

## **REPORT ON GIRL SUMMIT 2014 ON ENDING FGM AND CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE<sup>1</sup>**

### **Executive Summary**

On Tuesday July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 the government of the United Kingdom and UNICEF hosted the 2014 Girl Summit at the Walworth Academy in London. The Summit's purpose was to bring together community and government leaders, grassroots and international organizations, and members of both civil society and the private sector in order to build on current efforts and foster a global movement to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM). The elimination of such harmful practices as FGM and CEFM is key for the realization of a global future in which all girls and women can live free from discrimination and violence – a vision to which the UK government, UNICEF, and the other Summit participants have professed their commitment. The Summit goals were to:

- Bring together diverse actors in order to share what works in the fight against FGM and CEFM;
- Agree on an agenda for change; and
- Engage people – particularly youth – to support and advance that change.

The Summit resulted in the declaration of commitments by both governments and non-governmental organizations, and the signature of the [Girl Summit Charter](#) by hundreds of diverse organizations and representatives from around the world. This report provides an overview of the Summit and highlights two sessions of interest for PGA Members. It concludes with a section on commitments and next steps on CEFM and FGM.

### **Overview of the Girl Summit**

Both FGM and CEFM are human rights violations that stem from harmful social norms, cultural and religious traditions, and a lack of economic opportunities. They have overwhelmingly negative consequences for the health, education, and equality of women and girls. CEFM occurs around the world, and approximately 14 million girls are married every year before they reach 18 years of age. Some of these girls are as

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young as 8 years old. FGM, on the other hand, is most prevalent in Africa, and parts of Asia and the Middle East. At least 30 million girls will be at risk of FGM throughout the next ten years. As the Girl Summit made clear, effectively eliminating these two practices within a generation will require a combination of strengthening both formal child protection systems, as well as informal support networks that exist at a local level. Doing so will help preserve girls' childhoods, promote their education, reduce their exposure to violence and abuse, and allow them to fulfill their potential in life.

While this is certainly a daunting task, the Girl Summit provided an opportunity for community members, activists, faith leaders, government and international leaders, experts, and young people to come together to share with and learn from one another about the fight against FGM and CEFM around the world.

The Summit began with a UNICEF panel hosted by Princess Mabel van Oranje of the [Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage](#), and with participants Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia; Hina Jilani, Pakistani Supreme Court advocate; and Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, Commissioner for Social Affairs at the African Union Commission. They discussed the implications of FGM and CEFM, as well as the importance of advancing the global movement in support of girls. A high level panel with Sheikh Hasina, Bangladeshi Prime Minister; Chantal Compaoré, First Lady of Burkina Faso; and Malala Yousafzai of the Malala Fund followed. The panel focused on the importance of girls' education and was followed by a speech from the British Prime Minister, David Cameron. Mr. Cameron outlined the UK commitments to ending FGM and CEFM, both domestically and internationally.

Later in the day, participants of #YouthforChange - the Girl Summit companion event for young people from around the world - introduced the [Youth Action Statement](#), which illustrates recommendations made by and for young people to stop FGM and CEFM within a generation. The Summit concluded with remarks from Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the UK; Justine Greening, the British Secretary of State for International Development; and Babatunde Osotimehin, the Executive Director of UNFPA. They emphasized the importance of action and involvement on both international and local levels. The Girl Summit aimed to:

1. Highlight **examples of successful action** taken by community leaders, governments and others, and promote discussions between professionals to

share and embed effective practice.

2. Launch efforts to **increase and produce data and research** to inform and support action to end FGM and CEFM.
3. **Produce and adopt the [Girl Summit Charter](#)**, a declaration signed by hundreds of Governments and NGOs, which commits to ending FGM and CEFM within a generation.
4. Provide a **platform** for government representatives from 19 countries, the European Union (EU), and numerous civil society groups and private sector organizations to **pledge their commitment to ending FGM and CEFM**.
5. Launch a **global social media campaign to raise awareness** of these issues, increase support and gather pledges. Visit the website at: <http://www.girlsummitpledge.com/>

### **Spotlight Sessions**

The Summit was organized in spotlight sessions, which were small panels providing an opportunity for speakers to share good practices and experiences regarding FGM and CEFM in a concise way. Given the interest of PGA Members, this report focuses on two specific spotlight sessions:

#### **I. It's Everyone's Business: Strong, Comprehensive National Response to Child, Early and Forced Marriage**

The first spotlight session panel included Rob Swartol, Director-General for International Cooperation, Ministry of Affairs, Government of the Netherlands; Patricia Bah, National Coordinator for the Teenage Pregnancy Secretariat, Government of Sierra Leone; Hon. Minister Zenebu Tadesse Woldetsadick, Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Government of Ethiopia; Raj Kumar Mahato, Chairperson of BHOPE; and Laura Laski, Chief of Sexual and Reproductive Health at UNFPA. Each speaker briefly discussed efforts undertaken within their countries to combat CEFM, and then answered a number of questions regarding both the success of their efforts, and the challenges they have and will continue to face. The main themes emerged were:

1. **Partnerships**. Speakers reiterated the importance of joint action and togetherness in the fight against CEFM. There must be partnership between governments and grassroots organizations, as well as coordination across

various ministries. Ms. Laski and Ms. Bah emphasized the importance of a multi-sectoral approach. For example, in Sierra Leone, a key aspect of the success of the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy has been its requirement of actions within the health, education, protection, gender and justice sectors. In Ethiopia, the government has become involved in creating and supporting women's associations at the grassroots level by incorporating them within community programs.

2. **A Girls-Centred Approach.** Coordination across sectors and between various governmental and local actors is essential, but it must manifest at the level of the girl. For example, making sure girls have access to frequent health check ups, providing girls with access to friends and mentors who have been in similar situations, or encouraging literacy training. In Ethiopia, the government has worked with schools to create girls clubs that encourage the participation of female teachers and students. Strengthening health, education, or other systems and programs is inadequate by itself – actors and representatives from these sectors need to be able to connect on a personal level with the girls they are working to support.
3. **Consideration of the Economic Perspective.** Often when discussing CEFM, attention is given mostly to social norms and morals; however, the speakers reiterated the importance of considering CEFM as an economic issue as well. Mr. Mahato focused on the importance of social economic transformation for the successful facilitation of a national campaign for the end of child marriage and eradication of the Dowry in Nepal. Similarly, in Ethiopia and Sierra Leone, treating both CEFM and teenage pregnancy as an economic issues has led to increased efforts to keep girls – both unmarried, married, and pregnant – in school through the implementation of laws, such as the Child Rights Act in Sierra Leone.
4. **Inclusion of men in the fight against CEFM.** Women and girls are the obvious target for both the government and grassroots organizations working to eradicate this practice, but if half the population is excluded from the discussion, the harmful social norms that perpetuate CEFM will never be challenged or changed. Men and boys must be educated about the dangers of CEFM, and encouraged to join the efforts to end this practice. Additionally, male

perpetrators must be sufficiently punished under the law. In Sierra Leone, the government is working to create bylaws to punish men who participate in or perpetrate CEFM. Additionally, there are a number of male advocates against teen pregnancy and early marriage who are fully involved at the national level, but working at the local level with both girls and boys. Ms. Bah believes this has been a key element of the success of the national strategy for the reduction of teen pregnancy so far.

The spotlight session also emphasized one **major challenge** facing the elimination of CEFM, namely **the lack of implementation of legislation**. Many audience members brought up the fact that, while national strategies and action plans are both positive and important steps to take on the path towards eradicating CEFM, however, these remain insufficient if the necessary measures are not taken to ensure they are comprehensively implemented. Therefore, communication across various governmental ministries, between national and local institutions, and with non-governmental organizations is absolutely necessary for the effective implementation of anti-CEFM legislation.

## II. **Can Better Legislation and Successful Prosecutions Help End FGM and Child, Early and Forced Marriage?**

Speakers participating in this panel included Her Excellency Hooria Mashhour, Minister of Human Rights, Government of Yemen; Her Excellency Camara Sanaba Kaba, Minister for Social Action and Promotion of Women and Children, Government of Guinea; Alison Saunders, Director of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales; Kranti L. Chinnappa, Executive Director of the Human Rights Law Network in India; and Dr. Tabinda Sarosh, Program Director of Shirkat Gah in Pakistan. Each speaker briefly discussed legal efforts undertaken within their countries to combat FGM and CEFM, as well as the challenges they have faced.

Many countries where FGM and CEFM are practiced have laws in place that either criminalize these practices, or challenge them indirectly; however, these laws have clearly not been sufficient, as FGM and CEFM continue to happen throughout the world. The overriding themes of this spotlight session were:

1. **Importance of effective implementation.** A lack of implementation of

legislation has occurred in countries as diverse as Guinea, Yemen, and the United Kingdom. The reasons for this are equally diverse: lack of will power among both the government and community members, the negative influence of religious authorities, an inability to connect with the victims, and blatant loopholes within existing legislation. Consequently, the successful implementation of legislation is a global challenge; however, many of the panellists detailed measures being taken in their countries to overcome this challenge.

2. **The need for partnership.** The importance of cooperation and partnership between government and nongovernmental organizations and civil society was the most consistently emphasized means to improve the effectiveness of legislation. Almost every speaker insisted that **legislation alone is never enough - no matter how well-crafted the laws are, they will not be effective if no one knows about them, and if harmful practices are embedded within cultural practices that remain the norm.** In order to make sure that society *is* aware of legislation, and that harmful social norms begin to change, interaction with grassroots organizations must occur. Panellists from Guinea, India, and Pakistan all made the point that laws are made at a high level, whereas the actions are taking place on the ground; therefore, change in their countries has been most successful when it comes from the grassroots.
3. **Encourage victims to speak up.** The majority of girls who have suffered FGM and CEFM tend to remain silent. In Guinea, the public arrests of men and women who carry out FGM has begun to encourage victims to come forward, as has the creation of a free and confidential phone line available to women and girls at risk of FGM. In the UK, experts on FGM have been consulted by the government and assisted in the implementation of an FGM training program for the police force, which will better prepare them to deal with and encourage victims who come forth. The UK government has also passed a law ensuring the anonymity of FGM victims if they come forward.
4. **Face-to-face communication with girls and their families.** Legislation cannot be entirely effective without reaching out directly to those affected by FGM and CEFM and creating awareness within their communities.



## **Commitments and the Next Steps**

Throughout the Girl Summit, governments and non-governmental organizations pledged their [commitments](#) to ending FGM and CEFM during “Action Together for Change” sessions. Substantial financial commitments were made by the Canadian government, who pledged \$20 million over 10 years to UNICEF for the purpose of ending CEFM; the British government pledged £25 million for a new UN multi-country program in 12 countries to end CEFM, and £31 million over 8 years for generating new evidence on what works to transform the lives of poor adolescent girls; the Swiss government pledged CHF 16 million a year from 2014-2016 to UNFPA, CHF 22 million a year from 2014-2016 to UNICEF, and CHF 14 million to UN Women for one year, respectively.

Other governmental representatives from Zambia, Somalia, Pakistan, Nepal, Liberia, Sweden, Mozambique, Egypt, the Netherlands, Japan, Niger, Norway, Uganda, Ghana and India pledged their commitment to ending FGM and CEFM in their own countries, and around the world. The United States government pledged its cooperation with and development of programs addressing CEFM and FGM in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, India, Nepal, Yemen, Bangladesh, and Guinea. The European Commission pledged to organize an awareness raising campaign on violence against women in the European Union (EU), as well as develop e-learning modules for professionals working with those affected by, or at risk of, FGM in the EU.

UNFPA pledged to allocate \$20 million to building the health, social and economic assets of marginalized adolescent girls. UNICEF pledged to implement social programs that incentivize girls’ schooling and later marriages through cash transfers, and to use social media and other communication tools to elevate the voices of girls themselves and engage men and boys to bring about change.

Members of a Task Team, drawn from both the multi-stakeholder global advisory team established under a new global program on accelerating action to end CEFM, and the Donors Working Group on FGM that has existed since 2000, will track and report on Girl Summit commitments. This process of monitoring commitments will promote country ownership and mutual accountability, recognize and promote progress, and be integrated into existing mechanisms on FGM and CEFM. The tracking reports will focus on progress and on actions, rather than on the prevalence of FGM and CEFM, which is monitored elsewhere by UNICEF. The pledges made during the

Girl Summit will be time-bound, and monitoring will be continued on an annual basis for the length of the timeframe of the commitments. The first web-based annual update will be published in July 2015.

The Girl Summit concluded with a recitation of the [Girl Summit Charter on Ending FGM and CEFM](#), which declares that CEFM and FGM violate the “fundamental rights of all girls and women to live free from violence and discrimination.” The Charter has received hundreds of signatures, all from individuals and organizations that have committed to work for the end of CEFM and FGM for girls and women everywhere, within a generation.