

# End Child Marriage Now!



**It takes us all**

## World Vision International Global Partnership

Violence affects more than **one billion children** globally. It robs them of their dignity, their rights, their potential and their future. If we don't end violence against children, we risk jeopardizing the progress and losing the investments made in child survival, health and education, as well as overall economic development. But it doesn't have to be this way.

WVI's Global Partnership, is launching a five year (2017-2021) campaign dubbed "*It Takes a World to End Violence Against Children*". The campaign is "**a bold expression of our intent to promote human transformation, seek justice, uphold the rights of children to be protected and bear witness to the Kingdom of God.**" Kevin Jenkins, WVI President & CEO.



Photo Credit: World Vision / Joseline N. Annan

**World Vision International in Ghana** campaign theme is **End Child Marriage Now! It Takes Us All** with a goal to **contribute to a 50% reduction of child marriage by 2021** through the following objectives:

- *Improve legal enforcement of child protection laws especially the marriage Act 560 and seek to harmonize the sex consensual age of 16 with the marriage age of 18.*
- *Challenge social norms and eliminate harmful practices against children.*
- *Improve policy implementation to end child marriage.*
- *Strengthen institutions and faith communities to care and protect children from Child Marriage.*
- *Improve child protection and participation of children to end child marriage.*
- *Improve incomes of vulnerable households to reduce poverty.*

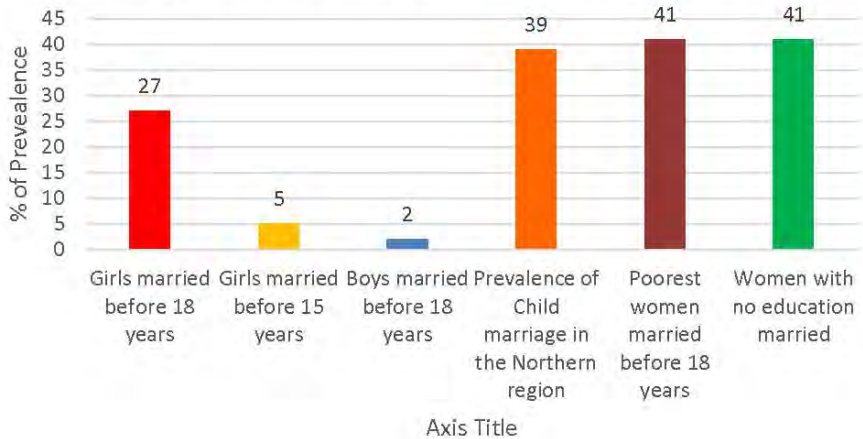
**Strategies to achieve the objectives are;**

- **Collaboration** with Government of Ghana to share research findings and evidence
- **Formation and empowerment** of community groups to **facilitate** engagement with government and other stakeholders to protect children in communities.
- Working with faith leaders to create **awareness** and promote **attitudinal change**.
- Creating public awareness through traditional and social **media campaigns**.
- **Empowering youth** as issue advocates and child marriage preventers.
- Addressing the **root causes** of child marriage in our area programs through health, education, livelihoods and WASH interventions.

## **What is Child Marriage?**

Child marriage occurs when one or both spouses are below the age of 18. It includes any marriage which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both parties. Child marriage denies the victims their rights to health, protection and education and perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty. The practice places children, especially girls, at an increased risk of sexual, physical and psychological violence throughout their lives. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana and the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) both define a child as a person below the age of 18. The Constitution and the Act prohibits marriage for anyone younger than 18. Contravention of this law is punishable by a fine of up to 5 million cedis or a prison term of up to a (1) year or both. However, there is a challenge with the legal enforcement of this law.

## KEY FACTS ON CHILD MARRIAGE IN GHANA



The graph shows statistics on child marriage prevalence in Ghana per GDHS 2014 and MICS 2011

### Introduction to World Vision International in Ghana:

WorldVision International in Ghana is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to the well-being of children. We work with communities to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty. WorldVision started working in Ghana in 1979 and is now working in all ten regions in Ghana. Our presence throughout Ghana is enabling us to contribute to the well-being of 4.5 million children and their families through the provision of access to quality education, access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, improved livelihood, health and nutrition.

### Appeal for action by relevant stakeholders:

#### Government of Ghana:

1. Strengthen formal prevention and protection of children through the enforcement of laws and policies linked to child marriage.

a) Amend the Criminal Offenses Act 1960 (Act 29 Section 14(a)) to increase the age of consensual sex which is 16 to be consistent with the legal age of marriage at 18.

b) Commit adequate financial resources to implement the National Strategic Framework to End Child Marriage in Ghana from 2017 – 2026.

c) Strengthen government's child protection agencies to scale up services to prevent, protect and promote the rights of children.

*d) Work with stakeholders/partners to promote toll free call lines, referral as well as psychosocial services.*

*e) Ensure an annual implementation review is established for the National Strategic Framework.*

### **Faith Leaders, Traditional Leaders, CSOs, NGOs, Media and Children to:**

2. Re-enforce informal prevention mechanisms by promoting awareness and changes in community attitudes and harmful practices and further empower youth as issue ambassadors and child marriage preventers.

*a) Promote the resilience and voice of children through child empowerment and participation programmes.*

*b) Strengthen national and regional houses of chiefs, traditional councils and religious leaders with adequate capacity to reform and abolish harmful traditional practices.*

*c) Build community awareness of existing child marriage laws and formal prevention mechanisms and the negative effects of child marriage.*

*d) Promote community change conversations to raise awareness of harmful practices for community action and engagement with local government on child protection issues.*

*e) Collaborate with the Ministry of Health: Reduce adolescent pregnancy through improved provision of adolescent sexual and reproductive health education and services.*

*f) Collaborate with the Ministry of Education: Improve retention of girls in school through gender-friendly school environments and provision of scholarships for female students. Empower student committees to advocate for and take action to prevent child marriage.*

*g) Collaborate with the Department of Social Welfare to increase opportunities for self-reliance of girls by improving their access to vocational and life skills training opportunities.*

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