



**THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**



**DISCUSSION POINTS**

**BY**

**THE MINISTER OF GENDER, CHILDREN, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE,  
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**MADE AT**

**THE HIGH LEVEL EVENT ON EVERY WOMAN EVERY CHILD “THE ROAD MAP TO  
REALIZING RIGHTS”**

**CO-ORGANISED BY EVERY WOMAN, EVERY CHILD AND UN WOMEN**

**ON 15 MARCH 2016**

**DURING THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEW YORK**

Chairperson,

1. The Government of Malawi recognized that the situation of child marriages at 50% is among the highest in the world. It is also noted that it is among the highest contributing factor to the high maternal infant and mortality rates. It is against this background that the President of Malawi was the first Head of State to sign the end child marriage campaign globally, soon after ascending to power. The environment was conducive because, there was a strong movement to increase the age of marriage to 18.
2. The constitution of Malawi provides the age of marriage as 18, but there is a provision which allows marriage at the age of 16 with consent. In line with that, it was **the goal of “no parenthood before adulthood,”** which was a stepping stone for Malawi to launch the end child marriages campaign in 2014. A lot of advocacy work was undertaken as a step to the enactment of the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act of 2015 which has provided for the age of marriage at 18 years. The law has strengthened the prevention and nullification; protection of children that fall prey to child marriages; and provision of remedies and rehabilitation of children that become victims of same.
3. The act goes further to Provide for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights which is also enshrined in the Gender Equality Act of 2013. The provision has the right to:
  - a. adequate sexual and reproductive health services;
  - b. access to family planning services;
  - c. protection from sexually transmitted infection

- d. choice of the number of children and when to bear children;
  - e. control of fertility
  - f. Choice of the appropriate method of contraception.
4. A chief's council was set up to compliment the implementation of all the acts that promote gender equality and empowerment of women by enacting bye-laws that specifically target to end child marriages; promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
  5. Mother groups have been mobilised to facilitate nullification of marriages, retention of girls in school and assist with their needs such as dignity pads.
  6. The re-admission for girls policy who drop out of school because of early marriages, teenage pregnancies and orphan hood has been fast tracked.
  7. The President of Malawi is one of the nine global impact champions for the He-for-She Campaign. He is also the champion for higher education in Africa; youth, reproductive health, HIV and AIDS; and the Global Resource Mobilization for Education. The president's personal commitment demonstrates highest political will, involvement of men in gender equality and empowerment of women while strengthening the elimination of gender based violence. The He-for-she Campaign was signed by the Cabinet Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Traditional Leaders, Chief

Executive Officers of Various Organizations and high profile men as a flagship to address end child marriages. The efforts have started paying dividends because in the 2015 year alone, over 600,000 girls have been withdrawn from marriages and re-admitted into school.

## 8. Conclusion

- a. The launch of the African Union and Commonwealth Heads of State Campaign to end Child marriages in 2014 re-energized and facilitated mobilization of critical mass to end child marriages.
- b. Malawi re-affirms her commitment to “Every Woman, Every Child Movement agenda and **the goal of “no parenthood before adulthood.** It is my sincere hope that the partnerships which have been built will facilitate the resource mobilization and monitoring of the progress to achieve the desired goal.