



Linha Fala Criança

A Review of Early Marriage Cases January 2021

Summary

- Victims of reported early marriage cases to Linha Fala Criança (LFC) are majority female (93%) and the median age of victims is 15 years old.
- Early Marriage cases reported to LFC have increased from 3 per month in 2018, to 31 per month in 2020. This large increase may be as a result of: the use of early marriage as a negative coping mechanism due to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth; a consequence of LFC expansion into Central Mozambique; and increased advocacy work.
- Those contacting the helpline about early marriage are four times more likely to be from the community than the family. Most contactors are young (25 years and younger), and male contactors outnumber female contactors by a ratio of 3 to 1.
- Whilst the median age of the contactor is 22 years old, the median age of a reported perpetrator (those who coerce an early marriage to take place) is 34 years old. Perpetrators are more evenly spread across the age distribution than contactors and are predominantly male (by a ratio of 4 to 1). 2 out of 3 identified perpetrators of early marriage are family members.
- The lack of widespread coverage of services to refer cases to is reflected in the data: families and neighbourhood structures are the main pathways for early marriage cases. Police, health and social services, legal services, and civil society organisations are involved in only a minority of cases.
- Referrals to formal structures (police, and health and social services) increased substantially after the implementation of the recently passed Early Marriage law.
- Half of reported cases are in Manica, whilst other Central Mozambican provinces of Zambezia and Sofala represent another quarter of cases.
- There is no clear evidence in the data regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the reporting of early marriage cases.
- For key messages, please see page 7 of this paper.

Scope, Methodology and Limitations

Scope: The scope of this thematic brief is to examine early marriage cases recorded by Linha Fala Criança, covering the period February 2018 to November 2020. Unless otherwise specified, the data presented reflects all early marriage cases recorded during this period. In total, 648 unique cases were identified during this period¹.

Methodology and Limitations: Data was collated into one database from LFC systems during December 2020. Duplicate entries were removed and the database was translated from Portuguese into English. All analysis has filtered out 'test' cases. This data reflects only cases reported to LFC, and does not reflect prevalence of early marriage.

Terminology: "early marriage" is the predominantly used term in this document - this is inclusive of premature unions and child marriage, and is used to indicate cases where children under 18 years old are married or in unions.

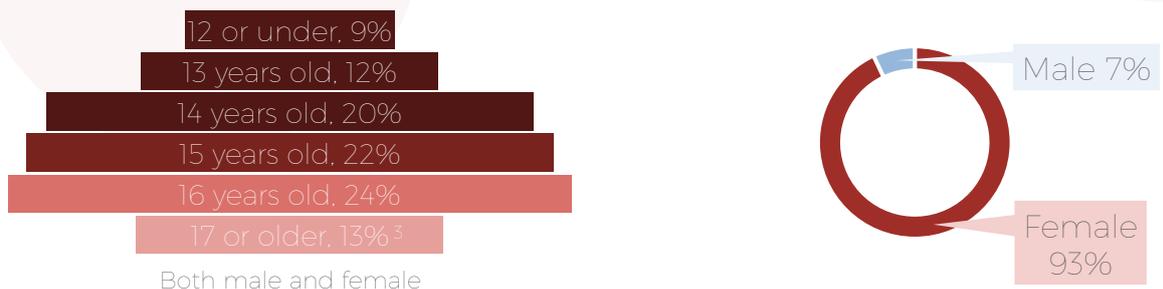
Who are the victims?

Victims of early marriage are primarily female. 93% of victims recorded in LFC case data are female, whilst 7% are male. This echoes prevalence data showing that whilst 48% of women are married before the age of 18, whilst the figure for boys is 9%².

Victims of early marriage have a median age of 15 years old. Most cases are of victims below the age of 16 (63%), and a significant minority of victims (21%) are below the age of 14. Victims aged 16 years old or older constitute 37% of victims. It is important to highlight that the Parliament of Mozambique outlawed marriage of persons under the age of 18 years old in 2019.

There is no significant difference between the ages of male and female victims: the median age for female victims is 15; the equivalent for male victims is 16. However, the data for male victims is limited, with only 33 cases of male victims recorded.

“Most cases are of victims below the age of 16 (63%)”



How have cases changed over time?

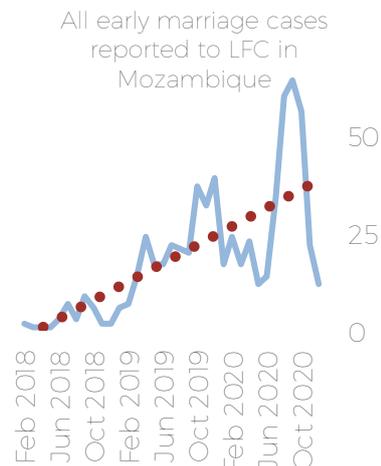
Cases of early marriage reported to LFC have significantly increased since 2018. Whilst cases in 2018 averaged at 3 per month, this rate increased to 21 cases per month in 2019 and increased again to 31 cases per month in 2020.

The increase in cases may reflect an increase in early marriage as a negative coping mechanism due to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in March and April 2019, as well as greater advocacy work in Central Mozambique. Large increases in cases between 2018 and 2019 occurred in Sofala (1 case in 2018 to 33 cases in 2019), Zambezia (4 to 73), and Manica (2 to 20). The increase between 2019 and 2020 is driven primarily by an increase in Manica where cases rose 700% from 20 cases to 160 cases. Both cyclones affected Central Mozambique, and early marriage reportedly increased. The link between cyclones, separation from families, poverty, and early marriage as a coping mechanism has been documented. One report noted that more than 124 girls were forced to early marriage after the cyclones in Mossurize⁴. Zambezia was affected to a lesser extent by the cyclones. Thus, the increase in Zambezia hints towards an increase in advocacy work being a contributing factor to the increase in cases.

An expansion of LFC into new areas of Mozambique due to the cyclones may also a compounding factor. LFC expanded operational presence in 2019 and 2020 to central Mozambique which may partially explain the rise in cases reported in the three central provinces, though the effect is hard to disentangle from the above. The increase may also reflect historic under-reporting of early marriage cases in these provinces.

All these factors may have driven the increase, illustrating how there may be an under-supply of services, and how cases may rise in other emergencies, notably the recent emergency in Cabo Delgado.

“The significant increase between 2019 and 2020 is driven primarily by an increase in cases in Manica”



“Whilst community contactors represent 45% of all contactors, those in the family represent only 11% of all contactors”

Who contacts LFC about early marriage?

Only a small minority of contactors are victims. 11% of those contacting about early marriage are the victim. This reflects the difficulty that victims have in reporting early marriage (for instance access to phones at home), and the reality that more needs to be done to enable victims to report early marriage.

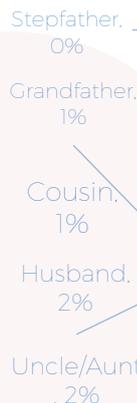
The largest group of people that contact LFC about early marriage are those from the community, particularly neighbours. Neighbours constitute 22% of all those who contact the helpline, followed by other whistleblowers in the community (12%), friends (4%), boyfriends (3%), teachers (2%) and colleagues (2%). Together this equals 45% of contactors.

Only 2% of contactors are teachers. Teachers are (and have the potential to be) one of the main pathways to report early marriage. Child Protection actors worked to introduce new Violence Against Children (VAC) mechanisms in schools that should facilitate increased reporting of cases from teachers. This figure will be closely monitored in 2021 to see if the new mechanisms are increasing the reporting of early marriage.

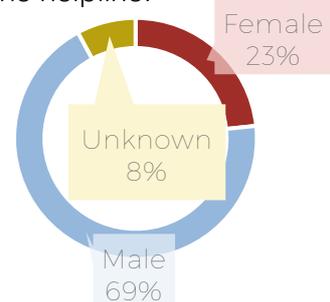
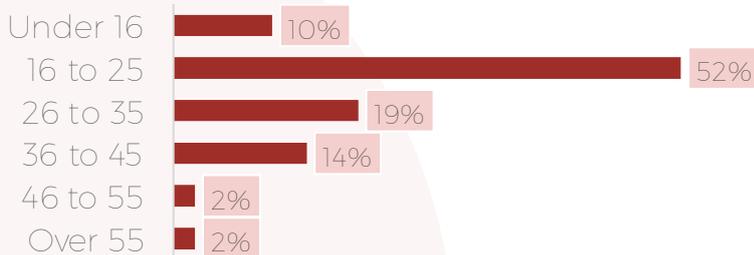
Comparatively, families are much less likely to contact the helpline than those in the community. Whilst community contactors represent 45% of all contactors, those in the family represent only 11% of all contactors. This reflects the fact that the majority of recorded perpetrators are those within the family (see *Who are the Perpetrators?* section).

Most contactors tend to be 25 or younger. 62% of contactors are below this age. This contrasts to only 4% of contactors being over the age of 46. This may reflect differences in social norms regarding early marriage across generations (see *Who are the Perpetrators?* for more on the generational difference). This could also reflect greater capacity to contact the helpline at a younger age with greater access to technology amongst younger generations.

A large majority of contactors are male. Male contactors outnumber female contactors by a ratio of three to one. Many factors may be behind this: it reflects the patriarchal society in Mozambique, it may be due to unequal access across genders to phones in order to contact the helpline, and many girls only finish primary education and may not have the sufficient Portuguese language skills to engage with the helpline.



“Most contactors tend to be 25 years old or younger ...[and] a large majority are male”



Definition of Early Marriage Perpetrator in LFC Case Data:

Anyone who coerces a child to marry

“The median age of perpetrators is 34 years old, compared to the median age of 22 for contactors”

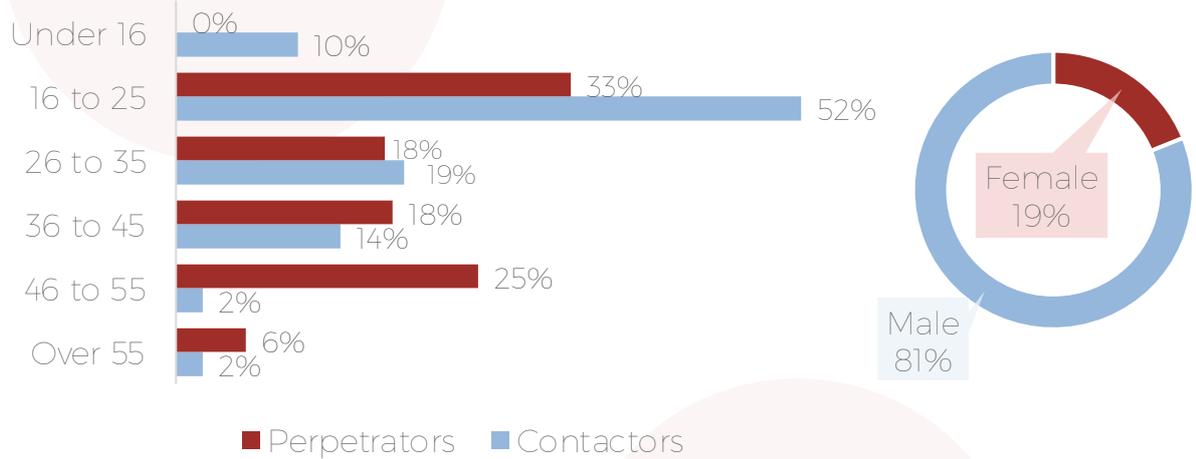
“2 out of 3 identified perpetrators of early marriage are family members”

Who are the perpetrators of early marriage?

The perpetrators of early marriage are distributed across all ages. The percentage of perpetrators who are below 25 years old is 33%, compared to 36% between 26 and 45, and 31% aged 46 or over.

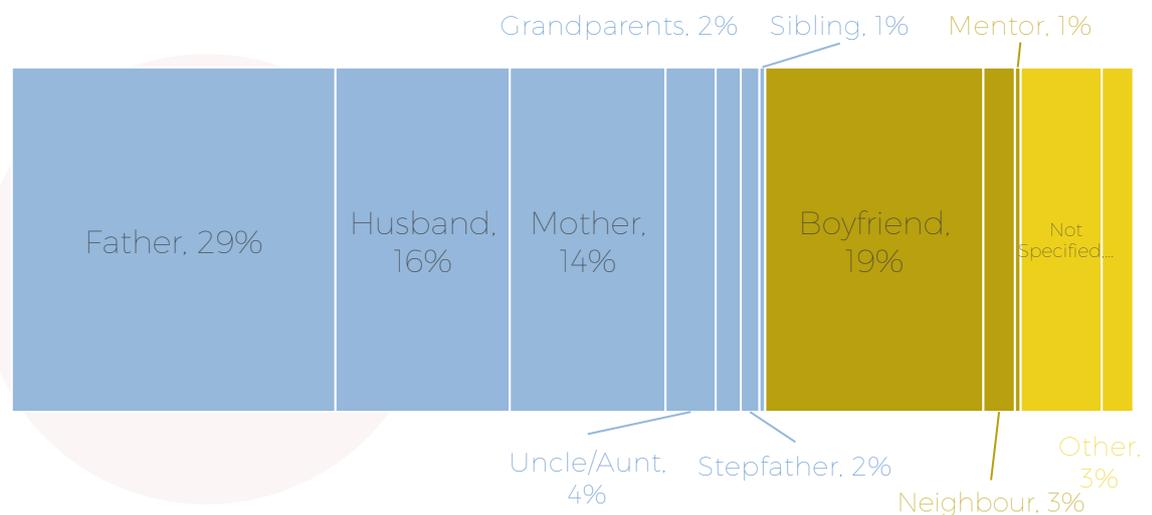
Comparing perpetrators and contactors, there is a noticeable generational difference. The median age of perpetrators is 34 years old, compared to the median age of 22 for contactors. This could reflect changing social norms across the age distribution, with younger generations more likely to have a negative view towards early marriage compared to older generations.

Perpetrators of early marriage are overwhelmingly male. 81% of perpetrators are male, with a not insignificant minority of female perpetrators (19%).



2 out of 3 identified perpetrators of early marriage are family members. Fathers constitute 29% of all perpetrators identified in LFC cases, whilst mothers represent 14%. Other perpetrators include the husband involved in the case (16%), uncles and aunts (4%), grandparents (2%), stepfather (2%) and sibling (1%). *It is important to note that more than one perpetrator may be identified per case, and in some cases no perpetrator was identified. Therefore, read the above as "out of all identified perpetrators", and not as "out of all cases".*

The only other non-family person identified as a perpetrator in a significant number of instances is the boyfriend. Boyfriends are second, only behind father, in terms of instances where they have been identified as the perpetrator.



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“Referrals to health and social services also increased throughout 2020”

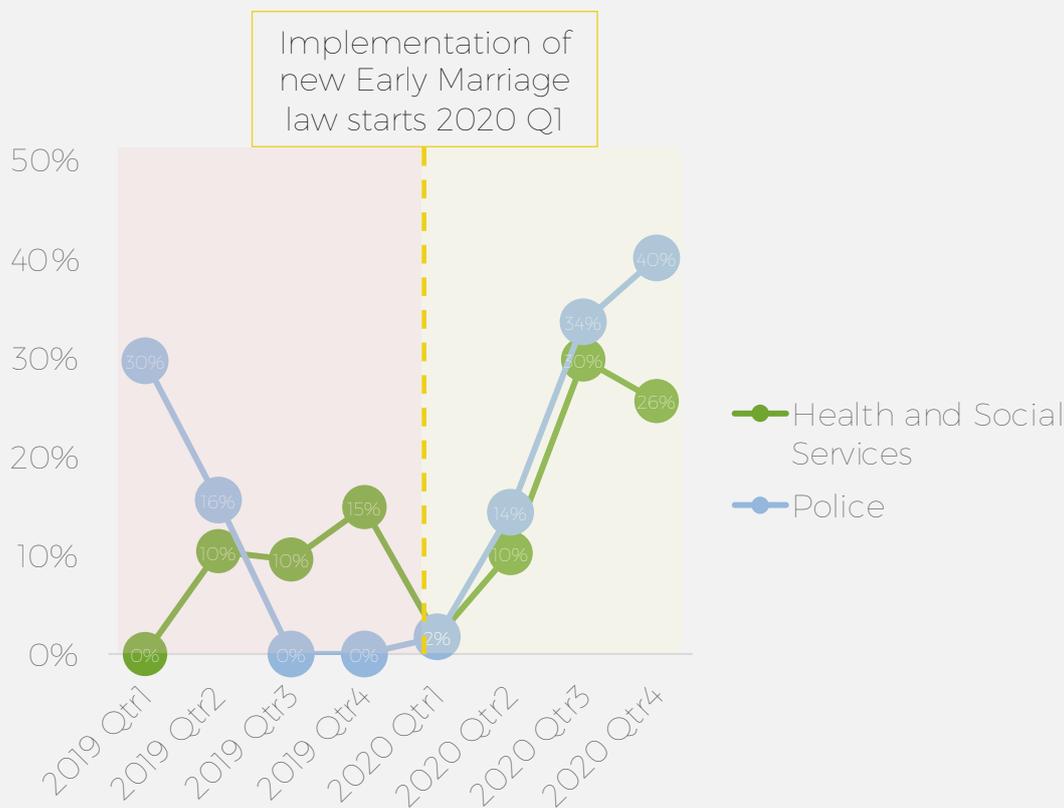
Turning Legislation into Action A Look at the 2019 Early Marriage Law in Mozambique

A milestone was reached in 2019 when Mozambique passed new legislation against **early marriage**⁵. Legislators passed the law, titled Law on Preventing and Combating Premature Unions, in October 2019, and implementation started in January 2020.

The new legislation outlawed marriages for persons under the age of 18. This law applies without exception.

As part of implementation, the law contains sanctions for violation. This includes for: those who coerce a child into marriage, figures who authorize such a marriage, public servants who celebrate or authorize the celebration of early marriages, and the law adopts measures to end existing early marriages⁶.

Referrals to the police after the implementation of the law increased from 0% to 40% in a year. The diagram below shows a clear increasing trend in 2020 in referrals to the police. Referrals to the police in 2019 varied, from a high of 30% in Q1, to 0% in Q3 and Q4. However, after the implementation of the new law, referrals increased quarter on quarter to hit a high of 40% in Q4 of 2020.



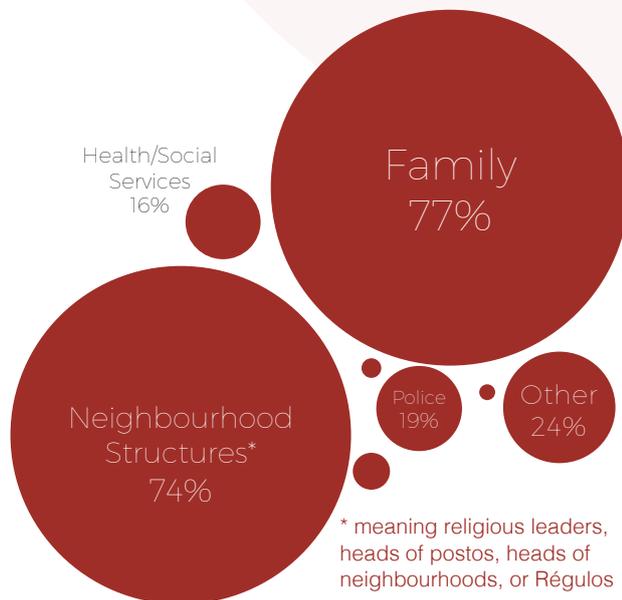
Referrals by LFC to health and social services also increased throughout 2020. Whilst only 2% of cases were referred to Health and Social Services in Q1, this increased to 26% by Q4.

Whilst too early to make a definitive conclusion, it appears that the law has translated into action. More data in the coming years is needed to see whether this is a sustained increase in formal services actively taking up early marriage cases. However, the ‘before-and-after’ picture is quite stark. Referrals to formal services in 2020 increased substantially from a very low base at the start of the year.

How are cases referred and resolved?

Families and neighbourhood structures are the primary pathways for an early marriage case. LFC refers 77% of early marriage cases to families, and 74% to neighbourhood structures. There are a number of factors that influence referral to the family: cases may be resolved when in contact with the most influential family members; there are often no specialised services for reintegration for victims; government services often resolve cases with the family; and there may be a lack of other services in other instances.

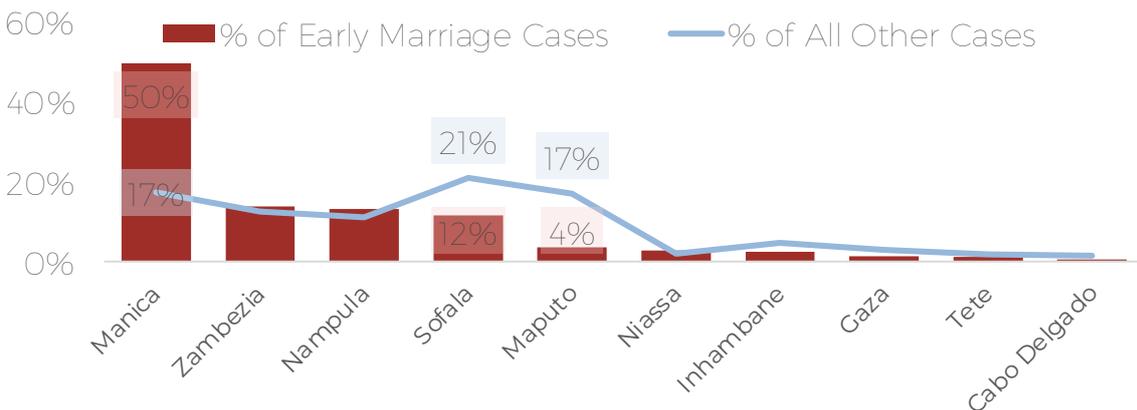
Police are involved in one of five cases, and health and social services are involved in one in six cases. Prior to the new early marriage law, the capacity of police to respond was inhibited by a lack of clear laws and regulations, and clear guidelines. However, there is a lack of aggregated data on what happens next after referral, in terms of both outcome and quality of services provided. Other referral pathways include "Other" (24%), which covers paralegals and associate assistants, civil society organisations (8%), education directorate (4%), and legal services and representation (4%).



Where are cases reported? (2020 data only)

Compared to all other cases, more early marriage cases are reported in Manica. It is unlikely due to the expansion of LFC into Manica, as if this were the case we may expect to see a similar increase in all other cases. As noted in the "How have cases changed over time" section, this is likely to reflect an increase in the use of early marriage as a negative coping mechanism in the post-cyclone era, as well as greater advocacy in Central Mozambique around the issue of early marriage.

Fewer cases of early marriage, compared to other cases, are reported in Sofala and Maputo. There is a 9% point difference in Sofala (12% of early marriage cases in Sofala vs. 21% of all other cases), and a 13% point difference in Maputo (4% early marriage; 17% all other cases). Further work is needed to understand the discrepancies. There may be under-reporting in Sofala for instance. Regional differences in prevalence may account for some of the difference in Maputo: only 3% in Maputo City and 5% in Maputo Province of women are married by the age of 15, compared to 18% in Manica and 17% in Sofala. Likewise, 15% of women in Maputo City and 26% in Maputo Province are married at 15-17, compared to 59% in Manica and 49% in Sofala⁷.



“Compared to all other cases, more early marriage cases are reported in Manica”

“Police are involved in one of five cases, and health and social services are involved in one in six cases”

The Impact of COVID-19 on reported Early Marriage cases

The indirect impact of COVID-19, through lockdowns and public health measures, has widespread consequences across all sectors. Mozambique’s schools were closed on the 23rd March 2020, impacting not only the education of children, but their protection as well. A state of emergency came into effect on 1st April 2020, with a recommendation to stay at home⁸.

There is no clear impact on the reporting of early marriage as a result of COVID-19. Compared to the previous quarter and the equivalent quarter in the previous year, reported cases declined 16% in the period when measures were introduced.

This may reflect natural variation in case numbers, or a reduced ability to report cases of early marriage. A reduction of nine cases in absolute numbers is not a substantial amount and may reflect natural variation in case numbers. An alternative hypothesis may be that contactors have reduced ability to contact helplines as victims may be in the home more due to public policy. However, it is impossible to discern the actual cause of the reduction in case numbers. *Note: Q3 and Q4 in 2020 were not considered as comparative reference categories due to large increases in case numbers in Manica (see previous section).*

Period	Description of period	# cases
2019 Q2	Equivalent period the previous year	58
2020 Q1	The previous quarter	58
2020 Q2	Recommended not leaving house; Schools required to close at all levels	49

Key Messages and Recommendations

The profile of contactors and perpetrators has clear implications for programme planning. When designing interventions, agencies can: account for who in the community is more likely to report cases of early marriage; tailor interventions to those less likely to report early marriage, and take into consideration those who are most likely to coerce children into early marriage.

Resources and services need to be expanded, with the lack of service provision affecting the quality of referral pathways. Whilst community solutions are not a cause for concern in and of themselves, the huge imbalance between informal pathways and referrals to formal structures and institutions is a cause for concern and reflects an under supply of services. The role of community courts on prevention of premature unions, as an informal justice mechanism, should be explored given the lack of formal mechanisms in place.

Monitor closely Cabo Delgado and any potential increase in early marriage. The data hints strongly at an increase in early marriage due to the effects that the cyclones had on Central Mozambique. With another emergency unfolding in Northern Mozambique, there is a clear need to identify and respond to any increase in the use of early marriage as a negative coping mechanism to the conflict in Cabo Delgado.

Reporting from teachers is low, but this is expected to increase in 2021. An increase in reported cases from teachers is expected in 2021 following the approval of the new multisectoral mechanism for prevention, reporting, referral and response to violence against children at school in October 2020.

“Monitor closely Cabo Delgado and any potential increase in early marriage”

Developing the Brief

This brief was a collaboration between Linha Fala Criança, the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR), UNICEF, and the Mozambique CP AoR. Helpline data can help agencies to identify needs, leading to implications for programme planning, resource mobilisation, and advocacy. To collaborate with LFC on exploring trends in helpline data, contact us via our email address.

About Linha Fala Criança and Contact Information

Linha Fala Criança seeks to establish a means of communication so that children and the general public can express their concerns, report cases of abuse, neglect, trafficking and have access to information and advice with a view to preventing future occurrences and influencing policies on the protection of rights of child. LFC was established in response to the Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to the second periodic report of Mozambique to establish a free telephone line and support services for most marginalized children. 116 is the only free child helpline accessible throughout the entire country.

LFC has significantly strengthened its capacity and services in the recent years through expansion of office locations into the Central and Northern regions, as well as through networks of focal points; development of a modern call center and training of councilors to provide telephone-based counselling and referral support. LFC has been supported by many partners, including UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision and Rede Came, and is an active member in the Child Rights Forum (ROSC) and the National Coalition against Child Marriage (CECAP).

References

¹ Not all cases have a clearly recorded victim, contactor and perpetrator. A case is defined as a record with a unique case number. Some cases however do not have all those involved recorded. For example, someone may call but the victim may not be identified, nor the perpetrator. Only 470 victims are identifiable out of the total caseload.

² MISAU/Moçambique, Instituto Nacional de Estatística - INE/Moçambique and ICF International (2011). Moçambique Inquérito Demográfico e de Saúde 2011: Quadro 4.3. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR266/FR266.pdf>

³ There are 3 recorded victims aged 18 in the dataset. It is assumed that these 3 cases represent early marriage cases with the victims reporting events that occurred before they turned 18.

⁴ Save the Children and Girl Child Rights (2019) "Double Disasters": https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/16005/pdf/policy_brief-_mozambique_final.pdf

⁵ Publicação Oficial Da República De Moçambique, 2019, Lei de Prevenção e Combate às Uniões Prematuras: <https://www.unicef.org/mozambique/media/1991/file/Lei%20de%20Preven%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20e%20ombate%20as%20Uni%C3%B6es%20Prematuras%20em%20Mo%C3%A7ambique.pdf>

⁶ Club of Mozambique, 2019, Premature marriage now punishable by up to 12 years in prison – Mozambique: <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/premature-marriage-now-punishable-by-up-to-12-years-in-prison-mozambique-136935/>

⁷ UNICEF, UNFPA, Girls Not Brides, 2015, Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy in Mozambique, https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/9401/pdf/en_moz_child_marriage_aw-low-res.pdf

⁸ Reuters, 2021, COVID-19 Tracker: Mozambique, <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/countries-and-territories/mozambique/>