CHILD MARRIAGE IN TANZANIA AT A GLANCE
MARCH 2, 2017
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INTRODUCTION

Despite national and international legislation prohibiting it, child marriage has proved an intractable problem across many countries and cultures. Poverty and discrimination continue to drive the practice which blights the lives of so many young girls and inhibits the prosperity of their wider community and country. This is the largest study of child marriage - its prevalence, drivers and impact - to be conducted in Tanzania. Its findings, which echo those of other studies conducted both in this country and in others across the world, challenge us to bring about change. Child marriage is very much a question of girls’ rights and this study shows that these rights are regularly ignored with devastating consequences to girls to whom we owe a duty of care. Child marriage effects their health, their educational and employment opportunities and often denies them any say in the conduct of their own lives. The impact of child marriage also reverberates down the generations embedding families and communities in a cycle of poverty from which it is hard to escape. We urge all those in authority, at all levels of society from family to government, to implement the recommendations emerging from this research and help put a stop to the fundamental abuse of human rights which is child marriage.
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 THE STUDY

This report summarizes findings from the “National Survey on the Drivers and Consequences of Child Marriage in Tanzania” (referred to as the study) conducted in 2016 by Research on Poverty Alleviation, REPOA, in collaboration with the Children’s Dignity Forum (CDF), Plan International, Foundation for Women Health Research and Development (FORWARD) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The study is based on data collected in 10 regions representing high, average and low prevalence rates of child marriage. The data comprises a household survey with 3,299 study participants, 199 in-depth key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with 190 participants.

Based on findings from the original research study, the summary report presents the key causes of child marriage, analysing which girls are most affected and its prevalence in different regions of Tanzania. It goes on to examine the consequences of child marriage to both the girls involved and the wider community, and to investigate the gaps and challenges which must be addressed. The report ends with evidence-based recommendations for further work to prevent child marriage in Tanzania.

1.2 PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN TANZANIA

Child marriage is common in Tanzania. Figures from the 2016 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) show that 36% of girls between 20 and 24 years old were married before the age of 18. Child marriage is most common in rural areas, but it also occurs in towns and cities and there are large differences across regions. According to the TDHS from 2010, Shinyanga, Tabora, Mara and Dodoma have high prevalence rates of child marriage with 59%, 58%, 55% and 51% respectively whereas Iringa and Dar es Salaam had the lowest prevalence rates at 8% and 17 %. It is interesting also to note that data collected for the 2016 TDHS shows a 5% increase in child marriage in the 15-19 age bracket since the previous survey in 2010.

1.3 DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Poverty: The study found that the key drivers of child marriage in Tanzania are multifaceted and vary across regions and ethnic groups. However it is clear from the research that, across all regions, poverty is the biggest factor. Economically disadvantaged families often struggle to provide food and clothing for their children, let alone fees or other costs related to keeping their children at school. As a result, many resort to marrying off their daughters as a means of “protecting” them economically and socially. Not only do families have one less mouth to feed, but on her marriage a “bride price” is paid to the girl’s family often as cattle or in cash and is a source of much needed income.

Socio-cultural norms and traditions: In some areas socio-cultural norms and practices specific to particular ethnic groups were also found to increase the prevalence of child marriage. These include initiation rites, traditional dances and female genital mutilation.

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1 Regions with high prevalence of child marriage: Shinyanga (59%), Tabora (58%), Mara (55%), Dodoma (51%), and Lindi (48%); average prevalence: Mtwara (35%), Manyara (34%), and Coast region (33%); and low prevalence regions: Dar es Salaam (19%) and Iringa (8%)

2 TDHS 2016:85
(FGM). These, often harmful, traditional practices initiate girls, sometimes as young as nine years old, into “womanhood” and are meant to ensure that girls are ready for marriage and acceptable as wives; once these rituals have been performed they are mostly followed, quite quickly, by marriage. Mara, Manyara and Dodoma regions have high rates of FGM and child marriage but in other areas the two do not coincide, revealing a more complex picture of the impact and role of initiation rites. For example, the Chagga tribe who originate from Kilimanjaro and constitute one of Tanzania’s most educated groups, practice FGM but the rate of child marriage among them is low.

Gender discrimination: Gender inequality and power imbalances discriminating against women and girls within the home, in institutions and the law tend to reinforce a subordinate role for girls and women. This too encourages child marriage. Girls are raised in a way that trains them as caregivers mostly performing unpaid domestic tasks. As a result girls have no recognised economic value to the household, beyond a bride price, and education is not considered a priority for them. Boys on the other hand are considered to be economic investments, who in the future will support the family financially. Families with limited financial resources will educate their boys. Additionally, the distance to and from school and the lack of security en route often leaves girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation and assault; this puts up an additional barrier to continuing their education.

Reputational risk: Another factor driving up the rates of child marriage is the fear of dishonour. Families are concerned that their reputation may be damaged and there are also financial repercussions in relation to teenage pregnancies. Parents may decide to marry off their daughters at a young age because they may see their child’s behavior as not good. So they believe it is better to marry her off so that they at least might get cows, rather than wait for her to get pregnant while still at home. [Female, 21 years old, Mbatata, Musoma]

Many studies indicate that teenage pregnancies are a critical concern in Tanzania and TDHS data confirms that teen pregnancies have increased from 23% in 2010 to 27% in 2016. Teen pregnancies lead to forced marriages since, in most cases, the girl is made to marry the man who impregnated her whether she wants to or not.

1.4 Consequences of Child Marriage

Child brides, girls below the age of 18, are often married off to men considerably older than they are. In Tanzania, in all regions, over 50% of child marriages involve men who are 5 to 14 years older than the bride and in many cases the age gap is even wider. In many cases child brides are married into polygamous households where they become one of several wives. They may have limited negotiating power in the household and are often sexually, verbally and physically abused by the husband, their in-laws and their co-wives. Research also indicates that child brides are at increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS and that they and their babies are more likely to die during labour. They are also more likely to suffer from obstetric fistula, miscarriages, preeclampsia and other complications of pregnancy and childbirth. In addition to these risks to their life and health, child brides often drop out of school and are less likely to develop professional and vocational skills. Overall they are largely denied their right to education and health,

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6 Raj et al., 2009; Sonfield et al., 2013; Tumbo-Masabo and Liljestrom, 1994
4 Clark, Bruce and Dude, 2004
8 Walker, 2012:234
6 Chen, et al., 2007
7 HRW, 2014: 60
8 Dahl, 2010
their right to decide who, when and if they want to marry, and, last but not least, the right to control their own body. Unsurprisingly the study found that child brides often suffer from emotional distress. Married children interviewed in the course of the research described being miserable, unhappy, and not taken seriously, all of which resulted in depression and in some running away from their homes and abandoning their children. Many older women who married young also described how they continued to be affected by psychological problems:

...my life was miserable. What I was expecting in marriage life was not the life I experienced; life was very hard to me...no one was there for me, not even my own mother, so I was depressed the entire 10 years of marriage. [Female, 29 years, Maweni village, Babati-Manyara]

It is also important to recognise that child marriage does not only affect the girls themselves, but has consequences for the family, the community and the country as a whole. Girls without education or professional skills are likely to remain poor and to perpetuate a cycle of poverty which will affect the development and prosperity of the nation as a whole, both now and in the future. Also, health risks increase for the girls and their families, as access to health services and health-related information is often restricted by their low educational and social status. The impacts of child marriage are therefore far reaching, resulting in limited life options, lost development opportunities, reduced economic growth and increased health problems.

1.5 GAPS AND CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING CHILD MARRIAGE

The study has identified several gaps and challenges:

- Child marriage is legal in Tanzania, and the lack of any clear legislation establishing the minimum age for marriage as 18 is a major hindrance to preventing child marriage. Tanzania’s Marriage Act of 1971 sets the minimum age at 18 for boys and 15 for girls with parental consent. It also permits both girls and boys to marry at 14 with a court’s permission. The legal framework therefore does not fully protect girls from child marriage. Other parts of the legislation do ban child marriage, but the legislation on marriage is generally unknown and poorly enforced.

- Bribery and corruption is also an issue and government officials who are likely to report a case of child marriage are often bribed by parents to drop the case.

- Community awareness of the consequences of child marriage and of harmful traditional practices such as FGM is limited, and parents continue to marry their girls off to generate income through the receipt of bride price.

- Stakeholders interviewed in the study indicated that the best way to avoid girls getting married early is to send them to secondary school. However, parents are reluctant to do so due to school fees (which were recently removed, however other costs still exist) the inaccessibility of many secondary schools and the prioritization of boys’ education over girls.

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10 Dahl, 2010
1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the study and on an identification and analysis of current gaps in combating child marriage:


The Law of Marriage Act of 1971 must be strengthened: the provision of girls as young as 14 years old being allowed to marry must be removed, making it clear that marriage is only for those 18 and above. Funding must be made available to ensure that the legislation is both known and enforced.

2. Educate community members about the adverse effects of child marriage.

The government should engage the community of girls, boys, parents, government officers, the private sector, religious leaders and groups and conduct education and sensitization forums to illustrate the ills of child marriage. This will include:

- Helping the community to understand that child marriage is not a solution to poverty and enabling them to develop strategies to provide other income generating activities. This may include investment in both training and infrastructure.
- Empowering girls to understand what is right for them by providing accessible education opportunities.
- Encouraging parents to treat boys and girls equally and emphasising the role they have to play in instilling values that reject child marriage.

3. Strengthen education and learning environments for girls in rural and urban areas.

The government and responsible ministries should establish/improve programmes that will enable children to stay longer in school and limit school dropouts which may lead to child marriage. Such programmes should include:

- School feeding and reliable and safe transport to and from long distance schools.
- Improving the quality of education in schools to persuade parents to continue to invest in it.
- Encouraging married children and teenage mothers to return to school or providing them with second chance educational opportunities and good quality vocational training which reflects local opportunities.
- Engaging male mentors and champions in the community to advocate for girls’ educational rights and campaign against child marriage.

4. Provide sexual and reproductive health education

Faith based organisations, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the government should provide Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education in schools and communities to reach as wide an audience as possible. SRHR
education should focus on girls in marriage, girls not in marriage, boys and adult males. Strategies could include:

- Using the existing initiation ceremonies to deliver SRHR education to girls.

- Creating greater awareness of sexual and reproductive health education in schools and beyond, using new and existing networks such as clubs, faith-based organisations and health centres.

- Government, NGO and CSO funding of large scale media campaigns, targeted at students and young people, to encourage them back to school and to educate them about their health, their rights and their responsibilities.
2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in 10 regions in Tanzania with high, average and low prevalence of child marriage as indicated by the 2010 TDHS data that was available at the time. The regions with high prevalence of child marriage are Shinyanga (59%), Tabora (58%), Mara (55%), Dodoma (51%), and Lindi (48%). An average prevalence rate is found in Mtwara (35%), Manyara (34%), and Coast region (33%). Low prevalence regions are Dar es Salaam (19%) and Iringa (8%).

The study involved the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Each region was assigned its proportionate number of quantitative and qualitative interviews depending on the level of prevalence rate. In other words, a region with a high prevalence rate was assigned a large number of both quantitative and qualitative interviews, and a region with a low prevalence rate a small number. In each of the sampled regions, two districts were randomly selected. Random selection was applied at all stages of the selection for the districts, wards, villages, households and individuals, giving every household an equal chance of being selected.

The study comprises a household survey with 3,299 participants (1871 were general interviewees, 950 women married as children, and 478 men and women who had married children), 199 in-depth key informant interviews and focus group discussions with 190 participants.\(^\text{11}\)

The study findings are compared with TDHS data from 2010 and 2016; although the different methodologies applied make direct comparisons difficult – TDHS is national and statistically significant, while the data in the study is based on prevalence of child marriage in the different regions. However, the child marriage rates in the sample regions are quite consistent with those of TDHS 2010 and thus confirm the findings from TDHS 2010. Enumerators who collected data for the study were faced with various challenges, the main one being the interviewees’ fear of participating. Participants were afraid that they would be prosecuted because of marrying children under 18 years of age. It was emphasized by the enumerators that they were only collecting data, but if participants still did not feel comfortable about taking part, the enumerators moved to the next household.

\(^{11}\) See the “National Survey on the Drivers and Consequences of Child Marriage in Tanzania” from July 2016 for an elaborated version and further explanation of the research methodology, findings and recommendations.
3. Child Marriage Prevalence and Girls Most at Risk

Prevalence of child marriage is high and, according to the TDHS data from 2016, 36% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 were married before the age of 18. Hence one third of all girls in Tanzania was married as a child. A comparison of TDHS data from 2010 with TDHS data from 2016 indicates that the prevalence of child marriage has been stable during the six years - 37% in 2010, 36% in 2016.

This is further confirmed by around 40% of the study participants across the regions, who reported that girls in their community frequently get married before they turn 18. Additionally, 28% of respondents answered that they knew someone who married off a daughter below the age of 18. Study participants also reported knowing a child in their immediate family who was forced into marriage. This indicates a similar prevalence rate to the TDHS rates.

Regional variation is a significant factor in assessing prevalence trends and identifying girls most at risk. Regions such as Shinyanga, Tabora, Mara and Dodoma have high prevalence rates of child marriage with 59%, 58%, 55% and 51% respectively according to the TDHS, from 2010 and the current study also confirms these as high prevalence regions. A local government official in Dodoma also pointed out that some schools have no female students after the fourth grade as they have all dropped out to get married. Iringa and Dar es Salaam, on the other hand, again quoting the TDHS in 2010, have the lowest prevalence rates at 8% and 19% respectively. These prevalence rates are also confirmed by the current study.

As noted previously, the variations in the methodology of the TDHS which is national and the study, which is regional, makes it difficult to make direct comparisons. However, the findings of the study correlate closely to the findings of the 2016 TDHS in terms of ranking the regions with highest and lowest child marriage prevalence rates, although there have been some changes in the ranking of the regions. Lindi, which was ranked number five in TDHS 2016 is ranked number eight in the study.
The regional prevalence rates in the study are higher compared to those in the TDHS. For example, Tabora, which had a prevalence rate of 58% in TDHS 2010, has a prevalence of 76% in the study. This difference is also reflected in the average marriage rate of females below the age of 18 which was 40% in the TDHS 2010 and 47% in the current study which also found that the average age of marriage was 16, compared to 19 in TDHS 2016.

AT WHAT AGE DID YOU GET MARRIED?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Below 18</th>
<th>18 and Above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shinyanga</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabora</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mara</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodoma</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindi</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mtwara</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manyara</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar es Salaam</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iringa</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average: 47% Below 18, 53% 18 and Above
Academic literature confirms that child marriage is most common in rural areas. When it does occur in towns and cities, it is mainly limited to the poorest families and those with strong religious and cultural ties. Overall girls from poor families are much more likely than girls from wealthy families to be married before 18 years of age. Age at first marriage is also directly related to levels of education and wealth, and according to the 2016 TDHS there is almost a 6-year difference in the average age at first marriage between women with no education and women with secondary or higher education.

Socio-cultural traditions and norms are also key indicators in terms of identifying the girls most likely to become child brides. There are some ethnic groups in Tanzania, for example pastoralists where there is a high prevalence of child marriage. This may be due to the fact that the bride price is usually paid in terms of livestock and parents may choose to marry off their daughters to increase their wealth.

Other cultural practices, described by one interviewee, include the Maasai’s culture of courting pregnancy. Among the Maasai of Arusha and Manyara, there is a specific ritual of men proposing to a pregnant woman. If the baby is a boy he will become the man’s friend, if the baby is a girl, the man will eventually marry her. Both the current study, and the research done by Human Rights Watch in 2014, found that there were many young women from the Manyara region who were fully aware whom they were expected to marry.

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13 Birech, 2013
14 Maasai are mostly found in Arusha and Manyara but they are also in many other parts of Tanzania, including Pwani where there were cases of child marriages among them.
4. DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

POVERTY is the key driver of child marriage. The findings of the study indicate clearly that child marriage is more likely to be practised among the lowest income groups than in wealthier families. Bride price, usually paid in cash or livestock, is a source of much needed income for poor families. Girls living in poorer households are almost twice as likely to marry before the age of 18, compared to girls in higher income households.

OTHER DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE INCLUDE:

- Traditions and socio-cultural norms such as FGM, initiation rites and traditional dances: These are customary in some areas as a rite of passage and they often take place when a girl reaches puberty. They serve the purpose of preparing the girls for marriage and attracting potential suitors.

- Gender discrimination: Gender inequality and power imbalances discriminating against women and girls within the home, in institutions and the law tend to reinforce a subordinate role for girls and women. Girls are raised in a way that trains them as caregivers mostly performing unpaid domestic tasks. As a result, girls have no recognised economic value to the household, beyond a bride price, and education is not considered a priority for them. Boys on the other hand are considered to be economic investments, who in the future will support the family financially. Families with limited financial resources will educate their boys.

- Reputational risk: Fear of teenage pregnancies causes parents to marry their girls off early to avoid them bringing shame on the family. An unplanned pregnancy also means that the family will receive a lower bride price for their daughter.

It’s like the tomato business—those commodities which are perishable—so the community perceives a girl like a perishable commodity; they will lose their value, and if the commodity loses its value [especially if they get pregnant] what will you do with it if you are depending on it to increase your income? [Male, 40 years old, Bungurere village, Tarime]

4.1 POVERTY

Child marriage practices and attitudes are often associated with poverty. In many cases child marriage is a response to economic insecurity. Marrying off a daughter not only pays a bride price but means the family have one less mouth to feed.

The chart below shows a high acceptance of child marriage among families with incomes below TZS 100,000. Acceptance is highest at 78%, in Manyara and Mtwara, and is at 77% in both Tabora and Lindi, followed by Mara at 74% and Iringa at 72%. In higher income households, the acceptance of child marriage was found to be minimal and in some cases non-existent.

![Acceptability of Child Marriage Across Income Groups](chart)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Group</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TZS 1 mil - 5 mil</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TZS 500k - 1 mil</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TZS 100k - 500k</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than TZS 100k</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: McCleary-Sills, Parsons and Klugman 2015
The figure below illustrates the views of married children on whether child marriage is driven by economic gains. Statistically significant regional differences are apparent with more respondents in Mara (59%), Dar es Salaam (56%), Dodoma (53%), Lindi (52%), Shinyanga (51%) and Tabora (51%) strongly agreeing that bride price and economic gain drive the practice of child marriage.

These rites and rituals vary and take different forms in different places. Traditional dances or unyago are prevalent among the Makonde, Yao, and Makua of Lindi and Mtwara, and among the Zaramos of Dar es Salaam and Pwani. Likewise, "Samba" \(^{16}\) and "Chagulaga" \(^{17}\) are commonly practiced among the Sukuma and Nyamwezi of Shinyanga and Tabora, the area, according to the study, with one of the highest rates of child marriage.

There are major regional variations in the prevalence of FGM as well as marked urban/rural differences; in rural areas 18% of women have been subjected to FGM, in urban areas 7%. It is most widespread in Manyara (81%), Dodoma (68%), Arusha (55%), Singida (43%) and Mara (38%). According to the 2016 TDHS, one in ten women in Tanzania has been cut. The prevalence is lower among younger women, with 5% of those in the 15-19 age group undergoing FGM. \(^{18}\) It is worth noting that FGM is illegal in Tanzania and likely to be under-reported. \(^{19}\) The practice marks a girl’s transition into womanhood and, in common with all the initiation rites, is meant to indicate that girls are marriageable.

4.2. Socio-cultural Norms and Traditions

In addition to poverty, the study identified several other factors influencing child marriage including socio-cultural norms and traditions which vary from region to region and between ethnic groups across the country.

There are many initiation rites, traditional dances, FGM and other cultural practices, which specifically initiate girls into “womanhood” and train them, sometimes as young as nine, on sexual and marital issues. When girls have undergone this initiation they are judged to be socialized as adults and ready to get married.

…when a girl is ready for initiation, she is ready for marriage. Things are not as they were before, when girls who were going into initiation were those who were adults. But these days they bring even young girls. And if they are not in school, it’s so hard to wait for them to reach the age of 18. [Male, 40 years old, Masasi, Mtwara]

Cultural attitudes towards the roles and value of women and girls can be a significant factor in the age at which girls marry. In some areas, Lindi is one example, findings illustrate that people are more accepting of child marriage which they view as being in line with

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\(^{16}\) Adolescent girls are taken to a traditional healer to get a potion which will help attract men.

\(^{17}\) Chagulaga meaning choose: a harvest rite where young adolescent girls run into the bush, followed by young men, the girls choose one as a sexual partner for the night.

\(^{18}\) TDHS 2016

\(^{19}\) TDHS 2016
religious and customary beliefs about women and their role in society.

In the Coast region, where customary practices are dominant, there is a significant association between them and child marriage. For example, the older the girls are when they receive their unyago training, the less likely they are to marry young. Findings also indicate that the more someone values their reputation in society - for example, the importance to them of family honour, preservation of chastity, and perceptions about a family’s reputation – the more likely that person is to endorse child marriage.

These findings are not confined to the Coast region; a positive and significant association between the value a family places on its reputation and the acceptance of child marriage is also found in Iringa, Lindi, Manyara, Mara, Shinyanga and Tabora. The message from these observations may be that households care more about protecting their collective reputations than they do about the infringement of the basic rights and freedoms of their daughters. A girl is seen as a potential risk to the family honour and this risk is mitigated against by marrying them off before - sometimes years before - they are 18.

Cultural perceptions of the ideal age for marriage also correlate with the prevalence of child marriage which is hardly surprising. Overall, 86% of the respondents state that the ideal age for marriage is over 18. However in Shinyanga and Tabora, 24% and 20% of respondents respectively answered that the ideal age for marriage is under 18 and these regions have the highest rates of child marriage. Conversely, more residents of Iringa (20%) and Dar es Salaam (16%) - regions with lower rates of child marriage - considered 23-25 and above 25 as a more ideal age for marriage.

Another factor found to be influencing child marriage rates in some regions is the force of peer pressure. Girls see the enhanced status and wealth of their married friends and they too want to marry.

“…when she sees that her friend has gotten married, she will see children, success and the good things that will be happening there. It may be that she is married within the neighborhood, so it may be that she sees the good things happening and she thinks that, “If I am married, I will be like that.” [FGD female, over 18, Hanang, Manyara]

The pressure is increased if you are in a minority among your peer group:

“All my friends were getting married, and I was the only one who could remain single. So I decided to marry so that I could do and talk about the same things with my friends, about families and children…” [Female, 26 years old, married as a child, Sikonge, Tabora]

In many areas parental pressure was also a strong factor though for some, it seems, it is an enforced choice.

I think parents marry off their children because life forces them to do so. [Male, 16 years old, Mchinga, Lindi Rural]

4.3 GENDER DISCRIMINATION

The child marriage literature has shown that gender inequality is rooted in patriarchal culture, which accepts
as normal men’s control over women, their bodies, minds, rights and wellbeing. Gender inequality in the home, within community and government institutions and within the law is a major concern and a dominant factor in the prevalence of child marriage. The Law of Marriage Act 1971 is discriminatory allowing girls to be married at 14 while boys must be 18 years old. In general, girls are viewed as wives and mothers to be, and less importance is placed upon their education. The study also found that girls are tested for pregnancy in schools, and pregnant girls are expelled, despite the fact that no national law supports the expulsion of pregnant girls.

The study also found that girls are seen as an economic burden. Their work in the home is unpaid and therefore not valued and their families do not see them as potential wage earners or as overall contributors to the family income. As a result parents allow girls to leave school to be married in order to relieve them of the burden of feeding an extra mouth and to raise additional funds through bride price. This finding is confirmed in other studies where the role of bride price has been widely discussed and acknowledged as a driver of child marriage. It clearly illustrates the link between poverty and gender discrimination as families choose short term gain against the possibility, which education for girls provides, of transformative change in both the families’ economic prospects and the girls’ lives and opportunities.

### 4.4 Lack of Educational Opportunities

The study also found that lack of educational opportunities drives child marriage and this too is confirmed by the child marriage literature. Girls often fail to transition between primary and secondary school and to many of the girls, and their potential partners, the end of primary school means that they are ready to marry.

*Many girls in this village marry after they finish primary school at the age of 14. I was married at 15. [Female, 17 years old, Shininga village, Kahama, Shinyanga]*

#### Push factors: finished school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Married Girls</th>
<th>Adults Married to Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coast</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar es Salaam</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodoma</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iringa</td>
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<td>Manyara</td>
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<td>Mara</td>
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<td>Mtwara</td>
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<td>Shinyanga</td>
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<td>Tabora</td>
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<td>All</td>
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One of the factors preventing girls from continuing their education is the distance that they may have to travel to get to their secondary schools. Whereas 80% of respondents stated that primary schools are near or very near to their homes, the majority, 66%, stated that secondary schools are a considerable distance away. Several qualitative interview participants also mentioned distance from home to school as a factor in why some girls choose to drop out of school early.

*Most of the girls when they reach standard four decline to go to school, citing that they already understand*
how to read and write. So, why should they suffer the plight of traveling long distances to attend school? [FDG girls, under 18, Busi Village, Kondoa, Dodoma]

Girls travelling long distances are vulnerable. Parents and the girls themselves worry about their physical safety and there is the additional issue of being coerced into having sex with men who offer gifts and transportation in exchange.

The study also explored whether girls actually did have opportunities for further education, but got married instead. Respondents were asked whether married girls chose to get married, were forced to marry, or planned to get married after the end of primary school. Findings demonstrate that 31% believed there were no concrete opportunities for continued education, so marriage was planned to coincide with the end of schooling. This result is however complicated by the fact that 87% of respondents, when asked whether married girls did have the opportunity to continue their education but chose not to, said that girls had in effect chosen to leave school to get married. It begs the question of how clear it is to a 14 year old girl what she is actually choosing, and whether the choice should be hers to make. In focus group discussions the girls, as quoted previously, talk about peer pressure and there is the added impact of the initiation rites which in their opinion confirms them as adults, not schoolgirls. Qualitative data from the study shows that since these rituals prepare them for marriage and teach sexual skills, completing them makes young girls feel that they are adults and ready for household responsibilities, including satisfying the husband’s desires. In Lindi and Mtwara for example, many girls drop out of school and wait for suitors.

Following FGM, I receive many cases on how the children, both boys and girls, assert that they are adults and that they should not be disciplined by teachers or told to do things that children do…They do this especially to female teachers who are not from Mara and who are not circumcised…Some even go to the extent of wanting to physically fight teachers, and this is for both boys and girls… The unfortunate part is that some now consider being in school a waste of their time and dropout; boys go to adult jobs and girls get married…I wish they could assert that confidence in refusing to get married. [Female social welfare officer, Tarime, Mara]

The comments demonstrate the potential for the initiation rites and ceremonies being used to enforce the value of education and to provide SRHR information to both girls and boys.

4.5 FEAR OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Teenage pregnancy has been the major issue we encounter. It is linked to the long distance that girls have to walk to go and fetch water as well as the long distance to school. This leads to most girls being exposed and thus fall into temptations by bodaboda (commuter motor cyclist) drivers and other people. [Tanzania Gender Networking Programme representative]

Both the wider literature and the 2016 TDHS show that teenage pregnancies are a critical concern in Tanzania. According to the TDHS their prevalence has increased from 23% in 2010 to 27% in 2016. Pregnant teenagers are likely to be forced into marriage, their bride price

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23 Raj et al.,2009; Sonfield et al., 2013; Tumbo-Masabo and Liljeström, 1994.
decreases and in many families, pregnancy outside an established and acknowledged partnership is seen as shameful.

The study found that 41% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that teenage pregnancy is a driver of child marriage, and a further 38% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that prevention of premarital sex drives child marriage.

**Prevention of Teen Pregnancy and Premarital Sex**

At the same time, the study found that teenage girls have little knowledge of contraceptive use and family planning methods, with over 50% of girls under 18 having no knowledge at all, which may explain the high rates of teenage pregnancy.
5. IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage has both negative social and economic consequences. It not only deprives girls of their basic human rights but also hinders socio-economic development at all levels - the individual, the community and the national.\(^{24}\) Findings from the study reveal that child marriage affects the girl child in a myriad of ways, especially in education, health (both physical and mental) and economically. The diagram below provides a summary of the consequences of child marriage, as cited by the study participants.

**CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

- LOST EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
- UNABLE TO HAVE A CAREER
- CONTRACTING HIV/AIDS OR STIS
- PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS
- ECONOMIC INSECURITY & CONTINUED POVERTY
- LACK OF AUTONOMY
- SEXUAL ABUSE
- PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL ABUSE
- VERBAL ABUSE
- INFANT MORTALITY
- MATERNAL MORTALITY
- MISCARRIAGE
- TEENAGE PREGNANCY

5.1 EDUCATION AND ECONOMY

Gordon Brown’s 2012 review of child marriage states that “nowhere is the scale of the problem more evident than in education.”\(^{25}\) When girls are married off, they normally drop out of school. They are denied their basic right to education and are more likely to live in poverty.\(^{25}\) Girls who are married off as children are prevented from developing the personal, educational and professional skills which could lead to paid jobs, interesting careers and economic independence. As a result they are denied the educational and economic opportunities that could lift them and their families out of poverty.\(^{26}\)

Education puts girls and young women in a stronger economic position able to invest in their families and with the ability to support their children’s education. Research has also shown that “for every year a girl stays in secondary school, her eventual wages are boosted by 15 to 25%.”\(^{27}\) This will benefit her and her family, but will also boost the development of her country. Findings from the study show that although girls have an interest in pursuing further education, many do not get the opportunity to advance their educational career. The figure below illustrates the percentage of study participants who know girls who have dropped out of school to get married.

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\(^{24}\) Warner, et al., 2011

\(^{25}\) Dahl 2010

\(^{26}\) Herz and Sperling, 2004; TDHS, 2010.

\(^{27}\) Herz and Sperling, 2004:28.
Additionally, the study found that 58% of child brides had career goals that were cut short due to marriage. They wanted to be nurses, businesswomen/entrepreneurs, seamstresses, engaged in modern agriculture, teachers and accountants, but the responsibilities of marriage and children shattered their plans to realize these goals.

5.2 Health and Sexual Reproductive Health

Findings from the study show that child marriage has a detrimental impact on the health, both physical and mental, of child brides. It can lead to sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation by their often much older husbands and they are at higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. 28 Girls who marry young are also likely to become pregnant early before their bodies are ready to carry and give birth to a child. Young mothers are at greater risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth and “teenagers aged 15–19 years are twice as likely to die during childbirth compared to women who are between 20 and 24.” 29 These risks, which also include preeclampsia, obstetric fistula and miscarriage, are even higher because of their lack of access to health services and health-related information and their low social status within the community.

All participants in the study were asked about common health risks from child marriage in their communities. The figure below reveals that these problems include maternal mortality risks (32%), followed by infant mortality (14%) and obstetric fistula (6%). Only 9% of the respondents thought there were no particular negative health consequences from child marriage.

Participants in the study were also asked whether they knew of family or community members who died during pregnancy or childbirth and 36% of all respondents knew of someone who had died during pregnancy or childbirth.

28 Chen, et al., 2007
29 Human Rights Watch 2014:60
In addition to the health issues resulting from early pregnancy, the literature also shows that child brides often experience abuse. Many cases of child marriage involve girls being married to older men, and, because of their youth, lack of education and lack of consent to the marriage, these girls are powerless in the face of harsh treatment from their husbands.\textsuperscript{30} The findings of the current study reveal that many married girls experience beatings from their husbands and cases of death were mentioned. 40% of respondents reported having been verbally abused, while 39% reported being beaten or slapped, and 35% abandoned or kicked out. This violence has an obvious impact on a child bride’s physical and psychological well-being and unsurprisingly over a third of women married as children also reported that they experienced psychological problems after marriage.

The imbalance of such marriages is also reflected in higher divorce rates. In-depth interviews reveal increasing divorce rates among child brides, due to violence and mistreatment at home, resulting in a rising number of street children. Divorce also has an impact on the girl’s family who have to take care of her and her children since she is no longer supported by the husband.

I wish I could train and become a seamstress. My vision is to open my own store and become the best seamstress in the village. But I do not have any capital, and I have not finished my tailoring training. Both my sisters were married at 12, and they are both divorced and have four children each. I do not want that life. I will not marry until I have my own things and no man can control me. [19 year old, Tarime]

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{married_childrens_experience.png}
\caption{Married Children’s Experience of Physical and Verbal Abuse and Abandonment Threats}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{30} Population Council et al., 2015.
Stakeholders, at all levels, who were interviewed for this study agreed that more work is needed to prevent child marriages. Several gaps and challenges were identified; these include an inadequate legal framework, the lack of enforcement of existing laws, corruption and bribery and a lack of awareness in the community of the consequences of child marriage.

6.1 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IS INCONSISTENT AND NOT ENFORCED

What I understand is that child marriage is when one of the persons getting married is below the age of 18. This is the understanding I get from the Child Act. But the Marriage Act that we have in this country recognizes marriages between people who are younger than 18… [Female, social welfare officer, Kondoa, Dodoma]

Child marriage is in fact legal in Tanzania. The Law of Marriage Act of 1971 allows girls as young as 14 to marry with the consent of their parents. Reforming the legal framework and coming up with a minimum age of marriage by law in Tanzania that clearly forbids marriage for children under 18 is seen by many of the study’s respondents as crucial in addressing child marriage.

The lack of a coherent legal framework often prevents government officials from taking those who marry girls under 18 to court and they have instead to persuade and educate parents who have not actually broken the law. There are other laws, and the Constitution, which are at times used to prohibit child marriage, as well as several international conventions. Tanzania has signed up to which prohibit child marriage. According to those interviewed for the study, the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act (SOSPA) 1998 and Law of the Child Act 2009 are the laws most usually applied in prosecuting child marriage cases.

An additional complication in applying and enforcing the law is that people are largely unaware of legislation prohibiting child marriage; 88% of study participants denied any knowledge of child marriage laws. Furthermore, 94% of study participants reported having no knowledge of girls being freed from child marriage and only 13% knew of enforcers of child marriage laws in the community. This indicates that, in general, the legal frameworks that do exist are neither known nor enforced.

In addition to a coherent marriage law that specifies the minimum age as 18 for both girls and boys, legislation could also be applied to releasing government funds directly related to implementing programmes to curb the practice of child marriage. Most of the support available to officials regarding child marriage initiatives comes from development partners and NGOs and not from the government.

31 E.g. Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) which specifies that a “person must be of full age” when entering into such a union and marriage should be entered “freely and with full consent.” Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the 1962 Convention of Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages oblige nations to institute a minimum age for marriage and register all marriages. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) calls for all countries to establish a minimum age for marriage and make child marriage unlawful. The Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act (SOSPA) also defines a child as someone under 18.
6.2 Corrupt and Bribery

The study found that corruption and bribery is widespread and that government officials and religious leaders accept bribes to protect parents who practice child marriage. This is an additional challenge because it means that cases of child marriages are not reported, the practice becomes acceptable and can be continued with no penalties for those involved.

6.3 Education and Awareness Raising

There is a general lack of awareness of the consequences of child marriage in the communities where it takes place. As the study has shown, parents continue to marry their girls off to ensure an income in terms of receiving bride price and gifts in relation to marriage and they view girls as an economic burden that will be lifted once they are married off. Parents do not see girls as a potential source of income and they are therefore not supportive of girls’ education. If they have limited incomes they will tend to prioritize boys’ education instead of girls, and believe that educating a daughter will only benefit her husband’s family not her own.

All stakeholders mentioned education for girls as crucial in preventing child marriage. Keeping girls in school has the potential of delaying marriages and is an additional reason why educational opportunities, especially access to secondary education, should be provided to girls. Secondly, it was reported that parents and community members in general should be educated about the negative effects of child marriage and should be encouraged to value girls as well as boys and to treat their children equally.

I know that some parents marry off their daughters because of poverty and ignorance, because they see that by marrying off their daughters early, they might be relieving some family burden. [Female, 22 years old, Mkamba village, Kisarawe]

The education of parents and community elders should go hand in hand with raising awareness about the impact of traditional harmful practices. Many of those interviewed suggested the involvement of religious leaders in educating communities about the effects of child marriage and other harmful traditional practices. A best practice example in Mara, where the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church banned FGM for its members, was noted as a potential example for others to follow.

6.4 Measures to be Enhanced to Prevent Child Marriage

If a girl has her own income, it is not necessary for her to marry because she has money to take care of herself. [Male, 36 years old, Nachingwea, Lindi]

In addition to good and accessible secondary schools, out of school education programmes, economic incentives and women empowerment programmes, are also suggested as measures that could be strengthened to help combat child marriage.

The study participants particularly noted the need to improve the economic status of the family, and especially the girls, by helping them acquire vocational and entrepreneurial skills which would enable them to earn money. Not only would this mean some social and financial independence for out of school girls and enhance their ability to contribute to the family income,
it would also mean they were not pushed into child marriage as the only alternative available to them and to their families. The pivotal role of parents and the family environment was also emphasised; strict parents will not encourage or allow their girls to marry early.

Some girls delay getting married because of the environment in which they are living at home. Sometimes, the parents are very strict, so they are afraid to engage early with men… [Female, 50 years old, Shinyanga Rural]
7. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To combat child marriage in Tanzania and address the gaps and challenges identified above:

7.1 REFORM AND HARMONIZE CONFLICTING LAWS CENTRED ON THE MARRIAGE ACT OF 1971.

Legislation should make it absolutely clear that marriage is only for those of 18 and above. The Law of Marriage Act of 1971 should be amended, and the provision of marrying girls as young as 14 years old should be removed. The government should provide funding to enforce all legislation against child marriage. In this way, cases of child marriage can be prosecuted and the facilitation of child marriage will have concrete consequences. This also sends a very clear signal to communities that child marriage will not be tolerated.

7.2 EDUCATE COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE.

The government should engage the community of girls, boys, parents, government officers, the private sector, religious leaders and groups and conduct education and sensitization forums to help them understand the adverse consequences of child marriage. This will include:

- Helping the community to recognize that child marriage is not a solution to poverty and finding other strategies for alleviating poverty such as income generating activities.
- Empowering girls to understand what is right for them by providing accessible education opportunities.

7.3 STRENGTHEN EDUCATION AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR GIRLS IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

The government and responsible ministries should establish/improve programmes that will enable children to stay longer in schools and limit school dropouts, which may lead to child marriage. Such programmes should include school feeding, reliable and safe transport systems to and from long distance schools, as well as hostels for female students. Moreover, programmes for sensitizing both girls and boys on the issues of safety should be established and/or strengthened. Attention needs to be paid also to the quality of education in schools to encourage parents to continue to invest in it. Married children and teenage mothers should be encouraged to return to school or provided with second chance educational opportunities and good quality vocational training which reflects local opportunities. These initiatives should also engage male mentors and champions in the community to advocate for girls educational rights and campaign against child marriage.

7.4 PROVIDE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS EDUCATION.

Faith based organisations, CSOs and the government should provide Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education in schools and communities to reach as wide an audience as possible. SRHR education should focus on reaching
girls in marriage, girls not in marriage, boys and male adults and use existing initiation ceremonies to give SRHR education to girls. Efforts should be made to create more awareness of sexual and reproductive health education in schools and beyond using new and existing networks. Large scale media campaigns, targeted at students and young people, should be funded by government, NGOs and CSOs to encourage them back to school and to educate them about their health and their rights and responsibilities.

The cost of child marriage is enormous. We can no longer in good faith be silent about something so destructive to the education and health of our children. Nations need to ask themselves if their silence is the result of their own fear of making difficult decisions. Why have we failed to take action that could change the lives of thousands of girl children - girls who are the engine for this and all countrys’ development. Given the complexity surrounding the practice of child marriage, its many drivers and its proven intractability, the key stakeholders - government, legislators, religious and community leaders, NGOs, CSOs - need to pool their resources and energies to finally eliminate it. It is the surest way not only to restore the rights and dignity of the children abused by child marriage, but also to improve the lives of countless families and communities and to enhance the prosperity and the reputation of the country itself.
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