



UNDIKUMBUKIRE
PROJECT ZAMBIA
ANNUAL REPORT

2024

10 YEARS OF SEEKING JUSTICE & BRINGING HOPE

www.upzambia.org



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“Undikumbukire”

means **“Remember Me”**

in Chewa

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Reflecting on 10 Years and Looking Ahead

It was ten years ago this year that I had my first encounters with child justice in Zambia. First, I visited at the invitation of the Corrections Legal Department to hear the stories of children stuck in Kamwala Remand Correctional Facility. That experience left me questioning: *"What can one person do?"* in the face of broken systems.

The second encounter came shortly after, when I returned as a "well-wisher" to distribute blankets to 59 teens in that same facility at the start of a harsh cold season. I still hear their voices: *"Don't go away and forget about us. Remember us. When will you be back?"*

Those moments left me forever changed.

It was from that second visit, in June 2014, that Undikumbukire Project Zambia was born. *Undikumbukire* means "remember me" in the Chewa language. From those early days, the UP Zambia volunteers—who would go on to become staff—refused to accept poor prison conditions, missing court files, excessive delays, and harsh sentences as inevitable features of the justice system. This mindset became the foundation for UP Zambia's core values: **Proximity, Problem Solving, Professionalism, and Passion.**

Our initial focus was meeting the basic needs of children. Over time, we realized that, beyond improving the environment, we could intervene directly—case by case—to bring relief. As we began to see each child as more than just a court file, our work expanded to include holistic social support. And as our experience grew, so did our opportunities to share that knowledge with stakeholders and partner with them to push for broader justice system reform.

Looking back, I see how a "creative maladjustment" mindset took root and propelled UP Zambia to where it is today. This idea comes from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who once said: "There are some things in our society, some things in our world, to which we should never be adjusted." In a 1967 speech, he called for "creative maladjustment," so that *"we may be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man, into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice. I have not lost hope."*

Ten years in, we remain deeply moved by the breakdowns we see and the impact they have on children's lives. Yet we also believe that change is happening, and will continue to happen—even if only incrementally.

As we look ahead, UP Zambia remains committed to our vision: **A transformed justice system that upholds and promotes the rights and welfare of children.**

On behalf of the children and all those we serve—thank you for remembering.



Sara Larios
Executive Director

Who We Are

UNDIKUMBUKIRE PROJECT ZAMBIA IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION THAT SUPPORTS AND SERVES CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW THROUGH FREE LEGAL SERVICES, SOCIAL SUPPORT, AND JUSTICE SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION.

OUR VISION

IS TO SEE A TRANSFORMED JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT UPHOLDS AND PROMOTES THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN.

OUR CORE VALUES

PROXIMITY: We strongly believe that success largely lies in staying close to those we serve; being present in the same spaces, listening to their voices, and tailoring our support to their unique contexts.

PROBLEM-SOLVING: Behind every challenge UP Zambia takes on is the life of a human being. This means that no matter how the system has failed, we will not take “no” for an answer. Instead, we will think outside the box to find a new approach to solve the problem because someone’s life depends on it.

PROFESSIONALISM: In our work, UP Zambia encounters people from all walks of life. We will treat and serve every person with respect, conducting and carrying out our work with excellence, integrity, and accountability.

PASSION: Caring deeply about our work and believing in the potential of every child is what will carry us through to success. Every one of us was once a child, and someone believed in us or offered us a second chance. It is our turn to extend the same opportunity to the next child.

How We Work



OUR MODEL: A THREEFOLD APPROACH

Our work is founded and guided by our three-fold approach: providing **free legal representation** and case follow-up for children in conflict with the law, offering **social support** through counseling, family tracing, reintegration support, and mental health care to ensure children's well-being, doing all this to ensure **justice system transformation** as we engage with justice actors and policy makers to create a child-friendly justice system grounded in human rights.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

WHAT WE DO

Free legal services, social support, and justice system transformation are at the heart of our work as we serve and support children in conflict with the law.



HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

We empower families and communities, build resilience in children, and shift institutional behaviors towards restorative justice.



THE IMPACT

A transformed justice system where every child, regardless of background, receives fair treatment, rehabilitation, and another chance.

UP Zambia In a Decade: The Journey

UP Zambia continues to offer legal services and legal representation on a daily basis throughout the year. As we celebrate 10 years of impact in the child justice system, we reflect on the lives we have touched and the progress we have made. **Thank you for being part of this journey.**

A SEED OF KINDNESS: THE BEGINNING

In this year, a group of friends brought 50 blankets to children at Kamwala Remand, now known as Lusaka Remand Correctional Facility. As the blankets were distributed, the children expressed their gratitude and said, "Thank you for coming. Tonight, we will be warm. Tonight, we will be talking about how people treated us like human beings. Please do not forget about us."

This heartfelt plea became the catalyst for the creation of the Undikumbukire Project Zambia (UP Zambia), named after the Chewa phrase meaning "Remember me".



PRESIDENTIAL PARDONS

A significant highlight was securing presidential pardons on Africa Freedom Day for 40 Ethiopian child migrants who had been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for consenting to be smuggled. Our legal advocacy enabled their safe return home, reaffirming our commitment to justice and compassion.

EXPANDING LEGAL ACCESS

In partnership with the EU and Germany through the Program for Legal Empowerment and Enhanced Justice Delivery (PLEED), we went further and launched legal help desks in Lusaka's correctional facilities, broadening access to justice for vulnerable populations.

2014

2016

2018

2015

2017

FROM RECREATION TO REPRESENTATION

Continuing our weekly visits to Kamwala Remand, we used recreation, sports, and art to build trust and remind children that they were not forgotten. Recognizing deeper needs, we began providing legal aid, focusing on children with prolonged detentions and no family support. Volunteer advocates and law students interviewed children, traced families, and supported court appearances—setting a precedent for legal advocacy in Zambia's child justice system.

JUSTICE FOR JUVENILES

With support from the German Embassy, we launched our first funded project and hired staff. Daily presence at juvenile courts and student-led case support improved legal outcomes for children.

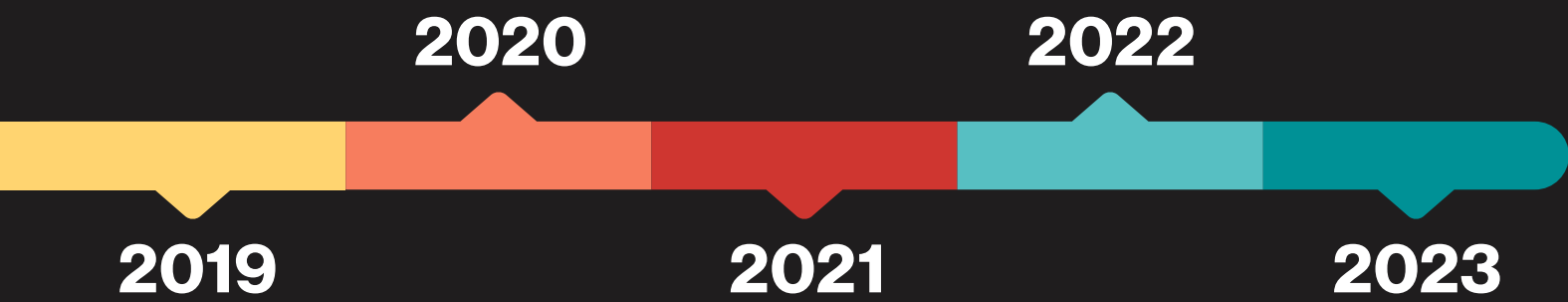


REMAINING RESILIENT AMID CRISIS

While the world grappled with COVID-19, we maintained in-person support with Personal Protective Equipment, and ensured uninterrupted legal, mental health, and social services for detained teens. With overcrowded prisons and suspended family visits worsening conditions, we provided weekly donations and encouraging messages to address food shortages and isolation. Never missing a day in juvenile court, advancing access to bail and upholding children’s rights.

RESEARCH AND POLICY INFLUENCE

To address the challenge of monitoring child justice cases at every police station and court, UP Zambia launched a nationwide toll-free Child Justice Helpline (2046). This helpline enables children, parents, and community members to access information on child justice and report cases involving children in legal trouble—ensuring timely legal support and extending UP Zambia’s reach and impact nationwide.



HOLISTIC SERVICES TAKE ROOT (THE RISE AGAIN PROJECT)

Realizing that children needed much more than legal representation and support, we added social workers and psychologists, integrating psychosocial support. Children began receiving counseling, education, and reintegration services alongside legal aid.

SCALING SUPPORT

With support from UNICEF through the Ufulu Project, we extended services to police stations in Lusaka, Kitwe, and Ndola, aiming to reduce child detention. Working with government partners, we piloted the Diversion Policy—enabling children to avoid court and detention through community-based alternatives.

TRANSFORMING JUSTICE

In 2023, we prioritized raising awareness about the Children’s Code Act No.12 of 2022 and its application in safeguarding children’s rights. Through legal representation, we helped establish precedent-setting rulings, including the right to bail for all children and the Act’s supremacy over conflicting criminal laws.

2024

Sustaining Momentum

As we mark a decade, we are building local and international partnerships to ensure long-term scale and impact through such innovations as the mobile courts in a bid to enhance access to justice and expedite case resolutions for a more just future for Zambia's children.

The impact of your support in 2024:



LEGAL SERVICES

- 651** Children received free legal information and support.
- 82** Children diverted from the criminal justice system in collaboration with Zambia Police, the National Prosecution Authority, and Social Welfare.
- 61** Victims of human trafficking identified and referred to the Department of Immigration for repatriation to their country of origin.
- 55** Children were legally represented by UP Zambia staff attorneys at trial.



SOCIAL SUPPORT

- 170** Children were provided with individual psychosocial support services.
- 150** Children were provided with group counseling.
- 25** Identified victims of human trafficking provided with Trauma Informed Care and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- 15** Families were provided with family counseling and support groups.



JUSTICE SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

- 635** Individuals trained on awareness of human trafficking and gender-based violence (GBV) during the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV.
- 27** Inmates identified through mobile courts screening cause-listed by the High Court.

What We Do

LEGAL SERVICES



We stay close to our clients, engaging with them at key points in the justice system. Our team identifies children in need of legal support through regular police station and court monitoring to ensure no child is overlooked. We also provide direct assistance at correctional facilities through legal help desks.

UP Zambia offers free legal representation to vulnerable detainees—especially children, women, and migrants/refugees. Our support includes facilitating diversion, securing bail for children, and guiding marginalized individuals through the justice system.



**FALSELY
ACCUSED**

A 16-year-old boy in Lusaka was taken from his home and detained after being accused of assaulting a 46-year-old man—despite consistently denying the charge. He spent over a year in a correctional facility, suffering both injustice and an untreated hernia. UP Zambia stepped in. Our Staff Attorney challenged the case, exposed conflicting witness accounts, and proved he was home at the time of the alleged assault. On August 29, 2024, the court acquitted him. **Because of UP Zambia, he walked free—cleared, protected, and no longer forgotten.**

What We Do



SOCIAL SUPPORT

At UP Zambia, Social Support is central to every child's journey. Using our PRRF approach—**Prevention, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Follow-up**—we address the full scope of each case beyond the courtroom.

We work closely with our legal teams, conducting home visits and assessments to understand the child's living conditions, guardian relationships, and overall well-being. This proximity allows us to advocate effectively, ensure guardian involvement in legal proceedings, and encourage active participation in reintegration.

Our support extends beyond legal aid. We provide family counseling, help address external challenges, and ensure adherence to court orders—key to preventing re-offending. We view reintegration as an ongoing process, not a one-time event, requiring consistent support and resources.

Our Reintegration Work Focuses On:

- **Family Support:** Strengthening family bonds to build stable environments.
- **Reducing Recidivism:** Equipping children with life skills, education, and emotional support.
- **Public Safety:** Helping children reintegrate reduces community-level risks.
- **Mental Health & Substance Abuse:** Providing treatment for underlying issues that contribute to criminal behavior.
- **Follow-Up:** Ensuring long-term commitment and accountability.

We also use peer mentorship and expressive therapies to support emotional healing. Through art therapy, children express feelings they struggle to verbalize. Sports therapy offers stress relief, anger management, and builds self-esteem. Our mentorship programs have even led children to participate in public events like the First National Bank Running Marathon—showcasing their talents and reinforcing the lasting impact of our proximity-driven approach.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Peter was 18 when he stood before the court—charged with housebreaking and theft. A prison sentence would have sent him deeper into a cycle of addiction and isolation. But instead, the court issued a counseling order, and Social Welfare referred him to UP Zambia's Social Support team.

That referral changed everything.

Through five individual counseling sessions and three family therapy sessions, our team uncovered the root cause of Peter's offence: a struggle with addiction, triggered by instability at home. With targeted therapy, consistent follow-up, and a safe space to be heard, Peter began to turn his life around.

Today, Peter is drug-free, reconnecting with his family, and building a future. He supports his mother's farming business and helps care for his chronically ill brother. Most importantly, he stayed out of prison—and found his way back to purpose.



*Name changed to protect privacy.

What We Do



JUSTICE SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

UP Zambia works to transform the justice system by addressing child justice and migrant issues through policy advocacy and community-driven awareness initiatives. We collaborate with government agencies, civil society, legal professionals, and child protection actors to close justice system gaps and drive meaningful reform.

In June 2024, we published the Shield Policy Brief, highlighting the sexual abuse of men and boys in correctional facilities. We presented the findings to key justice stakeholders to strengthen child protection responses.

As part of our evidence-based advocacy, we conducted a Children's Code Act survey one year after the Act's implementation. The survey, carried out in five provinces, assessed public awareness, stakeholder implementation, and the lived experiences of children and institutions. We worked with nine civil society organizations and five statutory bodies to develop policy recommendations based on the findings.

Beyond high-level advocacy, we run community and school sensitization programs to educate children, parents, and guardians about child protection laws and access to justice. Our media outreach—through radio and TV—ensures that children's rights and the provisions of the Children's Code Act reach audiences nationwide.

ADVANCING CHILD-SENSITIVE JUSTICE

In 2024, UP Zambia supported the installation and use of video link technology in eight courtrooms across Lusaka, Ndola, and Kitwe. This allows child witnesses and victims to testify without being in the same room as the accused. The initiative aligns with Section 78(4) and (5) of the Children's Code Act, which requires child-friendly, non-intimidating environments for child testimony in both Juvenile and Children's Courts. Video links reduce trauma, limit intimidation, and help children testify more freely and confidently. By strengthening the courts' ability to protect vulnerable witnesses, this effort marks a major step forward in child-centered justice system reform.

2024 Projects

MOBILE COURTS PILOT PROJECT

The Mobile Courts pilot project is designed to tackle the pressing issue of inmate overpopulation in Zambia's correctional facilities and seeks to bring the courts directly to those who desperately need access to justice. This project is implemented by **UP Zambia** in partnership with Prisoner's Future Foundation (PFF), with financial support from the Irish Government, and in collaboration with the Judiciary, National Prosecution Authority (NPA), Zambia Correctional Service (ZCS), and Legal Aid Board (LAB).



ENABLING ACCESS TO JUSTICE, CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AND TRANSPARENCY (ENACT) PROGRAM.

The Enabling Access to Justice, Civil Society Participation and Transparency (EnACT) Program is a project in Zambia, whose aim is to improve access to justice, promote human rights and rule of law, and strengthen civil society participation and transparency in government decision-making. It is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and co-funded by the European Union and implemented by GLZ. Through this program, **UP Zambia** is improving access to justice by providing free legal information and advice through help desks set up in correctional facilities.

COMPREHENSIVE BILATERAL ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAM IN ZAMBIA

The Comprehensive Bilateral Anti-Trafficking Program is aimed at strengthening Zambia's efforts to combat human trafficking. This program focuses on prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership, with the goal of improving interagency coordination, prosecuting traffickers, and providing comprehensive care for victims. This multi-year anti-trafficking program is funded by the U.S. Government and implemented in partnership with the Government of Zambia, Save the Children, **UP Zambia**, and YWCA alongside the Anti-Human Trafficking Department of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security.



*"Young people and especially young men make up a huge share of Zambia's prison population. UP Zambia's **relentless efforts to fight for those without a voice** have proven to be very impactful and we are looking forward to seeing UP Zambia and its very motivated team grow and succeed further."*



*"UP Zambia has worked with the Danish Institute for Human Rights since 2018. Over the years, we have appreciated their **invaluable commitment, professionalism, and efforts to provide legal aid services to vulnerable people that are in conflict and/or in contact with the law.**"*

**DANISH
INSTITUTE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Thank you to our partners



Looking Ahead

GOALS & PLANS FOR 2025

Ensure that every child in Lusaka District can access free legal help, know their rights, and receive fair representation in court.

Provide regular psychosocial support to children in conflict with the law to aid their recovery and reintegration.

Continue using mobile courts to reduce pre-trial detention across UP Zambia's service areas.

Deepen our data-driven reform efforts with a nationwide survey on how the Children's Code Act of 2022 is being implemented.

Expand legal aid services into a new province to increase access for children in contact or conflict with the law.

Strengthen identification and referral systems for trafficking victims across Lusaka, Eastern, and Muchinga Provinces.

Deliver child-focused legal training and hands-on support to community paralegals working directly with children.

Board of Directors

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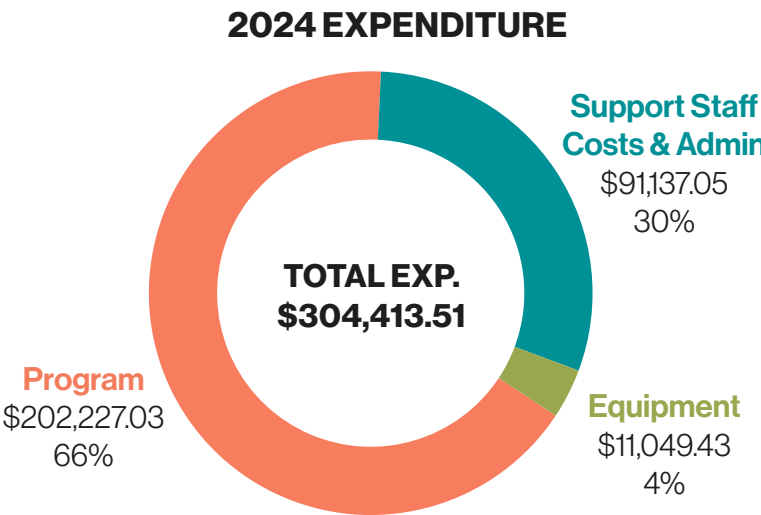
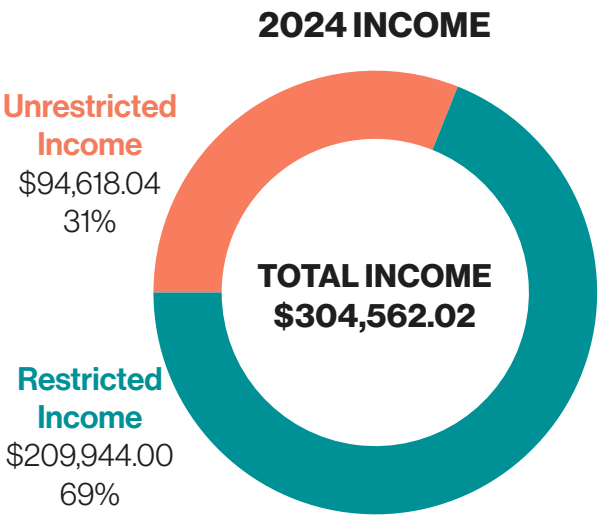
Board Member

Our Team



2024 Financials*

| DESCRIPTION | 2024 | 2023 |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| INCOME | \$ 304,562.04 | \$ 466,218.34 |
| EXPENSES | 304,413.51 | 465,878.89 |
| ASSETS | | |
| Bank | \$ 211,615.03 | \$ 81,489.92 |
| Prepayments | 207.07 | 264.23 |
| Staff Advances | 3,841.33 | 1,974.11 |
| Fixed Assets & Equipment | 5,248.88 | 5,227.61 |
| | 220,912.31 | 88,955.87 |
| LIABILITIES | | |
| Staff Gratuities | \$ 47,169.48 | \$ 8,578.94 |
| Statutory Obligations | 6,405.82 | 8,079.10 |
| Deferred Income | 152,474.11 | 54,247.73 |
| Payables | 10,097.39 | 12,158.54 |
| | 216,146.80 | 83,064.31 |
| EQUITY | \$ 4,765.51 | \$ 5,891.56 |



*This financial information is drawn from audited financials.

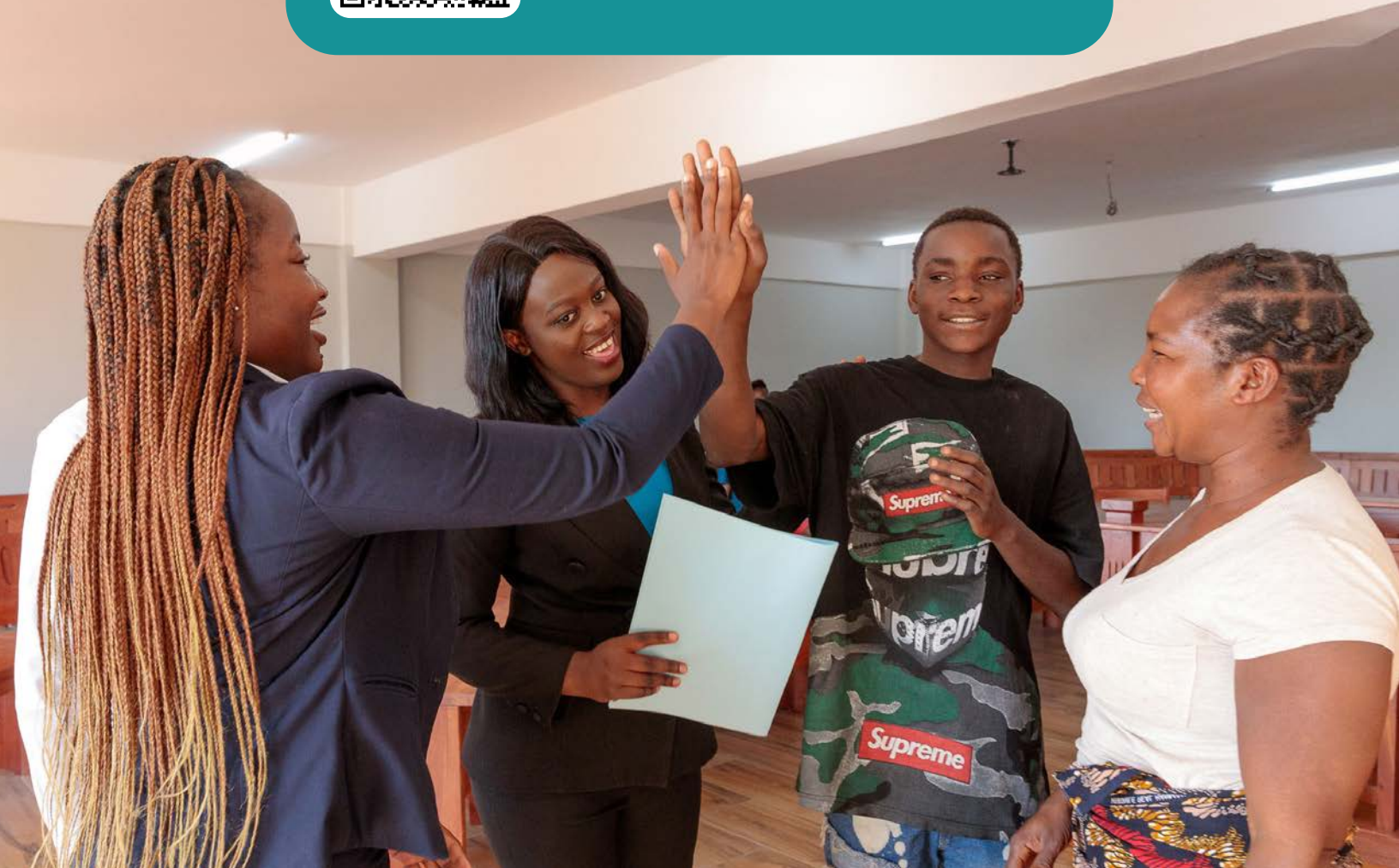
“Remember Me”

That's the quiet plea of every child forgotten in an under-developed and under-resourced justice system. UP Zambia is working to fill the gap — but we can't do it without you.



Your support ensures every child is seen, their rights upheld, and their hope restored. Give today.

upzambia.org/donate



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