

# TANZANIA: National survey on child marriage

[Full 2017 study in English \(192 pages\)](#)

[Summary in English \(32 pages\)](#)

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Girls Not Brides (04.04.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2pOK7N0> – Child marriage can look different from one country to the next. Without context-specific data, it is difficult to design interventions that will effectively tackle the practice.

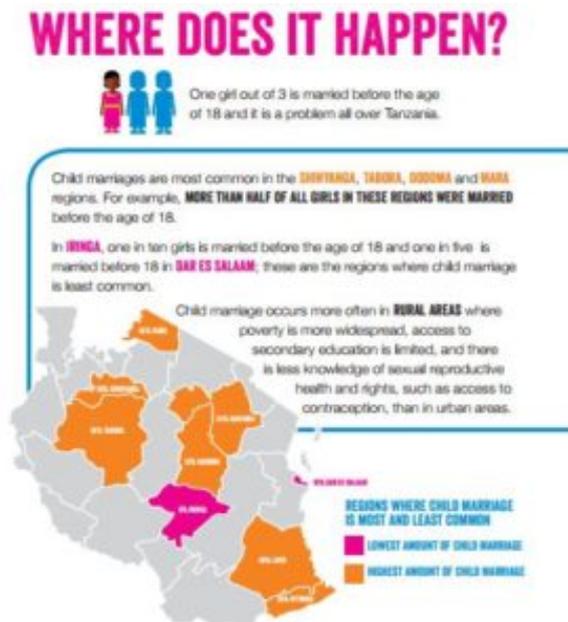
To better understand why child marriage happens in Tanzania and how best to tackle it, the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (MOHCDGEC) there conducted a national survey with the support of several Girls Not Brides members: Children's Dignity Forum, Plan International and FORWARD. They have released their findings and recommendations. Here is what we learned.

## ***Not all girls are equally affected by child marriage***

According to the survey, 37% of girls in Tanzania are married before their 18th birthday. This is based on the percentage of women aged 20-24 years old who were married before they were 18 years old. But not all girls face the same level of risk.

Some regions have higher rates than others, with Shinyanga and Tabora having rates of up to 59% and 58% while Dar es Salaam

and Iringa have rates as low as 19% and 8%. Girls who live in rural areas and/or come from a poor family are also much more likely to be married early.



### ***Child marriage is usually driven by poverty***

While there are many drivers of child marriage in Tanzania, poverty is by far the biggest factor. Poor families who are unable to pay school fees or take care of their children often resort to marriage, seeing it as a form of economic and social protection. The bride price that parents receive upon marriage – often paid in cattle and cash – is also seen as a strategy to reduce poverty.

### ***...But Gender is always a factor***

From a very young age, girls in some regions are raised to perform traditional gender roles as mothers, wives and caregivers. As a result, they often have limited economic value to the household, except the bride price they bring when

they marry. Boys, on the other hand are seen as an investment in the family's future.

### ***Fear of dishonour and teenage pregnancies also drive child marriage***

Parents worry about the shame, and financial burden, that an unwanted pregnancy brings to the family. In many cases, girls are made to marry the men who got them pregnant, whether they want to or not.

Girls are often tested for pregnancy in schools and expelled if they test positive. Once out of school, they are more likely to be married. There is a real concern that, with the recent increase in teen pregnancies (from 23% in 2010 to 27% in 2016), child marriage rates could rise too.

### ***Girls are not fully protected by the law***

Tanzania's Law of Marriage Act (1971) is different for boys and girls. It allows girls to be married at 15 years old whereas boys have to be 18. Both boys and girls can marry at 14 with a court's permission. In June 2016, Tanzania's high court ruled this to be unconstitutional but the law has yet to be amended.

Bribery and corruption are also an issue. There have been various cases of parents bribing government officials who may be likely to report a case of child marriage.

### ***What is needed to end child marriage in Tanzania?***

- Reform and harmonise conflicting laws, such as the Law of Marriage Act of 1971. Make it clear that marriage is only for those 18 and above. Ensure the legislation is enforced.
- Educate community members about the adverse effects of child marriage. Develop strategies to end poverty so families don't see marriage as a coping mechanism.
- Strengthen education and learning environments for girls in rural and urban areas. Invest in quality education, and offer reliable transport to school. Encourage married children and teenage mothers to return to school.
- Teach sexual and reproductive health education in schools and communities. Girls and boys need to know and understand what consent means and how to protect themselves, if they do decide to have sex.
- Fund and implement the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children in Tanzania (2017/18-2021/22) across the country. Ensure that all relevant Government ministries such as education and health are involved in tackling child marriage together in collaboration with civil society organisations, UN agencies, community leaders and other stakeholders.

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