

Yes, Africa can end child marriages: Solutions exist

I. Child Marriage is an urgent problem

Every year, in every country and every community, violence robs children of happiness, dignity and a bright future. No matter what form it takes, violence denies children the life God desires for all of them. It is estimated that 1.7 billion children are affected by some type of violence each year¹. One example of violence against children is child marriage, which is a serious form of child abuse. Approximately 15 million girls are married every year before the age of 18, with 39% of them in sub-Saharan Africa². Child marriage has devastating and long-term health, education, psychological, emotional and mental impact on the children. Girls brides are more likely to drop out of school, generate limited income activities, suffer all types of domestic violence and abuse, contract HIV/AIDS and other STDs, and die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Child marriage remains widely spread in Africa, where more than half of the Member States of the African Union have prevalence rates which are beyond 20%. Five out of the top six most impacted countries are located in West and Central Africa with Niger (76%), Central African Republic (68%) and Chad (67%) as the top three countries registering the highest child marriage prevalence rates globally. Projections show that if current trends are not reversed, the world will not be able to achieve the global target of ending child marriages by 2030 as set under the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Plan. There has been a growing momentum and recognition of the imperative to end child marriage in Africa as evidenced by the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage on the continent and in June 2015, all AU Member States endorsed an African Common Position to End Child Marriage. The political momentum is also building at the national level as shown by the development of national strategies or action plans on child marriage – including in Burkina Faso, Chad and Nigeria, with more countries in the process of developing similar initiatives.³

Child marriage has a heavy toll on the education of African girls⁴

Impacts on Educational Attainment Indicator	Estimated Impacts
Girls dropping out of school	According to parents in national surveys, marriage is a key reason for dropping out of school for girls
Educational attainment for girls	Marrying as a child reduces the likelihood of enrolling in and completing secondary school substantially
Marriage vs. schooling trade-off	Once an adolescent girl is married, it is very rare that she remains in school
Intergenerational effects	Child marriage affects the education of the children of girls marrying early
Education's impact on marriage	Each year of secondary education may reduce the risk of child marriage by six percentage points on average

Top 20 countries with the highest prevalence rates of child marriage	
01	76 % Niger
02	68 % Central African Republic
03	67 % Chad
04	59 % Bangladesh
05	52 % South Sudan
06	52 % Mali
07	52 % Guinea
08	52 % Burkina Faso
09	48 % Mozambique
10	45 % Somalia
11	43 % Nigeria
12	42 % Malawi
13	41 % Nicaragua
14	41 % Madagascar
15	41 % Eritrea
16	40 % Uganda
17	40 % Ethiopia
18	39 % Sierra Leone
19	37 % Nepal
20	37 % Democratic Republic of the Congo

¹<https://www.wvi.org/ittakesaworld>

²Concept note for the high level meeting on ending child marriage in west and central Africa- 2017

³Strategic direction for the au campaign to end child marriage in Africa 2019 - 2023

⁴Economic impacts of child marriage:(conference edition) June 2017. Global Synthesis report

2. How is World Vision addressing the problem of child marriages in Africa?

On February 6, 2017 in Addis Ababa, World Vision in collaboration with the African Union launched a five year global campaign to end violence against children in all its forms in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063. At the launch, members of civil society, faith leaders, children, youth, and Government Ministers from all corners of Africa came together and pledged their commitments to ending violence against children. This high-level audience included representatives from governments, embassies, the African Union, the UN and other multilateral organizations, businesses, faith leaders and institutions, INGOs, donors and civil society organizations. World Vision's campaign offers a powerful platform to mobilize support and strengthen momentum around the implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Common Africa Position on Ending Child Marriage, in order to make a significant impact on child-wellbeing in Africa. In 14 African countries, World Vision has prioritized a focus on ending child marriages, supporting the AU's strategic objectives to end child marriages in Africa. World Vision's campaign seeks to change attitudes and behaviors at family, community and national levels; scale up best practices and solutions that work; influence governments and donors to contribute more resources to ending violence; and hold governments and other stakeholders accountable to global commitments such as SDGs 5 and 16.

The four campaign objectives



1 CHANGING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Change attitudes and behaviours

Ignite global movements for, with & by children to catalyse global changes in attitudes, raise awareness and drive both courageous and effective action to end violence against children



2 SCALING UP WHAT WORKS

Scale up what works

Strengthen prevention and response measures and services to address violence against children



3 MORE MONEY BETTER SPENT

More money better spent

Increase in long term targeted funding to end violence against children from different sources

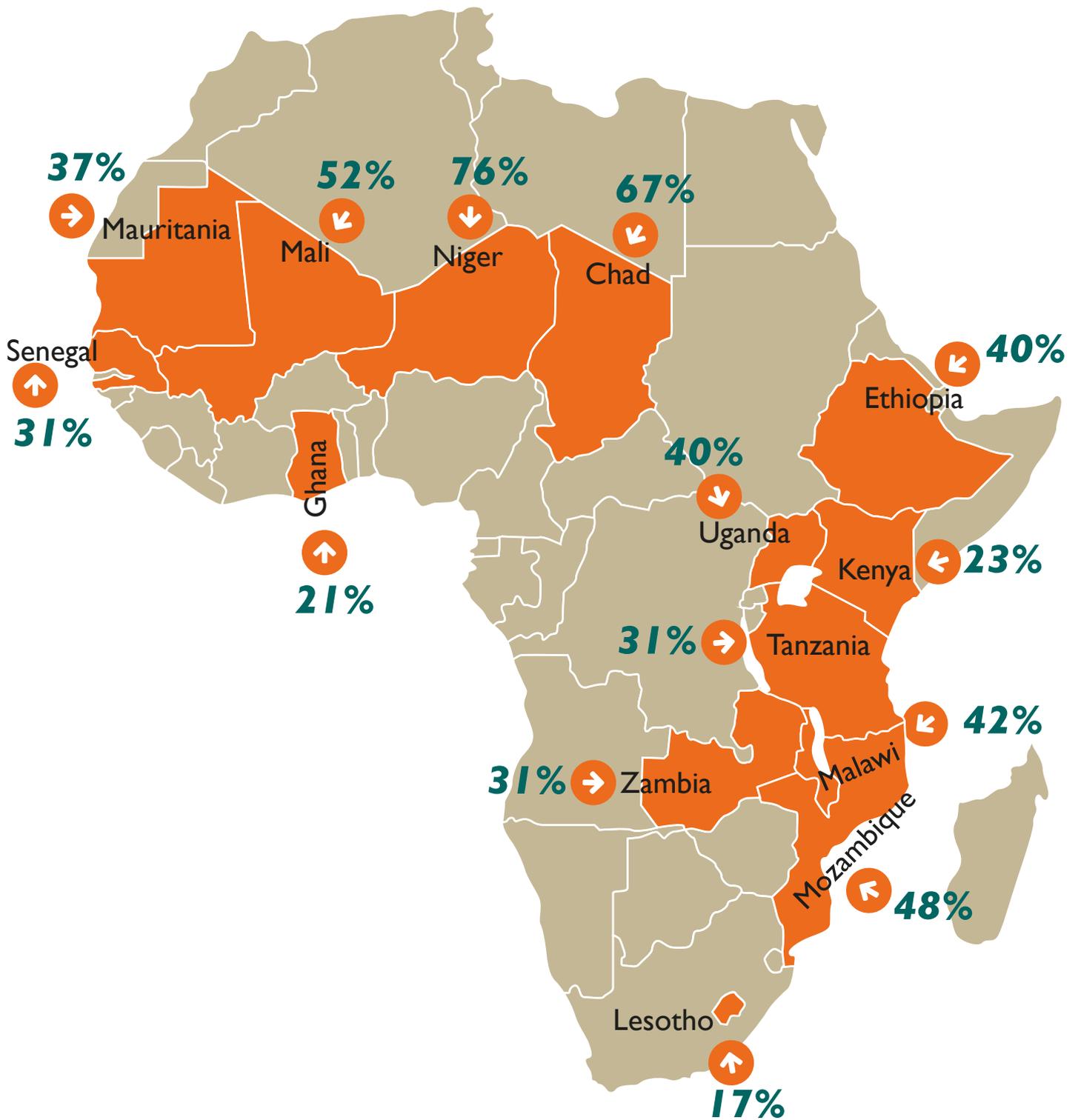


4 ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability for commitments

Strengthen accountability for implementation of commitments to end violence against children, especially the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals

3. Where is World Vision campaigning to end child marriages in Africa?



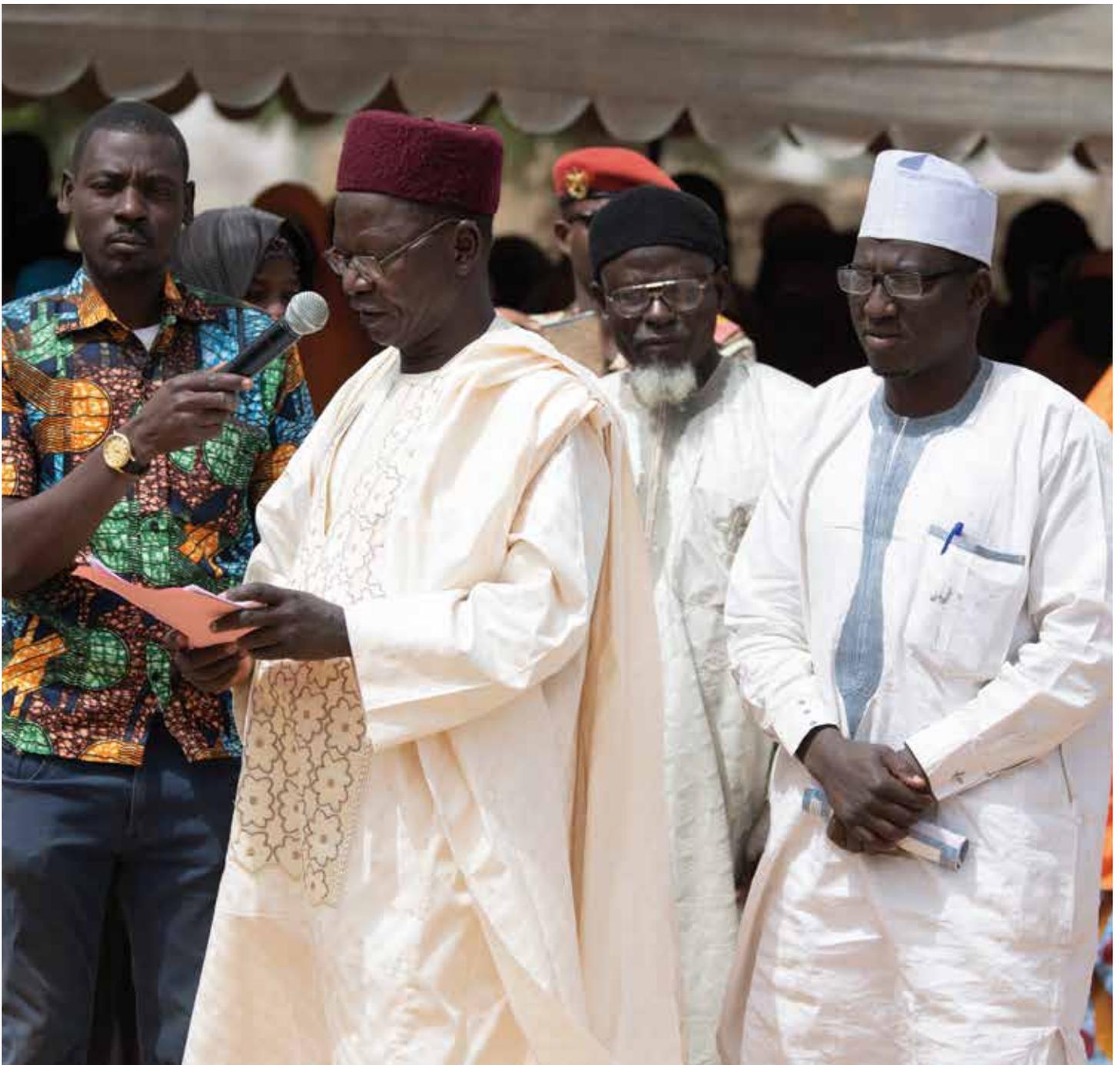
Figures indicate Child Marriage prevalence

4. Impact of World Vision's campaign against child marriage so far

1. Changing attitudes and behaviours to end child marriage

NIGER :A High Profile official issues an ultimatum

On February 17, 2019, World Vision Niger launched a two-week awareness raising “caravan” to highlight the negative effects of child marriage and violence against children. The caravan travelled through six major villages across the Maradi and Zinder regions, and featured speeches from religious leaders and government officials, drama skits and children’s activities. Prior to the launch of the caravan, the campaign’s ambassador, Nigerian singer/songwriter Safia Aminami, visited key government institutions and a unisex girl secondary school to share the mission of the caravan and orient key stakeholders to the campaign and the issue of child marriages. During the caravan tour, the “Prefet of Guidan Roudji” sounded a warning to citizens: “All marriages celebrated before the bride and bridegroom have attained the age of marriage will be cancelled”. In addition, he reiterated the commitment and determination of the highest authorities including the President of the Republic, Issoufou Mahamadou’s commitment to protect children in Niger.





MOZAMBIQUE :Adolescents lead the way

17 year old Carmelia Matavel is the leader of a girl-led movement determined to end child marriages in her southern Mozambique community where it is estimated that one in two girls is married before age 18. The youngest of four siblings, Carmelia grew up accustomed to seeing under aged girls married off by their families. Growing up, she painfully watched her peers abandon school and their dreams. All that changed when at age 13, she joined an adolescent girls' savings group formed under the auspices of a World Vision child protection project. "We started saving until we had enough to start our own small businesses and with the proceeds we can now fend for ourselves. We buy our own clothes and school materials and have our hair done. We are going after our own dreams". Additionally, the savings group constitutes a safe space for Carmelia and her peers to candidly talk about issues such as gender based violence and agree on how to address it. "The Savings group unites us and gives us a stronger voice" she points out. Picture below shows Carmelia representing her clubmembers at a World Vision event.

MALAWI :A music icon joins the cause

During the launch of his Mmidi musical album, World Vision Malawi's campaign Ambassador, Faith Mussa, vowed to do everything to end child marriages in Malawi. Speaking to a gathering of over 500 people, Mussa said "Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriages in the world with approximately 1 in 2 girls married by the age of 18". Mussa offered his platform to Memory, a 19 year old child marriage survivor who indicated that "girls rescued from marriages need to be given hope for their future and supported to get basic and formal education, which they cannot afford". Memory is now in her second year at the Polytechnic in Blantyre where she is studying for a Degree in Environmental Health. Mussa then capped up his advocacy hour with his song 'Anawa', touted to become the It Takes Malawi to End Child Marriage Campaign theme song.



2. Scaling up what works to end child marriages-Mobilizing Faith leaders through the Channels of Hope Project model

SENEGAL

The Institute for Global Health and Development Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, in collaboration with World Vision Senegal, undertook a midterm review of Faith leaders' contribution to ending violence against children in selected communities. Initial findings indicate that 86% of respondents reported that the Channels of Hope (CoH) workshop had positively changed their child protection related attitudes. Most participants changed their attitudes in relation to corporal punishment, early marriage, and birth registration after the workshop. Additionally, Baseline figures prior to project implementation show that 46% of respondents admitted that they would rather marry their daughter off young than see her fall pregnant before marriage; this percentage however decreased to 24% when participants were reassessed after the CoH workshop. Furthermore, concerning changes in the behavior of faith leaders and spouses, 99% of participants in the intervention sites reported that their behavior had positively changed, especially in respect to issues such as corporal punishment, birth registration, and early marriage. For instance, 72% of faith leaders and spouses reported that they had stopped hitting their children. The findings of this evaluation indicate that the Channels of Hope child protection model has the potential to change attitudes and behaviors around child marriage and other forms of violence against children, and could be scaled up to benefit more children across Africa and beyond.

3. Channeling government and donor funds towards ending child marriages-Increase in allocated budgets

LESOTHO

World Vision Lesotho influenced the government to increase the Ministry of Social Development's budget from 228 million to 248 million Maloti (approx. US\$15 million to US\$17 million) in 2018. World Vision-led National Advocacy Steering Committee sensitized the government on the important role a budget increase would play in responding to violence against children. In addition, World Vision Lesotho presented policy makers with evidence on root causes of child marriage to make the case for the increase, and demonstrated how it would ultimately contribute to achieving Lesotho's goals for ending child marriage.

GHANA

According to the Ghana Development Health Survey 2014, the prevalence of child marriage in Ghana was 21% and required government action. The ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection launched the "End Child Marriage Campaign" in 2015, established the Child Marriage Unit and together with stakeholders developed the National Strategic Framework to End Child Marriage in Ghana. Unfortunately, the child marriage unit was underfunded. World Vision and other stakeholders undertook a detailed analysis of government budget allocation over a set period and subsequently aired a documentary of the poor quality of services targeted at policy makers. The pitch culminated in an 85% budget increment to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, which then translated into a 75% budget increment to the Child Marriage Unit for the implementation of the National Strategic Plan to End Child Marriage.

4. Promoting accountability for commitments to end child marriage

At the World Vision campaign launch in collaboration with the AU on 6th February 2017, more than 200 leaders from across Africa met in Addis Ababa committed to working together to end violence against children. Leaders included religious leaders, ambassadors, government ministers and children. Archbishop Jackson Ole Sapit of the Anglican Church of Kenya, formerly a World Vision sponsored child, said: "I commit to take this campaign to all levels of influence, because it takes a leader like me to end violence against children." Speaking on behalf of the African Union, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs Dr Mustapha Kaloko said: "We are very excited by the 'It takes a world to end violence against children' campaign which will significantly contribute to realising an Africa fit for children."

5. Collaborating with High Level personalities to end child marriages

- High-level influencers such as First Ladies are championing the World Vision campaign to end child marriages in several African countries, providing additional opportunities for influence.
- In Mali, the First Lady has committed to be a campaign "patron" until 2021, which has raised the profile of child marriage on the national agenda and opened doors to working with other national level stakeholders such as Embassies, United Nations entities and other NGOs.
- In Niger, the first lady is collaborating with World Vision to host an event in July 2019 on the impact of child marriages on the education of girls.
- Malawi's First Lady, Gertrude Mutharika, launched the World Vision campaign in March 2018 alongside United States Ambassador, Virginia Palmer.
- In Senegal, the president of the Republic hosted children and the World Vision team and publicly endorsed World Vision's campaign to end child marriages
- World Vision's campaign to end violence against children in West Africa has been endorsed by Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, the African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriages.
- World Vision and a Regional Working Group have inputted into the ECOWAS strategy on ending child marriages in its 15 member states in West Africa.
- World Vision particular developed a concept note for ECOWAS to monitor Child Protection Systems across its 15 member states in alignment with SDG 16.

6. Empowering the most vulnerable children to lead efforts at ending child marriages

Kenyan children have vowed to continue fighting for their rights. These boys and girls, representing children from multiple Kenyan counties, state that they will not condone acts such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child labour and early marriages that violate their rights. This declaration was made during the Children's Forum, organised by World Vision Kenya on December 7, 2018. The event, convened annually by the organisation, provides a platform for children to deliberate on issues affecting them as well as possible solutions to the problems. Aside from networking with their peers and sharing ideas, the children also got an opportunity to interact with the leadership team of World Vision Kenya during the forum.



7. Mobilising faith leaders to end child marriage

- Through World Vision's capacity building efforts, Faith leaders in Mauritania have produced a National Islamic Guidance on the Dangers of Child Marriage.
- With the support of World Vision, the Muslim Council within a community in the Oti Region of Ghana has enacted a bylaw that punishes anyone who arranges the marriage of a child below 18 years. The bylaw makes provision for the arrest of perpetrators by the Police.
- Additionally, WV Ghana in 2018 played a key role in mobilizing faith leaders to participate in the maiden meeting of Side-by-Side, a regional faith based movement of people committed to tackling gender injustices. World Vision currently serves as a member of the steering committee