

As a girl child I have the right  
to a full childhood and education



# GO GIRLS GO!

## EDUCATION FOR EVERY CHILD

### What happens if a School-Girl Falls Pregnant?

Leave no child out of school.  
Secure the future today.



If we children miss out on education now, everyone will pay the price in the future. Every child has the right to be in school. Let us work together to achieve this!



### Everyone has a right to education

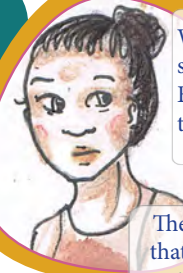
The United Nations Universal declaration of Human Rights states that education is a human right. This is also stated in the United Nations on Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC). Education is a right that is also guaranteed among other things by the: policy of Education for All (EFA), the Zambian national Gender Policy, the United nations Convention and the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals, and other international conventions, Zambia is a signatory to all these.

### Do you know that you can go back to school after you have given birth?

Hi my name is Misozi. When my friend Tamala got pregnant, she thought that she could no longer stay in school. But in Zambia, girls who have given birth are allowed to re-enter the school.

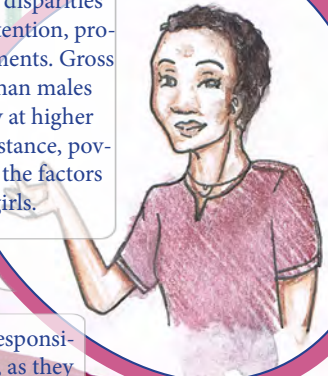


In line with international and national policy declarations, the Ministry of Education, science, Vocational training and Early Education (MESVTEE) has put in place a number of strategies to increase girls and boys access to education. One such strategy is the Re-Entry Policy which mandates schools to allow girls back into school system who previously left school due to pregnancy.

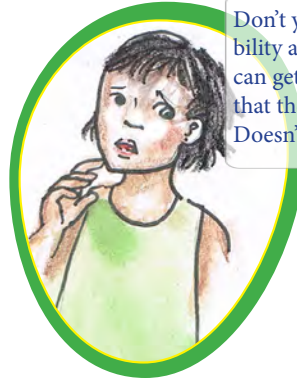


Why has the Ministry of Education, science, Vocational training and Early Education (MESVTEE) taken this move?

The Ministry has taken this move to move upon realizing that girls lag behind boys in education. Gender disparities persist in the favour of males in literacy rates, retention, progression, completion rates and education attainments. Gross enrolment rates tend to be lower for females than males at various levels of education ladder, especially at higher grades. Early marriages, HIV and AIDS, long distance, poverty and teenage/early pregnancies are some of the factors contributing to high drop-out rates for girls.



Don't you think the ministry is increasing irresponsibility and recklessness on the part of the girls, as they can get pregnant and still go back to school, meaning that there is no deterrent for getting pregnant? Doesn't this encourage teenagers to get pregnant?



Oh no, the main aim of the MESVTEE in this is to develop measure that will stop teenage pregnancies altogether. The Ministry will also endeavour to stop or reduce the incidence of girls dropping out of school for any other reasons.



### The following are some of the reasons for allowing girls to re-enter school after pregnancy:

1. Everyone has a right to education;
2. It will increase women's literacy levels;
3. It will empower women to look after their families;
4. It will bridge the gender gap in education;
5. It will give chance for women to contribute to national development;
6. Re-entry girls can counsel other girls and deter them from getting pregnant;
7. Punishment will not help girls to grow spiritually and socially; and
8. Some girls are victims of rape and should not suffer criminal actions of other people.

Not all girls know about the Re-Entry Policy. As you can see from Tasila's Story

## Tasila's Story

"I became pregnant in Grade 11. I told my mother. She took me to a clinic that confirmed that I was pregnant. We decided that I should not tell the school authorities.

I used to tie myself up and I was able to stay up to the end of the term without being detected. I gave birth during the school holiday. I could not come back to school immediately because that I had a hip injury following childbirth. My mother went to the school and reported that I had fallen down and dislocated my hip.

After three weeks I was able to go back to school. After only two days, the Deputy Head called me to her office and asked me if I was pregnant. I said not. She asked me if I had a baby. Again I refused. Then she told me to take off my uniform and my breasts were bursting with milk. I was told to come to school the following day with my mother.

When we came to the school, we were both told about the Re-Entry Policy, and that there was no need for us to go to all those lengths to hide the fact that I had a baby.

I was told to write the school, explaining that I needed to go on leave and come back to school when my baby was eight months old. I went on leave and came back last year. I'm now in Grade 12."

The pregnant girl, her parents or guardians and the teacher and the school should agree on and write down when and where the girl will start school after maternity leave.



What is the length of time for re-entry after delivery?

Counselling before and after medical examination is vital. When girls become pregnant they live in fear. It is important to reassure them. The girl should be allowed to re-enter school at least six months and not later than a year after delivery. However, depending on the support from her family she may re-enter earlier.



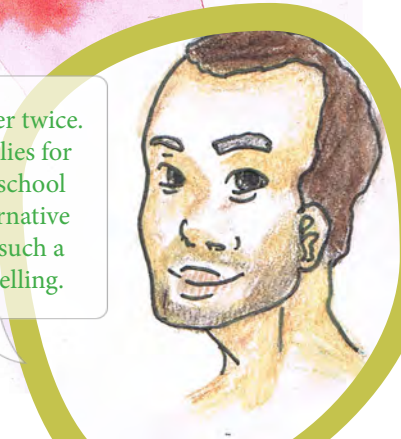
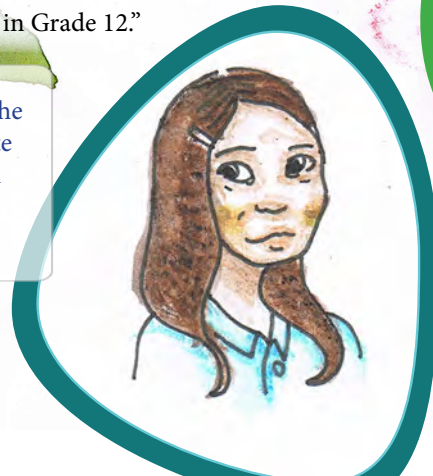
What steps should we follow in cases of school transfer?

Transfer should not be mandatory, though a girl may choose to transfer to another school. The School Guidance department should help to find a school place for the teen mother, if possible on an exchange basis in the case of a transfer to another school.



How many times should a girl be allowed to re-enter school?

A girl shall be allowed to re-enter twice. In the rare event that a girl applies for re-entry more than twice, the school should refer the learner to alternative mode of education. However, such a learner should undergo counselling.



Remember girls and boys,  
you are both responsible for  
the pregnancy!



The following steps should be taken if a fellow pupil is responsible for the pregnancy:

1. The boy responsible for the pregnancy should be counselled about his responsibilities together with the girl by trained counsellor;
2. The boy should also go on three (3) months mandatory paternity leave as a deterrent and lesson to other boys. However, the boy may come back should the girl resume school before then. This will partly ensure that girls return to school. In cases where the girl does not return to school after the maternity leave, the boy should be allowed to go back to school.
3. If a school boy is responsible pregnancy, both he and his parents should sign a committal document to support the girl and the baby;
4. Detailed records of the boy responsible for the pregnancy should be maintained in the school. This will help track him. The records are transferable in case of change of school. The records should give information on the duration of leave, contact and physical address as well as the date of re-admission into school.

## Temwani's Story

"I am an orphan, 18 years old, and in Grade 12. My parents are both dead. I was left with my maternal uncle and his wife. My uncle and aunt were very good to me. I was not the only person they were keeping. My aunt's nephew also lived with us.

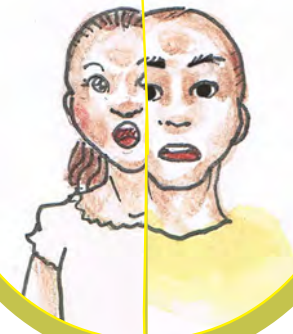
One day, I had a bath and went into my bedroom to get dressed. I was alone in the house with my aunt's nephew. Unfortunately, the girl's room did not have a key. My aunt's nephew came into the room and raped me. When my uncle and aunt came back, I told them what had happened. The boy ran away and has not been back ever since. It was a terrible experience for me. I would wash my body but still feel unclean. When I didn't have my period for two months, I knew I was pregnant.

My uncle..... was furious, no, he was terribly hurt and that made me feel worse. He said he was not going to do anything for me ever again. I reminded him that I was raped, but it seems a girl who is raped bears the blame. The following day, I did not have courage to get up and go to school. In fact, I realised that school was over for me. My aunt went to school and told the Headmistress that I was pregnant and could not continue with my education. The Headmistress asked to see me. When I went to see her she told me that I could go back to the same school after weaning my baby.

The atmosphere in our home was tense. Finally, my uncle told me to go and stay with one of my aunts. I gave birth in February 2014. Although I was not staying with him now, my uncle bought all the requirements for the baby. He became very supportive. In January 2015, I re-entered school. My uncle has taken me back into his home. I am lucky to get a second chance in life. I admit that I used to be playful before, I am serious now. The school has been wonderful. The teachers and all my fellow students treat me normally, if anyone has said something nasty about me I haven't heard about it.

What has my experience taught me? Well to start with, it has shown me what life is like for a girl orphan or a woman. You have to be alert all the time. Boys come up to me and say, you're beautiful. I look directly at them and say Thank you, but no. I know what you want. I have already reported some of the persistent boys; I'm not going to wait until I'm raped before I shout. My education is my priority now."

All girls and boys! Remember that you  
have the right to say NO!  
It is YOUR body. When you are  
touched in ways you don't like or  
when people ask you for sex, you have  
the right to say NO!



## Taonga's Story

"When I was in Grade 9, I got into bad company. My friends and I had boyfriends, mainly among the teachers. Towards the end of the third term, I became pregnant. I was able to sit my exams because I was only one month pregnant, I told the teacher responsible that I was pregnant, and said he was going to marry me. After I left school, I never saw him again. He got a transfer and I have no idea where he went and I have no wish to see him.

Although I qualified to go to Grade 10, I could not take up my place. All the other girls in my group went back for Grade 10. When they got to Grade 11, I used to see them and envy them so much. For a time I used to blame my friends for my predicament. I no longer blame them. If I had not wanted to do wrong, I would have left the gang. My father is dead, and my mother has been ill for a long time now. We all live with my grandmother. No one had the means to support me. I decided to earn a little money so that I could go back to school. Our Parish priest used to sponsor a number of children. When I asked for assistance he told me to work for it.

I found that I could not save money because everything I earned went to feeding the family. I totally lost hope. The head teacher at a nearby school felt sorry for me. He talked to one of the heads of an all-girl's school. I was accepted and I re-entered school grade 10. I'm now in Grade 12 I have not overheard any discouraging words from the teachers, or my fellow students. I still talk openly about my experience in the hope that other girls will learn from it. Unfortunately, I still see even girls I have talked to become pregnant. If I had someone to talk to me the way I talked to these girls I don't think I would have got pregnant."

The following steps should be taken if outsider/teacher is responsible for pregnancy:

1. Inform the girl's parents/guardians of the name of the unborn child's father.
2. Connect the family to organisations like Eastern Province Women Development Association (EPWDA), Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Child Protection Unit (CPU) and Victim Support Unity (VSU) for information on legal action and maintenance for girl and child.
3. Punish the perpetrators who defile girls under the age of 16 under the current law that deals with defilement cases.
4. In the case of the outsider, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)/Parent Community School Committee (PCSC) and Guidance and Counselling Department should play an active role in tracking the culprit, and
5. In the case of the teacher impregnating a school girl, a stiff punishment should be given. The teacher should be expelled and the case handed over for criminal investigation.

Girls who fall pregnant need 'second chance' - just like Taonga



The girls who go back to school after giving birth secure their future, like Chimwemwe!

## Chimwemwe's Story

"I am 19 years old, and I have a three year old son. My father died a long time ago. My mother was too poor to support me, so one of my sisters took me in. Then she died, and I had to come back home to live with my mother. Sitting at home, doing nothing, led to my getting pregnant.



After I had given birth, I found out the meaning of abject poverty. I could not buy things for my baby. I decided to rear chickens as a way of raising money to go back to school. I was thus able to pay for myself as an Academic Production Unit (APU) student in Grade 8 and 9. In Grade 9 I got the highest marks in school. The teachers at the school were very helpful. They explained my situation to the head at the high school where I was accepted. The school put me in contact with the Forum for the African Women Educationalist of Zambia (FAWEZA). LUCKLY, FAWEZA adopted me and supports me.

Perhaps I'm the only person who is teased in the school, not because I have a child, but because I'm so much older than other students. It hurts me, but it strengthens me at the same time. I know my time is limited, so hard that I beat all those who tease me. I am determined to go to University."

Gender and equity considerations entails that both girls and boys should be given equal opportunities.



## How exactly is pregnancy caused?

If you want to understand how pregnancy happens, you need to know about the menstrual cycle of a woman. After menstruating for the first time, a girl has her period once every month. Often it is every 28 days although for some women it is less and for some it is more than 28 days. The first day of the period is counted as the first day of the menstrual cycle. After the bleeding stops, one egg starts to grow in the ovary. Also the lining of the uterus starts to build up, in order to receive a fertilised egg. Between the eleventh and the fourteenth day, the egg is released from the ovary and starts to move through the fallopian tubes to the uterus.



When exactly during the menstrual cycle can an egg be fertilised?

A ripe egg is released 14 days before the onset of the next period. After being released either from the left or from the right ovary it moves through the fallopian tubes toward the uterus. If an egg unites with a sperm from a man while moving through the fallopian tubes, it can be fertilised. That is possible, if a woman has sex a few days before the egg is released or the same day the egg is released.



Since most young girls have very irregular periods, it is almost impossible for them to know the date of their next period. Therefore it is also difficult to know when there is an egg to be fertilised.

A girl's menstrual cycle can easily be affected by stress, sorrow, travelling or other changes in a girl's life. Even if a girl has had regular periods for some time, they may suddenly become irregular. Most women and especially young cannot rely on counting days to avoid pregnancies, as they can never really know whether there is an egg ready to be fertilised or not.

There are no "safe days" in menstrual cycle!



If the egg is fertilised while moving toward the uterus, it will settle in the lining of the uterus. The baby is protected in the uterus while growing until the baby is born.

If the egg is not fertilised, it dies together with the lining of the uterus and they move through the vagina together as menstrual blood. That is, the woman has her period and she will know that she is not pregnant.

Can I get pregnant before I had my first period ever?

Yes, a girl can get pregnant before she has had her first period ever that is before ever having seen her menstrual blood. For sure you ask yourself why.



Before seeing the menstrual blood, an egg ripens in the ovaries of the girl and it moves from the ovaries towards the uterus. If the ripe egg unites with a sperm from a boy, the girl will get pregnant. The menstruation is the sign that this ripe egg has not been fertilised and therefore it leaves the body through the vagina together with the lining of the uterus. An egg may have started to ripen in her ovaries and be ready to be fertilised, even if a girl has not yet had her first period ever.

Can I get pregnant by having sex only once?

Yes, a girl can get pregnant, if she has had sex only once. It depends on the menstrual cycle. If there is a ripe egg released from the ovaries of the girl, ready to be fertilised and that same day the girl has sex, she can get pregnant. This also applies, if she is having sex for the first time in her life.



# Child marriages are a risk

What is early marriage?

Marriage is a partnership between consenting adults and is usually binding in law. In early marriage (sometimes called child marriage) **one or both of the people involved are under 18.**

Early marriage often happens under customary laws without any formal registration. It mostly affects girls, who may be coerced, tricked or forced into marrying against their will, but it **affects boys too**, albeit on a smaller scale.

Do we have any legislation on child/early marriages in Zambia?

Zambia is characterised by a dual legal system where written statutory law and unwritten customary law exist side by side. Whilst statutory law is based on English law, customary law is said to stem from traditions and customs that existed in Zambia before the country was colonized. Customary law is resorted to especially in the rural areas and varies from one ethnic group to another. It has a particular impact on issues relating to marriage, custody of children rights. It is this basis that child marriages have been common.

Now with this dual legal system, which legislation is Zambia using in ending child/early marriages in Zambia?

In order to end child /early marriages in the presence of the dual legal system (Customary and Statutory) the law enforcement agencies in Zambia are using the, principle legislation/ education act Cap 134 chapter 81 Prohibition of certain marriages.

How is marriage and family in Zambia?

Women are frequently discriminated against in the application of family law in Zambia, for example, while the legal age for statutory marriage is 21 years for men, it is only 18 years for women and many women are married under customary law at a much younger age.

The minimum legal age for marriage in Zambia is 16 years for both men and women, and parental consent is required if either party is below 21 years of age. The incidence of early marriage is high, primarily because customary marriages usually take place soon after a girl reaches puberty.

What are the consequences of child marriage?

Child marriage is a fundamental violation of human rights. Adolescent mothers tend to be poorer, less educated, and less adequately nourished than older mothers; they also face greater social disadvantage.

The foremost risk first births carry is prolonged or obstructed labour, which can result in obstetric fistulas in settings where access to care is limited.

First births also have elevated risks of malaria and infant mortality. Girls who give birth during adolescence require special attention because they are less mature and are simultaneously coping with their own and their baby's physiological, motional, and economic needs.

# MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL ACTIVITY

## Key Findings

- Teenage marriage (age 15-19) is more common among girls (17 percent) than boys (1 percent).
- Twelve percent of married women and 7 percent of married men are in polygynous unions.
- The percentage of women married by age 15 declined from 13 percent among those age 45-49 to 2 percent among those age 15-19.
- Zambian men marry on average five years later than women. The median age at first marriage among women currently age 25-49 was 18.4 years, and the median age among men now age 25-49 was 23.9 years.
- Zambian women generally initiate sexual intercourse a year before their first marriage, while men initiate sexual intercourse 5 years before their first marriage.

Source Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013-2014





For more information please contact the  
nearest health facility in your area!



**EPWDA**



HELSINGIN YLIOPISTON YLIOPIILASKUNTA  
STUD. NIKÄRIKÄ VID HILSINGORS UNIVERSITETI  
STUDENT UNION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

