



Directorate of Information and Communication

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Lusaka Hosts Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Capacity Building Workshop on Ending Child Marriage and other Harmful Traditional Practices in Africa

Lusaka, Zambia, 07 September 2015—A five-day workshop to build the capacity of African Union Member States to end Child Marriage kicked off today Monday 7 September 2015 in Lusaka, Zambia.



The workshop organised by African Union Commission in conjunction with UNFPA, UNICEF, Inter-African Committee and the African Child Policy Forum, under theme; "Ending Child Marriage and other harmful traditional practices in Africa -

Mechanisms and Strategies, is being attended by experts from Regional Economic Communities, Member States and regional based Civil Society Organizations.

The workshop will feature among others theoretical presentations on the linkages of harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, the role of stakeholders and the effect of traditional and religious practices of child marriage on Africa's socio-economic development.

In his welcome remarks, the Zambian Minister of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs, Dr Joseph Katema M.P., expressed appreciation for the commitment shown by the African Union Member States towards the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa, noting that 'as concerned Africans, we are obliged to ensure that girls remain girls, not brides and enjoy their childhood manifested in education, play, good health and participation in social and cultural endeavors that are appropriate and relevant to their development'. The Minister charged all workshop participants to maximize the opportunity in coming up mechanisms and strategies that will reflect the noble cause of ending child marriage and other harmful traditional practices within the broader agenda of safe-guarding the life of children, especially the girl child.

On behalf of the African Union Commission, Dr Johan Strijdom thanked the Government of Zambia for accepting to host the Regional Capacity Building Workshop stating that 'the Republic of Zambia offers evidence toward the

commitment of African governments in ensuring that resolutions are instituted nationally as well as at a community level'. In a contemporary culture, where social volatility is a common occurrence, child marriage has become a dominant subject for debate. There needs to be continuous efforts to discover new directions in eradicating the practice and enhancing the prospects grounded in gender and development. Dr Strijdom affirmed that, "Girls and women have the right to live free from violence and discrimination and achieve their potential but are prevented due to being forced into child marriage."

A key component of the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa is to enhance the capacity of Member States Experts, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Civil Society Organizations(CSOs) in dealing with the harmful practice of child marriage, thus making them suitable or better equipped to design and manage development plans in which social and economic policies and strategies are fully interfaced to deliver the kinds of transformative outcomes desired in ending child marriage and other harmful traditional practices affecting children in Africa.

Child Marriage has negative effects on the girl, her family, the nation and the whole world and large. These girls are also exposed to a number of health disadvantages such as the risks of contracting HIV/AIDS, the risk of cervical cancer, pregnancy and child bearing complications and even death. These and other effects as well as how to better work towards ending them is what the series of regional based workshops seeks to address.

About the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa

The campaign was launched at the continental level in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 29 May 2014, during the Conference of Ministers of Social Development. It aims at ending child marriage by: (i) supporting legal and policy actions in the protection and promotion of human rights, (ii) mobilizing continental awareness of the negative socio-economic impact of child marriage, (iii) building social movement and social mobilization at the grassroots and national levels; and (iv) increasing the capacity of non-state actors to undertake evidence based policy advocacy including the role of youth leadership through new media technology, monitoring and evaluation among others.

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