



ENDING **CHILD MARRIAGE** AND **TEENAGE PREGNANCY** IN UGANDA

**A FORMATIVE RESEARCH TO GUIDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY
ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN UGANDA**

Final Report - December 2015



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABEK	Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja
ACRC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANPPCAN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
BEUPA	Basic Education for Urban Poor Areas
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CHANCE	Child-Centred Alternative, Non-Formal Community-Based Education
COPE	Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DAC	Day of the African Child
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FHRI	Foundation for Human Rights Initiative
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
IDP	Internal Displaced Peoples
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
SCORE	Sustainable Comprehensive Responses for Vulnerable Children and Their Families
SESPPEL	South-Eastern Private Sector Promotion of Entrepreneurship
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USE	Universal Secondary Education
V4C	Voices for Change
WFP	World Food Program



FOREWORD

Following the formulation of the National Strategy for ending Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies (NSCM&TP), it became necessary to have a well-articulated and researched information to guide the implementation of the strategy. The development of this formative research is therefore another important milestone in the implementation of the NSCM&TP.

This report was developed by a team of highly skilled consultants with passion for the subject matter so I trust and believe in their deliverable. The report also underwent a number of approval processes by the Ministry and partners so the Ministry agrees with the findings of the study.

I call upon all the partners implementing the NSCM&TP to make use of this report to guide the strategy and come up with informed interventions to target the right stakeholders that can effectively contribute to implementation of the NSM&TP. Partners are also requested to come up with targeted interventions for different geographical are specific, cultures, communities and religious denominations as identified in the formative research.

It is my hope that the participatory and inclusive process that led to the generation of this report will lead to its adoption and use to design relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable strategies to address the challenge of Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies in Uganda.

I once again urge all stakeholders implementing the NSCM&TP to join the Ministry in utilization of the formative research findings and recommendations to come up with workable solutions to address Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies in the country.



Hon. Florence Nakiwala Kiyingi

MINISTER OF STATE FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN AFFAIRS

MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



K-66



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a formative study on child marriage that was conducted in 10 districts selected from the 9 regions of Uganda. The main objective of the research was to identify underlying factors that drive child marriage and potentially other forms of violence such as Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C) and early pregnancy. The study draws on a comprehensive document review and a qualitative data collected through in-depth and key informant interviews, focus group discussions and case studies. The study participants include adolescent girls and boys aged 14 – 19 years, married, unmarried, in school and out of school, parents of married adolescent girls, adults (women and men), district officials, cultural and religious leaders and young women of positive deviance.

Both the literature review and the field research highlight how child marriage practice has persisted amidst legal and social economic transformation in Uganda. Uganda's progress in addressing adolescent girls' and boys' vulnerability to harmful practices and violation of human rights cannot be underestimated. This has been possible through establishment of a supportive legal and policy framework for promoting children rights and expanding education opportunities with interventions across the different sectors of development including health, education, social development and justice, law and order sector. However, child rights violations and harmful practices such as child marriage remain a major challenge for Uganda. The practice of child marriage affects over 60% of the young girls in Uganda of which 15% are married by age of 15 and 49% by the age of 18 years. Teenage pregnancies remain high (24%) although statistics show a declining trend. This implies that a number of adolescent girls and boys are denied their childhood and their rights to exploit the expanded education opportunities. This inhibits girls' and boys' general personal capability and career development. Many are trapped in a cycle of poverty due the limited opportunities for employment.

Social norms and practices associated with child marriage remain sticky

It is evident from the findings that child marriage and premarital teenage pregnancies remain major life experiences for adolescent girls in the studied communities. The continuity of the practice of child marriage is due to the sticky norms rooted in the traditional cultural perceptions about the definition of childhood (girlhood) and transition to adulthood (womanhood). It was clear from the discussions and interviews with adults (women and men) and adolescent (boys and girls) that the transition from childhood to adulthood are defined and constructed around marriage and reproduction. However, there was observed differences in what parents and adolescents felt should be the age of marriage for girls (18 - 25 years) and for boys (20 to 30 years) (injunctive norm) and the practice where most girls were reported to be marrying before the age of 14-18 years (the 'descriptive' norms).

In spite of the awareness of the legal definition of a child, girls' sexual maturation, body changes and physical stature are used to define the onset of adulthood (womanhood) – which is linked to marriage and child birth. In this regard, premarital teenage pregnancy was thus closely linked

to child marriage. This subsequently provides ground for girls marrying at an early age. For the boys, the body changes signal the onset of adolescence and preparatory period to adulthood – through rites of passage such as circumcision in districts like Bugiri and Kapchorwa among others. In Kapchorwa and Moroto circumcision of girls commonly known as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is done, it remains a deep rooted practice in these communities where it is believed to be the way girls are initiated to womanhood just like the way men are initiated into manhood. It accords to girls respect and social identity which allows them to engage in both family and community activities. This may explain its continuity despite the existence of the law.

The findings further show that marriage, motherhood (and fatherhood) are core expectations and the singular ideal for girls (and boys) – believed to be key markers of womanhood/manhood; which every individual (parents and children) aspires for. It accords respect, identity and social acceptance. In a patriarchal society these are core social norms that sustain the extension of the lineage of a particular group of people. Consequently, marriage is not only desired and expected, it is also enforced and sanctioned through particular practices like rites of passage such as circumcision, FGM and bride wealth payment among others. The evidence shows that bride price payment is a key incentive sustaining the practice of child marriage as it provides the much needed income for households, validates and legitimises the marriage union. These apparent social norms and practices provide a generally accepted context for child marriage. However, the study shows that there were other important drivers for child marriage related more to structural and institutional factors operating at the community, household and individual level.

Structural and institutional drivers strongly compound the practice of child marriage and teenage pregnancy

At the community level, modernisation in the communities (socio-economic transformation), peer influence and civil war and conflict situations were reported to sustain the practice in the study areas. The socio-economic transformation within communities characterized by growth of small village townships that provided entertainment spaces for the young girls and boys was noted to increase girls' vulnerability to premarital teenage pregnancies and child marriage. This was linked to the promotion of children's rights and adoption of western culture which were noted to have influenced adolescents' behaviours – resulting into moral decay and children's resistance to parental guidance. Civil war and conflict in the Amuru and Arua districts, cattle rusting in Moroto and Kapchorwa led to the breakdown of the family system and social cohesion, poverty and destruction of institutions. These have been identified as the core drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancies in these areas.

At the household level, the study findings show that household conditions, structure and form are pivotal forces for either child marriage or delayed age at marriage. It was evident from the discussions and interviews with adults and adolescents that the household or family is a foundational site that has both positive and negative effects – in particular the socio-economic status (household poverty and level of education) of the natal family and parental support, care and guidance as key forces driving child marriage in all the study districts. Household poverty was not only noted to influence parents' inability to afford education costs of children but also

for majority of the poor households, girls were said to be a source of wealth. In addition, girls from poor families were reportedly vulnerable to child marriage and teenage pregnancies through engaging in transactional sex with wealthy boys and men who can meet their material needs. Most study participants affirmed that poverty stricken families have more cases of child marriage.

The significance of the background of the natal family - parents and guardians level of education, marital status and form of marriage and life style in propelling child marriage was emphasised. Girls and boys with parents (especially the mother) with low levels of education, living with single parents, in polygamous families and had drunkard parents were most likely to get married early. Further, the families' role in sustaining the practice of child marriage was linked to parents who were reported to either withdraw their girls from school and married them off or created difficult conditions and unsafe home environment characterized by gender based violence that propelled girls to run away for marriage. Early marriage was seen by both parents and girls as an option to escape abusive family environments. The presence of both parents in a home was seen as indispensable, as effective parenting was viewed as complementary – where mothers and fathers were said to bring distinctive talents to the parenting enterprise. Other conditions noted to increase girls' vulnerability to child marriage included orphan-hood that predisposed girls to mistreatment by guardians and relatives, resulting into early marriage as the best option to offer them a home of their own.

Individual-level drivers were associated with the challenges of growth and development during adolescence amidst situations of lack of information and guidance on sexual and reproductive health and life skills to address these challenges. Consequently, adolescent girls and boys are trapped by the desire to adventure and explore the world around them; which exposes them to illicit sexual acts resulting into unwanted premarital teenage pregnancy and child marriage. Premarital teenage pregnancies were noted to be a common experience for many adolescent girls in the districts visited and a key contributory driver of child marriage as girls have limited choices thereafter. Teenage pregnancy was also reported to drive boys into early marriage.

Evidence from study shows that social norms and practices surrounding the definition of childhood and transition to adulthood, rites of passage and bride wealth payment continue to drive child marriage in most parts of the country. These social norms are however; amplified by other structural and institutional factors – in particular the social economic status of the natal family including household poverty, home environment and socio-economic transformation within communities. These, coupled with adoption of western culture and promotion of children's rights are said to have threatened and eroded parents' control over their children. The erosion of family control over children and total disregard of traditions has left communities powerless and unable to act on practices that they do not generally desire but allow to continue (all study participants concurred that child marriage and teenage pregnancy were bad). This calls for concerted efforts involving all stakeholders –community, household and individual boys and girls – to eradicate the practice of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The findings however, show some changes attributed to the national laws and policies and the work of civil society organisations. The following are the key findings and emerging issues.

Social institutions as mediating and foundational sites for changing the practice of child marriage

Household /family as a foundational institution: As noted above the family was noted to be a pivotal point in child marriage; either in facilitating its persistence or ending the practice. Parental support and care was seen as key in keeping children especially girls in school and marrying later. It is evident from the findings that as girls and boys transit from childhood to adulthood, household conditions, structures and forms are key forces in either sustaining or ending the practice. Family violence was seen to create situations of particular vulnerability to girls. These are compounded by the deep rooted social norms related to the definition of childhood and rites of passage are closely linked to womanhood and manhood.

Government institutions and the justice system: It is evident that government institutions especially the police and local councils as the custodians and implementers of the respective laws associated with child marriage are the main sources of recourse in the absence of any social or traditional mechanism of combating child marriage practices. Their inability to operate efficiently and effectively due to limited human and financial resources, endemic corruption greatly hampers their role in addressing the practice. Community members have become apprehensive and shun the institutions leaving the norm of child marriage to thrive unabated. These institutions (the police, local councils, probation officers) need revamping; capacity building and resourcing to enable them perform their role. Community confidence building in the respective institutions should be part of the intervention to promote utilisation of the institutions. The Law on FGM was widely known by all the study participants, efforts should be put on making the implementing institutions more efficient and effective.

School as a platform for ending child marriage: Education provides knowledge, life skills and opens up future employment opportunities and general career development. Education of girls in particular has been associated with multiple benefits – economic, social and political gains to the family, community and nation at large. In this study all study participants in the selected districts recognized the greater opportunity for schooling that girls and boys have today. This is largely attributed to national policies of expanding education, and in particular Universal Primary and Secondary Education (UPE/USE). There was higher social value placed on education of girls and boys by the study participants. Education was appreciated for not only opening up opportunities for the girls but her family as well as the community. The reported value of girls' education which also translates into an incentive to delay marriage offers a window of hope for changing the practice of child marriage. Further, the increased opportunity for education and appreciation for the return of teenage mothers to school offers a second chance to girls to develop their various capabilities. The challenges that these girls face when they return to school require pragmatic action to further exploit the opportunity of expanded access to education.

Role models as change agents: While child marriage remains prevalent in all the studied communities, the findings from the discussions and interviews with both adolescents and adult men and women pointed to key role models who were mainly individuals who were seen to have succeeded in life, educated their children, are wealthy, are leaders and their children usually marry late (beyond 20years). The role models play a significant role in offering an alternative to the

traditional social norms and practices associated with child marriage. Cultivating the influence of role models by encouraging them to share their experiences to the wider community opens up a vision of different possibilities for young people. The interaction between the role models and the adolescents may contribute to change in the thinking and perceptions about child marriage.

Religious and cultural institutions: Religious and cultural institutions are known as custodians of social and cultural values and morals in many communities in Uganda. In this study, religious and cultural leaders were reported to have the power to influence change in attitudes, beliefs and practices associated with child marriage in local communities. Institutional spaces like churches, mosques, cultural centres were said to attract large numbers of people and thus are spaces with a wide audience and big listenership. The findings illustrate the potential of religious and cultural leaders in creating awareness and acting as change agents for addressing child marriage in local communities. However, challenges of financial resources limit their movement and engagement with community members.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) as platforms for change: These were said to be important platforms for fostering change in social norms and practices around child marriage. CSOs play a critical role in both raising awareness to change attitudes but also in providing services as a bridge to support especially teenage mothers and school dropouts to acquire the much needed vocational skills. They are key players for engaging both the adolescents and parents to change beliefs, attitudes and practices associated with child marriage in the communities. Adolescents and adults interviewed identified diverse CSOs' initiatives aimed at encouraging communities to delay age of marriage and supporting girls' education. The initiatives focused on varied communications approaches including community dialogue, radio and television talk shows; music dance and drama; and financial and material support to economic empowerment of the needy families as well as provision of vocational training for the out of school adolescents and teenage mothers and legal aid. Challenges noted in the study were limited coverage and lack of resources by the CSOs to reach wider audience which is required to effect change.

Communication initiatives: It is evident that communication on early marriage, FGM and teenage pregnancy takes on multiple channels or approaches. The most common ones cited by the study participants fall in five categories namely mass media both print (newspapers, bill boards, magazines, charts) and electronic (radio, Television), community dialogues and reflection (including music dance and drama (plays); Information, Education and Communication (IEC); peer education and ICTs. Use of multiple communication channels appeared to be an effective way to reach a wider audience to create visible change. The most popular and effective means of communication identified was mass media – especially the radio. Further, community dialogues/ meetings or community gatherings such as meeting people on burial places, places of worship such as the church and the mosques; music dance and drama; debates, youth meetings and conducting peer education in schools through formation of adolescent groups were pointed out as key in driving change in child marriage practices.

Policy and Programme Implications

The key findings in relation to the drivers and persistence of child marriage practice in Uganda point to a number of policy and programming areas of intervention. The intervention sites draw on the key drivers including the deep rooted social norms and practices around the transition from childhood to adulthood, structural and institutional factors and social institutions that form the mediating and foundational sites for changing the practice of child marriage.

- There is need for interventions that aim at transforming social norms and practices around child marriage – with focus on the definition and transition from childhood to adulthood and values around marriage and child bearing and other practices such as bride wealth payment.
- While the practice of FGM appear to be on the decline in the respective districts, it is still valued and practiced in secrecy. Thus there is need for holistic interventions targeting all stakeholders especially addressing the needs of girls and women in relation to the sense of belonging and identity.
- A multi-sectoral approach to programming is key as drivers associated with child marriage span at least three or four different institutional sites including household, community and school. This also involves a number of sectors including health, education, law, social and economic development requiring targeting of multiple key stakeholders such as adolescents boys and girls, youths (males and females) and adults (men and women); government officials, civil society, cultural and religious leaders. Specific interventions targeting different institutional sites and sectors are required to address the issues sustaining the practice of child marriage.
- Given the often slow and uneven nature of social norms change, specific mechanisms should be developed to monitor changes in both attitudes and behaviours over the longer term – beyond a specific project implementation period; this can perhaps best be done by embedding simple assessment tools and indicators into local government planning and assessment exercises.
- Multiple communications channels seem to offer the best potential for reaching different audiences, with messages tailored to specific target audiences including adolescents (boys and girls) and the significant adults in their environments, such as parents and community leaders.
- Communications approaches that seek to promote positive changes in social norms and attitudes and behaviours should be complemented by other kinds of support to empower individuals for behavioural change as well as interventions for addressing economic vulnerability/economic empowerment. Greater attention should be given to the household/family as a foundation institution for addressing child marriage and teenage pregnancy.
- Investments in interventions seeking to increase knowledge and to change attitudes and behaviours should also be accompanied by similar strong and consistent attention to investments in service provision and economic empowerment so as to create the necessary enabling environment for such changes to take root and flourish in communities.

Recommendations

Give the multifaceted drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, integrated, holistic programming is critical – one that focuses on issues of livelihoods, empowerment (economic and knowledge/skills) and employment, and policy and legal enforcement.

Strengthen legal and policy enforcement

There was a general consensus that Uganda has the required laws and policies to deal with the practice. This view is confirmed by the review of existing laws and policies on child marriage, gender equality, education and sexual and reproductive health issues. However, weakness in government institutions and the justice systems especially corruption was said to hamper effective enforcement of the law on defilement. In this regard,

- It is recommended that strengthening these institutions with interventions to deal with corruption and build peoples' confidence in utilising the institutions be prioritised.
- There is urgent need for a policy for teenage mothers to return to school that specifies the time when the pregnant girl should be sent away and allowed to back in school.
- Misinterpretation and lack of understanding of the law on defilement and its link to child marriage was evident. This therefore calls for massive education about the law and its provisions – for both the law enforcement officers and the community members both young and old.
- Strengthening the existing local government structures such as the police, probation office and community development for implementation of the laws and programs of ending child marriage. The local structures offer great potential for local government leadership and sustainability of programmes. However this demands continuous capacity-building and support to enable them monitor the prormammes.

Programming for ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy

Given that child marriage and teenage pregnancy are driven by multiple factors there is need for an integrated holistic programming. Programmes that involve multiple actors to create synergy and address multiple needs of the communities are recommended. Programmes for example that seek to strengthen access to reproductive health information and services in schools demands effective coordination between the health and education sectors as well as parents and communities. Programmes to address sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) require working with civil society human rights organisations, police and justice system, families, men, boys, women and girls, religious and cultural leaders.

Family and household institutional site

Interventions at the family and household level should address three aspects: household poverty, gender based violence and parenting.

- Regarding household poverty, economic/financial support to improve family livelihoods and enhance ability to keep children in school is critical. This could include enrolling the specific vulnerable households on the social protection programme, supporting income generating activities and provision of grants to girls' education – to cover school fees, scholastic materials and sanitary ware.
- On sexual and gender based violence, counseling and sensitization should be offered to families to address the causes of violence in families. Parenting sessions should be conducted to enhance parents' skills to handle children's' growth and development issues including skills to communicate more with their children (boys and girls).
- There is need to engage with parents in relation to their responsibilities for children (care, support and guidance) especially encouraging parents to support their children's education through provision of basic necessities and following up their education academic progress.
- Massive education about laws and policies on children's rights to dispel some of the misinterpretations around these laws should be undertaken. Children should be sensitized about their responsibilities and obligations.
- Popularize and implement the recently developed national strategy for ending violence against in school and the girl's education strategy.

Community Site

There is need for massive sensitisation of communities on issues of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and girls' education with particular focus on the sticky social norms aimed at changing the attitudes of men and women as well as adolescents. Use of multiple channels of communication will be critical to ensure coverage of a wider audience. These include communication approaches that will not only offer community members space for sharing views and perspectives but also create greater awareness and change in attitudes and practices that sustain child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The promising approaches that are preferred include community dialogues and gatherings, mass media especially radio programmes and talk shows, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and peer education. School outreach programmes can effectively reach the girls and boys in school.

Gatekeepers and role models as change agents

The findings from the field and literature review indicate the importance of gate keepers and role models in influencing girls and boys aspirations.

- There should be deepened engagement and targeting efforts around those who are known as ‘gatekeepers’ including the religious, cultural leaders and other local leaders such as the LCs. These are pointed to be key in mobilising large masses of people; they are respected and have great influence on peoples thinking about ways of doing things in society.
- There should be specific interventions targeting men and boys enlisting their support as partners in ending the practice of child marriage. These may include supporting and encouraging establishment of boys and men clubs and male champions.
- Examples of success stories of role models should be celebrated, shared and made more visible to girls and boys to encourage them to raise their aspirations beyond marriage and to stay in school. These could form the core system of mentors with mentorship programmes established in schools and communities.

Individual agency and empowerment

Empowerment and building of girls and boys agency was seen to be crucial in ending the practice of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The interventions should address knowledge gaps and life skills.

- There is need for scaling up the sexual and reproductive health education through the school system and the expanded work of the Village Health Team (VHTs). This however, requires sensitisation of communities to address the social and religious norms and taboos about imparting sexual information and provision of sexual and reproductive health services to girls and boys - in and out of school adolescents.
- Priority needs to be accorded to providing quality education through an ensuring that there is an enabling environment for learning for children in schools. Poor infrastructure in school was noted as a major issue for retention of children in school – and once they dropout – the only option is to get married. This means adequate classrooms; desks, school sanitation and water are needed as a matter of urgency.
- Provision of technical and vocational education for the out of school adolescents provides an alternative to child marriage. This should be supplemented by other interventions such as integration of skills training in the school curriculum and establishment of technical schools in the communities.

01



BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Child marriage like many other forms of harmful practices is a violation of human rights; recognised globally in many of the International human rights instruments (Annex 1). The harmful consequences on girl's development of their capabilities cannot be underestimated. They include denying them their childhood and reducing their opportunities to education, inhibiting girls personal development and making learning and practicing a profession extremely difficult; girls risk of sexual abuse and violence with their husbands; and early pregnancies which increases the risk of disease or even death of the child or the mother (Bantebya et al., 2013; 2014).

Child marriage transcends regional and cultural boundaries. Across developing countries, an estimated one in three girls is married before turning eighteen, and one in nine before the age of fifteen (United Nations Fund for Population [UNFPA], 2015). It is projected that with the current trends, 142 million girls will marry before adulthood within this decade (Ibid). While majority of those affected are girls (82%) United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] (2014) suggests that about 18 % of those married before age 18 are boys.

Understanding of the drivers for this vice is of paramount importance. It is important to unpack the social norms that govern these practices, identify and understand the characteristics, interests, behaviour and needs of the target population and what influences the decisions and actions of those engaged in the practice. Further, there is need to examine positive deviance tendencies including role models and platforms of community engagement for change. This report highlights the background and the rationale for the formative study, research objectives, literature review, the findings and recommendations.

1.2 The problem and rationale

Evidence shows that many adolescent girls continue to be subjected to marriage at an early age; most of which marriages are arranged by parents (Rutaremwa, 2013; Jensen and Thornton, 2003; International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), 2012). Further, the practice of child marriage perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of poverty and acts as a break on development (International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), 2010). It has been an obstacle to achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and will equally negatively impact on realizing the post 2015 Development Agenda. Child marriage is closely linked to teenage pregnancies, and high levels of school dropouts among

girls. A girl who is protected from child marriage is more likely to stay in school, work and reinvest income into her family, and help lead her family and eventually her community out of poverty (Bantebya et al., 2013; ICRW, 2014). Crucially, a girl who marries later (after 19 years) or even after completing tertiary education is more empowered to control her fertility. While there have been a number of interventions by government, civil society, development partners and other stakeholders to address the problem of child marriage in the country, it has remained a major issue undermining girls' development and attainment of their full potential in all capability domains (Bantebya et al., 2013).

Previous studies and particularly the Uganda Demographic Health Survey (UDHS) 2011 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS] and ICF International Inc, 2012) and the child poverty report by UNICEF (2014) indicate that child marriage is a reality in Uganda especially among the rural poor, perpetuated by a multiplicity of complex drivers including those embedded in social norms and practices. It is sometimes referred to as a 'culture', a 'practice', 'institution', 'custom', a 'convention' or a 'moral imperative'. There is a dearth of research analysing child marriage as a social norm/practice in Uganda. However, existing studies do not provide recommendations for strategic interventions to address these norms to cause a delay in the age of marriage.

Addressing child marriage is in line with government's commitment to ending all forms of discrimination and ensuring protection of children's rights as articulated in the various global and regional conventions and declarations (Annex 1) and reflected in the Uganda's policy documents including National Development Plans [NDP], 2010; 2014); the National Vision 2014 - 2020; the National Gender Policy (2007); and other sector policies and strategic plans.

This formative research was conducted as an integral part of the strategy on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda. The aim was to examine the underlying factors, social norms and practices that govern the individual aspects of gender and inter-generational dynamics associated with child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The findings will inform development of the program activities that respond to rigorous analysis of real needs on the ground, and reflect feasible programmatic choices. An important underlying assumption is that focusing on child marriage may provide an important platform to realizing a broader range of gains for girls and boys.

1.3 Report structure

This section of the report highlights the background and the rationale for the formative study. Study objectives and the methodology for achieving the set objectives are presented in section 2. A national context with a review of related literature is presented in section 3. The subsequent section 4 presents the findings. The last section (section 5) presents a synthesis of the findings, policy implications and recommendations.



02



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The research objectives and methodology are informed by the gaps the literature that show high prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda. These are driven by the deep rooted social norms and practices around womanhood and manhood, rites of passage in some communities, family background and conflict and security situations. To understand these dynamics required adapting a participatory qualitative research methodology that is able to capture in-depth views and perspectives of the phenomena involving different categories of respondents namely boys and girls (married and unmarried, in and out of school), men and women, religious, cultural and local leaders.

2.1 Study objectives

The overall objective of this research was to identify underlying factors that lead to discrimination and violence against girls, resulting in child marriage and potentially other forms of violence such as Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C), early pregnancy, and sexual abuse.

2.1.1 The specific objectives

1. To unpack social norms and identify drivers of child marriage at community, household and individual levels;
2. To identify the cultural and social environment including traditions which promote or prevent child marriage;
3. To identify role models, platforms and other networks for community engagement that can be used for mass media activities including communication channels for influencing behaviour change; and
4. To make recommendation and define key indicators for monitoring progress in ending child marriage and other harmful practices in affected communities.

TABLE 1: SPECIFIC STUDY OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH FOCUS

NO	OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC RESEARCH FOCUS
1	To unpack social norms and identify drivers/determinants of child marriage at community, household and individual levels	Investigation of societal beliefs and practices (descriptive and injunctive norms) around child marriage, documentation of household characteristics that increase girls' vulnerability to child marriage and teenage pregnancies, the incentives and motivations for child marriage and analyse the link between social norms around marriage and other harmful practices such as FGM/C and other rites of passage.
2	To identify cultural and social environment including traditions which promote or prevent child marriage	Investigation of the meaning of a child as perceived by the people in the selected communities and the community's response to the legal age of consent and possible alternatives for child marriage. Further the study examined the role of social institutions such as the school, religious and cultural institutions and in particular religious, opinion and traditional leaders in ending child marriage.
3	To identify role models, platforms and other networks for community engagement that can be used for mass media activities including communication channels for influencing behaviour change	Assessed existing interventions and the different communication approaches on issues of child marriage; documented the most effective approaches for addressing child marriage.
4	To make recommendation and define key indicators for monitoring progress in ending child marriage and other harmful practices in affected communities	Based on the study findings, recommendations with indicators for monitoring progress – preferences, options and beliefs around child marriage as well as legal and policy changes required to end child marriage in Uganda are provided.

2.2 Research methodology and approach

The formative study adopted a participatory qualitative approach to gain an in-depth inquiry into the main objectives of the study as outlined above. The formative research was conducted as an integral part of the strategy on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda – by the MOGLSD supported by The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). The aim of this study was to ensure that the resultant interventions are adapted and refined so that proposed program activities respond to rigorous analysis of local needs on the ground, and reflect feasible programmatic choices.

The study engaged two main approaches namely a document review and a field based inquiry conducted in 10 selected districts based on set criteria as outlined in section 2.3. The research process is highlighted in Box 1.

BOX 1: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

- An inception report was presented to UNICEF Staff in February 2015 to solicit their views on the research focus and processes.
- The study commenced with reviewing of the secondary data which was done alongside data collection.
- A 2 day training of the research team was conducted between 18th and 19th March – to build the capacity of the research team and pilot the methods and tools. The Research team comprised of 26 researchers representing the different ethnic languages of the study areas.
- The fieldwork in the 10 districts was conducted between March and May 2015. The actual consultations with the local people took about 2 – 31/2 days per site.
- Data collection was followed by data management and analysis –involving transcription that took over a month.

2.2.1 Document review

A comprehensive document review of existing literature on child marriage in Uganda was undertaken including literature by ICRW and from other published and gray material. The review was largely focussed on Uganda drawing on other countries for emphasis and addressed a number of thematic areas including the prevalence and consequences of child marriage and teenage pregnancy to provide the national context, the drivers of child marriage, motivations and incentives significant to family or community members who allow child marriage, interventions and mediating institutions. This review shaped the research questions, the methodology and overall conclusions.

2.3 Study sites and sample selection

The study was undertaken in 10 districts of Uganda purposively selected based on a combination of variables ; high and low prevalence rates of child marriage represented by age at first marriage, low and high age at first sexual intercourse/sexual debut, high and low teenage pregnancies and prevalence of Female Genital mutilation/cutting (FGMC). Kampala represents the Urban/ city setting. Table 2 below indicates the selected reproductive health indicators for the study districts – representing all the sub regions of Uganda.

TABLE 2: SELECTED DISTRICTS REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INDICATORS

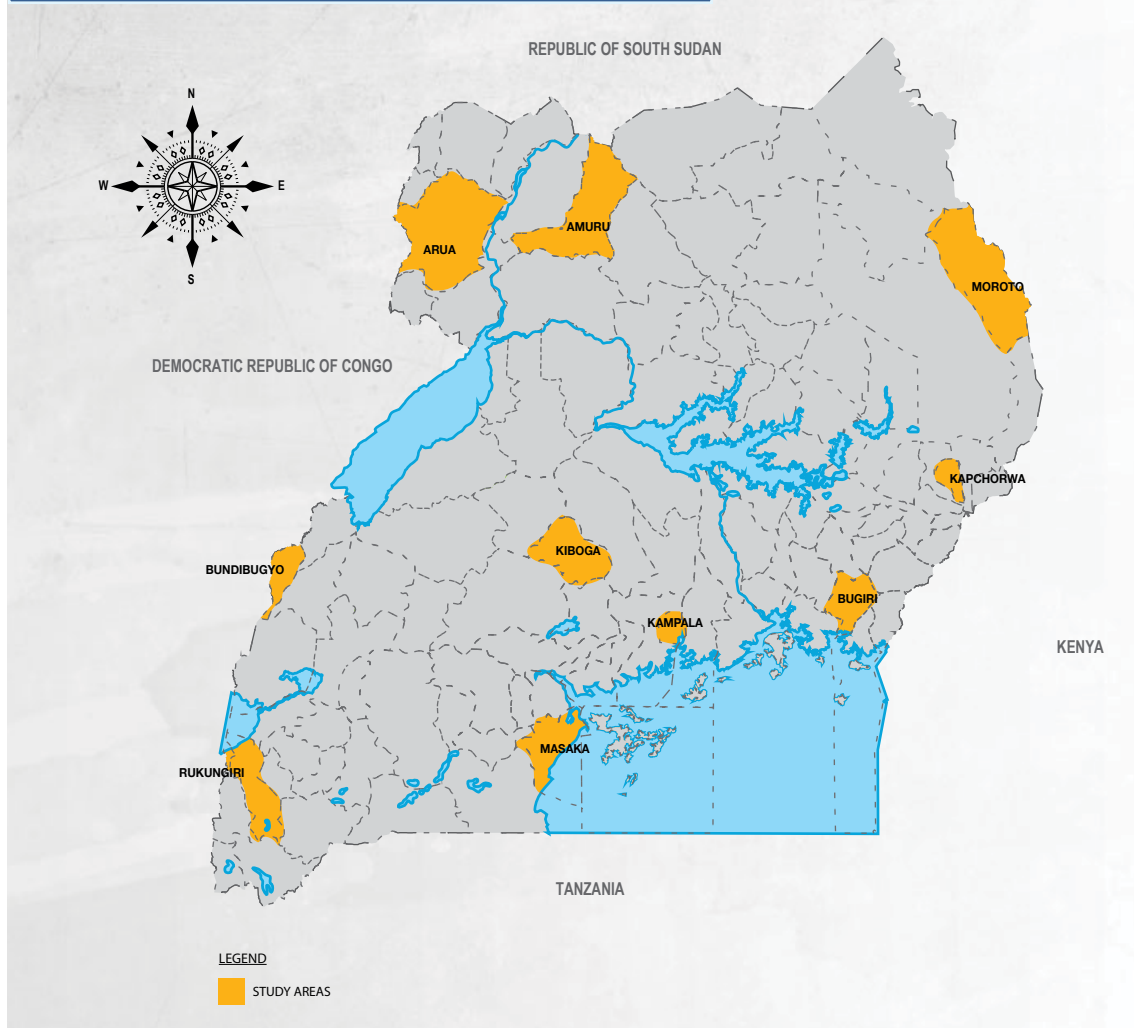
REGION	INDICATORS						
	DISTRICTS	AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE		AGE AT 1ST SEXUAL INTERCOURSE		TEENAGE PREGNANCY	PREVALENCE OF FGM/C
		FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	FEMALE
North East (Karamoja)	Moroto	18.4	20.8	17.8	18.9	29.7	4.8
Eastern/Mid-Eastern	Kapchorwa	17.6	21.7	16.3	18.4	30.3	2.3
Mid-Northern	Amuru	16.9	21.4	16.7	18	25.6	0.5
West Nile	Arua	18.1	22.3	17.8	19.3	26.4	0.2
Western/Mid-Western	Bundibugyo	18.1	21.9	16.9	18.4	22.6	1.1
East Central	Bugiri	17.3	22.5	16.2	18.4	30.6	0.6
Central 2	Kiboga	17.8	22.9	16.6	18.4	22.6	1.4
South Western	Rukungiri	18.9	22.8	18.7		14.6	1.4
Central 1	Masaka	18.2	23	16.5	18.2	19.1	1.5
Kampala	Kampala	20.7		17.8	18.4	21.6	1.8
NATIONAL		17.9	22.3	16.8	18.6	24	1.4

Source: UDHS 2011 Regional data

NB: Male data for age at first marriage for Kampala and age as first sexual debut for South Western region (Rukungiri district) is not available

Figure 1 shows the study districts – representing all the sub regions of Uganda.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF UGANDA SHOWING THE STUDY DISTRICTS



Study sites – With the guidance of district officials (Community Development Officers) purposive selection of the study sites was undertaken, and selected one rural sub county – with a known history of child marriage and FGM. In each of the selected districts the major town of the district formed an urban site. Similarly, with the guidance of a community development officer, one primary and one secondary school known to have recent cases of girls **and boys** dropping out of school due to child marriage and teenage pregnancy were purposively selected in each of the study districts. For details on the study districts’ profiles, see Annex 2.

2.3.1 Target Population

The target population for the study was young **boys and girls** aged 11 – 19 years (married and unmarried, in school and out of school), parents of married young girls and boys, community members – women, men, religious and traditional cultural leaders and opinion leaders.

2.3.2 Selection of study participants and size

Selection of adolescent boys and girls: sample selection was largely purposive targeting adolescent girls and boys in and out of school (married and unmarried including teenage mothers) aged 14-19 years for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Based on age, a lottery method was used to randomly select boys and girls in primary six and seven for the young adolescents; in S1 to S3 for the older adolescents.

Selection of parents of married young girls and boys: with the help of local leaders, purposive sampling was used to select parents (mothers and fathers) with married adolescent girls and boys.

Selection of Case studies: with the help of local leaders, based on education attainment and experience of forced marriage and teenage pregnancy; purposive sampling (snow ball sampling) was used to select cases of girls who have succeeded in life.

Selection of key informants: these were selected purposively based on the positions they occupy in the community.

Selection of adults for FGDs: Adult men and women with adolescent children were selected purposively with the help of community leaders.

2.4 Data collection

Data collection employed qualitative methods including In-depth Interviews (IDIs), Focus group discussions, Key Informant Interviews and case studies.

In-depth interviews (IDIs): These were individual interviews (face to face) held with adolescent girls and boys aged between 14 – 19 years, married and unmarried, in and out of school. Overall there were 101 IDIs for un married adolescents (51 boys and 52 girls); 44 (20 boys and 24 girls) married adolescents. Using an In-depth interview guide (Annex 3), IDIs addressed adolescent views on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C, expectations, incentives for early and delayed marriage, sanctions against child marriage, role of social institutions, laws, policies, programmes and services, communication strategies and role models.

A total of 68 (33 males, and 35 females) individual interviews with parents (Annex 3) who had adolescent married girls and boys were conducted. The main themes included; perspectives on marriages, definitions of childhood and transition to adulthood, incentives for marrying and delaying marriage, sanctions, pre-marital pregnancy, laws, policies, programmes and services, platforms for community engagement, role of social institutions and community perspectives on child marriage and FGM.

Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs): These were held with adolescent girls and boys, in and out of school, teenage mothers and adults. Over all there were 58 FGDS for adolescents (28 for boys and 30 for girls), 16 for teenage mothers and 15 for adults – mixed men and women. The main themes for the adolescent FGDs (see Annex 3 for the FGD guide) included: views on marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C, rationale for marriage, incentives, sanctions, role of social institutions and platforms for community engagement and role models. The FGDs for adults addressed issues relating to perspectives on marriages, definitions of childhood and transition to adulthood, incentives for marrying early and delaying marriage, sanctions, pre-marital pregnancy, laws, policies, programmes and services, platforms for community engagement, role of social institutions and community perspectives on child marriage and FGM. Group discussions comprised of 6 to 10 participants – with one moderator and a note taker.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Interviews with selected key informants at district and sub county levels were undertaken with district and sub county community development officers, Police officers (Family and Child protection Unit), probation officers and Religious and cultural leaders where they exist. A total of 40 (13 female and 27 male) key informants were conducted. The main themes included: district background information, definitions of childhood and transition to adulthood, changes in social norms and practices around early/child marriage, FGM, teenage pregnancies, incentives for marrying and delaying marriage, sanctions, pre-marital pregnancy, laws, policies, programmes and services, platforms for community engagement, role of social institutions and community perspectives on child marriage and FGM. A KII guide was used.

Case studies of positive deviance: Interviews with 26 young women who were able to successfully complete secondary school or attend college/university or were forced to drop out owing to marriage/pregnancy and went back to school, girls who have not undergone FGM/C to serve as ‘outliers’ were interviewed. Case study interviews focused on young women’s life experiences from childhood to date, drawing on factors that made a difference in their lives in education, adolescent transition (e.g. menstruation, sexuality etc.), marriage, FGM, Pregnancy/ childbirth, child rearing, family relationships and fortune/misfortunes, occupational/income-earning history, care work – within their natal home, marital home and health. Other issues addressed included; views on informal and formal support, role models, and quality of life – past and present

The study was largely exploratory and qualitative; hence the analysis and interpretation of the findings does not claim representativeness but rather adequacy of the sample and a nuanced understanding of social norms and practices and broad context that drive child marriage. The table 3 below shows the total sample size for each of the categories of respondents

TABLE 3: SAMPLE SIZE BY TOOL AND CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	WHO	NO. OF FGDS	SAMPLE SIZE	
			MALES	FEMALES
In-depth Interviews	Parents who had married adolescent girls and boys	-	33	35
	Adolescents (11-19 yrs -in/out of school)	-	51	50
	Married Adolescents	-	20	24
Case studies	Cases of positive deviance	-	-	26
Focus group discussions	Adolescents (11-19 yrs -in/out of school)	58	167	172
	Teenage mothers (married/unmarried)	16	-	98
	Adults (Mixed men and women)	15	58	60
Key Informant Interviews	Key Informants		27	13
OVERALL TOTAL		89	356	478

A total of 834 (356 males and 478 females) participated in the study; 89 focus group discussions were conducted.

2.5 Data management and analysis

The study being largely qualitative, the data collected from the interviews and focus group discussions were audio recorded (with consent from the participants) except where the participants refused to be recorded. The recorded voices were then transcribed into narrative reports and subjected to content and thematic analysis. The different data sets were analyzed along the following main themes: child marriage as a sticky norm; social norms and practices associated with child marriage; structural and institutional drivers of child marriage; pre-marital teenage pregnancy; platforms and social institutions for addressing child marriage; and communications approaches for addressing child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Common and unique experiences among study participants were identified and interpretations made.

2.6 Ethical considerations

In conformity with national and international ethical standards for research, the research followed the basic ethical framework built upon principles of respect for the rights and needs of children and doing no harm. Key ethical considerations included measures to enhance participation and inclusion of the relevant groups including children (boys and girls) women and men; ensuring informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity and protection of children. The participants were informed about the aim of the study, and probable benefits, and assured that participation

would not culminate into any harm. The children and their parents signed consent forms aimed to safeguard confidentiality of responses. The research team underwent a two days training that included a briefing on ethical issues including the need for sensitivity around topics that may be particularly sensitive for study participants to discuss, and potential need to assist participants in accessing appropriate help or support if required (but within professional limits) following appropriate national guidelines in all respects.

Maintaining confidentiality was further assured by ensuring that names of the study participants though obtained for identification purposes were not recorded in the report where verbatim quotes are used.

2.7 Limitation of the study

- Resource constraints: the funds provided for field expenses and data management were limited. Transcribing of the interviews became more expensive and took more time than expected.
- Study districts were far apart; diverse in terms of language and socio-economic setups, which required more time to spend in the field than we had planned.
- Although we used Research Assistants who spoke the local language, translation from English to the local language and back to English posed challenges relating to misunderstandings in interpretation of the respondents' views. However, during translation, I was conscious of these challenges and am satisfied that the English versions are 'good' enough representation of what was said in the discussions and interviews.
- The study was largely qualitative and did not claim any representativeness – as only a few individuals were interviewed in each district covering only 10 out of 112 districts in Uganda. However, the interviews and discussions with study participants provide in-depth insights on peoples' perceptions and views on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM.



03



NATIONAL CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Uganda is a multi-ethnic country, comprising of 4 main ethnic groups including the Bantu, Nilotics, Nilo-Hamitic and Sudanic people, spread throughout the different regions of the country. The tribal groupings speak 56 language dialects, with Luganda as the most widely spoken, followed by Swahili and English (the official language of the country). In Uganda, religion influences people's social and political perspectives of everyday life. The majority of the population are Christians, comprising the Catholics (41.9%); Protestants (35.9%), Pentecostals (4.6%), Seventh Day Adventists (1.5%), Orthodox (0.1%); 12.1% are Muslims and a group of Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahai, traditional, non Christians and Hindu (3.9%) (UBOS, 2005). The country has 9 sub regions and 112 districts by August 2014 (UBOS, 2014) – Figure 1. The study districts represented all the regions with Kampala representing an urban setting.

This section presents the national context and a review of literature that seeks to unpack the social norms and identify drivers of child marriages and teenage pregnancies at community, household and individual levels. The review addresses issues related to the social and cultural environment including traditional norms and practices that promote or prevent child marriage, the role of religious, cultural and other key opinion leaders in combating child marriage. The review further examined the existing interventions for ending child marriage.

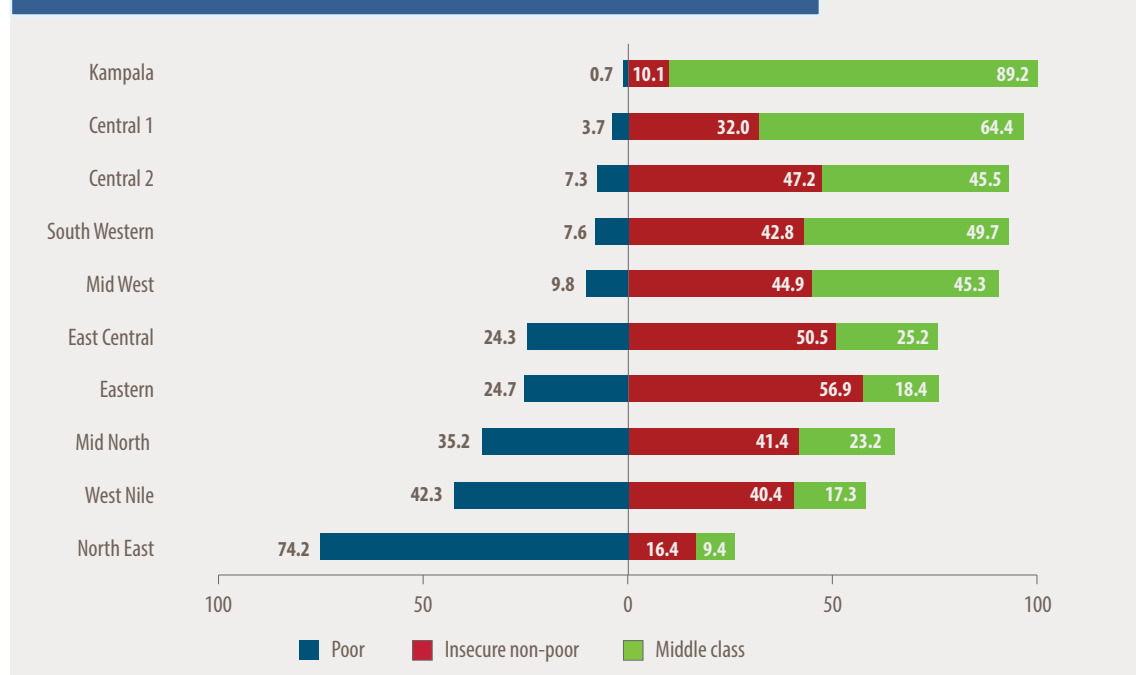
The literature is drawn from a comprehensive review of documents including: published materials from books, journals and gray material gleaned from policy documents, sector strategic plans, research reports and electronic resources from civil society organisations and academic institutions, the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) and the internet through the Google search.

3.1 Socio-economic architecture of Uganda

Uganda has made significant strides on reducing absolute poverty over the last 2 decades which is currently estimated at 19.7% in 2012/13 from 56.4% in 1992/93 (MOFPED, 2014). However, while 43.3% (14.7million) of the population escaped poverty (up from 42.9% in 2009/10), they remain insecure and vulnerable to poverty. In addition, there has been steady increase in income inequality across the different locations (urban/rural) and sub regions. With the rural urban

differentials 22.6% are poor; 47.4% are insecure and only 29.8% are middle class compared to 9.3% poor, 29.2% insecure and 61.4% middle class in urban areas. The rural poverty status shows an increase of the insecure non poor population from 32.5% (1992/93) to 47.4% (2012/13) with over 70% of the rural population who are insecure compared to 38.5% percent in urban areas. The poverty status report further shows sub regional differentials with North East having the highest proportion of absolute poor (74.2%); followed by West Nile (42.33%); Mid North (35.2%) and other regions as shown on Figure 2. There has been a steady increase in income inequality from 0.365 (1993) to 0.395 (2012/13) as measured by the Gini coefficient (Ibid).

FIGURE 2: POVERTY STATUS IN THE DIFFERENT SUB REGIONS OF UGANDA



Source: MOFPED, 2014

Uganda's livelihoods are largely based on the subsistence production of food and cash crops, livestock and trade. The population depends on mixed farming with some communities predominantly depending on livestock and small scale food production. Other communities are predominantly crop farmers owning few animals as part of their household income or one fallback resource (Browne and Glaeser, 2010). These livelihoods are supplemented by incomes from paid labour - with people migrating to seek work in a nearby local town work or to migrate for some weeks/months of the year to work in better-favoured agricultural areas or in cities (Ibid).

Uganda's population has continued to grow rapidly at an annual average growth rate of 2.9% currently estimated at 34.8 million by mid 2015 of which 51.4% are females (UBOS, 2014). The total fertility rate has been persistently high over the years ranging between 6.9 (in 2002) to 6.2 children per woman (in 2011) (Ibid). This could be attributed to the low contraceptive prevalence (30%) and high teenage pregnancies currently estimated at 24% (UBOS and ICF International Inc. 2012) – (see table 2 for sub regional differentials in sexual and reproductive health indicators).

3.2 Marriage practices in Uganda

In Uganda as in most of Sub Saharan Africa marriage and family are key institutions of social organization and important markers of transition from childhood to adulthood, and social expectation. Marriage is a central means through which a family is formed and accords women and men social status, to the extent that unmarried men and women are seen as abnormal, incomplete, ungodly, with no respect in the mainstream society (Otis, 2006; Nangoli, 1994; Kadduli, nd). As a key institution of social reproduction, the institution of marriage is regulated by set rules some of which are defined either by society or the state. For instance whereas choice of marriage partners is determined or influenced by socio-cultural ethos and sanctions which ensure maintenance of social cohesion, age at which boys and girls enter into marital union is regulated by the state. This is mainly to safeguard against child rights violations. In this context this literature review focuses on marriage below the state defined age of 18 years – commonly known as early or child marriage.

3.3 Prevalence of child marriage in Uganda

Marriage below the age of 18 years (Child marriage) remains a widespread practice across many cultures in Uganda. Evidence from the national statistics (Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS,) 2011) reveal that over 15% of ever-married women aged 20-49 were married by the age of 15 and 49% were married by the age of 18 (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). While the statistics show an increase in the age at first marriage between 1996, where over half (55.7%) of women aged 20-49 were married below the age of 18 and a fifth (19.6%) were married below the age of 15, and 2011 with under half (48.8%) being married below the age of 18 and 15.4% below the age of 15. The median age at first marriage¹ for girls/women has remained stable for over the last 3 decades estimated at an average of 17.9 years (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012; 2007). Other studies that show evidence of persistent child marriage in Uganda include the UNICEF supported study by Amin et al., (2013) which observes that over 20% of girls were married between the ages of 15 -19 years. Warner et al. (2013) noted that 10% of 20-24 year old females married before the age of 15 years, and 40% of 20-24 year old females married before the age of 18 years.

Although the prevalence of child marriage is declining with fewer women marrying at very young ages (before the age of 15) a study by ICRW study by Jain and Kurz (2007: 14) ranked Uganda 9th among the top 20 ‘hotspot’ countries for child marriage; and in 2013 Uganda was ranked 16th among 25 countries with the highest rates of early marriages; with 46% of girls marrying before 18 years, and 12% before they are 15 years (World Vision, 2013).

Evidence further shows that boys/men tend to marry at much older ages than girls/women. Among men aged 25-49, only 0.4% were married by age 15 years; 8.5% were married by age 18, and 25% by age 20. The median age at marriage for men aged 25-49 is 22.3 years, four years older than the median age for women in the same age range, at 17.9 years. The median age at marriage for men aged 25-49 has remained the same in the last five years (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). There limited documentation on child marriage among boys.

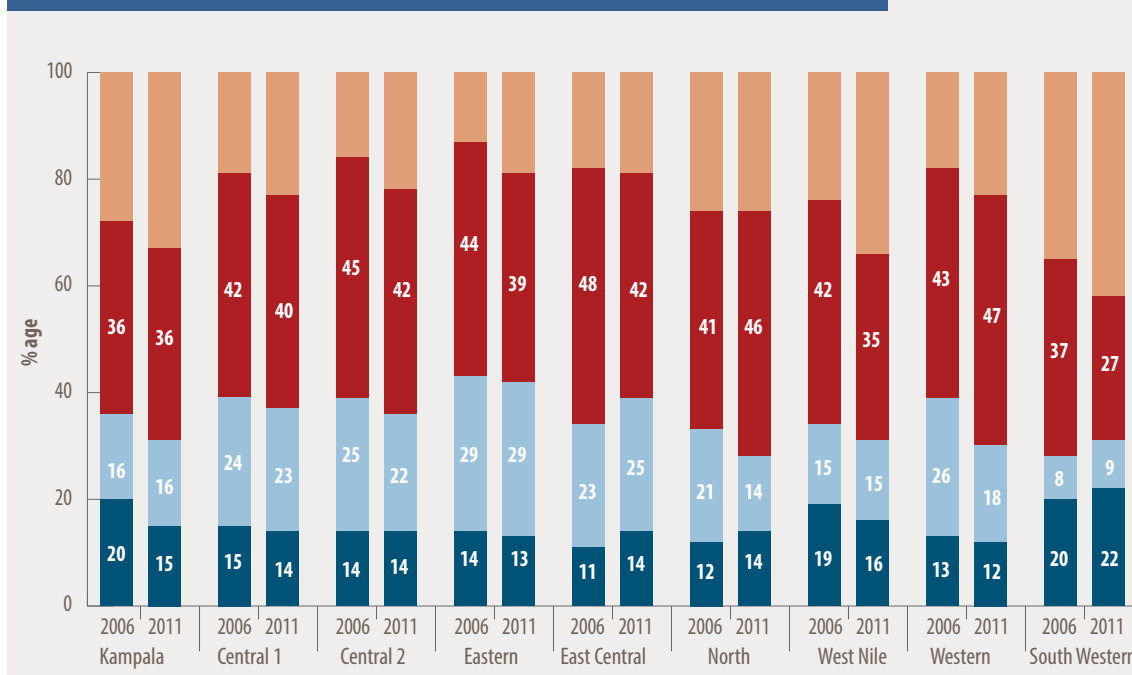
¹ The age at first marriage is defined as the age at which the respondent began living with her/his first spouse/partner.

Evidence shows regional variations in the prevalence of child marriage among girls with the northern region having the highest prevalence rates estimated at 59%, followed by Western region (58%), Eastern region (52%), East central (52%), West Nile (50%), Central (41%), South west (37%), and lowest in Kampala (21%) (UNFPA, 2013). According to Lubaale (2013) the highest proportion of children in marital union was registered in the Eastern region (5.4%) followed by the Northern region (5.2%) while Central and Western regions had same proportion of 3.8% of children ever married. The median age at first marriage for women (20 – 49 years) living in northern Uganda is lower (16.9) as compared to western and south western (18.1 and 19.9 respectively) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012).

Forced marriages are a common phenomenon in areas such as northern Uganda that were affected by prolonged armed conflict – where young girls and women were abducted and coerced into marriage with the rebels (Rubimbwa and Komurembe, 2012). Forced marriages are also reportedly common in Kapchorwa and Palisa districts, in Eastern Uganda. Mishambi (2004) in his study in Teso region observes that forced child marriages have taken form of economic activity as the bride wealth paid is increasingly seen as an important source of income in context of the heightened poverty and ill being created by insurgency.

Child marriage is linked to early sexual activity. Studies conducted in Uganda indicate high levels of early and unsafe sexual activity among adolescents, which often starts in their early teenage years (Neema et al., 2006; World Health Organisation (WHO), 1998). According to the UDHS 2011 the median age at first sexual intercourse for women aged 25-49 is 16.8 years compared with the median age at first marriage of 17.9 years (see table 2). This suggests that Ugandan women generally begin sexual intercourse about a year earlier than their first marriage. The UDHS 2011 further suggests that the median age at first sexual intercourse has increased over the past two decades, from 16.8 years for women currently aged 20-49 to 17.5 years for women currently aged 20-24, an indication that the trend of sexual activity leading to marriage is shifting. Among women aged 25-49, 23% first had sexual intercourse before age 15, 64% before age 18. Urban women have their first sexual experience at somewhat older ages than rural women. On regional variations, women from the Eastern and East Central regions engage in sexual relations earliest (16.3 and 16.2 years respectively) – 2 years later for boys in the same regions (18.4 years), than women from Southwest region who initiate sex about two years later, at age 18.7 years (19.1 years in 2006 (UDHS 2006); data for boys in this region is not available UDHS 2011) (See figure 3 for regional data of age at first sexual debut). This may be contributing to the high prevalence of child marriage these regions.

FIGURE 3: AGE AT FIRST SEXUAL INTERCOURSE FOR GIRLS BY REGION IN UGANDA



Source: UDHS 2011 data

A high prevalence of intergenerational sex where young women engage in sexual relations with a partner three to 10 years older, was also reported. Indeed UDHS statistics reveals that men tend to initiate sexual activity 2 years later than women as reflected in the median age at first sex for men aged 25-49 years estimated at 18.6 years. Men from West Nile and Southwest regions initiate sexual intercourse at higher age (19.3 and 20 years respectively) than men from other regions. According to the UDHS 2011 women with at least some secondary education start sexual relations almost two years later than less educated women. While there are limited studies on child marriage among boys, Bantebya et al. (2014) study in Eastern Uganda reveals that child marriage was also common among the boys – with boys commonly marrying at the age of 18 years.

3.4 Prevalence and trends in teenage pregnancy

While early marriage is reported to be one of the drivers of high levels of teenage pregnancies and child-bearing in Uganda, the later is seen as a driver of child marriage (Rutaremwa, 2013), UDHS 2011 and other data show that of the adolescent girls who were ever married, 63.4% had given birth and 30.7% were currently pregnant; compared with 4.2% and 2.1% respectively for those who had never married (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). The UDHS 2011 further shows that 24% of teenagers have begun childbearing: 18% of them have had a live birth and 6% are carrying their first child (Ibid). While these statistics show a decline in the proportion of teenage motherhood over time, from 43% in the 1995 UDHS (ibid), it remains a major concern affecting girls' development of their capabilities. There was a slight increase in the median age at first birth from 18.7 in 2006 to 18.9 years in 2011 for women aged 20 – 49 years.

The percentage of teenagers who have begun childbearing varies by region. The highest teenage pregnancy rates are reported in East Central region (30.6%), Eastern region (30.3%), and Karamoja region (29.7%), while Southwest region has the lowest (15%). Rural teenagers start parenthood earlier than their urban counterparts (24% versus 21% respectively). Teenage pregnancy also varies greatly with a woman's education where women with at least secondary education on average start to give birth at age 20.8 years, 2.7 years later than women with no education. A total of 16% of girls with secondary education begun their reproductive life later compared with 45% of those with no education (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012).

Teenage pregnancy and motherhood has remained a major health and social concern in Uganda because of its association with higher morbidity and mortality for both the mother and child. In addition to the physiological risks, there is a negative effect on the socioeconomic status of the mother, and the child. ICWR (2014) reports teenage pregnancy as one of the top contributory factors to high school dropout rates for girls in Uganda. While there is a government pronouncement on pregnant girls to remain in school and for young mothers to return to school (The Republic of Uganda, 2009), implementation of this policy has been weak (Bantebya et al., 2013).

3.5 Childhood and transition to adulthood

3.5.1 Definitions of childhood

According to the law (Children's Act, CAP 59 and 1996 Statute), children are any persons below the age of 18 years (Republic of Uganda, 1997; 1996). These are referred to as young people in the 2004 Uganda National Adolescent Health policy (Republic of Uganda, 2004). Despite the existing legal definition of a child, a girl's sexual maturation – manifested by menstruation and the development of breasts – is seen by many communities to mark the dividing line between childhood and adulthood with no transitional period of 'adolescence' in between, as is the case for boys (Bantebya et al., 2013). In a study by Bantebya et al. (2013: 36):

'If a girl starts having menstrual periods (around nine or 10) she stops being a child, she is now a woman. Also when she gives birth – even if she is only 13 years old, she is considered a woman', 'A girl irrespective of her age is a child so long as she is resident at her parents' home under their care; once she leaves her home for marriage and gives birth, she becomes a woman' and 'it is only boys who can be adolescents or youth.'

Thus, for girls, 'maturity' is linked more or less directly to 'physical maturity.' (ibid)

Adolescence (the juncture between childhood and adulthood) is a period when both boys and girls face a number of pressures to adjust to, explore and experience life as their culture defines it (Bantebya et al., 2013; Mathur et al., 2003). The adolescence experience of girls in many developing countries may be defined almost entirely in terms of entry into the marital state; with emphasis placed on domestic work and obedience, traits seen as essential to being good wives and mothers (ICRW and 2CV, 2009). The beginning of secondary school usually coincides with the onset of adolescence/puberty, a time when girls become more vulnerable to sexual coercion, violence, pregnancy and forced/child marriage (ICRW, 2014). The same report by ICRW

shows that an early age of onset of menstruation is associated with school dropout, teenage pregnancy and marriage in West Nile region- Uganda.

The wider range of developmental activities, including schooling, skill building, sports, and friendships are often not part of the adolescent experience of girls because marriage is on their immediate horizon (Mathur et al., 2003). Socially, many other changes begin to occur during adolescence including a heightened awareness of peer group opinion and perceptions of differences between genders. Late adolescence (15-19) is a period during which perceived differences between gendered social roles tend to magnify and solidify (ICRW and 2CV, 2009). On the contrary, boys face social and cultural pressures during adolescence to succeed in school; prove their sexuality and masculinity; engage in sports and physical activity, develop a social group of peers, and demonstrate their ability to shoulder household economic and financial responsibilities (Ibid). Rarely do these pressures translate into early and child marriage for boys (Mathur et al., 2003).

In some cultures in Uganda transition from childhood to adulthood is marked by certain practices, rituals and ceremonies many of which have transformed (Otiso, 2006)² but some still exist such as FGM/C among the Sabiny in Eastern Uganda, Pokot, Tepeth and Kadama in Karamoja region (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012; UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009). Other rites of passage include circumcision of boys among the Bagisu (marked with dance, singing '*Imbalu*' and '*Runyege*' dance, '*Iremba*' ritual which requires the new initiates to have sex with girls of their choice³) – also in Eastern Uganda. Among the Baganda of Central Uganda, menstruation marks the transition to adulthood - grandmothers instruct girls soon after their menstruation, during a period of seclusion, about sexual matters and future domestic responsibilities; marriage and the birth of children are prerequisites for adult status (Otiso, 2006). Sex education for females is more systematic than it is for males and father's sister (*Ssenga*) is the most significant moral authority for girls (Ibid).

Although Uganda passed laws declaring 18 years as the minimum legal age for marriage⁴, too often the laws are not enforced and social, economic, and cultural realities perpetuate the practice with arranged marriages for minors still reported, especially in rural areas (FIDH and FHRI, 2012). The age of 18 as the legal age of marriage, is seen by many to be in direct contradiction to the traditionally early timing linked to cultural and religious perceptions of physical maturity among young girls (Mathur et al., 2003; UNICEF, 2001). A girl is thought of as '*ripe for the picking*' as soon as breasts begin to bud (Bantebya et al., 2014; 2013). Additionally, with cultural taboos in many groups and some Muslim beliefs that a girl should not menstruate in her parents' home, the legal age of marriage is most likely to be violated (ibid). The awareness of the legal age at marriage is reported to have driven child marriage underground leading to increasing prevalence of very unstable informal unions – that do not provide a legal protection to the adolescent girls (Bantebya et al., 2014).

2 Circumcision among the Bakonjo and Bamba

3 This customs is reported to have become less common these days (Otiso, 2006)

4 Article 31 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda; the Penal Code (amendment) Act (CAP 120) (2007); Children's Act, CAP 59 and 1996 Statute; The Uganda's Teachers Code of Conduct (1996).

3.5.2 Female Genital Mutilation as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood

Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C), commonly used to describe alteration of female genitalia (Masterson et al., 2000) is a customary or traditional practice constructed as a rite of passage to welcome young girls to womanhood and to confer social acceptance or a sense of belonging within a community (International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), 2006; UNICEF, 2001). The practice is currently reported in about 28 African countries including Uganda. In Uganda, the prevalence of FGM is less as compared to other African countries (28 Too Many, 2013). It is commonly reported in the Karamoja region (among the Pokot, Tepeth and Kadama) and among the Sebei in the Eastern region of Uganda as well as in small proportions in other regions of the country (UBOS and ICF International Inc 2012). The 2011 statistics from the UDHS indicates a rise in the prevalence of FGM/C in girls and women (aged 15-49 years) from 0.6% in 2006 to 1.4% in 2011 (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2006; 2012) with a decline reported in Eastern Uganda where there has been a longer history of intervention (from 2.4% in 2006 to 2.3% in 2011). There are however regional variations in prevalence with the highest rates reported in Karamoja (4.5%) and the Eastern Region (2.3%) (Ibid) and other regions in Uganda have prevalence rates of below 2%. Among the Pokot, FGM/C is near universal at 95% and the practice is estimated at approximately 50% among the Sabiny (28 Too Many, 2013). Less educated women and women with the least wealth are more likely to declare that FGM/C should be continued compared to women who have more education and wealth (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). FGM/C connects with other social issues such as girls not completing education and growing into women who have poor literacy and pressure to accept early or child marriage (28 Too Many, 2013).

It is reportedly done to restrict sexual pleasure and premarital sex among girls, and as soon as the girl graduates from this traditional rite of passage, she is expected to get married (UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009; 28 Too Many, 2013). Studies conducted in the region point to girls being cut at younger ages ranging from 9 – 14 years among the Pokot, 10-15 years among the Sabiny, 11-14 years among the Tepeth resulting into child marriage (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2009; 28 Too Many, 2013). FGM/C is fundamentally linked to girls' and woman's identity, their full acceptance by society and their marriageability (DfID, 2013).

3.6 Drivers of child marriage in Uganda

The practice of child marriage is driven and supported by a number of factors including social norms and beliefs associated with women's identity; and socio-economic status of the family and socio-economic transformation in the community. Further, there are individual choices against the backdrop of social change.

3.6.1 Social norms and practices

UNICEF defines a social norm as a pattern of behaviour that individuals prefer to conform to on condition that most people in their relevant network conform to it (empirical expectations); and that most people in their relevant network believe they ought to conform to it (normative expectations) (Bicchieri, 2013). Changing a norm therefore entails changing the current social

expectations, creating new expectations or both. Even if specific individuals change their attitudes, they may not change their behaviour because they feel constrained by the expectations of others. Social norms are often held in place by a number of factors simultaneously; likewise, change may be driven by multiple factors occurring at the same time, which may be operating on different levels (Marcus, 2014). Thus, for example, structural forces of change or stasis set the context in which psychological processes promoting or undermining change take place (Ibid). Social norms revolve around religious, social and cultural values and expectations.

Research on age at marriage in different cultures, ethnic and religious groups suggests that getting married and bearing children are often valued as the only means for young girls to secure identity and status in families and as adults in society (Rubin et al., 2009; Mathur et al., 2003; ICRW and 2CV, 2009). According to IPPF (2006), failure to conform can often result in ridicule, disapproval or family shame. Invariably, local perceptions on the ideal age for marriage, the desire for submissive wives, extended family patterns and other customary requirements, are all enshrined in local customs or religious norms (UNICEF, 2001). A study by (UNICEF, 2001) found that traditional communities view child marriage as one way of ensuring social protection of the young girl by putting her under male control; not only to make the girl submissive and hard working, but also ensure that the children she bears are 'legitimate' (Ibid). It is highlighted that child marriage ensures that bonds of affection between couples do not undermine the family unit.

Studies conducted in Eastern Uganda report that Islamic beliefs that a girl should not menstruate in her natal home continue to fuel child marriage in the region (Bantebya et al., 2014; 2013). There are strong social prescriptions against a girl shedding menstrual blood in her father's home at puberty - such as classifying the girl as '*muko*' or 'in-law'- implying that father and daughter are not expected to interact closely or live in close proximity. Hence there is a strong push for early marriage, to avoid such complications (Bantebya et al., 2013). It is noted that marriage of a girl when she starts menstruation is one of the things that cannot be delayed in the Islamic faith – the other being burial of the dead (Bantebya et al., 2014; 2013). This is to avoid girls having children with no father and being "spoilt" (Ibid). Consequently, parents believe that they ought to marry their daughters as soon as they reach puberty because they know that they are biologically ready to conceive (Pasti, 2003).

Marriage and motherhood are the normal routes to social recognition and economic security especially for the young out of school girls or those who have few prospects for continuing education and securing a job (Sekiungu and Whyte, 2009). In a study by Green et al (2009) it is pointed out that parents choose to marry off their daughters early to enhance their (daughters) prospects for attaining social status and economic security.

Value of virginity and protection of family honor is one of the major social norms that has been linked to child marriage. Studies conducted in various parts of the country note that once a girl attains puberty, the concerns around protecting her chastity, fears around elopement and teenage pregnancy, and stigma from losing family honour, restrict her physical mobility including sending her to school (FIDH and FHRI, 2012; UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009). Further, for many societies that prize virginity before marriage, early marriage can manifest itself in a number of

practices designed to ‘protect’ a girl from unsanctioned sexual activity (UNICEF, 2001). In the Eastern and North eastern parts of Uganda, control may also include the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to restrict sexual pleasure and temptation (UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009). The Karimojong believe that girls with virginity are more valued in terms of bride wealth (cows), therefore they resort to child marriage (Ibid). Parents often justify early marriage of daughters as a form of protection against premarital sex and pregnancy, thus keeping the family’s dignity/honour as well as offering the young girls lifelong security (FIDH and FHRI, 2012; Bantebya et al., 2013). It is noted that in Eastern Uganda, child marriage is valued because of the dominant belief that late marriage for girls (16 and above years) brings a curse to the family (Sekiwungu and Whyte, 2009). These practices are all intended to shield the girl from male sexual attention, but in the eyes of concerned parents, marriage is seen to offer the ultimate protection measure.

Pregnancy outside marriage, when the girl is still living with her parents, is viewed negatively and surrounded by social stigma and ‘injunctive’ social norms (Bantebya et al., 2014). According to Ahikire and Madanda (2011), pre-marital pregnancy among girls is stigmatized both in school and in communities mainly on moralistic grounds, where the pregnant girl is “victimized”, seen as a “waste”, “a curse”, “a bad omen” and “a gone case”, isolated, denied resources, often rejected and sent away from home and school forcing her to get married. An adolescent girl who gets pregnant while still living at home breaks a variety of cultural taboos: she is not supposed to share basins and plates with the parents and so is sent to the paternal aunts to avoid ‘*obuko*’ (shame/pollution) (Bantebya et al., 2013). Although there is a government pronouncement on letting pregnant girls and teenage mothers continue with schooling (Republic of Uganda 2009) any girl found to be pregnant is expelled from school because of the view that such pregnancies promote immorality in schools exposing the girl child to marriage (Bantebya et al., 2013; 2014; Ahikire and Madanda, 2011). Kakuru (2008) and FIDH and FHRI (2012) in their studies also report that girls’ access to education is undermined by pregnancy. ICRW’s report “Unpacking Reasons for Girls’ School Drop-out in West Nile, Uganda” in the districts of Arua and Adjumani revealed that 12% of girls had dropped out of school due to pregnancy.

There are expectations that girls will help with domestic chores, learn to undertake household responsibilities and get prepared for marriage (Pereznieto et al., 2011). These gendered expectations are prioritized over sending girls to school, especially beyond the primary level (Pasti, 2013; Pereznieto et al., 2011). The studies in Uganda note that the traditional division of labour in the home and at school exert greater social demands on the girl than the boy child and often compel her to drop out of school to assume domestic duties (Pereznieto et al., 2011; Kakuru, 2008).

Bride wealth and child marriage in Uganda

One of the major customs across all types of marriages in Uganda is payment of bride wealth/ bride price. In their exploratory study on bride price and domestic violence in Bundibugyo district, Western Uganda it was found that exchange of bride wealth is used to validate and legitimize customary marriages and are universally acceptable among family and clan members of the bride and groom (Muthegheki, Kule and Abrahams, 2012; Osuna, 2003). While Otis (2006), Kaduuli (nd) and Muthegheki et al. (2012) argue that payment of bride price is a form of compensation

for the loss of labor and productivity to the girl's family. Nsubuga (2004) describes the practice as a traditional marriage gift symbolising appreciation. The form and amount exchanged varies widely across cultures and is influenced by a number of factors which include a girl's educational status and hence her earning potential, the socio-economic status of the groom's family, and whether or not the couple have produced children. While many studies associate bride price with poverty, others argue that the practice per se is a cultural norm and obligation irrespective of the socio-economic status of those involved. Valued as essential in promoting social cohesion, harmony in traditional ethnic communities, social bonding between the two families; securing family stability, spreading wealth; compensation to the brides' parents for the expenses of nurturing their daughter and loss of labor and productivity. Bride wealth is used by the brides' brothers to acquire wives, and generally as a symbol of appreciation of the groom's family to the brides' parents (Thiara and Hague, 2009). It is noted that marriage commands respect only upon exchange of bride wealth (Bantebya et al., 2014).

The practice is further noted to enhance a man's recognition and respect in society as a responsible husband; increase a woman's value, status and security in her marriage (Thiara and Hague, 2009; Nsubuga, 2004; Muthegheki et al., 2012). It is however noted that in contemporary Uganda, the practice has increasingly lost its traditional value and appeal, as it has become commercialized particularly among the rich elite urban communities. It is reiterated that bride price exchange has regressively degenerated from a gesture of appreciation to a means of economic gain, business and a competitive display of wealth and affluence, in the process alienating it from the original values it formally symbolized (Nsubuga, 2004). The practice is reportedly changing in value, composition and frequency (Bantebya et al., 2014). Bantebya et al. (2014) in their study in Eastern Uganda report that due to poverty the value had gone down and parents were willing to accept any amount, with informal relationships being formalized through 'compensation' or 'fines' paid by the boys or their parents. It was reported that in most cases payment of full bride price was often foregone and was fading as a form of social cement for marriage due to instability of informal marriages (cohabitation) (Ibid).

A number of studies conducted in Uganda attest to the negative consequences of the practice, the prominent one being child or forced marriage (Hagua and Thiara, 2009; Bukyabubi, 2004; Bantebya et al., 2014). Bukyabubi (2004) in a study conducted in Busiki, Bulamogi and Bugiri districts, similarly argues that bride wealth payment exposes girls to child marriages as parents are impatient to acquire wealth. The dominant thinking where girls are seen as a ready source of wealth per se, was described as endemic to most rural communities in Uganda.

Bride price exchange has been further associated with girls' limited participation in decision making in terms of whom to marry, and the terms of sexual interaction (Bantebya et al., 2014; Thiara and Hague, 2009; Bukyabubi, 2004). It is noted that as a result of compromised decision making power and agency, women in marriages where bride price has been exchanged are considered a husband's property and constantly live a life of fear, are tied to the marital homes despite their husbands' infidelity, abuse (as illustrated in Box 2) and are prone to infection with HIV/AIDS and other STIs (Thiara and Hague, 2009; Bukyabubi, 2004).

BOX 2: A YOUNG WOMAN WAS STUCK IN A VIOLENT MARRIAGE FOR SOME YEARS



Grace Apio 28 years, with the youngest of her six children, lives in fear of how she will ever pay back the bride price that has made her a prisoner. She was married to a man twice her age 10 years ago from whom her parents received three cows, a traditional seal for every legitimate customary marriage in Teso (Eastern Uganda). But the marriage never lasted long. “It was an arranged marriage. I never loved the man I was married to but for respect of my parents, I just went in for the marriage because my parents wanted some bulls to help them in ploughing their gardens,” She says that she could not put up with conditions of the marriage, but because she could not pay back the bride price, she hang on to the horrendous matrimony until 2011 when she moved back to her parents’ home. The animals her parents had received as bride price had died of a livestock epidemic. Just as she was considering remarrying as the last resort to getting the cows to pay back her first husband, one of her maternal uncles came to her rescue and paid back part of the bride price.

Source: <http://humanistuganda.wordpress.com/2013/03/26>

The media reports many cases of women, who like Apio, have persisted in oppressive and distressing marriages because the parents cannot pay back the bride wealth/price. Mishambi (2004) in his study in Teso region (North Eastern Uganda) reveals that some parents and guardians were encouraging their daughters to persist in harsh and extremely abusive marriages till they (parents) are able to raise the bride price to pay back; while other parents would encourage their daughters to entice other men capable of remarrying them and paying back their previous bride wealth/price. Thiara and Hague (2009) argue that bride wealth exchange entrenches gender inequality, perpetuates male dominance and power, reduces women’s power and turns them into commodities to be passed from family to family. In a study conducted in Bundibugyo district in Western Uganda (Muthegheki et al., 2012), the communities decried the negative consequences which include among others, exploitation of women through enslavement; increasing cases of pre-marital pregnancy and elopement; loss of respect for women whom bride price was not paid and for men who fail to pay; and the associated conflicts and breakup of marriages.

Generally the men described the practice as an economic burden, with many poor young men particularly struggling to meet the demands of the practice (Muthegheki et al., 2012). In similar context, Ndira (2004) reports increasing incidence of marriage by elopement in Tororo district Eastern Uganda, pointing out that under duress, the poor men involved pay very little bride price, too late; in the process creating tension between the girls’ natal and marital families, breeding conflict and generally undermining social cohesion.

3.6.2 Socio-economic status of the natal family

The characteristics of the natal family and in particular the location, social and economic background have been reported to influence girls' vulnerability to child marriage. While evidence shows that child marriages occur across all socio-economic groups, Lubaale (2013) reports that the proportion of children currently married or ever married tends to be slightly higher in rural areas (4.6%) than in urban areas (4.1%). The UDHS 2011 reports that women living in urban areas marry about two years later than rural women (20 years old compared with 17.6 years respectively) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). Rural teenagers also start parenthood earlier than their urban counterparts (24% versus 21% respectively). There is low level of educational attainment among the rural population as compared to the urban population which reduces the median age at marriage for girls and boys in rural areas.

The median age at first marriage for women age 25-49 is higher among the better educated than those with less or no education. The median ages at first marriage for women aged 25-49 with no education is 16.9 years, 17.4 years for girls with primary education, and 20.8 years for girls with secondary education and above (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). Teenage pregnancy is also highest among girls with no education (45%) compared to girls with secondary education (16%) (Ibid). Women with at least secondary education on average start giving birth at age 20.8 years, 2.7 years later than women with no education (Ibid). A similar trend has been noted in a UNICEF supported study by Population Council (Amin et al., 2012), where 28.2% of girls with no education had ever given birth, and 18.9% were currently pregnant compared with 11.3% and 4.9% respectively for those with secondary education or above. The occurrence of FGM has been associated with lack of education (28 Too Many 2013). Indeed literacy and the levels of education remain low in the regions where FGM is practiced. For instance the literacy rate in Karamoja is 12% for men, 6% for women, compared to the national rate of 76.8% for men and 57.5% for women and 50.3% of girls and 49.7% of boys of school going age in Karamoja have never accessed education (Ibid). In Moroto District some sub-counties do have even a primary school (Weber, 2012). Improving access to education is vital because if girls complete their education they are less likely to undergo FGM/C and early marriage (28 Too Many, 2013).

Poverty is a major cause of girls' vulnerability to child marriage and teenage pregnancy (Bantebya et al., 2013; Mathur et al., 2003; UNICEF, 2001; ICRW, 2014). A number of studies point to child marriage as most common in the world's poorest countries including Uganda (Jain et al 2007; ICRW, 2007). While there is reported reduction of poverty currently estimated at 19.7% poor, about 43.3% of the population is insecure (Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MOFPED), 2014). Children from poor households are more at risk of getting pregnant and being married off compared to those in relatively better households (ICRW, 2014; Lubaale, 2013; Bantebya et al. 2013; Joy for Children Uganda, 2013). According to Mathur et al., (2003); poverty leads to a higher prevalence of child marriage because poor families feel they have fewer resources and incentives to invest in alternative options for girls. There is a high proportion of teenagers who have begun childbearing in the poorest households (34%) compared with only 16% in the wealthiest households (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). UDHS 2011 further shows that, the median age at first marriage is higher among the wealthier girls (19.7 years) than that of girls in the lowest wealth quintile (17.5 years).

Children in poverty stricken households have challenges of continuing with high school in the



face of financial constraints and pregnancy, forcing them to drop out of school and are married off at an early age (ICRW, 2014; Bantebya et al., 2013). Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden where one less daughter is one less mouth to feed (UNICEF, 2005; Mathur, et al., 2003; UNICEF, 2001). Parents in many parts of Uganda encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children for financial benefits in form of bride wealth (Bantebya et al., 2014; 2013; FIDH and FHRI, 2012; UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009; Joy for Children Uganda, 2013). Bell and Aggleton (2014) in their study in Eastern Central and Central 1 (Uganda) reported that child marriage is seen as the best option for girls in households characterized by insufficient provision of basic necessities from parents.

A study by Kyomuhendo (2010) attributed early sexual activity among young people especially girls to poverty where girls engage in sex in exchange of gifts and other favours or money to meet their basic needs. Poverty characterised by uncertain sources of income and livelihood was reported as a key driver of girls into early sexual activity in various parts of the country (Bantebya et al., 2013; Parikh, 2007). Parikh (2007) in her study conducted in Eastern Uganda reveals that sexual relationships with wealthier married men provide young women with temporary social and economic security especially in situations where parents have died from HIV/ AIDS leaving the young girls without any parental economic and social support. In cases of resource scarcity the girl is either married off or does not go to school (Perezhieto et al., 2011; Kakuru, 2008). According to Parikh (2007) young men engage in pre-marital sex due to economic inability to formally marry and establish permanent residences. Communities with high levels of poverty such as fishing communities and those affected by the war are associated with high levels of poverty and are reported to have high levels of child marriage and teenage pregnancies (ICRW, 2014; Bantebya et al., 2013; Lubaale, 2013). UBOS and ICF International (2012) reports that teenagers from the poorest households had higher rates of pregnancy (34%) compared to those from the wealthiest households (16%). Girls who are sent to school without adequate resources are reported to engage in risky sexual relationships with teachers and sugar daddies in exchange for basic necessities and in the process they get pregnant and marry at an early age (Kakuru, 2008).

Enhancing the economic security of poor households; providing the girl's family with an incentive such as a loan or providing the girl with an opportunity to learn an income generating skill is proven to be an immediate economic relief to struggling families and helps to delay marriage (Malhotra et al., 2011; Jain et al., 2007; Mathur et al., 2003; ICRW and UNICEF, 2011).

Situations of insecurity particularly those associated with war and conflict are characterized by acute poverty, famine which prompts parents or relatives to resort to child marriage as a protective mechanism or survival strategy (IPPF 2006). Among populations displaced by war, marrying a young daughter to someone who could look after her or a warlord was a strategy for physical security or family support in war affected areas (IPPF, 2006; UNICEF, 2001). According to Lubaale (2013), the highest proportions of married children (5.9%) were those mostly in Internal Displaced Peoples' (IDP) camps whose source of livelihood was World Food Program (WFP). In some refugee camps especially in Northern Uganda, given the protracted nature of displacement, many girls end up getting pregnant and/or married at a significantly younger age than was traditionally the norm (ICRW, 2014; Gottschalk, 2007). Child marriages are common in internally displaced and refugee camps where informal marriages are common because the boys are not able to pay bride wealth and therefore sanctioned marriages are rare (Schlecht, Rowley and Babirye, 2013). Gottschalk's paper on early marriage noted that some girls in IDPs (who were unable to move from isolated settlements, forced to depend on subsistence farming and trapped in poverty) hoped to enjoy greater economic security if married. The UNICEF study notes that in conflict-torn Northern Uganda for example, some families married their young daughters to militia members in order to secure physical 'protection' for themselves and their daughters (UNICEF, 2001). Forced marriages were reportedly common in Northern Uganda – where young girls and women were abducted and forced into marriage with the rebels (Rubimbwa and Komurembe, 2012).

Orphanhood has been reported to increase children's vulnerability to child marriage. According to Lubaale (2013) orphaned children especially girl children and those in child headed households are more likely to be married early. The UDHS, 2011 shows that 18% of households in Uganda have orphans. There are more households with a single orphan (14%) than double orphans (4 %) and 20 % of children below 18 years live with their mothers but not their father (whether alive or dead); 5% live with their fathers but not with mother (whether alive or dead); and 19 % live with neither of their natural parents. Data shows that double orphaned children are less likely to attend school (84%) than children who have both parents alive and live with at least one parent (96%)(UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). ICRW (2014) in the study in Adjumani and Arua districts report that the death of a parent or living with a single mother is associated with teenage pregnancy and school dropout. The death of a father most often deprives the household of its key source of livelihood, leading to diminished household resources and lack of basic necessities including salt, soap, sugar, food and paraffin (Bantebya et al., 2013). Consequently, marriage is seen as one option for orphaned girls by caregivers who find it hard to provide for them (UNICEF, 2001). In addition, girls in households headed by children (below 18) are more vulnerable to being married early than those in households headed by adults (Lubaale, 2013).

Other reported drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancy associated with the natal family include lack of parental care and concern, especially inadequate provision of basic necessities, lack of control over girls' mobility and inadequate parental guidance and mistreatment of girls (Sekiwungu and Whyte, 2009). Bantebya et al. (2014) in their study in Eastern Uganda found increasing establishment of 'informal' marriages or cohabitation arrangements, which young people contract themselves – often to escape unfavourable home environments.

3.6.3 Individual beliefs and practices

Evidence shows that personal beliefs and practices can promote and perpetuate the practice of child marriage. These range from moral decay and indiscipline, and peer pressure (Sekiwungu and Whyte, 2009). These individual beliefs and practices are however often been shaped by the environment and the situations in which the girls and boys live. For instance children who grow up in high risk settings internalize and develop attitudes that support child marriage. For instance, Schlecht et al. (2013) in the study in Northern Uganda, note that conflict and insecurity motivated girls to marry early due to breakdown in family networks (parent and youth communication). They note that loss and trauma motivated the youth to acquire marriage partners at an early age, as well as dropping out of school due to lack of safety and access to school – consequently got married. Rural communities with families where child marriage is a norm lead the children to believe and aspire to get married early (Amin et al., 2013). Moral decay and indiscipline has been associated with the quest for children's rights and lack of parental guidance (Bantebya et al., 2014).

3.6.4 Institutional related drivers

These are macro level drivers associated with weaknesses in social institutions and socio-economic policies. For instance, there is evidence that although there is expanded access to education through UPE and USE, there are still many obstacles to accessing and completing a quality education (ICRW, 2014; Perezniето et al., 2011). Poor or nonexistent school facilities and lack of dedicated teachers contribute to girls and boys not attending school (FIDH and FHRI, 2012). One of the factors that is known to discourage girls from attending school in Uganda is lack of sanitary facilities (sanitary pads, lack of water and separate latrines, dirty latrines) (Perezniето et al. 2011). This implies that the adolescent girls are particularly at risk and they opt to stay at home than go to school to be humiliated. Middle and secondary school locations are often at a significant distance from rural homes, raising concerns about the safety of young girls, particularly when they reach puberty (FIDH and FHRI 2012; ICRW 2014). The high rate of school dropout has an association with teenage pregnancy and child marriage (ICRW, 2014). Perezniето et al. (2011); Muhanguzi (2011); Kakuru (2008) noted that harassment and threats of sexual violence by male students and teachers often prevent girls from attending school, causing them to be increasingly vulnerable to child marriage.

Inadequate implementation of policies and laws that seek to protect children has been noted to fuel child marriage (Sekiwungu and Whyte, 2009; Bantebya et al., 2014). In the study by Bantebya et al (2014) in Eastern Uganda, participants observed that while the Uganda Constitution of 1995 specifies the legal age of sexual consent and marriage as 18 years (Republic of Uganda, 1995) with a law on defilement that prohibits sexual relations between under-age children

(Penal Code), Evidence suggests enforcement of the law has instead driven the practice of child marriage underground, leading to the rise of early informal ‘cohabitation’ arrangements, where the rights of married girls and their children find no legal or material protection.

The social norms above, the weaknesses in the natal family and child protection institutions are clear motivations for marrying daughters early. There are however motivations and incentives for delaying marriage.

3.7 Motivations and incentives for delaying child marriage

Education is credited as a significant factor for empowering girls and boys, increasing negotiation skills in choosing a partner and for delaying the age of marriage (UNICEF, 2005; Mathur, et al., 2003). It is also noted as an important means to pave the way for a better life for girls themselves and their families (Bantebya et al., 2014; 2013). While there are many studies investigating the causes of child marriage, there is scanty information on the motivations and incentives for delaying child marriage. This is a major gap in literature that deserves attention to enable development of appropriate interventions to end child marriage in the country.

3.8 Consequences of child marriage

These are individual, household and community related consequences.

Prolonged exposure to sexual and reproductive health risks

Child marriage is often associated with multiple and prolonged exposure to sexual and reproductive health risks (UBOS and ICF International, 2012; Rutaremwa, 2013; Kawuma, 2004; Nsubuga, 2004; Schlecht, Rowley and Babirye, 2013). This is because young girls and boys have limited access to, and use of, contraception and reproductive health services and information (Mathur et al., 2003; Pasti, 2013; Rubin et al., 2009). The majority are exposed to early and frequent sexual relations, repeated pregnancies and pre-mature childbirth associated with pregnancy complications, especially obstructed labour, which result in higher rates of maternal mortality; disability and obstetric fistula (Kawuma 2004; Hague and Thiara, 2009; Green et al., 2009; Schlecht et al., 2013; IPPF, 2006). Adolescent girls have a 35% to 55% higher risk of delivering a pre-term or low-birth weight infant than mothers older than 19 years and infant mortality rate is 60% higher amongst newborns of child mothers (Pasti, 2013). Eighteen percent of adolescent mothers have had a live birth (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012).

Obstetric fistula is one of the most devastating consequences of child pregnancy (Mathur et al., 2003; Jain et al., 2007). Many young women who experience fistula also experience rejection by the community and family. In the communities that experienced prolonged insurgency especially the Acholi sub region in northern Uganda, it is reported that many young girls who were abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels and forced to marry soldiers continue to suffer long-term health problems of HIV/AIDS and vaginal fistula, and experience difficulties in trying to fit in the communities as they are viewed as outcasts (Schlecht et al., 2013). In addition, the girls are too young to cope with the challenges of motherhood and nurturing of children, coupled

with other family roles and responsibilities. Further it emerged that forcing girls into marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional consequences resulting from restricted personal freedom (Kawuma, 2004; Nsubuga, 2004).

Despite recent gains in expanding access to HIV prevention and treatment, the epidemic is worsening among young women (Pasti 2013). While there is a general belief (even among policy makers and communities) that marriage protects girls from HIV infection, child wives are more vulnerable to contracting HIV (Jain et al. 2007; IPPF 2006). Marriage often increases sexual activity and the likelihood of exposure and risk, particularly because many young brides cannot negotiate safe sex (IPPF 2006). Kawuma (2004); Nsubuga (2004) and Bukyabubi (2004) note that child marriage exposes teenage girls to a life-time of domestic and sexual subservience, which for social and physical reasons makes them more susceptible than mature women to sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. Young girls who are married off to older men especially widowers who pay a handsome bride price, are more prone to HIV/AIDS infection (Ibid). Physically the early involvement in sexual intercourse exposes young girls to the risk of HIV/AIDS infection given that their vaginal lining is thin and therefore prone to trauma during sex (Bukyabubi, 2004).

Limited capabilities and compromised agency

Education and social development are key areas where many child brides lose out when they are married too early. Girls are more likely to drop out of school and end their education at an earlier age (ICRW, 2014; Pasti, 2013; Bantebya et al., 2013). The children of young, uneducated mothers are also less likely to attain high levels of education, perpetuating cycles of low literacy and limited livelihood opportunities (IPPF, 2006). Child marriage limits young girls' skills, resources, knowledge, social support and mobility. The persistent high school dropout rates of girls in Uganda are associated with early marriage and teenage pregnancy and denial of education has a regressive impact on girls' personal development, their preparation for adulthood, and their effective contribution to the future wellbeing of their family and society (Bantebya et al., 2013; 2014). The destiny of thousands of young girls in Uganda is characterised by involuntary domesticity which is limited to subsistence farming, and performance of unpaid household chores such as cooking, cleaning, child care and other household chores.

Deprived of formal education, the girls are also ignorant about their basic human and civil rights; a situation that constrains their ability to choose a different type of destiny (Forti, 2005). Because of their limited skills, the young married girls have limited opportunity for wage employment. For instance, 2006 UDHS indicates that women who were married at age 18 or older were more likely to be paid cash for their labor than those who married at younger ages (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2007). Child marriage has a double faced link to poverty; it both a cause and a result of poverty. This is because it affects particularly the poorest in the population, and helps to reinforce cycles of poverty (IPPF, 2006). Child wives tend to have more children and fewer independent income options. They are less able to access income-generating opportunities or to benefit from economic development programs (Mathur et al., 2003; Jain et al., 2007; Pasti 2013; Ruibin et al., 2009).

Increased vulnerability to domestic violence

Studies show that while domestic violence is a common experience for married women in Uganda; women who marry young are reportedly more prone to a high incidence and severity of gender based violence and abuse (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2007; 2012). The increased susceptibility of young married girls to domestic violence and abandonment has been associated to their limited autonomy which is linked to the significant age and power differentials within the relationship (Schlecht et al., 2013). Young married girls' heightened vulnerability to sexual and other abuse is attributed to their older dominant husbands, inexperience and lack of power (Hague and Thiara, 2009). Child widows with little education and no means of earning are especially powerless and more vulnerable to physical abuse by in-laws (UNICEF, 2001; Hague and Thiara, 2009).

Limited decision making power

Girls' early marriage is associated with limited participation in decision making on matters related to various aspects of their lives including sexuality, health care, household purchases and visits to family (Green et al., 2009; UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012; Nsubuga 2004). It is argued that child marriage violates the young girls' right to good reproductive health including the right to a satisfying and safe experience of sexual relations, and control over reproduction with the freedom to decide if and when to bear a child. For instance the 2011 UDHS indicates that participation in household decision-making increases with age, doubling from 23% of married women aged 15-19, to 48% of married women aged 45-49 (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012).

Women are also more likely to participate in family decision making if employed, and especially if employed for cash, hence married young girls who lack employment skills have limited decision making power and agency in their home. Similarly control over household income is associated with age where older married women exercise more autonomy with their cash earnings, compared to their younger counterparts. For instance in the 2011 UDHS, 58.7% of married women aged 45-49 reportedly said that they had a say in issues pertaining to household income and expenditure compared to 44.1% of married women aged 15-19 (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). It is expected that women would gain more control over their cash earnings with more education, and hence girls who marry at an early age are at a disadvantage. The UDHS 2011 findings further reveal that among married women with no education, 49% control their cash earnings compared to 58% of women with more than secondary education. A study by Green et al (2009) found that women who married at age 18 or later were more likely to be paid cash for their labor; more likely to report that they alone or jointly with their husband made decisions regarding their own healthcare, major household purchases, purchases for daily household needs, and visits to the woman's family and relatives.

In addition, ownership and control of assets such as houses and land varies by age. The UDHS 2011 reveals that majority (90%) of the young married women do not own a house or a piece of land. Yet ownership and control of assets by women and men influence their individual participation in development processes at all levels and bestows additional economic value, status, and bargaining power (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). A wife's education level is reportedly a key determinant in regard to ownership and control over productive resources and assets with wives who are highly educated having more control.

Compromised psychosocial and emotional wellbeing

Early marriage impacts negatively on young girls' psychosocial and emotional well-being, which is characterized by denial of childhood and adolescence; the curtailment of personal freedom and the lack of opportunity to develop a full sense of the self, among others (Bantebya et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2001). Across the diverse cultures in Uganda, the concept of adolescence is alien, and as soon as a girl menstruates she transits into a 'woman' since she can conceive and bear a child. Consequently girls who marry early live isolated emotionally challenging lives as they are surrounded by mature people who endorse their situation; and instead of being in school, playing and enjoying their adolescent life, they are working in near slave-like conditions in the homes of their in-laws (Bantebya et al., 2013).

Summing up the pros and cons of child marriages, Green et al (2009) further notes that more often than not the causes and consequences of child marriage are difficult to delineate, and take form of a vicious cycle. For instance the poverty and ill being prevalent in young girls' homes makes it difficult for their parents to keep them in school, and the parents attracted by promise of a better future and well being for themselves and their daughters, coerce the latter into marriage. However, once the young girl enters marriage, she leaves school, becomes pregnant, her opportunities for finding employment diminish, and she and her parents wallow in life-long poverty; their hope of a better future permanently relegated to a pipe dream.

There is widespread recognition that child marriage and child bearing are not only harmful to the mother and children as individuals, but also to the family and entire society as well. According to UNICEF (2001) the insidious effects of child marriage to such uneducated, unhealthy, and unempowered girls who are ill-prepared for their roles as mothers and contributors to society, are costs which have to be endured at all levels of society and the nation as a whole.

While most literature on child marriage addresses the plight of girls, anecdotal evidence shows that boys too are significantly affected. For instance, Bantebya et al., 2014 in their study in Eastern Uganda (Mayuge district) report that premature nuptials lead boys to drop out of school and take up menial jobs to support their young families. Child marriage prevents boys from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others of their own age (Lubaale, 2013).

3.9 Interventions and strategies

Investment in ending child marriage and teenage pregnancies is a world move. In Uganda, there are efforts from government, NGOs (international and local) as well as community based groups to address child marriage and engender positive changes in people's attitudes towards girls' education. (Joy for Children Uganda, 2013; Bantebya et al., 2014). The initiatives range from legal to policy; increasing access and retention of girls in school; promotion and protection of children's rights and skills building for the out of school youth.

According to ICRW review of programme on early marriage in 66 developing countries by Jain and Kurz (2007), most programs were noted to focus on changing social norms that support child marriage, educating families and communities using a variety of communication channels,

providing education to girls on life skills, non-formal and formal education, and livelihood and vocational skills as well as legislation and policy issues. The recent program mapping for ending child marriage by UNICEF in (2014) reveals that while there a number of stakeholders (government, civil society and bilateral development partners) addressing issues of girls empowerment, child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda; programming to prevent or mitigate the effects of child marriage and teenage pregnancy has been done in a headlong, haphazard fashion, and not based on informed analysis of baseline or other data. The review further notes that although both non government and government agencies and development partners recognize child/early marriage as one of the child rights violations, they do not have direct interventions to end the practice (Ibid). It is addressed either indirectly or adhocly within sexual and gender based violence interventions (Ibid).

3.9.1 Strengthening the legal and policy framework

On legislation

At the national level, commitment to end to child marriage is reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) which provides for the right to marriage and family formation free of coercion and violence and criminalizes child marriage (Article 31) (Republic of Uganda 1995) and other Ugandan laws (the Penal Code [amendment] Act -CAP 120 2007; Children's Act - CAP 59 and 1996 Statute) (Republic of Uganda, 2007; 1996) and regulations – all of which set the age of marriage/age of consent at 18 years. The Uganda's Teachers Code of Conduct prohibits teachers from engaging in sexual relationships with students and provides for observance of the laws of Uganda in matters of sex and marriage, particularly the age of consent (Republic of Uganda, 1996). Article 33(6) of the Constitution prohibits laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status. Chapter 4 of the Constitution provides for the protection and promotion of fundamental and other human rights and freedoms for all Ugandan citizens with specific provisions for the protection of women and girls in Articles 20, 21, 24, 33, 34 and 50. Other Ugandan laws that are potentially useful in the prevention of child marriage include the Anti-trafficking Act (2010), the Domestic Violence Act (2010), and the Anti- Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010). The Anti-FGM Act provides that anyone carrying out or facilitating FGM/C, including circumcisers (those who perform the procedure), parents or others, is subject to up to five years in prison and if the girl dies as a result of the procedure, those involved can be imprisoned for life (Republic of Uganda, 2010).

Further, currently a domestic relations law is underway – named as a Marriage and Divorce Bill (2009) (applicable to all but Muslim marriages) that proposes to reform and consolidate the old laws relating to marriage, separation and divorce (which have remained in operation in contravention of the provisions of the Constitution). The Bill more explicitly grants equality within marriage or cohabitation and aims to provide for 18 years as the legal age of marriage and the consent of each party; to prohibit practices such as widow inheritance; and the demand for a refund of marriage gifts or bride wealth. It sets the minimum standards for all regimes of marriage provided for under the law, supplemented by separate provisions governing the conclusion of Christian, Hindu, Customary and Bahai marriages (FIDH and FIHR, 2012). The Muslim Personal Law (currently shelved) will guide marriages under the Muslim faith.

Increasing girls' access to and motivation for additional schooling is a key intervention strategy for delaying age at marriage (Malhotra et al., 2011). The Constitution emphasizes the right for all Ugandans to access basic education without any form of discrimination (Articles 30; 34 (2)) and the need for affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, among other social categories for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them. The Children's Act and Children's Statute (Republic of Uganda, 1996; 1997) and the Education Act 13 (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act (Republic of Uganda 2008) provides for access to education for all and gives full effect to UPE and Universal Post-Primary Education and Training (UPPET) policy (Objectives 1c&d). The Act commits the government to provide basic education for all as a right (Art. 4(2)). In Article 10 (3c), the government pledges to ensure alternative approaches to education for all those children who drop out of school before completing their primary education. It further provides for affirmative action with respect to female representation in the management of schools, where two out of the six members of the management committee should be female (Second Schedule – Sections 58, 59 – 2(a)). One out of five members of the Board of Governors should be a woman (Third Schedule – Sections 58, 59 – 3(a)).

On the policy framework

The Uganda National Development Plan (NDP) 2010-2014/15 acknowledges child marriage as a negative social cultural practice that increases the rate of early pregnancy, and as partly responsible for the country's persistent high poor health outcomes for women and children, especially maternal and infant mortality, and the high fertility rate, and therefore a major constraint to sustainable population growth; and also a constraint to girls education. The NDP commits to increase access to education through UPE and USE as one way of delaying marriage, and pledges to reduce the social cultural barriers to school attendance as well as to promote positive cultural values, norms and practices. However, there is no specific explicit strategic intervention for addressing child marriage. The plan indicates government commitment to promote rule of law and due process through fostering enactment and availability of laws and their continuous revision by supporting comprehensive and demand-driven law reforms to enhance access to justice and equality before the law, among others.

The Uganda Gender Policy (MOGLSD, 2007) under its 'gender and rights' priority area, government pledges to enact and reform laws to address gender-discriminatory practices, cultural norms and values; to develop and implement interventions to address GBV of all forms and at all levels; to promote sexual and reproductive health rights; and to sensitize communities about children's rights. However, the strategies remain broad, with no specific explicit intervention to address early marriage. Promotion of education of the girl child has been a key priority area in the Uganda Gender policy (1999 revised in 2007). Other sectoral policies such as the National Population Policy (MFPED, 2008) acknowledges the persistent cultural practices, customs and norms regarding polygamy, widow inheritance, child marriage and bride price, among others, that have negative implications for the status and welfare of women and children. It further identifies teenage motherhood as a major contributor to persistent high fertility and maternal mortality in the country. These challenges are envisaged to be addressed through promotion of UPE and USE.

Other policies that acknowledge early marriage as a negative practice include the National Youth Policy (MOGLSD, 2001), which expressly acknowledges the right of youth to marry at the legal age of consent and pledges to promote the enjoyment of this right. The National Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (MOH, 2004) pledges commitment to advocate for, coordinate and monitor implementation of programmes for the readmission of adolescent mothers into the school system. The policy commits government to advocate for the review of existing legal, medical and social barriers to adolescents' access to information and health services. It provides for protection of the rights of adolescents to health information and services; provision of legal and social protection for adolescents against all forms of abuse and harmful traditional practices; and promotion of gender equality and provision of quality care for adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues.

In addition to UPE and USE in the education sector, MOES has a Gender in Education Sector Policy (2009), whose main goal is achieving gender parity at all levels of education (Republic of Uganda, 2009). The Policy emphasizes gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusiveness, among other principles. It pledges government commitment to facilitating re-entry of girls who drop out as a result of teenage pregnancy and early marriage, among other strategies to ensure equity in access and achievement. The policy is further operationalised in the revised National Strategy for Girls Education [NSGE] (2013) that was launched in 2014 (MOES, 2013). The MOES is also developing a National Strategy on Violence against children in schools to further strengthen mechanisms for promoting girls and boys education (MOES, 2014⁵). The National Equal Opportunities Policy (MOGLSD, 2006) also emphasises education and skills training for the youth, affirmative action to redress gender imbalances including 1.5 points for girls on admission to tertiary institutions and retention of girls in school as well as non formal education. However, there are still many obstacles to accessing and completing quality education (Perezniето et al., 2011). A limited number of parents can afford the additional expenses of sending children to school, including the opportunity costs of foregoing children's work, or additional expenses (such as sanitary hygiene products for girls) (Bantebya et al., 2013).

Challenges and gaps in the laws and policies

A scan of the legal and policy environment reveals existence of good laws and policies to support ending of child marriage in Uganda. However, a number of challenges are observed ranging from policy coherence; effective enforcement; inter-sectoral collaboration; and adequate financing as well as overall capacity for service delivery (Ochan et al., 2013). These challenges represent key constraints to national efforts to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy and their negative impacts on the lives of individual girls and other harmful practices to foster sustainable girls' empowerment. For instance while passing a law against FGM is a major victory, the law in itself by no means guarantees that everyone will automatically stop the practice where a strong sense of tradition underpins community identity (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2009). Evidence shows that since the enactment of anti-FGM Act in 2010, the practice has gone underground with anecdotal reports of increases in cases of FGM with communities reportedly continuing to cut in defiance of the law; the practice is often now carried out in secret or over the border in Kenya for fear of prosecution (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2009; 28 Too Many, 2013).

Further, the laws on age of consent continue to operate alongside the old marriage laws that are lax in regard to the age of marriage. For example the Marriage Act of 1904 CAP 251 sets 21 years as the age of consent but allows written consent of fathers/mother/guardian/registrar for marriage of minors – those below the age of 21 years. The Marriage of Africans Act of 1904 also permits marriage for minors upon consent of their parents or guardians or registrar in case the parents are dead and no guardian is capable of consenting; but is silent about the age of consent. The Marriage and Divorce of Mohammedans Act of 1906 is silent on the age of consent. Both the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act of 1961 (2 (3) and 2 (4) and The Customary Marriages (Registration) Act 1973 (Art.11a) and (11b) set the age of consent at 16 years for girls and 18 years for boys and allow marriage of minors upon consent of parents or guardians. Such contradictions in the laws hinder their effective enforcement and in the long term serve to perpetuate child and forced marriage in Uganda. Indeed evidence shows that enforcement of the law on defilement has been very weak (Bantebya et al., 2013; 2014; FIDH and FIHR, 2012; DELTA, 2011; Nordic Consulting Group, 2008).

Efforts to amend these laws have been met with stiff resistance with the Marriage and Divorce Bill withdrawn and indefinitely put on hold (Bantebya et al., 2013; 2014). The Uganda Gender Policy acknowledges limitations in access to justice created by gender-biased laws relating to defilement and delays in delivery of justice (MOGLSD, 2007). The Policy further acknowledges persistent cultural norms and values that condone gender discrimination that have rendered the abuse of women's rights socially acceptable in Ugandan society. The policy commitment to facilitating re-entry of girls who drop out as a result of teenage pregnancy and early marriage, among other strategies to ensure equity in access is not yet actualised a policy . Further the commitment does not spell out the time when the pregnant girl should leave school and when to return in school..

3.9.2 Behaviour change communication initiatives

There is increasing evidence to show that communications initiatives are effective in transforming the way people think and act. Some of this originates in a top-down tradition of public service announcements and communication of information, some in a Freirean-inspired approach to education involving reflection and challenging orthodoxies, some in community-based activism (Bantebya et al., 2014). However, little is known about the effectiveness of different communication approaches to promoting more egalitarian gender norms (Marcus and Paige 2014) and promote a shift in attitudes in a wider society at individual, community and social-structural levels. According to Marcus and Paige, (2014) communications initiatives have been classified into 6 categories namely;

- Mass media and social media programming/engagement
- Information, education and communication (IEC) provision through dissemination of materials, billboards, stickers, educational videos, or events such as street theatre.
- Community dialogue and reflection
- Non-formal education approaches, including life-skills training

- One-to-one programming, including mentoring, peer education
- Public ceremonies, including alternative rites of passage and public declaration activities, often linked to programmes addressing FGM/C
- Training, capacity building, most commonly for professional personnel, for example health workers

Marcus and Paige, (2014) in their review indicate that communication programmes are effective in challenging gender-discriminatory attitudes and practices. They note that such programmes reach a variety of stakeholders and that programmes with multiple communication components achieve a higher proportion of positive outcomes and those that integrate non-communication activities have been found slightly more effective (Ibid). According to Marcus and Paige (2014) dialogue-based approaches are often important in creating opportunities for reflection and helping people shift both attitudes and practices; and that more intensive activities involving direct communication with target groups and providing space for dialogue seems to have greater impact than mass communication alone. Further, they note that combined non formal education and community dialogue showed positive impacts on attitudes towards girls' education held by parents and in some cases brothers. In addition to that, appealing TV and radio characters can act as role models and villainous characters can also stimulate behaviour change which seemed particularly important in initiatives around early marriage. The review further indicated that IEC activities play a helpful role in supporting and extending changes initiated by other types of programme. Clear communications can address issues of concern directly and provide enough factual information and in this way the audience can contemplate change or reframe issues and see the issues in a new way (Ibid). Marcus and Paige (2014) argue that working with multiple stakeholders, combined approaches can identify or address barriers to turning knowledge into action.

A recent review of the communications approaches for addressing child marriage in Uganda by Bantebya et al (2015), revealed that community dialogues and debates, use of mass media (radio and TV talk shows), capacity building, and promotion of peer education appear to be the most commonly used approaches for both governmental and non-governmental interventions. Other communication approaches include mentorship, school talks, social media (face book and twitter), and print media (newspapers, newsletters, reports). Public events and ceremonies take the form of national events organized around children's rights, which provide an opportunity for enhancing social mobilization and awareness raising efforts at district and community levels (Ibid).

NGOs and CBOs play a major role in disseminating messages about child marriage in communities (Malhotra et al., 2011). As human rights advocates, several NGOs have adopted strategies to target different stakeholders to curb the practice of child marriage. These target groups include parents, young girls and boys, various government personnel, elected representatives, and media people (newspaper, television and radio reporters) (Bantebya et al., 2015; Malhotra et al., 2011).

Community conversations/dialogues (sensitization): Mass sensitization activities about child rights protection and in particular child marriage and other harmful practices such as FGM/C appear to be one of the most popular interventions in Uganda (Bantebya et al., 2015). Organizations work with men, boys, religious and traditional leaders and networks for women and girls to create support for gender equality and shifting negative norms (Bantebya et al., 2015; Joy for Children Uganda, 2013). These mass sensitization campaigns are reported to be significant avenues for behaviour and attitude change (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2009). Rubin et al (2009) further suggest that community education and mass media programs led by local leaders, religious leaders, and other respected opinion leaders can be helpful in creating awareness of the harmful effects of early marriage and promoting positive role models.

Mass media: Mass media appears to be one of the most popular communication channels used to address child marriage issues in the country. A number of organizations including Joy for Children Uganda; Raising voices; ANPPCAN, Straight Talk Foundation, Pathfinder among others conduct talk shows on both national and local radio stations in different parts of the country as well as Television talk shows (Rubin et al., 2009; Joy for Children Uganda, 2013; Bantebya et al., 2015).

Social Media: takes the form of online media to disseminate information and engage with key stakeholders on issues of child protection and abuse (Bantebya et al., 2015). The commonly used social media is the facebook which appears to be most popular to the young people.

Use of ICTs: This involves the use of ICTs such as the U-report, a new communications technology developed by UNICEF (2012). Through the U-report questions are sent via SMS text to U-reporters, who are expected to respond either with a simple menu based reply or with personal messages. The UNICEF team analyzes and interprets the responses, and shares the results often following up with additional questions or suggestions (Ibid). The topics covered include FGM/C, outbreaks of disease, safe water, early marriage, education, health and inflation.

Commemoration of key events: Several civil society organizations in Uganda in collaboration with relevant government ministries commemorate special days for children where of recent the focus has been on girls. For example the Day of African Child (DAC) commemorated every 16th June of every year, the International Day of the Girl Child commemorated every 11th October of every year with educative and advocacy themes and other occasions, such as the annual '16 days of action against gender –based violence' with a campaign organized around the international conventions on human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women (Bantebya et al., 2015; Joy for Children Uganda, 2013). These organizations include Save the Children Uganda; World Vision; ANPPCAN, Voices for Children (V4C) among others (Joy for Children Uganda, 2013; Bantebya et al., 2015). Other local Non-Government Organizations and CBOs organize the same functions in their respective operational areas with the aim of raising awareness about the dangers of child marriage and other violence against children related cases (Joy for Children Uganda, 2013). An annual Sabiny and Pokot Culture Days which were established to promote the positive aspects of Sabiny are reported to have made significant changes in people's attitudes towards FGM/C (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2009).

Skills building and training: Skills building and training is another important intervention by many organizations. The intervention is aimed at providing adolescents with skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge discriminatory social norms, create change in their colleges and communities that include social marketing element (Bantebya et al., 2015; Joy for Children Uganda, 2013). These organizations include V4C, Agape of Hope Female Youth Development Association, ANPPCAN, MIFUMI; Restless Development and Straight Talk Foundation among others (Joy for Children Uganda, 2013). The interventions target both in and out of school adolescents especially with particular focus on teenage mothers. Through sport known as 'Karate' and informed by the Prevention, Provision and Protect (PPP) model by MIFUMI girls are taught life skills including self-defence, self discipline and confidence to take on leadership roles and to become change agents on girls empowerment - girls have taken a lead in reporting the perpetrators of VAC (including forced child marriage cases) in their communities to local authorities and the Police (UNICEF, 2015). The same programme targets boys to change their mind sets to see girls as their companions, partners and friends, and never as their subordinates (Ibid). Other programmes with skills include those by the Pathfinder – The Gender Roles, Equality and Transformation (GREAT) project (Ibid). Rubin et al. (2009) notes that health providers are key in providing youth-friendly reproductive health services to girls and young women, educating them on the risks of unprotected sex and helping them to acquire skills to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and gender-based violence; which is central in motivating girls to delay marriage.

3.9.3 Role models and champions

Studies report effective communications and awareness creation strategy of showcasing positive role models to highlight the benefits from delaying marriage (Bantebya et al., 2013; ICRW and UNICEF, 2011). These are fathers, mothers and girls who have either positively shifted from the practice of child marriage or hold alternative views regarding the priorities they place on education for girls and boys are willing to delay their marriage (Bantebya et al., 2013). Fathers are usually the main decision makers hence, role model fathers decide to educate their daughters and sons; and/or would like to see fathers supporting a need for a career for their daughters and sons; and prioritizing education over child marriage. Fathers in cattle communities of Uganda who try to give their daughters away in marriage without requesting bride price indicating that the daughters are not sold like property influences cultural change (Bantebya et al., 2013). A role model father deviated from the norm and supported his pregnant daughter to complete her secondary education (ibid). Such fathers who have been exposed to cities through higher education or employment realize that girls and boys should be able to participate in the decision making around their own marriage. Unlike girls, boys have numerous role models.

Mothers have been held responsible by society for passing on the gender norms and expectations to daughters and training them to take on marital roles and responsibilities. In this regard mothers play a central role in encouraging girls to delay marriage (ICRW and UNICEF, 2011). Role model daughters also have been able to speak with their parents to convey their wish to marry at a later age. Role model girls have desire for higher education; have aspired to further their studies and to get a career. For instance in a study conducted in Mayuge Eastern Uganda, a pregnant daughter ignored the social stigma and completed her S4 exams when she was pregnant (Bantebya et al., 2013).

3.9.4 Economic empowerment and social protection initiatives

There are also programs intended to economically empower vulnerable families to prevent children from child marriage (Malhotra et al., 2011). Organisations such as South-Eastern Private Sector Promotion of Entrepreneurship (SESPEL) based in Mayuge district works with adolescent girls to build confidence, teach skills and support income-generating activities, savings and loans associations along with sensitization sessions on early marriage (Bantebya et al., 2014). The transformative power of its confidence building efforts, which follow a ‘mindset management’ approach has made significant impact, as illustrated through a number of examples. For instance, girls separate from abusive husbands – refusing to submit to beatings or drunkenness. In addition, girls have formed groups including Rays of Hope, Rise and Shine and Bright Future that provide space for girls to share their experiences and support each other. Adolescent mothers are given practical skills to manage teenage motherhood (Bantebya et al., 2014).

Other Organizations with this approach include ANPPCAN – also targeting teenage mothers with vocational training and support for income generation among other skills in Iganga and Kitgum districts (Bantebya et al., 2015). SCORE (Sustainable Comprehensive Responses for Vulnerable Children and Their Families) supports and savings and loans programme, financial literacy and skills building for local artisans (to improve their well being and self-reliance), legal clinics for households of vulnerable children, many affected by HIV and AIDS and promotes safe schools (primary and secondary) through clubs (and girls rights clubs) to provide space for children to air out their voice around their rights; support pregnancy tests to schools and counselling for the affected girls (Bantebya et al., 2014).

According to some scholars including Rubin et al. (2009) programming for child marriage should focus on advocacy against early marriage with combined efforts to keep girls in school and to improve their economic situation. It is further noted that staying in school provides motivation for delayed sexual initiation. Emphasis is on keeping girls in school beyond 14 years and interventions that make school more affordable for the family persuade parents to keep their daughters in school, and initiatives that provide girls with useful life skills and vocational training, and counter social norms supporting early marriage for girls (Ibid). Rubin et al. (2009) also recommend provision of income generating skills to girls and young women as one way of empowering them to delay marriage.

Warner et al (2013) suggest coordinated and focused efforts that promote gender equitable and pro girl social norms to build girls’ capabilities. They suggest that efforts to end child marriage should focus on partnerships and scaling up of initiatives at national and sub national levels with active involvement of all stakeholders including government, civil society, development partners, the family and community; working with girls as a primary target offering girls only spaces (married and unmarried) to build their knowledge, skills and assets (social, health, economic and human rights), define and evaluate change at the level of the girl as well as the family and community (Ibid). They noted that providing education and mobilizing parents, religious/traditional leaders and community members; increasing accessibility to quality schooling for girls; and fostering an enabling legal and policy framework are key strategies to end child marriage (Ibid).

3.10 National and local support institutions and structures

State structures and institutions

The main institution responsible for child protection and promotion of child rights in Uganda is the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social development. The ministry has a fully fledged Directorate of Children and Youth Affairs. Other institutions include the MOES, Ministry of Internal Affairs – the Child and Family protection Unit in the Uganda Police Force – at national and district level. With decentralization - the National Structures are linked to the local government structures including the Department of Community Development with child protection issues handled by community development and probation officers. These are the key enforcers of government laws and policies on universal education (UPE and USE), women and children's rights including protection from child marriage (Bantebya et al., 2014). Under the Ministry of Health, there are Village Health Teams spread out in the communities to reach out to community members on a number of issues. However, evidence shows severe capacity gaps; community backlash against some of the policies such as UPE, defilement law; and widespread collusion – in the case of arrests for child marriage – between police and parents for 'compensation'⁶ and consequently there is limited confidence and trust in these institutions (Bantebya et al., 2014). In some districts such as Mayuge the Muslim leaderships in collaboration with the local leadership have established a community patrol made up of peer educators and village health workers to look for children who drop out and impose small fines on parents (Bantebya et al., 2013).

Civil society organizations

In partnership with the local structures, some organizations have established national and local structures to support implementation of child rights protection interventions and address issues of child marriage and abuse of children's rights in the country. These include children and youth clubs mostly established in schools such as Girls' Education Movement (GEM) clubs (Joy for Children, 2013), youth clubs by BRAC which have been established in the remote areas of Karamoja region (Pasti, 2013). Joy for Children Uganda through its "Good school" program in schools of the Rwenzori region has mobilized schools to start child rights clubs aimed at sensitizing their fellow children, teachers, parents and the community about violation of children rights with child marriage taking a centre stage (Joy for Children Uganda, 2013).

ANPPCAN has established case workers spread out in the areas of operation (in Iganga and Kitgum districts) - whose main role is to follow up cases of child abuse and neglect including child and forced marriages (Bantebya et al., 2015). Straight Talk Foundation (STF) in collaboration with Youth Efforts in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS and Poverty (YEFAAP) in Bugiri district has created parents support groups, Youth and children groups; groups of teenage mothers and STF school clubs in schools nationwide (Ibid). Pathfinder under the GREAT project has established Technical Advisory Group (TAG); Community Mobilization Teams (CMT); Community Action Groups (CAGs); Youth platforms Leaders – as avenues for discussion of gender equality issues in the community (Ibid).

The use of 'Ssenga' (paternal aunts) institutions was noted to be a promising strategy for providing sexual education to the girls with a specific focus on the benefits of delaying intercourse and marriage (Rubin et al., 2009).

6 money paid by the parents of the boy



Religious and cultural leaders

Rubin et al. (2009) observe that in rural areas, traditional and religious leaders are highly effective in making the case for later marriage for girls. They note that local leaders, religious leaders, and other respected opinion leaders are very strategic resource persons in creating awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage (Ibid). They remain the guardians of both ethnic/cultural and religious values respectively in the ideational sphere, which they urge community members to apply in practice (Bantebya et al., 2014). Bantebya et al (2013) in their study in Mayuge district (Eastern Uganda) revealed that Muslim religious leaders were reportedly conducting awareness raising through their mosques on early marriage and girls' education. According to UNFPA and UNICEF (2009) the Church of Uganda's Pokot Zonal Integrated Development Programme (POZIDEP) has been very active on issues of FGM. It is hailed for protecting Pokot girls from being mutilated and for conducting extensive community sensitization on the on the health risks of circumcision – which reported to have changed men's attitudes towards the practice (Ibid).

Expanded access to education but limited completion

With the introduction of UPE and USE, education access in Uganda has been expended as reflected in the rapid increase in enrolment at both primary and secondary education level with majority of the districts attaining parity at primary level. In 2013, enrolment at Primary level stood at 8,459,720 of whom 50.1% girls (4,240,197pupils) (Ministry of Education and Sports

[MoES], 2013). At secondary level, total enrolment was estimated 1,362,739 students of whom 46.6% (635,527) were girls. However, due to high dropout, completion rate at primary level is low estimated at 67.4% with more boys (67.8%) than girls (66.9%) completing this level. In addition transition to secondary level is poor – with more boys than girls entering secondary school as the enrolment above shows (Ibid).

3.11 Adolescent girls' vulnerabilities

The Adolescent girls' vulnerability index developed by population council and UNICEF indicates that girls aged 10-19 in Uganda had higher than average rankings of vulnerability (20.6%) at individual level (70.4% - based on indicators on education, marriage, pregnancy, engagement in high risk sex, and living with parents or not); and at community level (91.2% - based on indicators of early marriage and illiteracy for women aged 20-49); but lower than average ranking at the household level (27% - based on indicators of household access to water and sanitation, and education of household head) (Amin, 2013). Adolescent girls (aged 10-19 years) multi-level vulnerability varies across the different regions with Karamoja having the highest proportion of adolescent girls (53.6%) who are vulnerable at all levels and the main driver of vulnerability in the region is education (Amin, 2013). In other regions adolescent girls vulnerability was estimated at 25.8% in West Nile; 23.1% in central; 20.6% in East central, 16.2% in central 2; 14.6% south west; 14.2 Eastern; 12.2 western, 11% in Kampala 9 (Ibid).

3.12 Gaps in the literature

The review of literature on child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Uganda indicates that a number of studies have been undertaken over the last two decades. The studies address issues related to the prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, key drivers including social norms, poor economic status of natal families, conflict and security situations among others. While a number of drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancies have been highlighted, none of the studies provides a ranking of the drivers to determine the most significant cause of child marriage in Uganda. Most of the studies have concentrated in the Eastern and Northern regions of the country with minimal focus on the Western, South Western and Central regions. In addition, there is limited documentation on child marriage among the boys and yet some girls marry their fellow adolescent boys. However as indicated in Table 2, majority of the boys marry at a later age – 22.3 years as the median age at first marriage.

The few studies on programming for child marriage and teenage pregnancy in the country have not adequately provided information on the most effective interventions for ending child marriage; while some studies attest to the importance of communication strategies in addressing social norms and changing attitudes, they do not delineate the most effective communication strategies in this regard. Further, documentation on issues related to motivations and incentives for delaying child marriage, definition and transition to childhood as well as rituals and ceremonies around transition to adulthood and linkage to child marriage and people's perception on the legal age at marriage is scanty. There is also limited data on the effectiveness of cultural and religious leader's role in ending child marriage and other harmful practices such as FGM/C.

04



RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the main focus is on the study findings around social norms and practices and other key drivers sustaining child marriage, FGM and pre marital teenage pregnancy as well as the platforms and social institutions for change and communications initiatives.

The findings take cognisance of the two categories of social norms that is the 'Injunctive' gender norms (views about what people *should* do in a given society) and 'descriptive' norms (what most people are actually *doing*). Injunctive norms are prescriptive rules of appropriate behavior which are often different from 'descriptive' norms; and reference groups holding these norms may differ, depending on the norm. Descriptive norms broadly correspond to gender roles (generally accepted gender differentiated division of responsibility) while the injunctive norms refer to gender ideologies (widely shared conceptions about ideals of masculinity and femininity at different ages in the life cycle). This distinction is important for child marriage as it explains why some practices are changing while others are sticky. Study findings show that the practice of child marriage persists in all districts studied and is often driven by a multiplicity of factors as presented in this section. While the recent Uganda 2014 Social Institutions Gender Index (SIGI) report showed that the rate of early marriage in general is decreasing, the practice remains pervasive and widely accepted especially in the sub regions of East Central, Mid Eastern and Mid Northern Uganda (OECD and UBOS, 2014). This report is based on the conceptual underpinning that child marriage is not only a sexual and reproductive health issue, but rather a child rights issue.

4.1 Child marriage persists as a sticky norm

The findings did not show any distinct differences in norms and practices associated with child marriage in districts with high prevalence (Arua, Kapchorwa, Moroto, Bugiri Bundibugyo, Kiboga, and Amuru) of child marriage and those with low prevalence (Masaka, Rukungiri and Kampala). Child marriage was found to be the norm in all districts, but widely reported in the districts Bugiri, Amuru, Arua, Kapchorwa, Moroto and Bundibugyo (high prevalence districts). In the districts of Masaka, Rukungiri, Kiboga and Kampala study participants reported that the practice was changing and fewer girls are marrying below the age of 18. They study participants attributed the changes to socio economic transformation and development, which included increased education opportunities for girls and urbanisation. The average age of marriage in the districts with high prevalence ranged from 13 -17 years while in the districts with low prevalence of child marriage, the average age at marriage ranged from 17 to 20 years. Boys were reported to marry at a much older age than the girls as illustrated by a few selected extracts;

“In this community most girls commonly get married at the age of 15, 17. Boys get married at the age ranging from 20 to 22.” (FGD Adults - Arua); “Some girls get married at 14years others 15years and 16years there is no specific age.” (FGD Adults – Kapchorwa); “there is no strict age put in place though they marry through their own will; boys marry at the age of 25-30years because they always have to rare cattle under the hot sun the whole day but girls marry early because they stay home and do only easy work like home chores.” (FGD Adults – Moroto).

The voices from all respondents note that boys marry at an older age than girls, often when they are 20 and above years. This finding concurs with the UDHS 2011 data that shows a higher median age at marriage for boys/men estimated at 22.3 years – 4 years higher than that of girls/women (17.9 years) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). In one of the districts (Amuru district in Northern Uganda), it was observed that it was difficult to find unmarried young girls in the community and if there happens to be one, she would be divorced as pointed in the FGD of adult men and women;

“A beautiful girl if any whom you see in the community has been married and separated from her husband and now she is discouraged about marriage because of her experience” (FGD adults - Amuru).

All the respondents were aware of their ages, with majority (55.1% of the females and 54.2% of the males) who possessed birth certificates while 42.9% of the females and 45.8% of the male did not have birth certificates; the rest did not know. The average age at marriage of the interviewed married adolescent girls was 16 years with some having married at 14 years⁷ and a few at 18 years; while that of the married boys was 18 years with a few who married 17 years. Child marriage prevalence notwithstanding, study participants observed that there have been changes in the perceptions and practices associated with child marriage over the years as shown in Box 3.

BOX 3: NEGATIVE CHANGES IN SOCIAL NORMS AND PRACTICES AROUND AGE AT MARRIAGE

“In our community some girls get pregnant at home at the age of 13 years. This was different in the old days when girls would stay home till they are mature.” (IDI adolescent girl – Kapchorwa)

“Those days, girls used to marry at the ages of 20, 30 but now days, they marry at 15, 18years and even 12years.” (IDI father of married girl – Moroto)

“Nowadays things have become very complicated girls can marry whenever they want. Your daughter disappears and returns after sometime with either a baby or pregnancy. They don't mind the age they marry. They do things their own way” (IDI mother of married girl – Moroto).

7 Age range of marriage for girls is 14 – 18 years; for boys is 17 – 19 years.

As shown in Box 3, the most significant changes were reported on the age at marriage which was said to have gone down from 20 to 12 years. Further, on FGM study participants in Kapchorwa observed that unlike before when girls would marry immediately after circumcision, which was done around 16 years, currently some girls delay to marry.

Discussions with study participants in FGDs, IDIs and KII showed that child marriage is driven by multiple factors. Among them were social norms, ideals and expectations regarding the definition of childhood and transition to adulthood closely associated with femininity and masculinity, rites of passage. Marriage was observed to be an ideal which provide a generally accepted context for the child marriage. However, the “real” drivers as described by the participants were identified as more structural and institutional operating at community, household and individual levels. Community level drivers included modernisation in the communities (socio-economic transformation), peer influence and civil war and conflict situations; household level factors included household poverty, family background and home environment. The individual level drivers were largely associated with the challenges of adolescence, lack of life skills and pre-marital teenage pregnancy.

4.2 Social norms and practices associated with child marriage

The study participants pointed out a number of social norms and practices associated with child marriage including perspectives around the definition of childhood and transition to adulthood, marriage as the singular ideal for girls and boys and bride wealth. These, it was observed provide a broader and widely accepted context and justification for the existence and continuity of child marriage in the respective study districts. Study participants also pointed out changes especially in the practice of bride wealth and increased value of education for the girls.

4.2.1 Definitions of childhood and transition to adulthood

The study findings from the respective districts of both high and low child marriage prevalence show a divergence between the legal age of a child and social definitions of childhood which is largely based on sexual maturation and body changes for girls and boys. Majority of the study participants (over 90%) were aware of the legal definition of childhood being 18 years. The child was described as;

“A child is a person below 18 years old; The way we see it from 0-17 years old is a young person who needs our help.” (FGD Adults - Arua); “The exact age by the government is 18years which means that the child is old.” (FGD Adult - Kampala). “A child is by the constitution of Uganda supposed to be below 18” (KII District Official - Kapchorwa)

For the girl child however, all participants pointed out that age notwithstanding, sexual maturation marked by menstruation, development of breasts and physical stature as a transition to womanhood was more important in determining whether she was a child or a woman as reflected in these quotations:

“A child is considered by knowing exactly when he was born. But for girls we look at the breasts and that’s how we get to know if a child [girl] would be old enough for marriage.” (IDI father of a married boy - Bundibugyo). “a child is one who is not yet 18 years of age. If it’s a girl, if she has not yet experienced her periods she is still a child” (IDI Father of married girl – Bugiri); “Today if a girl is 12 years so long as she has got breasts, she feels she is old enough and she can no longer listen to the parents and she feels like she wants to go into marriage.” (FGD Adults- Bugiri)

The girl child’s adolescence is in this respect blurred by her sexual maturation rendering it non-existent for most of the girls in the study communities. This is interwoven with the passage of rites from childhood to adulthood (womanhood and manhood). There were varied views about the rites of passage relating to the transition from childhood to adulthood (womanhood/manhood). While in some districts there were no clearly defined rites of passage; in the districts of Kapchorwa, Moroto and Bugiri where the practice of FGM is prevalent, circumcision signals a transition from childhood to womanhood/manhood and thus eligibility or readiness for marriage as demonstrated by the extract below;

“Among the Sabiny a child is one who has not yet circumcised.” (KII Cultural Leader - Kapchorwa) . “Among the Sabiny FGM is done to girls at age of 12 or 16, 17 and she is now considered a woman.” (FGD Adults - Bugiri) “Girls go for FGM out of the pressure from the parents and it’s a culture that those who do not do it will not be fit for marriage. So once a girl is circumcised, she thinks she is ready for marriage.” (FGD Adolescent girls – Moroto)

In districts of Moroto and Kapchorwa especially in Kapchorwa, the practice of FGM/C was associated with early marriage. The practice was reported to be more prevalent in some parts of the districts and is desired for marriage and social acceptance; as uncircumcised girls/women are perceived as unclean and immature as was expressed thus: *“uncircumcised girl cannot share food on the same plate or even water with those who are circumcised” (FGD Adults, Moroto).* Study respondents in these communities reported that once girls are circumcised, they only think about marriage. FGM is an initiation ritual signifying that the girl is ready to start a family. In addition, FGM is valued because it brings new friend to the family and that parents may curse their daughters for not heeding to the social expectation:

“After circumcision, girls think of marriage. Circumcision brings new friends in the family. If a girl refuses to be circumcised her parents may curse the girl that she will never be stable in marriage, all the children she will deliver will die, there will be strange sickness etc...” (FGD teenage mothers - Kapchorwa);

Our mothers used to tell us that whenever they could get circumcised, they were forced to get married. They would get for you a man even when he was not your choice.” (KII Police Officer - Kapchorwa)

While some girls in Moroto district reported that girls who undergo FGM are under pressure from the adults, others reported that many girls go for it on their own and out of peer pressure.

“Once a girl hears that the rest of the girls have gone for circumcision in the other part of the area like may be in Kodonyo, the girl alone will go to that place to be circumcised without the notice of anybody including her parents. Many girls willingly accept to be circumcised and even if the parent stops her, she will find other possible ways of ensuring that she reaches the area. But also if you don’t circumcise, the rest of the girls will start to abuse you and nickname you “anguchungut” (uncircumcised). They start wondering why she has stayed to her late age without circumcision. those girls who have been mutilated will not accept to sleep together with the uncircumcised girl in the same room. They chase her away saying, what this “anguchungut” is doing here, go away, you feared to be circumcised. You can see even me a young girl has done it. How about you “Anguchungut”?” (FGM, teenage girls - Moroto)

They reported that girls are proud to undergo FGM because the practice confers social status and respect. Further, the circumcised women would be able to participate in public activities like meeting elections and other community decision making foras and performing cultural rituals - for example rituals associated with their son’s circumcision. However, study participants especially boys and girls in FGDs and in-depth interviews reported that the practice of FGM has gone down due to the enactment of the law in 2010.

“In the past, early marriage used to happen due to circumcision because the moment you are circumcised, they would assume that you are now fit to get married. But these days they have stopped female circumcision because of the law.” (KII Police Officer - Kapchorwa)

“now days, government has discouraged people from female genital mutilation because it has a lot of bad side effects on a girl during delivery...its illegal and if you are found, you will be arrested.” (IDI married adolescent girls, Moroto)

“Circumcising girls these days is not happening. I mainly saw it in rural places when I was in P.4 in Bukwa village (2008-2009). They were many. Previously girls who were not circumcised could not get a husband. Again in those times men used to pay more dowry (cows) for virgin girls and those that were circumcised but it has changed overtime.”(IDI adolescent boy – Kapchorwa)

“When a girl was circumcised she was expected to get married because it was a sign that the girl is mature and since it was done at the age of 15years it meant that girls used to get married at 15years. But now days it’s not happening anymore”. (IDI Father of married boy – Bugiri)

Some study participants however, felt that the law has driven the practice underground, where girls are circumcised in secrecy. From the above findings, it is evident that participants closely associated the move from childhood to adulthood with marriage as a solid marker of adulthood for both boys and girls. Below we further explore the intersection of childhood and marriage as pointed out by the respective participants in the study communities.



4.2.2 Childhood and marriage nexus

“eito telyenga” (what is not ready does not ripen)

The study findings reveal that the transition from childhood to adulthood especially for girls (in this case womanhood) is linked to readiness for marriage. Marriage and motherhood were reported as the normal routes for social recognition, identity and economic security for girls and women in all the study areas. The study findings show that marriage is the ultimate ideal and expectation for the girl child. Irrespective of the age, girls are expected to get married; and give birth. This is reflected in the definitions around the transition from childhood to adulthood – womanhood – as the following quotes illustrate.

“A child is one who is not married, unless girls get married that’s when they can be considered women but without that they are still children.” (FGD Adults - Moroto)

“When a girl becomes pregnant she is ready for marriage. I was impregnated at the age of 16 years and that’s when I got married and was still at school studying” (LH mother of married boy- Bundibugyo)

‘But in my culture I think a child is someone who is below 14. Because I see some of them getting pregnant at 14 and parents let them get married, and the bride price is paid.’ (KII District Official - Kapchorwa)

The close association of definition of and transition from childhood with marriage, is one of the drivers of child marriage. The expectation is that once one ceases to be defined as a child, she or he is expected to take on the position of adulthood and thus adhere to its requirements. For girls and boys, they are expected to marry and have children. This was internalised by girls, boys and parents, thus sustaining the practice of child marriage as means to becoming a proper woman or man. Further boys are expected to marry and start family but at a much later age and when they have acquired some resources to maintain the family. However a few cases of boys marrying at an early age as result of making girls pregnant were reported while others had married early because they were not in school due to lack of school fees

4.2.3 Pre –marital teenage pregnancy: limited options for the girl child

Pre-marital pregnancy commonly referred to as teenage pregnancy were noted to be a common experience for many adolescent girls in the districts visited and all study participants in all the districts pointed to rising trends in the incidence of pre-marital pregnancies.

“ Girls here get pregnant as a result of the films they watch that have violence and nudity hence end up getting involved in risky behaviours with their peers and so become pregnant. Also this issue of children’s rights has also caused early marriages since children are disobedient to their parents. However there are few cases of forced marriages”. (KII Religious Leader – Kiboga).

“There exist teenage pregnancies and early marriages and this is common among those aged 15-18 years mainly due to poverty and hard labour. It is a general problem. It happens in all sub counties and all religions because poverty cuts across every one being the main cause. However sometimes the parents force their own young girls into marriage. I would say the urban areas are worse off.” (KII Religious Leader – Rukungiri)

“ I delivered a child at home at the age of 17 and got married later The habit of producing children at home by teenagers is rampant in our community. It is on the increase because the children of these days have a lot of freedom-they do anything anywhere at any age. It is also perpetuated by the poor dressing and urban setting of settlements.” (IDI married girl - Kapchorwa).

“In the past days, if a girl got pregnant before the age of marriage she was even seen as a curse. And in the past days, the parents used to counsel their children, but today, most parents don't have time to counsel their children because most students spend their time at school and parents spend time at work and they don't get enough time for their children.” (IDI Adolescent girl - Masaka).

“It [premarital teenage pregnancy] used to be a rare case, in a community, we would even wish to see what kind of girl she is, how could one get pregnant in the presence of their parents? But these days it's a joke. They even give birth in their parents' homes.” (IDI Father of married girl – Rukungiri)

Study participants - adult males and females and adolescent boys and girls associated the rising rates of teenage pregnancy to girls' and boys' quest for fun, and girls' increasing preference for single life; increased children's freedom and unrestricted movement; bad dress code among the young people; young people's desire for sexual experimentation and happiness associated adolescence stage; boys lack of interest in school and drop out of school and later start chasing after school girls. In addition some children want to see their heirs before they die while others want to see their reproductive ability. Family situation characterized by parental negligence was also implicated to contribute to teenage pregnancies in the study communities.

There was a consensus among the study participants – both adult and adolescent males and females that the teenage pregnancy was closely associated with child marriage due to the associated social cultural stigma. They noted that when a girl gets pregnant, her chances of continuing education are limited and the only option is marriage.

“I wanted to study and graduate from the university and work in a big company like MTN but when I became pregnant my father refused to pay for me school fees and I lost my future dreams and got married. I want my children to study and work in good government hospitals as Doctors and Nurses.” (IDI Married girl - Bugiri)

“Girls may not be interested in marriage but due to circumstances of early pregnancies, they are forced to get married. Some boys also may not be interested or even ready for marriage but in cases where he impregnates a girl, he is forced to marry her in order to avoid arrest. That is how most child marriages in this community begin and they all agree there is no joy in marriage as most go into marriage because they got pregnant not because they wanted to.” (FGD Teenage mothers - Kiboga)

Negative perspectives around pre-marital pregnancy persist in the respective communities. Girls who become pregnant in their parents' home are viewed negatively, a disgrace, useless, wasted, worthless, a burden to their families, and are not loved and are isolated. They are despised in their communities with some blaming it on their mothers as illustrated in Box 7.

BOX 4: COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS AROUND PRE-MARITAL ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

“When a girl gives birth before marriage, she is a disgrace to her parents, she is seen as useless in a way that men simply use her, the boys are treated as evils who only destroy and put shame on families and whose lives are useless to the parents and the community at large (IDI mother of married girl - Amuru). In some instances the community feels for girls blaming the problem on the boys. She becomes a ‘laughing stock’ [despised] and a disgrace. Whenever she is seen with another girl, people start warning immediately. Boy’s name is written in the community’s black book.” (FGD Adolescent boys - Amuru)

Girls who give birth at their parents home are normally mistreated and stigmatized. The parents say this one has brought shame to the family... (FGD Adults – Kapchorwa). The community laughs at her. The girl loses respect from parents and community and the friends no longer associate with her because she is spoilt. Giving birth at home is more stigmatizing than early marriage in our community.” (IDI adolescent girl - Kapchorwa)

Girls are viewed negatively by their parents because of the burden they have to face; she becomes a disgrace to them on top of the burden they have to bear (FGD Adolescent girls - Arua). The girl is a disgrace in the society. The boys and men ran away and as a girl you feel rejected, depressed, thinking that man fooled you; this kind of a girl will always have a broken heart/ spirit. The community will look at this girl as wasted not worthy of any help. (FGD Adolescent girls - Arua). The parents reject her and say “let her live with her shame there”. You become a laughing stock (despised). The boys view this girl as a prostitute, wasted, and they abuse and laugh at her saying I have fully depleted this one. The man will pick a new girl and sees you as useless...” (FGD Adolescent girls - Arua).

“Here in Buganda it’s very bad to give birth when you are not married and that child is called a ‘bastard’. You are condemned for giving birth in your father’s home/compound. Even when you stay under the same roof with your father it brings sickness to your father so to avoid that, the girl should be moved away from the house (IDI father of a married boy - Kampala). Your parents will abandon you, you have to drop out of school and everyone in the community will be seeing you as a failure.” (IDI Adolescent girl - Kampala)

However, no sanctions or deterrents were reported by the respondents. Discussions from FGD with men and women revealed that parents have lost control and seem powerless to stop their children from having pre marital sex and pregnancy. Schools, modernisation of communities and children’s rights are blamed for the practice.

Harassment from parents and relatives coupled with the above negative perceptions create fear and stigma among the girls and propels them to get married once they conceive. Further, to cover up the shame associated with pre-marital pregnancy, the parent most often either encourage or forces or coerce the girl to marry the boy/ man responsible for the pregnancy. In this regard, pre-marital teenage pregnancy does not only cause girls to marry early but also the boys face the consequences of being forced out of school to marry. Of the 20 married boys interviewed about 40% were forced to marry the girls they made pregnant. Some of the boys from Kapchorwa narrated;

“I got married because I impregnated the girl; the parents of the girl reported me to police and was forced to marry the girl. So I accepted to marry that girl but it was not the right time” (IDI married boy - Kapchorwa). I impregnated a girl when I was 16 years and I was forced to marry her when she was 15 years but if pregnancy was not there, I would not be married.” (IDI Married boy - Kapchorwa).

This experience was not only unique for boys in Kapchorwa but also in other districts. The boys are forced to marry to avoid arrest/imprisonment and paying fines. Others go in hiding and migrate to other locations. As the girls, boys also were noted to experience stigma and social isolation in their communities as their moral integrity is put to question because of the fear that the boy would pregnant the girls in the community. According to some study participants most people were seen to sympathize with the girl's parents than the boy's parents because most of them deny the pregnancies and others change location for fear to face criminal charges. However, there was an acknowledgement from all study participants that girls bear the brunt of the negative consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancies.

Some boys noted that the girls are favoured – as some of the quotes illustrate:

“when a boy impregnates a girl, the society favours a girl.” (IDI adolescent boy Masaka).

“The girl's father may try to get you arrested when you did not intend it, you were having fun and it just happened.” (IDI Adolescent boy - Kapchorwa);

“only boys are jailed and yet these two may have agreed. Both of them should be punished to show some good example.” (FGD Adults - Amuru).

While it was observed that the boys are blamed for ruining the girl's future; it was clear from the study findings in all the districts that boys' opportunities remain wide amidst these challenges compared to the girls. The boys too acknowledged this fact. While both the adults and adolescents are aware of the negative societal perceptions about teenage pregnancy, the phenomenon was noted to be on the increase in most of the study communities.

The drivers associated with child marriage consistently point to the fact that the majority of adolescent girls have no choice but to marry due to the circumstances and conditions within their families and communities. These conditions include household poverty, gender based violence, family background, and peer pressure. The conditions are compounded by the deep seated social norms and practices that promote marriage as the singular identity for girls and boys in society. Further social economic transformation characterized by development of townships, access to media and increased market economy have changed the local economies and increased girls vulnerabilities to child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

4.2.4 Marriage as a singular ideal for girls

The nexus between social definitions of a child and marriage bring to the forefront the significance of marriage in the respective communities. In all the districts, marriage was seen as a valued aspect of life and the ultimate option for girls and boys that comes with social status and respect. According to the girls in the study gaining social status and respect; especially being called “Mrs Someone” (FGD Teenage mothers – Bundibugyo) is prestigious and an incentive for

girls getting into marriage early. It shields girls from being labeled prostitutes or seen as failures with problems prohibiting them from getting married. For boys it was mainly to have children and continuation of the lineage

“Some parents want their son to marry early so that by the time they die they will have seen about 4 or 5 grand children. (FGD teenage mothers - Amuru). Boys want to get married because they want to have children. (FGD adolescent boys - Bundibugyo). The extract below shows the importance attached to marriage and its significance in girls and boys lives.

Girls go for marriage for respect and social status; they want to be called Mrs so and so. This is because when they stay long at home, people start minimizing them. Others start calling them all sorts of names; they suspect them of hijacking other peoples' husbands. Therefore a girl gets married to avoid all these issues and she is respected in the community. (FGD teenage mothers -Kapchorwa)

Delay in getting married for both girls and boys is perceived negatively; an experience that is associated with witchcraft, “*lack of market for the girls*” and mental illness. Consequently, parents worry about their daughters’ failure to get a husband in future if they delay getting married. This was a view widely held in all communities visited. Such parents justified the practice as a blessing from God; that girls should marry as soon as an opportunity arises. In this regard, it was noted that some few parents still believed that educating a girl is a waste of time and resources since the girl will be married and thus do not encourage their girls to remain in school.

“The Sabiny community believes that a girl should not be educated; they are supposed to get married. Even if the marriage breaks the father will force the girl to go back because he might have taken the bride wealth. Some parents did not want to waste money on girls’ education when they are going to get married. They rather educate their sons (FGD Teenage mothers - Kapchorwa). There is also a feeling among parents that when their girl children stay at home for long they will fail to get married, therefore this leads to early marriage.” (IDI adolescent boy, out of school –Kapchorwa)

Similar views were echoed in the interviews and focus group discussions in all study districts. This belief has however changed over time with majority of the parents recognising and appreciating girls’ significant supportive role to their natal family. However, the change was closely linked to girls’ education, whose benefits mainly accrue to her natal family as shown in this extract “

A girl will get an educated husband. If she is studied she will have much experience. It's so important, their family will develop compared to boys girls always look back to where she comes from even if she is married. She will help her parents in future. Educating a boy child will help him prepare for his future instead of disturbing the parents at home. If a boy is educated he will be responsible and can support himself you see most of us are not educated so he will not come to ask you for bride price or land.” (FGD Adults – Bugiri)

This view was held by a number of respondents in both the interviews and FGDs with the adolescent and adults. Within marriage, motherhood and fatherhood was the ultimate expectation from girls and boys who are married. According to adult men and women, parents’ expect to see their grand children before they die and hence reproduction was noted as an indirect incentive for child marriage (for both boys and girls) as this quote illustrate:

“Parents want to see their grandchildren before dying thus forcing their children to marry and produce early...(FGD adolescents male, Amuru).

Having children was especially in reference to boys’ marriage seen as “*continuity of family lineage*” (IDI mother of married girl - Amuru);

“clan grows on seeing new born babies” (FGD adolescent boys - Amuru).

One of the parents (father of a married boy) in Bundibugyo observed: “*It’s too bad for your son to die without leaving behind a child*”. Such observations were also recorded in other districts by the adolescent boys, girls, women and men. Having children was also identified as key for girls;

Girls go into early marriage because they want to produce children. Girls may want to give birth and they rush into marriage.” (FGD Teenage mothers - Kapchorwa).

“Parents want to see their grandchildren before dying thus forcing their children [boys and girls] to marry and produce early...(FGD adolescents boys, Amuru). “Getting married is good because it helps you get children and also you are respected in the community.” (FGD adolescent girls , Budinbugyo)

Further, child birth was identified as a source of respect from peers, parents and community at large as noted thus

“Giving birth and working hard is my expectation from marriage. Marriage comes with respect from society and responsibility. (IDI Adolescent Girl – Kiboga). Getting married is good because it helps you get children and also you are respected in the community (FGD adolescent girls - Budinbugyo)

It is evident that marriage and childbirth go hand-in-hand and are key expectations of boys and girls in the respective communities. Marriage and child birth were said to not only to accord identity and respect to both girls and boy but also were seen as most singular expectation. Ugandan societies are patrilineal and thus the expansion of a lineage is at the core of the marriage institution. Thus child marriage though not desired is at the same time tolerated because it supports the very existence of families. Marriage is not only desired and expected but it is also enforced through particular practices like bride wealth among others as presented below.

4.2.5 Bride wealth: legitimacy and poverty

Bride wealth was reported by participants in the study as a cultural norm that validates and legitimises marriage across all ethnic groupings and all socio-economic backgrounds in Uganda. In most of the communities visited during the study, parent’s value for marriage was largely associated with bride wealth.

“Parents preferred to have the girls married to get some cows or have boys get married such that the few cows remaining goes for dowry and they are free from problem of dowry. Besides, children in the past used to stay with the grandmother such that the old woman would advise them. However, there is no more close advisor or supervision.”(FGD Teenage mothers - Kapchorwa)

“Some girls say before I get married they have to first have to pay dowry and in the process they wait for a man who has the money and marry at a later age.” (FGD adolescent girls - Rukungiri)

“Marriage in the past was not as expensive as today. To marry one woman today is as if you are buying a bus. Ten million shillings and if you have unpaid balance for like three years, it is like it earns interest. You will be demanded many more millions on unpaid balance.” (FGD adults - Moroto)

Some parents were reported to view their daughters as source of wealth through bride wealth. Others rationalised parental interest in bride wealth to the prevailing poverty situation in many households in study districts as indicated in section 5.3.2. According to majority of the study participants, the main incentive for the parents, relatives (uncles, Aunts) from child marriage, was economic largely associated with bride wealth.

“If a girl cohabits without informing her parents, some parents will be happy because that would be a source of income... (FGD adolescent boys - Amuru) The reason behind early marriage is the ignorance of some parents, lack money or ways to make money. Some parents expect money when their daughters get married.” (IDI Married boy - Amuru).

“Some parents force their children into early marriages in order to get material goods from bride price. (FGD adolescent girls - Kiboga).

“Some parents are poor so when their daughters get married to a rich man he can provide and look after the girl’s family. Bride price in form of cattle and goats is divisible among the family members like the brothers and sisters.” (FGD Adolescent boys - Rukungiri).

In some communities especially pastoral, bride wealth for girls in turn supports the brothers to marry as this boy noted;

“Most boys want their sisters to get married such that they can transfer the bride price to their in-laws – (IDI Adolescent boy - Amuru). In all the interviews, the sisters did not seem to benefit much from their sister’s early marriage.

Bride wealth is a widely accepted traditional practice in all the cultures in Uganda that cuts across all socio-economic groups as way of ceiling and legalising marriage. Due to its economic value, it is reported to drive child marriage as parents seek to gain resources for their respective needs and supporting boys’ marriage requirements.

Overall the findings show that social norms and practices associated with child marriage persist and remain deep rooted in total disregard of the law. It is evident from the above findings, that the definition of childhood of a girl child in relation to sexual maturation and body changes provides the general context for child marriage in the respective study communities. This definition is most important in the transition from childhood to adulthood and once labelled an adult or a woman/man, she/he is expected to behave and undertake the accrued responsibilities of the acquired status. The fluid definitions of childhood and adulthood seem to provide a foundation on which other norms and practices (such as the rites of passage, marriage as an ideal for girls (and boys) and payment of bride wealth) draw to justify either inadvertently or advertently the continuity of child marriage practice in the respective regions. While FGM is declining, it remains

a deep rooted practice in these communities where it believed to be the way through which girls are initiated into womanhood just like the way men are initiated into manhood. It accords to girls respect and social identity which allows them to engage in both family and community activities. This may explain its continuity despite the existence of the law and people's awareness of its negative consequences.

Marriage, motherhood and fatherhood were found to be core expectations and ideals for girls and boys. They are said to accord respect, identity and social acceptance to girls, boys, women and men in the respective communities studied. In patriarchal societies these are core social norms that sustain the existence of the lineage of a particular group of people. These norms are said to be internalised by both the adults, girls and boys who pursue marriage at the onset of puberty. All the teenage mothers interviewed said they chose their partners without their parents consent, had dropped out of school at either primary or lower secondary school level, a time when most girls begin experiencing menstrual periods, developing breasts and, experience change in body size. Further, parents desire for continuity of their lineage and status/identity that comes with marriage is seen as desirable by both girls and boys. Bride wealth though considered as a norm that traditionally seals marriage between the two families was reported to have changed to a source of income for poor families who force their daughters into marriage for poverty reasons.

4.3 Structural and institutional drivers

Structural and institutional drivers at community, household and individual levels were identified by study participants in the various districts as key drivers of child marriage as discussed below.

4.3.1 Community related drivers

Community level factors are factors that increase girls and boys vulnerability and risk to child marriage and teenage pregnancy based on community and social environments. In this study, community level factors associated with child marriage in the different regions visited included; socio-economic transformation/modernisation; peer influence and civil war/conflict situations. Apart from civil war and conflict which were commonly cited in Arua, Amuru and cattle rustling in Moroto and Kapchorwa districts, the other community related drivers cut across all the study districts irrespective of the prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancies. The difference between the two regional categorisations (high and low prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy) was on the poverty status and education opportunities for girls. Districts with high prevalence rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancies are located in regions with a large proportion of the population who are either poor or vulnerable to poverty (insecure) (ranging from 45% to 90%)⁸, with limited education opportunities for girls. This is reflected in the low completion rates ranging between 14% (for Moroto) 64% with the exception of Kapchorwa which has over 100% (112% for girls) completion rate.⁹

8 MoFPED, 2014

9 MoES, 2013

Socio-economic transformation – characterized by growth of small village townships and establishment of disco/video halls and internet cafés in townships showing pornographic materials (movies and dances); and changes in the dress code was blamed for influencing adolescents to engage in risky behaviours – including early sex and marriage. All the parents were concerned about the dress code of young people – short and skimpy dresses and the unrestricted movement of girls to video halls and dances where they meet men and boys who lure them into sex and marriage. It was reported that boys who drop out of school to engage in business (especially motorcycle riders commonly known as ‘boda boda’ riders), entice the girls with money and material things leading to pregnancy and child marriage.

“In the small towns that have developed in the villages, girls get pregnant as a result of the films, movies they watch that have violence and nudity hence end up getting involved in risky behaviours with their peers. In areas that have cinema halls those issues [child marriage and teenage pregnancy] are on the increase. Most boys when they reach a certain age may drop out of school and engage in some business and get some money. In the end they deceive these young girls and later make them pregnant. (KII Religious Leader - Kiboga). Girls are enticed by small petty gifts like phones as well watching wrong movies and trying out what they have seen, which drives them into early marriages.” (IDI adolescent girl - Kiboga).

The issue of girls’ unrestricted movement to attend discos and watch movies was reported in all the districts as one of major drivers for child marriage and pre-marital pregnancy. This was associated with the issue of children’s rights, where parents have lost control as the children demand for their rights. In addition, parents lamented over adoption of western culture which they said had led to moral decay among the young people. According to one religious leader in Kiboga district;

“this issue of children’s rights has also contributed to child marriage, children are disobedient to their parents, they move in and out of home anyhow and at any time of the day.” (Religious leader - Kiboga).

Another religious leader in Rukungiri noted that the freedom, availability of sexuality information and condoms encourages young people to engage in early sex.

“Things have changed due to socio-economic development, there is a lot of freedom and the dot com era, the youths want to attain a lot in a very short period unlike in the past. The issue of early marriage has increased because the government itself avails information and other facilities such as free condoms, which instead encourages the youth to indulge in sexual activities and the long term consequence is early marriages. In other words, the youths are comfortable and not pushed to do important things.” (KII Religious leader – Rukungiri).

“Child marriages are very common and on the increase mainly because of the family situation and parental negligence which is caused by children’s rights. Even if you try to talk to the children they go to report to the police. Times have changed where children belonged to the community and any one could punish them if found in the wrong which is not the case today. So children just do what they want and some parents abuse you if you try to advise or punish their children.” (FGD Adults - Kiboga).

Peer influence was cited by majority of study participants (adults and adolescent boys and girls) in the interviews and focus group discussions as a major driver for a large proportion of child marriage cases. Girls were particularly noted to lack the skills to resist the influence of their peers, boys’ and men’s sexual invitations.

“Desire for too much happiness, admiring things they cannot afford, and love for money are some of the things that lead young girls into traps. Some girls who come from rich families are given all they need and girls from poor families admire them and have to find ways to acquire such things and the outcomes are pregnancies and HIV.” (FGD Adults - Kiboga). “Those that are interested compare themselves with their peers who are doing well in marriage they are also compelled to get married.” (FGD adolescent girls - Kiboga).

“Many times girls admire what their peers have and they think getting married will be the solution and they end up getting marriage early.” (FGD adolescent girls - Amuru). When a girl visits boy in his house and sees the good stuff, she will eventually be convinced to get married.” (FGD Teenage mothers - Amuru). “Peer pressure makes legal age of marriage irrelevant. We teach our children in vain because of bad groups. Children leave home for town and mix up with wrong groups..’ (FGD Adults - Amuru).

“Girls get married because of peer groups, other girls tell them that marriage is good and thus she ends up getting married also.” (FGD adolescent girls - Budinbugyo).

“Girls and boys marry when they are young just because of peer groups in school that result into pregnancy.” (KII, Cultural leader – Kapchorwa). “When girls see friends who have married and they just follow.” (IDI adolescent boy - Kapchorwa).

Civil war and conflict situations: In Northern Uganda, child marriage was associated with the two decades of war burden which heavily crippled the social and economic fabric of the region and caused excessive poverty, and forced many households into the camps. There was break down in the family system and structures; many children dropped out of school, people were forced to live in crowded spaces. Consequently, some parents had to let their girls marry to secure some money; and prevent them from engaging in prostitution. The study participants however observed that with the return of peace which allowed people to return to their homes supported with education and sensitization from non-governmental organizations, child marriages have reduced. People are able and want their children to study. However, in Amuru district, the adolescents reported that there was a problem of land grabbing where children are withdrawn from school to dig and scare away land grabbers; which they noted was so boring for them and propelled them to get married early.

“Child marriage was very common during the camp time. Because of poverty, children could not go to school. The problem was brought by IDP camp life where resources were so scarce and girls saw that staying at home was really hard so they got married early. I may be forced to let her go to bring for me some money. Life has changed with the movement away from the camps and increased support from many NGOs which teach people to change behaviours for the better. These days people have resources though limited and every parent want their children to study. So there is a good change.” (FGD Adults - Amuru). “I expected my daughter to get married at 20 years and above but it didn’t happen because of camp life and my daughter got married at 14 years because I thought if delayed her she would be a prostitute.” (IDI mother of married Girl – Amuru).

Further, in Amuru and Moroto districts, limited accessibility to secondary schooling characterised by long distances to school and poor performance were also cited as barriers to girls’ participation in education; thus a cause for girls to drop out of school and end up getting married early. It was observed that when girls and boys drop out of school, they find marriage as the only alternative to education because of limited options.

In the Eastern region of Uganda (Moroto and Kapchorwa districts) cattle rustling is blamed for causing poverty in the area; and hence parents marry their daughters early not only in search for wealth – cows for themselves but also their sons’ bride wealth. Parents also reported inability to raise funds to pay their children’s schooling. Other community related drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancy included harassment by rich men and boys on the way to and from school.

4.3.2 Household/family as a mediating site for either early or delayed age at marriage

The study findings indicate that household conditions, structure and form are pivotal forces for either child marriage or delayed age at marriage. The findings show that the household or family is a mediating site that has both positive and negative effects on child marriage – pointing to the socio-economic status (household poverty and level of education) of the natal family and parental support, care and guidance as key forces driving child marriage in all the study districts. The families’ role in sustaining the practice of child marriage was linked to parents who were reported to either withdraw their girls from school and married them off or created difficult conditions and unsafe home environment that propelled girls to run away from home opting for early marriage.

Household poverty - withdrawing children from school was attributed to household poverty that create parents’ inability to afford education costs including school fees and scholastic materials such as uniform, stationery among others and provision of basic needs to the girls. Across all categories of study participants, it was noted that poverty stricken families have more cases of child marriage. While for some families girls are seen as a source of wealth, in other families girls are an economic burden – especially supporting their continued education. Consequently lack of school fees and support towards other material needs was reported as key drivers of child marriage. Most participants stressed that financial constraints to pay school fees and provide other essential materials to the girls often cause tension and conflict in homes – leading to harassment of children (especially girls) forcing them to run away and get married. These sentiments are described in the following quotes;

“Because some parents may not have fees to educate their girls, most of those girls get married due to lack of fees. At home when a girl demands for assistance and she is harassed she may decide to get married instead.” (FGD adolescent boys - Kapchorwa) “At times girls in this area get married when they lack school fees.” (FGD Teenage mothers –Kapchorwa.) “child marriage is due to poverty, a girl is driven by the harsh conditions at home. She gets a boy friend who has money to care of her and then eventually gets married.” (IDI adolescent girl - Kapchorwa)

Household poverty was further noted to cause young girls to engage in transactional sex with wealthy boys and men who could meet their material /basic necessities including meeting the cost of their education (school fees payment), that later culminated into teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Boys too who drop out of school due to lack of school fees, marry at an early age as this voice from one of the parents illustrate;

"It is just lack of money that causes the early marriages. I really wanted my son to finish school but as you know we lacked money to keep him in school." (IDI father of married boy - Bundibugyo).

Over 80% of the interviewed married boys said they married early because they were not in school due to lack of school fees. Similar sentiments around household poverty as a key driver for child marriage were recorded in the interviews and focus group discussion for adults (men and women), adolescent boys and girls and key informants in all the study sites. One of the adolescent mothers (married) in Kampala narrated her marriage trajectory (Box 4).

BOX 5: A 19 YEAR OLD MARRIED TEENAGE GIRL WAS FORCED INTO MARRIAGE DUE TO POVERTY

Stopped in primary 5, my mother (Single mother, separated) was not working, I lacked school fees and they would chase me out of school every school term. Time came when my mother told me to sit home and wait when she gets the money then I would go back to school. After waiting for some time and there was completely no money and I decided to come to Kampala with my sister in 2009. I was working in a hotel and that's where the man found me and persuaded me to marry him. By then I was 14 years old, I didn't want to sleep around with different men, I had no school fees to return to school so I decided to get married. I thought by getting married I would get peace but I didn't get what I wanted. Life was not easy because the man that I married was also young (26 years and stopped in Primary 7), I was not treated well, life became hard, just struggling, he used to beat me, and he never wanted to be blamed for anything. He has stopped beating me, maybe he has grown up in his heart. I knew that when I marry, my husband and I would get money build ourselves a home or do something for ourselves but things refused. In my home area girls get married when they are old but I was just forced by the conditions.

According to how my mother was the conditions forced me to get married early, to start working while young but I never wanted I wanted to study and be like other people. I have hopes of going back to school if my husband allows me, if he doesn't then there is no way I can go back to school. My mother was not happy but because of the conditions she let things go like that. When she saw that school was no more and when I introduced to her my husband she said it's was ok. My husband took for her a few things and promised that he would go back for introduction but he was just paying a visit. He has never gone back. Most of them don't know that am married because my uncles did not take the responsibility of knowing whether they have children that needed help like pay the school fees that forced me not to take the responsibility of showing them my husband because they also abandoned me.

I admire women who have educated their children to higher levels. I didn't study that much but I wish I could educate my child to the highest level she can reach. I think I need to work hard to be able to pay school fees for my child such that she doesn't be like me. I don't support a girl to get married when she is still young because they go through a lot of difficulty - a husband looks at you like a child, treats you like his daughter, he can't respect you

When girls (and boys) are not in school, the only option is marriage as many participants noted;

“Girls marry early because they have dropped out of school and feel they have nothing to do. They often look to marriage.” (IDI Adolescent boy – Arua).

The findings reveal that poverty increases girls’ vulnerability to intergenerational sex where rich men take advantage of the poor girls – by enticing them with materials things and promises of support. Women and men in Amuru district noted that;

“Money is used as the bait and the young girls can’t resist this bait. Men and boys use tricks like getting girls drunk to lure them into sex, the girls get pregnant and get married. Some girls just realize the mistake they have made sleeping with a boy and decide to get married to that boy.” (FGD Adults – Amuru).

Family background - characterised by the level of education, marriage type and status as well as life style were noted as key determinants of child marriage in many communities. A number of participants noted that education of the parents was very crucial in delaying girls’ entry into marriage. They noted that ignorant, non educated parents often do not see the value of education and therefore are reluctant to invest their efforts in the girls’ schooling. The background of the mothers was noted to be particularly influential in a girl’s life. It was revealed that girls whose mother married early, and had low levels of schooling were more vulnerable to child marriage than those girls whose mothers are highly educated and therefore married late (18 years and above). For all the married girls interviewed from both rural and urban areas; their mothers got married at an early age – ranging between 14 - 20 years and had low levels of education.

“If the mother married early, the girls also will marry early. The girls usually emulate their mother and if there are small resources for school fees the better...” (FGD Adults Amuru)

“When the father or the mother is not educated, they do not see the value of education and they say, for us we never went to school, aren’t we surviving... Parents who have low levels of education do not see the benefits of educating girls..” (IDI adolescent boy –Kapchorwa)

“They are idle and poor and parents are not supportive enough. There is a lot of ignorance because of little or no education at all and people don’t look at the negative side of their children running into marriage at a young age, parents do not give enough care to the girls which cause them to end up being attracted into marriage.” (IDI married girl - Rukungiri)

On marriage types, child marriage cases were reportedly common in polygamous families. Such families are poor and cannot maintain their children as the adolescent boys from Amuru explained:

“Most girls who marry early come from poor families that cannot maintain their children. They are from polygamous families which do not bother about children’s education and future, characteristically these are households of drunkards with the desire for luxury.” (FGD adolescent boys – Amuru).

“Usually the girls that go into early marriage are those that are from polygamous homes and extended families.” (FGD Teenage mothers - Bundibugyo). “The poor families, families where the man drinks a lot of alcohol, the family is ignorant, if they have not gone to school, then that family is disorganized and thus the girls there usually get married early.” (FGD adolescent girls - Bundibugyo).

Child marriage was further reported to be common in household of single parents – either male or female – as well as child headed households. These households or families were noted to be financially constrained to adequately provide for their children with all the necessities of life. For instance, the *“single fathers need help in homes and garden work from women and they force their sons to marry early...”* (FGD adolescents boys - Amuru).

Home environment - characterized by parental support, care and guidance was reported to be pivotal in creating a favourable environment for girls to remain in school and delay marriage. However, majority of the study participants – adults (men and women), adolescent boys and girls and key informants observed that most parents especially fathers have neglected their roles of guiding and supporting their children. Parents were criticised for failing to provide information to their children, consequently, girls are ignorant or have limited information on the dangers of early sex and marriage. The lack of guidance was also linked to the breakdown in family systems – where in the past grandparents guided children; parents closely monitored and supervised their children and were involved in the marriage arrangements especially in deciding the nuptial family; all of which was noted to have faded away/eroded.

“Besides, children in the past used to stay with the grandmother such that the old woman would advise them. However, these days there is no more close guidance and supervision of children. In the past, the parents would advise their children about marriage. They would decide which family to marry from (for both girls and boys) but now as long as you meet on the way you get married...” (FGD Adults - Kapchorwa).

Gender based violence was noted to be a common occurrence in many families in the study communities, leading to marital instability and harassment of children. The findings show that children from unstable and broken families lack care and guidance; girls are overwhelmed with household chores and responsibilities, which compels them to run for marriage.

“Broken families where the mother or father cannot take care of the children pushes the girl into early marriage. The parents no longer cater for needs of the family. The mother goes her way, and the father does not care, the girl is left with children. Hence she prefers to start her own family, instead of struggling at home.” (FGD Teenage mothers –Kapchorwa)

“Some parents may not be living together and the girl child feels overwhelmed with home chores. And the first man to convince her will marry her irrespective of the age. Girls drop out of school from P.5 and run to men. The blame is also on us parents; we do not tell, teach our children key things in life. Behaviours of parents like fights and quarrels, drinking, and insults are disgusting to children. They often run away from those bad parental habits to only end up in marriage.” (FGD Adults - Amuru). *Some parents will keep quarrelling all the time making your life even harder to stay at home, you decide to go for marriage.”* (FGD Teenage mothers - Amuru). *“Drinking is another reason why parents want their girls married because they believe that school fees takes away drinking fee.”* (IDI married boy - Amuru)

“These days girls go into marriage when still young at 15 years because of the hard life conditions.” (IDI adolescent girl - Kiboga).

“It is because of family problems and when the child becomes so ill mannered and thus the parents get tired and tell you to marry or get married. Others want to get grand children. Others also want respect of the in-laws.” (IDI, adolescent boy - Bundibugyo)

“Fighting and quarrels between parents lead the children into early marriages.” (Case Study, Female Teacher - Kiboga)

Marital instability was largely associated with alcoholism – where some parents are drunkards especially the men – come home drunk and abuse the children and their mothers. Such quarrels/fights and marital conflicts were noted to force girls to abandon the homes and opt for marriage. The problem of alcoholism was commonly reported in Bundibugyo, Kiboga, Rukungiri and Amuru.

“Some parents are drunkards and when they come back drunk and start insulting you saying that you are old enough to get married which forces one to get married.” (FGD adolescent girls - Amuru).

However, the presence of both parents in a home was emphasized, as effective parenting was viewed as complementary – where mothers and fathers were said to bring distinctive talents to the parenting enterprise. Box 5 illustrates the power of parental support as one of the young women narrated.

BOX 6: THE POWER OF PARENTAL SUPPORT IN DELAYING MARRIAGE

Jalia, now a Head teacher of Ola Ami Lobo Primary school, in Amuru district, attributes her success to the support and care from her parents.

When I started my studies, my father had a lot of interest in me. He bought all the school requirements and paid my school fees in time. While growing up, our senior female and male teachers would meet us in groups and give us advice. They taught us discipline and advised us to put much emphasis on studies. My parents also advised me about my growth and how I should behave, encouraged me to study hard and become a teacher.

In those days in the village most people did not like the idea of girls' education, they advised and discouraged my father to pay my brothers school fees and leave me home. I liked my father because he did not listen to their advice, he supported my education, care for me and encourage me to study. I became a role model to other girls because I would not miss school though I had to walk a long distance to school. I got married at 25 years, after completing my education.

My father was not quarrelsome person and was kind hearted; most people talked good about him so I also admired his character. My mother would cook for us very early in the morning before we left for school and we had food all the time. I wanted to be a teacher because my father told me he wanted me to be a teacher. So that dream did not die.

As shown in Box 5 and findings from other districts, girls who delay to marry get the encouragement from their parents because they provide for them the basic needs and encourage them to study.

According to most girls and boys, mistreatment at home forced girls to run away for marriage seeking refuge by starting their own families. The problem of mistreatment and harassment was noted to be common with children who stay with step parents and the orphans who stay with relatives. Orphan-hood does not only increase girls' vulnerability and exposure to mistreatment by relatives, but also girls look up to marriage as the only way of getting around with life.

"The type of home where someone comes from is important. Some girls are mistreated and neglected which forces them to go in for early marriage, some step mothers mistreat the girls and so force them to do work they cannot manage hence making them to opt for marriage." (FGD adolescent boys - Kiboga).

"Most parents mistreat their children. Girls who get married without telling their parents escape from home maybe because of the suffering they are facing at home." (FGD adults - Rukungiri).

"Young girls sometimes get married because of the conditions at home, sometimes they say there is too much poverty and they end up marrying off their daughter. Other parents harass their daughters, chasing the girls away and eventually they are discouraged and marry off." (IDI father of married boy - Moroto)

"I got married when I was 17years old and although I thought I would get married at 25years and above but I was disorganized by my parents and I lost moral for school because whenever I would come back from school in the evening they would start quarrelling that I was late and sometimes they would not allow me to go to school, I found it hard to bear the pressure." (IDI married girl - Amuru)

While the parents blamed themselves for failing to provide adequate guidance and education to their children (especially girls), others blamed children for refusing to listen to their parents' counsel. Children's resistance to parental guidance was associated with promotion of children's rights, which was seen as a threat to parental control and authority over the children. Parents appeared to have resigned their role of guiding their children – since physical punishment/ disciplining of children (corporal punishment) was outlawed.

"Some of youth no longer obey or respect their parents; they assume that whatever they do no one can stop them. Children no longer listen to parents; with children rights they just move around anyhow unlike in the past when their movement was controlled." (KII Cultural Leader – Kapchorwa). *"Children don't listen to the parent, once they fall in love they get married."* (IDI, mother of a married girl - Kapchorwa).

"Children today do not want to listen, they act with impunity. The issue of child rights has made it worst...in the past boys would come into the home of girls with the knowledge of the parents through their mediators. The girl would inform their the parents about their marriage plans, but these days it is a surprise attack like rebels, you just realize later that the girl is already at her new home from the neighbours or brothers..." (FGD adults - Amuru).

"Some girls decide for themselves that they want to get married even if you tell them that you want them to study because to them they consider themselves mature to enter marriage and at this time parents don't have much to do or sometimes parents try to guide their children but they refuse to listen as they want marriage and then parents give up." (FGD adults - Kiboga)

The living arrangements - of some households increase the risk of girls and boys to engage in early sex and marriage. Study participants revealed that for some homes, children stay with parents in crowded houses – sleeping in one room with the children, which exposes the children to parents’ marital liaisons. In Amuru district such situations were associated with the war and camp life – where families lived in one roomed houses with limited privacy. Situations of crowded living arrangements were also reported to be common in the urban areas in Kampala– among the urban poor who live in slums.

4.3.3 Individual level drivers

Individual-level drivers identified by the study participants were linked to adolescent growth and development, exposure and interest to marry before 18 years. Growth and development during adolescence was associated with adventure and engagement in illicit sex which exposes young girls and boys to risks of unwanted pregnancy and early marriage. Study participants both adults and the young people (adolescents) acknowledged adolescence period as challenging with experiences characterised by passion, desire for happiness, attraction to the opposite sex, sexual exploration and peer pressure – all of which was reported to cause them to engage in early sex leading to early pregnancy and child marriage. Box 6 below gives some extracts of study participants’ views on adolescent experiences.

BOX 7: STUDY PARTICIPANTS PERSPECTIVES OF ADOLESCENCE PERIOD AND CHILD MARRIAGE

“The passion and the desire in adolescence period makes boys marry girls below 18years to involve in early sex.” (IDI Adolescent boy – Arua).

“Some stubborn youths of twenty years and above will think of approaching girls of twelve years old who do not have resisting skills and maturity...” (FGD Adolescent boys – Amuru).

“Adolescence period is challenging for the young people especially girls, children want to adventure into sex, and what they see adults do...” (FGD Adolescent boys – Amuru)

Early marriages nowadays are a result of group influence among girls and boys. A girl finds herself married without resisting because boys know how to convince and trick them (IDI Mother of a married boy, - Kapchorwa).

“Girls are leaving school at 15years because girls grow faster and they think they are mature enough and this trend is increasing in the area.” (FGD Adolescent girls – Amuru).

“Today if a girl is 12 years so long as she has got breasts, she feels she is old enough and she can no longer listen to the parents and she feels like she wants to go into marriage.” (FGD Adults- Bugiri)

Limited access to information and guidance on sexuality and marriage

Girls were particularly described to lack skills to resist boys and men's sexual invitations and tricks. The lack of skills could be attributed to either lack or limited access to education and training on sexual and reproductive health matters. Study findings reveal limited provision of counselling and guidance to children on sexuality marriage issues. They attributed this to the diminished role of paternal aunts and grandparents whose duties included providing sex education to the young girls and boys. Most of the married boys and girls testified to having had no advice and guidance on sexuality and marriage issues. A few girls either consulted their mothers on menstruation and received information in form of warnings against interaction with boys with emphasis on abstinence, teenage pregnancy, STIs including HIV; problems associated with early marriage. The mother was noted to be a key source of information to children especially girls. Fathers were rarely seen as sources of information on sexuality issues; boys usually consulted their peers and other relatives. The selected extracts below show participants' views on sources of information on sexuality and marriage.

"Such sessions of counselling existed in the past but these days parents, uncles and aunts no longer teach their children sex education and how to go about marriage. I did not receive any advice about anything from anyone when I was going to marry." (IDI married boy - Rukungiri).

"There is no one who provides some counselling to these girls. No one advised me about anything." (IDI married girl - Rukungiri)

"Many girls in this community and in this era get into marriage without any counselling and believe in doing everything right themselves even without any advice about anything because they usually date these men for some time. I only talked to my mother before I got marriage and she gave me some counselling." (IDI married boy - Rukungiri).

"My mother talked to me about pregnancy, she is the one that I had as a "senga"[paternal Aunt] and a mother. She told me how a married woman behaves and even after getting married she called me and we talked ." (IDI, Married girl - Kampala)

Those in school indicated having got information from their teachers on subjects such as HIV infection, teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Others said they got information from the radios, TVs, Newspapers and friends. The limited source of information on sexuality and marriage for adolescent girls and boys was noted to greatly contribute to pre-marital teenage pregnancy.

4.4 Platforms and social institutions

Study participants identified a number of platforms and institutions for addressing child marriage and teenage pregnancy. These include government institutions such as the police, community development and probation office and local councils. Schools were recognised as institutions for engineering change in attitudes and beliefs associated with child marriage. Study participants especially the adolescent boys and girls identified individuals who they admired and looked up to. These are a source of inspiration and could be used to challenge the beliefs and practices that are associated with child marriage. Civil society, cultural and religious leaders were noted to be gate keepers in reaching out to the communities on issues of child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

4.4.1 Government institutions and the justice system

Government structures and the legal system were acknowledged as key purveyors and enforcers of laws and policies on universal education, women and children's rights and protection from early marriage. The commonly cited laws include the defilement law on the legal age of consent (18 years), the law against FGM and Universal primary and secondary education policies which promote girls' education. The commonly cited structures which are known to handle child marriage issues include the Police, Local Councils and the family courts as illustrated by a few extracts;

"For child marriage she should go to police and report her case because there is someone in charge of family affairs. In Kamukya we have an office responsible for human rights you can go there report your case and wait for the proceedings." (FGD Adults - Kampala);

"If a girl is not willing to get married at an early age and parents are forcing her she can go to the police because it offers the best solution." (IDI Adolescent girl - Kapchorwa).

"For me I know that she can go to the police and report or can go to the local government or council and report, and also there is a network called "women's right network" you can go and report and I think they can assist you." (IDI Adolescent boy - Masaka)

Girls also reported that there are Senior Village Women that handle cases of child rights abuse in the communities to whom they report cases of disagreements on child marriage. Similar views were given by adults and adolescents males and females in all the districts visited. District leaders also acknowledge that laws, policies, and programs to address issues of child marriage and teenage pregnancies exist. They reported that they conduct sensitisation meetings in the communities about child marriage and other child rights violations as testified by one of the police officers in Kiboga.

"We have to go to the ground and sensitize the community about such issues by educating the parents on such dangers". (KII Police Officer – Kiboga).

These institutions though widely acknowledged by the study participants are reported to face severe capacity gaps in relation to limited understanding of the laws and financial support to facilitate movement to the communities and follow up of the cases of child rights abuse. Other challenges were associated with weaknesses in implementation. The study participants noted;

"We know of some laws that prohibit child marriages, but the parents stopped minding them because the people that are arrested are released after a very short time. There are no initiatives to deal with child marriages." (IDI father of a married girl – Bundibugyo)

"There are laws concerning defilement that is, any person that engages in sex before 18 years will be arrested. However, the law enforcers become mediators between the two parties and send them back to solve the problem after they have been bribed. Therefore they have not been very effective." (FGD Adults - Kapchorwa)

"There is a law that one should marry at the age of 18yrs and above. However, in the police force corruption is rampant and cases of girls are not well handled. The other party can give a bribe and the case is sent back to the village. Hence there is need for people to assist and follow up. I had a similar problem where my girl was hijacked and when I went to police, I was told to pay money for police to come There is need to involve government institutions, use local organizations to strengthen policies and deal with issues of corruption." (FGD Adults - Arua)

Participants reported incidences of corruption among law implementers of child marriage cases in all the districts. They pointed out that the legal system only worked for the rich who could afford the bribes as shown by some of the extracts;

“The community gets demoralized especially when they bring people who defile young girls but when these people are taken to court they are released so people get bias that the laws don’t work.” (KII Police Officer – Bugiri)

“The laws are there that prohibit early child marriages. Yes they work when you report to the proper authorities. Here at the sub country level you can report and make follow ups. However there is a lot of corruption at these sub country level.” (IDI mother of married girl - Kiboga)

“The laws are there, men and youth who engage in early marriages are arrested. However the police is corrupt and doesn’t arrest rich men. The existing laws should be strictly implemented especially by the police because sometimes when you take culprits to the police they release them without facing charges.” (IDI father of married girl - Kiboga)

Discussions from FGDs and interviews with parents showed that Police was reluctant to deal with child marriage issues and referred to them as domestic issues to be sorted out within the families. One parent reported

“I felt bad because I even took them to police but the police released them saying that girl is ready and loves her husband but I felt bad and I said that this government is weak but if it was the old government the boy would have been imprisoned to set an example for others. (IDI father married girl -Rukungiri).

All KIIs interviewed also noted the limited implementation of the respective laws and policies related to child marriage as one of the extracts show

“Most laws here are not implemented. “There is a high lack of follow up and most culprits pay off bribes to avoid being captured. The situation is terrible here. These cases only help the police to get richer”. People here don’t complain about the age whether it is high or low. People’s way of thinking and understanding is what should be changed. Personally I think the laws are fine but we lack people to implement them”. (KII District Official - Kiboga)

A number of religious leaders especially the Muslims raised the issue of conflicting laws where the Marriage and Divorce of Mohammedans Act of 1906 is silent on the age of consent and allows individuals to decide on the appropriate age of marriage as pointed out by one of the religious leaders;

“I know of some of laws that prohibit early marriages and pregnancy if a girl is below 18 years. However there are also some laws that allow children to make their own decision at 16 years so this becomes contradictory. When we report to the police cases of defilement, they tell us of others laws that say that if a girl of 16 years is defiled, it is not a crime because the girl is mature enough to make a decision I think we need stricter laws against these culprits since most of them run off and abandon the girls after making them pregnant.” (KII Religious Leader- Kiboga)

A number of study participants expressed limited knowledge of the law governing child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Many did not relate child marriage to the law on defilement which the police frequently quoted for them when they reported cases of child marriage. Others especially adolescents were not aware of any law against child marriage.

“Am not aware of any laws on child marriage and teenage pregnancies; the laws should be taught to children and parents to avoid receiving money and marry off their young daughters.”
(IDI Adolescent boy - Kapchorwa)

“I don’t know the law, they simply tell us to take the case to the police but they don’t tell us the laws.” **(IDI mother of married girl - Amuru)**

The limited knowledge and misinterpretation of the law of defilement was not only common among the community members but also among the law enforcement officers. According to one of the police officers in Kiboga district child marriage and teenage pregnancy cases are not recorded as defilement and that these cases are rarely reported. Discussions with men and women in the FGDs revealed that some parents neither report nor follow up cases of child marriage. Parent’s reluctance to report the cases was associated with the fact the perpetrators are not prosecuted as illustrated in the following voices;

“The law is strong but the parents do not follow up the cases of defilement on their daughters.”
(FGD Adults – Amuru)

I know some laws that prohibit child marriages, but the parents stopped minding them because the people that are arrested are released after a very short time.” **(IDI mother of a married girl – Bundibugyo)**

In trying to implement these laws at the local level, the challenges involve the parents who expect to benefit financially once they are called upon, in other words people do not want to volunteer even though it is for the benefit of the whole community in the long run. **(KII Religious Leader – Bundibugyo)**

In relation to FGM all study participants in the districts where it is practiced were aware of the law against FGM. They were aware that the law was enacted in 2010 and anyone involved in the practice would be liable to arrest and prosecution as stated by some of the respondents;

“There is a law on FGM and some women in Tumboboi were taken for 4 years in jail for carrying, aiding, and preparing for FGM.” **(KII District Official - Kapchorwa)**

It is evident that government institutions especially the police and local councils as the custodians and implementers of the respective laws associated with child marriage are the main source of recourse in the absence of any social or traditional mechanism of combating child marriage. Their inability to operate efficiently and effectively due to limited human and financial resources, endemic corruption greatly hampers their role in addressing the practice. Community members have become apprehensive and shun the institutions leaving the norm of child marriage to thrive unabated. These institutions, the police, local councils, probation officers need revamping, capacity building and resourcing to enable them perform their role. Community confidence building in the respective institutions should be part of the intervention to promote utilisation of the institutions and curtail the practice of child marriage. The Law on FGM was widely known by all the study participants, efforts should be put on making the implementing institutions more efficient and effective.

4.4.2 School as a platform for ending child marriage

Education provides knowledge and life skills and opens up future employment opportunities. Education of girls in particular has been associated with multiple benefits – economic, social and political gains to the family, community and nation at large. In this study all study participants in the selected districts recognized the greater opportunity for schooling that girls have today. This is largely attributed to national policies of expanding education, and in particular Universal Primary and Secondary Education (UPE/USE). There was higher social value placed on education of girls by the study participants. Education was appreciated for not only opening up opportunities for the girls but her family as well as the community as illustrated in Box 8.

BOX 8: INCREASED VALUE FOR GIRLS EDUCATION

“When a girl is fully educated she helps her parents, a girl child’s mind is with her parents. It’s valuable to educate a girl. If a girl is educated she minds more on her parents than the boy. A boy will care more for the girl’s family and the girl’s parents will be the ones to benefit from the boy.” (FGD Adults - Kampala)

“An 18year old girl should stay at school so as to study and open up her future opportunities, if the girl gets married early, produced early with no money to maintain the child is bad. Married girls and circumcised girls should go back to school because girls can concentrate on books after learning their lesson; educating a girl child is good because they acquire knowledge.” (IDI Adolescent girl - Amuru). Both girl and boy education is equal though girls seem to attract more respect and reward when educated. (IDI married boy - Amuru)

“These days an educated woman can do anything that a man can do. These days they are heads of families and institutions. In Kapchorwa the RDC is a woman.” (FGD Adults - Kapchorwa)

“I think the girl has more value because if the girl studies and works she cares about the parents more than the boy who mostly thinks about marriage” (FGD Adults - Kiboga)

All the study participants noted that education was a main incentive for delaying marriage beyond 18 years. They believed that delayed marriage provides girls more opportunity to acquire education and secure a job to support themselves and their families.

Related to this, was that girls who delay marriage and are educated carry higher bride price than those who marry early where in some cases it may not be paid – but instead some form of compensation/fine is given.

“Sometimes there is nothing given for girls below 18 years, or what is given is little in form of fines and small things e.g. clothes for the mother of the girls but the incentives for girls above 18years include cows, goats, money, gomesi, shoes, suits and chicken, the things are much more.” (IDI mother of married girl - Amuru).

“If you marry off your daughter later above 18years you can get more wealth.” (FGD Adult - Moroto)

A positive trend in perceptions regarding the return to school by girls who have given birth or undergone FGM was also observed among the study respondents. Most study participants, women and men and female and male adolescents noted that girls who get pregnant or marry at an early age should be given a chance to continue with their education. It was observed that girls who have undergone through child birth experience are more stable in school and likely to succeed. One of the girls who got pregnant in senior two and went back to school narrates her story in Box 9 below.

BOX 9: GOT PREGNANT IN S2 BUT CONTINUED WITH EDUCATION AND COMPLETED UNIVERSITY

I conceived when I was in S2 and dropped out of school, kept the pregnancy and gave birth. The boy who made me pregnant denied the pregnancy. After giving birth I stayed home, took care of child for a year and went back to S2 where I had stopped. I finished senior four, passed and joined A' Level, passed and joined university. When I conceived, my parents got mad at me but later calmed down. My mother has been very supportive, she stayed with child when I went back to school. After completing University, I searched for a job but failed to get one. I sat with my mother and told her my plans and she gave me some money to start this business. Friends have been supportive, provided advise, counseling and company. My mother stood by my side and I have gotten a lot of support from her. I do not have a professional job yet, but I have started a small business of selling clothes.

When I got pregnant my family neglected me, the community shunned me, everywhere I went, they pointed a figure at me, talked ill about me. This experience gave me courage and I said to myself that I want to be someone and decided to go back to school. Going back to school has saved my life. My experience has been a lesson to my siblings. They observed at how people isolated and pointed at me and learnt a lesson that if they take the same path I took (getting pregnant while in school) it would be an embarrassment to them. All my siblings are in school and others are almost finishing university, none has messed like the way I did.

My aspirations were to be a better person and a person people would look up to, a leader, and a role model to the rest of the people in my family and community. For my children especially my child and my future off springs, I think I will be a role model and I will make them what they want to be.

The above girls who returned to school after giving birth attribute her success to parental support especially the mother. A number of study participants named some girls who were married or who had given birth but later returned to school.

“Adolescent mothers should go back to school it is good because after lessons learnt there are no big mistakes, they are destined for success, these children are blessed by God and whatever they do prosper. (FGD Adults- Amuru)

“If girls who married /produced at an early age are interested to go back to school, they should be allowed. They will be able to concentrate in school since they would have learnt a lot from the past experiences. Education helps the girls/boys to be independent”. (IDI adolescent boys - Arua).

“It is good for girls to be given a chance to continue with education after child birth. We support it. An educated girl will always remember to take care of her parents. She can be self-reliant in future and also develop the community. The advantage of educating a boy is to develop the community.” (FGD Adults - Arua)

Similar perceptions were reported across the different districts visited. This shows the intersection between education and the incentives to delay marriage. However, study participants observed challenges that these girls may face especially feelings of shame and embarrassment as well as lack of basic necessities and school requirements.

“It is good for a girl who has produced while still young to go back to school although she will be ashamed when she is among those who have not. I have some friends who went back to school, and they are more determined than before they produced.” (FGD adolescent girls – Kapchorwa)

“It’s good for married and adolescent mothers to go back to school but people laugh at them while at school and so if government could come up with a way or set up their own schools”. (FGD Adults - Amuru)

“It would be good for married girls and adolescent mothers to go back to school but most times parents are already annoyed with you and will not want to help. The girls mostly feel shy and ashamed to go back like in primary.” (FGD Teenage mothers - Arua)

The reported value of girl’s education which also translates into an incentive to delay marriage offers is a window for changing the practice of child marriage. Further, the increased opportunity for education and appreciation for the return of teenage mothers to school offers a second chance to girls to develop their various capabilities. The challenges that these girls face when they return to school require pragmatic action to further exploit the opportunity of expanded access to education.

4.4.3 Role models as change agents

While child marriage remains prevalent in many of the studied communities, study participants both adolescents and adult men and women pointed out key individuals, families, politicians, leaders as their role models. These were mainly individuals who were seen to have succeeded in life, educated their children, are wealthy, are leaders and their children usually marry late (beyond 20 years). Study participants passionately described their role models and desired to be like them. Box 10 shows the different role models pointed out by participants:

BOX 10: CATEGORIES OF ROLE MODELS

“Yes I have a role model I like their conditions; you look at a woman the way she takes care of her children, educating them and you feel she is capable. I didn’t study that much but I wish I can educate my child to the level of where that woman’s children have reached.” **(IDI married girl - Kampala)**

“Mzee Yokasi is my role model, because he has all his children in school and he has his buildings in town where he earns lots of money.” **(IDI father of married girl - Bundibugyo)**

“Like the member of parliament and the RDC Kapchorwa – Jane Francis Kuka as my role model.” **(IDI Adolescent boy - Kapchorwa)**

“I admire Miria Matembe (and then Kadaga) because she is a lady who will always stand by her words. She doesn’t beat about the bush, she is straight forward, (Case study - Kiboga)

“My role model is Akol who stood for Member of Parliament I like her because I want to be a member of parliament.” **(IDI Adolescent girl - Amuru)**

The role models play a significant role in offering an alternative to the traditional social norms and practices associated with child marriage. Several individuals, families and leaders who had not conformed to the practices of child marriage were mentioned and admired by the respective study participants as shown above. Cultivating the influence of role models by encouraging them to share their experiences to the wider community opens up a vision of different possibilities for young people. The interaction between the role models and the adolescents may contribute to change in the thinking and perceptions about child marriage.

4.4.4 Religious and cultural institutions: Custodians of morals

Religious and cultural institutions are known as custodians of social and cultural values and morals in many communities in Uganda. In this study, religious and cultural leaders were reported to have the power to influence change in attitudes, beliefs and practices associated with child marriage in local communities. Institutional spaces like churches, mosques, cultural centres were reported as places where messages about child marriage are transmitted to the respective audiences. Places of worship were said to attract large numbers of people and thus were observed to be potential spaces for reaching to a large proportion of people as these religious leaders noted;

“The church particularly the Catholic and the Anglican have big congregations; they reach out to many people. We are with people, we have already set systems.” **(KII Religious Leader, Kampala)**

“Children here admire religious leaders because most of them are admired by many people, they behave well and most importantly they are obeyed by most people.” **(KII Religious Leader – Kiboga)**

This was confirmed by women, men and adolescents in all the study districts. Through the church or mosque, religious leaders both Christians and Muslims mobilise their congregations/create awareness among people with different messages for children/youth and adults. The main messages for the young people focus on abstinence and chastity urging them to avoid sex before marriage and highlighting the consequences of early sex (teenage pregnancy, STIs including HIV and early marriage). For the parents, discussions focus on responsible parenting.

“Christian leaders including Pastors, Reverends talk about child marriage, teenage pregnancy, in the churches. They give advice to the young people.” (IDI father of married girl – Bugiri)

“In the church, associations like the Mothers’ Union have taken charge to move to all schools especially secondary to advise girls to stay in school and complete studies before getting married and other pieces of advice.” (FGD Adults – Arua).

“Church leaders pray and provide information on issues of early sex, pre-marital pregnancy, marriage before the right time, guides us as parents on how to bring up well behaved children. They urge people to put in more efforts towards child guidance and endeavour to stop child marriages; that’s why when it is time for marriage we take them to church to receive counselling and blessings.” (FGD Adults – Kampala).

“Through gospel preaching in crusades, attending youth conferences. They [the youth] the girls and boys are taught about the dangers of getting married at an early age.” (FGD Adolescent girls – Bugiri)

According to the Muslim leaders who participated in the study, the Quran prohibits early marriages and encourages people to avoid child marriages (KII Imam Bugiri). The Imam emphasized that ;

“We highly condemn it because we want girls to be able to make the right decisions at the right age. We want the children to be successful like the female successful women in the country like the speaker”. (KII Religious Leader – Bugiri)

Another Muslim religious leader concurred with the Quran’s writing that;

“We try as much as possible to speak against such issues. However some people’s hearts are very hardened while others have no shame and end up committing these things. However we have tried handling such issues legally but have had little help. We teach children here about religious issues on how they can go to heaven by avoiding early pregnancies.” (KII Religious Leader – Kiboga).

Another religious leader observed that there was a misinterpretation of the laws and teaching. Religious leaders were also reported to arbitrate and handle disagreements around child marriage and teenage pregnancy; as one of the Muslim leaders testified;

“When family members do not agree on how to deal with a case of a girl who has eloped with a boy, or the girl is pregnant, they first go to the man’s family, if it fails they can approach religious leaders, and if that still fails they can go to police and courts of law.” (KII Religious Leader – Kiboga).

Cultural institutions such as the clan leaders, elders were reported to play an important role in educating families and young people on different issues including engagement in pre-marital sex.

“Cultural and opinion leaders [elders] play the biggest role in educating the masses than any other group because they advise you like their own and if you fail to follow they even punish you in front of the clan and community members. (FGD Adults - Kapchorwa).

The fire place managed by elders especially in the northern Uganda were seen as good platforms for discussing issues affecting communities child marriage inclusive. They are respected members of society.

The findings illustrate the potential of religious and cultural leaders in creating awareness and acting as change agents for addressing child marriage in local communities. These are spaces with a wide audience and big listenership. However, challenges of financial resources limit their movement and engagement with community members.





4.4.5 Civil society organizations as platforms for change

Civil Society Organizations are platforms for fostering change in social norms and practices around child marriage. Adolescents and adults interviewed identified diverse CSOs initiatives aimed at encouraging communities to delay age of marriage and support girls' education. The initiatives focused on community dialogues, radio and television talk shows; music dance and drama, financial and material support to economic empowerment of the needy families as well as provision of vocational training for the out of school adolescents and teenage mothers and legal aid. Table 4 shows the organizations addressing child marriage issues in the respective districts.

TABLE 4: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON CHILD MARRIAGE RELATED ISSUES IN THE STUDY AREAS

TYPE OF INTERVENTION	ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED	DISTRICTS	TARGET GROUP
BEHAVIORAL CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS			
Community dialogues/ sensitization meetings and gatherings	Straight Talk Foundation, World Vision, REACH, Red Cross, Action Aid Uganda	All districts	Young people, Parents, teachers
Mass media (radio, TV, Newspapers)	Straight Talk Foundation and local organisations	All districts	Young people, Parents, teachers
Music, Dance and Drama	Action Aid Uganda, Straight Talk Foundation	Kapchorwa, Moroto, Bugiri, Amuru	Young people, Parents, teachers
ICTS – TELEPHONE –CALLS/SMS			
IEC materials	Straight Talk Foundation, GREAT project, World Vision	All districts	Young people, Parents, teachers
Skills building and training	Straight Talk Foundation, World Vision, MIFUMI, VFO, GIDA, C&D, Brac, FAWA, Charity for Peace Foundation, TEENS Uganda, Save the Children, GEM	Bugiri, Amuru, Kiboga, Moroto, Masaka	Young people, Parents, teachers
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION			
Financial support to girl's education – provision of school fees, scholastic materials	World Vision, ANPPCAN, Action Aid Uganda, Brac, Save the Children, GEM	Kampala, Masaka, Kapchorwa, Arua, Moroto, Amuru, Bundibugyo,	Young people, Parents, teachers
Legal Aid	FIDA, MIFUMI	Bugiri, Moroto	
YOUTH PLAT FORMS AND NETWORKS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT			
Youth forums, youth groups	Straight talk, World Vision, Action Aid Uganda, GREAT project	Kapchorwa, Bugiri, Moroto, Amuru	In and out of school girls and boys
VHTs, Community Health workers	MoH, GREAT project, World Vision	All districts	In and out of school girls and boys, Parents

International organizations supporting these interventions include UNICEF, UNFPA and NUSAF.

CSOs play a pivotal role in both raising awareness to change attitudes but also provide services as a bridge to support especially teenage mothers and school dropout the much needed vocational skills. They are key players for engaging both the adolescents and parents to change beliefs attitudes and practices associated with child marriage due to their close proximity of their operation in the communities. Challenges noted in the study were limited coverage and lack of resources by the CSOs. Consequently they are not able to reach wider audience which is required to effect change.

4.5 Communications for change in child marriage practice

Communication on early marriage, FGM and teenage pregnancy is done through multiple channels or approaches. The most common ones cited by the study participants fall in five categories namely mass media both print (newspapers, bill boards, magazines, charts) and electronic (radio, Television), community dialogues and reflection (including music dance and drama (plays); Information, Education and Communication (IEC); peer education and ICTs. Of these communication channels, mass media particularly the radio was the most popular channel of communication in all the study districts as illustrated by some of these voices;

“Information of early pregnancy, child marriage, FGM is accessed through radio programs, churches and mosques, conferences, football competition, burial place and bill boards.(FGD Adults – Kapchorwa). It is accessed from Newspapers, Magazines, TVs like NTV Uganda. (FGD adolescent girls - Kapchorwa). If I want to know anything about child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM I can access it through television for example NTV, radio such as KTR (Kapchorwa Trinity Radio) station in Kapchorwa.” (IDI Married boy - Kapchorwa)

“The mode of communication is through Straight talk and drama plays. (IDI mother of a married adolescent boy - Amuru). Community sensitization, radios for children who understand radio programs and local leaders. (IDI father of a married girl - Kapchorwa). News papers and at school when they organise sex education sessions.(FGD adolescent girls - Amuru). Through sermons in the church we are taught about marriage. At school there are drama plays which teach us about marriage. (FGD adolescent boys – Amuru). We get the information on teenage pregnancy from straight talk magazines. (FGD adolescent boys - Amuru). Information is spread through news papers, dialogues, radios, music dance and drama group and straight talk clubs.” (IDI adolescent boy - Amuru).

Community dialogues/meetings and gatherings) were also noted to be popular because they offer a face to face interaction with the grassroots communities. Sensitisation is commonly done in schools, churches, mosques and burial places. Other organisations were reported to organise football competitions for the young people. These are organised largely by civil society organisations (see table—above). Organisations such as Straight Talk and World Vision organise school visits for the in- school adolescents. Government through the local government structures (community development department and local council leaders) also provides education on child marriage and teenage pregnancies and other child protection matters in the communities. Sensitisation focuses on FGM, teenage pregnancy, child marriage and other forms of gender based violence – especially domestic violence. Child protection committee members and Para

Social workers were reported to organize sensitization meetings for communities at village level. In addition to organisations holding meetings with adolescents in schools, the senior women and men teachers were identified as key sources of information for the in- school adolescents.

A number of study participants testified how these communication strategies have changed attitudes of people on issues of child marriage and FGM as shown by these voices;

“People such as myself have adopted to these sensitization. For instance I believed that if my daughter chose to leave school and get married I would not let go, my attitude has changed and know that it’s better to keep them in school so they may secure a good future. I also now advise my children to avoid early sexual behavior.” (IDI Mother of married girl – Bugiri)

“These platforms have spread information on the disadvantages of female genital mutilation and right now this vice has greatly reduced it’s almost unseen. Those who do it do it secretly (IDI Father of married girl – Bugiri)

The findings show that there are varied communication channels on child marriage issues with mass media and community meetings being most popular. Use of multiple channels of communication offers an opportunity to reach a wider audience.

Which communication approaches are effective?

In all the districts visited use of mass media – particularly the local radios was identified as the most effective mode of communication for both the adults and young people. In Bundibugyo, Kapchorwa, Kiboga, the study participants noted that a large proportion of the families have small radios and hence mobilising the grassroots communities would benefit from the use of radios. Further, community dialogues/meetings or community gatherings such as meeting people on burial places, places of worship such as the church and the mosque; music dance and drama; debates, youth meetings, peer education in schools through formation of adolescent groups were also mentioned as effective channels of communication on issues of child marriage. In Amuru district the adults suggested that training should be conducted for selected individuals from the community who will in turn sensitise parents and the youth on the effects of child marriage and teenage pregnancy through face to face dialogues.

According to the young girls, they need encouraging messages on radio, use of visuals such as pictures to accompany writings/text and charts. The young people also identified social media particularly face book among one of the ways of spreading information on child marriage issues. Other channels of communication that were reported to be effective included: seminars for parents and young people (girls and boys) to be conducted in the local communities (at sub county and village level) and in schools (primary and secondary) and newspapers. The study participants emphasised the need for training parents on how to guide their children on sexuality matters.

4.6 Suggestions for delaying marriage and reducing pre-marital pregnancies

The following strategies were given by the study respondents as ways to address child marriage

- Keeping girls in school: education delays marriage because at school one stays for longer period
- Use of peer education to reach out to the youth – Young people advise each other on issues of marriage and pregnancy
- Provide financial support for income generation to start business (to parents or the girls) to improve people's livelihoods or direct financial support towards education of the girl – for school fees and other school and personal requirements. Encourage the young girls to income generating activities to keep them busy instead of running for marriage and FGM.
- Provide technical and vocational training for those who cannot continue with education
- Ensure effective enforcement of the defilement law
- Build school specific for teenage mothers – because of the stigma associated with pre-marital pregnancy
- Invest in girls' education so that they can secure jobs before they get married. Prompt payment of school fees would be helpful.
- Girls should not work in risky jobs such as bars
- Parents should keep close to their children and provide sexuality education particularly focussing on the dangers of early sex and child birth and HIV/AIDS.
- Restrict children's mobility – limit visits to relatives during holidays, watching movies and going for dancing.
- Provide guidance and counselling for young people especially the girls on sexual and reproductive health issues; - marriage and sexuality, STDs, condom use for the those who cannot abstain; family life and job opportunities
- Provide girls with advise on menstrual hygiene and sanitary ware would support their retention in school.
- Provide support to child mothers to upgrade their education either through vocational training or re-entry into the formal education system.
- If the government can help them with livelihood programs, like saving groups, recreational activities for example sports
- NGOs and Health workers to provide young people with education on sexuality and marriage issue
- Engage the young people in activities that will keep them occupied such as drama groups which will take most of their time and these groups will be used to educate other community members
- Government should reduce on the time upon which all the dance halls, music concerts and night clubs operate.
- Improve our facilities like UPE and support girl child-education.



05



A SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS, POLICY AND PROGRAMME IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both the literature review and the field research highlight how child marriage practice has persisted amidst legal and social economic transformation in Uganda. Uganda's progress in addressing adolescent girls' and boys' vulnerability to harmful practices and violation of human rights cannot be underestimated. This has been possible through establishment of a supportive legal and policy framework for promoting children rights and expanding education opportunities with interventions across the different sectors of development including health, education, social development and justice, law and order sector. However, child rights violations and harmful practices such as child marriage remain a major challenge for Uganda. The practice of child marriage affects over 60% of the young girls in Uganda of which 15% are married by age of 15 and 49% by the age of 18 years. Teenage pregnancies remain high (24%) although statistics show a declining trend. This implies that a number of adolescent girls and boys are denied their childhood and their rights to exploit the expanded education opportunities. This inhibits girls' and boys' general personal capability and career development. Many are trapped in a cycle of poverty due the limited opportunities for employment.

This section presents a synthesis of findings and emerging issues and their implication for programming. Recommendations to address the drivers and content under which child marriage thrives are highlighted

5.1 Synthesis of findings and emerging issues

Social norms and practices associated with child marriage remain sticky

It is evident from the findings that child marriage and premarital teenage pregnancies remain major life experiences for adolescent girls in the studied communities. The continuity of the practice of child marriage is due to the sticky norms rooted in the traditional cultural perceptions about the definition of childhood (girlhood) and transition to adulthood (womanhood). It was clear from the discussions and interviews with adults (women and men) and adolescent (boys and girls) that the transition from childhood to adulthood are defined and constructed around marriage and reproduction. However, there was observed differences in what parents and adolescents felt should be the age of marriage for girls (18 - 25 years) and for boys (20 to 30 years) (injunctive norm) and the practice where most girls were reported to be marrying before the age of 14-18 years (the 'descriptive' norms).

In spite of the awareness of the legal definition of a child, girls' sexual maturation, body changes and physical stature are used to define the onset of adulthood (womanhood) – which is linked to marriage and child birth. In this regard, premarital teenage pregnancy was thus closely linked to child marriage. This subsequently provides ground for girls marrying at an early age. For the boys, the body changes signal the onset of adolescence and preparatory period to adulthood – through rites of passage such as circumcision in districts like Bugiri and Kapchorwa among others. In Kapchorwa and Moroto where circumcision of girls commonly known as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is done, it remains a deep rooted practice in these communities where it is believed to be the way girls are initiated to womanhood just like the way men are initiated into manhood. It accords to girls respect and social identity which allows them to engage in both family and community activities. This may explain its continuity despite the existence of the law.

The findings further show that marriage, motherhood (and fatherhood) are core expectations and the singular ideal for girls (and boys) – believed to be key markers of womanhood/manhood; which every individual (parents and children) aspires for. It accords respect, identity and social acceptance. In a patriarchal society these are core social norms that sustain the extension of the lineage of a particular group of people. Consequently, marriage is not only desired and expected, it is also enforced and sanctioned through particular practices like rites of passage such as circumcision, FGM and bride wealth payment among others. The evidence shows that bride price payment is a key incentive sustaining the practice of child marriage as it provides the much needed income for households, validates and legitimises the marriage union. These apparent social norms and practices provide a generally accepted context for child marriage. However, the study shows that there were other important drivers for child marriage related more to structural and institutional factors operating at the community, household and individual level.

Structural and institutional drivers strongly compound the practice of child marriage and teenage pregnancy

At the community level, modernisation in the communities (socio-economic transformation), peer influence and civil war and conflict situations were reported to sustain the practice in the study areas. The socio-economic transformation within communities characterized by growth

of small village townships that provided entertainment spaces for the young girls and boys was noted to increase girls' vulnerability to premarital teenage pregnancies and child marriage. This was linked to the promotion of children's rights and adoption of western culture which were noted to have influenced adolescents' behaviours – resulting into moral decay and children's resistance to parental guidance. Civil war and conflict in the Amuru and Arua districts, cattle rustling in Moroto and Kapchorwa led to the breakdown of the family system and social cohesion, poverty and destruction of institutions. These have been identified as the core drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancies in these areas.

At the household level, the study findings show that household conditions, structure and form are pivotal forces for either child marriage or delayed age at marriage. It was evident from the discussions and interviews with adults and adolescents that the household or family is a foundational site that has both positive and negative effects – in particular the socio-economic status (household poverty and level of education) of the natal family and parental support, care and guidance as key forces driving child marriage in all the study districts. Household poverty was not only noted to influence parents' inability to afford education costs of children but also for majority of the poor households, girls were said to be a source of wealth. In addition, girls from poor families were reportedly vulnerable to child marriage and teenage pregnancies through engaging in transactional sex with wealthy boys and men who can meet their material needs. Most study participants affirmed that poverty stricken families have more cases of child marriage.

The significance of the background of the natal family - parents and guardians level of education, marital status and form of marriage and life style in propelling child marriage was emphasised. Girls and boys with parents (especially the mother) with low levels of education, living with single parents, in polygamous families and had drunkard parents were most likely to get married early. Further, the families' role in sustaining the practice of child marriage was linked to parents who were reported to either withdraw their girls from school and married them off or created difficult conditions and unsafe home environment characterized by gender based violence that propelled girls to run away for marriage. Early marriage was seen by both parents and girls as an option to escape abusive family environments. The presence of both parents in a home was seen as indispensable, as effective parenting was viewed as complementary – where mothers and fathers were said to bring distinctive talents to the parenting enterprise. Other conditions noted to increase girls' vulnerability to child marriage included orphan-hood that predisposed girls to mistreatment by guardians and relatives, resulting into early marriage as the best option to offer them a home of their own.

Individual-level drivers were associated with the challenges of growth and development during adolescence amidst situations of lack of information and guidance on sexual and reproductive health and life skills to address these challenges. Consequently, adolescent girls and boys are trapped by the desire to adventure and explore the world around them; which exposes them to illicit sexual acts resulting into unwanted premarital teenage pregnancy and child marriage. Premarital teenage pregnancies were noted to be a common experience for many adolescent girls in the districts visited and a key contributory driver of child marriage as girls have limited choices thereafter. Teenage pregnancy was also reported to drive boys into early marriage.

Evidence from study shows that social norms and practices surrounding the definition of childhood and transition to adulthood, rites of passage and bride wealth payment continue to drive child marriage in most parts of the country. These social norms are however; amplified by other structural and institutional factors – in particular the social economic status of the natal family including household poverty, home environment and socio-economic transformation within communities. These, coupled with adoption of western culture and promotion of children's rights are said to have threatened and eroded parents' control over their children. The erosion of family control over children and total disregard of traditions has left communities powerless and unable to act on practices that they do not generally desire but allow to continue (all study participants concurred that child marriage and teenage pregnancy were bad). This calls for concerted efforts involving all stakeholders –community, household and individual boys and girls – to eradicate the practice of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The findings however, show some changes attributed to the national laws and policies and the work of civil society organisations. The following are the key findings and emerging issues.

Social institutions as mediating and foundational sites for changing the practice of child marriage

Household /family as a foundational institution: As noted above the family was noted to be a pivotal point in child marriage; either in facilitating its persistence or ending the practice citing the social economic status of the natal family and parental support, care and guidance, home environment as key forces driving the practice in all the study districts. Some families were noted to either withdraw their children from school and marry them off, or created hard conditions and unsafe environment that propelled girls to run away for marriage, while others who valued girls education kept them in school and married later. It is evident from the findings that as girls and boys transit from childhood to adulthood, household conditions, structures and forms are key forces in either sustaining or ending the practice. Family violence was seen to create situations of particular vulnerability to girls. These are compounded by the deep rooted social norms related to the definition of childhood and rites of passage are closely linked to womanhood and manhood.

Government institutions and the justice system: It is evident that government institutions especially the police and local councils as the custodians and implementers of the respective laws associated with child marriage are the main sources of recourse in the absence of any social or traditional mechanism of combating child marriage practices. Their inability to operate efficiently and effectively due to limited human and financial resources, endemic corruption greatly hampers their role in addressing the practice. Community members have become apprehensive and shun the institutions leaving the norm of child marriage to thrive unabated. These institutions (the police, local councils, probation officers) need revamping; capacity building and resourcing to enable them perform their role. Community confidence building in the respective institutions should be part of the intervention to promote utilisation of the institutions. The Law on FGM was widely known by all the study participants, efforts should be put on making the implementing institutions more efficient and effective.



School as a platform for ending child marriage: Education provides knowledge, life skills and opens up future employment opportunities and general career development. Education of girls in particular has been associated with multiple benefits – economic, social and political gains to the family, community and nation at large. In this study all study participants in the selected districts recognized the greater opportunity for schooling that girls and boys have today. This is largely attributed to national policies of expanding education, and in particular Universal Primary and Secondary Education (UPE/USE). There was higher social value placed on education of girls and boys by the study participants. Education was appreciated for not only opening up opportunities for the girls but her family as well as the community. The reported value of girls’ education which also translates into an incentive to delay marriage offers a window of hope for changing the practice of child marriage. Further, the increased opportunity for education and appreciation for the return of teenage mothers to school offers a second chance to girls to develop their various capabilities. The challenges that these girls face when they return to school require pragmatic action to further exploit the opportunity of expanded access to education.

Role models as change agents: While child marriage remains prevalent in all the studied communities, the findings from the discussions and interviews with both adolescents and adult men and women pointed to key role models who were mainly individuals who were seen to have succeeded in life, educated their children, are wealthy, are leaders and their children usually marry late (beyond 20years). The role models play a significant role in offering an alternative to the traditional social norms and practices associated with child marriage. Cultivating the influence of role models by encouraging them to share their experiences to the wider community opens up a vision of different possibilities for young people. The interaction between the role models and the adolescents may contribute to change in the thinking and perceptions about child marriage.

Religious and cultural institutions: Religious and cultural institutions are known as custodians of social and cultural values and morals in many communities in Uganda. In this study, religious and cultural leaders were reported to have the power to influence change in attitudes, beliefs and practices associated with child marriage in local communities. Institutional spaces like churches, mosques, cultural centres were said to attract large numbers of people and thus are spaces with a wide audience and big listenership. The findings illustrate the potential of religious and cultural leaders in creating awareness and acting as change agents for addressing child marriage in local communities. However, challenges of financial resources limit their movement and engagement with community members.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) as platforms for change: These were said to be important platforms for fostering change in social norms and practices around child marriage. CSOs play a critical role in both raising awareness to change attitudes but also in providing services as a bridge to support especially teenage mothers and school dropouts to acquire the much needed vocational skills. They are key players for engaging both the adolescents and parents to change beliefs, attitudes and practices associated with child marriage in the communities. Adolescents and adults interviewed identified diverse CSOs' initiatives aimed at encouraging communities to delay age of marriage and supporting girls' education. The initiatives focused on varied communications approaches including community dialogues, radio and television talk shows; music dance and drama; and financial and material support to economic empowerment of the needy families as well as provision of vocational training for the out of school adolescents and teenage mothers and legal aid. Challenges noted in the study were limited coverage and lack of resources by the CSOs to reach wider audience which is required to effect change.

Communication initiatives: It is evident that communication on early marriage, FGM and teenage pregnancy takes on multiple channels or approaches. The most common ones cited by the study participants fall in five categories namely mass media both print (newspapers, bill boards, magazines, charts) and electronic (radio, Television), community dialogues and reflection (including music dance and drama (plays); Information, Education and Communication (IEC); peer education and ICTs. Use of multiple communication channels appeared to be an effective way to reach a wider audience to create visible change. The most popular and effective means of communication identified was mass media – especially the radio. Further, community dialogues/ meetings or community gatherings such as meeting people on burial places, places of worship such as the church and the mosques; music dance and drama; debates, youth meetings and conducting peer education in schools through formation of adolescent groups were pointed out as key in driving change in child marriage practices.



5.2 Policy and Programme Implications

The key findings in relation to the drivers and persistence of child marriage practice in Uganda point to a number of policy and programming areas of intervention. The intervention sites draw on the key drivers including the deep rooted social norms and practices around the transition from childhood to adulthood, structural and institutional factors and social institutions that form the mediating and foundational sites for changing the practice of child marriage.

- There is need for interventions that aim at transforming social norms and practices around child marriage – with focus on the definition and transition from childhood to adulthood and values around marriage and child bearing and other practices such as bride wealth payment.
- While the practice of FGM appear to be on the decline in the respective districts, it is still valued and practiced in secrecy. Thus there is need for holistic interventions targeting all stakeholders especially addressing the needs of girls and women in relation to the sense of belonging and identity.
- A multi-sectoral approach to programming is key as drivers associated with child marriage span at least three or four different institutional sites including household, community and school. This also involves a number of sectors including health, education, law, social and economic development requiring targeting of multiple key stakeholders such as adolescents boys and girls, youths (males and females) and adults (men and women); government officials, civil society, cultural and religious leaders. Specific interventions targeting different institutional sites and sectors are required to address the issues sustaining the practice of child marriage.
- Given the often slow and uneven nature of social norms change, specific mechanisms should be developed to monitor changes in both attitudes and behaviours over the longer term – beyond a specific project implementation period; this can perhaps best be done by embedding simple assessment tools and indicators into local government planning and assessment exercises.
- Multiple communications channels seem to offer the best potential for reaching different audiences, with messages tailored to specific target audiences including adolescents (boys and girls) and the significant adults in their environments, such as parents and community leaders.
- Communications approaches that seek to promote positive changes in social norms and attitudes and behaviours should be complemented by other kinds of support to empower individuals for behavioural change as well as interventions for addressing economic vulnerability/economic empowerment. Greater attention should be given to the household/family as a foundation institution for addressing child marriage and teenage pregnancy.
- Investments in interventions seeking to increase knowledge and to change attitudes and behaviours should also be accompanied by similar strong and consistent attention to investments in service provision and economic empowerment so as to create the necessary enabling environment for such changes to take root and flourish in communities.

5.3 Recommendations

Give the multifaceted drivers of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, integrated, holistic programming is critical – one that focuses on issues of livelihoods, empowerment (economic and knowledge/skills) and employment, and policy and legal enforcement.

Strengthen legal and policy enforcement

There was a general consensus that Uganda has the required laws and policies to deal with the practice. This view is confirmed by the review of existing laws and policies on child marriage, gender equality, education and sexual and reproductive health issues. However, weakness in government institutions and the justice systems especially corruption was said to hamper effective enforcement of the law on defilement. In this regard,

- It is recommended that strengthening these institutions with interventions to deal with corruption and build peoples' confidence in utilising the institutions be prioritised.
- There is urgent need for a policy for teenage mothers to return to school that specifies the time when the pregnant girl should be sent away and allowed to back in school.
- Misinterpretation and lack of understanding of the law on defilement and its link to child marriage was evident. This therefore calls for massive education about the law and its provisions – for both the law enforcement officers and the community members both young and old.
- Strengthening the existing local government structures such as the police, probation office and community development for implementation of the laws and programs of ending child marriage. The local structures offer great potential for local government leadership and sustainability of programmes. However this demands continuous capacity-building and support to enable them monitor the programmes.

Programming for ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy

Given that child marriage and teenage pregnancy are driven by multiple factors there is need for an integrated holistic programming. Programmes that involve multiple actors to create synergy and address multiple needs of the communities are recommended. For example programmes that seek to strengthen access to reproductive health information and services in schools demand effective coordination between the health and education sectors as well as parents and communities. Programmes to address sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) require working with civil society human rights organisations, police and justice system, families, men, boys, women and girls, religious and cultural leaders.

Family and household institutional site

Interventions at the family and household level should address three aspects: household poverty, gender based violence and parenting.

- Regarding household poverty, economic/financial support to improve family livelihoods and enhance ability to keep children in school is critical. This could include enrolling the specific vulnerable households on the social protection programme, supporting income generating activities and provision of grants to girls' education – to cover school fees, scholastic materials and sanitary ware.

- On sexual and gender based violence, counseling and sensitization should be offered to families to address the causes of violence in families. Parenting sessions should be conducted to enhance parents' skills to handle children's growth and development issues including skills to communicate more with their children (boys and girls).
- There is need to engage with parents in relation to their responsibilities for children (care, support and guidance) especially encouraging parents to support their children's education through provision of basic necessities and following up their education academic progress.
- Massive education about laws and policies on children's rights to dispel some of the misinterpretations around these laws should be undertaken. Children should be sensitized about their responsibilities and obligations.
- Popularize and implement the recently developed national strategy for ending violence against in school and the girls education strategy.

Community Site

There is need for massive sensitisation of communities on issues of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and girls' education with particular focus on the sticky social norms aimed at changing the attitudes of men and women as well as adolescents. Use of multiple channels of communication will be critical to ensure coverage of a wider audience. These include communication approaches that will not only offer community members space for sharing views and perspectives but also create greater awareness and change in attitudes and practices that sustain child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The promising approaches that are preferred include community dialogues and gatherings, mass media especially radio programmes and talk shows, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and peer education. School outreach programmes can effectively reach the girls and boys in school.

Gatekeepers and role models as change agents

The findings from the field and literature review indicate the importance of gate keepers and role models in influencing girls and boys aspirations.

- There should be deepened engagement and targeting efforts around those who are known as 'gatekeepers' including the religious, cultural leaders and other local leaders such as the LCs. These are pointed to be key in mobilising large masses of people; they are respected and have great influence on peoples thinking about ways of doing things in society.
- There should be specific interventions targeting men and boys enlisting their support as partners in ending the practice of child marriage. These may include supporting and encouraging establishment of boys and men clubs and male champions.
- Examples of success stories of role models should be celebrated, shared and made more visible to girls and boys to encourage them to raise their aspirations beyond marriage and to stay in school. These could form the core system of mentors with mentorship programmes established in schools and communities.

Individual agency and empowerment

Empowerment and building of girls and boys agency was seen to be crucial in ending the practice of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The interventions should address knowledge gaps and life skills.

- There is need for scaling up the sexual and reproductive health education through the school system and the expanded work of the Village Health Team (VHTs). This however, requires sensitisation of communities to address the social and religious norms and taboos about imparting sexual information and provision of sexual and reproductive health services to girls and boys - in and out of school adolescents.
- Priority needs to be accorded to providing quality education through an ensuring that there is an enabling environment for learning for children in schools. Poor infrastructure in school was noted as a major issue for retention of children in school – and once they dropout – the only option is to get married. This means adequate classrooms; desks, school sanitation and water are needed as a matter of urgency.
- Provision of technical and vocational education for the out of school adolescents provides an alternative to child marriage. This should be supplemented by other interventions such as integration of skills training in the school curriculum and establishment of technical schools in the communities.



5.4 Indicators to monitor progress in ending child marriage

For effective action planning and implementation, a number of indicators to monitor progress have been suggested. The indicators related to the key issues identified in the study – in particular addressing social norms and practices associated child marriage and other structural and institutional drivers that were said to sustain child marriage in Uganda. The indicators are both quantitative and qualitative. These are detailed in Table 5 below

TABLE 5: KEY FOCUS AREAS AND INDICATORS FOR ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

KEY FOCUS AREA	INDICATORS
SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE	
Social Norms and practices	Definitions of child hood tally with the legal age of a child
	Changes in attitudes and belief – about the definition of a child and transition to adulthood -Marriage no longer the singular ideal for women
	Passage of rites transformed to empowering processes that build girls and boys capacities
	Bride wealth made more symbolic
	Extent to which community perception of childhood definition tallies with the legal definition of a child
	Percentage of women 15-49 who have undergone FGM/C
	% of adolescents (girls & boys) who believe that it is harmful to get married before legal age of 18 years
	% of key stakeholders (parents, community leaders, young people) who know about the harms of child marriage
	% of key stakeholders (parents, community leaders, religious leaders) who oppose the practice of bride wealth
	% of parents who say they will not marry off their sons and daughters younger than 18
STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DRIVERS	
Community level drivers	Control and efficient management of township entertainment venues ; bi-laws banning young people below 18 years in video hall beyond 5pm
	No of youths in community youth groups for in school and out of school
	Extent to which public entertainment venues have put in place measures to regulate access and use by young people
	Number of adolescent peers/youth leaders engaged in activities to prevent child marriage in the community

Family/Household	Reduction in household poverty
	Reduction in GBV, alcoholism
	% of households living in poverty
	% of communities with public activities on child marriage, alcoholism and GBV prevention
	Parents' perception of the value of girls' education
Individual	Percentage of families of unmarried adolescent girls who support their daughters staying in, or returning to school
	% of adolescents with life skills
	Level of knowledge about SRH issues – adults and adolescents
	Proportion of adolescent girls and boys who are members of peer groups and clubs that address life skills, protection, SRH issues
PLAT FORMS AND INSTITUTIONS	
Legal and policy implementation for effective and efficient delivery of services	% of men , women , boys and girls knowledgeable about the laws associated with child marriage
	Policy on girls return to school after pregnancy and childbirth passed with clear guidelines spelling out the when pregnant girls should be sent home and return to school
	Proportion of child marriages that were investigated by police/prosecuted by law/resulted in a conviction
	Extent to which policy on school girl pregnancy has been implemented
Community	% of Teenage pregnancy
Schools	% enrolment of girls in schools
	% dropout rate
	% completion rate
	Number of schools accepting re-enrolment of girls after childbirth
Religious and cultural leaders	% of religious and cultural leaders campaigning against child marriage and promoting girls education and delayed marriage
Role models advanced as a strategy for ending child marriage	% of role models recruited and actively promoting end of child marriage and girls education
	Number of role models and influential leaders and communicators (traditional, religious, cultural, political) who have made public declarations to end child marriage
Communication for change effected for end of child marriage	No of communities , schools , actively using different communication initiatives to end child ,marriage , promote girls education and delayed marriage for bot girls and boys



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ANNEX 1: INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COMMITMENTS ON CHILD MARRIAGE

Globally, violence against children is provided for in the following instruments (paraphrased for clarity in some cases), which lay down norms to be applied to marriage, covering issues of age, consent, equality within marriage, and the personal and property rights of women.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): Article 16 of the 1948 states: (1) Men and women of full age have the right to marry and found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966): Article 3 - The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the present Covenant; **Article 10(1)** The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children. Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses (2). Special measures of protection and assistance should be taken on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions. Children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation.

International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966): Article 23 establishes the rights of men and women of marriageable age to marry. It also states that no marriage shall be entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouse.

Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956) includes in the institutions and practices similar to slavery: Article 1(c) Any institution or practice whereby: (i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family.

Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages

(1964) state: (1) No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person ... as prescribed by law. (2) States Parties to the present Convention shall ... specify a minimum age for marriage (“not less than 15 years” according to the non-binding recommendation accompanying this Convention). No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interests of the intending spouses ... (3) All marriages shall be registered ... by the competent authority.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979):

Article 16 prescribes equally for men and women in marriage and family relations: 16.1(a) The same right to enter into marriage; 16.1 (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent; *Article 16.2* prohibits child marriage and states: The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights – Women’s Rights Protocol: calls for the enactment and effective implementation of appropriate legislative measures to prohibit all forms of harmful practices, which endanger the health, and general well-being of women and girls (article 2.1.b). Harmful practices are defined as ‘all behaviour, attitudes and/or practices, which negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls, such as their right to life, health, dignity, education and physical integrity’ (Article 1f).

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990): *Article XXI* states: Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be eighteen years.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990): *Article 1:* A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier; *Article 2:* Freedom from discrimination on any grounds, including sex, religion, ethnic or social origin, birth or other status; *Article 3:* In all actions concerning children ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. *Article 6:* Maximum support for survival and development. *Article 12:* The right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child, in accordance with age and maturity. *Article 19:* The right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, guardian, or any other person. *Article 24:* The right to health, and to access to health services; and to be protected from harmful traditional practices. *Articles 28 and 29:* The right to education on the basis of equal opportunity. *Article 34:* The right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. *Article 35:* The right to protection from abduction, sale or trafficking. *Article 36:* The right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child’s welfare.



ANNEX 2. STUDY DISTRICTS' PROFILES

The brief profiles of the study districts focuses on the geographical location, ethnicity, population and socio economic architecture (education, poverty status and economic activities, sexual and reproductive health indicators) and gender relations where data was available.

AMURU DISTRICT

Amuru District is located in Mid- northern, part of the larger Acholi sub-region. The district is made up of four (4) sub-counties, namely Amuru, Atiak, Pabbo, and Lamogi. The district is predominantly a rural district (only 5% urban population) (Ravnborg et al., 2013), sparsely populated with a population of 190,516 of which 51.4% (98,014) are females (UBOS, 2014). Amuru district is located in a region with a large proportion of the population living below the poverty line (35.2%). Although 41.4% of the population is above the poverty line, they are insecure; only 23.2% are middle class (MoFPED, 2014). Subsistence agriculture is the backbone of the district economy, employing 98% of the population. With 90% arable land, the common crops grown include cash crops (cotton, Tobacco) and food crops (Maize, Millet, Sorghum, Sweet potatoes, Cassava, Simsim, Beans, Peas, Sunflower, Groundnuts among others (Amuru District Local Government, nd).

The district is recovering from a long period of insurgency caused by the Lord's Resistance Army (1986 – 2006). About 1.7 to 1.8 million people were displaced during the civil war (Ravnborg et al., 2013). Since 2006, most people have returned to their villages and the area is currently in a process of reconstruction. Amuru town is by far the largest town in the area and is situated 60 kilometres west of Gulu, while other centres like Pabbo are developing along the road towards South Sudan. Historically, the area around Amuru has been known as the bread-basket of Uganda (Das et al., 2008) and although not yet having re-established that status, crop sales from the area are growing and trade between South Sudan and Uganda is resuming.

Access to primary education has improved following the introduction of Universal Primary Education, Universal Secondary Education and return of peace in the district. In 2013, total enrolment was estimated at 43,918 pupils of whom 47.8% (20,971) are females (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2013). However, due to high dropout rates especially among the girls, the completion rates for those who enrol in P1 is low (65%) – lower than the national average of 67.4%. Only 41% of the girls complete the primary cycle compared to 86% of the boys. While access to secondary schooling is limited to both boys and girls with total enrolment estimated at 3,475 students in 2013, gender disparities are more glaring at this level with fewer girls (41.5%) than boys (67.2%) accessing education.

The district is located in region where majority of the women marry at 16.9 years with a lower average age at first sexual intercourse estimated at 16.7 and with high teenage pregnancies (26%) – higher than the national average (24%). Amuru is one of the PRDP focus district.

ARUA DISTRICT

Arua district is located in West Nile, with Yumbe District to the north, Adjumani district in northeast, Amuru District to the east, Nebbi district to the southeast, Zombo district to the southwest, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west and Maracha District to the northwest. Arua district is made up of twenty six (26) sub-counties, namely Manibe, Aroi, Pajulu, Oluko, Dadamu, Adumi, Ayivuni, Katrini, Ali-Vu, Udupi, Omugo, Bileafe, Uriama, Rhino camp, Rigbo, Offaka, Pawor, Ogoko, Anyiribu, OKollo, Vurra, Ajia, Logiri, Arivu, Arua Hill and River Oli and one town council of Arua town. Arua is characterized by a high ethnic and cultural diversity with majority of the population being the Lugbara constituting about 81%. Other ethnic groups include the Kakwa, Madi, Alur and non Ugandans – Sudanese.

The 2014 national population census puts the population of the district at about 785,189 of which 52.4% (411,427) are females (UBOS, 2014). The mean household size has been fairly stable over the years at 5.5 people with a population growth rate of 3.3% per year (Arua District Local Government, 2012). The high population growth rate is attributed to the high fertility rate that has persisted at 7 children per woman for the last 4 decades (Ibid). Arua district has a very young population with majority (55.2%) aged below 18 years; (21% aged between 6-12 years and 16% aged 13-17 years) and adults are 44.8% (18 years and above). Only 24% of the population is productive; 3.9% is aged 65 and above. About 10.5% of those aged below 18 years are orphans. The high proportion of dependent population in the district requires considerable investment in children (and orphans) especially in health and education. The district is located in a region with high prevalence of child marriages and teenage pregnancies and majority of the adolescents in the region engage in sexual relations early (see table 4 above). FGM in the region is minimal (0.5%) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012).

On education, Arua district is one of the districts with the highest enrolment in Uganda, largely because foreigners with majority from Sudan. In 2013 total enrolment in primary school was 270,013 of whom 49.4% are female – near parity. However, only 47% of the females compared to 69% of the males completed the primary cycle, with average completion rate of 58% (MoES, 2013). This means that majority of the children do not complete the primary cycle. Drop out is attributed to lack of adequate infrastructure in schools and the socio-economic conditions within the families (Arua District Local Government, 2012). Access to secondary school education is limited as reflected by the low enrolment of 23,475 students in 2013 with more boys (58.4%) than girls (41.6%); 7% of the students are foreigners. The low enrolment is attributed to the high cost of education at this level coupled with rampant poverty at household levels (Ibid). It is also reported that the dropout trend at this level is more visible (Ibid). With the few post primary and secondary education institutions, there are limited opportunities for technical and vocational training in the districts (see box 11) below.

BOX 11: POST PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ARUA DISTRICT

- Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs), 1 (Government aided)
- National Teachers Colleges (NTCs), 1 (Government aided)
- Technical Colleges, 7 (1 Technical Government Aided Institute, 2 Government aided technical schools and 4 private technical schools)
- Business Colleges, 2 (all private)
- Nurses Training Institutions, 3 (1 Government aided and 2 private- Kuluva and Maracha).

Source: Arua District Local Government 2012



In the functional adult literacy programme – majority are men; available data for 2009 shows that out of 600 learners only 25% are females (Arua District Local Government, 2012).

On socio-economic status, the district is located in a region with high proportion of the population living below the poverty line (42.3%); 40.4% are insecure and only 17.3% are middle class. The population depends mainly on subsistence mixed farming which employs over 81% of the population with small holder agricultural production of food crops including Groundnuts, Beans, Maize, Millet, Simsim, Mangoes, Avocado, Cassava and Matooke (Arua District Local Government, 2012). Tobacco is the main cash crop and a source of livelihood for the majority of the population in the district (Ibid). Other cash crops grown on small scale include coffee and cotton. Only 0.5% of the population is engaged in commercial agriculture. A few people keep livestock including goats, sheep, pigs and cows. Bee keeping is also a source of income for some people in the district. Another source of livelihood for a small proportion of the population (9%) is formal employment, petty (3.8%), formal trade (0.7) and cottage industry (2.3%) (Ibid).

Gender relations: GBV is high in the district with majority of the cases reported by women. Available data for 2009 indicates that there were 400 defilement/child marriage cases; 38 domestic violence; 69 assault and 6 rape cases reported (Arua District Local Government, 2012).

MOROTO DISTRICT

Moroto district, formerly part of Karamoja province, is situated in the North Eastern Uganda. It shares borders with four (4) districts: Kotido to the north, Lira to the Northwest, Katakwi to the West, and Nakapiripirit to the South with the entire eastern borderline is shared with the Republic of Kenya (Moroto District Local Government, 2013). Moroto district is made up of six (6) sub-counties namely North Division, South Division, Rupa, Nadunget, Katikekile, and Tapac. The district has 3 main ethnic groupings namely the Karimojong who are the main inhabitants of the rangelands, and the Tepeth who live on the mountains of Moroto and Napak with differences in language and culture (Ibid).

With a total area of 8,516km² which is 3.5% of the Country's area coverage, the settlement pattern in the district is of sparse with concentrations around productive agricultural areas, trading centres and near rivers and springs. The people live in clusters/settlements locally referred to as "Manyattas". According to the 2014 Uganda National population and Housing census, Moroto has a total population of 104,539 of which 51.4% are females (UBOS 2014). According to the UDHS 2011 statistics, the district is located in a region with a total fertility rate of 6.4 children per women above the national average (6.2 children per woman) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). While the region has a slightly higher average age at marriage (18.7) than the national average and for all the regions in Uganda; the rate of teenage pregnancies (30%) and FGM (4.8%) are very high; and have been named as major drivers of child marriage in the region. The age at sexual debut is lower – 17.8 Years (Ibid).

On education, access to education for both girls and boys is limited with more boys than girls accessing and completing both primary and secondary education. MoES statistics for 2013 show that primary enrolment stood at 10,356 of whom 43.9% are females with much lower completion rates 17% on average; 20% for males and 14% for females (MoES, 2013). A total of 5126 (out of whom 48.8% are females) enrolled in non formal education. Gender gap is wider at secondary level; with a total enrolment of 1928 only 27.9% (539) were females; and 72% were boys (Ibid).

While these ethnic groupings have differences in language and culture, they share similar socioeconomic lifestyle; they are agro pastoralist deriving their livelihood from subsistence crop production and semi nomadic animal rearing (Moroto District Local Government, 2013). Agriculture is the main economic activity – with majority of the farmers being small holders growing mainly sorghum (69.2%) followed by maize (22.8%); beans, cow peas, sunflower, groundnuts and vegetables¹⁰ (local and exotic) (UBOS, 2010). Livestock including cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, poultry, rabbits, and donkeys are kept. Given the subsistence level of agriculture, the district is located in a region with the largest proportion of the poor (74.2%). While 16.4% moved out of poverty, they remain insecure; implying that about 90.6% of the population are vulnerable to poverty; only 9.4% are middles class.

10 Tomatoes, cabbages, onions and eggplants

KAPCHORWA DISTRICT

Kapchorwa District is situated on the slopes of Mt. Elgon in Eastern Uganda. The district is bordered by Kween District to the northeast and east, Sironko District to the south, and Bulambuli District to the West and Northeast. Kapchorwa district is made up of fifteen (15) sub-counties, namely Chema, Kaserem, Tegeres, Kapchorwa T/C, Kawowo, Kaptanya, Sipi, Munarya, Amukol, Chepteret, Kapteret, Kapchesombe, Kapsida, Gamogo and Kabeywa (Kapchorwa District Local Government, 2014). The district is predominantly occupied by the Sabiny with a few other tribes including the Bagisu, Iteso and Langi.

The current population of the district is projected to be 104,580 people of whom 51.1% are women (UBOS 2014). The district has high dependency ratio of 107.9 with a very young population of which a large proportion is aged less than 15 years (48.6%) followed by those aged 15-65 years comprising of 48.1% and 3.3% are aged 65 and above. According to the UDHS 2011 statistics, the district is located in a region with the highest total fertility rate (7.5 children per women) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012) – attributed to high teenage pregnancies (30.3%) (Ibid); low utilization of available low utilization of available adolescent health services; cultural and religious misconceptions about family planning; lack of awareness about available family planning services and service points; and inadequate support for family planning from policy makers, decision makers, and resource allocators at family and other levels (Cardno Emerging Markets, 2012). In addition, the region has the lowest average age at marriage (17.6) and average age at first sexual intercourse (16.3) and 2.3% of the women have undergone FGM. Cardno Emerging Markets (2012) identifies a number of challenges facing Kapchorwa District including high incidence of children's rights violations, low quality of orphans and vulnerable children services, weak family and community child support and protection mechanisms, limited knowledge and skills in child care and protection among frontline staff, limited capacity for social welfare and protection services and low household incomes to meet basic needs.

The introduction of UPE in Uganda 1996 meant to expand access to education to all eligible children (girls and boys) and led to a rapid increase in enrolment across the country. In many districts including Kapchorwa district the gender gap in access to primary education has closed – with enrolment of girls estimated at 50.8% (15,780) of the total enrolment of 31,020 pupils in 2013 (MoES, 2013) with over 100% completion rate of 110% (112% for females and 107% for males). However, progression to secondary level is poor – in 2013 the total enrolment of was 8,645 of whom 47.8% (4,132) are females compared 52.2% (45,130) males (Ibid).

Subsistence agriculture is the main economic activity in Kapchorwa District; with a mixed farming system comprising of crop production (food and cash crops) and animal rearing (Kapchorwa District Local Government, 2013). Food crops grown include millet, irish and sweet potatoes, yams, beans, simsim, sunflower, maize, cassava, wheat, vegetables (tomatoes, cabbage, onions) and fruits (passion fruits). The cash crops include Cotton and Coffee. Animal rearing include cattle, goats and sheep. Very few people depend on trade and paid employment with a good number engaged in family labour (Ibid). Although only 24.7% of the population are poor, the majority (56.9%) are vulnerable to poverty and only 18.4% are middle class (MoFPED, 2014).



BUGIRI DISTRICT

Bugiri district is situated Eastern Central region of Uganda; was carved out of Iganga district and is bordered by Namutumba District and Butaleja District to the north, Tororo District to the northeast, Busia District to the east, Namayingo District to the southeast, Mayuge District to the southwest and Iganga District to the west. Bugiri district is made up of eleven (11) sub-counties, namely Budyaya, Bulidha, Iwemba, Nabukalu, Bugiri T/C, Buluguyi, Kapyanga, Nankoma, Bulesa, Buwunga and Muterere (Bugiri District Local Government, 2009). The district is a multi-ethnic predominantly inhabited by the Basoga with other tribes including Basamia, Itesots, Banyole, Adhola, Karamajongs and Bagisu (Ibid) most of whom are Muslims (KII, district official Bugiri).

Small holder agriculture forms the backbone of the district, as it does in the majority of districts in the country. The main crops include: **matooke, cassava, maize, millet, coffee, sorghum, peas, sweet bananas, sweet potatoes and lowland rice.** Growing of cash crop is limited – mainly growing cotton and coffee. Due to the abundance of freshwater bodies in the district, commercial fishing is actively practiced by many in Bugiri District. Poverty is widespread, with major factors including shortage of land coupled with soil exhaustion, dwindling fish stocks, poor markets for produce and lack of extension services (Bugiri District local Government, 2011; 2012). Poverty in the district is a reflection of the regional poverty status where over 50% of the population are either poor or vulnerable to poverty (see figure 4).

The national population census conducted in 2014 indicates the district population at about 390,076 of which 201,814 females (UBOS 2014). Like other districts in Uganda, the population is young with majority aged below 19 years. This implies a high dependency ration. The total fertility rate in the district is 5.7; with negative cultural assumptions and myths about family planning as well as limited coverage of reproductive health services , less than a quarter of women practice family planning. (Bugiri District local Government, 2011; 2012). Adolescent sexual and reproductive health indicators are poor (see Table 4). Gender violence is widespread (KII, District Official Bugiri). The number of OVC is estimated to have tripled in five years, with current district estimates at 112,370 (Bugiri District local Government, 2011; 2012).

Despite increased access to education as a result of UPE, school dropouts, particularly among girls, remain high (estimated at 25% compared to 15% for boys) and contribute to low rates of literacy in the district as a whole (estimated at 41% in 2002) (Bugiri District local Government, 2011; 2012). In 2013 enrolment at primary level was estimated at 109,838 of whom 49.9% with girls (64%) completion rate lagging behind that of boys (72%) (MoES, 2013). Secondary attendance is very low for both boys and girls; 2013 enrolment shows that out of 13,103 students 40.2%

were females (Ibid). According the interviews with district officials a substantial number of girls drop out before completion of the secondary level. Girls' dropout is attributed to involvement in domestic chores; parental prioritisation of sons; early marriage; poor sanitary conditions in schools, and sexual harassment at home, in the community and at school. Parents also withdraw both boys and girls from school for agricultural tasks at home and pupil absenteeism is high. District consultations highlight inadequate political will and support towards initiatives aimed at e.g. increasing enrollment, fighting cases of early marriages, early sex and defilement (Bugiri District local Government, 2011; 2012)

BUNDIBUGYO DISTRICT

The district located in Western region, relatively isolated from the rest of Uganda, to the west of Rwenzori Mountains. Bundibugyo District is bordered by Ntoroko District to the northeast, Kibaale District to the east, Kabarole District to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west and north. It is made up of thirteen (13) sub-counties (Ndugutu, Sindila, Ntotoro, Bukonzo, Harugale, Ngamba, Bubandi, Bubukwanga, Busaru, Kasitu, Kirumya, Mirambi, and Kisuba) and 2 town councils (Bundibugyo Town Council and Nyahuka Town Council) (Bundibugyo District Local Government, 2010). The district which is part of the Rwenzururu Kingdom established on 17th March 2008, is multi-ethnic with the predominant ethnic groupings of Bamba and Bakonjo. The other ethnic groups in the district include the Batooro, Bakiga, Banyoro and the Banyankole (Ibid).

Subsistence agriculture with crop farming and animal husbandry are the major sources of livelihoods in the district. Bundibugyo District is the largest producer of cocoa and oil Palm in Uganda. Crops grown in the district include the following: Coffee, Cocoa, Bananas, Matooke, Rice, Beans, Cassava. Animals raised in the district include: Cattle, Goats, Sheep, Pigs, and Mules (Bundibugyo District Local Government, 2010). Other sources of livelihoods include fishing, sand and stone quarrying near the river beds and banks, petty trade, brick laying and formal employment. The district is recovering from armed insurgency by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) that occurred between 1997- 2002 which led to death of many people resulting into many child orphans and abandoned family members. Consequently poverty is very high with majority of the population living below the poverty line (60%) (Ibid). Over half of the land area (59%) is gazette, creating pressure on land available for agriculture.

The 2014 national population census indicates the district population at about 224,145 of which 51.8% (116,126) are females (UBOS, 2014). With reference to 2002 census projections – over half of the population is young with children below 18 years constituting 56% of the population, while those below 15 years accounts for 50% of the population (Bundibugyo District Local Government, 2010). Some of the persistent harmful cultural practices in the district include widow inheritance – which has been linked to the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS in the area (Ibid). The district is located in a region with low age at sexual debut and high rates of teenage pregnancies (see table 4).

On gender relations, there is clear gender division of livelihood activities with men concentrating on cash crop growing and women in food crop production – mostly at subsistence level with only 10% of them engaged in market oriented agriculture. On ownership of productive resources,

majority of the land is owned by men (51.8%); women own 12.3% and 35.9% of the land is owned jointly. While women produce (contributing to over 70% of the labour in the agricultural fields) and sell agricultural produce, men control the proceeds from the sale of the products (Ibid). Decision making is male domain – both at the household level and in public sectors - out of 527 high level positions in the district of Bundibugyo, 32% (169) are females. In works, production and education sectors, there are no women employees at all. Cultural beliefs still place women as subordinates to men and their (women) involvement in leadership in priority setting and decision making is very limited. Commonly, widows and their children are left without any land and property as it is taken by the relatives of the deceased husbands, which disrupts their opportunities to make a living (Ibid). Box 12 outlines gives some of the identified threats to address gender inequities in the district.

BOX 12: THREATS TO IMPROVING GENDER EQUITY IN BUNDIBUGYO DISTRICT

- Low resource allocation to address gender issues.
- High illiteracy rates among women and inadequate information flow.
- Low level of appreciation for importance of addressing gender issues in development – both in the community and at district level (district officials)
- Low contribution of women councillors in decision-making fora
- Cultural preference for boy child education; girls are kept at home looking after young ones and assist in domestic work.
- Limited or no control over productive assets by women
- Ignorance and lack of respect for marriage laws (adultery, domestic violence)
- Women's heavy work load at household level, resulting to limited engagement in productive activities and access to information
- Inherent patriarchal beliefs in male dominance; that pregnancy and child rearing are concerns of women alone
- Poverty at household level
- High prevalence of early marriages and teenage pregnancies leading to girls limited participation in school - high dropout rates for girls – 38% completion rate at primary level
- Increased prevalence of alcoholism, especially among men; most of the work in agriculture and household is left to the women. Alcoholism was linked to the high incidences of gender based violence, neglect of domestic responsibilities by men, failure to provide to children's needs leading to school drop out
- Limited or no resources are allocated to address gender issues at the district level
- Misconceptions about the meaning of gender among the district technical officials

Source: Bundibugyo District Local Government, 2010

A number of interventions have been undertaken to address gender in the district. These include development of a District gender main-streaming strategy to guide the District, sub counties and other stakeholders; a Five year District OVC strategic Plan 2007-2012 to guide interventions for addressing the plight of children in the District; development of Anti-Alcoholism District Strategic Plan (draft in place); establishment of Bundibugyo Anti-alcoholism Association and anti-alcoholism Support Clubs; gender training for District and sub county staff and representatives of councillors both District and Sub County in gender sensitive planning & budgeting among others (see details in Bundibugyo District Local Government, 2010).

Education access in the districts is characterized by increasing enrollment for both boys and girls at primary level reaching parity but low completion rates and persistent gender disparities at secondary level – with girls’ enrolment lagging behind that of boys. For instance while total primary enrolment was 48,372 out of whom 50% were female, the completion rates were very poor estimated at 38% for females and 58% for males (MoES, 2013). This means that majority of the girls (and boys) drop out of school before completing primary school level. At secondary level, while access is limited for both boys and girls – there are more boys (70%) than girls (30%) (Ibid). The gender disparities have been attributed to early marriages, teenage pregnancies, limited parental investment in girls’ education and domestic work overload.

KIBOGA DISTRICT

Kiboga District is situated in the Central region of Uganda, bordered by Nakaseke District to the northeast and east, Mityana District to the south, Mubende District to the southeast and Kyankwanzi District to the northwest. Kiboga district is made up of seven (07) sub-counties, namely Lwamata, Kapeke, Kiboga T/C, Dwaniro, Muwanga, Kibiga and Bukomero. The district has diverse cultural attributes representative of most ethnic groups in the country, which include Baganda who are the majority; Banyarwanda, Banyankole; Bahima, Alurs, Bakiga and Basoga. There are 3 main religious denominations: Catholics, Anglicans and Muslims constituting 39.5%; 34.4% and 12.1% respectively. Others religions include Pentecostal churches, Orthodox and Seventh Day Adventist churches.

The majority of the population in the district (94.8%) lives in rural areas. Subsistence agriculture is the main source of livelihood employing over 80% of the district population majority of whom are women; 94% are directly involved in crop husbandry; 53.2% are involved in animal husbandry and 0.6% of the communities are involved in fish farming (Kiboga District Local Government, 2012). Agriculture involves both crop and animal farming. Crops grown include: Matooke (for food; fruit and alcohol), Coffee, Irish potatoes, Sweet potatoes, Cassava, Maize, Upland rice, Cabbages, Tomatoes, Mangoes, Pineapples and Passion fruit (Ibid). Poverty is widespread in the district with 60.4% of individuals below the poverty line and a 20.9% poverty gap as percent of poverty line (Kiboga District Local Government, 2012).

In 2014, the national population census estimated the district population at about 148,606 of whom 50% are females. With a high total fertility rate of 6.3 (average for Central 2 region) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012), the population has been growing at annual rate of 2.59% per annum since 2002 (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012; UBOS, 2014) with over 70% of the population aged under 18years (Kiboga District Local Government, 2012). Kiboga district is

located in a region with low average age at sexual intercourse, high teenage pregnancies and a slightly higher age at marriage, higher than the national average (See table 4).

On gender relations, most women continue to be subordinate to men and as a result, their role in production is ignored (Kiboga District Local Government, 2012). Many parents especially men spend most of the time drinking alcohol, gambling, theft, witchcraft and adultery among others and do not provide a favourable home environment for children's proper growth. Consequently, domestic violence due to drunkenness and infidelity is high resulting into family breakups – leaving children with trauma and inadequate care and support (Ibid).

With the introduction of UPE, enrollment for boys and girls increased leading to the closing of the gender gap at primary level. For instance, in 2013 total enrollment was 36,082 out of who 50.1% (18,088) were girls. However, average completion rate (59%) is lower than the national average (67.4%) with lower completion rate for boys (52%) than girls (66%). At secondary level, although access is limited for boys and girls, girls (47.9%) enrollment lags behind that of boys (52.1%). Poor completion rates are attributed to poor quality education characterized by unfriendly learning environment with limited number of qualified teachers (especially skills in child friendly teaching methods), few classrooms, limited instructional materials, lack of water and latrine facilities, textbooks and midday meals (Kiboga District Local Government, 2012). Further, the district plan notes that parents, teachers and local leaders do not take keen interest in the management of schools and the learning of their children which has negatively impacted on access, quality, retention and school completion rates of children (Ibid). In addition, local leaders are not committed to enforcement of existing laws for fear of offending their electorate and risking losing votes in future elections. Parents are also implicated for failing to provide adequate care and guidance for their children, exposing them to risky situations such as girls serving beer (local brew) until late in the night which exposes them to risk of sexual abuse; marrying off girls at an early age in exchange for bride wealth (Ibid) coupled with the breakdown of the traditional social support systems, with the counselling role aunts diminishing, hence many children do not receive adequate guidance and counselling.

MASAKA DISTRICT

Masaka district is located in the Central 1 region, bordered by Bukomansimbi District to the northwest, Kalungu District to the north, Kalangala District to the east and south, Rakai District to the southwest and Lwengo District to the west. The district is made up of nine (09) sub-counties, namely Bukakata, Kyesiiga, Kyanamukaaka, Buwunga, Kabonera, Mukungwe, Katwe/Butego, Kimaanya/ Kyabakuza and Nyendo-Ssenyange. With a rich cultural heritage and diverse ethnic groupings, Masaka district is predominantly inhabited by the Baganda (77%) followed by Banyankole (9%), Banyarwanda (8%) and other small tribes¹¹ making up 6%. The various cultural sites (the Palace, totem sites of different clans, caves and big stones) reflect peoples' patronage and royalty to the King (the Kabaka of Buganda) (Masaka district Local Government, 2012).

According to the recent National population and Housing census 2014, the district has a total population of 296,649 of whom 51.4% (152,418) growing at annual growth rate of 2.19% with average household size of 3.8 people (UBOS, 2014). Over a half of Masaka districts' population

11 Bakiga, Bafubira, Basoga, Banyoro, Acholi, Batoro, Bagisu and other Ugandans

are children whom 60% are exposed to child abuse and neglect by their own parents, guardians and fellow children (Masaka district Local Government, 2012). Masaka District has a total of 123,696 aged 12-17 years and about 27.6% of these are mothers. Orphans constitute around 69.4% (85,905) of the OVC (Ibid).

On socio-economic status, about 30% of Masaka's population lived below the poverty line by 2005 (UBOS Poverty Maps 2005 quoted in Masaka district Local Government, 2012). However, poverty status in the region has changed over the last few years with only 3.7% of the population remaining below the poverty line, and majority in the middle class (64.4%). However, although 32% have moved above the poverty line, they remain insecure and can fall back into poverty (MOFEP, 2014). The major economic activities in Masaka District include: agriculture (for 73% of households) constituting of food crop agriculture (Matooke, sweet bananas, pineapples, and tomatoes), cash crop farming (coffee and cotton) and animal husbandry (cattle, goats, and chicken) (Masaka district Local Government, 2012). Over 83% of the labour in agriculture is supplied by women (Ibid). Fishing is done on Lake Victoria with some people practicing Fish farming. Other sources of livelihood include manufacturing (1.8%) of soft drinks, metal fabrication/welding, coffee processing, cotton ginning; and retail trade in food products and manufactured goods. Only 0.3% obtains their livelihood from professional work.

On education, Masaka as many districts in Uganda, primary enrolment has improved over the years; in 2013 it was estimated at 66,539 of whom 51.1% (34,023) are girls. However, not all the children who enrol complete the cycle as reflected by the completion rates of 79% for boys and 96% for girls - higher than the national average (67.4%). At secondary level access to education remain limited to majority of the girls and boys (15,201 students) with girls (48.9%) enrollment lagging behind that of boys (51.1%). Technical and vocational training is limited in the district with only 1 technical college and 4 vocational institutes and all are private.

RUKUNGIRI DISTRICT

Rukungiri District which was created in 1974 as North Kigezi District, is in the Western region of Uganda. It is bordered by Rubirizi District to the north, Mitooma district to the east, Ntungamo district to the Southeast, Kabale District to the South, Kanungu District to the west and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Northwest. The district is made up of eleven (11) sub counties of, Buyanja, Bugangari Bwambara, Nyakagyeme, Kebisoni, Ruhinda, Nyakishenyi, Buhunga, and Nyarushangye, together with Western Division, Southern Division and Eastern Division. Ethnic groups in Rukungiri district are Bakiga, Bahororo and Banyarwanda (Rukungiri District Local Government, 2009).

As with rest of Uganda, agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of Rukungiri district with more than 90% of the population is engaged in farming (crop and animal husbandry). Production is mainly subsistence with two chief food and cash crops of coffee and Matooke. The other crops grown in the district include maize, rice, millet, beans, peas, fruits and vegetables. The animals reared in the district include Cattle, Goats, Sheep, Pigs, Chicken, Ducks, Turkeys, Rabbits and Donkeys. A number of people also derive their livelihood from fishing, particularly from Lake Edward as well as fish farming. Only 7.6% of the population in the region is below the poverty level, 49.7% middle class while 47.2% are insecure non poor (MoFPED, 2014).

In 2014, the population of the district was estimated at about 320,567 of which 52.4% (168,101) are females growing at 1.27% per annum (UBOS, 2014). Population of the district is young with 57% under 18 years. The district has one of the highest average age at marriage (18.9 years); high average age at sexual debut (18.7 years) and low rates of teenage pregnancy. According to the interviews and FGDs with women, men, boys and girls, female circumcision (FGM) does not exist in the district. According to one of the key informants; early marriage and teenage pregnancies are common in the district – especially in the urban areas and attributed it to poverty, hard labour and restricted movement of young people.

According to the 2013 education statistics, access to primary education for girls expanded leading to slightly more girls (50.7%) than boys (49.2%) accessing education; more of the girls (85%) completing the cycle compared to the boys (76%). Further, the district completion rate (80%) is much higher than the national average. Similar trend in enrollment is reflected at secondary school level, where there were more girls (54.7%) than boys (45.3%) of the total enrollment of 19,408 students (MoES, 2013). However, the enrollment figures at secondary level compared to that of primary level indicate that a number of students do not go for secondary education.

KAMPALA DISTRICT

Kampala District lies within the Kingdom of Buganda, in Central Uganda. The district is bordered by Wakiso District to the south, the west and the north and Kira municipality to the east. The division comprises the central business district of the Capital city of Uganda. Kampala District is divided into five (5) administrative divisions: Central Division, Kawempe Division, Nakawa Division, Makindye Division and Rubaga Division. Over 60% of Kampala's population lives in slums (United Nations Human Settlements Programme [UN-HABITAT], 2007). The district is home to all ethnic groupings in the country; majority of whom are Baganda. Religion too is diverse and include: Anglicans; Catholics, Muslims, Pentecostals, Bahai faith among others.

According to the 2014 National Population Census provisional figures, Kampala District has a population of approximately 1, 516,210 of which 52.3% (793,572) are female. The district's average population growth rate is 2.02 with average household size of 3.5 people. Kampala being an urbanized area, majority of the girls marry at the age of 20.7 years (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012). However, the average age at first sexual intercourse (17.8%) is low with teenage pregnancies (21.6%) slightly lower than the national average (24%)

Only 0.7% of the population is below the poverty line; majority are middle class (89.2%) with 10.1% insecure non poor (MoFEPD, 2014). Kampala district has the highest enrolment figures in the country. Ministry of Education and Sports statistics of 2013 indicate that primary enrolment was 216,653 pupils of whom 51.5% (111,564) were girls. Like in other districts a number of students drop out of school before completing P7; completion rates are estimated at 79% on average with 75% of the girls compared to 84% of the boys completing the cycle (MoES, 2013). At secondary level, of the total enrolment of 82985; 40,405 (48.7%) are girls (Ibid).

ANNEX 3: RESEARCH TOOLS

1.BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET – FOR ALL RESPONDENTS IN THE STUDY

Date: _____ Place _____

Time start: _____ Time end: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

Note taker: _____

Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Individual information as follows:

Name	
Age	
Ethnicity	
Religion	
Do you have a birth certificate	
If not how do you know your age	
Marital Status	
If married type of marriage (civil, customary, religious, cohabiting)	
If married number of children	
In school and level	
If not in school , what level reached (if any)	
Would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why not?	
Work or occupation	
Education status/level – siblings up to 5 siblings	

Education status/level – parents (mother and father)	
Parents' occupations	
Source of income	
Parent's marital status	
Type of marriage (monogamy or polygamy)	
Who is considered the head of household?)	
Household living arrangements (who lives in his household; (single house , compound with several huts or houses)	

2. IDI FOR UN MARRIED AND MARRIED ADOLESCENTS

Date: _____ Place: _____

Time start: _____ Time end: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

Note taker: _____

Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C

Age

- What are the current ideas/customs/beliefs as to when a girl should get married/**undergo FGM?**
- At what age do girls usually get married today/ **undergo FGM??** Is this different from the time of your mother/ grandmother?
- What are the ideas/customs/beliefs as to why a girl should get married before the age of 18 years/ **undergo FGM??** [e.g. honor, fertility, virginity]
- If married: at what aged did you marry/ **undergo FGM??** Was this in line with general expectations? If not, what happened when you married at the age you did? Did anyone try to stop you from this?
- If not married: at what age do you expect to get married/ **undergo FGM??** Is this in line with general expectations? If not, what will happen if you do not get married at the age you are expected to?
- Did you/Do you expect to choose your partner? Is this what is usually done? What happens if you refuse to marry a partner chosen for you?
- Who usually informs girls about what to expect during marriage/ **undergo FGM??** Has anyone told you what to expect during the marriage process and after marriage? What was your experience?

- Has anyone provided you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality/**FGM**? If so, who? What sorts of things did you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What were the gaps? What else would you like to know more about?

Expectations of marriage

- What do you expect to get out of marriage/ **undergoing FGM**? What do you think it would bring you? Do you have any concerns?
- Who do you think you can turn to if you have problems in a marriage/ **FGM**? (Relatives? Religious leaders? Others?) Are there any services to support you in your family life?

Incentives

- What are the incentives (*Probe for incentives for mother, father, family and community*) for marrying girls at an early age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at an early age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- What are the incentives (for marrying girls at a later age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at a later age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)

Sanctions

- If the girl is not willing to get married at an early age/ **undergo FGM** and she is being forced into marriage/ **undergo FGM**, where can she seek for support?
- If you and your spouse disagree about the age at which your daughter marries/ **undergoes FGM**, where can you seek for support?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing you first, how do you respond?
- What are the existing support systems and practices for families, parents and girls who choose not to marry their children?
- Are there any alternatives to early marriage/ **FGM** that already exist? If yes, what are they? What does the community consider think about these alternatives?
- Who if anyone provides you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality/ **undergo FGM**? What sorts of things do you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What are the gaps? What else would you like to know more about? What about girls – who helps them?
- Do you or your parents have to prepare in any way for you to get married/ **undergo FGM**? [Economic contributions (including bride wealth), rituals, sharing of information on what to expect (role of uncles?)] If so how? What about your sister? What are your views on these customs? Have they been changing over time and why?

- Do boys choose their wives here? What about you – what do you want? What is likely to happen to you in reality? And has this custom been changing over time – if so how? Why?
- Do girls get to choose their husbands? Why/why not? Is this changing over time? Are there particular groups of girls who have more choice in the process? What about the case of your sister or close relative?
- What happens if a boy fathers a child without being married? How does he feel? What does he do? How does the girl feel/what does she do? How do others view them? Do they view the boy and the girl differently?
- Is this common here? What could you do to prevent this?

Pre-marital/Teenage pregnancy (Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?)

- Is it common for girls in your community to have children before they are married./ **uncircumcised**? Do you know of girls who have?
 - *Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?*
- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried girl's life/ **uncircumcised**? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
 - *Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?*
- What about the boys who father children outside of marriage? How are they usually viewed? What do they usually do? Do they take responsibility for them?
- Which do you think would be worse for you - getting married at a very early age or getting pregnant without being married?

The role of schools and child marriage and FGM/C

- Would an 18 yr old girl have been in school or married/ **uncircumcised**? What were the advantages/ disadvantages? *Have things been changing over time and if so how?*
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage **or FGM/C**? At what age? What did you think about this? *Has it been changing?*
- What do you think about married girls and circumcised girls going back to school? Did you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children going to school? Did you have any friends or relatives who had any experience of this?
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers **or circumcised girls** to continue their schooling? *What kinds?*
- What is the value of educating girls? Is it the same for boys? *Is this changing nowadays?*

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What were/are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage/ **FGM**? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the services that exist to help young married couples in their family life? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?

Platforms and other networks for community engagement

- What communication strategies/approaches/activities are being used to address child marriage, teenage pregnancy and **FGM/C**? How effective are they effective in addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and **FGM**?
- What other kinds of communication activities would be important to you? (probe for Radio broadcasts, SMS messages, TV programmes, Street theatre and community events, Community dialogues, Posters etc)
- Are there any structures (peer groups, fire places, VHTs, child rights committees, OVC committees etc) for addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and **FGM/C**

Role models

- Who are some of the role models – they look up to, inspiring individuals they know in their community? What do they do? How have they inspired them?

3. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS (MOTHERS/FATHERS OF MARRIED GIRLS AND BOYS AGED 15 – 19 YEARS)

A. QUESTION GUIDE

Date: _____ District: _____

Urban or Rural: _____

Place of Interview: _____

Time start: _____ Time end: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

Note taker: _____

Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Observe and note the conditions of the home (type of house etc)

Marriage and teenage pregnancy/FGM

Age at marriage

- Who is considered a child in this community? Is it the same when you were young? (probe for age and other characteristics).
- *Is it the same for boys and girls?*
- When you were a child, what were the customs/beliefs as to **WHEN** a girl should get married **or FGM**? And what age did they usually get married?
- What were the customs/beliefs as to **WHY** a girl should get married **or FGM** at a particular age? [e.g. honor, fertility, virginity].
- At what age did you get married and **FGM**?
- What were the reasons for you to get married **and FGM** at the age you did? (Children? Security? Companionship? Social acceptability? Prestige? Other?)
- Was it acceptable for girls/boys to married **or FGM** at time in your community and why?
- What are the existing practices related to the rites of passage for girls and boys in this community? In what way are they linked to the practice of child marriage and FGM?
- What are the social norms and practices, rituals that encourage marriage of girls and boys before the age of 18 years?

Main reasons/expectations of marriage

- Before you got married **or FGM** how did you view marriage? What did you think it would bring you? Did you have any concerns? After you got married, did your views stay the same or change? Why?
- What were your expectations in terms of marriage age for your daughter? Have they been met? Why/why not?

Incentives

- What are the incentives (***Probe for mother, father, family and community***) for marrying girls at **an early age**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- What are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at **an early age**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- What are the incentives (***for mother, father, family and community***) for marrying girls at a **later age**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at a **later age**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)

Sanctions

- If the girl is not willing to get married **or FGM** at an early age and she is being forced into marriage, where can she seek for support?
- If you and your spouse disagree about the age at which your daughter marries/ **or FGM**, where can you seek for support?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing you first, how do you respond?
- What are the existing support systems and practices for families, parents and girls who choose not to marry off / **not FGM** their children below the age of 18 years ?
- Are there any alternative practices to early marriage that already exist? If yes, what are they? What does the community consider think about these alternatives?.

Pre-marital/Teenage pregnancy

- Was it common in your time for girls in your community to have children before they are married? Did you know of girls who did?
- Was it common in your time for girls in your community **Not FGM** to have children before they are married? Did you know of girls who did?
- What effect (positive/negative) did having a child have on an unmarried or **not FGM** girl's life in your day? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
- What about the boys who fathered children outside of marriage? How they were usually viewed? What did they usually do in your day? Did they take responsibility for them?
- Which is worse for your daughter – getting married/ **FGM** at an early age or getting pregnant without being married or **not FGM**?

Role of schools/Education for girls

- Would an 18 yr old girl have been in school or married? What were the advantages/disadvantages? Was it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What did you think about this? What did you think about married girls going to school/

Did you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this??

- Would an 18 yr old girl **not undergone FGM** be in school or married
- What about unmarried girls/ **un circumcized girls** with children going to school? Did you have any friends or relatives who had any experience of this? ?
- Were there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling?
- What was the value of educating girls? Was it the same for boys?

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What were/are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage/ **FGM**? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - a. What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - a. What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the services that exist to help young married couples in their family life? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - a. What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?

Platforms and other networks for community engagement

- What communication strategies/approaches/activities are being used to address child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C? How effective are they effective in addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM?
- What other kinds of communication activities would be important to you? (probe for Radio broadcasts, SMS messages, TV programmes, Street theatre and community events, Community dialogues, Posters etc)

Platforms

- Are there any structures (peer groups, fire places, VHTs, child rights committees, OVC committees etc) for addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C

Role models

- Who are some of the role models – people they look up to, inspiring individuals they know in their community? What do they do? How have they inspired them?

4: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS) ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BOYS

Date _____ Location _____

Numbers of participants (at beginning): _____ (at end): _____

Kind of participants (girls/boys; married/unmarried; in/out of school adolescent mothers)

Ages (average): _____

Time start: _____ Time end: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

Note taker: _____

Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Views on Marriage and teenage pregnancy

Age

- Do you have a birth certificate? If not how do you know your age?
- What do you think is a good age for girls to be married / **and FGM**? Why? How about for boys? Why?
- What is the usual age at marriage / **and FGM** in this community?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage / **for FGM** is (for girls/boys). What do you think about this?
- What are some of the advantages (**For parents; For girls ; Other family members [e.g. brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins]**) for girls to marry early/ **undergo FGM**? What are the advantages of marrying later or not marrying at all? (Probe practical/economic/social)
- What are some of the disadvantages(**For parents; For girls; Other family members [e.g. brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins]**) of **marrying at an early age or undergoing FGM**? What are the disadvantages of marrying later or not marrying at all? (Practical/economic and social)
- What are the existing practices related to the rites of passage for girls and boys in this community? In what way are they linked to the practice of child marriage and FGM?
- What are the social norms and practices, rituals that encourage marriage of girls and boys before the age of 18 years?

Rationale for marriage

- Do most girls want to get married or **undergoing FGM** in this locality? If so why/why not?
- What are your expectations from marriage **and FGM** – positive and negative? [Including probes around children, protection/family honour, economic security, emotional wellbeing etc.]

- Do most boys want to get married in this locality? If so why/why not?
- What are their expectations from marriage **and FGM** – positive and negative? [Including probes around kids, family honour, economic security, emotional wellbeing, fear of GBV, concerns about care work burden etc.]

Incentives

- What are the incentives (***for incentives for mother, father, family and community***) for marrying girls at an early age **and FGM**? (Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?)
- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at an early age **and FGM**? (Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?)
- What are the incentives (***Probe for incentives for mother, father, family and community***) for marrying girls at a later age **and FGM**? (Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?)
- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at a later age **and FGM**? (Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?)

Sanctions

- If the girl is not willing to get married at an early age **and FGM** and she is being forced into marriage, where can she seek for support?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early **or FGM** without informing the parents first, what is the response of parents ?
- What are the existing support systems and practices for families, parents and girls who choose not to marry their children before the age of 18 **and/or FGM**?
- Are there any alternatives to early marriage/ **and FGM** that already exist in this community ? If yes, what are they? What does the community consider think about these alternatives?.
- What are the characteristics of households that are likely to have their girls marrying below the age of 18 years **and FGM**? (Probe for economic status , education polygamy , single parents etc)

Pre-marital/Teenage pregnancy

- What effect does having a child have on an unmarried girl's lives? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
- How does having a baby make the unmarried **or uncircumcised** girl feel?
 - How is having a baby when not married **or uncircumcised** viewed by others? (Parents, peers, relatives, authorities, future marriage partners....)
 - How do boys feel about having children when not married?
- Do boys who have fathered children when not married usually take some responsibility for them? If so, what? If not, why not?

Role of the School and Child marriage and FGM

- Should an 18 yr old girl be in school or married? What are advantages/ disadvantages? What is most common here, and are things changing over time?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage or for FGM/C? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing?
- What do you think about married girls and circumcised girls going back to school? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children going back to school? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What do you think might be done to support married girls/ or unmarried mothers to continue with schooling?
- What is the general perception about girls' education? How has this changed over time?

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage/**FGM**? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the services that exist to help young married couples in their family life? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- Do you think people are using/accessing the above services (if they exist) , how?

Platforms and other networks for community engagement

- What communication strategies/approaches/activities are being used to address child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C? How effective are they effective in addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM?
- What other kinds of communication activities would be important to you? (Probe for Radio broadcasts, SMS messages, TV programmes, Street theatre and community events, Community dialogues, Posters etc)
- Are there any structures (peer groups, fire places, VHTs, child rights committees, OVC committees etc) for addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C

Role models

- Who are some of the role models – people they look up to, inspiring individuals they know in their community? What do they do? How have they inspired them?

5. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (WOMEN AND MEN)

Date _____ Location _____

Numbers of participants (at beginning): _____ (at end): _____

Kind of participants (mothers/fathers): _____

Ages (average): _____

Time start: _____ Time end: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

Note taker: _____

Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Views and perspectives on marriage

Early marriage

- Who is considered a child in this community? (Probe for age and other characteristics).
- Is it the same for boys and girls?
- At what age do most girls and most boys marry/**undergo FGM** in this community? Has this always been the case, or is it changing over time?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is (for girls/boys)? What do you think about this?
- What is the community response to the law of age at marriage/ **FGM**?
- What do you as parents (mothers/fathers) think is the appropriate age for girls to marry or **undergo FGM** in this community and why?
 - Is it different for boys and why?
- Do some girls marry or **undergo FGM** later or not at all? Who/ which girls? [Individuals or groups] Why? And how do you as parents think about this?
- Have attitudes and practices about the age at marriage/ **FGM** evolved over time and if so how and why?
- What are some ideas/ customs/beliefs/ attitudes that promote or discourage girls' marriage at early or late age / **undergo FGM**?
- Are there specific people/groups who actively work to maintain girls marrying below the age of 18/ **undergo FGM**? Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? / Why are they influential?

- Are there specific groups working to promote girls marrying at a later age **or** **undergo FGM**? Who are they? [If national level actors] How are their views communicated/conveyed at local level? Does their opinion carry weight here? Why?

Incentives

- What are the incentives for marrying girls at an early age/ **undergo FGM**? (*Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- **Probe for incentives for mother, father, family and community**
- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at an early age/ **undergo FGM**? (*Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- What are the incentives for marrying girls at a later age/ **undergo FGM**? (*Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- **Probe for incentives for mother, father, family and community**
- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at a later age/ **undergo FGM**? (*Probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)

Sanctions

- If the girl is not willing to get married at an early age/ **undergo FGM** and she is being forced into marriage/ **undergo FGM**, where can she seek for support?
- If you and your spouse disagree about the age at which your daughter marries/ **undergoes FGM**, where can you seek for support?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing you first, how do you respond?
- What are the existing support systems and practices for families, parents and girls who choose not to marry their children?
- Are there any alternatives to early marriage/ **FGM** that already exist? If yes, what are they? What does the community consider think about these alternatives?.

Pre-marital/Teenage Pregnancy (*Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?*)

- Is it common for girls in this community to have children before they are married/ **undergo FGM**? Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried/ **uncircumcised** girl's life? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others)
- How do you as parents view girls having babies when not married/ **uncircumcised**? How do others view this? (Relatives, authorities, future marriage partners....) and how does the unmarried girl/ **un circumcised** view herself?
- How are boys who father children when not married viewed by the community? How do they view themselves?

- Do boys who have fathered children when not married usually take some responsibility for them? If so, what? If not, why not?
- What do you as parents do if your son/daughter has a child without being married/**uncircumcised**?
- What differences are there in having a baby when married or unmarried/**uncircumcised**?
- Does having a baby when not married create any particular problems/challenges for the girl?
- Which is worse for your daughter – getting married at an early age/**uncircumcised** or getting pregnant without being married?

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What were/are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage/**FGM**? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the services that exist to help young married couples in their family life? What is your opinion about the effectiveness of these initiatives?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?

Platforms and other networks for community engagement

- What communication strategies/approaches/activities are being used to address child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C? How effective are they effective in addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM?
- What other kinds of communication activities would be important to you? (probe for Radio broadcasts, SMS messages, TV programmes, Street theatre and community events, Community dialogues, Posters etc)
- Are there any structures (peer groups, fire places, VHTs, child rights committees, OVC committees etc) for addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C

Role models

- Who are some of the role models – people they look up to, inspiring individuals they know in their community? What do they do? How have they inspired them?

Role of schools/Education for girls

- What do you think about married girls/**circumcised girls** going back to school?
- What about unmarried girls/ **circumcised girls** with children going back to school?
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling? If yes what are they?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage/ **for FGM** ? At what age? What did you think about this?
- What is the value of educating girls? Is it the same for boys?

Community Perceptions

- What are the reasons men marry young girls below the age of 18 years?
- What are the attitudes of teachers, religious and cultural and other opinion leaders regarding young girls marrying below the age of 18 years and FGM?
- What are the motivating factors for teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in promoting child marriage and FGM/C in your community?
- What is the role of teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in promoting child marriage and FGM/C in your community?
- What are the motivating factors for teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in addressing child marriage and FGM/C in your community?
- What is the role of teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in addressing child marriage and FGM/C in your community?
- Are there any role models in the community who are fighting to keep girls in school or end the practice of child marriage in your community? If yes. Who are they? What are the reasons? How has the community responded to their initiatives?
- What are the existing practices related to the rites of passage for girls and boys in this community? In what way are they linked to the practice of child marriage and FGM?
- What are the social norms and practices, rituals that encourage marriage of girls and boys before the age of 18 years?

6. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

DISTRICT/SUB-DISTRICT LEVEL

Date/place of interview: _____

District/Sub-district/Parish: _____

Name: _____ Sex _____

Ministry/Department /Agency/Institution: _____

Function: _____

Facilitator _____

Time start: _____ Time end: _____

A: Background issues on district/locality

- What are the characteristics of Population; main sources of livelihood; religions; ethnic groups;
- What kinds of services (schools/training institutes; health structures; social centres; commercial centres)
- What are the main issues around youth/young people
- What are the main gender issues affecting men and women in this district?

B: Key questions to explore

- **Existence and scope of problem of early marriage in the district (*the district in general – at district level; and specific communities at sub-district level*)**
- Is there a problem of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and **FGM/C**? At what age do girls normally get married? Does it vary from place to place? By ethnic group and/or religion? By urban/rural?
- Who is considered a child in this community? (Probe for age and other characteristics). *Is it the same for boys and girls?*
- **Causal factors for persistence in social norms and practices around early marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C**
 - Why do girls continue to marry at early ages? How are social norms for early marriage enforced? Who is most responsible for keeping these norms alive? Are these factors different in different places?
- **Consequences of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C**
 - Educational / physical / psycho-social....
- **Changes in social norms and practices around early marriage and FGM/C**
 - Any changes over time? In particular areas/communities? Urban/rural? How/where/ why are norms and practices around early marriage changing?

- **Adolescent pregnancy and childbirth outside of marriage**
- Is this a common problem in Uganda? Or is it rather rare? Does it vary from place to place? What factors lead to differences?
- Has the situation been changing over time?
- Is pregnancy/childbirth out of marriage accepted by the community (by families, by religious leaders, by others)
- Existing laws, policies and programmes to address this.
 - What more needs to be done?

Incentives

- What are the incentives for marrying girls at an early age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)

Probe for incentives for mother, father, family and community

- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at an early age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)
- What are the incentives for marrying girls at a later age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)

Probe for incentives for mother, father, family and community

- Why are the incentives for girls/boys to marry at a later age/ **undergo FGM**? (*probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*)

Sanctions

- If the girl is not willing to get married at an early age/ **undergo FGM** and she is being forced into marriage/ **undergo FGM**, where can she seek for support?
- If you and your spouse disagree about the age at which your daughter marries/ **undergoes FGM**, where can you seek for support?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing you first, how do you respond?
- What are the existing support systems and practices for families, parents and girls who choose not to marry their children/**undergo FGM**?
- Are there any alternatives to early marriage/ **FGM** that already exist? If yes, what are they? What does the community consider think about these alternatives?.

C: Laws/policies and programmes to address issues of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy outside of marriage (in particular) as well as gender equitable marriage practices (in general)

- Existing laws, programmes and policies on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and **FGM** (at national level, Implementation at local level - Who is doing what? What seems to be working best? What are some of the key challenges?)

- What is the community response to the law of age at marriage/**FGM law**?
- Recommended laws, programmes and policies (What more is needed? Suggestions for moving forward)
- Recommendations on what more is needed to move forward on girls' education in the district.

D: Platforms and other networks for community engagement

- What communication strategies/approaches/activities are being used to address child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C? How effective are they effective in addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM?
- What other kinds of communication activities would be important to you? (Probe for Radio broadcasts, SMS messages, TV programmes, Street theatre and community events, Community dialogues, Posters etc)
- Are there any structures (peer groups, fire places, VHTs, child rights committees, OVC committees etc) for addressing social norms around child marriage, teenage pregnancy and FGM/C

E: Role models

- Who are some of the role models – people they look up to, inspiring individuals they know in their community? What do they do? How have they inspired them?

C: Role of schools/Education for girls

- What do you think about married girls going back to school?
- What about unmarried girls with children going back to school?
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling? If yes what are they?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What did you think about this?
- What is the value of educating girls? Is it the same for boys?

F Community Perceptions

- Why do men marry young girls below the age of 18 years?
- What are the attitudes of teachers, religious and cultural and other opinion leaders regarding young girls marrying below the age of 18 years and **FGM**?
- What are the motivating factors/reasons for teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in promoting child marriage and **FGM/C** in your community?
- What is the role of teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in promoting child marriage and **FGM/C** in your community?
- What are the motivating factors/reasons for teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in addressing child marriage and **FGM/C** in your community?
- What is the role of teachers, religious and cultural leaders and other key opinion leaders in addressing child marriage and **FGM/C** in your community?
- Are there any role models in the community who are fighting to keep girls in school or end the practice of child marriage in your community? If yes. Who are they? What are the reasons? How has the community responded to their initiatives?
- What are the existing practices related to the rites of passage for girls and boys in this community? In what way are they linked to the practice of child marriage and FGM?
- What are the social norms and practices, rituals that encourage marriage of girls and boys before the age of 18 years?

G: Indicators to monitor

- What are the factors including norms, beliefs, values, knowledge and practices that could be tracked and used to decrease risk of or increase protection against child marriage and other harmful practices like **FGM/C**
- Suggest legal and policy changes required to support efforts to address child marriage and **FGM**

7. CASE STUDIES (TYPICAL CASES AND OUTLIERS)

INSTRUCTIONS

Time start: _____ Time end: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

Note taker: _____

Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Note: Describe why this girl was selected for a case study: ie she is an example of

Categories of possible Case studies

Girls who have undergone FGM and completed tertiary education

Girls married or undergone FGM but continued with education

Girls with children but continued with education

Girls proactively escaped child married and FGM

Girls with successful business or income generating activities

Uncircumcised girl married with children

Question Guide

Can please describe your life from childhood to date in relation to the following, identifying both the positive and negative experiences? (**Ask one issue at a time**)

1. Education
2. Adolescent transition (e.g. menstruation, sexuality etc.)
3. Marriage
4. Undergone FGM
5. Pregnancy/childbirth
6. Child rearing
7. Family relationships and fortune/misfortunes
8. Occupational/income-earning history
9. Care work – within their natal home, marital home
10. Health history
11. Migration history

Informal and formal support

What kind of informal and formal support did you get from the following? ***(ask one issue at a time)***

1. Support people e.g. peers, friends / networks/ organizations
2. Access to services (e.g. health, school, justice, credit/economic assets, legal aid)
3. Access to media, technology, phones, internet and the role this has played in their life and wellbeing
4. Role models; people they look up to; inspiring individuals (can be family, service providers, famous people)
5. Recommendations for other types of support needed (psycho-social; legal; economic; information/education; other.....)

Assessing life quality – past, present and future

1. How would you assess the quality of your life compared to your siblings and why?
2. What did the community and family attitudes/values/practices/beliefs play in shaping or constraining your life?
3. What were your aspirations and how they have evolved over the course of adolescence?
What are your aspirations for your children or future off springs?



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