

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**INVESTIGATION ON THE FEMALE INITIATION PRACTICE,
CHINAMWALI/ CHINAMWARI IN CHEWA COMMUNITIES. A CASE
OF CHEGUTU URBAN 2000 -2016**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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DEGREE.**

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The undersigned strongly certify that they have read and made recommendations to the Midlands State University for acceptance of a research project entitled Human Rights Investigation on female initiation practices in Chewa communities: A case of Chegutu urban 2000- 2015. The project was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts in History Honours degree.

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Declaration

I Tracey Gondo declare that this research is my original work that has not been submitted to any other university. The sources I used have been acknowledged.

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this research to my late mother Mrs Ellen Gondo who passed away in March 2016 during my study, my siblings, my husband Norman Mukoyi and beloved son Bill for their unwavering support in my study.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to my learning institution Midlands State University for the unfailing support in all my academic endeavours. Special mention is due to the History Department and its dedicated staff for equipping me with the necessary and requisite skills and knowledge that have proved to be immensely helpful and useful during the compilation of this project. Special mention goes to my supervisor Mrs M. D. King for her profound and distinguished determination in helping me to realise the essence of this project as a vital tool and exclusive component in building up my career

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Acronyms and list of abbreviations

Chewa	Malawian/Zambian language and culture
Alien.....	Immigrants from other countries
Chinamwali	Female initiation cult
Anamwali	girls undergoing initiation
Nyamkungu.....	Malawian word for female initiator
Mwambo	Secret codes and songs
Mashayamombe.....	Chegutu before colonisation
Hartley hills.....	Chegutu after colonisation
UNICEF.....	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund.
UNDHR.....	United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
UNIHR.....	United Nations International Human Rights.
UNCHR.....	United Nations Charter for Human Rights.
STIs.....	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
W. H. O.....	World Health Organisation
ZNNP ^T	Zimbabwe National Network for People living with HIV/AIDS
VOC.....	Voice Of Children
YMCA.....	Young Men Christian Association
C RC.....	Conventions on the Rights of Children
CEDAW.....	Conventions on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
ZWLA.....	Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association
SRH.....	Sexual Reproductive Health

Abstract

Female initiation practice (Chinamwali/ Chinamwari) is a traditional culture practiced by the Chewa speaking people. The study investigates the background of the practice, location of the study, description of the group, the changes it has undergone and reasons behind these changes. The study reveals that the practice involves teachings on menstruation, life skills and sex education in order to mould an ideal woman. The age group of initiates, duration of seclusion, ritual baths and shaving of initiates are changing gradually due to continuous criticism from Christianity, modernisation and women and children's rights awareness campaigns. The changes however serve to encourage its continuity in the modern day society and it is celebrated for its ability to curb promiscuity and the fear of the spread of HIV/AIDS. The study looked on how the practice affects the right of girls to education and sexual reproductive health and its link to the school drop outs, early marriages and child prostitution and how it link with education since this area is usually ignored by many scholars as much focus is placed on differences and weaknesses of the practice and sometimes scholars tend to take sides on whether the practice is good or bad. To come up with this piece of work the researcher used individual and group interviews, focus group discussions, reports from clubs and organisations, debates, participant observation and written sources which included internet sources and published books and journals to supplement information obtained from primary sources. Targeted population for interviews were initiators (Nyamukungu), initiates, Faith Based Organisation (FBOs), teenage girls, gender focal persons, Child Care Workers.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

0.1 Introduction

The researcher found out that cultural practices like female initiation and virginity testing raised suspicions and assumptions and these were misunderstood and misinterpreted due to their lack of transparency. The practice has managed to thrive through time due to social and cultural factors however there are some changes which took place and this is due to the fact that culture is not static rather it is dynamic. However, this dynamism should not result in the total transformation in order to remain with the central aim of the practice. The practice has faced criticisms from other ethnic groups and Christianity and this can be traced to the number of factors which include urbanisation, globalisation and vigorous and continuous campaigns on women and children's rights. In the modern society cultural practices have been used by perpetrators of crimes to justify themselves on abusing and exploiting young girls hence, this has brought some mere changes and modifications on the practice. The Chewa culture became a debatable issue hence it probed one to unearth the depthless of the issue. Zimbabwe has ratified the United Nations Charter that is the United Nations International Human Rights which has been elaborated for the protection of human rights (UNIHR).¹ Human rights are still a myth considering that women and children have not benefited much since Zimbabwe became a signatory to the Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR). In the African history, women in the society have attained a subordinate, weaker and hold inferior status to that of their male counter parts and in most cases this was attributed as an effect of cultural practices which hinders the development of women. Thus the local and international institutions continue to join hands against women's abuse and exploitation.

Article one of the United Nations Charter on Human Rights (UNCHR) states that 'all people have the right of self determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'. The article liberated people to exercise their religions and cultures however these cultures are failing to take into consideration the Article 7 which stated that no one should be subjected to medical or scientific

¹ .Ian.,Brownlie, and S. G. Goodwin-Gill, Brownlie's Documents on Human Rights, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p. 97.

experimentation without his free will.² This is not so in the Chewa religion in which most of the young girls are subjected to virginity testing during initiation which is the norm and the custom.

Culture is defined as the combination of the language that one speaks and the geographical location one belongs to. It also includes the way one represents one self.³ Thus unknowingly girl child's rights were violated all in the name of culture. The cultural practices which undermined girls as second class citizens were not regarded as exploitation and abuse in pre-colonial societies. The gender norms and roles were considered to be proper. However the encroachment of colonialism brought formal education and also the declaration of the human rights, women and girls were said to be loosened on the yoke of exploitation but this is not true in the Chewa as far as culture and religion are concerned and this has protracted the views by males that women are inferior and there is need for infibulations of their body parts to please them connubially.

There is a modern day proverb which says, 'girls of today no longer cook like their mothers but drink and smoke like their fathers.' Formal education and human rights are perceived to have loosened the morals and cultures though there are laws protecting the interest of girl children and people are not prepared to support that.⁴ However there are also cases of children misbehaving all in the name of human rights and the law. The research was done so as to realise how female initiation affects children and women and also to bring out why there are continuities and changes and also to realise its positive and negative effects on young girls..

² Ibid, p. 97.

³ E. M. Chiwome, and Z. Gambahanya, Culture and Development: Perspectives from the

South, Mond Press, Harare, 1996, pg 40.

⁴ Ibid. p.40.

The research looked at the female initiation versus human rights and looked on how culture violates or benefit the society in regard to the right to education and sexual reproductive health. However, human rights have been a debatable issue in the developing countries since they are regarded as an instrument to destroy the African cultures and religion.

0.2 Back ground of the area under study

The advent and the settlement of the pioneer column in Southern Rhodesia modern day Zimbabwe under the BSAC in the early 1890s gave rise to mining and agricultural activities in the country. The quest for more gold deposits led to the migration of white miners from South Africa to the Zimbabwe Plateau to settle at Hartley.⁵ The land of Mashayamombe which was later named Hartley was rich in mineral deposits and the whites did not find minerals in quantities they expected and they shifted to agriculture because the soils were very rich for agriculture. The settlement of Hartley Hills gave rise to mining and agricultural activities in Chegutu. Most of the workers in the town were largely from Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. The workers immigrated into Hartley in search of better working and living conditions. Chegutu town was dominated by David whitehead which was the clothing industry and Cargill Cotton Company and surrounded by commercial white farms which practiced different types of agriculture. Mining was also done near the town and all these contributed to the creation of town.

0.3 Statement of the problem

The period between 2000 and 2015 has witnessed a rise on teenage girls dropping out of school, child prostitution and child marriages in the area. The research investigated the female initiation practices and how has it contributed to these problems and unearth its impacts to understand its contribution to school drop outs, child prostitution and marriages and to explore if they have impacts on the rights of children to education and sexual reproductive health.

⁵ J. D. Fage, and W. Tordoff, A History of Africa, 4th edition, Rutledge, London, 2002, Pp. 444-448.

The prevalence of high levels of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs), child prostitution, unwanted pregnancies and child marriages are some of the factors purported to this research. Child marriages added to high maternal mortality rate, young mothers who usually faced complications while giving birth were in the 15 to 19 age group.⁶ These young mothers are at risk due to lack of proper medical care because in most cases they register late their pregnancies putting their unborn babies at risk of HIV and AIDS. The age group 15 to 19 was noted to be vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and the prevalence of the virus between men and women is on the ratio 21 percent to 14.5 percent at national level.⁷ This shows that young girls are mostly at risk of the pandemic.

Child prostitution is also a major problem in Chegutu and this can be accorded to high unemployment and poverty due to the closure of David Whitehead textile industry and also the closure of Cargill Cotton Company (CCC). These industries were the backbone of Chegutu industry hence their closure was a blow to Chegutu economic and social activities. Most teenage girls are venturing into child prostitution selling their bodies to the gold panniers as gold panning was the source of income in the area. The issue of female initiation and body infibulations is something that was being ignored by many feminist historians; maybe the reason being that the Chewa are a minority group, however the practices were also adopted by other non Chewa people in the community and therefore the researcher found out this was worth to be unearthed to find out if they have impacts on the rights of women particularly teenage girls.

⁶ . World Health Organisation. The prevention and management of unsafe abortion: Report of a technical working group, <http://wholibdoc.who.int/hq/1992/WHO MSM92.52013> (Accessed 01.08.16)

⁷ World Health Organisation. The prevention and management of unsafe abortion: Report of a technical working group, <http://wholibdoc.who.int/hq/1992/WHO MSM92.52013> (Accessed 01.08.16)

0.4 Aims and objectives of the research

0.4.1 Aim

To investigate female initiation practices on the rights of girls to education and sexual reproductive health.

0.4.2 Objectives

To examine the knowledge and content imparted to teenage girls during initiation.

To explore the causes of child marriages in Chegutu

To examine if female initiation carries positive effects worth to be retained or modified.

1.5 Research questions

1. What type of knowledge is imparted to girls during initiation?
2. In what ways have the aspects of the female initiation been modified and what factors have influenced this change?
3. What are the factors that make people to cling on or refrain from the practice?

0.6 Sources and methodology

Interviews were used to collect data by approaching relevant people and asking them questions. Oral interviews were conducted in Community services office and in the community. One managed to conduct individual and group interviews and this was much easier due to the interaction one had with the people in the community during the one year work related learning. With the help of the work place supervisor one managed to make use of the chances obtained when conducting home visits to carry out interviews for the research. Face to face interviews allowed personal communication and made it possible to gather more information. The targeted people for consultancy were the female initiators (Nyamukungu), Child Care Workers, Gender focal persons, the Chegutu Municipality community and social services department, initiated girls and faith based organisations (FBOs) and teenage girls in the community. One also used focus group discussions where the topic interest was culture and tradition. The method was an advantage as it allowed one to draw lessons from participants at the same time and a lot of

information was obtained and it also saved time and cost. However, most of the initiated were not willing to disclose as the practice do not allow initiates to disclose information especially to outsiders.

As a researcher my observation of events was important and to be able to unfold the mysteries of the practice became a little bit easier as one was also regarded as an insider and given access to places and people who were necessary and this was evitable due to the fact that one was regarded as an insider and part and parcel of the group because was also a produce of the practice though one cannot remember everything which went on during one's initiation since it was long back, lacked interest and the zeal during the time because one was initiated forcefully without one's consent. However, one decided to research on the topic to find out on the importance of the practice and the reasons behind its continuity in the modern day society since it was perceived to have survived the taste of time. However, some also regarded me as an outsider because one has never participated or come out openly since it appeared to be very embarrassing and shameful during that time.

Secondary data was used to supplement the information which was obtained through interviews and monthly and quarterly reports from local clubs and organisations. One had access to the reports as an attaché at Chegutu Municipality under Housing and Community Services Department where one worked in the Community Services Section where clubs and organisations submitted their day to day activities. One also obtained information through participating in meetings with partner organisations of the town council; Gender links conference held at Pandari Hotels, meetings with the government institutions and the civil society. The secondary sources included books, journals, online text and news paper.

Questionnaires were used in the collection of statistical useful information about the research. The researcher distributed the questionnaires personally since the respondents were in her locality. During the distribution, the researcher seized the opportunity to explain the purpose and significance of the study, clarified the points, answered the questions and motivated respondents to answer questions carefully and truthfully. This was much easier due to the fact that one was born and bred in the area and sometimes people felt safe to respond to the

questions unlike they did to strangers. However, people tend to lie when responding to questionnaires since direct questions are posed unlike during face to face interviews.

0.7 Literature review

Cultural practices are facilitating child abuse which result in child marriages and these cultures are supported by family, clan or group and even the community. Millet cited by Brynson argued that the family is a central part of the society's power as children learn the values and expectations of their society. Thus it is within the family that children first encounter patriarchal power therefore the empowerment of girl children need to start at household level.⁸ However, the 21st century has witnessed scholars who argue that the cultural practices like female initiation are of great importance in the lives of the Africans and it brings positive benefits as it has managed to stand the taste of time, become popular due to the belief that it controls promiscuity and the fear of HIV/AIDS. In some cases the practice was celebrated for its ability in saving marriages for instance Pastor Malemo and wife praised the practice in the Sunday mail and argue that it is a noble practice done to mould women to be compliant, hard working and courageous and to endure difficulties.⁹ However, these scholars concentrated much on the importance of the practice to women but they did not consider the teenage girls who also undergo the rite of passage who will be exposed to knowledge not relevant to their age.

Smith cited by Warnock says that the major point of moral principles is to promote social harmony; moral is important in the individual conduct, human happiness, interest, needs and desires.¹⁰ However, the educated Chinamwari graduate confirmed that for those who have not attained higher formal education, initiation can be manipulated and serve the purpose of exploiting and discriminating against women. One noted that moral doctrines can be used deliberately to repress women. One was able to draw a line between young girls and women and figured out that young girls who undergo initiation in most cases can adopt the rebel attitude which can result in the misuse of the knowledge. There is need by the institution to

⁸ V. Brynson, *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed, MacMillan, New York, pp. 175-180.

⁹ Sunday mail, "Saving marriages with Chinamwali," <http://www.sundaymail.co.zw>, August 2 2015.

¹⁰ G. J. Warnock, *New Studies in Ethics: Contemporary moral philosophy*, MacMillan, Britain, pp. 48-50.

modify the practice to initiate mature women in order to serve its aims and purposes which one has identified to be in the marriage life or ‘bedroom and kitchen.

Some Faith based organisation and Christians have vigorously criticised the practice and regarded it as a pagan custom because it is held in the confines of African Traditional Religion which involved ancestral worship which is contrary to the Christian principles and doctrines. The bodily exposure of the initiates is also strongly condemned. However a fifty year old mother and Christian confirmed that she is a produce of the practice and argued that nothing is bad about it, she said the pastors could publicly condemn but secretly initiated their daughters and some ended up marrying women who had been initiated. It is therefore difficult for individuals to do away with their families’ tradition as they will be regarded as the outcast. This then makes the children vulnerable to child marriages and sexually transmitted diseases. Dualeh postulated that female initiations and infibulations violate women’s right to privacy and dignity.⁹ He did not consider children in his work therefore neglecting and not considering children as the weakest and voiceless group. However, it is outsiders who feel that the practice infringe the rights of women, considering the willingness of the women to continue with the practice and they praise it as the reliable source of bringing up “an ideal woman” in the society. The elderly people of the group overlooked the importance of the practice and ignore the needs of children who are growing under intense wide spread economic crisis and a world full of sexually transmitted diseases. The research therefore considered girl children as the most victims of the practice and looked on the grievances they encounter.

Martin Dixon et al noted that human rights are possessed by all human beings. He postulated that rights is a term used to describe varieties of legal relationship and liberties to do something, certain specific liberties such as freedom of speech, worship, right of association, personal and sexual relationship.¹¹ It is necessary for young girls to know fundamental rights in order to realise abuse and exploitation especially in culture, customs and traditions of their societies. However Dixon focused on studying the human rights in general and focused much on the liberties of which are mainly theoretical and not put into practice. Dixon’s focus was on the

¹¹ . M. Dixon, R. McCorquodale, and S. Williams, Cases on materials on International Law, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p.175.

International arena and also neglected children in his work. One looked at children at community level since culture and traditions vary from place to place.

The practice can violate the children's right as abuse and torture is used as punishment.

Torture is a crime against humanity when considering the Roman statute article 7 which stated that a human being requires fundamental rights and privileges and also protection from torture and inhuman practices.¹² Culture can be harmful and there is need by the government to investigate on these practices and redefine them if there is need. Dualeh made it clear how female initiation and female infibulations violates women's rights.¹³ However, Dualeh's work fall short on the fact that he did not consider children as being victims of the practices. The 21st century has witnessed the revival of the practice to the extent that professional women are engaging in these practices willingly to save or mend their broken marriages. Dorkeno Efua also brought out how the genital mutilations compromises and complicates female's life,¹⁴ However, the elements in the practices are changing gradually for instance there are no genital mutilations, older women can be initiated unlike long back when only virgins could undergo the initiation. Most of the works by many scholars fall short in the sense that they concentrate much on finding differences and weaknesses and sometimes make judgement without researching much about the group and its cultures and draw conclusions afterwards. One realised that there are traces of positive elements in the practice; however, there is need for modification in order to honour the rights of girls to education and sexual reproductive health.

Children were neglected and were mostly not considered to have been affected by the initiation ceremonies and rituals. Madison Park managed asserted that, female initiation practices are abusive and fuel child marriages and early pregnancies.¹³ Children's rights appear to be a myth than reality because they are not honoured in the protection of children particularly girl child. Children are powerless and voiceless and cannot protect them and so they need protection and help from the family, community and the state as a whole. The period between 2000 and 2016 was coupled by widespread economic crisis and the male factors also used the opportunity to misuse the knowledge from the practice to engage in prostitution. However, there is need for modification of the practice to serve the right age in order to realise its objectives and aims and

¹² *Ibid.*, p.175.

¹³. M. Park, A rite of passage that pushes girls into sex, CNN, 1628, February 4 2014.

to save children at the same time as well as protecting their rights to education and sexual reproductive health.

Women have always occupied the lowest and subordinate positions in the social ladder in the society. Feminism is about opposing patriarchal world view. The feminist theories are divided into separate schools of thought. The liberal feminist censure prejudices and stereotypes of the role females occupy in the society which show women's subordination. This theory is of crucial importance to this study because it brings forward the fundamental essence of liberty. Pilcher and Whelehan postulate that the strongest weapon for women is education and if men and women are educated equally they will get equal access to society.¹⁴ Girls are not advancing with their education due to early marriages and unwanted pregnancies which force them to drop out of school.

Pilcher and Whelehan have acknowledged the problems faced by women and teenage girls as a result of unequal education and economic opportunities which resulted in their inferiority, however they failed to give solutions to the problems behind economic marginalisation of women and girls because girls are lacking resources due to economic crisis in many parts of Africa. Poverty is prevalent in the area and the closure of industries has widened the gap between men and women. The community under study is patriarchal in nature; hence economic crisis would mean that girls would be at a disadvantage and are likely to venture into child marriages with older men putting their lives at risk since these older men in most cases had many marital affairs.

In the radical theory women blamed patriarchy as a system that organises the society in the basis that male are superior. This ideology challenges oppression of women and called for a radical reordering of the society. They argued that the liberation of women can only be achieved on working on economic and cultural sources of women's oppression and these are female initiation rituals, genital mutilation among others.¹⁵ It should be noted that women have also

¹⁴ J.Pilcher, and I. Whelehan, 50 Concepts in Gender studies, Sage, London, 2011, pg48-50.

¹⁵ . H. Barnett, "Introduction to feminist jurisprudence", Cavendish, London, 1998. (Accessed 01.08.16)

contributed to their marginalisation due to their inferiority complex and looking down upon themselves. Women have always told themselves that they were an inferior group and this is evidenced by their willingness to continue the initiation schools and rituals all in the name of pleasing their husbands. One is of the view that these practices should consider those who are willing and ready for marriage to avoid violating the rights of young and innocent girls.

The female initiators postulated that Chinamwari prepares girls into women; the girls who are initiated are from puberty stage usually those who have started on their menstruation. They said that the practices are meant to educate a girl child on menstruation, good morals, HIV and AIDS, information about woman's place in the society, pulling of the labia minora and virginity testing is also conducted during initiation.¹⁶ This shows that some of the lessons taught at Chinamwari can be irrelevant to the young girls who are not yet ready for marriage. One noted that there is a gap which needed to be filled in this education as there is need to teach children and give them information required at their level and also that the initiation schools should be operated putting children in their age regiments so that the information passed to a ten year old is different to that given to someone who is ready for marriage.

A report from The Brookings Institution and UNESCO postulated that children's rights to education is not realised and they aired out reasons behind the failure to fulfil the right of children to education. They said economic challenges, governance challenges in the education sector, lack of parental and community support for education and gender inequalities are factors behind. They argued that lack of education increase the risk of a girl to be married early at the same time making her vulnerable to STIs.¹⁷The question remains, what needs to be done for children's right to education and sexual reproductive health to be realised. A report left out other factors like religion and cultural practices which are also contributing to the failure to realise girl child's rights and the remedies to the problems.

¹⁶ Nyarai. Kangaza, Chinamwari graduate, middle aged woman, interviewed on 10.03.16

¹⁷The Brookings Institution and UNESCO, Financing for Global Education: Opportunities for multilateral action, at <http://tellmaps.com/uis/oosc/> (assessed 01.03.16)

There are also other incidents which were reported in the local newspaper of girls who dropped out of school and started flocking the beer halls after graduating from Chinamwari.¹⁸ Park asserted that Chinamwari is a rite of passage that pushes girls into sex whereby he explained that these practices fuel child prostitution and child marriages.¹⁹ However the interviewed middle aged woman who have undergo the female initiation practice said that the practice is of crucial importance as it moulds a woman into a responsible wife. She said that the practices disseminate information about abstinence to young girls, so those who were seen flocking the beer halls after graduating from Chinamwari were of that character even before they were initiated.²⁰ In one's assessment the giving of marriage items like beads and training on sexual performance was a signal that girls were free to go and marry. However it should be noted that the training is perceived differently by different scholars at different times.

0.8 Chapter breakdown

Chapter one introduces the research by giving the historical back ground of the Chewa female initiation ceremonies in Chegutu migrant community and the location of the study. This chapter gives brief history of the targeted group, the role of religion and culture in the upbringing of the Chewa children and what they are expected to become in the community. The Chewa children are taught different chores in which they are expected to perform at different intervals of life. The chapter highlights when and how the children are groomed using the initiation schools known as Chinamwari. The chapter also gives the kind of education imparted in initiation schools.

Chapter two highlights the changes and continuities of female initiation practice and the factors behind this dynamism. The chapter looks on how modernity, Christianity, human rights awareness's has contributed towards the gradual changes taking place in these cultures. from the human right point of view, the chapter also touch on how the practice violates the rights of children and in what way were they affected in regard to education and sexual reproductive

¹⁸."Chinamwari turning girls into women," The Herald of Zimbabwe, Harare, 24 March 2007.

¹⁹M. Park, [A rite of passage that pushes girls into sex](#), CNN,1628, February 4 2014. (Accessed 02.07.16)

²⁰ Nyarai. Kangaza, Chinamwari graduate, middle aged woman, interviewed on 10.03.16

health. The chapter also gives background on the children's rights to education and sexual reproductive health and also the appraisal of the female initiation practices to women particularly girls.

The third chapter highlights the role of the family, community civil society and the government strategies in respect to girls' and women's rights. The chapter gives an analysis on how the female initiations affected women and also looks on other factors which contributed to the changes in the economics of the community which also hindered education and health sector. The third chapter is followed by the summary and conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE ETHNIC GROUP, PRACTICE AND THE TYPE OF KNOWLEDGE IMPARTED TO INITIATES.

1.1 Introduction

The chapter gives the historical background of the female initiation in Chegutu urban amongst the Chewa speaking group, a minority group in Zimbabwe but constituting the larger percentage in the area under study. It further explores the functions of culture in the upbringing of a girl child and what she is expected of. The area under study constitutes the immigrant population from Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. The chapter also looks on the type of knowledge imparted to girls during their initiation into womanhood. It also looks at the importance and relevance of this knowledge to young girls and examines its impacts on the rights of children and women.

1.2 Back ground of the research

The Africans have their own way of perceiving things and the environment around them. They have a traditional set up of bringing up their children. Taboos, proverbs and legends were part of the education instruments which were used in the past and these instruments still exist in the modern day communities. In the Chewa community it is regarded as a taboo and also against the society for one not to undergo some of the practices and rituals and therefore one can be regarded as an outcast.¹ Culture and religion are intertwined and work hand in hand. In the Chewa traditional set up it is a taboo for parents to discuss issues to do with adolescent and sexual reproductive health and when children reach this stage they are sent to elderly women and men for training.² The Chewa children particularly girls were supposed to make a contribution to the community after attaining the skills from the elderly who were experts and

¹ A. R. H. Dualeh, Sisters in affliction, circumcision and infibulations of women in Africa, http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1992/WHO_MSM92.5_PDF_2013. (assessed 01.08.16)

² D. Efua, Cutting the rose, female genital mutilation; the practice and its preventions, Minority Rights Publishers, London, 1994, pg 40.

regarded as the calabashes of knowledge thus in the African set up age was accorded with knowledge. The practices were meant to protect the girl child and they were not consulted in issues pertaining their well being.

In addition girls were taught different chores which were very important in their future life. Girls were turned into women at puberty stage. They were taught to manage their menstruation, training on sexual performance, training on respect and good morals especially when speaking to people of opposite sex, to humble themselves and honour their husbands when they get married, household chores like cooking, fetching water and also susceptible to virginity testing.³ It has been discovered that initiation schools have started long back before urbanisation, Momoh asserted that uncles and aunts were responsible for the dissemination of information to children pertaining their reproductive health and counselling.⁴ Urbanisation and the economic crisis which made many parents to migrate to greener pastures leaving child headed families behind has led to the breaking down of the extended families which left people with no option. However this is not true considering the history of Chinamwari which was practiced in pre-colonial period and up today it is still thriving.

Learning of different life skills at a tender age is giving teenage girls passports to marriages as they feel that they are capable of handling households. The other reason is that after graduating from Chinamwari many older men rush to these young girls and this is locally known as the scramble for the gold. Young girls after graduating face a lot of challenges and pressures from the community as they are expected to participate in certain duties and responsibilities because the community regards them as adults even though they are not yet mature enough to handle things on their own. At this age the parents seize their protection and are expected to act maturely. This has witnessed many school drop outs in the area as girl child feels that she is ready for intimate relationship and marriage.

³ International Press Service, 'Raising the voices of the South and civil society on issues of development, globalisation, human rights and the environment', IPS, 2016. (assessed 01.07.16)

⁴ C. S. Momosh, ed, Philosophy in African proverbs in The substance of African philosophy, African philosophy project publications, Chicago, 1989, p232.

1.3 Location of the case study

The study was carried out in Chegutu urban. Chegutu is a town in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. It is along the Harare to Bulawayo road 107 kilometres south west of the capital Harare with an area of about 57441 square kilometres. It had an estimated population of 50.590 in 2012.⁵ Chegutu has been established as a mining and agricultural settlement. The Cotton and Grain Marketing Boards established depots in Chegutu however the cotton depots closed in 2015 due to economic crisis. The creation of Chegutu town has roots in the advent and the settlement of the pioneer column in Southern Rhodesia modern day Zimbabwe under the BSAC in the early 1890s which gave rise to mining and agricultural activities in the country. The quest for more gold deposits led to the migration of white miners from South Africa to the Zimbabwe Plateau to settle at Hartley.⁶ The land of mashayamombe which was later named Hartley was rich in mineral deposits and the whites did not find minerals in quantities they expected and they shifted to agriculture because the soils were very rich for agriculture. The settlement of Hartley Hills gave rise to mining and agricultural activities in and around Chegutu. Most of the workers in the town were largely from Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique.⁷ The workers immigrated into Hartley in search of better working and living conditions. Chegutu town was dominated by David whitehead which was the clothing industry and the Cargill Cotton Company.

1.4 Description of target group

The alien population constitute about fifty percent of the whole population in Chegutu District. Chegutu can also be called a migrant community due to the fact that it is occupied by people from Malawi (Nyasaland) and Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) and Mozambique and this can be traced back in the time of the federation when Zimbabwe benefitted the most and people from other federation countries flocked to Zimbabwe in search of greener pastures.⁸ Some Aliens

⁵ Zimbabwe 2012 population census results (ZIMSTATS) (assessed 01/08/16)

⁶ J. D. Fage, and W. Tordoff, A History of Africa, 4th Ed, Rutledge, London, 2002, pp444-448.

⁷ Historical dictionary of Zimbabwe, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, 2001. (assessed 01/07/16)

⁸ J. D. Fage, and W. Tordoff, A History of Africa, 4th Ed, Rutledge, London, 2002, p488-500.

continued to have closer links with their relatives back home but some had cut ties that their children have no links with those back home. Some immigrants have maintained their identities, religion and culture but some of them could speak fluent local language therefore it becomes difficult to identify them unless on occasions such as weddings, initiation ceremonies and other festivals. However intermarriages have been promoted and in some cases cultures are exchanged hence some of the Chewa practices which are practiced in Zimbabwe can have some differences with those practiced in the Chewa Provinces back in Malawi and Zambia.⁹

In the Chewa culture, every child has to undergo initiation processes. However the researcher had studied the female initiation ceremony and this was because that the girls were the most vulnerable group compared to boys. Chinamwari practice is conducted by elderly women who are called Nyamukungu in the Chewa language.¹⁰ The initiation practices usually take place in the month of August when children are on school holidays. The parents or guardians of the girl arrange for the initiation and a certain fee is paid. Parents or guardians of the child arrange for the food and everything needed during the course of the initiation. The course of the initiation runs for two to three weeks. A house of the Nyamkungu can be used to shelter and conduct lessons. The place is a no go area for the non members and the secret codes and songs are used as passport to enter into the initiation house.

Members are identified by knowing these codes. In rural areas a secluded hut is used as the initiation camp.¹¹ There are rules and regulations which need to be followed by the Anamwari/Anamwali (girls who are undergoing initiation), failure to comply would result in punishments and slow learners are usually victims of these detrimental punishments.¹² The

⁹ Kecia's world," Chewa tribe, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, [http://www. Chewa's world. Com/Chewa tribe html](http://www.Chewa's world. Com/Chewa tribe html) (assessed 01/08/16)

¹⁰ Chewa Religion <http://philter. Ucsm.ac.uk/ encyclopaedia/sub/chewa/html>. (assessed 01/08/16)

¹¹Ibid

¹² Rodriguez. Takeuchi, L., Intra household inequalities in child rights and well being: A barrier to progress. (assessed 01/08/16)

initiated girls stay indoors for the initiation period and usually go outside to bath in the early hours of dawn to avoid contacts with other people. The practice is kept as a secret to the extent that the neighbours could not be aware of what is taking place in their neighbourhood. Chinamwari prepares girls into women; the girls who are initiated are from puberty stage usually those who have started on their menstruation.¹³ The practices are meant to educate a girl child on menstruation, good morals, HIV and AIDS, information about woman's place in the society, pulling of the labia minora and virginity testing is also conducted during initiation.¹⁴The initiated girls stay indoors for the initiation period and usually go outside to bath in the early hours of dawn to avoid contacts with other people.¹⁵

1.5 Education imparted during chinamwari

Girls experience many changes in their bodies during adolescence and they require knowledge on the changes taking place within their bodies. Mbuya Donoria a female initiator when interviewed said that, " here at chinamwari we teach children on how to manage their menstruation and how to dispose their sanitary pads and also proper maintenance of their bodies during menstruation."¹⁶ The menstruation times appears to be a very difficult time for many young girls and one also noted that children need education concerning menstruation so that they do not get terrified and troubled on what is going on when they start on their menstruations. One has witnessed some girls crying on their first menstruation because of the fear of blood and also some could not feel comfortable and some went even to the extent of losing confidence and feeling embarrassed and shameful especially near boys.

Girls are traumatised during their first menstruation, they experience what Laura Fingerson brought out in her book as horrors of menstruation that are issues related to genital hygiene, storage and washing of menstrual cloth or pads, traditional beliefs and practices related to

¹³ Chewa Religion <http://philter.Ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopaedia/sub/chewa/html>. (assessed 01/08/16)

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 01/08/16

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 01/08/16

¹⁶ Mbuya Donoria, female initiator, interviewed on 10/03/16

menstruation and health problems like diarrhoea, discharge and excessive bleeding. ¹⁷This education is of paramount importance to young girls however lessons concerning menstruation are given even at schools usually from grade three. There is a lot of literature to help children in times of this and many schools started on girls clubs where lessons and education about adolescence are conducted.

In one's assessment the formal education has replaced initiation schools and children can be well equipped with relevant knowledge which they require. The sciences of growing up in formal education have been proven hence children are imparted with knowledge even when they do not attend initiation schools. The female initiation schools are a place where girls are trained on respect and good morals and women's place in the society. Once a girl has started her menstruation she is expected not to mix and mingle with boys and also not to have a sexual relation with the boys as this will result in unwanted pregnancy. They are taught to abstain from sexual relationships. ¹⁸

In addition, the Chewa girls are taught to manage different household chores and the time spent doing household chores instead of school work hindered the participation of a girl child in her education. A form three girl from Pfupajena High postulated that sometimes she absented herself from school due to work which one is compelled to perform as per their tradition. ¹⁹ It was confirmed that there are too much expectations from the parents and community after one has graduated from Chinamwari and expected to fulfil the duties of an adult and the type of education becomes contrary for instance at school they are treated as juveniles whilst at home they are regarded as adults. It was seen that most girls spent two to three hours on chores in the morning before going to school and four hours would be spent on different chores after

¹⁷ Laura. Fingerson, Girls in power: Gender body and menstruation in adolescence, State University of New York Press, New York, 2006, pg 10.

¹⁸ Mbuya Donoria, female initiator, interviewed on 10/03/16

¹⁹ T. Tapfuma, form three pupil, Pfupajena High School. Interviewed on 10/03/16

school. The agenda of schooling is usually lost. Half of the girls who were interviewed either repeated classes or they dropped out of school due to the pressure they succumbed after graduating from Chinamwari.²⁰ Some girls dropped out of school because they regarded themselves as adults and work as house maids. These girls usually work for richer African families.²¹

The other education was training on sexual movements and how to please men connubially. During the study one visited one of the female initiation which took place in the nearby and had a zeal of what was going on inside the initiation room. One asked for permission and permission was granted. One witnessed that the exercise taught girls to be flexible in bed and most of the dance moves were clearly imitating the song and drums rhythm. Chewa songs were sung and half naked girls took turns to dance showing different sexual positions. Women and girls of different generations freely shared intimate knowledge on how to perfect their flexibility in bed. One was also asked to dance together with other ladies and found that it was something that was not easy but required ample time of training. Sharp objects were placed underneath and this was done to punish those who were lazy and weak.

One was able to interview the initiator Mrs Banda who took her time to explain the importance of Chinamwari to an African woman. She said men were also initiated and educated, so most men know what to expect from their wives and failure to live up to expectations result in them having affairs in search of the proper and well trained women who could please them in bed. She also said that Chinamwari was very crucial as it educates women on how to treat their husbands and keep them clean for instance by shaving their husbands' pubic regions. Mrs Banda said the prostitutes also know how to treat and handle men in bed that is why many marriages are breaking up because once a man feels pleased he will never return home.²² One also interviewed a middle aged lady who was married for more than two times who also shed light that the men whom she was married to left their families for her. She said women who were not initiated were at a disadvantage of losing their husbands to more experienced

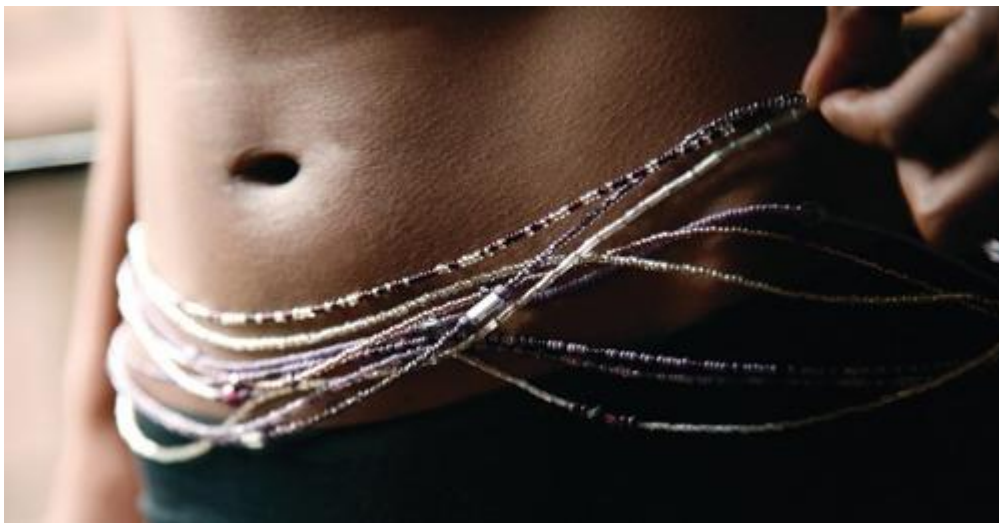
²⁰P. Ndlovu, sister in charge Chinengundu clinic, interviewed 22/06/15

²¹ Ibid 22/06/15

²² Mrs Banda, female initiator and instructor. Interviewed on 10/03/16

ladies.²³ One discovered that Chinamwari is used by deviants and malefactors to do their dirty deeds of harlotry. A daughter of the female initiator lives by prostitution, she was married and divorced many times and her addiction brought her to the point that prostitution was the only means she had to survive. She dropped out of school at a tender age and the only profession she knew was prostitution. Mbuya Donoria during interview postulated that Chinamwari brings a sense of comradeship, bravery, courage and also promote peaceful coexistence of men and women as women could be able to understand their roles and positions in their homes and society at large, it also teach good morals to girls .

The initiated girls were given items which showed that they are now adults on their graduation day. The graduation day is regarded as a great day where the female vigils dance the whole night prior to graduation and they throw feathers at every vigil's resident very early in the morning and the researcher was amazed and wanted to know more about the practice. The initiator said this was a symbol of womanhood. The Anamwari then had their hair cut, bath and get dressed in superior clothing that is usually African attire with a head veil and tennis shoes and each one of them was accompanied by a cheerful crowd to her place without



Picture 1 is showing initiate wearing beads around her waist. Source @www. Obololo files. Word press. Com

communicating with them. On arrival the parents or guardians pay a certain fee for their child to remove her veil and to communicate with them. Each family with their child graduating prepares special meal for the girl and the initiators. The researcher found out many local people were surprised with the event and one discovered that the days one grew up the practice was

²³ Ibid. interviewed 10/03/16

very rare in town but they were usually practiced in farms surrounding Chegutu. The young girls were taken there for initiations for instance a former commercial farm called Peter Martins which is about fifteen kilometres from Chegutu.

The researcher wondered if the dressing would be the same in all Chewa communities in Africa, Mrs Banda told the researcher that dressing varies from place to place and things are changing due to intermarriages and the influence of urbanisation.²⁴She said long back the initiated used to wear traditional regalia and they were usually painted on their faces.²⁵The girls received gifts on the graduation day from parents and people from the community and also from their initiators. The items which they were given included beads which were a marriage item to be worn when one get married. The purpose of the beads was to make a rhythmic sound when a woman performs her dances in bed.²⁶

One discovered that every time they were greeting elders they bowed and scrapped, one witnessed that this was a norm among the Chewa women when greeting elder people. The girls were taught to respect their elders and humble themselves in the presence of their elders especially of opposite sex, they were taught to wake up very early in the morning before everyone else in the family. The elders used taboos to educate the children, they are taught not to put salt whenever they are on their menstruation periods and not to enter or sleep on their parents' bed. It is believed that doing so would result in the mother having a badly backache and serious coughing.²⁷ One observed that this was done to make children respect and avoid their parents' room and also parents wanted to know the monthly psyche of their children so that if anything goes wrong were able to discover early for example in the event of becoming pregnant. According to Shorter a taboo exploit an innate and irrational fear in human psyche and was used to inculcate practical attitudes and act as a precaution.²⁸ Thus respect was instilled to children through the use of taboos. They were told what to do and what not to do through the use of taboos.

²⁴Mrs Banda, female initiator and instructor. Interviewed on 10/03/16

²⁵ Ibid. Interviewed on 10/03/16

²⁶ Ibid. Interviewed on 10/03/16

²⁷ Nicole. Madzima, Form 3 student, Chegutu High , interviewed on 26/06.15

²⁸ A. Shorter, *Songs and Symbols of initiation: A study from Africa in the Social Control of perception*, Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 1987.

The kind of knowledge which the girls were imparted with was life skills and these skills were to be transmitted to the next generation using the word of mouth. There are no syllabuses and knowledge is not divided into subjects but it is a process which goes on and on. Much of information is not found in books and it is kept as a secret and it becomes a taboo to discuss it in public or with opposite sex.²⁹The education becomes contrary to that received at schools where they are treated as juveniles at the same time treated differently at home.

The researcher found that there were also other group that were commercialising Chinamwari and this has become their source of income. The commercial female initiators charged a certain fee for their services rendered. They also sell items such as beads and herbs to women and Mbuya Mwanza told the researcher that prominent and well educated women come for her services and they even pay large tokens of appreciation for the services rendered. She said many of them found the practice more effective and efficient.³⁰The commercial initiators were a bit different from the above one in that they provided services to women usually who are in marriages and who sought to mend their broken marriages. They provided services even to Non-Chewa people in exchange for a fee. There was a report that even single ladies were seen frequenting the house for the services. This indicated that women were benefiting from the practices.

1.6 The role of culture in the upbringing of the Chewa girls

Culture is dynamic and it varies from place to place. It is the arts, customs and habits that characterise a certain group of people or society. A group's beliefs, values, behaviours and material objects that constitute a people's way of life. Anthropologists define it as the knowledge that is passed from one generation to another. It is a combination of the language one speaks and the geographical location one belongs to.³¹Culture can be influenced by

²⁹ Mrs Phiri, Pfupajena township resident, interviewed on 26/06.15

³⁰ Mbuya Mwanza, Chegutu municipality housing department. Interviewed on 26/06/15

³¹ Oruka. H. Odera, Sage philosophy, ''*Philosophy of History and culture*, 4, 1990. (Assessed 01/08/16)

migration, urbanisation, intermarriages, colonialism and economic situation. A group can correspond to certain changes through their day to day socialisation with other people with different cultures and beliefs.

Chewa culture and Islamic religion are intertwined that it is impossible to talk of culture only without religion. Christianity views Chewa practices as backward, unscientific, myth and superstitious but most of Chewa people continue to practice their traditions some on the open but some who perceived themselves as educated usually perform their traditions at their homes.³² The researcher in a discussion with a Chewa middle aged man known as Phiri found out he did not send his children for initiation but still follow some cultures for instance not buying meat in common butcheries but go to Islamic butcheries or follow the Halawa tradition.³³ Hence showing that the Chewa people are a different group which cannot abandon their traditions totally, however, they changed some of the elements in their culture but still cling on to some. This shows the continuity of the practice despite the criticism from the Christians and human rights activist. The role of religion and culture was to inculcate skills and traditional wisdom of the Chewa to the new generations. Realities of life and skills are imparted to children. Religion and culture also work as a process of one to become part of the society. Chinamwari is a church sponsored initiation ceremony.³⁴ The main religion of Chewa people is Islamic. Most of the Chewa people are Islamic and their place of worship is the religious centre that also became the cultural centres for instance schools, libraries sometimes a hospital. The religion centres sponsor education for the girls where they are taught customs relating to sexuality and reproduction. Songs are sung at initiation rites and other gatherings and traditional dances are common.

Culturally, elders were accorded with wisdom and they were there to disseminate knowledge and to discipline the younger generations to become compliant citizens. Deviants and

³² Pastor Marenga, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe Chegutu circuit. Interviewed 01/07/16

³³ Mr Phiri, an Islamic middle aged man. Interviewed on 01/08/16

³⁴ Ibid Interviewed on 01/08/16

malefactors were brought before the elders to be educated and become responsible people in the community. The researcher found out that the girls who misbehaved were taken back to the initiators where discipline was instilled in the form of beatings and punishments.³⁵ There was the reinforcement of knowledge by the use of stories, folklores and taboos because they provided information on everyday situation and gives analytical solutions at the end. The Chewa girls are taught the science of health, its promotion and preservation for instance to wash themselves early in the morning before they handle any household chores and also to wash their posterior part of their body after visiting the toilet. Cleanliness is taught in the context of personal hygiene, cooking and looking after and taking proper care of the household. The role of culture and religion is therefore to inculcate life skills which helps a girl understand her place, position and status which help her integrate and conform to the actions and activities of people in the society as well as her husband. Elders were concerned about the future life of children and children also thought of themselves in the future episodes of life. One discovered that this is true especially considering how one conformed and avoided to sit on the mortar fearing that one's husband would die. However this was for hygienic purposes but elders knew that children would never conform so they invented a lie and this was an instrument for education.

One attended the workshop which was chaired by the National Aids Council on HIV/AIDS, causes of early marriages and unwanted pregnancies. One was representing the Social services department of Chegutu Municipality and present were the Child Care workers (CCW), Ministry of Youth representatives, Ministry of Women Affairs and selected members from each ward in Chegutu urban. Some of the views were that cultural practices were causing early marriages and making the minors to be vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. However practices like Chinamwari was among the factors which were said to be fuelling child marriages and prostitution in the area. A representative from the Ministry of Youth who was Chewa and Muslim refuted this claim and argued that Chinamwari is not a culture which promotes child prostitution because

³⁵ Mbuya Mwanza, Chegutu municipality housing department. Interviewed on 26/06/15

young children are taught nothing to do with sexuality. She said older girls ready for marriage are the ones who receive this kind of education.³⁶

One discovered that culture and religion guide the morals and principles of the Chewa children through norms, values and traditional character building and respect for authority. They are taught to endure life problems and community participation. One witnessed that the Chewa people have unity and this is evidenced in rituals and festivals when they unite for a common goal for instances at funerals and other festivals like Sadaka (gathering of Chewa people, similar to a party).³⁷ Their culture also works as an instrument in conserving natural resources and animals but at the same time exploiting women. There are certain species of animals which are not consumed by the Chewa and these include pigs, mice, and snake fish to mention but a few. One discovered that Africans perceive the world in the same manner that is the preservation and conservation of resources. The young generations are taught on what to consume and what not to be consumed. Thus culture and religion moulds girls into people who respect the environment and nature. Women were also regarded as part of that nature whilst men are viewed as controllers of nature. Religion and culture made girls and women to be passive and dependent on their male counter parts that are their husbands and their fathers.³⁸

Religion and culture support patriarchy and female subordination in society. In the Islamic religion the Koran is used and shariah laws are practiced which further infringe the rights of women and girls as human beings. Men and women who are not related are not allowed to interact, to eat together or to be seen together.³⁹ Culture and religion therefore has created a

³⁶ Workshop on the causes of child marriages, child prostitution and unwanted pregnancy on teenage girls, Chegutu Municipality Hall, 24/06/16.

³⁷ Workshop on the causes of child marriages, child prostitution and unwanted pregnancy on teenage girls, Chegutu Municipality Hall, 24/06/16.

³⁸ Oruka. H. Odera, Philosophy of History and culture, Sage philosophy 4, 1990. (Assessed 01/08/16)

³⁹ N., Swainson, Knowledge and power: The design and implementation of gender policies in education in Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. International journal of educational development, special issue, gender and education, volume 20, issue no 1, pp46-64.

social barrier. Women and girls are socialised to become passive, subordinate and dependent to males in the community. The culture and tradition discourage women from participating in public places even at funerals. An Islamic widow testified that the religion makes distinctions between men and women; she said she was hurt when she was unable to give her last condolences at the graveyard when parting with the body of her husband as the law forbade her up until the next day.⁴⁰

The Chewa girls were socialised from childhood that they are second class citizens compared to their male counter parts. The role of culture was to make them dependent and always look up to men in every decision and activity a woman has to consult the male that is the husband, brother or father.⁴¹ Men dominate in the Chewa community and view women as part of nature which was created to comfort him in bad times and ululate for his achievements and the greatest achievement of a woman in her lifetime is to get married and bear children. When a husband becomes promiscuous the blame goes to the woman from the society, she will be given all sorts of names that she is lazy in bed. The only important thing that the society is interested with is pleasing men no matter the challenges a woman might be facing. Girls are taught to stand with their husbands for better or worse when they get married. Hence religion played a major role in the subjugation of girl children and women.

⁴⁰ Mrs Richard, Islamic widow, interviewed 26/01/15

⁴¹ Ibid. interviewed on 26/01/15

CHAPTER TWO: CHINAMWARI IN TIME AND THROUGH TIME

2.1 Introduction

The chapter shows the social and cultural reasons for continued initiation practices among the Chewa girls. The survival of the institution is due to the belief in its control of promiscuity and also acts as a means of instilling bravery, courage and one's loyalty to one's culture and tradition and endurance in times of hardships. However for those who have not attained higher formal education and those who are power and economic hungry, the practice can still serve the purpose of subordination. Female initiation is practiced by many ethnical groups in Africa and this is evidenced by different vernacular languages which describe that rite of passage. The practice carries traces of similarities, however, there are some differences which can be noted since culture and tradition are dynamic and are susceptible to change due to economic, social and political factors.

2.2 The ancient form of the female initiation and rite of passage

The practice has a very long history from the pre colonial period. It has managed to thrive due to social and cultural reasons. It was a tool used to mould girls to become brave, courageous, hard working and reliable mothers in future. The female initiation practice is a culture and tradition of many African ethnic groups and they have different names for instance Chinamwari/Chinamwali, Dipo, Kaguru, Chisamba among others, therefore, it is a culture of the Africans which brought the sense of belonging and comradeship and brought people of the same culture together as a family. Permanent relationships were created and people regarded the practice as good, proper and admirable in their lifestyle. They served as a means of transmitting customs and traditions from one generation to another through oral tradition, no syllabuses or written documents were used to inculcate knowledge to the younger generations. Elders were calabashes of knowledge and were accorded with duty of disseminating information. A person who has undergone initiation was expected to be a changed person who could positively contribute in community debates and decision making because she has passed the rite of passage.⁴²

⁴² T.A. Matobolo, et al Continuity in the traditional initiation practice of boys and girls in contemporary Southern African Society [http://www.Krepublishers. Com/o2-Journals/pdf 17/10/16](http://www.Krepublishers.Com/o2-Journals/pdf/17/10/16)

Female initiation was a way of ensuring that girls abstain from sexual activities before marriage, enhance fertility since women were regarded as part of nature, to promote cleanliness and to avoid girls falling pregnant before they have passed the rite of passage.⁴³ The girls were initiated in different age sets and they were supposed to undergo initiation three times before getting married. The Chewa initiation is similar to that which was practiced in Eastern region of Ghana by the Krobo ethnic group which also took it as a taboo for a girl to fall pregnant before undergoing initiation.⁴⁴ Therefore, it can be noted that the practice made girls to become part and parcel of the community and it was something which women bragged about. Initiated women were very proud of them and were highly respected in the society. In the ancient time, the interviewed initiator highlighted that initiated girls were publicly paraded on the day of their graduation and every member of the society could witness the event unlike in this modern day when some girls are secretly initiated due to embarrassment and criticism from the Christian doctrines.⁴⁵

The domestic and sex education given to the initiates symbolised wifely duties not only to the husband but to the family as well to ensure that her family is well fed. They were taught to cook with traditional utensils and to prepare traditional dishes and were also educated to cook for the large number of people.⁴⁶ Ritual and morning baths symbolized personal hygiene and cleanliness.⁴⁷ The initiation schools served as the informal type of education and it has the essence of equipping the initiates with skills which were needed in reinforcing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as women since they were home makers and responsible for the upkeep of the home. Therefore, female initiation in the history of Africans particularly the Chewa was very important and the historical background shows an attempt by

⁴³ T.A. Matobolo, et al Continuity in the traditional initiation practice of boys and girls in contemporary Southern African Society [http://www. Krepublishers. Com/o2-Journals/pdf](http://www.Krepublishers.Com/o2-Journals/pdf) 17/10/16

⁴⁴P. A. Boakye, Dipo rite of passage among the Krobos of Eastern Region of Ghana, research paper, <http://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle> a rite of passage among the Krobos of Eastern Region. 17/10/16

⁴⁵ Mbuya Musa, female initiator. Interviewed on 07/03/16

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

women to be incorporated into gender and ethnic identity and was seen as a girl child's empowerment.

2.3 The issue of Chinamwari today and factors associated with its gradual changes

Culture is not static rather it is dynamic; it changes from time to time and from place to place. However, this does not imply that culture involves a complete transformation but there are merely aspects that are changed but the central aim usually remains the same. Cultural practices have not been stopped due to Christianity but there are changes which took place and these changes are still going on and on.⁴⁸ However, with the economic crisis in the country the main aim of the practice is lost as the practice is now commercialised in urban centres for instance in Chegutu and many other parts of the country. Change is built in the social systems that make up a modern society and a modern society is open to change due to formal education, technology which has resulted in globalisation. In a traditional set up a person was only aware of the happenings around her or him and had limited access to long distant people and events and situations therefore, one was tied and locked to local events only. Modernity has brought the rationality among people and culture and tradition becomes a choice.

⁴⁸ T.A. Matobolo, et al Continuity in the traditional initiation practice of boys and girls in contemporary Southern African Society [http://www. Krepublishers. Com/02-Journals/pdf](http://www.Krepublishers.Com/02-Journals/pdf) 17/10/16

Mbuya and sekuru sande at their home in Mbare. Source [https:// news day.co.zw](https://news.day.co.zw) 2014/03



Picture 2: Mbuya Sande, a commercial initiator and her husband

The picture above shows Mbuya and Sekuru Sande of Mbare. Mbuya Sande is a female initiator who trains and is a holder of Chinamwari traditions. One noted that Chinamwari nowadays is being commercialised and now appears as a business. The local people are also engaged in these practices. One noticed that amongst the girls who were initiated some of them were karanga, Zezuru, korekore to mention but a few. Looking at the history of the initiation practice in Mozambique and Zambia, Chinamwari was not a commercial thing rather a rite of passage. One noted that from its history it seems it has lost its objective of educating on good morals rather concentrating much on the sexual education part. In the area under study the researcher noticed that the practice became more common and popular in the late 90s though it is regarded as a traditional custom showing that its popularity can be linked to widespread economic crisis due to the closure of David whitehead in 2005 and Cargill Cotton Company in 2012. Bernard cited by Moyo argue that careful inspection of the observable actions of human beings, their movements, speech, the thought and emotions showed that some behaviours can be determined by situation and environment in which a person resides,⁴⁹ many interviewed blamed economic

⁴⁹ J. N. Moyo, *Politics of Administration: Understanding Beauracracy in Africa*, SAPES, Harare, 1992, p. 46.

crisis as the reason for the misuse of Chinamwari and the commercialisation of the practice. However one is of the view that no amount of destitution can serve as a justification for the motive against culture.

Civilisation and modernisation are also factors which have contributed to the dynamism of the practice. The initiators argued that due to civilisation girls experience sexual intercourse earlier, some of the informants like Christians argued that the practice has lost its importance when initiates are young and therefore promotes immorality as girls are at liberty of having sex afterwards. In the ancient time it was noted that it was shameful for a girl to fell pregnant before the rite of passage. However the criticism from faith based organisations and human rights activists spearheaded the changes through their advocacy on the human rights campaigns and awareness which has resulted in the changes on the age group which are undergoing initiation. One noticed that some women would undergo the initiation after marriage in a bid to mend their broken marriages. This shows that there is change in the practice considering that in the ancient, the initiation school was regarded for virgins and young girls only but now Mbuya Donoria asserted that, even girls who have lost their virginity can still attend the initiation and this is vice versa to what happened in the history of female initiation in the Chewa.⁵⁰ The issue of parading graduates is gradually changing as some girls and women are initiated secretly and sometimes are not confined to the secluded areas due to reasons which include employment, education and fear of criticism from the Christian leaders and doctrines. Therefore, the bond of sisterhood which was created amongst the initiates during confined time is lost since these changes are taking place.

Ritual baths which was a symbol of cleansing, purification and protection are no longer common as there is little or no separation of initiates that is camping or seclusion of initiates from their normal everyday lives due to urbanisation and economic factors and also commercialisation of the practices has made older women to pay for the services rendered without being initiated and without being separated from their day to day social and economic activities. Girls after graduating from the practice are also able to go back to school since the rituals and ceremonies are usually done on holidays to accommodate school children. And also

⁵⁰ Mbuya Donoria, female initiator, interviewed on 07/03/16

the shaving of hair during initiation could be avoided by paying money and all these changes are attributes of civilisation.⁵¹

Missionary work and colonialism has left a mark on the social activities of the Africans particularly the Chewa who converted to Christianity. However this did not stop the majority from practicing their traditional culture and traditions. Mai Nikwe a Christian mother was a produce of the Chinamwari and this did not stop her from sending her niece to the initiation. She admitted that Christianity forbids it but the practice still continues and some of the Church leaders marry these Chinamwari graduates and some could secretly send their daughters to be initiated.⁵² On the other hand the Islamic faith does not condemn the practice and this shows why it has managed to survive up to this day. She said that there are changes taking place due to Christianity for instance taboos on menstruation and walking barefooted during the whole period of initiation and also the ritual house was regarded as a holy place and walking barefooted symbolised respect.⁵³ Re-entering of the society after graduation involved girls dressed with beads and marriage items but this is also no longer common as the initiates now wore expensive silk cloth, scarves or light make ups and earrings.⁵⁴ This clearly shows that the agenda and mission of using the practice to differentiate groups on the basis of background, origin, language and on whether one was initiated or not was lost because people are being brought together by classes which are determined by their education, environment, economic and political affiliations.

2.4 Human rights as a factor of dynamism of the female initiation practice

Zimbabwe ratified International and regional conventions on the rights on rights of women and these laws were incorporated into the domestic law. The government incorporated these laws into domestic laws to ensure free and compulsory education and also that girls are afforded the same opportunities as boys to obtain education at all levels and their solemn commitment to

⁵¹ Mbuya Donoria, female initiator, interviewed on 07/03/16

⁵² Mai Nikwe, Chinamwari graduate, Christian. Interviewed on 16/13/16

⁵³ Ibid. Interviewed on 16/13/16

⁵⁴ Ibid. Interviewed on 16/13/16

eliminate all forms of discrimination and harmful practices against women made culture and tradition to be susceptible to change and women could engage in these cultural practices voluntarily. However in some case women still continue to be victims of discrimination and harmful practices.⁵⁵The harmful cultural practices that hinders or endangers the normal growth and affects the physical and psychological development of women and girls should be condemned and eliminated.

The United Nations has played a crucial part in the establishment of the agreed human rights standards among nations. The UN Charter outlines four major important organisational goal and these were tranquillity and harmony, basic rights, justice, and freedom. From its birth the United Nations has promoted human rights, as exemplified by the following statement from its Charter: “We the Peoples of the United Nations, determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small...The bedrock instrument on human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was approved in 1948.⁵⁶ The Declaration states that “the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.”⁴ Since then, the UN has taken the lead and served as the institutional framework through which many other human rights instruments have been passed, signed, ratified, and implemented by states. In September 2000 the heads of states and governments gathered at a summit in New York, which ended successfully with the adoption of the Millennium Declaration goals.⁵⁷ A set of specific Millennium Development Goals were agreed upon, including eleven goals relating to development and poverty eradication. The respect for all internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. The General Assembly

⁵⁵ Protocol to the African Charter on People’s and Human Rights of Women in Africa
@<http://www.achpr.org/instrument/women-protocol/>

⁵⁶C. Archer, International Organisations, Rutledge, London, 2001, pg 96.

⁵⁷ I. Brownlie, and G.S. Goodwin-Gill Ed, Brownlie’s documents on Human Rights, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, pp391-400.

adopted a resolution that encouraged all United Nations organisations and member states the declaration and achievement of its goals.⁵⁸

Human rights are entitlements of a person by virtue of being a human being. They are inherent to all human beings despite race, nationality, sex, ethnic origin and language and human rights are expressed and guaranteed by international law as well as domestic law.⁵⁹ the international law set obligations on governments in all countries which ratified the law to be bound by it in order to promote and protect human rights.⁶⁰The deprivation of one right affect the other and human rights are inseparable for instance the right to education if this right is not honoured then the right to economic development and self determination are hindered.⁶¹Examples of human rights include, the right to life, nationality, social security, freedom of speech and expression, food and shelter, the right to education, the right to privacy, the right to be free and equal and the freedom to move⁶²

Article 14 of the African Charter on the rights of women held in Addis Ababa in 2005 on Health and Reproductive Rights, stated that all Parties shall ensure that the right to health of women, including sexual and reproductive health is respected and promoted. This includes the right to control their fertility, the right to decide whether to have children, the number of children and the spacing of children, the right to choose any method of contraception, the right to self-protection and to be protected against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.⁶³

⁵⁸ Text from Sustainable Development Goals, [http:// www. Un.org/ millennium goals/ education shtmls](http://www.Un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml), pdf. (Assessed 9/12/15)

⁵⁹ C. Archer, International Organisations, Rutledge, London, 2001, pg 96.

⁶⁰ Ian. Hurd, International Organisations, Politics, Law, Practice, Cambrige University Press, New York, 2011, pp97-100.

⁶¹ Ibid pp.97-100.

⁶² SAVE the children alliance, Children's rights: Equal Rights, London, 2000. (Accessed 01.07.16)

⁶³The constitution of Zimbabwe, [www.Parliament.am/library/sahmanadrutyunner/ Zimbabwe/pdf Amendment no 20 Act](http://www.Parliament.am/library/sahmanadrutyunner/Zimbabwe/pdf_Amendment_no_20_Act) (assessed 01/08/16)

The member states agreed to ensure women with the right to be informed on one's health status and on the health status of one's partner, particularly if affected with sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, in accordance with internationally recognised standards and best practices the right to have family planning education.⁶⁴ States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to provide adequate, affordable and accessible health services, including information, education and communication programmes to women especially those in rural areas.⁶⁵

2.5 Education and economic crisis

The Zimbabwean policies after the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) did more harm than good to the education and health sector and the wounds are still felt to date. Firstly, the economies of a country were affected in the 1990s on the adoption of Economic Structural Adjustments Programmes which crippled the education sector and deteriorating economic climate under ESAP resulted in reductions in government spending on social services which squeezed the education budget and a corresponding reduction in investments in teaching resources in the 21st century.⁶⁶ The literature provided in the book *Selected Development Issues in Zimbabwe* shows that when governments experience economic hardships such as those experienced in Zimbabwe during this period the educational sector often bears the brunt of cost cutting,⁶⁷ also the education budget was reduced which had led to many school drop outs of girls due to patriarchal system in the society.

Secondly the Fast track Land reform which started in 2000 which was coupled with violence and intimidation resulted in the migration of active virile population outside the country especially teachers. Women and girls were victims of exploitation especially in 2008 were

⁶⁴The constitution of Zimbabwe, [www.Parliament.am/library/sahmanadrutyunner/ Zimbabwe/pdf](http://www.Parliament.am/library/sahmanadrutyunner/Zimbabwe/pdf) Amendment no 20 Act (assessed 01/08/16)

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ D. Munemo, and J. Matunhu, ed, Development issues in Zimbabwe, Book love Publishers, Gweru,2014, p.87.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.87.

slogans and gatherings were conducted by pro- Mugabe youths.⁶⁸ Chegutu is a farming town which was surrounded by white commercial farmers, the unplanned and cohesive exercise led to the disruption of agricultural sector which was the backbone of the economy and the economy suffered immensely followed by the closure of Cargill Cotton Company and David Whitehead Textile Company which provided employment to more than fifty percent of the citizens. The GMB depot in Chegutu has lost its importance as there was little or no grain after the commencement of the Fast Track Land Reform which was popularly known as third Chimurenga.

Article 12 on Right to Education and Training, States Parties agreed to take all appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access in the sphere of education and training however education was also affected and schools experienced massive movement of teachers out of the town as they sought greener pastures.⁶⁹ Secondly, children whose parents had been allocated land moved to surrounding farms and most of them dropped out of school and the meaning of education were lost at the same time the right to Sexual Reproductive Health since there were very few who afforded to seek medical assistance in town.⁷⁰ However in the resettled areas backyard schools and clinics were formed where there were no proper resources. The Murambatsvina of 2005 also intensified the economic and social crisis in Chegutu which left girls and women vulnerable to abuses and robbed them off the right to shelter and food as the houses and illegal tuck shops were demolished.⁷¹ One noted that this also increase dependency of women on their male counter parts, poverty, prostitution, house breaking, illegal gold panning, hunger and starvation became rampant in the Chegutu community. Article 15 on Right to Food Security

⁶⁸ B. Raftopoulos, and S. Jensen, Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of a crisis, Weavers Press, Harare, 2012, p. 105.

⁶⁹D. Munemo, and J. Matunhu, ed, Development issues in Zimbabwe, Book love Publishers, Gweru, 2014, p.87.

⁷⁰ Ibid p.87.

⁷¹ B. Derman, After Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform: Preliminary Observation on the near future of Zimbabwe's effort to resist Globalisation

and Article 16 on Right to Adequate Housing on the African Charter on the Rights of Women which stated that women shall have the right to equal access to housing and to acceptable living conditions in a healthy environment was violated in the operation restore order.

There was the emergency of private secondary colleges for example Focus, Boom, East view to accommodate the disadvantaged group of young mothers with the aim to empower women educationally. The Plan International asserted that education is a key to a girl's development and argued that the consequences of not having education are detrimental and infringe economic development of a girl.⁷² Statistics show that the percentage of children enrolling into schools rose from 83 percent in 2007 to 91 percent in 2015.⁷³ However there is much to be done to ensure that every girl and boy attend and complete school, reports from secondary schools show that many girls are dropping out of school before O Level completion.⁷⁴ However the mushrooming of these private colleges added confusion because their operational are not that of learning institutions a lot of indiscipline takes place because teachers turn a blind eye when it comes to student behaviour and moreover students are their pay masters.

There are no vocational training schools, no tertiary institutions and funding is limited in Chegutu. Employment was dwindled and unemployment rate is very high and employment opportunities are limited with only Zimplats acting as a source of employment for Chegutu and Norton. Therefore teenagers lack motivation and marriage becomes the only form of security to young girls and marriage is taken as a career. However the YMCA, VOC, ZNNP^T started on the revolving funds to promote youth and women's income generating projects to empower them to be independent and become capable of making decisions of their own. However these organisations lack funds to support the economic activities on a wider coverage.

⁷² Plan International, Learning for life, BIAGG Report, Area overview: The Right to inclusive education. www.planinternational.org/education (07/07/16)

⁷³ Impact Area overview: The Right to inclusive education. www.planinternational.org/education (07/07/16)

⁷⁴ Ibid (07/07/16)

2.6 Appraisal of the practice

In one's evaluation of the initiation school is that it serves a useful purpose in so far as it teaches good morals and life skills. However they reinforce gender stereotypes and roles also, the institution hinders the transformation of the gender relations in patriarchal societies. A teaching revealed that, the woman's place is in the home and that men fend for families in the public sphere of life. The information imparted to teenage girls at Chinamwari contends against the messages aimed at ensuring the development of a woman rather the patriarchal society is maintained. The gender roles are clearly articulated in the 44 sessions of the Millennium Development Goals that are aimed at reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. Goal 3 articulated the need to promote gender equality and empower women.⁷⁵In addition gender equality has been identified as important tool for the achievement of all of the MDG's from improving health and fighting disease, reducing poverty and mitigating hunger, to expanding education and lowering child mortality, to increasing access to safe water, to ensuring environmental sustainability.⁴⁴

The question one asked continuously throughout this research was why women and girls sacrifice so much to ensure that they satisfy their husbands sexually. Was sex an important aspect for a conducive and favourable relationship that so much effort could be directed at getting it right? Were the men also putting in as much effort to sexually satisfy their wives? What benefit is there to the women who had undergo the preparations of pleasing and satisfying their husbands? One then asked even further why it was that the practice had managed to exist through all odds and to the extent that there were now some commercial initiators coming onto the scene it appeared that the practice still thrive up to this day.

The Chewa ethnic group overprotects women and girls, taboos, myths, magical beliefs where attached to the socialisation of Chewa girls and the rules were usually strict and forbid them to do or touch certain things. However with the formal education which gave a room for experiments and formulas, some of the taboos associated with menstruation and initiation are

⁷⁵Goal Education Cluster, Material from Education can't wait event 2013,<http://educationcluster.net/?get001687%7c2014/06/education-cannot-wait-2013Analysis.pdf>. (07/07/16)

changing gradually. In many cases women and children endured abuses due to the practice which included emotional abuse which can be traced on virginity testing which was done at Chinamwari, it was compulsory and the act was done to check if the girls were still virgins or not, if one was found not pure she was regarded as an outcast and usually faced stigmatisation and isolation. Virginity testing also affected girls psychologically because those who did not pass the test experienced the disgrace which might last for years. The idea of virginity testing is the evidence which shows gender stereotyping because men were not even subjected to testing and usually the virgins girls got married to men who had had many sexual affairs. The study established that the status of the girl that is whether she is a virgin or not determines the amount of bride price to be paid by the in-laws.

There is a stereotyping and discriminatory attitude towards “woman”. These attitudes affect the way parents think about their children for instance in terms of investments for the children and preferences in times of scarce resources. At the end of the day girls are socialised in an environment of deprivation in which their rights to good health, education and economic opportunities may be infringed. Chinamwari teaches young girls to be hardworking, tolerant and submissive to their husbands and to cook, wash and iron their clothes. In this context women should treat their husbands as first class citizens. The initiators highlighted that men were the heads of the house and they deserve more respect and women should sacrifice for their husbands’ happiness. One also discovered that the women in context were house wives who were usually at home every time the husbands’ need them. There was a general tendency that the woman’s place was in the kitchen and bedroom. Hence there is stereotyping in the socialisation as well as at the initiation schools.

Only girls are taught on abstinence whilst men sleep around and expect to marry virgins. During the testing a finger can be used or other testing materials like sponges. If the finger penetrates more than the anticipated length then the girl is regarded not a virgin. Mbuya Donoria said that the virgins have a white colour inside whilst those who are not virgins have a reddish colour on their private parts.⁷⁶ Older men will be there to console young girls when hope is robbed out of them after virginity testing. The practice is meant to encourage girls to

⁷⁶ Mbuya Donoria, Female initiator, interviewed on 07/03/16

abstain from sexual intercourse but at the same time violating the right to privacy in the Declaration of the Human rights of the International law.⁷⁷ The 1993 Vienna world Conference on the Human Rights noted that it is the duty of states to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms regardless of political affiliations, economic and cultural systems.⁷⁸ However children's right to dignity and privacy are not recognised, hence children are exploited emotionally. One has witnessed that during initiation initiates expose their bodies and are usually naked during the period of confinement and on the graduation day they came from the seclusion half naked exposing their breast before they take their ritual bath. It is one of the reasons why people view the practice as indecent and as a practice that fuel early marriages as Christians argue that girls should not be seen their nakedness except only by their husbands. This practice is viewed as old fashioned. However, International institutions such as World Health Organisations, UNESCO, Plan International and UNICEF joined hands against Children's initiation in as far as it resulted in the mutilation of the genital parts. It was confirmed that the Chewa culture only teach girls to elongate their clitoris but they do not mutilate.

In the Chewa culture girls are educated at a very tender age on life skills sometimes the education could be not relevant to them considering the age group which goes to the initiation schools. The teachings sometimes proved to be the kind of education to be given to older girls and women. Therefore, this clearly explains why it is regarded as a pagan custom because it gives education which is contrary to that which should be given to juveniles that children are deprived of their innocence by the society by pronouncing that girls who have reached puberty automatically become adults. Girl children lose the agenda of schooling after initiation due to the dilemma of being regarded as an adult at a juvenile age. Children's right to education articles 23, 28, 29 and 42 of the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) are therefore not

⁷⁷ Mbuya Donoria, Female initiator, interviewed on 07/03/16

⁷⁸A. A. An-Naim, 'Towards a cross cultural approach to defining International standards of Human Rights, the meaning of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,' in Human Rights Cross cultural perspective a quest for consensus, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. (Assessed 06/03/16)

honoured.⁷⁹ Chinamwari teaches girls to be passive and to respect their husbands when they get married. They are taught to please their husbands and not to deny them their conjugal rights. It should be noted that it becomes contrary whether any child at the age of twelve would really appreciate the education attained at the initiation school and other serious advices let alone sex education given to her at this age. This information does more harm than good to a girl child. The duration of the initiation school makes a child to be away from home in the hands of strangers. The children are exposed to harmful knowledge and obscene languages at the Chinamwari. The information might even hinder their development and deprive the children of the right to be raised and educated by their parents at a time when they need them most.

2.7 Problems associated with school dropout girls

The Zimbabwe National Network for People Living with HIV/ AIDS is an organisation for the people living with HIV/AIDS asserted that from 2000 to 2008 42 percent of the women who reported their cases suffered from economic hardships and shows that women are more vulnerable to the hardships as they were socialised to become housewives and take care of the children and household.⁸⁰ Many of the women who joined the support groups were usually aged women who were taking care of their grandchildren who were born out of wedlock.⁸¹ Early marriages increased the burden to parents and result in the high chances of a girl having more children at a tender age. Most of the young mothers heavily depend on their parents for care and support of the children. The Convention on the Rights of Children established that once a child enters into marriage that could be the end of the road to education. The girl will be expected to take care of the husband and the household, marriage has turned most young girls into servitude.⁸² Cases of marital rape are prevalent due to cultures and religion and men feel that they own their wives and treat them as a pieces of property. Women are traumatised

⁷⁹ M. Schuler, and D. Q. Thomas, Women's Human Rights, step by step. A practical guide to the International Human Rights, women, law and development, International and Human Rights watch. (assessed 01.08.16)

⁸⁰ Report from, Zimbabwe National Network for People living with HIV (ZNNP^T), assessed on 26/06/2016

⁸¹ Report from, Zimbabwe National Network for People living with HIV (ZNNP^T), assessed on 26/06/2016

⁸² UNICEF, Early marriage: A harmful traditional practice A statistical exploration, New York, UNICEF 2005,(Assessed 01/08/16)

psychologically and cases like this go unreported in fear that they will be divorced and face economic hardships⁸³The economic dependency is therefore an instrument for the continual subjugation of women and many women admitted that they are not able to manage on their own without their husbands.

Uneducated girls tend to marry earlier than their educated counterparts and also tend to have more children sometimes with different paternities therefore putting themselves at risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Parents sometimes support these marriages especially when the in-law proves to be financially capable of taking care of the girl at the same time capable of paying the bride price. One interviewed parents who had their children married at a tender age and seemed to be happy that it was a blessing for their children to find partners and to them it was normal since they argue that they were also married at a tender age and managed up to date. During the interviews one discovered that in every sample area about five to six girls were married at the age of fourteen and fifteen.⁸⁴ Girls are deprived of their right to play as children because they carry insurmountable tasks on their shoulders at a very tender age, they are robbed of their childhood at puberty stage when the society regards them as adults. It was confirmed that there are too much expectations from the parents and community after a girl has graduated from Chinamwari and expected to fulfil the duties of an adult and the type of education becomes contrary for instance at school they are treated as juveniles whilst at home they are regarded as adults.

Sexual Reproductive Rights (SRH) includes access to information on SRH, sexuality control, prevention of infertility and reproductive loss, prevention of diseases and discrimination due to reproductive role. Women's sexual and reproductive rights are being violated. The Sexual Reproductive Health Culture has made the girls and women to be passive in matters concerning the bedroom. Most women are unable to negotiate safer sex with their spouse and this can be

⁸³Women's voices, Traditional practices, customs and their effects on women's and children's rights, 2000. (Assessed 03/07/16)

⁸⁴ BBC News, Sex traditions spreading HIV. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/Africa/3285061.stm>, December 6 2003.

regarded as lack of respects and mistrust.⁸⁵ This then violates their right to prevention of diseases. Young mothers are reported to register their pregnancies late at the same time putting their unborn babies at risk of HIV transmission during birth. Most women have no say in the family planning the husbands do all the planning on how many children a woman should conceive. However one noted that culture particularly Chinamwari had led to the violation of Sexual Reproductive Health of girls as well as their right to education.



Picture 3 showing a young lady from the Community services section facilitating on the causes of early marriages and unwanted pregnancies on young girls at Chegutu hall (own source)

2.8 The role of International and local institutions on the fight against abuse and exploitation

In the fight against female genital mutilation (FGM) the W.H.O in 2001 has listed pulling of the labia minora as a form of female genital mutilation and thus it constitutes FGM and qualifies as a harmful cultural practice under article 5 of CEDAW and Article 5 of the African Women's

⁸⁵ Mbuya Donoria, female initiator(Nyamkungu), interviewed on 10/03/16

Protocol.⁸⁶ Debate however has been raging on whether the practice qualifies as a form of female genital mutilations or not. However some argue that female genital mutilations carries negative effects and therefore the pulling of labia minora is so tormenting and painful. This becomes problematic because mutilations have the effect of bringing pleasure to men at the same time violating women's rectitude and rights and prefer that the practice be referred to as genital mutilation or modification. The UDHR recognise the people's religion, culture and traditions but disregards and condemns anything to do with culture which undermines the rights of people.

The studies have shown that physical abuse is done in the initiation schools by the instructors. The corporal punishments and beatings are prevalent especially to punish those who are weak lazy, and those perceived as rude and stubborn and also those who were examined and found out without pulling their labia or found not virgin. These were subject to beatings and corporal punishments which are also examples of physical abuse by the initiators. This was done in a bid to make them comply to the rules and regulation of the Chinamwari. The initiators did not consider this as an abuse but a way of disciplining children to conform to what they are told to do. However this proves to be against the convention on the Rights of the Children article 34 which prohibits the violation of the right to dignity and privacy.

⁸⁶ Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), <http://www.humanrights.gov>. (Assessed01/08/16)



Picture 4: Young people at a discussion at Chegutu Community hall (own source)

The plan international's goal and aim is that every child completes a quality inclusive education; they asserted that, 'we must act to transform girls' lives.' They argue that gender equality is essential to international development and can only be achieved by listening to the voices of girls. CEO Plan International Anne- birgitte Albrechtsen asserted that a girl child should be honoured the right to quality education with the aims and purposes of education as outlined in Human Right Conventions.⁸⁷

Education helps a girl child and adults develop their cognitive
And socio emotional abilities free from gender bias. Emotional
Abilities result in quality and participation in all aspects as well

⁸⁷ J. Piltcher, and Imelda Whelehan, 50 Concepts in Gender Studies, Sage, London, 2011, p.48.

as safety in and around school and life.⁸⁸

Plan International views education as the strongest weapon each human being should have to be able to develop, without education, the risk of a girl getting married early is very high. Therefore much emphasis is put into education. One noted that cultural and religious factors play a role in the violation of girls' rights to education and economic development which lead to the infringement of women to further economically depend on their male counterparts. UNICEF points out that, those children who begin work at an early age and do not attend school are likely to remain trapped in the cycle of poverty. UNICEF sees education as a preventive strategy against child labour. However, the study does not show whether the man is also prohibited from having sex elsewhere. On initiation, one observed that sometimes preparations of girls' transition into womanhood includes practical experience and this raise the curiosity of young girls to venture into sexual activities.

Abuse and exploitation of girls and women was socially accepted in the African context. Mbuya Donoria asserted that,

Kana mwana akanetsa achiita misikanzwa, kuramba kutumwa,
nungo uye uchapa muunzei kuno isu ndiro basa redu rekupinza
ndururani mumuforo, tinorova kusvika ava munhu kwaye.

She meant that if the child misbehaves at home, being stubborn and do not want to work just bring her here so that she becomes straight and compliant, she admitted that discipline is instilled to children using beatings or corporal punishments and this shows that abuse is socially acceptable and also justifiable and this has proved to be the best way of disciplining children.⁸⁹ Perpetrators of physical abuse to children do not understand the abuse but they regard it as discipline and some do not even know the consequences of the abuse. Children who suffer from this form of abuse usually have physical injuries, lose confidence and have low self

⁸⁸ World Health Organisation, The prevention and management of unsafe abortions: Report of a technical working group. http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1992/WHO_MSM_92.5.pdf, 2013 (Assessed 01/08/16)

⁸⁹ Mbuya Donoria, female initiator(Nyamkungu), interviewed on 10/03/16

esteem. The failure to recognise the problem led to the perpetrators to continue abusing children and the persistence of the problem.

CHAPTER THREE: KEY FINDINGS OF BARRIERS TO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AND SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND MEASURES TAKEN

3.1 Introduction

The chapter looked on how the family, community and institutions can hinder the economic development of women and girls through the continual adherence to cultural and tradition practices. Therefore, the empowerment of women needs to start at grass roots level going up to the government institutions. The chapter also unearth the role of the community in the honouring of human rights; there is a view that a person is determined by the situation or environment in which one resides. Apart from the family the community is also responsible for improving the status of girls and women through different programmes. The chapter also looked on the role of the government and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the promotion of these rights and find out the gaps which need to be filled so that the rights of girls and women are recognised.

3.2 Poverty

Poverty was acting as a push factor which fuel early marriage as it is seen as a way of lifting the economic burden from the family. The fast track land reform in 2000 coupled with other economic factors was a disaster to the education sector in Chegutu. One third of the children in the primary and secondary schools came from the surrounding farms and the agrarian reform dwindled employment and unemployment rate was very high. This also led to the rise in the school drop outs especially among girls. The economic crisis was also worsened by operation restore order of 2005 which left many families homeless and their economic and social way of life was disrupted as they were forced to move to their rural areas. There are no vocational training schools and tertiary institutions in Chegutu, the only vocational is Mupfure self help college which is some kilometres out of Chegutu. There is limited funding by the government on the education sector in the area.

3.3 family and morality

The study has found out that religion and culture are two inseparable phenomenons in the Chewa culture. Moral stemming comes directly from the values believed in an acceptable religious faith and culture shown in chapter two of this study. Nevertheless one of the needs of

the young people is to have standards of behaviour by which they can live and develop psychologically, socially and economically. The psychological evidence reviewed that children live at the level of social necessity and social convenience. Hence the education to improve the girls' livelihoods therefore needs to start at grass root level that is the family. Goldman asserted that the early standards of children are moulded by their parents and close family members and usually their role models are the people who are very close to them.¹ True morality usually begins to emerge at adolescent stage when girls are expected to notice what is wrong and bad and also as children they perceive what their elders do and say as right and therefore any teaching against their norms becomes fruitless and meaningless

However the findings show that girl children are socialised as inferior and stereotyped from the point of birth. It was noted that when a boy child is born the elder women ululate but when a girl child is born nothing is done. One therefore argues that the female stereotyping has a long history which started in the biblical history. However the cultural and religious practices in a bid to inculcate morality in the society have robbed a girl child off her dignity, self esteem and reduced her to an inferior citizen who is driven by the force of patriarchy. Emotionally, the girl child needs to be secure and the root of this need is love. One bought the security and love argument from Goldman when he said the child needs to feel that he belongs to a loving family and a community which cares for him.² Goldman was talking of all children and one realised that the girl child needed more security than boys. Many might have questions to why one is saying so, this is due to the nature and societies where children are bred which are patriarchal and favour boys to girls, the societies which look down upon girl children, the societies where girl children are susceptible to dehumanising practices for instance female initiation which is the topic under study.

¹ Ronald. Goldman, Readiness for Religion: A basis for developmental Religious education, Rutledge, London, 1965, p.59.

² Ronald. Goldman, Readiness for Religion: A basis for developmental Religious education, Rutledge, London, 1965, p.59.

There is need for human rights education at household levels because home is the community where children are made secure so that they learn to love and trust. Bryson asserted that the family is a central part of society's power structures as such it sustains patriarchal power in the society and the world and it is a source of women's oppression.³ It is a social institution in which women's labour is exploited, male sexual power expressed and an institution where gender stereotypes are learnt where men are viewed as the economic masters of women. Delphy and Leonard cited by Bryson argued that marriage and family is a labour contract through which men exploit women's labour and become their economic masters.⁴ Millet in Bryson's work asserted that the family acted as an agent of socialisation where children learn values and expectations of their society.⁵ Thus; it is within the family that boys and girls first encounter patriarchal power. Dinnerstein's was cited by Bryson and her argument noted that, 'it is the female monopoly of child care that is at the root of our present problem'. She argued that the raising of children should be done by both parents.⁵

One backs to differ with Dinnerstein's views that the female monopolisation of child caring and household management is the root problem of patriarchy considering that in the Chewa culture men took part in initiating young boys into manhood. Therefore one noted that mothers are responsible for the upbringing of the girl child and the fathers are responsible for the teachings given to young boys which then lead to the problem of boys viewing themselves as superior to their female counter parts. One noted that it is because the society is a patriarchal in nature where moral doctrines are deliberately used as an instrument of repression or aggression to do more harm than good to the female world. The education which is disseminated to young boys shows that it is not possible for a man's life to be dominated by women and therefore boys grow up only considering their admirable in human capacity and character but not determining about what is good or harmful to girls.

³ Valerie. Brynson, *Feminist political theory: An introduction*, MacMillan, New York, 2003, p. 175.

⁴ *Ibid* p.175.

⁵ *Ibid* p.175.

The belief that all girls should behave the same way, this has created detrimental effects. One observed that a girl child might end up developing what is known as a rebel attitude to demonstrate against the norms and morals which she is expected to comply with. It leads to negative effects because the rebel attitude characterise a socialised person who misuses her socialisation from Chinamwari to venture into activities like prostitution, child marriages or dropping out of school as a way of demonstrating that the elders had regarded her as an adult who have passed the rite of passage. UNICEF indicated that early marriage is a harmful effect on the health and physical development of a girl child.⁶ Sister Ndlovu also buys this assertion as she says maternal complications and prolonged labour is common in young mothers.⁷

3.4 Perceptions about Chinamwari

In some cases Chinamwari was celebrated for its success in mending broken marriages but there is need to clear the assumption that marriage break ups are due to dissatisfaction of a spouse in bed considering also that there are numerous reasons which can lead to separation and people tend to generalise all these factors and work with universal solutions forgetting that they can be hardly no uniform problems and factors which results in the failure of the marriage. The good case study is of a middle aged woman known by the nickname Mai Sorobhi who was married and divorced countless times despite the fact that she is also a trainer who helps her mother in the Chinamwari business. There are other numerous examples in this place under study which shows that Chinamwari is a way of serving marriages to a lesser degree considering the polygenic lifestyle of the Chewa and also the girls who have taken prostitution as a carrier after graduating from Chinamwari. Hence this view becomes a problematic and therefore it appears that Chinamwari has changed its purpose which it used to serve back in the provinces of the Chewa in Malawi and Zambia.

3.5 The fight against exploitation and abuse

The Young Men Christian Action (YMCA) is an organisation which deals with young people and their aim is to equip the young people. In February 2015 one attended a debate conducted

⁶UNICEF, Early marriage: Harmful traditional practice, A statistical exploration, New York, UNICEF 2005. (Assessed 01/08/16)

⁷ P. Ndlovu, Sister In Charge(Chinengundu Clinic), interviewed 26/01/15

by YMCA on the question, 'are our parents the biggest influence in making decisions that could affect our lives and healthy.' The results showed that parents had the most influence for example in culture and religion which were perceived by many parents as the best for the young for instance Chinamwari which indicated that children were at high risk of contracting HIV and AIDS, dropping out of school than their male counter parts, getting married earlier usually to older men, ending up with many children with different paternity at the same time burdening their parents with responsibilities, dependence syndrome and lack of development.⁸

The debate brought out some factors leading to the prevalence of the pandemic and pointed out technology, unemployment, poverty as a push factor to prostitution which was recorded to be taking place at Cotton pickers where young girls could travel to during weekends and the lack of social amenities for the youth in Chegutu urban.⁹ The YMCA advocates for the empowerment of youth with skills and knowledge, however one discovered that not all youths were capable of acquiring information because children at primary level are usually not accommodated in these programmes considering that Chinamwari practice involve children from ten years depending on whether the child has started menstruating. Nowadays children are starting their cycles much earlier and therefore there is need to involve young girls in these programmes.

⁸ YMCA Debate, attended 25/06/15

⁹ Ibid, 25/06/16



Picture 5: Sister P. K. Ndlovu (Sister In Charge, Chinengundu Clinic) educating young mothers on Sexual Reproductive Health

The main concern by the community was female awareness against harmful cultural practices as a way of reducing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Chegutu Municipality started programmes on HIV/AIDS wellness on which the wellness's were conducted separately that is on basis of whether male or female. The Human Resources Officer invited all female workers to an employee wellness on STIs and HIV/AIDS workshop which was facilitated by FACT Zimbabwe. The Human Resource officer together with the Municipality family wanted to improve the status of women socially and economically. This shows great improvements on women's status and recognition as equal to men. The Municipality also worked hand in glove with Gender links in awareness campaigns against harmful cultural activities and further infringement of the girls and women socially, economically and politically and in all spheres of life. Female empowerment is also a human right which females are entitled to as well as equal treatment and allowances with their male counterparts. The 50/50 campaigns were done which has resulted in women taking jobs which were previously considered as male jobs for instance driving and managerial posts. However one noted that there was a gap which needed

to be filled since the Municipality only considered its workers only therefore neglecting other women who were not part and parcel of the Municipality.



Picture6: showing people marching in town on 50/50 campaign in 2015



Picture7: female involvement in road maintenance work in Chegutu



Picture 8: showing women doing jobs which were previously believed to be male jobs.



Picture 9 taken on the Chegutu municipality 50/50 campaign at the CBD

At community level the report from the National Aids Council in Mashonaland west in the Chegutu District showed that under the thirty healthy facilities providing ANC services during the period under review 4.5 percent of the exposed infants tested DNA positive, 241 were tested for HIV which was the less national target of male participation of 20 percent. The report showed that 7299 were tested and 484 females were HIV positive against 171 males. The results show that women were more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.¹⁰ The study showed that besides female initiation there are also other factors which also resulted in the deprivation of the child's right to education and sexual reproductive healthy. However at community level, DAAC advocated for workplace HIV/AIDS programmes which targeted both female and male workers. They also advocated for the youth programmes 2244 youth were in schools, 540 at tertiary and 133 youth out of school.¹¹ These programmes were meant to equip the community in the fight against deprivation of a girl child's right to education and sexual reproductive health; however so many challenges were faced due to lack of funds and lower attendance of youth out of schools in friendly centres.¹²

The ZNNP^T highlighted that they have nine support groups for meaningful involvement of young and elders living with HIV as a way of providing and improving the right to information and food particularly their main interest was on women.¹³ It was also noted that there was a gap in terms of other services like nutritional and financial support because of lack of funding. Voice of Children (VOC) which was founded by Takunda Chesa works with the youth from primary level doing clubs and agricultural activities in trying to curb challenges faced by youths which lead to child marriages and school drop outs and also works with the Chegutu Municipality on the protection of vulnerable children. Their main argument was that poverty

¹⁰ Chegutu stakeholders meeting, quarterly report, 26/02/15

¹¹ Chegutu stakeholders meeting, quarterly report, 26/02/15

¹² Ibid. 26/02/15

¹³ Zimbabwe National Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS, Report. Assessed 26/06/16

was pushing young people especially girls into prostitution and young men who dropped out of school due to financial problems were becoming drug addicts and criminals in the society.¹⁴ The budget for 2015 resource allocation by Chegutu Municipality showed that a certain amount was set aside for the gender programs and awareness campaigns; they provided office spaces for youth organisations such as Voice of Children and YMCA and also the ZNNP^t.



Picture 10: Secondary school students at VOC offices provided by the Municipality

The constitution of Zimbabwe emphasize that every child is entitled to the protection by the law to ensure the well being, education, physical or mental, healthy or spiritual, moral or social development of children.¹⁵ The Amendment Number 20 Act 2013 section 2 chapter 4 part 3 on the rights of children also said that it is the duty of the government to protect children from labour exploitation.¹⁶ The constitution also mentioned that the law shall protect the youth from

¹⁴ Takunda. Chesa. Voice Of Children, quarterly Report. Assessed 26/06/16

¹⁵The Constitution of Zimbabwe www.parliament.am/library/sahmanadriyunner/Zimbabwe/pdf. Amendment No 20 Act 2013. Assessed 01/07/16

¹⁶ ibid. Assessed 01/07/16

harmful cultural practices exploitation and all forms of abuse as well as free and compulsory education.¹⁷ However the Zimbabwean government is failing to fulfil and honour these rights due to widespread economic challenges which led to the challenges in the education sector. Beetham asserted that it is the duty of states regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems to promote and protect all human rights fundamental freedoms on the Vienna Declaration and programme of Action Article 5.¹⁸ However this had become a problematic due to economic instability which had its roots in adaption of ESAP and economic sanctions from the West. Lack of parental and community support for education and gender inequalities had also resulted in failure to comply with the aims and purposes as outlined in human rights conventions.

Zimbabwe has ratified the children's education rights of the convention on the rights of the Child (CRC), Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 10 of the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However more children are not going to school despite these efforts. However, too much emphasis was put on criminal matters but not to the dehumanising acts by culture and religion which further infringe the rights of girls and women from their male counter parts and therefore there is need for the community and the government to join hands to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for women and girls.¹⁹ The Legal Age Majority Act which was an attempt by the government to provide justice to the juveniles by using law to protect them.²⁰ However this law seems not to be honoured due to many cases of child marriages and child prostitution and cultures which make juveniles to become adults' for instance female initiation which has

¹⁷ ibid Assessed 01/07/16

¹⁸ David. Beetham, Democracy and Human Rights, Polity Press, UK, 2000, p. 90.

¹⁹ J. S. Goldstein, International Relations, Dorling Kindersley, India, 2007, p. 319.

²⁰ Sharon. Manenji, The impact of traditional cultural practices on Gender based violence and Sexual Reproductive Healthy and Rights of Women: Mudzi case study, MSU, 2011.

resulted in many negative effects even though traces of positive effects can be found here and there but to a lesser degree.

Pieces of legislation and strategies have been adapted in a bid to promote the rights of women and children and stop the violation of the right to sexual reproductive health such legislations include the Domestic Violence Act of 2008 which made the practices that discriminate and degrade women a crime, sexual offence were also adapted to protect women from sexual abuse and marital abuses. The National Gender Policy advocated for the elimination of all negative economic, social and cultural practices that infringe of equality and equity by women. Gender focal persons were placed in each and every ward and are responsible for mainstreaming gender in all sectors of development. However it should be noted that the realisation of women's and girl children's rights is not a gradual process and the study has highlighted that the starting point is with the individual then to the community. The core idea of human rights is therefore not possible to attain good result if the hierarchy is ignored and tend to jump to government institutions.

3.6 International organisations and human rights

The International Organisations for instance the United Nations is limited by the United Nations Charter which gives much emphasis on the states sovereignty rather on the Human Rights discourse. In Africa there are cases of massive human rights violation which resulted in even loss of life and one was wondering on how an International Organisation play a significant role on the cultures of a certain state considering that there was matters which the United Nations failed to intervene for instance the Rwandan genocide and other devastating human right crimes across the world. It is therefore the duty of the state to protect the fundamental rights of its citizen in this case the rights of girl children and women and provide security. The International worlds is more concerned with the issues of government's abuses of its citizens which they are afraid of inflaming ethnic conflicts and in other ways threaten the peace and stability of the international community.²¹ There are widely norms about how governments

²¹ J. S. Goldstein, International Relations, Dorling Kindersley, India, 2007, p. 319.

should behave and the concern of states for human rights of individuals living in another state is a far cry from realistic and its emphasis on military force and potentials for international cooperation as an outcome of bargaining.²²

The 2015 SADC Gender Protocol on Gender and development held in Pandari Hotel from 22 to 26 June 2015; holding government accountable, conducting advocacy workshops at the grassroots level as well as improving women's movement in SADC sponsored by the Gender Links. The category of women's rights and Sexual Reproductive Healthy (SRH) HIV and AIDS emphasis was put on women and sexual reproductive health from different presenters' nationwide. One discovered that Rushinga had the best practices on the education of menstruation to young girls and also provided good facilities for instance bathrooms and sets of Blair toilets for sanitary disposal. However the presentations and best practices which the town councils embark on promoted awareness in the communities especially the community under study. The PLAN International, UNICEF, UNESCO, The Brookings Institutions in their work towards the girl child's rights has failed to accommodate every child in need. However they managed to provide literature, scholarships and funds for self help projects and information which managed to improve the chances of girls enrolling in schools from 83 percent in 2000 to 91 percent in 2015. However there is still some action to be done to ensure that the girls attend school despite the economic situations in the country

Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted on the roles played by the family on the rights of girls and women and there was evidence that the advocacy for the realisation of these fundamental rights need to start with the individuals rather than with the institutions of governments at household level to yield good results at the end. The community and civil society also has to play a role against the discrimination and stereotypic practices against girls and women. children need security and the roots of this is love from the family and the community, the chapter emphasised much on the part of the family due to the psychological evidence available which revealed that

²² J. S. Goldstein, International Relations, Dorling Kindersley, India, 2007, p. 319

children live at a social necessity and social convenience which rob them off their dignity and privacy. The Government, civil society and the international community needs to ensure and protect girls and women from exploitative and harmful cultural practices which are barriers to their development. The chapter also indicated that the government of Zimbabwe is not complying and the achievement of HR and SRH is becoming an unachievable goal due to economic crisis from 2000 to date. However some actions were taken to emancipate women in the community by organisations such as Gender links, the town council, YMCA, VOC, ZNNP^T, FACT and other smaller groups not mentioned though to a lesser degree.

Summary and conclusion

The Chewa people like the Bagusi, kuria, Suba, Meru of Kenya, Krobo of Ghana, Sena, Lomwe of Zambia and Malawi continue to believe in the importance of the female initiation due to the fact that it signifies maturity and responsibility to one's family and society. The practice is praised and has the mission of ensuring virginity, enhancing fertility as well as promoting cleanliness and equipping young girls with life skills. This was a way of differentiating groups on background, origin and language. The practice brought sister hood and relationships as well as bringing the people of the same ethnic together as they shared so much in common. Chinamwari culture thrived up to this date due to the belief that it curbs promiscuity and also the fear of HIV and AIDS. There are also other social and cultural reasons associated with its continuity and its survival and these include the ability to instil bravery and courage into girls and to mould them to become compliant mothers in future because in the historical back ground women were regarded as part of nature due to the ability of reproduction. The practice was something the women and girls bragged about and it was a sign of empowerment to pass through the rite of passage.

The practices is gradually changing some of its elements and this is evidenced by the differences in the ancient initiation compared to the modern day initiations which are done in urban areas where ritual baths are no longer common, seclusion and separation of initiates from their day to day social and economic activities becomes a problematic due to modernity and criticism from the society and also commercialisation of the practice and commoditisation of marriage items like beads which has made non Chewa older women to pay for the services rendered without being initiated. The transition process from girl to woman which was done before marriage is no longer common as married women and girls who are no longer virgins could still undergo initiation in some cases it will be in a bid to mend broken marriages or to learn skills to make their men sexually happy. The age of the initiates is changing gradually considering the age group which is frequenting the initiation places. However, these changes can be accorded to the changes in the social and economic structure of the society, criticism from the Christian doctrines and the fight against women and girls exploitation by local and international institutions which has raised awareness among people.

The study shows that a girl child is treated differently from her male counterpart due to patriarchal structure of the society. Religion and culture has played a role in the deprivation of a girl child to her fundamental human rights. The practice also reduces women to second class citizens who are born to please their husbands through infibulations of their reproductive organs. The culture protects the girl child but at the same time not honouring her right to education, development and sexual reproductive health as equal to boys. Girls at Chinamwari are educated on menstruation, household chores and to please men connubially. After graduation they are expected to become responsible in the society. Girls are turned into women at puberty stage. They are trained on sexual performance, training on respect and good morals especially when speaking to people of opposite sex, to humble themselves and honour their husbands when they get married, household chores like cooking, fetching water and this could be of great significance as the practice teaches girls to become responsible mothers of tomorrow. Morals are very important in the day to day life of the African people as asserted in the traditional set up of the family and it helps to promote social harmony as individuals and among people in the society.

However, one observed that moral doctrines can be used or deliberately used as an instrument of repression for instance there is need by society to consider the morals in respect to human dignity, self esteem, happiness, interests, needs, wants and desires by those who undergo the rite of passage. Repression can lead to moral condemnation and therefore morals need to have benefit intentions to both parties. However the types of morals seem to be making men dominant over women. There is need by the initiation overseers to differentiate knowledge given to different age groups and have syllabuses and some initiators argued that urbanisation has disturbed the age sets which were three, the first one being the pre- menstruation age which was from ten to thirteen years, to be educated about menstruation management and pulling of labia minora. The second group should be that from fifteen to eighteen and can be given education about sexual activity, taking care of the home and relationships with the in-laws. The last group is the post marriage where issues about house hold management, pregnancy and child birth and this acts as a marriage counselling. The separation of age groups allows minor children to acquire the knowledge that is relevant to them at that time.

The initiates after graduating are given items which show that they are now adults and this becomes contrary as if elders are giving the juveniles permission to get married soon after initiation. Learning of different life skills at a tender age proved to be giving the young girls a licence of dropping out of school, child marriages, early pregnancies and information imparted to young girls during Chinamwari about woman's place in the society proved that a woman's place is in the bedroom and kitchen and marriage is the best qualification a woman should have, other practices like pulling of the labia minora dehumanise women to become sex objects which are there to please men. The study showed that the role of a woman is to give comfort and support the husband in good and bad times and to endure hardships in marriage. The study also discovered that Chinamwari can be used by deviants and malefactors to achieve their aims. The practice is now being commercialised and it seems to be a business the effects of commercialising Chinamwari are detrimental in the sense that many are being engaged in the practice not for the purpose of teaching good morals but for the sake of pushing for their male factor ideals this was evidenced in both sides that is the side of the initiator (Nyamukungu) and the initiated (Anamwari).the agenda of the practice is therefore lost.

Early marriages violate the girl's right to education and sexual reproductive healthy, there was evidence that early marriage has a harmful effect on the health and physical development of a girl' high chances of a girl having more children at a tender age. Most of the young mothers heavily depend on their parents for care and support of the children. The CRC established that once a child enters into marriage that could be the end of the road to education. The girl will be expected to take care of the husband and the household, marriage has turned most young girls into servitude and the lack of education increase the risk of a girl getting married early and falling pregnant early as well. At the initiation girls dance naked showing what they have learnt at the initiation school. This is a clear violation of the girls' rights to personal dignity and liberty. This makes the girls vulnerable to sexual abuse at the same time violating the girls' rights to protection from sexual exploitation. After graduating men scramble for these young innocent girls and are prevalent to Sexually Transmitted diseases therefore compromising their right to health.

There was evidence of discriminatory attitude by parents and society and this affects the way parents take care of their children in their investments and in times of scarce resource at the end of the day girls are brought up in an environment of deprivation on their rights to good

health, education and economic opportunities, it is a detrimental practice which allows torture, starvation and humiliation of people. That is better for the people to be loved and attended to rather than hated or neglected. The study put much emphasis on the family and the community. However pieces of legislative measures which were adapted from the international convention in which Zimbabwe ratified were incorporated into domestic law by the government. It is therefore the duty of the state to protect the fundamental rights of its citizen in this case the rights of girl children and women and provide security.

The study showed that Chinamwari carries other positive elements like education on menstruation, household chores, and morals and respect. There are also other factors which contributed and are still contributing in the deprivation of girls and women's rights and these includes poverty, lack of family support to girls and women's development, lack of funding, widespread economic crisis in the country which had roots in the government policies and failure of the council to improve amenities and policies suitable for the education of girls. The study showed that the deprivation of the right to education affects other rights as they are intertwined and therefore education becomes a stepping stone to the development of women. The years between 2012 and 2015 have witnessed the great changes in the area under study as campaigns and awareness's were done to promote the realisation of women and girls' rights, this was done through the aid from the civic societies, NGOs and the government institutions like DAAC, Ministry of Women AFFAIRS, Ministry of Youth, ministry of education.

List of pictures

Picture 1 showing Chinamwari graduate wearing beads around her waist

Picture 2 showing Mbuya and Sekuru Sande at their homestead in Mbare where Mbuya Sande conducts her female initiation business. Source @<https://news day.co.zw> 2014/03

Picture 3 ward focal persons in a meeting and discussion on early marriages and child prostitution.

Picture 4 showing the youth at a focus group discussion at Chegutu Community Hall discussing on the factors contributing to school drop outs, unwanted marriages and child marriages..

Picture 5 illustrate the roles of the Municipal clinic, Sister Ndlovu educating young mothers on Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH).

Picture 6 Showing community involvement in gender awareness campaigns in Chegutu in March 2015.

Picture 7 showing the empowerment of women by Chegutu Municipality by employing them to participate in road maintenance works.

Picture 8 shows women participating in jobs which were previously perceived to be male jobs.

Picture 9 shows Gender links in involving the community in gender 50/50 campaigns in 2015 towards the aim to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. (MDGs)

Picture 10 shows the involvement of school children in discussions and programmes on issues concerning them.

List of the people and organisations who were interviewed concerning the rights of Children and women to education and sexual Reproductive health practice in Chegutu in the period between February 2015 and May 2016

Name	Designation/ Ministry
F. W. Madzingira	Education
L. Gwanzura	David Whitehead (DWT)
B. Chakazamba	Education, District Human Resources officer
S.Mafuta	FACT
O. Jiya	PSI
C. Marange	FACT
D. Mushure	Pastors fraternal
Wadzanai	YMCA
Wadzanai	YMCA
L. Muzari	Chegutu Municipality- Social Services Section
Takunda Chesa	VOC Co-ordinator
Z. J. Banda	Youth and sports Co-ordinator (Chegutu Municipality)
K. Salima	Assistant C.S.O (Chegutu Municipality)
P. Ndlovu	Sister In Charge Chinengundu Clinic
Mbuya Donoria	Female initiator (Nyamukungu)

Mai Banda	Female initiator
Mr Phiri	Middle aged resident of ward 7
Pedzisai	Divorced young mother, Chinamwari graduate
Fatuma Zhuwawo	Form three student Chegutu High
Teenage girls	Roma, Chegutu, Ameva, and Pfupajena High schools
Creshnance Mukoyi	School dropout, young mother, 15 yrs
Mrs Mautsa	Teacher, Pfupajena High

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Mai sorobhi, middle aged woman, Chinamwari graduate, interviewed on 10/03/16

Mbuya Donoria, female initiator interviewed on 07/03/16

Mbuya Mwanza, Chegutu municipality housing department. Interviewed on 26/06/15

Mr Phiri, an Islamic middle aged man. Interviewed on 01/08/16

Ndlovu, P. Sister In Charge (Chinengundu Clinic), interviewed 26/06/15

Pastor Marenga, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe Chegutu circuit. Interviewed 01/07/16

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