

By Citizen Journalist

Villagers in Lower Gweru have expressed concern over acts of child marriages which continue to haunt young girls, a development which has negatively impacted the future of the girl child in the area

Most cases of eloping which have been recorded in the area are being attributed to the works of illegal gold miners (Makorokoza/Amakorokoza) who splash money and goodies on the minors in exchange for sexual favors.

Despite the rise in cases of abuse, the community is also facing a number of challenges which include accessing national identification documents as a number of children don't have birth certificates, it has been established.



Vungu RDC Ward 8 councilor Sipiwe
Moyo

Vungu RDC Ward 8 councilor Sipiwe Moyo said a collective approach was needed to protect the girl child from the jaws of illegal panners who are preying on young girls.

“The greatest challenge which our young girls are facing is that of illegal gold miners. Right now we quite have a significant number of young girls who have dropped out of school and eloped, some are now mothers at a tender age a scenario which is very disturbing because they are supposed to be in school.

“We no longer have control over our children because sometimes the situation at home has become a push factor which is leading children into early marriages, some are orphans living with their grandparents and for them to survive they end up promoting child marriages in exchange for food and

money to feed. So it's a very disturbing situation," added Moyo.

One parent, Judith Khumalo of Manyathela Village in Lower Gwelo, appealed for government and Civic Society groups to embark on educational awareness campaigns to empower the rural girl child.

"We need education for our children, particularly the girl child because its very painful to note how our 12 and 14-year-olds have become mothers at a tender age. We need a strong advocacy campaign to help our children, we want them to value their education first.



Women Coalition of Zimbabwe Midlands
Chapter Chairperson, Locadia Mavhudzi

"The challenge we have here in ward 8 is of illegal gold panners, after making money they come back in the community to lure girls with money. They use goodies to bait young girls and ask for sexual intercourse in return . Once the girl sees money she either drops out of school or elopes. What pains us as parents is they are still kids, they don't even know the dangers of engaging in premarital sex and a number of them end up being infected with Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS.

"The other challenge is of birth certificates, we have quite a number of teen mothers and their children who still don't have birth certificates. The document is not accessible due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. Some adults don't have national identity cards due to various reasons, we really need help as a community because we encounter problems on events which require these documents." Khumalo said.

Another parent who identified himself as Nyathi said some perpetrators of GBV were using their pockets to escape the law.

“Some of these boys who abuse our young girls only face arrest for a few days and they get released, we really don’t understand how best we can contain the situation,” she added. Women Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) Midlands Chapter Chairperson, Locadia Mavhudzi said the rural girl was still in need of much support and empowerment in the fight against abuse. “We are worried about the rural girl as we celebrate the Rural Women’s day. Rural girls are more vulnerable and are quickly turned into mothers. As a chapter, we bemoan low reportage of such Gender-Based Violence and early marriage cases hence we need more to be done to expose these ills

“As a coalition, we are trying to raise constitutional literacy in such communities so that women can take protection from the law. It is saddening to note how young girls have become victims of sexual abuse and exploitation due to economic difficulties,” added Mavhudzi.

Responding to the challenges being faced in accessing the national identification documents by the rural populace, Gweru District’s Assistant Administrator, Tarisai Mudadigwa said the program was going to be conducted with urgency as the district administration was going to engage the registrar’s office on the way forward.

He added that the government was working towards facilitating quick issuing of identity documents a head of the oncoming censuses’ program next year and residents were encouraged to stay alert.

#Women In News