

**STATEMENT BY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR PUSIGA. HON
LAADI AYII AYAMBA ON THE RISE OF FORCED EARLY
MARRIAGE.**

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to make a statement on the rise of forced early marriages in Ghana.

Mr. Speaker in accordance with our constitution from page 28 under article 28 on Children's rights point number 5 page 29 states that and I "quote for the purposes of this article; " a child means a person below the age of eighteen years."

For the above reason Mr. Speaker no child below age eighteen should be forced into marriage as early forced marriage is a crime that hinges on the rights of the child.

Mr. Speaker, forced early marriage comes in many ways such as compulsion, coercion, pretension and adoption to mention a few. These can be undertaken by relatives, parents, Peers or agents.

Mr. Speaker, according to Graham Crouch in an organization called "Girls are not brides" he states that each year, 15 million girls are married before the age of 18 that is 28 girls every minute are married off too soon. Endangering their personal development and well-being.

Mr. Speaker, child brides face huge challenges as a result of being married early. They are always isolated, their freedom curtailed, they are disempowered and are deprived of their rights to health, education, safety and socialisation.

These girls are normally neither physically nor emotionally ready to become wives or mothers, so they stand a greater risk of experiencing dangerous complications in pregnancy and child birth, sometimes leading to death,



contracting HIV/AIDS, suffering domestic violence with little access or no opportunities of ever getting out of the situation.

Mr. Speaker, according to Alessandra Brivio (20 July 2016) in an article she states that young girls generally between 14 and 16 years old migrate from the rural areas of northern Ghana to the urban centres of the south that's Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi and other parts of the country seeking for greener pastures. Some of these girls as stated are normally running away from forced early marriages that are arranged by parents of both parties, relatives or other interested persons.

Mr. Speaker, these girls who ran away from home find themselves migrating to the urban areas where they come to seek refuge with the hope of making life better but their vulnerabilities leave them exposed to sanitation related illnesses such as malaria, diarrhoea, skin diseases, sexual violence, that come with increasing HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned pregnancies, illegal abortions gender based violence and human trafficking thus making their plight worse than what they were running way from.

Mr. Speaker this sometimes leads to modern day slavery which is a crime but it spans the globe, providing ruthless employers with an endless supply of people to abuse for financial gain. As most of these girls who are seeking all opportunities without question are ready to go with anybody who is able to convince them to any place without their prior knowledge of where, who and what they are going to be faced with they find themselves in worse of situations most probably in different countries.

Mr. Speaker some of the causes of forced early marriage are:

1. Poverty is a key factor as most of these children when spoken to say that their parents are not able to support them even with their daily meals.

2. There are no schools around so they are at home doing nothing but playing around so their parents give them to other relatives who easily give them out for marriage.
3. Outmoded cultural practices where betrothal is a practice strives when it comes to early marriage.
4. Lack of money to pay school fees when the need arises.
5. Lack of encouragement or motivation as there may not be no role models for them to emulate.
6. Awareness creation on how better educated well established girls are a hundred times better when married.
7. Ignorance of the effects of marrying off a child in relation to what really happens in marital life is a key factor as parents may not know that as a girl child is not matured, her reproductive system is equally not ready for child birth and that she does not even know how to manage herself not to talk of getting herself out of the situation when the need arises.

Mr. Speaker, early marriage has a broad global impact as it weakens legitimate economies, threatens public health and safety, shatters families and shreds the social fabric that is necessary for progress and it's an affront to our basic values and our fundamental belief that all people deserve to live and grow in safety and dignity and as provided in our constitution every child has the right to education which is normally curtailed as the girl child is compelled to either not go to school at all or stop schooling.

Mr. Speaker children are the future of the world but how realistic is this saying in the case of Ghana as the girl child is married off at an early age that prevents her from living up to expectation. Does the girl child of Ghana have a future when her rights and privileges are being trampled upon especially those from the three northern regions? Ghana as the beacon of Africa has marked its 60th anniversary with pomp and pageantry to the admiration of the whole world, a



mile stone which was vividly celebrated across the length and breadth of the country owing to its importance and significance. This means Ghana as a country has come a long way having grown independently, democratically, politically and peacefully and yet there are a whole lot of questions when it comes to the freedom and rights of our girls.

Mr. Speaker although the children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) stipulates the rights of the child, this law is being violated as the girl child is not given the opportunity in all facets of our country to prove their worth although we can attest to the fact that what men can do women can do and even sometimes better. This is clearly seen in our political dispensation as is seen even in parliament where the girl child who became a woman has been able to contest with male counterparts to become members of parliament.

Mr. Speaker, there are many women out there who hold the same or higher positions than their male counterparts but continue to live as women and make life better for both they, their spouses and children. Some of these women Mr. Speaker are able to carter for the same parents, relatives and siblings who wanted them married at an early age and even sometimes pay their own dowry to their parents as they continue to be the bread winners of their families.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) by 2030 and uphold the rights of women, we must act now to end child marriage. We won't make progress on half of the Sustainable Development Goals without ending child marriage.

Mr. Speaker to end forced early marriages in Ghana and other countries, all concerned individuals, organizations and institutions must help educate girls on the consequences of early marriage, empower the girls, educate parents, mobilize religious leaders, chiefs, queen mothers and elders, support implementation of legislation against child marriage, provide relevant economic

support, give information and take action against perpetrators, talk about it, sponsor a girl child, support anti girl child marriage charities and organizations, support artists, photographers and journalist who raise the awareness about child marriage.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that if the above measures are considered by all then Ghana as a country and other countries will be able to eradicate, forced early marriages.

Thank You Mr. Speaker for this prospect.



