



YES I DO. Champions of Change

Towards gender equality in Chadiza District, Eastern Zambia: a baseline study

Executive Summary

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Introduction

The main aim of this operational study was to assess the baseline situation prior to the Champions of Change (CoC) intervention, focused on gender equality and girls' rights, in Chadiza District, Zambia. The study sought to assess the challenges and opportunities that young people faced during the establishment of a youth movement to influence social norms on gender equality and girls' rights. It also explored the local context regarding the promotion of and engagement around gender equality and girls' rights; including community leaders, civil society organizations and government institutions. Lastly, it assessed young people's attitudes regarding gender equality and women's rights.

Methodology

A mixed methods research design was used. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires that were administered using electronic tablets. A total of 356 respondents aged 15 to 24 years, all participants of the CoC intervention, participated. From the overall number of respondents 189 were males and 167 were females. The respondents were from eight wards within Chadiza District, which

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included Chadzombe, Manje, Dsadzu, Tikondane, Kandabwako, Khumba, Chilenga and Kapachi. The wards were selected by Plan Zambia from the 12 wards in which the intervention is being implemented.

The qualitative part of the study consisted of three focus group discussions (FDGs), eight semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) and four key informant interviews (KIIs). The FDGs were conducted with young female and male facilitators of Champions of Change (FCoCs) and focused on gender, youth and sexuality. One group was with females, another group was with male FCoCs, and a third one with a mix of male/female FCoCs. Meanwhile, six IDIs were conducted with CoCs aged 15-24 years: three with female and three with male CoCs, and a mix of younger and older youth. These CoCs are members of youth groups which are established by the FCoCs. Furthermore, two IDIs with parents/caregivers were conducted. The KIIs were conducted with community leaders and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives. All study participants were asked about gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of young people and youth agency.

Results

The establishment of CoC groups had taken place. Selection of FCoCs was started by Plan Zambia, with community leaders' involvement, based on pre-determined criteria. FCoCs had received two training sessions. CoC groups in the community were taking place, they were in the beginning stage of implementation.

Fifty-three percent (53%) of the survey respondents were female, the rest were males. The age group of 16-17 years comprised 40% of the sample, and 28% of the respondents were in the age group of 18-19 years, and 32% in the age group of 20-24 years. The proportion of married respondents was quite high: 15%. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the respondents had children, among females this was 40%. The majority of the respondents were Christian, with the Catholic denomination having the highest percentage: 41%. Most of the respondents were of the Chewa tribe (87%). Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the respondents were in primary school, 50% in secondary school and 20% were currently not in school.

The study revealed that discussions on gender equality and children's rights across generations were not often taking place. For instance, only 10% of the respondents reported to 'always' discuss this with older men or women in the community, while 35% reported to be 'always' take part in peer-to-peer discussions.

With regard to gender stereotypes, 80% of the female and 84% of the male respondents agreed that it is wrong when boys behave like girls. Only 10% of all respondents agreed that girls do not need to go to university. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the females and 97% of the males thought that girls wearing little clothing provokes boys. Homosexuality was hardly accepted.

Respondents were also asked whether they agreed that boys have more opportunities in the community than girls. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the female respondents agreed with this statement, compared to 75% of the male respondents. Another statement read: 'I believe that men and women should take equal responsibility for household chores and childcare'. Female respondents agreed less often with this statement than male respondents: 43% versus 92%.

With regard to decision making, young people reported to know how to make important decisions about their lives: 83% of the females and 98% of the males said so. On the statement 'A girl should be able to

decide for herself over how to use her free time', 63% of the females and 82% agreed. It seems that young women were aware they have more limitations than boys in deciding on how to spend time, partly because they have more household responsibilities. When asked about decision making regarding marriage, 20% of the female respondents agreed that it is not for a girl to decide whom she marries, while 46% of the male respondents agreed with this. Data also showed that young men had more decision making power than girls, and that it is accepted that young men have influence on young women's decisions.

Male respondents were more often of the opinion that it is a girl's responsibility to prevent pregnancy than female respondents: 81% versus 61%. On the statement 'If a boy is unfaithful, it is because his girlfriend did not care of him', 25% of the females agreed and 80% of the males agreed.

The majority of the youth indicated to be able to take care of their sexual health (91.5% of the females and 92% of the males). However, 71% of the female respondents versus 86% of the male respondents indicated to be able to negotiate condom use.

The safety of young women appeared to be compromised. A total of 61% of the respondents believed that communities were safe in general and 79% of all respondents reported to be able to identify safety problems in their communities. A worrisome finding was that 25% believed it is the girl's fault if she is sexually harassed (35% of the females thought so, and 14% of the males). In addition, 85% of the male respondents agreed that a good woman should tolerate violence from her husband/ partner in order to keep the family together. The percentage of young women who agreed with this was lower, but still at 41%. Young males and females were also asked in which circumstances it would be justified to hit a boy or a girl. It became clear that generally, young people thought it is more justified to hit girls than boys. In many cases, female respondents thought this as well, which indicates a low self-worth.

While the above findings indicate that there is much to be done with regard to gender equality in the communities under study, FCoCs often (but not always) provided more gender-sensitive answers to survey questions than CoCs, which could indicate that the two modules that they already received had some impact. FCoCs and CoCs seemed to have a general understanding of their role. However, they quite often reported that their role was to monitor and react to cases of teenage pregnancy, child marriage and harassment in their community, which sometimes put them in vulnerable positions. The reporting function might be good, but it is not the main responsibility of FCoC according to the intervention. FCoCs and CoCs were not yet able to explain what gender equality really means and which actions they took to promote it. The study collected feedback on the training given to the FCoCs in the last two modules, and FCoCs felt more information on children's rights and entrepreneurship was a necessity for further empowerment. Logistical challenges were also identified, such as a lack of bicycles and meeting shelters that could stand the rainy season.

There was some evidence of collaboration among actors such as Plan Zambia, the local government and traditional leaders. It seemed that traditional leader were not very involved in the CoC intervention. Nevertheless, it emerged that some traditional leaders made effort to regulate the cultural practice of Nyau (male initiation), but not necessarily the girls' initiation. However, they placed emphasis on education for both boys and girls. Parents were perceived to have a salient role in guidance and discipline of their children. Although parents seemed to know about the CoC intervention, it was reported that there is a need to put more focus on communication between youth and parents.

Conclusions and recommendations

This baseline study demonstrates that the establishment of the CoC intervention had taken place in Chadiza. The intervention is much needed, taking into account the current infringement of the rights of young people, especially women. The intervention needs to improve efforts in targeting adults in the community, such as community leaders, parents and teachers. Social and gender norms originate from the community in which young persons are brought up and therefore, targeting young people's environment is as important as targeting the youth themselves. In addition, an intensified focus on young women seems necessary, because of their low self-worth that appeared throughout this baseline study. To be able to create a youth movement in Chadiza district, some operational challenges of the CoC intervention should be addressed, and FCoCs should be better enlightened on their broader role in discussing and sensitizing other youth and community members on gender equality and youth rights. Empowering the youth with entrepreneurial skills, providing transport as well as identifiers for the FCoCs in the form of T-shirts could make the intervention more attractive and influential in the communities of Chadiza.

The CoC intervention has a good potential to contribute to increased awareness in matters concerning gender equality and youth rights; and to result in changes in attitudes and opinions in this regard. Furthermore, it can increase communication and shared ideas among the youth and between young people and adults. This could yield a community that is more gender sensitive, which can contribute to enhance young people's SRHR and prevent teenage pregnancy and child marriage. The specific recommendations of the study are as follows:

1. Intensify collaboration among a wider variety of stakeholders in the community, such as parents, community leader and teacher, in the promotion of gender equality and youth rights
2. Focus, as planned, on what gender and gender equality means in the next modules for the FCoCs, and mentor FCoCs in their group meetings and other activities, to become agents of change (and less reporters of negative issues or events)
3. Provide transport as well as identifiers for the FCoCs; this could make the intervention more attractive and influential in the communities of Chadiza
4. Break the communication barriers between adults and young people through extra meetings stressing gender equality and youth SRHR at a later stage in the intervention
5. Together with community stakeholders, put emphasis on increasing safety in the community