



# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

## PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Policy Monitoring and Research Centre (PMRC) is delighted to join the rest of the world in commemorating the International Day of the Girl Child which fell on the 11th October under this year's theme, **"Digital Generation Our Generation"**.

As we celebrate the girl child, we wish to shine the light on the **strides made by Government this far in empowering the girl child and its continued resolve to eliminate the impediments that hinder the full realisation of their human rights, such as protection from all forms of violence and abuse, access to equitable and quality education, the campaign to end child marriage and child-specific social protection.**

As the world evolves into a digital era, Zambia is set to bridge the digital divide through the adoption of information communication technology (ICT) as part of its commitment to achieving the country's aspirations of attaining **"Education for All"** through Sustainable Development Goal No. 4, to **"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"**. Access to ICT plays a key role in the provision of **education, which is the greatest equalizer**. It is our belief that the digital era is a transformative one especially for the girl child as it enables equal participation of persons and continuous learning regardless of gender and physical ability.

In 2013, the **Government introduced Computer Studies in all schools in a bid to enhance the digital skills of learners which we believe will capacitate them to interact at national, regional and global level with increased access to information.** The path to gender equality

runs through education; **when a girl is educated, the knock-on effect benefits families, communities and generations.** However, we note that access to ICT has continued to be a challenge for many learners, especially in rural areas and among the country's less privileged. The **COVID-19 pandemic revealed the inequalities that exist in access to the digital space as evidenced in the challenges that characterised online learning resulting from the closure of schools.** Therefore, this year's theme is a call on Government and its cooperating partners to continue to bridge the digital divide as the country implements efforts towards Vision 2030 and the Global 2030 Agenda.

The foregoing notwithstanding, digital technology and its advancements have the potential to expose the girl child to social ills such as **cyber bullying, harassment and pornography,** among others. We therefore commend the Government for developing the **National Online Child Protection Strategy,** launched in 2019 and enacting the **Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act No. 2 of 2021.** This was a response to protect children from various forms of abuse perpetuated through online media and technology. The use of ICT is a critical tool that can be used to fight various forms of child abuse by developing platforms on which children can report cases of abuse while also safeguarding their identity and dignity. **Once they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, they are better positioned to take ownership of their safety and futures.**

We therefore urge parents, caregivers and teachers to use existing online platforms to report any cases of gender-based violence and abuse towards the girl child and build the capacity of the girl child for responsible use of ICT and social media platforms.

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