



GIRLS NOT BRIDES UGANDA

The Ugandan Partnership to End Child Marriage

THE SIXTH NATIONAL GIRLS SUMMIT REPORT

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THEME: 'A UNITED SOCIETY FREE FROM CHILD MARRIAGE'



Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	4-5
2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE.....	5-6
3.0 STRUCTURE OF THE GNBU 6 TH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GIRLS SUMMIT.....	6-7
4.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE GNBU 6 TH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GIRLS SUMMITS.....	7
5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF GNBU 6 TH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GIRLS SUMMITS....	7-8
6.0 OPENING SESSION AND ADDRESSES	
6.1 Remarks from the Co-chair GNBU.....	9-10
6.2 The Summit Opening Address from the Chair GNBU	10-12
6.3 Chairperson Parliamentary Committee Gender, Labor and Social Development Address.....	12-15
6.4 The Power of Collective Action in Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy.....	15-18
7.0 CHILDREN’S PARLIAMENT DELIBERATIONS.....	18-20
8.0 THE PANELIST DISCUSSION ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE	
8.1 The Role of Media.....	21-22
8.2 Faith/Religious Leaders Perspective.....	22-23
8.3 Cultural Leaders Perspective	23-25
8.4 The Role of Parliament.....	26-27
8.5 Understanding the legal and policy environment in place to end child marriage.....	27-28
8.6 Financing for the End of Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies in Uganda.....	28-29
9.0 BREAKOUT SESSIONS	
9.1 Strengthening Family and Community Capacity to Support Children and End Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancy.....	32-33
9.2 The Nexus between Child Marriages and HIV Infections among AGYW.....	33-35
9.3 Impact of Transcendental Meditation.....	35-36
9.4 Legal and Policy Framework to End Child Marriage in Uganda.....	36-38
9.5 The Role of Education in ending Child Marriages.....	38-39

The Role of Social, Religious and Cultural Norms in Ending Child Marriage.....39-40

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMITMENTS ACROSS SECTORS

10.1 Education.....41

10.2 The Government: Executive, Legislature and Judiciary.....41-43

10.3 Parents and the Local Community43

10.4 Civil Society Organizations and other organizations.....44 -45

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Girls Not Brides is a global diverse network of over 1600 civil society organizations (CSOs) working to end child marriage across 100 countries in the world. Their experience, unique understanding and long standing connections with girls and communities are the driving force of our movement. It constitutes of the Girls Not Brides Uganda (GNBU) - National Partnership chaired by Joy for Children Uganda and World Vision Uganda with a membership of 134 CSOs working at community, district, regional and national level committed to ending child marriage and enabling children live to fulfill their potential.

GNBU has been a key partner to the Uganda government in implementing the National Strategy to End Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancy i.e. (2014/2015 -2019/2020) and continues to adapt the new strategy i.e. 2022/2023- 2026/2027. It convenes annual girl summit aimed at intensifying policy and legal advocacy to protect girls from child marriage and amplify the urgency for adopting girls' /children's rights at community and national level. GNBU intentionally gears towards empowerment of both girls and boys with correct information to enable them recognize child marriage and early pregnancy as a gross violation of their rights, and support them to take mitigating actions.

For five consecutive years, GNBU has organized girl summits which have featured the social drivers that have associated with child marriage. Uganda has vast cultures, religions and tribes in both development and humanitarian settings. Through these summits advocacy platforms are enabled across the various parts of the country to call for an end to child marriage by working with both girls and boys to hold duty bearers accountable in addressing child marriage root causes. These moments convene, high level government officials, ministry departments, faith leaders within the different religious sects, INGOs, NGOs CSOs and the media fraternity as well as the community stakeholders at the grass roots among others.

As a result, the GNBU partnership has taken initiative in mobilizing communities and leaders to have increased social justice seeking behaviors for issues regarding child marriage. Budget advocacy for the child and protection unit across the different districts in Uganda has been placed as a key priority for curbing perpetrators of child marriage but also seeking shelter for the vulnerable girls identified. Traditional and religious leaders have also joined the movement for ending child marriage by conducting community sensitization, promoting gender equality

sessions and addressing child marriage as a child violence issue. The Government of Uganda has proceeded with issuing the policies and guidelines for curbing/ending the vise of child marriage.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The legal age threshold for marriage internationally and in Uganda is set at 18 years. This is in reference to multiple conventions, treaties, and international agreements, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, getting married formally or informally before this age is a common practice in Uganda. Both boys and girls are married off as children, but girls are disproportionately affected by this harmful practice. In most cases, young girls are married to considerably older men.

On a global scale, Uganda is ranked 16th among 25 countries with the highest rates of child marriage (The national strategy for Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy 2022/23 - 2026/7). 8.9 million girls aged 10–19 are at risk of harmful practices, including child marriage. In many cases, child marriage is a driver for teenage pregnancy and unintended pregnancy drives child marriage because it is a taboo for young females to become pregnant or have sex outside marriage in many cultures and religions.

In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Sports highlighted that teenage pregnancy accounts for 22.3% of school dropouts among girls aged between 14 to 18 years and only 8% of the girls that dropout of school are given a second chance to re-enroll. In 2021, the UNFPA fact sheet highlighted the teenage pregnancy burden that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic across the varying regions in the country, - including Busoga region: the most affected districts were Kamuli (6,535) and Mayuge (6,205) teenage pregnancies. North Central region: the most affected districts were Mukono (5,535) and Luweero (4,545). Lango region: (Oyam 6,449 and Lira 4,697). South Central region: (Wakiso 10,439 and Rakai, 2711). West Nile region: (Arua 4,705 and Yumbe 3,973) and Tooro/ Rwenzori region: Kasese (7,319) and Kyenjojo (4,341).

In many contexts, early sexual debut - including that which takes place within child marriages - is associated with increased lifetime risk of HIV infection. Child brides are exposed to frequent

unprotected sexual activity, in part because there is pressure on them to prove their fertility. They have little say in how they practice their sexuality, because of their young age and limited power in the relationship, leaving them unable to negotiate safer sex or refuse sex. They are also more vulnerable to intimate partner violence, a factor that has been shown to increase the likelihood of contracting HIV. Girls married before the age of 18 tend to have lower levels of education than their unmarried peers, which further increase their risk of contracting HIV.

Climate change and other environmental crises are multiplying the drivers of child marriages. These drive up the instances and threats of violence against children, including putting families in positions where they might resort to child marriages. Loss of education due to the factors listed above is another consequence that is putting children, particularly girls, at higher risk of being married off in childhood. Varying research indicates that the longer girls stay out of school, the higher chances of child marriage. Child marriage puts children particular girls at grave risk of many forms of violence such as domestic and sexual violence, female genital mutilation, harming their physical or mental health and depriving them of liberty.

Action is taking place, but needs acceleration, in policies, communities, schools, cultural and faith institutions to create a mass movement for ending child marriage

3.0 STRUCTURE OF THE GNBU 6TH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GIRLS SUMMIT

The 6th National Girl Summit aimed at convening several delegates including children, youth, officials from different Ministry Department Agencies, UN agencies and other development partners, district leaders, faith and cultural leaders, private sector such as school administrators, media and CSOs plus voices of children to reflect on the progress made in ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy both at regional and national level.



Figure 1: The 6th Annual National Girls Summit Delegates

The Girl Summits supplemented interventions that;

- a) Aimed to reduce child marriage and teenage pregnancy advocating for an end to the harmful social and cultural norms and values that are influencing the child marriage practice.
- b) Encouraged guardians/parents, faith/cultural leaders to be at the forefront of ending child marriage messages.
- c) Leveraged on partnership with formal and informal “ending child marriage actors” including faith leaders (Christian & Moslem), cultural leaders, government leaders to take part in addressing the dangers of child marriage to the public.
- d) Utilized media coverage i.e. audio, visual and print (newspapers, radios, televisions, billboards, placards, social media etc.) to echo messages with call to action for and among key duty bearers (parents/guardians, government/cultural/faith leaders/journalists/ general public etc.)
- e) Conducted regional and national girl summits and supplementing activities across the GNBU partnership with coordination led by the GNBU regional coordinators/focal persons.

- f) Documented stories of change and impact of interventions implemented by partners on ending child marriage
- g) Created a platform for partners to share best approaches and practices used in ending child marriage at national level, regional and community level.

4.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE GNBU 6TH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GIRLS SUMMITS

- a) To empower faith and cultural leaders with information that enables them to analyze the causes and implications of child marriage and teenage pregnancies in Uganda.
- b) To prioritize advocacy platforms for partnerships with the key “end child marriage actors” in holding communities accountable to ending child marriage.
- c) To facilitate dialogues and media platforms featuring children and key duty bearers on discussions regarding ending child marriage.
- d) To amplify voices of children and key duty bearers (government, faith/cultural leaders, teachers, guardians etc.) advocating for an end to all forms of violence against children in Uganda.

5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF GNBU 6TH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GIRLS SUMMITS

- a) Empowered faith and cultural leaders with information that enables them to analyze the causes and implications of child marriage and teenage pregnancies in Uganda.
- b) Increased advocacy platforms for partnerships with the key “end child marriage actors” in holding communities accountable to ending child marriage.
- c) Increased dialogues and media platforms featuring children and key duty bearers on discussion regarding ending child marriage.
- d) Amplified voices of children and key duty bearers (government, faith/cultural leaders, teachers, guardians etc.) advocating for an end to all forms of violence against children in Uganda.

6.0 OPENING SESSION AND ADDRESSES

6.1 Remarks from the Co-chair GNBU

The National Girls Summit commenced with remarks from the Co-chair Girls Not Brides Uganda (GNBU) Ms. Catherine Guntesse after which the Chair, Mr. Moses Ntenge, gave the opening address.



Figure 2: Co-chair GNBU Giving her Remarks

The co-chair celebrated GNBU's partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders as a key aspect in the fight to end child marriage in Uganda. She asserted that the fight was one that necessitated well- coordinated collective effort if significant strides were to be made towards bringing the number of child marriages to zero.

Though there was much appreciation of work collectively done, the co-chair recognized that there were still challenges that stood in the way of completely ending child marriages and teenage pregnancies in Uganda.

Reminding the delegates of the theme for the 6th National Annual Girls Summit: ‘A United Society Free from Child Marriage’, the co-chair emphasized the fact that the vice not only had a social and economic impact on individual children but families, communities and the nation at large.

She affirmed that the 6th Annual National Girls Summit was being held to create an opportunity for introspection and assessment of the scope of individual and collective organizational efforts in ending child marriage. She added that as a collective in arms against this vice, it was very necessary to come together and evaluate the existing gaps. Formulation of better engagement strategies was also necessary for a unified front that would achieve the needed traction on the battle field.

6.2 The Summit Opening Address from the Chair GNBU

The opening address to the Summit was given by Mr. Moses Ntenge, standing in the capacity of Executive Director of Joy for Children Uganda and Chair, Girls Not Brides Uganda, a national partnership to end Child marriage.

The Chair affirmed that all delegates present were architects of change and not merely advocates. He asserted that his unwavering determination was fueled by the collective passion and dedication shared for the welfare and rights of children, especially the girls.

He also acknowledged that though a lot of work had collectively been done through partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders, 34% of girls in Uganda were still being married off before the age of 18; an equivalent of 1 in 3 girls. He also added that 25% of these girls had gotten pregnant or given birth before their 19th birthday.

He emphasized the fact that child marriage remained a significant threat to the well-being and future prospects of young girls; stripping away their education rights, denying them a chance to fulfill their potential and ultimately undermining their fundamental human rights. He added that the practice not only affected individual lives but also caused stagnation in the progress of society as a whole.



Figure 3: The ED Joy for the Children and Chair GNBU giving the Opening Address

As the Executive Director of Joy for Children Uganda, he highlighted that the organization’s mission was deeply rooted in the belief that every child deserved a childhood free from the shackles of early and forced marriages. He affirmed that the organization stood at the forefront of the battle against child marriages; advocating tirelessly for policies and actions that would safeguard the future of the children.

He firmly asserted that the Summit was a beacon of hope and a platform where voices united in solidarity to combat the pervasive vice. He added that it was also an opportunity for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and strategizing towards tangible solutions that would emancipate girls from the grips of child marriage.

The Chair stated that the path to eradicating this harmful practice was multifaceted and demanded holistic approaches encompassing education, community engagement, legal reforms, and the empowerment of girls with the tools needed to shape their destinies.

➤ Education

The chair highlighted education as a cornerstone. This, he added, was the most potent weapon against ignorance and inequality. By ensuring access to quality education for girls, the empowerment to envision a future where they are in control of their destinies would be made possible.

➤ Community Engagement

Engagement with communities was also pointed out as equally crucial. The Chair asserted that it was necessary to work hand in hand with families, leaders, and influencers to challenge harmful norms and practices. He stressed the need to create an environment where the rights and aspirations of girls were respected and protected.

➤ Legal Reforms

Policy reforms were also stated as very crucial in providing a robust legal framework that would safeguard children. Advocacy and enforcement of laws that prevent child marriage were needed to ensure that the perpetrators of such injustice face the consequences.

The chair implored all stakeholders not to forget the voices of girls affected by child marriage. He beseeched them to let their stories guide their actions and fuel the determination needed to create lasting change. He entreated everyone to take up the mantle of responsibility and pledge to work collaboratively, tirelessly, and passionately until every girl was free to pursue their dreams without fear of being coerced into marriage.

Finally, he thanked all stakeholders for their unwavering commitment to the fight against child marriage and encouraged them to continue working together to forge a society where every child's future is filled with promise and devoid of the chains of child marriage.

6.3 Chairperson Parliamentary Committee Gender, Labor and Social Development Address

The Summit was also graced by Hon. Flavia Rwabuhoro Kabahenda the Woman Member of Parliament representing Kyegegwa district and Chairperson Parliamentary Committee of Gender, Labor and Social Development. She shared concerns/hindrances, commitments regarding the fight against Child Marriage.



Figure 4: The Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development giving her address

With the 16 days of activism against GBV unfolding, she emphasized the need for continued activism even after this period. She further called to attention the Annual Police Report 2019/2020 which revealed a high prevalence of Gender Based Violence in the North, North East, and Eastern regions. She also informed the delegates that the Parliamentary Committee of Gender, Labour, and Social Development had taken an oversight trip to these areas to ascertain the situation on ground for better engagement. The trip was taken with the Minister of Gender and Culture, Chairperson National Counsel for Women and the Chairperson National Counsel for Youth. This was done to ensure prompt response to communities, service providers and duty bearers concerning the findings.

The team discovered that there were a number of issues not taken care of as a people, a country and the obligation of the state. On the basis of these discoveries, a comprehensive report was written and presented to government and the legislators in parliament with recommendation on a clear way forward as highlighted in the last section of this report.

Stated below are the hindrances that stand in the way of ending child marriage in Uganda and the government/parliament's commitment towards fighting the vice.

Hindrances

1. **Unreliable Data:** The Honorable Member of Parliament revealed that Uganda had last had a National Gender Audit in 2015. She asserted that it is through these audits that the right data and statistics are accessed to guide interventions. She also highlighted the birth certificate fee as a hindrance to obtaining right data. Many mothers who can't afford the fee end up not registering their babies. She acknowledged that there was presently no actual reliable and utilizable data to inform the very interventions that would be discussed throughout the summit.
2. **Bad cultural practices:** In the north and north east districts visited, the Committee found overwhelming cases of FGM, rape and child marriages all having been socially accepted. Unlike what is popularly declared, the victims also included boys most of whom had been forced to get married to the girls they had impregnated.
3. **The lack of political will:** The number of legislations not assented to at the East African Community Affairs clearly state that there is no political will. These include the legislation of 2017 on Female Genital Mutilation, Anti-trafficking in persons of 2016 and the legislation on Gender of 2017 that were all passed by the East African Legislative Assembly. When Country Presidents do not assent to legislations passed by the EALA to protect the girl child it becomes hard to trust that they believe in the same legislations passed in their own countries. In addition, none of the Attorney Generals from all these countries has tabled any disagreements with these legislations so they can be improved. Because of this, girls continue to be mutilated and trafficked to other countries throughout the East African Community.
4. **The lack of synergy, coordination and collaboration amongst the different actors to ensure that girls are protected and given the opportunity to grow to their full potential as productive citizens of the nation.** The Honorable Chairperson noted that as much as individual organizational milestones and progress in the fight against child marriage are important they are insufficient if the need to work together is ignored. In line with collaborating as one army, the willingness and readiness to step in and carry on or

support the work of another player in times of reduced funding or weakness on any other part was stressed.

Commitments

- a) The members of the Committee of Gender, Labour and Social Development pledged to legislate well; making sure that the existing policies can secure a bright future for the girl child. If they don't, a post-legislative scrutiny to ascertain whether the laws and policies that are in place really speak to the issues at hand would be done. The Gender Based Violence Act and the Female Genital Mutilation Act have been in operation since 2010. The Gender Policy, Gender strategy and action plan have also been in operation. However, there is need to ascertain whether these still speak to the situation at hand.
- b) Parliamentary Committee of Gender, Labor and Social Development meeting with the Ministry of Gender: This was organized to perform a mid-term budget performance assessment. The honorable Chairperson hoped to get answers from the Ministry of Gender on issues pertaining to the plan to have an inventory of all the girls in every sub county and household in the nation. An account of the work that had so far been done was also expected.
- c) She affirmed that Members of Parliament were very observant of the concerns regarding inclusive education at both primary and secondary level. These, she added, were going to be presented to duty barriers so the government can be more responsive.

Finally, she pledged her commitment as a member of parliament and the commitment of the Committee of Gender, Labour and Social Development. She also encouraged all actors to work together to continue to support and ensure that the future of the girls is secured.

'These girls are the mothers, the flowers of the Country, and the productive energy we are looking at for now and for the future. Let us all together be in good standing with them and for them.' She asserted in conclusion.

6.4 The Power of Collective Action in Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy

Speaking from an Institutional perspective, the Country Director Plan International Uganda shared what it means to take collective action.



Figure 5: The Country Director Plan International giving an address on the power of collective action

Below are the main points from her discourse:

- a) Agency building; this included building the confidence of young people to speak up, challenge and seek accountability for promises and pledges made. The voices of the young people are needed to give feedback to duty bearers on how things are being done. Under agency building campaigns to bring the boy child on board to also participate in matters that pertain to the girl child are run. Plan International agreed to bring boys together in their collective action so they can also share what spaces they would want the Institution involved.
- b) Take overs; this is where young people are given the opportunity to sit in positions of power and make decisions for the day so they can experience what it is like to lead an organization or hold a high profile position. This is done to encourage young people to aim higher and fulfill their potential. It is part of collective action that young people be involved in driving the change they desire.

- c) The focus on the girl child; this, she clarified, was not to communicate that boys were less important but rather to lift the girl child to a place of equal access to opportunities as the boy child. She however emphasized that the same applies to situations where the boy child is found lagging behind the girl, even then, the institutions and duty bearers need to work towards bridging the gap.
- d) Role-model-ship; this involves a collective work of individuals from different sectors for example religious leaders, cultural leaders, political leaders and others in positions of power to walk a journey that enlightens and shapes the perspectives of young people in light of the now and the future.
- e) Creation of opportunities for children and young people to contribute to different spaces. She mentioned an Institution at the African Union that Plan International works with to avail such opportunities to young people as and when they are needed to contribute to the space. The young people are fully facilitated to travel to the African Union and have their voices heard. Through this collective action is built across different institutions to enable young people gain the agency they need.
- f) Intentionality in all work done and involvement of stakeholders; this necessitates the bringing of young people to the table not as those simply on the receiving end but rather those whose opinions matter. It was emphasized that programs should be informed by needs presented by the young people rather than what the actors think are the needs. This, she added, was to be the same attitude with partners, working together as one works with their joint force allies. This would involve the sharing of progress on work done, challenges faced, better ways to be prepared as part of a common initiative, to learn together and make sure that collectively all programs are effective.
- g) Flexible funding to allow young people do innovative things and also be able to reach out to their peers to pass on what they have learnt. The idea, she explained was to make sure that young people were not stifled into paralysis, suffocated by rules that they can't do anything. The goal for this is to build young people through skill and information empowerment.
- h) Work with duty bearers for example law enforcement to create deterrence against child marriage and teenage pregnancy. This, however, in cases where cultural practices that are harmful to girls are held dear for example female genital mutilation, she advised that

actors strive to understand the purpose for which the practice exists to be able to suggest an alternative rite of passage.

7.0 CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT DELIBERATIONS

The children's parliament comprised of children representatives selected from the North, Northeast and Central regions of Uganda particularly Gulu, Abim and Buikwe districts. The children shared their views and perspectives on the summit theme; A united society free from child marriage and also gave recommendations. These were shared against five drivers namely: Cultural norms, Climate change, Gender inequality, Quality Education and Institutional barriers.



Figure 6: Children's Parliament during the discussion on the five drivers of child Marriage

Here are the views and recommendations shared:

Cultural Norms

- a) Specific cultural norms contributing to child marriage were highlighted. These included the beliefs that girls should not be educated but rather groomed for a good bride price.
- b) Community dialogues were advocated for to challenge harmful traditions for community engagement.

- c) Emphasis was placed on the importance of educational programs to promote awareness and sensitivity towards harmful and undesirable cultural practices.
- d) Culturally sensitive interventions that respected traditions while advocating for change were proposed as inclusive interventions.

Climate Change

- a) Discussions focused on how climate change impacted vulnerability, particularly among girls, through a vulnerability assessment.
- b) Advocacy was directed towards policies addressing climate change impacts on vulnerable communities for policy integration.
- c) Resilience-building strategies and adaptation measures were proposed to mitigate risks associated with climate change for resilience building.
- d) Advocacy for resource allocation; calls were made for resources and support to assist communities in adapting to climate induced challenges.
- e) Construction of valley dams to enable irrigation farming method for prolonged droughts especially in the Karamoja region.
- f) Provision of drought resistant seeds.

Institutional Barriers

- a) Legal and administrative barriers hindering effective interventions against child marriage were highlighted, identifying obstacles.
- b) Advocacy aimed at policy reforms to strengthen institutions and improve implementation was emphasized for policy reform.
- c) Calls were made for capacity-building programs to enhance institutional effectiveness through capacity building.
- d) Emphasis was placed on the need for coordinated efforts among various institutions and stakeholders for a collaborative approach

Gender Inequality

- a) Discussions revolved around societal attitudes and systemic factors contributing to gender inequality and child marriage through root cause analysis.

- b) Proposals were made for empowerment programs to challenge gender norms and empower girls as empowerment initiatives.
- c) The importance of engaging boys and men as advocates for gender equality was highlighted, emphasizing engaging boys and men.
- d) Advocacy was directed towards gender-equitable policies and laws to address systemic inequalities in policy advocacy.

Quality of Education

- a) Education requires competent, motivated and well supported teachers and in numbers proportionate to the students.
- b) Academic friendly infrastructure; classrooms, toilets
- c) Sensitization of parents on the importance of educating girls
- d) Reinstate counseling and guidance sessions in schools
- e) Encourage educative clubs in schools to increase awareness, build confidence and cognitive ability.



Figure 7: Children from different districts sharing key messages on ending Child Marriage

8.0 THE PANELIST DISCUSSION ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

The panel comprised of representatives from the Parliament, Ministry of Gender, the Media, the Church, Cultural Institutions, and Civil Society. Among them were an NTV journalist, a member of parliament for Busia Municipality, a cultural leader from Buganda Kingdom, a program and policy coordinator from the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), and a representative from the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development. Here is what was discussed:

8.1 The Role of Media

The media representative stressed that the media's mission was to report on the facts on ground for the authorities to investigate and ensure that justice was served. He also added that these reports were to give the public a basis to demand for answers should the authorities fail to do their part. He emphasized that the media's job was simply to; 'raise awareness of and give a platform to the voices of the voiceless'.



Figure 8: The Media Representative giving talking about the role of media on fighting Child Marriage

He expressed deep disappointment with the inaction of civil society organizations and authorities in response to concerns and reports exposing mistreatment and other injustices done against girls. He revealed that in most cases when these stories are published, civil society organizations are quick to release statements condemning the actions of offenders; however, there is hardly any follow up for Justice to be served.

Additionally, he asserted that the media played a crucial role in mobilizing resources, particularly in cases where victims required financial assistance to cope with the aftermath of the atrocities experienced. Some victims need financial help to be reintegrated back into school. With the capacity to reach a large number of people, the media is able to increase awareness and motivate concerned organizations and the general public to support the victims. ‘A journalist’s work can only be counted as successful when the authorities in charge respond appropriately’, he asserted.

He further pointed out that in the age of social media; one does not have to wait for conventional media to act. He therefore emphasized the need to work together as a society; taking collective initiative as responsible citizens to put pressure on authorities to respond appropriately. He asserted that no girl in any community should be married off under the watchful eyes of community members who have access to the internet. Collectively sharing these stories would create great awareness and compound pressure on the responsible authorities to take action.

He emphasized that stories written and aired on TV are not just for knowledge’s sake; they should not just be read or watched but spread until justice was served.

However, the media was cautioned to focus a little more on condemning the actions of the offender in their reports, exposing the identity of shameless and vile men as the real problem that innocent girls face daily. There should be open and emphasized condemnation of such actions and the perpetrators themselves too.

8.2 The Faith/Religious Leaders Perspective

The representative from the Church of Uganda recognized that the Church and faith based organizations were an important voice in matters concerning children and their welfare. He acknowledged that the Church had for a long time been silent. He also stated that the Church was

fully aware of the violence in homes and in communities, and its impact on the children. but had never gotten around actively reaching out; they only did so in sermons. The Church however in many ways ignored the need to actively get involved in the situation on ground. The representative acknowledged that they focused on preaching sermons as a sufficient approach and trusted civil society and government to do their part.



Figure 9: A Representative from the Church of Uganda sharing the Faith Perspective on ending Child Marriage

The representative from the Church however asserted that the Church now sees its active role and is striving to do better in advocating for the many voiceless young people; boys and girls. The Church pledged to be silent no more.

He also emphasized that the affected girls and youths were in communities where the Church already has presence: the church knows them. Seeing as we all belong to different faiths, the representative also implored every man and woman to hold their Faith Leaders accountable for their silence on the atrocities done to young people, especially the girls.

He added that the Church was institutionally incorporating their need to actively participate in the fight against Child Marriage, Teenage pregnancy and violence against women and girls. It is now doing this by actively engaging with communities in partnership with duty bearers. The envoy also announced that, in collaboration with several duty bearers, the Church was to actively take part in the sixteen-day activism against gender-based violence in Kasanja.

8.3 Cultural Leaders Perspective

The representative from the Buganda Kingdom reminded delegates that every individual is rooted in culture, having everything they do influenced by it.

He also added that as a kingdom and as cultural entities, they were fully aware that there were very many cultural practices that propagated teenage pregnancies and early marriages. He acknowledged that the deep rootedness of culture in the way of life of people made it very difficult to deal with these issues.

He affirmed that the Buganda Kingdom had reached out to various cultural entities and currently had partnerships with about 9 other cultural institutions. He also revealed that the Kingdom was working on an approach to help address these deep rooted practices that have contributed to teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

One of the approaches he shared as adopted by the Buganda Kingdom was the use of the parenting guidelines that the Ministry of Gender released. He asserted that the Kingdom was thinking through ways to ensure that these guidelines resonated with the perceptions of the individuals in their communities.

He added that they were fully aware of the cultural structure and the need for change to start at the household or home level. This, he stressed, was the only way lasting change would happen.

The other issue raised was the communication of this message of change. This, he stressed, had to be done in a manner acceptable within the confines of the cultures in which people operated. He added that if communicated as rights, the message would be rejected as a foreign imposition from the 'Bazungu'. However, he shared that the Buganda Kingdom had found a way to communicate this message in a manner deeply rooted in culture called 'Buntu bulamu'.



Figure 10: Extreme right is the Representative from the Buganda Kingdom. He shared the perspective of Cultural Leaders

Therefore for every deed done in the name of culture, the question that was to be asked was, ‘ekyo kya buntu bulamu?’ meaning, ‘do your actions reflect respect for humanity?’, to cause one to reflect and evaluate the situation.

The Buganda Kingdom representative also cited the need for support from partners and government to try and understand the reasons and purposes for which people hold onto certain practices. Taking the example of FGM and the reasons for which it is practiced, he stressed that it would be very unreasonable to expect cultural leaders to just let it go. The cultures that started these practices had a purpose and the purpose was a rite of passage. The question for actors to ask then was whether there was an alternative rite of passage that could be suggested. This would enable a respectful graduation of these children in a manner that does not harm them or expose them to risks of teenage pregnancy.

8.4 Role of Parliament

The honorable member highlighted that Uganda was one of the countries with the highest early marriages; 10% of the young people being married before the age of 15 and 40% below the age of 18 years.



Figure 11: The Parliament of Uganda Representative during the discussion on the role of Parliament in ending Child Marriage

She asserted that Parliament's main role in this matter was to legislate against child marriage, teenage pregnancy, gender based violence, human trafficking and all other vices that propagate the abuse of the human rights of the girl child.

She acknowledged that this was to be done while tackling the drivers that fuel these vices. This included poverty which was being mitigated through government programs like PDM and Emyooga. She also asserted that the biggest problem for the region of Karamoja was not poverty but climate change and mindset change. She called out to different actors including the government to work towards sensitizing people and opening their minds to the possibilities that surrounded them.

She also mentioned the new Education Curriculum that is aimed at empowering children with skills that can wisely be used to generate income rather than just theory, crammed to earn good grades.

In regards to the amendment of the marriage bill and sexual offences bill that she stressed as key to ending child marriage and teenage pregnancies, the honorable member asked the organizational actors present to rally behind the parliament and support the needed adjustments.

She also highlighted the increase in HIV AIDS infections among the young people which had been escalated during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Many girls were married off, abused and infected with HIV in this period. She therefore encouraged the young people to be vigilant enough to know their HIV status so they can be guided on the next steps.

8.5 Understanding the legal and policy environment in place to end child marriage

The representative from the Ministry of Gender started off by acknowledging that the five minutes given would not be enough to do justice in giving the legal framework through the international, regional and national lenses for everyone to understand.

He however emphasized that ignorance of the law was no defense and encouraged all delegates to educate themselves of the laws and policies in place, at least at the national level. He added that Uganda had one of the best policy frameworks in the world, one that many countries have learnt a great deal from, adopting some of which we have failed to implement.

He also affirmed that the Ministry of Gender was responsible for issues of children where the girls were included. He asserted that a strategy to end child marriage and teenage pregnancies was also already in place. The representative thanked the partners present; development partners, CSOs, Members of Parliament and the different stakeholders for having contributed to the strategy.

He asserted that Uganda did not need help from foreigners to solve its problems. All actors could use the policy frameworks in place to urge one another in discussions; learning, evaluating and collaborating to bring Child Marriage to an end.



Figure 12: The Ministry of Gender Representative during the Panelists Discussion

He also added that the efforts of actors would not go far if the ordinary man, girl and boy child do not know what these policy frameworks actually say. He advocated for all actors to come to one table and work together, know what each one is doing, evaluate efforts and move forward united against Child Marriage. He also encouraged the children to speak up.

8.6 Financing for the End Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies in Uganda

A representative from the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group was given the task to explain to actors and delegates the kind of financing it takes to end Child Marriage and Teenage pregnancy in Uganda.

He revealed that looking at the strategy to end child marriages and teenage pregnancies, the government had allocated UGX 65million for a period of five years. This, according to the representative is a drop in the ocean in comparison to the total budget of about UGX 57.2 trillion. The entire strategy to end child marriage and teenage pregnancies is spear headed by the ministry of gender, labor and social development as its core mandate. Unfortunately, this

ministry is among the least funded ministries in the country. Given the magnitude of the work that needs to be done in order to gain ground in regards to the fight to end child marriage, the representative stressed that government funds will never be sufficient. He also intimated that the funding is likely not to increase as the ministry is not considered of critical priority.



Figure 13: The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group Representative during the Panelists Discussion

He however declared that Uganda is not a poor country and that it is very possible for funds to be philanthropically raised among the Ugandans to support the fight to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy. This he supported with a call to mindset change amongst all stakeholders, from a collective dependent on foreign funding to one that would raise funds from within and make optimum use of available resources.

Still on mindset change, he pointed out that many parents largely think that when a child gets pregnant it marks the end of their education journey. He pointed out that government had pledged to work towards the reintegration of all teenage mothers into school so they can be supported to complete their studies. He therefore called out to actors present to hold the ministry of education accountable on the implementation of this reintegration.

8.70 Key Issues Raised and Recommendations

	ISSUES RAISED	RECOMMENDATIONS
Media Representative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inaction of organizations and authorities in regards to media concerns and reports exposing injustices done against girls. 2. The lack of collective effort among individuals in communities where girls were being abused and married off at a young age. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formulation of strategies to follow up published stories of injustices done to girls until the offenders are prosecuted as opposed to just releasing statements condemning these acts. 2. Community watch; he urged each individual to make use of their social media platforms to report injustices against girls and compound pressure on authorities to respond appropriately.
Faith Leaders Representative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Silence of many Faith Leaders on the atrocities done to young people, especially the girls. 4. The absence of institutional incorporation of active participation in the fight against Child Marriage, Teenage pregnancy and violence against women and girls 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Since all belong to different faiths, the representative implored every man and woman to hold their Faith Leaders accountable for their silence on the atrocities done to young people, especially the girls. 4. Institutional incorporation of active participation in the fight against Child Marriage, Teenage pregnancy and violence against women and girls. This would include active engagement with communities in partnership with duty bearers.

<p>Cultural Institutions Representative</p>	<p>5. The deep rootedness of culture in the way of life of people, encouraging unhealthy practices that propagate teenage pregnancies and early marriages.</p> <p>6. Organizations and governments hardly take the time to study and understand the purposes for which people hold onto certain practices. This results into ineffective interventions.</p>	<p>5. Cultural Institutions should embrace the Ministry of Gender parenting guidelines to redirect and reshape perceptions of individuals in communities starting at household level. Government and other actors should aim to communicate the desired change in a manner that is culturally friendly. In the case of Buganda Kingdom from which others can learn, ‘Buntu bulamu’ has been used to help communities and individuals evaluate whether their actions reflect respect for humanity.</p> <p>6. Organizations and government should take time to research, study and understand the purpose for which different cultural practices like FGM are practiced. In the case of practices like FGM, an alternative rite of passage can be suggested.</p>
<p>Parliamentary Representative</p>	<p>7. Amendment of the marriage bill and sexual offences bill.</p> <p>8. Increased HIV AIDS infections among young people.</p> <p>9. The need for mindset renewal for Karamoja region.</p>	<p>7. She called for the participation and support of all actors present to push for the needed amendments.</p> <p>8. She encouraged the young people to know their HIV status and for organizations present to help the young people to pursue the necessary next steps.</p> <p>9. She called out to different actors including the government to work towards sensitizing the people of Karamoja and opening their minds to the possibilities that surround them.</p>
<p>Ministry of Gender representative</p>	<p>10. Widespread ignorance of current policy framework.</p> <p>11. The need to utilize the available policy framework as opposed to looking for help outside Uganda.</p>	<p>10. Sensitization of the ordinary citizen about the laws and policies in place, at least at the national level.</p> <p>11. He called for collective collaboration and evaluation of efforts geared towards ending child marriage.</p>
<p>Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group</p>	<p>12. Inadequate funding</p>	<p>12. Philanthropically raise funds among Ugandans to support the fight to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy</p>

	13. Reintegration of teenage mothers into school	13. Hold the Ministry of Education accountable on the implementation of the promised reintegration of all teenage mothers. Mindset change; sensitize communities about the reintegration of teenage mothers into school as a worthy cause.
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9.0 BREAKOUT SESSIONS

9.1 Strengthening Family and Community Capacity to Support Children and End Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancy

The World Vision Uganda-led group brought the following items under this strategic emphasis area, which can help increase community and family capacity to support children and put an end to child marriage and teenage pregnancies:

- a) Economic empowerment through models like saving for transformation so that families can have money to support children in schools and meet their basic and other needs.
- b) Mindset change intervention through trainings and sensitization to fight the mindset that girls are sources of wealth and income in homes through brides and focus on empowerment of girls and boys in schools through ensuring quality education.
- c) Strengthening of parenting in the community through teaching best parenting methods to address parenting gaps in the different communities in the country.
- d) Working closely with the different partners like churches, government at local level and national level to ensure they have the knowledge and support in transforming the communities since they have a bigger voice in the community through partnerships, collaborations and coordination.



Figure 14: A Representative from World Vision facilitating a breakout session

9.20 The Nexus between Child Marriages and HIV Infections among AGYW

This session was facilitated by AHF Uganda Cares and was held in the format of a focus group discussion where each participant was given an opportunity to share. The AGYW present were able to share experiences that revealed the dangerous link between child marriages and HIV/AIDS.

The lessons learnt, important takeaways and conclusions from the conversation are listed below:

- a) The team from Uganda Cares was able to fully explain prevention measures against HIV/AIDS to the AGYW present.
- b) The attendees were able to visualize the link between child marriage and HIV infections and how quickly action should be taken.

- c) There was a visible mindset shift for some participants on gender stereotypes especially those targeting women.



Figure 15: Delegates in a discussion on the Nexus between Child Marriages and HIV Infections among AGYW

- d) Child marriage/early marriage is still a largely prevalent issue in our communities.
- e) Girls continue to be victims of harmful gender norms and stereotypes.
- f) Vulnerability to HIV infections will continue to exist unless girls gain the power to speak up.
- g) Child Marriage fuels GBV, the spread of HIV, maternal deaths and mental health issues.
- h) Sex education should begin as early as immediately; parents and guardians should not give chance to peers and the internet to educate their children as they will be susceptible to the wrong information.
- i) The participants agreed on collective responsibility; everyone must be concerned and intentional; it could just take one neglected child for hundred others to be infected.

- j) A plea to consider all sides of the coin; prevention of pregnancies, prevention of HIV spread and child marriages. It is not enough to prevent a pregnancy if one ends up HIV positive.

9.3 Impact of Transcendental Meditation

This session was facilitated by AWAGO. The AWAGO representative emphasized the benefits of Transcendental Meditation while showcasing the organization's dedication to transformative programs. The program's positive impact on the girls' lives was extensively discussed, and the organization's dedication to using Transcendental Meditation for stress relief, empowerment, and education was underlined.



Figure 16: Delegates in a discussion on the Impact of Transcendental Meditation

A panel discussion centered on the remarkable advantages of Transcendental Meditation was held, presenting it as a transcendent tool for bringing about beneficial transformations. It was promoted as a program as well as an unmatched way to lower stress, support mental health, and improve general health. AWAGO's enthusiastic involvement in the summit demonstrated its

dedication to stress relief, empowerment, and education through Transcendental Meditation. The representative skillfully conveyed the remarkable impact of this approach, in promoting positive and constructive transformation in the lives of women and girls.

9.4 Legal and Policy Framework to End Child Marriage in Uganda

This session was facilitated by Joy for the Children. The representative from Joy for the Children presented an informative background to the problem stating that 43% of girls in Uganda are married off before their 18th birthday (Demographic Health Survey 2016). The drivers of Child marriage and teenage pregnancy were said to be cross-cutting and deeply rooted in traditions, culture and poverty with some communities holding onto the belief that when a young girl begins experiencing menstrual periods then she is ready for childbearing.



Figure 17: Delegates in a discussion on the Legal and Policy Framework to End Child Marriage in Uganda

In addition the participants were taken through a legal and policy framework instituted by the Government of Uganda by enacting a number of laws and formulating a plethora of policies all geared towards protecting children against abuse and specifically protecting children against

sexual-related offenses. These included the National Strategy to End Child marriage and teenage pregnancy 2022/23-2026/27, Child Policy, National Education sexuality framework. The facilitator stated that other laws besides Uganda's Constitution have been enacted by the Parliament to explicitly provide for the protection of children against sexual violence. These include the Penal Code Act, Cap 120 as amended, the Children Amendment Act, 2016, the Anti-Pornography Act, 2014 among others. In addition, besides the delayed enactment of both the Marriage and Divorce bill and the Sexual Offences Bill into law, the facilitator emphasized that there are existing latent gaps in Uganda's current legal and policy framework and that these shortcomings have inadvertently weakened the campaign against child marriage.

The breakout session delved into critical aspects of legal and policy measures aimed at eradicating the practice of child marriage within Uganda. The session created an opportunity for the audience to appreciate the current frameworks by providing an overview of Uganda's legal and policy architecture and highlighting some of the challenges and recommendations.

The session provided an abridged understanding of the legal and policy interventions required to effectively combat child marriage in Uganda. An interrogation of the challenges and recommendations on implementing the existing and legal policy framework was also done. Lastly, discussions were held on the strengths and weaknesses of current policies and laws addressing child marriage, Identifying gaps and areas for improvement.

Here are the lessons and key points from the session:

- a) Uganda has many good laws and policies but implementation is still a challenge.
- b) There are inconsistencies in existing laws that need to be bridged.
- c) Child marriage itself is not legislated; it is not recognized in our Ugandan laws.
- d) In terms of specific Justice, what is even more critical for child marriage, teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse is the connivance of parents to negotiate with offenders for exchange of gifts or resources instead of pursuing social justice. On the other hand even the offended; the girls often times refuse to mention their offender's name.
- e) Prevailing issues of corruption to proceed in some of these cases. Some offenders pay off the police and are set free leaving the girl with trauma to deal with and the pain of the injustice from those she hoped would help.

- f) There is great need for the different actors to continue working together so that they are able to address the challenges and gaps, even in education to ensure that children can enjoy the environment free from bribes and exploitation

9.5 The Role of Education in ending Child Marriages

This session was facilitated by Concern for the Girl Child which exists to empower vulnerable children, especially the girl child. CGC works in five thematic areas: education, child protection, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and livelihood.



Figure 18: Delegates in a discussion on The role of Education in ending Child Marriages

The session was conducted in the form of a panel discussion with an opportunity for the audience to participate. The panel was made of representatives from three organizations. namely; CGC, SOS, UCOBAC, Raising Teenagers and an independent panelist; a teenager.

The organizations shared with the participants some of the work they do which was quite similar and included:

- a) Sponsorship of children with some being educated all through to university.
- b) Safe spaces approach where girls who previously dropped out of school, some getting married are equipped with different skills to empower them to be able make a living for themselves and their children.
- c) They introduce these girls and young women to village saving and associations.
- d) Provide safe water to communities
- e) Mentorship program where girls are mentored to the end and given employment placements.
- f) Empowerment of teachers
- g) Shelter for children without parental care

Here are the key points from the discussion:

- Education is at the core, without it the rest of the departments do not work
- Education exposes girls to their rights and responsibilities thus helping to protect them.
- Education is an important factor in delaying the age of marriage for girls.
- There is still exploitation of girls at the university by their lecturers; demanding sex for marks.
- Parental role is very crucial in keeping girls in school
- Access to quality education and decent work are also critical to breaking the cycle of poverty and the intergenerational transmission of child marriage.

9.6 The Role of Social, Religious and Cultural Norms in Ending Child Marriage

This session was facilitated by Plan International Uganda and was held in the format of a focus group discussion where each participant was given an opportunity to share.

Here are the key points from the discussion:

- a) Social, religious and cultural norms fuel Child Marriage and can also end it if changed.
- b) A participant argued that religious institutions for example churches force people to get married especially when there is a pregnancy involved, a claim that a representative from the Church denied.
- c) The government's role: it was acknowledged that while civil society has successfully included traditional and cultural leaders in the development process, the government has

not done the same to determine how best to implement strategies to put an end to child marriage.



Figure 19: Delegates in a discussion on role of Social, Religious and Cultural Norms in Ending Child Marriage

- d) Cultural leaders require assistance in differentiating between societal norms that are favorable and harmful. It was mentioned that most cultural leaders assume that discussing social norms is an attack on the entire cultural institution. Therefore, it is important to continuously raise the cultural leaders' level of awareness so they can distinguish between the two and provide them with or propose alternative norms.
- e) The role of the church, media and everyone in sexuality education was also discussed.
- f) The question of whether it is feasible to teach teens how to use contraception in order to address the problem of teenage pregnancies was discussed; some participants supported the notion, while others believed that doing so might encourage them to have extramarital affairs that would fuel infections.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMITMENTS ACROSS SECTORS

10.1 Education

- Academic friendly schools: The Chairperson Committee of GLSD asserted that the increase in school drop outs was not entirely due to fees being charged at the universal primary and secondary education schools. She firmly declared that it was more than this. She pointed out that there were other supportive facilities that were crucial to the education experience. These included: teachers, weather friendly classrooms as opposed to studying under trees, desks and chairs, chalk, functional and sufficient toilets as per the number of pupils, clubs for the development of other cognitive skills among others. These play a big part in the retention of the girl child in school.
- Re-instate senior woman teachers in schools who will handle issues to do with the girl child. This will not only create a space for girls to be groomed but to also share their struggles and seek help in time.
- Provide accommodations for the disabled and special needs girls. Some districts like Kyegegwa have only two schools with inclusive education but many girls drop out in the transition because the Secondary schools they could go to are as far as Mbale and Mbarara. She therefore appealed to government to equip more schools with basic facilities to create a better and more inclusive learning environment for retention.
- Emphasize the role of education in preventing child marriage and commit to supporting educational initiatives.
- Advocate for inclusive and quality education for all children, especially focusing on accessibility and equality.
- Address barriers like lack of schools and gender-based discrimination while ensuring increased investment in education and policies ensuring equitable access.

10.2 The Government: Executive, Legislature and Judiciary

- The National Council for Youths needs to make a conscious effort to provide the youth with practical solutions. One crucial element emphasized by the Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD was that the council needed to be well informed

about everything going on in the various regions of engagement to be able to address the needs and difficulties young people are facing. This should then inform the budget.

- The operationalization and functionalization of the National Children's Authority (NCA). In order to "provide a structure and mechanism, which will ensure proper co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of policies and child rights programs relating to the survival, development, protection and participation of the child and for other connected matters," the Children (Amendment) Act 2016 No. 9 established the NCA in 2016. Sadly, the NCA, which has such a significant mandate for children, has never been operational and is extremely underfunded with only three staff. The Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD called on government to functionalize the National Children's Authority that will specifically and intentionally look at the unique needs of the children where girls are inclusive.
- Inclusivity; the Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD appealed to technical personnel present to revise the definition of youth according to circumstance rather than age as countries internationally do. She warned that if this is not done, economic government programs coming up like Emyooga, PDM among others will not benefit categories of young people that really need them. In the Ugandan context, teenage mothers 16-17 years of age would make use of such programs to generate income by selling different items to be able to take care for themselves and their babies. Unfortunately, there is no program that currently includes them since they are below the age of 18.
- Social Registry: There is need for an inventory of every Ugandan in the country. With lessons learnt from the Parliamentary Committee on GLSD's visit to Zambia, it was proven that an inventory of every family in the nation would improve social protection interventions. Just like Zambia, the Ugandan government would be able to ascertain the number of households in the country and the degree of their vulnerability in order to plan an appropriate response. Interventions would then be at the household level and would be based on real conditions on ground to fight poverty that has been an excuse for many parents to give in to child marriage.
- Justice Centers should be made available, accessible and responsive. The Ministry for Justice has introduced closed courts where victims will feel safe and free to express

themselves regarding their abuse or rape. However, the Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD confirmed that there is still need to decentralize these courts to all the lower Justice Centers. She disclosed that the nearest court for girls who have been abused in Karamoja is in Mbale. Not only is it costly to transport all the witnesses to Mbale, but it can take up to a year for the court proceedings to end. Over time, the families of abuse victims choose to withdraw these cases, leaving the victim to deal with not only the trauma but a loss of faith in the Justice system. Consequently, when the offender is not prosecuted, many of his kind remain fearless and the girls become incredibly insecure.

10.3 Parents and the Local Community

- Improve neighborhood security; all the girls impregnated during the Covid-19 pandemic were preyed on by members of the same neighborhood they called home. Strategies for fortifying the bonds within the community were encouraged so that neighbors watch out for one another and report any suspicious persons that may exhibit intentions to harm the girl child.
- Harness traditional and social protection systems and models. The Chairperson Committee on GLSD pointed out that parents have neglected active and intentional parenting and instead relied on the boarding school system to raise their children from nursery through to university. With this kind of system, traditional models are not inculcated in the nurturing and growth of children. Children grow up like strangers to their parents with no one to confide in or seek guidance from which leaves them exposed as prey.
- Ensure indiscriminate upbringing of both girls and boys.
- Invest in the boy child; the Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD pointed out that 98% of children in remand homes are boys. This simply means that a majority of boys, the fathers and family heads of tomorrow are in conflict with the law. She submitted that efforts to protect the girl child are futile if the boy child is neglected, for it takes one boy to undo a good number of girls. She therefore appealed to actors to include the boys in their programs and invest in them and for parents to intentionally parent boys and girls equally.

10.4 Civil Society Organization and other Organizations

- The Business Case: The Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD beseeched all actors to collaborate on a business case that eloquently illustrated the costs associated with ignoring issues that affect the girl child, specifically teenage pregnancy and child marriage. This would be an opportunity to prove that there would be a great return on investment if interventions were well funded. If actors can make an economic case for the girl child, the Ministry of Finance would consider how these returns feed into the growth of other sectors of the economy as grounds for extending funding.
- Philanthropy for funding and development; It takes money to be able to run the necessary programs and campaigns to end child marriage. The Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD urged stakeholders present as lobbying partners, to develop a concept on how they could harness philanthropy into something that will protect the girl child. She suggested that stakeholders can flagship the girl child and encourage Ugandans to contribute a small amount towards the development of tangible solutions to ensure that they are not lured into child marriages and other vices. This, she added, should be built into organizational systems to deal with the issue of insufficient funding.
- The Chairperson Parliamentary Committee on GLSD challenged actors to widen their scope and include girls with unique needs. These included refugees, the disabled and the intersex. These are categories of girls who are critically vulnerable, struggling to fit in and are exposed to abuse with little or no defense.
- Advocate for policy reforms aiming to strengthen institutions and improve implementation in combating child marriage.
- Support capacity-building programs to enhance the effectiveness of institutions and overcome barriers.
- Emphasize the need for collaborative efforts among various institutions and stakeholders to address institutional obstacles.
- Commit to addressing root causes by challenging societal attitudes and systemic factors contributing to gender inequality and child marriage.
- Propose and implement resilience-building strategies and adaptation measures to mitigate climate- induced risks.

- Allocate resources and support to assist communities in adapting to challenges induced by climate change.
- Advocate for policies that address climate change impacts on vulnerable communities, especially concerning child marriage.
- Implement empowerment programs aiming to challenge gender norms and empower girls.
- Engage boys and men as advocates for gender equality and support gender-equitable policies and laws.
- Commitment to engage with local communities to understand and address specific cultural norms contributing to child marriage.
- Pledge to initiate and support community dialogues aimed at challenging harmful traditions.
- Promise to implement educational programs that promote awareness and sensitivity towards cultural practices
- Sensitization of communities on existing policy frameworks.