



VOICES OF MEN AND BOYS AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY

Printed with support from



**The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network**



NGOCC
Non-governmental Gender
Organisations' Coordinating Council

Acknowledgement

In this booklet, gender activists from the Zambia National Men's Network for Gender and Development (ZNMNGD) share their personal experiences as individuals and as change makers. ZNMNGD works to challenge unequal power relations between men and women, boys and girls, transform harmful masculinities into positive ones, and put an end to child marriage and all forms of gender injustices.

The members share how their participation in the campaign, their experiences and how the training helped them to change from violent past experiences and how they now use their activism to influence change in the lives of others.

Beside short personal stories told by activists, this publication also includes short briefs on the work of ZNMNGD. The aim of publicly sharing these experiences is to inspire other men and boys to join the campaign to promote gender equality. It is our hope that more men and boys will be motivated to join the struggle to end gender injustices in their families and later on in the communities where they come from.

In the last one year, ZNMNGD trained more than 1000 men and boys who are now mobilising others in their various communities to challenge, speak out and take action against gender based violence.



Members of Mwashinango Men's Network pose for a photo after a community meeting.

I HAVE COME TO ACCEPT THAT GENDER INEQUALITY AFFECTS MEN TOO

Allan Chilambwe is a resident of Chongwe District, one of the men that was trained as a male champion to advocate against child marriage and all forms of gender discrimination. Allan feels gender based violence is not only devastating to survivors and their families, but also entails significant social and economic costs.

“Prior to the sensitisation workshops by Zambia National Men’s Network for Gender and Development I used to think gender equality as a responsibility that was largely in the hands of women and girls. After acquiring the relevant knowledge, skills and values, yes, I have become an active advocate of gender equality in my community”.

“I have come to accept that gender inequality affects men too. It is not only an essential human rights, but also the necessary foundation of achieving a peaceful, thriving and sustainable community. I no longer look down on women because I do not want to create a false sense of superiority over them,” says Allan Chilambwe.

“Household chores are also a man’s responsibility. It is not a woman job alone to do household chores, it is our job. I have also noticed with happiness that improved communication between couples is key to good family well being. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a man helping a woman with the household chores”.



Allan Chilambwe and his wife in happier moments.

NYELETI AND HIS WIFE HAVE BECOME PARTNERS IN DECISION MAKING

"I often used to come home extremely drunk, I became more aggressive and violent towards my wife. I regret that she suffered violence at my hands. I needed to control my drinking tendencies."

Fortune Nyeleti, has become a kind man to his wife, he regularly used to beat her for no reason, but now he helps her with household chores. Today, Nyeleti has learnt how to value his wife. He is not only open to doing household chores to ease her burden but has also become vigilant to her healthcare needs. He has learnt how to apply what he learnt in the men's workshop against gender based violence. He feels more loved and admired by his wife because he is now disciplined and orderly in his behaviour.

"I adjusted my drinking of alcohol. I began paying attention and listening to her more. This made me understand her even better. I have also responded to her needs appropriately. I believe there is no better individual who can show her support than myself," Nyeleti admitted.

To show respect to each other Nyeleti and his wife make most of the family decisions together. He treats his wife as an equal partner in their marriage.

As an active member of the Chongwe Central Men's Network Nyeleti has organised outreach activities against child marriage talking to parents in Katoba village. He is of the view that outreach initiatives are helping communities to prevent actions which may lead to child marriage and gender injustices.



Fortune Nyeleti at home with his wife.

"Incidences of child marriage are reducing because messages have been delivered through men's activities. I am pleased that the administration at Katoba Secondary School have also engaged me to talk about child marriage at the school."

ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE STARTS WITH INFORMED MEN

“It is encouraging that we, the transformed men are able to work with the traditional leaders in our communities in curbing child marriage, especially in areas where some customs violate the rights of women and girls. My aunt is a headwoman in Chikonkoto Village and she is very active in the fight against child marriage,” said Bernard Chitambala.

Chitambala noted that traditional leaders are the custodians of culture and it is critical that they are fully engaged in taking a practical role in sensitising their subjects on harmful cultural practices that are perpetrating the increase of child marriage and GBV cases.

“We are working with the Church in addressing cases of GBV in our communities. The Church was encouraging its members to be involved in preventing and offering safe spaces for survivors of gender based violence. We are happy that the Church has taken a stand against perpetrators in our communities. The Church is also promoting equality between men and women through the gospel,”

The Men’s Christian Fellowship (MCF) under the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) is also being used as a platform by members to communicate to each other on the devastating effects of child marriage.

Chitambala is happy that the men’s fellowship has helped members in fighting child marriage, adding that working alongside each other through such gatherings the men, women, boys and girls are educated on how to prevent gender-based violence and promote healthy families.

Community members were also being sensitised through radio campaigns. Chongwe Community Radio Station is one such a media institution that had played an outstanding role in creating and shaping public opinion and strengthening of society in the fight against child marriage in the area.

Because of the sensitisation workshops and interactions with the ZNMNGD, Chitambala, has also made it priority to familiarize himself with the Anti GBV Act of 2011.



Bernard Chitambala is now an anti-child marriage activist after being trained.

Boy's Network pledges to be the voice for the Girl Child



Dennis addressed the AU Pre-Summit on Ending Child Marriage.

Dennis Kapumpe is Chairperson of the Boys Network at Chainda Combined School. He is actively involved in sensitisation activities at the school and surrounding communities reaching out to his peers and parents with messages about the dangers of child marriage. Since being trained, the Boys Network members have managed to withdraw 10 girls from child marriage and encouraged them to enroll back into school.

The Boys Network inspired their 17 male teachers at the same school to form a complementary Male Teachers Network after seeing the good work that they were doing. Because of his activism, Dennis was nominated by the African Union to share his experience at the AU Girls Pre-Summit on Ending Child Marriage that was attended by several dignitaries from across the globe.

One of the biggest harmful cultural practices that the Boys Network are fighting is initiation ceremonies which are also a recipe for child marriage as they encourage girls to go into early marriages. The Boys Network pledged to continue being the voice for the girl child.

Mwashinango Village: A Model for Male Activism

"In the past I used to drink too much alcohol to an extent where my family members, especially my children started avoiding me whenever I got home from my drinking spree. The situation escalated from bad to worse. My children had no hope of getting an education. I physically and verbally abused my wife in the presence of the children. However, I had to change my behaviour following the introduction of the Men's Network. Peace has returned in my home, my children are now able to go to school, others are about to get into the university.

Evaristo Muyayama leads the Men's Network in Mwashinango village of Chongwe district as chairperson. He is one of the men that have taken a strong position against child marriage and gender based violence. He mobilises the members to sensitise other men and parents in the village and reporting cases to the police. Because of his strong leadership and mobilisation, Mwashinango village has seen a reduction of child marriage. He also works with tradition leaders and helps the boys network to conduct sensitisation activities. He is one of the pioneers of the SGBV Survivors Support Fund, a community initiative to support survivors of GBV to meet their needs such as transport to access medical facility and report cases to the police. He has participated on radio and TV programmes to share his experience of fighting child marriages. During the 2019 16 Days of Activism, he was presented with a certificate of Recognition and Activism by the Ministry of Gender



Evaristo Muyayama sensitising the community on child marriage in his village

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According to Stephen Tembo, “This group (Mwashinango Men’s Network) has brought harmony in our homes. Ever since I joined this group in 2015, I have experienced a peace of mind. I have learnt how to humble myself. With my friend, Darius Mwenya, we have taken it upon ourselves to share our good experiences with other men in our community. We have always received absolute support from our Network Chairperson Mr Muyayama and our Secretary Mr Lazarus Nyawali whenever we need guidance during our journey of activism. This group (the Network) has changed our lives. Even if I go back to my home town in Chipata Eastern Province I would ensure that I mobilise other men to continue championing positive change in our society. My family members can attest to the fact that I have been transformed to restore some sanity in my community. I would like to thank the Zambia National Men’s Network for Gender and Development (ZNMNGD) for the good job they are doing in our communities especially where addressing GBV and child marriage are concerned”.



“I have learnt a lot of positive things” Says Lazarus Nyawali.

Lazarus Nyawali joined Mwashinango Men’s Network in 2019. He learnt a lot of positive things ever since he joined the group. Today he is able to carry out household chores such as washing dishes, fetching water, cleaning the surroundings etc. He realised that these duties are not only meant for his wife alone. He is now doing the work which he never used to do before he joined the network.

“I am happy to disclose that another friend of mine within this community has also refrained from beating his wife. He was offered some good counsel and peace has since retained in his home. It is also pleasing that our Headwoman is committed in ensuring that child marriage, defilement cases and other GBV related offences are dealt with effectively in our area.”

“I know that there are some men in this community who are physically and emotionally abused by their wives or spouses. Unfortunately, we do not report to relevant authorities to have our issues addressed. My experience is that no matter the extent of the abuse, we feel embarrassed or think that the police or members of our community won't believe us, especially that we are considered to be head of the house. I would like to advise my fellow men that it is not good to keep quiet. We must know that no one deserves to be violated against. We should also realise that GBV is against the law and is a crime,” Mr Nyawali highlighted.



Lazarus Nyawali (center) leading the members on a sensitisation mission

Mr Nyawali further revealed that the lack of transport was hindering the positive impact of community outreach activism. He appealed to well-wishers to help them with bicycles to ensure the Network members are able to reach other men in remote villages as it was difficult for them to quickly respond to SGBV in distant villages. He also appealed for T-shirts so that they are easily recognised as champions against SGBV in the community.

“We contributed our little money and apprehended a perpetrator”

Mr Limited Zulu shared, “I would like to agree with Mr Nyawali. It has been very difficult for us to travel long distances to engage with other men. Most GBV cases are reported to the police very late, a situation which might result in delayed justice for victims and their families. Sometimes there are cases that are brought to us by members of the community in the night. For instance, we recently received a complaint around 03:00 in the morning. It was difficult for us to deal with this case because we had no means of transport especially that it happened in the dark. We are however, glad that this case is now in the hands of the police and a docket was opened against the perpetrator because we contributed our little money together and apprehended the perpetrator and helped the victim to go for medical attention. We are strong and we want to work to ensure stability in our community. We are appealing to well-wishers to come to our aid to ease our movements”.



Mr. Limited Zulu at a community meeting in Mwashinango Village.

My husband no longer beats me; ‘the story of the Kaluwes’

Before the coming of the training workshop by the Zambia National Men’s Network for Gender and Development, my husband and I used to fight a lot. He would beat me over simple matters, I feared for my life, because his violent behaviour had prolonged for sometime. I did not do anything about it, I was scared that if I reported the matter to the police, he would be arrested. I kept quiet and endured the violence.

One day he beat me so badly that I had one of my eyes swollen, I felt so disturbed to the extent that I got a cooking stick and hit him on his head. Of course, he sustained a deep cut on his head. Unfortunately, he would beat me in the presence of our children. His violent behaviour was distressing because our children would cry whenever their father beat me up.



Kaluwe is now a changed man after attending the training on positive masculinity

However, after undertaking the training, my husband has changed a lot, our misunderstandings have reduced, we no longer fight. He has never beaten me again. I remember he shared with me whatever he was taught at the training workshop. He even admitted that whatever he was doing to me was against the law, it was an offence and that I had the right to report him to the Victim Support Unit (VSU).

I would like to thank this group, the Zambia National Men’s Network for Gender and Development for coming to Chongwe District to sensitise our people against gender-based violence. My husband and I would have continued fighting had it not been for the Men’s Network. I am happy that this group came up with a programme of involving men and boys in advancing our (women and girls’) rights.

“We need a Magistrate Court in Rufunsa to punish sexual offenders”

Aubrey Mumba is a Chairperson of Mpanshya Boys Network in Rufunsa district who was trained by ZNMNGD in masculinity, gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. He has been very active in sensitising the community in Chamalenje Village against child marriage. He has been an instrument of change. The Boys Network disrupted four planned wedding ceremonies of underage girls and reported the matter to the police. The Network also conducted a citizens arrest of a 41 year old man who defiled a 15 year old girl. The defiler was later handed over to the police. The Network followed the matter during the court proceedings. The man was jailed for 15 years. Aubrey was one of the persons who petitioned the government to establish a Magistrate Court in Rufunsa to prosecute sexual offenders. Because of his work Aubrey was invited to participate in a television programme called Africa to Night by the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) to share his experience of being an anti-child marriage advocate. During the 2019 16 Days of Activism, He was presented with a Certificate of Recognition and Activism by the Ministry of Gender.



Aubrey Mumba (center) when he featured on the ZNBC's Africa Tonight Programme

THE POWER OF MEN'S CAMPFIRE MEETINGS

It was evening, around 18:00 hours when the sun was setting from the East to the West, the men were gathering around a fire at Chainda Combined Secondary School grounds in Chongwe District. A few minutes later a voice was heard, "This get-together should stimulate us. I am happy we have assembled in this manner to socialise and discuss various issues affecting us as men, especially matters related to GBV, child marriage etc.

"We have a greater degree of responsibility as men. We are peacemakers in our homes, that is the gift which God has given us. This is not a political gathering, we must express ourselves without fear or favour. We are here to build safe homes through finding strategies that address the root causes of violence against our women and children".

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These were words of Sternal Muzembe head teacher at Chainda Combined Secondary School when he was called upon to welcome participants at the men's campfire meeting.

The campfire discussions provided men an opportunity to openly talk about men's response to sexual and gender based violence and the increasing cases of child marriage in the community.

Musonda Chabala, the Chairperson of the Chainda Male Teachers' Network opened the meeting by posing a question, "What should men do to stop violations of women and girls? In response, the majority of the participants noted with dismay that the rights of women in many homes are violated and is the leading cause of sexual and gender based violence.

The violations of women's rights was identified as the basis for increased divorce incidences in the area. The 30 participants who mainly comprise male teachers and men from the community felt the need for men to get involved to address all forms of gender based violence.

A community member Mr Mushanga said, "Most of us suffer silently". We grieve quietly sometimes to keep the peace and avoid hurting our wives, especially that we are now advocates against SGBV. Unfortunately, we don't report such domestic violence because we are considered to be perpetrators. We shy away from talking about the abuse perpetrated against us. Mainly we fear of not being believed by the community members or worse off the police.



Mr Musonda Chairperson of the Chainda School Male Teachers Network speaking during the Campfire meeting

Headman Harrison Njovu said the lack of proper communication was one of the several reasons why spouses engagement in marital conflicts. He pointed out that good communication was vital to a healthy marriage.

"I would like to warn the men that violent acts are just too much for your wives to bear. Some of these habits should be avoided to save your marriages. If you trust your wife let her know it. Communicate it to her. This is likely to make you happy in your marriage. Good communication should be prioritised as it sets the right foundation of the relationship" headman Njovu said.



Headman Njovu

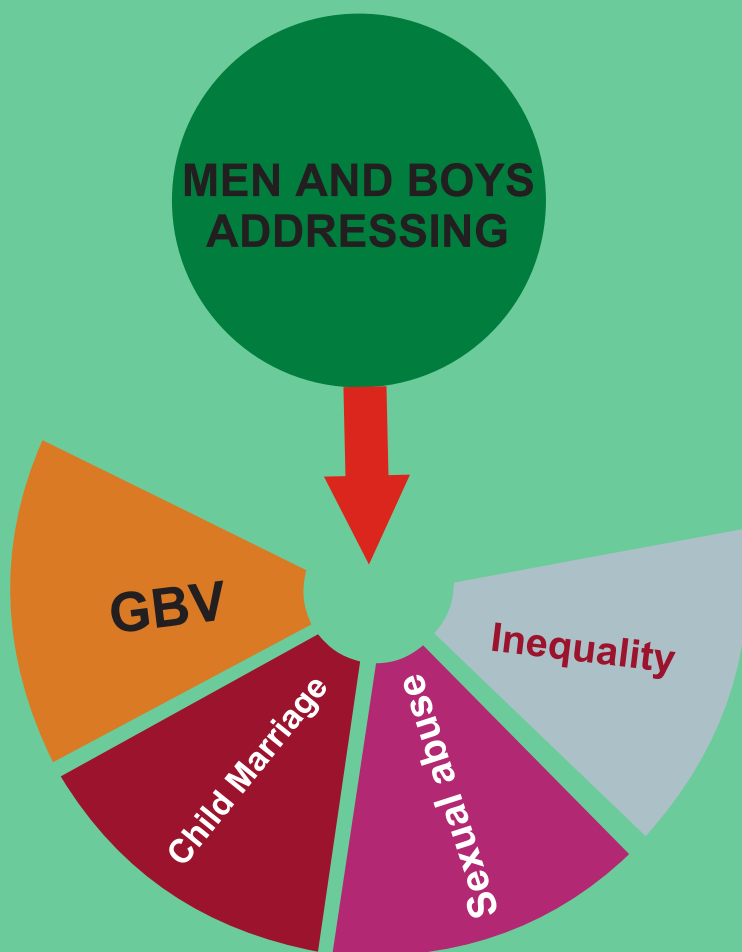
He further recounted, "It was unfortunate that the use of alcohol and abusive substances among young married men in our area has contributed to increased cases of GBV at household level. Some men were in the habit of not tendering their salaries to their wives. You, men, have the sole responsibility to take care of your families, especially your wives and please avoid marrying off your underage daughters for money

Stephen Shankandi, Chairperson of Men's Network in Katende Village warned parents and guardians against approving child marriages.

"I would like to warn some parents who are in the habit of marrying off their under aged daughters, that you are violating our children's rights. This act is also considered to be a form of GBV, it robs children of their childhood. We are watching all those that are violating children's right to a decent life. Let me caution that child marriage is a criminal offence. It must worry us all that girls who are married off at a tender age are far less likely to stay in school. We must all begin to value the education of a girl child" Shankandi highlighted.

"Asa Teacher's Network we are committed to the rights of the girl child in and out of school.

Our core business is to propagate the rights of women and girls and to remind men that we hold solutions to most of the abuses in all of their forms. We believe that as teachers we can use our influence to change the mind set of men with negative perceptions about women," Mr Musonda said.



ZAMBIA NATIONAL MEN'S NETWORK FOR GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

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