

**Communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in the 18+ campaign towards ending child marriages in Chibombo District.**

**By  
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**A report submitted to the University of Zambia in Partial fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Communication for Development**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Tarisai Treasure Jangara**, do hereby declare that this report represents my own work, has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other University and does not incorporate any published work or material from another report.

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**APPROVAL**

This report of Tarisai Treasure Jangara is approved as fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of the degree Master in Communication for Development by the University of Zambia.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in the 18+ campaign towards ending child marriages in Chibombo District of Zambia. The study used the triangulation method. A total of 102 questionnaires were distributed to respondents in the six villages of Chibombo District. The six (6) villages were Chibombo, Mwamuyamba, Mulaisho from the new Boma and Kaonga, Pwangama and Chuno from the old Boma. In each village, seventeen (17) respondents were picked to make a total sample size of one hundred and two (102) people. The researcher conducted four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with residents of Chibombo ward. Two separate FGDs were conducted with boys' and girls' groups set up by Plan International Zambia in schools within Chibombo ward. The other two FGDs were held with women and men from the communities. The researcher also used in-depth interviews with a headman in Chibombo, a teacher who had been participating in Plan International Zambia's programmes, Paralegals trained by Plan International Zambia, and Plan International Zambia staff.

The findings of the study revealed that Plan International Zambia has a lot more to do for Chibombo residents to have more knowledge about child marriages. Chibombo has a population that has rural and urban characteristics, thus it is divided into two sections, the new and old Boma. In light of this, Plan International Zambia should come up with interventions that can accommodate the two populations as they differ when it comes to access to different media. Information on child marriages has been mainly received through the formation of girl clubs/child rights clubs and community meeting through the engagement of traditional leaders. However, Plan International Zambia should consider having girls' clubs in every school and ensure that a large proportion of boys are incorporated in these clubs. Materials with child marriage information should also be translated into local languages and distributed in communities and schools.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late friend, Sharon Netsai Muguwu. I think it would make you happy to know that memories of our friendship keep making me a better and stronger person. You were full of compassion and love which just made you the perfect friend. I loved you for being more than a friend. While it is frightening that you passed on very young, somehow, in your own way, you have prepared me for it. You shared your dreams with me and furthering your education was one of them. Therefore, dearest friend, this is just for you. I will forever love you.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Plan International Zambia has been playing a vital role in ending child marriages in the country. This research analyses the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in the 18+ campaign towards ending child marriages in Chibombo District.

Child marriage, defined as a legal or customary union before the age of 18, threatens children's well-being and constitutes multiple violations of their rights. Zambia has one of the highest rates of female child marriage in Africa, with a reported national prevalence of 42 per cent.

Zambia is a youthful nation with 50 per cent of the population below the age of 15 years old. On the other hand, children and youths in Zambia experience significant problems including child neglect, child labour, sexual abuse, child marriage and mostly affected by bad practices such as polygamy where young girls are married off to older men, and initiation ceremonies for girls who reach puberty also tend to prepare them for marriage way too early before their time. As a developing country, statistics show that Zambia has high levels of poverty having 64 per cent of its total population being poor with the rural population overall poverty levels at 80 per cent as compared to their urban counterparts at 34 per cent (UNICEF, 2015).

Violence and abuse of children and young people is widespread, with family, community and school environments frequently failing to provide the protection and care to which all children and young people are entitled.

Knowledge on children's rights is low and while the relevant structures for the promotion and protection of children's rights exist, the implementation of laws protecting children is weak. For example, the Zambian law stipulates that the legal age for marriage is 18; however, girls as young as 14 to 15 years are still being married off. In customary law, under which most child marriages take place, a child can be married when he/she reaches puberty. Again, while birth and marriage registration helps prove the age of spouses at the time of marriage, they are rarely produced or verified.

Zambia has signed and ratified a number of international and regional legal instruments relating to the protection of children's rights. These include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (PACHPRRWA), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Article 16(2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) compels State Parties to enter marriages in an official registry.

It is against this background that Plan International Zambia in 2014 embarked on several projects, campaigns and programmes targeted at the wellbeing of children in Zambia. Plan International Zambia aims at addressing challenges that affect children, young people and their parents to improve their quality of lives through empowerment and skills training.

Plan International embarked on a project dubbed 18+ programme on ending child marriage in Southern Africa which won the *"Most Successful Advocacy Campaign"* in the 2015 Global Awards. Plan International's 18+ Programme is a flagship initiative of the Global Girls Innovation Programme (GGIP) under Plan International's *Because I am a Girl* campaign. The 18+ Programme focuses on core drivers that perpetuate child marriage in five Southern African countries: Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The programme adopts a preventive, rather than a reactive, approach, thereby prioritising interventions that benefit girls aged 10 - 14 years old. The programme is aimed at mobilising girls at risk of child marriage so that they have the capabilities to determine their own future, especially choices about if, when and who they marry. The campaign also seeks to transform, through social movement building, the gender norms and practices that drive child marriage. The 18+ campaign also aims to facilitate an enabling legal and policy environment to protect girls from child marriage. Thus, this study analyses the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in the 18+ campaign towards ending child marriages in Chibombo ward located in Chibombo District, Central Province. The town lies near Lukanga Swamp, 95km north of Lusaka and 45km South-west of Kabwe on the Great North Road.

## **1.1 Background Information**

Based on the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, child marriage refers to marriage under the age of 18 (UN 2000). Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental human rights violation. Child marriage disproportionately affects young girls, who are much more likely to be married as children than young boys (Mathur et al 2003; UNICEF 2005; Save the Children 2004). The latest international estimates indicate that worldwide, more than 60 million women aged 20–24 were married before they reached the age of 18 (UNICEF 2007).

Several organisations have examined the causes and consequences of child marriage in some detail (Bott & Jejeebhoy 2003; Mathur et al 2003; UNICEF 2001), and many have highlighted promising programmatic approaches to prevent child marriage (e.g. USAID 2009; Hervish & Feldman-Jacobs 2011). However, comprehensive reviews to take stock of existing programmes have been more limited.

These reviews have uncovered important insights on the scope and range of interventions to address this problem. Many programmes recognise the multitude of factors driving the persistence of child marriage. These interventions have tried comprehensive or integrated approaches that engage communities, families and policymakers, while attempting to impart girl's skills, opportunities and empowerment. However, prevention efforts were not always focused in the countries with the highest rates of child marriage (Jain & Kurz 2007). And many efforts lacked scale and were not integrated into larger government initiatives or private sector drivers of economic and social change to be sustainable in the long run (Mukherjee et al 2008).

Most importantly, existing reviews of initiatives to prevent child marriage indicate that few of these have been evaluated (Jain & Kurz 2007; Hervish & Feldman-Jacobs 2011; Mukherjee et al 2008). For example, only 10 per cent of the programmes identified in the 2007 ICRW scan had been evaluated. Still fewer were evaluated using rigorous methodologies or included information about the evaluation process. Thus, while we know something about what has been attempted to prevent child marriage, we know little about how successful these efforts have been. To address this gap, this brief interrogates the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in its 18+ campaign to end child marriages in Chibombo ward.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The Marriage Act Chapter 50 of the Laws of Zambia establishes the legal age for marriage at 18 years and requires that consent, though not well defined, be obtained for anyone younger who wants to marry. For those requiring consent, section 33 stipulates that both parties must be at least 16 years old; otherwise the marriage shall be void. However, the provision can be averted by an application to a Judge of the High Court, who can consent to the marriage if the particular circumstances of the case are not contrary to the public interest.

The Marriage Act is not absolute in terms of defining the minimum age for marriage; it is open to interpretation on the issue of consent or circumstances in which a marriage involving persons younger than 18 might take place. According to the Penal Code Amendment Act of 2003, defilement or sex with anyone younger than 16 is prohibited. This legislation was also expected to act as a major deterrent to child marriage, but despite these efforts, early marriage persists in Zambia. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a child is defined as anyone from birth to the age of 18, unless the age of majority is attained earlier.

The term ‘child’ can range from new-born babies to unmarried males and females in their twenties who are still living with their parents or relatives. Childhood does not end abruptly when a person turns 18, but is instead a fluid and dynamic concept that involves the confluence of a number of individual, social and cultural factors. Puberty, completion of initiation rites, withdrawal from or completion of school, engagement in sexual relations, full-time labour, wage employment or development of the capacity to care for oneself and others—these, rather than age, are the markers of maturity used by children and adults alike. This process of change, from child to adult, can occur anytime from the approximate age of 12 or younger, for girls and 14 for boys.

Zambia signed the Convention on the Rights of Children in 1990 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1992 but does not consistently employ the definitions contained in these conventions.

Despite long-standing efforts to harmonise national laws with these instruments, the end of childhood in Zambia is legally defined as between 16 and 18 years. Communities however, tend

to understand a child in terms of developmental stages and achievements. Particular emphasis is placed on an individual's degree of helplessness, dependence or need for others to provide care, guidance and assistance.

As a result of poverty, lack of information and weaknesses in the law as well as traditional systems that fail to establish the right age for marriage, the problem of early child marriage remains largely unresolved and efforts to deal with it must be scaled up.

With this situation, the research was designed to focus on the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in fighting and ending early marriages. Analysing the communication strategies used in the 18+ campaign and how effective they have been in ending child marriages is the concern of this paper.

### **1.3 Rationale**

In the absence of communication, people will not know how to stop child marriages in the community. The research was undertaken to provide understanding of how relevant information will help people to reduce child marriages in their communities. Hence, communication is a vehicle to fight this challenge.

Plan International Zambia remains in a better position to influence change in attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour of the people in Chibombo. The study is useful for planning and implementing relevant communication programmes by Plan International Zambia, policy makers and other stakeholders aimed at preventing early child marriages.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The main objective is to evaluate the communication strategies used towards ending child marriages in Chibombo ward by Plan international Zambia in the 18+ campaign.

The following are the specific objectives:

1. To identify and assess the current communication strategies that Plan International Zambia's 18+ campaigns is using to sensitise the people on Child marriages prevention.

2. To examine what Plan International Zambia's 18+ campaigns is doing to provide the people with quality information on the prevention strategies.
3. To evaluate the knowledge base of the people in Chibombo ward on child marriages prevention.
4. To assess the response of people in Chibombo ward towards child marriages prevention messages.
5. To evaluate community involvement in child marriages prevention programmes.
6. To provide alternative means to effective communication in the prevention of Child marriages.

### **1.5 Research questions**

1. Are the current messages on child marriages by Plan International Zambia impacting on the population to bring about change in attitudes, values and behaviour that may end child marriages?
2. What are the strategic programmes Plan International is employing to disseminate information on prevention strategies of child marriages?
3. Do the people have knowledge on the prevention methods that are recommended to use?
4. To what extent has been their response to the available prevention means?
5. What is the source of people's information on modes of prevention?
6. What else needs to be done to provide quality information to the people on the means of prevention?

### **1.6 Structure of the report**

The chapters that follow are structured in the following manner: Chapter two examines past scholarly research work and findings in the world at large, Africa, and Zambia. Chapter three explains conceptual and operational definitions of concepts. It also discusses main theories and how they apply to the study. Chapter four provides methodology and research methods, sampling procedure, data gathering methods and data analysis. Chapter five provides data analysis and analytical interpretations of the findings. Chapter six is the discussion of results, while the concluding chapter seven provides recommendations.



## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the history of humankind, communication has been used to transmit values and to shape behaviour. In the literature review our aim is to derive a framework and to fill a gap in the literature on Zambia about the communication strategies used towards ending child marriages in Chibombo Ward. The literature also takes a glimpse of what other people have written about the subject and what they have not. The chapter has reviewed literature beyond Zambia.

### 2.1 What is child marriage?

For UNIFPA (2006) early marriage, also known as child marriage, is defined as “any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing. “Child marriage, on the other hand, involves either one or both spouses being children and may take place with or without formal registration, and under civil, religious or customary laws.

Various international conventions have an impact on child marriages and provide different definitions which determine its legality from an international perspective.

- a) **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):** Although child marriage is not explicitly addressed in the CRC, it is linked to a number of other rights and frequently highlighted as a serious rights violation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. A ‘child’ in this instance is anyone younger than 18 years.
  
- b) **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** Under CEDAW obligations, “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women”. CEDAW goes on to state that 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”.

- c) **The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages:** In addition to outlining the need for consent and registration of all marriages, this convention calls for legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage. It specifies that a marriage entered into by any person younger than this age should be considered illegal, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses.
- d) **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child:** The charter states that “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”.
- e) **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa:** Article 6 of the protocol promotes the equality of men and women in all aspects relating to marriage and, among other things, highlights the need for consent and marriage not to take place before the age of 18.

The lack of an overarching definition of early marriage in international conventions has generated some debate. Some scholars and activists, argue that instead of looking for a universal age at which girls and boys should not marry, the focus should be put instead on eliminating the unwanted effects of early marriage (Women’s human rights resources, <http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/Diana/index.htm>). For example, some commentators suggest that a universal age of marriage is not appropriate, in part because societies have different understanding of what it means to be a child as well as different socio economic and cultural realities. Bunting (1999) proposes that governments should be allowed to set the age of marriage below 18 years of age, but that the onus is on them to demonstrate that this lower age does not result in any adverse consequences for women.

In its 2013 report to the CRC Committee, which was considered in January 2016, the Government of Zambia conceded in relation to the definition of the child that: “Legislation

remains fragmented with regard to the definition of ‘child’ or the age of attainment of majority. Each relevant piece of legislation sets age limits that are appropriate for its purposes.

## **2.2 Perspectives on Child Marriage**

According to the 2016-2021 National Strategy on ending child marriage in Zambia, globally children most affected by child marriage are those who are poor, live in rural areas, and are out of school and without opportunities for labour force participation. Girls are significantly more likely than boys to be married off before the age of 18. It is estimated that globally some 700 million girls and women alive today were married off as children, and a further 280 million girls alive today will be married off by age 18 if current global action does not accelerate progress. Though girls are disproportionately affected, boys too are affected by child marriage, but with far less intensity than girls, at least 10% of boys (in at least 8 countries with data) are affected compared to over a third of the girls.

Child marriage is most prevalent in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and least common in North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Africa, home to 15 of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage, has the second highest rates of child marriage in the world after South Asia. West and Central Africa in particular follow closely on the heels of South Asia with two out of five (41%) girls marrying before the age of 18. Overall, 20-50 per cent of women in developing countries are married by the age of 18, with the highest percentages in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Singh and Samara 1996 cited by LeFevre et al. 2004).

Theories and debates surrounding the subject of early marriage, like other traditional cultural practices, are numerous and complex. There is a paradoxical existence of multiple forms and even cross national and regional variations of marriage customs and traditions. The existence of various customs and traditions within the institution of marriage alliances is well established. However, a comprehensive appraisal of the present position demands an impartial survey of the very considerable body of scattered and uncoordinated material on the socio-cultural, legal, economic, and political aspects of early marriage. Even though issues surrounding marriage alliances (including early marriage) converge and differ in many ways, efforts to challenge the status quo could be based on a unified agenda and prescriptive modes of action around common

denominators. The forces, which promote and sustain early marriage, are usually expressed in terms of socio-cultural, economic and legal factors. The selection of these common denominators forms part of the larger argument, which emerges from reading about the issues of early marriage in their individual or combined contexts (Heinonen 2002).

Based on the above general highlights, this section reviews literature on early marriage structured in socio-cultural, economic, human development, right-based, and legal frameworks.

### **2.2.1 The Socio-Cultural Framework: Customs and Traditions Related to Early Marriage**

The socio-cultural framework can be explored in terms of ‘customs’ and ‘traditions’ as two common denominators for the causes of early marriage. ‘Customs’ and ‘traditions’ can be understood as ‘man made doctrines, beliefs, practices, or stories that are passed from generation to generation, orally or by example’ (Heinonen 2002). Customs surrounding marriage, including the desirable age and the way in which a spouse is selected, depend on a society’s view of the family its role, structure, pattern of life and the individual and collective responsibilities of its members (UNICEF 2001a:5).

Early marriage and other traditional practices such as female genital mutilation are part of a complex social relationship related to family formation and sustainability of ethnic groups. Studies on marriage abound but often fail to incorporate early marriage in a holistic picture of the place of marriage in family formation, community building, the role and process of early marriage and its relations to other traditional practices (NCTPE 1997:197).

Viewed from a socio-cultural perspective, the reasons for early marriage are varied and many. Some of the most common socio-cultural reasons for early marriage are: to forge alliances/ links between families and to ensure that the girl is properly married while she is still a virgin and too young to act independently. In this context, early marriage may even occur where a family has made a pledge to give its daughter in marriage to a benefactor. Hence, the age of betrothal for girls in early arranged marriages might even be before birth takes place or after puberty (FMRWG 2000, 2001, 2003; Heinonen 2002). Here it should be noted that, in early arranged marriage, like forced marriage, the element of the girl’s consent is usually absent.

The themes of female purity and danger permeate entrenched beliefs for maintaining the status quo. In societies where the honour of the family depends upon the honour of its women, there is a strong link between early marriage and the social goal of maintaining the reputation of daughters. Consequently, virginity becomes a necessary preliminary as well as an absolute prerequisite to marriage. This is because once a girl has lost her virginity, and/or given birth out of wedlock, she is considered a woman, even if she is only 12 years old or younger (Heinonen 2002).

The socio-cultural justifications of parents for early marriage can be summed as: fear of being dishonoured as a result of delayed marriage and/or loss of virginity, to prevent abduction, to secure a proper marriage for daughters, and to forge links between families. More specifically, traditional justifications for early marriage may include: 1) Respect for traditions that dictate that girls should marry early; 2) The honouring of pledges to a family or a benefactor; 3) The strengthening of community ties; and 4) Girls given a substitute to the husband of a deceased sister (FMRWG 2000; Heinonen 2002). However, this does not tell us why particularly girls are married off early, rather than boys. The underlying reason behind early marriage is discrimination against girls and women from the time they are born and throughout their life cycle (FMRWG 2000, 2001, 2003). Hence, the themes of female purity and danger permeate entrenched beliefs for maintaining the status quo (Heinonen 2002).

With regard to why particularly girls that are married off earlier than boys, Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (FMRWG 2003:10) argues that:

“In general men tend to marry ... at a much older age than women or girls, and this is even reflected in some national laws where the legal minimum age for boys may be two or three years more than that for girls. Again, the national minimum age of marriage is often only applicable in statutory marriages and is hardly even enforced in religious or customary marriage. The notion of men as household heads means that most husbands are often financially better off and older than their brides. The age differences between spouses have serious consequences on the power dynamics between them, resulting in unequal partnerships in the marriage, social isolation, low-decision-making powers and coercion. It is common to find girl brides becoming widows at a very early age because of this age gap”.

In this regard, the underlying reason behind gender-specific socio-cultural justifications for early marriage can be further explored in the light of the economic framework or the economics of early marriage.

### **2.2.2 The Economic Framework: The Links between Early Marriage and Poverty**

From the economic point of view, young girls are often seen as an economic burden and married off. In this respect, early marriage for girls is viewed as a means of economic survival, i.e., if a girl is married early, the family has one mouth less to feed, and the hope is that the girl herself will be better off. In other words, parents may feel that marrying a daughter at a young age can help them economically (Heinonen 2002).

In this context, the link between early marriage and poverty is discussed in terms of ensuring a better future for girls, or of girls being financial burdens to their families. The latter is voiced in terms of “another mouth to feed”; the aim is securing the survival of the family, depriving a girl of her education in order to give a better chance to her brothers, since her labour power and children will go to her husband’s family anyway (Heinonen 2002; UNICEF 2001a; FMRWG 2000). Conversely, the prohibitively high bride price demanded by parents in some rural areas of Ethiopia is encouraging poor young men to abduct and rape underage girls in order to secure a marriage (Teshome Segni 2002).

A multitude of issues created by early marriage are increasingly associated with poverty and illiteracy. Recent studies show that poverty and illiteracy are the main causes for early marriage and its continuance. “Globally, early marriage and early childbearing have been more or less abandoned by the wealthiest section of society, even in poor and highly traditional countries. Virtually, everywhere, poor women in rural areas tend to marry younger than those in urban areas and educational levels also play a critical role” (UNICEF 2001a:5).

FMRWG (2003:11) further notes that, “poverty is a major cause, as well as a consequence, of early marriage for many young girls under the age of 18.” In many traditional settings, poor families use the early marriage of daughters as a strategy for reducing their own economic vulnerability, shifting the economic burden related to a daughter’s care to the husband’s family. Unfortunately, while this strategy may in some instances place the girl in a better-off family environment, in many

cases, the negative effects reinforce her vulnerability, and that of her children, to poverty in her marital home. “The younger the age at the time of marriage, the lower the probability that girls will have acquired critical skills and developed their personal capacity to manage adverse situations that may affect their overall welfare and economic well-being” (FMRWG 2003).

The foregoing discussions about the links between early marriage and poverty imply that the tradition of early marriage is part of a circle of “poverty”<sup>16</sup> in its broader sense. In this connection, FMRWG (2003:14-15) clearly states that:

*“There are over 1 billion people living below the poverty line (on less than a dollar a day), the majority of which are females and mainly live in rural areas of developing countries. This form of poverty is characterised by a lack of human capital such as livelihood, skills, education, interpersonal skills, good health (including sexual and reproductive health) and well-being. Additionally, the majority of poor people lack social assets and social networks (Diop et al 2002). Married adolescent girls, especially those from rural settings, are at most risk of being poor and will therefore manifest most of these characteristics of poverty. There is little information on the determinants of early marriage. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that the majority of married girls in rural communities tend to have mothers who are married early. Marriage becomes the only option available to such girls. Poorer mothers are more likely to transmit intergenerational poverty to their children....Children born to young mothers will be disproportionately affected by the ‘intergenerational transmission of poverty via nutrition which often begins in the womb of the malnourished mother’ (Harper et al 2003:3, 27). Such children become stunted and underweight in early life and also experience slow-cognitive development. This may lead to learning difficulties and adversely affect their development of life skills-which will also, in turn, limit their productivity and earning opportunities, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty into the next generation. This could be financial, material or environmental, or simply about acquisition of social values, knowledge or status...Young girls who have married early will therefore have fewer opportunities to acquire vital capabilities that can be used when they are in vulnerable situation.”*

Based on the above-mentioned statements, FMRWG (2003) strongly argues that poverty is gendered and affects men and women differently; strategies that target poverty do not address the

multi-dimensional nature of poverty and fail to focus on the most vulnerable. Existing gender disparities and socially prescribed roles for wives put undue pressure on young wives to meet these demanding responsibilities. Social issues around the transmission of poverty and the vicious circle of early marriage have not been adequately researched. However, available evidence indicates that social norms regarding access to and control over productive resources and assets within the household are biased against girls and can be exacerbated in situations where girls are married early and have very little decision-making power.

In addition, social pressures to bear many children results in the girls' preoccupation with childcare and their social isolation, while their lack of access to opportunities and resources is a hindrance to improve their vulnerability to social poverty.

In general, concerning the intergenerational cycle of early marriage and poverty, Tan (2004) further argues that once married, young girls will no longer be able to stay in school. They tend to be socially isolated, sequestered at home to raise another generation of children where daughters are again deprived of opportunities to break out the intergenerational cycles of early marriage and poverty. Ultimately, it is the society, which pays for this. The young brides as well as their children face greater risks for illness and death. The young brides also represent "wasted human capital", reduced to becoming "baby-makers" (Tan 2004). This remark will be further explored in the light of the human development framework.

### **2.2.3 The Human Development Framework: Early Marriage Hinders Overall Development**

In order to grasp how early marriage hinders overall development we need to conceptualize the concept of "human development" in terms of "education". In other words, the human development framework revolves around the concept of "education" as a development theme. In the 1970s, education was "rediscovered" as a development theme; but this owed less to the view that education was intrinsically important than to the recognition that it was essential for economic growth, which was seen as the real measure of development. In the terminology adopted and popularised by the World Bank, "education was a form of 'human capital' capable of generating high returns for economic growth" (OXFAM 2000a:15).



Here, according OXFAM, education matters because it is a fundamental human right, and because it is intrinsically important in its own right. It opens new horizons and raises the quality of life. However, education is also a means to achieving wider human development ends, including higher living standards, improved public health, and democratisation. It is one of the most powerful catalysts for poverty reduction. Viewed from the opposite angle, educational deprivation is an equally powerful cause of poverty. “The intergenerational cycle of illiteracy and poverty admittedly involves many complex, deep-rooted issues for which there is no simple solution” (OXFAM 2000a:3).

When we come to the relationship between early marriage and education as a means to achieving wider human development, early marriage seriously hampers the girls’ educational and social development. It also has serious health and social implications for children. Ultimately, early marriage has implications for the well-being of families and the society as a whole. Hence, where girls are uneducated and ill-prepared for their roles as mothers and contributors to the society, there are costs to be borne at every level, from the individual to the household to the national as a whole (UNICEF 2001a:9).

Education, even at a basic level, is not only about livelihood and technical skills but more importantly provides social ‘connectedness’ or aptitude which enables one to access key resources to alleviate poverty (Harper, et. al 2003:13, in FMRWG 2003:13). However, girls who are married early are often denied access to education or pulled out of school, diminishing the opportunity to acquire critical life skills, which will enable them to escape poverty related conditions. Some parents even fear that formal education of girls will increase their bride price (FMRWG 2000) and so be a deterrent to prospective husbands. For a number of poor families, the potential rewards of educating daughters are too off and therefore their education is not recognised as an investment. Families perceive that a girl’s education will only benefit her husband’s household, and not her parents.

Prevailing gender norms on the roles of girls focus mainly on marriage, and as such it becomes acceptable to remove girls from school for marriage. In some cases, girls are not even allowed to

go to school at all, because an education is perceived as unnecessary for becoming wives and mothers (FMRWG 2003:12).

Of course, all children from poorer households are less likely to go to school; however, this is more so for girls than boys. This gender gap in educational enrolment is also more pronounced in rural communities. Early marriage is often linked to low levels of schooling for girls (AGI 1997).

Studies confirm that school attendance is lowest for married girls aged 15-19. Some research findings suggest that early marriage is the main cause of high dropout rates for girls. Other studies show a sudden drop in the proportion of girls in school between the ages of 13 and 14 years. It is unclear whether girls are removed from school to be married or girls are withdrawn from school because of other reasons, such as the quality of the education, girl's low educational attainments or parents' fears for the safety of adolescent girls. Furthermore, many societies in which early marriage takes place believe that giving information to girls on contraception and other matters concerning sexuality encourages promiscuity, which can lead to unwanted pregnancy and family shame. This denial of girls' rights to make informed decisions about their sexual lives and to plan their families persists into their marriage, resulting in decision-making on reproductive matters becoming the domain of husbands (FMRWG 2003).

In general, the continuing gaps in literacy rates and schooling between the sexes and the comparatively limited access of women to various types of resources must be realised and dealt with. "Women's lives are, to a large extent, bounded by their activities and responsibilities as wives, mothers, and food producers, processors and distributors. Women are seriously vulnerable to the physical dangers of unattended births. It is also noted that high parity (high birth rate), which leads to a high risk of mortality greatly impair their health" (Adepoju and Oppong 1994:4, in Hirut Terefe 2000:44). Hence, exploring how poor health status, including sexual and reproductive health, illiteracy, social exclusion and powerlessness affects married girls provides a better understanding of their vulnerability to poverty. Where these elements are linked with gender inequalities and biases for the majority of young girls in rural communities, their socialisation which grooms them to be mothers and submissive wives, limits their development to only reproductive roles (FMRWG2003:12).

#### **2.2.4 A Right-Based Approach: Early Marriage and the Human Rights of Girls and Women**

A right-based approach to early marriage is founded on the universal principles of human rights. Human rights are a set of common standards that every individual is entitled to enjoy by virtue of being human, because they are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and enshrined in international conventions, agreements, and declarations (FMRWG 2003).

At the national level, the governments which signed the Convention in 1948 are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of their citizens, according to this convention. Human rights not only give power to individuals, they are “rich”, infinitely mouldable raw materials out of which individuals, communities, and societies can shape their reproductive and sexual liberty (Cooke et. al 2003:215, in FMRWG 2003:28). However, girls and women’s human rights, and sexual and reproductive decision-making remain contentious in a number of countries because of cultural and religious reasons. The legal context of women’s marriage life often reflects the society’s attitudes towards females (FMRWG 2003).

Even in countries that have signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), there is a discrepancy between the legal minimum age of marriage and the actual age of marriage, due to “official tolerance of cultural, societal and customary norms that shape and govern the institution of marriage and family life (Center for Reproductive Rights, CRR 2000:52, in FMRWG 2003:16).

These social norms make the legal national minimum age difficult to enforce. Additionally, in a number of countries, the law recognises three types of marriage: customary, religious and civil. Often the minimum age of marriage is only applicable in civil marriage. In some countries that have a legal minimum age of marriage, there is unequally defined age for boys and girls. The legal minimum age of marriage for boys is often two years higher than that of girls. This lower age of marriage often reflects an influence of tradition and religion. Most early marriages in developing countries result from parental choice, and often do not require the consent of the girl. In countries where the legal age of marriage is below 18 years, marriage with parental consent does not refute the fact that such marriages are “early marriages.”

Any individual under 18 who is willing to marry, which has lifelong implications, is considered to lack the full understanding required to make an informed decision (FMRWG 2001). Unfortunately, for many girls under 18 in developing countries, they are no longer categorised as children (FMRWG 2003:16). In short, early marriage, because of its harmful consequences, violates the rights of children, in particular girls, in relation to such matters as health, survival and development, education, and protection from sexual and other forms of exploitation.

Within a rights perspective, three key concerns are: 1) The denial of childhood and adolescence; 2) The curtailment of personal freedom, the lack of opportunity to develop a full sense of self-hood; and 3) The denial of psychosocial and emotional well-being, reproductive health and educational opportunity. When children are married off at an early age, they are denied their human rights, foremost their right to be children. Early marriage constitutes a violation of a girl's human rights because it can deprive her of the right to give full and free consent to marry. It also deprives children, particularly girls, of an education.

With specific reference to the situation of early marriage and women's life cycle in Africa, the following statement reveals the actual reality:

“In the traditional subsistence situation, early marriage is the norm for women and woman's life is closely oriented around her capacities to reproduce and provide for her family. Arduous involvement in child bearing and rearing and the economic and domestic activities required for the maintenance of children continues throughout life (Adepoju and Oppong 1994:22). The life cycle and plight of the average African women were aptly clarified from the description of UN report of 1975. Before the age of 20, the African female child carried a full load of adult responsibilities. By the age 25 she might have given birth half a dozen times and by the age 40 she might already be exhausted by illness, poor nutrition, child bearing and heavy work in the field and at home, which leads to early death” (Hirut Terefe 2000:45).

When one considers the impact of early marriage on the lives of children, particularly girls, it is clear that the practice violates a range of human rights, including those contained in the Convention

on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Governments who have signed these conventions are obliged to ensure that these rights are fulfilled without cuts and must therefore take steps to prevent early marriage. CRC and CEDAW regularly urge state parties to raise the minimum age at marriage and to set the same minimum age for girls and boys. In a General Recommendation, the CEDAW Committee has recommended that “the minimum age be set at 18, because when men and women marry, they assume important responsibilities. Consequently, marriage should not be permitted before they have attained full maturity and capacity to act.”

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is also opposed to forced marriages at any age, where the notion of consent is non-existent and the views of bride or groom are ignored, particularly when those involved are under the age of UNICEF also believes that “because marriage under the age of 18 may endanger a wide range of human rights (including the right to education, leisure, good health, freedom of expression, and freedom from discrimination the best way to ensure the protection of children’s right is to minimum age limit of 18 for marriage” (UNICEF 2001a, 2002c, 2002d). Generally speaking, according to international conventions and declarations, girls are adequately protected against the abuse of early marriage, yet it is still taking place. However, early marriages violate the right of children with often more negative consequences for girls.

Furthermore, the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC 1995, in FMRWG 2003) states that the majority of countries have set a minimum legal age of marriage of 15 years, but this varies throughout the world, and is often different for girls and boys. In this connection, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF 1993, in FMRWG 2003) argues that “while at first glance a higher minimum age for men appears to discriminate against women, these laws and traditions tend to be based on ideas of women’s inferiority. They imply that women need fewer years to prepare for marriage as their duties are confined to childbearing or domestic roles”. Furthermore, the age for marriage with parental consent is invariably lower and although it should, does not require the consent or the presence of those getting married since the families of the future spouses are very much involved

in the negotiation. Hence, marriage without the child's consent, where only parental consent is necessary, reveals a flaw in safeguarding the minimum age of marriage (FMRWG 2003).

In short, though the international conventions and declarations are aimed at protecting girls from the harmful consequences of early marriage, in developing countries, including Ethiopia, girls are married early mainly for socio-cultural and economic reasons. There is also the problem of defining when a girl is too young to marry in the International Conventions, such as the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC). CRC is near universally ratified, but it does not state that early marriage is prohibited, although many of the articles protect the child through other means, such as the right to have their views taken into account and a right to education (FMRWG 2000).

Above all, CRC as well as other related international conventions do not clearly state when a girl is too young to marry and various provisions that deal with age of marriage do not have a commonly accepted definition to "early marriage". Thus, lack of an overarching definition of "early marriage" in international conventions has generated some debate. Some scholars and activists argue that instead of looking for a universal age at which girls (and boys) should not marry, we should focus instead on eliminating the unwanted effects of early marriage. For example, some commentators (such as Bunting 1999) suggest that a universal age of marriage is not appropriate, in part because societies have different understanding of what it means to be a child as well as different socio-economic and cultural realities.

Viewed from the anthropology of human rights, women, either all of the time or in specific contexts, have obviously been viewed as different from men- a separate category of person or nonperson that never totally belongs to the social unit's category of person - or some fraction of full adult human status (Strathern 1972, in Messer 1996:185). The political, economic and social structures that deny women full personhood may also deny them human rights (Messer 1996:185-186). More specifically, in local communities, definitions of personhood are embedded in cultural values that set women apart. In this connection, Savell's article entitled "Striking a Balance between Cultural Sensitivity and International Human Rights Standards" (1996) examines the role of international human rights norms as a means of criticising traditional cultural practices. In order

to achieve an intelligent and informed debate on traditional cultural practices, Savell (1996) stresses the need for cross-cultural dialogue that recognises cultural and historical differences and concern to a particular cultural tradition should respond to “human rights concerns” within that cultural tradition.

Currently, cultural practices, including early marriage and FGM, have attracted considerable and criticism from commentators outside practicing cultures, whereas internal commentators have been addressing the issues from the point of view of their own cultural traditions within their communities. In response to these internal and external processes (sometimes reflective, sometimes ill-informed) a cross-cultural dialogue has emerged (Savell 1996).

In this cross-cultural dialogue, according to Savell, focusing on women’s experiences is necessary for the following reasons. First, with this perspective, outsider assertions about the nature and reasons for the continuation of a certain cultural practice can be tested and, perhaps, challenged.

Second, we can appreciate the form and content of the internal struggles and debates surrounding the issue. Finally, we might subsequently engage in a form of criticism that supports those internal agitators in culturally appropriate ways (Savell 1996). In this regard, Savell has attempted to demonstrate that by taking a dynamic view of culture as a series of on-going internal and external debates, the role of cross-cultural dialogue in expanding cross-cultural understanding of human rights looks promising. She has also argued that this approach opens opportunities for discourse by orienting us to the cultural and historical assumptions that feed the human rights debate. This approach encourages us to re-evaluate theoretical positions and strategies in light of the actual (rather than imagined or imposed) experiences and priorities of those with the cultural tools to devise the best strategies for dealing with human rights concerns. At the same time, Savell argues that the cross cultural dialogue should not be used to silence external criticism, but such criticism should be supportive of and sensitive to the substance of internal debate and norms.

### **2.3 Context of early marriage in Zambia**

Zambia is among the top twenty countries with the highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world. The 2013-2014 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) found that child marriage

was more common among girls than boys: 17 per cent of girls aged 15-19 are married compared to only 1 per cent of boys of the same age group. The practice disproportionately affects, and has affected Zambian females, as 42 per cent of women aged 20-49 report having married before age 18, compared to 4.2 per cent of men. The practice however, seems to be on the decline, as older generations are more likely to report a younger age of first marriage: 13.2 per cent of women aged 45-49 were married before age 15 (and 53.7 per cent before age 18) compared to 5.9 per cent (and 31.4 per cent) of women aged 20-24.

The rates of child marriages in Zambia vary from province to province, and are as high as 60 per cent in the Eastern Province, followed by Luapula (50 per cent), Northern (48 per cent), North-Western (47 per cent), Central (46 per cent), Southern (38 per cent), Western (34 per cent), Copperbelt (32 per cent) and Lusaka (28 per cent). These marked differences in prevalence by area of residence suggest that more information is needed on how the social, historic and economic reality in which children and families live influences or mitigates decisions related to child marriage (Child Frontiers, 2015).

The minimum legal age for marriage in Zambia is 16 years for both men and women, and parental consent is required if either party is below 21 years of age. The existing legal framework in Zambia is not absolute in terms of defining the minimum age for marriage. The legal system is dualist in nature and, as a result, marriages can take place in accordance with either customary or statutory law. The Marriage Act establishes the legal age for marriage at 21 but also allows younger people to marry subject to written consent being given parent or guardian, as appropriate in a given situation. For those requiring consent, section 33 stipulates that both parties must be at least 16 years old – otherwise the marriage will be void. However, this provision can be averted by an application to a judge of the High Court who can consent to the marriage if the particular circumstances of the case are not contrary to the public interest.

The National Gender Policy defines 'child marriage' as marriage of children younger than 18 years. According to the Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 1 of 2012, defilement or sex with anyone younger than 16 is prohibited, and this legislation was expected to act as a major deterrent to child marriage. Similarly, the Education Act (part IV, section 18) provides for offences against any person who marries a student, or takes a child out of school to be married. The Act further enables



everyone with the right to go to school, regardless of marital status. These provisions may however be circumvented due to the constitutional exceptions given to customary marriage. That the legal framework remains open to interpretation is an on-going concern for efforts to end child marriage.

Under customary law, the age of consent is lower than what is defined in the Marriage Act or the Constitution and is often described as coinciding with puberty. Statutory law is supposed to take precedence over customary law, but this is often not the case in practice. Research findings indicate that the majority of Zambians, especially those living in rural areas, follow customary law because it is the legal system which they are most familiar with and to which they have access. While traditional authorities are often aware of and familiar with statutory law, they may not be willing to enforce it in practice or develop by-laws that provide similar levels of protection for children. If the provisions of statutory law are not enforced by traditional leaders, then marriages involving children are likely to persist.

The incidence of early marriage is high, because customary marriages usually take place soon after a girl reaches puberty. A 2004 United Nations report estimated that 24 per cent of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed.

According to the Zambia Law Development Commission's 2002 report on customary law, all the ethnic groups found in Zambia do not have a specific age for marriage. Puberty is the determining factor for a girl to marry, with some ethnic groups allowing a little longer time after a girl becomes of age.

More so, the 2013–2014 ZDHS found that 13 per cent of women aged 25–49 had their first sexual intercourse by the age of 15, with 58 per cent by the age of 18, and 75 per cent by the age of 20. The median age at reported first sexual intercourse among women aged 25–49 was 17.3 years, a figure that is almost one year younger than the median age at first marriage (18.4 years). This finding suggests that Zambian women initiate sexual intercourse a year before their first marriage. The median age at reported first sexual intercourse among men aged 25–49 was one year later, at 18.3 years.

The ZDHS also established that 28.5 per cent of girls aged 15-19 in Zambia have begun childbearing, with 33.6 per cent of women aged 20-49 reporting that they were under 18 at first birth. Teenage pregnancy is a major social and health issue with severe problems for both the adolescent mother and the child, both in the short term and on an intergenerational level. Adolescent pregnancy and motherhood are strongly associated with education and wealth indicators: 53.2 per cent girls (15-19) with no education began childbearing early, in contrast with only 23.1 per cent of girls with a secondary education. Similarly, 44.5 per cent of girls 15-19 in the lowest wealth quintile have begun childbearing, compared with 10.3 per cent of those in highest wealth quintile.

## **2.4 Reasons for Early Marriage in Zambia**

The factors presented below are not a particularity of Zambia or African countries because they seem to be almost the same all over the world with very few disparities due to cultures.

### **2.4.1 Economic survival strategies**

Poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden where one less daughter is one less mouth to feed (UNICEF 2001, Forum on marriage and the rights of women and Girls 2001; Mathur 2003 and Nour 2006).

Parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children in hope that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family.

The marriage to a much older – sometimes even elderly – man is practice common in some in traditional societies in Sub-Saharan Africa; the bride's family may receive cattle from the groom, or the groom's family, as the bride price for their daughter, (UNICEF 2001).

In traditional societies – where infant mortality was very high and survival depended on a family's ability to produce its own food or goods for sale – child marriage helped to maximise the number of pregnancies and ensure enough surviving children to meet household labour needs (Mathur

2003). Additionally, poor families tend to marry off girls at the same time to help reduce the burden of high marriage ceremony expenses.

#### **2.4.2 Socio-cultural and religious values**

In communities where child marriage is prevalent, there is strong social pressure on families to conform. Failure to conform can often result in ridicule, disapproval or family shame. Invariably, local perceptions on the ideal age for marriage, the desire for submissive wives, extended family patterns and other customary requirements, are all enshrined in local customs or religious norms. In many contexts child marriage is legitimised by patriarchy, and related family structures, which ensure that marriage transfers a father's role over his girl child to her future spouse. The marriage or betrothal of children in parts of Africa and Asian is valued as a means of consolidating powerful relations between families, for sealing deals over land or other property, or even for settling disputes (UNIFPA, 2006).

Additional socio-cultural factors that perpetuate early marriages are as follows:

- a) **Lack of Knowledge:** It may also be thought that parents approve and practice early marriage because they are ignorant or not fully aware of its negative consequences upon their children. Lack of information for parents and community on dangers of child marriages, harmful cultural practices, importance of education for both girls and boys, respect for children's rights and other such relevant information makes children vulnerable to abuse and to early marriages. Like lack of formal education, lack of information limits the options for survival available to children. The importance of access to information in eradicating child marriages, therefore, cannot be overemphasised. The failure of girls and their families to access information that would help them mitigate the threats to their lives aggravates the dangers.
  
- b) **Cultural practices** (for example Chinamwali for girls and Gule wa Mkulu or Nyau for boys in Chadiza, and Nkolola for girls in Mazabuka) are said to influence girls and boys to enter marriages early. Polygamy is also seen as a cultural issue. Older men pick young girls as junior wives in their polygamous marriages. Polygamous marriages also lead to big families where parents fail to support all the children financially and morally. Such children are vulnerable to early marriage.

- c) **Death of Parents/Orphan hood:** Death of one or both parents usually leaves children with no proper care and support. In search of love, security and comfort, these children become vulnerable to early marriage.
- d) **Inadequate enforcement of the law:** another important reason for the continuity of the practice of early marriage – in spite of the legal provisions – is the perception that the laws and their consequences pose little real threat. This is mainly due to the fact that some community members are not aware of the law which criminalises and penalises the practice.
- e) **Negative Impact of modernisation:** It is often argued that due to modernity and human rights issues, most parents have lost the grip on their children. As a result, premarital pregnancies are increasing among school girls, which are regarded as a disgrace to their families. This is considered a genuine traditional explanation for promoting child marriage.

## **2.5 Key issues surrounding early marriage**

There tends to be a relationship between age of marriage, level of education, poverty, and health: poorer, less educated girls tend to marry earlier and tend also to have poorer health. The following consequences tend to flow from early marriage:

### **2.5.1 Health and related outcomes**

**Early child bearing and unwanted pregnancies:** Young girls who get married will most likely be forced into having sexual intercourse with their, usually much older, husbands. This has severe negative health consequences, as the girl is often not psychologically, physically and sexually mature.

Early marriage is associated with early child bearing. Young married girls are under tremendous pressure to prove their fertility in the first year of marriage. Girls, who marry young, inevitably, have children early, and have many children, because their knowledge of contraception is poor and their power to negotiate its use is weak.

**Domestic violence and sexual abuse:** As young girls are often married to men who are much older than themselves, the age difference tends to reinforce the powerlessness of the girl, who is thus at

greater risk of abuse and less likely to assert herself. Young married girls are more likely to be beaten or threatened and more likely to believe that a husband might sometimes be justified in beating his wife. Women who believe that are more likely to have been married before age 18 than those who believe that there is never justification. Child brides are often more susceptible to domestic violence. (USAID Gender Assessment, 2003-2005).

**High maternal mortality and morbidity:** The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that the risk of death following pregnancy is twice as great for women between 15 and 19 years than for those between the ages of 20 and 24. The maternal mortality rate can be up to five times higher for girls aged between 10 and 14 than for women of about twenty years of age. Pregnant adolescents face far more health problems than older women, particularly single girls who often receive less prenatal care.

Adolescents are far more susceptible to suffering from anaemia than adults, which greatly increase the risk and complications linked to pregnancy. They are equally more at risk of malnutrition, high blood pressure linked to pregnancy than women who are over 20, (Women's International Network 2000 and IHEU 2006)

**Increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and AIDS:** Fear of HIV infection, for example, has encouraged men in some African countries to seek young virgin – and therefore uninfected –partners. On top of pregnancy-related complications, young married girls are also at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and AIDS. Young married girls are even at higher risk because their older husbands may already be infected in previous sexual relationships. Furthermore, the age difference between the girl and the husband and her low economic status make it almost impossible for the girl to negotiate safe sex or demand fidelity. Early marriage usually means that young girls enter marriage without adequate information about critical sexual intercourse, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and childbirth.

### **2.5.2 Lack of power**

It is hypothesised that women who are married as children have less decision making power than women whose marriage is delayed until adulthood. They do not have ability to make decision on

their own health care, contraception, household budget, daily household purchases, visit to family and friends etc., (UNICEF, 1996). They have little power in relation to their husbands and in-laws.

### **2.5.3 Divorce or abandonment and Early Widowhood**

Some desperate girls and women who have been forced into marriage try to run away or take other avenues to leave their spouses; others are abandoned by their spouses. However, the girls and women are usually left with the responsibility of raising children without the husband or family's financial support, thus making them more likely to live in poverty. In many cultures, husbands are often many years older than their young brides, and consequently die while the girl is still young. Traditionally, girls were not allowed to remarry or were passed onto their dead husbands' brothers. Furthermore, the girl's families are unlikely to accept her back once she has become widowed, (UNICEF 2001). In cultures that permit polygamy, the youngest co-wife is required to care for elder co-wives. This relationship is sometimes a daughter/mother relationship, but in many cases the elder wives view the younger with bitterness and resentment.

### **2.5.4 Consequences for children**

The health problems linked to early marriage not only affect the pregnant mother and the foetus, but also continue after childbirth. The consequences reach beyond the lives of young married girls themselves to the next generation. The immaturity and lack of education of a young mother undermines her capacity for nurture evidence shows that infant mortality among the children of very young mothers is higher – sometimes two times higher – than among those of older peers, (UNICEF2001).

Again, the 2013 MDG Progress report points to child marriage as one of the triggers of maternal mortality. It is estimated that 38 mothers die each month due to complications relating to pregnancy and childbirth in Zambia. These conditions are disproportionately pronounced among teen mothers. Thus, maternal mortality is still high and only declining at a very slow rate from 649 deaths/per 100,000 live births in 1997 to 483 (UNFPA 440) in 2010.

## **2.6 Effect of early marriage on girl's education**

The school is the most important institution outside the family involved in socialising young people into all dimensions of adult roles and responsibilities. More years of schooling have been associated with many positive outcomes, including later ages of marriage, lower fertility, and healthier and better educated children, economic development. However, early marriage inevitably denies children of school age their right to the education they need for their personal development, their preparation for adulthood, and their effective contribution to the future wellbeing of their family and society. Indeed, married girls who would like to continue schooling may be both practically and legally excluded from doing so. The essence of the rights to education and to health is that they facilitate and ensure the effective enjoyment of other human rights.

A Central Statistical Office (CSO) report of 2010 carried out by Plan Zambia indicates, “Only a few adolescent girls and boys complete upper primary education while the enrolment ratio in secondary education is 13.4 per cent for males and 12.9 per cent for females.” The report concludes that child marriage is the critical driver for this state of affairs.

For a number of poorer families, the potential rewards of educating daughters are too far off and therefore their education is not recognised as an investment. Families perceive that a girl's education will only benefit her husband's household, and not her parents. Additionally, some parents believe that girls do not need an education for their roles as wives and mothers, that education undermines cultural practices, and it teaches the girl to reject tradition. The following citation illustrates well the case: “At the age of about 14 years, my father sent me to my uncle so that he could let his wife train me for marriage. He believes that if continued to go to school, I would be a spoilt girl” and no man would agree to marry me. Being a spoilt girl meant that I would be too wise to marry back in his village where he could get my dowry, (Womankind 1999 cited by the Forum on marriage and the rights of Women and girls, 2000: p.18).

However, there is a saying that when you educate a woman you educate a nation. Education, even at a basic level, is not only about livelihood and technical skills but more importantly provides social ‘connectedness’ or aptitude which enables one to access key resources to alleviate poverty. By interacting with others, individuals acquire the social skills and personal capacities needed to

access resources and opportunities, and to form social networks for support and assistance when required in the future. Individuals can also develop their self-esteem and confidence to voice their opinions and to take control over their own actions, lives and bodies. Other positive benefits of education are linked to better reproductive health and child survival and welfare, (Naana Otoo-Oyortey and Sonita Pobi 2003).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Although respective governments and society are doing much to abolish early marriages through campaigns, laws, policies and individual support of people, the problem is still rampant world over. Child marriage constitutes a serious violation of children's rights, and is a huge barrier to development. The UNFPA estimated in 2012 that if child marriage trends are to continue, 142 million girls will be married worldwide in the next decade (during the period 2011- 2020). This translates into an average of 14.2 million girls who will marry every year. These numbers could be even higher, reaching 151 million girls by the end of the period 2021-2030. The implications of this projected growth are astounding, and urgent action is required.

Early marriage which is also referred to as child marriage is common all over the globe and has inflicted dangerous and devastating effects on young children who are compelled to tie the knot in most cases. As mentioned in the literature review, child marriage is also indicative of the levels of development of a region or country and is generally conducted between very young girls and older men. The literature review has also explored causes of early marriages which include: raising the economic and social status, religious hurdles and barriers, gender bias, lack of education, myths and misconceptions about early marriage. This highlights the necessity for all people in general and young ones in particular to receive relevant information on early marriages. Thus, this study attempts to fill the communication gap by focusing on the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia towards ending child marriages in Chibombo ward of Chibombo district.



## **CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter, the researcher gives definitions of concepts and theories and their application to the study.

### **3.1 Marriage**

A marriage is a legally recognised union between a man and a woman in which they are united sexually, cooperate economically, and may have children through birth or adoption. (Strong, DeVault, and Sayad, 1998)

In Zambia there are principally two ways by which marriage can be contracted. There are:

- a) Civil marriages - Civil marriages are those contracted in accordance with an Act of Parliament (they are also known as statutory marriages because they emanate from statute). In this marriage, two people can contract a marriage and have it solemnised by the registrar of marriage or a gazetted minister of religion. Under the Zambian civil law, a person aged 21 years is eligible for marriage.
  
- b) Customary marriages - In customary law, a marriage is a union between people in accordance with their customary practices. Many customs in Zambia do not limit the number of people who would be part of this union, but the practice is that the union comprises of one man and one or more women. The marriages contracted under Zambian laws and traditions are usually valid only after definite steps are taken. According to the Zambian customary law, a child who attains puberty is old enough to be married.

### **3.2 Development**

The general definition of development includes the specifications that social groups have access to organisations, basic services such as education, housing, health services, nutrition and above all else that their cultures and traditions are respected within the social framework of a particular country (Bwalya 2010, p. 4).

Dudley Seers (2006) defines development as the “reduction and elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment within a growing economy.” While Michael Todaro (2006) suggests that improving living standards must ensure wider economic and social choices. He argues that

development should “expand the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence, not only in relation to other people and nation states but also to the forces of ignorance and human misery.”

Communication for Development Manual (2002) defines development as a long process of qualitative and quantitative changes in society in political, economic, social and cultural terms, which leads to individual or collective well-being.

Development in this study will be looked at as a progression of people from less human conditions to more human conditions. The problem of child marriages hinders social development and economic growth and it results into poverty in people because it stifles full realisation of human life.

### **3.3 Communication**

A lot of definitions have been made regarding the term communication, but these attempts by various scholars to define the term have landed in the predicament of there is no single approach to the study of communication (Madondo, 2000:36). According to McQuail, the term communication is the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills by the use of symbols like words, pictures, figures, graphs, etc.

Communication involves co-orientation and sharing of meaning. We share some of the meanings of the words or gestures because we speak the same language and belong to the same culture. Communication also occurs in a context and, as such, it is contextual. Communication in context will have different characteristics from communication in another context. For instance, there is more feedback in family communication than in mass communication (Infante et al, 1997:492)

According to Julia Wood (2004), communication is “a systemic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings.”

Initially communication was regarded as information transmission from the sender to the receiver. The earliest model of communication assumes a relatively linear process whereby someone sends

a message to another person via a channel and then gets a response called feedback. The linear system of communication is in reality involved in economic and political processes of society (Bwalya 2010, p.3). Communication opens the doors of social change and is key to human development. It could, therefore, be said that communication is important in child marriages prevention awareness campaigns.

### **3.3.1 Types of communication**

#### ***a) Intra personal communication***

The part of communication in which self of a human being is involved only and the communication is confined to one human entity. This means that all the elements which come into action in a given piece of communication are located within the self of an individual. A message originating from some part of the brain travels through the channel of nerves to reach another location, however close it may be to the point of origin of message, where it is interpreted and understood as receiver.

#### ***b) Inter personal communication***

This part of communication belongs to involving two or more individuals for exchange of information. Since this part is experienced more due to its vastness, it is further classified in many categories.

#### ***c) Group Communication***

More often people are seen exchanging views with almost all the participants enjoying an equal status on one count or the other. Like all the players of a hockey team, class-fellows, doctors, teachers, bureaucrats, politicians, economists etc.

#### ***d) Organisational communication***

In this part, communication usually takes place on vertical lines. For instance, a company director is passing on instructions to managers who would be guiding accordingly to field officers and relevant other field staff.

An army general may not be talking to lowest rank men in khaki but would follow the chain of organisational command to deliver his message to the last rank people. Be it a corporate sector, NGO, a political party, an educational institution, the communication process would strictly follow the essentials of organisational communication.

*e) Mass Communication*

### **3.5 Communication for Development**

According to Ilboudo (2002), the concept of communication within the context of development can be stated with the following definition: Communication for development implies the use of a communication process, techniques and media to raise people's awareness of their own situation and of the options they have at their disposal for activities involving change, as well as helping to resolve social conflicts and working together to reach a consensus. In addition, it should assist people in planning activities involving change and sustainable development, so that they are aware of the knowledge and qualifications needed to improve their living conditions, and those of their community, and the effectiveness of local and national government.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has a similar definition as above. According to it, "Communication for Development is the planned and organised use of techniques and means of communication (media or otherwise) in the promotion of development, through a change of attitude and/or behaviour, through the dissemination of the necessary information and through encouraging the active and conscious participation of all stakeholders, including the beneficiaries, in the process."

### **3.6 Participatory Communication for Development**

The concept participatory communication for development entails the use of different modes of communication such as mass media, interpersonal, group and traditional means to enable communities attain their potential and discover answers to their problems related to development (Uphoff 1985, pp. 369- 378).

Uphoff presents four different ways of participation:

- a) Participation in implementation: The people are encouraged and mobilised to take part in the actualisation of the projects. Some of the responsibilities are given to them, tasks and other forms of contributions which they have to make.
  
- b) Participation in evaluation: As soon as the project is complete, people are given the platform to analyse the project's successes and failures.

- c) Participation in benefit: People must profit from the goodness of the project. There are different projects that are carried out for people such as water and borehole sinking, medical care from newly built hospitals, vehicles for transportation of goods and other produce to the market and meetings in a new community hall.
  
- d) Participation in decision-making: People should be able to initiate, discuss, conceptualise and plan activities they will do as a community. Some of this work may be related with communal development projects such as building schools, clinics or a bridge. There may also be political responsibilities such as removing corrupt officials or supporting a parliamentary candidate while others may be cultural or religious in nature like organising a traditional ceremony or prayers for an end to drought. The importance of people's participation in decision-making cannot be over emphasized because this component is critical in the success of any developmental project. The significance of decision-making is that it enables people to be masters of their own lives and environment.

### **3.7 Communication theories applicable to the study**

#### **3.7.1 Agenda Setting Theory**

The media has a big influence on setting the agenda about important issues. The proponents of this theory, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 stated that when people are exposed to media agenda for a sufficiently long time, they internalize that agenda and prioritise media issues (McCombs, M & Shaw, D 1972, pp. 176-187). The proponents of the theory claim that there is a relationship between the way mass media treats events and the way the people form ideas about such issues. The media sets the agenda and the policy makers set the agenda. The news media is the source of people's information on public affairs. The media has the capacity to create an image for the public on what they must adhere to. In this way, the public may be influenced on what they should think about. The more the media gives attention to a topic, the greater is the importance attributed to it by the news audience.

Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz examined in McCombs (2005), are among the early proponents of this theory argue that the media does not specifically inform the audience what to think about concerning a particular matter but just which subjects the audience should form an opinion from.

Thus, this theory is relevant in assessing the impact of communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in ending child marriages. Plan International Zambia has been having radio programmes on community radio stations discussing topics concerning child marriages. Mass media is crucial in disseminating messages to the masses as long as the message content is appropriate, suitable and made available to the targeted audience. If the media includes topics on child marriages frequently, it would set the agenda for public discussion.

### **3.7.2 Cultivation Theory**

According to this theory, George Gabner explains that the heavy viewers of television end up having perceptions that are influenced by the programs they view. The continuous exposure to television shapes their perception of social reality and culture as a whole. Gabner asserts that mass media cultivates attitudes and values that are already present in a culture (Gabner G., Gross, L, Morgan, M, & Signorielli, N 1986, pp.17-40).

Further, entertainment— education programmes may help to promote prevention of Child marriages. If one keeps watching listening or watching a soap opera, one may identify with certain characters in an entertaining way that is not preachy or didactic. Even when the show is over, people continue talking about it and in this way the message keeps spreading. Consequently, this stimulates their action.

The theory may be useful when disseminating information on Child marriages using radio and television. According to Rogers and Singhal, child marriages infections were greatly reduced in Thailand by using this method of communication. He reports that new infection cases dropped from 143,000 in 1991 to 29,000 in 2000 due in part to a US \$48 million dollars education and public health campaigns. The Thai president, Mechai Viravaidya, at that time, asked the nation's 488 radio stations to air child marriages prevention messages every hour. A combination of this method with other techniques helped to combat child marriages in that country.

### **3.7.3 Social change campaign theory**

Social change campaigns are organised efforts done by some groups of people to bring about positive change. Social campaigns have been used since time immemorial. In the Greek and the Roman empires, these campaigns were used to free slaves (Chama 2007, p. 55).

In Zambia social campaigns are used to promote vaccination against polio, the prevention of child marriages and AIDS through the use of different strategies. This is often done by persuading people to adopt change by modifying or abandoning some ideas, attitudes, practices and behaviours (Chama 2007, p. 55).

Communication campaigns have goals. They endeavour to inform, persuade and motivate behaviour change in a large and well defined audience. Campaigns provide the individual and society with commercial benefits within a particular time. This is done via organised communication activities that involve the media, interpersonal communication and community events. The concept of social change requires that the individual and society change their lives by both transforming their adverse practices into productive ones and by changing their attitudes and values in communities. Kotler, describes social change campaign as: An organised effort conducted by one group (the change agent), which intends to persuade others (the target adopters) to accept, modify, or abandon certain ideas, attitudes, practices and behaviour (Kotler, 1989:8). Kotler here means that the change agent ultimately wants to change adopter's behaviour. Further meaning according to Kotler is that most social change campaigns that are examined are high – consensus campaigns to promote brotherhood. As such, some social change campaigns often fail while others succeed (ibid).

Thus, this theory is relevant to this study because when it comes to the fight against early marriages a lot of campaigns are carried out in attempts of changing attitudes. Often times the topic has something to do with persuading others into accepting, modifying or abandoning their certain ideas, behaviours, practices and attitudes but this change does not come easily and it is not guaranteed.

#### **3.7.4 Carl Hovland's persuasion theories**

A psychologist, Carl (1912:61) was a pioneer in the theory of effects of social communications on attitudes, beliefs, and concepts. He was preoccupied with gathering useful data about effectiveness of campaigns and various methods of communication. He set out to test the effects of different variables in the communicator, message, channel and receiver. He put emphasis on all pertinent questions we have to ask in communication; who says what, to whom, and how and with what



effect? Implying that in order to understand persuasion communication, we need to have the source, message, and the audience /receiver. He looks at the source as having some characteristics; credibility, trust, attractiveness, expertise and power. When it comes to the message, he talks of the importance of packaging of a particular message. The message takes different forms like visual, images, or can use language of fear or humour.

This theory is relevant to our study because communities usually interrogate the source of the messages on child marriages. This has everything to do with authoritative sources and authenticity of the messages to make the campaign more acceptable to the community.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter gives the research methodology of various research techniques and approaches that were used in assessing the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia to prevent child marriages in Chibombo ward. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The use of these two methodologies helped the researcher with covering gaps where adequate information was not obtained. Questionnaires were used to get numerical and statistical data from the respondents in Chibombo ward. Qualitative research involved the use of Focus Group Discussions and In-depth interviews to collect data from Plan International Zambia Field Officers, their key stakeholders and residents of Chibombo ward.

### **4.1 Quantitative Survey**

To gather information from residents of Chibombo ward, a total of 102 questionnaires were distributed to randomly selected households in six (6) villages within the ward. Every third household was included in the survey. The researcher administered semi-structured questionnaires to male and female respondents from 10 to 68 years. The use of questionnaires helped in analysing how knowledgeable the respondents were about Plan International Zambia's communication activities with regards to child marriages in Chibombo ward.

#### **4.1.1 Sampling procedure**

The researcher used random sampling to obtain the required sample from Chibombo ward, which has an estimated population of eight thousand (8000) people. Chibombo has a population that has rural and urban characteristics, thus it is divided into two sections, the new and old Boma. The old Boma has rural characteristics whilst new Boma is more urban. Out of the ten (10) villages in Chibombo ward, the researcher only picked six (6) villages to obtain the sample size using convenience sampling. The six (6) villages were Chibombo, Mwamuyamba, Mulaisho from the new Boma and Kaonga, Pwangama and Chuno from the old Boma. In each village, seventeen (17) respondents were picked to make a total sample size of one hundred and two (102) people.

### **4.2 Qualitative research**

#### **4.2.1 Focus Group Discussions**

The researcher conducted four FGDs with residents of Chibombo ward. Two separate focus group discussions were conducted with boys and girls groups' setup by Plan International Zambia in

schools within Chibombo ward. The other two focus group discussions were held with women and men from the communities. Each group had at least ten members. The participants were selected based on their knowledge, representation and shared characteristics on the topic of research. FGDs were conducted in the form of open discussions while being recorded. Prior consent was obtained before recording, with the researcher allocating 30 to 60 minutes for the FGDs.

#### **4.2.2 In-Depth Interviews**

The researcher used in-depth interviews as a qualitative method of data collection and analysis. The in-depth interviews allowed for confidential conversations between the researcher and respondent. In-depth interviews were carried out with a headman in Chibombo, a teacher who had been participating in Plan International Zambia's programmes, a member of the girls group, Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the Zambia Police, Paralegals trained by Plan Zambia, and Plan Zambia staff. The above respondents were purposively selected based on their expertise in the field of child marriages.

#### **4.3 Data Analysis**

The researcher used Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) to code and analyse quantitative data. The data obtained was interpreted using charts, tables and graphs.

#### **4.4 Limitations of the Study**

Due to limited financial resources, the researcher could not cover all the ten villages within Chibombo ward but had to scale down to six villages.

Access challenges: It was very difficult to reach some of the villages especially the ones in the rural parts of Chibombo ward (old Boma) because the research was conducted during the rainy season which made most of the roads impassable.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

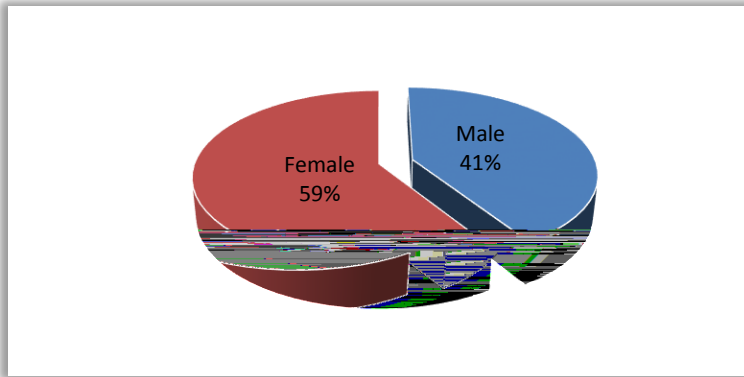
The researcher informed participants about the research and requested the participants' consent to being interviewed by signing consent forms. Respondents were assured that information recorded during the research would be confidential.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter is a presentation of the data that was collected from the residents of Chibombo ward using both the quantitative and qualitative methods. The data was analysed using SPSS. A total of 102 questionnaires were administered.

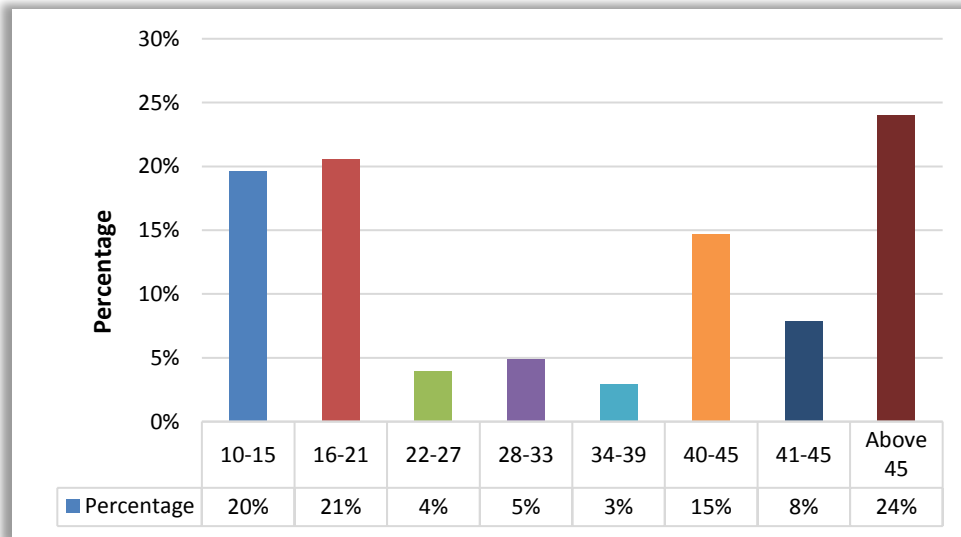
### 5.1 Data presentation from questionnaires

**Figure 1 - Gender of Respondents**



From the figure above, it was discovered that 59% of the respondents were female while 41% were male.

**Figure 2 - Age groups of Respondents**



The majority of the respondents were above 45 years, representing 24% out of the total respondents. The 16-21 year olds accounted for 21% of the total respondents, 20% for the 10-15 year olds; 4% for 22-27 years and 5% for the 28-33 year olds. 34-39 year olds accounted for 3%

of total respondents; 15% for the 40-45 year olds and the remaining 41- 45 year olds were represented by 8% of total sample.

**Figure 3 - Highest level of education attained by respondents**

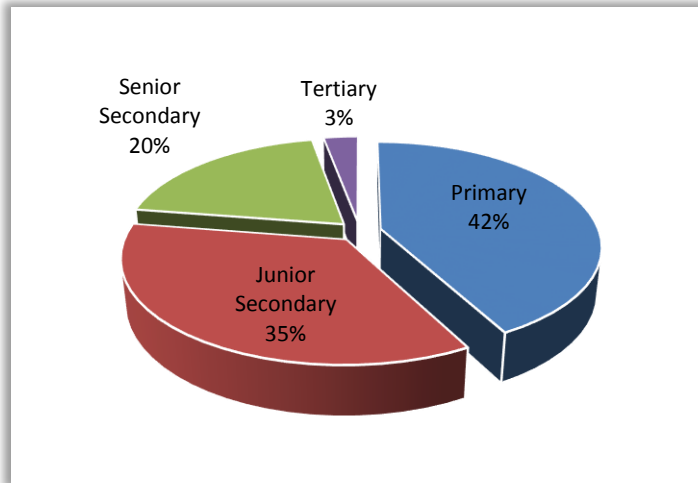
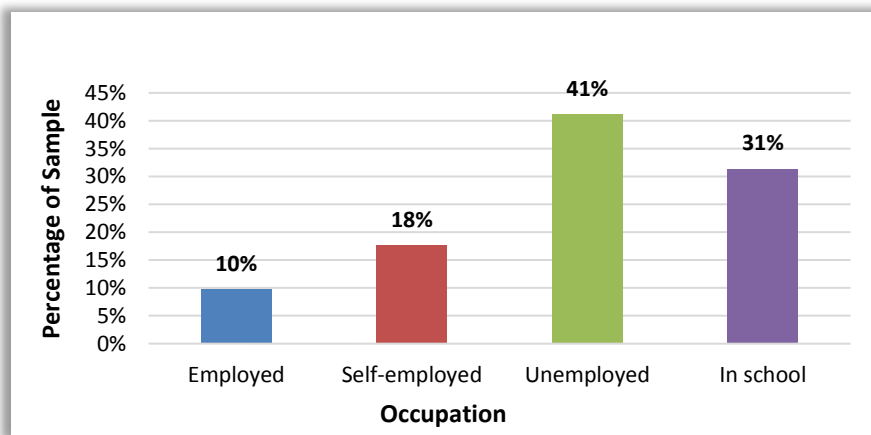


Chart 5.1.3 shows the level of education attained by the respondents. The majority of the respondents had attained primary education as their highest level of education representing 42% of total respondents. The remaining population which constituted 35% attained junior secondary, 20% had attained senior secondary and only

3% attained tertiary education.

**Figure 4 - Employment/Occupation status**



The majority of the respondents were unemployed at 41%, 31% of the respondents were still in school, while 18% were self-employed. However, 10% respondents were employed.

**Figure 5 - Prevalence of child marriages**

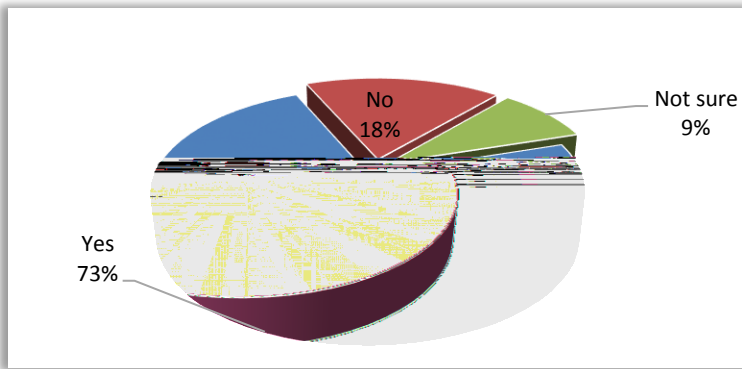
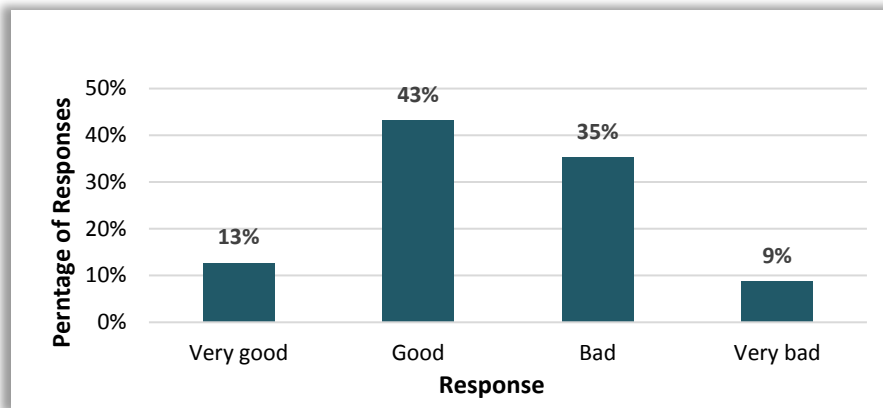


Chart 5.1.5 above shows the prevalence of child marriages in the area. Of the total number of responses, 73% answered “yes”, indicating that child marriages were high in the area, while 18% said “no”, indicating that the child marriages incidents were low. The remaining nine per cent said they were not sure.

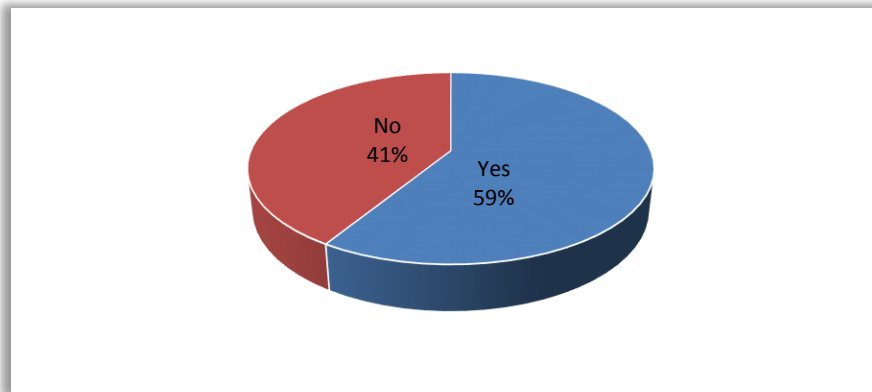
**Figure 6 - Level of knowledge of child marriages**



A total of 43% said they had good knowledge about child marriages, 13% indicated that they were highly knowledgeable about child marriage issues

as they responded with ‘very good’. However, 35% of the sampled population indicated that their knowledge on child marriages was ‘bad’ while nine per cent responded as ‘very bad’.

**Figure 7 - Importance of child marriage campaigns**



From the figure above, 59% of the sampled population thought that child marriages campaigns were important while 41 per cent deemed them as unnecessary.

**Figure 8 - Knowledge about Plan International Zambia**

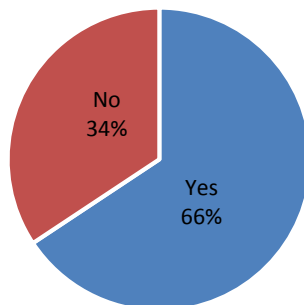
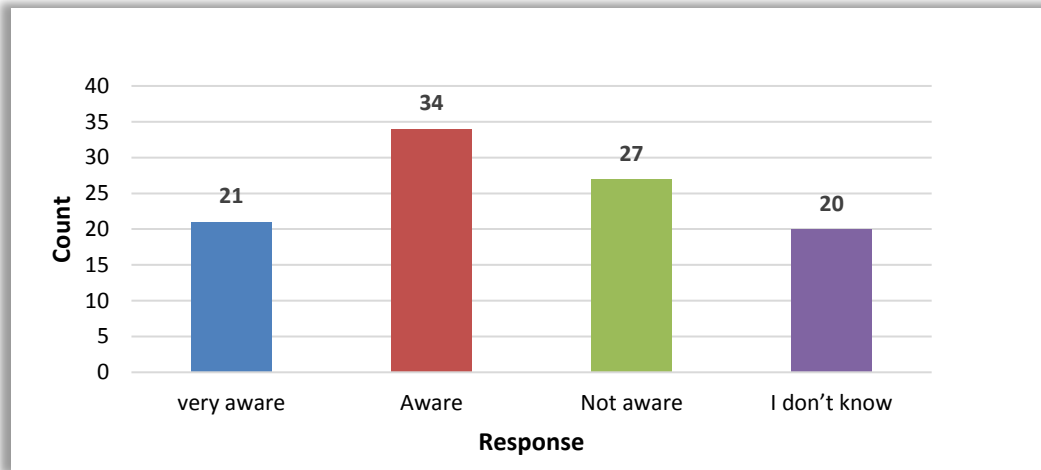


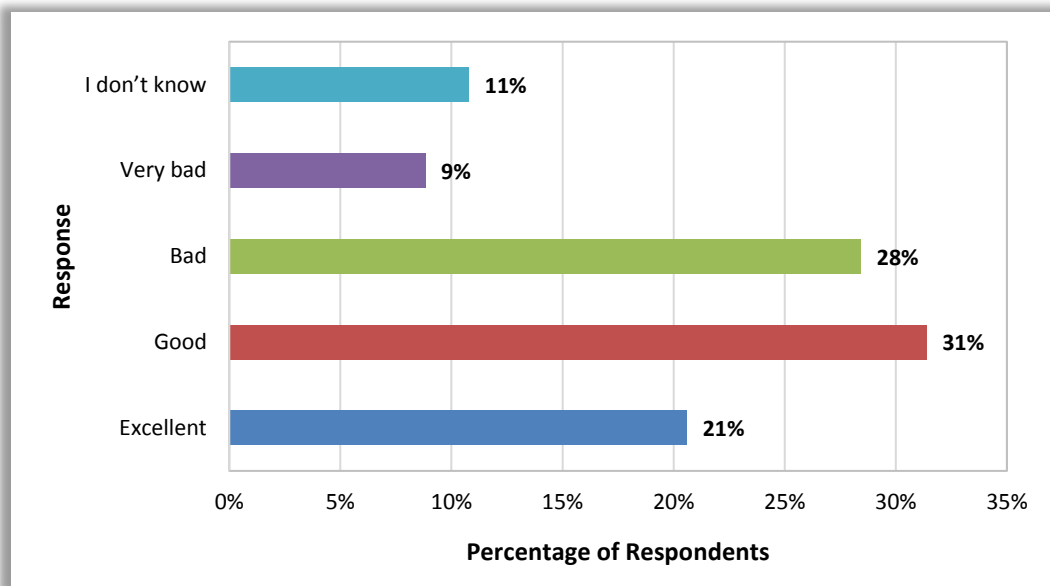
Chart 5.1.8 indicates that 66% of the sampled populations were aware of the existence of Plan International Zambia while 34% of the sampled population said they were not aware of Plan Zambia International.

**Figure 9 - Awareness about child marriage activities undertaken by Plan International**



From the above figure, 34 of the sampled population said they were aware of Plan International Zambia’s activities, 21 were very aware, 27 were not aware and 20 said they did not know.

**Figure 10 - Quality of information on child marriages disseminated by Plan International Zambia**

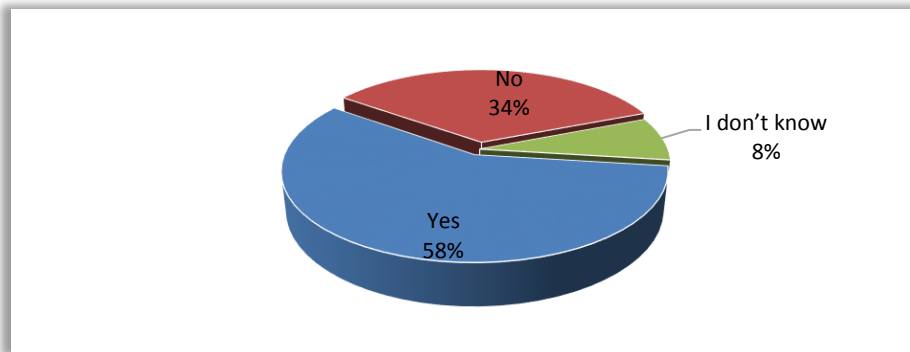


On the question of quality of information disseminated by Plan International Zambia, 21% rated the information as excellent, 31% said the information was good, 28% indicated that information



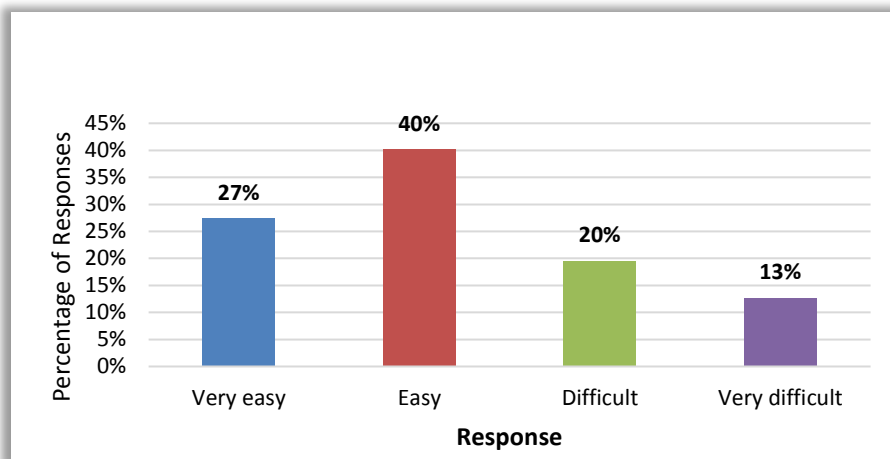
was bad, while 9% said the quality of information was very bad. The remaining 11% of the sampled population said they did not know.

**Figure 11 - Impact of Plan International messages on child marriages**



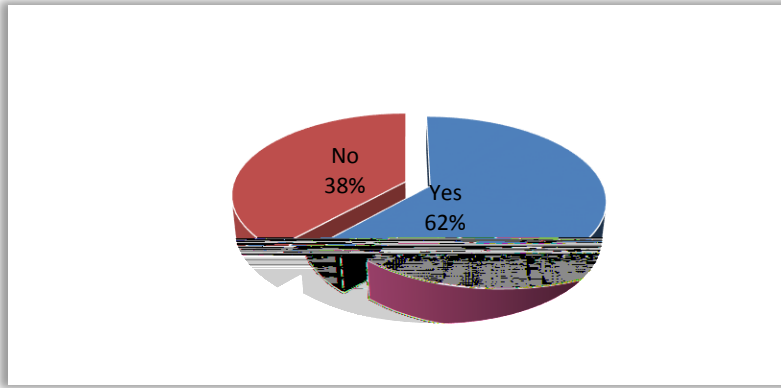
Responding on whether the information provided by Plan International Zambia had helped reduce child marriages, 58% of the population said yes, indicating that the information was helpful while 34% said no. Only 8% said they did not know.

**Figure 12 - How easy is the information on child marriages to understand?**



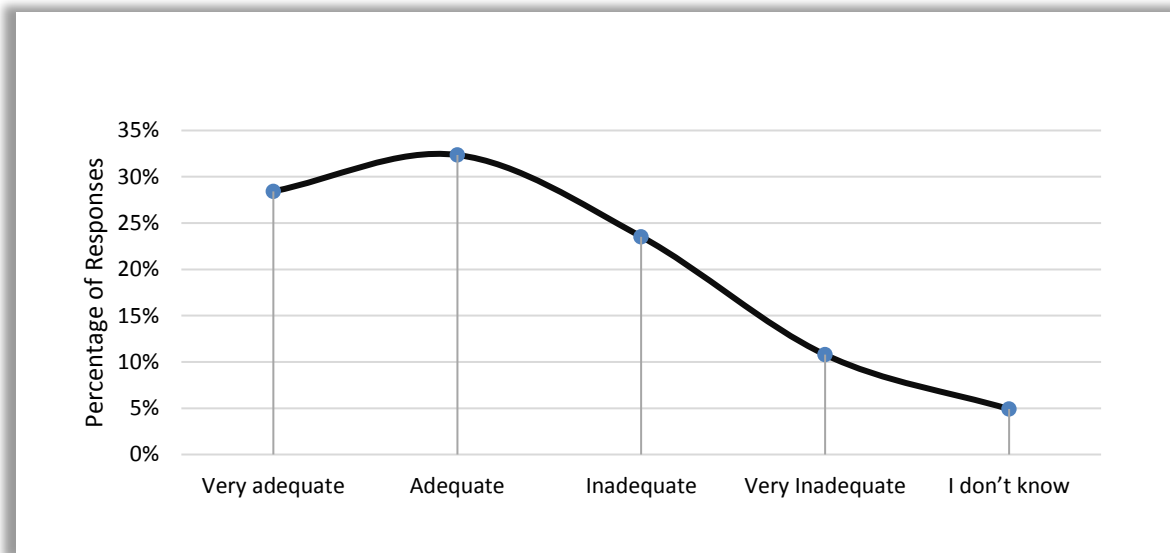
From the figure above, 27% of the respondents said the information provided by Plan International Zambia was very easy to understand; 40% said it was easy; 20% said it was difficult whilst 13 per cent said it was very difficult.

**Figure 13 - Cultural acceptability of child marriage information**



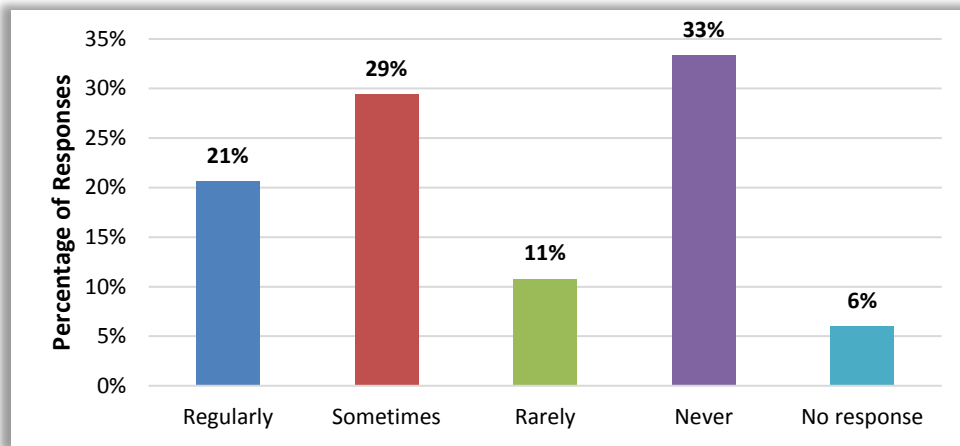
Commenting on the cultural acceptability of the information provided by Plan Zambia, 62% said the information provided by the organisation was culturally acceptable while 38 per cent said it was not.

**Figure 14 - Adequacy of participation by targeted beneficiaries in Plan International Zambia Programmes**



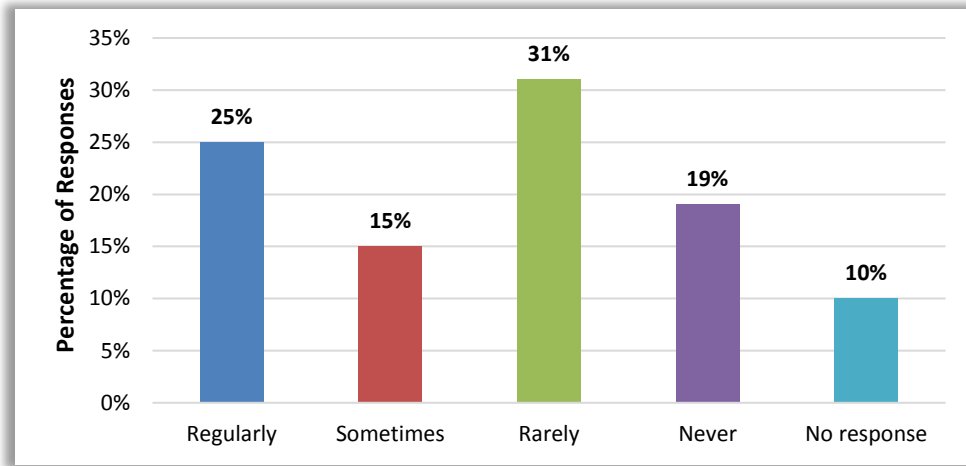
The figure shows that 28% of the sampled population thought that there was very adequate participation of beneficiaries in Plan International Zambia programmes, 32% thought it was adequate, 24% felt that there was no adequate participation by beneficiaries in the programmes, 11% indicated that participation was very inadequate while 5% said they did not know.

**Figure 15 - Access information through radio**



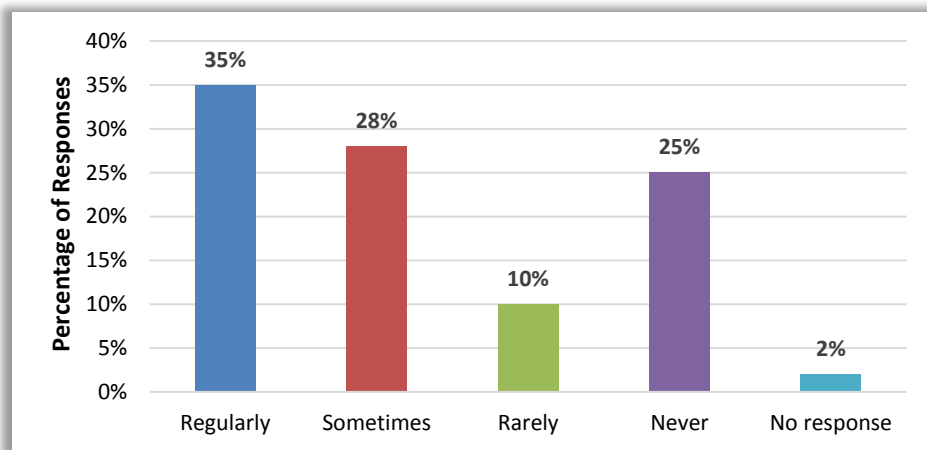
The figure above indicates that radio is one of the media accessed by some residents in Chibombo ward. 21% of the respondents said they regularly accessed Plan International Zambia information through radio. 29% stated that they accessed the information sometimes while 11% of the respondents rarely accessed information from Plan on radio. 33% of the respondents said they never accessed information through radio. Six respondents did not answer the question.

**Figure 16 - Accessing information through TV**



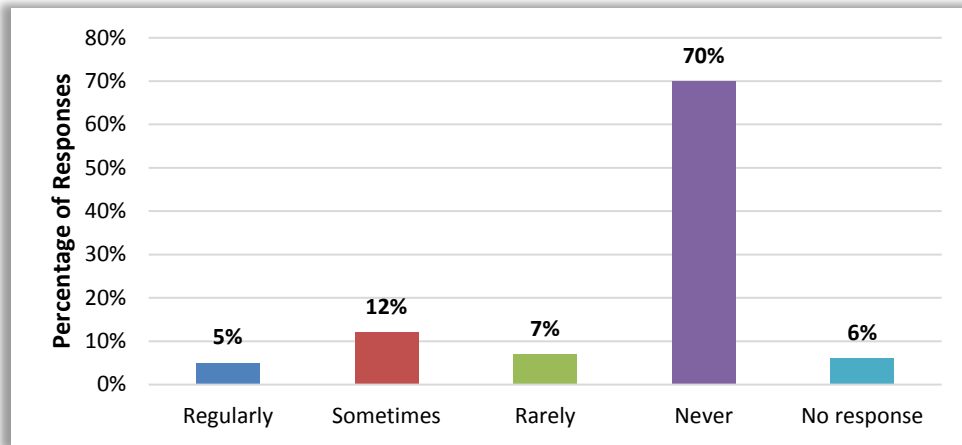
The figure shows that 25% of total sample accessed Plan’s information through TV regularly while 15% accessed the information through TV sometimes. 31% of the respondents rarely accessed information through TV. 19% of the respondents never accessed information through TV and 10% respondents did not answer the question.

**Figure 17 - Accessing information through public address system**



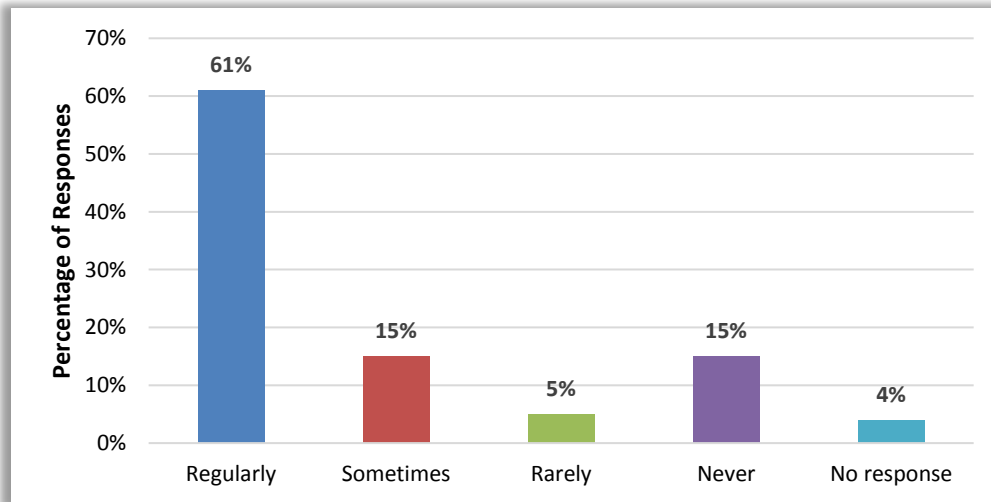
Group discussions as a way of regularly getting information from Plan by the respondents accounted for 35% of total respondents, 28% said sometimes while 25% of respondents never got information through this medium and 10% rarely got information through this channel. 2% of the respondents did not answer the question.

**Figure 18 - Accessing Plan information through the internet**



A paltry 5% of the respondents said they regularly used the internet as a source of information. 12% said they sometimes accessed information through internet and 7% of the respondents rarely accessed information through internet. 70% of the respondents said they never accessed information through the internet. 6% of the respondents did not respond to the question.

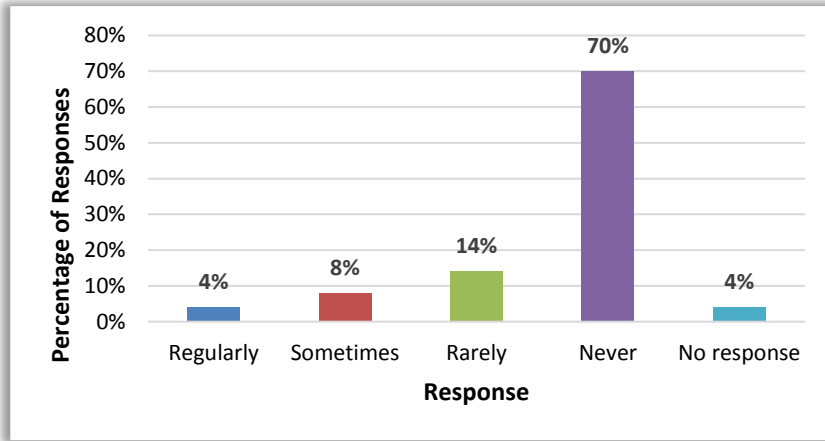
**Figure 19 - Access Plan information using group discussions**



The research revealed that 61% of the respondents received information about child marriages using public address system. 15% of the respondents never accessed information the public address system, 15% had sometimes accessed information through the public address system and 5% of

respondents rarely accessed information through PA. 4% of the respondents did not respond to the question.

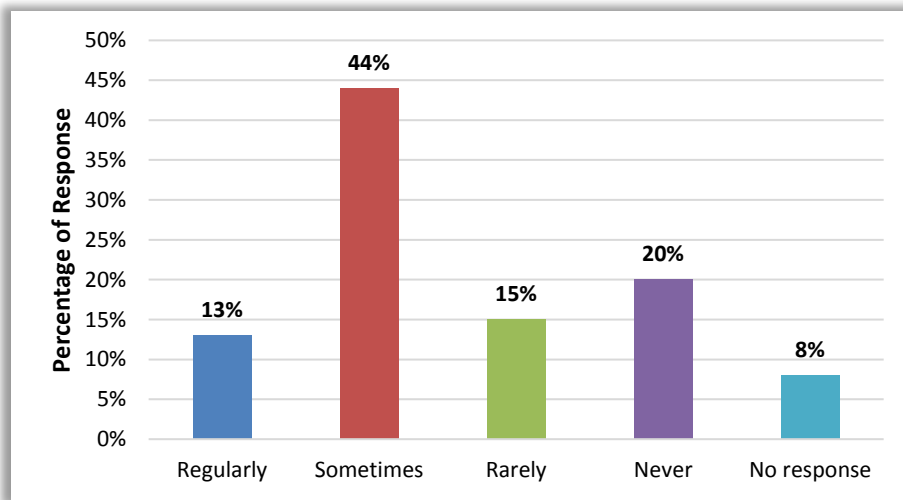
**Figure 20 - Accessing Plan information through magazines**



As can be seen in Figure 5.1.20, 4% of the respondents regularly received information through magazines and 70% of the respondents had never accessed information through magazines, while 8% sometimes used

magazines. 14% of the respondents rarely accessed information about child marriages through magazines. 4% of the respondents did not respond.

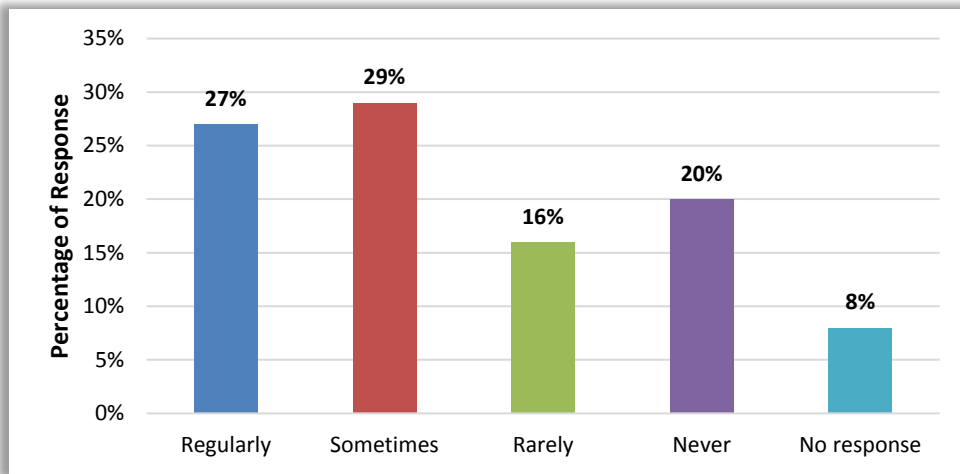
**Figure 21 - Accessing information through newspapers**



From the above figure, 13% of the respondents regularly accessed child marriages information from Plan International through newspapers, while 44% of the respondents indicated that they

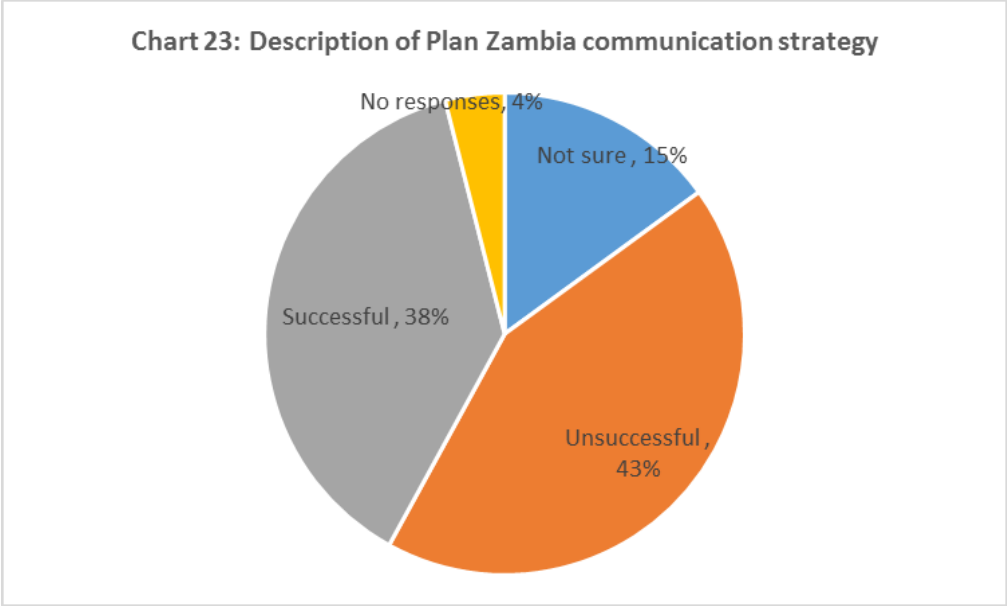
sometimes accessed the information through newspapers. 15% of the respondents rarely got information through newspapers while 20% of the respondents never used newspapers. 8% of the respondents did not respond.

**Figure 22 - Accessing information through billboards**



From the figure above, 27% of the respondents regularly got information through billboards, 29% of the respondents sometimes received information through this medium. 16% respondents rarely got information through billboards while 20% of the respondents never had access to information in relation to child marriages through billboards. 8% of the respondents did not respond to the question.

**Figure 23 - Description of communication strategies of Plan International Zambia**



The figure above shows how respondents described the communication strategies employed by Plan to disseminate information on child marriages as follows: 43% as unsuccessful, 38% as successful and 15% were sure and 4% did not respond.

**5.2 Data presentation from Focus Group Discussions**

The researcher held four focus group discussions with the people that this study targeted in Chibombo district. The four focus group discussions took place in different places of Chibombo ward: two were held in a classroom at Chibombo Primary school while the other two were held just at Plan International Zambia offices in Chibombo village. A prompt list of questions /topics was used to bring out issues pertaining to communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia towards ending child marriages in Chibombo ward. The main sections of the discussion were:

**5.2.1 Respondents’ source of knowledge on early marriages**

A focus group held with parents agreed that information on child marriages was being obtained from meetings convened by local Chiefs and Headman in different villages. *“Each time we have a meeting either the Chief or Headmen makes it a point to tell parents and community leaders that marrying off their children at an early age is a violation of the rights of the children and that it is a punishable offence”*. Respondents during the focus group discussions said the meetings



promoted discussions around issues pertaining to child marriages and other tendencies that inhibit women and girls from realising their potential. Also, some respondents said they got information from community based paralegals trained by Plan International Zambia. Paralegals were helping with information on explaining the laws around child marriages and helping victims of early marriages through the justice system. *“At times we do not feel comfortable going to the police to report early child marriages cases but we are able to tip off the paralegals within our communities”*. However, most school going pupils indicated that they belonged to certain groups/clubs where they discussed sexual reproductive issues and got information about child marriages. Other participants said Plan International Zambia field officers were also disseminating information at the local clinics such that women who went for anti-natal got information on child marriages.

### **5.2.2 Discussants knowledge level about Plan International Zambia**

The groups demonstrated that they knew Plan International Zambia as a result of having attended meetings and trainings conducted by the organisation. Some of the participants said they knew Plan Zambia through the different activities they carried out in commemorating international events like International Women’s Day and Day of the Girl Child.

### **5.2.3 Communication strategies used by Plan**

The group pointed out that the different means of information that was being used by Plan was not inclusive as it targeted a few people. Some people felt that discussing early marriages openly was not easy as it involved the use of some words which are perceived as taboo.

### **5.2.4 Respondents’ most accessed media on early marriages**

In comparison to other media like radio, television, newspapers, public address, respondents said they most accessed information through public meetings. However, the population residing in the New Boma, an area which has urban characteristics said they had access to Radios and TV whilst the population in the Old Boma which has rural characteristics does not have access to these two. On magazine /brochures/pamphlets, the discussants articulated that if they were translated into



child marriages there was need to encourage boys to participate too. It was also noted that the involvement of girls in origination of Plan projects was minimal, *“Only a few girls have attended Plan International Zambia trainings which always raises problems in the girls’ clubs, no wonder we have a few girls attending. It will be better if Plan staff could be conducting their trainings from schools”*.

- c) **Paralegal** - A community paralegal explained how they had been trained by Plan International Zambia to help with explaining the laws around child marriages and helping victims of early marriages access the justice system. The interviewee said this was an effective way of communicating community members were beginning to seek legal help from the community paralegals. *“We are always available in the community which makes it easy for people to approach us when child marriages issues arise. We have reported several cases to the police; while some perpetrators are arrested some choose to relocate and becomes difficult to trace them”*. The community paralegal however, said that some places within Chibombo were difficult to access which made it difficult for paralegal to render any help.
- d) **Headman** - During the interview, a headman attested that he had attended more than two trainings organised by Plan International Zambia which had helped him lobby for abolishment of norms and harmful cultural practices that promote child marriage in Chibombo. *“Prior to the training I thought there was nothing with child marriages, I thought this was a decision a family could make. After the trainings each time we convene a meeting I always share information on child marriages and I encourage parents to send their children to school”*.

### **5.3.2 Media used to disseminate child marriage information**

All the interviewees said consultative meetings as way of engaging traditional leadership, the media, paralegals, teachers, religious leaders and girl’s empowerment groups. *“Our meetings try as much to engage traditional authorities to promote child marriage free zones, by passing declarations on ending child marriage in their areas of influence”* said Plan International Zambia staff.

They all shared that public address had proved to be more effective in Chibombo ward as most people did not have either radios or television sets. However, the interviewed paralegal said it would be better to create listener groups and make use of a single radio to target rural parts of Chibombo.

The Plan International staff also said that there were plans of training girls on digital storytelling so as to ensure continuous involvement of girls in capturing their own life changing experiences in the fight against child marriages. Stories captured by girls will be used for advocacy to influence change and further be a basis for galvanising the building of the girls' young women's social movement(s) on ending child marriage.

### **5.3.3 Success stories about child marriages**

In the discussions with the different interviewees they all said that the 18+ campaign had been useful in the fight against early marriages. The teacher said the number of girls dropping out of school as a result of early pregnancies had significantly improved. The paralegal said more parents were now forthcoming in terms of reporting child marriages instead of concealing such issues. The Plan staff said through their programs they were enduring that girls retrieved from marriages were enrolled back in school.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The research showed that information on child marriages is mainly accessed through group discussions that come in form of either community meetings or formation of girls clubs. These meetings are a key part of sharing information on child marriages in Chibombo Ward as they increase girls' and communities' demand for girls' education. They also enhance access to sexual and reproductive health information, increase awareness and understanding at household level about child marriage, girls' education and rights.

In this chapter which discusses the findings of the research, it is the author's view that the research questions of the study are mentioned so as to easily observe whether or not the objectives were met. As mentioned in chapter one, part 1.5; the research questions of the study were as follows:

- 1) Are the current messages on child marriages by Plan International Zambia impacting on the population to bring about change in attitudes, values and behaviour that may end child marriages?
- 2) What are the strategic programmes Plan International is employing to disseminate information on prevention strategies of child marriages?
- 3) Do the people have knowledge on the prevention methods that are recommended to use?
- 4) What is the source of people's information on modes of prevention?
- 5) What else needs to be done to provide quality information to the people on the means of prevention?

The paper now proceeds to discuss the findings of the research in relation to each of the research questions.

***a) Are the current messages on child marriages by Plan International Zambia impacting on the population to bring about change in attitudes, values and behaviour that may end child marriages?***

Plan International Zambia has been focusing on the need of ensuring that girls stay in school with the belief that education can be a preventative measure for early child marriages. During a focus group discussion with young girls and boys, they shared how they valued education and would not want to miss school in any way. Explaining how girls' clubs were helping in changing attitudes

one girl said, *“I do not tolerate early marriages, at one point my parents wanted to marry off my sister but I stood my ground and told them what they wanted to do was wrong”*. In addition, when the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with a teacher at a local school, she professed that Plan International Zambia’s programmes were impacting on the population to bring about change in attitudes. *“Every term we used to have more than 10 girls dropping out of school after being impregnated but the trend has drastically reduced. The girls understand the need to stay in school and parents are also playing their role to ensure that the girl child is empowered through education,”* said the teacher.

The researcher got to know that many young girls were previously involved in the selling of beer in public places which put them at risk of being of being impregnated and subsequently being married off at an early age. However, through the sharing of information by Plan International Zambia, the researcher got know that the trend had reduced. Chiefs in Chibombo ward were also coming up with by-laws pushing for the abolishment of child marriages, a move that has seen people changing attitudes in fear of being punished.

***b) What are the strategic Programmes Plan International is employing to disseminate information on prevention strategies of child marriages?***

- ***Education:*** Plan International Zambia believes that failure to attain a significant education level for the girl child stunts her development and leaves her vulnerable to early child marriage. For Plan International Zambia, there is a strong basis for the belief that the girl child who is not attending school is more prone to child marriage than the school-going child. With the view that girls from poor households who cannot afford the costs of education are most likely to be married off or seek marriage, Plan has been working with communities to ensure that girls stay in school. Through their programmes they have been addressing factors that affect access to education by the girl child which include: poverty, the inability to afford scholastic materials, culture, traditions and gender discrimination. The researcher learnt about how Plan International Zambia had integrated the re-entry policy to ensure that early child marriage survivors go back to school.
- ***Formation of girls clubs in schools:*** Lack of adequate provision of information and services for girls has been at the heart of disempowered girls who fall pregnant and drop out of school. In many instances, they are forced by parents and relatives to marry the father of the child. The formation of girls clubs in schools has provided safe spaces for girls to learn more about sexual

reproductive and child marriages. During a focus group discussion, the researcher observed that the girls club had not only helped girls with knowledge about child marriages but had empowered the young girls to be highly confident and assertive. The girls knew the health implications that they would experience if they were to get married early. One of the girls said, *“It is not safe for me to be pregnant at my age, my body is fragile and I could die before of while giving birth”*. However, though the girls club are a good way of sharing information about child marriages, a lot needs to be done to ensure that they are effective. There is need to encourage more boys to be part of these groups so that they equally have the information on child marriages. Also, during a focus group discussion the girls were of the view that Plan International Zambia should provide reading materials for them to use during their club. The girls said they felt restricted in terms of activities they were engaged in at the girls’ club, *“We only perform dramas focusing on child marriages during International Day commemorations yet there is more we can do”*. The girls were of the view that they could interact with other schools and also engage in interesting ways of sharing information on child marriages within their schools. Thus, Plan International Zambia needs to do more in terms of engaging girls to participate in programming.

- ***Chibombo Girl Power Group:*** Plan International Zambia staff shared that they established a girl power group as a way of imparting life skills in child marriage survivors. According to Plan International Zambia, the girls’ power group had established a salon where information about child marriages would be shared with people who visited the saloon. However, the researcher observed that lack of proper follow up had seen the saloon becoming defunct. A member of the girl power group said they had been taught how to write project proposals which were supposed to enable them to come up with income generating projects.
- ***Engaging the traditional leadership structures:*** Representing the substructure of the traditional authorities, chiefs form the most widespread and accessible mechanism for addressing family and social issues in communities. The role of chiefs, indunas (headmen/women) is important because they are ever present in communities and thus the most accessible ‘authority’ for the majority of people living in rural areas. Thus, the researcher noted that Plan International Zambia has been conducting workshops for traditional leaders and in turn traditional leaders’ convened meetings discussing issues around child marriages in their communities. Some traditional leaders have even come up with by-laws to ensure that child marriages are not tolerated in their communities.

- **Paralegals:** The training of community paralegals has helped with ensuring that communities get intervention when it comes to addressing child marriages. The paralegals said they have been ensuring that child marriages cases are reported and dealt with lawfully. However, they said working with the police was challenging because some child marriage cases were reported without any follow up being taken. “*At times parents relocated victims of child marriage and such cases would just die a natural death*” said one paralegal during an in-depth interview.

***c) Do the people have knowledge on the prevention methods that are recommended to use?***

The researcher observed that the rural population of Chibombo residing in the Old Boma has less knowledge about child marriages whilst the population residing in the New Boma which is more urban in nature is more knowledgeable. The population in the New Boma has access to a variety of sources of information on child marriages while the rural population mainly rely on community meetings. A sizeable number of people in the New Boma have access to radios, television and they can afford to buy newspapers. However, this is a different case for people in the Old Boma as the majority do not even own radio and television sets.

***d) What is the source of people’s information on modes of prevention?***

The researcher has to know that most people rely on public discussions, which included community meetings, formation of girls’ club and workshops conducted by Plan International Zambia. Below, the researcher discusses the use of radio, television, newspapers, meeting, internet and magazines.

- **Use of radio** - According to the research, only 21% of the sampled population regularly accessed Plan International Zambia information through radio. This is as a result of the majority of the population not having access to radio. The residents do not own radio sets neither do they have smart phones that can connect to radio. However, Plan International Zambia should do pre-recorded shows where they go in communities and record people’s views about child marriages. These programs can be played on different radio stations and Chibombo residents can be encouraged to come up with listener groups.



- ***Use of TV*** - The majority of the sampled population in Chibombo ward do not own a television set which makes it difficult for them to access information through TV. According to the research, only 25% of the total sample accessed Plan's information regularly through TV.
  - ***Use of Newspapers*** - The researcher observed that Plan International Zambia used newspapers to disseminate information in form of news. However, during focus group discussion, participants said they could not afford to buy newspapers thus; they rarely accessed child marriage information through newspapers. Participants who were receiving information through newspapers indicated that the information was just for the general public with no specific targets.
  - ***Use of meetings by Plan International Zambia*** - The researcher observed that the use of meetings is a major source of receiving information for people in Chibombo. These meetings come in form of meetings convened by traditional leaders in communities, girls in school, commemorations of international days, trainings and workshops conducted by Plan International Zambia. Most people cannot afford to buy newspapers, they do not own radio and television sets which is a constraint in receiving information on child marriages thus they are forced to rely on public or private meetings.
  - ***Use of Internet by International Zambia*** - Though Plan International Zambia shares information about child marriages on the internet only 5% of the sampled population said they received information through the use of internet. Thus, internet has not been effectively used to disseminate information on child marriages mainly due to constraints in access.
  - ***Use of Magazine by Plan International Zambia*** - The population that participated in the study believed that Plan International Zambia had not done enough in the area of using magazines to disseminate information about early marriages. During focus group discussions, the population suggested that Plan should share information using magazines written in local languages.
- e) ***What needs to be done to provide quality information to the people on the means of prevention?*** This will be thoroughly discussed in chapter seven when the researcher shares recommendations.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Conclusion

It cannot be disputed that child marriages are impacting badly on the population in Chibombo district. However, for Plan International Zambia, community dialogue around child marriages and child protection issues has been a key strategy towards ending child marriages in Chibombo. This has been done through discussions at the community level that challenge the attitudes and beliefs that fuel child marriages. Plan International Zambia believes that, understanding child rights ensures better child protection through enforcing laws and policies against child marriages. Furthermore, the education on the dangers of child marriages can help community members to dialogue with the aim of finding lasting solutions in addressing child marriages in their communities.

In this evaluation, the study focused on the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in the 18+ campaign towards ending child marriages in Zambia. Chibombo District was the area of study. The study has revealed that regardless of its communication strategy, Plan International has a lot more to do for Chibombo residents to have knowledge about child marriages.

Though, Plan International Zambia has done well in building the capacity of paralegals, traditional authorities to identify and refer cases of child marriage in the community to the police. However, paralegals need to be pro-active in engaging the communities, they should not wait for child marriages incidents to occur but they can already share information in schools, churches and communities on laws governing child marriages. One traditional leader acknowledged having been trained by Plan International Zambia about child marriages but said, *“At times it’s difficult to interfere with private matters of a family. Once they decide to marry off their children, it’s their decision and no one can go against it”*

While the formation of girls clubs in schools is something that is commendable, all schools should be encouraged to form girls’ clubs’/child rights clubs for it to be more beneficial. The researcher noticed that the girls’ clubs had a maximum number of fifteen (15), a figure which is very low in terms of effectively disseminating information on child marriages. Mechanisms to ensure that victims of child marriages and early pregnancy get information to ensure their rehabilitation should

also be put in place. This will enable Chibombo residents to understand why it is important to end child marriages in their communities. Below are some recommendations for Plan International Zambia as it continues pushing for societies to do away with child marriages.

## **7.2 Recommendations for Plan International Zambia**

After the researcher collected, analysed and discussed the information, the following recommendations were made:

- a. Plan International Zambia needs establish radio listeners' clubs for their radio programmes on child marriages so that affected communities benefit by engaging in discussions and providing objective feedback. It will also help in featuring children on live radio programmes so that their voices can be heard too, which will increase children's participation since they are directly affected by early marriages. Radio programs should be aired in local languages for wider reach.
- b. Plan International Zambia should come up with ways to share the National Strategy to End Child Marriage at district level. This will help in raising awareness of the national strategy and to provide space for dialogue, and to build consensus and support for the strategy at district levels.
- c. Plan International Zambia should translate media packages into local language, such as magazine/brochures/pamphlets, to increase circulation and encourage citizens to participate in the development process. The 18+ newsletter should be shared with schools and other beneficiaries of the project to ensure wider reach. Girls clubs should be encouraged to write and submit stories that can be featured in the publication.
- d. Plan International Zambia should improve parent to child communication by implementing projects that bring parents and children together. Specifically, programs to assist parents in better supporting their children as they transition into adulthood are needed. Such programs should involve parents in developing ways of coping with conflict and improving communication.
- e. There is need for coordinated follow ups on projects for child marriage survivors.

- f. Plan International Zambia should consider putting boys at the fore of their communication strategies. This will enable more boys to get involved in the formation of rights clubs.
- g. Erect billboards with child marriage messages. This will increase more visibility around child marriage issues and for Plan International Zambia as an organisation.
- h. Engage with Parents Teacher Associations (PTA) groups and carry out capacity building to improve their capacity to advocate against child marriage within schools and the community, and among their peers.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Chibombo residents**

**Topic:** Communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in the 18+ campaign towards ending child marriages in Chibombo.

Dear Respondent,

I am a Postgraduate Student at the University of Zambia (UNZA) conducting a research on the above topic.

I am pleased to inform you that you have been randomly selected to be a respondent in this research. However, you are free to withdraw or decline from participating if you wish. Be assured that all information you will offer will be treated with high confidentiality and will be used for academic purposes only.

Your name will not be recorded. Therefore, be objective as much as you can. Your cooperation will highly be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

*Tarisai Jangara*  
*MCD Student*

## **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHIBOMBO RESIDENTS**

The University of Zambia  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department of Mass Communication

Dear Respondent,

We have sent this questionnaire to you because we believe you possess information critical to the success of this study about the evaluation of the communication strategies of Plan International Zambia towards ending child marriages in Chibombo ward, Zambia.

We thank you most sincerely for your co-operation and we promise that the information you will provide will only be used for academic purposes.

Kindly answer the questions by simply ticking [] what applies to you.



1. Your sex.

- a. Male
- b. Female

2. Your age.

- 10-15years
- 16-20years
- 21-25years
- 26-30years
- 31-35years
- 36-40years
- 41-45years
- 46 and above

3. Your level of education

- a. Primary
- b. Junior Secondary
- c. Senior Secondary
- d. Tertiary
- e. None of the above

4. Your occupation.

- a. Employed
- b. Self-employed
- c. Unemployed
- d. In school

5. What is your level of knowledge about Child Marriages?

- a. Very good
- b. Fairly good
- c. Good
- d. Nothing

6. What is the level of Child Marriages in your area?

- a. Very severe
- b. Fairly severe
- c. Severe
- d. Nothing

7. Is there any difference between Child Marriages and early marriages?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

8. Do you consider Child Marriages awareness campaigns important?

a. Yes [ ]

b. No [ ]

9. Do you know anything about Plan International Zambia?

a. Yes [ ]

b. No [ ]

c. Not sure [ ]

10. Has PLAN Zambia conducted any Child Marriages awareness campaigns in your area?

a. Yes [ ]

b. No [ ]

c. Not sure [ ]

11. Are you aware of any activities undertaken by PLAN International 18+ Campaign to combat Child Marriages in your area?

a. Very aware [ ]

b. Aware [ ]

c. Moderately aware [ ]

d. Not aware [ ]

12. How would you describe the information you receive from PLAN International about Child Marriages?

a. Excellent [ ]

b. Very adequate [ ]

c. Adequate [ ]

d. Fairly adequate [ ]

e. Very inadequate [ ]

13. Does the information provide by Plan International on Child Marriages help in ending child marriages in your area?

a. Yes [ ]

b. No [ ]

c. Not sure [ ]

14. Is the information provided easy for everyone to understand?

a. Very easy [ ]

b. Easy [ ]

c. Moderately easy [ ]

d. Difficult [ ]

e. Very difficult [ ]

15. Do you consider the information provided by Plan International on Child Marriages to be culturally acceptable?

- a. Yes [ ]
- b. No [ ]
- c. Not Sure [ ]

16. Do you think there is adequate participation in the programs of Plan International by the targeted beneficiaries?

- a. Very Adequate [ ]
- b. Adequate [ ]
- c. Moderately adequate [ ]
- d. Inadequate [ ]
- e. Very Inadequate [ ]

17. How would you rate the communication strategies used by Plan International Zambia in mitigating the impact of Child Marriages?

- a. Very Good [ ]
- b. Good [ ]
- c. Fairly Good [ ]
- d. Poor [ ]
- e. Very Poor [ ]

18. Which of the following media of disseminating Child Marriages messages is most appropriate for you?

- a. Radio [ ]
- b. TV [ ]
- c. Newspapers [ ]
- d. Public Address systems [ ]
- e. Posters, Pamphlets or Brochures [ ]
- f. All the above [ ]

19. Which of the following Media used by Plan International Zambia do you have access to and how often

MEDIUM	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	2 3	4		

- a. TV
- b. Group and Individual approach
- c. Internet
- d. Public Address
- e. Magazines
- f. Newspapers
- g. Brochures, Pamphlets and Posters

20. Would you recommend Plan International Zambia to provide information on Child Marriages?

- a. Yes [ ]

- b. No [ ]
- c. Not sure

## **Appendix 2: In-depth Interview guide**

1. In what ways have you been involved with Plan International 18+ Campaign activities?
2. For how long have you been involved?
3. Have you ever attended any meeting organized by Plan International 18+ Campaign?
4. If yes, how did you find the discussions?
5. Have you ever attended a meeting or workshop organized by Plan International 18+ Campaign to sensitize people on the Child Marriage?
6. Explain how effective the approaches used by Plan International Zambia's 18+ Campaign to disseminate Child Marriages?
8. If you think they are effective, what are some of the things you can point out as successes?
9. Which medium is the best source of Child Marriages messages for you?
10. Do you participate in the origination and running of these projects?
11. What do you say are some of the weaknesses of the communication strategies used by Plan International 18+ Campaign in its quest to mitigate the impact of Child Marriages to the target communities?
12. What would you recommend to be done in order to improve the communication strategies of Plan International 18+ Campaign?

### **Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion guide**

1. How did you about early marriages?
2. Why do you think it's important for people to be sensitized about early marriages?
3. What do you know about Plan International Zambia?
4. What activities has Plan International Zambia taken to sensitize the community about early marriages issues?
5. Have you ever received any form of information about early marriages and its effects from Plan International Zambia?
6. What time of information would you want from Plan International Zambia?
7. What role do you play in disseminating child marriage information?