

The prevalence of Child Early Forced Marriages in Ghana: Facts and Figures

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Defining CEFM
- An overview of CEFM in Ghana
- Some important facts and figures of CEFM in Ghana
- IMPACTS of CEFM on the girl-child
- STRATEGIES currently being pursued

WHAT IS CHILD EARLY FORCED MARRIAGE (CEFM) ?

- Child marriage is the practice where one or both spouses enter into marriage while BELOW the age of 18 years.
- Also called Early marriage because the marriage occurs before a person reaches the age of consent - 18 years
- It is also described as Forced marriage because the marriage occurs without the express consent of either one or both of the parties.
- Usually the party whose consent is not sought is the girl and she is usually forced or coerced into marriage although some boys can be affected as well

AN OVERVIEW OF CEFM IN GHANA

- Child marriage is undoubtedly a global menace that affects millions of women every year and unfortunately, Ghana falls within the category of nations with the highest prevalence rates inspite of the fact that it was the first country to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with around one in four girls marrying prior to her 18th birthday.
- The 2010 national population census report made a startling revelation of the status of adolescents and children in the Ghanaian society.
- The report indicates that out of a total of 3,254,007 children within 12-17 years old, 176,103 representing 5.4% were married

OVERVIEW CONT'D

- The situation is even more disturbing when one takes a critical look at the data at regional level.
- For instance, in the three regions of Northern, Upper East and Upper West alone, out of a total of 567,554 children between the ages of 12-17 years, 43,311 of them of them were married.
- Among these married children of the three regions of the North, 23,050 were girls.
- Based on these statistics, it has been estimated by the UNFPA that if present trends in child marriage continue unchanged, by 2030 more than 407,000 of girls born between 2005 and 2010 will be married before the age of 18

OVERVIEW CONT'D

- It is impossible for any nation to address poverty, gender equality, maternal and child mortality with this kind of statistics.
- Early marriage as it were contravenes the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- It threatens the achievement of the main goals eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women and reducing child mortality.
- A later marriage is a precondition for the attainment girls' personal goals of completing school, acquiring key skills, and understanding roles in family and in society

NATIONAL STATISTICAL DATA ON CEFM

- At the national level 1 in 4 women (27%) married before the age of 18 (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2011)
- Child marriage has increased nationwide from 25.9% in 2006 to 27% in 2011.
- The Upper East Region has the highest child marriage rate (39.2%), followed by Western Region (36.7%) and the Upper West Region(36.3%) Northern Region (27.4%)
- The following Regions have seen considerable increase in prevalence: Eastern Region(+6.6%), Central Region (+8.3%) and Western Region (+9.3%) this shows how the child marriage is no longer only a “problem of the North of Ghana”

NATIONAL STATISTICS CONT'D

- Child marriage is more common in rural areas than in urban areas. According to the MICS data it increased from 30.6% in 2006 to 36.2% in 2011 across all rural areas. Meanwhile it reduced from 20.5% to 19.4% in those same years across all urban areas.
- There is evidence to show that child marriage is higher among poorer women than richer women. Among the poorest women in Ghana, 41.2% married before age 18 (MICS, 2011). The rate increased from 32.5% in 2006. Meanwhile among, their richest counterparts, only 11.5% (MICS 2011) a reduction from 14.6% (MICS 2006) married before age 18

NATIONAL STATISTICS CONT'D

- Again it has been established that levels of educational attainment have significant impact on child marriage- Among women with no education, 41.6% married before age 18 as compared to 4.7% of women with secondary+ level of education.
- In addition, in Ghana, 20% of women have had their first child before age 18. Teenage pregnancy is both a cause and a consequence of child marriage.(Source MICS 2006 and 2011)

SOME CAUSATIVE FACTORS OF CEFM

- Girls access to education is a major determining factor. According to the MICS survey girls who complete secondary or higher education are less likely to fall victim to child marriage than those who have no education
- Poverty is another correlative factor in child marriage. The 2008 GDHS indicated that women in poor households were more likely to enter into early marriages than those from richer households. One less mouth to feed, bride price and other gifts strong inducements for poorer households

CAUSES CONT'D

- Strict adherence to traditional and religious doctrines also plays a major role in Ghana's high rates of child marriages. Most Ghanaian communities are governed by a strong code of traditional and religious beliefs which may tend to encourage practices and mindsets used to justify child marriage.
- For instance Ghanaian traditional setting and religious societies both share the opinion that pregnancy before marriage is a disgrace to the family. This belief leads to the conclusion that child marriage is a preventive safety measure to protect the girl child against immoral behavior.

CAUSES CONT'D

- The lack of harmonization with customary laws that may condone the practice of child marriage. Globally child marriage is generally more prevalent in jurisdictions that offer fewer protection for women and girls. The high prevalence of child marriage in Ghana is an indication of societal attitude towards women and girls.

CURRENT STRATEGIES BEING PURSUED

- The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is at the center of preparing a holistic national strategy to combat child, early and forced marriages to make the practice a high risk marital engagement
- Strands of the yet to be outdoored strategic framework include:
 - Inter-Ministerial action
 - Feeding traditional and community leaders with updated information on harmful impact of practices and collaboration with security agencies to enforce the laws

STRATEGIES CONT'D

- Other aspects of the strategy as detailed by the Ministry involve non-governmental and civil society organisations to lead national crusade against the practices etc