

MEDIA AS DEFENDER OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN ZAMBIA

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Abstract

Defilement and adolescent pregnancy is considered as an emerging epidemic which required urgent solutions. This early pregnancy took a toll on a girl's health, education and human rights and prevented her from realising her potential. Teenage pregnancy resulted in increased illiteracy levels among women, baby dumping, infanticide, higher numbers of street kids and stigmatisation, and given that most girls get married to much older men, early marriage renders them susceptible to physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as early widowhood, among others. Therefore, in 2013 Zambia launched a campaign against girl-child-marriage. The capacity of the media to be a watchdog, act as a voice for the voiceless, reach diverse audiences and influence people's attitudes and behaviours cannot be doubted. However, in Zambia it is not clear how the media has been involved in this fight.

So the objective of this research is to find out how the media has been involved in protecting the girl-child from sexual abuse in Zambia. The study applied a qualitative method by conducting a content analysis of the textual material. The researcher analysed the Zambia Daily Mail and the Times of Zambia newspapers, special committee reports and special letters through social media. This research applied the purposeful/ judgemental sampling techniques because the researcher knew the target group. Basically it was the non-academic world which included the Zambian first ladies because they are the ones who are in the forefront against the girl-child sexual abuse, the United Nations, the National Assembly of Zambia, the Ministry of Gender and some Non-Governmental Organisations. Then two theories were used in guiding the researcher. These were the Muckraking Theory and the Ecology of News Model. This muckraking imagery implies that investigative journalists unearth evidence of a problem. The exposure of the problem leads to the mobilisation of a changed public opinion which leads to a ripple effect in that legislators and administrators initiate a policy. Then the ecology of news model is a theory that says that the press and government actors exist in a 'mutually constituted' ecology in which, when interests merge, coalitions are formed. Consequently, the press and public officials establish quid pro quo relationships so that they collaborate and work together to uproot this scourge.

The researcher undertook an analysis of the Special Committee Report for the 2014 National Assembly of Zambia committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly which carried out a research on the girl-child sexual abuse and how this could be brought to an end; analysed the programmes being implemented by Government, Cooperating Partners including the United Nations, and Civil Society Organisations to prevent and mitigate the effects of teenage pregnancy in the country; analysed the speeches of the First Ladies and Minister through the Public Print Media on Child Marriages in Zambia; analysed the 2014 Media Brief by Panos Institute Southern Africa on ending child marriages in Zambia; analysed social media over the letters which were written by female pupils from Kasama Girls Secondary School and Chipembi Girls Secondary School. In all the efforts being undertaken to eradicate this scourge, the media is not mentioned as a stakeholder, but just reporting. Hence, the major role of the media in Zambia in fighting this scourge is by and large to expose girl-child abusers by reporting. The research concluded by making some recommendations of how the media can be involved in defending the girl-child other than just by reporting.

Keywords: abuse; defense; defile; early marriage; girl-child; media

1. Introduction

According to the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the United Nations, “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible” [1]. Therefore, human rights are understood as rights belonging to any individual by virtue of being a human being, independent of any law. Since they are supposed to be recognised everywhere, they are therefore, universal guarantees which protect individuals and groups against actions and omissions which interfere with fundamental freedoms, entitlements and human dignity.

However, human history is a witness to many grave injustices suffered by children. According to the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires who was in Zambia by then in 2015, David Young, “the statistics provided by UNICEF, are sobering. Nearly 300 million boys and girls live with violence, abuse, child labour, neglect, sexual exploitation, physical and humiliating punishments, armed conflict, defilement, rape and harmful cultural traditional practices [2]. That is why even before the United Nations was born in 1948, the League of Nations already in 1925 declared June 1 as the International Children’s Day. [3]. Although society has seen fundamental changes since then, yet some truths remain valid: all adults were once children; children remain the most vulnerable members of society; and each generation of parents wants to create a better future for their children. The stakes are high: if a child is failed today, there will be a failed tomorrow [2].

However, the big bang came in 1979 when Poland moved a motion at the United Nations for the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the UN by its resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. In 1995, the Convention had been ratified in Vienna [3]. Despite the adoption, yet boys and girls sometimes live in an environment that does not respect their rights. One of

this axis of evil is the girl-child sexual abuse.

1.1. *Statement of the problem*

In a joint statement to mark the 2013 World Population Day, the UN system in Zambia stated that globally, about sixteen million adolescent girls gave birth each year. Most of these were from poor countries. Zambia was among the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with the highest rate of teenage pregnancy (National Assembly of Zambia 2014 report of the committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly, [4] Infact according to Panos, Zambia is the third highest country with cases of child marriages in the SADC region (Media brief on ending child marriage in Zambia, 2014, p. 13). And according to the Situation Report on Child Marriages in Zambia, as of 2015, Zambia was ranked 16th amongst countries with the highest rate of child marriage in the world (A Situation Report on Child Marriages in Zambia, [4]. Child marriages are a deep reflection of all-encompassing gender discrimination and its devastating effects on the girl-child and society. Pregnancy among adolescents was deeply rooted in poverty; gender inequality; violence; forced child marriage; power imbalances between girls and their partners; lack of education; and the failure of systems and institutions that otherwise should be protecting their rights.

The issue of the girl-child abuse is further amplified by the Lusaka Voice which quoted the Public Relations Officer of the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) while speaking on Radio QFM saying that the UTH recorded one thousand two hundred and twenty five (1,225) cases of defilement in the year 2013. The UTH Public Relations Officer, Mwenya Mulenga, stated that most cases of defilement involved children aged between eleven and fifteen years, an indication that this is the age group mostly at risk of being defiled. He also clarified that the figures were only based on the cases reported to the institution and did not include those cases not reported (UTH recorded 1,225 defilement cases in 2013 [5].

To this effect, within 2013, Zambia launched a campaign against child marriage which initially

was being spearheaded by the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs in close collaboration with Ministries of Health, Gender and Child Development, Community Development, Mother and Child Health, UNFP and Civil Society Organisations. Now this programme is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Gender. Zambia and Canada sponsored the UN resolution to end child marriages which has since been passed. The then Zambia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dr. Mwaba Kasese-Bota led this effort. Furthermore, the African Union Commission in May 2014 also launched a continent-wide campaign to end the harmful practice (AU 1st girls summit on child marriages: Zambia Daily Mail, [6]). Although strides have been made in the fight against child marriage, still a lot needs to be done.

Adolescent pregnancy was considered as an emerging epidemic and a time bomb which required urgent solutions in order to diffuse it. Early pregnancy took a toll on a girl's health, education and human rights and prevented her from realising her potential thereby forever derailing her future. It was not just mothers and babies that suffered the consequence, adolescent pregnancy also severely impacted communities. Teenage pregnancy resulted in increased illiteracy levels among women, baby dumping, infanticide, higher numbers of street kids and stigmatisation (National Assembly of Zambia 2014 report of the committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly, [7]).

National Assembly of Zambia 2014 report of the committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly [8].

In an effort to show how serious the situation was, from November 26 to 27, 2015, Zambia hosted the first African Union Girls Summit under the theme 'Eliminating Child Marriages'. The summit brought together high-level officials from AU members, some heads of state and government and first ladies, high-level United Nations dignitaries, civil society and international organisations, as well as community and religious leaders and other stakeholders. The summit discussed, among other things, modalities for curbing child

marriages and the role of key stakeholders in ending the scourge. According to the summit, if no deliberate and sustained efforts are implemented within the next ten years to eliminate child marriages from occurring, the continent runs a risk of having about 14.2 million girls under the age of 18 being married off every year; resulting into 39,000 girls becoming child brides every day (AU 1st girls summit on child marriages: Zambia Daily Mail, [9]). The media were not invited other than just being reporters and not as participants.

According to the *Icengelo* magazine, the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Hon. Kampamba Mulenga, is quoted as having said that between January and September 2016, about 1,634 girls were defiled [10].

Indeed, the above statistics are alarming considering the effects of child marriages discussed above. According to the National Assembly of Zambia 2014 report of the committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly, one of the major weaknesses in eliminating this scourge lies in the fact that there is a lack of a specific policy and law on child, early and forced marriage. Currently marriage can be contracted both under statutory and customary laws. The non involvement of the media in fighting this scourge is not considered as a weakness.

There is a general agreement that media is a watchdog and a voice for the voiceless. Since the media is considered as such, therefore, it is possible that it can be another weapon that can be used to fight cases of defilement, rape and girl-child marriages. Although similar studies have been conducted which examined the policy and legal environment, yet studies which examined exactly how the media influences the decisions and actions of public actors in Africa's anti girl-child sexual abuse agenda are few. The capacity of the media to reach diverse audiences and influence people's attitudes and behaviours cannot be doubted. However, it is not clear how in Zambia the media has been involved in this fight.

Table 1: teenage pregnancy rates by age, residence, province & Education

AGE	PERCENTAGE WHEN THEY BEGUN CHILD-BEARING
15	5.8
16	16.2
17	28.7
18	41.0
19	54.6
RESIDENCE	PERCENTAGE WHEN THEY BEGUN CHILD-BEARING
Urban	20.4
Rural	35.0
PROVINCE	PERCENTAGE WHEN THEY BEGUN CHILD-BEARING
Western	43.6
North Western	37.3
Southern	35.9
Luapula	32.1
Eastern	29.7
Central	29.3
Northern & Muchinga	26.6
Lusaka	20.8
Copperbelt	20.1
EDUCATION	PERCENTAGE WHEN THEY BEGUN CHILD-BEARING
No education	54.3
Primary	32.9
Secondary	20.8

2. Objective of the study

The objective of this research is to find out how the media has been involved in protecting the girl-child from sexual abuse in Zambia. In order to realise the objective of the study, the researcher applied a qualitative method. In applying this method, the researcher used the Content Analysis for textual material. The researcher used the literature review method in order to analyse the Zambia Daily Mail and the Times of Zambia newspapers, special committee reports and special letters through social media. In this way, the researcher was able to establish how the media was involved in protecting the girl-child against sexual abuse. In terms of the sample size, the researcher undertook a study of special major committee reports between 2013 – 2017 concerning the protection of the girl-child in Zambia, social media and the newspapers in the public print media. In terms of the sampling technique, the study applied the

purposeful/ judgemental sampling technique because the researcher knew the target group which could provide the required information. The target group is the non-academic world which included the Zambian first ladies because they are the ones who are in the forefront against the girl-child sexual abuse, the United Nations, the National Assembly of Zambia, the Ministry of Gender and some Non-Governmental Organisations. Then the data was analysed through the use of Content Analysis so as to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases within a text in order to make inferences about the message. Therefore, the choice of this tool was relevant as it helped to understand the protection of the girl-child sexual abuse by the media.

2.1. Muckraking theory

Mark Feldstein [11] explains that Muckraking is a type of in-vestigative reporting to check on wrongdoing in politics and public policy. “This muckraking imagery implies

that muckrakers (investigative journalists) unearth evidence of a problem. The exposure (publication) of the problem leads to the mobilization of a changed public opinion which in turn is reflected in policy initiatives by legislators and administrators, followed by some sort of policy consequence.”

The term was pejoratively coined by an American President Theodore Roosevelt on March 17, 1906, who did not like the investigative journalists because their writings inflamed the masses [12], [13]. Although the president’s use of the word was pejorative, the muckrakers themselves embraced the insult as a badge of honor.

Muckraking also known as investigative reporting is “the reporting, through one’s own work product and initiative, of matters of importance which some person or group want to keep secret. The three basic elements were that the investigation be the work of the reporter, not the work of others that he/she is reporting; that the subject of the story involves something that is important for his or her readers to know; and that others are attempting to hide the truth of these matters from the people [14], [15]. Hence, it is the investigative reporting which entails “digging ‘beneath the surface’ so as to help readers understand what’s going on in an increasingly complex world” [14]; [15]. Nonetheless, despite these varying definitions, the core of investigative reporting has been its use of fact gathering to challenge authority and oppose the abuse of power be it political, government, corporate, or religious on behalf of ordinary citizens.

It could, therefore, be said that muckrakers are custodians of public conscience whose reporting yields stories that are carefully verified and skillfully narrated accounts of special injury and injustice with a meaning that always transcends the facts of the particular case. Their stories call attention to the breakdown of social systems and the disorder within public institutions and their stories implicitly demand the response of public officials and the public itself to that breakdown and disorder [16].

While muckraking applies a lot in issues of corruption, yet it can as well be applied in the girl-

child protection by the media in a sense that in its pure form, muckraking can be a crucial check on abuse of power by big men against the moral fibre of the society by sexually abusing young girls. Unearthing such abuse of sexual gratification would help in moulding opinion to shape public policy and affirm important societal values. Hence muckraking theory simply believes in the importance of the truth as a check on wrongdoing. Whatever is contrary to the truth and decency is exposed. It is a belief in righteousness whereby the media comes in as a moral crusader.

2.2. *Ecology of news model*

According to Molotch and others, the ecology of news model is a theory that says that the press and government actors exist in a ‘mutually constituted’ ecology in which, when interests merge, coalitions are formed. Consequently, the press and public officials establish quid pro quo relationships so that they collaborate and work together to uproot the scourge [17]. So they ended up concluding that the press and government actors exist in a ‘mutually constituted’ [17] ecology in which, when interests merge, coalitions are formed. In such situations, the press and public officials establish quid pro quo relationships in which ‘policy actors find their interests best served by joining in a journalistic investigation. The policy actors’ goal is to foster an image of responsiveness so as to head off potentially damaging implications of inefficiency or incompetence’ [17].

Therefore, this theory implies that the media and stakeholders are supposed to collaborate and work together to uproot this girl-child vice.

3. **Research findings about the involvement of the media to curb girl-child sexual abuse**

3.1. *First ladies concerns about the early girl-child marriages*

According to the Situation Report on Child Marriages in Zambia, former first lady, Dr. Christine Kaseba-Sata on 10th June, 2014, in The

Times of Zambia outlined that child marriage presented a serious challenge to development and needed to be criminalized. Later, Inonge Wina, Minister of Gender at the time, now Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, reinforced Dr Kaseba's remarks in The Post Newspaper dated 19th November 2014 by declaring child marriage a national crisis and also called for its criminalization. However, both of them were just quoted by the print media. The duo never invited the media as stakeholders to come on board and fight the scourge.

In 2015, First Lady Esther Lungu at the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS(OAFLA) summit highlighted that the scenario of early marriages and pregnancies had become worrisome and as such their goal was to find ways to eliminate or reduce early marriages and teen pregnancies. She further emphasised that as first ladies their agenda was to advocate for a free Africa with no child marriages [4]. As can be seen from the contribution of the first lady, nothing was proposed that could be done in partnership with the media to stop the scourge.

3.2. Special Committee Reports

In 2014, the National Assembly of Zambia tasked a committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly to carry out a research on the girl-child sexual abuse and how this could be brought to an end. In carrying out this research, the Committee invited some stakeholders to make both written and oral submissions of how this scourge could be brought to an end. Those invited were as follows:

- Ministry of Youth and Sport;
- Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education;
- Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs;
- Ministry of Gender and Child Development;
- Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health;

- Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia;
- Young Women's Christian Association;
- Women and Law in Southern Africa;
- Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia;
- Youth Vision Zambia;
- Young Women in Action;
- Restless Development;
- United Nations;
- Zambia National Union of Teachers;
- Basic Education Teachers Union of Zambia;
- Council of Churches in Zambia;
- National Youth Development Council; and
- Mr R M Sakutaha.

National Assembly of Zambia 2014 report of the committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly [7] . As can be seen from this list, the media was not invited as it was not considered to be one of the major stakeholders that could help in bringing this scourge to an end.

After establishing the causes of early pregnancies, the Committee moved on to look at the programmes being implemented by Government, cooperating partners including the United Nations, and Civil Society Organisations to prevent and mitigate the effects of teenage pregnancy in the country. These programmes include:

- a nationwide campaign on safe motherhood, family life and reproductive health;
1. a national campaign to end child marriage, launched in April, 2013;
 2. incorporation of comprehensive sexuality education in the school curriculum from grade five to twelve, starting in 2014;

3. existence of an Adolescent Health Strategic Plan (2011-2015);
 4. existence of an eight year Family Planning Scale-up Plan (2012-2020)
- expansion of coverage of fistula repairs;
 - sensitisation campaigns, which included the formation of AIDS action clubs (anti-AIDS clubs) in schools, to sensitise students on HIV prevention methods such as abstinence and condom use;
 - evening/night school for teenage mothers;
 - bursaries for children from poor families, as well as some mothers who opted to go back to school; and
 - establishment of the youth friendly corners in health facilities where the teenagers could access different health services.

(National Assembly of Zambia 2014 report of the committee on youth and sport for the third session of the eleventh national assembly, [7].

As can be seen from the programmes being undertaken by government, there is nothing that is being done in conjunction with the media. Not only that even the recommendations which this committee made, there was nothing that touched the media.

3.3. Media Institution: Media Brief by Panos Institute Southern Africa

In 2014, the Panos Institute Southern Africa (PSAf) carried out a research entitled, “Media Brief on ending child marriages in Zambia”. Panos is a media institution that deals a lot with community media houses.

The brief carried out a research on the country’s situation on child marriages; and by and large, provides basic information on the legal and policy issues on child marriages; provides information on the consequences of child marriages on the development of children; informs the journalists on the traditional and customary practices that hinder

compliance to the international, regional and domestic laws and policies as well as providing information on the role of different stakeholders; policy makers, community members and traditional leaders in ending child marriages (Media brief on ending child marriage in Zambia, 2014, p. 28). However, the Brief just ends there. It does not identify ways in which the media can play a great role in protecting the girl-child.

3.4. Reporting by the Public Print Media

(a) Exposition of the public office holders so that they are arrested, prosecuted or imprisoned for being child-abusers: A few examples are highlighted in this regard. The first example was when on February 6, 2014, the UK Zambia magazine reported that the Lusaka High Court sentenced an artist Chibombelo Musunankulu (pseudonym) to 15years imprisonment with hard labour. Musunankulu, who was convicted by the Lusaka Magistrate Court after being found guilty of having unlawful carnal knowledge with a girl below the age of 16, had been committed to the High Court for sentencing. When the matter came up in the Lusaka High Court, Musunankulu was handed a 15 year jail sentence for his crime [18]. As can be observed, the media only played one role and that was to report about it.

(b) On May 29, 2015, the Times of Zambia reported that a Pastor of Lusaka and his nephew had been arrested for defiling a 15-year-old girl and making her pregnant. The girl was taken to the pastor for healing but him and his nephew took advantage of her and repeatedly had sex with her. Lusato Chiyendela (pseudonym), 40, pastor at Angelic Life Church (pseudonym) in Chazanga Township in Lusaka and his 18-year-old nephew are alleged to have defiled the girl. The two allegedly had sex with the girl, while she was living with them from February to May 2015. What can be observed is the fact that the media has only played one role, namely, to report the incident.

(c) On July 21, 2015, the Zambia Daily Mail reported that a teenage girl of Ndola’s Kabushi township had narrated to the Ndola Magistrate’s Court how a pastor of Manner from God Church

(pseudonym) allegedly defiled her after informing her that she had demons on her thighs and snakes in her stomach which he needed to cast out. Between April 10 and May 24, 2015, Bolingo Bombasa (pseudonym), 43, of house number 10 (not real number) in Old Twapia township in Ndola, had unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of 16. In narrating her ordeal, the victim told the principal resident magistrate Obbister Musukwa that she went to church around 13:00 hours on a Friday for prayers so that Bombasa could pray for people who were believed to be demon-possessed. When she entered the office, the pastor allegedly asked her to go to his plot where he would find her. When the pastor arrived at the plot, he opened the door to the toilet and asked her to enter and he followed her and locked the door. Bombasa then undressed her chitenge wrapper, which he spread on the floor in the toilet, and then took off her clothes before taking off his and allegedly had sex with her. The victim told the court that Bombasa then left and asked her to stay behind but she followed him to church, where she found him leaning against his vehicle and he placed the bible on the ground and asked her to jump over it. Later, Bombasa is alleged to have told the victim that what she had done was a covenant and if she told anyone about their sexual encounter, she would run mad and eventually die. The victim further narrated to the court that on the second occasion, she was at church for a youth meeting when Bombasa allegedly told her to go and wait for him at Alpha and Omega guest house in Kabushi township. She said Bombasa then followed her and picked her in his vehicle registration number she identified as MMC 13 (not real number) and drove to Dola Hill on the Ndola-Mufulira road, where he yet again allegedly had sex with her. The victim asked Bombasa what he would do if she fell pregnant as he was not using any form of protection. She alleged that Bombasa told her that he would take her to a clinic for an abortion. She confided in one of the church members on her encounter with the pastor and was advised to inform her mother about it (<https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/?p=37167>, viewed on 23/12/2015).” It’s not known how

the case ended, but like in the previous saga, the media has only played one role, namely, to report to the public.

3.5. Use of Social Media

(a) On 24th January, 2017, a lot of Zambians woke up to a rude shock of a letter claimed to be written by a grade 12 female pupil at Kasama Girls Secondary School. The letter was written as follows:

“THE TEARS OF KASAMA GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS. Dear Editor, I am writing this letter to all Zambians on behalf of all sexually abused pupils at Kasama Girls. I am in grade 12 and have been at the same school for 4 years now. Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, the problem we have been having here is that of being sexually abused by our watchmen and some few male teachers... Our night watchmen (plus some few male teachers) like having unprotected sex with a lot of pupils at night to the extent that a lot of us have been aborting. Last year alone, about 22 girls were impregnated by these merciless members of staff (teachers and watchmen). I am also one of these victims. On the fateful day last year, I happened to come late from town and found the gate closed. Unfortunately, I was out of bounds illegally and I was supposed to face the wrath of the school rules. I found the watchman at the school gate who threatened to report me to the administration for further judgment. At Kasama Girls, when you are taken to the administration for out of bounds offence, you are either expelled or asked to call your parents, and a lot of girls would rather sacrifice their bodies than reaching these extreme levels. Fearing to be punished and sent away on ‘call your parents’, I humbled myself before the watchman and pleaded for his mercy. The watchman agreed to forgive me on condition that I give him sex. I tried to explain to him that I was about to start attending and that my parents back home taught me not to have sex with any man outside marriage but my plea fell on deaf ears.... He cheated me that he had a special medicine (umuti) that prevents him from impregnating school girls. After more than 40 minutes of refusing, I gave in after he threat-

ened to terminate our discussion and report me to the teacher on duty (uncompromising female teacher). He is old (40) as my uncle who keeps me but his sexual activity was like that of a 25 year old man on sexual drugs. He warned me not to shout as that would attract other people's attention. I am 17. After that brutal sexual encounter, he allowed me to go to my dormitory and never reported me to the administration the following morning...But alas, during the holiday (December 2016), I started feeling weak and discovered I was three months pregnant for this watchman. I was forced to abort without the knowledge of my uncle and auntie and I am now back at school for grade 12 term one. But on Tuesday this week when I told my friends what had happened to me, I was shocked to be told that a lot of them had similar experiences. Starting from grade 8 – 12, most girls are sexually abused by teachers and watchmen especially if you are caught out of bounds. Even people cooking for us have also joined. Some hungry campus girls sell their bodies in exchange for extra food from the school cooks. At Kasama girls, when you are caught with a phone or out of boundaries, you are forced to call your parents. And in order to avoid calling your uncompromising parents or guardians, some of whom are situated in far flung places, you are forced to sleep with watchmen and teachers who are the same size of your parents. And when you come from a poor family where your parents don't give you enough pocket money, the school cook becomes your sexual friend, just to "bevula"... Some of us wanted to get a transfer to our sister girls boarding school Chinsali in Muchinga province, but we were warned by girls there that the situation was the same if not worse. We were told Kasama was much better now because teachers fear Mr. Kalumba the Provincial Education Officer... Some girls have lost their lives while trying to abort these unwarranted pregnancies coming from the same people that are supposed to take the positions of our parents or guardians. While, it is true that some of the girls enjoy having sex with teachers and watchmen plus cooks, majority of us are just being forced... Please help us, also help girls at Chinsali Girls. Help us before

most of the girls finish school with pregnancies and HIV/AIDS.

Yours,

SEXUALLY ABUSED KASAMA GIRLS PUPILS (20th January, 2017).

As can be observed, social media was used as a reporter so that the message goes viral within an instant. The social media was not called upon to be a stakeholder in fighting this scourge, but only to be used to report.

(b) Just about the same time, another letter came out from the social media and it read: "I have slept with over 500 female recruits in 16 years of working at Lilayi Police Academy", he confesses. 'I have also impregnated over 60 and made them abort.' The named male police officer has also disclosed that he is HIV positive as a consequence of sleeping with young trainee police officers without using condoms. 'I have been remarrying since my first wife died of AIDS. The woman I am married to currently is my 11th wife. I have so far lost 10 wives from HIV and AIDS', he said... Since 1998, there have been massive abuse of female police officers in police training colleges and worse at Lilayi. Before 1998, there were very few female police recruits hence were not abused but favoured as a way of encouraging others to come forward and be recruited. I am a retired police officer who worked at Lilayi for good 16 years and witnessed how female police officers were being abused sexually in exchange for not being beaten severely during training. Bosses take turns in sleeping with the young girls who are being trained as police. I have nothing to hide, I am a repented man.... I have confessed my sins and I just ask for forgiveness from all the innocent ladies I have slept with especially those I have infected with HIV. I have broken more than 100 young female police officers' (recruits) virginity... I regret this!... I am really sorry and asking for forgiveness from all Zambians that may be affected after reading my work which is now history. D.H. in Choma

As can be observed, social media was used as a reporter so that the message goes viral within an instant. The social media was not called upon to be a stakeholder in fighting this scourge, but only

to be used to broadcast.

(c) On 24th March, 2017, another article appeared on the internet in the *Zambian watchdog*. The article was as follows: Am writing this in line with the decision the district authorities have taken to investigate allegations of sexual abuse at Chipembi Girls secondary school... The issue at hand here is that we are molested by some few male teachers and other staff... It is not long ago when one teacher was transferred because of the same pupil – teacher relationships. This was a man we thought we could go to when we needed some counselling but turned to be something when it comes to girls.... Another teacher was caught red handed with a pupil in his house by some prefects and to our surprise the pupil was just dropped as prefect and no suspension. Few weeks ago the central province PS visited our school and informed us to report any cases related to sexual abuse by teachers... It is my wish that findings of the investigations should not leave sacred cows. To a larger extent this situation is somehow encouraged by teachers who have married their former pupils and are still working here at this school. It is my humble appeal to the powers that be that in case one marries his former pupil, he be transferred from the school (<https://www.zambiawatchdog.com/teacher-pupil-sex-relations-at-chipembi/>, viewed on 27/03/2017).

As can be observed, social media was just used as a reporter so that the message goes viral within an instant. The social media was not called upon to be a stakeholder in fighting this scourge, but only to be used to report.

In all the efforts being undertaken to eradicate this scourge, the media is not mentioned as a stakeholder in fighting the scourge, but only for reporting and broadcasting to the public. Hence, the major role of the media in Zambia in fighting this scourge is by and large to expose girl-child abusers by reporting.

4. Recommendations

4.1. *Prompting investigations by official bodies*

This is a situation whereby hard-hitting reporting provides the initial seed that prompts official bodies to launch formal investigations. Official anti girl-child abuse bodies are sometimes reluctant to investigate girl-child sexual allegations. In other cases they are either incompetent, sluggish and lack the capacity to investigate and prosecute. But due to the pressure from the media, these bodies have no choice other than to act. For example, according to the *Post* newspaper dated September 25, 2003, it was rumoured that Chief Kapetamulomo (pseudonym) of a certain tribe here in Zambia had carnal knowledge of a girl aged 14 years. And due to the pressure mounted by the media, NGOs and interested parties, the police were forced to arrest the chief. According to the *Panapress* published on September 30, 2003, the police summoned and questioned the chief over this allegation. The police spokesperson, Brenda Muntamba confirmed on Monday that the chief had been arrested at the weekend. The chief maintained that the girl was his long time girlfriend and that she was much older than the stated years. In reaction to this, Home Affairs Minister Ronnie Shikapwasha warned that "the full weight of the law" was going to be applied against that Chief if he was found guilty of defiling the 14-year old girl [19].

Therefore, transparent media coverage can not only prompt anti girl-child abuse agencies to investigate allegations but even go a step further by pushing for expedited prosecution. Thus this role of the media goes hand-in-hand with the muck-raking theory whereby once the media exposes the girl-child abuse, the authorities and the powers that be are forced to mould a public policy to protect the girl-child and affirm important societal values.

4.2. *Reinforcing the work and legitimacy of the state's pro girl-child bodies*

legitimacy to anti girl-child abuse agencies. If people read in the papers that such agencies are preventing girl-child abuse before it occurs

and that when it has happened they investigate and prosecute the culprits, it stirs a feeling that these entities are doing their work. For example, FAWEZA in conjunction with other stakeholders made a documentary in 2014 called "Together: ending child marriage in Zambia". This is a short documentary that asks what can be done to enable girls avoid child marriage and fulfil their potential. In this documentary, Mirriam, a 17-year-old girl, has ambitions and dreams. She wants to become a doctor. However, where Mirriam lives, child marriage and poverty threaten her chances of getting the education she needs and the future she dreams of.

This documentary concludes by explaining how partnership, how civil society activists, girls, traditional leaders, and the government are coming together to make sure that no girl is married as a child.

If a movement can gain momentum in a country where rates of early marriage are among the highest in the world, then perhaps it is possible that a way can be paved for change. This documentary shows how by working in partnership, child marriage can be brought to an end in one generation, and ensure that every girl, like Mirriam, can have a bright future [20]. Indeed, this is one of the most significant roles the press can play in curbing the girl-child abuse.

Thus this role of the media goes hand-in-hand with the ecology of news model whereby the media, government and other stakeholders exist in a 'mutually constituted' manner in which, when interests merge, coalitions are formed and they establish quid pro quo relationships in which 'policy actors find their interests best served by joining in a journalistic investigation. By working hand-in-hand with the media, policy actors' goal is to foster an image of responsiveness so as to head off potentially damaging implications of inefficiency or incompetence' [17]. In this way, the media and stakeholders are supposed to collaborate and work together to uproot this girl-child vice.

4.3. Strengthening pro girl-child bodies by exposing their flaws

Anti girl-child abuse agencies are not flawless. Since 'no public body - or private entity, for that matter - can be immune from making mistakes. So anti girl-child abuse organizations themselves can 'turn out to be chambers of abuse for the girl-child. The media can help salvage such scenarios by exposing the abuse going on in such organisations so that these agencies can clean their own house first before tackling external girl-child abuse. In Egypt, for instance, on 4 August 2014, the Manager of an Orphanage in Giza, Odisse Mecca (Pseudonym), was arrested after a video emerged showing him beating children with a stick. The video of the assaults at this orphanage was filmed by Mecca's wife and published online because it was too much to remain silent. She told an Egyptian TV that she "could not remain silent anymore". Within a day, the video went viral and caused such an outcry that President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi had no choice other than to intervene. Mecca attacked the victims - aged between four and seven - for not asking for permission to watch TV. Mecca was arrested and charged with assault, forced child labour and violating child laws. On 10 September 2014, the court sentenced him to three years imprisonment for assaulting these seven children in his care and endangering their lives. The sentence included two years' hard labour while the third year was suspended pending the payment of \$110 (£87) bail. The children were then transferred to another facility while the orphanage's board of directors was dismissed [21]. This incident reveals that the anti girl-child abuse bodies are not flawless and the press should play a watch-dog role on the 'watch-dog' agencies themselves.

4.4. Helping to shape public opinion hostile to 'sleaze' in government

African cultures have a huge ability to tolerate nonsense through a spiral of silence. In most cases, when people have publicly spoken on some vices taking place in the community, they have been treated as traitors betraying their own blood. Hence, sometimes, people end up keeping

quiet over some crimes. But certain crimes really need just to be fixed. However, what happens in some cases is that the courts of law will perpetually continue postponing the case so that people lose interest in it and then acquit the culprit. Or the courts of law may enter into a nolle prosequi and therefore quash off the case. Indeed the media as a watchdog should strive to bring these issues to the attention of the public and through public pressure, government or the powers that be would be forced to be accountable thereby bringing justice.

4.5. Pressure for changes to laws and regulations that create a climate favourable to girl-child abuse

As a watchdog, the press should be well informed about the laws and regulations of the country and pin them to the microscopic audit in order to find flaws that increase the opportunities for the girl-child abuse. They could do this by working hand-in-hand with the Law Association of Zambia so that the press is well schooled. For example, in the past, Zambia used to have a dual marriage system, namely customary and state. The customary law and statutes did not define the age of marriage. So people were shielding themselves from scrutiny and use it as a scapegoat for under age marriage. The Zambian laws on marriage just stated that anyone could get married at 21 or below for as long as they got consent from their guardians. So a bill was generated and taken to parliament for the customary law to be revised and now marriage is not less than 18 years of age [22]. Hence this is just an eye opener of how issues around laws and regulations place a high demand on the media personnel to study such laws and mount enduring pressure for change.

4.6. Anticipation of adverse media publicity prompting a pre-emptive response

This is the role of investigative journalism. When the state actors are aware of the investigative role of the press as 4th estate, they would be forced to take pre-emptive actions. This fear of the scoops by the media personnel would force

government to act in such a way that issues of the girl-child abuse are not swept under the carpet. Although on the surface level this may not give credit to the press, yet indirectly the media would have triggered this act to take place. Thus this role of the media goes hand-in-hand with the muckraking theory whereby the authorities are afraid of the adverse media publicity in which their inefficiencies would be exposed. This forces the authorities and the powers that be to swing into action to protect the girl-child either by arresting the culprit or moulding a public policy to protect the girl-child and affirm important societal values.

5. Conclusion

There is a general agreement that media is a watchdog and a voice for the voiceless. The girl-child has been a victim of early marriages, rape and defilement here in Zambia and beyond. Since the media plays a significant role as a watchdog and as a voice for the voiceless, therefore, it is possible that the media can be another weapon to eliminate girl-child sexual abuse. The capacity of the media to reach diverse audiences and influence people's attitudes and behaviours which can positively affect all people concerned to the circumstances in which the girl-child find themselves cannot be doubted. Fighting for the girl-child's rights and welfare is an obligation the media must fulfill. The media themselves can act as change agents working for the common good of the girl-child. The media need to make the fight against the girl-child violence part of their daily business.

Indeed for the media to add a lot of value to the fight against the girl-child abuse, there is need for an 'additional tool: the use of social marketing' [23]. Social marketing aims at changing behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of target groups starting from the cognitive level to induced behavioural change.

Two steps are identified, namely, marketing research and unlearning old habits in preference of the new ones:

The first one is the marketing research. This

is meant for the identification of the groups that most need the information and their media habits are identified. The messages are formulated in accordance with the needs of target audience analysis and are carried to the audience through various communication strategies such as theatre, TV and radio, advertising, publicity, opinion leaders, bill boards and other ways.

The second one is by identifying the targets groups, sensitise them on how bad their habits are and help to induce them to change some aspect of their behaviour. Even though this is much harder to achieve, yet it is not impossible. People must unlearn old habits, learn new ones, and maintain the new pattern of behaviour.

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