








# ZAMBIA CASE STUDY

Review of Technology-Based Interventions  
to Address Child Marriage and Female  
Genital Mutilation

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## ZAMBIA OVERVIEW

	<b>Child marriage prevalence<sup>1</sup></b> (girls married before the age of 18 years, as a proportion of all girls)	29%
	<b>FGM prevalence<sup>2</sup></b>	–
	<b>Internet users<sup>3</sup></b> (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	36% of men 36% of women
	<b>Mobile phone ownership<sup>4</sup></b> (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	87% of men 81% of women
	<b>Level of government support for digital literacy<sup>5</sup></b> (scale 0–3) <sup>6</sup>	High: 3

## THE CONTEXT OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND FGM IN THE COUNTRY

Zambia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa, with 1.7 million child brides living in the country (girls and women alive today who were married before age 18), of which 400,000 were married by age 15. Nevertheless, the national prevalence has decreased over the last three decades as, in 2018, 29 per cent of young women aged 20 to 24 years were married by 18 years old, and 5 per cent before turning 15, whereas the figures were 46 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, in 1993.<sup>7</sup> One of the contributing drivers is that although the legal minimum age is set at 21 years in the Marriage Act, a person can marry at the age of 16 with consent from his or her legal guardian. The National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage in Zambia 2016–2021 highlights an accentuated prevalence of intergenerational marriage between men and young women, but notes that children also marry each other driven by customary practices.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike child marriage, the prevalence of FGM in Zambia is relatively low, and hence there is no national data on FGM prevalence. Although the practice is not common, the 2011 Anti-Gender Based Violence Act considers it a form of gender-based violence.<sup>9</sup> It is important to highlight that labia minora elongation, which consists of modifying the labia with oils, herbs and cream to enlarge it, is practised among young women in Zambia. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that this practice should be considered a form of FGM because it is a social convention and hence there is the social pressure for young girls to modify their genitalia. However, some scholars argue that the lack of long-term harm and the focus on eroticism do not classify it as a form of FGM.<sup>10</sup>

## NEWS ABOUT HARMFUL PRACTICES: WORD CLOUD MAPS AND NUMBERS OF REPORTS

A GDELT word cloud and figures on reports for child marriage and FGM are not available for Zambia. After filtering the database for a comprehensive pool of keywords related to FGM and child marriage and technology, there were no results

returned for associated reports pertaining to child marriage and/or FGM in the country. Consequently, a country word cloud map representing the most common words portrayed in the reports is also unavailable.

## THE TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT IN ZAMBIA

The National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage in Zambia 2016–2021 acknowledges the need to optimize technological advancements and innovations in child marriage mitigation

interventions.<sup>11</sup> Generally, the country is characterized by its limited access to information, notwithstanding the adoption of relatively common technologies such as radio or television.<sup>12</sup>

In 2020, 44.5 per cent of the Zambian population had access to electricity which, despite the low figure, represents a 20.5 per cent increase from 2010.<sup>13</sup> In regard to access to the internet, Zambia was one of the first countries to receive internet connectivity in sub-Saharan Africa in 1994.<sup>14</sup> However, the growth has been slow, with only 20 per cent of internet penetration (measured as individuals who have used the internet from any location in the last three months) reached by 2020.<sup>15</sup> As noted by the Paradigm Initiative LONDA Zambia Digital Rights and Inclusion 2021 Report, the majority of the population access the internet through mobile broadband (56 per cent) as opposed to fixed line subscriptions (0.5 per cent).<sup>16</sup> Additionally, there were 96.4 mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2019.<sup>17</sup>

Currently, the key actors in the technological landscape in Zambia include the Ministry of Technology and Science, which governs ICTs, and the Zambia Information Communications Technology Authority, which is responsible for regulating ICTs.<sup>18</sup> As noted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the country has made significant progress in its digital infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> According to ITU, in 2019, 71.8 per cent of the population had access to 3G network coverage, and 49.1 per cent to 4G coverage.<sup>20</sup> This has contributed to the high number of mobile cellular subscriptions (i.e., subscriptions to a mobile pre- or post-paid telephone service) in

the country, which in 2020 reached 104 per 100 inhabitants.<sup>21</sup>

Access to technologies, however, is insufficient without digital literacy, which encompasses the necessary skills to find and use information through the use of technologies. The World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index 2019 ranked Zambia at 3.5 on a scale of 7 in terms of digital skills among the population. This suggests there is still a long way to go, especially as between 2017 and 2019 there was a negative growth rate in digital skills of -1.62 per cent.<sup>22</sup> In Zambia, government support for digital literacy is rated by the Economist Impact at 3 in a scale of 0 to 3. The score indicates that the government has put plans and strategies in place to address digital literacy among students and teachers. Despite these efforts, the national female e-inclusion policies of the country only obtained a score of 2 on a scale from 0 to 4.<sup>23</sup> According to the Economist Impact's criteria, the current plans to promote internet access and e-inclusion do not appropriately consider women or adopt a gender perspective.

Data from the internet Inclusive Index 2022 show that the gender gap in mobile phone access stood at 13.9 per cent in 2019, and at 27.8 per cent for internet access in the same year.<sup>24</sup> In 2021, 51 per cent of women and 57 per cent of men were active mobile phone users; while 87 per cent of men versus 81 per cent of women owned mobile phones.<sup>25</sup>

## MAPPING OF TECH INTERVENTIONS

The interventions mapped in this section stem from an initial landscape exercise conducted jointly by UNFPA and UNICEF, followed by a systematic review of publicly available data and information on technology-driven and technology-enabled interventions addressing child marriage in Zambia. The compiled information was curated and complemented with insights emerging from key informant interviews conducted with local stakeholders.

### CODING TYPE OF INTERVENTION

- [☉] Technology-driven intervention/solution (tech is a core element)
- [⦿] Technology-enabled intervention/solution (tech is secondary to the intervention, there are other non-tech components)





## ♀ FEMINIST LENSES

The seventh column of the interventions table below identifies how organizations have included feminist lenses into the design and implementation of the interventions by highlighting four key aspects:

1	Consultation with experts and/or community leaders	Consultations with gender or thematic experts and/or local leaders were conducted during the development, implementation, and/or monitoring and evaluation of the interventions.
2	Consultations with target group(s)	The interventions incorporated, at any stage, consultations with the populations targeted, especially girls and women of different ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, classes, and other social markers.
3	Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instruments	Monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out to measure the intervention's progress and sustainability, and/or to generate disaggregated information, gender-sensitive/responsive indicators, and/or gender analysis frameworks.
4	Women- and/or girl-led organization(s)	The intervention was designed and/or implemented, partly or completely, by a women- and/or girl-led organization(s).

Additional descriptive information about the feminist lenses and potential intersectional approach (i.e., addressing ethnicity, language, class or other aspects of the target group's identity) is provided within the table, following the general description of each intervention, which can be identified by the use of this symbol [♀]. This analysis is based on information collected during semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and/or publicly available information.

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGNS DURING COVID-19 / 2020 – 2021 / ♂

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNFPA</li> <li>UNICEF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Education</li> <li>Ministry of Community Development and Social Services</li> </ul>	Child marriage	Nationwide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual level empowerment</li> <li>Family and community engagement</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mass media (including TV and radio)</li> <li>Online polls</li> <li>Phone calls</li> <li>Tablets</li> <li>Virtual meetings</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultations with experts and/or community leaders</li> <li>Consultations with target group(s)</li> <li>M&amp;E instruments</li> </ol>

Implemented in various countries, including Zambia, the Global Programme was designed as a 15-year programme (2016–2030) to contribute to achieving SDG 5.3 which aims to eliminate all harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage, and FGM. Diverse interventions have been put in place through the Global Programme, for example, the U-Report (a SMS-based digital platform available in 95 countries) was used in Zambia to collect data related to sexual and reproductive health, education, and use of health digital services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting data can be utilized as input for programmes combating child marriage. During this period, public service announcements on social issues, including child marriage, were broadcast through television and child journalism platforms. In addition, communities were reached through radio programmes to disseminate messages on child or adolescent well-being.<sup>26</sup> UNFPA and UNICEF country offices also organized individual follow-ups via phone calls with safe space mentors that were experiencing exacerbated vulnerability during this period, thus providing girls and boys with tablets to discuss sensitive topics around sexual and reproductive health, as well as themes impacting their lives, such as child marriage.<sup>27</sup> In terms of the impact, in 2020, 5,923 adolescent girls (aged 10–19) actively participated in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education interventions.<sup>28</sup>

♀ This intervention integrated an intersectional feminist approach by conducting consultations with young people from different parts of the country, particularly during the crafting of messages for media outlets, but also in leveraging the feedback from U-Report users for decision-making and platform improvements. In addition, girls with disabilities were able to participate in safe space discussions by providing access to sign language packages for mentors. M&E activities were also adopted, which considered application across age groups, disabilities and other population characteristics.

## NATWAMPANE, PREVENT! SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) PROJECT / 2019 – ONGOING / ●

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
European Development Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● BBC Media Action</li> <li>● Lifeline/Childline Zambia</li> <li>● Norwegian Church Aid</li> <li>● World Vision Zambia</li> <li>● Other CSOs, including: Women for Change, LustChambers, Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), Catholic Medical Mission Board, and others.</li> </ul>	Child marriage	23 districts of the Luapula and Northern Provinces	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Service development and strengthening</li> <li>2. Individual level empowerment</li> <li>3. Family and community engagement</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Radio</li> <li>● Helpline</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultations with experts and/or community leaders</li> <li>2. Consultations with target group(s)</li> </ol>

One of the largest and most encompassing technology-based interventions in the country is the Natwampane, Prevent! Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) project, launched in 2019. Funded through the European Development Fund, this initiative is led by four implementing organizations: BBC Media Action, Lifeline/Childline Zambia, Norwegian Church Aid and World Vision Zambia, who collaborate with other CSOs in bringing together all relevant stakeholders (from religious leaders to government and young people) to end SGBV, including child marriage, in Zambia.<sup>29</sup> The main goal was to challenge traditional beliefs and foster social norms and behavioural change.<sup>30</sup> At its onset, the programme sought to accomplish the following specific objectives: provide comprehensive sexuality education for 235,000 children; involve 335,000 children through clubs; engage faith leaders, traditional and civic leaders, traditional and marriage counsellors; and reach 200,000 young people through 392 radio programmes. The initiative supported the construction of One-Stop Centers with trained staff to inform and support survivors, and introduced a toll-free counselling helpline for children (Lifeline/Childline Zambia). Two key telephone lines were used on this project, 116 for children and 933 for adults. Through these services, SGBV survivors have been able to receive medical care, police support, legal aid and psychosocial assistance. BBC Media Action introduced another technological component to the project by working with 13 radio stations in the two provinces to engage young people to share, understand and discuss SGBV and the issues surrounding it, such as gender equality and SRHR.<sup>31</sup> From 2020 to 2021, 9,981 cases of SGBV, including child marriages of children aged 13 to 17 years, were supported through the Natwampane project.<sup>32</sup>

♀ This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by promoting the active collaboration of different stakeholders in society, from government to religious and community leaders and target groups (i.e., young people), as well as by considering the context specific characteristics of the two provinces in which the project was implemented throughout the design and implementation.

## STOP GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE / 2018 – 2023 / 1

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● USAID (funding partner)</li> <li>● Lifeline/ChildLine Zambia</li> <li>● Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAf)</li> <li>● Ministry of Health</li> </ul>	Zambia Centre for Communication Programmes	Child marriage	Eastern, Lusaka, Central, Copperbelt, Southern, Western, and North-Western Provinces	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual level empowerment</li> <li>2. Family and community engagement</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mobile videos</li> <li>● Traditional media (radio)</li> <li>● Database</li> <li>● Helpline</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultations with target group(s)</li> <li>2. M&amp;E instruments</li> </ol>

The main goal of this project is to strengthen the environment for the target populations (girls, women, boys and men, including people with disabilities) to live lives free of GBV and enjoy healthy-supportive, gender-equitable relationships.<sup>33</sup> The project commenced in 2018 in 16 districts of Zambia and is expected to end in 2023.<sup>34</sup> A multisectoral approach is used to prevent and respond to GBV, specifically by promoting gender norms change, strengthening the capacity of local systems to respond to GBV, and supporting one-stop GBV response care.<sup>35</sup> The 11 One-Stop Centres established under the prior project aim to standardize the quality of care and support provided to GBV survivors. One of the implementing sub-partners, WILDAf, is leading advocacy interventions to enhance access to justice for survivors. Meanwhile, another sub-partner, Lifeline/Childline Zambia, is providing tele-counselling and referrals for GBV survivors while also ensuring anonymity.<sup>36</sup> The Zambia Centre for Communication Programmes, as the main implementing partner, is responsible for carrying out capacity-building activities. It is noteworthy that this project has a District Health Information Management System that is used as a reporting platform for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>37</sup> The database has unique identifiers that help collect data and prevent duplication of reported cases, while also allowing capture of data on key performance indicators. In terms of impact, according to the USAID Stop Gender-Based Violence Project-Quarter 3, 2019 Report, approximately 5,701 people were engaged through mobile video shows followed by community dialogues.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, almost 80 per cent of the beneficiaries are women and girls.<sup>39</sup>

♀ This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by talking directly with the target audience, including young people, in all the communities where they work specifically seeking to understand how the project can be improved. The feedback is directed to each of the service providers, such as the Childline and the Ministry of Health. M&E activities are also incorporated into this initiative.

## YES I DO ALLIANCE / 2016 – 2020 / 0

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan International the Netherlands</li> <li>Rutgers</li> <li>Amref</li> <li>CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality</li> <li>Royal Tropical Institute</li> <li>Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs</li> <li>Ministry of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan International Zambia</li> <li>Generation Alive</li> <li>Afya Mzuri</li> <li>Other CSOs</li> </ul>	Child marriage	Chadiza and Petauke districts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family and community engagement</li> <li>Individual level empowerment</li> <li>Legal and policy systems intervention</li> <li>Economic empowerment</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Radio</li> <li>Social media</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultations with experts and/or community leaders</li> <li>M&amp;E instruments</li> </ol>

This programme aimed to reduce child marriage, teenage pregnancies and FGM, and was implemented in seven countries including Zambia.<sup>40</sup> Some of the strategic goals included young women and men taking informed action on their sexual health and young women having alternatives beyond child marriage and teenage pregnancy through education and economic empowerment. Radios, loudspeakers and social media were some of the primary channels used to spread information about SRHR, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown. An assessment found that radio remains very popular and contributed to reach groups in otherwise difficult to reach areas.<sup>41</sup> The End Project report noted a “small but significant” decrease in the prevalence of child marriage among young women in the Petauke district over the programme’s life span.<sup>42</sup> However, no change was recorded in Chadiza district. In addition, the programme was successful in establishing more awareness about gender equality and SRHR information and SRH services. It was noted that 23,775 adolescent boys and girls between 15 and 24 years have utilized SRHR services between 2016 and 2020.<sup>43</sup>

♀ This intervention integrated an intersectional feminist approach by using mixed methods to support with M&E activities, and to develop base, mid and end-line reports throughout the five years of the programme’s implementation. In addition, consultations with evaluation and gender experts were carried out at different stages.



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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Demographic and Health Survey (2018), as cited in UNICEF (2022a), *Zambia country profile*
- 2 Statistical data not available
- 3 Gallup (2019), as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 4 ZICTA (2018), as cited in Nkhowani (2022)
- 5 Economist Impact (2022)
- 6 The score on government support for digital literacy, on a scale from 0–3 (low to high), reflects a government plan or strategy to address digital literacy for students and/or teachers – through the design and development of courses in ICT skills, computer science, programming or other classes for students; and through ICT capacity-building courses for teachers. A zero score indicates that the government does not have such a plan/strategy, neither for students and nor for teachers; a score of 1 reflects a plan for student digital literacy but without including teacher capacity-building; a medium score of 2 indicates a current plan for both; and the highest score of 3 reflects a plan addressing both students and teachers, and with the courses and capacity-building starting at the primary school level.
- 7 Demographic and Health Survey (2018), as cited in UNICEF and UNFPA (2020d)
- 8 Zambia Ministry of Gender (2016)
- 9 UN Women (2011)
- 10 Perez et al. (2015)
- 11 The Ministry of Gender (2016)
- 12 Mann et al. (2015)
- 13 World Bank (2020s)
- 14 Nkhowani (2022)
- 15 ITU, as cited in World Bank (2020s)
- 16 Nkhowani (2022)
- 17 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 18 Nkhowani (2022)
- 19 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and The World Bank (2020)
- 20 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 21 World Bank (2020w)
- 22 World Bank (2022b)
- 23 Economist Impact (2022)
- 24 Gallup (2019), as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 25 ZICTA (2018), as cited in Nkhowani (2022)
- 26 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021d)
- 27 Information by a UNFPA Zambia representative
- 28 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021d)
- 29 EEAS (2019)
- 30 World Vision (2022)
- 31 EEAS (2019)
- 32 World Vision (2022)
- 33 Kwatu (2022)
- 34 Mtonga (2019)
- 35 USAID (2022)
- 36 Mtonga (2019)
- 37 Kwatu (2022)
- 38 Mtonga (2019)
- 39 Interview with USAID official
- 40 Kit RoyalTropical Institute (n.d.)
- 41 Plan International (2020)
- 42 Ibid., p. 61 (2020)
- 43 Plan International (2020)



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