

## African Union Country Monitoring Mission on Ending Child Marriage and Other Harmful Practices Visit to Nigeria

The African Union Commission launched the Campaign to End Child Marriage in 2014 to accelerate the implementation of Ending Child Marriage (ECM) programs and interventions among member states. To date more than 30 countries have launched campaigns and are implementing national action plans and programs to end child marriage. The Federal Republic of Nigeria launched its nation-wide campaign along with the National Strategy to End Child Marriage (2016 - 2021) at the highest political level, by the Vice President; H. E. Prof. Yemi Osinbajo.

Against this backdrop, the AU monitoring team led by the AU Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and other Harmful Practices; Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing visited Nigeria and engaged Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies; Coalition of Civil Society Organizations; Traditional and Religious Leaders, United Nations Agencies Offices and other International/Development Partners working to eliminate Child Marriage and other Harmful Practices in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The engagement with the traditional and religious leaders was hosted by the dRPC with funding from Ford Foundation on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022 in the FCT Abuja. The session featured opening presentation by the Co-chairs of the Coalition of Civil Society to End Child Marriage in Nigeria on the best practices documented from projects successfully implemented to delay the marriage of girls (such as conditional cash transfer, Safe Spaces Programs, etc) and examples of some Innovative Approaches to Ending Child Marriage and other Harmful Practices in Nigeria (such as Tostan Model, Gender Transformative Approach and Social Impact Filmmaking).



*Figure 1: Alhaji Sani Umar Jabbi while addressing the AU delegation and cross section of participants during the Interactive session with AU Delegation*

The Co-chairs noted that the CSOs working to end child marriage in Nigeria face several challenges which include weak coordination, lack of funding support, lack of updated and disaggregated data on the incidence of child marriage and services rendered to victims of child marriage across the country, poor policy framework exists with gaps in our laws that continue to foster impunity, etc. The AU monitoring team advised the CSOs to redouble their efforts in tracking and monitoring the implementation of the AU campaign in Nigeria and think of more creative ways to raise funding to support interventions aimed at reducing the high rate of child marriage in Nigeria.

The brainstorming session with the traditional and religious leaders raised concern about the campaign branding and the approach used to address the issue of child marriage and it was resolved that the Federal Government should take steps to rebrand the Campaign Name to suit all-inclusive and respond to the needs on the ground especially the traditional/religious leaders.