12 March 2024

Reference: WHRGS/GA/RES/77/202

**Call for inputs to inform the report by the Secretary-General on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and has the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 77/202 on “Child, early and forced marriage”.

The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report, based on evidence, before the end of its seventy-eighth session, on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide, as well as best practices, using information provided by Member States, United Nations bodies, agencies, funds and programmes, civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

In this regard, OHCHR is seeking inputs from Member States and other stakeholders to inform the preparation of the aforementioned report. OHCHR would appreciate receiving written contributions, comprising replies to the guiding questions in the annex.

Submissions should be received by **15 April 2024** and be:

* Limited to 3000 words;
* Sent by email in Microsoft Word format to **ohchr-registry@un.org** with **ohchr-wohchr@un.org**in CC**,** including in the e-mail subject line: **input to SG report on child, early and forced marriage, pursuant to GA resolution 77/202**;

Submissions will be made publicly available, in full and as received, on the OHCHR website, unless otherwise requested.

Any enquiries may be addressed to Stefania Tripodi at **stefania.tripodi@un.org**

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.

**ANNEX**

Report by the Secretary-General on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide

Guiding questions

1. What efforts have been made or are planned to address the recommendations of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/77/282)? Please, provide information, *inter alia*, on measures to:
	1. address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage including social norms, gender inequalities and stereotypes;
		1. In 2022, the Zambia Government passed the Children’s Code ACT that clearly defined who a child is – under the age of 18 years. The Marriage Act Amendment Bill was enacted into law in December 2023. The amendments repealed the provision on marriage at 16 years. With this amendment, marriage can only be among people aged 18 years and above. The amended laws states that “a marriage between persons either of whom is a child, is void”. The constitution defines a child as anyone less than 18 years. This act is a significant milestone in strengthening the legal framework and ensuring that the minimum age for marriage is applicable whether contracted through customary or statutory law. This amendment algins the Marriage Act to the Children’s code.
	2. ensure access to education, decent work, social protection, health services, including sexual and reproductive health, for girls and women who are affected or at risk, who are already married or in informal unions, who have fled such a marriage or union, whose marriage has dissolved, and widowed girls or women who were married as girls;
		1. In Zambia, the Government has introduced several programs such as Keeping Girls in School program. The Keeping Girls in School (KGS) initiative of the Government of the Republic of Zambia was launched in 2015 to address inequalities in educational attainment related to gender and poverty and reduce secondary school drop-out rates among vulnerable adolescent girls
		2. Girls’ Education and Women’s Empowerment and Livelihood (GEWEL) aims to increase access to livelihood support for women and access to secondary education for disadvantaged adolescent girls in extremely poor households in selected districts.
	3. guarantee protection measures, remedies and support services for victims;
		1. The Zambian government introduced the re-entry policy in 1997 to allow girls that get pregnant to return to school and complete their education. Even after the policy was introduced, many girls that get pregnant fail to return after their maternity leave. It is estimated that about 50% of girls return to school after delivery of the babies and more needs to be done to ensure more girls utilize this opportunity.
	4. implement child- and gender-responsive budgeting to support effective measures to eradicate child, early and forced marriage.
		1. The government of Zambia has in the last three years consistently increased funding to the education sector to support the recruitment of teachers, construct classrooms and improve the quality of learning.
		2. The constituency development fund (CDF) allows for Bursaries especially for secondary education. This is to help keep girls in schools.
2. What prevention mechanisms have proved effective to eradicate child, early and forced marriage? Please include examples of promising practices and challenges encountered on engaging family members, religious, traditional and community leaders, in raising awareness about, and countering child, early and forced marriage.
	1. Working with traditional leaders has been effective. The traditional leadership in Zambia is core to the implementation of this section because through the customary law, they are the custodians of the traditional practices. Thus, the Chiefs, are able to influence communities to advocate against practices that perpetuate child marriage. Equally influential, is the Chiefs role in barring the facilitation and endorsement of unions where either of the partner is aged below 18 years. Some have put in place bylaws to protect children including girls from child marriage.

What kind of approaches and tools have been used to collect disaggregated data on child, early and forced marriages, as well as informal unions?

UNICEF is supporting the Government of Zambia to reach out to more than 51,000 children and adolescents who dropped out of school during 2021 or are at risk of dropping out due to child marriage and early pregnancy. An innovative digital data collection tool, Kobo Collect, was developed and piloted to track the learners and various interventions put in place under this programme in two districts of Zambia. Kobo Collect is a free, flexible, and intuitive app for collecting data even in difficult contexts where internet connection is unstable. Data generated is critical evidence for decision-making at all levels and aspects of the society, and Zambia is not an exception.

1. Have digital technologies and tools been used to address child, early and forced marriage? If so, please share promising practices, challenges and possible solutions.
2. Are digitalized birth and marriage registration systems being used in your country, requiring mandatory registration of all births and marriages, including childbirths at home and marriages under customary and religious laws? Do these digitalized registration systems allow to verify digitally birth certificates, before registering any marriage?
	1. Birth Registration and national identification system is digitalized in Zambia including for births at home. However, the birth registration is not applied during marriages.
3. What other innovative strategies have been used to address child, early and forced marriage, as well as informal unions and collect data on this practice in your country?
	1. Interventions to empower girls were implemented in schools, at the Safe Spaces and in the community. At the Safe Spaces, for instance, adolescent girls are mentored to build their self-esteem, understand their sexual and reproductive health rights, autonomy to make decisions and acquire skills to enable them to be self-supporting. Emerging evidence shows that these goals are progressively being realized.