

FACT SHEET
CHILD MARRIAGES
IN TANZANIA

what is
CHILD MARRIAGE?

By definition child marriage is a formal or informal union of children both boys and girls under the age of 18, although girls are by far the most affected¹.



current statistics on
CHILD MARRIAGES

- Child marriages are very prevalent in Africa -15 out of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage are in Africa².
- Tanzania is among the countries with the highest prevalence of child marriages.
- 2 out of 5 girls in Tanzania are married before their 18th birthday.
- Shinyanga, Tabora, Mara and Dodoma have the highest prevalence rate of child marriages³ and Lindi has also been added as a hotspot⁴.

1 http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html
 2 <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/african-union-launches-first-ever-campaign-against-child-marriage/>
 3 Tanzania Demographic Health Survey, 2010
 4 National Survey on the drivers and consequences of child marriages in Tanzania, 2017

Some traditional practices like “kuwekwa mwali” (rite of passage) encourages child marriage and parents choose husbands for their daughters.
(Judith, Female, 15 years, Tanzania).

key
DRIVERS

- In many cultures in Tanzania girls are considered to be ready for marriage when they reach puberty⁵,
- Marriage is viewed as a way to protect girls from premarital sex and pregnancy that undermine family honour.
 - Child marriage is regarded as a way of securing financial security for the girl’s parents and their daughters.
 - The practice of payment of bride price by the groom is considered a key incentive for many families to marry off their daughters.
 - Female genital mutilation and initiation ceremonies also contributes to child marriages. The rite of passage to prepare girls aged 10-15 years for adulthood is sometimes misinterpreted as a process of preparing girls for marriage.

consequences
OF CHILD MARRIAGES

- INCREASED EXPOSURE TO HIV AND AIDS**
- Young married girls are more likely to contract HIV than their unmarried counterparts as a result of their heightened sexual exposure, often with an older spouse who by virtue of age is more at risk of being HIV positive.

5 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/10/29/no-way-out/child-marriage-and-human-rights-abuses-tanzania>



EDUCATION

- Child marriages often result in school dropout.
- Child marriage limits girls' life opportunities and their ability and confidence to make informed decisions about their education and career path.

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT

- Married girls are often cut off from their peer networks, community activities, and even families, which are a fundamental source of their social and emotional wellbeing. They have to deal with the stigma of being married young.
- Married children face high risks associated with early sexual activity, pregnancy and childbirth, as well as physical violence, sexual abuse and slavery⁶.
- Married girls have complications during pregnancy leading to miscarriage, obstetric fistula and death of their children.
- Isolation and abrupt end to childhood that is typically associated with child marriage, combined with possible physical and sexual abuse, can have a profound effect on a child's psychological health as it imposes adult roles and responsibilities on children before they are physically, emotionally and psychologically prepared⁷.

⁶ (Ant-Slavery International, 2013; UNICEF, 2005a).

⁷ UNFPA, 2012

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL POLICIES TO END CHILD MARRIAGES

- A court ruling was made by the Tanzanian High Court in protecting girls from the harms of child marriage. The high court ruled section 13 and 17 of the Tanzania law of the Marriage Act of 1971 as unconstitutional as it allowed girls to get married at the age of 14 with parental consent and at the age of 15 without parental consent.
- The child act of 2009 is against the marriage of young girls.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO END CHILD MARRIAGES IN TANZANIA?

- Changing attitudes and behaviours related to child marriages and addressing misconceptions on the role of women and girls in society through community engagement and advocacy especially in the rural areas.
- Engaging community power holders and support them to come up with action plans to end child marriages.
- Review Tanzania's Law of Marriage Act (1971) as it allows the girl child to get married at the age of 15.
- Families and communities invest in sending their girls to school and that they complete their education.
- Government should implement Social protection measures that enable families to support their children.
- Addressing religious and cultural practices which facilitate child marriage and remove any barriers that hinder the fight against child marriage.

LIST OF MINISTRIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS WORKING ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGES

- In Tanzania the Ministry of Health Community Development Gender Elderly and Children- launched a national plan of action on ending child marriage
- Plan International
- United Nations Population Fund
- Children's Dignity Forum
- Amref health Africa
- CARE
- Hope 4 Young Girls Tanzania
- Morongoro Saving the poor organisation
- VSO International
- Tanzania Support for Women's Rights (TASUWORI)
- Research on Poverty Alleviation
- Msichana Initiative
- AFRICARE
- Hekima