

CAMFED, Libonda Kuta partner against early marriages ■ ■ ■ as traditional leadership consider enacting customary laws against perpetrators

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THE Libonda Kuta of Kalabo and Sikongo districts has assured Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) of stringent measures aimed at curbing child marriages in the chiefdom.

Speaking on behalf of his fellow indunas, Induna Sinawambuyu said the Kuta would soon convene a special session to take affirmative action and consider enacting customary laws against perpetrators of early marriages.

The traditional leader, who is also sub-chief of Mukola area in Liuwa, was addressing CAMFED Kalabo District Committee which briefed the Kuta on CAMFED programs and its focus on girl child education.

Induna Sinawambuyu observed that cultural norms were hugely contributing to the high prevalence of early marriages and teenage pregnancies in the chiefdom.

He said the scourge has a negative impact on the socio-economic livelihoods of affected households as parents are burdened to provide amenities to the young couple who otherwise cannot fend for themselves.

And CAMFED Focal Point Person Chuma Kaitwa appealed to traditional leaders to use their authority and decisively act as agents of change against early marriages.

Mrs. Kaitwa, who is also District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) Planner, was speaking at Libonda palace when the CAM-

FED District Committee paid a courtesy call on Her Royal Highness Chieftainess Mboanjikana, Kandundu Yeta, of Kalabo and Sikongo districts.

She said CAMFED attaches great value to ending child marriages, teenage pregnancies and the protection of children against abuse.

“These include the right to health, education, family life, play and recreation, an adequate standard of living and to be protected from abuse and harm. Children’s rights cover their developmental and age-appropriate needs that change over time as a child grows up,” she said

Mrs. Kaitwa disclosed that CAMFED shares a vision in which every child is educated, protected, respected, valued and grows up to tackle the tide of poverty.

She said such efforts have potential to tackle the cycle of poverty, disease and inequality by supporting girls to go to school and succeed, adding that CAMFED further empowers young women to become leaders of change.

She stated that it is in breach of the Education Act of 2011 to marry or marry off a learner who is a child, prevent or stop a learner who is a child from attending school for the purpose of marrying or marrying off the learner who is a child.

“CAMFED is doing its part by embarking on community engagement meetings and advocacy

against child marriages. A total of 169 girls in eight out of 31 CAMFED engaged schools in Kalabo district are currently receiving educational support in terms of school fees, uniforms and other requirements needed for them to further their secondary education from grades 8-12,” she said.

Mrs. Kaitwa has since lobbied Chieftainess Mboanjikana to support CAMFED by ending early marriages in her chiefdom through community sensitizations, form and re-enforce by-laws aimed at ending the scourge as well as support the re-entry policy for girls who dropped out of school.

Meanwhile, CAMFED Alumni (CAMA) Chairperson Chindele Chabaya implored traditional leaders to promote the nurturing of girls into becoming women of influence and change.

Ms. Chabaya said through CAMA Fund, her organization offers interest free loans to alumni members, partners with the Department of Social Welfare in supporting child-head households and mentors its membership in life skills, fundraising and entrepreneurship ventures.

And Acting Kalabo District Chiefs and Traditional Affairs Officer Pelekelo Shwana appealed to traditional leaders to be wary of cultural norms and practices which hinder the education of girl children and perpetuate early marriages as well as teenage pregnancies.