

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH INTO THE EXTENT, FACTORS AND EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE RESEARCH IN ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE AND MALAWI

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Subthemes:

Policy and Legal instrument and issues

Social Cultural, Historic, Economic, Political and Religious Issues

1. Introduction

Globally, approximately 15 million girls are married before they turn 18 years of age each year. Over 700 million women alive today were married as children. It is estimated that if nothing is done, by the end of the decade as many as 142 million girls will be married as children.

Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia are the focus countries for the review and they are selected based on a set criteria. The research will look at factors contributing to child marriage including legal issues, its health and social impact on the lives of child brides and their families as well as offer recommendations to address and reduce child marriages.

2. Methods

The study is mainly based on a review of the literature to identify existing knowledge and research gaps relating to child marriage. Secondary data from a review of available documents In-depth interviews were done with selected key informants using semi-structured interview guides in each country.

3.Findings

According to the UNICEF 2015 State of the World's Children, Sub-Saharan Africa has a very high level of child marriage, at 40% of women 20–24 years old who were first married or in union before they were 18 years old, only second to Asia with a level of 45%. With-in Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa have a lower level at 37% than West and Central Africa at 42%.

Drivers of child marriage in the three focus countries are not expected to differ a lot from what is happening in other countries with higher prevalence. However, since child marriage drivers are very interrelated and very much depend on contexts, there will be peculiarities and specificities in the countries that were explored. The most common drivers of child marriages which the study demarcated and found out are poverty, traditional and cultural practices and education.

The below table summarises the different underlying causes against the three countries under review.

Country	Incidence of Child Marriage	Drivers of Child Marriages			
		Poverty	Traditional and Cultural Practices	Educational Factors	Minimum age of Marriage
Malawi	15years-11.7% 18years - 49.6 %	In Malawi, some poor families marry off daughters to get money to meet basic needs such as food, and sometimes to get dowry or continued support by their daughter's husband. In addition, because	Traditional practices like <i>kusasa, fumbi chinamwali, nsondo, fisi</i> encourage male adults to have sexual intercourse with newly initiated girls. The young girls, often between 12 (or even 10) and 15 years, who have undergone	Disruption of education is a driver of child marriage in Malawi because girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school when families face financial constraints because of their low social status and the costs of educating them.	The Marriage Act (Act 22/2001) defines 16 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and 18 years for boys The Children's Act (Act 14/2002) defines a child as anyone under the age of 16. The Customary Marriages Act (Act 23/2004) does not give a

		of poverty, many girls engage in transactional sex, a commonly accepted practice in Malawi.	the puberty rite,are “encouraged” to have sexual debut with a male older than her, to “clear the dust” or to “dust off”, after which she is a considered mature women .		minimum age of marriage at all In February 2015, the country’s parliament unanimously passed the “Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill” that raises the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and criminalizes child marriage.
Zambia	15years - 8.5% 18years- 41.6%	Early marriage contracted under customary law, mainly a rural phenomenon, is linked to payment of a bride price, and as such is	There are areas in Zambia where initiation is still carried out as part of the rites of passage for pubertal girls. In some of these communities, girls are encourage to	A reanalysis of the data from the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2001–2002 (ZDHS 2001–02) found that more than two thirds of married girls aged 15-19 (68%) had	The minimum legal age for marriage is 18. Statutory law and customary law work side by side but they contradict on minimum age of marriage

		widely recognised as a coping strategy for the poor.	indulge in sexual intercourse after initiation, which may result in teenage pregnancy and subsequently child marriage. .	not completed primary school, compared to 43 % among unmarried girls of the same age, and as much as six out of ten married girls aged 15–19 cannot read .	
Zimbabwe	15 years - 3.9 % 18 years - 30.5 %	As a result of the high levels of unemployment, Zimbabwe has a high level of income and food insecurity, with many urban families depending on casual work, remittances and petty trading, which	In Zimbabwe, it is traditionally accepted that if a man has intercourse with a girl and/or impregnates her, he must marry her.	Though Zimbabwe has made major progress towards gender parity, with girl indicators for school attendance being higher than boys (primary school attendance rate of 94% for girls vs 93% for boys, and secondary school attendance rate of 63% for girls vs 52% for	The Marriage Act (Act 22/2001) defines 16 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and 18 years for boys. The Customary Marriages Act (Act 23/2004) on the other hand does not give a minimum age of marriage at all.

		is also affecting the girl child		boys), the secondary out of school rate is 21.9%.	
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4. Recommendations

- Development and implementation of national action plans to end child marriage
- Empower girls to mitigate against child marriage
- Community mobilization against child marriage
- Provision of services to mitigate against child marriage
- Advocacy for countries to address the problem of child marriage
- Enabling legal and policy environment