



## THE PROBLEM:

Zambia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Africa, with **31% of girls under the age of 18 already married** and a median age of 18 for a first marriage among women generally. The rates of early marriage and early pregnancy and childbirth are higher in rural areas and among girls living in poverty. Nabukuyu Village is located in rural Monze district in Southern Province, where the median age of first marriage for married girls aged 15-19 is 16. Child marriage in Zambia is driven by interconnected factors such as poverty, gender inequality, cultural and social norms, lack of educational opportunities, a weak policy environment and limited law enforcement. Two key drivers of early marriage in the Nabukuyu community are **poverty and limited educational and economic prospects for girls**.

## LUBUTO'S APPROACH:

The variety of factors driving early marriage in rural Zambia requires a holistic approach that involves other stakeholders. This project, called "Communities for Change," engages key groups through the shared community resource of **the Mumuni Library**, a public library serving vulnerable children and youth located in Nabukuyu Village. Project activities include:

- 1) A **Family Makerspace offering skills-training and fabrication activities** (e.g., sewing, technology training, pottery, arts and crafts, carving, carpentry, gardening, hairdressing) that **increase the financial capacity of mothers and female caregivers to keep their daughters in school**, and that offer girls and young women the ability to develop new skills both academic and practical in nature;
- 2) Facilitation of meetings of chiefs, headmen, teachers and other local stakeholders to increase awareness of early marriage and to **generate and deliver community-led solutions** to the problem;
- 3) Provision of **10 comprehensive secondary boarding school scholarships**--including tuition, boarding fees, uniforms, school supplies, and feminine hygiene products, guaranteed from the point of enrollment through Grade 12 graduation--to keep at-risk girls in school;

- 4) Collaboratively generate advocacy materials with library users—including case studies and program briefs—to **give girls a voice** in national lobbying efforts.

Over 2 years, the project aims to reach 50 traditional leaders, 200 adolescent girls, 200 parents/caregivers and all major child marriage advocacy groups with programs and resources.



## ACHIEVEMENTS

**Makerspace:** In April 2019, an inaugural Makerspace event was held in the form of a week-long residential "**Girls Can Code!**" camp. The Girls Can Code! camp model aims to promote understanding of **computational logic**, develop **problem-solving and creative technical thinking skills**, and build life skills such as **leadership and teamwork** through an immersive, hands-on week of technology training. The 27 campers included girls from the surrounding Nabukuyu community, as well as from Choma-based partner

organization Musokotwane Compassion Mission Zambia (MCMZ), which retrieves girls from early marriages and conducts advocacy activities with traditional leaders. **Over half of the participants were out-of-school**, one-third were orphaned, and participants from MCMZ included girls retrieved from early marriages. While the majority of the girls arrived with little to no experience using computers, they left as amateur programmers who had created games in Scratch and Python, programmed robotic vehicles, and built their own computers. In June, the Makerspace began offering **free courses and workshops** on topics requested by the community, including **tailoring, pottery, basket weaving, textiles, gardening, carving, carpentry, and hairdressing**.

**Advocacy:** We have developed a strong advocacy partnership with Musokotwane Compassion Mission Zambia (MCMZ), joined the stakeholder group Network of Ending Child Marriage, Zambia (NECM-Z) and attended **advocacy and traditional events** to share news about our work. In March, LLP held meetings with area chiefs to introduce the project and form joint advocacy goals. One key priority was the identification of solutions to the challenge of **gender-based violence reporting and referrals** in Nabukuyu, where **the closest police post is 23 kilometers away** and transportation is unreliable and costly. Chief Mwanza agreed to establish and host a **Gender-Based Violence Secretariat** at his palace, which will equip girls and women from the Nabukuyu community to **report cases of GBV and early marriage without travelling to the nearest town**. In June, MCMZ and Lubuto held a 4-day training to build technical capacity in the chiefs and headmen responsible for managing the Secretariat. The 10 secondary school scholarships, to be granted in January of 2020, will be offered in consultation with the Secretariat to girls who are at high risk for early marriage or who have been retrieved from early marriages through the Secretariat/Zambia Police.

**Programs and outreach:** An all-girls weekly mentoring program was introduced at the Mumuni Library in May 2019. The program uses the Peace Corps Girls Leading Our World curriculum and focuses on **sexual and reproductive health knowledge, gender equity, human rights, self-esteem, and early marriage prevention**. 19 out-of-school girls and young women aged 14-24 years have enrolled in the first cohort. Weekly outreach sessions target nearby communities and places where mothers and female caregivers tend to congregate, such as the nearby clinic. Staff connected with 152 people through outreach in April and May of 2019, offering information about human rights, early marriage prevention, and library services and programs.

