



Zimbabwe
Gender
Commission

PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL GENDER FORUM REPORT



2021

Acronyms

AU	African Union
GBV	Gender Based Violence
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NAP	National Action Plan
NGF	National Gender Forum
PGF	Provincial Gender Forum
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ZGC	Zimbabwe Gender Commission
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

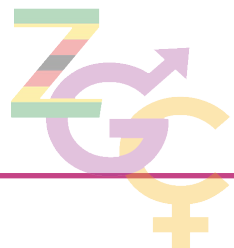
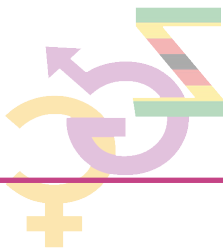


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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

The report presents findings of the 2021 National Gender Forum (NGF) that was convened in Gweru, Midlands Province on the 10th December 2021. The report contains synthesized findings from Provincial Gender Forum Meetings convened in eight of the country's provinces from 29 November to 3 December 2021 and the NGF that was convened in Gweru.

1.2 Purpose of the National Gender Forum Meeting

Annually, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) is mandated to convene a National Gender Forum in accordance with Section 8(1) of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act [Chapter 10:31] to discuss any issues related to the Commission's mandate and functions. This is also in line with Section 246 of the Constitution and the Gender Commission Act which mandates the Commission to monitor gender equality issues, conduct research, investigate gender related violations and recommend changes to laws and practices.

The theme for the 2021 NGF was **'Action towards the Eradication of Harmful Practices which breed Child Marriages and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of young girls'**. The theme was arrived at recognizing the unprecedented levels of child marriage/rape. as it is one of the systemic barriers prejudicial to the achievement of gender equality in Zimbabwe. Child Marriage impedes the full enjoyment of rights, it limits girls from accessing educational and economic opportunities that could lift them and their families out of poverty. Further, child marriage exposes the "brides" and their newborn babies to high health and death risks due to physiological immaturity. Over and above these effects, Child Marriage increases the risk of domestic violence particularly Intimate Partner Violence and compromises one's ability to exercise choice regarding sexual and reproductive health rights.

This Annual Gender Forum came at the backdrop of a significant rise in cases of child marriage in Zimbabwe. A case in point is that of Anna Machaya, a 14-year-old girl who died whilst giving birth at an Apostolic shrine in Marange, Manicaland Province. The Anna Machaya case is only a representation of many other cases going unreported. Child marriage has also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions which according to studies conducted by Stopping Abuse and Female Exploitation (SAFE), saw a 400% rise in cases of teenage pregnancies and child marriages in the last two years.

The NGF was preceded by Provincial Gender Forum (PGF) community dialogues that were convened across the country. The PGF dialogues were convened The district level dialogues were conducted in hot spot areas where child marriage prevalence is high. Subsequently, the dialogues sought to gather views and inputs from communities and stakeholders to ensure inclusive participation in line with Government's thrust on devolution and SDGs 2030 Agenda of 'leaving no-one behind' and ensuring diversity and inclusive participation in national discourse. Findings and recommendations of the PGF dialogues informed that annual NGF.



1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Provincial Gender Forum Community Dialogues

The Community Dialogues were structured around key questions to establish community knowledge of the key principles in dealing with the scourge of child marriages: - defining who a child is, what a marriage is, the prevalence rates of child marriage in each province, the drivers of child marriage and how different sectors of the community should and can respond to child marriage and specifically what the ZGC can do to end child marriages. The information from community dialogues was rich and diverse. Some was common to all 8 Dialogues and significant parts of the Dialogues carried the distinctiveness of the provinces where it was generated.

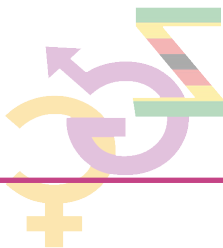
The eight districts in which the dialogues were held were Bubi in Matebeleland North; Inzisa in Matebeleland South; Shurugwi in the Midlands Province; Hurungwe in Mashonaland West; Marondera in Mashonaland East; Marange in Manicaland Province; Mwenezi in Masvingo Province; and Muzarabani in Mashonaland Central Province. The dialogues were held with the following objectives:

- To unpack the underlying causes of child marriages and seek effective solutions for addressing systemic issues causing child marriages;
- To identify structural and underlying causes of child marriages
- To strengthen and call for accountability by all stakeholders responsible for child marriage prevention
- To promote community-based interventions in ending child marriages; and
- To gather information as part of the Commission's national inquiry on child marriage and sexual exploitation and abuse of young girls.

The Community Dialogues were held as the world commemorated the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. The National Theme for Zimbabwe's commemorations in 2021 was "**End Violence against Women and Girls Now – No to Child Marriage!!**" The ZGC deliberately chose the theme focused on child marriage to further the country's efforts in ending the scourge of child marriage in line with its Mandate.

The PGF dialogues culminated in the hosting of a high-level National Gender Forum held in the Midlands Province in Gweru on 10 December 2021. The objective of the National Gender Forum was to table before policy makers at the High-Level Policy Dialogue the outcome of the Provincial Dialogues. The outcomes of the Provincial Dialogues will also contribute to the National Inquiry on Child Marriages and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of young girls in the Apostolic Sect.

The PGF dialogues were convened in small and separate groups of women, men and the youth and had identical questions to guide the discussions. This arrangement enabled men, women and youth to have open and honest and self-regulated conversations. The outcome of the Provincial Dialogues with immensely rich data is testimony to the effectiveness of the process. The Provincial Dialogues were guided by the following key questions:



- Understanding of/the meaning of a child, marriage, child marriage and forced marriage
- Areas where child marriage is prevalent
- Age at which children are being involved in child marriages (including usual age difference between a child bride and her husband)
- Establishing whether child marriage cases are reported (If so where cases are reported and by who. Actions taken, and if not, possible reasons)
- Main drivers of child marriages and sexual exploitation
- Types of households most affected by child marriage
- Risks/ challenges faced by child brides
- Contribution of child marriage to the increase in school drop out (At which level - primary/ secondary)
- The role that culture and religion play in perpetuating the practice of child marriage
- Challenges that exist in ensuring prosecution of cases of child marriage
- Knowledge of laws that prohibit child marriages, and their adequacy to protect child marriages
- The types of programs that have been effective in keeping girls in school and unwed until they are 18
- Recommendations to the following duty bearers in order to end Child marriages:
 - Government
 - Parents
 - Traditional and Religious Leaders
 - Civil Society Organisations
 - Schools
- Actions that can be taken by the ZGC to end child marriages

After deliberations in the different groups, participants were asked to make presentations of their findings in a plenary where participants made contributions.

1.3.2 National Gender Forum

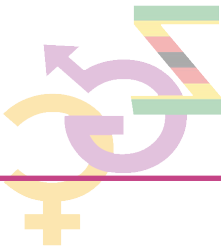
The NGF was convened in Gweru, Midlands Province with adherence to COVID-19 precautions and regulations. The meeting was well attended drawing participation from Government Ministries and Departments, Traditional Leadership at the highest levels; Church leadership, Civil Society Organizations, The United Nations Family, the AU Goodwill Ambassador and members of the media. The participation of these wide-ranging duty bearers and policy makers was to ensure a coordinated response in efforts to end child marriage. This NGF was structured in such a manner that not only were actors involved in a coordinated manner but it also was providing an opportunity for actors to renew strategies, discuss the development of robust policies and reinforce accountability mechanisms in line with the objectives of the NGF.

Findings and recommendations from the PGF dialogues were presented to the participants by a consultant who facilitated the PGF dialogues. The purpose was to inform the NGF participants of the key issues around child marriage that emerged from the PGF dialogues. A panel of experts also made their presentations touching on different sectors within the response to child marriage in Zimbabwe. Below are the panellists and their respective topic on which they presented:



1. Legislative and Policy frameworks: Is the law protective enough in safeguarding girls from Child Marriages and Sexual Exploitation Abuse?
2. Progress in the implementation of the National Action Plan on Ending Child Marriages
3. Role of Tradition and Culture in ending Child Marriage
4. Perspectives from Faith Based Organizations
5. Reflections by the African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Child Marriages
6. Reflections from the children's perspectives - Child Parliamentarian

Participants at the National Gender Forum included relevant government ministries, independent commissions, non-governmental organizations as well as community based organizations, faith based organizations, traditional leaders, youth organizations, the media, church bodies, the police victim friendly unit (VFU) as well as representatives from schools.



2. Key issues emerging from the NGF and PGF dialogues

2.1 Introduction

The key issues emerging around child marriage from the PGF and the NGF are presented under this section. The issues are presented according to the key questions defined by the ZGC for the PGF dialogues and the panel presentations from the expert presenters.

2.2 Overview of the situation of child marriage in Zimbabwe

Participants concurred that child marriage is rife in the country and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Girl children while away from school for the greater part of the two-year period from 2020 – 2021 were exposed to increased teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

The Zimbabwe Statistical Agency (Zimstat) confirms that levels of child marriage remain unacceptably high in Zimbabwe. According to 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 1 in 3 (32.6%) girls and 4% boys were married before the age of 18. Zimstat data also indicate the rural-urban divide in child marriages where rural girls are twice more likely to be married before the age of 18 than their urban counterparts. In addition, prevalence of child marriage per Province has been reported as follows:

Province	Girls	Boys
Bulawayo	13.5%	2.7%
Manicaland	36%	3.4%
Mashonaland Central	49.5%	6.7%
Mashonaland East	37.8%	3.9%
Mashonaland West	41.7%	5.6%
Matabeleland North	32.9%	5.5%
Matabeleland South	22.2%	1.7%
Midlands	30.4%	2.7%
Masvingo	35.3%	4.2%
Harare	21.7%	2.7%

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2019)

The legal and policy framework that addresses child marriage in Zimbabwe is in need of strengthening. During the NGF and the PGF dialogues, participants emphasized the need for the alignment of laws to the Constitution which sets the minimum legal age of marriage at 18 years. Currently pending enactment into law is the Marriages Bill which will have the effect of harmonizing all marriage laws and developing one comprehensive Marriages Act. The law will also prohibit child marriages by setting at 18 the minimum age of marriage for all marriages. In particular, clause 3 provides that the minimum age of marriage is 18 years. In order to ensure the protection of minors, the minimum age requirement has been extended to unregistered customary law marriages and to civil partnerships. Sub clause(2) of this Clause, clearly provides that for the avoidance of doubt, child marriages are prohibited and under no circumstances shall any person contract, solemnize, promote, permit



allow, or coerce or aid or abet the contracting, solemnizing, promotion, permitting or allowing or coercion of the marriage involving a child. This guards against attempts to sidestep the law by avoiding formal marriages and still have children being forced into relationships which are, to all intents and purposes, marriages. The commission of an offence under this Clause will attract a fine of up to Level 10 or five years in imprisonment or both. It also reconciles all the contradictions in the existing laws and complies with the 2016 Constitutional court case of ***Mudzuru & Tsopodzi vs Minister of Justice, Legal & Parliamentary Affairs N.O; Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender & Community Development & Attorney General of Zimbabwe*** which outlawed child marriage. It also criminalizes the participation of any person in a child marriage.

In addition, the proposed Children's Amendment Bill will widen the meaning of a child in need to include a child who is married or about to be married. It will also include in the types of neglect the committing of a child into marriage as ways of protecting children from child marriage.

From the Constitutional position, Section 19 under Chapter 2 on "National Objectives" obliges the State and all institutions and agencies of Government at every level to take reasonable measures, to ensure that children are protected from any form of abuse, maltreatment and neglect. Section 78 (1) of the Constitution sets 18 years as the minimum age of marriage. Its effect is that a person who has not attained the age of eighteen has no legal capacity to marry. He or she has a fundamental right not to be subjected to any form of marriage regardless of its source.

At the international and regional levels, Zimbabwe ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and it is also party to its two Optional Protocols. Zimbabwe also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1995. The African Charter defines a child as anyone below age 18 years and child labour is comprehensively covered in Article 15, while Articles 21 and 22 protects children against harmful social and cultural practices (child marriage, discrimination based on gender) and recruitment into armed conflict. The Charter further protects children from sexual exploitation in Article 27 where children are supposed not to be in child prostitution. Article 29 protects children from sale, trafficking and abduction, while Article 16, section 2 expects state parties to establish monitoring units to prevent and protect children from abuse and exploitation. Under the Charter, nations are obliged to provide protection to children against all forms of abuse, discrimination, neglect and exploitation.

Zimbabwe also developed the National Action Plan (NAP) and Communication Strategy on Ending Child Marriages as part of the AU Campaign to end Child Marriage in Africa where member states were expected to develop comprehensive and elaborate plans and implement National Action Plans aimed at ending child marriage. The development of the NAP also took into account the SDGs especially goal number 5 of achieving gender equality and particularly target 5.3 which addresses the elimination of harmful practices including child marriage. The NAP was launched in 2019 and following the launch the Ministry developed a costed Implementation Plan and Communication Strategy on the National Action Plan which was launched in May 2021.



2.3 Key Findings on Child Marriage

This section synthesizes the key drivers of child marriage as discussed during the PGF dialogues and further picked up in the NGF.

2.3.1 Prevalence Rates and Reporting of Child Marriage Cases

Without exception, the PGF dialogues confirmed the high prevalence of child marriages and that they are under reported. The opening remarks of the Chairperson of the ZGC were helpful in quantifying the prevalence rates in the different provinces and community members concurred that it was so and for some it was alarming that though they knew that there were high prevalence rates, the specific figures in their communities alarmed them. In many of the provinces visited, the reasons for under reporting were diverse ranging from ignorance of how to handle and report child marriage cases; to families conniving and not reporting and community leadership like *vanaSabhuku* knowing of incidences of child marriage and just not reporting them to appropriate authorities and covering up the crime for the offending families.

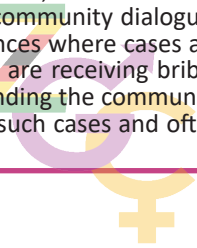
Communities also noted corruption among the police as reasons for not reporting, commenting that when they reported, police would be bribed and drop cases or would simply sit on cases which died a natural death. Communities noted that in instances of bribery and corruption, the police would threaten to arrest aggrieved family members genuinely following up their cases. Some Police officers were reported as saying to those following up their cases, “*Ibvai pano tinokusunga!*” (*leave or else we will arrest you*) and that would be enough to frighten and silence community members genuinely seeking justice.

It was noted that distances to courts and the cost of transport often prevented reporting and effective follow up of cases. In Muzarabani graphic examples were given on how distances to courts subverted justice for children given in marriage and that as part of ending child marriage there will be a need for courts nearer communities and the facilitation of offended families to access the courts.

Other reasons for not reporting included fear of witchcraft. In different provinces, examples were given where even when cases of child marriage were known, they would not be reported because of the known witchcraft practice linked to the offending family. Women in Hurungwe and Masvingo cited known examples of child marriage involving an 11 and 12-year-old respectively but these women were too fearful to report the cases. In Hurungwe members of the Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) committed to protect the reporting woman if she shared information on the details of the child marriage case and the woman narrating the story consented to share information with the police.

Communities noted that poor birth registration of children has facilitated child marriages noting that many children do not have birth certificates and therefore making it impossible to positively identify them as children and ascertain their true age.

Ironically, the issue of the office of *Sabhuku* covering up and not reporting incidents was spoken about a lot especially in Marondera and Hurungwe. However, Marondera and Hurungwe had the biggest number of *vanaSabhuku* attend the community dialogues - 23 and 15 in attendance respectively. It was noted that in instances where cases are getting to police and churches, police officers and *vanaSabhuku* are receiving bribes to conceal abuse and cases of child marriage. Police officers attending the community dialogues noted that the VFU is the one mandated to deal with such cases and often community members do not report to them.



Some cases are reported, however follow up is lacking on these cases to see how the cases ended. Some cases are not reported because families end up agreeing not to disrupt the young families. In some instances, parents will shield their children to avoid shame and humiliation.

Teachers are reporting cases but unfortunately parents don't cooperate and defeat the course of justice, some community members noted. There were extensive discussions on how parents and teachers are not cooperating and how this has subverted the rights of children. All communities visited were calling for close and more amicable relations between parents and children to protect children from child marriage. In Shurugwi, Insiza, Bubi, Masvingo where there is artisanal mining, parents bemoaned children who are picked by *makorokoza* from school while teachers watch and do nothing about it. Parents appealed to schools not to allow girls to be picked from school and generally not to entertain "anyone" not a learner at the school and without a school uniform.

2.3.2 Age Groups in Child Marriage

The dialogue process revealed that girls were taken in marriage in the age range of 11-16 years. These children were often taken in by much older men over the age of 20 years with many of them over the age of 30 years. Marondera noted that with the prevalence of the Marange Apostolic sect, men in higher age brackets of 40-50 years marry children.

Important to note is that where the Marange Apostolic Sect is dominant, communities noted a wider age difference between girls and the men taking them. The girls were in the 11-16 years range when they are mostly given in marriage to much older men, 50 years and above. In Masvingo, one woman said "*chero varume vane 100 years vanatora vana*" (even 100-year-old men marry children). This was not necessarily a literal 100 years but given as emphasis on the magnitude of age difference in the Marange Apostolic Sect.

It was also noted that there was considerable child to child marriage and these of course with a narrower age difference. The predominant view was that girls were disproportionately affected by child marriage and taken in by much older men.

2.3.3 Drivers of child marriage/rape

Several drivers of Child marriage were given and can be categorized as follows:

2.3.3.1 Economic and Social Factors

Children are pushed into marriage by poverty and lack in families. Children are then mortgaged to older and more well to do men that are open to child marriage. Young girls spoke about how they have had to offer sex in exchange for resources to buy sanitary pads.

Even in families not necessarily destitute, greed and envy or admiration of abundance in the next family pushed children into seemingly affluent families. This point was excellently dramatized in a play in Insiza District where a husband planned with his wife that their 16-year-old daughter be married to a man with three cattle so that their family could access some of that "wealth." The father felt justified to marry off his child because for him to drink beer, it was the neighbor who bought the beer, and for the father to be clothed, it was the same! It took collective community intervention to protect the girl child from a child marriage and for her to continue with her education.

Children themselves, seeking relief from poverty move towards older men who can look after them and alleviate their poverty. Children in child headed households tend to be particularly vulnerable to child marriage, to seek relief for themselves and their siblings in the absence of providing parents or guardians.

The informal mining sector, *amakorokoza* were highlighted in all provinces as drivers of child marriage. The communities and local leadership in all provinces were unanimous in this view. Hurungwe noted how its rich mineral wealth was pulling artisanal miners from across the nation who leave their families in search of wealth and end up founding new families in their new homes and often this is done with child brides.

The Hurungwe dialogue was attended by some informal miners who in hearing community contributions on their role in driving child marriage, noted that it was not always the case that they went for children as wives arguing that it was often families who pushed their daughters towards them so that they can access their stashes of cash. They also noted that even without the help of families, girls actively sought out artisanal miners to marry them.

All provinces made the point that children are changing with some of them seeking premature adulthood hence child marriages. Parents passionately spoke about how the advent of children's rights, has rendered children averse to counsel preferring to make their own uninformed choices around marriage and relationships. Hurungwe gave an example of a child who poisoned her parents in food because they were discouraging her from entering into a relationship with an older man.

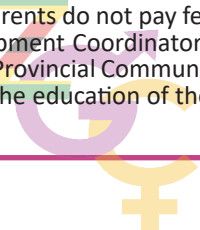
Linked to informal mining too is that communities noted how parents in search of mining wealth take their sons and daughters to participate in mining resulting in them losing interest in and dropping out of school and ending up in child marriage. Communities noted that it is not a good idea to expose children to wealth as they have no capacity to handle it and it ends up subverting their youth through child marriage.

Communities noted that child abuse and GBV at home pushed children into child marriage. In different provinces it was noted that where children were under the care of a step mother, in some instances they were abused and this drove them away to found their own families away from abuse.

All provinces bemoaned the fracturing of the family with limited guidance and counselling happening there. They noted that in the absence of aunts and uncles to counsel and teach children, children are exposed as parents have not always stepped into that role. Parents and guardians appealed to each other to immediately start loving their children and take on the teaching, mentoring and counselling role.

Related to this too is the youth noted poor parent-child relationships in many homes. Communication was weak resulting in children growing up without benefitting from the experience and knowledge of their parents.

Bubi and Insiza noted that some parents and guardians do not value education. Some of them do not motivate for children to go to school and some parents do not pay fees even if it within their power to do so. The Insiza District Development Coordinator, a clear Gender Champion, took advantage of the gathering for the Provincial Community Dialogue to motivate parents and guardians to actively support the education of their children.



2.3.3.2 Cultural and Religious Beliefs

Provincial dialogues noted that some church beliefs and practices promote child marriages. Examples were given of men with up to 12-15 wives and some of them being very young men. This practice is spiritualized such as being led to a wife through a dream making it difficult for loyal church members to challenge and refuse with their children. Whereas the Marange Apostolic Sect was pointed out the most, the majority of the Provincial Community Dialogues noted that it is no longer the case that this scourge is limited to this religious sect but is now common to many other churches. The youth and community leaders and members called on churches to be vigilant and safeguard children.

Other cultural beliefs and practices such as Chinamwari, kuzvarira, girl pledging, kuripa ngozi, kutamba zvigure among other practices were cited as fueling child marriage.

2.3.3.3 Children's Rights

Parents and guardians across the provinces lamented the advent of children's rights. They noted that it is becoming difficult to discipline children and show them the right way as they easily invoke their rights and threaten parents with police arrest. There were wide ranging concerns that the law empowers children too much and children can no longer be disciplined as it was in the past. The removal of corporal punishment in schools was roundly condemned and parents felt that the law has weakened the influence and leadership role of parents over children. Parents felt that removal of moderate corporal punishment has been costly for children and families. Adults argued that there is now rampant child indiscipline, early sexual debut and children no longer shun sexual immorality. Marondera gave examples of children as young as 13 years found with condoms in their bags. Children are now abusing their constitutional rights. Children are no longer being beaten as discipline by their parents.

2.3.3.4 Long Distances to School

Walking long distances to schools has exposed girls to sexual abuse leading them to child marriage. Muzarabani noted that parents find themselves renting rooms for children to be nearer schools. However, the distances are such that parents cannot supervise children out of home and that exposes children. A mother in Muzarabani regretted this phenomenon noting that when these children run out of cooking oil, they have no one to ask and end up getting what they need illicitly leading to teenage pregnancies and child marriages. Long distances have also meant that girls and boys live in bush homes nearer to their schools exposing them to sexual predators. These distances to school and back home are causing young girls to encounter many things along their way to school including rape, bullying and other evils.

2.3.3.5 Technology

All Provincial Community Dialogues lamented the double-edged sword of technology. There was clear appreciation that the COVID-19 lockdown necessitated that children use smart phones to do their school work. The same phones are now being inappropriately used by children to access pornographic material, they discussed. Communities noted that children are recruiting each other and congregating on phones for wrong content leading them to indulge in sexual activity. Community members called upon each other and teachers to monitor children's phones to minimize exposure to explicit content.

Social media came out as a key driver of child marriage with the perception that parents are no longer monitoring what activity is taking place on their children's gadgets. Parents encouraged each other to go through their children's phones and confiscate them at certain times of the day.

2.3.3.6 Gender Inequality

Girls lack empowerment and that there is need to work on their self-confidence and esteem as part of efforts to end child marriage.

2.3.3.7 School Dropout

Communities noted that school dropout is both a cause and a consequence of child marriage. In all provinces, it was noted that girls are more likely to drop out of school due to child marriage and will not resume education. Even with the availability of second chance education some girls choose not to go back to school due to a lack of support and encouragement and also feelings of shame and the fear of stigma and discrimination. In Shurugwi, the Provincial Education officer noted the challenges they faced in encouraging girls to go back to school after marriage or teenage pregnancy noting that both the girls and their families were not forthcoming.

In many of the community dialogues convened, it was noted that churches like the Marange Apostolic Sect did not allow children to go to school and the girls end up getting into marriage.

2.3.3.8 Impact of COVID 19

Parents lamented the fact that children have lost interest in school due to extended school closures. In all provinces visited, it was noted that the COVID 19 lockdowns have seen Zimbabwe record high levels of teenage pregnancies and child marriages. In a Youth Community Dialogue Group in Insiza, the youth group had 53 girls and of these 16 girls had children and 3 were pregnant. It was discussed that in 2021, Marondera had similar shocking statistics where a whole grade 7 class had only 1 girl sit for her examinations. Muzarabani noted that only 3 in a stream of 30 pupils wrote Grade 7 examinations. The socio-economic challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic have seen many job losses, and child marriages are resorted to, in order to feed families.

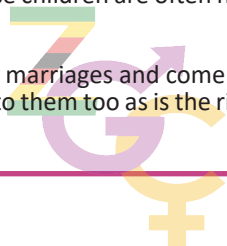
2.3.3.9 Knowledge of the Law that Protects Children from Child Marriage

The Provincial Dialogues brought out clearly the fact that there are still people in Zimbabwe who do not have access to the Constitution. As part of the facilitation process, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission asked citizens who had a copy of the constitution and how many had read /seen it before. The response was that in almost all the provinces, they had not seen the Constitution and some men asked "where do you get the constitution anyway?". Clearly a lot of work still needs to be done in distributing copies of the Constitution and getting citizens to live by that document.

2.3.4 Effects of Child Marriage on Children

Communities noted that child marriage impedes the growth of children, limiting their access to education and opportunity to be meaningfully and gainfully employed. Girls face a lot SRHR related issues such as complicated delivery and abiding complications after that. They also are at risk of delivery of underweight babies because the mothers are young and physiological immature. They are also at risk of getting HIV. Child marriage also increases their risk of domestic violence and these children are often not aware of their rights to choose and access SRHR services.

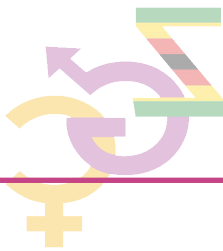
Some communities noted that when these children grow up in marriages and come to themselves, they want to leave that marriage and that is a risk to them too as is the risk of trying multiple partners after they divorce.



Youth noted that child brides face harassment by the community. Even though there is second chance education, they fail to return to school due to shame and lack of support within schools.

3. Conclusion

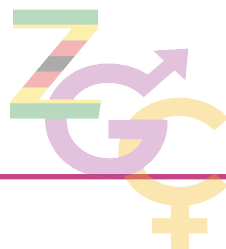
The main conclusions drawn from the NGF and the PGF dialogues is that there is a realization that child marriage is rife and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is need for strengthening of the legal and policy frameworks particularly criminalization of child marriage and the realignment of the law to the Constitution in ways that protect young women and girls from this harmful practice. This includes speedy enactment of the Marriages Bill as well as aligning the legal age of consent and the legal age of marriage. There is need for a coordinated, multi-stakeholder and multisectoral approaches to end child marriage in Zimbabwe .



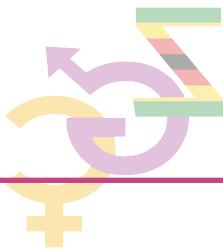
4. Recommendations

This section outlines the specific recommendations that were made to the different sectors from the PGF dialogues and the NGF.

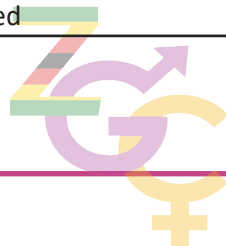
Sector	Recommendation
Family	Families need to strengthen relationships with their children and teach them in love
	Parents must take time to educate their children on what is right and what is wrong.
	Parents must not abuse their children, when a child comes home late parents must not chase away children to say “dzokera kwawanga uri” (go back where you were)
	Parents and guardians should lead by example and model lifestyles they would like their children to emulate
	Children must be taught to be content with what they have and work hard and aspire to acquire what they desire. There must be targeted dialogue platforms and gatherings and lessons for children and parents
	Scripture Union must be returned to schools.
	Families to embrace neighbors as part of them so that they can raise children as a collective
	Parents are encouraged to allow other members in the community to have oversight over their children to ensure children behave better
	Families not to shun children in marriages but to support and reintegrate them into the family and community and encourage them to go back to school
	Parents must educate their children in their homes and must have synergy with teachers



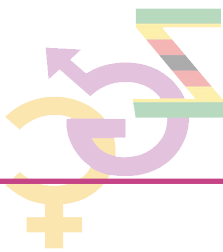
Community	Intensify awareness campaigns to spread information on child marriage
	Traditional leadership to become champions in efforts to end child marriages. Presently, some are seen as defenders and enablers of child marriages.
	Traditional leaders must educate and discipline members of society with regards to these crimes against children
	Every village to have a ‘champion” for the anti-child marriage/rape campaign. This point was debated that communities already have child protection committees in communities and this might be a factor of their being unknown and therefore underutilized
	Economic empowerment initiatives that include the participation of family members so that they work together to alleviate family poverty and build strong support networks for children in marriages



Government	Communities called for sustained community education on the scourge of child marriages
	Training of village health workers and provide them with a dossier of information on responding to cases of child marriage
	Schools to support pregnant girls and work on stigma and discrimination so that girls continue in school after they fall pregnant or enter into a child marriage
	There was a request for police suggestion boxes to file complaints that would help withhold the identity of the complainant/reporting citizen
	Awareness campaign in schools to raise awareness on child rape/marriage
	Government to impose stiffer penalties to sex offenders and rapists and justice must be seen to be served.
	Harmonization of the age of consent and legal age of marriage. This matter raised a lot of discussion that the whereas the legal age of sexual consent is 16 years, the age of marriage is 18 years. There is need to align the laws.
	Government encouraged to intervene in the Marange church which encouraged and promotes child marriage/rape
	The government should establish vocational training centres that impart meaningful technical skills to children while keeping them gainfully occupied.
	Government must finance and sustain such programmes as BEAM and the Education of Child Care Workers ensuring that BEAM serves purpose by targeting children in genuine need.
Government must intervene by ensuring that all children have access to birth certificates and that child marriages are registered	



<p>Civil Society Organizations</p>	<p>The communities assigned CSOs a role in ending child marriage by continuing to fund awareness campaigns. They noted that these campaigns, in partnership with the Government and the ZGC are to raise awareness on the scourge and on referral pathways for survivors and their families.</p>
	<p>It was also recommended that CSOs provide projects for girls to keep them meaningfully engaged while acquiring practical skills and generating income for themselves and their families.</p>
<p>Churches and Traditional Leaders</p>	<p>Churches and Traditional Leaders were urged to educate congregates to end the culture of child marriages.</p>
	<p>Communities recommended that churches train families to live in harmony with their children and to have clear rules on how to behave and live together harmoniously at home</p>
	<p>Chiefs should be empowered to handle cases of child marriages.</p>
	<p>Men noted that traditional leadership should train fathers not to “discipline” their wives in the presence of children</p>
	<p>When traditional leaders identify cases of child marriage, they should educate and discipline members of society with regards to these crimes.</p>
	<p>Traditional leaders should begin to play the role of custodians of children’s rights and oversee their proper upbringing of children</p>



Zimbabwe Commission	Gender	Gender Commission must take the message on ending child marriages across all corners of the country.
		Community committees must be established under the Gender Commission to assist them in awareness raising initiatives.
		Gender Commission must continue to work with police to practically deal with cases of child marriage
		Decentralize ZGC to community level
		Monitor budgets allocated to government institutions for ending child marriage and ensure they are spent accordingly
		Ensure availability of quality GBV prevention and response services

