



CONCEPT NOTE

7TH KNOWLEDGE SHARING WORKSHOP ON CHILD PROTECTION

October 2023

Introduction

Since 2017, Participatory Development Associates (PDA) has been hosting its flagship annual Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Child Protection. The event, which has successfully convened relevant stakeholders, state and non-state actors in the child protection ecosystem over the years, has made significant contribution to protecting children in Ghana. Key outcomes from the workshop have been the deployment of the Child Abuse Tracker, an online platform to collect and host cases of child abuse reported in selected media outlets in Ghana. Reports and policy briefs have been produced to complement knowledge on child protection issues in Ghana.

This year, PDA partners with Afrikids Ghana to organize the seventh annual knowledge sharing workshop on child protection, focusing on child marriage in Northern Ghana.

About Child Marriage

Child marriage has, for many years, been one of the key human rights issues that countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, have had to deal with. Child marriage is predominantly perpetuated in societies that strongly adhere to patriarchal beliefs. Constitutionally, the phenomenon is defined as a marriage where one or the two parties involved are below the age of 18. Despite the provision of 18 years as the minimum age of marriage in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, many families continue to coerce children to marry at a very tender age with the intention of evading poverty; however, evidence suggests that child marriage makes household poverty even more pervasive. It is worthy of note that even though the issue of child marriage involves both sexes, girls are disproportionately affected.

Globally, more than 700 million women living today were married before they attained 18 years. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than 40% of girls are married before their 18th birthday. The pervasiveness of the social problem in Ghana, especially, in the northern part of the country, is telling. The most recent Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017/2018 found that a little over 19% of girls are married before they turn 18, while 5% are married before their 15th birthday. The Northern and Upper East regions of the country recorded the highest rates (28% each) of child marriage during the period.

Coupled with the fact that child marriage infringes upon the rights, education and freedom of children, the phenomenon has debilitating impact on the health of victims. While the social problem heightens girls' susceptibility to physical, sexual, and psychological violence, it is also effective in prematurely truncating the victim's childhood and adolescence by imposing adult roles and responsibilities which they are not prepared for. Additionally, child marriage exacerbates the conditions of childbearing for children as it leads to various health and reproductive complications. Because adolescents are not biologically and emotionally competent to carry pregnancy to live birth and appropriately care for the child, children of adolescent mothers are particularly at a higher risk of being malnourished. The health problems are even more compounded due to girls' vulnerability to contracting HIV because of the immature vaginal mucosa of adolescents.

Given the enormity of the problem, many legal and policy frameworks (both nationally and internationally) have been introduced, in a quest to end child marriage in Ghana. Key among them are Target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560), and the National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage in Ghana 2017-2026. Even though the incidence of child marriage is on a downward surge, efforts are still required to ensure that the SDG targets for child marriage in Ghana, especially in the northern regions, is achieved.

About this Year's Event

In the spirit of contributing to ending child marriage in the northern regions of Ghana, and protecting children from its negative effects, Participatory Development Associates has partnered with Afrikids Ghana to host the seventh (7th) Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Child Protection. This year's workshop leverages substantive data on child marriage to discuss ways of targeting and improving advocacy to end child marriage in Ghana.

The objectives of the 2023 workshop include the following:

To share evidence of the prevalence and the nuanced drivers of child marriage in Northern Ghana

To highlight some of the systemic barriers in the fight against child marriage in Northern Ghana

To recognize and celebrate the successes chalked in the fight against child marriage

To deliberate the most effective ways to rely on evidence-based advocacy to end child marriage.

Event Structure

The workshop will be held in a hybrid format, hosting some critical stakeholders on the ground in the Upper East region in person, but also allowing participants from all over the world to join online. The event will feature presentations examining available data on child marriage, as well as a documentary produced by PDA and its partners on the nature of child marriage, its impact on children, as well the strides made in rescuing young girls from being victims of child marriage. There will also be a panel discussion to deliberate on the headline topic for the event.

The details of the event are herein provided:

Theme: Tackling Child Marriage in Northern Ghana: A Shift from Rhetorics to Evidence-based Advocacy

Date: Thursday, 30th November, 2023

Venue: Walewale, Upper East Region

Time: 9:30am to 1:30pm

Arrangements for virtual participation will be communicated