

Ethiopia to end FGM and Child marriage by 2025; budget to achieve this target increased



22nd July 2014, LONDON - This morning a delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Demeke Mekonnen and the Women's, Children and Youth Affairs Minister, Zenebu Tadesse, took part in the first ever Girl Summit, aimed at mobilising domestic and international efforts to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) within a generation.

The Deputy Premier participated in a high-level panel discussion hosted by the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr Anthony Lake. Princess Mabel Van Orange of the Netherlands, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, Dr Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko and Hina Jilani of the NGO called The Elders were also on the panel.

The DPM said that the government is committed to looking at sustainable measures to tackle FGM and child marriage. He also highlighted the importance of formulating appropriate policies and strategies and putting in place institutions and human resources for their implementation.

He stressed the importance of education in empowering girls and women, saying that more than 10 million girls have been enrolled in school in Ethiopia. This, he said, is the surest way of protecting girls and women from these harmful practices. He accentuated the role of effective decentralisation, which ensures the participation of all stakeholders so that they can contribute to the ongoing national effort.

Another important factor which positively contributes in the fight against FGM and child marriage, he said, is the deployment of more than 38,000 health extension workers, who work at grassroots and community level in remote parts of Ethiopia.



The Deputy PM emphasised the need to scale up best practices that have produced excellent results in the fight against FGM and child, early and forced marriage, and dealt in detail with the experience of Ethiopia in this regard.

The DPM concluded by emphasising the need to allocate an appropriate budget in a sustainable fashion for the programmes and strategy to succeed. On the fringe of the summit the DPM met the UK Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, Home Secretary, Theresa May and Alice Albright of Global Partnership for Education, and discussed the challenges facing countries like Ethiopia in the fight against these practices, and how to enhance the partnership to find a lasting solution to the problem.



The Honourable Minister W/ro Zenebu Tadesse also took part in a special panel discussion which outlined the works and success stories of different countries addressing FGM and CEFM.

The Minister highlighted the experience of an Ethiopian girl, Yeshalem from the Amhara region, who was a victim of FGM in her early childhood and how she stood up to protect her rights by joining a girls' club, which empowers them to involve teachers and the police when they hear about threats of child marriage.

The Minister stressed the need to fully support the mission of girls like Yeshalem, as they are instrumental in fighting this heinous crime, to bring about lasting solutions. W/ro Zenebu highlighted the results that Ethiopia has registered in fighting these harmful traditional practices, enabling Ethiopia to benefit from the active involvement of its citizens. The national rate of FGM has decreased by half among girls aged 14 and under, from 52% in 2000, to 23% in 2011 and national prevalence of child marriage has decreased from 33.1% in 1997 to 21.4% in 2009/10.

She also highlighted the three core elements of Ethiopia's approach to end harmful practices, which involve **political will** from the government to end harmful practices, **public opinion** and attitudes to change social norms, and **partnerships** with development partners, institutions, NGOs, etc.

She called on the international community to stand united in the fight against these practices and thanked partners for their continued support in helping create a positive, enabling environment for Ethiopian girls. The Government of Ethiopia, she said, is hopeful that this support and collaboration will continue until all forms of harmful traditional practices are abolished in Ethiopia.

The Girl Summit, co-hosted by the UK government and UNICEF, brought together women, girls and community leaders from all over the world, together with governments, international organisations and the private sector.

Success stories and good practice in tackling FGM and child marriage were also shared during the summit, which aimed to secure new commitments from the private sector, faith leaders, other civil society organisations and governments.

*****ENDS*****

Background

Ethiopia has taken steps to tackle FGM and child marriage and these are enshrined in the constitution which outlaws these harmful customs - "Laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited" The constitution further states that "Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses." And "Women have equal rights with men in marriage...The historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken into account, women, in order to remedy this legacy, are entitled to affirmative measures."

Successive legislation has strengthened the likelihood of overcoming both FGM and early and forced marriage.

Ethiopia's commitment

Ethiopia is committed to achieving the total elimination of FGM and Child, Early and Forced Marriage by 2025 through a strategic, multi-sectorial approach. The goal is in line with Ethiopia's objective to also reach middle-income country status by 2025, with the country's overall development being closely linked to greater opportunities for women and girls. Our approach puts girls at the heart of our commitment, working closely with them, their families and communities, to end these practices for good and break the cycle of harmful traditional practices. We will achieve our aim through a four-pronged approach:

- ⇒ Through incorporating relevant indicators in the National Plan and the National Data Collection Mechanisms, including the 2015 Demographic and Health Survey to measure the situation of FGM and CEFM and to establish a clear bench-mark
- ⇒ Through enhancing the coordination and effectiveness of the Alliance to End Child Marriage and the National Network to End FGM by engaging different actors with key expertise
- ⇒ Through strong, accountable mechanisms for effective law enforcement
- ⇒ And, an increase in financial resources to eliminate FGM and CEFM of 10% more than the existing budget.

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