12 March 2024

Reference: WHRGS/GA/RES/77/202

**Call for inputs to inform the report by the Secretary-General on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and has the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 77/202 on “Child, early and forced marriage”.

The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report, based on evidence, before the end of its seventy-eighth session, on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide, as well as best practices, using information provided by Member States, United Nations bodies, agencies, funds and programmes, civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

In this regard, OHCHR is seeking inputs from Member States and other stakeholders to inform the preparation of the aforementioned report. OHCHR would appreciate receiving written contributions, comprising replies to the guiding questions in the annex.

Submissions should be received by **15 April 2024** and be:

* Limited to 3000 words;
* Sent by email in Microsoft Word format to **ohchr-registry@un.org** with **ohchr-wohchr@un.org**in CC**,** including in the e-mail subject line: **input to SG report on child, early and forced marriage, pursuant to GA resolution 77/202**;

Submissions will be made publicly available, in full and as received, on the OHCHR website, unless otherwise requested.

Any enquiries may be addressed to Stefania Tripodi at **stefania.tripodi@un.org**

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.

**ANNEX**

Report by the Secretary-General on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide

Guiding questions

1. **What efforts have been made or are planned to address the recommendations of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/77/282)? Please, provide information, *inter alia*, on measures to:**
	1. **address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage including social norms, gender inequalities and stereotypes;**

To create an enabling environment for adolescent girls to enjoy their full potential, UNFPA and UNICEF through the Global Programme to End Child marriage, have supported the government of Ghana to develop and update the following legal frameworks: National Strategic Framework for Ending Child Marriage in Ghana (2017-2026), [the Domestic Violence Act 2007, its Legislative Instrument (LI 2237), passed in 2016](https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/g/personal/suhan_unicef_org/EbUiPqXf4X5Ert9VpzEI9qIBLWNlE6rGyFSuE1KL3-iG2A?e=GTxjUl) and its [National Policy and Plan of Action 2009-2019](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TchWov5R53ygwAiWy1Yt3gT3ZSrXdfrm/view?usp=share_link); [the National Gender Policy](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/103987/126660/F-515436150/GHA103987.pdf); [the Children’s Act 1998](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/56216/65194/E98GHA01.htm#:~:text=AN%20ACT%20to%20reform%20and,assent%3A%2030th%20December%2C%201998.); [the Child and Family Welfare Policy 2014](https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/846/file/UN938171.pdf); [the Juvenile Justice Act 2003](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/88528/101253/F145480142/GHA88528.pdf); the [Justice for Children Policy 2015](file:///C%3A/Users/suhan/Downloads/Justice%20For%20Children%20Policy.pdf); the Five-Year [Strategic Plan to Address Adolescent Pregnancy in Ghana 2018-2022](https://ghana.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Adolescent%20Pregnancy%20Strategic%20Plan%202018.pdf); [the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) Strategic Plan](https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/g/personal/suhan_unicef_org/EYRV0N3IZh9Ks8cMhx77vlgBkO8ghxp30Uk9iLjySZZGVw?e=yiD5pG).

With the support from the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, a total of 3,441,976 adolescent girls, boys, parents and caregivers, families and traditional and religious leaders in Ghana engaged in nationwide awareness raising campaigns with the use of mass and social media as well as community engagement activities to promote a supportive and gender equal environment for ending child marriage. Key interventions included: [the Ghanaians Against Child Abuse (GACA) social drive](https://www.iamgaca.org/); Media and Communication Advocacy Network (MCAN) platforms; [the Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits](https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/%3Af%3A/g/personal/suhan_unicef_org/EqiybM9-7oxKsiJkzDYYYk8BmxKcINT_vZ30ihT1ZItTxQ?e=04RFgM); and [Child Marriage Advocacy Toolkit.](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mgtPfBadt4xw4EmS0oTGDc1brGiqg_Tw/view?usp=sharing) These interventions contributed to enhancing their understanding of gender norms, increasing their knowledge of the risks associated with child, early and forced marriage – including the danger of adolescent pregnancy and childbirth – and raising awareness among communities of the harmful impact of the practice.

* 1. **ensure access to education, decent work, social protection, health services, including sexual and reproductive health, for girls and women who are affected or at risk, who are already married or in informal unions, who have fled such a marriage or union, whose marriage has dissolved, and widowed girls or women who were married as girls;**

The ‘Safety Net’ programme, led by the Ghana Health Service (GHS) with support from UNICEF Ghana, has been scaled up to 261 health facilities in the four regions out of 16, reaching 20,808 pregnant girls and adolescent mothers at risk of child marriage, with gender- and age-responsive prevention and care services, including maternal, new-born and postnatal care and SGBV response services. In addition, with support from UNFPA, GHS has reached 39,348 adolescent girls in four regions with age-appropriate Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) information and services. A total of 13,010 at-risk adolescents (8,205 girls and 4,805 boys) were equally provided with adolescent-friendly and gender-responsive health services through the Adolescent Health Development Programme (ADHD).

* 1. **guarantee protection measures, remedies and support services for victims;**

With the support from the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, 20,833 children (11,018 girls) in need of care and protection across 86 districts, including those at risk of or affected by child marriage benefitted from case management services through the scale-up of a flagship initiative, [Integrated Social Services (ISS)](https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/iss/) to 170 districts out of all the 260 districts in the country. 1,635 social service providers received virtual and face-to-face training on [the Inter-sectoral Standard Operating Procedures (ISSOP) for child protection and family welfare](https://www.unicef.org/ghana/reports/inter-sectoral-standard-operating-procedures-child-protection-and-family-welfare) (ISSOP), [the Case Management SOPs for Children in Need of Care and Protection](https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/?mdocs-file=2753), [the Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits](https://www.unicef.org/ghana/reports/protecting-children-violence-abuse-exploitation-and-neglect) and [the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS)](https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/swims/). “Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy” are included as one of the protection concerns in these guidelines, protocols and standards. This has contributed to facilitating working relationships, intersectoral collaborations and referrals among social service providers (child and social protection, health, education, police, human rights, legal aid, health insurance, civil society, religious and traditional bodies).

The capacity of 25 service providers across 50 GBV service points (2 service providers per service delivery point) have been strengthened in provision of coordinated SGBV response as part the roll-out of the Minimum Services Package for Women and Girls subject to Violence. As a result, 254 adolescent girls who experienced SGBV received quality response services.

* 1. **implement child- and gender-responsive budgeting to support effective measures to eradicate child, early and forced marriage.**

Ghana made significant progress in integration of child marriage into national planning and budgeting documents, which resulted in the increased budget allocation for ending child marriage. For instance, UNICEF Ghana has supported the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) to include child protection related SDG indicators, including 5.3, in the National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework (NMTDPF) 2022-2025 and the Medium-Term Development Plans 2022-2025 of all the 43 Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and 261 Municipal, Metropolitan and Districts Assemblies (MMDAs). In 2023, it was found that about 80% of MDAs, including the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) leading child protection and GBV prevention and response, and the MMDAs planned, budgeted and implemented child and social protection related interventions, including for prevention and response to child marriage, in line with the National Medium Term Development Plan 2022-2025.

1. **What prevention mechanisms have proved effective to eradicate child, early and forced marriage? Please include examples of promising practices and challenges encountered on engaging family members, religious, traditional and community leaders, in raising awareness about, and countering child, early and forced marriage.**

Evidence indicated a **significant improvement over time** in attitudes and practices across a range of child protection issues. This has further resulted inreduced acceptability of child marriage: 1 in 4 respondents found child marriage acceptable in 2013, this reduced to 1 in 7 by 2020. While existing interventions have achieved significant reach and gained public approval, there has been a less of a change with regard to attitudes towards child marriage in rural communities and among less educated families.

Please see some examples of promising practices in Ghana:

As part of the Government’s “[Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for the Protection of Children in Ghana](https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/946/file/Social%20and%20Behaviour%20Change%20Communication%20Strategy.pdf)”, UNICEF Ghana has supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), to coordinate with other Government and CSO/NGO partners for the implementation of [the Ghanaians Against Child Abuse (GACA) social/drive campaign](https://www.iamgaca.org/). Since its launch in 2017, GACA has mobilized nationwide support to create a supportive and gender-equal environment for children, using digital and traditional media as well as interpersonal dialogue with the [Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits](https://www.unicef.org/ghana/reports/protecting-children-violence-abuse-exploitation-and-neglect). Over 5 million people have been reached with key messages on the protection of children from violence and harmful practices via social and mass media, as well as with community engagement activities with the Toolkits, which has been implemented concurrently with the Integrated Social Service (ISS) approach across 170 districts.

With the support from the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, 15,435 boys and men (9,205 boys and 6,230 men) were engaged in gender transformative programmes that promote healthy relationships and positive masculinities and gender equality. In 2024, targeted interventions for men and boys engagement will be further strengthened with the [National Framework and Toolkit for Engaging Men and Boys](https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/g/personal/suhan_unicef_org/ER7RbO3Zw2VIsSz1GcGxRqUBn0XPL1rjtyx_uB83EC3rzg?e=GjPiqA), which has been developed and validated in 2023.

As part of the Ghanaians Against Child Abuse (GACA) social drive as well as the National Framework for Engaging Traditional and Religious Leaders for Gender Equality and the Child Marriage Advocacy Toolkit, 1,446 traditional and religious leaders (615 females and 831males) were engaged in dialogues, consensus-building and capacity development training at the national and regional levels to increase their knowledge and promote positive attitudes and practices for ending child marriage.

UNFPA partnered with the Media and Communication Advocacy Network (MCAN) and strengthened the capacity of network members on sensitive reportage on child marriage and sexual and reproductive health issues. Multiple human interest stories and news articles were developed with focus on the impart of the Global Programme and were disseminated through various communication channels, both traditional and social media.

UNFPA Ghana partnered with five youth-led organizations to enhance their capabilities in crafting and sharing impactful social media content advocating for gender equality and ending harmful practices, particularly child marriage. This collaboration resulted in significant strides in advocacy efforts, effectively challenging deep-seated gender biases and structures associated with child marriage.

1. **What kind of approaches and tools have been used to collect disaggregated data on child, early and forced marriages, as well as informal unions?**

UNICEF Ghana supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to implement the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS), digital case management information system enabled the entry of over 20,000 cases, including child abuse, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), child marriage, child labor, trafficking, neglect, and other vulnerabilities. It aimed at ensuring regular, timely, and reliable data collection, reporting, referral, and monitoring. In 2023, the SWIMS hosting server was fully migrated from UNICEF to the Government, showcasing national ownership and adherence to Ghana's data protection law. As part of the Safety Net Programme, UNICEF Ghana also supported the Ghana Health Service for the operationalization of the e-Tracker, digitalized tool to record adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and any other related GBV cases.

UNFPA supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to develop a national digital portal dubbed Child Marriage Information Portal that facilitates the effective management and sharing of information on Child Marriage for advocacy and programming.

1. **Have digital technologies and tools been used to address child, early and forced marriage?** **If so, please share promising practices, challenges and possible solutions.**

In addition to the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS) and the E-Tracker mentioned above, UNICEF Ghana supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to improve data management through the Child Protection Community Facilitation Toolkits App. It aims to facilitate real-time monitoring and report the progress of community engagement activities for ending child marriage with the use of the Toolkits.

UNFPA Ghana initiated the integration of technology and digital platforms to further amplify the reach of its programmatic interventions for ending child marriage, enabling it to connect with remote communities and provide essential services and support. This included: You Must Know (YMK), a web-based platform developed by Ghana Health Service with support from UNFPA to provide ASRH and GBV information and connect the marginalized adolescents particularly girls to services; and Boame App, a web application established in partnership with the Domestic Violence Secretariat under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to improve GBV reporting.

1. **Are digitalized birth and marriage registration systems being used in your country, requiring mandatory registration of all births and marriages, including childbirths at home and marriages under customary and religious laws? Do these digitalized registration systems allow to verify digitally birth certificates, before registering any marriage?**

Ghana is progressing towards a digitalized birth and marriage registration systems. Ghana has a legal requirement for mandatory registration of all births includes childbirths at home, whilst marriages under customary and religious laws is not mandatory.

* The Registration of Births and Deaths Act. 2020 (Act 1027) provides for the registration of birth occurring in the country and it mandatory.
* The Marriages Act, 1884-1985 (CAP 127) is the principal enactment on marriages in Ghana. It consolidates all the laws on the various types of marriage into a single enactment. The Act provides an option for parties to a marriage to apply for their marriage to be registered under the Act. However, this is not mandatory.

Ghana is in the process of digitalizing its civil registration system, including the Births and Deaths Registry. While some progress has been made, complete digitalization with full online functionality is not yet achieved. Currently, there is no system for digital verification of birth certificates before marriage.

1. **What other innovative strategies have been used to address child, early and forced marriage, as well as informal unions and collect data on this practice in your country?**

Since 2019, PASS has been jointly delivered by UNFPA and UNICEF with two NGO Partners (NORSAAC and INGH) with the support from the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage. PASS is a multi-component community-based programme with the aim of providing intensive support to the most marginalized adolescent girls to make their own informed decisions and choices regarding marriage, education and sexual and reproductive health. The core programming focuses on the creation of safe spaces for adolescent girls that receive at least 31 contact hours of customizable life skills and reproductive health education (Official term used in Ghana in place of “Comprehensive Sexuality Education”) sessions. It is complemented by: men and boys' engagement; economic empowerment skills and vocational training; community mobilization and engagement; and partnership with sub-national authorities to connect girls to services. In 2023, 21,934 most marginalized girls, including in the communities affected by the Sahel crisis, benefitted from PASS. With support from the Impact Catalyst Fund, an impact evaluation will be conducted between 2024 and 2026 to strengthen the evidence-base for further scale-up.

In intensifying the campaign to end child marriage, an innovative approach was adopted under the theme “Commitment to Ending Child Marriage in Ghana, one Paramountcy at a time". This initiative is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs in collaboration with UNFPA. Three paramountcy publicly declared their commitment to ending child marriage and other harmful practices. This significant milestone engaged 1180 individuals, including paramount chiefs, kings, and queen mothers. Additionally, 7,600 community leaders pledged to reshape societal norms on gender within their communities.

UNFPA supported evidence generation in two key areas; (i) Cohabitation Among In-School and Out-Of-School Youth: The Case of University Students and the Youth in UNFPA Supported Communities in the Central Region. (ii) Thematic Brief on Child Marriage in Ghana. The studies revealed the prevalence and impacts of child marriage and informal unions in specific contexts and on specific subpopulations. They also revealed hot spot for Child marriage there by informing the required specific programme intervention areas for Phase III of the Global Programme to end Child Marriage in Ghana.