ECM interventions in Malawi

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Outline of the presentation

- Introduction – drivers of ECM in Mw
- Activities of the Expert
- How was the work of the expert useful in dealing with ECM
- Other initiatives by govt and partners
- Good practices
- Useful statistics
- Future Govt Activities
- Challenges
- Possible solutions/way forward to engage with govt
Introduction

- Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world at 47%.
- Ending child marriage is one of key development priorities of the Malawian govt as articulated in the MGDS.
- Approximately 1 in 2 girls marry before their 18th birthday.
Major causes/Drivers of child marriage in Malawi

- Entrenched cultural beliefs, social practices and tradition
- Poverty levels
- Educational factors and social barriers((7% for girls, 15% boys)
- Gender inequality and discrimination.
Major activities of Expert on ECM

- Provision of technical support (conduct research on how best to write a strategy, challenges, opportunities and checklist of an effective strategy then adapted it to the Malawi context.) in the development of the national strategy on ending child marriage in Malawi (2018 to 2023).
- Select effective indicators based on context, design monitoring framework and developing advocacy/community dialogue approach for the country’s ECM strategy.
- Conducted research, stakeholders consultations, community dialogue on by laws framework to combat child marriages.
- Technical assistance, developing communications material, M&E support, social mobilization on the violence against children campaign in Malawi (2018 to 2022).
- Provision of technical assistance, conduct research and develop communication and advocacy materials on the amendments of all pieces (27) pieces of child and gender related laws after Malawi amended its constitution on the age of a child from 16th to 18th.
Active participation and provide technical assistance and guidance to several technical working groups addressing challenges of ending child marriage and women empowerment such as TWG on One stop centres, TWG on HIV/AIDS impact, TWG on child development, TWG on IEYP etc.

- Develop messages for communication on ECM and engaging communities on harmful practices
- Developed a directory on ECM to be validated and approved by govt
How useful was the work of the Expert

- Improve advocacy, awareness, social mobilization and community dialogue in combating the root causes of child marriage.
- Strengthened coordination and improved engagements between relevant stakeholders working on ECM across Malawi including CSOs, CBOs, other ministries and traditional authorities.
- Improve data collection, monitoring and evaluation across districts in Malawi.
- Engage govt to prioritize child marriage as a critical emergency and child protection issue to be addressed. Increase in scale on ECM activities.
- Conduct a study/research on ECM in Mw and recommend to govt on activities to prioritize. Share good practices for replication across districts.
- Provide guidance on best practices to operate OSCs and Children’s corner.
- Sensitization and awareness campaigns on SRHS reaching over 2,000 girls and boys in children corners, youth clubs and other children clubs across the country.
- Provision of life and business skills.
**Initiatives by govt and partners**

- **Government**
  - Launched ECM, AGYW strategy, VAC campaign, ECD and NC policy.
  - Leadership and coordination of ECM activities (harmonization of laws and development of by laws)
  - Ongoing withdrawal of girls from marriage and non officiating of a union involving a child
  - National child help line (116)
  - Children and youth parliament to address VAC

- **Partners**
  - YONECO: national child helpline, education and life skills for adolescent
  - WVI: it takes Malawi to end child marriage, Choices
  - Save the children: End child marriage and human trafficking project
  - CAMFED: back to school project for girls withdrawn from marriages
  - ONE community etc
Good practices

- Massive birth and national identity registration across districts in Malawi
- Constitutional change in age of a child from 16 to 18.
- Willingness of senior chiefs to terminate and prevent child marriages
- Provision of life skills, business skills and educational support to girls withdrawn from marriages.
- Cash transfers to families for girls education
- Strong legislative environment (marriage, divorce, family relations act, child protection, care and justice act, deceased estate act, Gender equality act, trafficking in person etc)
Current and useful statistics for Malawi

- 47% rate of child marriage in Malawi for girls, 8% for boys
- Ranked 13th globally with the most prevalent rate of child marriage
- 12% of girls are married before 15, only 1.2 for boys (rate of CM 7 times higher for girls)
- The median age is 1.7 years older among urban women than rural women.
- Median age of marriage for women 18 for men 23.
- Teenage pregnancy 30%, contraceptives reach 22%
FUTURE GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

- Future engagement with religious and traditional authorities, CSOs on ECM
- Popularization of the marriage, divorce, family relations act, child care protection and justice act
- Formation of the National Children Commission with a unit dedicated for ECM
- Harmonization of all pieces of legislations to prevent child marriage.
Challenges

- Lack of budgetary allocation for ECM interventions
- Unavailability of reliable data on ECM to track progress and for evidenced based programs
- Poor case management and referral system
- Issues of improved coordination, different organisations don’t share information and their initiatives, they work in silos.
- Suspicion by govt
- Inadequate communication between AU, host org and volunteer
- Lack of adequate after care support and services for girls withdrawn from marriages
Possible solutions/way forward

- Strong political will to address GBV, VAC (ECM) and harmful cultural practices
- Budgetary allocation on ECM interventions, involvement of private sector
- Enforcement of by laws to prevent child marriage and other laws prohibiting child marriage.
- Engage the media to tell the story especially at community level
- Clear MOU between AU, volunteer and host organisation.
- Engage parents, families and communities on dialogue to shift attitude and end the practice.
- Have a dedicated focal person to monitor and provide guidance on ECM interventions
- Increase access to SRHS, education and information
- Registration of civil and customary unions
- Consider protection for people with disability including albinism
Questions & Answers
THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION