



ZAMBIA

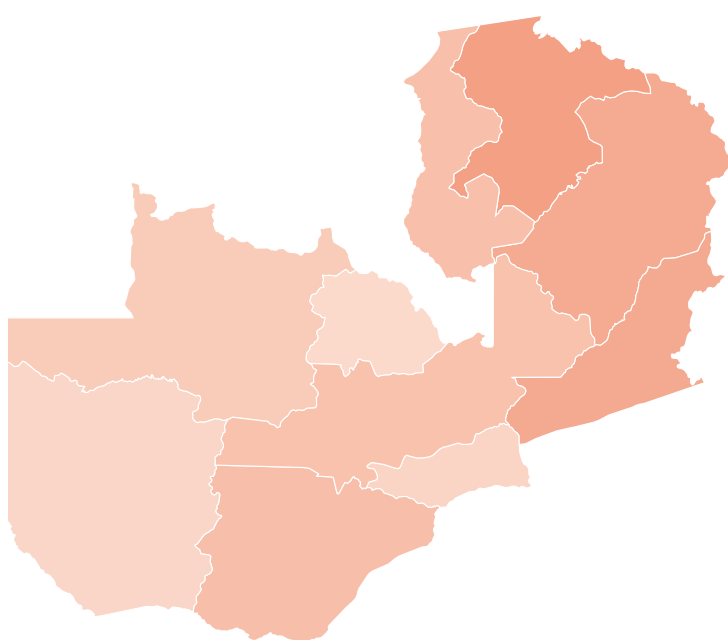
COUNTRY PROFILE



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ZAMBIA

Percentage of women aged 20–24 years who were first married or in union before age 18.



Source: Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013–2014. **Note:** This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the legal status of any country or the delimitation of any frontiers.

The country context

Zambia is home to 1.7 million child brides. Of these, 400,000 were married before age 15. The practice has become less common in the past decades, with 29 per cent of all young women aged 20–24 married before 18 years old, and 5 per cent before turning 15, in 2018, compared with 46 and 10 per cent, respectively, in 1993. However, the progress observed is not enough to eliminate child marriage by 2030 as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – if the progress observed over the past 10 years continues, 22 per cent of all girls in Zambia will still be married in childhood at the end of this decade, and even if the rate of progress is doubled, 16 per cent of all girls will still be child brides in Zambia in 2030.¹



These data refer to the situation in the country before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent data show that over the next decade, 100 million girls globally are at risk of becoming child brides, according to pre-COVID-19 projections. Over the past decade, the proportion of young women globally who were married as children decreased by 15 per cent, from nearly 1 in 4 to 1 in 5. This means that, over the last 10 years, the marriages of some 25 million girls have been averted. This remarkable accomplishment is now under threat. Over the next decade, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of child marriage as a result of COVID-19.²

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that nearly 24 million children and adolescents, including 11 million girls and

young women, may drop out of school due to the pandemic's economic impact.³ Equity is the principal concern of the school closures, as it disproportionately affects vulnerable and disadvantaged students. Alternative distance learning modalities can exacerbate learning inequities due to the gaps in access to technology and in the resources and capacities of schools and teachers. A national survey conducted during the near-six-month school closures in Zambia (including in Global Programme-targeted Katete and Senanga districts) revealed that less than 20 per cent of all children accessed technology-based distance learning (e-learning, through television or radio) during the pandemic, with the majority relying on paper-based take-home assignments and textbooks for their continued education. Only 8 per cent of the surveyed

children agreed that they could learn from home as well as or better than how well they learned in their schools before the closures. The survey also showed that 52 per cent of the teachers never contacted their students during the time of school closure and 29 per cent of the schools (143 of the 500 schools surveyed) reported incidences of teenage pregnancy among their students – a risk factor for both school dropout and child marriage.

Despite these setbacks, the elimination of child marriage by 2030 remains a priority under SDG 5 on gender equality. This monumental task puts pressure on the global community to deliver on effective interventions and policies at scale, generating calls for coordinated efforts and renewed commitments from stakeholders, particularly governments, to invest more to accelerate an end to child marriage.



Zambia is home to 1.7 million child brides. Of these, 400,000 were married before age 15. However, the practice has become less common in the country in the past decades.

Key highlights



Over

2,200

adolescent girls were supported to enrol and remain in school. In addition, the engagement of traditional leaders and chiefs through the community action groups has increased local ownership of the programme, as evidenced by them mobilizing funds to return

181

girls who had dropped out back to school.



In safe spaces, over

4,300

boys were mentored on positive masculinity and zero tolerance to violence, and

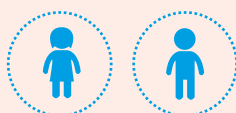


2,200

community members engaged in dialogues on gender norms, positive masculinities and alternatives to child marriage.



Child marriage modules were institutionalized within the national community-based case management training manuals and implementation guidelines for social workers. The programme also supported the development and roll-out of guidelines for guidance and counselling teachers, and a learner's handbook aimed at strengthening the provision of personal, social, academic and vocational counselling to at-risk and vulnerable girls.



Close to

6,000

adolescent girls and boys engaged in life-skills sessions through a systematic mentorship programme delivered within safe spaces.



2020 Achievements



The mentorship programme focuses specifically on ensuring that no one is left behind, and during the year,

121

girls with disabilities and



91

adolescent mothers were engaged to participate in the safe spaces and hence able to access information on sexual and reproductive health and rights and other life-skills sessions.



In total,

5,923

girls (3,923 aged 10–14 and 2,000 aged 15–19) completed safe space sessions during the year.

Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The strategies adopted by the Global Programme in Zambia are aligned with the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and the overall aims of the Government and the broader United Nations network in the country. Results from a Global Programme-commissioned review that assessed child marriage evaluations published from 2000 to 2019 suggest that targeted interventions that enhance girls' human capital (e.g., schooling, life-skills, livelihood and gender rights training) and their employment opportunities are the most successful channel for delaying their marriage among programmes evaluated to date.⁴ In Zambia, to ensure that girls can make informed decisions and choices, and that boys are respectful of these, safe spaces for in- and out-of-school adolescents have been established. Adolescents are taught financial literacy and life skills, covering, for example, human rights, relationships, positive masculinities, and sexual and reproductive health. Using local organizations as implementers of the safe spaces ensures improved engagement with girls and boys, and promotes local, community-based solutions. The programme also supports schools to run Student Alliance for Equality (SAfE) clubs, teaching life skills for girls and boys, and career clubs for girls to encourage and support completion of secondary education. This is enhanced by the provision of menstrual hygiene products and by engaging community platforms to support the re-entry of girls into school after pregnancy and childbirth.

In 2020, the Global Programme facilitated mentorships for adolescent girls through the safe space model, with 108 safe spaces established during the year (45 for girls and 63 for boys). The mentorship programme focuses specifically on ensuring that no one is left behind, and during the year, 121 girls with disabilities and 91 adolescent mothers were engaged to participate in the safe spaces and hence able to access information on sexual and reproductive health and rights and other life-skills sessions. In total, 5,923 girls (3,923 aged 10–14 and 2,000 aged 15–19) completed safe space sessions during the year. Girls were mentored on several topics, including gender equality, self-confidence, HIV, gender-based violence (GBV), goal-setting, menstrual hygiene management and entrepreneurship. Based on tests conducted before and after the mentorship programme, 85 per cent of the girls were more confident and assertive after the training and had gained more information about the various topics and life skills covered.

One key result from the safe space intervention was that 49 girls who were previously out of school opted to start small businesses and piecework, which enabled them to pay for themselves to go back to school when classes opened up after the first wave of COVID-19 in the country. The girls feeling empowered enough to stand up for themselves and decide to fund their own education was a result of lessons in the safe spaces focusing on goal-setting, dealing with peer pressure and decision-making skills. Another 60 girls (42 in Senanga district, 11 in Katete and 7 in Lusaka) re-entered into formal education during the year thanks to support from traditional leaders engaged by the programme. For example, some of the traditional leaders supported the girls with stationery and other school requisites from their own resources – aiming to overcome both a financial barrier for the girls, and the cultural barrier that does not recognize formal education as a priority. To further overcome this barrier, the use of community-level platforms, such as community action groups (CAGs), utilizes the expertise of trained community members who understand community attitudes and practices, and are able to hold culturally sensitive conversations on topics such as the importance of girls' education – also after pregnancy or child marriage – in the communities. This helps to address underlying norms and attitudes that restrict the realization of girls' rights. During the year, dialogues were held in 25 communities and, as a result, 72 girls from 25 schools were supported to return to school after pregnancy or marriage. To further support girls' education, 409 teachers from 54 schools were also equipped with knowledge and skills to roll out menstrual hygiene management interventions in their schools and surrounding communities.

That the mentorship programme was sustained during the year can in itself be considered an achievement, as many operations and sectors closed during the pandemic. Most girls were not able to continue learning during the six months that the schools were closed, so the mentorship programme offered an opportunity for sustained engagement with adolescent girls, ensuring continued protection against adolescent pregnancy and child marriage. Instead of discontinuing the mentorship programme, the programme adhered to COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions, so fewer adolescent girls and boys met at any given time and for a shorter period of time, while observing physical distancing. In addition, hygiene supplies such as face shields, masks, sanitizers, soaps and buckets were provided in the safe spaces. As a result of the entrepreneurship training provided in the sessions, two girls were able to make the masks for all the girls in the safe spaces themselves, using the cloth and sewing machines they already had as part of their work on making reusable menstruation pads.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Due to the school closures in Zambia for most of the academic year, the previously run in-school clubs (SAfE clubs and career clubs) were not operationalized in 2020. These sessions will be prioritized in 2021, with life-skills education rolled out in primary schools, and career and livelihood skills clubs being operationalized in secondary schools. As mentioned, however, safe spaces continued to be operated to ensure continued outreach to and engagement with adolescent girls during the year. This was possible thanks to adaptations in the form of reduced numbers of participants in each session, provision of personal protective equipment and hygiene supplies, and the introduction of virtual safe spaces as a complement to the face-to-face spaces – using tablets and smartphones to reach out to girls, especially in the central business areas of the districts.

Seventy-two adolescent girls were supported by the CAGs to return to education when schools reopened. However, the target for the year had been set at 188 and this was not reached as fewer girls than expected returned to school after the COVID-19-closures. All the girls who were supported to return were older than the targeted age for their specific grade: they returned to primary school despite being aged between 15 and 19. This serves to highlight that despite multiple challenges (being over-age and being adolescent mothers), when provided the support and opportunity, girls want to continue their education.

One lesson from the year is that the inclusion of parent-teacher association members in the menstrual hygiene management training helped trigger menstrual hygiene management-related activities at the community level, including after the COVID-19-induced school closures.

In 2021, the programme will continue with the same strategies for girls' empowerment and further develop adaptive approaches to be prepared for a potential surge in cases of COVID-19 or the reintroduction of stricter guidelines on physical distancing. This approach will include exploring opportunities for hybrid safe spaces (combining face-to-face and virtual sessions), especially for girls in urban areas. During 2021, the aim is also to finalize the handbook for safe space facilitators to ensure a coordinated and strengthened approach across the targeted areas.

Enhancing the family and community environment

To promote a supportive and gender-equal environment, evidence-based tools such as the Start Awareness Support Action! (SASA!)⁵ are adapted to the Zambian context to address gender norms through community dialogues and engagements with boys and men, and

youth groups are specifically engaged to develop and roll out peer-to-peer tools on positive gender and social norms in the communities. Traditional leaders and traditional marriage counsellors are further engaged to discuss adolescents' rights, including those related to menstrual hygiene management, sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS, gender equality and GBV. To institutionalize the work with the marriage counsellors, the Zambia National Traditional Counsellors' Association and the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs have developed a traditional counsellors' manual. The manual will be rolled out in 2021 through the traditional marriage counsellors' association. It aims at ensuring that gender-transformative information and approaches are included in counselling for adolescent girls and young women. The manual will also contribute to the challenging of – and in the end, elimination of – harmful gender and social norms that perpetuate patriarchy and male dominance.

COVID-19 slowed the implementation of planned community dialogues in 2020, due to restrictions on public gatherings. However, it picked up again in the last quarter of the year as 42 district stakeholders were capacitated on facilitating dialogues on gender norms, masculinities and child marriage. The capacitation built on an already developed gender-transformative tool, which was adapted for community dialogues. The tool covers topics such as gender roles deconstruction, gender power relations, sharing responsibilities and decision-making at the household level, as well as male involvement in child marriages. This resulted in the training of 140 community volunteers who rolled out dialogues at the community level in December, reaching a total of 2,200 community members (1,300 men and 900 women) with at least five of the eight sessions, lasting 1.5 hours each.

The community volunteers, in addition to facilitating community dialogues, also participated in a total of 22 radio programmes alongside district staff during the year, reaching an estimated listenership of 300,000 people and providing a platform for public conversations around issues related to adolescent and child well-being and the impacts of child marriage, including girls' education, re-entry to education after pregnancy, and children's access to social protection programmes. This activity was especially important during the pandemic when other community engagements were impossible. The radio programmes are built on a guide called *Stronger Together on Gender Norms, Gender Transformation, Positive Masculinities and Child Marriage*, developed by the Zambia Center for Communications Program, together with social welfare officers in Katete and Senanga, with district stakeholders

and radio staff oriented on its content. Through the engagement of the community volunteers in the radio programmes, the community dialogues led by the volunteers enabled a follow-up discussion around the issues raised in the programme, for deeper engagement among community members. The radio programmes also consist of a live phone-in format, which allows listeners to contribute to the conversation as it is aired; 413 callers participated in the programmes in 2020. As a result of the radio programmes, the multisectoral district child marriage team in Katete was requested by listeners to provide mentorships to 111 girls in five schools in the district.

To support positive masculinities and promote a conducive environment for the realization of girls' and boys' rights, the programme supported the formation of 30 boys' and 30 men's networks in the targeted districts, with 4,266 adolescent boys being mentored on positive masculinities and on zero tolerance to violence through the safe space clubs also run for girls. The integration of gender-transformative content and approaches in the boys' safe spaces resulted in most boys expressing a will to return to school and support positive masculinity actions. The engagement with the adult men targets men who lead traditional initiation rites and rites of passage for boys, since these men have close interactions with adolescent boys. The engagement focused on helping the men to instil values among the boys that foster positive masculinities and support girls' and women's well-being. UNFPA and UNICEF had planned to jointly develop a tool for boys' and men's engagement during the year, but due to delays caused by COVID-19, this priority has been shifted to 2021.

In 2020, 37 traditional leaders were engaged in communications around the dangers of child marriage, gender equality, and availability of sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning and GBV services. As a result, these traditional leaders have continued to mobilize themselves in support of adolescent girls and young women in their communities, including identifying adolescents who have dropped out of school due to marriage or pregnancy, engaging with their parents and spouses to raise money for the girls to return to school, identifying organizations in the communities that are working with educational support, and referrals to services for young people. These traditional leaders have become more vigilant of incidents of child marriage and discourage the practice. The traditional leaders and chiefs mobilized and supported 181 girls and 85 boys who had dropped out of school and provided them with school necessities such as stationery and school uniforms to enable their return when schools reopened during the latter part of the year after the pandemic-induced closures.

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Another 30 traditional initiators, who work with adolescent girls and boys to ensure a smooth rite of passage to adulthood, were reached in 2020. Thanks to capacity-building and mobilization, they have been able to explore different organizations to support the empowerment of adolescent girls with knowledge and skills; they are now more systematic in their engagement of the adolescents, in collaboration with community-led organizations. UNFPA supported the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs, the Ministry of Gender and the Zambia National Traditional Counsellors to codify the curriculum used during rites of passage for adolescent girls in 2020. This review was done with the view of ensuring that traditional marriage counsellors engage girls in a way that is gender transformative. The analysis was based on various gender norms, sayings and songs from various provinces to ensure that the content does not promote male dominance or perpetuate the low status of women and girls in the communities. The draft is currently being finalized and will be launched in 2021.

The Global Programme also supported capacity-building for 7 youth-led organizations and 23 women's rights organizations, which primarily work with women and adolescent girls and boys on issues such as economic empowerment and rites of passage at a community level. The youth-led organizations have an existing mandate on youth engagement and youth empowerment interventions, and throughout the year they referred 20 adolescent girls to other service providers, including education and health services.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

The main challenge during the year was that face-to-face community dialogues could only take place in the fourth quarter, when the COVID-19 situation in the country had subsided and the restriction on public gatherings was lifted. To ensure the safety of participants in the dialogues, the duration of the sessions was reduced, and the number of participants was lower than normal. However, radio programmes had already been adopted in the second quarter of the year to ensure continued outreach to the communities during the pandemic.

The inclusion and engagement of community volunteers as facilitators for community engagement interventions has proven to be key, as they are well established to ensure relevance to the local context and language appropriateness. Orientation of key district partners on the content of various activities such as radio programmes and community dialogue is critical for shared understanding of intended programme outcomes.

The programme continued to engage with the ActionAid Global Platform during 2020, specifically on the development of a peer-to-peer tool on gender norms.

However, due to staff movements and delays during COVID-19, this work stopped in the middle of the year. In 2021, a consultant will be engaged to support the finalization and field-testing of the tool, in collaboration with ActionAid.

Despite the fact that comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) was introduced in schools in Zambia in 2014, in 2020 the church mother bodies raised concerns about its content and appropriateness for school-going children. This might have been provoked by reports of high levels of adolescent pregnancy among schoolgirls. These concerns provoked a heated debate in Zambia among various stakeholders during the year, especially among some traditional and religious leaders and within the Government. Faith-based actors and churches were strongly opposed to CSE, as were some traditional leaders. The acceptance of providing age-appropriate information on sexuality remains contentious and impacts strongly on the ability of the health sector to provide adolescent sexual and reproductive health services and address issues of adolescent pregnancy and school dropout – both drivers of child marriage. This highlights the need to continue to engage with the faith-based community and leaders and leverage other voices among traditional leaders to have an honest and broad discussion that focuses on addressing the needs and rights of adolescents – since it became evident that traditional leaders who had previously participated in dialogues supported by the Global Programme came out in support of CSE during this debate.

In 2021, some of the priorities for engaging community members around the issue of child marriage include: the development of a tool for boys' and men's engagement, including male traditional initiators; the development and roll-out of a tool for community dialogue, co-created by United Nations bodies, the Government and the non-governmental organization network on ending child marriage; further engagement with chiefs and their spouses; further engagement with ZINGO (the network of inter-religious organizations) to ensure that marriages involving children are not officiated by religious leaders; the implementation of a mass-media campaign; and finalizing the curriculum for engaging traditional marriage counsellors (alangizi).

Strengthening systems

To further promote an environment conducive to girls' rights, and to ensure a scaled-up and sustainable approach to ending child marriage, the Global Programme in Zambia works with the education, health and social welfare sectors to strengthen quality services that respond to the needs of girls and boys. In the education sector, and to enhance links

between sectors, the Global Programme focuses on strengthening the role of guidance and counselling teachers in schools to identify vulnerable children and provide counselling support and/or referrals to services. The programme also supports water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions in schools, specifically focusing on menstrual hygiene management to support girls' attendance in school, and works with community platforms to help girls re-enrol in education when they have dropped out due to adolescent pregnancy.

In Senanga District, continued efforts to strengthen the capacity of 25 CAGs engaging 637 community members (259 male and 208 female), resulted in the re-entry of 72 girls into school after pregnancy and marriage. CAGs are created to work closely with schools and communities to identify children and adolescents who have dropped out of school and to support them based on their individual needs (e.g., through the provision of uniforms or stationery). They also lead negotiations with the girls' school and/or parents to allow them to return.

Each CAG is linked to a specific school in the community and the CAG members are all from that same community – ensuring that there is a level of trust in the platform. Schools are also supported with grants for CAGs to lead income-generating activities; funds raised are used to improve the environment for girls, for example, through the provision/production of sanitary pads (in schools where menstrual hygiene management clubs are not already making sanitary pads) or sanitation products (e.g., basins or soap).

To further support girls' education, the National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools Strategy (2019–2030) and the National School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Standards and Guidelines, both drafted in 2019, were finalized and approved with the support of UNICEF in 2020. These documents will guide the sector in the provision of WASH services in schools, including services related to menstrual hygiene management. As part of scaling up of the menstrual hygiene management interventions, 409 teachers (193 female)



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and 570 parent-teacher association members (287 female) from 54 schools were trained in menstrual hygiene management promotion during the year. Basic sanitation facilities – such as gender-segregated toilets with menstrual hygiene management facilities and group hand-washing stations – were established in eight schools in Katete District, benefiting 3,764 students, including 2,127 girls.

In 2020, the Global Programme supported the development of guidelines for guidance and counselling teachers and handbooks for teachers and students. The guidelines support the implementation and administration of guidance and counselling services in schools. The availability of the guidelines and the handbooks, coupled with training and mentoring of guidance and counselling teachers, will strengthen the provision of personal, social, academic and vocational guidance and counselling to girls, especially in primary schools, who are vulnerable or at risk of teenage pregnancy, GBV and/or child marriage. A total of 125 school managers and guidance and counselling teachers from 58 schools in Senanga and Katete districts were equipped with knowledge and skills to establish and run guidance and counselling committees, develop school action plans on guidance and counselling, provide guidance and counselling services to students, and use standard referral forms, monitoring and reporting tools.

In the health sector, the programme focuses on ensuring adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services through the development of normative and operational guidance for service delivery. This work includes, for example, support to the National Operational Plan for the Adolescent Health Strategy (2017–2021) and to the updated service quality assessment (SQA) tool for adolescent health services. The operational plan has been instrumental in supporting improved service delivery, while the SQA tool has been used to undertake assessments of the quality of service provision, identifying implementation challenges and subsequently implementing remedial action where appropriate. The support to the health sector is further provided by supporting the establishment of adolescent-friendly spaces in health-care facilities, and capacity development of health-care facility staff and peer educators to provide community- and school-based outreach. It does so by linking community-based distributors, safe motherhood action groups (SMAGs) and peer educators with each other to provide adolescent sexual and reproductive health services at community level.

Continued advocacy on the need for age- and sex-disaggregated data in the health management

information system (HMIS) to enable progress in adolescent health programming to be ascertained, led to the revision of HMIS registers, where some data – including uptake of family planning services – will now be disaggregated by age. Given the links between adolescent pregnancy and child marriage in Zambia, this modification in the HMIS is an important step in ensuring evidence-based programming also occurs at subnational level. One of the targeted districts (Senanga) was also supported with requisite hardware and software, and staff capacity development, to set up an electronic HMIS, something which is expected to improve the efficiency of generating relevant data for decision-making.

During the year, the programme supported capacity-building of 89 health workers in five districts, reaching a total of 67 health-care facilities. The capacity-building focused on running newly established adolescent-friendly spaces at the health-care facilities, and on continued functionality of previously established ones. In addition, 348 peer educators were engaged: these peer educators are based in the health-care facilities and undertake school and community outreach with the support of health workers. Given the context of COVID-19, continuation of the delivery of adolescent-friendly health services entailed supporting the districts where the facilities are located with masks, sanitizers, and information and education communication materials on COVID-19. Thanks to the programme support to the health sector, all health-care facilities in Katete and Senanga districts now have adolescent-friendly spaces established. A secondary review of HMIS data is ongoing in both districts and will ascertain service utilization patterns for services linked to child marriage in 2020 and preceding years, with the data intended to inform subsequent delivery of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and HIV services.

Finally, in the social welfare sector, a nationally endorsed community-based case management approach has been rolled out to enable social welfare volunteers to identify vulnerable children and families and provide, and/or refer them to, services. Linkages have been made with the social protection sector to ensure that horizontal expansion of the regular and emergency social cash transfer interventions are gender sensitive and aligned with ongoing child protection case management efforts as part of 'Cash Plus' programming.

In 2020, national tools and training for community-based case management were revised and endorsed by the line ministry to include more specific references to child marriage and to include a new module on intensive family support. The training activities are led by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, and target community volunteers through 140

community welfare assistance committees, enabling them to identify vulnerable children and families, address issues at household level where possible and/or refer them to services or a social worker when needed. Six government master trainers were re-oriented on the new tools and training in 2020, thereby ensuring a sustainable approach in rolling out this revised approach to three wards in each of the two districts of Katete and Senanga as target areas for the Global Programme. In 2020, thanks to this new training, 974 cases were opened in the two districts using the community-based case management approach (gender disaggregation not available yet). Through advocacy with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services to ensure uniform application of community-based case management by United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) across the country, the tools and training were also expanded to 29 more districts during the year. A case management technical working group offered the opportunity to advocate for this uniform approach to community-based case management, resulting in buy-in from NGOs to expand this approach to new districts. Across the country, a total of 2,012 community volunteers have been trained since 2017 in this programme, which was initially supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); in 2020, a total of 28,556 cases were opened using the community-based case management approach.

In 2020, the programme carried out a technical review of the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) programme implemented by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), which developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for dealing with cases of child marriage. The SOPs are similar to the existing GBV multidisciplinary guidelines available in the country, but focus on child marriage. Discussions are ongoing to ensure one comprehensive set of GBV guidelines that can be applied to any case of GBV, including child marriage cases, rather than duplicating the guidelines for specific issues. The work is

overseen by the Ministry of Gender, which leads all work on GBV and child marriage in Zambia.


In 2020, draft guidelines for the protection of child victims and witnesses through judicial proceedings, including for child-friendly interviews, were drafted with technical support from the ministries of gender, health, education, home affairs, and community development and social services, as well as the National Prosecution Authority.

In addition to this, the child protection subgroup became an effective mechanism to support the roll-out of the child-related components of the COVID-19 response plan of the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services during the year.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

COVID-19 led to school closures, disrupting learning for children and adolescents. To prevent prolonged school closures, the Government reopened schools for examination classes on 1 June, and subsequently schools were fully reopened by the end of September. To mitigate the period of school closures, UNICEF, in partnership with i-School, supported the development and transmission of an eight-week series of lessons through national and community radios. A nationwide assessment on school readiness for reopening, status of continuity of learning, major gaps for safe reopening of schools and the challenges in the provision of remote learning contributed towards informing the full reopening of the schools in September 2020.

Going forward in the education sector, the programme will focus on the roll-out of 13 radio programmes on the prevention of school-related GBV and training of teachers on the code of ethics. The programme will also continue strengthening guidance and counselling services in schools and the capacity and sustainability of CAGs to record, monitor and support girls who have dropped out of school. Provision of WASH services and scaling up of menstrual hygiene management



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interventions in additional schools in Katete and Senanga districts will also be prioritized.

In the health sector, districts have been supported to scale up community-based outreach sessions for adolescent-friendly services, given that the facility-based approach was reaching fewer adolescents and young people with integrated sexual and reproductive health and HIV services than hoped. While districts had been supported with bicycles and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to provide technical support and monitor progress of the activities.

Through programme monitoring visits prior to COVID-19 and virtual discussions in the context of COVID-19, consensus has emerged that the scope of the training for peer educators and health workers in adolescent-friendly services is inadequate. For example, key aspects such as sexual violence and GBV, inclusion of disability and other equity-focused areas are not emphasized. Moreover, the quality of training has not been extensively monitored, leading to situations where peer educators and health workers may not be adequately prepared to provide services that are responsive to the needs of adolescents. Emerging lessons therefore suggest that it is imperative to revise the peer educators and health workers training manual to expand the scope of topics and also ensure quality of training. Hence, in 2021, the peer educator and health worker manual will be revised to further promote gender equality and inclusion of disabilities, and health-care facilities will be further supported to ensure continuation of adolescent-friendly services.

The Ministry of Health has developed guidelines for continuity of services during COVID-19, in which adolescent health services are considered essential services. However, despite these guidelines, the development of the situation with regards to the pandemic will determine the implementation landscape in 2021. In this regard, UNFPA and UNICEF will continue to use alternative delivery modalities for services, including digital platforms and mobile services that adhere to safety measures and that engage young people and the private sector in its modes of service delivery.

Face-to-face training of community volunteers on community-based case management took place early in the year, before COVID-19 hit. However, refresher training was moved to 2021. After the first training was conducted, district social welfare officers took the initiative to address challenges faced by newly trained community volunteers by starting up their own mentoring support platforms.

In 2021, the programme will also continue to support the Government with strengthening referrals and linkages between critical groups and platforms (e.g., peer educators, SMAGs) and provide targeted mentorships for these actors to improve the quality of community- and school-based outreach activities. In the area of GBV, the programme will continue to work with stakeholders within the United Nations joint programme on social protection and national GBV actors, including the World Bank, to strengthen GBV coordination and multidisciplinary guidelines, and include child marriage district actors in the GBV training under the joint programme, which includes guidelines on dealing with victims and witnesses, and statutory case management for child marriage cases.

Addressing poverty

The work to address poverty and strengthen livelihoods is funded through complementary streams to the Global Programme, leveraged to increase the impact of programme interventions. In 2020, UNICEF expanded its partnership with the World Bank in the social protection sector, with the World Bank now providing funding to the social cash transfer programme in Zambia. Thanks to ongoing advocacy with the Government, the national treasury also released funds to the programme, especially in the fourth quarter of the year. UNICEF further supported this programme – which is in line with the seventh national development plan of the country – through enhancements of the management information system, continued roll-out of a grievance mechanism, improvements of the payment delivery system, implementation of a new financial management and reporting system, and through a strengthened strategic planning framework. The programme currently reaches 632,223 households, of which 68 per cent are female headed.

Throughout the year, UNICEF continued providing technical support to the government-led drought-response emergency cash transfer (ECT) programme, reaching 92,202 households (approximately 400,000 people). A similar COVID-19 ECT programme was also successfully developed, targeting 118,000 households directly or indirectly affected by the pandemic through additional resources mobilized (a total of US\$21 million). The ECT benefited both households in chronic poverty and already part of the social cash transfer programme (vertical expansion) and households that have become vulnerable due to the emergency context (horizontal expansion). The programme is aligned with other emergency response sectors, including health, WASH, GBV, case management, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, child protection, nutrition and disability. It is expected to continue in 2021. These ECT programmes do

not specifically target child marriage, but, as adolescent girls in the households reached would be at risk of child marriage due to poverty, the aim is that they will contribute to a decreased risk for the girls.

In addition to the cash transfer initiatives, the programme engaged with actors through the national-level GBV coordination mechanism and with the World Bank, which is implementing the girls' education and women's empowerment and livelihood programme focused on keeping girls in school (providing additional educational support to households within the social cash transfer programme that consists of adolescent girls) and securing women's livelihoods (providing women in the targeted households with livelihood packages).

Facilitating supportive laws and policies

An analysis of longitudinal data on child marriage policies published in 2020 by the World Policy Analysis Center found that the rate of child marriage reduced by an average of 6 per cent in countries that enforced child marriage laws. The same study found that child marriage laws, combined with advocacy efforts surrounding their enactment, foster improvements in gender-equitable attitudes.⁶ This is consistent with the hypothesis that gender egalitarian laws positively impact norms regarding women's equality and empowerment at national and subnational levels.⁷

In Zambia, the Global Programme continues to advocate that the Government adhere to international human rights standards and include a minimum age of marriage of 18 for statutory and customary marriages in the Children's Code (defining a child as anyone under the age of 18 and that no child can be married). The Children's Code – currently with government drafters and the final content embargoed until it is endorsed by Cabinet and taken to Parliament – includes provisions on limiting the use of residential care for children; on lifting the age of criminal responsibility from 8 to 14; and on regulating diversion, limiting detention and stipulating disability-inclusion measures aligned with international human rights treaties. It introduces a ban on corporal punishment in family settings, new child rights monitoring mechanisms, and mandatory child participation and protection measures for all entities directly interacting with children. It also secures protection of child victims/witnesses and ensures child testimonies carry equal weight to those of adults. It states that any child in a marriage is in need of care and protection, which paves the way for a social welfare response, and states that forced marriage is considered maltreatment and a harmful practice constituting modern slavery, thereby allowing for other laws to impose penalties on adults who contravene this

provision. The Global Programme continues to leverage its role in bringing different actors – including the judiciary, ministries, civil society and actors within the child marriage field – together around a common goal, and to support consensus building between the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development to help resolve long-standing challenges delaying the enactment of the Children's Code.

Because of COVID-19, the implementation and coordination of the national action plan on ending child marriage was slow in 2020. However, the programme continued advocacy with the Ministry of Gender to hold an annual review of child marriage programming in Zambia, led by the Government. In 2020 for the first time, national-, provincial- and district-level actors from the two programme focus districts of Katete and Senanga were involved, alongside representatives from the ministries of education, health, agriculture, chiefs and traditional affairs, and provincial planners, among others. In 2021, the programme will support a review of the national action plan, and advocacy for public financing for children, to ensure budget allocations from line ministries towards the action plan.

The programme made strong efforts to include multiple stakeholders in providing technical support to the development of guidelines, solidifying the strong convening role of the United Nations, and ensuring that policies and frameworks gained multisectoral buy-in to support adolescents. UNFPA made continuous efforts to collaborate with the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs to increase the national-level coordination on ending child marriage, including supporting dialogue on child marriage in the House of Chiefs and other national forums.

UNFPA appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on Youth, Sport and Child Matters with the main topic of discussion being sexual and reproductive health and rights of children and young people in Zambia. This sparked a good discussion and elicited debate, with the Members of Parliament expressing willingness to tackle issues around sexual and reproductive health and rights in their constituencies. The programme also advocates for a reduced age of consent to access health services.

The United Nations in Zambia jointly developed a draft conceptual document for a proposed presidential initiative on ending child marriage, which was completed in June and submitted to the Ministry of Gender for review. Due to COVID-19 and competing priorities within the ministry, feedback has not yet been received. The aim of the presidential initiative is to leverage the role of the President in his capacity as the African Union

Champion for Ending Child Marriage, and design a robust initiative that increases the scale, scope and speed of interventions to ensure Zambia meets its target of reducing child marriage by 40 per cent by the end of 2021.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

Beginning in March 2020, the Government focused on addressing COVID-19. However, the Global Programme continued to advocate for and engage with multiple government actors to find space to finalize important laws such as the Children's Code, and started work on developing key guidelines related to ending child marriage. This highlights the important convening role of the United Nations in driving key regulatory frameworks forward. Further, UNFPA and UNICEF supported the Government in its emergency programming during the pandemic, especially with regards to child protection and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and GBV.

The long delay in finalizing the Children's Code and the lack of movement on the Marriage Bill prolonged the confusion in addressing child marriage in the country, as customary law allows a child to marry at puberty, whereas statutory law puts the minimum age of marriage at 21 years. The continued lack of clarity on the legal age of marriage also impacts national discussions on the definition of a child, with a knock-on effect on age of sexual consent, CSE in schools, access to adolescent sexual and reproductive health services, age of criminal responsibility, and promotion of child participation of different ages in programming and policy processes.

The programme will prioritize organizing a review meeting with all 10 provincial planners engaged. The inclusion of provincial planners in the annual review process highlighted the need to leverage the role of previously untapped government officials in scaling up efforts to end child marriage and expand accountability for results across the Government. Significantly, the provincial planners recognized the importance of addressing child marriage to ensure improved outcomes for children, and suggested the inclusion of multisectoral child marriage work as one of the key performance indicators of the provincial permanent secretary. The programme intends to take this suggestion forward in 2021.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, planned learning visits to wards within Katete and Senanga districts from other districts within Eastern and Western provinces could not take place during the year. However, online meetings were held with the district social welfare offices that are leading the programme on ending child marriage in the two targeted districts, to provide ongoing technical support.

Generating and applying data and evidence

For strengthened governance to end child marriage, the Global Programme supports government information management systems and district actors to collect and use data to inform policymaking and programming. Implementation research and surveys on social and behaviour change provide additional evidence to inform decision-making and track progress.

The strong partnership between UNFPA and UNICEF in Zambia ensured a solid sub-analysis of the 2018 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey in 2020. The results highlighted the ongoing work required to address child marriage, with the rates of child marriage dropping less than expected from the previous round of the survey. The sub-analysis also highlighted the link between quality education and child marriage. This important piece of work will help inform decision-making and planning processes in 2021, and has already informed the annual child marriage review in 2020, where line ministries agreed on multisectoral indicators to inform 2021 planning.

The programme built upon its recognized role in leading child marriage programming in Zambia to technically support the Canadian High Commission to conduct research on the role of social workers in preventing and responding to child marriage. The document was reviewed by all stakeholders working on child marriage and will be used to guide the development of statutory case management guidance notes for child marriage cases in 2021.

Challenges, lessons learned and next steps

COVID-19 impacted the implementation of field-level activities in 2020, including local learning visits and conducting research, such as the social and behaviour change baseline planned for the year. This study will instead be conducted in 2021, using local entities and processes as far as possible while aligning with the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office cross-regional work on social norms. In 2021, implementation research linked to the programme will also be conducted, and support to district actors will continue, to ensure documentation of the process to end child marriage and to strengthen the collection and use of data.



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Partnerships and working as one

In 2020, the Global Programme engaged 304 partners across regional and country offices – an increase from 249 partners in 2019. In Zambia, the Global Programme worked with nine partners: six government bodies, two civil society organizations (both focusing on children's rights and one of them also focusing on women's rights) and one media institution. The engagement with the government bodies shows the multisectoral nature of the Global Programme, as UNFPA and UNICEF are working with partners across the sectors of health, education, youth, social protection, gender, and chiefs and traditional affairs.

To ensure joint, coordinated implementation of the Global Programme in Zambia, the two organizations met

at the beginning of 2020 to map out accountabilities of each actor, including targets to be achieved. During the year, the organizations continued to meet regularly to track progress of programme implementation and assess achievements of targets.

The Global Programme continues to focus on two learning districts (Katete and Senanga), with joint implementation in six wards in those districts. In addition to the focused implementation in these wards, support to adolescent sexual and reproductive health services covers all health-care facilities across both districts and the support to the education sector was scaled up to an additional five wards in 2020.

Communicating the need to end child marriage

In 2020, the Government of Zambia once again co-hosted, with the Government of Canada and with support of the Global Programme, a high-level side event at the United Nations General Assembly in September. Given the current situation, the event was virtual; it brought together over 500 participants from 56 countries. The event provided a platform to bring up youth voices and for governments and development partners to recommit to the need to accelerate action to end child marriage if we are to reach the SDGs. Zambia was represented by Minister of Gender, Elisabeth Phiri, who noted in her opening statement that: "child

marriage continues to deny girls' fundamental rights, and Zambia remains committed to ending this; making national investments in multiple sectors, including education, social protection and health; and providing continental leadership."⁸

The Global Programme in Zambia also ensured that communication on child marriage was spread through social media, and enhanced the programme's aim of lifting girls' voices on the Day of the Girl in the context of Generation Equality.⁹

Summary of output indicator performance (2020)

Indicator	Target	Result
Indicator 1111: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) who actively participated in life-skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas	5,840	5,923
Indicator 1121: Number of girls (aged 10–19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school	2,163	2,264
Indicator 1211: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms	5,150	4,325
Indicator 1221: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participated in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality	7,739	2,200
Indicator 1222: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) reached by mass media (traditional and social media) messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls, and gender equality	300,000	N/A
Indicator 1223: Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage	500	141
Indicator 1231: Number of civil society organizations newly mobilized by the Global Programme in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality	30	23
Indicator 2121: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards	50	58
Indicator 2131: Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards	24	191
Indicator 2211: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction and economic empowerment programmes and services	1	1
Indicator 3111: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational levels with Global Programme support	3	1
Indicator 3211: Number of pieces of evidence and knowledge generated that focus on what works to end child marriage	2	N/A
Indicator 3212: Number of pieces of evidence and knowledge generated that apply a gender analysis	N/A	N/A
Indicator 3221: Number of South–South cooperation activities (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported	N/A	N/A

N/A, not applicable.

ENDNOTES

- 1 UNICEF analysis based on the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2018.
- 2 United Nations Children's Fund, *COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage*, UNICEF, New York, 2021, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/covid-19-a-threat-to-progress-against-child-marriage/>>, accessed 17 August 2021.
- 3 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in collaboration with McKinsey & Company, *COVID-19 Response - Remediation: Helping students catch up on lost learning, with a focus on closing equity gaps*, UNESCO, Paris, July 2020, <www.mckinsey.com/-/media/McKinsey/About%20Us/COVID%20Response%20Center/Overview/COVID-19%20Education%20Response%20Toolkit/202010_UNESCO-McKinsey%20Response%20Toolkit_Remediation_VF.pdf>, accessed 17 August 2021.
- 4 Malhotra, A., and S. Elnakib, '20 Years of the Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A systematic review', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 68, no. 5, 2021, pp. 847-862, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.11.017>>, accessed 17 August 2021.
- 5 SASA! is a community mobilization approach developed by Raising Voices for preventing violence against women and HIV. It is a Kiswahili word meaning 'now' and is also an acronym for the four phases of community mobilization that scale up the stages of change to enable a community to move through a series of activities and experiences naturally: Start, Awareness, Support, Action.
- 6 Omidakhsh, N., and J. Heymann, 'Improved Child Marriage Laws and Its Association with Changing Attitudes and Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence: A comparative multi-national study', *Journal of Global Health*, vol. 10, no. 1, June 2020, art. 010707, <<https://doi.org/10.7189/jogh.10.010707>>, accessed 17 August 2021.
- 7 Harper, Caroline, et al., *Gender, Power and Progress: How norms change*, Advanced Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms and Overseas Development Institute, London, December 2020, <www.alignplatform.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/align_-_gender_power_and_progress-singles-digital.pdf>, accessed 17 August 2021.
- 8 For more information about the event, please see: <<https://mailchi.mp/2e2fe676134d/un-general-assembly-child-early-and-forced-marriage-and-the-covid-19-pandemic>>.
- 9 See examples of posts here: <<https://twitter.com/unicefzambia/status/1315245797701713921>>; <<https://twitter.com/unicefzambia/status/1315170703273078790>>.

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ACT NOW:

Accelerating gender equality
by eliminating child marriage
in a pandemic

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