



## **African Girls' Summit, November 2015: Parallel session on “Multisectoral approach: improved coordination and integration at regional, subregional and national levels in addressing harmful traditional practices”**

### **Session highlights**

As part of its contribution to the official programme of the first African Girls' Summit convened by the African Union on 26-27 November 2015 in Lusaka, Zambia, *Girls Not Brides* organised a parallel session on “Multisectoral approach: improved coordination and integration at regional, subregional and national levels in addressing harmful traditional practices”. The session was organised in collaboration with UNICEF.

Moderated by Mrs Mabel van Oranje, Chair of the Board of Trustees of *Girls Not Brides*, the session aimed to highlight the value and necessity of working in multi-actor, multi-sector partnerships when addressing child marriage at all levels. It started with a panel discussion, followed by a rich discussion with the audience.

The following panellists shared insights and lessons learned from their experiences in countries/regions where national coordination mechanisms have been put in place to address child marriage:

- Mrs Dinah Adiko, Technical Adviser, Gender – Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana
- Mr Seleshi Tadesse, Team Leader, Women and Youth Mobilisation – Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, Ethiopia
- Mr Albino Francisco, Coordinator, *Girls Not Brides* Mozambique
- Mr Manuel Fontaine, Regional Director, UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office

The panel and the ensuing discussion highlighted the fact that child marriage cannot be effectively addressed if those working on the issue do not adopt a comprehensive approach, and do not work in multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level partnerships.

It was found that the very nature of child marriage requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, and therefore the involvement of a wide range of government sectors (including education, health, justice, finance, etc.) as well as a diversity of actors working at different levels.

Lastly it was agreed that ending child marriage is a long term commitment, which requires a vision in the development of strategies, but also patience in their implementation.

## **Main findings and recommendations from the session about addressing child marriage through multisectorial and coordinated approaches:**

The following findings and recommendations emerged from the session:

- a) Partnership is essential to ending child marriage and should not be an afterthought – it is essential to initiate partnership from the very inception phase of our work on child marriage, and all the way to implementation and monitoring.
- b) High-level political commitment and leadership is key, but to be effective, governments must establish partnerships that are as inclusive as possible. Young men and women, and civil society organisations, media, and community groups and leaders, were identified as essential to associate to any collaborative approach to ending child marriage.
- c) Effective partnerships must be based on evidence – we must take the time to collect, analyse and develop a common understanding of the issue we want to address together. It is important that key partners are engaged from the beginning of the evidence building as opposed to specific partners working in isolation and then trying to engage others who have a critical role to play. While this can be seen as a slower process, the evidence provides a solid basis for establishing clear strategies, defining roles and responsibilities of different actors as well as providing a baseline for evaluating our collective progress.
- d) Partnerships should not be limited to the national level: it is critical to involve community-level actors in the partnership, and this can be done through many channels, including by building on existing community structures. To ensure success of such an inclusive partnership, it is essential to have clear and strong coordination mechanisms and mechanisms to ensure accountability among the actors involved in the partnership.