



Ulemu No One Excluded

Report 2024/2025

Child Protection and Violence Prevention
Lusaka - Zambia





Intervention context

Ulemu operates in the Kanyama compound, one of the poorest and most densely populated areas of Lusaka, Zambia, characterized by extremely precarious living conditions, high unemployment, limited access to services, and widespread social vulnerability.

In this context, domestic and gender-based violence represents a structural phenomenon, deeply rooted in economic, social, and cultural factors. The persistence of patriarchal norms, alcohol and substance abuse, and the normalization of violence—even as an educational tool—contribute to the widespread occurrence of physical and sexual abuse.

Children are the most vulnerable victims: in most cases, abuse occurs within the family or in close community settings, making disclosure and reporting particularly difficult.

Within this scenario, since 2019 Ulemu has been managing a Gender-Based Violence Unit within Kanyama General Hospital, providing an integrated service that includes medical care, psychological support, legal assistance, and protection interventions.

During the 2024–2025 period, Ulemu further strengthened its multidisciplinary approach and network-based work, consolidating collaboration with the hospital, social services, and the police. This has enabled more effective and timely case management, particularly in complex situations involving children.

Victim Statistics

ACCESS TO THE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE UNIT – 2024

TYPE OF VIOLENCE	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
PHYSICAL ABUSE	1231	270	1501
SEXUAL ABUSE	451	13	464
TOTAL	1682	283	1965
of which MINORS			
PHYSICAL ABUSE	187	105	292
SEXUAL ABUSE	381	9	390
(of which children under 10 years)			97
TOTAL	568	114	682
TOTAL VICTIMS			1965
Female victims (% of total)			85,6
Child victims (% of total)			34,7

ACCESS TO THE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE UNIT – 2025

TYPE OF VIOLENCE	FEMALES	MALES	TOTAL
PHYSICAL ABUSE	1373	254	1627
SEXUAL ABUSE	442	19	461
TOTAL	1815	273	2088
of which MINORS			
PHYSICAL ABUSE	255	121	376
SEXUAL ABUSE	400	15	415
(of which children under 10 years)			97
TOTAL	655	136	791
TOTAL VICTIMS			2088
Female victims (% of total)			86,9
Child victims (% of total)			37,9



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Children's
ACT No. 12 of 2022



Situation Analysis

During the 2024–2025 period, a steady upward trend in cases of physical and sexual violence managed by Ulemu is confirmed. Following years of progressive increase, the total number of victims continued to rise during the reporting period, from 1,965 cases in 2024 to 2,088 in 2025, with a clear predominance of women and girls, who account for just under 90% of all victims.

It is important to highlight that data relating to adult women is likely partial: in most cases, only physical violence is reported, while sexual violence within intimate relationships or the family context tends not to be recognized as such and is therefore not reported. This contributes to an underestimation of the phenomenon. Sexual violence in adult relationships remains largely invisible.

By contrast, data concerning minors requires more specific analysis. In 2024, 658 minors who were victims of physical and sexual abuse were assisted, rising to 789 in 2025. This significant increase confirms the particular vulnerability of this population group.

Within this data, sexual abuse against minors represents the most critical component: 366 cases in 2024, of which 357 involved girls, and 415 cases in 2025. The phenomenon therefore continues to disproportionately affect girls, highlighting a strong gender dimension.

Data relating to male minors is also likely underestimated: due to cultural and social factors, boys and male adolescents tend not to report abuse, as a result of shame, stigma and cultural norms that make disclosure more difficult.

Particularly alarming is the data concerning children under the age of 10: 97 cases in 2024 and 96 in 2025. While stable, this remains an extremely high number, pointing to the widespread nature of violence even among the youngest age groups, where the ability to defend themselves or report abuse is virtually absent.

Overall, data from the two-year period confirms a highly critical situation, in which the increase in cases can be attributed both to the persistence of the phenomenon and to greater disclosure, linked to strengthened awareness-raising activities and improved accessibility of services.

Rising Cases: Structural Drivers and Increased Disclosure

The increase in cases recorded over the two-year period is the result of two parallel dynamics. On the one hand, violence remains a structural phenomenon, closely linked to the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the context.

On the other hand, Ulemu's activities have significantly contributed to greater disclosure of the phenomenon. Awareness-raising campaigns, workshops, and educational activities have increased community awareness, making people more likely to seek help.

An important role has also been played by the introduction in 2024 of legal literacy interventions aimed at raising awareness of the provisions of the Children's Code Act, the legal framework for child protection adopted in Zambia in 2022. Ulemu's activities have helped make this law more widely known and accessible to the community, fostering a better understanding of children's rights and legal responsibilities in cases of abuse.





CHILD ABUSE IS A CRIME

WHERE TO REPORT

- **ANY NEAREST POLICE STATION**
- **ONE STOP CENTRE AT KANYAMA GENERAL HOSPITAL**
- **CALL 116 CHILD HELP LINE “TOLL FREE”
FOR MORE INFORMATION REFER TO THE
CHILDREN’S CODE ACT, 2022**





Stop Child Abuse

During the 2024–2025 period, Ulemu strengthened its prevention activities through the Stop Child Abuse campaign.

Activities included:

- awareness sessions in schools;
- community meetings;
- door-to-door and radio campaigns;
- thematic workshops;
- dissemination of informational materials.

Overall, awareness-raising activities reached over 5,000 direct beneficiaries.

A specific focus was placed on the importance of timely reporting of sexual abuse within 72 hours, a critical time frame to ensure an effective response. Within this period, it is possible to immediately activate a series of essential medical procedures, including:

- administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV prevention;
- prevention of other sexually transmitted infections;
- provision of emergency contraception in cases of pregnancy risk;
- collection of medico-legal evidence, which is essential for initiating potential legal proceedings.



Beyond this critical time window, many of these interventions become significantly less effective or no longer accessible, with a direct impact on both the victim's health and the possibility of legally prosecuting the perpetrator.

Another crucial component of Ulemu's work has been the prevention of corporal punishment, which at times reaches unacceptable levels of brutality and remains widely practiced and socially accepted.

Through dedicated campaigns and workshops, Ulemu has promoted the abandonment of violence as an educational tool, encouraging non-violent parenting and teaching approaches.

Activities have engaged parents, teachers, and communities, promoting positive discipline, non-violent conflict management, and effective communication between adults and children.

This work is essential to breaking the intergenerational transmission of violence and represents one of the key pillars of long-term prevention.

A young girl with dark skin and short hair, wearing a bright pink long-sleeved shirt and shorts, is running barefoot towards the camera. She has a joyful expression with a wide smile and her right arm is raised high. The background consists of a grey stone wall and some green foliage to the left.

Integrated Case Management and Service Strengthening

During the 2024–2025 period, Ulemu continued to provide a structured and integrated service for the management of victims of violence, consolidating an intervention model developed over the years and based on close collaboration between the Gender-Based Violence Unit, Kanyama Hospital, social services, and the police.

At the Gender-Based Violence Unit, victims have access to a coordinated set of services including medical care, psychological support, legal assistance, support in reporting cases, and, where appropriate, family mediation. This multidisciplinary approach makes it possible to respond comprehensively to the needs of those assisted, addressing not only the immediate consequences of violence but also its medium- and long-term implications.

A key element in strengthening the service during the two-year period has been the expansion of psychological support, targeting both minors and adults, which is essential for the recovery and rehabilitation of victims.

The significant increase in cases has highlighted a growing demand for therapeutic care, particularly in situations involving complex trauma, prolonged violence, and emotional distress.

For minors, psychological support has been delivered through individual pathways and the use of specific techniques such as art therapy, play, and expressive activities, which are essential in facilitating the processing of trauma within a safe environment. At the same time, work with adults—particularly women survivors of violence—has also been strengthened through individual support pathways and, where possible, family-based interventions.

The increasing pressure on the service, with a steadily growing number of patients supported on a daily basis, underscores the central importance of this component and the need for further development, both in terms of human resources and the structuring of interventions.

During the 2024–2025 period, Ulemu strengthened its commitment to ensuring equitable access to services for persons with disabilities who are survivors of gender-based violence. Persons with disabilities represent one of the most vulnerable groups, facing a higher risk of violence while often being excluded from services due to physical, communication, and cultural barriers.

Activities carried out included:

- training of community paralegals, including persons with disabilities;
- sign language training to improve service accessibility;
- home visits for follow-up of gender-based violence cases;
- support for school inclusion of children with disabilities;
- awareness-raising through campaigns and media.
-

This intervention represents a key step towards a model of response to violence that is capable of reaching even the most marginalized individuals.

Prevention activities carried out over the past two years have directly engaged men and boys, recognizing their fundamental role in addressing gender-based violence.

Through community meetings and dialogue sessions, key topics such as positive masculinity, respect, healthy relationships, and individual responsibility have been addressed. These spaces have fostered greater awareness of violent behaviors and their consequences, contributing to a gradual shift in attitudes.

Male engagement represents a key element of prevention, as it makes it possible to address not only the needs of victims but also the root causes of violence, promoting more equitable and respectful relationship models.



Protection of Child Victims of Abuse

In the most serious cases, particularly when children are exposed to a concrete risk within the family environment, Ulemu activates direct protection measures, which may include removal from the family and placement in safe settings.

During the 2024–2025 period, Ulemu ensured the placement of 30 child victims of abuse each year in boarding schools, providing them with a structured and protected solution. Boarding schools represent an effective protection tool, as they allow children to be removed from situations of ongoing violence and placed in a stable and supervised environment.

Placement in boarding schools not only ensures the child's physical safety but also guarantees:

- continuity of education, often interrupted or compromised due to family conditions;
- access to a structured environment, with daily routines and constant supervision;
- opportunities for socialization in a safer setting.



Children placed in boarding schools are also continuously monitored by Ulemu staff, who maintain direct contact with the schools and regularly assess their educational and personal development. At the same time, access to psychological support and rehabilitation pathways is ensured, which are essential for processing trauma and supporting children through a process of emotional and relational recovery.

This type of intervention is particularly relevant in cases where the perpetrator is a family member or a trusted figure, making it impossible for the child to remain safely within their home environment.

Experience over recent years shows that placement in boarding schools is not only an emergency measure but also a crucial step in initiating medium- and long-term recovery pathways, offering children a real opportunity to escape situations of violence and build a different future.



Cherished Home: Protecting, Caring, Rebuilding

Cherished Home is a safe shelter managed by Ulemu in Lusaka, dedicated to the temporary accommodation of children who are victims of violence, abuse, and severe vulnerability. The facility represents a key component of the violence response system, particularly in cases where it is necessary to immediately remove victims from unsafe family or community environments.

Children are admitted to the shelter upon referral from social services, the police, or the Gender-Based Violence Unit in Kanyama, typically following incidents of abuse or in situations where remaining within the family poses a concrete risk to their safety.

The girls hosted at Cherished Home—97 over a little more than two years—present highly complex and vulnerable situations. Cases include sexual abuse, often within the family (fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or cohabiting partners); violence perpetrated by members of the community; labor exploitation and trafficking; early pregnancies resulting from abuse; abandonment or severe neglect; physical violence and brutal corporal punishment; and situations of significant psychological distress, often linked to prolonged trauma.



In some cases, children are also admitted for legal protection purposes, for example when they are required to testify in court or when there is a risk of family pressure that could compromise judicial proceedings.

Cherished Home provides a safe, structured, and protected environment where children can begin a recovery process. The length of stay varies depending on the complexity of cases, the duration of legal proceedings, and the possibilities for reintegration. The service is based on an integrated approach that includes:

- protection and residential care;
- continuous psychological support;
- assistance throughout legal proceedings;
- access to education or literacy programs;
- educational and vocational activities (tailoring, music, art therapy);
- development of skills for independent living.
-

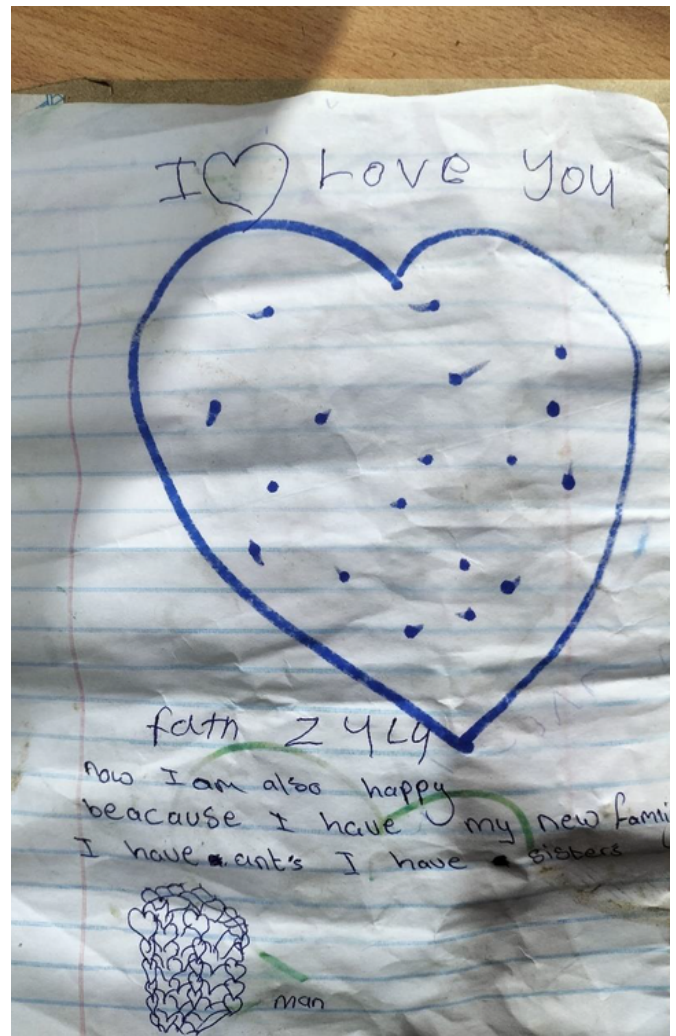
Children are supported on a daily basis by a team composed of educators, social workers, and a psychologist, in close collaboration with local institutions.

Admission to Cherished Home is temporary and aimed at identifying a stable and safe long-term solution for each child.

Exit pathways include:

- family reintegration, where adequate conditions exist;
- placement in boarding schools;
- transfer to other care facilities;
- support towards independent living for older girls.

In a context where violence is often invisible or normalized, Cherished Home represents a vital space for protection and care. Beyond ensuring immediate safety, the shelter offers children the opportunity to rebuild trust, process trauma, and develop future prospects.



Conclusions

The 2024–2025 period highlights a significant strengthening of Ulemu’s action, both in terms of case management capacity and impact on the ground.

The increase in reported cases—particularly among minors—confirms the severity and widespread nature of violence in the Kanyama context. At the same time, it reflects an increased level of disclosure, supported by awareness-raising activities, workshops, and prevention campaigns.

The consolidation of network-based work with the hospital, social services, and the police has improved the timeliness and effectiveness of interventions, ensuring more coordinated case management, especially in the most complex situations.

Particularly noteworthy has been the strengthening of psychological support for both minors and adults, which remains a central element in trauma processing and in building sustainable recovery pathways. At the same time, direct protection interventions—including the annual placement of 30 children in boarding schools and accommodation at Cherished Home—represent a concrete and effective response to the most vulnerable situations.

Awareness-raising and non-violent education activities have also contributed to strengthening community knowledge of children’s rights and reducing social tolerance towards violence. At the same time, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in services and the increasing involvement of men in prevention activities have broadened the intervention approach, making it more inclusive and oriented towards cultural change.

Despite the results achieved, the context remains extremely complex and the need for intervention continues to grow. For this reason, it is essential to continue and further strengthen activities, with particular attention to prevention, psychological support, and child protection.

Ulemu confirms its role as a key actor in the area, capable not only of responding to emergencies but also of making a concrete contribution to building a community that is more aware, better protected and less tolerant of violence.

RAISE CHILDREN WITHOUT VIOLENCE & ABUSE



Stop Child Abuse Project



PRO.SA

FONDAZIONE
PROSOLIDAR

CHILD DEVELOPMENT, GOOD
PARENTING, CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS & PARENTAL
RESPONSIBILITIES
WORKSHOP

Acknowledgements

Ulemu would like to express its sincere and heartfelt gratitude to all partners and supporters who, during the 2024–2025 period, made it possible to implement activities and strengthen services for the most vulnerable individuals.

Special thanks go to the main donors, whose contributions have been essential in ensuring the continuity, quality, and development of interventions:

- Fondazione Pro.sa ETS (Italy)
- Associazione La Goccia (Italy)
- Fondazione Prosolidar (Italy)
- Hlanganisa Community Fund for Social and Gender Justice (South Africa)
- ACT Ubumbano (South Africa)

Thanks to their support, Ulemu has been able to expand prevention activities, strengthen case management services, promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and develop innovative community engagement initiatives—making a concrete contribution to addressing gender-based violence and protecting children.

Their commitment represents an essential contribution not only in terms of resources, but also in building a network of international collaboration aimed at protecting rights and promoting lasting cultural change.

Ulemu renews its gratitude and looks forward to continuing these valuable partnerships, which are fundamental to responding to emerging needs and building a more just and inclusive society.

