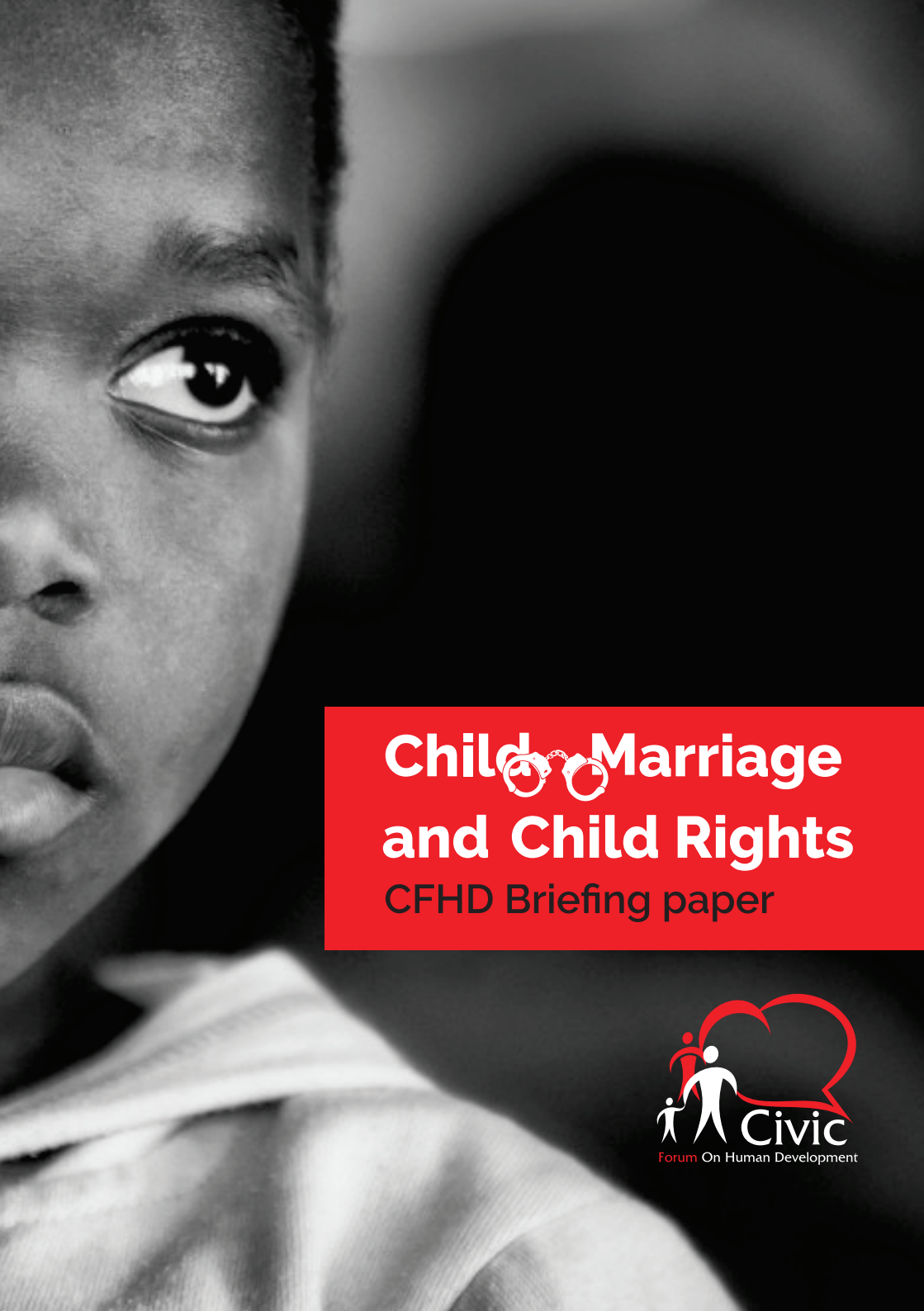




Child Marriage and Child Rights

CFHD Briefing paper

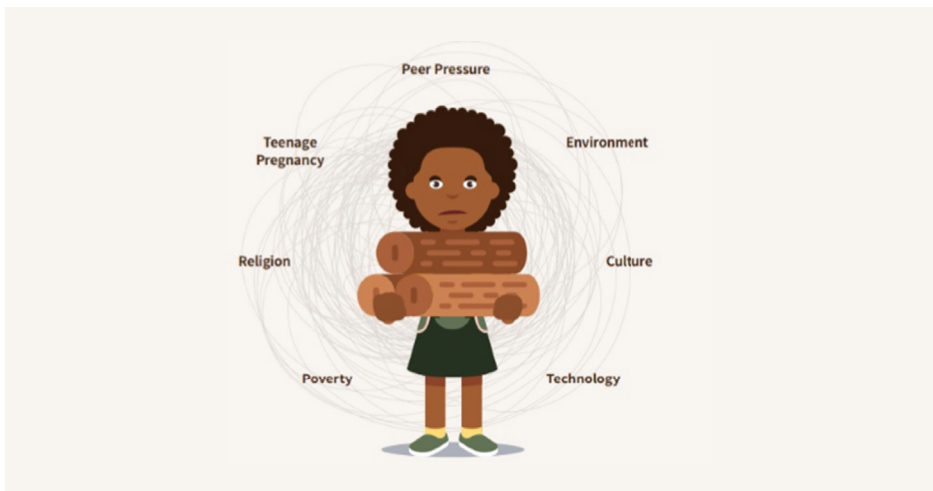


Issue Context and Background

Marriage at a young age can have long lasting negative impacts on the physical, economic and social well-being of especially young and vulnerable women. Globally research on child marriage has shown that 6% of people between the ages of 15 and 19 are married and in sub-Saharan Africa it's about 9%. The married 15-19 year olds happen to be predominantly female. The attendant gender gaps in early marriage often shows gender inequality in the societies or communities where young people are socially isolated, lack information and awareness on health risks such as HIV and are highly vulnerable to early pregnancy which puts their health at even a high risk. UNICEF estimates that about 70,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19 die each year as a result of pregnancy and child birth. Young married females are disadvantaged in acquiring opportunities being accessed by their peers as they have less access to communication, education and

employment opportunities. It has also been shown that married youth have less access than their unmarried counterparts to basic resources such as food, water, income and shelter. While married youth tend to be employed at higher rates than unmarried youth, their lower levels of education may result in low-skill and low-wage jobs (Ministry of Women and Youths Affairs, 2018).

The Human Rights Promotion and Protection Project is funded by the European Union through the International Organisation for Migration. The CFHD conducted community assessments and dialogue processes which identified child marriage practices as a direct violation of children rights in Mutoko, Mudzi, Guruve, Mbire, Hwedza, Manyame, Lupane and Gwanda districts. This issue was therefore prioritized for local learning dialogue and peer to peer education by CBOs working in these districts.



What do local CBOS and CSOs want to know?

Based on participatory mapping and benchmarking within their communities the following learning priorities on child rights were identified:

- Meaning of child marriage and child rights
- Existing information and knowledge resources
- Support organizations and areas of expertise
- Key tools and methods
- Examples of good practices
- Challenges and opportunities in addressing the issue
- Effective actions for addressing child marriage and rights issues

Existing Information and Knowledge Resources

Information and knowledge on child rights can be obtained from a variety of sources including:

- Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) Section 19
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child(ACRWC)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- NGO Human Rights Forum Fact sheets
- The Labour Relations Act Chapter 28:01
- The Marriage Act section 22
- Zimbabwe Customary Law and Local Courts Act (Chapter 7:05)
- Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9:23)

N.B the highlighted acts need to be realigned to the constitution

Support Organizations and their areas of expertise

Zimbabwe has a number of organizations supporting child marriage and rights issues and these are:

- Government: Ministry of Women and Youths Affairs
- NGOs: Research Advocacy Unit, NGO forum, UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International
- ChildLine
- Others: Children welfare committees in respective districts

Tools and Methods

Several tools and methods can be used by local CBOs and CSOs and the main ones are:

Community Based Planning:

This process requires CBOs and CSOs to engage in participatory and reflection approaches with all members of the community to ensure inclusivity of all diverse groups, transparency, open dialogue and consensus building on action priorities that need to be addressed and in mapping the key roles and responsibilities of all potential actors identified through the community based planning process.

Community Dialogue Platforms (CDPs):

These can utilize existing platforms like the ward platforms to discuss pertinent child rights issues and challenges within the community and to develop community action plans based on local resources and capacities.

Publicity Information and Education Materials:

These range from use of factsheets, pamphlets, short case studies, videos, posters targeted at the different audiences from the stakeholders, gate keepers and community members.



A victim of early child marriages

Peer to peer learning:

This method allows CBOs and other local community based workers to learn from each other and to collaborate in the process of promoting human rights at the local level.

Social network methods:

This is based on social network analysis and mapping to identify connected points that enables CBOs and CSOs working at local level to build synergistic relationships and even coalitions based on their shared concerns and priorities.

Learning platforms:

These bring together a wider range of stakeholders to exchange views and experiences on resolving child rights problems and issues to build consensus on effective strategies for combating child marriage and child rights.

Local Learning Circles:

These are existing platforms where community groups meet within their own comfort spaces to discuss issues on child rights and abuses and to promote

actions that protect and promote children's rights.

Community drama and theatre:

These are usually organized in schools, communities, social and cultural platforms to show case issues of child rights and ensuring advocacy for eradication of child marriage practices and other child rights violations.

ICT Platforms:

These take advantage of advancement in communication technologies and include use of podcasting to record key messages for self-learning by communities, use of smart phones to share information and potential threats to child rights and electronic dialogue forums including e-learning on children rights.

Documentaries:

Communities themselves can be trained to document and monitor child rights issues and violations within their communities and in the creation of rich pictures that are evidence based.

Examples of Interventions in Protecting and Promoting Child Rights

Interventions

Various intervention strategies have been taken to address the issue of early marriages and child rights in Mutoko. Some of these strategies include:

- Awareness raising: These have been targeted at children clubs, parents, platform shows, sporting activities, and festivals such as the budja festival e.t.c.
- Homebased approach: ZECHIRE is using a homebased approach to promote awareness on the effects of early marriages on children. The approach involves visiting of homes and having dialogue on issues affecting the family that include early marriages and child rights.

Constraints

The main constraints identified through the community dialogue process are:

- Lack of adequate data capturing mechanisms on child rights issues and problems at the community level
- Cultural barriers and practices which suppress documentation and reporting of child rights abuses and violations
- Limited information flow to remote rural areas
- Poor communication networks for efficient reporting and referral cases of child abuse

Action priorities for CBOs and CSOs

Local CBOs and CSOs can play a key role in:

- Strengthening community awareness (traditional leaders, local socio-economic groups and FBOs, local youth organizations, school representatives, parents and all interested actors) on the problem of child marriage and children's rights as enshrined in various legal statutes and the Constitution of Zimbabwe.
- Creating dialogue and learning platforms to generate effective community based solutions for the effective promotion and protection of children's rights using contextually relevant approaches.

- Taking a lead in sharing and disseminating information and knowledge on child rights and on the legislative framework for child rights protection and promoting public awareness on the role of Government and other stakeholders.
- Building the capacity of local groups to combat child rights abuses and violations through peer to peer learning, advocacy, collaboration, effective documentation and monitoring and improved knowledge of referral pathways.

Pilot interventions by CFHD

Pilot initiatives on child marriage and child rights issues will take place in Mutoko, Guruve, Mbire, Hwedza, Manyame, Lupane and Gwanda districts of Zimbabwe. The network members involved are: Nyaunhure Trust, Lower Guruve Development Association, Single Parents and Widowers Network, Tatujaane Trust and Vhukaunzele, Moses Foundation, Better Life Foundation. The main activities to be supported include:

- Learning platforms informing all key stakeholders to create a shared understanding of child rights issues at the local level
- Responsive information dissemination and child rights education
- Promoting peer to peer learning on child rights in the hotspot areas
- Creating policy dialogue platforms on child rights and ways of improving policy formulation and implementation



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