

2009

Report on Documentation of Abuse stories/cases in Malawi daily papers, The Nation and The Daily times



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Table of Contents	Page
List of Acronym	3
Acknowledgments	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	6
Rationale	6
Aim	7
Methodology	7
Findings	
<i>Sexual abuse stories /cases</i>	10
<i>Early Marriage stories/cases</i>	14
<i>Physical Abuse stories/cases</i>	14
<i>Child labour stories/cases</i>	16
Recommendations	18
Conclusion	18
References	19
Appendices	20

List of Acronyms

HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMIS	Health Management Information System
MDHS	Malawi Demographic and Health Survey
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MHRC	Malawi Human Rights Commission
NYCOM	National Youth Council of Malawi
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

Acknowledgements

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1.0 Executive Summary

The National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) with financial and technical support from United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) carried a documentation exercise on reported newspaper stories/cases on abuse in Malawi. The exercise was conducted as another activity in the series of activities carried out by the National Youth Council of Malawi aimed at building a case to law makers (parliamentarians) and the President on the need for him not to assent to the marriage age bill that proposed to move the age of entry into marriage with parental consent from 15 to 16 years.

The documentation exercise was carried out at two of Malawi's popular daily papers, The Nation and The Daily Times, libraries. Desk reviews were done on papers that have gone been published since January 2009 to November 2009. All stories that featured news on Sexual abuse, physical abuse, child labour and early marriage were captured. The process of documenting the stories/news/cases took 8 days. The findings are presented using descriptive statistics.

Results from the analysis made on the documented stories/news, show that very few stories on abuse are reported in the papers. It also shows that there is a high number of victims of physical abuse as well as sexual abuse amidst young people in Malawi. A lot of girls under the age of 15 are still getting married and that Child labour is a problem in Malawi..

The results from this documentation exercise should encourage decision markers to adequately seek for evidence before making a decision on behalf of young people as the young people are falling victims to a lot of abuses perpetrated by adults.

2.0 Introduction

Malawi with a total population of 13,066,320 has over 43.6 percent of the population aged 0 to 14 years and 46 percent aged 15-49 (Preliminary 2008 housing census report) implying then that 70 percent of the total population is aged 30 years and less (MICS 2006).

The Malawi youth Policy of 1996, define youths to include all young people, male and female, regardless of their marital, socioeconomic status as those aged from 14 year to 25 years (Malawi youth policy 1996).

Unemployment, teenage pregnancy, early marriages, poverty and HIV and AIDS are some of the major challenges that young people face. The MDHS 2004 for example show that young females especially adolescents are more 4 times more at risk of contracting HIV than their counterparts. Child labor is another challenge. It is estimated that at least 26 percent of children aged 5-14 years in Malawi are in a form of child labor (MICS 2006).

The issue of early marriage has taken center stage in Malawi recently after the Malawi National assembly on its seating of 22nd June to 31st July 2009 passed a bill to move the age for entry into marriage from 15 to 16 years. The National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) as a coordinating authority on all issues related to adolescents and young people carried out a series of interventions to provide evidence on the effects of early marriages. The interventions were: 1. Live district hearing campaigns; 2. Meeting with parliamentarians; 3. Development of a communiqué ; 4. Launch of STOP early marriage campaign; (Preliminary Profiling Early Marriages, NYCOM report) . Another exercise that was done to support the intervention mention was documenting abuse cases reported in the daily papers and analyzing the content to highlight other issues that decision makers should address amidst young people.

The activity was ,as with the other interventions, carried out with financial and technical support from United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA). This report is aimed to document and highlight cases of abuse (whether physical or sexual) that have been published in the daily papers. Providing an analysis and possibly showing the extent to which early marriage cases are reported.

3.0 Rationale

The president of the republic of Malawi opened a public debate on the passed bill of the Malawi National Assembly seating of 22nd June to 31st July 2009, which entails moving the age for entry into marriage from 15 years to 16 years. Young people felt that they were not consulted and wanted the president not to assent to the bill but to ask the house to revise the age. In order to present a case to stop the state president assent to the bill and to STOP early

marriages, evidence was needed so that the President, national assembly, civil society organizations, government, parents, adolescents and young people understands the risk associated with early marriages thus the documentation exercise.

4.0 Aim

The main aim of the documentation exercises was to document stories published in the daily papers that touched on issues of abuse (whether sexual or physical or emotional) and providing statistics of those cases that are concerning then youth.

5.0 Objectives

The following were the specific objectives of the situation analysis:

- 5.1** To document sexual abuse cases (rape, incest, indecent assault and harassment) domestic or not domestic
- 5.2** To document physical abuse cases (severe beating, scalding and burning), domestic or not domestic
- 5.3** To show the extent to which cases of abuse reported in the daily papers deal with young people and children.
- 5.4** To show the extent to which cases of abuse reported in the daily papers deal with early marriage

6.0 Methodology

6.1 Data collection

Data collection was done at public service information access centers, however a formal request was made to the managing editors of the daily papers notifying them of the exercise and its aims (see appendix 1). Data for the exercise was collected from the Nation Newspaper and The Daily Times Newspaper libraries in Blantyre. These libraries were chosen because they have a collection of every single issue of their papers that has ever been published in the country dating several years back.

6.2 Data collectors

Data collectors were individuals with some tertiary or post secondary education and some survey skills. They were chosen due to their availability and skills. The team leader has several years experience in research and documentation .The documentation exercise took 8 days.

6.3 Documentation tool

As this was not a survey per say but more of a documentation exercise, there was no specific questionnaire for collecting the information, however the data collector/ research assistant were provided with a guideline for collecting the information(published stories). The guideline was explained in details and each term that was contained therein defined to enable systematic and concise classification of cases (stories) reported/documented. The abuse stories were documented were classified into the following cases Sexual Abuse (including :1 Rape; 2 incest; 3 Defilement; 4 Indecent Assault; 5 Sodomy;) 6 Early Marriage; 7 child labour; Physical Abuse (ncluding 8 Severe Beating; 9 Dousing (dry/wet); 10 gender based Violence; 11 ill treatment.) The classification was based on how news items were presented in the papers.

6.4 Data analysis

Being more of a documentation exercise, care was taken to deliberately use descriptive statistics to report the findings. The use of tables and graphs was employed to present summary of finding, this enabled the reporting of variables of the documentation. Where possible, comparisons have been made with other social research work to make a case for individual variables. The collected storied were coded into an SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientist) data base from which descriptive analysis was produced.

6.5 Limitations

The method employed for this documentation exercise was a desk review. Thus there was:- no way of determining duplication of stories; no possibility of finding out more from any reported story that what was published; the social and demographic characteristics of the victims or perpetrators could not be known or determined apart from the information provided in the reported story. In spite of these limitations the goal of the exercise were achieved.

7.0 Findings

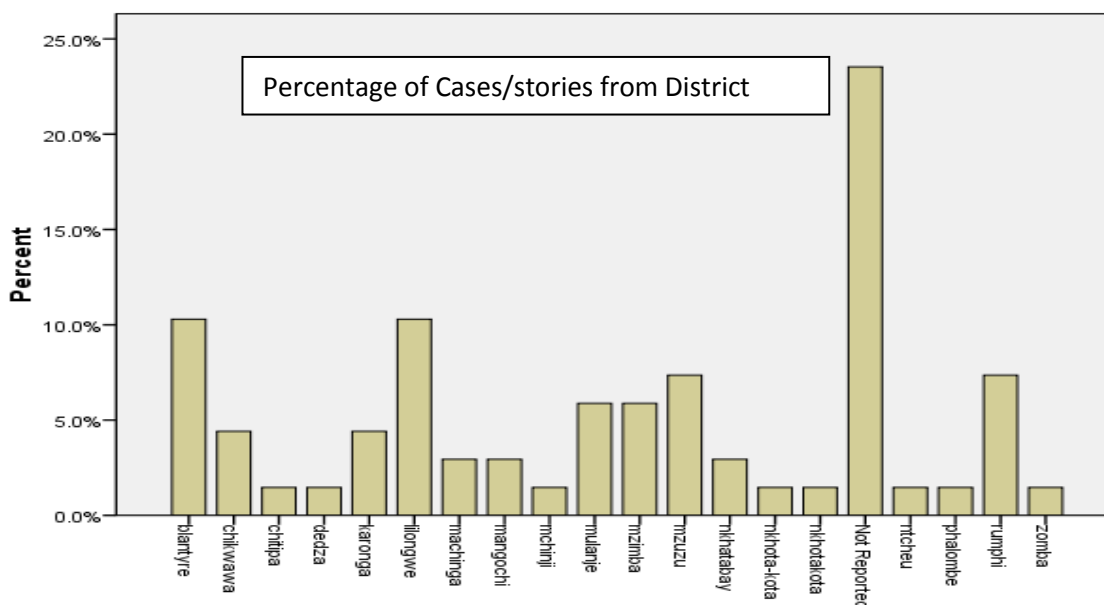
7.1 Number of Published stories/cases relating to issues of abuse in the papers

The exercise documented 105 abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) related news items (stories). Ten of the covered stories were to do with trainings on different issues of abuse; the trainings targeted the victims, policy makers or community members). Issues of advocacy for the reduction of different types of abuse were covered in 20 news item (stories). Advocacy was in terms of community mobilization meeting, conferences, trainings or workshops.

Sixty eight of the news items/stories covered cases of different forms of abuse being reported. In this report we will only concentrate on these 68 to cover issues/cases of sexual abuse (rape, incest, molestation, harassment) , physical abuse (including beating, dousing, neglect), and other forms of gender based violence.

7.2 Origin of published stories/cases relating to abuse in the papers

The origin of each and every story if analyzed to some extent can tell a lot about the story. In our case most of the stories were reported based on district. The table below shows the district and percentage of stories coming from the district.



Graph 1: Percentage of stories from Districts

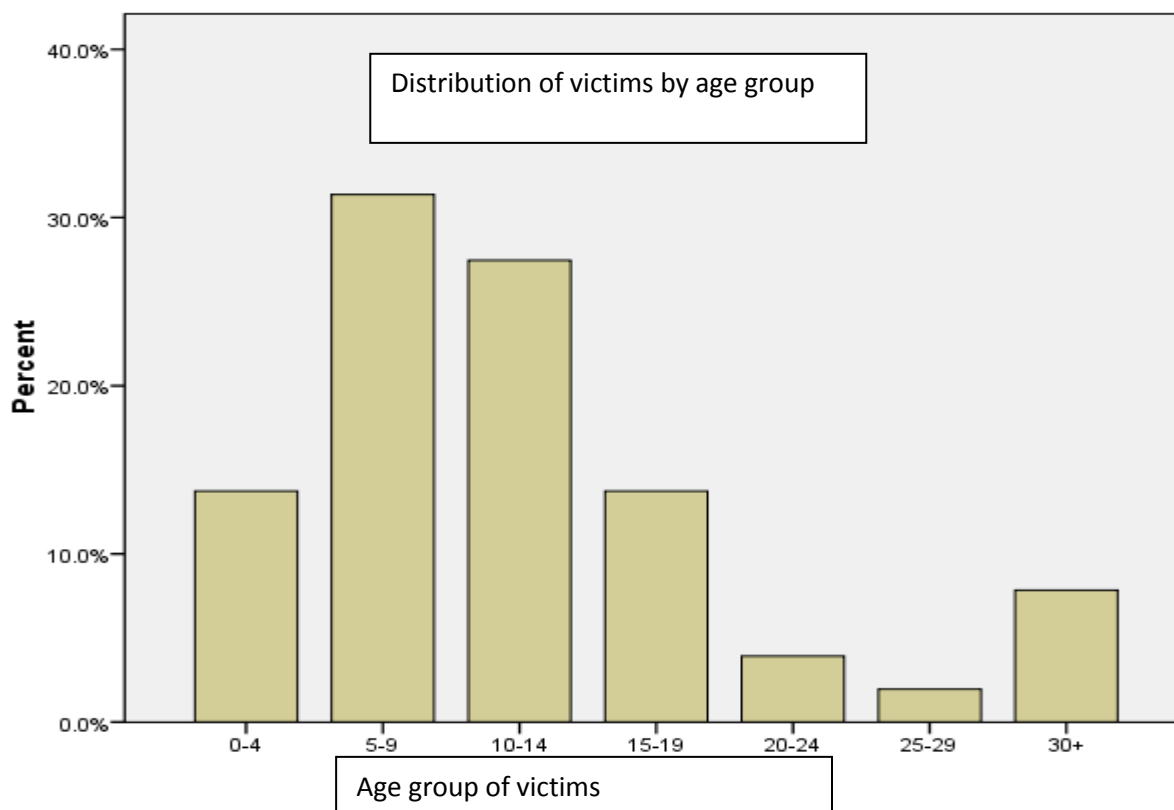
The graph show a lot of stories coming from most urban districts, if combined the district of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu contribute well over 25% of the stories while the rest is shared amidst the remaining 23 districts. Looking at the locations mentioned in the stories published most were in urban or semi- urban of the listed districts.

The reporting of stories from semi urban and urban area can be attributed to reporters being limited to the same area. The only other rural district that is an outlier is Rumphi which also has contributed substantially, 9% of the reported stories of abuse in the paper for the period in question.

7.3 Age profile of Victims in the stories/case

In the 68 stories, over 50 % of the victims are aged between 5-14. The Nature of the concentration of victims within a certain age group can as well be an indicator of the vulnerability of the individuals with that group. The graph below shows more on the distribution by age group of the victims in the stories.

Graph 2: Victims by age group



7.4 Reported Sexual Abuse Cases/stories (Rape, incest and defilement cases)

7.4.1 Rape

Rape “is defined in most jurisdictions as sexual intercourse, or other forms of sexual penetration, by one person ("the accused" or "the perpetrator") with or against another person ("the victim") without the consent of the victim”¹

In the 68 stories in consideration 6 reported rape cases, representing 8.8 % of stories on abuse reported in the two daily papers for the period January to November 09.

Though the reported stories concerned women of all ages, women under the age of 30 (young women) are likely to be the victim in a reported rape case with a calculated probability of 0.83. Four of the six victims that were reported in the rape cases were in the age group 15-19.

7.3.2 Incest

Incest is defined by Wikipedia as “any sexual activity between close relatives (often within the immediate family) irrespective of the ages of the participants and irrespective of their consent that is illegal, socially taboo or contrary to a religious norm.”²

The finding however show that rarely are stories reported as incest. If the exact definition of incest is followed then some of the stories published in the papers under defilement would also fall under incest but for this documentation exercise we shall adhere to how the stories were presented. In this case then only 2.9% of the 68 stories reported on incest. Table 1 below, shows the frequency and percentage of incest stories in the period January to November 09.

Reported story about Incest	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	8.8
No	62	91.2
Total	68	100

Table 1: Frequency of incest stories reported in the daily papers (Jan – Nov 09)

7.3.3 Defilement

The term defilement however seems to have no clear definition as understood in the papers in Malawi. It tends to roughly mean sex with a minor. Whether the minor was raped or coaxed the story still carried the same classification of defilement.

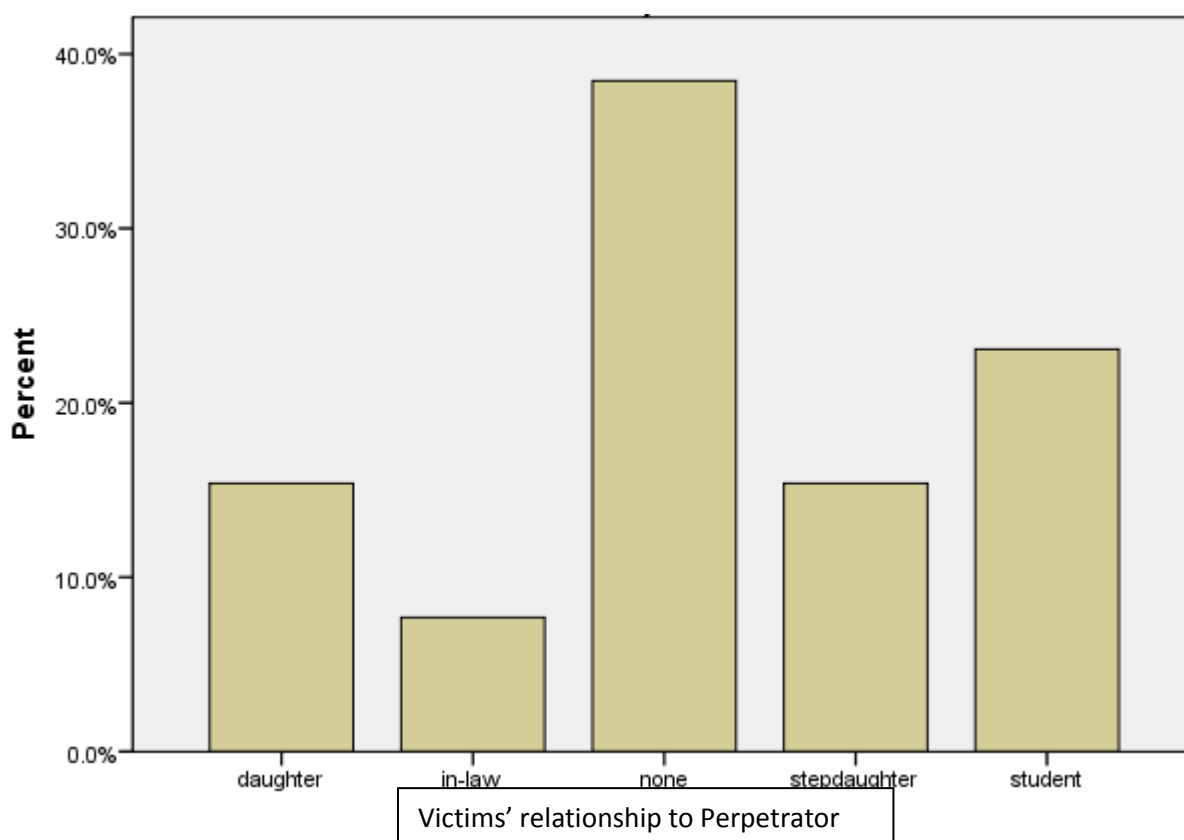
Through the period, January 09 to November 09, 13 stories reporting defilement were covered, this represent 19.1% of our 68 stories covering about abuse. Of the reported stories 6 were about victims under the age of 9.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape>

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incest>

Sixty Percent (60%) of the reported cases of defilement involved a perpetrator that was close to the victim, fathers (biological/step) were the most reported upon close to the victim perpetrators at 30%, with teachers following at 25% . Graph 2 below put the issues explained above in a better perspective.

Graph 2: Percentage showing defilement Victims relationship to perpetrator



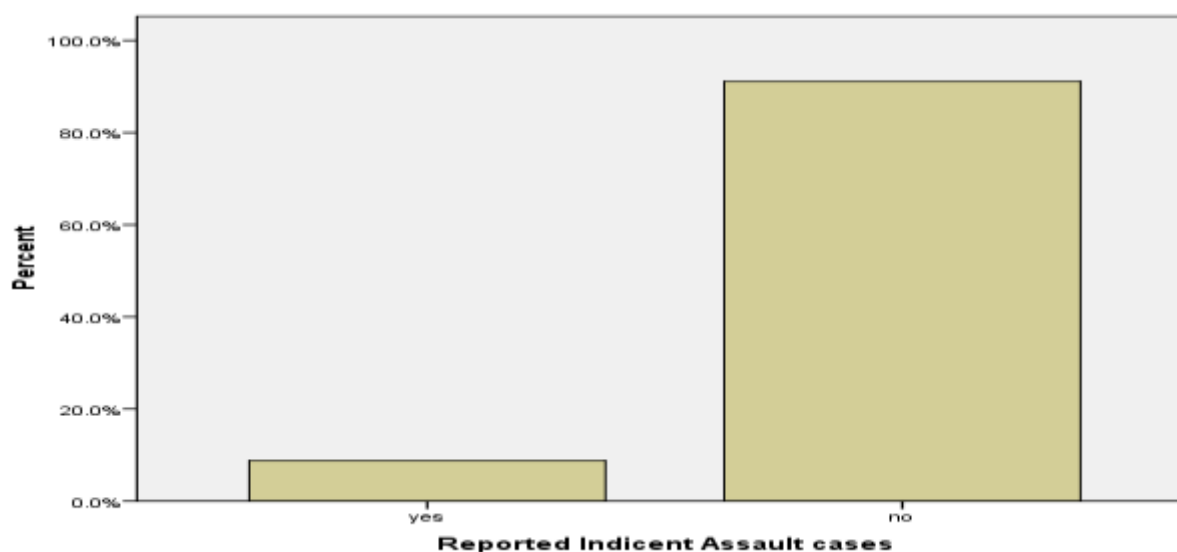
There is however no well defined research work or publication done on defilement in Malawi that we could make a comparison with. Nyasa times an online news bulleting indicated in one of its articles that defilement is on the increase in Malawi quoting the courts of Malawi as having indicated so.³)

These statistics however show the risk that adolescent girls are facing in different parts of the country and these scenarios cannot be ignored.

³ (<http://www.nyasatimes.com/national/rape-defilement-cases-on-the-increase-%E2%80%93-malawi-courts.html>)

7.4 Indecent Assault Cases

Indecent assault in our classification included cases of attempted rape, attempted defilement and improper conduct towards the victim expressed in sexual forms. The term indecent assault is defined by the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia as “any unwanted sexual behavior or touching which is forced upon people against their will”⁴.



Of the 68 stories in consideration 8.8 % are stories that reported an act of indecent assault. All the victims in the reported cases/stories were females. 50% of the victims were in the age group 15-19. The table below shows the age distribution of the victims of this type of abuse in the covered stories/cases.

Table 2 : the age groups of victims of indecent assault covered in the two papers

Age group	5-9	10-14	15-19	30+	
Number of Victims	1	1	3	1	6
Total	1	1	3	1	6

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indecent_assault

7.5 Reported Early Marriage stories/cases

In Malawi Early marriages have been defined as marriage before the age of 18. The percentage of women married before the age of 15 and before the age of 18 (MICS 2006) are the two proxy indicators of early marriage.

Of the 68 stories/cases in our consideration only 3 stories (4.4%) reported on early marriage. However this classification of abuse requires a special attention. The total number of victims in all the 68 covered stories/case is 2162, of these 261 (12%) were victims of early marriage.

The victims in the covered stories come from only 2 districts, Mzuzu and Phalombe. The table below gives an indication of the victims from each district.

Table 3: Victims of early Marriage by District

District	Mzuzu	Phalombe	Total
Number of victims	14	247	261

All the victims were in the age group 10-14, below even the passed bill on age of marriage of 16 years.

This show to what an extent early marriage as a problem is, if only 2 districts could provide such a number of victims, the number would substantially increase if all the districts could have reported their cases/stories.

7.6 Reported Physical Abuse stories/cases

The free only encyclopedia, Wikipedia, define physical abuse as “abuse involving contact intended to cause feeling of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering of bodily harm”⁵

Mamashealth⁶ in defining it as “consisting of anything one person does to another that causes physical pain. This includes slapping, pinching, punching, pushing, throwing objects at another person, assaulting someone with an object or anything that brings about physical pain or discomfort to another. Physical abuse can result in bruises, black eyes, knocked out teeth, broken bones, internal organ injuries, [miscarriage](#), [brain concussions](#), and even death”

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physical_abuse

⁶ <http://www.mamashealth.com/abuse/physical.asp>

Our classification of this abuse included stories/cases of gross beating, dousing in water, porridge or fire, stabbing.

The total number of stories/cases that were reported by the papers in this category for the period is question, 23. This represents 33% of 68 reported stories/cases of abuse. The table below shows the frequency of this type of abuse

Table 4: Frequency of Physical Abuse Stories/cases in abuse stories/cases published

Case/story about	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Physical Abuse	23	33.8	38.8
Other forms	45	66.2	100

7.6.1 Ill-treatment cases/stories

The cases reported in this category were more of negligence, and general ill treatment of victims, that did not necessarily result in an physical or sexual harm but could affect the victim psychologically as well as emotionally in the now or near future. Cases of denying victims some essential day to day entitlements, housing food or clothing were considered.

Table 5: Frequency of ill treatment stories/case in the period

Case /Story	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ill treatment	8	11.8	11.8
Other type	60	88.2	100.0
Total	68	100.0	

11.8% of the stories reported in the period and in the selection of stories were to do with ill-treatment. The victims were in the age range of 0-9years. The perpetrators were immediate parents or relatives.

7.6.2 Burning/dousing cases/stories

Several stories have been featured in which the victim was burnt in some parts of the body all doused all over, with either hot water, porridge or in paraffin and set alit, or burning plastic

paper. The table below illustrates the frequency of stories that covered an incidence of the aforementioned. The stories covering this category comprised 20.6% of the 68 covered stories.

Table 6. Frequency of dousing/Burning of victims in the covered stories

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Dousing/burning	14	20.6	20.6
Other type of abuse	54	79.4	100.0
Total	68	100.0	

Females seem to be the likely victims of this kind of abuse, 10 out of the 14 (71% of) the victims in this category were females. For the 29% of the male victims all were of the age group 4-9, while for the women most of them were of the of the age group 20-24 and above.

7.7 Child labour Cases/stories

Child labor in Malawi defined as labor involving children under the age of 15 (MDHS 2004). Though the definition is sometimes debated among stakeholders, most of them are in agreement when it comes to specific types of labor. The MDHS 2004 estimate about 37% of children in Malawi aged 5-14 engaged in some type of work.

The table below illustrates the frequency/ occurrence of child labor case stories in the papers. Of the 68 stories being considered on 3 (4.4%) were stories to do with child labor

Table 3 Frequency of child labour stories covered

Type of abuse	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Child labour	3	4.4	4.4
Other type of abuse	65	95.6	100.0
Total	68	100.0	

Though the cases were few, the number of victims involved, 1780, surpassed the number of victims in all the other stories covered. This represents 82.3 % of all the victims covered in the 68 stories. Most of the victims of child labor were males, 1065 boys compared to 715 girls.

8.0 Recommendations

The above paragraphs have just elucidated the coverage of abuse stories in Malawi for the period of 11 Months. From the period it can be observed that not a lot of child labour and early marriage stories have been reported. However from the few reported stories/cases it can be noted that the number of victims involved is large. Extrapolating the figures to make it even for reported stories/cases would imply a lot of victims for the two types of abuses. The exercise recommends the following therefore:

1. A full fledged research be conducted to determine the extent of early marriage in Malawi and why the stories/cases are not reported.
2. There is need to strengthen campaigns to sensitize young people and parents and communities to on dangers of early marriages but also to report cases of early marriage to authorities.
3. There is need for programs to encourage young people to report any kind of abuse that they experience in their community to authorities

9.0 Conclusion

The stories documented in this exercise and the analysis made was to show the extent of abuse cases that are exposed by the print media. This was also to show that thought early marriage is rampant in Malawi very few of these stories/cased are actually published or reported. This is not very far from the stand of the National youth councils and its partners stand on “the end of early marriage campaign”. It can be observed from this limited exercise that the stand of the council and that of its partners is in the right direction. Because though the number of publications on early marriage stories is small the number of victims involved is greater (3 stories/cases, 261 victims).

It is therefore of importance that more resources be made available by institution to conduct an extensive research to establish causes or reasons of why stories of early marriage and child labor do not feature more in the Public information providers when it’s evident from the few stories that are captures that the practices ⁷are very rampant and concern greater numbers of young people.

⁷ http://www.newsfromafrica.org/newsfromafrica/articles/art_522.html

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Appendix: 1

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NYC/ Daily Times/ pm/01

November 27, 2009

The Managing Editor
The Daily Times
P/Bag 39
Blantyre

Dear Sir/Madam

**SUBJECT: Gathering of Published abuse cases from The Daily Papers
in Malawi**

The National Youth Council of Malawi with support from its partners is in the process of documenting and disseminate information regarding abuse cases that has affected young people (girls and boys) to make a case for policy review.

The information that is gathered will be analysed to document cases that are reported that concern the youth in Malawi, specifically those under the mandate of the National Youth Council of Malawi (ages 10-29)

With the frequency of abuse stories appearing in the papers we believe a period of 6 months would provide enough cases to make a statement.

It is to our understanding that your publishing house has a library that keep all the past publication. We would like ask for your permission and kindness to use your institutions' library to gather the reported stories / cases, our research personnel shall be at your facility for a number of days while they go through the papers to get the information.

Yours in Youth Work

Patrick Makono
Program Officer (Research & Evaluation)
for
Aubrey Chibwana
Executive Director

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NYC/ The Nation/ pm/01

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