COUNTRY PROFILE 2021: UNFPA-UNICEF GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

ZAMBIA
Child marriage context

There are 1.8 million child brides in Zambia, 396,500 of whom were married before the age of 15. The practice has become less common, with 29 per cent of all young women aged 20–24 married before turning 18 and 5 per cent before turning 15 in 2018, compared with 47 and 9 per cent, respectively, in 1993. However, the progress observed to date is not enough to eliminate child marriage by 2030 as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). If the observed progress over the past decade continues, child marriage prevalence will still be at 22 per cent by 2030, and if doubled, 16 per cent.

Programming context

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected the everyday lives of girls for a second year in 2021, including their physical and mental health, education and the economic circumstances of their families and communities. Globally, up to 10 million more girls are estimated to become child brides by 2030 as a result of the pandemic.

UNFPA and UNICEF Evaluation Offices conducted a joint assessment of Global Programme adaptations to the COVID-19 crisis in 2021. The COVID-19 assessment aimed to:

- Assess relevant contingency planning and implementation and alternative delivery and
management arrangements for the Global Programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account the views of vulnerable adolescent girls, their families, communities and key implementing partners.

- Make recommendations for the immediate to mid-term improvement of the Global Programme response to COVID-19, identify ongoing programme changes and recommending any additional support required to implement those programme changes and shifting priorities.

- Make any recommendations required to adjust the Global Programme Phase II to the new context, including its theory of change and the targets established before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of the assessment indicate that:

- It is critical to keep the focus and efforts in reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescents, including those in remote areas.

- Lessons could be taken from experiences using multi-channel and two-way communication approaches, while also being attentive to the digital divide.

- Vulnerable adolescents must continue to have access to education (especially if provided remotely), health and social welfare services.

- It is key to overcome drivers of poverty by leveraging existing social protection schemes.

- Ensuring the use of evidence led programming is important and so too is advocating with governments to keep child marriage prevention and responses on national agendas while continuing to develop legal and operational frameworks to help accelerate the end of child marriage.

### TABLE. Conclusions and recommendations from the COVID-19 assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCLUSION</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme advocacy and engagement efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic</td>
<td>Advocate with governments to continue developing legal and operational frameworks contributing to ending child marriage with a rights-based and multisectoral focus</td>
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<td>kept child marriage on national agendas</td>
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<tr>
<td>The COVID-19 crisis underscored the vulnerability of adolescent girls in</td>
<td>Reinforce efforts to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescent girls, boys and their families</td>
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<td>rural and remote areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoption of digital and mass media approaches demonstrated a high potential</td>
<td>Develop complementary multi-channel approaches to reach target populations, ensuring that they foster two-way communication</td>
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<td>for sustaining engagement of adolescent girls at scale, although the</td>
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<td>digital divide should be considered</td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19 restrictions limited adolescent girls’ access to health and</td>
<td>Continue technical support and explore the most effective approaches to ensure adolescent girls have access to essential services</td>
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<td>social welfare services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The programme theory of change remains valid but poverty and economic</td>
<td>Further articulate the strategy to leverage social protection schemes such as cash transfers and income generation opportunities for adolescent girls and their families</td>
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<td>drivers need to be stressed further in operational strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19 programme adjustments created a high demand on data and</td>
<td>Continue adjusting monitoring, data generation and analysis in order to reinforce evidence-based programming</td>
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<td>evidence for adopted approaches</td>
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These results will inform future adjustments and refinements to the programme. They will help continue delivering in changing contexts and accelerating the pace, during the Decade of Action, of eliminating child marriage to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

**Key highlights**

- Over 6,100 adolescent girls (aged 10-19) actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education in programme areas

- Close to one million individuals (boys, girls, women and men) were reached by traditional and social media messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality

- On a policy level, in 2021, key achievements included the endorsement of the Children’s Code Bill by the Ministry of Justice Legislative Review.

- Over 32,000 individuals (boys, girls, women and men) participated in group education or dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality

- On a policy level, in 2021, key achievements included the endorsement of the Children’s Code Bill by the Ministry of Justice Legislative Review, the adoption of the National Prevention and Response Plan to End Violence Against Children and the development of a National Volunteer Policy to support community volunteers during the implementation of the programmes to end child marriage
Providing intensive support to marginalized girls

The mentorship programme conducted through the safe space model has continued to galvanize adolescent girls and boys into a movement of young people willing to pursue a different trajectory and delay marriage and pregnancy. A total of 11,851 (6,108 girls and 5,743 boys) were reached with information on confidence, self-efficacy and positive masculinities through weekly safe space sessions which took place in their communities in 2021. The sessions were facilitated by trained female and male mentors from the community. The content of the

Programme performance

TABLE. Summary of output indicator performance (2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>TARGET</th>
<th>RESULT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1111</strong>: Number of adolescent girls (aged 10-19) who actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions in programme areas</td>
<td>5,940</td>
<td>6,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1121</strong>: Number of girls (aged 10-19) supported by the programme to enrol and/or remain in primary or secondary school</td>
<td>2,169</td>
<td>989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1211</strong>: Number of boys and men actively participating in group education/dialogues that address harmful masculinities and gender norms</td>
<td>5,150</td>
<td>8,946</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1221</strong>: Number of individuals (boys, girls, women and men) who participate in group education/dialogue sessions on consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality</td>
<td>32,739</td>
<td>32,884</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1222</strong>: 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</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1223</strong>: Number of local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders) with meaningful participation in dialogues and consensus-building to end child marriage</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1231</strong>: Number of civil society organizations newly mobilized in support of challenging social norms and promoting gender equality by the Global Programme</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 2121</strong>: Number of primary/secondary/non-formal schools in programme areas providing quality gender-friendly education that meets minimum standards</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 2131</strong>: Number of service delivery points in programme areas providing quality adolescent-responsive services (health, child protection/ gender-based violence) that meet minimum standards</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 2211</strong>: Number of partnerships (both formal and informal) established to deliver adolescent-responsive social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3111</strong>: Number of policies or legal instruments addressing child marriage drafted, proposed or adopted at national and subnational level with Global Programme support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3211</strong>: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that focus on what works to end child marriage</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3212</strong>: Number of generated evidence and knowledge that apply a gender analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 3221</strong>: Number of South-to-South cooperation (conferences, expert visits, peer consultations, study tours, communities of practice) supported</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sessions included information on human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, menstrual health and similar topics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme was adjusted and implemented using a staggered methodology to conduct meetings with adolescents, while observing COVID-19 regulations. To implement effectively, the meetings took place for 30 minutes in smaller groups of ten people which was a departure from the pre-COVID-19 meetings, which accommodated 25-30 adolescents for a maximum period of two hours. The programme also developed and piloted two virtual safe space models which included e-learning and radio listening clubs. The digitalization model that enabled the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights content onto digital tablets also provided an interactive platform where adolescents engaged on various topics. This model proved to have worked well because of the integration of visuals that young people easily relate to.

Two chiefdoms in the Katete district (Chieftainess Kawaza and Chief Mbangombe) were trained to implement programme interventions for marginalized adolescent girls and boys in their chiefdoms. Training of chiefdoms targeted 50 traditional initiators (25 male and 25 female) who are considered to have direct influence on adolescents. The trained traditional initiators will ensure that correct sexual and reproductive health information is effectively disseminated to the adolescent girls and boys in the community.

To enhance girls’ knowledge around sexual and reproductive health and rights and raise awareness on available services the mobile platform U-Report was also utilized during the year. Through peer educators, information was disseminated to adolescent girls and young women, helping them make informed choices on issues affecting them, including avoiding pregnancy. Resulting from this, 85 girls (15-19 years old) accessed family planning services through health facilities. The increased knowledge and awareness on adolescent rights also led to some girls beginning to say no to child marriage and some arranged marriages being reported to authorities. The reported cases on child marriage were resolved together with school administrations and implementing partners ensuring that the affected girls stayed in school.

During the year, capacity building activities were conducted to enhance the access to and provision of services to adolescent girls. This included training of 100 peer educators on sexual and reproductive health and HIV, equipped with knowledge and skills to disseminate accurate information to peers in their communities. The educators are comprised of Community Welfare Assistance Committees, mentors, Safe Motherhood Action Groups and peer educators based in health facilities. Equipped with this information, the peer educators were able to conduct community outreach activities, providing information on contraception and on services offered in the health facilities that support young people.

Furthermore, 18 community-based organizations were trained in how to work with adolescents and how to reach them with information on life skills and financial education. The organizations were identified based on their experience in working with young people in communities. This training resulted in the organizations broadening their targeting for adolescent programming to include girls aged 10 and above, as it had been noted that most of the community-based organizations only engaged girls above age 15. The inclusion of younger adolescent girls too will ensure that they are equipped with age-appropriate life skills.

During the year, guidance and counselling materials and radio lessons on prevention of school-related gender-based violence were delivered for use by schools. These schools now have a well-functioning guidance and counselling unit and have been providing personal, social, educational and vocational guidance to students, both through one-on-one and group sessions by 59 guidance and counselling teachers. A total of 1,256 students (477 boys and 779 girls) were provided with guidance and counselling services to enhance retention in school. Career days and motivation talks by invited professionals were also conducted.
“I felt I was not smart enough to keep going,” says 18-year-old Jelina Mbewe when she describes the moment she dropped out of school in Grade 8.

Before leaving, Jelina shared her thoughts with her peers in her village in Zambia’s Eastern province and most of them encouraged her to stay quiet.

“I dropped out and stayed home where I helped out with house chores and after that would spend time with my friends in the village... With time, the desire to get married grew as those were the main conversations I had with my friends, seeing that there was nothing else to do,” she says.

That is when Jelina came in contact with the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). They were enrolling young girls in the village into a safe space programme which focuses on combatting child marriage, issues affecting young girls and menstrual hygiene practices. Jelina was curious to find out more.

"From the teachings during the safe space sessions, I realized that peer pressure was real, and I thought it was best that I return to school: this time I told myself that I will focus and try my best to study hard.”

"Jelina is my first-born child,” explains her mother Selina Phiri. “Whenever she came back from school, she would always complain of how tough school was and her thoughts of not being smart enough to continue with her studies. The complaints where too much and discouraging for me as a mother. It made me feel that I was wasting money taking her to school. Eventually Jelina dropped out of school and the only thing left was for her to get married. However, with the organizations introduced in the village, Jelina was able to join one before she got married. From the lessons, Jelina decided to go back to school. At first, I was not so supportive with the idea as I was afraid of wasting money,” she says.

The opposite happened. Jelina passed her Grade 9 examinations at the first attempt with no need for her to rewrite any subjects. “This was very encouraging for me as a mother and not only that, Jelina set a good record for her younger siblings as the eldest child,” Selina Phiri notes. “I am a proud mother as all my three children are in school and performing well. Jelina and I share a really good relationship and she is able to openly share her school results from every test written in school.”

After successfully completing a mentorship programme with YWCA, Jelina volunteered to become a peer mentor in order to assist in spreading the information she learned with other young girls in the village. Jelina is now in Grade 11 at Kapoche Day secondary school and hopes to study law in the future, once she is done with her secondary education.
Through the support of Community Action Groups, and working closely with schools, 210 girls (57 from Katete and 153 from Senanga) returned to education in 2021. Out of the 57 girls from Katete who had dropped out of school, 20 were due to child marriage whilst 37 were because of teenage pregnancy. The girls were from 27 out of the 40 schools that are implementing Community Action Group activities in the Katete district. In the Senanga district, the 153 girls who were supported to return to school came from 52 of the 71 schools that are being supported to implement Community Action Group activities.

Meanwhile, interventions of Community Welfare Assistant Committees, through community-based case management, demonstrates a positive change. For example, more boys are going to school as opposed to herding cattle – promoting boys to go to school rather than collect cattle for marriage – and girls are empowered to continue their education, even if they have given birth. For instance, six girls in the Katiula ward of the Katete district, who had given birth, went back to school and wrote their grade 12 examinations in 2021 following the interventions made by the committees.

**CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS**

Some girls are very far from the central business district and reaching them is a challenge because their nearest school or health facility is still far away. To mitigate this

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**The power of community mobilization**

In the words of a 50-year-old father of an 18-year-old daughter who got pregnant in Musamwacalete village (part of the Katiula Community Welfare Assistance Committee area) in Katete:

“I stay in Msamwacale village in Katiula, where the Community Welfare Assistant Committee members are doing a lot of things for the community. The first thing we have learnt from the Community Welfare Assistant Committee was about financial literacy. From that time, me together with the family, are saving, and the children involved in the saving scheme process as well.

The other benefit I have experienced because of the Community Welfare Assistance Committee’s interaction is the issue of school dropouts going back to school. For example, I have a daughter who is 18 years old. She got pregnant and lost interest in school while in grade eight. As parents we equally lost interest and thought it was a waste of time and resources. The option was that she stops school and starts farming, but with the help of a Community Welfare Assistance Committee Member, who visited our family and engaged us over the issue of our daughter, we saw that it was beneficial to give our child a second chance to go back to school.

Our daughter went back to school after delivering a baby and we remained to take care of the baby. She wrote her grade nine exams and made it into grade ten. Right now, I have bought all the school requirements and she is in school at Katiula Day secondary school while we have continued to take care of her child who is our grandchild.

One other issue I have learnt is over cattle herding, my children now go to school while I take care of the cattle. The information is very beneficial, and we appreciate what the Community Welfare Assistance Committee members are doing in our community.”

As a result of the father’s participation in community dialogue sessions organized by the committees, further changes have been observed in his family:

- The children now regularly go to school and only participate in herding cattle during weekends
- Elderly people now herd the cattle during working days, to enable the children to go to school
- Boys in his household now participate in domestic chores, previously perceived to be the work for girls and women
- The children now have a separate field to cater for their personal needs
- His family now budgets together to decide on priority household needs
challenges, local radio programmes were employed and digital platforms were used in safe spaces with the digital platforms also being considered to be used in schools and health facilities to ensure wider reach of services.

Continuous innovations and reprogramming are essential in the context of COVID-19, especially to ensure that the programme is implemented with fidelity and quality. Going forward, digital platforms and radio programmes will be applied in a hybrid modality to ensure two-way communication and the support of mentors in following up on information through one-on-one sessions while adhering to health protocols and guidelines.

**Enhancing the family and community environment**

32,684 community members, including women, men, girls and boys, participated in gender-transformative dialogues promoting positive gender norms, alternatives to child marriage and gender equality. Of those who participated in the dialogues, 6,486 were boys, 7,184 men, 10,565 women and 8,449 girls. Additionally, 90 local actors (e.g., traditional, religious and community leaders and traditional marriage initiators) contributed with meaningful participation in the dialogues and consensus-building activities to end child marriage.

The social and behaviour change component of the programme has identified traditional leaders as one of the allies in addressing child marriage. The programme has involved traditional leaders in dialogues on child marriage and on norms that underlie the issue. As a result of these engagements, traditional leaders have been able to issue decrees in their chiefdoms banning the practice of child marriage and in some cases issued sanctions to parents where children have been married and also to the children involved in the practice. Traditional leaders have also used platforms such as traditional ceremonies to condemn the practice of child marriage. Having traditional leaders at the forefront of challenging child marriage has really changed the narrative in terms of the practice being seen as undesirable for children’s wellbeing.

One notable achievement from 2021 was the involvement of boys as allies in promoting positive masculinities and in addressing some of the challenges they face as a result of gender roles expected for men and boys. The Global Programme, through the social and behaviour change communication component of the programme, prioritized gender-transformative approaches in engaging boys and 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 facilitators for the sessions who thereafter engaged 6,117 boys in dialogues that address harmful masculinities and negative gender norms in the two districts of Senanga and Katete.

Radio programmes were also utilized to spread gender-transformative messaging on child marriage, the rights of adolescent girls and gender equality together with COVID-19 awareness messages, reaching an estimated 1 million individuals in the Katete and Senanga districts. Through the awareness raising activities, community members, including parents, are empowered to mobilize themselves to halt and report child marriages and address other gender-based violence issues.
CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The two districts of Senanga and Katete have cultural practices for the initiation of boys where masculinities are learned and assimilated. The Coaching of Boys into Men initiative faced some resistance in some of the targeted communities, as the initiative was viewed as contrary to the cultural practice of boys’ initiation. However, this challenge was resolved through the engagement of the district social welfare office and community development officers and continues to be managed this way as the initiative is rolled out and encountering the same challenge in new areas. District social welfare officers have a huge presence on the ground through community volunteers of the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme, and hence they are respected and well-known. Their presence and engagement with key community gate keepers provides a conducive environment for addressing some culturally sensitive issues that seem to challenge traditional male roles.

Though no survey has been carried on potential norm change as a result of community dialogues, review meetings with key stakeholders at district level, such as with Community Welfare Assistance Committees, traditional leaders and relevant government staff have shown a shift in attitudes and practices around some deeply entrenched gender norms. In some wards in the districts there was the involvement of couples to participate together in the dialogues, something deemed effective as they were able to talk about their own household realities in terms of gender roles and responsibilities at household level. Thus, the dialogues provided a platform where, for the first time, couples could talk about how they are impacted by their gender roles. There are also visible signs of change at community level in terms of men taking some of the roles that have been considered for women, such as parenting. For example, it is not uncommon to see men come to meetings while carrying a baby or taking up chores such as drawing water for household use.

Strengthening systems

Capacity building activities were prioritized for authorities in the Katete and Senanga districts to take a leadership role in programme implementation, especially in the area of coordination across protection, health and education and in the area of implementing community-based case management and social and behaviour change activities. To ensure that adolescent girls and boys are adequately provided with information and correctly referred to various service delivery points, community volunteers such as community health workers, peer educators, Safe Motherhood Action Groups, community-based distributors and Community Welfare Assistance Committees were equipped with information and skills on harmful social norms and gender equality.

Using the revised tools and training on Community-Based Case Management, which were endorsed by the line ministry, an additional 180 (79 female and 101 male) Community Welfare Assistance Committee members were trained in case management in an additional eight wards in the two districts. The trained committee members were also oriented on the minimum standard guidelines for quality case management and monitoring. Moreover, 303 Community Welfare Assistance Committee service delivery points exist to support vulnerable children and are implementing the guidelines for adolescent girl-friendly health and protection services in two districts. These service delivery points were accessed by a total of 2,716 children (1,436 boys and 1,280 girls) in 2021, referred by committee members, and an additional 250 adolescents were reached with services related to sexual and reproductive health, HIV and gender-based violence through referrals.

The programme supported access to adolescent-friendly reproductive health services in the target districts. Subsequently, 51 health facilities have sustained provision of adolescent-friendly health services, making the two target districts among those with the highest geographical coverage of adolescent-friendly health services in the country. Additionally, community- and school-based
adolescent-friendly outreach services were scaled up to almost all target areas of health facilities with an adolescent-friendly space.

The Katete district was supported with the scale-up of an electronic health information system in 30 of its 33 health facilities to an extent that data completeness, accuracy and timeliness in reporting has improved. Moreover, due to the electronic information system set up (through provision of laptops and software), the district is now able to efficiently generate age and sex disaggregated data which is used to ascertain utilization patterns of essential sexual and reproductive health services among adolescents and young people, ultimately informing programming, including on the reduction of teenage pregnancies (being a precursor for child marriages). 14 health facilities were further reached with more information on adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services. 425 (232 female and 193 male) community health workers were trained in Katete so that they can foster access to services.

**CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS**

In 2022, community health workers will work together with other volunteers to ensure that adolescent girls and boys are effectively reached with a wide range of information and services at a community-level, building on the training they received in 2021.

COVID-19 has restricted full implementation of community- and school-based outreach activities given that schools were closed, and some COVID-19 control measures meant that community activities were limited. However, school- and community-based outreach have the potential to reach large numbers of adolescents and young people, and to be effective, a stronger referral and linkage system needs to be put in place, which will be the focus of programming going forward.

Attrition of peer educators has been a challenge for continuity of services, although the continuous training has mitigated this challenge. Peer educators offer services that are regarded appropriate and acceptable to adolescents and young people. However, quality assurance during training and supervision and mentorship during their service delivery remains imperative to improve responsiveness to the needs of adolescents and young people.

**Facilitating supportive laws and policies**

The Global Programme made steady progress towards supporting the government to develop policies and legal instruments addressing child marriage. A key achievement was the finalization of the Children’s Code Bill which was endorsed by the Ministry of Justice Legislative Review and a wider Cabinet Review in April/early May 2021. The draft Children’s Code Bill incorporated international and regional human rights standards, including but not limited to, defining the minimum age of marriage to 18 and strengthening the statutory response for children in need of care and protection.

Furthermore, efforts were made to strengthen the prevention and response to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect through drafting the Child and Family Welfare Framework, adopting the National Prevention and Response Plan to End Violence Against Children as well as drafting the Statutory Case Management Handbook for social welfare officers to respond to cases of children at risk of significant harm, including guidance notes on addressing cases of violence against children and gender-based violence. The National Volunteer Policy was also finalized to support community volunteers who play a critical role in the implementation of activities to end child marriage together with the Social Workers’ Association of Zambia Bill.

At a subnational level, the Katete and Senanga districts continued to implement the developed district plans to coordinate interventions to address child marriage. The districts were supported to develop monitoring frameworks with agreed indicators which will be tracked by all stakeholders at district level. The data from the monitoring tool will be used for decision-making to improve the quality of interventions, when scaling-up the programme to an additional ten districts. They have also developed and implemented a multisectoral package of interventions.
which comprises of education, health, and water, sanitation and hygiene sectors, including social and behaviour change. This has been achieved through the district multisectoral committees responsible for implementing child marriage-related activities. District teams have also been supported with funds to conduct joint monitoring visits to the field, which provides data for further reflection in terms of moving forward.

Furthermore, the new president of Zambia has elevated the Ministry of Gender to his office as a Gender Division, giving it more power to coordinate national gender issues, as well as the integrated action plan on ending child marriage. The introduction of free education at secondary level, together with support towards the development of a national framework on child safeguarding and a school-based child safeguarding policy to prevent violence against children in schools and other settings, further strengthened the environment in the country.

CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

Despite the development of joint district plans, sectors still prefer to work in silos, thereby losing the benefit of cross-sectoral leveraging of strengths. In 2022, a key strategic shift will be the focus on building relations between and across sectors so that the challenges experienced in working in silos are addressed.

Another challenge is the over-dependence on the Global Programme to fund all activities in the district action plans. To ensure ownership and sustainability, districts are meant to resource the plans, but this has yet to be materialized. With the commitment of the new government to fiscal decentralization and an increase in development funds, the programme will increase advocacy to influence the allocation of funds towards ending child marriage at subnational levels.

**Generating and applying data and evidence**

Though the programme research agenda did not move much in Zambia in 2021, the programme intends to strengthen evidence generation around child marriage, which will inform advocacy activities. A programme review was held during 2021, focusing on past approaches and their effectiveness in addressing child marriage. Consultations between different United Nations agencies, as well as with the government, were held and as a result, an agreement to use lessons learnt so far for scaling-up the programme to ten more districts was made. In 2022, implementation research will also be embarked upon to further assess how some interventions are working or not working, and measures will be derived to address the gaps arising out of the research. These points of learning will further inform the scale-up of the programme to other districts.

The baseline survey on current gender norms and their impact on child marriage as part of UNICEF’s gender norms research strategy, with technical support from the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and the UNICEF Office of Research—Innocenti, will be the baseline for the social and behaviour change component of the programme and the gender-transformative approach across all programme strategies. The survey will take place in the first quarter of 2022 with technical support from UNICEF Innocenti.

A documentary on ending child marriage and some videos have been produced. These will help in decision-making as the programme continues to evolve. Stories have been portrayed on several aspects of the programme, including the role of community volunteers such as Community Welfare Assistance Committees and the efficacy of the mentorship programmes.

**CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS**

Bringing stakeholders together to obtain agreement on the research agenda takes time. The process has to be consultative to build consensus on the approach, methodology and data collection tools and to obtain ethical clearance. This may delay the process of implementation of the research on gender norms. To mitigate this, it is expected that the stakeholder consultation process will start early in 2022.
end child marriage