



## TRADITIONAL LEADERS SYMPOSIUM

To improve well-being  
of Niger's Population

Symposium Newsletter N° 002



# FIGHT AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC ASKS TRADITIONAL CHIEFS TO ENGAGE MORE

**1. On the occasion of the symposium of traditional leaders,  
I ask you to make two resolutions:**

**2. No traditional chief would give a girl under  
the age of 18 to marriage.**

**3. No traditional chief would himself marry  
a girl under the age of 18 years.**

His Excellency, Mr. Mohamed BAZOUM  
President of the Republic

## Éditorial

As announced, the President of the Republic, *His Excellency, Mr. Mohamed BAZOUM*, launched the work of the Symposium of traditional leaders with a remarkable presence, a frank speech in search of action and renewed commitments in terms of Girls' Education to fight against child marriage. Three highlights marked the first day of the symposium:

After the opening ceremony, in turn, the panelists followed one another to deal first with the issue of child marriage, from a strictly religious point of view, drawing exclusively from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.

Secondly, the consequences of child marriage were dealt with from health, economic, social, psychological and legal angles.

Finally, the interactive session between panelists and participants made it possible to note that all participants unanimously recognize the relevance of the chosen themes regarding the capture of the demographic dividend. However, they noted shortcomings and sometimes inconsistencies in the legal texts but also made recommendations to all those involved in the symposium. Here, the arguments supported by the panelists, the questions and contributions of the participants will be presented concerning the common objective: "to end child marriage"

President Mohamed Bazoum  
firmly commits increase young girls'  
school enrollment



The President of the Republic of Niger, HE. Mohamed Bazoum sponsored yesterday, Monday November 22, 2021, at the Mahatma Gandhi Conference Center in Niamey, the opening ceremony of the work of the international symposium for the mobilization of traditional leaders around the demographic transition.

In opening the proceedings, the Nigerien President HE. Mohamed Bazoum reiterated his commitment to support the three key themes of the symposium before calling on traditional leaders to invest more in the fight against child marriage, in favor of girls' education and their retention in school in these terms: " ... Would it not be possible that at the end of this symposium, you take a resolution in which you commit yourself that no canton chief, no sultan, no group leader should take as a wife a girl under 18 ... "

The President of the Republic took the time to follow with great interest the panelists dealing with the multiple consequences of child marriage before retiring for other imperatives.



## SOME CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE NOTED DURING THE PANELS

### Islam and child marriage: a formal ban!

The illustrious panelist is none other than Sheikh, **Dr Hamid Mouhamad Abdourahman Abu Talib**, former rector of the Faculty of Legal Sciences at Al Azhar University in Egypt, unequivocally affirms that Islam prohibits child marriage. According to the Sheikh, marriage in Islam is based both on consent and on the age that the country's authorities have full freedom to set. This age is around 18 years old. The exclusive sources of our affirmations are the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.

### On the physical and mental levels: disastrous consequences

According to **Dr Abdoul Rachid Fatima Moustapha**, Director of Adolescent and Youth Health at the Ministry of Public Health, Population and Social Affairs, child marriage has disastrous consequences for the victims. These are, among others: physical violence; sexual trauma; diseases such as cervical cancer and fistula; premature deliveries very often followed by stillbirths; depression and psychological disorders; and maternal mortality. Among these ailments, she says, obstetric fistula is one of the major consequences of child marriage in Niger. In 2020, 499 cases of fistula recorded in Niger.

### Economically, Child marriage is one of the causes of poverty

**M. Rasmané Ouédraogo**, Resident representative of IMF (International Monetary Fund) in Niger explain the economic consequences with a simple example : health care for victims of child marriage generates enormous costs for the health services. These same costs could have been used to finance the development of health services or several other if weddings were celebrated from the majority of girls. Another consequence stem from the dropout of girls married before their 18TH birthday. By depriving them of a better future, early marriage leaves them vulnerable and dependent. They thus become a heavy burden for their families, their communities and their country deprived of an important and qualified human capital thus accentuating its poverty.

### Legal inadequacies against child marriage identified in call for harmonisation

According to **Maitre Kadidiatou Hamadou Mounkaila**, lawyer, Niger has ratified several international convention in favor of the development of women in general and girls in particular .However, the legal framework against child marriage is weak. These are, among others:

- The inequality in the civil code which sets the age of marriage for boys at 18 and girls at 15? Even though the nigerien Constitution sets out the principle of gender equality in rights and duties;
- The absence of real civil and penal sanctions against the practice of child marriage;
- The coexistence of two different legislations (customary and modern) on the marriage of girls en though Islam, the majority religion of the country, guarantees and protects the rights of women. *Maitre Kadidiatou pleads for a harmonization of the relevant texts the age de marriage of girls to 18 years.*

### Difficulties in caring for and protecting victims of child marriage.

The difficulties in the care and protection of victims of child marriage reside, according to Ms. Zouera Hassane Haouzeizé, principal police commissioner, head of unit for the protection of minor and young people at the Directorate of the Nationale police, in the weakness of legal framework which means that the competent services in the matter do not have the power of repression.

According to her it is therefore necessary to define a clear and dissuasive legal framework. This opinion is shared by traditional chiefs who are holders of customary authority with attribution in the care and protection of victims of child marriage. In 2021 763 cases were identified by police (706) and the gendarmerie (57).



UNFPA Niger

**1 Mettre Fin au Mariage des enfants**

**2 Scolarisation et maintien de la jeune fille à l'école**

**3 Repositionner la planification familiale pour le bien-être de la famille**

**TOUS MOBILISÉS AUTOUR DE LA TRANSITION DÉMOGRAPHIQUE**