**KINTAMPO SOUTH DISTRICT ASSEMBLY**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**FIELD REPORT ON COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION ON CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE DISTRICT.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Child Marriage has been an issue of great concern in the district as the statistics on it is alarming, especially in the Muslim dominated communities. Owing to this development, the Department of Social Development, with the mandate of strengthening the rights and wellbeing of children, decided to undertake Sensitisation programs on Effects of Child Marriages in Six (6) communities namely; Agyina, Amoma, Bredi, Krabonso, Mansie and Ayorya in the month of June 2022.

**METHODOLOGY**

This activity was facilitated by four (4) Officers from the Social Development unit. The officer were divided in Two (2) groups. The officers used Four (4) Working days to executes this activity.

Flyers of the list of social intervention programs were also distributed to the citizenry and some were posted at Area Council Offices, Market Squares, and District Assembly Premises.

**TARGET GROUP.**

This Programme targeted the Religious Leaders, Traditional Rulers, Parents, Teenage girls and Unit Committee members within the selected communities.

**WHAT THE SENSITISATION SEEKS TO ACHIEVE.**

The sensitisation seeks to;

1. Educate parents and the girl child on the negative effects of child marriage especially its consequences on the future of these victims and their offspring.
2. Educate the girl child on the benefits of schooling and getting a decent job before marriage.
3. Advise traditional leaders to make such practises forbidden in their communities.
4. Outline the various Referral Pathways available for reporting cases of child marriages.
5. To form a community child protection committee to intervene on issues involving child right infraction and report those that are beyond them.

**NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

The Social Welfare Officers gave a comprehensive education on the effects of Child Marriage and Reporting pathways of such issues. Demonstrations were also done to bring to light the negative effects of child marriages.

According to the officers, a recent study suggests that a clear link has been established between girls’ education and the mitigation of climate change. One reason being that educated women have smaller, healthier families, and in turn educate their children, leading to a virtuous cycle of development. When girls are excluded from education and locked away in an early marriage, they are often unable to gain the knowledge or earn the respect and decision-making power that they need to lead change in their communities.

Child marriage they said, traps girls and their families in a cycle of poverty. Women who are employed reinvest 90% of their earnings back into their families, lifting themselves, their children, their siblings and relatives out of poverty. But when a girl is married as a child, this can often mean the end of her education, and her ability to become financially independent. One girl’s potential to lift an entire family, and even a community, out of poverty disappears.

Again, Child marriage is a major barrier to achieving gender equality. Girls who are married as children are more likely to experience domestic violence, and have a lower status in society, because too often child brides are denied their right to pursue education, employment or entrepreneurial opportunities. With every child bride we lose a future teacher, doctor, scientist, entrepreneur or political leader. The cost to all of us is tremendous, and we pay the price in the form of inefficient accumulation of capital and slower economic growth.

In addition, Child marriage they said, linked to high global rates of maternal mortality. When girls become pregnant before their bodies are ready, they are at high risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, which endanger the life of both mother and child. The risk of maternal mortality is highest for adolescent girls under 15 years old, and complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death among adolescent girls in our communities, leaving behind vulnerable orphaned children.

Also, Child brides are more likely to contract HIV/AIDS. Girls who are married as adolescents to men who have had many previous sexual partners are even more likely to contract HIV due to a lack of sexual and reproductive health information, and a lack power to negotiate safe sex or refuse sex. Often they are subject to partner violence, which further increases their risk of contracting HIV.

The Officers emphasized that, each and every one of the selected stakeholders has a role to play in curbing this menace. The religious leaders were cautioned to desist from officiating marriages where children are involved to avoid any legal consequences. Traditional leaders were also encouraged to make such practices formidable in their localities by issuing sanctions on the perpetrators in order to serve as a deterrents to others. Parents were as well urged to desist from betrothing their children into early marriages for their selfish material gains else they face the legal consequences thereof and finally the assembly member and the entire participants were charged to be watch-dogs and report to appropriate authorities and preach the good news they have heard to their neighbours and the community members as a whole.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMUNITY SENSITISATION**

The participants raised interesting issues. Someone testified on how she became a child bride and now, a widow and a single mother. She therefore urged parent to desist from doing this disservice to their adolescent girls.

Many of them were once themselves destined to be child brides, so they understand what it takes to help girls escape this poverty trap.

One of the participants raised a concern that it is better to engage in child marriage as it is an antidote to teenage pregnancy. The Social Welfare Director in his responses made it clear to them that notwithstanding any positive argument for child marriage, it still remains illegal for an adult to have sexual intercourse with a child below sixteen years let alone marry her. Some were also on the augment that teenage pregnancy is the main reason for child marriages, reason being that, most of the children are married off later after delivery.

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PRESENT PER THE COMMUNITIES**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **DATE** | **COMMUNITY** | **MALES** | **FEMALES** | **TOTAL** |
| 1 | 4/06/2022 | Agyina | 45 | 91 | 136 |
| 2 | 4/06/2022 | Amoma | 43 | 101 | 144 |
| 3 | 6/06/2022 | Bredi | 38 | 94 | 132 |
| 4 | 6/06/2022 | Krabonso | 44 | 85 | 129 |
| 5 | 7/06/2022 | Mansie | 33 | 78 | 111 |
| 6 | 8/06/2022 | Ayorya | 26 | 68 | 94 |
|  |  | **TOTAL PARTICIPANTS** | **229** | **517** | **746** |

**CONCLUSION**

Child Marriage is standing in the way of progress towards many of the 2030 Global Goals. For as long as child marriage continues to exist, so will poverty and instability, violence against women and girls, high global maternal mortality rates, and an ever-widening educational gap between the poorest and wealthiest nations.

The exercise was very successful as the maximum cooperation was gained from the participants. The follow up questions and concerns signify that, the participants were willing to change and also the committee formed on child protection was tasked to oversee all child related infractions and report those that they cannot intervene.

REPORT PREPARED BY;

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**APPENDEXES**

SOME PICTURES FROM THE EXERCISE



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