

SEMINAR ON COMBATING EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

Early and or forced marriage is/are one of the cultural practices that are considered harmful to the victims, often the female. It stunts the potential of the victim to develop herself as they are often made to quit education at rather young age. They often do not get to learn any trade either. As a result they are not able to carry any part of the financial responsibility that go with marriage.

They end up being mistreated and are unhappy or they engage in any menial jobs to help support the family thereby, exposing them to very many dangers.

A few though get married to wealthy men but such wealthy men are often oversubscribed and may pay very little attention to the developmental needs of the teenage or young wife. And they may be widowed at an early age. Either way, society is often denied the full potential of the victim to contribute meaningfully to the development of the society.

PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN CURBING EARLY MARRIAGES

The approach to curbing this harmful socio-cultural practice should be a multi-pronged one incorporating a legislative and advocacy segment for Parliament and Parliamentarians.

LEGISLATIVE

The main constitutional function of Parliament is legislative. In Ghana however, Parliament on its own may not be able to initiate legislation. The Executive therefore may need to be cajoled/courted into partnership with Parliament to achieve the objective of promulgating laws to curb this practice.

Parliament may use some tools as *statements* on the floor of the House or even questions to Ministers to draw the Executive into the required partnership.

Again, Parliament may expeditiously ratify international legal instruments touching on this subject and work to domesticate them as part of our municipal laws to make them enforceable without controversy as to their applicability to Ghana.

Finally, on this, enforcement is critical. Parliament should use all the tools at its disposal to ensure that laws on this harmful Socio-Cultural practice are enforced to achieve their objectives.

ADVOCACY

In addition to the foregoing, I suggest that each individual MP considers it a social responsibility to personally advocate

against or support other advocacy groups to trumpet the harm early and forced marriages pose to the victims, their communities and the country.

I must confess though that the issue can be culturally sensitive and must be handled with tact but if but we cannot tackle it who can?

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