



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
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**Girl Empowerment and Child Marriage:**  
Empowering girls to prevent and end child marriage in Zambia

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Author: Namwiinga Chitempa

Supervisor: Agneta Hedblom

## **Abstract**

**Title:** Girl Empowerment and Child Marriage: Empowering girls to prevent and end child marriage in Zambia

**Author:** Namwiinga Chitempa

**Key Words:** Child marriage, Empowerment, girl child, significance.

Child marriage is human rights violation that violates the rights of a girl child and robs her of her innocence. It is a widespread social problem that cuts across the globe.

The purpose of the research was to investigate the significance of using empowerment as a strategy towards preventing and ending child marriage in Zambia. The research was a qualitative study that focused on Plan International Zambia and its empowerment programmes. The total number of respondents was 22 comprised of 4 Plan Zambia members of staff, 8 community child protection unit members and 10 girl children between the ages of 13 and 18. 5 out of these girl children were former child brides. 3 focused group discussions were conducted and 4 telephone and skype interviews were conducted. Four theories used in the research were intersectionality, empowerment, capability approach and the human rights based approach.

Main findings from the research reveal that empowering a girl child is an important strategy towards preventing and ending child marriage. The study also revealed poverty and lack of education opportunities are some of the causes of child marriage. Lack of education opportunities and conflicting pieces of legislation were revealed to be a challenges against combating child marriage.

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## **Dedication**

This paper is dedicated to my 8-year-old Chisomo Tabo Chilowa who means the world to me.

## **Acronyms and Abbreviation**

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AU	African Union
CDF	Community Development Facilitator
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRP	Child Rights Programming
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
IFMSA	International Federation of Medical Students' Associations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PSAf	Panos Institute Southern Africa
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children' Fund
ZDHS	Zambia Demographic Health Survey

## *Quotes*

“Child marriage happens because adults believe they have the right to impose upon a child. This denies children, particularly girls, their dignity and the opportunity to make choices that are central to their lives, such as when and whom to marry or when to have children. Choices define us and allow us to realize our potential. Child marriage robs girls of this chance”

*(Desmond Tutu and Graca Machel).*

“Ending child marriage will help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by allowing girls and women to participate more fully in society. Empowered and educated girls are better able to nourish and care for their children, leading to healthier, smaller families. When girls are allowed to be girls, everybody wins” *(UNICEF, 2014)*

## Table of Contents

1.1 Introduction .....	9
1.2 Background .....	9
1.2.1 Global Context.....	10
1.2.2 Zambian Context.....	10
1.3 Legal Frameworks and Policies.....	11
1.3.1 International Instruments.....	11
1.3.2 Regional Law.....	14
1.3.3 National Laws.....	14
1.3.3.1 Conflicting Issues in the Zambian Legal Context.....	15
1.3.4 International Policies and Development Goals.....	16
1.3.5 Regional Campaigns.....	19
1.3.6 National Policies and Campaigns.....	19
1.3.7 Organizations working towards ending child marriage.....	19
1.4 Concept Definition.....	20
1.5 Problem Statement.....	21
1.5.1 Relevance of the study and relation to Social Work.....	22
1.5.2 Research Aims.....	23
1.5.2.1 Specific Aims.....	23
1.5.3 Research Questions.....	23
2.0 Literature Review.....	23
2.1 To investigate causes and effects of child marriage.....	23
2.2 Empowerment strategies used by the organization to empower a girl child.....	26
2.3 Benefits and importance of Empowerment.....	27
2.4 Challenges affecting the promotion of girls' rights against child marriage.....	29
3.0 Theoretical Framework.....	30
3.1 Intersectionality Theory.....	30
3.2 Empowerment Theory.....	31
3.3 Sen and Nussbaum's Capability Approaches.....	33
3.4 Human Rights Based Approach.....	36
4.0 Research Methodology.....	37
4.1 Research Design.....	37
4.2 Sampling Design.....	38
4.3 Data Collection Tools.....	39
4.4 Data Collection Techniques.....	39
4.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Tools.....	41
4.6 Data Analysis.....	42
4.7 Ethical Considerations.....	42
4.8 Study Limitations .....	43

5.0 Study Findings and Analysis.....	44
5.1 To investigate causes and effects of child marriage.....	44
5.1.2 Discussion and Analysis.....	47
5.2 Empowerment strategies used by the organization to empower a girl child.....	48
5.2.1 Discussion and Analysis.....	50
5.3 Benefits and importance of Empowerment.....	51
5.3.1 Discussion and Analysis.....	53
5.4 Challenges affecting the promotion of girls’ rights against child marriage.....	53
5.4.1 Discussion and Findings.....	55
6.0 Conclusion.....	57
7.0 Recommendation to Policy Makers.....	58
8.0 References.....	59
9.0 Appendices.....	60

## **1.0 Chapter One: Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**



Child marriage is a global challenge which is mostly widespread in Africa and southern Asia (Boehmer and Raj, 2013). The UNCRC, defines a child as any person below the age of 18<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, any marriage that involves any person below the age of 18 is referred to as child marriage and it affects both girls and boys (Asrari, 2015). However, more girls than boys are affected by this practice (Birech, 2013). According to the World Policy Analysis Centre (2015, p. 1) “UNICEF estimates that nearly five times more girls are married before the age of 18 than boys. Approximately 720 million women alive today were married as children, including an estimated 250 million who were married before the age of 15”.

Child marriage not only infringes upon a girl child’s basic rights but also robs her of her innocence emotional, social, educational and economic capabilities to contribute to her own personal development as well as national development (UNFPA, 2016). Additionally, the practice is not only an infringement of basic rights but, it is also a barrier to educational opportunities for girls and achievement of gender equality (McCleary-Sills and Parsons 2014). Besides that, child marriage substantiates discrimination against women and gender inequality in the areas where it is practiced. Above all, it exposes a girl child to other forms of sexual abuses, harmful cultural practices and other degrading treatments (Equality Now, 2014). There are many factors that lead to child marriages and they are complex (ibid). However, most of them stem from issues of gender discrimination and cultural and religious practices, among others (Asrari, 2015).

Considering the fact that child marriage is a violation of human rights (Population Council, 2005), international, regional and national legislations have been put in place to eradicate child marriage (International Federation of Medical Students Association, 2014). The UNCRC and CEDAW are two UN treaties that have a direct impact on eradicating child marriage. Notwithstanding that child marriage is not mentioned in the UNCRC, “the convention contains a provision calling for the abolishment of traditional practices” (UNICEF, 2008, p.2). The UNCRC articles also gives guidelines on the rights that the child has and what must be done to ensure that the child is protected from harm. The outlined CRC principles and rights are very significant towards preventing and ending the practice of child marriage (ibid).

Child marriage is therefore, a child rights issue which inhibits the promotion of life, survival and development, participation and best interest of the child as well as non-discrimination of a girl child. It is in regards to this that Edmeades, Gynair and Hayes (2014) state that empowering a girl with education, economic support, information and skills is an approach to stop the practice of child marriage.

## 1.2 Background

### 1.2.1 *Understanding Child Marriage from a Global and Zambian Context*

#### *Global Context*

Child marriage is a global problem cutting across continents, countries, religions and cultures and it affects both developing and non-developing counties (World Vision, 2016). Nonetheless, sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia are the two continents worst affected by this harmful practice (Boehmer and Raj, 2013). Hodgkinson (2016:11) asserts that “50% of the girls will be married before 18 in South Asia with Africa having 40%”. Even more, Anand and Singh

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<sup>1</sup> UNCRC [www.ochrc.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx](http://www.ochrc.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx)

(2015, p.1) state that “South Asia alone is home to nearly half of all the child marriages in the world (42%) and most shockingly, every third child marriage in the world takes place in India”. Globally “1 in 3 girls will marry by 18 and 1 in 9 will marry by 15 equating to 39,000 children being married every day” according to (Hodgkinson, 2016:11). ICRW<sup>2</sup> (2013) reported that 67 million women between the ages of 20 and 24 were married off before they attained the age of 18 years in 2010. According to the calculations by Girls Not Brides (2014), 280 million girls alive today are at risk of becoming child brides by the age of 18 thus increasing the total number of women who are former child brides from around 700 million to 950 million by 2030 and with an overwhelming 1.2 billion by 2050. Nevertheless, considering mitigation factors been implemented and continual progress of desired results, child brides will decline around 22% by 2030 and 18% by 2050.

Noting that child marriage is affecting all continents, it is imperative to factor in that “certain social contexts are at increased risk for this phenomenon. Studies consistently show that marriage of minor-aged girls is more likely to occur in rural and impoverished areas with low access to health care and education” according to (Boehmer and Raj, 2013, p.537). Thus, the risk of child marriage varies across countries, cultures and communities inter-alia. Similarly, the reasons or causes that lead to child marriages are various and vary across regions, communities and from one country to another (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Most studies conducted on the causes of child marriage have revealed that child marriage is as a result of poverty, harm cultural and traditional practices, insufficient laws to protect a girl child, gender inequality and low literacy level among others (Birech 2013, Fernandes 2013, Girls Not Brides 2015 and Okonofua 2013).

Child marriage has detrimental effects on a girl child and its associated with lower wealth and education attainment as it deprives girls of their right to education (Male and Wodon, 2016). In addition, it perpetuates the cycle of poverty, makes girls to be vulnerable and increases their risks to violence and vices such as discrimination, sexual, physical and emotional abuse inter-alia. Furthermore, it poses as a health risk to the girl child as it exposes them to teenage pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infection, child birth complications such as fistula among others (ibid and Population Council, 2017).

### *Zambian Context*

Zambia is a land locked country in Southern Africa with a population of over 15 million people and over 70 ethnic groupings with diverse tradition and culture and is divided into 10 provinces. The names of the provinces are Lusaka (South-Centrally located), Central, Southern, Western, North-Western, Copperbelt (North-Centrally located), Northern, Luapula (North-East located), Eastern and Muchinga (located in the most north of the country).

When it comes to child marriages, Zambia is one of the hotspots in the world with a ranking of 16<sup>th</sup> in the world (World Vision, 2015). Additionally, 42% of Zambia women were child brides by the time they reached the age of 18 years and 9% out of the 42% were married before the age of 15 (Plan International Zambia, 2016 and UNICEF, 2015). According to a report by PSAf (2014, p. 6) “Zambia is the third highest country in the SADC region with child marriage”. Out of 10 regions in the country, Muchinga, Northern and some parts of the Copperbelt provinces are the hotspots of child marriage in the country has reported by Population Council (2017).

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<sup>2</sup> International Centre for Research on Women.

Similarly, to the global context, child marriage in Zambia affects more girls than boys. The ZDHS (2013/2014, p. 56) indicates that “16.5% of the girls between 15 and 19 are married while 0.4% are cohabiting against 1.0% of boys within the same age group married and 0.1% cohabiting”.

Fischer Mann and Quigley (2015) describes different kinds of marriages that exist in the country. The traditional marriage also known as the ideal marriage is the one that is socially accepted and follows standard procedure where consent is sought from the parents and bride price is paid. The reasons behind this could be economical gains, to perverse the family’s honour or cultural factors related to the beliefs held by the girl’s parents . The second type is the self –decided or peer marriage where consent is not sought nor approved and in most cases, the child bride and her partner elope to live as a married couple. Thirdly, responsibility based marriage is also practiced in Zambia. This type is mostly as result of a girl child falling pregnant before marriage hence, parents decide to marry her off to the man responsible to avoid bringing shame to the family name. This type of marriage is allowed in Zambia’s customary law and can be presided over by a traditional leader of that particular community. Last but not the least, the transactional marriage is socially disapproved as it entails an elderly man marrying a girl child for economic reasons however, it is still practiced. Mostly, this kind of marriage is always polygamous in nature and the girl child might become the third or fourth wife. The transactional marriage is also referred to as the intergenerational marriage (Population Council, 2017). This type of marriage is viewed as a way of escaping poverty as the girl’s family gains economically through payment of bride price and other financial assistance rendered to the girl’s family through the entire marriage period

PSAf<sup>3</sup> (2014) lists poverty, limited access to formal education, lack of information and cultural beliefs and practices as the main cause of child marriage in the country. These causes and effects of child marriage in Zambia are similar to those at global level.

### 1.3 Legal Framework and Policies Addressing Child Marriage

This chapter focused on the laws, and policies at global, regional and national that aim at addressing the issue of child marriage.

#### 1.3.1 International Instruments

Zambia is a signatory and ratified international treaties that protect the welfare and rights of a child. The UNCRC and CEDAW are two conventions that explicitly address child marriage. Notwithstanding that CRC does not specifically prohibit child marriage, it is an important legal instrument has its clearly outlines the rights that every child has and these rights are linked to child marriage (Birech, 2013). Since child marriage is a violation of child rights, the CRC becomes a perfect tool instrument to combat child marriages. In the similar manner, the CEDAW despite a women’s convention advocates equal rights for both women and girls across all age groups. Additionally, it also abolishes child marriages (Alwis-de-Silva, 2008).

#### *UNCRC*

The following are some of the articles and provisions in the UNCRC which are instrumental in protecting a girl child from child marriage.

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<sup>3</sup> PSAf Panos Institute Southern Africa

Article 1: A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years<sup>4</sup>. This entails that any person below the age of 18 years is still a child and has not yet attained the legal marriage age and as such, needs to enjoy her childhood and not rushed into marriage. This is due to the fact that marriage before the age of 18 years is a human rights and health violation not forgetting the violation of educational opportunities for the victim (Raj, 2010). As such, member states to the treaty have a mandate to ensure that every girl child is protected from the practice by domesticating the convention.

Article 2: A child shall be protected from all forms of discrimination irrespective of the child's religion, race, language, colour, sex, ethnic, national, disability and social status among others<sup>5</sup>. This article is significant in eliminating child marriage as a girl child should have the same opportunities accorded to a boy child and should not be viewed as a commodity. Child marriage can be seen as a contributing as well as a causal factor of gender inequality and social re-enforcement on gender roles that disadvantage a girl child (Akyeampong, Delprato and Dunne). According to Raj (2010, p. 931) "child marriage is gender inequality often characterized at least in part, by lower access to education and employment opportunities for females relative to males". By ensuring a girl child's protection from discrimination, child marriage can be eliminated.

Article 3: The best interest of the child shall be considered in all issues pertaining to children<sup>6</sup>. In all decisions made about children, their best interest should be of paramount importance. Child marriage "limits knowledge skills, resources, mobility and autonomy" according to Anad and Singh (2015, p.1) and as such, what is best for the child should be considered by the parents before marrying off their girl child. The member states who are the duty bearers have an obligation to ensure that when it comes to the practice of child marriage, the best interest of the child must always take precedence.

Article 6: The rights to survival and development shall have maximum support<sup>7</sup>. Child marriage affects a child 's physical, mental and social development and denies them access to health and education which are pillars of survival (Okonofua, 2013). This provision requires member states to put in measures to ensure that children survive their childhood and grow into health adults with full potential and development in all aspects of life. Thus said, member states to the CRC have a mandate to combat child marriage as it is a hindrance to survival and development of the child.

Article 12: A child who is capable to make independent shall have the right to air their his/her views in matters affecting them<sup>8</sup>. Just like adults have right to make meaningful independent decisions, children also have this right. Children are supposed to participate in issues that affect them and have a right to their own point of views. Most cases of child marriages are forced where a child is coerced into the marriage for economic gains. According to Glinski, Stoebenau and Warner (2014, p.2) "when girls are forced to marry, they are deprived of the ability to make an informed choice about a life-altering decision". Allowing and encouraging a girl child to

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<sup>4</sup> UNCRRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> UNCRRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> UNCRRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> UNCRRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> UNCRRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

speak for herself against child marriage is very vital as she is the one who is going to be affected by the phenomenon before it spirals to affect national and lastly global development.

Article 24: Right and access to health, health information and services and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices<sup>9</sup>. Lack of access to adequate health service is a contributing factor to child marriage. In some communities especially the ones that are remote, they experience high levels of poverty with no adequate health care and services. In such communities, the prevalence of child pregnancy is high which contributes to the practice of child marriage as families marry off their pregnant girl children to avoid bringing shame upon the family name (Fischer, et al, 2015). McCleary-Sills and Parsons (2014, p.2) state that “girls who marry before the age of 18 years are at greater risk of poor health outcomes including HIV and other sexually transmitted infections”. Additionally, Raj (2010, p.931) also states that “girls marrying as minors are at substantially greater risk for maternal and child morbidity and mortality as well as experience pregnancy complications”. Furthermore, Okonofua (2013, p 9) also reports that “child marriage has the highest adolescent fertility and carries additional health risk such as cancer and obstetrics fistula”. Therefore, every member state has to ensure that a girl child has access to health facilities and services to reduce child marriage. According to Raj (2010, p.934) “reducing rates of child marriage and its health impact will require legislation and legislative enforcements against the practice combined with community-level and social change approaches”.

Article 27: “Right to a standard of living adequate enough for a child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development”<sup>10</sup>. Child marriage has profound consequences on the mental, emotional, physical and social welfare of a girl child (Anand and Singh 2015) and girls who marry while still children are socially, physically and emotionally disadvantaged (Okonofua, 2013). Thus, every member has an obligation to ensure that children have access to the above right and that they are protected from social, physical, spiritual and mental abuse. Article 28 and 29: Right to equal education and Goals of education<sup>11</sup>. All children have the right to primary education which should be free. The education that a girl child acquires must enable her to develop to her full potential and capability and enhance her talents as a result of the empowerment from education. In turn, the girl child will significantly contribute to the development of the community, will understand her rights as well respect other people’s human rights. Access to education by a girl child is vital to reducing the prevalence of child marriage. McCleary-Sills and Parsons (2014, p.2) report that “lack of education can be both a risk factor for an outcome of child marriage”. Additionally, a girl child with no education is likely to get married while still a child (ibid). Furthermore, the practice of child marriage has “negative impacts on education attainment and literacy” according to (Nguyen et al, 2015, p.54).

### *CEDAW*

The following article and provision in the CEDAW is very instrumental in protecting a girl child from child marriage.

Article 16 (2) The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriage in an official registry compulsory<sup>12</sup>. It is the

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<sup>9</sup> UNCRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> UNCRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> UNCRC [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> CEDAW <http://www.ohvhr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>



responsibility of every member state to ensure that the convention is domesticated and that child marriage is abolished by setting a legal age of 18 years as the minimum age of marriage. It is important that betrothal and marriage of a child is abolished as it has “negative impact on a wide range of developmental outcomes and also has an impact on the resources available to girls” according to Nguyen et al (2015, p.55).

### 1.3.2 Regional Laws

One of the regional treaties that is instrumental in shaping the welfare of children in Africa and in protecting their rights is the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of which Zambia is a signatory. Most of the articles and provisions in the ACRWC correspond to the UNCRC and CEDAW. The definition of a child according to the ACRWC is in line with the universally accepted definition. It also takes into consideration the best interest of the child, non-discriminations and survival and development of the child. Nonetheless, Article 21 of the charter stipulates regulations against child marriage.

Article 21: Protection against Harmful social and Cultural Practices<sup>13</sup> (1) state parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular (a) those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child and (b) those customs and practices that discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or status. (2) Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.

### 1.3.3 National Laws

Zambia has a law that governs the solemnization of marriage. This law which is known as the Marriage Act Chapter 50 of the laws of Zambia, contains articles and provisions that can be used to eliminate child marriage. The legal age for marriage without consent in the country is 21 years. Article 17 of the Act states that “If either party to an intended marriage, not being a widower or widow, is under twenty-one years of age, the written consent of the father, or if he dead or of unsound mind or absent from Zambia, of the mother, or if both be dead or of unsound mind or absent from Zambia, of the guardian of such party shall be produced and shall be annexed to the affidavit [...]”<sup>14</sup>. What this entails that any marriage involving a spouse who is below 21 years will not take place without written consent from either parent or guardian. Additionally, article 33 (1) of the same Act explicitly talks about child marriage. It states that “a marriage between persons on either of whom is under the age of sixteen years shall be void”<sup>15</sup>. This article therefore, forbids marriage if either party is below the age of 16. Noting that most victims of child marriages are girls, this article may be translated as saying that any union to a girl who has not yet attained the age of 16 is illegal.

Article 266 of the constitution of the Government of Zambia (Amendment) of 2016 defines a child as a person who attained or is below the age of 18<sup>16</sup>. Domesticating the UNCRC is very important for the country to prevent and end child marriage.

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<sup>14</sup> Marriage Act Chapter 50 of Zambia <http://www.parliament.gov.zm/files/acts/>

<sup>15</sup> Marriage Act Chapter 50 of Zambia <http://www.parliament.gov.zm/files/acts/marriage>

<sup>16</sup> Constitution of Zambia (Amendment) [No. 2 of 2016

<http://www.parliament.gov.zm/sites/default/files/documents/acts/Constitution%20of%20Zambia%20Act%20016%200.pdf>.

### 1.3.3.1 Conflicting Issues in the Zambian Legal Context

Despite Zambia been a signatory to International laws protecting the rights of a child and having ratified the same treaties, the country has not done much to domesticate them into national laws. A lot of discrepancies exist between the Zambian laws and the International instruments when it comes to defining who a child is. For instance, the Marriage Act of Zambia defines a child has someone who is below 16 years of age. According to article 33 (1) a marriage between persons either of whom is under the age of sixteen years shall be void<sup>17</sup>. Meanwhile, article 17 of the same Act states that any union if either party is below 21 years of age requires written consent from a parent or guardian<sup>18</sup>. This entails that any union involving a girl who is above the age of 16 but below the age of 21 years will be considered legal provided that, there is consent written and signed consent from either parent or guardian.

Furthermore, the Education Act of 2011 and the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act of 2011 also have conflicting definitions of a child from that of the universally accepted definition. According to the Act, a child is any person below the age of 16 years. Nonetheless, the Amended Constitution of 2016 defines a child as someone below the age of 18 years.

Similar to the conflicting definitions of a child between the national laws and the international instruments, conflict also exists between the Zambian legal systems. The country is governed by two legal systems are the Statutory and Customary laws. The Statutory laws are the written laws in the constitution and are enshrined in the penal code. On the other hand, the customary is the unwritten law that is passed down from one generation to the other. This is the law that governs culture and tradition. The Zambian NGP (2014, p.iv) defines customary laws as “laws based on tradition and culture and maybe influenced by public opinion in a particular society about standards governing behaviour or what society considers as a norm”.

The existence of these two legal systems is considered to be a major drawback towards the fight against child marriages in Zambia according to NSECM in Zambia (2015). This is because of the of the differing definitions of a who a child is as well as what child marriage is not forgetting the consent age of marriage.

The customary law according to the NGP (2014, p.8) “provides attainment of puberty as minimum criteria for marriage for the girls while the statutory law provides a minimum of 21 years with parental consent for marriages of persons below the minimum age”. This customary minimal age for marriage conflicts with universal definition of child marriage and is “[...]therefore challenging for the judicial process as well as the law enforcement agencies to punish and deter perpetrators of child marriage” (ibid).

According to the Zambian custom, any girl who has attained puberty is no longer considered to be a child. She is deemed to be a woman thus, ready for marriage. This customary law definition of a child is a major challenging factor to the enforcement of the universal legal definition of a child in the fight, against child marriage. It is important to note that in most cases, the customary

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<sup>17</sup> Marriage Act Chapter 50 of Zambia <http://www.parliament.gov.zm/files/acts/marriage>

<sup>18</sup> Marriage Act Chapter 50 of Zambia <http://www.parliament.gov.zm/files/acts/marriage>

law prevails over the statutory law. According to NSECM in Zambia, (2015, p.22) “the majority of Zambians especially those living in rural areas follow the customary law because it is the legal system which they are familiar with and to which they have access to”. Furthermore, “over 70 percent of marriages in Zambia are solemnised under the customary law” according to NGP, (2014, p.8).

Notwithstanding the discrepancies in the Zambian legal system, measures are being set up to rectify these discrepancies. Thus said, the government of the Republic of Zambia in partnership with various stakeholders such as the NGOs and traditional leaders is working towards harmonizing the two legal system to ensure that they speak the same language. There is need to involve traditional leaders as one of the major stakeholders in order to harmonize the two legal systems. This is because they are the custodians of culture and tradition and have more authority than the government when it comes societal and cultural norms related issues.

Similarly, measures to harmonize the definition of the child with that of the universal definition are in progress. Currently, there is a proposed Bill of Marriage of 2015 which is before the Zambian Parliament. According to Plan International Zambia (2016, p.5) the proposed Marriage Bill (2015) if enacted, will ensure that “all marriages will have to be registered; child marriage will be proscribed and minimum age of 18 set; marriages concluded without the free and informed consent of the spouses will be void and registrars will be liable for committing an offence if they register marriages where a party is aged below 18 years”.

### 1.3.4 International Policies and Development Goals

Apart from the international laws, there are also global partnerships, policies and developmental goals that Zambia that aims eradicating the practice of child marriage globally.

#### *Sustainable Development Goals*

The SDGs whose process started in 2012 were approved in September 2015 by the UN General Assembly to continue with the momentum produced by the MDGs and fit into a global developmental framework beyond 2015. The SDGs are divided into 17 development goals. Five of the SDGs have an impact on contributing to the reduction of child marriage by 2030. Nonetheless, its goal number five that has a direction mention of the elimination of child marriage.

*Goal One* End poverty in all its forms everywhere<sup>19</sup>. Poverty has been cited to be one of the root causes of child marriage and that the practice of child marriage contributes to the cycle of poverty (IFMSA<sup>20</sup> 2014, Okonofua 2013, USAID 2012). Even more, child marriage and poverty are closely associated as they go “hand in hand and that child marriage occurs more readily in poorer families” as reported by IFMSA (2014, p.1). Similarly, McCleary-Sills and Parsons quoting from ICRW<sup>21</sup> 2007, (2014, p.1) state that “girls living in poorer households are almost twice likely to marry before the age of 18, compared with girls in higher-income households”. Furthermore, Birech (2013:98) states that “where there is acute poverty, a young girl may be seen as an economic burden, when purchased will relieve the family financially and socially”. Therefore, tackling the issue of poverty is vital to the eradication of child marriage.

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<sup>19</sup> UN://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

<sup>20</sup> International Federation of Medical Students Association

<sup>21</sup> ICWR International Centre on Research for Women



*Goal Two Zero hunger*<sup>22</sup> achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity which are related to poverty are also causes and consequences of child marriage. Many times, girls from families that are experiencing hunger and food insecurity, will be married off to reduce the number of mouths to feed according to World Vision, 2016. Additionally, “child brides are more likely to suffer from malnutrition compared with girls who marry later in life and the children they have are more likely to die due to low birth weights” (ibid, p.8). Achieving the above goal will lead to reduction of child marriage as girls will not be married off to mitigate hunger by their families. Furthermore, Girls Not Brides (2016, p.2) reports that “programmes that advocate for improved land titling and inheritance rights and educate on land policies and laws can mitigate a key driver of child marriage by decreasing girls’ dependence on men for key resources”.

*Goal Three Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*<sup>23</sup>. According Boehmer and Raj (2013, p.538) “girl child marriage not only occurs among the most vulnerable girls, but it also compromises the health of this vulnerable population”. Besides, Birech (2013, p.100) reports that “studies have shown that married girls are more likely to die from childbirth due to various reasons such as postpartum, haemorrhage, HIV infection, malaria and obstructed labour”. Furthermore, not only does child marriage cause “adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes but can also be associated with poor mental health, including feelings of isolation, depression, and suicidal thoughts and behaviours that can also contribute to poor health outcomes for future generations” according to Girls Not Brides (2016, p.1). This goes on to show that child marriage not only perpetuates the cycle of poverty and food insecurity but also has detrimental health consequences on a girl child. Therefore, achieving this SDG goal will contribute to reduction of child pregnancies as well as maternal, child and infant mortality rates among other things.

*Goal Four Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*<sup>24</sup> The fourth SDG aims at achieving eliminating gender disparities in education, ensure equal access to all levels of education, ensure that boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education inter-alia<sup>25</sup>. Child marriage significantly contributes to “low access to education and employment opportunities for females relative to males” as reported by (Raj, 2010, p.931). It also lessens the progress of girl child enrolment and completion of primary school which is a universal child right (Akyeampong et al. 2016). Additionally, there is low educational attainment as well as low literacy levels in societies that have high prevalence rates of child marriage (Nguyen et al. 2016). Furthermore, “child marriage clearly has an impact on the resources available to girls, since girls marrying early often drop out of school” (ibid, p.55). Similarly, it also leads to high rates of school drop-outs as “girls are often forced to terminate their education” as reported by (USAID, 2012, p.3). Achieving inclusive and quality education will empower educationally, economically and socially subsequently contributing to the reduction on the practice of child marriage (Mc-Cleary-Sills and Parsons 2014, Nguyen et al. 2016, Raj, 2010).

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<sup>22</sup> UN <http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

<sup>23</sup> UN <http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

<sup>24</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>25</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

*Goal Five* Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls<sup>26</sup>. According to McCleary-Sills and Parsons (2014, p.1) “child marriage is a fundamental barrier to the achievement of international commitments for development and gender equality” while Raj (2010, p.931) also states that “child marriage is gender inequality”. Additionally, it disadvantages a girl child over a boy girl in many aspects of life such as education, economic independence, social and physical developments among others (Anand and Singh 2015).

The first target of the goal is to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere<sup>27</sup>. The practice of child marriage is “driven by social norms and expectations and by gendered discrimination that devalues women and girls and their right to make choices.” (McCleary-Sills and Parsons 2014, p.2). Eliminating discrimination against girls will enable the girl child to be accorded the same opportunities as a boy child, will not be viewed as a commodity to be married off for economic gains and will be treated in a dignified manner thus, eliminating the practice of child marriage.

The second target aims to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls<sup>28</sup>. Apart from child marriage been a gender inequality and discrimination practice, it is also a form of sexual, emotional and physical violence against a girl child (Anand and Singh, 2015). Due to the fact most girls leave their families when they marry to live with their husbands, they are more likely to be exposed to abuse by both their husbands and in-laws<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, young wives are more at risk of being subjected to physical and sexual domestic violence<sup>30</sup>.

Another target towards achievement of the goal is to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage<sup>31</sup>. The practice of child marriage is harmful because it violates the human rights of a girl child, discriminates her, limits her education attainment and participation in decision making not forgetting rendering her health complications (Raj 2010, Anand and Singh 2015, McCleary-Sills and Parsons 2014, Boehmer and Raj 2013, Birech 2013). Child marriage is harmful practice that has detrimental effects on a girl child physically, emotionally and eliminating harmful practices such as initiation ceremony, marrying off a girl for economic gains will contribute to preventing and ending child marriage.

It is therefore, important to ensure that girls are empowered by awarding them the same equal social status, equal educational, physical, economic and emotional developmental capabilities as boys to ensure that the fight against child marriages is achieved.

### 1.3.5 Regional Campaigns

In November 2015, an African Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage took place in Lusaka, Zambia. This summit was organized and spearheaded by the AU Commission in collaboration with the Zambian government. The purpose was to enhance awareness of the effects of child marriage and accelerate its end<sup>32</sup>. Participants also shared good practices and challenges

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<sup>26</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>27</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>28</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>29</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>30</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>31</sup> UN <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

<sup>32</sup> Population Reference Bureau <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2015/child-marriage-zambia-event.aspx>.

encountered on ending child marriage at both national, regional and international level<sup>33</sup>. Some of the key messages were that child marriage is a human right violations and lessens the progress towards achieving of SDGs such as eliminating poverty, increasing educational attainment, promoting gender equality and empowering girls and women<sup>34</sup>. During the summit, AU member states agreed to end child marriage by 2030 which is in line with the SDGs.

### 1.3.6 National Policies and Campaigns on Ending Child Marriage

One of the campaigns on ending child marriage in the country is the *National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage in Zambia 2016-2021*. This strategy was launched in 2013 after a directive from the cabinet with a goal to address child marriages and its challenges on the respect of human rights. (NSECM<sup>35</sup> in Zambia, 2016). The strategy envisions the country to be child marriage free by 2030 and has a goal of achieving a 40% reduction in child marriage by 2021. Some of the aims of the strategy are facilitate positive change in prevailing negative attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and practices in order to reduce the incidence of child marriage, develop and review policies and legislations to ensure that there is consistent application and intervention of child related interventions among others<sup>36</sup>.

Another policy that is very instrumental in addressing the problem of child marriage in Zambia is the National Gender policy. The NGP (2014, p.7) defines child marriage “as marriage of children below the age of 18 years” and this definition is in accordance with the universally accepted definition

### 1.3.7 Organizations and Actors Working Towards Ending Child Marriage

There are a number of NGOs both local and international, UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNPFA that are in partnership with the government of Zambia to prevent and eliminate child marriage and ensuring that 2030 SDGs are met and that the country is child marriage free by then. All these coordinated efforts from civil society actors and the government which is the primary duty bearer do not exclude secondary duty bearers who are the traditional leaders and other community members such as parents. One example of an international NGO that is working in partnership with the government of the Republic of Zambia to promote children’s rights and end child marriage is Plan International Zambia.

#### *What is Plan International Zambia?*

Plan International Zambia is part of Plan International which is a global development and humanitarian NGO that was founded in 1937 to advance children’s rights and equality for girls and is active in 71 countries<sup>37</sup>. Plan International has been in Zambia since 1996 and is helping children access their right to education, health and economic empowerment<sup>38</sup>. The organization

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<sup>33</sup> Gender Links <http://genderlinks.org.za/barometer-newsletter/african-girls-summit-on-ending-child-marriage-2015-10-20/>.

<sup>34</sup> Population Reference Bureau <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2015/child-marriage-zambia-event.aspx>.

<sup>35</sup> National Strategy to End Child Marriage in Zambia

<sup>36</sup> Plan International <https://plan-international.org/news/2015-12-04-african-leaders-agree-end-child-marriage-2030>.

<sup>37</sup> Plan International <https://plan-international.org/about-plan-international>.

<sup>38</sup> Plan International Zambia <https://plan-international.org/zambia/where-we-work-zambia>.

works to increase access to quality health services such as improved access to sexual reproductive health information and services, ensure quality education for both girls and boys such as increasing access to quality primary education. It also improves the economic status such as improving the economic status of youths and caregivers. Last but not the least, it is committed ending violence against children through reducing violence and abuse against children both at home and school and also increasing their participation in issues that affect them. The organization is present in three of Zambia's provinces which are the Eastern, Central and the Luapula which is on the North-Eastern part of the country.

## 1.4 Concept Definition

### *Child*

According to the UNCRC article 1 a child is defined as any person who is below the age of 18. Thus it entails that any human being who has not yet attained the age of 18 is considered to be a child. My working definition of a child will therefore be the universally accepted definition. A girl child will refer to any female who has not attained the age of 18 years.

### *Child Bride*

Child Bride is defined as “a young girl married to an older man” according Bolzendahl (2016, p.261). My working definition of child bride in this report is a married girl who is below 18 years or was married before reaching 18 years of age.

### *Child Marriage*

The SADC PF (2016, p.29) defines child marriage as “a statutory or customary union in which one party is a child or both parties are children”. The other definition of child marriage is “marriage that takes place before one or both spouses has reached adulthood” as defined by UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health (2012, p.12). For the purpose of my research, child marriage will be defined as statutory or customary union involving a girl who has not yet attained the age of 18 years.

### *Empowerment*

There are many definitions of empowerment and all of them are similar. Maschi (2015, p.152) views “empowerment as a theoretical framework that helps people to gain or take control over their live. My working definition of empowerment is the process by one is given access to resources that will enable her have control over her life and enabled to make independent decisions that will contribute to her personal growth and development and become an active, meaningful member of the community.

### *UNCRC Principles*

These are the guiding principles of the UNCRC and they are the right to participate, right to life, survival and development, non-discrimination and the best interest of the child.

### *Right Holders*

A right holder is any human being who has the power to claim his or her rights from the duty bearers. For the purpose of this research, a right holder will mean any girl below the age of 18.

### Duty Bearers

Duty bearers are structures or systems that have obligations to make rights accessible to right holders. There are primary and secondary duty bearers. For the purpose of this research, primary duty bearers will mean the government of the Republic of Zambia as a member state to the UNCRC and CEDAW. Secondary duty bearers will mean Plan International as an organization providing services to the right holders and in its capacity as a key stakeholder in preventing and ending child marriage.

### Community Development Facilitator

For the purpose of this study, a community development facilitator will mean a Plan Zambia staff who is community based and works with the community members.

### Community Crime Protection Unit

These are community volunteers under Plan International Zambia who are trained in child rights and Zambian legal system and serve as community law advisors.

### Human Rights Based Approach

It is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights<sup>39</sup>. For the purpose of this study, human rights based approach will mean a conceptual framework for development that is focused on promoting the rights of a child. Human rights based approach and child rights based approach will be used inter-changeably.

## 1.5 Problem Statement

Child marriage continues to remain as one of the hideous child rights violations and social injustice issues of all time as its health, educational, economic, personal and social development consequences are manifold (Okonofua, 2013). It is caused by many factors and it subsequently affects the health development of its victims. It is therefore, a practice that is deemed to be harmful to not only the victims but also at national and global level. Due to child marriage been a serious violation of child rights, many countries with support from UN agencies and other international NGOs have made it law, mandate and policy to put in measures in order to end the practice.

Zambia is one of the countries that has been implementing policies and programmes to eradicate the practice of child marriage. This is because the prevalence of child marriage in the country is high and as such, the country is considered to be one of the hotspots of child marriage at a global level. The Zambian government in partnership with UN agencies and NGOs both international and national, FBOs and CBOs have been coordinating efforts to prevent and eliminate the practice of child marriage.

Girls Not Brides developed a theory of change to show how various strategies or approaches can be used to end marriage. One of those strategies is empowerment of girls in order to give them opportunities to life skills, participate in the efforts of ending marriage and be able to exercise their rights thus supporting them in becoming agents of change.

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<sup>39</sup> HRBA Portal <https://hrbaportal.org/the-human-rights-based-approach-to-development-cooperation-towards-a-common-understanding-among-un-agences>

It is for the above reason that the researcher deemed it important to investigate and analyse the significance of empowering a girl child as a strategy to prevent and end marriage especially that the country is aiming at achieving “a 40% reduction in child marriage by 2021” (NSECM in Zambia, 2014, p. viii) as well as envisioning “a Zambia free from child by 2030” (ibid, p. viii).

### 1.5.1 Relevance of the Study and relation to Social Work

The relevancy of the study is not limited only to governmental and NGO programme implementation but also to the academic study of social work and human rights. It will serve as a foundation for social workers in academics to further investigate child marriage as a social problem and child rights violation.

In the view of the aforementioned, empowering a girl child is very vital for her well-being. The United Nations Foundation (2015) outlines five reasons as to why it matters to empower a girl child. The first reason been that it is the right of every girl child to empowered. A girl child needs to be empowered as means to eliminate discriminations against her. The second reason is that empowering girls results in healthier and happier families while the third is that girl empowerment helps to have the cycle of poverty that perpetuates their social injustice and inequality broken. In addition, when girls are accorded an opportunity to get education, access health services, the results will be higher income, economic independence and making meaningful independent decisions thus disintegrating the cycle of poverty. The fourth reason as to why a girl child should be empowered is the fact that it leads to strong economies that contribute to the country’s Gross Domestic Product and lastly, it is the right thing to do. This means that empowering a girl child does not develop a girl child but effectually, spiralling over to familial, community, national development and eventually to regional and global development.

The findings of the study will provide data on how Zambia is progressing towards achievement of one of the SDGs, regional goal of ending child marriage by 2030 under the AU goals as well as the country’s goal of recording a reduction in child marriage of 40% by 2021. Its findings will also reveal whether some of the intervention strategies of which one of them is empowerment are contributing towards achievement of the 2021 and 2030 goals.

As alluded in the above paragraphs, child marriage is a big global social problem that needs intervention. It not only affects the victim who is a girl child and her offspring but also has effects on familial, societal and finally global development. It is a form of child abuse because it is a form of sexual, psychological, physical and emotional maltreatment. Therefore, social workers need to be concerned about the practice. Rock in Healy and Link (2012, p. 145) writes that “by virtue of its mandate, the social work profession must be concerned about child abuse and neglect, including the risk factors, and the effects of abuse on children, families and communities”. Thus said, social workers should care about the practice of child marriage and its impact on children.

### 1.5.2 Research Aims

The overall aim of this study was to investigate and analyse the significance of empowering a girl child as a strategy towards preventing and ending child marriage. The study focused on Plan International Zambia which is a child rights advocacy organization working to promote



the rights of children and ensuring that a girl child is enabled to achieve her full potential. The study area was Chamuka community in Chibombo District of the Central Planning Unit of the organization. The researcher targeted three groups of respondents. The first being the rights holders who in this case are the girls that are beneficiaries of Plan Zambia's programmes. The second group consisted of CCPUs who are community members trained in child rights. Finally, the study also focused on Plan Zambia's members of staff who are secondary duty bearers.

#### 1.5.2.1 Specific Aims

The following were the specific aims of the study:

- ✓ To investigate and analyse the causes of child marriage.
- ✓ To investigate and analyse the empowerment strategies used by the organization to empower a girl child.
- ✓ To investigate and analyse the benefits and importance of empowering a girl child as a strategy towards preventing and ending child marriage.
- ✓ To examine and analyse the challenges affecting the fight against child marriage.

#### 1.5.3 Research Questions

The following were the research questions that guided the study:

- ✓ What are the nature of child marriage?
- ✓ What are the strategies that the organization is using to empower a girl child?
- ✓ What is the importance of empowering a girl child and what are the benefits of empowerment on preventing and ending child marriage?
- ✓ What are the challenges affecting the promotion of girls' rights towards preventing and ending child marriage?

## 2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review

The structure of the reviewed previous studies was according to the specific aims of the study.

### 2.1 To investigate and analyse the causes and effects of child marriage

A lot of studies have been conducted both in Zambia and across the globe on the causes of child marriage and its effects on the wellbeing of the child, nation and how child marriage contributes to the cycle of poverty and gender inequality. Fischer et al (2015) conducted a study in six districts of Zambia for UNICEF. The purpose of the study was to find out the causes of child marriage, traditions and environmental factors that promote the practice as well as the extent of the practice in those six districts. The six districts where the study was conducted are Lusaka, Katete, Mufurila, Luwingu, Mwinilunga and Senanga. These districts are located in Lusaka, Eastern, Copperbelt, Luapula, North-Western and Western provinces of the country respectively. It was a qualitative study which focused on the underlying socio-economic and cultural factors that promote and sustain the practice of child marriage. The key informants were various NGOs, community members (parents) and married and unmarried boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 17.

The study revealed that economic hardships make parents and guardians to marry off their daughters even though the solution is a short-term one and that they see the practice to be an opportunity towards financial gain as they will receive bride price locally known as 'lobola'. Another finding was that in larger families, marrying off the eldest daughter provides the parents with the financial capacity to educate the younger children and more so, the boy child. The study further revealed that a girl child sees the practice of child marriage as a chance to

gain materialistically and also as a means of escaping the economic hardships existing in her family.

Hodgkinson (2016) also states that child marriage is caused by poverty and contextual economics and that, child marriage is believed to be used as a coping strategy for families living in poverty or financial insecurity and can become a means of survival” (ibid, p.20). Contextual economics has to do with income poverty, economic dependency and bride price inter-alia. World Vision International (2014, p.2) state that “poverty leads parents to withdraw their daughters from school and offer them for marriage to older men (in most cases) in exchange of payment of dowry”. This consequently perpetuates the cycle of poverty and makes child marriage to become an inter-generational practice (ibid).

Fischer et al, (2015)’s studies also revealed that there are higher rates of child marriage in rural areas compared to urban areas and that lack of access to social amenities such as entertainment and recreational facilities in rural areas, educational and health information services contribute to the prevalence of the practice. In addition, they also revealed that, the lack of education opportunities as well as funds to finance secondary school education contributes to the prevalence of the practice. Additionally, distance from home to school was also cited as a contributing factor to the practice and that, young respondents pointed out on how frustrated and despondent they were over their inability to continue or complete their education due to lack of schools within walking distance as well as lack of financial means to further their education. Due to the aforementioned, girls who have to walk long distances to school said that it was very common for girls in their situation to quit school and get married. Additionally, Male and Wodon (2016) on basic profiling of child marriage in Zambia report that girls who live in rural or remote areas and are from low socio-economic groups have a chance of marrying early than girls from urban areas.

Another cause of child marriage is the phenomenon of culture and tradition. Birech (2013, p.98) on a study about child marriage and cultural health alludes that “most studies have shown that the dominant reason for child marriage is culture” and that the practice is “rooted in socio-cultural practices and religious beliefs in many communities” according to Parsons (2015, p.12). Okonofua, 2013 further regards the cultural misconception and practice of protecting a girl’s sexuality as a cause of child marriage. In some cultures, it is considered shameful to the family for a girl to engage in sexual activities before marriage. In such communities, the virginity of a girl child is highly upheld and as such, girls are expected to preserve it. In regard to this, many parents prefer to marry off their girl child early in order to protect her purity and avoid bringing the family name to shame (Fernandes, 2013).

Furthermore, Girls Not Brides (2015) notes that in many communities, the persistence of child marriage is as a result of the tradition of marrying off girls when they reach adolescent which has been practiced for many generations. These traditions are harmful cultural practices that define the rite of passage to womanhood. The Guardian Newspaper (2015) reporting on Malawi’s legislation to ban child marriage state that a traditional ceremony in the southern part of the country is a contributing cause to child marriage. The Kusasa Fumbi is a tradition in which a girl is forced to participate cleansing of her childhood when she attains adolescent. She is then taught and prepared how to come a good wife then forced to sleep with an older man commonly called as ‘hyena’.



Gender inequality where child marriage is rooted in it is another cause of child marriage according to (Parsons et al, 2015). McCleary-Sills and Parsons, (2014, p 2) state “the practice of child marriage is driven by social norms and expectations and by gendered discrimination that devalues women and girls and their right to make choices for themselves”. Okonofua (2013, p.9) also suggests that child marriage “is driven largely by gender and social discrimination against the girl child”. Birech (2013) further alludes that the societal status and position of a woman is a critical key in child marriage. Additionally, “a girl child is seen as a burden and parents prefer to educate a boy child and marry off the girls at an early age” (ibid, p.98).

Besides the causes of child marriage, Fischer, et al (2015)’s study findings also revealed the consequences of child marriage. It was revealed that girls who marry early are at risk of health complications such as cervical cancer and those that are associated to child birth not forgetting, sexually transmitted infections as well as HIV/AIDS. It was also revealed that married girls in the study group reported having experienced some of these health issues.

Child marriage has detrimental effects on a girl child. It not only robs a girl child of her basic human rights but also has profound effects on her emotional, social, physical, and financial wellbeing (Raj, 2010). Apart from contributing to the cycle of poverty, it also slows down personal, national and global development. Anand and Singh, (2015, p.1) evidently suggest that “child marriage limits knowledge, skills, resources, mobility, autonomy and social support of young girls and those who lack this are extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and psychological and economic abuse”.

Girls that are married off young will in most cases not be able to continue with their education, be financially independent hence; the cycle of poverty continued, worsened gender inequality and consequently, the continued practice of child marriage (IFMSA<sup>40</sup>, 2014). Correspondingly, Parson et al (2015, p.18) concludes that “girls who marry early have little decision- making and power within the marital home, a greater likelihood of school dropout and illiteracy, lower labour force participation and earnings, and less control over productive household assets. Because child brides often become mothers during adolescence, they and their children are likely to experience poorer overall health and nutrition”.

Secondly, there are health complications associated with child marriage such as maternal mortality, cervical cancer, risk for sexually transmitted infection, child birth complications such as fistula and HIV/AIDS inter-alia (Birech, 2013, Nour, 2006 an Raj, 2010). Furthermore, child marriage is a violates the health rights of vulnerable girls and also compromises the health of the vulnerable population (Boehmer and Raj, 2013).

Notably, the education sector has been affected by child marriage as it leads to dropping out of school. Nguyen, Tsimpo and Wodon (2015, p. 55) state that “child marriage maybe endogenous to a girl’s education prospect” while Okonofua (2013) asserts that girls that are married as children are side-lined and disadvantaged educationally thus inhibiting them from reaching their full potential and subsequently, limiting the enjoyment of their social, economic and health opportunities. UNFPA (2012) further reports that about 60% and over of child brides who are in developing countries have no formal education.

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<sup>40</sup> International Federation of Medical Students Association

The second findings on the consequences of child marriage was the increased rates of domestic violence. According to the findings, there were many cases of domestic violence reported. The violence was inflicted upon the child brides by their much older husbands because the girls refused to perform sexual and domestic duties that were expected of them. Additionally, the study showed that there was a negative impact of child marriage on a girl's right to education as it leads to withdraw from school either voluntarily or been forced to end formal education.

## 2.2 Empowerment strategies used by the organization to empower a girl child

There has been a lot of studies that have been conducted around the globe on how to end and prevent the practice of child marriage

Lee-Rife, Malhotra, McGonagle and Warner (2011) conducted a study on solutions to end child marriage and evaluated the programmes that were implemented between 1973-2009 aimed at preventing the practice of child marriage. The main purpose of the study was to systematically review and appraise evidence which is relevant to preventing child marriage. The study which began in 2009 was a WHO initiative which was commissioned by ICRW and its aim was to identify programme interventions and strategies as well as policies that had recorded a change of measurement in attitudes and behaviours that are related to child marriage. Programmes from NGOs involved in child marriage prevention were also identified by contacting staff, online web searches, grey literature and reviewing other necessary documents. In total, more than 150 organizations with programmes related to child marriage prevention were identified. However, it was only 23 out of these more than 150 that had documented the measurement of attitude and behaviour change.

The results of the study indicated that there was an increase in the number intervention strategies that were targeted towards child marriage in the last two decades. Most of these programmes worked directly with girls and offering them opportunities and giving them a platform where they could obtain skills and education and also attempting to change social norms that perpetuate the practice of child marriage by engaging with families and the community at large. Other significant intervention strategies were giving economic incentives to parents in order to promote education and good health behaviours and attitudes as a way of preventing child marriage.

One of the summary findings of the research was that programmes aimed at preventing child marriage use five strategies which are "(i)empowering girls with education, skills and support networks, (ii)educating and mobilizing parents and community members (iii) enhancing the accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls (iv) offering economic support and incentives for girls and their families (v) fostering an enabling legal and policy framework" (ibid, p26). Notwithstanding the study revealing the programme strategies on ending child marriage, its finding did not reveal how empowering a girl child can prevent and eliminate child marriage thus creating gaps and this justified the need for further research.

Walker (2013)'s report on why ending child marriage needs to be an education goal states that "girls' education seems to be the best strategy to for ending child marriage" (ibid, p. 6). She also states that focusing on education as an empowerment strategy to end child marriage increases girls' freedoms that can be used as mitigations against child marriage and also empowers them with skills and decision making that challenges the social and gendered injustices that they face. Enige (2015) also states that the most powerful and vital tool to help end child marriage is education and that this tool is proving to be a success at ending the practice

while Hodgkinson (2016, p. 35), states that “there is a strong relationship between child marriage and education”.

Fieldman-Jacobs and Hervish (2011) report that interventions aimed at eradicating child marriage should involve different approaches that will empower a girl child and such approaches are increment in education opportunities as well as income, increase access to sexual reproductive information such as family planning and enabling participation of men and women as a way of changing norms on child marriage.

### 2.3 Benefits and importance of empowerment strategies and their effects on preventing and ending child marriage

A research was conducted by Austria, Behrman, Bozzani, Digitale, Hewett and Soler-Hampejsek (2016) which was a mid-term evaluative research for Population Council Zambia whose findings indicated the significance of empowerment programmes and how it can prevent child marriage. The study was on a programme called Adolescent Girls Empowerment Programme (AGEP) which was implemented from 2013 to early 2016. AGEP was an interventional programme that was aimed at empowering girls economically, health-wise and socially and would effectually prevent early/child marriage, HIV and reduce the rate of school drop-out inter-alia. The target group were girls between the ages of 10 and 19. It was implemented at 10 sites of 4 Zambia’s 10 provinces by Population Council in partnership with YWCA-Zambia. Central to the AGEP was the ‘Safe Space’ where girls were mentored and educated on various topics such as life-skills, health and financial education. Furthermore, some girls were selected within the programme to access free sexual reproductive and health services at both private and public health centres while others were selected to benefit from the ‘Girls Dream’ savings programme. Girls that were selected for this programme had bank accounts opened with consent from their parents or guardians. According to findings of the study, “the overall impact of AGEP on empowerment was modest compared to expectations at mid-way point” (ibid, p.89).

Subsequently, empowerment was achieved in all the spheres where it was measured. While urban based girls were able to use their financial knowledge to advance skills into economic opportunities, rural based girls did not utilise the financial knowledge. On the other hand, levels of participation by girls in decision making were higher with rural based girls in comparison with urban based girls. Under the goal of reducing the rate of school drop-out, the findings indicate that there was an increase in the number of grade school completion recorded among young adolescents who are rural based. The findings further showed that there was a recorded improvement in knowledge relating to sexual reproductive health information. However, the practical use of the sexual reproductive controls was comparatively lower than the theoretical knowledge obtained. Nonetheless, the overall empowerment programme was a success.

Glinski, Stoebenau and Warner (2014) under ICRW which was a follow up study on the earlier research conducted by Lee-Rife, Malhotra, McGonagle and Warner. The purpose of the study was to learn and know more about the earlier empowerment strategies and understand how the strategies were used as an approach to prevent and eliminate child marriage. Finally, it wanted to understand if these empowerment programmes yielded any positive results in-terms of change in attitudes and behaviours regarding the practice of child marriage. The study was qualitative in nature, reviewed literature and documents and also conducted participatory focus group discussions as well as in-depth interviews programme participants who were both current and former beneficiaries at that time. The research was conducted in-form of case studies by focusing on different programmes from different parts of the world.

One of these programmes was the Ishraq which is a programme been implemented in Upper Egypt. The aim of this programme is to prepare girls to re-enter formal school by using group-based programming. The programme targeted girls who were aged between 12 and 15 years and were out of school. The study revealed that there was a decline in the percentage of girls who preferred to be married before the age of 18 among those enrolled in the programme. Another programme that was case-studied was the social and financial empowerment of adolescents conducted in Bangladesh. The purpose of the programme was to provide economic and social developmental opportunities for girls by using group-based programming. The target group was girls aged between the 11 and 21 with a target population of about 14,000 girls in 5 districts of the country. The research findings revealed that beneficiaries of the programme were able to identify early marriage risks, had improved perceptions and attitudes on women's rights and gender equality. They were further able to identify the legal minimum age for marriage.

In addition to the two above case studies was the study carried out in Amhara, Ethiopia. The Toward Improved Economic and Social/Reproductive Outcomes for Adolescent girl promotes sexual and reproductive health and economic empowerment for married adolescent girls using group-based programming. It had a target of 5,000 child brides aged between 14 and 19. The revelation from the study was that communication between the young wives and their husbands was improved as well as a decline in levels of gender-based violence. Health wise, there was a significant improvement in the mental health as their knowledge and use of sexual and reproductive health services was broadened. Additionally, an increment in economic assets and investment was recorded.

The general findings from the above case studies provided an understanding on actions through which programmes can successfully broaden a girl's ability to make life choices that are strategic with regards to child marriage. These actions are increased access to resources and information, skills and social support. The study also revealed that the most fundamental action is self-change in the girl where she builds self-esteem and awareness about the right to equal treatment and opportunities that will enable her make better choices, have access to education and economic opportunities that are alternatives to marriage. Subsequently, her participation in empowerment activities will enhance her capabilities and enable her to make meaningful decisions in future concerning when to get married and will also effect other people's perceptions about her.

Asrari (2015) compiled a report which comprised of various case studies conducted from different Commonwealth around the globe and this report was published by the Royal Commonwealth Society and Plan International UK. The focus of the report was on the role of education empowerment as a means to preventing child marriage in the Commonwealth countries. One of the countries where the studies was carried out was Rwanda. The government of Rwanda came up with a programme called the Nine Year Basic Education programme that combines the first six years of primary and the first three years of secondary school making it into one system which is compulsory schooling. The findings from the study indicated the programme has been successful with a rate of 98% of girls enrolling and this rate is even higher than the boys. The case study concluded that such policies or programmes create opportunities for girls to access education that will subsequently eliminate reasons for child marriage. Additionally, it was also reported that a rights based and gender sensitive education is a powerful strategy towards ending and preventing child marriage as it is broad and encompasses

a safe environment that has respect for human rights and does not discriminate against girls, empowers them to make meaningful decisions that challenge harmful cultural practices gendered norms that violate their rights.

Fieldman-Jacobs and Hervish 2011 reported in a policy brief that it is cardinal to impart information and knowledge to girls as a strategy towards changing norms about child marriage. This information and knowledge should be about their human rights, family planning as well reproductive health information according to the report. It was further reported that communities must be mobilized and sensitized so that girls' rights are respected and that, the girls are enabled to make their own independent decisions. It was also reported that an empowerment programme in Senegal recorded a reduction in the number of girls married before the age of 15. The Tostan community empowerment programme conducted education sessions and awareness campaigns on human rights, health among others and the programme experienced decrease by 40% of girls married before the age of 15.

## 2.4 Challenges affecting the promotion of girls rights against child marriage

According to Fischer et al (2015, p.50), "addressing child marriage in Zambia is a complex and difficult undertaking". The findings of Fischer et al's study indicate that children deciding to marry is a very big challenge that the fight against child marriage is faced with. It is a big challenge for both organizations, parents and institutions. Another factor is the unintended negative impact of messages about child marriages as many messages promoting child protections are not accepted nor received by some community members. In addition to the aforementioned challenges, high costs to finance education, distance to school, lack of recreational activities, poverty, lack of coordination mechanisms among service providers were also reported to be factors that challenge the fight against child marriage.

Davis, Postles and Ross (2013, p.25) report that "prohibiting child marriage can be complex, particularly in countries that have established plural legal systems and where marriages are also conducted under customary, traditional or religious laws". Furthermore, there are existing barriers such as social and economic that impede implementation and application of legal instruments in communities where child marriage is prevalent (ibid). UNICEF (2017) some of the challenges to eradicating child marriage are weak laws, poverty, lack of educational opportunities, social norms and poverty among others.

According to Friedman (2012), one of the factors that make it hard to combat child marriage is the lack of enforced laws by the judiciary. A policy brief developed by Girl Not Brides and Plan Zambia (2015) on ending child marriage in Zambia state some of the gaps existing in the legal system and these gaps have been cited as a challenge towards ending the practice. According to the policy brief the current Marriage Act forbids marriage involving a girl below the age of 16. This conflicts with the universally accepted legal age for marriage which is 18 years. The policy brief also takes note of the customary law which is as legal as the statutory law and in most cases, takes precedence over the statutory. In addition to Girls Not Brides and Plan Zambia policy brief, another policy brief by UNFPA and Population Council (2016) also cites lack of a single definition of marriage as well as the existence of two legal systems to be a challenge on the fight against child marriage.

The NSECM which is a national strategy valid from 2016 to 2021 aiming at ending child marriage state that the “conflicting definitions of a child can lead to complications in applying statutory law in a consistent manner but also in terms of how laws resonate with the community” (NSECM, 2016, p.18).

## 3.0 Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

The study used a number of theories and approaches to understand the causes of child marriage and its consequences as well as to understand the importance of using empowerment as a strategy towards eliminating child marriages.

### 3.1 Intersectionality Theory

The introduction of intersectionality theory was in the late 1980s and was used by Kimberle Crenshaw (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). It “was derived from the failure of lawsuits that were brought by African American women who complained of racist and sexist treatment on the job” as stated by Kyung-Kim and McCann (2017, p.164). Due to the marginalisation that Black American women, Crenshaw introduced the theory to redress the aforementioned. According to Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays and Tomlinson (2013, p.303), Crenshaw used “intersectionality to highlight the ways in which social movement organization and advocacy around violence against women elided the vulnerabilities of women of color, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities [...]”. It is therefore, a “research and policy paradigm” (Hankivsky, Cormier and Merich, 2009, p.3) that enables both policy and decision makers as well as researchers to investigate policy interventions, solutions and approaches that are familiar with classes constructed by marginalization of people at both individual and institutional level (ibid). Dill and Zambrana (2009) in McCann (2017, p.185) state that “intersectionality analysis explores and unpacks relations of dominion and subordination, privilege and agency, in the structural arrangements through which various services, resources and other social rewards are delivered [---]”. Collins (1998) also states that the theory analyses how social identities such as social class, gender, age, nationality, immigration status, physical ability, geography inter-alia are created and not as distinguishable social ranks. Additionally, it also demonstrates how these social identities and systems such as oppression, discrimination and dominion intersect simultaneously (ibid, Hankivsky et al. 2009).

The theory is a strategy for analysing and understanding the challenges, lives, experiences and behaviours of the people that are marginalized (Dill and Zambrana 2009 in Kim and McCann, 2017). Furthermore, it helps researchers and policy makers to understand that social positions are as a result of the intersecting social identities which subsequently contribute to social and economic injustices (ibid). Intersectionality has a central goal which is the “social inclusion of previously ignored and excluded populations” (Hankivsky, et al, 2009, p. 3). Using the theory as a means of analysis of the theory enables us to glance at structured inequities that are from a perspective of social and economic justice. The theory through its analysis unveils identities that are multiple and also manifests different types of marginalization, oppression and exploitations that comes by as a result of the multiple identities.

#### Contextualizing the theory



This theory is therefore important in investigating, analysing and comprehending how different identities such as gender, age, class, nationality, cultural values can cause and contribute to the existence of child marriage which is a social problem as well as a social injustice against a girl child. Bowleg (2012) gives the advantages of using intersectionality theory as an analytical tool and one of those advantages is that, there is no type of social inequality that can be considered to be more salient than the other because it uses multiple social identities to find the root cause of social inequality and social injustice. Considering how child marriage is an injustice and oppression against a girl child, the theory helped the researcher to understand the intersecting social identities that contribute to the practice of child and the consequences of the practice and also how empowering the girl child based on these multiple identities is significant towards preventing and ending the practice. It also helped the researcher to not only focus on the age of children affected by the practice of child marriage but also focus on their gender, class, cultural values, educational background and geographical location.

### 3.2 Empowerment Theory

Empowerment is a “process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take action to improve their situations” according to Gutierrez (1994, p.202). Funnel and Rodgers (2011, p. 332) also define it as “a process by which people gain control and mastery over their lives and are able to influence others who affect their lives”. On the other hand, Adams (1996, p. 5) defines it “as the means by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximise the quality of their lives”. The concept of empowerment therefore, refers to both a “process and an outcome” as alluded by (Miley in Shera and Wells, 1999, p. 2). Thusly, for empowerment to be achieved, steps must be taken to ensure that there is some result at the end of it (ibid). It also stresses that self-determination, democratic participation and improvement and can be applied to organizations, individuals and communities inter-alia (Funnel and Rodgers, 2011). Empowerment can also be understood as having access to power which is “the ability to get what one needs; the ability to influence how others think, feel, act or believe and the ability to influence the distribution of resources in a social system such as family [...]” according to (Gutierrez, 1991 pp.201-202). During this process, members of society who are disadvantaged are empowered to have access to both rights and resources around them that will enhance their participation in making decisions affecting them as well as in shaping their community (Bird, Luttrell, Scrutton and Quiroz, 2009).

In addition, it is also a construct that connects individual strengths with capabilities as well as socio-environments to social policy and change and it traces its roots in citizen participation, action research and community psychology (Perkins and Zimmerman). Programme intervention strategies that are created using empowerment assumes that “problems are best addressed by the people experiencing them, people possess valuable knowledge about their own needs, values goals [...]” according to Funnel and Rodgers (2011, p. 333).

The theory of empowerment entails combining both the process and outcomes of empowering someone (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment maybe activities or programmes that give power to people to improve their well-being as well as influence change in others thus, bringing about social change in their lives and communities they live in.

On another note, empowerment outcomes may simply be seen as measured results or effects such as social change achieved by the empowerment processes. Empowerment processes at

individual level includes participation at community level through having access to both governmental and community resources while empowerment at community level includes collective and coordinated actions to bring about social change by having access to resources found in the community. Meanwhile, empowerment outcomes include exercising power to bring social change and having access to resources (ibid).

### Contextualization of the theory

The researcher used this theory to investigate and analyse how empowering a girl child can contribute to preventing and ending the practice of child marriage. The researcher decided to use Naila Kabeer's concept definition in contextualizing the theory to the study. She discusses the concept of disempowerment which she refers as "to be denied choice and refers to empowerment as the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability [---]" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). She further discusses three power dimensions which are very cardinal to the concept of empowerment and identifies these dimensions as resources, agency and finally achievements. What this entails is that for an individual to be empowered, there must pre-existing conditions which are resources and must be made available to the individual in order to be empowered (ibid). The second dimension is agency and is defined as "what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important" (Sen, 1985, p. 206). It "also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or the power within" as stated by Kabeer (1999, p. 438). Thusly, agency refers to the process of empowerment. Last but not the least, is the dimension of achievements which also refers to outcomes (ibid). They are referred to functioning by Nussbaum (2011, p. 25) where she defines them as "an active realization of one or more capabilities". Combining resources and the agency results in what is known as capability (Kabeer 1999 and Sen 1989) or as "substantial freedoms" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20).

Therefore, empowering a girl child entails enabling and enhancing her resources and agency or capabilities or substantial freedoms so that she reaches her full potential and obtains her achievements or functioning.

There has been studies that have been conducted on children's rights where empowerment was used as a theoretical framework. One such study was conducted by Ruth Cross and Diane Lowcock on empowerment and participation as being key frameworks for advancing children's health rights such as sexual health rights. The researcher therefore decided to use empowerment in analysing and explaining of the strategies been used to empower the girls as well as their significance to the process of empowerment as well as analysing the benefits and effects of empowering a girl child.

### 3.3 Sen and Nussbaum's Capability Approaches

Amartya Sen who is a prominent philosopher as well as a welfare economist is a pioneer of the capability approach. Its origin is dated back to the 1980s and the approach can be attributed to his focus on development as freedom (Frediani, 2010, Gopal, Karupiah and Saigaran, 2015). Many various scholars have used Sen's ideas to "develop a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual wellbeing and social arrangements" (Frediani 2010, p.175).

Sen and other proponents of the approach such as Nussbaum, developed the approach in order to migrate from the focus of measuring development by use of economic metrics such as GDP to focus on



whether people have basic freedoms to be aware of their own concepts about good (Hickel, 2014).

Capability approach is an approach that can be used to evaluate the welfare of an individual by analysing poverty, inequality and policies according to Kuklys (2005). Clients' welfare according to this approach are assessed based on their functioning and capabilities (ibid). The main feature of this approach is to focus on the abilities that people possess to achieve the things and results that are valuable to them (opt. cit). The capability approach is supported by the "attractive idea that people should be equal with respect to effective freedom" as quoted by Cohen (1993, p. 7) The idea behind the capability approach is a very good and attractive one. This is because it uses "a picture of persons as agents who have their own goals, make their own choices and are not receptacles for resource-inputs and satisfaction [...]" according to Gasper, (2007, p. 339).). Meanwhile freedom is defined "a concept comprising components of both wellbeing and agency" by Frediani (2010, p.176).

According to Sen (2005, p. 5), a functioning is "an achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be, and any such functioning reflects, as it were, a part of the state of that person". Similarly, Alkire (2003, p. 5) states that "functionings is an umbrella term for resources and activities and attitudes people spontaneously recognize to be important such as poise, knowledge [...]" while Nussbaum, (2012, p. 25) defines it as "an active realization of one or more capabilities". Meanwhile, Kuklys (2005, p. 10) states that capability is "a derived notion and reflects the various functionings a person can potentially achieve and involves the person's freedom to choose between different ways of living [...]". In addition, Frediani (2010, p. 176) also defines capabilities as "freedoms that people have to achieve the lifestyle they have reason to value".

While noting the definitions of capabilities and functionings, Sen (1990) puts forth an argument that the wellbeing of a person should not be evaluated within the area of functionings but instead, within the area of capabilities. Additionally, achievements should not be the centre while evaluating people's wellbeing but rather, it should be opportunities that have been set forth. Furthermore, there are four ways in which a person can be evaluated according to Sen's arguments and these are; well-being achievement, agency achievement, well-being freedom and last but not the least, agency freedom (Gasper, 2007).

It can therefore be said that the basis for Sen's capability approach is the evaluation of social change in relation to the outcomes experienced from the quality and goodness of human life (Sen,1990). The approach can also be used to evaluate class, gender and equality by assessing an individual's improvement in her or his well-being without reducing another person's position in life.

Another well renowned capability proponent is Martha Nussbaum and she is responsible for expanding the capability approach. She uses capabilities to stress that "the most important elements of people's quality of life are plural and qualitatively distinct: health, bodily integrity, education and other aspects cannot be reduced to a single metric without distortion" (Nussbaum 2011, p. 18). She also defines capabilities approach as "an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorizing about basic social justice" (ibid, p.18). The approach is also referred to as the "human development approach because it is concerned with the capabilities of non-human animals as well as human beings" as alluded by (Gopal et al, 2011, p. 192).

Additionally, the approach asks a key question of “what is each person able to do?” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 18). It further “takes each person as an end, asking not just about the total average well-being but about opportunities available to each person” (ibid). And even further, the approach entails that the achievement of goals and plans should not be at the expense of another person (Hedge and MacKenzie, 2012).

Notably, the approach is also concerned with issues to do with social inequality and injustice as well as their consequences (Nussbaum 2011). Furthermore, the approach “takes a fundamental principle, the idea of human dignity, understood to have supreme value, incomparable quality, and unconditional worth” as stated by Kant, (1998, pp. 434-435). Furthermore, Nussbaum (2003) talks about central human capabilities which are life being, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and last but not the least, control over the environment and also articulates capabilities as “freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment” (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20). Further to this, are distinct capabilities which are the basic, internal and combined capabilities (Hedge and MacKenzie, 2012). Therefore, Nussbaum uses this approach for basic social justice as well as the fundamental entitlements which are supposed to be made available by the duty bearers to be accessed by right holders.

Both Sen and Nussbaum agree that the focus of human development should not be on one factor which is income poverty only but, that other factors should be considered as well when explaining human development (Gopal et al, 2011). While Sen’s approach focuses on how well-being is dependent on capabilities and functionings, Nussbaum’s approach version details a list of capabilities and on how they need to be served by every person (ibid). The researcher decided to use the two approaches in the study because of the different focus they have.

#### Contextualizing the approach

There has been wide usage of both Sen and Nussbaum’s approaches to analyse empowerment strategies, gender inequality, social justice and poverty among others (Hickel, 2014). However, the application of the approach to children has only been addressed recently according to Peleg (2013). This is because of Sen’s suggestions that “children will enjoy their freedoms when they become competent adults” (ibid. p. 533). However, she states that the “approach should be acknowledged as relevant to children as for all the reasons that is considered to be relevant to all human beings, including the elderly and those with disabilities [...]” (op. cit. p. 534). Ballet, Biggeri and Comim (2011) also allude that children, just like any other adult human being need to have their capabilities assessed and this requires understanding their capabilities from a child perspective and not an adult perspective. Their capabilities are “formed through social interaction and receptiveness within the household and broader environments, and constitute to a large extent, the foundation of a human being’s development [...]” (ibid, p. 3). It is imperative to consider the functionings and capabilities of children when analysing issues faced by them such as inequality or poverty as this is paramount to their well-being (op. cit.).

Notably, children’s rights cannot be dissociated from the capability approach because these “rights are a major issue for the development of the capability approach [...]” according to Bonvin and Stoeckling (2014, p. 11). Furthermore, the rights that children have “can be seen as formal resources or entitlements [...]” (ibid. pp. 11-12).

In relation to the foregoing, Peleg (2013, p. 534) analyses Nussbaum's internal and combined capabilities and asserts that "once children are given the opportunity to develop their internal capabilities, primarily through education, they will no longer be denied the opportunity or entitlement to develop [...]". She further argues that when the children's human right to education is achieved and their agency upheld, they will develop their internal capabilities (ibid.). Similarly, Biggeri and Karkara in (Bonvin and Stoeckling, 2014) articulate the relationship between the capability approach and the human rights based approach where they try to examine if the two approaches permit the analysis and translation of participation, life cycle and equity into practice.

Equally important, Dixon and Nussbaum (2012) claim that the capability approach can be of much use in justifying why children's welfare rights, more especially those that are cardinal to children's agency and welfare needs should take precedence over other human rights. In view of the aforementioned, the capability approach is not only applicable to every human being's rights but also children's rights and issues that affect them.

As a matter of fact, research has been conducted on issues relating to women and girls where the capability approach was used as a theory for analysis. For instance, Hickel (2014) used Sen's approach to examine women's empowerment and the girl effect programme which was strategy by IMF, World Bank, DFID, USAID among others to empower young women in developing countries. Josefsson (2016) also utilized the capability approach to examine its forthcoming and constraints in relation to asylum seeking children's rights. It was against this background that the researcher used the approach in analysing the findings of the research. It was used to understand and analyse how child marriage is a constraint on the freedoms that children have and how it affects their capabilities to develop into meaningful and independent adults. The theory also enabled the researcher to understand how empowering a girl can increase her capabilities to achieve a meaningful life and how this meaningful life can subsequently be significant towards preventing and ending child marriage.

### 3.4 Human Rights Based Approach

A human rights based approach is a "conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights"<sup>41</sup>. The approach aims at ensuring that all developmental programmes at national, regional and global level focus on prioritizing human rights principles derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and using them as guiding tools in their programme formulation and implementation processes. It also seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress<sup>42</sup>.

It further ensures that policies aim at realising human rights and contribute to the duty bearers' capabilities to be able to meet the obligations they have towards rights holders while at the same time, rights holders should be able to claim their rights<sup>43</sup>. Some of the elements of good

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<sup>41</sup> HRBA Portal <https://hrbaportal.org/the-human-rights-based-approach-to-development-cooperation-towards-a-common-understanding-among-un-agences>

<sup>42</sup> UNICEF [https://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/index\\_62012.html](https://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/rights/index_62012.html)

<sup>43</sup> HRBA Portal <https://hrbaportal.org/the-human-rights-based-approach-to-development-cooperation-towards-a-common-understanding-among-un-agences>

practices under a human rights approach are programmes that identify the realization of human rights as their ultimate goals, people recognized as key players, strategies that are empowering and not disempowering, focus on excluded and marginalized groups and ensuring that participation is both a goal and a means<sup>44</sup> among others.

The main purpose of the HRBA is to empower boys, girls, men and women to claim their human rights in their capacity as right holders<sup>45</sup> and some of its strategies to empowerment are participation, link to human rights, accountability and non-discrimination among others<sup>46</sup>.

### Contextualizing the HRBA

A human rights based approach that looks at the welfare of children can sometimes be referred to as a Child Rights Based Approach<sup>47</sup> by UNICEF or as Child Rights Programming<sup>48</sup> by Plan International. Plan International (2010, p. 84) defines CRP as “the programming process that uses international standards of child rights and human rights as its foundation and the tools”. The CRP or CRBA is tailored at addressing the rights of children as outlined in the UNCRC and draws its guidelines from the UNCRC principles which are definition of the child, non-discrimination, best interest of the child, right to survival and development and respect for the views of the child<sup>49</sup>. In short, the CRP is a child centred and friendly version of the HRBA. Using the CRP enabled the researcher to understand how child marriage violates the rights of a girl child as well as how the approach empowers a girl child to claim her rights and enhance her capabilities to achieve her full potential. It also enabled the researcher to understand the challenges that inhibit the eradication against child marriage.

## 4.0 Chapter Four Research Methodology

The research focused on qualitative research method to investigate the significance of girl child empowerment as a strategy towards preventing and ending the practice of child marriage. The researcher decided to use qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research because the former deals with words, meanings, definitions and concepts inter-alia while the later, deals with numbers (Bryman 2016). This method enabled the researcher to get full insight and an in-depth knowledge (Berg, 2009) of the nature of child marriage in the study area and how empowering a girl child and enabling her capabilities is a good strategy towards preventing and ending the practice.

### 4.1 Research Design

The study was explorative in nature because no much academic research has been conducted on the significance of girl empowerment on preventing and ending child marriage in Zambia. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011, p. 10), an explorative study “seeks to investigate an under-searched aspect of social life”. However, most of the research that has been conducted

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<sup>44</sup> UNFPA <https://www.unfpa.org/human-rights-based-approach>

<sup>45</sup> SIDA <https://www.sida.se/English/partners/resources-for-all-partners/methodological-materials/human-rights-based-approach-at-sida/>

<sup>46</sup> SIDA <https://www.sida.se/English/partners/resources-for-all-partners/methodological-materials/human-rights-based-approach-at-sida/>

<sup>47</sup> UNICEF [https://www.unicef.org/tdad/index\\_55678.html](https://www.unicef.org/tdad/index_55678.html)

<sup>48</sup> Plan International <http://www.plan-academy.org/pluinfile.php/20448/mod-data/content/2020/Handbook-Rights-Based-Approach-to-Development-Child-Rights-Programming.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> UNICEF [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Guiding\\_Principles.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Guiding_Principles.pdf)

on child marriage and girl empowerment has been done so by UN agencies and international child rights focused NGOs.

### *Research Area*

The study was conducted in a community called Chamuka Chiefdom ruled by its traditional ruler called Chief Chamuka. It is located in the Central part of Zambia in Chibombo district. Chamuka Chiefdom is one of the communities in Chibombo district where Plan International Zambia is present. It is inhabited by the Lenje speaking as well as tribes from the other parts of the country. Apart from Lenje, another language that is spoken is Nyanja. It is a very vast area which is located about two and half hours from Lusaka, the capital of the country. It has three sub-communities of which three of them are Chamuka, Kaputi and Kanakatampa. Chamuka sub-community is the headquarters for the entire for the community and that is where the Chief's palace's located.

It is important to note that Chief Chamuka is one of the prominent Chiefs in Central Province fighting against child marriage. Chamuka has a government clinic, an agriculture college which is run by United Church of Zambia. It also two schools of which one is a secondary boarding which attracts students from many parts of the country and is run by the United Church of Zambia in collaboration with the government of the Zambia. The other school which is primary school offering basic education is a government run school. Last but not the least, the community also has an early childhood education centre built by Plan Zambia but run by community members with support from the organization. Kanakatampa is also another community under the chiefdom of Chief Chamuka. It is more remote than the former but also has a government run clinic and primary school offering basic education which were built by Plan Zambia. Lastly, Kaputi is most remote community of the 3 communities. Nonetheless, it has a clinic built by Plan and its residents utilize the health services at Kanakatampa clinic because it is the nearest health centre.

The rationale for choosing Chamuka community notwithstanding the organization been present in other communities, was because the commonly spoken language in the area is related to one of the country's local languages that the researcher is fluent in. This made it very easy for the researcher to translate the interviews from Lenje into English. The second reason was that Chamuka Chiefdom is the biggest community geographically and population wise where Plan Zambia implements its programmes. The third was that traditional ruler of the area Chief Chamuka is one of the End Child Marriage Ambassadors. Therefore, the researcher wanted to understand if the influence and knowledge that the chief has been extended to the fight against child marriage in his community.

### *Research Participants*

The study first targeted girls between the ages of 13 and 18. These included unmarried girls and former child brides. While some of these respondents are school going girls, some of them are not. All the girls that were part of the research are all beneficiaries of Plan's programmes. The second targeted group consisted of community members who are parents, community traditional leaders otherwise known as village headmen and headwomen but are also volunteers under Plan Zambia. They are trained by Plan Zambia and its partnering organizations to advance child rights. They have basic understanding of the Zambian legal, regional and international instruments and they work on voluntary basis. Last but not the least, staff from Plan Zambia were also targeted as respondents. This group consisted of one CDF, Child

Protection Coordinator, Empowerment Programme Coordinator and last but not the least, the Early Childhood Education Coordinator. The total number of participants was 22 of which 4 were Plan Zambia staff, 10 girls between the ages of 13 and 18 and 8 community members who are community volunteers under Plan Zambia. 5 out of 10 girls were former child brides and all of the girls are beneficiaries of Plan Zambia's programmes.

## 4.2 Sampling Design

Two types of sampling procedures were used in this study by the researcher. The first been purposive sampling. According to Bryman (2016), purposive sampling is the kind of sampling which is non-probability and is used to sample out respondents that are of relevancy and importance to the research questions. These sampled respondents have similar attributes, experiences and characteristics among others. This type of sampling is sometimes called judgemental sampling and a researcher uses details, information and knowledge that they have about the respondents to select the study group to represent the wider population (Berg, 2009).

The advantage of using this sampling technique is that study, subjects who possess similar traits and experiences are not left out in the study to ensure that the data collected is valid and correlates to the research question (ibid). However, in this kind of research, a researcher cannot generalize the findings to a wider population (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

The second sampling technique that was used is the snowball sampling technique. This is where the already sampled participants from the purposive sampling suggest other participants whom they have similar experiences with and who will also further suggest other participants until the researcher has the number of respondents for the study (Bryman, 2016). The act of referring other participants by the respondents enables the researcher to have a sample of respondents fitting into the researcher's study target (Berg, 2009). With regards to the foregoing, the researcher used these sampling technique to select study subjects who were relevant to the research questions.

As earlier mentioned, the first group of children comprised of girls aged between the age group of 13 and 18. The rationale behind choosing this age group was to understand child marriage from the perspective of a child. The second targeted respondents consisted of community volunteers who are fighting child marriage and are championing the promotion of children's rights as well as the protection of a girl child. This group was identified with the help of the community's Plan's CDF and child protection coordinator. Last but not the least, Plan Zambia's staff from the Central Planning Unit were sampled out.

## 4.3 Data Collection Tools

The study employed two data collection tools which are the primary and secondary data tools.

### *Primary and Secondary Data Sources*

The data collected in this study was obtained through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained from the different targeted groups by use of interviews and focus group discussions. This enabled the researcher to get first hand data from the respondents themselves however, it was time and resource consuming. The researcher engaged the services of research assistants recommended by the organization for the community based interviews and focused group discussions as the researcher could not be physically present for the data collection. The phone interviews involving the organization were equally time and resource



consuming. Notwithstanding these challenges, the primary data collected was very beneficial to the study. The secondary data source included documents that were reviewed. These included official government and private documents and media documents among others. These were obtained through web-searching as well as e-mailing relevant organization to request for data.

#### 4.4 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection tools in this study consisted of interviews which were done on phone and skype as well as one-on-one, focus group discussions and document reviewing. The one-on-one interviews were conducted by a research assistant that was engaged by the researcher but recommended by the Plan Zambia Central Planning Unit.

##### *Interviews*

One of the mostly used data collection technique in qualitative research is interview according to Bryman (2016). Berg (2009, p. 101), states that “interviewing may be defined simply as a conversation with a purpose. Specifically, the purpose is to gather information”. One of the advantages of using interview in qualitative research is the flexibility nature of the research which allows the interviewer to ask questions which might not be from the interview guide (Bryman 2016). Using interview as a data collection technique enabled the researcher to ask follow up questions.

Semi-structured interviews were used in the study. In this type of interview, “the researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply [...]” (ibid, p. 468). It is a widely used interview type among social scientists and it gives room for dialogue and enables the researcher to ask follow up questions that might be vital in acquiring the knowledge and data intended while at the same time, focusing on the research topic (Brinkmann in Leavy, 2014). Using this type of interview enabled the researcher to get an even greater in-depth knowledge of child marriage and the strategies aimed towards preventing and eliminating the practice.

In total, the researcher conducted 11 interviews of which 5 were comprised of the service providers who in this case are Plan Zambia staff while the other 6 were community members representing the 3 sub-coomunities.

##### *Face to Face Interviews*

Interviews that were community based were conducted face-to face by the research assistant engaged by the researcher and was recommended by Plan Zambia. This is in line with the organization’s child protection policy which requires background checks to be done on any person outside the organization coming into contact with children and community members who are under the organization’s programmes. The researcher was therefore advised to use an expert researcher who is not only fluent in the local language widely spoken in the community and has clearance from the organization, but also has experience in conducting community and child-focused interviews. The reasons pertaining to why the researcher had to engage a research assistant were that the researcher could not be physically be available for the study which was carried out in Zambia. Secondly, telephone interviews could not be used with community members as they would not have been effective and efficient. This is because of poor phone network and services in that part of the country as well as reluctance on the part of community members to engage in a phone conversation with someone they have no physical contact with.

### *Telephone and Skype Interviews*

Telephone interviews were conducted with Plan Zambia's members of staff. Telephone interviews are becoming a common technique for collecting data Shuy (2002,). They are suitable in situations where the researcher cannot be physically available for the face-to-face interviews (Bryman, 2016). One of the advantage of using this type of interview is that it allows the researcher to conduct a study in a geographical place that where she or he cannot have physical access while its disadvantage is that the fact it is not able to read the respondent's body language and expressions. Two skype interviews were conducted which were a follow up to the telephone interviews. This allowed the researcher to have face-to-face conversations with two of the respondents.

### *Focused Group Discussions*

Focused group is "an interviewing with several people on a specific topic or issue" (et al, 2016, p.500). The researcher used this data collection technique with the group comprising of girls. This method was very effective because it allowed interaction among the participants and gave them a platform to fully participate in the discussions. They gave very insightful responses that would normally be rare to get during individual interviews.

### *Interview Settings*

Two FGDs were conducted at the organization's early childhood education centre. This is the place where the organization meets the community members during meetings and it is also where the girls' empowerment group normally meets from. It was therefore a very familiar environment for the girls and they felt secure. The researcher picked a day when the group normally meets for its group meetings. The rationale for choosing such a day was because some of the girls have to ride bicycles and other walk many kilometres to get to the community centre. The FGDs were only conducted on girls whose families had consented to them been respondents. The CDF was present at the meeting as it was considered imperatively necessary to do so because of the organization's child protection policy.

The second FDG was conducted at a school that is supported by the organization. Since this school is run by the ministry of education of the republic of Zambia and as such, the researcher had to follow the school guidelines that requires contact with students to be done within the school premises. The discussions were conducted during school hours but however, it was in the afternoons during extra-curriculum activities. The researcher chose a day when students attend various club meetings and turned the child rights meeting into a group discussion.

While noting that participants were child rights club members as well as non-club members, not every club member was club part of the discussions. Those aged below 13 were given other activities to do by one of their club leaders. Similarly, the CDF was present during the discussions as well as one of the school teacher who is club matron. This is a school regulation that requires a teacher to be present when talking to students during school hours.

The interviews involving community members who are the community crime protection unit members were conducted over a number of days as they are engaged in other activities and do not come from the same villages. While the interviews involving the organization's members of staff were conducted on the telephone, they were all conducted in a noise-free environment and that the time suggested so by the respondent. Most of them were interviewed during weekends when they were home as they conduct community visitation programmes.



### *Document Analysis*

Documents were also considered as data collection technique during the study to accompany the interviews and FGDs. Bowen (2009, p. 27) defines document analysis as “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic [...]”. He further states that “document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as means of triangulation. The documents that were analysed were official documents from the state as well as official documents that were from private sources. The private documents that were sourced from mostly NGOs provided much needed data compared to obtained government documents. Media documents such as online newspaper articles were also part of the documents analysed. These documents were obtained through web searching as well as requests made via emailing the relevant authorities.

However, obtaining governmental documents proved to be challenging because of the bureaucratic nature of the system. Nonetheless, the researcher managed to obtain some of the documents and relied on web search for the rest. On the other hand, documents from private sources were easily sourced from the relevant authorities without any challenges while others were sourced from the web. The analysed documents served as empirical evidence to the research thus were used as a tool for testing the validity and reliability of the data collected.

### **4.5 Validity and Reliability of Research tools**

Drost (2011, p.106) refers to reliability as “the extent to which measurements are repeatable when different persons perform the measurements, on different occasions, under the same thing” while states that validity “is concerned with the meaningfulness of research components” (ibid, p. 104). The study ensured that the findings were validated and reliable

#### *Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Authenticity.*

The researcher ensured that were all credible, dependable and transferable. By credibility, the research findings were submitted to the participants to ensure that they believed them. They were given an opportunity to go through the notes and the recordings were played in order to allow them to confirm whether the researcher had captured and understood their social world.

Notwithstanding that the respondents were sampled out using purposive sampling, the researcher ensured that the findings are transferable to another social context similar to the study context. This was facilitated so, by giving a full and rich description of the study context (Bryman, 2016).

Dependability requires that the researcher keeps record of all stages of the research from the start to the end to for checks and balances are done throughout the process and at the end (ibid). This is to ensure that the research process and findings are dependable. The researcher therefore, factored in the aspect of dependability throughout the research process.

#### *Triangulation*

Triangulation “entails using more than one method or source of data collection in the study of the social phenomena” according to Bryman (2016, p. 386). Additionally, triangulation provides “a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility” as asserted by Eisner (1991, p. 110).

Furthermore, it lessens the likelihood of biasness and safeguards the researcher against criticisms of the research data been sourced from a one source or method (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the researcher used different sources of data to ensure that the findings were valid

and not biased. Interviews and FGDs within four different groups were conducted alongside analysing documents. This enabled the researcher to compare the data collected from all sources to produce not only results which are relevant but are also of good standard.

#### 4.6 Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used a tool for analysing the data. During the process of data collection, data that was derived by using FDGs and interviews was recorded using an audio device to enable playback while transcription of the data. Thematic content analysis was chosen by the researcher because presents data in a descriptive way and the data to be analysed maybe in form of transcribed interviews and other textural data that is related to the data from the transcribed interviews (Anderson, 2007).

Themes were developed after a lengthy process of listening to the transcriptions and later, key features noted from the transcriptions were grouped together. This enabled the researcher to categorize items according to what description they offered. This analysis method had its weakness as it was lengthy and time consuming.

#### 4.7 Ethical Consideration

In any research conducted, ethical issue must be taken in to consideration by the researcher (Bryman, 2012). The researcher ensured that ethics of social research were upheld. Since some of the respondents were minors, parents were notified and consent was sought. The researcher ensured that a letter of consent was given to the parents or guardians of the girls informing them of the study, its aim and what the study was all about and that their permission was been sought to allow their children to be part of the study. They were also informed that they had the power to say no or give a go ahead. Letters of consent were also given to other respondents who were the staff for Plan Zambia and community volunteers. They were also informed what the study was all about and what its aims were. The researcher ensured that only those who consented to participate in the research were interviewed. In addition, the respondents were notified that there was going to be an audio recording during the interviews and they were at liberty to listen to the recordings after the interviews were done.

Secondly, confidentiality was taken into consideration by the researcher by ensuring that no identifying information was put in the report. The participants were assured that no information identifying them will be part of the report. They were also told not to talk about situations or experiences that were very private to them. Furthermore, they were asked not to share information and make reference to any person that they know who was not part of the study. The researcher did so according to Homan (1992, p. 329), participants may “invade the privacy of subjects who are not participants”.

Thirdly, the researcher ensured that there was no deception involved in the study. The researcher informed the respondents what the research was all about and what the findings would be used for. Further, the researcher assured the respondents that copies of the report would be available to them if they wished to read through it.

Last but not the least, the researcher ensured that there was no harm to the participants during the interviews. Interviews were conducted in safe environments such as schools and Plan Zambia community meeting places which are normally early childhood development centres built by plan. The interviews with the community members and children were conducted during day time hours. The researcher also provided snacks and refreshments to the respondents to ensure that they did not get thirsty. Noting that the researcher had to engage a research assistant,

that research assistant was given a security clearance by the organization and was made to sign a child protection policy which every person coming into contact with children under the organization's name has to sign. Interviews involving the girls were conducted in the presence of a school teacher; for those that were conducted at a school as well as in the presence of the organization's CDF. Similarly, interviews with non-school going girls were conducted in the presence of the CDF. This was to guarantee their safety and also as a fulfilment to the organization's requirements.

#### 4.8 Study Limitations

The researcher faced challenges in getting consent from the organization to carry out the interviews. The personnel in charge of giving consent was indisposed at the time and the researcher had to wait for a long time before consent was given. The second limitation was lack of finances to pay out allowances to the respondents and the research assistant as well as the telephone expenses incurred while conducting the phone interviews. Thirdly, the researcher could not travel to Zambia for data collection. Lastly, the researcher faced some limitations in arranging dates for phone and skype interviews as the respondents were never available at the scheduled times for the interviews.

#### How Limitations were dealt with

The researcher had to exercise some patience while waiting to be granted permission to go ahead with the interviews. Instead of paying out allowances to the respondents who were community based, the researcher negotiated with them and provided snacks during the interviews and transport refunds which was a fixed amount. The children were only provided with snacks and not transport refunds. The respondents from Plan office were not provided with snacks nor transport refunds. The research assistant was paid in instalments. The first instalment was at the beginning of the research while the last instalment was after the recorded findings were submitted. A research assistant was engaged to help with data collection as the researcher could not travel to Zambia.

Due to the fact that it was difficult to conduct phone interviews during working hours, the researcher and the respondents decided to conduct them after working hours and on some occasions, over the weekend.

## 5.0 Chapter Five: Study Findings and Analysis

The presentations of research findings and analysis were done according to the research aims and the themes developed during the analysis.

### 5.1 To examine and analyse the causes of child marriage.

The following were the themes that were developed under this specific aim.

- ✓ Definition of a child and child marriage
- ✓ Types of child marriage
- ✓ Economic, social, legal and cultural causes of child marriage
- ✓ Effects of child marriage

#### Definition of a child

Under this aim, the study wanted to investigate what causes or contributes to child marriage and what are the effects of child marriage.

The respondents were asked if they knew who a child is. It was important to see if all respondents had the same knowledge of who a child is. There were differing definitions. The participants from the staff group and the community child protection unit as well as some girls all defined a child as according to the international definitions however, the focused group discussions with the girls yielded varying definitions. The following were some of the definitions that they gave.

I understand a child to be someone between the 1 year and 10 years.  
Group A

For me, a child is someone below 18years. Group A

No, a child is not some between 1 and 12 years but below the of 16 years. Group A and Group B

I understand a child to be someone below 18 years. Group B

I think a child is someone who has not yet attained puberty because as long as you have attained puberty, your parents will not consider you to be a child anymore and you will even be given more responsibilities.

The findings showed that some rights holders who are children do not have the knowledge of the universal definition of a child. However, those who are members of the child rights club had the knowledge of the universal definition of a child. Comparing the respondents from groups A and B to groups C and D, it was discovered that groups C and are more empowered with CRC than the respondents from groups A and B.

When asked about their understanding of child marriage, two kind of responses were given. Those from the staff group defined according to the international definition which is a union in which one person or both is below the age of 18 years. The community child protection unit also gave the same definitions but also gave the traditional definition.

Child marriage is when two people start living together when one of them has not yet attained puberty.

Child marriage is marriage when a girl has just attained puberty and starts living with a man.

To me, child marriage is when a girl of my age who is still in school goes to live with a man (Informer 5 and 3 Girl from Chamuka and Kaputi).

### Types of Child Marriage

It was revealed that there are three types of marriage which are consensual, forced or elopement. An elopement is kind of marriage is where a girl runs away with her to be husband and start living together as man and wife and once the family discovers, the man is made to pay the bride price which is locally known as 'lobola'. The second type is what is known as forced marriage

and is very commonly practiced. The last type is consensual where the girl and her family all agree that she should get married.

Here where we live, child marriage is caused by how we view a child. As long as a girl has not yet come of age, she will be considered to be a child but the moment she attains puberty, people around start seeing her to be ready for marriage. Young and old men start chasing after her. Respondent from group A and C.

#### Economic, social, legal and cultural causes of child marriage

When asked what the causes of child marriage were, the respondents gave social, economic, legal and cultural causes.

Respondents from the staff made a revelation about the existing traditional beliefs. He said the following;

There is a belief that once a girl reaches puberty, they have automatically become of age and are ready to be taken up for marriage. Another traditional practice that we are battling with is that once a girl gets pregnant, they are automatically married off. Families see this as a way of shifting responsibilities of taking care of that girl and her pregnancy to the man and his family. (Group D)

Another respondent from the girls group said that it was not only the customary definition but also some of the existing traditions. It is important to note elongation of the labia minora is revered and such, the researcher could not verify the claims made by the girls with the other participants. It is considered to be uncultured to discuss elongation of the labia minora with members of the opposite sex, the elderly among others.

Once a girl reaches the age of 10 to 11, she is taught to start pulling her labia minora as a way of elongating them. She is told that she will not get married without them and even if she gets married, her husband will leave her and go after different women. Because of this, we girls grow up knowing stuff that we should not know when we are still young. By the time we reach puberty, we start experimenting with the labia minora to see for ourselves if they serve a purpose. Another girl added that during the process of experimenting, they can get pregnant and then made to marry the man or boy responsible for the pregnancy. (Group A and B).

The findings also revealed that some community members still practice *nkolola* (initiation ceremony) where the girls who have come of age are taken to seclusion for about a month or so where they are taught how to take care of a man during sexual intercourse. During this period, they are also asked to pull their labia minora and are taught erotic dances which are to be performed during an encounter with a man. Afterwards, a big public feast is hosted in honour of the girls who have come of age and many people come to watch the girls perform the dances that were taught to them. The respondents from groups A and B all said that most girls get married afterwards as many men become interested in them as well as some girls losing interest in going back to school and instead wanting to get married and practice what they were taught. However, the respondents did say that even though this ceremony is not as common as it used to be a few years ago, there are some families that still practice it.

The findings further revealed about the economic factors that lead to poverty and all the participants agreed that poverty was the main economic contributing factor.

Families will see it as a way of gaining monetary, or materials.  
Respondent from (Group D)

Some girls get married because they want to have material things that their parents cannot offer them. Respondent from group A and B.

Hunger at home and lack of money to continue with education. For example, I was married off at the age of 14 years because my father was very sick and we had no money to buy food at home and to take him to the hospital. So my family decided that I get married in order for them to raise some money

The social factors included discrimination of a girl child and lack of opportunities for girls compared to the boys. One of the respondents said families will do anything to safeguard their daughter but a male child is given freedom to do whatever he wants compared to a female child. Furthermore, it was revealed that a girl is taught how to take care of a home, be a good mother and good wife while the male child is not taught anything at all. The values that are instilled in a girl child are those that will not empower her but will further weaken her against her brothers. Some of respondents did say that some girls decide to get married in order to gain freedom and independence by leaving their parents' home.

Findings revealed that child marriage inhibits the girls from completing their primary and secondary education and this contributes to lack of development in the communities and the continued poverty that they experience.

Once you get married, then you cannot continue going to school as you have to take care of your house, husband and children (group A and B).

Child marriage has contributed to the high rate of illiteracy and the high number of school drop outs in this community. And because of this, most people do not value education as a tool to combating poverty. Apart from having profound effects on education, it has led to a high rate of infant mortality rate and young girls having a lot of children before they even attain the age of 20 and in most cases, you find that the children they give birth suffer from ailments such as malnutrition (group B).

The existence of the dual legal system in our country is also a leading cause of child marriage. The two laws contradict themselves. For instance, our customary law allows the betrothal of a girl child who has come of age. Another cause is lack of a uniform definition of a child in our statutory law. Different pieces of legislation have different definitions of who a child is, so this creates an opportunity for child marriage to take place (Group D).

Well, here in our community, we do not have the heavy presence of law enforcers and interpreters like the Police. The Police post that we have has limited man power and our community is so vast. We try our best as community volunteers but what we can offer is not what the Police can offer. So this lack of law enforcers causes child marriages in our community (Group C).

## Effects of child marriage

The study revealed the effects of child marriage to be high rates of school drop outs, cycle of poverty, health complications, domestic violence and gender inequality. All the respondents did indicate that child marriage does lead to an impoverished community and its causes also fall under its effects. They said that as long as child marriage is not eliminated, development will never take place and community members will continue to live in poverty, have limited education, unplanned children as well as high maternal and infant mortality rates.

### 1.1 Discussion and Analysis

The studies revealed that the causes of child marriage are socio-economical such as poverty, gender inequality, culture and traditions. The socio-economical causes of child marriage derived from the study affirm the causes that were revealed in a study conducted by Fischer et al (2015) in some districts of Zambia. According to the findings of that research, poverty was cited as a cause of child marriage where a parents decide to marry of their girl child notwithstanding the fact that she is not yet of legal age. The findings revealed that through marrying off a girl child, parents gain financially when bride pride is paid. The findings confirm Hodgkinson (2016) and World Vision (2014) who reported that poverty is one of leading causes of child marriage as most parents prefer to marry off their girl child in exchange of bride price. And once they marry off their girl child, the cycle of poverty becomes perpetuated as the girl child will also likely marry off her in future.

In addition to poverty been a cause of child marriage, the findings also indicated that lack of education and low literacy levels also contribute to child marriage. Parents who less educated are more likely to marry off their girl child as they do not understand the importance of education nor do they understand the risks factors associated with child marriage. According to the study findings, children with a parent or guardian that is not get educated or has a low education did not feel motivated to continue with education and opt to drop out of school and get married just like their relatives who got married before them. These findings agree with Parsons et al (2015) as well as Fischer et al (2015) on lack of education opportunities on been one of the causes of child marriage.

Another cause of child marriage that the study reviewed was discrimination of a girl child. According to the study findings, most parents prefer marrying off their girl child while they educate the boy child. A girl child is seen to be a source of income as well as waste of income if educated as she will be married off and join her husband's families. The findings confirm Birech (2013)'s assertions a boy child is preferred over a girl child as a girl child is seen as a commodity.

The study also indicated the role that culture and tradition have on causing child marriage. According to the study findings, there are tradition practices that are demeaning to a girl child and exposes her to the risk of child marriage. Elongation of the labia minora is one of these traditions where a girl as young as 10 is asked to start pulling her labia minora as it is believed to provide more sexual pleasure to the man. Once the girl start pulling, she gets enticed to start experimenting on them which can later result into early pregnancy which in turn will lead to her becoming a child bride. The studies also reviewed that it is a big shame for a family to have unwed mother in the family hence, many parents opt to marry off the girl to the man responsible. Another tradition is one that is called nkolola (female initiation ceremony) and this ceremony not only exposes the girl child to child marriage but also exposes her to early pregnancy which



will later result in child marriage. Similar findings to the above have been reported by Girls Not Brides (2015).

The findings also revealed the effects that child marriage has on a girl child which confirm the findings from previous studies conducted by Anand and Singh (2015), Raj (2010) and other researchers.

From a human rights approach perspective, the governmental policies and programmes aimed at addressing child marriage and protecting the rights of a girl child have a lot of gaps towards in them. It is evident from the findings of the study that

According to intersectionality theory, when gender, age, class, culture, geographical location and education background intersect, then the children are made vulnerable to child marriage. As the findings indicate, child brides are identified by their age, gender as child marriage mostly affects girl, their social class since the practice mostly affects those from low social and income class. All these causes of child marriage intersect and form multiple identities resulting in young girls with these identifies suffering abuse and having their rights violated.

## 5.2 To Investigate and analyse the empowerment strategies used by the organization to empower a girl child.

Under this specific aim, the following themes were developed;

- ✓ Educational empowerment
- ✓ Economic empowerment
- ✓ Health empowerment

### Educational Empowerment

The findings indicate that providing educational opportunities to the girl child is one of the major strategies that are used to empower a girl child. The findings indicate that Plan Zambia has built schools in the communities it operates. Nonetheless, these schools are run by the government of the republic of Zambia.

Plan has built us schools so our children no longer have to walk long distances to get to school (group C).

Apart from building us schools, they have some children that are known as sponsored children whose sponsors are abroad and send money for the school supplies (group C).

Education is a key to success and because of education, I was able to leave my husband and go back to school and I have now learnt to read and to write and I am able to make sound financial decision and I want to finish my school so that I can be a teacher and be able to teach others. (group A)

Plan's sponsorship programme is helping me be in school and get my education. Before when I was just staying all day, I would go out to meet my boyfriend but right now I do not have time for boys and I do not even want to think of marriage as I just want to complete my primary education and go to a boarding school. (group A)

The findings revealed that education is the key to unlocking a girl child's potential and enhance her wellbeing and that it has given her more power than before. The study also revealed that education has led to awareness of the rights that a girl child has and has contributed to enabling a girl child to participate in decisions affecting her.

### Economic Empowerment

The findings revealed that apart from providing educational opportunities to girls, Plan is also providing economic opportunities to girls. This economic empowerment is provided to the girls under the guardianship of their parents. The parents and the girls are first trained in conducting a business and managing finances before they are empowered economically. According to the findings, this is to ensure that the opportunity been provided are sustainable and not short lived. It was further revealed that once profit is realized from the economic opportunities provided, then another set of girls is given the same opportunities. According to the respondents, the 'pass on' project is proving to be a good idea of economic empowerment where when one group of girls is empowered, they pass on that empowerment to another group.

I was one of the first girls to be empowered economically under the girl power project. After we realized profits from our small income generating activity, we passed on the capital to another group of girls. (Group B).

Apart from empowering the girls economically, we do conduct workshops on financial management and accountability because we believe that for this project to be sustainable, the girls have to take ownership and have to be business minded and disciplined to generate more income and keep the project going so that their young sisters and children can benefit and be part of the project. We also involve their parents and other family members to ensure that the profits derived from the empowerment scheme are not put to waste. (Group D).

### Health Empowerment

In addition to the economic and education empowerment strategies, the findings of the study also reveal that Plan uses access to health services and information as a strategy to empower a girl child as a means to prevent and end child marriage.

The organization has provided us with youth friendly corners at the health centres that allows us to get health information and services such contraceptive pills to avoid early and unwanted pregnancies which can lead to our parents marrying us off (group A).

As an organization, we believe that health empowerment is as important as education empowerment. This is why we have built health centres in our communities and even though these health centres are run by the government through the Ministry of Health, we have made it a policy to ensure that we support a youth friendly corner at these health centres. We have trained community members who work in partnership with government workers to provide information and services such as contraceptives to the girls in the community. Our aim is to reduce the

number of unwanted pregnancy that normally lead to child marriage. (group D).

### 5.2.1 Analysis and Discussion

According to the findings, education was cited to be the key to empowering a girl child as a means of combating child marriage. When a girl child is given education, she is empowered to make meaning full decisions and participate in issues affecting her. The research findings indicated education opportunities are empowering girls to be able to claim their rights, be able to recognize before it takes place. Education empowerment has enabled child brides to be able to go back to school. The findings correspond with Lee-Rife (2011) et al's research findings where education was cited to be a strategy for empowering girl as a means of ending child marriage. The findings also indicated that the re-entry education policy that the government introduced years back that allows girls who stopped due to pregnancy or child to be enrolled back in school, has seen a number of former child brides going back to school. It indicated that some girls who fall pregnant outside are not married off but are taken back to school a year after giving birth.

All the respondents said that empowering a girl child with education not only empowers her to end prevent child marriage but also to end the practice from happening to her future offspring. The respondents also linked education empowerment to economic and health empowerment. They noted that without education empowerment, one cannot be empowered economically nor health wise. The study also reviewed two other strategies that are equally important to use as tools towards ending child marriage and these were economic empowerment and health empowerment. According to the findings, girls who beneficiaries of Plan Zambia's projects are empowered economically in order to start income generating activities and once they realise profits, the capital is given to another group. Health empowerment is another strategy of ending child marriage. During the study, it was discovered that girls who has access to health services and care are not at risk of falling pregnant. Since early pregnancy is one of the causes of child marriage, the respondents were very happy to say that now girls can have access to health information and services to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

The above findings confirm Fischer et al's findings on the empowerment strategies used as means to prevent and end child marriage.

In reference to the above findings of this study under this specific aim, empowerment theory indicates that providing education, economic empowerment and health accessibility enables the girl child to have access to power and once they have access to power, they will change their thinking, and will influence others around them. They will also be enhanced to bring out social change in their community by championing child marriage.

The findings also indicate that child marriage is combated when a girl child's capabilities are enhanced and has access to her freedoms, reaches her full potential and is able to make her own decisions. This is evidenced from the findings where some child brides left their husbands after been empowered education wise and economic wise. Power also enables the girl child to make informed health choices to reduce the chances that might lead her into child marriage.

The capability approach just like empowerment enables the girl child to grow into a potential adult full of potential. According to the findings, empowering a girl child with education enables her to achieve a meaningful life that deters child marriage. A girl child just like a boy child possess capabilities that have to enhanced in order to ensure that she enjoys her life, free

from rights' violation and abuse and can subsequently contribute to the eradication of child marriage and development of the national.

According to the human rights based approach, the findings of the study under this aim are in line with the requirements of the approach. Making education and health services easily accessible and claimed by the right holder is a clear indication of a rights based approach. Empowering the girls with education, health services and information and economics increases their participation level which is right, their right to survival and development as well that ensuring that they are not discriminated against.

### 5.3 To investigate and analyse the benefits and importance of empowering a girl child as a strategy towards preventing and ending child marriage.

The research revealed that one of the benefits of empowering a girl child is increased knowledge on the dangers of child marriage as well that the awareness of rights that the girl child has. It was also revealed that girl empowerment programmes have significantly contributed to the participation level by girls in issues and decisions that affect them. It has also led to a lot of awareness on the rights that a girl child poses.

The advantages of empowering a girl child is that capability is enhanced not only to make good choices but to also participate in decision making both at home and at school. It also builds up her confidence to confront challenges that she might face later in life. (group D)

Another advantage of empowering a girl is that it keeps her busy for instance, education empowerment will make her be involved in extra school activities which will deter her from vices that might lead her into marriage. Empowerment is important in ending child marriage because you cannot end it without empowering a girl child. Once a girl child is empowered, she will be able to know her rights and claim them and enable her achieve her full potential. (group D). Making educational opportunities to gives me them moral to say no to child marriage. As an organization, we have realized that the school re-entry policy is becoming popular than before.

There are a lot of benefits of empowering us girls and some of them are we become independent. Before I joined empowerment scheme, I would miss school most of the times to go to farms and do casual job to enable me assist at home as my mother is indisposed and I am the eldest child. (group A)

Without providing us with these programmes most of here would have quit school to get married or even getting pregnant. These empowerment programmes have made it possible for some of us who were once married to go back to our parents' homes. (group B)

Another benefit is that it gives power to be who we want to be and also makes us to be better human beings. (group B)

The number of child marriage cases are now declining. I cannot give an exact number but we no longer a lot of cases as we should do. It is a working progress which requires constant monitoring. But definitely we as community crime protection unit members have seen an increase in a number of girls that are living their husbands to go back home and re-enter school or to just do some start up business with the proceeds they get from the economic empowerment project. (group C).

All the respondents did voice out that the empowering a girl should be the first to be taken towards combating child marriage. It was revealed that an empowered will more likely say no to marriage compared to who is not empowered. One of the respondents was delighted to share how his niece who had gotten married at the age of 14 years had left the marriage and was now enrolled in a boarding school in the city all because of girl empowerment programmes. The findings further indicated how many girls are now accessing health information services such as contraceptives, condoms and getting tested for HIV and AIDS. Though the respondents from group D did indicate that it is a working progress towards access to contraceptives, cervical and breast cancer screening and HIV and AIDs because of superstitions, misconceptions, stigmatization among others.

### 5.3.2 Analysis and Discussion

The study findings indicated that empowering a girl child delays child marriage, it stops it and slows it down. Empowered are more likely to make good life choices and are more likely to achieve their full potential. The study revealed that empowerment enabled some former child brides to leave their husbands and return to their parents' home. The study revealed that the reported cases of child marriage are declining compared to before the empowering girls.

Notwithstanding that Asrari (2015)'s study was on the role of education empowerment towards ending child marriage, its findings can still be related to the benefits and importance of using education empowerment as a tool towards ending child marriage. Even though the findings of that research had figures to show the outcome of the programme, its success are an indication that the benefits of education empowerment are high basic education completion rate. This policy can be compared to Zambia's education re-entry policy after pregnancy or marriage. The findings from the research indicate that more girls are now going back to school. Some of these girls are former child brides while some of them would have been married off due to early pregnancy had it not been for the empowering them with education.

Additionally, the findings from this study affirm the findings of the mid-term evaluative research for Population Council Zambia by Austria et al (2016). The findings of the evaluative research indicated an increase in the use of financial knowledge, grade school completion and use of sexual reproductive control inter-alia which is very similar to increased number of girls who access health services and information and who are making meaning financial decisions.

The theory of empowerment and the capability approach confirm that empowering a girl child with education, economics, health increases their personal and interpersonal power (Gutierrez, 1991) to enable her increase her capabilities, access and claim her rights, participate in decision making which in the gives her power over child marriage thus, contributing the eradication of child marriage.

From the human rights based approach, the benefits of using empowerment as a tool to end and prevent child marriage are that, the strategy is based on respect of the girl child's rights, takes her best interest into consideration allows her to participate in decisions affecting as well as a participant in the fight against child marriage. In addition, her right to survival and development is promoted and upheld.

#### 5.4 To examine and analyse the challenges that affect the fight against child marriage

Themes developed under this aim were as follows;

- ✓ Legal framework and limited legal resources
- ✓ Lack of educational opportunities.
- ✓ Poverty, geographical location
- ✓ Harmful traditional practices

##### Legal framework and limited legal resources

The findings indicated that the main challenges affecting the fight against child marriage is the existence of the dual legal system which is the customary and statutory laws.

Our dual legal system is a very huge setback when it comes to fighting child marriages and promoting girls' rights. As long as the two legal systems are not harmonized, the fight against child marriage will always be frustrating for us and the girl child as well. Let us take for instance the cultural aspect of child marriage, under the customary law, there is nothing wrong with marrying off a girl who has attained puberty as the law automatically qualifies her to a woman who is ready for marriage. So sometimes, you can sensitize and educate the community members on the dangers of child marriage but you will be met with a lot of resistance and reluctance because customary law allows child marriage to exist. And in a situation where the statutory and customary law overlap, the customary law prevails. And apart from the dual legal system, our statutory law does not have a unified definition of a child is. Each Act has its own definition and that brings about challenges in the fight against child marriage. We now have an amended constitution of 2016 whose definition is now in line with the universally accepted definition. However, there are other pieces of legislations that are very instrumental in combating child marriage but they have different definitions of who a child. (group D).

We sometimes get confused with which legal system to use especially when dealing with child marriage. And here in rural areas, we do not have judges to preside over court cases and other issues. Most cases are presided over by the village headman or headmen and we will analyse the issue at hand according to the customary law. This is the law that people are familiar with. So we hope that one day, the harmful stipulations of the customary law will be replaced with some stipulations from the statutory law. (group C).

##### Harmful traditional and cultural practices



The responses from the Groups C and D of the respondents all agreed on the existence of the dual legal system as the biggest challenge towards combating child marriage. It was also indicated that harmful traditions and cultural practices also pose as challenges towards combating child marriage. These are traditions and cultures that have been practiced for generations and people identify themselves by their traditions and cultures.

As long as harmful traditional and cultural practices continue to exist, most girls our age will be ending up getting married before they finish school. For instance, labia elongation which our society prides itself in is a harmful practice that challenges child marriage. Another thing is this practice of marrying of girls once they fall pregnant. Another issue that is challenging to fighting child marriage is that our culture and tradition creates a communication between a daughter and her parents. We would like to have close relationships with our parents especially our fathers but our tradition and culture does not allow us to do so. So you find that most of our friends decide to get married to even older men, so that they get to have a relationship that they never had with their fathers. (Group A and B).

Misconception of what human rights are especially the rights of us children and even more, us girls. There has been a lot of misconception about rights in our community such that some parents think that rights are not a good thing as they make us, disobedient among others. What most parents and children do not realise is that our rights come with responsibilities. Most people have not been educated on the responsibilities that they have. (Group A and B).

The findings revealed that all groups of respondents view harmful traditional and cultural practices as factors frustrating the fight against child marriage. They also cited geographical location to be a factor challenging the promotion of girls rights to end child marriage. They indicated that been a rural community not connected to the national grid, no running water, no social amenities make it a challenge to end child marriage as they are not exposed to the knowledge that urban dwellers are exposed to. Furthermore, respondents from group C affirmed group A and B's views of misconception of what rights are and lack of understanding of the responsibilities that each person has towards safe guarding their rights. It was indicated that some girl children do not want to take their parents' advise of continuing with education against getting married. It was reviewed that as long as these rights are well understood by the right holders, then it will be difficult to combat marriage as some children who elope say that they have the right to make their decisions without realizing that secondary duty bearers such as parents have the right to decide what is best for the girl child.

#### Limited of educational opportunities, Poverty and geographical location

Furthermore, all the respondents cited poverty, low literacy levels, existence of gendered norms and social inequality to also be factors that inhibit combating child marriages.

We have a shortage of secondary schools. So after a girl children complete primary school, some get married as their parents cannot afford to send them a boarding school either in Chisamba, Chibombo or Kabwe. (Group A)

Poverty is a big challenge towards eliminating child marriage. Most parents marry off their children due to poverty. So as long as the community remains poor, we will continue to see the cases of child



marriage. Our location also disadvantages us a lot. When compared with town dwellers, town dwellers have access to information from phones and TV which we fail to access here in our community. Our villages are in remote areas and all we value in our villages are our customs and traditions. We do not have exposure to developmental progress as compared to town dwellers (Group C).

According to one of the respondents from the Group D, as long as these factors continue prevail in the community, the fight against child marriage will be a challenge and frustrating at the same time.

#### 5.4.1 Discussion and Analysis

The specific aim was to examine and analyse the challenges affecting the fight against child marriage. The findings indicated that there are challenges existing in the fight against child marriage and these challenges are as a result of institutional, social, economic as well as personal.

The institutional challenges are those challenges stemming from the gaps existing in the legal systems. The findings of the research indicated that the country has a dual legal system which is the statutory and customary law. From the findings of the research, it can be deduced that these two statutes contradict themselves. The findings revealed that there is a discrepancy in the definition of marriage between the two. UNFPA and Population Council (2016) reported that Zambia lacks a single definition of marriage and the findings from the researcher's study concurs with the report made by them.

Furthermore, Girls Not Brides and Plan Zambia (2015) also reported that there are existing discrepancies in the statutory law and this is affirmed by the findings of this study where the respondents indicated that the two systems always come into conflict when addressing child marriage and that, the customary law in most cases prevails over the statutory law. The respondents were correct to say these marriages that take place in rural areas are never registered with the civic centre but are conducted under customary law.

In addition to the above, the findings indicated that lack of educational opportunities such as a situation where a child has to walk long distances to school, lack of social amenities, poverty. It was reviewed that poverty plays a critical role in posing as a challenge towards combating child marriage. Respondents saw poverty to be at centre of child marriage and cited that as long poverty prevails, the efforts against child marriages will be deemed fruitless. The findings of this research affirms Fischer et al (2015)'s findings that poverty is a challenge towards combating child marriage. Furthermore, the findings also agree with World Vision (2016) on poverty making child marriage to be an intergenerational practice.

The study also revealed that misconception or lack of understanding of what rights are have is a challenge towards eradicating child marriage and they confirm Fischer et al (2015)'s findings on some people trying to resist messages on rights especially children's rights. The researcher's findings indicated there is a gap between understanding having rights and having responsibilities. From the findings of the research, it can be deduced that, some community members object rights because they have not been made aware about the existence of responsibilities that come with the rights.

Notwithstanding that the previous research, did not reveal traditional and cultural practices to be challenges affecting the fight against child marriage, the researcher's findings did indicate that there existing traditional and cultural practices that are harmful and detrimental to a girl child and as long as these traditions and cultures are practiced, then combating child marriage will continue to be faced with challenges. The findings did actually reveal that most community members value these practices as they have been passed down from one generation to the other and they see them to be part of their lifestyle. According to the research findings, there is no way child marriage will completely end as long as harmful still exist and are still practices due to the fact these practices do encourage the practice of child marriage.

Basing the findings on the human rights based approach, the findings can be understood not to be in line with the conceptual framework of the approach. According to the approach, the duty bearers must ensure that right holders have access to claim their rights however, the Zambian government which is the main duty bearer has not put enough efforts to domesticate the CRC and CEDAW. The existence of the dual legal system with its conflicting laws as well as the discrepancies within the statutory law is clear indication that the country has not domesticated the laws. Additionally, the human rights based approach asserts that the best interest of the child should be take precedence above all other things. However, the findings indicate that the best interest of the child have not been considered of paramount importance as evidenced in the lack of the unified definition of a child which is in line with the universal definition.

The theory also asserts that there is an interaction between laws and policies which are insufficient and this interaction subsequently affects the fight against child marriage which in turn has a negative effect on the rights and welfare of a girl child. The theory further confirms that existing laws do not completely protect a girl child from discrimination and right violation.

## 6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, there are gaps in the academic research on girl empowerment and child marriage. The study attempted to investigate the significance of empowerment as a strategy towards preventing and ending child marriage. According to the findings of the study, empowerment should be the tool that should be used prevent and end child marriage alongside the CRC, CEDAW and other national and regional treaties relevant to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Child rights must be promoted and the rights of a girl child must be protected. A girl child should not be viewed as a commodity but as a dignified human being who should not be discriminated against. The governments been the duty bearers must coordinate efforts with various stakeholders such as the UN and NGOs to ensure that policies and laws enable right holders to claim their rights.

The empowerment strategy to be used must not only focus on education alone but must also focus on the social, economic and health promotion. And this empowerment strategy must be sustainable for many years to come.

The governments in countries where child marriage is prevalent must ensure that the relevant international laws are domesticated into the pieces of legislation of their countries to ensure that they speak the same language. At the same time, harmful cultural and traditional practices must be abolished and replaced with good practices that will contribute to the 2030 goal of eradicating child marriage.

Social Work profession must get on board to ensure that a girl child is empowered and protected from child marriage.

## Recommendations

The following are the recommendations

- ✓ There is need for future research on best practices to prevent and end child marriage.
- ✓ The government and its stakeholders should quicken the process of harmonizing the dual legal system.
- ✓ The Parliament of the Republic of Zambia should adopt the Marriage Bill of 2015.
- ✓ More sensitization and awareness programmes to be implemented in communities where child marriage is practiced.
- ✓ The government should come up with policies that will empower communities in order to address the underlying issues of child marriage

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# Appendices

## Categorization of respondents

Group	Type of Respondents
A	School going girls between the ages of 13 and 18
B	Former child brides between the ages of 13 and 18
C	Community volunteers under Plan International Zambia
D	Plan International Zambia members of staff

## Interview Guides



Dear Respondent,

My name is Namwiinga Chitempa, a student in Masters of Social Work and Human Rights at the University of Gothenburg, in Sweden. I am doing a study on Empowering a girl child as strategy towards preventing and eliminating child marriage.

The aim of the research is to investigate and analyse the significance of using empowerment as a strategy towards preventing and ending child marriage in Zambia. The information obtained will provide an insight as to the progress that is been made towards a goal of ending child marriage by 2030 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals among others.

I therefore ask for your help by answering the questions in the interview guide. The information generated from the study will be documented and will serve as recommendations to develop policies, interventions and legal frameworks towards ending child marriage by 2030. A copy of the report will be available to you through the office of your Plan Zambia CDF.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are the causes and consequences of child marriage?
2. What are the strategies that the organization is using to empower a girl child?
3. What is the importance of empowering a girl child and what are the benefits of empowerment on preventing and ending child marriage?
4. What are the challenges affecting the promotion of girls' rights towards preventing and ending child marriage?

## **Interview Guide for Community Volunteers**

### ***Causes of child marriage and consequences***

1. Can you describe the socio-economic demographics of the community you live in?
2. What do you understand by child marriage and how common is it?
3. What are some of reasons why parents marry off their daughters?
4. What risks come about as a result of child marriage?

### ***Empowerment strategies***

1. What do you understand by the term empowerment?
2. What empowerment strategies do you know?
3. What are some the empowerment strategies that Plan Zambia is using to empower a girl child?

### ***Benefits and importance of empowerment***

1. Why should girls in your community be empowered?
2. What are the benefits of empowering a girl child as means towards preventing and eliminating child marriage?
3. Why is it important that girls should be empowered in order to end child marriage?
4. Do you think empowering a girl can contribute to ending child marriage?

### ***Challenges***

1. What challenges do you face as community volunteers and community members in promoting, advocating and protecting the rights of a girl child in your community? How do you address those challenges?
2. Are there any factors that pose as a challenge to preventing and ending child marriage in your communities? If so, state them.
3. Do you work in partnership with your traditional leaders such as the village headmen and the chief to try and address those challenges? If yes, at what level do you involve them, if not, what could be the reason?
4. Do you get any support from Plan Zambia in terms of addressing the challenges? If yes, what kind of support. If not, what could be the reasons?

## **Interview Guide for Plan International Zambia Staff**

### ***Causes and Consequences of Child Marriage***

1. Can you describe the community you work in terms of socio-economic demographic?
2. What is child marriage and who is a child? How do you understand it?
3. Does child marriage exist in the community you work in? If so how prevalent is it?
4. What are the factors that lead to child marriage?
5. How does child marriage affect a girl child?

### ***Empowerment Strategies***

1. What is empowerment? What is the organization's definition of the term?
2. What strategies do you use as an organization in order to empower a girl child as a means towards preventing and ending child marriage?
3. Are these empowerment strategies supported by the human rights based approaches?

### ***Benefits of Empowerment***

1. Is there any relationship between empowerment and child marriage? If so, how does empowerment effect child marriage?
2. Do you think it is important to promote empowerment towards child marriage prevention? If yes, what are the advantages of empowering a girl child towards preventing and ending child marriage?
3. How do you perceive ending child marriage by 2030? Is it something that can be achieved by empowering girl?

### ***Challenges***

1. Are there any challenges that you face in your work of promoting the rights of a girl child towards preventing and ending child marriage? If yes, what are the challenges?
2. What measures has the organization put forth to address these challenges?
3. Can these challenges inhibit achieving the goal of ending marriage by 2030 if not addressed?
4. Are your organization's efforts in ending child marriage by 2030 adequate? If they are, describe the adequacy.

## **Interview Guide for the Rights Holders (The Girl Children)**

### ***Causes and effects of child marriage***

1. What do you understand by the term child?
2. What do you understand by the term child marriage?
3. What causes child marriage in your community?
4. Are you in school? If yes, what grade are you doing? If not, what are the reasons?
5. What the consequences of child marriage on you as a girl child?

### ***Empowerment strategies***

1. Do you know what empowerment is? If yes, in what ways can a girl be empowered?
2. Is Plan Zambia implementing any empowerment programmes in your community?
3. What methods in Plan Zambia using to empower you as a girl child?

### ***Benefits of Empowerment***

1. Do you think it is important for girls your age to be empowered? If yes, why?

2. Can empowering a girl child prevent and end child marriage?
3. What are some of the benefits of empowering a girl that you see around in your community?
4. Do you think the organization should continue empowering a girl child in order to end child marriage?

### ***Challenges***

1. Are there challenges you see in your community that hinder the prevention and elimination of child marriage?
2. If yes to number 1, what are some of these challenges?
3. Do they have an effect on your life as a girl child?
4. What action do you think should be taken by the government and duty bearers to ensure that the challenges are tackled and that child marriage is eradicated by 2030?