



Concept Note for Ending Child Marriages in Shamva district in Zimbabwe

Programme Title: Giving Girls a Chance (‘Mukana’)

Introduction

“Child Marriage is a practice that robs millions of girls of their childhood, their rights and their dignity.” – Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Child marriage is a significant cultural, political and public health issue on the African continent. Child marriage is defined as any legal or customary union involving a boy or girl below age 18. While it is prevalent throughout the world, it occurs with higher frequency in low-income countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. The many drivers to child marriage include poverty, weakness in civil registration, discriminatory gender relations and cultural and religious norms. More than 700 million women worldwide will get married before age 18, with about one in three of these marrying before age 15.

In the case of Zimbabwe available data shows that one in every four adolescents girls (25%) aged 15-19 were married or in union by age 18 (MICS 2014). A quarter (25%) of adolescent girls entering into marriage or union bear the negative consequences of child/ early marriage which include teenage pregnancies and higher experiences of Gender Based Violence (GBV). There is urban rural difference in female child marriage with 27.4% married in rural as compared to 16.9% in urban areas. Child marriage lead to school dropouts, low socioeconomic opportunities and health risk associated with adolescent pregnancy, childbearing and gender based violence. Adolescent girls who marry older men also risk HIV infection (UNICEF 2012).

Thematic Focus

The thematic focus for this programme is:

- I. Prevention and Support (access to SRHR and HIV information and services)
- II. Adolescent Girls and Young Women’s (AGYW) Economic Empowerment: Resources, Technology and livelihoods & enterprise development
- III. AGYW’s empowerment: Self-Esteem, decision making and active participation

**Purpose**

The programme seeks to address the link between child marriage (teen pregnancy/motherhood) and school drop-out as a key factor limiting education completion rates for adolescent girls through the provision of comprehensive education, economic and social empowerment services layered with referrals to clinical HIV-related services for AGYW within the districts of operation. The programme will implement a holistic package of individual and community-based interventions that work to both prevent child marriages among adolescent girls and provide financial and economic support in response to girls who have dropped out of school due to marriage, pregnancy and have limited options to complete their education

Primary Target Beneficiaries: The AGYW (10 – 24 years) will be drawn from highly vulnerable and under-served sub-population of AGYW who are pregnant and have dropped out of school, young mothers who recently dropped out of school and school-going adolescent girls with the greatest risk of becoming pregnant and dropping out of school.

Secondary Target Beneficiaries: Parents/ guardians, community leaders, Boys

Justification of Intervention

Child Marriage is described as a multi-faceted sociocultural and endemic harmful practice in most parts of Africa which adversely impacts the personal development and future opportunities of children. The detrimental consequences on children, women, families, communities and nations at large are evident.

Married girls can be particularly vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Child brides lack the information or the power to abstain from sex or negotiate safe sexual practices with their often older and more sexually experienced husbands and are at a heightened risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Child marriage encourages the initiation of sexual activity at an age when girls' bodies are still developing and when they know little about their bodies, their sexual and reproductive health, and their right to access contraception. Frequent unprotected sex increases the likelihood of HIV transmission from husband to young wife.

Investments in girls through adolescence provide a demographic “three-for”: reducing population momentum by delaying marriage and childbearing, thereby increasing the space



between generations; lowering desired family size as more educationally accomplished girls are less reliant on multiple children for security; and decreasing the age and power differential between partners, thus positively affecting women's ability to meet their fertility goals. Benefits also extend to the next generation, because those who marry later and with more authority are likely to invest in their children (especially their girl children) in ways that establish a virtuous cycle of improved health and education. Specifically, HOPE will (1) help girls stay in school through adolescence, (2) provide social and economic alternatives to early marriage and childbearing, (3) end child marriage and support married girls, and (4) focus on the youngest first-time mothers.

Increasing the age of first marriage reduces girls' risk for physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. Delaying marriage can also increase girls' and women's decision-making power. Keeping girls in school and delaying marriage increases incomes for individuals and advances economic development for nations. When girls stay in school, communities and families reap health benefits, such as decreased risk of HIV and reduced infant mortality.¹ Investing in girls, developing their social and economic assets, ensuring they have access to education and health services, and ensuring that they can postpone marriage until they are ready; all this means greater dignity for women. It also means healthier families and higher levels of gender equality. This in turn makes for stronger societies and more vibrant economies. Investment in later marriage for girls is investment in development for everyone. No society can afford the lost opportunity, waste of talent, or personal exploitation that child marriage causes.

Proposed programme

In an effort to respond to and address some of the challenges and issues highlighted above HOPE will implement the 'Giving Girls a Chance'/ 'Mukana' programme in partnership with government ministries and departments among other relevant stakeholders. Respect for girls' human rights requires that stakeholders prevent and end child marriage and demands that they actively support girls who are already married.

¹ Melanne Verveer. (2010). Targeting Girls in the Name of Tradition: Child Marriage.



The ‘Giving Girl a Chance’ programme envisages a holistic approach to address key consequences and causes that prevent AGYWs fulfil their full potentials, such as 1) high rates of child marriage, 2) high rates of teenage pregnancy, 3) high incidence of HIV among AGYWs , and 4) increase in school drop-outs at secondary level.

The project equips adolescent girls and young women with an integrated package of life skills (HIV prevention, adolescent reproductive and sexual health, and child protection) and economic strengthening interventions. Through Girls First Clubs, DREAMS interventions will build the social assets and agency of adolescent girls so that they can protect themselves from HIV and abuse while building their financial literacy, entrepreneurship skills, and market-linked career guidance skills.

Caregivers and girls are supported to enroll in internal savings and lending (ISAL) groups that build household resiliency. Additionally, parenting groups for caregivers and teens strengthen intergenerational communication and build on positive parenting practices to help caregivers and adolescents discuss sensitive topics like reproductive health and HIV prevention.

Through the Girls Opportunity Fund, the project will provide financial and social support to adolescent girls and young women who have dropped out of school to enrol and go back to school. Financial support include school fees and also uniforms and stationery requirements.

A unique feature of the programme is to realize the multi-faceted nature of child marriage and ensure integrated and multi-sector joint effort to address the needs of AGYWs. HOPE will ensure integration of prevention and response efforts within and across programmes in various sectors, including health, education, food security and economic growth. The ‘Giving Girls a Chance’ programme recognizes that AGYWs are a special group and they themselves are part of the solutions rather than the problems. Therefore in the programme AGYWs are not only the recipient but owner of various interventions. Moreover, innovation will be placed at the center of the programme to facilitate the AGYWs to take advantage of the fast development of information technology and their participation to the programme. The programme also intends to achieve multiply effect for programme results through adopting Delivery as One approach, where HOPE, government ministries, departments and relevant



development partners work together and complement each other based on their comparative technical competencies.

Vision: A community where girls can decide if, when and whom to marry and that married girls lead healthy, empowered lives

Goal: The overall goal of the programme is to improve retention of adolescent girls in school and reduce the number of girls getting married or in union before the age of 18.

Objectives:

- 1) To empower girls by building their skills and enhancing their social assets
- 2) To increase knowledge and capacity of AGYWs to provide information services on HIV and AIDS and child marriage.
- 3) To increase access of adolescent girls married and unmarried to health, education, economic, and legal services
- 4) To increase awareness of the harmful impact of child marriage and alternatives available by families, communities and young people

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased participation by girls at risk of child marriage G in decisions that affect them, including regarding marriage.
2. Decreased adolescent fertility rates
3. Reduced new HIV incidences among AGYWs
4. Increased access and use services and supports of all kinds (health, education, economic and legal) by married girls
5. Reduced number of families engaged in exchange of bride price for their
6. Community, traditional and religious leaders take greater action to end child marriage and realise the rights of girls

Activities

The programme will implement the following broad core activities:

Needs assessment: An in-depth rapid need assessment will be conducted in order to understand the underlying socio - cultural norms, practices and attitudes that perpetuate child



marriages. The assessment will also explore locally appropriate strategies for ending child marriage.

To increase awareness of the harmful impact of child marriage and alternatives available by families, communities and young people

Advocacy and community awareness: Increased community awareness of the dangers of child marriage and its links to specific consequences like poor maternal health and HIV is essential. Several authors note that advocacy campaigns have the potential to affect child marriage and HIV. More nuanced programming and advocacy are required that are tailored to specific communities but have the potential to galvanise action. HOPE will engage local music artist as an ambassador to compose a theme song on the harmful effects of child marriages and also use themed dramas to stimulate conversations. Digital conversations and mass media messages will be used to raise awareness about the dangers of child marriage, the alternatives, and the rights of girls.

Community Dialogues: Traditionally the family and elders of the community have made the decision whether, when and whom a girl will marry. Working with parents and other community stakeholders is therefore vital in changing the attitudes and social norms that perpetuate harmful practices such as child marriage. A primary goal is to create an environment in which delayed marriage becomes more socially acceptable than child marriage. At the same time, girls must be able to pursue an education or other alternatives to marriage without the fear of criticism or ridicule. Noting that the community plays a critical role in ensuring pregnant and teenage mothers are supported and retained in school, community dialogues will be rolled out through the support of other partners such ZAPSO. Among the targeted community members are AGYW, men and women, traditional leaders, husbands/boyfriends, school administrators, cultural gatekeepers and opinion leaders play a pivotal role in communities to increase support for improved developmental outcomes for AGYW. Working in partnership with parents is also essential, as child marriage is often a consequence of the constraints and stresses experienced by families as a result of poverty, displacement, or societal pressures. Working with parents to transform attitudes and identify viable alternatives that advance the interests of individual children and the wellbeing of the entire family is critical to ensuring that interventions have positive, sustainable results.



Male Involvement: Engaging men, particularly fathers and brothers will be necessary. Interventions that involve fathers and religious and traditional leaders broaden understanding of the dangers of child marriage, and the long-term benefits of education and economic opportunities. Traditional leaders will be trained to additionally advocate for the rights of the girl child whilst influencing the support of men and boys to support AGYW. Equally important is reaching out to boys at a young age to encourage equitable gender attitudes and norms so that they can be allies in preventing child marriage and change agents within their communities.

Empower girls by building their skills and enhancing their social assets

To increase knowledge and capacity of AGYWs to provide information services on HIV and AIDS and child marriage.

Girls Health Clubs: Girls Health clubs or safe spaces (innovative learning and sharing platforms) for AGYWs will be established in the different districts at ward level. HOPE will empower girls at risk of child marriage and married AGYWs through, for example, life skills training, provision of safe spaces for girls to discuss their futures, the provision of information about their options, and the development of support networks. The Girls Health Clubs mandate is equip AGYWs with knowledge and skills in areas relevant to their lives, including sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, and their rights under the law. Girls are empowered when and if they are able to learn skills that help them to develop a livelihood, help them to better communicate, to negotiate and make decisions that directly affect their lives. Safe spaces and the support they offer help girls overcome their social isolation, interact with peers and mentors, and assess alternatives to marriage. As the girls develop their abilities and self-confidence, parents and community members come to regard them differently, which can help to re-shape long held views and customary assumptions.

Multipurpose Resource Centre- The centre which will serve as a multipurpose resource centre for empowerment as well as a shelter or safe space and counselling centre for adolescent girls and young women.

To increase access of adolescent girls married and unmarried to health, education, economic, and legal services

To increase knowledge and capacity of AGYWs to provide information services on HIV



and AIDS and child marriage.

Girls Opportunities Fund- This is a financial and social support tool for enabling communities and the Trust to provide a bridge for children and mostly girls and young women to rebuild their lives. It builds on the last ten years of educational assistance to children living with HIV and is now adapted to include girls at risk and those who have experienced child marriage

Edutainment for AGYWs– HOPE will have edutainment as a core component of its interventions. This will involve, among other things, working with artists to develop theme songs that disseminate information on HIV and AIDS. Sporting events and competitions will be organized for girls and young women around the themes of the programme focus areas. HIV prevention information will be disseminated and a number of ASRH and HIV prevention services will be provided including condom demonstrations, distribution and HIV testing. HOPE will partner with ZNFPC and NAC for HIV testing which will be done on site.

Empower girls by building their skills and enhancing their social assets

Entrepreneurship and Livelihoods: Through partnership with VIRL Financial services and Nduna Trust the club members will be trained on ISALs and have established ISAL groups. The AGYWs will be supported in the identification of business and income generating projects that are context appropriate. HOPE will also offer mentorship and trainings in business management and financial literacy. They will also be trained on production of reusable sanitary pads which they can resell and; also on market gardening so that they are more productive, diversify their product offering as well as gain access to new markets. Support to equip AGYW with life skills and social assets will be provided through social asset building and AGYW will be linked with mentors.

Partnerships

Child marriage is a cross-sectoral issue that require a coordinated, integrated response and partnership between governments and stakeholders. HOPE will work in partnership with Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC), Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Health & Child Care and National AIDS Council (NAC) among other relevant stakeholders. The Government line ministries will also be actively



involved in supervision and monitoring of the project

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of the programme implementation will be conducted from two levels, organizational and community. Monitoring at community level will be done by the participating families and involve the parents/guardians, community leaders and AGYWs. Monitoring at organizational level will be undertaken by Programme staff as part of their daily/weekly/monthly routine, in order to notice changes or deviations from the expected results and thereby take corrective action. Formative internal review exercise will be conducted mid-term or at any other time before the end of the projects, taking into account the findings of the monthly monitoring by the district field officers, M&E officers and other interested partners. HOPE will also be guided by the programme's Theory of Change (ToC) to monitor the causality effect of changes that are expected at each level of the results chain. It will also use the ToC to guide programme implementation, monitoring and learning in order to facilitate achievement of the desired positive change at individual and community levels. The ToC itself will be monitored and adapted in response to monitoring data. Risks and assumptions that are likely to have an impact on the desired and most significant change will be closely monitored and evaluated to ensure that the programme is not derailed from the proposed pathways of change.