



Voices of Child Brides and Child Mothers in Tanzania

A PEER Report on Child Marriage



F→RWARD
Safeguarding rights & dignity

Children's Dignity Forum (CDF)

The core aim of CDF is to improve dignity and human rights of children in Tanzania.

- CDF's Mission: CDF is a not-for-profit organisation that works to promote and reinforce rights of vulnerable children particularly girls by placing children's legal and human rights on the public agenda; creating working forum to empower children, families and the society in general, and developing capacity and skills to address harmful traditional practices.
- CDF's Vision: CDF envisages a Tanzanian society where children live in dignity, have rights and accorded social justice.
- CDF's Core Values: Voluntary Spirit; Gender Equality, Partnership; Participation and Voice of the Children.

FORWARD

Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD) is an African Diaspora women's campaign and support charity that was set up in 1985. Our work responds to the need to safeguard dignity and advance the sexual and reproductive health and human rights of African women and girls. We work with individuals, communities and organisations to transform harmful practices and improve the quality of life of vulnerable girls and women.

- FORWARD's Vision: That women and girls live in dignity, are healthy and have choices and equal opportunities.
- FORWARD's mission: FORWARD was founded to safeguard dignity and advance health and human rights for African girls and women globally.
 - **We educate** and engage policy makers, communities and the public to facilitate social change and protection of rights
 - **We advocate** for enabling policies and resources
 - **We support** programmes and services to tackle gender based violence in particular female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriages
 - **We inform and** share learning and good practice
 - **We empower** and mobilize vulnerable girls and women to raise their voices and exercise their rights

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Koshuma Mtengeti
CDF Co-ordinator

Local words

<i>Litungu</i>	Kurya traditional dance
<i>Nyumba Ntobu</i>	women-to-girls marriages
<i>Ngariba</i>	FGM practitioners
<i>Saro</i>	the period when FGM is conducted
<i>Wazee wa mila</i>	traditional leaders

Abbreviations

CBO	community-based organization
CDF	Children's Dignity Forum
FGM	female genital mutilation
FORWARD	Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
LHRC	Legal and Human Rights Centre
PEER	Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation Research
SDA	Seventh Day Adventists
SOSPA	Sexual Offence Special Provision Act
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the research

This report details a participatory ethnographic evaluation research (PEER) project conducted in Tarime district, Mara region, Tanzania from January to June 2009. Tarime is in the lake zone of Tanzania. The dominant tribe is Kurya, although there are other tribes in the area. Agriculture (maize, millet, bananas, coffee and beans), livestock and fishing provide the main sources of livelihood.

The research focused on child brides, child widows, and girls at risk of child marriage. It was conducted as a follow-up to a previous survey into child marriage in Dar es Salaam, Coastal, Mwanza and Mara regions,¹ which had faced time constraints. A more thorough anthropological study was therefore recommended, to ascertain the extent of child marriage and enable researchers and respondents to develop the depth of relationship needed for discussing these sensitive issues.

This latest research used peer researchers, all of whom had been directly affected by child marriage. They helped to investigate the extent of child marriage in Tarime; the root causes and risk factors; and the possible solutions and actions for the community, local and national decision-makers, and influential international stakeholders. The research sought to give a voice to

affected girls, and to use their voices to stimulate efforts to end child marriage.

This report highlights the real lives of girl children in marriages; their duties and responsibilities as wives, the challenges they face, and the strategies they think could end child marriage in Tarime district. The report further looks at the influence of female genital mutilation (FGM), and addresses pregnancy and childbirth of girls and young women. Conclusions and recommendation are provided.

1.2. The problem of child marriage

In general marriage is a choice made by two consenting adults. However, adulthood is often viewed differently in many societies, that is why children are often forced to marry at a young age. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that one remains a child until the age of 18². Thus any marriage involving partners under the age of 18 is a child marriage. Girls below this age are not physically, physiologically or psychologically ready for the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing.³ Nevertheless, it was estimated that 52 million girls below 18 were married in 2002; and 25,000 are being married off each day. By 2012, around 100 million girls will have been forced into marriage.⁴

International human rights frameworks, in theory, offer children protection from marriage at a young age. The following conventions – which Tanzania has ratified – promote children’s rights and welfare, stand against child marriage as a form of gender discrimination, and highlight that child marriage is a public, not private, matter:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) – Article 16
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) – Articles 2 and 16
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children (2000) – Article xxi
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) – Article 16 (a), (b) and (d).

Despite ratifying these conventions, Tanzania (like many other countries) has not domesticated them into national law. Inevitably, therefore, child rights violations, such as child marriage, persist across the country. Given that children constitute approximately 50 per cent of the Tanzanian population,⁵ such violations present a significant problem.

1.3. The Tanzanian legal context

Age of childhood

Tanzania has not reviewed new or existing laws to ensure compliance with the international conventions it has ratified – creating a significant barrier to the achievement of child rights. Some laws clearly contradict each other with regard to the age at which a child becomes an adult. For instance, the Children and Young Persons Act defines a child as under 12 years of age, while the Evidence Act says the age of majority is 14 years.

Child marriage

Under Tanzanian law, child marriage still has legal status. The Law of Marriage Act (1971) allows for boys to marry at 18 and girls to marry at 15. They can marry at 14 if the courts approve their request. Girls under 18 need their parents’ permission to marry, but that does not in any way protect a girl from an early marriage. The current legality of child marriages makes the challenge of ending such marriages particularly difficult.

FGM

FGM is a practice closely related to marriage. It is prevalent across Tanzania (except in Kigoma).⁶ FGM refers to a range of procedures involving the total or partial removal of the female genital organs. Four types of FGM have been classified by the WHO, although unskilled excisors may carry out procedures that do not always fit into these categories.⁷ Type 1 has been found to be practised in Tarime district.

WHO classification of FGM

Type I: Excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or the entire clitoris (clitoridectomy).

Type II: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision).

Type III: Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering by cutting and positioning the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation).

Type IV: All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for no medical purposes, for example: pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterisation.

The Sexual Offence Special Provision Act (SOSPA, 1998) outlaws FGM as an example of cruelty to children, punishable by fines and/or imprisonment. As the current research shows, however, the law is clearly not being enforced in Tarime district; no one has been prosecuted despite

conducting visible FGM celebrations and ceremonies. Greater efforts to enforce the law are urgently needed.

The Child Development Policy (1996) does not mention school girl pregnancies, but says laws should be reviewed to protect children against acts that curtail their studies. There are penalties for anyone who impregnates and/or marries a school girl, and for any parent who aids, abets or solicits a primary or secondary school girl to marry. Being pregnant is not legal grounds for expulsion from school (although in reality few people know this, and thus many girls are expelled); while expulsion following marriage is a policy.

Following pressure from UNICEF, the Tanzanian government adopted a new law in January 2010 (six months after this project ended). The law allows young mothers to return to school after giving birth, something previously forbidden. However, not all schools are aware of the law or accept girls back.⁸

2. Research methodology

2.1. Participatory ethnographic evaluation research (PEER)

PEER helps us work with hard-to-research groups and investigate issues from the insider's perspective, particularly in the field of health and social research. Community members are trained to interview individuals they select from their own social networks. Outside researchers might never gain access to or develop sufficient trust from these individuals, especially when investigating sensitive topics such as gender relations, child marriage and FGM.

PEER taps into established relationships of trust between peer researchers and their friends. It generates rich narrative data on how people view their world, their behaviour and experiences, and how they make decisions on key issues. The research process helps to empower the peer researchers as experts of their community.

This PEER study, by FORWARD and CDF, was based on technical expertise received from Options Consultancy in London. PEER got approval from the University of Wales, Swansea Research Ethics Board in 2007.

2.2. Research stages

2.2.1. Training

- Twenty-four volunteers (peer researchers) were recruited from different wards in Tarime district. All were victims of child marriage, aged 16-24 years, and were representative of their community, as far as possible.
- The girls took part in a four-day participatory training workshop to help them understand the objective of the research and their roles. The training used Kiswahili and Kurya languages, with which all the peer researchers were familiar.
- Facilitators, supervisors and peer researchers worked together to decide the key themes of the research, and developed prompts to guide in-depth conversational interviews around these themes.

2.2.2. Data collection

- Each peer researcher carried out three interviews with two friends. The interviews covered the themes of life in Tarime, child marriage, and the effects of child marriage.
- Interviews were carried out in the third person. For instance, interviewers asked: "What do people in your community say about...?" No names were used. Interviewees were encouraged to

share stories or examples they had heard from the community.

- Peer researchers made brief notes on key issues or stories immediately after interviewing their friends (if they felt comfortable doing this).
- Supervisors met the peer researchers weekly to collect their findings, and wrote detailed notes.
- After two weeks, the supervisors met with the research team made up of CDF, FORWARD staff the lead consultant and the local consultant from Tanzania to discuss the data collection and possible improvements.
- Peer researchers were interviewed individually by members of the research team to help expand details, clarify queries and fill gaps. Detailed notes from these interviews were used in the final analysis.

- An evaluation workshop for the peer researchers enabled them to discuss what they had learned from participating in the research, to share experiences, and to suggest practical recommendations for addressing the issues they had researched.

2.2.3. Data analysis

Data was analysed thematically; emerging themes were assigned codes, explored further and triangulated during the final peer researcher workshop. Data was printed and cut into paragraphs and stories which the peer researchers could arrange under thematic headings. The research team then refined the findings.

3. Research findings

The findings are presented here in four categories, illustrated by quotations from interviewees (in italics):

- daily life
- FGM
- child marriage
- broader issues.

3.1. Daily life

Researchers asked about daily life in Tarime in order to understand the context in which the girls affected by child marriage were living.

3.1.1. Income generation and domestic activities

Farming

Farming is Tarime's main economic activity. Most people grow food crops near their homes, which they use to feed their families. They cultivate cash crops – tobacco, coffee, millet, maize, beans, bananas, sweet potatoes, peas and cassava – on farms further away. The cash enables them to buy items for the home or to educate their children. Most of the farming is done by women; men may sometimes assist with harvesting. They use hand hoes for cultivating food for consumption, and cow ploughs on their cash crop land. Women and young married girls do farm work early in the morning, returning home around 10am to continue with household chores.

Cattle

Cattle are a source of wealth. They are used for ploughing land and their sale can raise money for education or other uses. Women take care of the cattle (milking them and grazing them all afternoon), but men own the animals and any wealth they generate. Grazing the cattle in nearby forests and hills can be a hazardous activity for the women. Women who are unable to care for cattle maybe be *"beaten and chased from their husband's home"*. Men only care for cattle *"if the woman is sick, travelled, or has taken a child to the clinic"*. They reportedly often spend any income earned from cattle on alcohol or marrying additional wives, rather than on their family's needs. Cattle form a key component of the bride price during marriage negotiations in the region.

Collecting firewood

Firewood is used for cooking or is made into charcoal and sold to earn money. It is collected from forests, though trees are sometimes grown specifically for firewood. Women and girls collect the wood, often travelling *"a distance of about 3 hours on foot...one can leave in the morning and come back in the evening"*. Men don't collect firewood, *"if they do, others will call him dense"*.

Unequal division of labour

The examples of firewood collection, cattle care and crop cultivation all highlight the gender roles present in the community, and all contribute to

an increased burden on girls and women. All of those interviewed highlighted the heavy workload faced by women, who combine domestic chores and childcare (and sometimes caring for elderly parents) with farming and income earning. Men, meanwhile, have little to do, spending their days doing recreational activities and socializing. One girl explained a common picture:

"I wake up in the morning and go to the farm with my husband. Then I come back, make some porridge for the kids, fetch water, [then] I take the cows for grazing. Then in the afternoon I come home to make lunch for the family and take back the cattle for grazing."

The imbalance of responsibilities between women and men was felt by most of those interviewed.

"...men don't graze cattle as they think that women and children are there to do all the work, they just play chess. Women do most of the work because men feel that because they have paid dowry for them, they should do all the work."

The girls and young women interviewed explained graphically how hard life in Tarime is.

"Life here in Tarime is really hard as all the work is being done by us women...I was married at 15 years and it's been three years now and I have no children but I am so tired of this life"

Within the community, greater awareness and understanding of this unequal situation and its consequences, and increased empowerment of women and girls, are needed.

3.1.2. Traditional activities

Dancing

The Kurya tribe have a traditional dance commonly known as *litungu* which is usually performed on special occasions, such as to celebrate a good harvest, weddings, FGM rituals (*saro*) and passage to adulthood. Both boys and girls, of the same age (usually 13-18-year-olds), take part. They dance in two lines, with boys on one side and girls on the other.

"After FGM the dances are done so that one can advertise themselves as being ready for marriage. Girls dress up for the dances as they are going to look for market for themselves. Mostly it is girls of 14 years of age and after that one gets a husband if you are liked."

Traditional brew

The traditional brew in Tarime district is mostly made by women, in areas with a plentiful water supply, and sold to earn an income for their household or children's school costs. Various brews are made, using ingredients such as ripe bananas, coconuts, maize and cassava. They are consumed by men, including the elders, when they meet to relax. The brew is also drunk during end-of-year celebrations, weddings and FGM celebrations. Often

it leads to drunkenness and violence towards women.

"... for those who drink it can lead to fights, even people cutting each other with machetes. Also for a man who is drunk he can beat and chase away his wife and children from the house."

"People here take the traditional brew so as to reduce stress and to be merry. The brew has effects especially if one drinks too much such as he can rape adults or children and also insult other people"

Making traditional brew can be dangerous for the women involved:

"...it can cause liver damage and skin discolouration... Sometimes the brew can make bubbles which when they bust they can seriously burn a person."

Most traditional brews are banned by the government because of their effects, but women still make the brews secretly to maintain their income. Alternative income generating activities are needed.

3.2. Female genital mutilation

3.2.1. Background

FGM in Tarime is used as a rite of passage into adulthood, and signals that a girl is ready to marry and thus that her family can get bride price. The incentive of bride price is one reason

why FGM is now practised on younger girls (aged 10-16 years).

"...mostly girls go through FGM when they are 10 years and circumcision for boys when they are 12 years, they do so at an early age so that girls and boys can get married early."

Traditionally, FGM in Tarime is practised every two years in a ritual that lasts a full day. Girls 'rest' for a month afterwards, then if not in school they are married off. The research highlighted that FGM was primarily practised in order to be able to marry off girls.

"Most of the times after FGM, children are married off. Taking children early through FGM results in child marriages."

3.2.2. Reasons for FGM

FGM is considered to be observing Kurya customs and traditions, hence the pressure from traditional leaders and the society to continue the practice.

"FGM cannot end as it is driven by deep-rooted beliefs ...those who are not [mutilated] are despised and insulted by relatives, parents even their peers, and by so doing girls are willing and happy to go through FGM."

Other reasons for the popularity of the practice in Tarime include:

- to reduce sexual desire (although some research participants

admitted that it doesn't have this effect, and so girls also need to be married off to avoid them shaming the family through sexual activity outside wedlock)

- to get married – un-mutilated girls usually cannot find a husband. The link between FGM and marriage is one factor that contributes to child marriage in Tarime
- to get gifts from those who come to the FGM ceremony
- to prevent stigma, abuse and isolation from one's peers.

3.2.3. Beliefs and myths

The following common beliefs around FGM in Tarime were revealed during the research:

- Girls who have undergone FGM have a higher chance of getting married. Men are brought up believing mutilated women are better, and they start asking for a girl's hand in marriage straight after FGM has taken place.
- Girls usually find a husband within two years of being mutilated (before the next FGM ceremony) otherwise the community believes they will have bad luck.
- Un-mutilated girls are considered unlikely to marry; any man willing to marry such a girl is believed to be 'doing her a favour'.

Married girls who have not undergone FGM face problems with their in-laws.

"...my ex-husband's friends used to laugh at him as I have not been mutilated. Even my in-laws used to call me 'msagani',⁹ making my relationship with my ex-husband difficult. I used to cry a lot and would go back home and tell my father about it who used to say that I should blame my mother, for she was the one who refused for me to go through FGM as she is from another tribe which does not practise FGM."

Un-mutilated girls may have to undergo FGM after their marriage.

"I was constantly insulted and discriminated because I had not gone through FGM by my in-laws... I approached a traditional birth attendant, she can cut me to do away with the problems. After going through it my father-in-law and my husband's relatives were very happy and even slaughtered a cow in my honour".

Various myths exist in the community, ranging from what should be worn at the ceremony through to what will happen if un-mutilated girls marry. For instance, in addition to being generally bad luck for an un-mutilated girl to marry, the girl would not be allowed to cook for her in-laws, bathe in the river with mutilated girls, or open the door to the cow shelter for fear of bringing bad luck to anyone else who passes through after her.

When a girl dies as a result of FGM there is no funeral.

"It is felt that...the dead corpse will bring bad fate to the village and that it will kill all the girls mutilated in that year. Due to this the corpse is thrown away in the bushes or in another tribe or village area. If the other clan realised that there is a corpse thrown in their area they also throw it back to where they think the corpse came from. This can happen back and forth until the corpse is eaten by wild animals."

3.2.4. Religion and FGM

In Tarime, religious groups such as the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) and the Catholic Church advocate against FGM, although some members of the Catholic congregation still practise it. The study found that the community often accepts those who do not follow FGM traditions due to their religious beliefs. Girls from these religious groups are still able to marry despite not being mutilated; they don't seem to face the same discrimination as their peers. This indicates the potential for the community to accept a different view of FGM.

"...FGM has changed nowadays, it has started to cool down because the SDA and the Pentecost churches are advocating against. So the next six years there will be a great improvement toward the end of FGM in Tarime district."

3.2.5. Decision-making

Parents and elders in the family play a major role in FGM practices. They

influence the girl's perception of FGM and make the final decisions regarding whether and when the girl is mutilated.

"...it's the father of the girl who decides when the girl is to go for FGM, and if the girl refuses then the father feels he has been embarrassed..."

"...fathers normally decide to send their daughters through FGM; also the aunties and grandmothers also enforce the father to do that."

Targeting grandparents, aunts and other family members – when trying to promote an end to FGM – is therefore as important as targeting parents.

While girls usually do not have control over decisions regarding FGM, some are influenced to willingly accept it after listening to other girls and women who have been through it. The stories they hear often highlight the positive and ignore the negative aspects of FGM.

"...some girls run away from home and go through with it, staying with their grandparents or aunts until they are healed, then come back home to their parents. They want to go through it because of peer pressure, attracted by the gifts and attention they get from the process. It also depends on the girl herself, even if the father refuses she can go to the aunties and convince them to go through FGM."

Some girls choose to go through with FGM to escape discrimination and insults from their peers, and to 'fit in'

with their age group and society in generally.

"I did not experience such discrimination because my mother was sick for a long time. I couldn't go out a lot, but I knew girls who were not mutilated and they had a tough time as other girls would fight with them and call them names... The SDA girls do not care, but the others when called names they fight and when the FGM season comes they go for the circumcision...if a girl is not mutilated she is usually shunned by society and discriminated [against]..."

3.2.6. Practitioners

FGM practitioners in Tarime district are called *ngariba*. The role is hereditary, passed from mother to daughter. They are highly respected and even feared members of the community.

"If one antagonises them they can hurt your daughter or even cut her badly during FGM."

The traditional leaders in the community (*wazee wa mila*) plan the FGM ceremony and choose the *ngariba* – a village may have up to 30 practitioners. *Ngaribas* get paid a fee for circumcising (more for a boy than a girl), and they give some of this fee to the *wazee wa mila*, who must also give their permission before any girl can be cut. The *wazee wa mila's* influence over the FGM process makes them key targets for any attempts to end FGM.

3.2.7. Experiences of being cut

Girls recounted different experiences of the day FGM was performed on them. A few examples include:

"...only women are present during the cutting itself but the traditional leaders are usually nearby... On that day people come to the house, eat and drink and celebrate the ceremony, and the girl is awarded presents. Then in the evening the aunties wash the wound of the girl with hot water and herbs."

"...other girls after mutilation stay with the wound for more than one month. The wound is to be cleaned by a witness (a person who attended the circumcision with the girl, usually the mother or the auntie). Because it is very painful so some of the girls want to wash it themselves, but because of the pain, they sometimes don't even wash to avoid the pain. So they end up smelling badly."

"One of my brothers sat on my chest while the others held my legs apart so that the ngariba can cut me. They told me that if I screamed the father would have to pay the ngariba one cow. So I had to keep very silent despite of all the pain I felt...She cut only a small part. After the cutting they put in some local medicine in powder form which was so painful. I stayed for three weeks to heal; passing urine was so painful, the ngariba had put in medicine but when I walked bleeding started again but not a lot."

Most girls who have gone through FGM do not like to talk about it. Some feel ashamed to speak about their stories, as they consider it a secret, while others want to forget about the painful experience.

3.2.8. Consequences of FGM

FGM has physical, psychological and social consequences. The consequences vary. Some girls reported minimal physical effects:

"There is no pain during the menstrual periods. The only pain is when they cut you and when they wash you after the cutting."

While others talked of fatal consequences:

"I refused to go through FGM because I knew other friends who were mutilated and had bled heavily and one had died so I was scared that if I went through the ritual I might die and dreaded the fact that the bodies of those who die during FGM are just thrown away."

Painful sex, heavy bleeding, and tearing or other complications during child delivery are common among girls who have been mutilated – they may not often talk about these consequences, but they cannot hide them.

3.3. Child marriage

3.3.1. Age, consent and choice

Child marriage is a problem faced by many children in Tanzania, especially those in rural areas. In Tarime, children get married at a very young age – as early as 11 years.

"...my father was at the forefront of arranging the marriage despite my young age of 11 years. This was immediately after undergoing FGM. I have had three children with my husband..."

"...I did not go to school as my father saw it is no use to take a girl to school, so after FGM I was married off. My father had taken dowry and thus forcing me to get married at the age of 12 years. My mother agreed with me that I was small, but she could not go against my father for fear of being beaten..."

Some girls are forced to get married young to bring in a dowry income which their brothers can then use to secure a wife.

"...I was still in school at the age of 14 years but I was married off as my brother wanted to marry and he did not have cows, so they married me off so that they can get cows for him. I was [my husband's] fourth wife."

Girls may agree to marry young to escape their current difficulties at home, but they often are not aware of the new challenges marriage will bring.

"...I got married at 14 years with my own consent because of the hardship at home."

"...I was very happy to get married because I knew my husband before and I was the one who told my parents that I want to get married, but now I am not happy as life is difficult especially after getting my second child."

Legally there must be consent to marriage. Some marriages are based on the girl's consent, but the research revealed that most are arranged and contracted by the girl's parents (particularly fathers), with or without the girl's agreement.

"Parents decide their daughters should get married, since they are faced by a number of challenges like shortage of money to fulfil the daily basic needs of their family... Sometimes girls decide to get marriage due to the poor life that they are living and the belief that marriages rescue them from the difficulties of life."

"My father had agreed on my marriage with the father of my husband. Normally if the marriage is agreed by both parties they would do a ceremony. But for me I was forced into it. I had managed to escape being mutilated by running away to my grandmother's, but for the marriage my father and uncles were insistent and my father had intimidated and threatened to kill me if I tried to do the same thing and escape."

Issues of consent go hand-in-hand with the matter of bride price. Girls' wishes or best interests are often ignored by parents in order to secure this income.

"...the problem of child marriages is mostly people's perception on poverty and the tradition beliefs that girls are meant to bring wealth. A girl of 12 years can marry a man of 30 years, and the parents do not interfere as the parents just want the bride price."

Interestingly, girls do not always know when bride price has been paid for them.

"I was not aware of my marriage arrangement. My father and one of my uncles received bride price and arranged the marriage. I got to know it when the man came to my home and my father and my uncle told me that the man you see here has paid bride price therefore this is your husband."

Society considers marriage to be a life-long union. However, interviewees noted this is not the case with most child marriages, which tend to face problems and break down – often with negative consequences for the girl.

"...most girls married at a young age get divorced and return to their homes. [For] some their parents are too harsh and they run away and roam in towns doing prostitution... Some stay with their parents until they get another man and get married to try their luck. The big percent remember the beating and

humiliation faced during their previous marriage and get discouraged to marry."

A common view is that once girls are married they do not have the option of returning to their parents, regardless of any hardship they face. Families are reluctant or unable to return any bride price paid to the husband, so girls are forced to remain in abusive marriages.

"...some families allow the girls to stay with them and even let them go to school. While some chase them out and even return them to their husbands."

Many girls refuse to be married again, once their first marriage fails. Others marry older men so they don't have to return to their families where they are viewed as a burden.

3.3.2. Bride price

Bride price is given to a girl's parents to thank them and her relatives for taking care of the girl. The study highlighted that bride price plays a significant role in perpetuating violence against girls. Bride price contributes to violence and harassment against girls, usually this comes from the girl's husband and his family. Having received a price for her, the girl's parents may put her under pressure to stay with or return to her violent husband, so that they don't have to return the bride price.

"...I think the reason that men are cruel to their wives is because some of them pay so many cows as

dowry. ...when a girl gets married the parents tell her that she should not come back... Thus the husband beats her because he knows she doesn't have any place to go."

Young brides also suffer in marriages where a bride price has *not* been paid. They indicated that men who have not paid bride price tend to value their wives even less – "*men feel they got the girl for free*" – and insult and beat them.

"...one day I went into a hut where people pay to watch video shows. There I met this man who later I started living with as my husband. The man has now started beating me saying I am a prostitute as he found me in the television hut and he did not pay anything for me..."

Parents perceive bride price as a way to relieve poverty, but in reality it rarely seems to achieve this – hence parents' fears of having to return a bride price to a daughter's husband if the marriage fails.

3.3.3. Education

The research revealed a strong preference for educating boys, with families even selling their cows to pay their school costs. Girls are not so lucky, and parents are often wary of the independence that might result from educating them.

"...education is not given a first priority especially girls are not taken to school compared to boys. Parents say that when you educate a girl

child she will get married to another family therefore there is no advantage of educating women."

"...parents cannot force an educated girl to get married because parents know that educated girls know how to argue about their rights, for instance the right to education."

In Tarime district, most girls get married after finishing primary education (up to standard seven), especially if they do not pass exams for government secondary school entry. Girls who do not go to school at all get married younger, once they have undergone FGM. It was reported that if the husband of a girl who has completed primary education continues his education into secondary and beyond, he tends to abandon his poorly educated wife to marry a more educated girl.

3.3.4. Married life for young brides

Power relations between husband and wife

Relationships between husbands and wives in Tarime are often not easy. Wives are expected to fulfil a domestic and childbearing role as well as providing for the family financially or in terms of food production. Husbands are often impatient if wives prove to be too young to fulfil these roles effectively. Married girls are clearly overburdened.

"After men marry they do not do anything. They leave all the work to their wives. All they want is the woman to have a child each year

but they do not do anything to feed, educate or clothe those children."

Some men do work, but do not provide a reliable income.

"I have to bring income into the family, feed and clothe the kids. While my husband just goes to his friends and talks most of the days and at times goes to the mine and does odd jobs to bring income, but not always. Most of the men in my village are small miners (illegal mining). When the security is tight at the mining site they just sit and drink."

Despite shouldering huge responsibilities, a married girl cannot make decisions on issues that concern her life and her children. She has a relationship with her husband based largely on dependence. This tends to lead to violence if the wife makes an independent decision against the husband's wishes.

"A woman was selling goods in her small shop without the support of her husband. Her legs were cut off because she refused to give some of the money she made to her husband."

Interviewees reported a frustrating picture in which men did not provide for their wives and children, yet had greater power than their wives.

Sexual relations

Child marriages usually feature unequal sexual relations between husband and wife, especially when girls lack knowledge on sexual and reproductive health. Marital rape – and

the consequential physical and psychological distress for the girl – is common.

"...before marriage I had no information or knowledge on marriage and sex. I also had not known any man before that way. The first day after the wedding I refused my husband, I told him I was still young. ...he forced himself on me and beat me when I tried to push him away. During the sex I felt pain on penetration and also after finishing, I felt sick, even wanted to go to the hospital as I felt the pain in my back, stomach and calf. But he refused..."

Sometimes girls had slightly more positive sexual experiences to report.

"...some days I enjoyed sex more than others. It usually depended on the day and how my husband approached me. Sometimes he was rough but others he was good."

Despite planning the girls' marriages, parents and relatives don't offer them information about the relationship they will have with their husband.

"...I thought that the husband would be like a brother who would help me..."

As a result girls have little chance to negotiate sexual relations or control what happens to their bodies. The fact that many girls who divorce are unwilling to marry again illustrates how much the experiences of their early marriage distorts their whole life.

Violence

Beating women is common in Tarime district. Kurya women used to believe that if they are not beaten they are not loved. They no longer subscribe to this view, but men still beat them. There is a cycle of domestic violence in many homes – husbands beat wives, brothers beat sisters and later their own wives – creating an environment of fear in which girls and women must live, and from which they can rarely escape.

"...I got married at 15 years with my consent and I have one child. My husband beats me most days and at times he throws me out of the house. I would go back to my parent's home. My parents would send me back to him as they can't pay back the bride price."

Some girls reported that their husbands did not consider a violent approach to be the norm.

"...I got married after class 7 with my consent to a man I had known for a while. The man is an SDA. He does not beat me but one day he did. After that, he asked his friends to speak to me and apologised that it was his fault and he promised not to beat me again. He has not since then."

Relationships with parents and in-laws

Parents were considered by research participants to play an important role in ensuring the success of their children's marriages, especially in the

case of daughters who were married at a young age.

"If forced marriage last longer there must be assistance from the parents especially parents of the girl. For instance myself I am married and I have a happy marriage. This does not mean that my husband provides everything needed in the family but my mother used to come to my house and when she comes she must bring something for me or for my family."

In-laws can also play an important role in strengthening or breaking marriages. Most young married couples live with the husband's family, for the first few years at least. Young brides are therefore heavily under the influence and often control of their in-laws.

In-laws can sometimes assist a young wife by mediating with her husband when things go wrong (with mixed success):

"...my husband used to always quarrel and I would go to my husband's sister to complain. She would then talk with him and I would return back to my husband. Then things started getting worse as he began hitting me. It was then when I decided to leave him."

They can also make things worse by interfering in the couple's affairs or reporting to the husband their dissatisfaction with the wife.

Polygamy

In Tanzania, civil and customary marriages can legally be polygamous. However, research participants thought such marriages were more difficult for young wives, and not ideal. Men were thought to marry many wives for status reasons, to ensure they could father many children and/or so the wives could care for the men's cattle.

"...men here are cruel to women because they have more than one wife and give a lot of dowry for each woman that is why they are cruel and they end [up] beating, harassing and letting them to do all the hard work."

Succession practices

The research highlighted two traditions related to family succession that are linked with child marriage.

Nyumba ntabu is practised by older, wealthy women who are childless. The old woman pays bride price for a young girl who becomes her 'wife'. The girl chooses a male relative of the old woman, or any man, to impregnate her. Any children born 'belong' to the old woman and not to the biological mother or father, thus continuing the old woman's family line.

Nyumba mboke is similar, and is practised by women who have only daughters. They 'marry' a girl who can provide them with sons.

In both cases girls may face hard work and abuse at the hands of the older woman. The girls have no rights over the children they give birth to, and

usually are unable to return to their parents, who can't afford to repay the bride price to the old woman if the 'marriage' fails.

"I was married at 13 years and have two children. The woman who married me paid 12 cows as my pride price. She chose me at the FGM dance and there was a wedding done were a man stood as a groom... the older woman beats me and I cannot leave since if I do I have to leave my children with her. Also if I leave, my parents have to return the bride price which they do not have. Thus I persevere with the situation."

3.3.5. Becoming mothers

Conception

Young married girls are often pressurized by their husbands and in-laws to conceive as soon as possible. Failure to do so is common, as their bodies are not fully developed. Young wives may also feel insecure if they can't have the children expected of them, and may face divorce if they don't get pregnant.

"...sometimes if a girl does not conceive her husband and his relatives may chase her away from the home, divorce her or the husband can decide to marry another wife."

Pregnancy and delivery

Pregnant young wives often lack the care and support needed to maintain their health and ensure they deliver a

healthy baby. They are expected to continue with the same level of work, regardless of the risk of complications.

"...I used to work the usual routine until the last minute of delivery with my mother-in-law. When I was working in a sorghum farm I had to bend down so I used to get a back ache but the mother-in-law used not to believe me. So on the day I had my labour pains I had to send a message to my mother who next day took me to hospital and I delivered straight away."

Childbirth is risky for a young girl's under-developed body. Some reported having a good delivery, with their parents' assistance. Most girls, however, highlighted that they are not allowed to decide where to deliver as the elders make this decision for them.

"...I use to get very sick when I was pregnant and I was advised to deliver in the hospital, but when I went into labour I was taken to a traditional birth attendants by my mother-in-law. As a result I had prolonged labour and I was unable to deliver and was taken to the hospital and found the baby had died..."

The girls also often did not know what to expect, or had received only partial information from friends or mothers.

"...I was supported by my friend who was also married at a young age. She informed me on how I would feel and that I should follow up at the clinic. So when it came to delivery I knew what to expect."

When I had labour pain I went to the hospital, but my friend had not told me that I should take some things such as baby's diapers, some cloths for the baby. I also did not know that I had to be admitted first so I went straight to the labour room, where I was told I was not ready and had to stay and relax, do exercises..."

The physical impact of giving birth so young was explained by some girls.

"...I had gone through FGM so during delivery I got another wound and scarring, as I had a tear that did not heal until after two months. Those who have gone through FGM face problems such as lots of bleeding and fistula. They also take long to recover after delivery [yet] there [are] those who 3 days after delivery have to go to farm, fetch water and start working..."

Motherhood

Young mothers are expected to take care of their children and husband, while often lacking the knowledge and skills to do this properly.

"...child mothers suffer a lot as they are unable to know how to take care of their children. They cannot feed them properly and don't know when their children are sick or not, and as a result children can die."

However, the research found that some girls enjoy being mothers, if supported by relatives and older women. It was evident that there is a need for support systems by the community to enable the child mother

to take care of her children, provide for them and also maintain her home and husband.

"...It feels good being a mother and I love my child. It becomes hard to raise him only when he gets sick and I do not have money to take him to the hospital,"

"...it is normal having a child. I feel good raising her despite the difficulties. I am lucky now that I no longer stay with my husband as I am staying with my brother, and my sister-in-law helps by giving me advice, and my brother also supports me financially. I also work hard at home, so they give me some money which helps me to buy clothes for the child."

Most young mothers explained that lack of financial security, and an inability to provide adequate clothing, medication and nutrition for their children, were the biggest motherhood challenges.

3.3.6. Knowledge of the law

The law allows girls as young as 14 to marry in Tanzania, creating a major barrier to ending child marriage. However, there are already laws against violence and other marriage-related problems that girls can use to ensure their rights and to protect themselves from violence.

Research participants highlighted how difficult it can be to use these laws to enforce one's rights.

"Girls get problems in their marriages but they feel ashamed to report their husbands to the authorities because amongst Kurya's a man is everything."

"...if you are battered you cannot report to the police because you have nowhere to go, and if you report your husband and he gets to know of it, he can even kill you".

The law provides for women's right to maintenance and the division of matrimonial assets in the case of divorce. Research participants indicated that the procedure for divorce is known by the community, but is usually not followed.

"...the woman is not allowed to get anything apart from her cloths when she leaves her husband's home. It is only when they go through a legal divorce then she can get some of the things and the court can order joint custody of the children."

Court proceedings usually take a long time, are costly and involve travel costs. The research also indicated that corruption in the system enabled those who can afford bribes to 'win' their case in court.

3.4. Broader issues raised by the research

3.4.1. Women's rights

Interviewees said they had heard about women's rights from the radio and television. Some had learned

about women's right to own land during the nationwide survey conducted during the enactment of the 1999 Land Laws. Yet many also highlighted how these rights are not upheld.

"...a right is to be free and not to be harassed by your husband. Girls have the right to protection against abuse, but what amazes me is in Musoma district and Tarime district girls do not have such rights."

"...people speak about human rights and women's rights but for me this is not the reality. Women and men are not equal in Tarime as everyone has to be free, but men beat women and especially their wives."

Other means of getting information about rights were mentioned, such as the use of community-based organisations (CBOs), government officials and institutions.

"...the government helps because if you want to leave your husband because he is cruel to you, one can go to court, explain the situation and the court can rule that your husband should stay away from you. Then the woman is free to live her life in peace."

However, these mechanisms don't always behave as they should.

"...one can get information from the courts, although sometimes when [women] follow court's advice and report to the police – especially on issues of battering – they will tell

[the women] that they should go back to [their] husband and try to solve their problems at home."

Most women choose legal redress as a last resort, since the community feels men should not be taken to the police or courts; women who do so (and even their sisters) are often shunned by the community and their family. As a result, many women suffer in silence, which in extreme cases has resulted in murder by the husband.

3.4.2. Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Access to information on reproductive health and rights is limited in Tanzania. Most interviewees only referred to the use of condoms for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, not to prevent other sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancies.

"...first time I had sex I did not use any protection, but after that I used the calendar as a way of family planning. Other girls use condoms to avoid HIV/AIDS."

Girls married to older men have no say in reproductive matters and cannot talk about using contraception or protection against sexually transmitted infections.

"... girls who are married to a much older man do not know the previous life of that man. Often the older men have had a number of sexual partners. Thus some [girls] end up getting sexual transmitted diseases such as gonorrhoea and even

HIV/AIDS. Child marriage is a source of HIV infection as the girl...cannot take precautions."

The research identified a clear need for improved access to information on sexual and reproductive health (and the capacity to use it), for girls and young brides in particular.

3.4.3. Early sex and pregnancy outside marriage

The research revealed that, in Tarime, cohabitation and early sexual activity play a significant role in pregnancy and school drop-out rates, with some girls becoming sexually active at a very young age.

However, despite the community's preference for early marriage, not all parents/guardians are happy with their daughters becoming sexually active or cohabiting with men at a young age:

"I was living with a man for two years from when I was 14 years and we have a child together. [My parents had died so] the man whom I was living with brought my bride price to my uncle. [But] my uncle refused and said my mother's last wish was for me to go back and live with my brothers and sisters at home. So I left my husband and took my child to live with my siblings. Now the husband only comes to visit his child and he has no relations with me."

Girls who cohabit with men at a young age often don't realise that they are effectively in a marriage. They also

tend to become dependent on the man, so if he leaves they struggle to live alone and may enter into another relationship. This often leads to girls becoming trapped in a cycle of violent relationships with different men.

Unmarried girls who get pregnant often face pressure to marry, or become an outcast from the family/community.

"...it is considered shameful to get pregnant without marriage. I was ashamed when I was pregnant and wanted to get married to any man who was willing to marry me because of my condition. That was not possible as I had to take care of my sick mother..."

"...girls who get pregnant out of wedlock bring shame to their families. It is a shame for unmarried pregnant girl to remain at her parent's home. This leads to girls who are pregnant at home having their brothers or fathers taking them to the father of their baby."

Because of the stigma of pregnancy outside marriage, the girl and her parents (particularly the mother) may try various ways to enable the girl to continue her education, including seeking an abortion. However, abortion is a criminal offence in Tanzania, so illegal, unsafe abortions take place.

"...they use dangerous methods in abortion such as taking drugs, drinking poisonous substances and inserting local instruments into the uterus. Sometimes they bribe

doctors at the hospital...there are those who use local medicines so that the baby can die in the womb but this does not lead to a miscarriage so they would have to go to hospital for the doctors to remove the baby."

The research identified that girls have information on abortion options in their areas.

"...abortion is common in Tarime district. Mostly the mother and daughter go to the hospital without letting the father know, so that the girl can continue with school. Most people prefer to do it in hospital than with the traditional healers because there is a high chance of dying at the traditional healers."

Attitudes towards unmarried pregnancy and abortion in many ways fuel the prevalence of child marriages, and again highlight the need for better information and capacity to avoid pregnancies in the first place.

3.4.4. Girls' aspirations

Interviewees expressed a range of dreams and aspirations. Most wanted an opportunity to go back to school, finish their education and gain financial security and independence. Careers wished for included: prison guard, magistrate, community worker, tailor, nurse and business woman.

"...if I am educated ... I will get a good job and will find a good man. But if I remain as I am the whole cycle will occur again and I will have

to marry a Kurya man and will be beaten."

"...if I have a daughter I want her to go to the University so that she will support herself and me..."

3.4.5. Girls' suggestions

Interviewees, peer researchers and supervisors made various suggestions for eradicating child marriage in Tarime district, including:

- Establish a school where girls can learn different skills instead of getting married.
- Develop a Community Based Organization (CBO) that provides information on key issues for women and girls. This can also become a support network which helps build women's and girls' confidence and which enables open discussions on sexual and reproductive health matters.
- Open a CDF branch in Tarime district to help victims of child marriage and address other child issues.
- Create women and girls groups or clubs to help educate those who are married or at risk of being married. Members would be from diverse backgrounds and would include women such as nurses or doctors who can offer training to others. Alternatively, trainers may be invited from outside the club.
- Develop income-generating projects, such as farming of poultry, for child spouses where they can work together and get an income to support their families and children.
- Conduct awareness raising among influential members of the community, with an emphasis on education for all.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

This PEER research initiative provides an in-depth look at the problem of child marriage in Tarime district, from the perspective of those most closely affected by the practice. As well as revealing the extent, causes and effects of child marriage in the district, the research offers insights into the local government structures and institutions that are likely to be strategic partners in any efforts to end child marriage in Tarime. The research also highlights the need for similar participatory research studies into child marriage in other parts of Tanzania.

The following recommendations are focused on: informing policy-makers at the national and local level so that they can recognise the multi-faceted nature of child marriages; increasing actions to end child marriage and to support children affected; improving the health, education and wellbeing of affected children; and developing better partnerships with communities so as to safeguard girls at risk of child marriage.

Recommendations

Awareness raising and community involvement

- Extra efforts are needed to raise community awareness and to mobilize and engage community members on the issue of child marriage, as they are central to any attempt to end the practice in Tarime district.
- Key government and NGO stakeholders, including local informal organizations, need to be more involved in the movement to end child marriage. This requires coordinated actions and commitments in providing resources to support community consultations, information sharing, and improved links with government institutions at the local level.
- The cycle of silence surrounding the plight of women and girls in Tarime needs to be broken. This is vital for moving forward with community solutions to child marriage, violence and brutality towards women. In particular, the following community discussion and activities are much needed:
 - ***listening to men's views:*** there is a particular need to hear from men, especially from those who do not subscribe to the common views on bride price and the value of women
 - ***questioning traditions and customs surrounding FGM:*** in particular discussions are needed that encourage people to rethink the practice and its relevance
 - ***engaging parents (both mothers and fathers) and grandparents, who are making decisions about girls' FGM and marriage:*** in particular discussions need to focus on the negative impact of

these practices on the girls and the wider family/community

- ***improving links with teachers and other service institutions working with young people and parents in the community:*** these stakeholders need to be brought into open dialogue on issues relating to FGM and child marriage
- ***coordinating government departments and institutions*** – e.g. police, District Council, Magistrates, Community Welfare Officers and local government leaders – to improve their proactive responses to FGM and child marriage.

Advocacy and lobbying for law and policy change

A coalition at national and regional level is needed to push for improved political will to change laws and policies concerning children protection. In particular this united advocacy effort needs to focus on:

- changing laws concerning marriage age, so as to outlaw the marriage of children
- enforcing the law against FGM and allocating resources to enable the police to follow up and investigate the perpetrators of FGM
- changing policies so as to allow child mothers to return to school and fulfil their right to education
- taking legal action against parents who marry off their daughters at a

young age, or against men who marry young girls, so as to deter others

- enforcing laws and punishments against those who impregnate girls.

Direct interventions and services

Various programmatic responses are also necessary, in view of the research findings. These include:

- ***empowering girls through the provision of training in various skills***, e.g. life and livelihood skills, leadership and participation, communication, decision-making, income-generating, and sexual and reproductive health
- ***facilitating improved access for girls to formal and non-formal education***, for instance assisting and sponsoring girls who want to re-enrol
- ***supplementing training with income-generating activities***, such as supporting small projects initiated by the girls and enabling key players in child marriage (*ngariba*, traditional leaders, etc) to find and build alternative income sources
- ***providing legal advice/services***, such as the establishment and maintenance of a paralegal team in Tarime district which can offer legal aid, advice and protection for girls against FGM, child marriage, battering, and other forms of domestic gender-based violence

- ***establishing para-health services*** that offer girls, women and other community members reliable and appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health.

The implementation of these recommendations from the PEER Study will be critical in interventions to address child marriage, FGM and other forms of violence against girls and young women in Tanzania. Child marriage, FGM and domestic violence are entrenched forms of gender based discrimination that are internalized and enshrined within communities' social

fabric, traditions and customs. However, they can be changed through the active mobilisation and engagement of key community stakeholders; this includes placing girls at the centre of change and working with parents, traditional and religious leaders and government decision makers. Now is the right time to strengthen efforts to safeguard and protect the rights of vulnerable girls and young women, to raise their voices, and enable them to access their entitlements to improve their wellbeing and opportunities for themselves and society in general.

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