

Assessing the Effects of Child Marriages on Children's Personal and Community Development in Chitulika Village of Mpika District, Zambia

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Abstract— The study was carried out to assess the effects of child marriages on children's personal and community development in sections of Chitulika village of Mpika rural, by establishing, from the participants' point of view; factors that perpetuate child marriage in the sections of Chitulika Villages, describing the effects of child marriage on children's personal development and the development of Chitulika Community as a whole and analysing the effectiveness of the National Strategy on ending child marriages in Zambia. The study adopted a qualitative as well as quantitative paradigm as a way of guaranteeing effective probing of the teething phenomenological issues herein. The sampling techniques used was purposive sampling for the community married girls, section headmen and random sampling members of staff for Chitulika Secondary School and DEBS office. The target population was 7,211 and the sample size of 100 was used. Data Collection Tools such as interviews, and self-administered questionnaires were employed to collect data from Members of staff for Chitulika Secondary, Mpika DEBS office and Chitulika Section headmen. Twenty-five (25) questionnaires were distributed for self-administration and only 20 were returned while Focus Group Discussion was used for young married girls. The data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively through content analysis and SPSS respectively. The study revealed that; early marriage was caused by poverty, economic survival, unintended early pregnancies, illiteracy and value for virginity, among others. Besides, child marriage affects the development of the community and children's personal development because married children are very likely to have poor families, high school dropout rate, illiterate community, less female community participation and domestic violence. On the other hand, it was also observed that most of the sections of Chitulika Village feel the National Strategy on ending child marriage was ineffective and others have never heard of it. It was however, concluded that the main causes of child marriage in sections of Chitulika Village were poverty, economic survival, unintended early pregnancies, illiteracy and value for virginity, among others. Because of low infrastructure development in rural areas the national strategy on ending child marriage was ineffective. The study recommends that government and other stakeholders should employ human rights approach in order to solve the socio-economic problems leading to early child marriages. Provision and improvement of access to economic opportunities by young married and non-married girls, expanding the education infrastructure and incentivizing school-going girls through distribution of free sanitary towels would make education career attractive. There was also need to expand employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and promotion of girls' education, among others, by government.

Keywords— Assessing, Effects, Child Marriage, Personal Development, Community development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, marriage is regarded as a moment of celebration and a milestone in adult life. Sadly, the practice of child marriage gives no such cause for celebration. All too often, the imposition of a marriage partner upon a child means their childhood is cut short and their fundamental rights are compromised (UNICEF, 2001 and Lefebvre, Quiroga and Murphy 2004). Boys and girls are robbed of their youth and required to take on roles for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared. Many have no choice about the timing of marriage or their partner. Some are coerced into marriage, while others are too young to make an informed decision. Premature marriage deprives them of the opportunity for personal development as well as their rights to full reproductive health and wellbeing, education, and participation in civic life

Child marriage is one of the major impediments to the realization of Human rights and therefore detrimental to socio-economic development. Zambia has not been spared from the vice of child marriage. The children's overall development is compromised leaving them socially isolated with little education, skills and opportunities for employment and self-realization: 42 % of women married before their 18th birthday. Relatedly, adolescent girls continue to die from complications arising from early child bearing including obstetric fistula. Both girls and boys continue to drop out of the school system before completing their education, therefore reducing their chances of escaping poverty (GRZ, 2013).

Zambia as a country has put in place the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage in order to promote and contribute to the protection of the rights of children, both those affected by early marriage as well as those at risk. The National Strategy on ending child marriages in Zambia was developed in this regard to address the overwhelming developmental and human rights impediments that are associated with marrying off children while also promoting the realization of all children's rights and child protection services such as right to education and the right to life, survival and development, among others. The strategy's goal is to achieve 40% reduction in child marriage by 2021 through strengthening multi sectoral responses, facilitating the development and review of policies and legislation to ensure consistent interpretation and application of child related interventions. The strategy also

aims to achieve its goal through facilitation of positive change in prevailing attitudes, behaviors, beliefs and practices, facilitation of provision for child sensitive services and mobilization of finances to implement programmes aimed at reducing children's vulnerability to marriage. The strategy identifies household poverty as a major contributor to child marriage, among others, hence, a number of policies and programmes that are sensitive and responsive to the needs of children and the fight against poverty are proposed in the strategy with the view to address the vulnerabilities as well as the consequences of child marriage, in line with national policy direction as well as international child rights standards (GRZ, 2013). But the question still remains; *why are child marriage cases still rampant? And how effective are measures put in place to reduce child marriages?*

Chitulika Village has five sections, each headed by the headperson. The village is within the proximity to the township of Mpika District. Mpika is a town in Muchinga Province of Zambia, lying at the junction of the Great North Road to Kasama and Mbala and the TAZAMA Highway to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It is situated between the Muchinga Escarpment to the East and vast Miombo plains to the West. Before this, Mpika was a Sub-centre which was established at Makana's Village on the banks of Lwitikila River (Mpika District Situation Analysis – 2011 – 2015). Mpika is one of the districts identified as child marriage hotspots in Zambia. The district has also not been left out on the twin problem of HIV/AIDS and poverty. The majority of the people in Mpika District suffer from weak buying power, homelessness and insufficient access to basic necessities such as education, health, food and clean water.

A. Problem Statement

Child marriage is not just a fundamental violation of human rights but also a barrier to girl child education and progress. Premature marriage deprives children of the opportunity for personal development as well as their rights to full reproductive health, wellbeing, education, and participation in civic life. Child marriage contributes to a series of negative consequences for young girls and the society in which they live (UNICEF, 2000). Numerous studies have been done and recommendations made. Additionally, strategies to end child marriage have been put in place, such as the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage in Zambia (2016 – 2021). Even with such pieces of concise policies and recommendations in place, the cases of child marriage have, however, continued to increase thereby affecting the personal development of children and exerting pressure on government budgets through health care costs as a result of complications arising from early child bearing including obstetric fistula. The research, therefore, intends to assess the effects of Child Marriages on children's personal and community development in Chitulika Village of Mpika Rural, which has over 7,211 residents. It is imperative also to understand bedrock factors which perpetuate child marriage and analyse the effects of child marriage on children's personal development and the development of the community and the district as a whole. Overall, the effectiveness of the National Strategy on Ending

Child Marriages in Zambia will be brought into focus as the mirroring context and content underpinning the study.

B. Objectives

- To establish from the participants' point of view, factors that perpetuate child marriage in the sections of Chitulika Villages.
- To describe the effects of child marriage on children's personal and community development.
- To assess the effectiveness of the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages in Zambia.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Factors that Perpetuate Child Marriage

UNICEF in GRZ (2013) is of the view that the understanding of child marriage is complex, ranging from the traditional understanding of marriage where consent of the families is obtained and a bride price is paid to transactional marriages to marriages initiated and completed by children themselves. It is driven by poor economic circumstance, low educational levels and limited opportunities, amongst other factors. The perceived benefits associated with child marriage include economic gain for families and individuals, improvements in living situations, and enhanced social status, including for the children themselves while the acknowledged risks include early pregnancy and associated complications, a withdrawal from formal education and loss of employment opportunities as well as truncated personal development. Marriage may not be, and often is not, the first choice of the concerned boys and girls, or their families, but is often the best of "bad options", and a method that enables the children to become respected adult members of their societies.

On the other hand, FMRWG (2003) 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.

Poverty, particularly in rural areas, and a tradition of marrying young daughters off, account for the high rates of child marriage. The practice of bride price where the groom pays an amount of money to the bride's family and also plays a role as some parents seek financial gains from marrying their daughters. Many parents also choose to marry their young daughters to prevent them from getting pregnant outside marriage and besmirching family honour. Child marriage is one cause of Zambia's high maternal mortality rate, which at 591 per 100,000 live births, is one of the highest in the world. In addition, it is responsible for increasing school drop-out

levels among girls, which currently stands at 60 percent for girls of 13 or 14 years old. Also, since girls are often married to older men, they run the risk of living in abusive relationships and being exposed to HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, 2001 & Lefebvre et al, 2004). Child Marriage constitutes a multiple violation of children's rights curtailing their opportunities for full realization of their potential. It is both a symptom and a cause of ongoing development challenges, as the practice violates the human rights of girls and boys and further perpetuates the poverty cycle.

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. Here it should be noted that, in early arranged marriage, like forced marriage, the element of the girl's consent is usually absent (FMRWG, 2003 & Heinonen, 2002).

B. Effects of Child Marriage on Children's Personal and Community Development

Child marriage contributes to a series of negative consequences both for young girls and the society in which they live. It is a violation of human rights in general and of girl's rights in particular. Child marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts; cutting off educational and employment opportunities and chances of personal growth. Besides having a negative impact on girls, themselves, the practice of child marriage also has negative consequences on their children, families, and society as a whole (UNICEF 2007). There is 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. Consequences such as High maternal mortality and morbidity, increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, divorce or abandonment and Early Widowhood tend to flow from child marriage.

Children 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 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 recognized 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. Heinonen (2002).

UNICEF in FMRWG (2003), notes that 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: the denial of childhood and adolescence; the curtailment of personal freedom, the lack of opportunity to develop a full sense of self-hood; and 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, primarily 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.

C. Effectiveness of the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages in Zambia

A recent parliamentary report on child marriages observed that incidences of child marriage are high in Zambia. The Country has been ranked 10th on a global ranking of prevalence of child marriages amongst girls and boys. Particularly notable is the vast gender discrepancy with 42% of women aged 20 - 24 years, married before age 18, compared to only 5% of men, indicating that girls are often married to older men (UNFPA, 2014). The 2013/14 Zambia Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) shows that 31% of the women aged 20-24 years in Zambia were married before the age of 18, representing a 25% reduction from the 2007 ZDHS where it was at 42 % for the same age group (GRZ, 2018).

UNICEF Zambia, (2015) reports that the goal of the National Strategy is to reduce child marriage by 40 per cent by 2021, and this goal is supported by five objectives thus: to strengthen multi-sectoral responses to reduce children's vulnerability to marriage; to facilitate positive change in prevailing attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and practices that contribute to the practice of child marriage; to facilitate the development and review of policies and legislation to ensure a consistent approach to protecting child rights and promoting their well-being; To facilitate the provision of child sensitive social services in order to reduce children's vulnerability to marriage; and to effectively mobilize financial resources in order to facilitate the implementation of programmes aimed at reducing children' vulnerability to marriage. The advocacy and communication strategy on ending child marriage was designed to provide strategic direction in the engagement of various stakeholders at both national and community level for behavior change. It was mainly developed to address Objective 3 of the National Strategy on ending child marriage. While the overall aim was to improve knowledge and facilitate positive change in prevailing, attitudes, beliefs and practices of parents, children, communities and other stakeholders toward reducing the incidence of child marriage, it also addresses, strengthens the capacity of local stakeholders to act as change agents and will fully engage the media in advocacy and communication efforts. The strategy would simultaneously support the achievement of the rest of the

objectives through the use of advocacy and communication approaches.

World Vision (2015) asserts that child marriage is predominately a rural phenomenon although there are sections of urban communities that have been caught up in the vice. Rural communities have to be active participants in order to bring about change. World Vision further notes, that although some traditional leaders come up with by – laws aimed at punishing perpetrators of child marriage, it was critical for the government of Zambia to speed up legislation so that the legal age of marriage could be standardized across the country regardless of whether one was operating under statutory or customary law.

The Education Act (Part IV, section 18) provides for offences against any person who marries a learner 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 (GRZ, 2011).

D. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Psychologist Albert Bandura's Social Learning theory. People learn through observing others behavior, attitudes and outcomes of those behaviours. Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling, from observing others, one form an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as guide for action (Bandura). Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental influences.

Bandura believed in reciprocal determinism that is, the world and a person's behavior cause each other, while behaviourism essentially states that one's environment causes ones behavior, Bandura who was studying adolescent aggression, found this too simplistic and so in addition he suggested that behavior causes environment as well. Later, Bandura soon considered personality as an interaction between three components, the environment, behavior and one's psychological process (one's ability to entertain images in minds and languages). Social learning theory has sometimes been called a bridge between behaviourist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory and motivation.

Researchers and theorists focus on the change or activity itself see it as not wholly reducible to prior events; they see the emergency of the Childs appreciation of necessity as a somewhat spontaneous event, qualitatively different from his or her prior way of thinking, under the control of internal structures and regulations, as part of a system of events which determines its form and emergency. It is a change that is not entirely predictable from earlier development. It is not just that a response change, but rather a structure or pattern or an organization change. Most importantly the changes are unidirectional, always in the direction of more general, more coherent and consistent systems which progressively enhances the competence of the individual and species to know. To the

extent that cognitive developments (changes that occur in periods of months or years) are looked at as the accumulated result of many small changes due to learning which each took place in minutes, hours or days, then cognitive development theories are viewed as a special case of learning theories (Bandura, A. 1973).

The social learning theory fits in the study in that children tend to observe and imitate the behavior of a family member, friends if they perceive there is meaningful reward in such a behaviour. Family and community members instill the ideas that there are economic benefits in marrying early.

E. Research Gaps

From the reviewed literature, it is evident that Child marriage is very common in our Zambian rural communities and more especially among the girl child who is considered as a capital investment for the family that wallows in poverty. Despite the availability of National Strategies, Laws, Policies and international agreements forbidding child marriage, this phenomenon is still widespread not only in the sections of Chitulika Village of Mpika district but in Zambia and many other developing countries with a high prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa, more particularly in Central, Southern and West Africa. The surveyed literature has not articulated in greater detail the effectiveness of interventions put in place to reduce or eliminate child marriage for the purpose of creating an enabling environment for children's personal development and the community development as a whole. This is the basis of this study.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methods research design. This mixed methods design can be defined as a type of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study. Among other strategies, the study was driven by the inductive (calling for measurement and building patterns) and abductive research (requiring to show case experiences in form of verbal accounts) strategies (Blaikie, 2000:78; 2010:79). This was in an attempt to legitimize the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions or they tend to approach different questions from different viewpoints. The sampling technique used was purposive for the community married girls as well as section headmen and random sampling for members of staff for Chitulika Secondary School and DEBS office. The target population (N) was 7,211 representing the village total membership and the sample size of 100 was used. Data Collection Tools such as interviews and self-administered questionnaires were employed to collect data from Members of staff for Chitulika Secondary, Mpika DEBS office and Chitulika Section headmen. Twenty-five (25) questionnaires were distributed for self-administration and only 20 were returned while Focus Group Discussion and interview schedules were used for young married girls. The data collected was carefully edited, sorted and coded to eliminate the inconsistencies and errors that were made during the data

collection process. It was then analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively through content analysis and SPSS respectively.

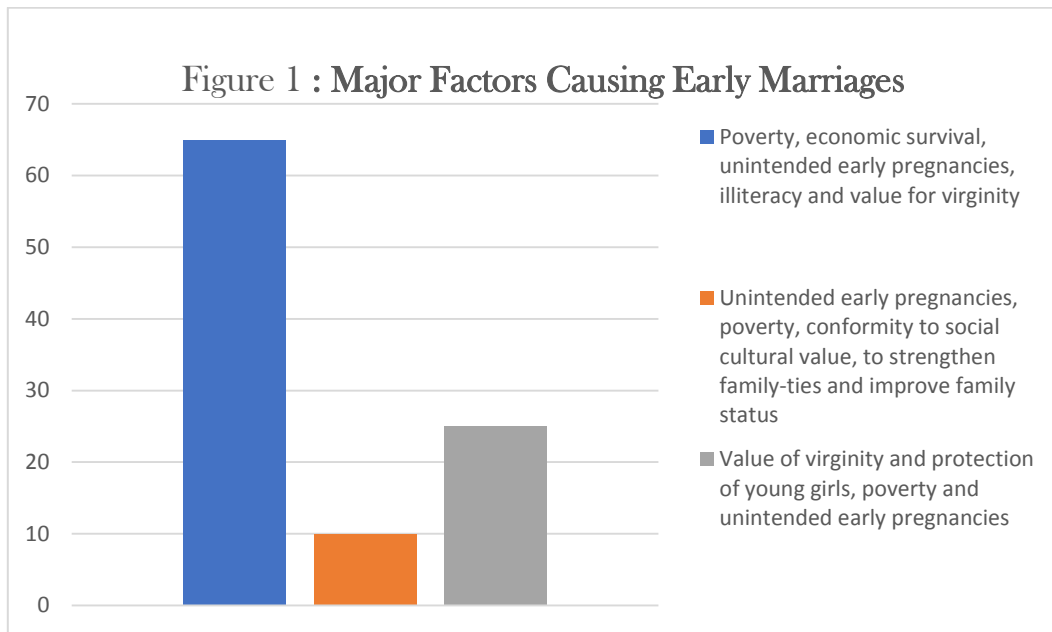
For content validity on the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that research questions are in conformity with the study objectives. The researcher evaluated the relevance, wording and clarity of questions in the instrument as recommended by Gay (1996). The interview guides were used to bring the researcher and respondents face to face. This enabled the researcher to collect firsthand primary information from the respondents over what they think, know or feel about

the phenomenon in Chitulika Village. The researcher used these instruments because they permitted flexibility in data collection and were best suited for the study.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Major Factors Which Perpetuate Child Marriage

Figure 1 below shows the responses of respondents on the question factors causing or perpetuating early marriages.



Source: Field Data (2021)

The statistical account in Figure 1 above shows that 65% of respondents confirmed that the major cause of child marriage are poverty, economic survival, early pregnancy, illiteracy and value for virginity while 25% of respondents said the major causes of child marriage are value for virginity, protection of young girls, poverty and unintended early pregnancies. The last category accounting for 10% indicated conformity to social cultural values, early pregnancies, strengthening family ties and improvement of family status as being causes to child marriages. Poverty and early pregnancy were the most frequent responses given as the causes of child marriage.

In communities like Chitulika where child marriage is prevalent, there is strong social pressure on families to conform. Failure to conform can often result into 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 social norms. In many contexts, child marriage is legitimized 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 Mpika District is valued as a means of consolidating powerful relations between

families, for sealing deals over land or other property or even for settling disputes.

Furthermore, child marriage is one way to ensure that a wife is protected or placed firmly under male control; that she is submissive to her husband and works hard for her in-laws' household; that the children she bears are legitimate, (UNICEF 2001). On the other hand, for many communities in Mpika that value virginity before marriage, child marriage can manifest itself in a number of practices designed to 'protect' a girl from unsanctioned sexual activity. Also, parents use early marriage as a strategy for securing a girl child's future. Securing children's future through marriage alliance is the major concern of peasant families due to acute rural poverty and diseases such as HIV/AIDS. As a result, the parents desire to see their children married or settled before becoming sick or ensuring they don't end up in poor families where they came from. Some parents withdraw their girls from school as soon as they begin to menstruate, fearing that exposure to male pupils or teachers puts them at risk. These practices are all intended to shield the girls from male's sexual attention, but in the eyes of concerned parents, marriage is seen to offer the ultimate protection measure. In civil conflicts, parents resort to child marriage as a protective mechanism or survival strategy. In most instances, girls who fall pregnant early are forced into

marriage as a way of ensuring that the family is not shamed because of the fact that their child fell pregnant before marriage. For the orphaned girls, or those separated with their parents or relatives the only way to survive and get protection is to get married hence, hindering their progression of life economically, socially, politically and culturally.

Focus Group Discussions (FDG) were conducted among the girls who were married off at tender ages. The discussants had the age ranges of 17 to 22 years old. These were 49 in total and were grouped in two in order to adhere to COVID – 19 measures. The participants confirmed they were married before their 18th birthday. Three (3) of the participants did not know their ages but only remember that they were married off a year after they matured. One of the participants aged 22 with three children confirmed that her husband who is a community teacher took her back to school and she was in grade nine at the time of an interview. Out of 49 participants, 41 participants confirmed that they dropped out of school before their 8th grade and 7 participants confirmed that they have never been to school. *Asked as to what circumstances led to their early marriage, they gave the underlisted responses which have been grouped and presented in Table 1 below:*

TABLE 1: Cause of Early Marriage from the Victim’s Perspective

Response	No. Response	Percentage of Response
Unintended early pregnancies that made our parents force us into marriage to avoid being shamed	16 out of 49	32.8
Poverty and improvement of status	25 out of 49	51.25
Value of virginity and protection of young girls	6 out of 49	12.3
Eloped with lover	2 out of 49	4.1

Source: Field Data (2021)

B. Effects of Child Marriage on Children’s Personal and Community Development

Respondents and interviewees on the question of how child marriages affect community as well as children’s personal development made various vital comments. They stressed generally that child marriage has affected the development of the community and children’s personal development because married children are likely to have poor families, high school dropout rates as children leave school for marriage. Most community members would therefore be illiterate thereby impeding socio-economic development. Furthermore, there is less female community participation and prevalence of domestic violence. Additionally, there would be low educational skills levels, high rate of diseases like HIV/AIDS, low work skills, high abandonment or divorce rate and impoverished families and undeveloped communities.

The interviews and FGD on how the girls have been affected by the phenomena of early marriage was revealing and hair-raising. Their general and collective experiences and feelings were as follows: *22 out of 49 said their husbands batter them most of the times and cannot leave their husbands because they have no one to provide for them and their children. Some indicated that their husbands left them with children for other women. Others gave their life experiences with one indicating that her sister died during child birth*

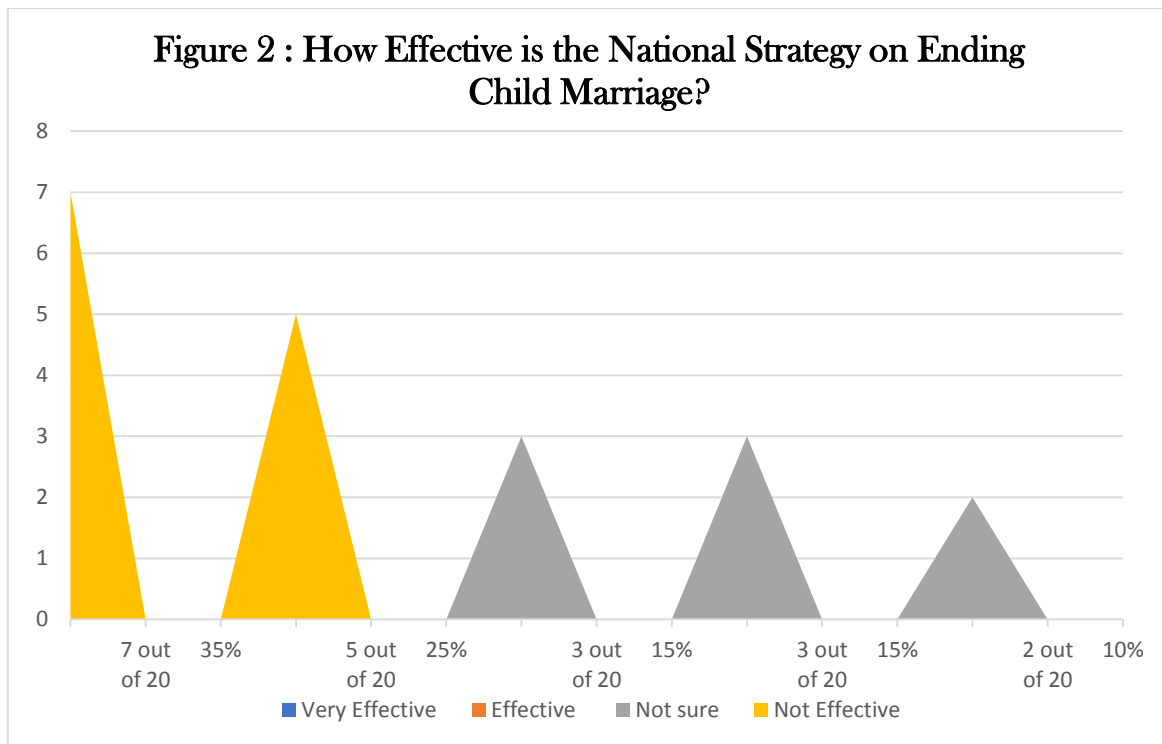
because she fell pregnant when she was too young. The other nine respondents indicated that their husbands died a few years after their marriage because they could not continue taking antiretroviral drugs. Additionally, 18 out of 49 reported that they cannot participate in community meetings because of illiteracy. They stressed that them and their husbands are just peasant farmers, hence they cannot afford to take their children to school.

C. How effective is the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages in Zambia?

Figure 2 below shows responses from Chitulika Section Headmen, Mpika DEBS Staff and Chitulika Secondary School Staff on the questions assessing the effectiveness of the National Strategy on Ending Child.

Figure 2 below shows that 60% (that is 25% plus 35%) of respondents felt that the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage was *not effective* because government and other key stakeholders have not created an enabling environment to end child marriages. The respondents noted that there was shortage of school places, poor physical infrastructure, poor quality of education and lack of female teachers to be role models to girls and the remoteness of rural schools. The respondents further added that in rural areas, schools are at least 10 or more kilometers apart and there are less teachers while traditional beliefs which are in conflict with the law on child marriage are equally prevalent - the issues which compound in making the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage ineffective. Besides, 40% (that is 15% plus 15% plus 10%) of respondents were *not sure* as to whether the strategy is effective or not because they have not heard of it. They indicated that if such a strategy exists, key stakeholders needed to be aware of especially that child marriages are mostly perpetrated in rural areas and it is in rural areas where there are less recreation activities, less schools and less teachers, no unification of statutory and customary laws on child marriages, less provision of child sensitive services and that most Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other key stakeholders make efforts to end child marriage but efforts made are scanty and uncoordinated.

As indicated by the UNW and IBSA (2019), the **Zambian National strategy on ending child marriage** aims to address the overwhelming developmental and human rights impediments that are associated with child marriages. The efforts of the Zambian government are complemented and supported by various stakeholder, giving the campaign to end child marriage a holistic approach which tackles both the cause and the consequences of the practice through the national Advocacy and Communications strategy. The UNW further adds that even though Zambia has put in place legal sanctions against early marriage and through these sanctions, the country seems to be making progress, but there are still challenges here and there. The organization identifies limited access to education, poverty, poor health services and lack of effective implementation of existing laws as the major drivers to child marriage. Those likely to get married include children living in poverty, those whose families lack opportunity for waged employment and orphans.



Source: Field Data (2021)

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion

This study has ascertained with utmost precision that the main causes of early marriages in sections of Chitulika Village are poverty, economic survival, unintended early pregnancies, illiteracy and value for virginity. Early marriage is sometimes caused by the need to conform to social cultural value, protection of young girls, strengthening of family-ties and improvement of family social status. Besides, child marriage has affected the development of the community and children’s personal development in that married children are very likely to have Poor families, high school dropout rate, illiterate community, less female community participation and domestic violence. In some instances, the development of the community and children’s personal development have been affected by the fact that married girls tend to have poor health, early widowhood, low education levels, high rate of disease burdens like HIV/AIDS, low work skills, high abandonment or divorce rate, impoverished families, gender-based-violence and undeveloped communities. To make the matters worse, the hope of redeeming the situation through the existing National Strategy on Ending Early Child Marriages has been eclipsed by plethora factors. The community strongly feels that the policy is ineffective with others not even being sure (aware) whether it is effective or not as they have never heard of it. Efforts to end child marriage are scanty and unco-ordinated, making the Strategy on ending child marriage less effective.

B. Recommendation

A human rights approach hails from the assumption that women’s rights and the rights of her society and family are inextricably linked - they cannot be separated from each other. As the causes and consequences of early marriage indicate, a society cannot prosper if the interests of women and girls are neglected. Moreover, women and girls are right bearers themselves, they are entitled to the same level of respect, concern and right to pursue their potential - things that are generally given more easily to men than to women by societies around the world.

Against this background and taking poverty and underdevelopment as overarching variables in perpetuating child marriages, there is need to improve infrastructural development in rural areas where there are shortage of school places and poor physical infrastructure to provide job and entrepreneurial opportunities. Poor quality of education, and general lack of female teachers to act as positive role models, non-unification of statutory and customary laws on child marriages and less provision of child sensitive services in rural areas must be curbed and/or combated if a desirable scenario is to be achieved. Awareness activities about the content and the prescription of the policy must be roll out by government and any other interested stakeholders in order to salvage the situation.

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