

ELIMINATING HARMFUL CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PRACTICES AFFECTING CHILDREN: OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

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FOREWORD

It is imperative that children are protected from all forms of harmful cultural and social practices in order for them to realize their full potential. Harmful social and cultural practices are not only a local or rural problem, but an international problem affecting the lives of millions of children. Regardless of the context and the type of harmful practice, they all have devastating consequences on the lives of children; affect education, health, and psychological well-being.

The Africa Union Theme for 2013 was: "**Eliminating harmful social and cultural practices affecting children: Our collective responsibility**" and the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe through the Zimbabwe Youth Council, with funding from UNICEF, commissioned this study as a follow up to AU's 2013 theme. The purpose of this research was to gather empirical evidence on the different practices affecting the lives of children. The findings of this research will provide the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe with an empirical basis for their approach toward eliminating harmful cultural and social practices affecting the lives of children in Zimbabwe.

The study focused on new "hot-spots" in order to identify these prevalent harmful practices. This research compliments other initiatives already underway by Government Departments, UN Agencies, NGO's, and Advocacy Groups. The Zimbabwe Youth Council facilitated the documentation of some of the harmful and social practices in order to enable the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe to present comprehensive findings to decision makers. While the current findings are not entirely new, they affirm the presence of harmful social and cultural practices and highlight the need to start making steps toward eliminating them.

The Zimbabwe Youth Council conducted seven consultative meetings in Chikomedzi, Neshuro, Ngundu, Hwange, Lukosi, Uzumba and Mudzi. We consulted various stakeholders (Government Departments, NGO's, Traditional and Religious Leaders, Parents, Children and also the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe). Overall, the findings indicate a failure at all levels of society (parents, families, communities, and leaders) to eliminate harmful cultural and social practices affecting the lives of children. These practices are invariably linked to numerous factors, but the nuances could be a distraction from the urgent work at hand.

I am confident that this research will help map a clear strategy that will transform the future of all children in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe Youth Council Director
Mr L. Dzikira

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AU	Africa Union
CDF	Constituency Development Funds
CPC	Child Protection Committees
BEAM	Basic Education and Assistance Module
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CPC	Child Protection Committee
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JCT	Justice for Children Trust
LRF	Legal Resources Foundation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MRDC	Mwenezi Rural district Council
MYIEE	Ministry of Youth Indigenization and Economic Empowerment
NAC	National AIDS Council
NACZ	National Arts Council of Zimbabwe
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
RDC	Rural District Council
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VFU	Victim Friendly Unit
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZNFPC	Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council
ZYC	Zimbabwe Youth Council
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of consultative meetings conducted by the Zimbabwe Youth Council on Harmful Social and Cultural Practices that affect children in Zimbabwe, with the funding from UNICEF. A study of this nature is not entirely new; it complements the efforts of individuals and organizations working on children's rights and child protection issues. The study findings corroborate the findings of previous researchers. The current approach is unique because it is a child-driven initiative that seeks to establish a collective strategy for eliminating harmful practices and seeks to lobby for policy and legislative changes through the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe.

This study addressed two questions:

- a) What harmful social and cultural practices are present in a given area?
- b) What can be done to eliminate these harmful practices?

The approach was largely qualitative and participatory. The approach allowed children, community members, and respective stakeholders to articulate their views and feelings regarding the welfare of children and some of the prevalent practices that are harming children.

MAIN FINDINGS

This section reports the main findings of the consultative meetings. It focuses on the harmful practices that were ranked as most common in the seven areas we consulted. We feel that reporting these key findings will allow interventions to focus on highly prevalent practices that cause serious harm to children.

Early Marriages

Early marriages were reported as the most common harmful practice in all the seven areas. In most cases, participants reported that early marriages are accompanied by emotional, physical and psychological abuse. Early marriages also lead to increased vulnerability especially in cases where young girls are burdened with the responsibility of looking after the family. While most early marriages can be classified as statutory rape, most parties often opt for negotiated settlements, and in some cases parent will accept bride wealth.

Child Prostitution

Child prostitution was reported as highly prevalent in transit towns; Ngundu, Neshuro, Hwange and Lukosi. Prostitution varies from highly organized to opportunistic. The most dire situation was reported by participants in Hwange where young girls were reported to charge as little as \$1.

Child Labour

Cases of child labour are prevalent in communal communities. The participants noted that most children are asked to herd cows during school time (Mwenezi and Chikombedzi), while

some look after the fields in order to keep wildlife away (Mudzi and Uzumba) or to pan gold (Uzumba). All communities had challenges distinguishing between child work and child labour.

Child Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse cases were also reported in the seven areas. It is interesting to note that both early marriages and child prostitution are forms of child sexual abuse. While child sexual abuse is a common practice, it is highly under-reported because it is mostly committed by people that are close to the victims.

Border Jumping

Border jumping was reported as a significant problem in the border areas such as Chikomedzi, Hwange, Mwenezi and Ngundu. Border jumping is driven by the search for economic opportunities in South Africa. Upon completing grade seven (7), most young boys cross the border in search of jobs in South Africa. The challenge is that most of the children are victimized en-route to South Africa or Botswana.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Early Marriages

Participants recommended the following:

- Harmonizing marriage laws in order to make it easy to prosecute offenders. The new constitution defines children any person under the age of 18 years. However, the customary act is silent about marriage issues and this makes it difficult to handle child marriages
- Children should be issued with birth certificates so that it is easy to identify them and to know their exact ages as this will assist in legal proceedings.

b. Child Prostitution

- Most of the reported cases of child prostitution were linked to bottle stores and trucks. Participants recommended that there is need to engage with business owners and truck owners to ensure that children are protected.

c. Child Labour

Participants recommended that communities should take the initiative to eliminate child labour practices and ensure that children attend school. On the other hand, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is working with other organizations and companies to ensure that children enrol back in schools.

d. Child Sexual Abuse

First, there is need to create a conducive environment to ensure that children will be able to report cases of sexual abuse when they occur. Second, the system for dealing with cases of child sexual abuse needs respond timeously to all reported cases.

e. Border Jumping

There is need to regularize travel especially for minors so that they travel with the required documentation. In addition, the government needs to ensure that some of the

push factors are addressed in order to reduce irregular migration in search of economic opportunities in Botswana and South Africa. In addition, communities also need to promote alternative role models, in particular local success stories and the merit of education.

CONCLUSION

Table 0.1 Summary of the main issues raised in the seven areas:

	1	2	3
Chikomedzi	Border Jumping	Early marriages	
Neshuro	Early marriages	Child labour	
Ngundu	Sexual abuse	Prostitution	Early marriages
Hwange	Early marriages	Prostitution	
Lukosi	Child prostitution	Early marriages	
Uzumba	Child labour	Early marriages	
Mudzi	Child labour	Early marriages	

The findings of the current research confirm that harmful cultural and social practices are prevalent in all communities that were visited. These practices are influenced by several factors and in most cases people attribute poverty as a significant driver. In addition, orphans are most vulnerable to abuse in most social contexts. Based on the empirical data gathered during this study, there is need to implement the recommendations of the African Union (AU). In addition, the numerous stakeholders that participated in this research are an indication that there are several, though largely uncoordinated, efforts to eliminate harmful practices. It is time that these efforts are coordinated and harmonized in order to formulate a collective strategy. The collective strategy should encompass the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, and communities in order to develop a system that responds to, and serves the needs of children.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Zimbabwe Youth Council's research on Harmful Cultural Practices (HCP) conducted under the theme: “**Eliminating Harmful and Social Practices Affecting Children: Our collective responsibility**”. The Junior Parliament seeks to address all forms of social and cultural practices that affect children in the country. It is to this end that the Junior Parliament, through ZYC, conducted this study in order to understand what harmful social and cultural practices affect children in Zimbabwe and to use the study findings to make specific recommendations to policy makers.

Harmful practices against children are both a global and local concern. Globally, millions of children are harmed by parents, guardians, and other adults. These practices are often motivated by cultural, social, and religious factors. Regardless of what motivates adults to behave that way, the universal effects on children include psychological trauma, victimization, and violence. In addition, the practices violate internationally agreed standards for the welfare of children. This research marks the commitment of the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe's toward eliminating all practices that harm children in Zimbabwe.

1.1 WHAT ARE HARMFUL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES?

Harmful social and cultural practices refer to:

“... all behaviour, attitudes and or practices which negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls, such as their right to life, health, dignity, education, and physical integrity.”¹

The Gender and Development Network defines harmful cultural and social practices as a:

“... form of discrimination; they violate the human rights of affected individuals, particularly women and girls. They arise from gender inequality and discriminatory values, which lead to unequal power relations in communities and societies and to violence against women and girls.”²

The UN Study on Violence against Children (2006) lists **harmful traditional practices** (HTPs) as follows: genital mutilation (including female genital mutilation – cutting of girls' sexual parts – and male circumcision); child sexual abuse, including girls married very young

¹ <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/women-protocol/>

² Gender and Development Network. You Questions Our Answers. Available online: <http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/storage/http-report/GADN%20Harmful%20Traditional%20Practices.pdfreport/GADN%20Harmful%20Traditional%20Practices.pdf>

or being forced to marry; honour killings, where men kill girls in the name of family ‘honour’, for example for having sex outside marriage, or refusing an arranged marriage.

The key feature of harmful practices is that they negatively affect the lives of children in particular. Most of the common practices have some ideological basis of some form; couched either in moral, social or religious terms. The universal declaration against harmful social and cultural practices takes into consideration the best interests of the child. In mainstream literature, the preferred term is “Harmful Practices”. This takes away both the cultural and social factors which in many cases elicit some negative responses for the different people involved.

1.2 RELEVANT INSTRUMENTS

This section reviews international instruments that make specific reference to harmful social and cultural practices.

1.2.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC)

Harmful social and cultural practices were first condemned by the United Nations in 1979. This was followed by an Agenda item on the Commission of Human Rights in 1984. In 1995, the WHO produced Fact Sheet No. 23 entitled: “Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children.” The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children provides a universal framework for understanding the rights of children. It defines moral, social, political, and economic guidelines that member states should adhere to regarding the appropriate or acceptable treatment of children³.

The UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the rights of children in 1989 and then it became international law on September 2, 1990. The convention comprises 54 articles. Below makes specific reference to some of the articles that will be discussed in this report.

Table 1.1 UNCRC Articles

Article 1:	Definition of a child (anyone under the age of 18 years)
Article 3:	Best interest of the child – how adult decisions affect children
Article 4:	Protection of rights
Article 6:	Survival and Development
Article 7:	Registration, name, identity, nationality, and care
Article 19:	Protection against all forms of violence
Article 28:	Right to education
Article 32	Child labour – children’s work is not expected to jeopardise any of their rights
Article 33:	Drug abuse
Article 34:	Sexual exploitation ⁴

³ The ten principles are specified in UN’s “A-RES-1386(XIV) General Assembly Resolution 1386”

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_the_Child

1.2.2 The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and it consists of 30 articles that define several forms of discrimination against women. It also provides specific recommendations for eliminating these forms of discrimination.⁵ Article 2 of the convention condemns all forms of discrimination against women and urges all State Parties to

“Take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women” In addition, Article 5 seeks to ensure that adults should act in the interest of children.

Article 16 (2) states:

“The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.”

1.2.3 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

The ACRWC was adopted by the African Union in 1990 and was entered into force in 1999. The Charter covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Article 21 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child makes specific references to harmful social and cultural practices.

Table 1.2 ACRWC Article 21

Article 21: Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices	
1.	States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular:
A.	those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child; and
B.	those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or other status.
2.	Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory. ⁶

While most of the rights conferred to children under the UNCRC are similar to those conferred under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC), the ACRWC adds Article 31 which species the Responsibility of the Child. This is important when interpreting child rights in Africa. Article 31 specifies the Responsibilities of the Child as follows:

⁵ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

⁶ http://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/protection_12815.html

Table 1.3 Responsibility of the Child (Article 31)

Every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty;
(a) to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need;
(b) to serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service;
(c) to preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity;
(d) to preserve and strengthen African cultural values in his relations with other members of the society, in the spirit of tolerance, dialogue and consultation and to contribute to the moral well-being of society;
(e) to preserve and strengthen the independence and the integrity of his country;
(f) to contribute to the best of his abilities, at all times and at all levels, to the promotion and achievement of African Unity.

1.2.4 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)

The Maputo Protocol was signed in July, 2003 and became effective in November, 2005. Presently, it has been ratified by 15 nations and it provides women the right to participate in political process as equals with men. It also provides women the right to control their reproductive health and seeks to end female genital mutilation.

Article 5 of the Maputo protocol prohibits female genital mutilations and all forms of harmful cultural and social practices against women. The full text reads as follows:

“States Parties shall prohibit and condemn all forms of harmful practices which negatively affect the human rights of women and which are contrary to recognised international standards. States Parties shall take all necessary legislative and other measures to eliminate such practices, including:

- creation of public awareness in all sectors of society regarding harmful practices through information, formal and informal education and outreach programmes;
- prohibition, through legislative measures backed by sanctions, of all forms of female genital mutilation, scarification, medicalisation and paramedicalisation of female genital mutilation and all other practices in order to eradicate them;
- provision of necessary support to victims of harmful practices through basic services such as health services, legal and judicial support, emotional and psychological counselling as well as vocational training to make them self-supporting;

- protection of women who are at risk of being subjected to harmful practices or all other forms of violence, abuse and intolerance.”⁷

All state parties are required to ensure that they make necessary legislative provisions to ensure such practices are eliminated.

1.2.5 Zimbabwe Context

The Children’s Act [Chapter 5:06], the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] and the Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16] deals with the rights and welfare of children in Zimbabwe. The constitution of Zimbabwe⁸ also provides for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms for all Zimbabweans, children included. Part 3 Section 81 defines the following rights of children:

Table 1.4 Constitutional Rights of Children in Zimbabwe

81 (1) d. to family or parental care, or to appropriate care when removed from the family environment;
e. to be protected from economic and sexual exploitation, from child labour, and from maltreatment, neglect or any form of abuse;
f. to education, health care services, nutrition, and shelter;
(2) A children’s best interest are paramount in every matter concerning the child
(3) Children are entitled to adequate protection by the courts, in particular by the High Court as their upper guardian

In addition, the Government of Zimbabwe is a state party to a number of international and regional instruments that protect the rights of children. Regarding the rights of children, the Constitution of Zimbabwe should be read in conjunction with the following:

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children,
2. Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC),
3. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁹

The Child Protection and Adoption Act of 2001 also stipulate the respective guidelines for the protection of children in Zimbabwe.

1.2.5.1 The scale of the problem in Zimbabwe

Vulnerable children are often the victims of harmful cultural and social practices. National statistics indicate that more than 1 million children have been orphaned due to HIV and AIDS(Mukaro, 2013). This vulnerable group is prone to all forms of abuse. In addition, political leaders are also paying significant attention toward child sexual abuse and several harmful social and cultural practices in the country. The following statement by Hon. Oppar

⁷ www.achpr.org/files/...protocol/achpr_instr_proto_women_eng.pdf

⁸ Source: Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013

⁹ Source: ZIMSTATS. (2011). National Baseline Survey on Life Experiences of Adolescents Report

Muchinguri shows the urgency of the issue at hand and the need for a collaborative approach in tackling harmful social and cultural practices.

“I urge each and every one of us here today to make it their responsibility and be an ambassador to speak out and take action against sexual abuse of children...”

“Let us continue to work together in strengthening child protection systems at national and local levels including implementation of laws, policies, regulations and the provision of comprehensive services to child victims.”¹⁰

1.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the key international instruments and Zimbabwe’s legislation that safeguards the rights of children. The chapter also discussed the legislative and legal framework in Zimbabwe, paying attention to articles and sections that deal with children and protection against harmful cultural and social practices. The rest of the document is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides a brief literature review

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and data analysis procedures

Chapter 4 presents the research findings

Chapter 5 provides conclusions and key recommendations

¹⁰ Zimbabwe: calls to strengthen child protection systems. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201311050790.html>. Accessed 20 November 2013

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature specific to the key findings of this study (early marriages, child prostitution, child labour, child sexual abuse, and illegal migration). The material for this chapter is drawn from several secondary and internet sources. The chapter provides references to key statistics provided in this report. The overall strategy entails providing and global overview of the scale of the problem and then zooming on local statistics. This is not an exhaustive review of literature, it barely touches the core texts but seeks to give the reader an overview of the problem at hand and the need for governments to take proactive action toward eliminating the harmful cultural and social practices described in this report.

2.1 EARLY MARRIAGES

The UN defines early marriages as any union with a child that is less than 18 years. Both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) outlaw child marriage. The WHO estimates that globally 39 000 children are married every day.¹¹ This entails that 140 million girls will marry before they are 18, while about 50 million will marry under the age of 15 by the year 2020.

The UNFPA report “Marrying too Young,” indicates that girls that reside in rural and remote areas are likely to marry before the age of 18¹². Girls in poor households and the least educated girls are likely to marry before they reach 18 years. Table 2.1 below shows the top 10 countries where children marry before they reach 18 years. Zimbabwe ranks number 41.

Based on the UNICEF Global Database, Zimbabwe is ranked 41 on the number of countries where children marry before the age of 18 years. The Demographic Health Survey (DHS 2010-11) estimated that 31% of the girls in Zimbabwe marry before they reach the age of 18 years and about 15% of these girls are married before they reach 15 years. In Zimbabwe, child marriages are prevalent among the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect.¹³

¹¹ http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/child_marriage_20130307/en/

¹² <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

¹³ Maureen Sibanda. 2011. Married too Soon: Child Marriage in Zimbabwe. Available at: http://www.researchandadvocacyunit.org/index.php?view=download&alias=294-child-marriages-in-zimbabwe-printers-version-final&category_slug=womens-programme-1&option=com_docman&Itemid=115

Table 2.1 Percentage of women aged 20–24 who were first married before the age of 18

Rank	County	%
1	Niger	75
2	Chad	68
3	Central African Republic	68
4	Bangladesh	66
5	Guinea	63
6	Mozambique	56
7	Mali	55
8	Burkina Faso	52
9	South Sudan	52
10	Malawi	50
41	Zimbabwe	31

Source: UNICEF Global Databases. Child Protection: Child Marriage¹⁴

2.2 CHILD PROSTITUTION

The UNCRC and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography prohibits “the act of obtaining, procuring or offering the services of a child or inducing a child to perform sexual acts for any form of compensation or reward”¹⁵. Under the ILO, Child Prostitution defined as “use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution” under the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, (Convention No 82) of the International Labour Organization (ILO)¹⁶.

Globally, it is estimated that about 10 million children under the age of 18 years participate in prostitution related activities, that is an estimated one (1) million children forced into prostitution every year.¹⁷ Figure 2.1 below shows the top 25 countries where child prostitution is most prevalent. The challenge however, is that data on child prostitution is not easy to collect and this might not reflect a true global picture. Figure 2.1 shows that India has the highest number of children forced into prostitution (1.2 million) followed by Thailand, Brazil and Peru.

¹⁴ http://www.childinfo.org/marriage_countrydata.php Zimbabwe Statistics are based on the DHS 2010-11

¹⁵ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPSCCRC.aspx>

¹⁶ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312327

¹⁷ Willis, B. M., & Levy, B. S. (2002). Child prostitution: global health burden, research needs, and interventions. *The Lancet*, 359(9315), 1417-1422.

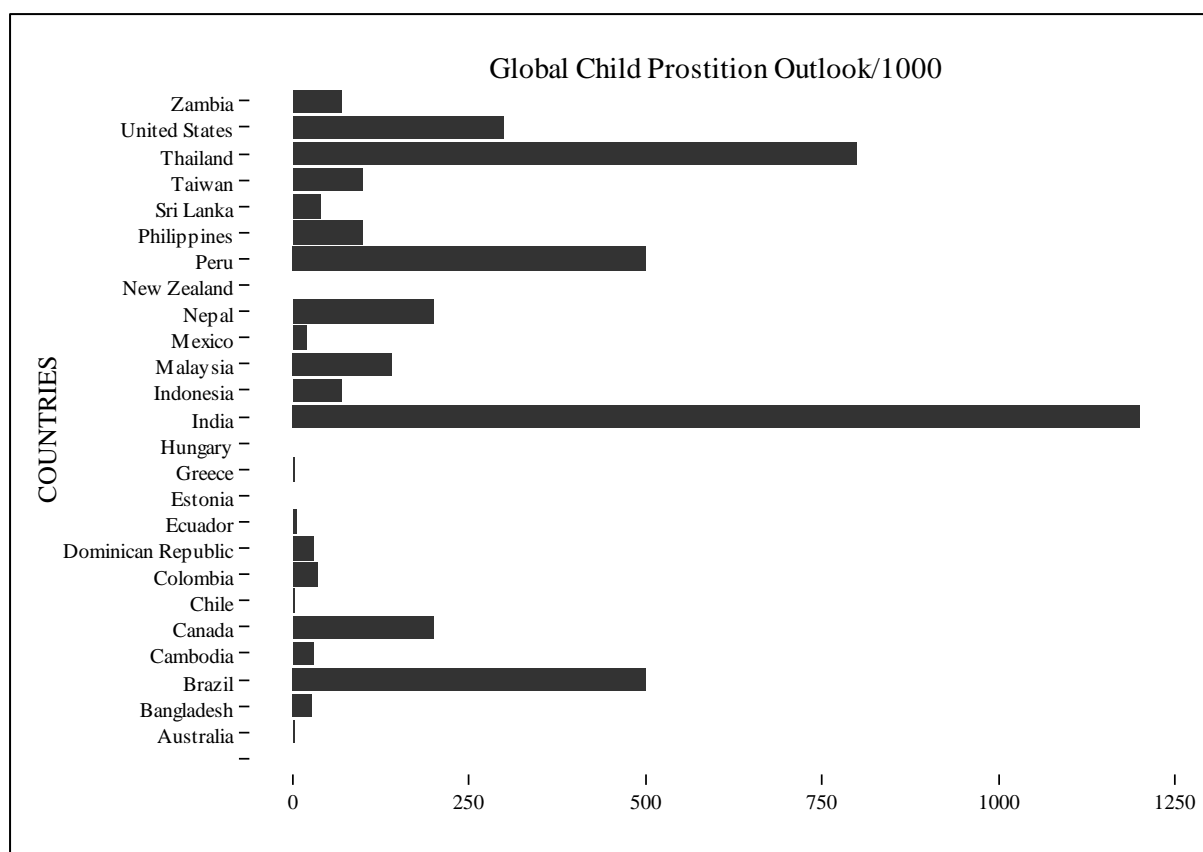


Figure 2.1 Top 25 countries practicing child prostitution¹⁸

In Zimbabwe, children under 15 years have been reported to participate in prostitution. Numerous newspaper reports indicate that the phenomenon is quite prevalent. The Telegraph for example reported that girls as young as 15 years were working as prostitutes in Bulawayo.¹⁹ UNICEF program, **Young People We Care Programme** also targeted about 15000 young people in order for them to “avoid the trap of prostitution, which is rampant because of poverty.”²⁰ In addition cases of child prostitution have also been reported in mining communities.²¹ There are no clear figures to indicate the number of children participating in child prostitution in Zimbabwe. However, inferring from newspapers articles, there is an indication that this is a serious problem in the country.

2.3 CHILD LABOUR

In Zimbabwe, the Labour Act Chapter 28:01 prohibits the employment of children 13 years and below. The Labour Relations (Employment of Children and Young Persons) Regulations

¹⁸ This graph is based on data adapted from the following website:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_of_children#CITEREFLim1998

¹⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/zimbabwe/1477723/Zimbabwean-children-sell-their-bodies-to-put-food-on-the-table.html>

²⁰ <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/51986/unicef-focuses-on-child-prostitution.html>

²¹ <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/60764/child-prostitutes-at-gold-mines.html>

prohibits the employment of children under 12 years, 12 to 17 year only be hired for a maximum of 6 hours a day for light work during the school holidays, and teenagers cannot work in any areas that involve hazardous substances.²²

According to the Maplecroft Labour Index, Zimbabwe is ranked 6 out of 197 countries. Table 2.2 below shows the top 10 countries practicing child labour.²³ Locally there are reports of children working in mines and risking exposure to dangerous chemicals²⁴, some work as domestic workers, and also in farming communities.²⁵

Table 2.2 Maplecroft Labour Index

Country	Rank
Myanmar	1
North Korea	2
Somalia	3
Sudan	4
DR Congo	5
Zimbabwe	6
Afghanistan	7
Burundi	8
Pakistan	9
Ethiopia	10

Table 2.3 and 2.4 show summarized child labour statistics in Zimbabwe (ZIMSTATS). The statistics indicate that about 290684 children between 15-17 years are engaged in economic activities for at least 3 hours per day. A total of 314173 children between the ages 5-14 also participate in economic labour.

Table 2.3: Adapted from ZIMSTATS: 2011 Child Labour Survey Report

15 -17 YEAR OLDS	
Children NOT engaged in non-economic activities at least 35 hours per week	772 835
Children engaged IN non-economic activities at least 35 hours per week	65 698
Children engaged in economic activities for at least 3 hours per day	290 984
Children NOT engaged in economic activities for at least 3 hours per day	224 674

²² Violata Chinyangara, Israel Chokuwenga, Roselyn G. Dete, Linda Dube, Joshua Kembo, Precious Moyo & Ratidzai Sharon Nkomo. Indicators For Children's Rights Zimbabwe Country Case Study. Available online at: http://www.child-abuse.com/childhouse/childwatch/cwi/projects/indicators/Zimbabwe/ind_zim_ch3.html

²³ http://maplecroft.com/about/news/child_labour_2012.html

²⁴ <http://www.irinnews.org/report/99443/zimbabwe-s-ailing-economy-fuelling-child-labour>

²⁵ <http://www.voazimbabwe.com/content/local-project-rises-larger-question-of-rising-child-labor-in-zimbabwe/148149295/1469068.html>

Table 2.4: Adapted from ZIMSTATS: 2011 Child Labour Survey Report

5-14 YEAR OLDS	
Children IN Non-Economic Child Labour	29 887
Children NOT in Non-Economic Child Labour	2 362 754
Children IN Economic Labour	314 173
Children NOT in Economic Labour	8748 89

2.4 CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Articles 34 and 35 of the UNCRC prohibit all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. This includes outlawing the coercion of a child to perform sexual activity, the prostitution of children, and the exploitation of children in creating pornography.

According to statistics released by the Victim Friendly Unit, in 2013 about 10 girls were raped every day in Zimbabwe.²⁶ Most of the sexual abuse cases were perpetrated by people that are close to victims. In one example, a father was caught raping his 12 year old daughter. Table 2.5 is adapted from Childline's summary statistics of 2010. The data indicates that most sexual abuse cases involved rape (91%) of the total cases. The majority of the victims are most children aged 5 to 12 years (40%) and 13 to 17 years (40%).

Table 2.5 Childline 2010 Statistics

Abuse Category	Indecent Assault N (%)	Intentional Exposure N (%)	Minors N (%)	Rape N (%)	Total N (%)
Under 5	7 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	44 (11)	51 (12)
5 to 12	5 (1)	0 (0)	8 (2)	172 (40)	185 (43)
13 to 17	10 (2)	4(1)	4(1)	172 (40)	185 (45)
Total	22 (5)	4(1)	12 (3)	386 (91)	486 (100)

Source: ChildLine Zimbabwe Child Abuse Report (January– December 2009) Submitted: July 2010

2.5 ILLEGAL MIGRATION

According to Save the Children, more than 400 children illegally cross in to South Africa every week.²⁷ In the book entitled: *Our broken dreams: Child migration in Southern Africa*,²⁸ the authors provide rich narrative accounts of the challenges faced by children on their way to South Africa. These challenges include victimization, attacks by wildlife, and prolonged periods of hunger, rape and deception. Some are deported back to Zimbabwe

²⁶ <http://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2013/10/10/2-400-children-raped-in-10-months>

²⁷ http://www.sundaynews.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37891:400-zim-children-illegally-cross-into-sa-weekly-scz&catid=38:local-news&Itemid=131#Uxa7JD-wImU

²⁸ Staunton, I., McIvor, C., & Bjornestad, C. (2007). *Our broken dreams: Child migration in Southern Africa*. Weaver Pr.

mostly without accompanying elders. In addition, most of the migrants do not have any documentation which makes it difficult to verify their ages.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter briefly reviewed literature on early marriages, child prostitution, child labour, child sexual abuse and illegal child migration. Literature indicates that these are global concerns and also serious problems in Zimbabwe. In particular, Zimbabwe lies in the top 10 of child labour offenders and is ranked number 41 on early marriages. Lack of reliable data makes it difficult to rank all countries based on the five harmful cultural and social practices discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methods used to collect data. The methodology for this study was largely qualitative (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1988). Data was collected through focus group discussions with key stakeholders, district reports from the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe, and through a stakeholder conference convened by the Zimbabwe Youth Council in Harare.

3.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

The focus group method was used as the primary tool for gathering data (Farquhar & Das, 1999; Horner, 2000; Morgan & Spanish, 1984; Sandelowski, 2000). Through the Ministry of Youth, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment, participants from respective government departments and key informants were invited to participate in the stakeholder consultative meetings. See Annex II. Seven focus groups/stakeholder consultations were conducted in the following areas: Chikombedzi, Neshuro, Hwange, Lukosi, Uzumba, and Mudzi. The discussion sessions ranged between two and four hours.



Figure 3.1 Focus Group Participants in Hwange

3.1.2 Focus Group Protocol

During the focus group discussions, participants were asked to list all harmful social and cultural practices prevalent in their area. After free listing the harmful cultural and social practices in their area, participants were then asked to rank all the listed practices by raising their hands. Once ranked, the top three to five practices then formed the key topics that

guided each session. Further instructions to participants included: (1) avoid using real names for any examples they wanted to give, and (2) the session's purpose was to gather data and not to incriminate people – this was important since the police were also present in the discussion sessions.



Figure 3.2 Focus Group Participants in Hwange

3.2 SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data was collected from the internet, project documents, and through the contributions of other stakeholders. Key documents submitted for inclusion in this report were district level reports from the Junior Parliament and Junior Council of Zimbabwe. Respective stakeholders also shared their experiences and statistics during the stakeholders' conference conducted in Harare and presented their findings. These information sources are also consolidated in this report, fully aware of some of the pitfalls of using secondary data (Atkinson & Brandolini, 2001).

3.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Key stakeholders working in the child rights and child protection sector were invited for the stakeholder consultations. The sessions targeted those participants that are “information rich” (Patton, 2005; Sim, 1998b) and also targeted diverse stakeholders in order to get a richer perspective on the key issue; harmful cultural and social practices. Zimbabwe Youth

Council Provincial managers, through an existing and effective network mobilized district level stakeholders to attend these consultative meetings.

3.4 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

The Zimbabwe Youth Council convened a Roundtable event in which the preliminary findings of the current research were presented in order to validate them against the work of other organizations and government departments. In addition, government departments, UN Agencies and NGOs shared their findings. The Zimbabwe Youth Council used the event to collect additional information and recommendations that could be carried forward to the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe. See Annex II

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

All data was analysed thematically (Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Rabiee, 2004; Sim, 1998a; Smithson, 2000) and the report focuses on the key issues identified in each area. Other harmful practices are listed in the annexes. It should also be noted that focus groups constitute a social context rather than an aggregate of interviews. Hence, any form of statistical inference based on the opinions expressed by a particular group will be misleading.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented the key methods used to gather stakeholder perspectives. A qualitative approach was used and focus groups were conducted with various stakeholders. The approach allowed stakeholders to express their views and opinions on the various harmful cultural and social practices presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

MAIN FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the major findings from the consultative meetings. It focuses on practices that were considered highly prevalent during the focus group sessions. These rankings are not indicators of statistical prevalence but show consensus among participants on what they considered prevalent. However, they are significant because most of the participants were experts in child rights and child abuse issues.

4.1 CHIKOMBEDZI

Chikombedzi located about 120 kilometres south east of Chiredzi town in south east Zimbabwe.

Two key issues that emerged in Chikombedzi were:

- Border jumping
- Early marriage

4.1.1 Border jumping

Chikombedzi is traditionally a migrant community with most community members migrating to South Africa for several reasons. What is challenging however is that most of the migration is illegal and done by young children. As participants noted, most of the migrants migrate to look for jobs without proper qualifications and they end up working for little income.

Border jumping is a result of multiple factors. First, participants noted a general lack of meaningful opportunities in the area and in Zimbabwe. Second, local role models encourage young children to migrate in South Africa without fully disclosing some of the challenges youngster will face. Third, general marginalization and lack of opportunities, even at local level were seen as push factors that led to migrations.

The harmful effects of border jumping for young children as participants noted include: (a) some children especially girls are raped along the way,²⁹ (b) some are murdered along the way, or killed by wild animals, or some are just abandoned and the community has no trace of their whereabouts, and (c) some are recruited into criminal activities and end up bringing fire arms back in the country.

²⁹ We were given an example of a girl named Gumi (Not a real name), 12 years old. She was raped on her way to South Africa. In their words “*vanhu vakanga vakungoita wadhidha wadhidha*”

In order to minimize this practice, participants felt that with proper parental guidance children will be able to understand that there is 'no gold' in South Africa. In addition, parents felt that the Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) should assist by explaining the roles and responsibilities of children vis a vis their rights. At policy level, there is need to ensure that children get proper career guidance and design programs that economically benefits locals.

4.1.2 Early Marriages

Typical early marriages in the area start at the age of 12 years. Participants indicated that these marriages take different paths and are a combination of several factors. For example, this can include girls being chased for coming back late or simply being seen with a boyfriend. More common cases were due to traditional rites "komba" or traditional schools for girls. Some teachers reported that typically girls are less likely to come back to school once they attend the traditional school.³⁰

The immediate impacts of early marriages include forgone education and the risk of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Traditional schools take place during the school term and children will lose school time. December to January of every year was characterised as the peak period for most marriages since most of the South Africa returnees will be in the village – locally referred to as "*majoni-joni*" who will be in a rush to marry young girls whom they eventually leave at home.

Institutional responses to early marriages have not been pleasing. For example, some stakeholders accused would-be child protectors to be perpetrators of child abuse. One participant said: "*Mutemo ngausimbe magistrate anototi ma 13 years old ndiwo ari sexually active. Iwe ndiwe unoita kunge usingaziwe.*" [The law should be strengthened. Some magistrates say 13 year olds are sexually active. When you take up such a case you appear less knowledgeable]. The quote not only illustrates the weaknesses in law enforcement or a lack of commitment on part of some law enforcement agencies in tackling early marriages but also a prevalent perception of women and victims in society - that is, victims are responsible for the actions of perpetrators.

Early marriages are accompanied by other vulnerabilities such as exposure of HIV, rape and deliberate transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In general, early marriages fit within the broader societal views of the "girl child" – that they can be used for patriarchal or family purposes without regard for their choices. Participants also reported that early marriages are usually linked to rape but it is under reported in order to protect the perpetrators. Whilst we are able to enumerate the incidences of early marriages, the problem is deeply attitudinal or perceptual. Therefore, there is need to target these attitudes and beliefs about women and children in order to safeguard the rights of children, in particular the treatment of the girl child.

³⁰ "*Mwana akaenda ku komba anokurumidza kuita zveimba*" [if a child attends the traditional school, they will be married early]

Some leaders present at the meeting suggested working out a new calendar for traditional schools so that it does not affect formal school attendance (note, these school are usually conducted after five years and their effect might be overstated). The challenge with the traditional school is that its psychological effects could be more far-reaching than actual attendance - as one participant noted: *"Some people think the traditional school is the ultimate school and don't want to hear about English"*.

4.2 MWENEZI-NESHURO

This section presents the main findings of the consultative meeting conducted at Neshuro Growth Point in Mwenezi. A total of 19 participants attended the consultative meeting, including Chief Neshuro, Village Heads, NGO representatives and Government Departments. Mwenezi is situated in southern Zimbabwe. It is bisected by the Mwenezi River and the A4 highway, the main thoroughfare that connects the town of Beitbridge, on the border with South Africa to Masvingo.

4.2.1 Early marriages

Early marriages are reportedly common in the Mwenezi area. Most young girls are married to South Africa returnees (*Majoni-joni*) or married off due to religious practices. It was reported that majority of the children leave the house without parental consent. Culturally, once they leave the house they will not be reintegrated into either the family or in schools. Chief Neshuro also noted that in very few cases, some parents actually receive bride wealth for marrying their young girls or receive groceries.

Early marriages occur in a social context that often shares a different set of norms and values. Some religious sects do not allow their members to visit clinics. This is particularly challenging for young women that might require specialized medical attention during labour, leading to maternal deaths³¹. An additional observation regarding initiation for girls was that those that are trained influence other especially if they return to school. In addition, there are incentives in running traditional schools since parents pay a beast in order for the children to be either circumcised or initiated.

Chiefs have been proactive in reducing the harmful impact of some of the reported practices. For example, Chief Manhanda instituted a law that children should not be beaten during the traditional ceremonies. The challenge however, is that some of the issues are considered religious or personal and they find it difficult to intervene. One case is that of a person with 16 wives and some of them were married before the age 16 years. The village heads present also acknowledged that early marriages are a serious problem but they did not have adequate knowledge to handle such cases when they occur in their villages.

³¹ The Minister of Health, Dr. Parirenyatwa recently announced that traditional mid wives should stop practicing since they were not able to deal with some birth complications.

4.2.2 Child labour

Child labour was ranked as the second most prevalent harmful practice in the Mwenezi area. Child labour takes the form of young boys employed to herd cows for richer families. In some cases, the child then gets a cow at the end of each year but in most cases the parents collect the payment on behalf of the child. This practice is also common among orphans and vulnerable children, who are often sent to work for richer families.

Girls are usually assigned to vend at shops or along the highway or to work as maids. This often results in early marriages and child prostitution. The participants also reported that some organized prostitution was present in Lundi and Rutenga - and that some business people employ young girls and encourage them to wear miniskirts.

The participants recommended the need for locals to tackle child labour issues on their own. One participant noted that people were used to the culture of donor led initiatives on issues that affect their lives. Chief Neshuro also encouraged the Rural District Council (RDC) to form a committee that works with him to discuss issues around the conduct of people at business centres and townships. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to set up a prevention taskforce that focuses on beer halls and squatter settlements since most of the practices were taking place in such areas. Finally, they encouraged the business community to conduct ethical business - i.e. not providing space for some harmful cultural and social practices to thrive.

4.3 NGUNDU

4.3.1 Sexual Abuse

In Ngundu, cases of sexual abuse are usually committed by people that are close to victims. One participant narrated a case of a 17 year old girl who was abused by people from within the same village. Kombi drivers are another group of perpetrators that usually harass school children. Third, participants reported that some young boys were also being sexually abused.

Most cases of child sexual abuse are not reported to respective authorities for several reasons. Some cases of early marriages are also sexual abuse cases but they are not reported in order to protect perpetrators (similar to what was reported in Chikombedzi). Participants provided an example of child that was sexually abused but the parents did not report the case. Instead, they arranged for the perpetrator to marry their daughter. Fortunately, the case was reported to workers under the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP II) program and the perpetrator was arrested.

The community cannot effectively handle sexual abuse cases due to lack of resources to follow up on a case - they lack transport and adequate communication. In most cases, the perpetrators are discharged and re-join the community which puts the victim at additional risk or psychological distress. In one case, the victim had to be relocated out of the community in order to protect her.

All stakeholders are required to collaborate in order to address cases of sexual abuse. There appears to be a gap between what the community expects the police to do and vice versa. For example, some of pertinent issues regarding cases of sexual abuse are not communicated between the community and the police.

4.3.2 Child Prostitution

Child prostitution is thriving at Ngundu Business Centre and participants reported that some school-going children also participate. The information gathered indicates the existence of a possible cartel that recruits young girls into prostitution activities. The immediate impacts are high school drop outs, pregnancies, and diseases. As the Chief of the area noted, the challenges are beyond inability of parents to discipline their child but also linked to the economic situation in the country and lack of clear divide between personal economic interest and law enforcement. He states:

“mutemo wave kuregedzerwa nekuda kwekuti vanochengetedza mutemo wacho ndivo vane mabusinessse. Mutemo yedu ikasadzokera pakare hatigone kubudirira. Kana vangosvika ipapo basa riitiwe. In addition, the law is also applied selectively unobata vanhu kadzi asi uchisiya vanhurume.” [the law is lax because some law-enforcement agencies own businesses. If the rule of law is not restored, we cannot develop. You find them present at the places but they do not the law. In addition the law is applied selectively; they only arrest women not men].

In addition, he recommended business people should build child friendly places as this will help in monitoring the movement of children at bottle stores.

4.3.3 Early marriages

Most young girls marry before they finish school. Participants attributed this to: emotional abuse or other forms of abuse, peer pressure, lack of guidance which leads other to think marriage will solve all their problems, and parental encouragement. One participant gave a personal testimony of a girl she adopted and educated her up to Form 4 but later eloped before she finished school. Another case was that of a businessman who married a Form 3 (15 years) child but he is suspected to be HIV positive.

Some religious practices also encourage members to marry young girls. One participant reported that early marriages among some apostolic sects involve sexual abuse and or rape of young girls before they are married. For example some men touch the breasts of young girls after which the council of church elders then “brain washes” the child get to marry the elderly husband. As noted above, in extreme cases, the girls are first raped before they are taken in the 4th or 5th wife.

4.3.4 Bullying

Victimization of school children by elderly students or people from the community affects them psychologically and physically. Some men reportedly fondle young girls on their way from school. Bullying was reported as prevalent in boarding schools.

4.4 HWANGE

4.4.1 Early Marriages

Early marriages were ranked as the top most harmful practice in Hwange. The causes of early marriages in the area include: (a) some people do not value girl education and my belief and my culture and (b) religious practices. Among some religious sects, early marriages are linked to virginity testing whereby young girls undergo virginity tests then paraded in front of adult males. Virgins will get full leaf while non-virgins are given half a leaf. These annual parades provide men an opportunity to select as many wives as their resources permit. As reported in others areas, such religious sects do not allow their members attend hospital and members die due to labour complications.

Some participants noted that early marriages are a part of every culture. The major challenge across the spectrum is that they do not usually last. In both religious and cultural contexts, people marry off young girls because to the low regard for women.³²

Participants recommended the need for life skills information and career guidance at schools as way of encouraging children to stay in schools. The Child Protection committees were also in place and benefitted from volunteers that committed their time and resources in protecting children. In rural communities, the chief, headman, councillor are potentially a good starting point to handle issues of child abuse. At Rural District Development Committee (RDDC) level - multi stakeholder platforms should be set up to allow children and parents to share ideas. But as Mr. Gumbo noted, the best strategy is where both parents and children have collective responsibility.

4.4.2 Child Prostitution

Child prostitution is a major problem along the Hwange-Victoria Falls highway. Usually truckers that ferry coal are the major attraction for girls. Participants noted that some children go as far as Lupinyu (close to Victoria Falls) where prostitutes charge as little as US \$1. Some adults were implicated in recruiting young girls from Hwange during the World Tourism Conference to supply the tourist market. One of the leaders was at the time resident in Hwange but managed to escape. Parents noted that children are easily attracted to such prostitution since there are no training institutes in the area.

Hwange's response to child protection issues has been exceptional compared to other areas. For example, there is a volunteer worker using her vehicle and financial resources to follow up on cases of child abuse in the area. The challenge however, she has been threatened several times by perpetrators.

³² One participant noted that all actors exhibit "*hangover that a girl child anotariswa pasi than a boy child*" and this mentality needs to change in order for communities to deal with early marriages.

Children at the meeting blamed adults for perceiving girls as sexual objects. One outspoken student said:

“Some parents are destroying our future.... You hear some of them say “She has got her stuff... You hear some men achiti haa aibva [She is ripe]... Ndokwachura mazamu ndisiye kumba here? [Should I remove my breasts and leave them home?].”

Child prostitution activities were also reported to take place at bottle stores. Bottle store owners are not part of the Child Protection Committees (CPC) to be able to contribute towards the welfare of children in the area. Three key recommendations out of the session were: a) CPCs need to ensure that children participate during their meetings, and b) bring tertiary education in Hwange, and c) Government and companies should take steps to eliminate poverty and ensure that companies employ locals.

4.5 LUKOSI

The participants noted that the legal age did not correspond with social and cultural expectations. Parents advocated for a review of the age upwards to 23-25 years. Others consider it as a continuous process and do not see the need to demarcate a legal age.

4.5.1 Child Prostitution

The challenge in Lukosi is that *“Magonyeti ese anofira ipapa nekuda kwevana ivava ...”* [all trucks breakdown here because of these children] noted one participant indicating the emergence of new practice in the area, that of child prostitution. This practice was reported to also occur in churches, in the community, and some teachers were also implicated. Elderly people were also blamed for influencing the lives of their children in a negative way.

Traditional leaders indicated that the loss of traditional values was responsible for most of the challenges people face today. For example, traditionally children were raised by the community and this collapse of traditional values has led to a plethora of social problems. If the community is able to revert back to regarding children as then these problems will disappear because children will be monitored by the entire community (and also disciplined).³³

There is some gap between what the community members narrated and the reports that get to the police. The Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) indicated that they did not receive most of the child abuse cases that were reported during the focus group session. In addition to parents reaching out to the VFU, it was also recommended that the VFU should reach out to parents and clarify some of the issues pertaining to children.

³³ *“Iva nerudo namakerwano kuti anokwanisa kukutarisira vana iwe usipo”* [love your neighbour. Your neighbour should be able to look after your children when you are away]

At policy level, the government needs to ensure that children easily access birth certificates. This will be helpful in cases where children are sexually abused and then asked to lie about their age. While the CPC is important in determining the success of child protection activities, the committees need human and financial resources to fund their activities. In Lukosi, the committee had not met in the past 24 months due their reliance on volunteer time and resources.³⁴ As in the case of Hwange, we also learn that activists are also threatened in several ways if they decide to vigorously pursue cases of child abuse.

4.5.2 Early marriages

Early marriages are also common phenomena in Lukosi as is the case in Hwange. Most young girls are married before they complete schools. As was the case in other areas, early marriages are usually practised by apostolic churches and they come with social and health challenges for young girls. Occasional cases of teenage to teenage pregnancies also occur in the community. The solutions for dealing with early marriages were the same as proposed in Hwange; this is also because the areas are close together.

4.6 UZUMBA

4.6.1 Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Drug usage by children was noted as a major concern and the major drug types include illicit beer and marijuana. The influence to use drugs is usually for prestigious purposes in order to gain what is termed “Dutch Courage”. The participants also noted that this is major challenges since most young people were panning gold in Mazowe River. Parents are unable to control or monitor their behaviour leading to other social problems such as crime, early pregnancies/marriages, prostitution and disease.

4.6.2 Early/Forced Marriages

In Uzumba, participants noted that early marriages take three forms: intergenerational, religious, and cultural. All forms involve the mental manipulation of the child and some people end up marrying 13 year olds. The councillor noted with concern that “*Hapana akambobika katiyo* – No one cooks a day old chick” and if one does so it indicates there are serious problems. This also means such a marriage is problematic and involves a lot of force on behalf of the child. The key recommendation for dealing this practice includes:

1. All stakeholder need to ensure that children are present at all meetings so that they can share their views on issues that affect their lives
2. Harmonize the gaps in existing laws. For example, there is need to synchronize the Child Protection Act and the Bill of Rights of Children
3. Pass deterrent sentences to offenders

³⁴ *Kana pasina anopa ma hat hapana waunoona* [if there is no one giving hats, people will not attend]

4. Society should promote good values in general in order to motivate young people to do the right thing.

4.7 MUDZI

4.7.1 Child Labour

Increased numbers of children are reportedly dropping out of school in order to work in the fields and to look after cattle. In Chingwena, children usually miss school in order to tend gardens and fields against baboons. Girls are keen to work as 'house girls'. Gold panning is also a major activity and participants gave examples of three school pupils that fund-raise for their education through panning. BEAM issues were also topical and participants highlighted that some of the neediest were not being assisted to attend school. The indications are that the BEAM selection process is not clear to most community members. Some deserving orphans and vulnerable children left out of the beneficiary list. Participants recommended that teachers should participate in the selection of BEAM beneficiaries.³⁵

4.7.2 Early Marriages

Regarding early marriages, apostolic sects were singled out as most problematic. The participants reported cases of four primary children that dropped out of school due to pregnancy and also a government employee who married a Grade 4 student (11 years). The presence of a military camp in the area was also attributed to early marriages. The school responded by discouraging young girls from seeking medical treatment at a military hospital nearby.

As reported in other areas visited during this consultation, women are given extra responsibilities for looking after the family.³⁶ In addition, children from these religious sects are denied medical attention. This is a challenge for health practitioners and teachers since the non-treated children have to interact with other children at school.

4.8 ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATIONS

This section summarizes the key presentations that were delivered during the Roundtable event organized by the Zimbabwe Youth Council on the 7th of February, 2014.

³⁵ Most participants were not aware of the procedures used to select BEAM recipients and accused leaders of corruptly allocating funds. While these are allegations, they probably signify that BEAM is failing to reach all deserving members of society.

³⁶ *Hanzi ibasa remukadzi kuriritira mhuri – baba vanoti mukadzi nevana zvisionere wega vana ivava vapedza two years vakagara kumba* [it is the role of the woman to raise the family. The husbands say wives should fend for their children and most children fail to attend school].

4.8.1 Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children

The Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC) presentation highlighted that child marriages were prevalent in most African countries. For example, in Mozambique they are called child unions. The challenge in Zimbabwe is that not all child marriages can be taken to court. Some of the marriages are willing partnerships where children marry one another. A willing partnership is difficult to take to the court. In most cases, children are forced due to economic circumstances. ZNCWC highlighted that there is need to understand why some of these child marriages take place through a comparative lens, picking areas where it does and does not occur.

The additional challenge regarding child marriage issues in Zimbabwe is that Customary Law does not define the legal age for marriage. This legal pluralism allows most adults to seek out of court settlements in cases where children are involved. Furthermore, ZNCWC hopes that as the various state agencies re-align with the new constitution, the irregularities between the formal law and communal law will be addressed.

ZNCWC Recommendations

1. Parents need to consult children on issues that concern them
2. Children need to be economically empowered, for example the Government should fund the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe and provide it with administrative funds
3. The Zimbabwe Youth Council should lobby Senior Parliament to fund the Junior Parliament and to also set aside part of the Constituency Development Funds toward funding BEAM and other issues focused on children. ZNCWC proposed that 10% of CDF should be earmarked for BEAM or children's issues.
4. The informal education department should be brought back and reintegrate the drop outs
5. Positive messages should be promoted to ensure that children do not see it as a weakness to be abused but should be encouraged to report any form of abuse.

4.8.2 Legal Resources Foundation

The Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) primarily works with children in order for them to access justice. Presently, LRF is inundated with maintenance cases but they have not undertaken a study to uncover the probable causes. However, the indications are that most of the child support claims are filed by mothers that would have been married very early in life. This probably led to total reliance on the male support. Statistics indicate that 21% of the children in Zimbabwe are married before the age of 18. Some of the harmful effects of these early marriages are not immediate, but are likely to appear later in life. In the case of LRF, the increased number of child support cases reflects that early marriages are an underlying cause

Recommendations

- a. There is need to harmonize marriage laws in Zimbabwe and to ensure that marriage laws should also define the marriage limit as 18 years and not 16 years.

- b. Specifically, the question that needs to be asked is why do we have a provision where children are being allowed to marry at the age of 16?
- c. The law needs to be consistent and there is need to address this in the customary marriage laws as well.

4.8.3 Justice for Children Trust

Justice for Children Trust (JCT) highlighted their research and the work they undertake with minors seeking legal services in civil and criminal cases.

Recommendations

1. Coordination of effort in order to cover all areas where needed. This coverage should also include police stations in most areas of the country
2. The government needs to coordinate their effort. In addition, all stakeholder efforts need to be coordinated (for example as is the case with the National AIDS council)
3. Child participation should be strengthened at all levels
4. Laws should be re-aligned
5. Civic organizations should support government initiatives
6. There is need to focus on rights based programming to ensure that the rights of children are respected by all sectors

4.8.4 International Organization for Migration

The presentation by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) focused on migration issues and irregular migration in the southern provinces of Zimbabwe. The presentation indicated that Plumtree and Beitbridge were major transit points. The figures for 2013 indicated that most child migrants passing through Beitbridge come from Chiredzi, Chipinge, and Bulawayo (3284). While those that pass through Plumtree originate mainly from Harare and Bulawayo (1294). In addition, IOM noted that especially in Botswana, some of the young girls end up being married to elderly men in order to survive.

The key recommendations were as follows:

1. Promote regular migration – demystify travel
2. Debunk the passport myth so that people know that they can get it at any time

4.8.5 Childline

Childline noted that some of these practices manifest as early marriages could be a form of sexual abuse whereby older men take young girls as wives. In most cases, child marriages are a result of sexual abuse. As was highlighted during the consultation meetings, Childline also reported cases of young girls married at 13 years in certain religious sects and some boys have also been victims of sodomy. In addition, such children are not allowed to seek proper health care. The challenge with most of the abuse cases is that most of the victims are afraid to report. In 2013 alone, Childline received 58000 reports through the call in facility. Additionally, they have also set up a Facebook and Whatsapp reporting platform.

4.8.6 Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare

The presentation gave an overview of the human rights history and the historical development of child protection rights. The presentation further emphasized the need to constantly conduct research on children issues since new issues are constantly emerging. In

addition, it also highlighted some of the government programs that seek to keep children in school; Harmonized social cash transfers and BEAM. Finally, it highlighted the comprehensive support that is provided to children under the National Case Management System.

Recommendations

1. There is need for “Social militias” that report all cases as soon as they are detected and this way they will revive the functions of CPC’s
2. Develop the Girl Child empowerment framework
3. Create an office of an Ombudsman that deals with children issues
4. Allocate a budget to the Junior Parliament
5. Create a Ministry that focusses on children
6. Ensure continuous data collection and research in order to generate information for advocacy purposes.

4.8.7 Ministry of Health

Following a 10 minute video presentation on a victim of child sexual abuse, the Ministry of Health then focused on the key response strategies and some of the work done by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare on harmful practices. They also highlighted that cases of sexual abuse occur within and outside the house. The ZIMSTAT figures indicate that over 2% of the children that reported cases of sexual abuse also required some treatment. In addition, the impacts of sexual abuse show that most of the children that are sexually abused are likely to lack empathy and increase violence and this will reduce the chances of emotional attachment in their adult life.

Recommendations

1. People should avoid sending conflicting messages to communities, even among government departments

4.8.8 National Arts Council of Zimbabwe

The presentation focused on the role of artists in shaping the future children. The artist industry is full of both good and bad models that impact on the lives of children.

Recommended actions were:

1. The need to promote local values and a local film industry (ZimWood)
2. It is difficult to legislate the artists, but there is need to balance between morality and legality
3. Zimbabwe needs to stand out cultural and artistically but at the same time use self-regulatory mechanisms to regulate performing artist, for example the Dance Association of Zimbabwe.

4.8.9 Zimbabwe Republic Police

The Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) reiterated that harmful and social and cultural practices were topical in this country. Broadly, issues of child abuse fit within broader domestic violence against women and children. The VFU is found at each and every police station. From policing perspective, they have to translate the behaviour into criminal acts. The most common cases that are handled through the VFU include:

1. *Chiramu* (Indecent assault, or rape)
2. Forced virginity testing usually treated as aggravated indecent assault – similar to rape
3. Child pledging
4. Spousal inheritance
5. Non-medical circumcision
6. Genital mutilation – it is not very prevalent
7. Child marriages (traditional and religious groups)- the cases are very difficult to investigate. The victims do not cooperate because of the socialization and or brain washing that would have occurred

Recommendations

1. Create an awareness of these harmful cultural and social practices that targets both children and elders.
2. Enforcement of the law.
3. The media should debunk these practices.
4. Men's attitude towards women and girls is the major problem and it needs to change – for example the main blame on women's dressing as a major cause for sexual abuse and rape case is not true since "...the majority of girls are less than 12 and there is nothing attractive about these women".

4.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter highlighted the primary findings from the consultative meetings and the round-table stakeholders' conference. It has shown that both local level stakeholders and planning level agree on the need to eliminate harmful cultural and social practices. The recommendations from both district level and national level stakeholders call for a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach in order to eliminate harmful practices affecting children. The above harmful practices constitute a subset of numerous practices that are harming children in Zimbabwe, but the ones highlighted in this chapter provide an entry point for intervention programs.

Chapter 5

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter first discusses key issues that emerged during the consultative meetings and then provides recommendations based on the stakeholders perspectives presented in Chapter 4 and District reports attached in Annex I. The key issues highlight some additional work that is required to revive child protection systems in Zimbabwe

5.1 CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEES

The main objective of CPC's is to protect the interests of children. However, in three cases where CPC's were mentioned, they were inactive and did not meet to advance the needs to children. This is because they lack funding and incentives for committees. A participant in Lukosi, Hwange said "*Kana pasina anopa ma hapana waunoona,*" while another participant in Uzumba also said: "*Zvikangoshaya cent havachadi – even muno mumeeting mamwe ma government departments' haana kuuya nekuti hapana ma allowances.*" Both participants note that because people are used to work in contexts where they get allowances, it will be difficult for such systems to persist when funding runs out.

The CPC in Hwange is exceptional because of a dedicated volunteer who commits their resources and time. The challenge however, is that these dedicated individuals lack the support of other stakeholders. In both Hwange and Lukosi, volunteer CPC members ended up threatened by perpetrators of child abuse. Both incidences have not led to arrests or prosecution of child abuse perpetrators.

5.2 CHILD PARTICIPATION

Child participation in decision making arenas is minimal especially on issues that affect their welfare. For example, children are not consulted regarding marriage. The district consultations and the stakeholders' conference further confirmed children are rarely consulted on decisions that affect them. One of the key recommendations that came out of the consultations, especially in Mudzi, is that child-mainstreaming should be implemented at governance level. Some village heads welcomed the idea of allowing children to participate at village level courts and meetings. In short, there is need to move from a culture that does not allow children to provide their views on issues that concern them. This is an important recommendation that cuts across all harmful social and cultural practices discussed in this report.

5.3 RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

Most of the harmful practices are either justified on the basis of religion or culture. There is need therefore to clearly specify the linkages between religious freedom and constitutional rights. This is important in order to regulated emerging churches. Some village heads felt they have no right to intervene in cases where abuses are perpetrated in the name of either culture or religion.

5.4 ENFORCEMENT OF LAW

The general feeling among stakeholder is that there is need to enforce the law and pass sentences that are deterrent to would-be- offenders. Strict enforcement of law in conjunction with community mobilization is likely to lead to a more desirable outcome. There is evidence that adults entrusted with children are also abusing children.

5.5 ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

There is need to educate communities especially on the rights and responsibilities of children. Most rural participants did not understand the difference between child work and child labour. This lack of information was evident in most sessions as some parents accused the government of “taking away” their children and also not allowing children to help in the fields. Information will be key in ensuring that child protect systems begin to function at grassroots level.

5.6 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Early marriages

There is need to harmonize marriage laws in order to make it easy to prosecute offenders. The new constitution defines children as persons below the age of 18 years. However, the customary act is silent about marriage issues and this makes it difficult to handle child marriages. In addition, children should be issued with birth certificates as this will assist in the prosecution of offenders.

Child prostitution

Most of the reported cases of child prostitution were linked to bottle stores and trucks. Therefore, there is need to engage business owners and truck owners to ensure that children are protected. Local businesses can also invest in child-friendly places.

Child labour

Participants recommended that communities should take the initiative to eliminate child labour practices and ensure that children attend school. On the other hand, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is also working with other organizations to ensure that children enrol back in schools.

Child sexual abuse

First there is need to create a conducive environment to ensure that children will be able to report cases of sexual abuse when they occur. Second, the system for dealing with cases of child sexual abuse need to be timely in responding to reported cases.

Border jumping

There is need to regularize travel especially for minors so that they travel with the required documentation. In addition, the government needs to ensure that some of the push factors are addressed in order to reduce irregular migration in search of economic opportunities in Botswana and South Africa. In addition, communities also need to promote alternative role models, in particular local success stories and the merit of education.

5.7 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the overarching recommendations that were gathered during the roundtable discussion and also the Child Sensitive Social Policies conference.³⁷

Coordination of Stakeholders - Participants noted with concern that there is need for a multi-stakeholder platform that ensures collaboration among the key actors in order to avoid duplication of efforts. An exemplar will be the work of the National AIDS Council that ensures stakeholders to do not duplicate efforts or work in one while other is under-served.

Child Protection Committees - Child Protection Committees were not very active in the communities that were consulted due to lack of resources. There is need to avail funding for the CPC's at village level. In addition, the CPCs need to ensure that children attend the planning sessions and or meetings so that children's voices are heard.

Child mainstreaming – Children should be present in all committees starting at village. Participants felt that allowing children to sit in village level committees will go a long way in transforming adult perceptions of children and transform societal values.

Funding the Junior Parliament – the government needs to commit funds toward the activities of the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe. These funds could be allocated at constituency level through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Ten percent of the CDF can then be allocated toward the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) or other programs that focus on children.

Responsive Parenting - In general, parents should be responsive to their children's needs. Churches and traditional leaders can take a leading role in promoting responsive parenting.

³⁷ The Child Sensitive Social Policies International Conference was convened by the Women's University in Africa

Economic empowerment – Children should be economically empowered for example through a dedicated budget to the Junior Parliament of Zimbabwe.

Effective reporting mechanisms - there are limitations in the current reporting mechanisms especially for the physically challenged. There is need for reporting mechanisms to be sensitive to the needs to all children. A potential reporting mechanism, in addition to Childline's 116 is the U-report platform launched by UNICEF. The report protocols also need to ensure that they protect children and are friendly in order for them to approach or use them.

Office of the Ombudsman – Some participants recommended that there be created an office of the Ombudsman to deal with children's issues.

Research and Documentation – Data collection and research is very KEY in order to document any new harmful social and cultural practices – considering that social phenomena is dynamic, there is need to constantly gather information to inform policy decisions.

Social and Community Mobilization - Social and community mobilization should complement the efforts of the law.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This research was conducted under the Africa Union 2013 theme: **Eliminating Harmful Cultural and Social Practices: Our Collective Responsibility**. It has accomplished the following objectives stated under this theme; took stock of harmful practices against children, highlighted the negative consequences of harmful practices on the various rights of children, identified the need to review existing legislative and policy frameworks, as well as practices, at national level to combat and eliminate harmful practices against children. This is a first step as additional work is required so as to “undertake advocacy with African Governments, civil society organizations including faith based organizations, the media and other role players for greater mobilization for the realization of the rights of children against harmful practices.”

Annexes

ANNEX I DISTRICT SUMMARIES

The information presented in this section was gathered by Junior Parliamentarians, Senators and Councillors and submitted to the Zimbabwe Youth Council for inclusion in this report.

Masvingo District Report (Junior Senator for Masvingo District)

Child migration is a major problem. It is a result of either of the following: seeking employment, fleeing from abuse, visiting relatives.

Despite the fact the Government of Zimbabwe introduced the Junior Parliament; harmful practices are always affecting the physical, social well-being, health, education and development of children. Socially children are facing difficulties in walking long distances to school and this exposes children to several dangers.

Most harmful cultural and social practices affect girls in our community. Girls are facing many problems forcing them to unexpected things. Instead of being supported by the community they do not even consider our views as child representatives since the culture does not allow children to speak or give advice to parents. Therefore, elders cannot support us since they are responsible for most of the harmful social and cultural practice affecting us as children: spirit appeasement, forced and early marriages, and assigning boys to look after cattle.

Because of the lack of support from the community young people continue to cross borders; the community has not been able to find solutions or even to start projects to help improve the lives of the youths and young children. If young people are able to make their own decisions, they will be able to develop.

Training centres must be introduced to all parts of the district, Mwenezi Training is too far. Another disturbing is that even some girls that are funded by CAFMED continue to drop from school. This is because the culture regards girls as suitable for marriage and helping parents with chores.

Why Zimbabwe cannot even get something for those that drop out of school?

Compiled by Petronella Ndlovu

Masvingo West Constituency

The following harmful practices were identified:

Drug abuse

There are several cases of drug abuse but they are not being taken seriously and mostly by teens of school going age. Marijuana is being sold publicly by some well-known drug dealers and they are even selling it to school students. Some are buying deadly drugs such as ZED (an illicit beer) and drinking during school days.

Early marriages

The girl child is being sexually abused, falls pregnant, and then chased from their homes. In 2013, five girls (form 1 to form 3) dropped out of school because they fell pregnant. Even though education is a right for every child, children here in Mushandike are dropping out of school in order to pan gold – which further exposes them to a lot of “evils”. Additional cases of children that dropped out of school due to lack of fees, looking for work in Harare.

Recommendations

1. Meetings and consultations should be conducted to raise awareness and also to identify the support that is required
2. Some religious practices should be abandoned – such as depriving children access to health care
3. Avoid age mixing i.e. older boys and younger girls as most of the girls end up getting pregnant – and most of the boyfriends usually end up fleeing to South Africa.

Compiled by Panashe Dube

In Zimbabwe, children are being abused and sometimes nothing is done about it. It is really disturbing to know that in Zimbabwe, after attaining independence in 1980, children are still being harassed and sexual abuse is still active. In this report, there are three cases that I have come across and it is sad to know that they are being abused by relatives.

Case1: Alias names used

He lives in Mucheke with his grandmother and aunts. When the grandmother is not home, the aunt ill-treats him. He does all the work and only eats at night if ever. I could not get more details from the individual since he was afraid the relatives might get arrested and he will be rejected from the family and will not have anywhere to stay.

Case 2

He lives with his father and stepmother. The thing is he does most of the work and is mostly abused physically. The step mother has an upper hand and the father fails to protect his son.

Case 3

These are young children around the age of 6 or 7. Their mother lives in South Africa and

they stay with their grandmother who makes them work beyond their age. They are also verbally abused and this will affect them psychologically.

*Compiled by Nanette Zawala,
Child Minister of State for Provincial Affairs, Masvingo*

Zaka Central Constituency

The major problem in Zaka Central is that of teenage pregnancies. I assume this problem is prevalent because some children are ignorant of its impacts. They can be helped by forming social clubs and groups – that can run awareness campaigns to assist young girls. Some children find themselves as parents because they are idle, some of them are not in school due to lack of fees, other drop out or lack opportunities or motivation to repeat school once they fail.

Some children lack proper parental care. For example in November, I attended to a five year old girl who has been at a hospital for more than one month with her ill mother. The extended family members are not there to help. Bullying is another problem faced by children in schools – children are bullied around, have their children confiscated, while others are asked to work for their seniors.

Finally children are having bad morals. Most children are disobedient and need the help of parents and guardians in order to model them into better people

*Complied by Mitchelle Njukuya
(Child MP, Zaka Central)*

The popular internet development accessed in Zaka District and Worldwide has harmful social sites –pornography in particular. In addition, such platforms as Whatsapp are diverting children's focus from school to indulging in casual and risky sexual activities. This leads to unwanted pregnancies and the contraction of STIs such as HIV. I appreciate the efforts by school teachers of seizing cell phones from school pupils. With cheap phone now able to access the internet, school children can easily access harmful social sites.

Some moral and norms promoted by churches affect children. The Apostolic churches led by the XXX sect are becoming prominent in Zaka. Some of the harmful practices include forced marriages risking children to HIV/AIDS. Unmonitored youth meetings conducted by the Seventh Day Adventist and the Roman Catholic Church also expose children to abuse.

“Improper association between teachers and school children is taking shape once more after a short calmness after the orientation and awareness campaigns made by the Ministry of Education, that of binding all school headmasters to read before the teachers a section on improper association from the statutory instrument booklet which might be unfamiliar to new-juvenile teachers. One nerve touching case is a case of improper association between a

primary school girl and a teacher whose name I am to reserve for anonymity, a teacher at XXX school for marriage.

The child got impregnated and dropped out of school for unwanted marriage. The parent, a teacher also at the school reported the case as statutory rape which he lost as the perpetrator used “dollar power” to manipulate the victim’s mind and make her claim an older age than her actual chronological age and exonerating the apprehended as her betrothed husband. The young girl became the teachers’ second wife booting the older wife out of marriage with about three children”

Child labour is also a major issue in the area. Parents send their children to work during early hours of the morning to work in the fields before going to school.

*Prepared by Thabeth Ganyata,
Child Senator Zaka Central*

Zaka West Constituency

It seems as if children in my constituency lack parental guidance. There are cases of school drop-outs. Career guidance and counselling is no longer taught in schools including Mutonhori High School and Rudhanda High Schools. A large number of girls have dropped out of schools as a result of pregnancies. Mutonhora High to be specific lost up to 20 pupils last year. My suggestion pertaining how this can be changed is:

1. AIDS clubs should be established in schools and they should be functional and informed by children since we are the ones being affected.
2. Career guidance and counselling in schools are dormant and should be reintroduced.
3. Parents should educate children and also emphasize the consequences of deviant behaviour that leads to unwanted pregnancies and HIV and AIDS. This way we will be able to attain the MDGs and combat the spread of HIV

I have also received reports of children who say that they have been victims of child trafficking. My suggestion is that experts in this area should visit my constituency and enlighten us of how we can be safe and where we can report.

My last issue is that of birth certificates. A large number of children in my constituency are not going to school the problem being that they cannot get access to birth certificates. My hope was that it was possible, madam or sir, before the end of the term in office; these children need to be back in school. If you provide them with birth certificates this will help achieve another millennium development goal that is, Achieving Universal Primary Education.

*Nemmy Ranganai
Junior MP. Zaka West*

Mwenezi East

Schools in resettlement areas should be improved. In the following schools: Bubi, Mucheni, Mateke, Chipangai, Marirangwe, in Mwenezi face harsh learning conditions because:

- 1) There are only pole and dagga classrooms that are leaky and not user friendly
- 2) There is no furniture and children learn while seated on the floor or lying on their stomachs on cow dung floors. Because of this school children do not take schooling seriously because it is not given due value in their communities hence they end up travelling to South Africa at tender ages or get married earlier.
- 3) There is no education learning material
- 4) Political parties should stop abusing school children. School children lose a lot of time attending rallies rather than attending school

Conclusion

More should be done to assist schools in resettled areas and providing study material.

*Courage Zinatsa
Junior MP, Mwenezi East*

Zaka North

In my constituency young girls are being raped by older men and in some cases by boys. This is resulting in outspread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS and syphilis. This will totally ruin the future of the girls. Cases of rape include a three year old girl who was raped by a 17 year old boy of the same family in Ward 2.

Additionally several vulnerable children particularly orphans are lacking parental guidance. This is resulting in these children indulging in horrible activities like drug and alcohol abuse as well as prostitution as a way of getting rid of stress and sourcing money to earn a living. Other children are not attending school lessons because of failure of their parents to afford the fees required for registration and tuition.

*Chareva Talent
Junior MP, Zaka North*

Bikita District

As a junior senator, I have identified some of the social and cultural practices affecting children. These factors are hindering them from accomplishing their goals by frustrating them from going to school and live freely in society.

Some children are not sent to school due to cultural and societal beliefs that have been adopted by their parents. Children are dropping out of school due to financial constraints. Others drop out in order to take care of their siblings because they live in child headed households. Parents are neglecting the girl child whom they regard as inferior and worthy to receive formal education because they believe boys are more important.

Some school children are not attending school and abusing drugs and also become prostitutes. The general lack of discipline is leading to poor pass rates. Teachers also tend to neglect children as well as parents and children end up behaving lawlessly.

Religion and health are closely related. Some children are not allowed to access medical treatment due to certain cultural beliefs and church laws that do not allow children to attend clinics regardless of the type of illness. This is leading to high mortality rates. On the other hand, some children are forced to get married to older men who are not of their choice due to church laws. Some of the children are pledged, while some are used in appeasing spirits or as *chimutsamapfihwa*. This makes the girl child vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases.

Junior Senator, Marirangwe High School

Bikita South Constituency

One of the major factors affecting children is early marriages. Young girls are forced to marry at a delicate age of 13. They are forced to drop out of school to get married to economically empowered men in the community such as business people. Poverty at times is a push factor. Three quarters of girls in Bikita South view school and the education process as a hindrance to the quick “high life” which is presumably brought by marriage. Some of the girls are given in as *chimutsamapfihwa* by their parents. This takes away their opportunity to pursue education. These marriages have affected the progress of young children in society but unfortunately there is a strong cultural element to this as many parents in the rural communities consider it traditionally appropriate to give their daughters away in marriage.

Some parents prefer educating males compared to girls. Boys are allowed to proceed to secondary education while girls are educated up to Grade 7. The girls are left with no option except to marry at a young age.

Some religious doctrines do not allow children to go to health care centres for immunization and medication. Not only do they abuse children’s rights to health but also deprive them of the right to education.

I found out that one 13 year old was being forced by the church elders to marry a polygamist with 15 wives. Boys are also prone to some harmful and cultural practices. During the 2004-2008 most young boys migrated to South Africa upon completing Grade 7. Some of the young boys became victims of xenophobic attacks.

While culture is embedded some of these practices can be eradicated with some serious effort and political will, these can be gradually changed for the better. Harmful practices against children continue to ravage society and if not adequately addressed, will have serious consequences for the future of the constituency.

*Ruth Mutema
Child MP, Bikita*

Malipati

From my constituency, I have observed with a heavy heart quite a number of child labour cases. Young boys are either employed or assigned full time to herd cattle at a very tender age. From the community’s point of view cattle come first before anything and child labour is

a crime. As for young boys that would have completed Grade 7, their parents stop sending them to school so that they can look for jobs – they drop their education for the glory of South Africa (Mzansi).

For the girl child, marriage is glorified and a life achievement. On the other hand girls in Form 2 are getting married in order to meet the needs of the family and then drop out of school.

In addition, the boy and girl child are expected to attend a ceremony for two months during the school term for them to be prepared for marriages. Thus, they will be absent from school lessons during that period. After the ceremony is done, the elders then encourage both sexes to get married. As for the boy child, they will be encouraged to seek employment. After the ceremony, the parents or guardians then deny supporting their child 100 percent and it forces the boy child to look for jobs and the girl child to get married.

Reggis Takauiza
Malipati High School

ANNEX II: LIST OF VISITED AREAS

DATE	LOCATION
17 December, 2013	Chikombedzi
17 December, 2013	Mwenezi-Neshuro
18 December, 2013	Ngundu
13 January, 2014	Hwange
14 January, 2014	Lukosi
27January, 2014	Uzumba
28 January, 2014	Mudzi
7 February, 2014	Roundtable, Harare

ANNEX III: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference for Consultancy: “Eliminating Harmful Social and Cultural Practices Affecting Children: Our Collective Responsibility”

The Junior Parliament established in 1999, is a child leadership development and representative Institution which is run by Zimbabwe Youth Council under the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment. Over the years, it has become a formidable institution in representing children’s development issues and concerns in Zimbabwe. Recognition and support from the Government has seen the Presidium and Government Ministers attending to submissions by the Junior Parliament with the most recent being the inclusion of their views in the new Zimbabwe Constitution.

The Junior MPs are elected annually and their activities for their term in office which lasts one year is guided by a theme set by the African Union. The African Union (AU) theme for 2013 is noted as “eliminating harmful social and cultural practices: our collective responsibility”. The current Junior Parliament hence seeks to address all forms of social and cultural practices that affect children in the country. It is to this end that the current Junior Parliament’s objective is to present the state of the nation regarding these harmful practices and make recommendations that the government will take on board in eliminating these practices affecting children.

Zimbabwe Youth Council seeks to engage a consultant who will help with this exercise. The research is to be carried out within two months where consultations are to be done in any 4 of our provinces and other hot spots that the consultant feels need attention. The Consultant is expected to engage the Junior MPs and other key stakeholders both in Government and the child sector. These research findings will go through a validation exercise where these informants/ participants will critic the outcome before submission to the government and other relevant stakeholders.

The Consultant is expected to come up with the following:

1. Guiding methodology for the assignment
2. Conduct focus group discussions
3. Conduct stakeholders’ validation
4. Compile draft and final report

The consultant is to state his/her Consultancy fees. The organization will cater for the travel and subsistence expenses.

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