



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF**  
**NIYI OJUOLAPE, UNFPA COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE AT THE 2019**  
**NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS' REVIEW MEETING ON ENDING CHILD**  
**MARRIAGE IN GHANA AT SUNLODGE HOTEL, TESANO ON**  
**WEDNESDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019**

**Protocol:**

- **Honorable Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection**
- **Chief Director of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection**
- **Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, the UN and Private Sector**
- **Distinguished Executives and Representatives of the NGO/FBO Community**
- **Members of the Press**
- **Invited Guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am extremely happy to be part of this meeting and to provide few words on behalf of UNFPA in Ghana and on behalf of the Global Programme to end Child Marriage.

We at UNFPA are pleased to be part of this national multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss strategies for addressing the pervasive culture of child marriage that robs so many young girls of their childhood. This meeting is especially timely as it was just yesterday that we climaxed the 16 days of activism against gender-



based violence and harmful practices and also marked the Day to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We are thus happy about this timely effort of the Ministry to bring key national institutions and CSOs not just to deliberate on the issues of child marriage but to provide an opportunity to share information and experiences to enhance partnership and networking to combat child marriage.

Like all partners gathered here, UNFPA in Ghana is very much concerned about the incidence of child marriage that currently affects 19% of girls in Ghana. (MICS, 2017-18). We believe there is the need for us to improve on prevention efforts as well as effective management of cases to mitigate long term effects on the victims. This is one of the key reasons why UNFPA continues to partner with the Government of Ghana through the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, DOVVSU and CSOs such as PAYDP, PPAG, International Needs and the Office of the Second Lady under the umbrella of CoPASH, to work on this harmful practice.

There is some good news, as globally, child marriage rates are slowly falling. Around 2000, one in three women between the ages of 20 and 24 reported they had been married as children. In 2017, this number was around one in five. Rates of child marriage before age 15 have also fallen, from 11 per cent in 2000 to 5 per cent in 2017. However, progress has been uneven and child marriage is not



declining fast enough. To change this, we must accelerate our actions to end child marriage.

The UNFPA and its allies, recognizes that, despite the existence of several legal frameworks and institutions, children and adolescent girls continue suffer child marriage and its repercussions. We therefore need to urgently move to the next level and invest more time and resources to prevent this atrocious act. This will require that we intensify our efforts systematically to address risks and enhance protective factors.

UNFPA and its partners are thus working to bring these changes to the most vulnerable girls through the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage. The Programme is reaching girls in 12 countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and is mobilizing a movement against child marriage globally. It is increasing girls' access to education and health-care services, and it is educating parents and communities on the consequences of child marriage. It is also contributing to a more girl-friendly legal and policy environment and generating data on what works to address child marriage and related issues such as adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence.

UNFPA in partnership with Government and Civil Society will continuously work to eliminate SGBV against girls, young people and women and promote reproductive health and rights. One of our global transformational goals seeks to bring to 'zero' all forms of gender based violence and harmful practices such as



child marriage. It is our shared responsibility and investment to protect and empower young people, especially adolescent girls through advocating for stronger laws, policies and equally important, enforcement mechanisms to end child marriage. We must address the root causes of child marriage and agree on how to tackle them. I am sure this meeting over the two days will contribute immensely to this goal.

I wish you a fruitful review meeting. Thank you for your attention.