOs etc. in the fight.

Day 2: Tuesday, 4th March, 2014

The second day discussed solutions and strategies to addressing the Early and Forced Marriages.

Session 4: Community Leaders and Facilitators of Positive Change

This session was facilitated by Hon. David Oppon-Kusi, MP (Parliament of Ghana) with three (3) resource persons speaking on the topic. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Ghana represented by Mr. Richard Quayson, Deputy Commissioner, in a speech touched on Early and Forced Marriage in the Ghanaian context.

Mr. Quayson mentioned that the role of the Members of Parliament is for them to be abreast of international conventions and national laws and to be able to synchronise both when making laws. Again MPs should be abreast of some strategies used by perpetrators including adaption and confinement of girls. The MPs should play their watch-dog roles so promises made by government do not end up on their tables. MPs should ensure that there is improved allocation of resources in budgets to support social interventions and show responsiveness to social justice issues. It was also revealed that UN has already made proposal to ending early and forced marriage. The proposal is significant as it emphasized patriarchy and poverty as causes of the menace but went ahead to say that the practice gives room to conjugal slavery. It was also clear that in spite of the legal provisions at national, regional and international levels prohibiting the practice, a cursory review of media reports and examination of CHRAJ's complaints records reveals that the practice continues and unknown numbers of cases go unreported.

The second speaker, Dr. Wale Okediran on his part said early and forced marriage had become a national issue in Nigeria, cited the case of how high level personalities including Senators have married teenagers as low as 13 years. He also affirmed many of the issues raised by the first speaker, emphasising disadvantages of early marriages, the role of Parliamentarians, civil society organisations (CSOs), the community leaders, and the constraints facing MPs and recommendations. In his view, it is essential to develop the capacity of parliamentarians and their staff, especially with respect to economic and sector issues, improve the quality of information availability to parliament, effective collaboration with legislators on the

early marriage issue, improve communication between MPs and their constituents and the executive, build networks among parliamentarians to facilitate information sharing and collaboration and urgent need to sensitising the electorate on the consequences of child marriage as well as the gains associated with educating their children especially girls.

Hon. Joseph Osei- Owusu, MP (Parliament of Ghana), held the view that often time the rich partner of the victim of early marriage might be oversubscribe and would not support the developmental needs of the young lady. He also called for improved provisions in laws, and providing synergy between international and national laws. There was further suggestion for particularly Ghanaian MPs to ensure that the executive arm of government who by law and practice in Ghana are initiators of Bills develop Bills that are up to standard and strong.

Discussion Session

At the discussion session on the presentations of the three speakers, it was clear that there was the need to take urgent steps to address the issue. It was also agreed that there is the need for effective collaboration between the three arms of government, the media, CSOs and other stakeholders.

Key recommendations

Parliamentarians

- ❖ Adopting multi-prolong strategy: parliament combining legislative and advocacy as tools for fighting early and forced marriage.
- ❖ Parliament should expeditiously ratify international legal instruments touching on this subject and work to domesticate them as part of national and municipal laws to make them enforceable as to their applicability to Ghana.
- ❖ Parliament apply tools at its disposal to ensure laws on this harmful socio-cultural practice are enforced to achieve their objectives.
- ❖ Creating a conducive environment for passing enabling statutes to discourage early marriages.
- ❖ Encourage state-level authorities to enforce national law that establishes 18 years as the legal age of marriage for girls.
- ❖ Increase budget allocations to develop social and economic programmes for out-of-school institutions such as schools for girls and other non-formal educational programs.
- ❖ Develop special social and health support structures for young (first-time) mothers.

- ❖ Encourage and promote public health education on the early marriage issues
- ❖ MPs should intensify their oversight the responsibilities of government agencies such as the ministries in charge of education, culture, women affairs among others at the constituency level.
- ❖ MPs should be proactive as agent of change at constituency level.
- ❖ Advocacy visits to state and local governments to encourage the promotion of the child rights law.
- ❖ Collaboration and networking with government agencies, civil society organisation, donor agencies and other Parliamentary committees on how best to address problem.

Community Leaders

- ❖ Raise awareness on the extent of early marriage and its relations to human rights abuse.
- ❖ Engage communities through public campaigns, pledges or incentives schemes.
- ❖ Encourage governments and communities to commit to getting girls to school on time and to keeping them in school through the secondary level.
- ❖ Develop social and economic programmes for out-of-school girls including non-formal education program.

Role of CSOs

- ❖ CSOs can support capacity – building for parliaments across the Sub-Region through seminars, workshops and facilitating trainings ICT and development communication materials
- ❖ Play its watchdog duties diligently and always be fair and firm in demanding accountability and responsiveness.

Session 5: Strengthening the Law: Recommendations for Effective Implementation

Moderator: Pindi Chana, MP & Deputy Minister, Tanzania.

Speakers: Hon. Jessie Majome, MP Zimbabwe; Hon. Clarice Jah, Senator, Liberia; and Hon. George Loh, MP, Ghana.

Hon. Majome held the opinion that enforce of the law is key to eliminating early and forced marriage. According to her, the current situation depicts a weakness in the

enforcement of laws; weak rule of law culture, gender biases in law and legal systems, conflict between formal and traditional laws, customary laws and religious law and semi-autonomous societal norms. She believes that differences in these laws make things difficult for ensuring compliance with the statutory laws.

In her recommendations for strengthening reforms she mentioned strengthening rule of law, rationalisation of law systems to international standards, mainstreaming gender into all law making and enforcement, improve law implementation and enforcement for efficiency.

Hon. Clarice Jah in her presentation made it clear that the stand of many international organisations is that any child marriage must be integral to global effort to end violence against women and girls. She shared the opinion that the phenomenon reiterated human rights abuse as it does not conform to the Universal Declaration of Human and condemned traditional and cultural norms that perpetuate the practice. Again she was of the view that politicians may try to avoid offending tribal people when making laws or taking certain decision hence may be soft in advancing reforms that goes against such critical issue such as early and forced marriage. She also added her voice to contribution of war to early and forced marriage as stated earlier by the Sierra Leonean representative; both Liberia and Sierra Leone have gone through terrible civil war.

Hon. Jah also made some recommendations:

- Strengthening Birth Registration and Data Collection System, but training of health personnel to undertake the task is very much important too.
- Awareness-raising on the Rights of the Child in communities by MPs, government officials and knowledgeable community members.
- Protection of Victims and Enforcement of Sanction are necessary to ensure compliance to the law and ensure protection for the victims.
- Provide shelters for rescued victims or those who are bold to escape.

Hon. George Loh in his submission made the following suggestions for strengthening the law. Birth registration is fundamental to enforcement of law hence the need to adequately ensure birth registration for all children within the first anniversary of birth across all communities so as to have a strong data based and information on the individual. Public places such as schools and hospitals could be used as venues for the registration. Since poverty is endemic every social intervention policy should aim at demanding from beneficiaries some forms of identity. Government institutions and para-statal agencies should provide facilities for protection of victims; adequately applying existing laws such as the Children's Act and Domestic Violence Act as foundation to demand responsiveness from government to provide shelters (at least

one in each district) for abused and victims of early and forced marriage. The Attorney-General Departments should establish unit for addressing expeditiously legal issues relating to early and forced marriage.

Session 6: Exchange Best Practices and Effective Tools to Combat Early and Forced Marriage

Speakers: Ellen Travers, Girls Not Brides; Hon. Ursula Owusu-Ekufu, MP, Ghana; Johanna Erikso Takyo, UNICEF; and Hon. Michael Afenyo Markins

Ellen Travers of Girls Not Brides sharing her experience stressed on national, regional and global level advocacy as a critical tool to addressing early and forced marriage. She also suggested qualitative research on trends, drivers and impact as alternative way of establishing facts and finding solutions to the problem. Programming on child marriage and related issues and partnership with UN agencies, national and regional governments could help address the problem.

However she suggested the following as effective strategies for ending the menace.

- Empowering girls with information, skills and support
- Sensitise and rally parents and community members
- Providing economic support (credit and other financial support)
- Enhancing girls access to high quality education
- Encourage supportive laws and policies
- Integration into other development programmes education on maternal and child health rights
- MPs should utilise the large presence of the media to educate other community members

Hon. Markins the second speaker in this session believed marriage is part of every society's custom. There is also the perception that in rural areas girls turn to know and practise sex early hence the need to arrange marriage among families, even adults are not left out. The speaker's opinion was that early marriage should not be criminalised; (many participants did not agree with him).

However he made certain key suggestions. In defence of non-criminalisation he suggested that such attempt may lead to people opposing genuine efforts at eliminating the menace rather education should be made compulsory and free. Steps should also be taken in addition to education to make teachers agents of change and local advocates due to their spread and availability. He also added his voice to skills training and equipment support to girls who learn trade.

Hon. Ursula Owusu-Ekufu, on her part, shared experience on her short stay in Saudi Arabia. According to her, early and forced marriage is prevalent on high scale in the country and human rights are seen as foreign cultural import. She opposed the

non-criminalisation proposition by her colleague Markins calling for strict enforcement of laws and policies that criminalise the menace. Sustain education on existing laws and intensive advocacy targeting peer educator system approach. Involve men in efforts to eliminate early and forced marriage. Locally Ghana should be able to harmonise the albatross of different age qualification at different level capacities such the 16 years as consent to sex and 18 years as mature age for marriage. The Livelihood Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation policy should be able to lift poor people to higher economic level. Ministry of Health should practical help in fistula repairs.

Johanna Eriksson Takyo of UNICEF Ghana gave a bit of history of her home country in relation to early and forced marriage stating that some Queens of Sweden married as early as between 15 and 17 years. However the situation changed later with introduction of progressive laws, industrialization, compulsory and free education. These strategies according to her worked effectively to stop he menace. In her presentation, she commended Ghana on passing progressive laws such as the Children's Act, Domestic Violence and establishment of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the use of the media and civil society in the fight against early and forced marriage. However she was also of the opinion that the phenomenon prevails and serves as a threat to Ghana's socio-economic development.

She also made some important recommendations. Speed up the introduction of the new child and family welfare policy, legislative reforms, amendments of the Children's Act and the Juvenile Act. Strengthen education through improved access to non-formal education for out-of-school children, awareness raising through C4D. Improve quality of education through teaching and learning, safe and protective learning environment, school leadership, management and community engagement. Parliament can also approve and initiate laws that govern society in a structured manner, help amend the Children's Act and Juvenile Justice Act. Allocate enough financial resources to government and wisely monitor government spending. MPs serve as advocate in their various constituencies.

Discussion Points

Much emphasis was laid on budgetary allocation particularly at the local government level to support social intervention institutions, policies and law reforms; Parliament supporting advocacy actions; continuous donor support as essential complement to particularly civil society and governmental organisations who do not make money and does not have the resources to do so. Participants did not support the assertion that early and forced marriage should not be criminalisation.

General Conclusions

1. Early and forced marriage exists, it is widespread and increasing more than what might have been known. It is however widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa and least developed societies.
2. No single factor may be the cause of early and forced marriages, but a combination of them.
3. Poverty and economic issues are major causes of early and forced marriages apart from cultural and traditional practices.
4. Ignorance and illiteracy also contribute to early and forced marriage.
5. Conflicts and wars have also contributed immensely to early and forced marriage.
6. Early and forced marriages have health implications on the victims; fistula, sexual reproductive health rights, maternal mortality and child mortality
7. Development of the girl-child is a major concern as marriage is prioritised over growth without consideration of the future benefits that may be derived from developing the child.
8. There have been efforts at national, regional and global levels to fight the menace through laws, policies, conventions, treaties, protocols and platforms such as conferences, seminars, workshops and development of IEC materials.
9. In some countries including Ghana, laws already exist, but the strength of the laws is a major concern and its implementation has not been effective.

Key decision point

The key decision point was the adoption of Statement of Commitment, which seeks to compel participants, beneficiary country institutions, and parliament of Ghana, to improve its efforts at working to ensure eliminating early forced marriage.

Recommendations

Parliament

- Power to engage the executive to initiate progressive laws and existing laws review to improve on their strength.
- Parliament to make ensure allocation of financial and other resources are improved for law enforcement agencies and auxiliary institutions to enable them carry out their mandate effectively and efficiently.

- Parliament must serve as agent of change by embarking on advocacy and community sensitisation programmes to educate constituents negative effects of early and forced marriage and help stop the phenomenon.
- Parliament should strengthen its oversight responsibility of resource and compliance with policies and promises by the executive.

CSOs

- Intensify advocacy and hold government accountable to its promises to the ordinary citizens.
- Build the capacity of law makers and enforcers in areas where there is some weakness including training on research, ICT and some international policies and conventions.
- Carry out sensitisation activities at community levels and engage stakeholders to discuss and adopt strategies to enhance greater awareness.
- Use of the media including social media, policy briefs and public engagement to influence government decisions and effort at eliminating early and forced marriage

Community

- Collaborate with state institutions, civil society and faith based organisation to sensitise members and especially in endemic areas the need to reverse the trend.
- Encourage education of the girl-child and support social policy interventions that seek to eliminate early and forced marriage.

Regional and Global





- Institute regional review mechanisms to ensure regional decisions and protocols are complied with.
- Create platforms for sharing of best practices with other countries.



Government

- Country ownership in RH policies and programming.
- Strengthening the capacity of countries to carry out research and innovation in RH that addresses their specific needs.

Annex

1. Profile of Speakers


Session 1	
The Ghanaian Case: Assessment of Current Legislation and National Policies on Early and Forced Marriage	
Hon. Alban Sumana Bagbin 	MP for Nadowli-Kaleo, Lawyer by profession, Holds Executive Masters in Governance and Leadership (Ghana Institute of Public Administration), six-time Member of Parliament, and the National Chair of PGA – Ghana , Former Minority and Majority Leaders and Minister of Health
Hon. Gifty Eugenia Kusi 	MP for Tarkwa-Nsuaem, a Medical Sociologist, with MPhil obtained from University of Ghana, was a Principal Research Assistant of the Department of Community Health, University of Ghana Medical School, four-time Member of Parliament.
Hon. Gershon Gbediame 	MP for Nkwanta South, Teacher by profession, BSc in Physics and Diploma in Education, a former Minority Chief Whip, six-time Member of Parliament.
Angela Dwamena Aboagye 	Mrs. Angela Dwamena-Aboagye. She is a lawyer and the Executive Director of The Ark Foundation Ghana, A Women’s Human Rights NGO that established the first Shelter for battered women in Ghana and also set up a Crisis Centre, a Legal Centre and a Counselling Centre for rendering sexual and gender based violence and child abuse services in different locations in the country. He is

	also the Board Chair of WILD AF Ghana
<p>Dr. Dorcas Cooker-Appiah</p> 	<p>She is Executives Director of Gender and Human Rights Documentation Centre, a NGO dedicated to promoting and protecting women’s rights in Ghana. She is a Lawyer by Profession of 42 years standing. She is also Member of CEDAW. She is the Board Chairperson of WILD AF, Pan African women’s rights NGO operating IN 26 African Countries.</p>
<p>Session 2</p> <p>Addressing Root Causes of Early and Forced Marriage</p>	
<p>Hon Rashid Pelpuo</p> 	<p>MP for Wa Central, He is a profession Architect, Quantity Survey and Development Expert. He holds MA (International Affairs), from the University of Ghana. He was the Human Resource CO-coordinator & Policy Analyst at the Institute for Policy Alternatives; currently Minister of State at the Office of the President, and Former Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports and three-time MP.</p>
<p>Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai</p>	<p>Hon. Lahai is currently the Minority Leader of the Sierra Leone Parliament, the first female to ever occupy that position. She entered parliament in 2002 to date. She charged the committees of education and later agriculture, forestry and food security. She also represented the Sierra Leone parliament in the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly from 2007-2009 and later the Pan African Parliament from 2009 to date and chairs the committee on Transport, industry, communication, energy and science and technology.</p> <p>Professionally, Hon Dr Lahai is an Agricultural Extensionist and worked for 11 year as Research Assistant and Research Officer 1&11 in the Institute of Agricultural Extension now Njala Agricultural Research Center in Sierra Leone, in the Social and Economic</p>


	<p>Division. She also was a consultant to the FAO Women's Project and the Social and Gender Expert in the Sierra Leone Vision 2025 Project.</p> <p>Dr Lahai has a Ph.D in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, M.Sc in Agriculture, Post Graduate Diploma in Education with Distinction and B.A in Geography and Rural Sociology.</p> <p>She is a gender activist and belongs to many women's and human rights organisations both nationally and internationally.</p>
<p>Mr. Birima Fall</p>	<p>Birima Fall is the new Deputy Project Manager of the Tostan Training Center. He has worked with Tostan for eight years and was previously the National Coordinator of Tostan Somalia, based in Hargeisa for two years.</p> <p>He joined Tostan in 2006 initially as a Trainer of trainers in French and English to help with the expansion of the Tostan Community Empowerment Program (CEP) into Anglophone and Francophone countries including Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Somalia and The Gambia. Birima was then promoted to the position of International Program Officer and represented Tostan in many African countries and in the US, to either supervise the implementation of Tostan's program or to represent Tostan at workshops and international conferences.</p> <p>Birima has extensive field experience in the implementation of Tostan's program, especially in Somalia in challenging conditions, and has been successfully working to engage communities in acquiring new knowledge through nonformal education and in raising awareness for the abandonment of harmful social norms and practices.</p>
<p>Hon. Dr. Susan Chebet</p>	<p>Dr. Chebet has been a Member of Parliament in the National Assembly of Kenya since March 2013 elected for the Elgeyo Marakwet County. Her areas of interest are gender and development.</p>

<p>Hon. Betty Amongi-Ongom</p>	<p>A Member of Parliament from Uganda active in both her nation's parliament and its peace process. She is the chair of the Uganda chapter of AMANI, also known as the Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace, and she chairs the observer mission to the Juba peace talks between the government and the LRA. She is also Uganda's delegate to the African Caribbean and Pacific-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU-JPA).</p> <p>As an opposition member of parliament, Ms. Amongi-Ongom was one of only five women who agitated for the Ugandan constitutional change from one-party system to a multi-party system, which was introduced in Uganda in 2005. She is a women's rights advocate, a peace builder, and a critic of the current government policies in Uganda. She is an independent member of parliament.</p> <p>Ms. Amongi-Ongom has also served as the coordinator of the Northern Uganda Women's Forum since 2004. She has been Uganda's expert on democracy, good governance, and gender in the UN/African Union Conference on Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region since 2004. From 2001 to 2004, Ms. Amongi-Ongom was the publicity secretary for the Uganda Women Parliamentary Association; as of 2006, she is the finance secretary for the Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians. Ms. Amongi-Ongom holds a master's degree in international relations and diplomatic studies.</p>

Session 3
Overcoming Challenges to Improving Maternal and Reproductive Health



<p>Hon. Mary Salifu Boforo</p> 	<p>MP for Savelugu. She is a farmer by profession. She holds NVTI Certificate; she is an entrepreneur and self-made woman. She is a five time Member of Parliament. She is a member of Business Committee of Parliament, Committee on Gender and Children, Food and Agriculture and Cocoa Affairs House Committee.</p>

<p>Dennitah Ghati, Kenya</p>	<p>Born into a pastoral tribe in the Kuria District of southwest Kenya, Ghati ran away from home at twelve years old to escape “the female cut” and early marriage.</p> <p>Ghati learned that to succeed in life, she needed to pursue an education and study hard. She completed her primary education in a boarding school with the support of Catholic nuns and her secondary education with her mother’s guidance. During this time, Ghati grew increasingly concerned about the plight of the women and girls in her community, and increasingly determined to do something about it. She continued her education by earning a bachelor’s degree in Sociology from Kenyatta University and began a career in journalism. In 2001, Ghati was granted the Fords International Foundation Program (IFP) Fellowship to attend the Columbia University School of Social Work as a member of IFP Kenya’s first cohort.</p> <p>Ghati chose to pursue a master’s degree in Social Work because she wanted to better understand how to help people experiencing injustice and to determine the best solutions in addressing these problems. Upon returning to Kenya, Ghati founded the Education Centre for the Advancement of Women in the Kuria District, a grassroots organization that advocates on behalf of local women and girls through community workshops and empowerment activities. Today, Ghati continues to conduct advocacy work with local women and girls to promote women’s rights as human rights</p>
<p>Prof. Friday Okonofua</p>	<p>Prof. Okonofua has MD, PhD, is a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Benin in Nigeria and a Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Science. He has served as the Executive Director of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) and as Honorary Adviser on Health to President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.</p> <p>Professor Okonofua is a global champion of women’s health, a discipline where he has published more than 240 journal articles. He is the founder of the Women’s Health and Action Research Centre, one of Nigeria’s leading NGOs, and the founding editor of the <i>African Journal of</i></p>

	<p><i>Reproductive Health</i>. He is a member of the editorial board of the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and several international non-profits. He currently serves as program officer at the office of the Ford Foundation in Lagos.</p>
<p>Hon. Bernice Heloo Adiku</p> 	<p>MP for Hohoe. She is a professional Development Consultant and studied Development Work, Architect and Quantity Surveyor. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the European American University (EAU), Dominican Republic. She was the CEO of Prolink Ghana (an NGO dedicated to reproductive health and HIV/AIDS).</p>

Session 4

Role of Parliamentarians in Addressing Early Marriage: Legislators, Community leaders and Facilitators of Positive Change

<p>Hon. Nana Oye Lithur</p> 	<p>Nana Oye Lithur has a Bachelor of Law (BL) from the School of Law, Accra (1992) and a Masters in Law, Human Rights and Democratization in Africa (LLM) from the University of Pretoria, South Africa (2001). She is currently Chief Executive Director of the Human Rights Advocacy Centre. For years she worked as the Regional Coordinator (Africa Office) for the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI). She is an advisory member of the International Consortium on Realising Reproductive Rights and a member of the steering committee of the International Consortium on Medical Abortion. Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection</p>
<p>Hon. Juliana Azuma Mensah</p> 	<p>MP for Agortime-Kpetoe, a Nurse by profession, Holds MSc in Health Administration and Planning (Birmingham University, UK. Three- time Member of Parliament, Former Minister of Tourism and also of Women and Children.</p>
<p>Helen Adjoa Ntoso</p>	



MP for Krachi West, a Teacher by profession. Holds Advance Diploma, from Lambert University, was Head of Operations at the National Disaster Management Organisation and current Minister for the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Dr. Wale Okediran

Dr. Wale Okediran has been a public servant for the Nigerian government for almost 30 years while simultaneously developing a breadth of experience contributing to advocacy, regional dialogue, and policy development leading to improvements in health, Freedom Of Information Policies and Financial Regulation across the region.

As a Legislator, he was also a conferee on several important Bills including the National Agency for the Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS (NACA) Bill, the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill, The Sustainable Energy Act as well as sponsoring the Act to establish the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Bill and the Freedom Of Information Bill. He was and remains a member of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB). Between the years 2008-2009, Dr Okediran was involved in the Action for West Africa Region (AWARE) HIV/AIDS project, where he was instrumental in helping to develop the HIV/AIDS Model Law and moving the policy process forward through advocacy with national governments in The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.

He has consulted for several International and Local Development Agencies such as Constella Futures International USA, The Financial Reporting Council Of Nigeria, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, USIS, UNAIDS, NPHCDA, NACA, UNICEF, Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria, Action Aid among several others.

Richard Quayson

Richard Quayson is the Deputy Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). A position he has held for the past eight years. He is a Lawyer by profession. He started his career as








Legal Officer with the then Office of the Ombudsman in 1989. He has been with the Commission since its inception in 1993. Prior to him being the Deputy Commissioner, he was the Regional Director for the Western Regional Office of the Commission, where he was in charge of about twelve district offices.


Session 5

Strengthening the Law: Recommendations for Effective Implementation

<p>Hon. Pindi Chana</p>	<p>Member of Parliament of Tanzania, Deputy Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children</p>
<p>Jessie Fungai Majome</p>	<p>Jessie Fungai Majome, Zimbabwe is the former <u>Zimbabwe Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development</u>. She is the Member of <u>House of Assembly for Harare West (MDC-T)</u>. Member of Parliament Select Committee on Constitutional Reform and its Deputy Co-chairperson and Information and Publicity Sub-committee Chairperson. Founder and Senior Partner at Gonese, Jessie Majome & Co. Legal Practitioners, Member of National Executive Committee of the Movement for Democratic Change Party (MDC-T) and its Secretary for Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs.</p> <p>In the year 2000 she became the youngest female commissioner in National Constitutional Commission. 2002 – 2006 National Spokesperson of the <u>National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)</u>. 2003 elected Councillor for Ward Hwange & Chairperson of Hwange Local Board (equivalent of Mayor). 2004 – 2005 Vice Chairperson for Harare North District (M.D.C. party) 2006 – 7. Member of National Executive Committee of MDC & Deputy Secretary for Legal & Parliamentary Affairs 2005–2011. Consultant to UNIFEM Sudan in gender justice in post-conflict reconstruction project. 2009–2010 Deputy Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs. From 2010 – present serves as the Deputy Minister of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development.</p>

<p>Senator Clarice Jah</p>	<p>Senator Clarice Jah from Liberia is Chairman of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA) Rules, Order and Administration Committee, where she performs all administrative functions under the supervision of the Speaker. Some of these functions included the issue of transparency in procurement and distribution of monthly petrol and fuel supplies to assembly members. I was also expected to insure the maintenance of the Capitol Building and Government Properties.</p> <p>As member of NTLA Gender Committee, she articulated gender equity, conducted Women Development workshops in Kakata and Harbel, Margibi County.</p> <p>As the first Female Senator of Margibi County she has also been working with Women Groups in the County such as the Clarice A. Jah Community Women youth Vocational Skills Training Center, named after her. The school when it was established back in July of 2004 was to provide Vocational Training Skills Programs in tie and dyeing, tailoring, carpentry, copy books and envelopes production, hair grease production, masonry and hair dressing. Others are pastry, arts and crafts, plating of fishing nets, bible training, literacy program, typing and shoe making, crocheting, agriculture, technical training, soap making, computer literacy and many more. Hundreds of Margibians have benefited from this initiative.</p>
<p>George Loh</p> 	<p>MP for North Dayi, a Lawyer by profession and a graduate with LLB from the University of Ghana. He has previously worked as Barrister and Solicitor at Oakhouse and Wuuds, Accra. He entered Parliament in January 2013.</p>
<p>Session 6</p> <p>Exchanging Best Practices and Effective Tools to Combat Early and Forced Marriage</p>	
<p>Esther Abena Dapaah</p>	<p>MP for Abirim, She holds LLB (Chelmer Inst of Education, Essex), BL (Lincoln's Inn), BL (GSL) which she obtained in 1977; 1978 and 1979 respectively. She is a Lawyer and</p>

	<p>worked at the London Borough of Newham (Rent Enforcement Officer), before she became an MP. She is a three-time Member of Parliament</p>
<p>Ellen Travers</p> 	<p>She is Programme Officer at <i>Girls Not Brides</i>. Her current focus is on highlighting solutions being taken to address child marriage in different countries, and enabling members to learn from each other about effective approaches to end the practice. She supports efforts to encourage evidence-based advocacy on the issue, working with members and partners to create opportunities to highlight research findings related to child marriage. Ellen has also been instrumental in driving Partnership-wide policy and advocacy efforts, particularly related to global processes. Prior to joining <i>Girls Not Brides</i> in 2012, Ellen worked in the NGO sector in Cambodia, as well as in the human rights departments of the Irish and UK Foreign Ministries.</p>
<p>Hon. Ursula Owusu</p> 	<p>MP for Ablekum West. She is Lawyer by profession. She was the President of International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Ghana, human rights and gender activist. She graduated from the University of Ghana with LLB and holds Certificates in the Japanese Language, and Project Planning and Management from Ghana Institute of Public Administration (GIMPA).</p>
<p>Johanna Eriksson Takyo</p> 	<p>She hails from Sweden and her Academic background is in Political Science and International law. Johanna has worked with UNICEF for the past 15 years, taking her to countries like Nepal, India, Timor-Leste, Fiji and the other Pacific island countries and since 2 years back, she is working here in Ghana as the Chief of UNICEF Ghana's Child Protection Programme. In her career with UNICEF, Johanna has supported the work of UNICEF and the Governments in the countries where she has worked in addressing violence, abuse and exploitation of children. She has been part of reforming legal and policy frameworks, contributed to strengthen child and family welfare systems and spearheaded social and behavioural change on child protection concerns. Johanna is married</p>

	with 3 children, the youngest being baby Alyssa, 3 months who is with us here today.
Hon Afenyo Markins 	MP for Effutu , and a Lawyer by Profession and a security expertise. He holds MA in International Politics and Security from University of Bradford, UK and LLB from Buckingham University, London. He was the CEO of Excel Courier Ghana Limited and has been a Member of Parliament since January 2013.