**SUBMISSION OF REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON PROGRESS TOWARDS ENDING CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE.**

The Government of the Republic of Zambia with support from UNICEF and UNFPA and other Co-operating partners is implementing the Global Programme to End Child Marriage (GPECM) launched in 2016, through a pilot project in Katete and Senanga Districts. The pilot Districts work as a multisectoral team with a developed District joint plans on Ending Child Marriage (ECM), using the Community Level Case Management approach, to address Child Marriage and harmful practices towards children. The GPECM offers a framework promoting the right of girls to delay marriage, addressing the conditions that keep the practice in place, and caring for girls already in union.

**SCALE UP OF THE PROGRAMMME**

The **Children’s Act No. 12 of 2022 Section 167 (i)** defines a child in need of care as, including children that are likely to be subjected to child marriage or to customs and practice prejudicial to the child’s life, education and health. The Government has ensured that children are protected from such harmful practices through the implementation of Ending Child Marriage programme. The programme has been scaled up to 10 additional Districts with the highest rate of Child Marriage, highest rate of Teenage Pregnancies and low levels of children transitioning from Primary to Secondary School namely; Chama, Mpulungu, Mbala, Lundazi, Sesheke, Mwandi, Mungwi, Mansa, Samfya and Chilubi of Eastern, Western, Luapula and Northern Provinces of Zambia.

Working with health and education system efforts focus on to increase the knowledge of the adolescent girls on their rights, including on (Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), HIV/AIDS and Menstruation, this is achieved through support health facilities to sustained provision of adolescent friendly health services.Education is a game changer for empowering girls and it expands opportunities for girls to reach their full potential. School helps girls develop their own social-support network, which is also a pre-condition for preventing/addressing violence against girls.

Government in collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA has also been engaging the implementing Districts on Social Behavioural Change (SBC) in promoting positive gender norms which underlie the child marriage problem through community dialogues targeting key community gate keepers such as traditional and religious leaders, men, women, girls, and boys. Radio programmes focusing on rights of adolescent girls, alternatives to child marriage and positive gender norms are aired through community radio stations in the implementing Districts.

Boys have been engaged through the Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM) model where through sports they are engaged on developing healthy relationships with others including women and girls. Using the ‘Coaching Boys into Men, Mens’ Network, radio programmes on gender transformative messaging on Child Marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality, engagement of traditional, religious, traditional marriage initiators and community leaders, have contributed with their meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end Child Marriage by enhancing systems, accountability and services across sectors.

Child Marriage is highly associated and recognized as a violation of human rights and a hindrance to national development. In fact, evidence suggests that the practice of child marriage is associated with high levels of child marriage, high levels of teen pregnancies and low levels of transitioning from primary to secondary school.

* The prevalence of child marriage decreased from 31% in 2014 to 29% in 2018.
* Yet the Adolescent pregnancy rate remained stagnant and is at 29.2%.

 From the education sector, 81% of girls attend primary education and

 only 38% attend secondary level showing low transition rates from

 primary to secondary.

* 18% of learners dropped out of school due to teen pregnancy or child marriage (with 96.4% of those affected being girls
* 14.8% of surveyed head-teachers received reports of child sexual abuse.

 **Achievements of the Program from pilot districts**

The programme applied gender transformative approach to behavior change and awareness raising. This approach involved;

* Community Level Case Management being implemented in Katete and Senanga Districts. Implementation of community-based case management was intensified in Katete and Senanga were 303 service delivery points were established, and 2,716 children (1,436 boys and 1,280 girls) were reached. These children were provided with services such as referral and follow up for access to education, SRHR and protection services.
* Community Dialogues, 32,684 community members participated in gender transformative dialogues promoting positive gender norms, alternatives to child marriage and gender equality. Of these who participated in the dialogues, 6,486 were boys, 7,184 were men, 10,565 were women and 8,449 were girls.
* Couching Boys into Men for the promotion of healthy relationships, positive masculinities, and gender equality; Using the ‘Coaching Boys into Men’-tool, 36 community sports coaches were trained as “Coaching Boys into Men” facilitators. 6,117 boys actively participated in education/dialogues that addressed harmful masculinities and negative gender norms in Senanga and Katete Districts.
* Radio programmes on gender transformative messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality (with COVID-19 awareness messages), reaching 1,000,000 people in Katete and Senanga Districts.
* Mentorship programmes were conducted through the safe space-model for adolescent girls and boys. 11,851 (6,108 girls and 5,743 boys) were reached with information on confidence, self-efficacy, and positive masculinity.
* Mobilizing families, communities, traditional and religious leaders, and other influencers who are advocates of Ending child Marriage. 90 local actors (traditional, religious, traditional marriage initiators and community leaders) contributed with their meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage.
* 100 community volunteers (peer educators, SMAGs, CWACs, CBDs, Community Health Workers) were engaged for increased access to SRHR information and services.
* For sustainability purposes capacitated 18 CBOs at community level (women and youth led organizations).

 **Priority for the program scale up;**

The focus for 2022 was to scale up on already existing interventions such as;

* Community Case Management to reach 16,296 children by 2023
* Coaching Boys into Men to reaching 36,702 boys by 2023.
* Community Dialogues reaching 196,104 community members by 2023
* Radio programmes on gender transformative messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality (with COVID-19 awareness messages), reaching 6,000,000 people by 2023.
* Safe Spaces and mentorship programme including virtual Safe Space, to reach 71,106 boys and girls by 2023.
* Social Behaviour Change interventions/activities.
* Expansion of Peer-to-Peer education (Strengthen Adolescent friendly services).
* Further, the programme will prioritise assessment on the Gender transformative approaches and gender norms survey.

**PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

ln December 2023, the Global Programme Phase II (2020-2023) will come to an end, which provides an opportunity during the year to review, reflect and make the necessary programmatic adjustments to inform and plan for Phase III which is expected to run 2024-2030 and contribute to the participated elimination goal.

Government participated in the Phase III development workshop which was attended by 12 countries in May 2023 in South Africa. The workshop aimed to redefine the agenda to deliver on Sustainable Development Goal target 5.3, to end child marriage. This included an exchange of lessons, achievements and challenges faced in the implementation of Phase II of the Global Programme, as well as other child marriage interventions, and the development of strategic and forward-looking ideas to inform programme, policy, and advocacy work for 2024-2030. The inputs to and discussions at the workshop informed the development of the Phase III programme document, including a theory of change and results framework.

 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

* To enhance collaboration during implementation at district levels, all implementing institutions i.e. Social Welfare, Education, Health and WYCA to work together at all levels.

 **CONCLUSION:**

Government machinery including staff from Headquarters, Provincial, selected Districts, UNICEF, UNFPA, YWCA and SWAZ have actively been involved in the implementation of Ending Child programme. Zambia holds the Continental Championship for ECM and there is need for Zambia to demonstrate more with regards to implementation of the GPECM programme.