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# SECOND CHANCE

FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN:



## **Mainstreaming Psycho-social Support into re: entry of young mothers in formal and non formal education**

SCOPING STUDY REPORT 2017

PICTURED ABOVE

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The RMT girls and young women including those who have experienced child marriage with the African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology at the Africa Girls in Education Conference in Zambia

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Mrs. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda  
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## 1. Background and Context:

Child marriage is a human rights violation that prevents girls from obtaining education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others of their own age, maturing, and ultimately choosing their own life partners. Although child marriage most often stems from poverty and powerlessness, it further reinforces the gendered notions of poverty and powerlessness and this leads to the stunted physical, mental, intellectual and social development of the girl child and heightening the social isolation of the girl child.

There is significant work describing how child, early and forced marriage is a development and human rights issue, and its consequences to the individual girls and their families has been documented. A global movement on ending child, early and forced marriage emerged in the last five years and has pushed for a strong policy commitment, resulting in inclusion of child marriage within Sustainable Development Goal 5 as an indicator, the adoption of Human Rights and General Assembly resolutions. The African Union has significant policy commitment to advancing gender equality including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights and the AU Gender Policy (under revision). In addition, the African Union adopted 2017 as the year to focus on Demographic Dividend through investment in youth. Since 2014, the African Union has been championing the Campaign to End Child Marriage which resulted in the Africa Common Position.

At the regional level, the SADC Model on Ending Child Marriage and Mitigating the Impact on Married Children has been received as standard setting. At the National level, Zimbabwe has a National Gender Policy and has developed a National Action Plan to End Child Marriage. In all these global, continental, regional and national policy frameworks, the key challenges have been to ensure continued investment in prevention, while equally mitigating the impact of such marriage such that the young women and girls do not fall into deeper poverty. The 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals are bold and unprecedented. They are universal, thus recognizing that change in the world requires action from governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and people everywhere. Also committing to Leaving No One Behind provides a deep commitment to those who are marginalised and face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and have the least opportunities. This scoping study was aligning to the global, regional and national action plans to end child marriage but mainly focusing on re-entry of young women in formal and non formal education.

## 1.1 Rationale for the Study:

This scoping study recognised that young women who have experienced child marriage are usually not included when it comes to access to education. The analysis and evidence that exists on child marriage reflects the lack of access to information and services, including comprehensive sexuality education for girls and access to contraceptives. All these factors increase the risk to HIV and AIDS for girls.

The situation continues within the state of “marriage”, or separation. Young women in these marriages often do not know their rights, and are unable to negotiate safe sexual relationships. They have no decision or voice on family planning and may have limited resources and possibilities to access family planning of their choice. Many young women are tested for HIV when they go for their first antenatal visit. If positive even with counselling, it’s devastating to know that they are pregnant and HIV positive at the same time, and they have the responsibility to ensure partner notification and bring their spouse for counselling. Such young women are often blamed and stigmatized, and may face violence at home.

Re-entry back to school offers a long term sustainable option, because a) of reclaiming of self worth, dignity and assertiveness in the public arena, b) reconstruction of a supportive and progress support network of peer learner or sponsor/mentors providing the moral and emotional support, and it is an intrinsic investment in which the knowledge and skills gained cannot be taken away from the girls. It offers options and range of pathways for social and economic empowerment and security of rights.

The project builds on the findings of the 2016 multi-country scoping study in Zimbabwe and in Kenya that Rozaria Memorial Trust undertook on the impact of child marriage on the mental health of women married under age 18 as well as on the development of their children. The study was approved by the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe and was funded by Grand Challenges Canada. The scoping study established that women who experience marriage as girls’ mental health and well-being is impacted by the multiple experience of traumatic events, which impacts the women’s self-esteem, agency and capabilities to self-actualize through education or economic empowerment. This is even complex and compounded with experiences of HIV in the relationships or the family, and the loss of economic and assets such as dropping out of school.

More than 100 women who experienced child marriages were reached in this multi-country scoping qualitative study and cited education as the most singular wish for them to rebuild their social and economic assets, self esteem, reclaiming their self worth and dignity. Building from this experience, Rozaria Memorial Trust in 2017 has been carrying out a rapid

assessment on the re-entry policy in Zimbabwe focusing on Murewa and Shamva Districts to establish the current state in the policy implementation, provision of psychosocial support, opportunities and gaps that are inhibiting the girls and young women who experienced child marriages to enjoy the positives that the policy entails to achieve. The initiative is also providing the practical support for young women who experienced child marriages to go back to formal and non-formal education.

The study also drew on the extensive regional and continental work by RMT Chief Executive, Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, in her capacity as the African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage. She has firsthand disclosures and confidential discussions with and even older women who are still struggling with the traumatic experience of this abusive practice. Many have shared even publicly about attempts to commit suicide or to kill their children, or even committing unsafe abortions. However despite having these testimonies, there have been very limited systematic interventions on psychosocial support services. The study was therefore seeking to bridge the gap between policy and implementation that that will lead to evidence based advocacy on mainstreaming psychosocial in the re-entry policy in the country and within the region and at continental level.

## 2. Scoping Study Objectives and Methodology:

### **The main goal of the scoping study was:**

To understand the knowledge and integration of psychosocial (PSS) services in re-entry programs in formal and non-formal education to restore the rights, dignity as well as social and economic assets for girls who experienced child marriage.

### 2.1. The Study Objectives:

- a. Strengthen evidence based advocacy for inclusion of comprehensive psychosocial services within the re-entry into education policy, and its implementation.
- b. Gather evidence on the knowledge and implementation of the re-entry policy in Zimbabwe as enshrined in MoESC Policy Circular Minute P. 35 of 1999
- c. Identify entry points for integration of approach in the implementation of regional policy frameworks at both regional and continental levels.

### 2.2 Methodology

#### i. An in-depth qualitative assessment

This was the most appropriate design to capture aspects of participants' lives that would otherwise be unstated and unimportant in other study designs, such as purely quantitative surveys. It focused on women from ages 15-30 years who are willing to go back to school and those that have already gone back to formal education and non formal. The qualitative assessment provided an opportunity for capturing the nuances and the details in the life stories of the study participants.

Key informant interviews were done with school authorities as they are the key in the school support system for girls and young women who experienced child marriages when they chose to go back to school. The study reached out to school District Schools Inspectors for Murewa and Shamva, Remedial tutors for Murewa and Shamva health. These enabled an understanding on the interventions and policies in place as well as identifying the gaps in services and policies and understand their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs towards re- entry and psycho social support for girls and young women who experienced child marriages.

The study also administered a brief questionnaire for school heads and teachers it was critical as they are the frontline actors who spend most of the time with the students including girls and young women who experienced child marriages who would have chosen to return to school.

**Samples for the qualitative assessment;**

<b>Data collection Method</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Recruitment of participants</b>
In depth Interviews	50	10 teachers per each school
Focus Group discussions	2	100 young women who have experienced Child marriage 50 from Shamva and 50 Murewa
Key Informant Interviews-School heads and Vocational Training tutors	8	7 schools and one vocational training centre
Key Informant Interviews- District Officials	4	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials including DSI, Remedial Tutor from Murewa and Shamva



## 2.3 Recruitment of participants

Women of reproductive age (15-30 years old) who were 'married' before the age of 18 were recruited. The study utilized girls and young women who experienced child marriage as the key participants approaches in our recruitment methods. They included those who are currently in the marriage set-up and those were divorced either in marriage or who were impregnated as teenagers but did not enter into a formal marriage.

The community engagement and mobilization was done through outreaches to village heads as well as the RMT Focal Persons in Murewa and Shamva District. In the recruitment of girls and young women who have experienced child marriage, it was observed that in Shamva District, some of them were not so forthcoming with information as they were afraid that it will affect their relationships in the community and families. However, an RMT officer had to clarify the reason of the study and stressed the importance of confidentiality.

To have informed observation on psychosocial support 12 girls and young women who experienced teenage pregnancies and child marriages were facilitated to go back to formal and non-formal/vocational skills training in Murewa and Shamva Districts.

For confidentiality and consent, **each participant was taken through an informed consent process where they were assured of privacy and confidentiality. This allowed the participants in the study to speak freely and share some intimate aspects of their marriages.**

## 2.4 Study Sites

The qualitative assessments were administered in two sites, Murewa District in Mashonaland East and Shamva District in Mashonaland Central both in Zimbabwe. Below is the statistical information of the two districts;

### Site 1; Murewa District:

<b>Population</b>	Total population of 199,607 with 94,269 males and 105358 females
<b>Women aged 14-24</b>	33,899
<b>Dropout Rate</b>	Literacy rate is at 95% for females. The school dropout rate for girls before completing Form 4 is 15%.
<b>Child Marriage Prevalence Rate</b>	36% against national rate of 31%
<b>HIV Prevalence</b>	The HIV prevalence rate is 18,2 (NAC Provincial report-NEW Zimbabwe article 22 May 2016)
<b>Poverty Prevalence</b>	ZIMSTATS 2012 states that 15% of the populations live below the poverty datum line. There is high level of unemployment, subsistence agriculture as main economic activity.
<b>Economic profile</b>	Agriculture is the main activity in the district with maize being the main cultivated crop of all households. Other crops cultivated include groundnuts, sunflower and a variety of vegetables. Most households grow vegetables throughout the year often using water from small ponds in their respective gardens or using water from perennial rivers.

<b>RMT partnerships and collaborations/History of work</b>	<p>Rozaria Memorial Trust has its headquarters in Murewa for the past 10 years and has solid partnerships and is a strategic and recognized partner at district level working with Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Health and Child Care as well as Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development. RMT collaborates with local, national, regional and international organizations such as Heather Chimoga, SAFAIDS, Katswe Sisterhood, Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, SRHR Africa Trust, REPPSI, IM Swedish Development Partner, Save the Children and Plan International amongst a host of organisations and networks. The Trust has also enjoyed support from mainstream and social media which has frequently covered and profiled its work.</p>
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**Site 2; Shamva District:**

<b>Population</b>	<p>Total population of 123,650 with 61,360 males and 62,290 females</p>
<b>Women aged 14-24</b>	<p>22,416.00 females are aged 15 -24</p>
<b>Dropout Rate</b>	<p>The literacy rate of the female is at 94%. 36.08% of the drop out of school before completing their ordinary level.</p>
<b>Child Marriage Prevalence Rate</b>	<p>56% against national rate of 31%</p>
<b>HIV Prevalence</b>	<p>The general HIV prevalence rate is 16%. The HIV prevalence amongst the sex workers is estimated at 59,2% and the district has an estimated number of 400 sex workers aged 15-35.(www.chronicle.co.zw December 2017)</p>
<b>Poverty Prevalence</b>	<p>24% of the population lives below the poverty datum line despite the district being rich in gold and nickel and also with vast tracts of fertile agriculture land.</p>
<b>Economic profile</b>	<p>Mining is a strong economic activity in Shamva</p>

<b>RMT partnerships and collaborations/History of work</b>	Rozaria Memorial Trust established its work in the district in 2017 and has solid partnerships and is a strategic and recognized partner at district level by Ministries of Education, Health as well as Gender, Women Affairs and Community Development. RMT collaborates with local, national, regional and international organizations as ROOTS, REPPSI, SOS and Ponesai Vanhu Institute. This is the first study that RMT is undertaking in district; this offers Shamva as a control district for measuring responses compared to Murewa where RMT has a long track record.
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## 2.5 Identification of Formal and Informal Schools;

In Murewa, four (4) Secondary schools were identified namely Zaranyika in ward 5, Hurungwe in ward 30, Kambarami in Ward 10 and Magaya in Ward 8. One (1) Vocational Training Centre, Almega Trust housed at Murewa Culture Centre offering practical Garment Making Trainings was involved in the study. In Shamva two (2) secondary schools namely Jiti and Madziwa and one (1) Primary School, Mudzinge participated in the study.

Schools based girls' clubs were also important resources for the dialogues with girls and young women in the focused group discussions. Shamva District was more the control district since RMT had just started to work in the District and therefore had to establish relationships.

## 2.6 Limitations of the Study

**Coverage and sample size;** the study was limited in terms of its geographical district coverage with outreach covering at least two wards in each district. The number of participants was also fairly small in relation to the total population of girls and young women who experienced child marriage. However the study was able to capture the voices and get the perspective from other family members such as parents, siblings, extended family and even men who were engaged in the meetings. In this regard, the findings are indicative, investigative and identify parameters and areas of potential a more wider and in-depth research.

**Content on Psychosocial Support;** the scoping study did not explore the content and approach to counselling but just identified the triggers and the factors that determine the need for such services. This was an important first step in this work which will also inform elements for exploration in the next phase of the study. During the design, it was anticipated that REPSSI will be a critical partner for the technical aspects of this work. While relationships were fostered and an MOU developed, there was REPSSI staff movement at the community level, and Rozaria Memorial Trust then relied on the advice from the experts and officials from Ministries such as Ministry of Health and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education who were key partners in this collaborative work.

## 2.7 Overview of Stakeholders engagement

Stakeholder engagement was very crucial to the success of this research. The lead partners in undertaking this study were the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, through the offices of the District Schools Inspector; and the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, with work at the district level as well as with Ward Coordinators in the designated communities of focus. RMT also partnered with other civil society organisations such as Roots Africa, REPSSI and Almega Trust Training Institution.

RMT firstly held a stakeholders inception meeting with stakeholders in Murewa and in Shamva District to advise and guide the design and implementation of the research. This was crucial in ensuring that there was buy in and ownership into the study. The partners meeting in Shamva facilitated by RMT Chief Executive had the participation of Takawira Clinic, the local councilors of the area, the schools, village heads and the chairpersons of the Rozaria Girls Clubs representing the girls and young women. For Murewa stakeholder consultation had more district level officials than community level representation. The stakeholders acted as critical resource persons during the implementation of the study.

A general survey and visits were undertaken to the various centres that offer vocations training Shamva and in Murewa, especially within the catchment areas of the field of study. This was important because the scoping study focused on both formal and non-formal education.

At the end of the study, RMT held two feedback sessions with stakeholders one for Murewa and one for Shamva. The Shamva meeting was held during the International Women's Day celebrations and was attended by the Dutch Ambassador to Zimbabwe. The validation workshop for the study brought together the key stakeholders from the two districts, including the DA's offices.

### 3. Key Findings and observations

#### i. Dropouts and Readmission of Girls and Young Women

<b>School</b>	<b>Girls Dropped out due to teen pregnancies and Child marriage (2016-2017)</b>	<b>Girls who have come back to school (2016-2017)</b>
a) Zaranyika Secondary school	6	2
b) Hurungwe Secondary School	Had no clear number	1
c) Magaya Secondary school	10	0
d) Kambarami Secondary School	6	2
e) Jiti Secondary*	Information not given	Information not given
f) Mudzinge Primary School	2	1
g) Madziwa Secondary School	20	1

It is evident from the data above that the numbers of girls and young women who are coming back to school is low. In some of the schools school authorities were not forthcoming on the data such as Hurungwe secondary school and Jiti secondary School.

This information is so revealing of the opportunities lost for girls who dropped out of school because of child marriages related issues. It confirms the loss in human capital, the reality that there are many barriers that really make it difficult for the girls to enroll back into school once they have left. This data therefore justifies why this is a bigger problem that need to be fully understood with many other variables include age, grades etc.

## **ii. Knowledge and Existence of Laws and Policies on Reentry;**

Zimbabwe's constitution provides for the right to education for all children, irrespective of their status, which is further elaborated in ZimAsset as well as the Zimbabwe Education and Gender related strategies. In addition Zimbabwe has National Gender Policy in which rights to and equal opportunity to education for girls and boys is foundational to achieving gender equality. Zimbabwe is signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on Women's Rights in Africa, which all espouse equality in education and need for legislative, policy, administrative and other measure to removes any barriers for right to education for all children.

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has policy circular guidelines on prevention and management of teenage pregnancy in schools (MoESC Policy Circular Minute P. 35, 1999). P35 came into existence after the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education discovered that a lot of girls were dropping out of school due to teen pregnancies and child marriage among other reasons. This policy clearly states that if a girl gets pregnant whilst at school she may continue with her education until a time she feels she needs to rest. The student will inform the school head and will be given a period of three months or more maternity leave.



## Study Observations;

- Zimbabwe has adequate laws on the universal rights to education including re-entry for girls and young women who drop out of school because of teenage pregnancies and child marriages. Despite the availability of this instruments, there is selective and a lapse in the implementation of the policies and the lack of accountability by the responsible authorities including Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education  
There is also a lack of knowledge of the laws and policies and policies by the rights-holders, namely the girls themselves and their parents or guardians.
- Despite, the policy clearly stating that no girl will be refused access to school due to teenage pregnancy, during the scoping study it has been observed that the final decision for expulsion or readmission is solely with the school authorities. However, during the scoping study it was clear that in as much as the school authorities knew about the policy they still denied readmission of girls and young women who dropped out of school because of teenage pregnancies due to the notion that their schools will be labeled as school of ‘prostitutes’ and the other believe is that that the girl/young woman will have a bad influence to the behavior of other students.
- **Knowledge of Re-Entry Policy by the girls and young women;** Young women who have experienced child marriage had little knowledge on the re-entry policy at the time of leaving school. Most if not all the girls just left school without informing their guidance and counseling teacher or any school authority due to fear of the stigma and discrimination. One of the girls stated when I left school I did not inform anyone, *“I only got to know about the re-entry policy through Rozaria Memorial Trust.”* When asked whether if they would have been able to come back to school if they knew about the policy one of the girls stated; *“I do not think it was a possibility because the father of the child would not allow it and secondly I would be ashamed to face my classmates and I do not think the school will also accept me”*. The issue of fear of being mocked and laughed at remained topical during the discussion with the girls and young women who have experienced child marriage. It is therefore clear that even though the policy is there on re-entry back to formal school not many young women and girls have knowledge about it.

- **Knowledge of Re-entry Policy by school teachers and administrators;** In interviewing the school authorities at schools such Kambarami, Hurungwe, Mudzingwe and Madziva they all noted that they have knowledge on the re-entry policy. In some of the questionnaires they stated that, *“We only hear from the community that a girl is married or pregnant, however as schools we don’t usually follow up but wait for the girl or parent to approach the school for re-entry”*. One teacher clearly said that *“I have read about the policy but I did not get into the detail of its content and clauses”*. At Hurungwe Secondary one of the school teachers stated that they know about the policy and are supportive however they are hesitant because this increases chances of other school girls also getting pregnant or getting married thinking that its acceptable.

### iii. Availability of Psychosocial Support System for Girls and Young Women

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education provides that at least at every school should have a teacher who serves as a Guidance and Counseling Teacher amongst other duties. Such teachers usually undergo some basic training on counseling. The roles and responsibilities of the teacher include provide education on Sexual and Reproductive Health, reporting dropouts due pregnancies and teenage pregnancies, re-entries of girls and young women and provision of counselling services for students in need.

#### Study Observations;

- Despite the availability of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in schools, it was observed that the G&C Teachers are usually overwhelmed as they have teaching loads of other subjects. At the end, the teachers would usually prioritise other academic subjects at the expense of the guidance and counselling component. During the study, it was clear that many girls and young women who are readmitted back to school rarely get such counselling services at school and there is no set content to define the scope of such counselling. Most teachers interviewed highlighted that have limited time to offer counselling services because of other competing work at the school. Therefore, a combination of lack of knowledge on existing policy and negative attitudes of the teachers and school administrators creates barriers and reduces the chances for girls and young women who experienced child marriages to go back to formal school. As observed in the findings, the counselling services at school are under resourced and the content and training is not fully developed or elaborated to respond to the full breadth of issues emerging from circular P35.

- In both Murewa and in Shamva there are no systems in place either by Government or Civil Society Organisations to provide psychosocial support services to girls and young women who experienced teenage pregnancies and child marriages. The thrust of the health care centres is the provision of curative and child centered health services. The mental health and wellbeing of the mother is not a priority. In schools, counselling and other related supportive services are only offered when the girls and young women comes back to school. It is important to take note that it was observed that in most schools, the provision of psychosocial support of this nature it is not a priority at all.
- Social movement and empowerment of girls and young women through social and economic group activities at school and out of school is a powerful approach for providing counselling and other psychosocial support for girls and young women. The RMT Girls clubs and the #Nhangwa methodology has proven to be an effective for mentorship, confidence building and peer support including for the girls and young women who experienced teenage and pregnancies. It provides for powerful spaces for young women to define issues that affect them and be the agents for change in reclaiming their own rights. In addition, investing in education and economic empowered is therapeutic in itself, as it offer a window of hope out of poverty, dependency and does break the cycle of violence.
- Schools with other active extra curriculums on girls' leadership and Sexual Reproductive Health programmes were found to be better equipped in the provision of psychosocial support services for girls and young women who are readmitted back to formal education. At schools such as Hurungwe and Kambarami Secondary Schools the mentors of the Rozaria Girls Clubs also provide the guidance and counseling services to students at the school. The teachers at Mudzingo primary and Madziwa secondary schools in Shamva, indicated the need for more training and exposure for Guidance and Counselling Teachers.
- In the community the girls often rely on the extended family, the church and other community based structures like girls and women's clubs. It is evident that there is a huge gap in relation to PSS and it linkages with child marriage and sexual and reproductive health for girls and young women. This calls for a holistic programming to address this gaps and challenges. PSS services that are available are mostly in the school setting and not within the primary setting of the

community; there are very few options in terms of services and infrastructure outside of the formal education system.

## **4. Barriers to Re-entry in the Formal and Non Formal Education.**

### **i. Personal attitudes**

Many of the young girls who get pregnant or experience child marriage often have either self blame or they feel being victims of circumstances or abuse. This often comes with a sense of powerlessness and inability to make decisions. Such girls feel that often they are unable to make decisions on their own and have to defer either to the “*husband*”, or if they are back home, they need the consent and support of their parents.

In some cases, the girls feel ashamed to go back to same school, be in the same class or behind their peers, to be treated differently or sense that they will be stigmatized. These internalized perspective related to self worthy and judgement on their character by the external world often inhibits them to take a bold move to go back to school.

However, following the intervention we made in supporting some of the girls to enroll back to school or take some vocational or training courses, the sense of worth was restored, the confidence returned and a strong hope or dream for their future. Therefore it is important that those young women and girls who have gone back to school or are involved in other economic activities should be resource persons and social mentors motivating others who want to go back to school but are still entrenched in lack of self belief and self worth. Personal counselling, accompaniment and support are also essential for individual girls since each one them faces different range of issues.

*As Marvelous puts it “I am now 19 years and really want to go back to school. I dropped out in grade 6. It is just embarrassing to wake up and go to school with my own son in grade 2. I would prefer non-formal education to begin with”*

## ii. Entrenched Stigma and Discrimination in Formal Schools

This is the space and place where girls who experienced child marriage face many challenges for re-entry. First of all, and as mentioned above it is just difficult to get a place for re-entry due to attitudes of the school administration. School life after re-entry is initially difficult for the young women who go back to school especially in the first weeks as they are trying to cope with the pressure of being a mother and student at the same time, stigma and discrimination including naming from other students and school authorities. Tadiwa Tunduwani, a young mother who is at Hurungwe Secondary said *“The first weeks were difficult for me I couldn’t cope, some of my former friends were not sure about the stories to talk with me at break, while I also had some very supportive friends who made it all easy for me”*. This was also the same sentiments with Vimbai Mhembere a student at Kambarami, *“The first term I did not perform so well, it was very difficult for me to acclimatize back to the school environment and some of the fellow students were hostile”*.

Stigma and discrimination is real and requires systematic approach by school administrators and teachers, as well as having a strong support network for the girls among friends and peers. Psycho social support systems are not strong especially in formal education and there is limited access or no safe spaces available for reentries to engage and share their challenges. This was clear example at Zaranyika Secondary, even though the school has guidance and counseling teachers available, they also have other educational related commitments and therefore lack time for one on one psychosocial support for the girls and young women who have been re-admitted back to school.

### iii. Lack of Follow Up System for School Dropouts

In terms of follow up system for school dropouts due to teenage pregnancy and child marriages, the teachers noted that it is important for the parents and guardians to encourage their children to come back to school and to engage the school authorities when any challenges are faced during the readmission process. There was a consensus amongst the school teachers that there is need for a massive campaign to be done about the re-entry policy for school authorities and the community at large to change their attitude towards girls and young women on readmission for girls and young women who had dropped out of school because of teenage pregnancies and child marriages.

*"Image of the school is important even though the school accepts these young mothers, people will label the school as a school of prostitutes"* Hurungwe Secondary School

### iv. Limited Options for Non-Formal Education and Technical Vocational Education;

The scoping study confirmed that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education curriculum has non-formal education as an integral approach for school based support to learners who have dropped out of school due different circumstances that include teenage pregnancies and child marriages. However, this scheme is not fully developed and resourced. The enrolment is very low or non-existent in many schools. At Mudzinge Primary school we only had one student supported through this research. The school initially was refusing her admission citing that it is costly for a teacher to be assigned to her alone for the 2 hours a week of tutoring. She had to look for a private tutor to assist her and then just come to write the exams.

The other major finding was simply the lack of Vocational Training Centres in Murewa and Shamva District which are easily accessible, affordable and with diverse range of course content for the girls and young women who are looking for a second chance in life.

In Shamva, there are two possible training Centres i.e. Ponesai Vanhu Technical Institute and Madziva Teachers College. Madziva Teachers College only offers teaching practices courses and requires a minimum of five ordinary levels. This means that the majority of the girls and young women who would want to enroll for more practical trainings are not accommodated and in addition for those who want to be teachers, the need for 5 Ordinary Levels is the major barrier.

Ponesayi Vanhu Technical Institute was 40 kilometers away from the wards of focus in the research. Due to the cost factors involved like accommodation, this option is out of reach for many girls and young women they offer residential accommodation for its student. Apart from the prohibitive cost, it challenge for the girls and young women as they need to take care of their own children and families. The best option for most girls and young women in Shamva was to go for the school based non-formal education; this kind of arrangement lacks the basic facilities and resources to ensure its full operation.

In Murewa, vocational training based training services are only offered by the Ministry of Youth and Almega Trust. Ministry of Youth based skills trainings face challenges because of limited financial resources to cater for operations and trainers. Almega Trust was a better option for the girls and young women involved in the study as it provided better training services including a follow up programme for the girls and young women trained. Despite being a better option, Almega Trust skills training focuses mainly on garment making thereby limiting the training options available. In addition, the institution does not have its training centre but relies on the infrastructure at Murewa Culture Centre thereby posing challenges in mid-term and long term sustainability for the institution.

## **v. Domestic Violence and Family Dynamics**

Domestic violence and insecurity of the husband was cited as one of the major another barrier for re-entry back to formal and non-formal education for the married girls and young women. For those living in an abusive relationship, bring the subject of going back to school is even a non-starter. The men felt psychologically threatened that if their wives improve themselves they may leave them in the future. It was therefore easier and more acceptable for most of the girls and young women to join economic empowerment groups or non-formal education than to go back to formal school.

For most girls and young women, the relationship with their own families is usually stressful at the beginning of the 'marriage', especially if she falls pregnant. In most cases her family pushes her to marry the man who impregnated her, and they expect bride price in return. The parents cedes their responsibility over their minor child to the husband as they deal with disappointment of the girl dropping out of school, the pregnancy and the social pressure that comes with loss of honour to the family because of the pregnancy.

What was heartening though was the openness of some parents to have their married girls to go back to school. About 90% indicated a good relationship with their own family members after offering apology on the experience and rebuilding the desire to fulfill their parents and their own

dreams of a better life. However, the issue of outstanding lobola was in many instances highlighted as contributing to strained relationships.

## 5. Recommendations

- Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should improve and strengthen the content on re-entry for girls and young women who dropped out of school because of teenage pregnancies and child marriages. The MoESC Policy Circular Minute P. 35, 1999 states that ***“If the young mother (former pupil) wishes to come back to school and her parents/guardians have indicated their wish for their daughter to come back to school, the Head of the school at which the pupil was before she went away to give birth to her child shall do everything possible to facilitate her re-enrolment in the same grade/form in which she was before she took leave to deliver her child.”*** However, there is great concern about the arbitrariness and poor implementation of the policy due to scant monitoring and perceived powers vested in Heads of Schools on readmission of the girls and young women whom have dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancies and child marriages.
- There is need for schools to prioritise and strengthen the delivery of Guidance and Counselling services including lessons, provision of group and individual counselling and psychosocial support for girls and young women who had initially dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancies and child marriages. The psychosocial support is essential in rebuilding the self esteem of the young mothers and it helps in reintegration back with other students. Academic performance of the young mothers is compromised and affected if they do not sustain psychosocial support services.
- Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should carry out trainings for teachers and school authorities to understand and implement the MoESC Policy Circular Minute P. 35, 1999 that spells out the process of readmission of girls and young women who have dropped out of school because of teenage pregnancies and child marriages
- It is important to carry community awareness campaigns and capacity building programmes targeting girls and young women who have dropped out of school due teenage pregnancies and child marriages, their parents and guardians and other community frontline actors that include village heads, faith based leaders to enable them to understand the provision of this policy on re-entry so as to create demand and enabling supply of the services for girls and young women to go back to school.



- There is need to carry school based trainings and awareness amongst teachers to change the entrenched negative attitudes towards girls and young women who are readmitted back to school or those who want to come back to school after teenage pregnancy or marriage. A positive change in attitude will ensure the implementation of P35 Circular in totality and will also help to reduce stigma and discrimination. It should be clear that re-entry is not a way of promoting prostitution in school as believed by most teachers, some students and the community in general but it's a way of rebuilding the socio-economic opportunities for the victims of teenage pregnancies and child marriages thereby contributing to the human capital development of the country.
- Non-Formal or Vocational Based Trainings must be availed and strengthened in the districts and at community level. It has been noted during the scoping study that more than 75% of young mothers who experienced child marriages prefer to go to non-formal education and other related vocational trainings than to go back to formal education. Government in partnership with development partners such as RMT must strengthen the economic empowerment and skills building models for young women and girls to include Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Market and job linkage models are also important to ensure that the young women and girls who graduate or complete their training have access to the job markets or to marketing of their products.
- Policy advocacy at the national and regional level should be prioritised to ensure the strengthening and full implementation by state actors on policies that promote equal access to education for girls and young women who experienced child marriages. There is need for a strong push with the national governments, SADC and the African Union building on the existing commitments that include African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage and the SADC Model Law on Eradication of Child Marriage and Protection of children in Marriage. A social movement on ending child marriages should be established to spearhead the policy engagement and also promote self representation of girls and young women who experienced child marriages to bring their own voices in such advocacy platforms.
- It is critical to nurture and building a community based social movement of champions for ending child marriage, protecting the social and economic and SRHR rights of girls and young women who experience child marriage to transform norms and policies. Building capacity and resourcing for mainstreaming of psychosocial support into child marriage is at the nascent stage, requiring scaling up of interventions in relation to skills, tools and methodologies and referral networks. Civil society and community based networking that have a direct interface with these girls and young women must continue to build social movement with girls themselves to support prevention, contribute to demand for accessible, quality and affordable SRHR, education and economic empowerment services and opportunities.

## 5. Conclusion

The scoping study though limited in nature opened a whole new area of work. It has generated the rationale for prioritizing investment in young women who have experienced child marriage, making the invisible and significant possible to be addressed by policy, services and research. The study provides an array of opportunities that can be explored going forward to push further this work on the anchored on the emerging opportunities that include;

- The building of a regional social movement on ending child marriages led by Rozaria Memorial Trust and supported by partners that include SRHR Africa Trust. The social movement will provide platform for further dissemination and engagement based on some of the evidence generated and recommendations from the scoping study.
- The growing prioritisation and recognition of the need to mitigate the impact of child marriages across the nation, region and international level. Opportunities should be explored to move the agenda on re-entry and related services such as psychosocial support. The Africa Girls Summit, Global Meeting on Ending Child Marriages, Gender Is My Agenda Campaign, the African Union and SADC amongst a host of regional and international platforms to take advantage of.
- There is significant number of the girls and young women already enrolled and benefited from re-entry programme initiated as part of the study, it is important to keep the momentum and strengthen programming around this and reach out to more beneficiaries. Developed relationships and key commitments with Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and other key stakeholders should be nurtured to ensure that re-entry becomes a reality form many girls who have dropped out of school because of teenage pregnancies and child marriages.
- This scoping study provides an opportunity for further scaling up of the study to national or multi-country research which can generate more evidence and recommendations to accelerate the rebuilding of social and economic assets anchored on education for girls and young women who have experienced child marriages.

Finally, it is worth stressing that the process of undertaking this scoping study in itself was transformative to the discourse of re-entry to formal and non-formal education for girls and young women who experienced child marriages in Murewa and Shamva Districts. It has created an opportunity for discussion, taking stock of the current situation and what the stakeholders can do together with Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to improve access to education and welfare of girls and young women who experienced child marriages. It has created much needed evidence based providing stories and information for policy influencing and decision making both at local, national and global level.

## Annex 1; CASES OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR RE-ENTRY

### 1. Story of Ethel Bondera: AGE: 24 of Chinzara Village, Ward 5 in Murewa

Ethel fell pregnant at the age of 16 to a 22 year old unemployed man. She was doing form three (3) at that time. They stayed together for a year but they did not have many resources and her husband spent the little that they had on alcohol and they were left with nothing to feed on. The situation was further worsened as the husband started to bring girlfriends home. As the situation continued to deteriorate and fearing for her own health with the increased risk of contracting STIs including HIV, Ethel decided to leave her husband. She went back to her parent's house and at first they sent her back but after realising the suffering she was going through, the parents decided to take her back. Although she was now being labeled within the family and community at large and reminded of her mistakes she remained resolute in her desire to feed for herself and her child. She worked on menial jobs, tilling the land in exchange of clothes, food and sometimes money.

Ethel is a vulnerable young women was tricked again by the father of her child, he came to apologies and request for reconciliation. Within a few month of getting back together she fell pregnant for the second time and within a few months the husband ran away leaving her at his home with his grandfather. Ethel survived by handouts from relatives and the husband was nowhere to be found. She later went back to her maternal home and kept on surviving on menial jobs. Ethel has two children a girl aged 5 and a boy aged 2 years. Her first born is living with the mother of her 'husband'.

One day in June 2017, she went to a Ward 5 Development Meeting and she met Councilor Chimuteka who told her about the re-entry programme for girls and young women who experienced child marriages spearheaded by Rozaria Memorial Trust. She came to RMT offices and shared her own story. Ethel passionately highlighted that she was ready to go back to school to improve her own life and that of her family; to her education was the only way out that can guarantee her a brighter and a better future. She was re-admitted at Zaranyika Secondary School in September 2017 as form 2 students with RMT facilitating for her to get the place with the help of Councilor Chimuteka. At first it was hard for her as she faced some stigma and discrimination from other students at school especially boys but with the support of the school authorities, the rogue students were warned and from then the environment has become better and supportive of her. RMT is paying for her school fees and also providing her with a continuum of counselling and psychosocial support

At home one of the major challenges she faced when she started school was unavailability of a person to take care of her child whilst she is at school. The husband's family refused to take care of the child but fortunately, her neighbor has agreed to take care of the child free of charge.

The future is now looking brighter and promising for Ethel. Her educational performance for the term 3 in 2017 and Term 1 of 2018 has been exceptionally good. She has been managing to attain a minimum of five (5) Ordinary Level subjects and with continued hard work and focus, the chances are very high that she can pass her final Ordinary Level Exams and proceed to Advanced Level

Her family has now fully accepted and embraced her and becoming supportive of her aspirations. She feels that the re-entry project has managed to make her realize that a better world is possible for her and she can take total control of her destination in life. She aspires to be a nurse and wants her children to have a better life with access to quality education, health and food. In five years she sees herself as a respected person in the community and her being able to take care of herself and family and to inspire other girls and young women who might be in the same predicament as hers.

Ethel is encouraging other young mothers to positively redefine their lives and not to give up as having children or being married should not be the end of the world. She believes it is only through either formal or non-formal education that girls and young women can have a better life and take charge of their future.

As indicated in the Ethel's case above, as one of the major challenge that inhibits young mothers to go back to school is the aspect of child care. In most cases relatives are not prepared to take care of the children whilst the mother is attending school. Re-entry both to formal and non-formal education needs the support of the family members that will ensure the provision of child care services.

## 2. A Story of Danai Ruze, 21 years old from Ruze Village in Ward 8, Murewa

Danai Ruze is one of the girls who got the chance to be enrolled in the non-formal re-entry program. She is 20 years old and lives in Ruze Village, Murewa District, Zimbabwe. She fell pregnant at the age of 16 and she had to drop out from school which made her to miss her Ordinary Level examinations. She is extremely happy for being identified because before this program she was at home with her mother and it was a hard time for her.

Danai fell pregnant at the age of 16 and then eloped to her husband who was 25 years old in Mukarakate village in 2013 and she now has a 4 year old daughter. She was accepted and had to drop out of school before she could write her Ordinary Level exams. The parents of her husband accepted her but it was merely out of fear that she was an underage girl. She was just under 16 years. Her husband then decided to run away to South Africa, she was left alone with her baby. The husband has never communicated or sends any material support for the child since he left for South Africa.

Danai learnt about the S.R.H program from the Ward 8 Coordinator, Mr. Mbwanda who works with Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development. She decided to join the program on her own will. She joined because she wanted to rebuild her own life and be able to raise income for the welfare of her child. Danai wants to work with her own hands rather than depending on others. After joining the non-formal education Danai has managed to gain a lot. She had learned a myriad of things. Firstly she now knows her rights as a young woman; build her self esteem and confidence.

She can now stand and address other people and girls at meetings or gatherings.

Danai was enrolled by Rozaria Memorial Trust in garment making at Almega Trust housed at Murewa Training Centre where she has been doing cutting and designing since September 2017. She has now acquired the skills of making dresses, skirts, trousers and many more. She is quite positive that dressmaking is going to change her life for the better and that she will be able to cater for her own life, her child and family.

Expressing gratitude to this life changing program, Danai had this to say ***“I fell pregnant at the age of 16 and by that time I was in form 4 so I dropped out of school. I did not write ordinary level examinations I was already at home. When this program came I was happy to be identified for I knew my life was going to change. So far now there are no challenges I have encountered, I am really happy with the training. I finished my first garment and I am actually wearing the skirt I have made. I just want to thank***

***Rozaria Memorial Trust for this opportunity; it has changed my life for better”.***

Her biggest wish after completing her course is to establish her own place where she will do cutting and design. She wishes to have an established line of clothing for the local market and beyond.

Danai encourages other young mothers to positively redefine their lives from cases of vulnerability to cases of opportunities and admiration within the community.