

BEST PRACTICES AND EFFECTIVE TOOLS TO COMBAT EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

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Tried and tested interventions which have proved useful in combating EFM's can be broadly categorized under three headings-

- Legal and rights awareness and enforcement,
 - Policy interventions
 - Targeted projects and programmes
1. Sustained advocacy and rights awareness campaigns on the existence of laws criminalizing early and forced marriage in endemic communities; intensify adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights awareness and training programmes, using TOT approach, community legal literacy volunteers, opinion leaders, CSO's and FBO's (FIDA model). Emphasise EFM as a Human Rights and developmental issue. Involve and use men as change agents to lead advocacy and sensitization drive; legal aid and access to justice needed
Clarify discrepancy in law on marriage age by repealing parental consent to marriage at 16 provision. Stick to one marriage age. Enforce laws on age of marriage. Need for inter-sectoral collaboration between Gender Ministry, Police and Judiciary on enforcement.
Enforce constitutional provision on FCUBE (emphasis on compulsory education) and change definition of Basic Education to secondary education as the longer girls stay in school, the better to resist attempts at forcing them to marry.
Train teachers, social workers, health workers and the police on laws and rights of the at risk girls. Incorporate this in the curriculum of their training institutions.
 2. Cash transfers to vulnerable households (LEAP); enforce youth employment initiatives; provide vulnerable households with alternative livelihoods to escape poverty snare; Positive discriminatory support for females in agriculture, industry and commerce with access to credit, microfinance etc. MASLOC can be charged to favour female applicant; support CSO's, Parliamentary Women's Caucus and Gender Committee to lead advocacy in their constituencies and neighbouring ones (adopt a constituency and target a male MP to engage as a change agent. Operationalize Gender Desk Officer concept and equip them with the skills and tools to work. Move from rhetoric to actual gender budgeting to release funds for specific interventions aimed at combating this scourge. In Ghana, this EFM issue received mention in the State Of The Nation address so Minister should push for increased budgetary allocation to this sector as lack of funds is a major challenge to successful implementation of policies in the Gender Ministry. District Assemblies should be encouraged to set up the Child Panels created by the Children's Act to give full implementation to the Act. Make our health centres adolescent friendly
 3. Re integrate married teens into schools even after child birth; build a coalition of interested CSO's and FBO's to lead advocacy and implements projects to assist at risk girls and their families; establish a media network on EFM's to publicise and highlight issues and programmes;
 4. Promote mentoring schemes to provide positive role models for at risk girls and their families, if possible, use role models from a similar background so they can identify with them; scholarship for girls (some communities in the Northern region give them bicycles and it has increased the retention rate for girls in school); public awareness and school based celebration of international Children's Day and day of the African Child. Promote foster care and establish more shelters for rescued girls, some of whom may not be able to go back home if rejected by their families for defying them. Improve cooperation and collaboration and coordination of efforts between CSO's and state agencies in fight against EFM; informal education, literacy and

skills building programmes and evening classes for married teens and at risk girls who drop out of school. Improve access to healthcare, safe motherhood, fistula repair service etc for girls.

5. The need for urgent action to combat EFM is clear and all stakeholders need to work actively together, talk constantly to each other and collaborate effectively to minimise and eventually eradicate it.
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