1. **a. What is the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage in your country?**

According to a UNFPA (2005) fact sheet, the child marriage prevalence rate is 88% in Nigeria. According to The Times, northern Nigeria has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world (28 Nov. 2008). According to the British Council in Nigeria, more than half of Nigerian women in the north are married by the age of 16 and are expected to give birth to a child during the first year of marriage (UK 2012, 2). The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008 reported the median age of marriage for 15 to 19 year olds in the northeast to be 15.9 and in the northwest to be 15.7 (Nigeria Nov. 2009, 94). The Times reports that some girls in northern Nigeria are married by the age of 12 (28 Nov. 2012).

The 2005 National HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health Survey revealed that 73 per cent of girls between the ages of 13 and 19 years are married in the North-Eastern States of Nigeria. The number of married adolescents in North West and North East Nigeria make up about 42 per cent of the total number of Nigerian married adolescents aged 15 – 19,

1. **Are there studies you could submit which document the rate of child, early and forced marriage on national and sub-national levels in your country?**

Daily Trust, an Abuja-based newspaper, reports that "thousands" of young women in Nigeria are forced to marry every year and that this practice is increasing (12 Oct. 2012).

According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008 statistics, out of 6,493 respondents, 12.4 percent of women aged 15 to 19 in Nigeria had been married by the age of 15 (Nigeria Nov. 2009, 94). Among women aged 20 to 24 in 2008, out of 6133 respondents, 16.4 percent had been married by the age of 15, and 39.4 percent were married by the age of 18 , Among women aged 20 to 49, 46 percent had been married before the age of 18. The 2008 survey statistics also show that women aged 25-49 who reside in urban areas got married approximately four years later than women in their age group in rural areas, with women who reside in urban areas marrying at a median age of 21.1 years compared to 16.9 years in rural areas. By region, among women aged 25-49, the median age of marriage ranges from 15.2 years in the northwest to 22.8 years in southeast

1. **a. What has the impact of child, early and forced marriage on the human rights of women and girls and other affected groups in your country been?**

**The following areas is where the impact of child, early and forced marriage on the human rights of women and girls and other affected groups in our country is greatly felt:**

**Health**   
The majority of young brides have limited access to contraception and reproductive health services and information. They are exposed to early and frequent sexual relations and to repeated pregnancies and childbirth before they are physically mature and psychologically ready. Obstetric fistula is one of the most devastating consequences, affecting over two million girls and young women. Pregnancy related deaths are the leading cause of mortality in 15-19 year old girls, and girls age 15 years or under are five times more likely to die than those over 20i Child marriage threatens the health and life of girls. Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the main cause of death among adolescent girls below age 19 in developing countries. Pregnant girls aged 15 to 20 are twice as likely to die in childbirth as those in their 20s, and girls under the age of 15 are five times as likely to die. These consequences are due largely to girls’ physical immaturity where the pelvis and birth canal are not fully developed. Teen pregnancy, particularly below age 15, increases risk of developing obstetric fistula, since their smaller pelvises make them prone to obstructed labor. Fistula leaves its victims with urine or fecal incontinence that causes lifelong complications with infection, pain, and smell. Complications during pregnancy and birth are worsened in poor countries where child marriage is prevalent.

**Education**  
According to the ICRW, education is the strongest predictor of marriage age. For example, in Mozambique approximately 60% of girls with no education are married by 18, compared to 10% of girls with secondary schooling and less than 1% of girls with higher education.  Human rights research shows that the greatest obstacles to girls’ education– as identified in many government reports to human rights monitoring bodies – are child marriage, pregnancy and domestic chores. Child marriage often ends a girl’s education, particularly in impoverished countries where child marriages are common.Without education, girls and adult women have fewer opportunities to earn an income, financially provide for herself and her children. This makes girls more vulnerable to persistent poverty when their spouses die, abandon, or divorce them.

**Poverty**  
In many countries child marriage is linked with poverty. This is because it affects particularly the poorest in the population, and helps to reinforce cycles of poverty. Child wives tend to have more children and fewer independent income options. Poverty ultimately fuels child marriage, which in turn perpetuates the feminization of poverty. This situation is also supported by country economic indicators for measuring the health of the economy:  several countries with very low gross domestic products (GDPs) tend to have higher rates of child marriage.

**Domestic-violence**

Child brides are often more likely to experience domestic violence and less likely to take action against this abuse. Girls who marry early are also more likely to believe that a man is justified in beating his wife.vi Married teenage girls with low levels of education suffer greater risk of social isolation, domestic violence and sexual violence from their spouses, than more educated women who marry as adults. and sexual violence from their husbands has lifelong, devastating mental health consequences for young girls because they are at a formative stage of psychological development. Child brides, particularly in situations such as vani, also face social isolation, emotional abuse and discrimination in the homes of their husbands and in-laws.

**Women's rights**

Child marriages impact a range of women's rights such as access to education, freedom of movement, freedom from violence, reproductive rights, and the right to consensual marriage. The consequences of these violations impact not only the woman, but her children and broader society

### Physical consequences

When a child bride is married she is likely to be forced into sexual activity with her husband, and at an age where the bride is not physically and sexually mature this has severe health consequences.

Child brides are likely to become pregnant at an early age and there is a strong correlation between the age of a mother and maternal mortality. Girls ages l0-14 are five times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than women aged 20-24 and girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die. Young mothers face higher risks during pregnancies including complications such as heavy bleeding, fistula, infection, anaemia, and eclampsia which contribute to higher mortality rates of both mother and child. At a young age a girl has not developed fully and her body may strain under the effort of child birth, which can result in obstructed labour and obstetric fistula. Obstetric fistula can also be caused by the early sexual relations associated with child marriage, which take place sometimes even before menarche.

Good prenatal care reduces the risk of childbirth complications, but in many instances, due to the limited autonomy or freedom of movement, young wives are not able to negotiate access to health care. They may be unable to access health services because of distance, fear, expense or the need for permission from a spouse or in-laws. These barriers aggravate the risks of maternal complications and mortality for pregnant adolescents.

Child brides may also suffer vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Being young and female in Africa is a major risk factor for infection and young girls are being infected at a considerably disproportional rate to that of boys. Whilst early marriages are sometimes seen by parents as a mechanism for protecting their daughters from HIV/AIDS, future husbands may already be infected from previous sexual encounters; a risk which is particularly acute for girls with older husbands.

The age disparity between a child bride and her husband, in addition to her low economic autonomy, further increases a girl's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. It exacerbates the abilities of girls and women to make and negotiate sexual decisions, including whether or not to engage in sexual activity, issues relating to the use of contraception and condoms for protecting against HIV infection, and also their ability to demand fidelity from their husbands.

There is also a clear link between Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child and early marriages. Communities who practice FGM are also more likely to practice child marriages and in some FGM practicing communities FGM is carried out at puberty and then marriages are arranged immediately afterwards. It is also common in FGM practicing communities for a man to refuse to marry a girl or woman who has not undergone FGM, or to demand that FGM is carried out before marriage.

### Developmental consequences

Child Marriage also has considerable implications for the social development of child brides, in terms of low levels of education, poor health and lack of agency and personal autonomy. The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls explains that 'where these elements are linked with gender inequities and biases for the majority of young girls, their socialization which grooms them to be mothers and submissive wives, limits their development to only reproductive roles' .

Whilst girls in Africa are already less likely to go to attend school than boys, particularly in poorer households, the non-education of the girl child is a problem compounded by child marriage, with studies showing a strong correlation between a woman's age at marriage and the level of education she achieves . Large numbers of the girls who drop out of school do so because of early marriage, leaving many women who married early illiterate. Early marriage plans can also discourage a girl's parents from educating their daughter because they believe that a formal education will only benefit her future family in law.

A lack of education also means that young brides often lack knowledge about sexual relations, their bodies and reproduction, exacerbated by the cultural silence surrounding these subjects. This denies the girl the ability to make informed decisions about sexual relations, planning a family, and her health, yet another example of their lives in which they have no control.

The cyclical nature of early marriage results in a likely low level of education and life skills, increased vulnerability to abuse and poor health, and therefore acute poverty.

### Psychological and social consequences

It is a huge responsibility for a young girl to become a wife and mother and because girls are not adequately prepared for these roles this heavy burden has a serious impact on their psychological welfare, their perceptions of themselves and also their relationship. Women who marry early are more likely to suffer abuse and violence, with inevitable psychological as well as physical consequences. Studies indicate that women who marry at young ages are more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a husband to beat his wife, and are therefore more likely to experience domestic violence themselves.

Violent behaviour can take the form of physical harm, psychological attacks, threatening behaviour and forced sexual acts including rape. Abuse is sometimes perpetrated by the husband's family as well as the husband himself, and girls that enter families as a bride often become domestic slaves for the in-laws.

Early marriage has also been linked to wife abandonment and increased levels of divorce or separation and child brides also face the risk of being widowed by their husbands who are often considerably older. In these instances the wife is likely to suffer additional discrimination as in many cultures divorced, abandoned or widowed women suffer a loss of status, and may be ostracized by society and denied property rights.

**What steps are being taken to address the issue in your country?**

1. **what is the legal minimum age of marriage for men and women in your country**

**The legal minimum age of marriage in Nigeria is 18** (Research conducted summer 2010 using CEDAW ) in 18 states of Nigeria.

* **What are the challenges to effective implementation of the law?**

The main challenges are:

1. The cultural settings, traditional beliefs norms and values of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria
2. Division of the country into six geo- political zones also poses a threat to address this issue.
3. Another challenge to overcome child marriage in Nigeria is poverty. When the parents do not have money, they give their daughters in early marriage, expecting financial gain.
4. Religious belief and practices is another challenge in addressing this issue.
5. Poverty is also posing a threat to the addressing child marriage.

* **What policies programmes and measures are being taken national and sub-national levels to end child, early and forced marriage?**

1. The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition, formed in May 1998 as a national network of more than fifty registered Nigerian NGOs working on women's human rights and the 16 articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2008, listed 16 states as having adopted the Child's Rights Act: Abia, Anambra, Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Imo, Jigawa, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Plateau, and Taraba (18 July 2008, 11). The Coalition added that the state "legislatives" of Osun and Rivers states had passed the law but were awaiting governors' assent (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition 18 July 2008, 11). Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Justice indicated in 2011 that 22 states had adopted the Child's Rights Act (Nigeria Aug. 2011, 30), and Okeke, in 26 October 2012 correspondence with the Research Directorate, said that 26 states had adopted the law. and recently Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Rivers state had joined in the adoption of child right act.
2. Child marriage is widely and globally regarded as a surviving form of social discrimination and is challenged by the Nigerian constitution and several human rights laws. In the last Century, particularly, intense global opposition to child marriage has deepened and the concerns are expressed in various conventions and charters.
3. Under the Nigerian Law, the concept of the child is based exclusively on calendar age. The legal age at marriage is 21 years and anyone under this age is considered a minor and would require a parental consent before legally entering into a marriage in the country ((Effah, 1996). The rights of the girl-child in Nigeria are protected by a legal framework, including national laws and international and regional conventions which the country has ratified.
4. The relevant International Human Rights Instruments and Child Marriage include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages,1964,African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990, and the Convention on the Rights the Child.
5. Others are the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. All these are relevant to the issue of child marriage, emphasizing the issue of protection for the child against physical and mental violence, sexual and psychological abuse, maltreatment and exploitation by parents, guardians and members of the family. The instruments also emphasize the right to health, access to health care services and protection from harmful traditional practices.
6. Of particular significance is the Convention on the Rights of the Child that focuses strongly on several survival-related issues underscored by the practice of child marriage such as the right to education, protection from physical, psychological and mental violence, including sexual abuse, rape and exploitation. It also emphasizes, for the child, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, rest and leisure, employment and the right to be protected from separation from parents and peers. Utilizing the human rights approach to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of reducing maternal mortality by 2015 has in the last decade provided new strategies for addressing child marriage.

* **What efforts are being taken in communities where child marriage rates are high to mitigate its impacts?**

The efforts that are being taken to address child marriage in communities are:

1. **Bringing men and traditional rulers on board:-** religious leaders and traditional leaders have played a key role in speaking out against child marriage and changing community Attitudes
2. **Incentives Introduction:-** incentives introduction has help to encourage families to consider alternatives to child marriage. this includes micro-finance schemes to help girls support themselves and their families, and providing loans, subsidies and conditional cash transfer to parents of girls at risk of becoming child brides.
3. **Raising awareness in the media**

Girls Not Brides members are using mass media campaigns to raise awareness about general rights and laws and the impact of child marriage. Our members aim to both raise awareness among the general public and to pressure governments and community leaders to take action to end the practice.

1. **Educating and empowering girls**

Education is one of the most powerful tools to delay the age at which girls marry as school attendance helps shift norms around child marriage.

Improving girls’ access to quality schooling will increase girls’ chances of gaining a secondary education and helps to delay marriage. When a girl in the developing world receives seven or more years of education, she marries on average four years later.

Empowering girls, by offering them opportunities to gain skills and education, providing support networks and creating ‘safe spaces’ where girls can gather and meet outside the home, can help girls to assert their right to choose when they marry.

Girls Not Brides members are working to empower girls by establishing girls’ groups that provide a safe space for girls to meet and share experiences, reducing their sense of isolation and vulnerability.

## Supporting young people to become activists for change

Girls Not Brides members have set up youth groups, bringing together adolescent girls and boys to share their experiences and to encourage girls and boys to become advocates for change. Some of our members encourage dialogue between youth groups and local community leaders or government officials on the issues that affect young people, including child marriage.

## Mobilizing and educating communities

Laws alone won’t end child marriage – in many instances legislation is not enforced as many local authorities are reluctant to be seen as interfering in the private affairs of families. Many are simply unaware of the scale of child marriage and the harmful impact it can have.

Girls Not Brides members are working in a number of ways to raise awareness among communities of the impact of child marriage such as street theatre, bicycle rallies, and encouraging community dialogue, which often results in a collective community pledge to end child marriage.

* **What have the impacts of such policies or projects been?**

the impact of such policies has been very low since the policies hasn’t been made compulsory even at the community level, the masses especially the very poor and excluded are not aware of such law and policies including punishment that will be melted out to those who have gone contrary to the law. Even those who are literate are not keeping to the laws either because their religion doesn’t permit it or norms and traditional beliefs

* **What challenges remain in adopting policies, measures and implementing strategies to address the issue**

**The challenges that posses a threat to adopting these policies are:**

1. **Legislative system:** if the legislative system adopt policies and attached strong punishment to the offenders, making it public with reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that focuses strongly on several survival-related issues underscored by the practice of child marriage such as the right to education, protection from physical, psychological and mental violence, including sexual abuse, rape and exploitation. It also emphasizes, for the child, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, rest and leisure, employment and the right to be protected from separation from parents and peers; this can pose a threat to the adoption of these policies.
2. **Religious beliefs:** because of the diversity of religion in the country adopting child marriage may be difficult because one Islam religion permits child marriage while the Christian marriage does not permit child marriage
3. **Traditional and cultural practices/beliefs including norms:**
4. **poverty:**
5. **lack of adequate knowledge on available policies guiding child marriage**

* **What is the most effective/important strategy for overcoming child marriage in your country/region?**

**The important strategies for overcoming child marriage in Nigeria are but would not be limited to**:

1. Education: Education is the most important key to helping end the practice of forced child marriages. Many believe that education may prove to be more successful in preventing child marriages than banning child marriages.

* Education of the parents is just as important as education of the children. Education will broaden their horizons and will help convince parents of the benefits in having their children educated.

1. Support and Scale Up Community Programs
2. Increase Access to Girl’s Education
3. Provide Economic Opportunities for Young Women
4. Support the Needs of Child Brides
5. Evaluate Programs to Determine What Works