ZIMBABWE LAWYERS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Fostering a culture of human rights

The Legal Monitor

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What's inside

Catching them young

Children are taking the lead in pointing out the evils of child marriages in an area where many of them are forced to abandon school to assume motherhood...

PAGE 1

And the winners are…

Chipo Mufambi aged 15 years, a Form 3 student at Chipangayi High School walked away with the first prize at the award giving ceremony of a schools essay...

PAGE 1-4

In pictures

Joy and celebration characterised the prize giving ceremony held in Chipinge, where three students from Chipangayi High School and Rimbi High School emerged as winners of a schools essay competition...

PAGE 4

Catching them young

…Students tackle child marriages in essay competition

CHIPINGE-Children are taking the lead in pointing out the evils of child marriages in an area where many of them are forced to abandon school to assume motherhood.

Chipinge district in Manicaland province is one of the areas worst affected by child marriages, a problem that has worsened since the outbreak of coronavirus and subsequent government enforced lockdowns and economic problems.

As part of efforts to eradicate the scourge, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) in partnership with Platform for Youth and Community Development (PYCD) decided to engage school children by introducing an essay competition focusing on child marriages in Chipinge district.

Students drawn from Chipangayi, Rimbi, Checheche and Takawira High schools participated in the competition under the topic: "Child marriages, causes and effects. Towards ending child marriages by 2030".

The quality of entries was high, judges of the schools essay competition said, highlighting how young people could turn from victims to become effective agents of change. Out of the 37 participants, three emerged as the best.

"Chipinge District was particularly chosen because of the high number of child brides and the impact of early marriages in that community," said Peggy Tavagadza, ZLHR Regional Manager for Manicaland and Masvingo provinces.

Tavagadza said a call for interested young people in schools to participate was made in June 2021 with the assistance of PYCD, a community-based organisation.

The schools essay competition not only provided young people an opportunity to proffer solutions, but, also be part of documenting the actual impact of child marriages as experienced and seen from the young people's lenses, said Tavagadza.

"The schools essay competition also availed, through the prizes given, an incentive for the young people to engage in national processes and discourses so that their voices are amplified, counted and heard," Tavagadza said.



First runner-up... Precious Majede of Rimbi High School


Overall Winner...Chipo Mufambi of Chipangayi High School


Second runner-up Nyasha Mandiyamba of Chipangayi High School

The objectives of the competition were to interrogate perceptions of young people on effects and impact of child marriages in Zimbabwe, to provide a platform for secondary students to write and possibly proffer solutions towards ending child marriages by 2030 and to gather evidence on the experiences of young people and access the factors they believe should be addressed to end child marriages.

And the winners are…

CHIPINGE-Chipo Mufambi aged 15 years, a Form 3 student at Chipangayi High School walked away with the first prize at the award giving ceremony of a schools essay *Continued on Page 4*

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Netherlands

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Chipo Mufambi

39/50 = 78%

CHIPO MUFAMBI

078 283 4892

CHIPANGAVI SECONDARY SCHOOL

F3

THE HEAD CHIPANGAVI SEC. SCHOOL 2021-06-4 P.BOX 340 CHIPINGE

"Child marriages, causes and effects. Toward ending child marriages by 2030."

A child marriage is a marriage entered in by an individual before reaching the age of eighteen. It is either formally arranged, when there is consent of parents and family membe or entered into informally. Child marriages affec both girls and boys though girls are mostly affec In many cases of child marriage, one parther is child and it is usually a girl. Child marriages i abuse of human rights. The Bible even prohibi child abuse. Jesus offered protection and blessings to the children, not abuse.

There are a number of causes of child marr which include social and religious pressure, cultur and tradition, illiteracy, premarital sex, gende inequalities, poverty and fear of remaining unmarr although it is uncommon. Places which are mostly affected by this problem are Africa, some parts of Asia and Latin America.

Poverty is a definite cause of child marriages. Parents might marry off their child, a female as a means of survival in form of the dowry they are given. The child can also willingly get married in order to escape poverty with knowing the consequences thereafter. This is common in low and middle income countries

marriages. Artisanal miners lure young girls into having sex. This leaves them expos to sexually transmitted diseases and teena pregnancies. They might end up getting marri This is then a difficulty to them because th would be too young to perform their responsib as a married couple.

Culture, tradition, social and religious pressure can push young girls into marriages. Most families and communities have a mentality th a girl child is a burden to the family and he only fate is to get married and be a housewife They end up denying the girl child basic rights such as education and the right to choose one's future partner. Some church denominatio even allow young girls to be married off. The young girls would be send to virgin testing and the virgins would be most likely to be taken for marriage- despite how young they are. Some religions do it for protection.

Child marriages have their consequences. The best interests of the girl child involved in the marriage are forgotten. Just like everybody else, the girl has hopes and dreams that she needs to fullfil Because of marriage, she is cut short of her dreams hence missing her opportunities. Many girls who get married early drop out of school and by doing so, they stunt their intellectual growth. Their offspring are most likely to become

illiterate too.

Being married while still a child can end up causing health complications. Their health is pu at risk as they contract sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and also the girls mental well-being is affected. There is also the threat of infant and maternal mortality during child bearing. The young mother's body is not ready for child bearing which is a task her body and mind is not prepared f

Child marriages often lead to domestic abuse and violence which may lead to post-traum post-tramautic-stress. Household responsibilit fall on the child bride even though she is not mentally and physically ready for it. Because she would be young, the responsibilities of a married woman would be a challenge to her. She would want to play with her peers and also taking care of a child would be difficult for her because she is also a child who needs to be taken c care of. Her lack of understanding and reasoning a married woman would make the husband angr with making him violent with her.

In order to eliminate child marriages, we can raise awareness about the negative effects of child marriages and related human rights of girls to help change attitudes and strengthen duties of parents, guardians and communities to protect

the girl child. There should be the involvement of m when discussing issues concerning the welfare o a girl child so that both genders can work toget using different opinions to end child marriages

Use of laws to wipe out the case of child marri can also be done, laws can be put in place in favour of protecting and supporting the girl c boy in child marriages. Child marriages is cri a crime and whoever marries a child consensua or forcefully sh should have the law act upon hi The laws that would have been put in place t deal with the a case of child marriages shou be popularized so that they are made well known by everyone especially in rural areas where the situation is most common.

We cannot depend on legislation alone to annihilate this situation. Girls can be empowere through supportive networks such as UNICEF high-quality education and information and skills on how to develop themselves. Girls should be encouraged to make themselves liter and independent.

As youths, we can go door to door talking to people and encouraging them to help stop chil marriages in our community. We can even star a committee that deals with supporting girl children with education and some basic necessitie such as food. Since we are all teenagers we

know the challenges and temptations we face and we can help each other to overcome them

By eradicating poverty we can help to solve problems of child marriages as it is a major cause. In order to do so, income generatin projects can be done by young girls to help themselves. For example, CAMFED helps girls with projects like rearing broilers for ea which helps the girl.

As a society we can start a child protection committee which is extremely strict with prote minors from child marriages. This committee should be fierce one which does not take any considerations of cases of child marriages and bribes. Their aim should be to stop child marriages immediately once and for all. Membe should be active even if the law takes no acti to enforce this issue of child marriages. Th should be brave and stand together raising their voices against child marriages.

To fully eradic eliminate child marriages by 2030 can be hard but if we work together we are most likely to succeed. Together we can achiere more.

Chipo Mufambi
Chipangayi Secondary School
Contact number 078 283 4892

The Marriage Act Chapter 5:17 which governs civil marriage, states that the minimum age for marriage is eighteen, when children would have reached adulthood. However, this Act is being violated, more often than not, wi impunity leading to multifarious negative effects of child marriages. Child marriages rob girls of normal childhood and the requisite education, thus limiting their opportunities or prospects and impacting on all aspects of girls' lives.

Girls are forced to have children before their bodies are fully grown, thereby leading to maternal deaths. Early exposure to reproductive responsibility like pregnancy and child bearing jeopardies children's health.

Intimacy with much older men, who have enjoyed conjugal rights with a multiplicity of women, expose the immature girls to a much higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, let alone, HIV and AIDS.

This also culminates in an increase in the number of people infected in the community and the country at large.

Child marriages force girls out of school and engender extrem poor prospects and put them at a much greater risk of violence and abuse. Gender Based Violence is common in child marriages as child brides are assaulted sadistically, even if they are heavily pregnant. This often leads to miscarriages, stress and even deaths of the child brides and their unborn babies.

Child Marriages, causes and effects: Towards ending child marriages by 2030: 35/50 = 70%

NAME OF STUDENT : MAJEDE PRECIOUS
CONTACT DETAILS : 0779883060
LEVEL OF EDUCATION : A LEVEL
NAME OF SCHOOL : RIMBI HIGH

Child marriages are premature marriages that underage girls wittingly or unwittingly enter before the legal age of consent. Child marriages are a violation of Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as several other Human Rights Treaties, notably; the Convention on the Rights of the child, the world's most widely ratified human rights agreement.

To start with, poverty is one of the major causes of child marriages. Some children are born of parents ensnared in grinding poverty such that these children's needs fail to get fulfilled. These children end up indulging in early marriag in the mistaken hope that marriage would be the panacea to their financial woes and material discomforts. Parents ma even unashamedly "sell" their underage children to affluent men as a way of escaping from the poverty trap.

Being orphaned and devoid of caring guardians also prompt child marriages. Some children lose one of their parents or both at tender ages. Their guardians may be uncaring and abusive, so these children run away from home after being tortured or beaten in satanic fashion. Some orphans are neglected by their relatives, leading to child-headed families. These children lack parental love, financial and material support and guidance, thus in the absence of solicitous guardians, they erroneously conjecture that they can turn to untimely marriages

for solace.

Additionally, religious and cultural beliefs play a role in causing child marriages. Some churches, for example Johane Marange Masowe violate the rights of children, as young girls are given away to very old men who already have their families comprising several elderly wives.

Some archaic and barbaric cultures do not value education and even claim that a girl must not reach twenty years without getting married, yet at such ages, girls ought to be pursuing their tertiary educational journeys.

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Precious Majede

Misunderstandings and domestic violence usually entail divor which aggravates the immature mother's plight and is like adding salt to a wound to the single unemployed mothe burdened with raising a family. The parents of the girl child are then forced to look after their divorced child an her child. Conflicts between parents of the girl child may also ensue as the mother will be accused of failing to tea her daughter.

Mentally or psychologically traumatized, child brides need counselling services since they always feel social isolation due to unwanted separation from their families and friends.

There is need for strict enforcement of policies and prohibitive penalties for barefaced culprits to ensure tha girls are protected from child marriages. Child Protection Laws need to be harmonised as a matter of urgency to close t gap on laws. that many perpetrators use to depend themselves after sexually violating girls. The culprits of

of child marriages must be apprehended and incarcerated.

Protection from violence, abuse and exploitation is essential in order to ensure children's survival and their continued health, development as they grow towards childhood and full citizenship. There must be a holistic intervention on child marriages. Comprehensive sexuality education should be given to adolescents and youths to understand their bodies so that they delay sexual debuts.

Religious practices which violate children's rights must be totally banned. Child marriages ought to be annulled, and future ones must be thwarted before they see the light of day. The Malawian Chief, Theresa Kachindamoto annulled more than eight hundred and fifty marriages in Dedza District a few years ago, and this writer is of the view that if our own leaders take such decisive, drastic measures, child marriages would cease.

The Social Welfare Ministry must implement full-blooded programmes which help towards ending child marriages. Those already implemented must operate meticulously towards ending child marriages, for example, Plan International Zimbabwe empowers girls affected by child marriages through the "Because I am a girl" campaign and more of such laudable lobbies should be undertaken.

To combat the affliction of child marriages, stakeholders should come up with more robust programmes that contribute to ending child marriages in Zimbabwe. Child marriages should be tackled at financial, social, personal and

should be tackled at financial, social, personal and

material level by focusing on girls' empowerment and agency building, influencing transformation and change of attitudes.

The commendable Second Chance Education Programme must be expanded and implemented with more robustness. However, girl children must be advised against abusing the second chance initiative by not getting involved in early marriages just because of the Second Chance Programmes.

Child marriages must be criminalised through the amendmen of the Children's Act by the legislature to align it with the constitution. This would indubitably frustrate the paedophiles of this nation from manipulating constitutional flaws in order to legitimize their dastardly or villainous acts.

NYASHA MANDIYAMBA 37/50 = 75%
F3

07761816092

CHIPANGAYI SECONDARY SCHOOL

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CHIPANGAYI SEC. SCHOOL
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CHIPINGE

"Child marriages, causes and effects. Towards ending child mar by 2030"

Children marriage is a system whereby a girl under the of is is married off willingly or unwillingly to young men older man. Child marriages affects both boys and girls i the most affected gender are girls.

The issues of child marriages is very rife in most African communities owing to some cultural and religious beliefs and norms, persistent poverty, inadequate knowle and information and attitude of the family or community

We hear an outcry of girls being married off at an such tender age due to poverty. In order to sustain a living, th parents practise betrothal or child marriage. Parents w give their children in marriage before they are born o when they are still young.

Apart from that, child marriages are manifested through low representation in leadership and decision making position in both public and community thus leadin to child labour and over representation in the femal societies. Girls are seen as a burden in society an it is believed that their fate is for them to get married.

Moreover, religious practices and customs influence child marriages. Due to skewed customs and traditions, gir are forced to be married at an early age. They are, offered the right to choose the men they want to be married to. Rather, the family chooses a husband for

the young girls. This is done as a way of strengthening relationships between families socially and economicall In most cases, the girls are denied education as their families reason that they do not deserve to acquire education as their sole duty is to get married.

Premarital sex leads to early marriages since girls wil have reached the puberty stage which exposes them to the snares of predatory men. With the use of contraceptive girls are lured into early sexual intercourse. They are initiated into early sexual activity and they are promi heaven and earth by the men. The result is they ent into marriages at an early age only to realise lat that marriages hurriedly got into is a bed of thorn with enormous responsibilities too heavy for their immature minds and too demanding from their physical immature bodies

Inspite of the legal commitment to gender equal at regional, international and national levels, girl Zimbabwe face myriad of challenges in the pol social and economic spheres as a consequence of gend inequality manifestation of gender inequality. Include the violence against women and girls which poses major challenge to their advancement and empower high rates of teenage pregnancies, high rate of sch drop outs and high vulnerability of adolescent girls a also child labour.

Child brides often become mothers at an early ag thus soon after marriage, they face pressure fro their husbands and in-laws, their family and the wide community to prove their fertility.

Furthermore, due to child marriages, there is a high ra teenage pregnancies which is quite dangerous for teenage children. When girls bear children while they are still chil themselves their lives are put at risk. Complications, pregnancy and child birth are the leading cause of d in girls aged 15-19 in low and middle income countrie Girls who give birth between the age of 15 and 19 are much more likely to die in child birth than girls in their early 20s. Those under the age of 15 are at eve greater risk. When these child brides survive child bir they remain at risk of health complications.

Apart from that, there is high drop out rate of girls especially in Secondary school due to early marriage The girls leave school and miss a golden opportunity to improve their future and concentrate on their new formed relationship.

Child marriages also lead to child labour which harm children as they try to earn a living for their famil It will be difficult for young mothers to go throug the process of resolving labour-related disputes which they arise with the employers.

In addition, there is also high rate of vulnerability of adolescent girls who are sexually abused. When eve a man meet a girl, they see a sexual item. They do not dream of anything else other than sleeping with a girl or even marrying one. It is true that a girl might have reached puberty stage and a budd chest which can mislead them into early sexual inte However, this delusion has disastrous consequences. A adolescence stage children should be focusing on educa and their future lives and not on indulgence and marri affairs.

There are many solutions which can be implemented to eradicate child marriages. Under the age framework of education, the government should support efforts to pr equality in education particularly for all children and The government must ensure that all children are in s this will complement efforts to eliminate the worst fo of child marriages and child labour. Children must not admitted into employment and work in line with ILO conventions.

African leadership is also essential in harnessing attention to effectively prevent and eliminate child marriages. To achieve this goal, there must be concre changes nationally and locally. A girl is still a ch and should be protected. All excuses that one can giv be they are religious or traditional they translate t child abuse at its worst. Any soul under the age majority must be considered a child and nothin more. Sleeping with or marrying a child is tantam to rape and one who does such an act should be

Since marrying an under aged child is illegal, the should be peaceful and inclusive societies which promotes a sustainable development in societie There should be access for to justice for all and

zero tolerance to child marriages in our country.

Nyasha mandiyamba
Chipangayi secondary school
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In Pictures

CHIPINGE-Joy and celebration characterised the prize giving ceremony held in Chipinge, where three students from Chipangayi High School and Rimbi High School emerged as winners of a schools essay competition under the topic "Child marriages, causes and effects. Towards ending child marriages by 2030" from 37 students, who participated.

Below, *The Legal Monitor* captured the award ceremony which was attended by students, teachers, parents, community leaders and representatives from Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights and Platform for Youth and Community Development.









And the winners are...

Continued from Page 1

competition aimed at raising awareness on the dangers of child marriages and to sensitise communities on the law regarding child marriages.

The schools essay competition, organised by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) in partnership with Platform for Youth and Community Development Zimbabwe (PYCDT) and was supported by the Royal Netherlands Embassy, was held for schools in Chipinge district in Manicaland province, one of the areas recording high numbers of child marriages.

Mufambi received US$150 for tuition fees, US$100 for uniforms, US$50 for stationery and a shield after a panel of five judges that included two secondary school teachers, a lawyer and a community development worker declared her the winner.

Precious Majede of Rimbi High School came out second. She received US$150 for tuition, US$100 for purchasing school uniforms and a shield for her efforts. Nyasha Mandiyamba of Chipangayi High School received US$150 for tuition fees and US$50 worth of stationery and a trophy for coming out third.

At prize giving ceremonies held separately at Chipangayi High School and Rimbi High School, the three winners read out their essays in front of their peers, teachers, members of the school development committee, their parents and members from PCYDT, who included Claris Madhuku, the organisation's Team Leader and Director, Cynthia Gwenzi, the Gender Wellness and Advocacy Officer and Allan Murozvi, the Gender Wellness and Advocacy Assistant Officer.

A delegation from ZLHR, comprising of board member Langton Mhungu, Roselyn Hanzi, the Executive Director, Peggy Tavagadza, the Regional Manager for the organisation's Mutare office, which covers Manicaland and Masvingo provinces, ZLHR Programme Lawyer Moses Chikomo, ZLHR Programme Officer Kennedy Majamanda and Kumbirai Mafunda, the organisation's Communications Officer.

Chipo Mufambi aged 15 years, who is a Form 3 student at Chipangayi High School, received US$150 for tuition fees, US$100 for uniforms and US$50 for stationery for coming out first. Nyasha Mandiyamba, a Form 3 student at Chipangayi High School aged 16 years received US$150 for tuition fees and US$50 worth of stationery for settling for third position.

From Chipangayi High School, the ZLHR delegation went to Rimbi High School to present another prize to Precious Majede, a Form 6 student aged 19 years, who came out second from the competition. She also read her essay in front of her peers and received US$100 for tuition, uniforms in the sum of US$100 and US$50 for stationery.

"I want to be a lawyer," Mufambi, the winner told The Legal Monitor after the ceremony, adding that the competition had inspired her to commit more energy to schoolwork to achieve her dreams. The essays underscored the students' deep understanding of issues related to child marriages. The judges said the candidates showed that they were well versed with the causes, effects and solutions related to child marriages.

"The most touching part is that the learners have their colleagues who are victims of these disheartening acts particularly the girl child," said Peggy Tavagadza, ZLHR Regional Manager for Manicaland and Masvingo provinces. The participants managed to list the causes of child marriages, which include poverty, lack of education, religious beliefs, peer pressure, customary laws and beliefs, greed, rigidity and ignorance.

On the effects of child marriages, most participants managed to identify the following effects: emotional trauma, dropping out of school, domestic violence and health complications when giving birth. On solutions on how to curb child marriages by 2030, many participants suggested the following:

- having a holistic approach where every stakeholder is involved, which includes, learners, parents and guardians, the community, government, the teachers, non-governmental organisations, lawyers and the media
- awareness campaigns
- harsh penalties for paedophiles





