



N° 01 of October 24, 2017

HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY SESSION FOR THE ABANDONMENT OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Under the high patronage of:

Mrs KEITA Aminata MAIGA, Wife of the President of the Republic

with the participation of:

**Her Royal Highness Mary, Crown Princess of Denmark
and Mrs Ulla Tørnæs, Danish by the Danish Minister for development cooperation**



The PRESIDIUM (from L to R): the Malian Minister for Human rights, representing the Minister of Justice; the Malian Minister of Health; Her Highness Princess Mary, Crown Princess of Denmark; The First Lady of Mali; the Malian Minister of Crafts and Tourism, representing the Minister for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family; the Danish Minister for Development and Cooperation; the Malian Minister of the Economy and Finance.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ADVOCACY SESSION AND THE CALL FOR ACTION:

- UNFPA presents the topic
- NGO AGIR draws attention and launches an advocacy
- The Government of Mali commits for the first time
- Her Royal Highness Princess Mary and the Government of Denmark support the Malian government and the First Lady

**TOPIC
OF THE ADVOCACY SESSION**

**Reproductive health and the abandonment of child marriage:
dynamics for Women's Empowerment**

Editorial

Reproductive health and child marriage: : Dynamics for Women's Empowerment



Sexual and reproductive health rights are part of human rights (to which Mali has subscribed) and which are based on the fundamental rights of each couple and individuals including teenagers to be able to decide freely and with full understanding when and how many children they want and the spacing of their births (Program of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, September 1994) and to have information to do it. Child marriages or early and forced marriages are marriages which are contracted before 18 years old.

These child marriages whose consequences are early and unwanted pregnancies have a multidimensional impact on health, they limit education, hamper the empowerment of young girls and prevent them from attaining their full potentiality in terms of decent employment.

The First Lady of the Republic of Mali, President of NGO AGIR, agreed to chair and uplift this very important advocacy session on the topic "Reproductive health and child marriage: dynamics for women's empowerment" to which the United Nations system (UNS) as a whole adheres particularly UNFPA, UNICEF and UNWOMEN with which a joint program is ongoing. It was a great honor for Mali and for UNFPA to receive, for this high

level advocacy session, her Highness Mary, Crown Princess of Denmark, patron of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Her Royal Highness the Princess Mary works tirelessly throughout the world for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health of the women, of teenagers, of young girls in order to "deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled".

The topic on the abandonment of Child Marriage and Sexual and Reproductive Health is one of concern. In fact, its consequences are manifold in the areas of health, education, employment and entrepreneurship.

According to The State of World Population Report 2017, officially launched on October 17th, the lack of access by poorest women to reproductive health services including family planning can weaken economies and jeopardize all efforts to eliminate poverty. And if measures are not taken to reduce these inequalities and the rights of the poorest women are not protected, the world could face unrest, peace could be compromised and the sustainable development objectives would likely not to be reached.

The promotion of sexual health and rights as regards reproductive health of our countries is at an era marked by severe inequalities: Our continent accounts for 14 out of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriages.

In Mali, these inequalities are grave with 55% of girls married before the age of 18, 2 girls out of 3 aged 19 are already procreating, and 20% of children are married before their 15th birthday. This situation has harmful implications on health and can generate obstetric accidents, maternal deaths, and premature births. At the school level, a good number of these married girls will not complete their school courses, diminishing their chances to have decent employ-

ment and a bright future. Child marriage thus remains a challenge in Mali and, much remains to be done in spite of the efforts invested for decades.

This is why, I humbly take the opportunity given to me to call for ACTION:

- To call for a reread of all relevant legislative texts;
- To ask for coverage of all unmet needs for family planning;
- To call for the mobilization of public and private resources, for the technical assistance and financial support of development partners;
- To call for the elimination of all the economic, social and geographical obstacles preventing girls from reaching secondary and higher education and hindering their enrollment into science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
- To invite for guarantee that our girls remain in school, to promote technical and vocational training for young people, to guarantee the access for all, in particular the most vulnerable rural poorer to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services;
- To lastly call for the facilitation of the socio-economic integration of girls taken out of the school system, in order to allow greater self-reliance and contribution to the economic development and the emergence of Mali.

Finally we wish that the strong commitments of the Malian Government announced during this high level meeting on Child Marriage, can mean the end of the suffering of young girls, the fulfilment of their right to dignity, the dedication of their rights to own their bodies and manage it in a healthy manner, the full exercise of their independence and their wellbeing. The harnessing of the Demographic Dividend for an emerging and peaceful Mali depends on it.

by Mrs. Josiane YAGUIBOU
Resident Representative UNFPA

THE NGO AGIR DRAWS ATTENTION AND ADVOCATES

UNFPA Mali and the NGO AGIR have been engaged for several years to work with the Government of Mali



THE NGO AGIR DRAWS ATTENTION AND ADVOCATES

UNFPA Mali: The working with the NGO AGIR and the Government



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ADVOCACY SESSION

Malian Ministers commit for the first time



COMMITMENT

of the Minister of Crafts and Tourism,

Mrs. Nina Walett INTALOU

standing in for the Minister for the Promotion of Woman,
children and the Family

« The Minister for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family intends to strengthen the National Gender Policy, national policies on women's empowerment and child protection which today are of particular interest to the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, Head of Government. »

With the technical and financial support of UNFPA, the department is currently drafting a new ten years development plan for the empowerment of women, the wellbeing of children and the promotion of positive family values. »

COMMITMENT

of the Minister of Health,

Pr Samba Ousmane SOW

« I commit and I wish that all the other government departments do same, to:

- Promote the provision of integrated services that are favorable to teenagers and young people in health care facilities and schools. This was clearly stated in the Declaration of the General Policy of the Prime Minister, and in the annual report of the (first lady's) NGO AGIR ;*
- Promote school health, to return to preventive and non-curative medical checkups during which many messages on sexual health will be passed. »*



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ADVOCACY SESSION

Malian Ministers commit for the first time

COMMITMENT

**of the Minister for Human Rights, Barrister Kassoum TAPO
standing in for the Minister of Justice**

« I hereby reaffirm the commitment of the government to accompany the political processes and programs aimed at the promotion and protection of women's and girl's rights.

I would like to inform the First Lady and Her Royal Highness that the Government of Mali has tabled a bill in the National Assembly on Gender Based Violence which takes into account child marriage. »



COMMITMENT

of the Minister of the Economy and Finance, Dr Boubou CISSE

« The alarming rate of child marriage and its dreadful consequences on the health of youths is a challenge to us all.

Together with all the Ministers concerned, I solemnly commit to increase, depending on available resources, the share of funding granted on the national budget, to the reproductive health of teenagers and youths specifically through the purchase of the contraceptive products and the provision of services that are appropriate for young people.

In the area of reproductive health, the State of Mali has granted over the past two (02) years (2016 and 2017), one hundred and two millions three hundred thousand (102,300,000) F CFA to the Ministry of Health to subsidize the sectors concerned. (Source: State Budget 2017).

As for the provision of appropriate services for young girls, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance undertakes to ensure efficiency by further redirecting budgetary expenses towards projects that will be elaborated on this subject. In the same light, I commit us to increase the share of the national budget devoted to the funding of community sensitization activities for the abandonment of early marriage and the empowerment of married girls through income generating activities. .

The Ministry of the Economy and Finance pays attention to projects and programs aimed at sensitization, advocacy, training and the holistic management of cases of gender based violence including female genital mutilation and early marriage (GBV/FGM/EM).

Finally, Madam the First lady, Your Highness Princess Mary, the last commitment we wish to take is to make available necessary resources, within the limits of budgetary constraints, for the improvement of girls' access to education and the setting up of special programs to maintain married girls in the school system.

The Government of Mali intends to fully respect its commitments and counts on the support of all its national and international partners for their full achievement. »

Denmark supports the Government of Mali

THE DECLARATION OF SUPPORT TO MALI

By the Danish Minister for development cooperation

Ms. Ulla Tørnæs



« What can we do to solve this problem? While there are several causes of child marriage, the underlying cause continues to be gender inequality.

We must ensure that every girl and every woman has the right to decide, when, with whom and how many children, she will have. And we must ensure that she is able to start and complete her education.

This requires investments in quality education and in sexual and reproductive health and rights through information, education and access to family planning services.

These are all key priorities in Danish development cooperation.

And they are important priorities for Denmark's engagement in Mali.

Furthermore, our private sector program has a special focus on strengthening female entrepreneurship and employment.

The economic empowerment of women is crucial if we want to end inequality.

Finally, we must work together in order to end child marriages.

The partnership between Mali and Denmark and with organizations such as UNFPA, as well as your strong personal commitment, Your Excellency, is essential to bring about the change that so many Malian girls desperately need I can assure you that Denmark is ready to support your progressive efforts.

We are ready to deliver our share - for the benefit of every young girl, of her family and of Mali. Because when we invest in girls, everyone benefits. »

HRH Princess Mary supports the First Lady of Mali

EXTRACT OF THE SHORT SPEECH

of Her Royal Highness Princess Mary,
Crown Princess of Denmark

« There is not only one solution to child marriage.

Today, the use of a combination of strategies is absolutely necessary.

We must all put our efforts together in order to make child marriage a bad memory in Mali.

It is also necessary to take the context into consideration.

A combination of strategies that take into account the context and specificities of the region.

All these must aim at effective and efficient solutions.

The First Lady's commitment to improve the lives of Malian girls and boys is extremely important. I understand that you play a very key role.

Thank you Mrs. First Lady. »



The First Lady congratulates and thanks the UNFPA Country Office in Mali

EXTRACT OF THE SPEECH

of Mrs. KEITA, Aminata MAIGA

First Lady of Mali



« Early marriage and pregnancy denies the young girl the right to continue her schooling, to enjoy any form of empowerment and to contribute to the development of her country.

A proper understanding of reproductive health by teenagers and young people not only makes it possible to carry out family planning, but also to fight against the STI's, HIV/AIDS, early pregnancies, early marriages, etc

This is precisely why for several years, the NGO AGIR has accompanied the government in the promotion of the reproductive health of young people and teenagers.

The NGO AGIR also works to create an enabling environment for girl's access to school and, to quality vocational training for their empowerment.

I thank the government through the Ministers here present for the special attention given to the various concerns raised during this session and their commitment to accompany the initiative with concrete actions.

I nourish the hope to see significant improvement in this very unsatisfying situation, so as to reverse the trend.

The support of all our partners, in particular UNFPA and the Kingdom of Denmark, will undoubtedly make it possible to attain the expected results of our advocacy session.

I congratulate and thank the Mali Country Office of UNFPA for its collaboration with various Ministerial Departments of Mali and the NGO AGIR. »

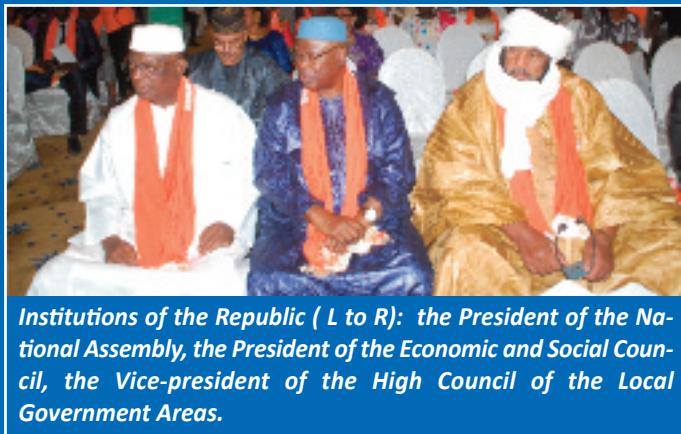
Images of the event



Ms. Josiane Yaguibou, UNFPA Resident Representative in Mali welcoming Her Highness Mary, Crown Princess of Denmark



The First Lady arriving the event



Institutions of the Republic (L to R): the President of the National Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Vice-president of the High Council of the Local Government Areas.



The civil society: traditional chiefs and women's organizations



The traditional music of Mali filled marvelled her Highness Princess Mary



The Minister of the Economy and Finance, and the Deputy Representative of UNFPA in Mali



The Minister of the Economy and Finance, and the Deputy Representative of UNFPA in Mali



L to R: Rep. UNFPA Mali, the First Lady of Mali, Princess Mary in handshake with the Resident Coordinator of the UN System in Mali, Ms. Mbaranga Gasarabwe in the presence of the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation (in white)



A cocktail put an end to the advocacy session



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**Delivering a world where
every pregnancy is wanted,
every childbirth is safe
and every young person's
potential is fulfilled**





AGir
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE



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Under the high patronage of:

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Bamako, Hôtel Radisson, October 24th, 2017

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HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY on reproductive health and the abandonment of child marriage



Mrs. KEITA Aminata MAIGA, First Lady of Mali said:
« I am already committed! »

Abidjan, 17-18 October 2017 - First Lady's Conference



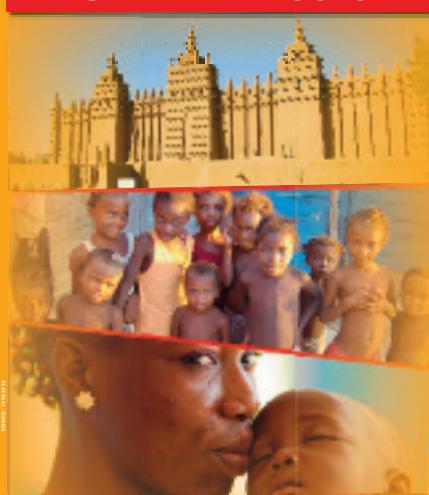
POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET LA QUALITE DE LA VIE



AMBASSADE DU DANEMARK
Au Mali



HIGH LEVEL ADVOCACY



**Investing in Family Planning
is all about saving lives.**

I COMMIT!



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