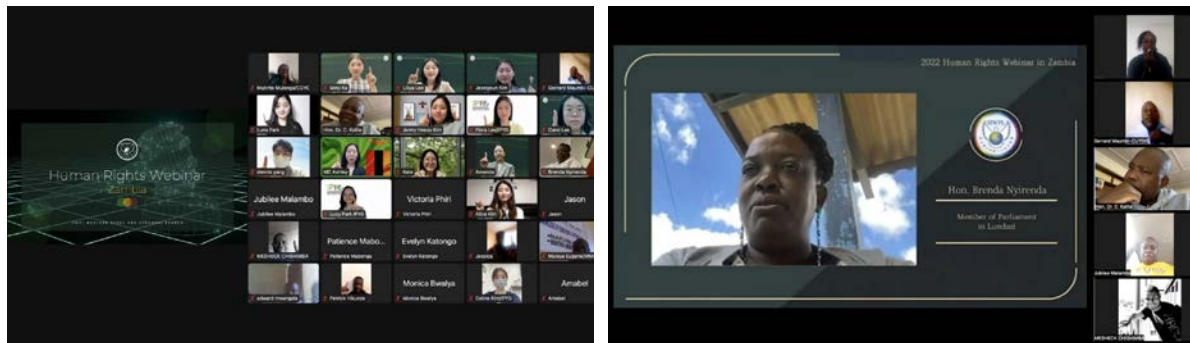




## WEBINAR REPORT

### “Human Rights Webinar in Zambia

- Discussions on the enactment of laws to solve the problem of early marriage and the roles of civil society”



**Date and Time:** Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 11:00-12:30 (Time in Zambia)

**Location:** Online (Zoom)

**Topics:** Discussions on the enactment of laws to solve the problem of early marriage and the roles of civil society

**Host:** HWPL Western Seoul & Gyeonggi Branch

**Speakers:** Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, Member of Parliament in Lukulu East  
Hon. Brenda Nyirenda, Member of Parliament in Lundazi  
Mr. Edward Muma Mwangala, Teacher of Zambezi Primary School  
Ms. Mutinta Mulenga, Founder of Chosen Generation Youth Club Solwezi(CGYC)

The Human Rights Webinar in Zambia was conducted to raise awareness for the problem of child marriage in the country, and the importance of human rights of children through education and the media. Active support and efforts by both the government and civil society were also emphasized as essential for raising awareness to these issues.

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*Code bill. So that once this is enacted, then we know exactly how to deal with this.*

**- Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, Member of Parliament in Lukulu East**

*"Education can help people to unlearn and change their behaviors by providing them with new insights to be enlightened. I believe the peace organization's education activities are really good to bring about change, but what is important is to involve the media as well. The media have to advocate progress so that everyone else can hear about it."*

**- Hon. Brenda Nyirenda, a member of parliament in Lundazi**

## **Introduction Webinar**

On April 30th, Human rights Webinar was held online by Heavenly Culture World Peace Restoration of Light (HWPL), a peace NGO in Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC, to discuss the enactment of laws to solve the problems of early marriage in Zambia and the roles and efforts of civil society.

As Zambia has one of the highest child marriage rates in the world, the Government of Zambia has made headway in reviewing the policy and law that bears considerable influence on child marriage. Zambia has been adopted a national strategy to build "a Zambia free from child marriage by 2030" to end child marriage.

The Human Rights Webinar in Zambia was conducted to raise awareness for the problem of child marriage in the country, and the importance of human rights of children through education and the media. Active support and efforts by both the government and civil society were also emphasized as essential for raising awareness to these issues. It was a time to narrow the gap of understanding through communication between law makers and civil society.

At the webinar, around 30 people such as youth, a primary school teacher and journalists who support the Children's Code Bill attended. It included Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, a member of Parliament in Lukulu East, and Hon. Brenda Nyirenda, a member of Parliament in Lundazi.

## **Background Information**



Child defilement cases have been on the rise in recent years. The Zambia Police Service reported that in the second quarter of 2021, 576 children were defiled. That number increased by 10% from that reported in the first quarter of the same year. Children have also fallen victim to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). As of February 2022, 1,814 children were abused countrywide, representing 22.9% of all the victims of Gender-Based Violence reported. Girl children were the most affected with GBV, accounting for 1,342 (74%) cases compared to boys at 472 (26%) cases. It should be noted that the reported cases are just a fraction of the many incidences that remain unreported.

On the other hand, child marriage is currently estimated at 29% in Zambia, a slight decrease from 31% reported in 2014. This reduction can be attributed to several implemented efforts by the Government and its partners, following the National Campaign launch to end child marriage in 2013. The campaign intended to address the causes and effects of child marriages in Zambia.

However, with high levels of poverty still limiting access to livelihood opportunities among families, the risk of more children getting married increases as they experience additional vulnerabilities that lead to adopting coping mechanisms such as child marriage. For example, as households suffer limited livelihood opportunities and sometimes economic effects of COVID-19, the marriage of girls aged below 18 can be seen as the best alternative for parents and guardians to reduce the household burden or a means of earning incomes through informal dowry-based economies.

Furthermore, culture and traditional norms that encourage initiation ceremonies for girls that have attained puberty contribute to child marriages. During initiation ceremonies, girls are taught how to please men sexually and run a home, influencing their mind set to get married at a young age. These issues are a sad reminder that Zambia needs to take stern actions to end child violations repeatedly reported and those that go unreported.

Nonetheless, we appreciate ongoing efforts to end violence against children by the Government and its cooperating partners. Among the interventions implemented, Zambia ratified international human rights instruments on the protection and rights of children, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a Child. Moreover, Zambia became a pathfinding country in 2020 to end violence against children, raise awareness, provide a roadmap for action, and stimulate leadership commitment in preventing violence against children.

Furthermore, Zambia has made headway in reviewing the policy and law that bears considerable influence on child marriages. For example, the Children's Code Bill was drafted, which brings together all the laws governing the children's welfare and harmonizes the definition of a child. If passed, the Children's Code Bill will incorporate provisions under the customary law on marriages into Zambia's legal statutes to ensure that the minimum age of marriage cuts across all forms of

marriages in Zambia – both statutory and customary.

Other laws and legislations that seek to protect children legally include the Education Act, the National Child Policy, the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act, the Re-entry Policy and the Education Policy.

### **Points of discussion**

#### **Hon. Brenda Nyirenda, a member of parliament in Lundazi**

Q1. Please introduce yourself briefly

I am a Zambian psychologist and also a gender activist, and a member of Parliament for Lundazi constituency in eastern province of Zambia.

Q2. What is the motivation of joining this enactment of the Children's Code Bill?

The motivating factor is that children have got rights, and I, myself, am a victim of sexual violence. So my motivation comes from my experience. There's no provision in the law for the children and there is no one to protect them. Within the rural constituency, most of the children are abused and some of them are pregnant at a very early age and even dying from complications.

Q3. What mindset or awareness that the Zambian government and people in Zambia should have to follow this law?

We need some kind of campaign to reach out to the community from all kinds of levels, from domestic to the school, the church, the university, and so on. Our constituency is composed of villages, so the youth, church, and the elderly people need to share universal information. Because if not, people will have a hard time understanding about the information whenever they receive from different community levels. Especially within the church community, they need to raise awareness about the challenges that Zambian children are suffering as stated in the bill.

Q4. What kind of effort or support do you think is necessary from the government level for the legislation to be fully implemented?

Legislators formulate and pass the budget. So first, we should be able to make sure that the resources to the Ministry of Community Development can get their funding. Secondly, we need to remember our role in overseeing the presidency and government officials whether their duty is reaching out to the community. In this case, we pointed out that the current law lacks protection for the children, hence the need to enact this Children Code Bill has been urged. Thirdly, the



Members of Parliament need to speak out of the wrongs which are happening. We need to be good examples when we go out to the communities. We should be in the frontline of this fight to enact the Children Code Bill.

Q4. What would be the effect of educating civil society through peace education conducted by HWPL?

Education can help people to unlearn and change their behaviors by providing them with new insights to be enlightened. I believe the peace organization's education activities are really good to bring about change, but what is important is to involve the media as well. The media have to advocate progress so that everyone else can hear about it. Especially, they need to go out to the rural areas to share what's happening there to the people outside that community. The education shouldn't end up amongst the elite, but we must go into the remotest sectors as well with the language they are able to understand. Let us also find champions from the rural areas to ignite this move within their community by the people they trust.

Q5. Appeals and messages of request

Thank you very much. For the youth, this fight is centered around you. You are the message carriers. You are the future of this nation and this world. You must be able to carry this as your own burden. Youth can empower the youth.

**Mr. Mwangala Edward Muma, a teacher of Zambezi Primary School**

Q1. Please introduce yourself briefly

My name is Mwangala Edward Muma. I work as a teacher at a secondary school in Livingstone District, southern province of Zambia. I have been trained as a peace educator by HWPL.

Q2. What motivated you to be a peace educator?

Firstly it's so painful to see that people are resolving their misunderstandings with violence, disrespect, and without respecting human rights. This therefore calls for the training and education of young people to become citizens of peace and to respect humanity and the environment.

In addition to that, we have to train the young people to become peace messengers so that we can work together to spread a culture of peace in all parts of the world and appreciate the concept of peace at a young age. Once we provide HWPL's peace education in Zambia, the children can respect and love one another.

What motivated me the most is the love for peace. We all have to respect the love of peace and also love nature and humanity. And once we have love of peace, there will be a peaceful world, a world without conflicts and wars

Q3. What is your opinion regarding children's early marriage and after the bill is passed what kind of efforts should be made and what kind of education should be provided to children?

Early marriages should be stopped at all costs and we should not support them. It negatively impacts children's rights in education and health. Once they get married, it means children are likely to be out of school and to not be able to contribute to the community and country.

To put in disciplinary measures against those who implement, authorize and support child marriages, we should put in strict punishment. We need to empower the young people, especially the girls by providing them the education, skills, and support networks.

The government should enhance and promote the girls' and boys' access to high quality education. The civil society should continue advocating against child marriages and educate the public about the problems with child marriages.

And the values of peace education such as cooperation and coexistence, respect for human rights and diversity assertiveness should be taught to children. And as a civil society, we need to report all cases of early marriages and sensitize the youth on the dangers of early marriages.

**Ms. Mutinta Mulenga, Founder of Chosen Generation Youth Club Solwezi (CGYC)**

Q1. Please introduce yourself briefly

Greetings to HWPL, IPYG and all the organizations present in this important event. My name is Mutinta Mulenga, Coordinator and founder of Chosen Generation Youth Organization.

Q2. What motivated you to start your NGO activities?

What motivated me to start the organization was the need to help young people facing economic, social, cultural and religious challenges. Our objective is to empower youths through their talents and our vision is to help bring about a generation of innovative, hardworking and God fearing young people.

Q3. What kind of mindset do you have as a woman and head of an organization to legislate the Children's Code Bill and what kind of efforts should be made and what kind of education should



be provided to civil society?

Children's Code Bill will protect all children from sexual abuse and exploitation thereby reducing the cases of child marriages and other abuse.

Once the bill is passed I think the government should put in place laws and accessible platforms that will help children, the community, parents and health providers to report all cases of sexual abuse and other abuse related to children and also provide confidentiality and lasting solutions.

As an organization we have continued to participate in IPYG activities and we have been offering peace education like Youth Empowerment Peace Workshop and Youth Empowerment Peace Class at Emmanuel Academy through the peace club and end period poverty project. Peace education has a positive impact on the young people as it will help them to have the ability to coexist with other people of different beliefs and culture. It will also help young people to learn conflict resolution and understand the importance of peace at home, at school in the community and the globe and as a result it will help them to protect themselves and their own rights as women and youths.

Q4. Appeals and messages of request to audience

We should thrive to raise awareness that promotes the rights of children and to abolish harmful cultural and religious practices that don't promote the welfare of children.

## Highlights

### **Hon. Dr. Christopher Kalila, Member of Parliament in Lukulu East**

- Child marriage is actually one of the abuses of our children. So, it is expected to be in the Child Code bill. So that once this is enacted, then we know exactly how to deal with this.

- We are in a hurry to pass it. Because we believe that it will not only promote the human rights of our children, to protect them, and deal with all these vices which we have been talking about, including new crimes, such as child pornography, and some of the bad things. This is what we expect the bill will deal with: The Child Code bill.

### **Hon. Brenda Nyirenda, a member of parliament in Lundazi**

- The role of media is immensely important. Media has to update and promote everything that is being done so that this information can reach even those who live in the remotest areas and let them understand the new law.

- It was good to communicate with people from all levels of society about the issue that we are facing. I have learned many things through this webinar as a member of parliament and I'm

grateful to HWPL for organizing such a great webinar.

**Mr. Mwangala Edward Muma, a teacher of Zambezi Primary School**

- We have to let them be aware of the dangers of early marriage and encourage the young people to concentrate on school work and become better citizens so that they can learn how to manage conflict without violence, respect all forms of life, and engage in social justice activities.

**Ms. Mutinta Mulenga, Founder of Chosen Generation Youth Club Solwezi (CGYC)**

- To reduce the cases of early marriages, we have to create a girls' network. Under this network, we can make a project for girls to interact with each other by sharing skills and information that will benefit their lives.

- And the government should put in place laws and accessible platforms that will help children, the parents, and the community, and our role as an organization is to put an effort to raise awareness that promotes the rights of children and to abolish harmful cultural and religious practices that don't promote the welfare of children.

**Mrs. Victoria Phiri, Curator of Zambia Choma Museum**

The reason Zambian girls choose early marriage is to escape from the situation. Zambia has limited educational opportunities especially for girls. My daughter committed suicide because of this reason. If the period of education for Zambian women is extended further, women can focus on their studies, build careers, and prevent early marriage.

**Next Steps**

Our next step is to build a network between NGOs to expedite the Children Code Bill to be passed in Zambia. At the same time, we will provide a peace education to raise awareness about the importance of education and human rights to the civil society, especially to the students including those in the remote rural areas. We will continue to promote this plan of action and our achievements to the Zambian media to raise the law-abiding spirit and human rights.

**Contact Information**

+82-10-4694-9423

Amanda Kim, Department of International Law of HWPL Western Seoul & Gyeonggi Branch