

REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ELIMINATING CHILD MARRIAGE AND FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION



19-20 June 2019 Cairo, Egypt



The AU Campaign on ending child marriage in Africa has so far been launched in 28 Member States, out of the 30 countries targeted with the highest prevalence of child marriage in Africa. As one of the mandates of the campaign, these launches are essential to the enhancement of advocacy against child marriage at a national level. As a follow-up on the launch of the campaign, the AU campaign undertook nine post-launch country visits¹ to Member States. One of the most remarkable post launch visits was to Egypt in September 2018 with the cooperation of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) which exposed the team to best practices in combating child marriage over the past decade. Specifically, the country visit to Egypt exposed the AU to the strengthening of social protection schemes for vulnerable groups especially girls and women.

In addition, **the Saleema Initiative** – an African Union Continental Initiative on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation – was launched at the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government Summit. AU Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.737 (XXXII) calls on Member States to implement the Initiative with a focus on “social norms and cultural dimensions, addressing cross border practice of female genital mutilation, in addition to implementing strong legislative frameworks, allocating domestic financial resources, promoting use of evidence and data, regular reporting, and the engagement of civil society and community groups in ending female genital mutilation”. FGM is a harmful practice that perpetuates human rights violation and gender based violence against girls and women – a recognition that has been recorded by the African Union within key policy and legislative instruments, and strategies.

The African Union Commission (AUC) used this meeting as a platform to follow up on the success of the 2nd AGS with a high level conference on ending child marriage and female genital mutilation as proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt specifically **the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) and National Council for Women (NCW)** during the AU delegation’s post launch visit to Egypt in September 2018. In addition, building a mechanism to hold Member States accountable to commitments to end harmful practices will be an important drive of the Saleema Initiative.

¹Egypt, Mali, Burkina-Faso, Niger, Zambia, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ghana and Mozambique.



Ending FGM and Child Marriage is a matter of rights. A matter of health and safety. A matter of equality, education and dignity, giving every girl and woman in Egypt and the rest of Africa a chance to make her own decisions and shape her future.

#EndFGM

#EndChildMarriage



Mr. Bruno Maes,
UNICEF Representative in Egypt

CONFERENCE RESULTS:

Organized by the Arab Republic of Egypt and the African Union with the support of the European Union, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and Plan International, the Conference provided a platform to:

- Share the latest updates on the **AU Campaign to End Child Marriage** in Africa and the AU **“Saleema” Initiative** on Ending FGM;
- **Review Child Marriage and FGM Global and Regional Trends** including child marriage in humanitarian settings and identify countries to prioritise in order to meet the SDG elimination target;
- Review the Child Marriage Regional **Accountability Framework and FGM Medicalization**;
- **Showcase best practices**, new findings, trends and developments in the efforts to end child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Malawi, Egypt and;
- **Showcase the role of religious and traditional leaders** in engaging communities in changing perceptions, attitudes and social norms.



PARTICIPATION:

Meeting delegates included Dr. Azza El Ashmawy, Secretary General, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood; H.E. Dr. Maya Morsy, President, National Council for Women; H.E. Honorable Commissioner, Soyata Maiga, Chairperson of African Commission on Human and People's Rights; H.E. Honorable, Lucy Asugbor, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa and Mrs. Cisse Mariama Mohamed, Director for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission. In addition, the conference had more than 400 participants:

- Government representatives dealing with social development–children's and women's affairs;
 - Parliamentarians
 - League of Arab States Social Affairs Sector
- Religious, Traditional and Community Leaders;
- Youth leaders and advocates particularly women, girls affected by child marriage and female genital mutilation;
- Development Partners, UN Agencies, Civil Society and Grassroots organization.
 - Youth volunteers and Children themselves



UNFPA congratulates the African Union for the successful launch of the **#SaleemaInitiative** and Assembly Decision on Galvanising Political Commitment to **#EndFGM**

Ms. Frederika Meijer,
UNFPA Deputy Regional Director
Arab States



CAIRO CALL TO ACTION

For The Elimination of Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation in Africa

We, the representatives of the Member States of the African Union, representatives of civil society organizations, representatives of UN agencies, funds and programs, religious, traditional and community leaders, children and adolescents participating in the Regional High- Level Conference on the Elimination of Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation, gathered here in Cairo on 19th and 20th June 2019 under the auspices of H.E. Mr. Abdelfattah El-Sisi President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and current Chairperson of the African Union:

- Recall Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted in Maputo on 11 July 2003, which contains, inter alia, undertakings and commitments on ending female genital mutilation and child marriage;
- While celebrating the 25th anniversaries of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development this year, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action next year, we reaffirm the commitments included in these two international instruments to eliminate harmful practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation, and in this regard we thank the Governments of Egypt and Kenya for leading the celebrations for both documents respectively on both instruments on the international level;
- Recognize that child marriage is a harmful practice that violates, abuses or impairs human rights and is linked to and perpetuates other harmful practices and human rights violations and that such violations have a disproportionately negative impact on girls;
- Recognize also that education is one of the most effective ways to prevent and eliminate child marriage and to help married girls to make informed decisions about their lives;
- Take note with appreciation of the ongoing African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, the Joint General Comment of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, as well as international, regional, national and subnational instruments, mechanisms and initiatives to end child marriage, including the Southern African Development Community Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage, and further encouraging coordinated approaches to action at all levels;
- Recognize that female genital mutilation constitutes irreparable, irreversible harm and an act of violence against women and girls, and recognizing also that it affects many women and girls who are at risk of being subjected to the practice throughout the world, which is an impediment to the full achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- Reaffirm that female genital mutilation is a harmful practice constituting a serious threat to the health of women and girls, including their physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, that it has no documented health benefits, and that the elimination of this harmful practice can be achieved as a result of a comprehensive movement that involves all public and private stakeholders in society, including women and men, girls and boys, families, communities, religious leaders and local community and traditional leaders;

Are determined to collectively support our governments and communities to eliminate child marriage by:

- Developing and implementing holistic, comprehensive and coordinated strategies and responses to prevent and eliminate child marriage, to support girls who are affected or at risk, including through the strengthening of child protection and social protection measures including access to quality education, health and effective justice systems;
- Removing barriers to education, including investment in quality primary and secondary education for every child in a safe environment, through adequate financing particularly within a comprehensive social protection program to ensure girls and boys have access to quality formal education and skills development. Attention will be paid to children living in remote or insecure areas, in ensuring the safety of girls in school with a focus on their movement to and from school, providing safe and adequate sanitation, including for menstrual hygiene management.
- Formulating or reviewing, as needed, appropriate policies, programmes or strategies in order to prevent and eliminate child marriage, and address discrimination and violence, including domestic violence, which may happen to girls at risk of marriage and married girls;
- Advocating for the creation of an enabling environment that facilitates and enhances the role and involvement of traditional and religious leaders; and the active participation of youth in decision making.

We are determined also to collectively support our institutions and communities to eliminate female genital mutilation by:

- Condemning all harmful practices that affect women and girls, in particular female genital mutilation, whether committed within or outside a medical institution, to take all necessary measures, including through educational campaigns and by enacting and enforcing legislation to prohibit female genital mutilation, to protect women and girls from this act of violence;
- Holding perpetrators to account and to put in place adequate accountability mechanisms at the national and local levels, where applicable, in order to monitor progress;
- Complementing punitive measures with awareness-raising and educational activities designed to promote a process of consensus towards the elimination of female genital mutilation;
- Protecting and supporting women and girls who have been subjected to female genital mutilation and those who are at risk in order to assist them, including by developing social, legal and psychological support services and care and appropriate remedies, and to ensure access to health-care services, including for sexual and reproductive health, in order to improve their health and well-being;
- Ensuring that national action plans and strategies on the elimination of female genital mutilation are comprehensive and multidisciplinary in scope and that they include projected timelines for goals and incorporate clear targets and indicators for the effective monitoring, impact assessment and coordination of programmes;

We urge the international community and other key stakeholders to:

- Continue to strongly support national regional and continental programmes to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage focused on the elimination of female genital mutilation and child marriage;
- Continue in collaboration with the international financial institutions to actively support African governments, through the allocation of increased financial resources and technical assistance, targeted comprehensive programmes that address the needs and priorities of women and girls at risk of or subjected to child marriage and female genital mutilation;
- Fulfill its commitment in supporting African countries in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress, in order, inter alia, to inform policy and programming, as well as to monitor progress in the elimination of child marriage and female genital mutilation.

WE thank the Government of Egypt and the African Union Commission for organizing and hosting this meeting;