



Unlocking Girls' Power & Potential
**SITUATION OF GIRLS' RIGHTS AND
WELLBEING ANALYSIS REPORT**

Study Brief
October 2024



1. Introduction

This report is a product of an analysis of the situation of girls' rights and wellbeing conducted by Msichana Initiative in 2023 and 2024. The analysis sought to determine the situation of girls' rights and wellbeing in Mainland Tanzania by looking at key aspects that affect girls' education and power, health and wellbeing, and voice and agency.

The goal was to explore key issues that girls face and recommend ways of addressing these issues to advance girls' rights protected by various international and regional human rights instruments. Understanding the current situation of girls' rights is key to developing better plans and strategies to safeguard their rights.

2. Study Objectives



3. Methodology and Scope

The analysis was mainly informed by document review and stakeholder consultation and included analysis of legal and policy frameworks governing girls' rights and wellbeing. A total of 346 stakeholders (66% female, 34% male) were consulted through questionnaire, key informant interview, and focus group discussion data collection methods, both online and offline. The stakeholders targeted were those working around girls' rights issues and/or having knowledge or expertise on girls' rights and wellbeing.

Various documents pertinent to girls' rights and wellbeing were reviewed, including government reports and reports developed by local and international organizations; speeches; statements; court judgements; and articles. The situation was assessed in line with international, regional, and domestic standards on girls' rights and wellbeing.

4. Key Findings

4.1. Key Issues Affecting Girls' Rights and Wellbeing

Sexual violence, suppression of voices, psychological violence, lack of confidence, inadequate parenting, physical violence, mental health problems, access to education, and child marriage are among key issues affecting girls' rights and wellbeing, according to over 50% of community stakeholders.

Other key issues include child limited access to justice, low awareness of girls' rights, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and discrimination.

Challenges that girls face in enjoying their rights and achieving wellbeing are largely contributed by discriminatory customs and traditions in deep-rooted patriarchal systems.

Commonly violated girls' *rights include right to education; freedom from violence; right to a life with dignity; right to non-discrimination; protection from harmful practices; right to health (including mental health and SRH); right to privacy; freedom of opinion; right to liberty and personal security; right to equality before the law (including right to access to justice); and right to survival and development.*

4.2. Education and Power

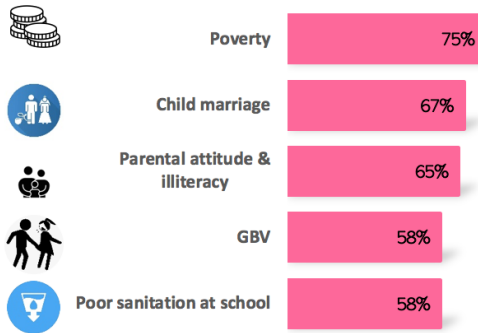
Investing in girls' education is crucial to increasing women's access to better health, higher earnings, and increased agency in their lives, which positively impact their families and communities.

Tanzania Gender Assessment Report 2022



Community stakeholders identified the following as top five issues affecting or threatening girls' right to education:

Top key issues affecting girls' access to education



Other key issues

Other key issues include long distance to school, unintended pregnancy, gender stereotypes/discrimination, human trafficking, and menstruation.

Education

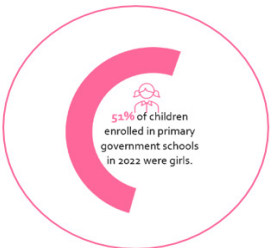
Education is essential in lifting girls out of poverty and empowering them.

Fee-free education has significantly boosted girls' access to education. However, widening gender gap as girls reach upper secondary and the quality of education remains key concerns.

Budget

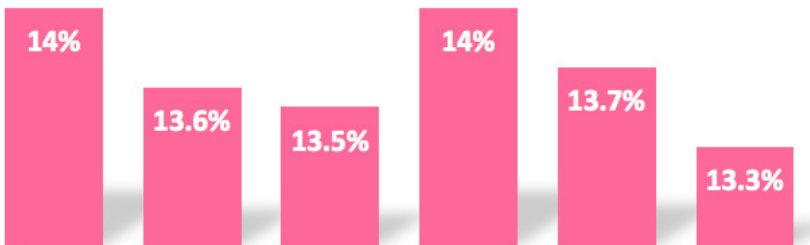
The Government has made commendable efforts to increase budget allocation for the education sector, but the budget is yet to reach the 20% of the national budget benchmark.

Inadequate budget has affected the quality of education provided.





■ %National budget



Percentage of the overall government budget allocated for the education sector - 2018/19 to 2023/24



4.3. Health and Wellbeing

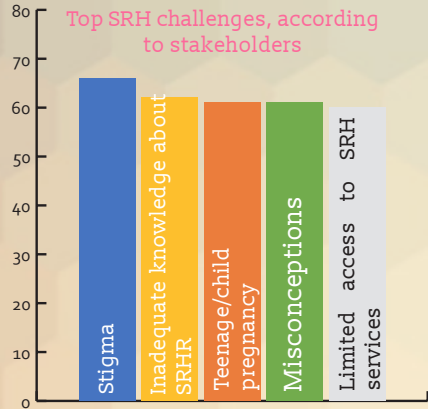
Better education improves health outcomes, reduces teenage pregnancy, and increases the control women have over the size of their families. Better education levels are associated with better health outcomes in Tanzania.

World Bank

The Government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, has taken various measures to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including expansion of health services. However, several sexual and reproductive health (SRH) challenges persist.

Over 50% of the stakeholders also mentioned inadequate access to information, lack of comprehensive sexuality education, harmful cultural practices, and SGBV as key challenges. Budgetary constraints in the health sector, low health insurance coverage,

shortage of healthcare workers, and availability and proximity of health facilities are also contributing factors. Provision of SRH education is hampered by challenges such as shortage of teaching and learning resources, outdated teaching and learning approaches, inadequate SRHR knowledge by teachers, and omission of some key topics.

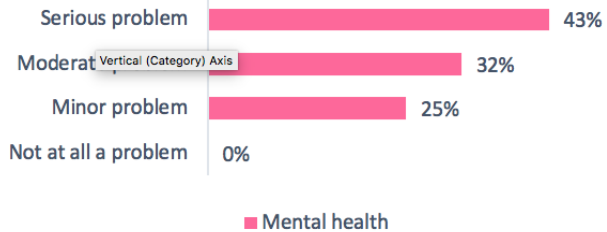


Girls with disabilities are disproportionately affected by sexual and reproductive health (SRH) challenges, which are exacerbated by stigma and discrimination they face in the community



Nearly half of community stakeholders (43%) said mental health is a serious problem for girls.

Mental Health



Community stakeholder opinion mental health problem for girls in the community

Adolescent girls are more likely to experience mental health issues than boys.

Mental ill-health is especially a problem for girls who have encountered challenges such as rape, unintended pregnancy, forced and early marriages,

and being subjected to violence in home and school settings.

Poverty, unhappy family, and gender social norms (e.g norms around son preference) also contribute to mental ill-health among girls.

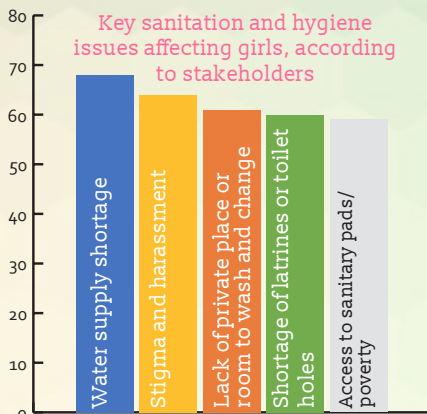
Sanitation and Hygiene

Lack of or limited access to menstrual sanitary pads significantly affects girls' education, cause them miss classes.

Access to sanitary pads remains a challenge for the majority of girls and women.

Most women and girls in Tanzania use cloth as a method of menstrual protection (53%).

Only 37% of women and girls use disposable pads.



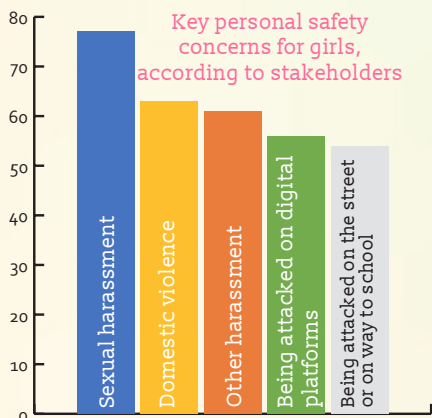
Stakeholders emphasize that removal of tax on sanitary pads, declaring pads to be essential need, and removal or significant reduction of import tax on ram materials used to make them is key to increasing access to sanitary pads for girls.

Safety

Persistent violations of their fundamental human rights put girls' safety at risk.

Community stakeholders identified sexual harassment (77%) as the top safety concern for girls.

Other safety concerns include human/child trafficking, limited access to justice, and long distance to school, particularly in rural areas.



4.4. Voice and Agency

Decision-making & Leadership

comfortable expressing their views or opinions in the community and more likely to be asked for their opinions and encouraged to participate in leadership, while their counterparts in rural areas are much less comfortable and less likely.

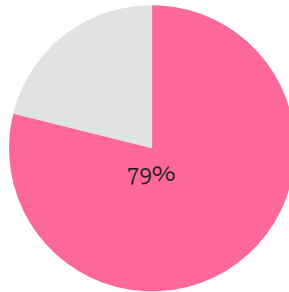
Community stakeholders identified key barriers to girls freely voicing their opinions to include lack of or limited

discriminatory customs and traditions (62%), and lack of access to accurate information (61%).

Stakeholders recommended education, creating safer spaces, capacity building, parental engagement, campaigns, and encouragement as strategies to improve the situation.



79% of stakeholders consider suppression of girls' voices to be among major key issues affecting girls' rights and wellbeing





Violence

Violence is a key barrier to girls' voice and agency. Incidents of different forms of violence against children, especially sexual violence, in Tanzania have been widely reported and escalated over the past five years.

Girls working and living on the streets, girls with disabilities, and those working as house helps are also at greater risk of being subjected to sexual and other forms of violence. Most acts of violence against girls are perpetrated in home and school settings.

Analysis of police reports for the period of 2018 to 2023 reveals that 8 out of 10 victims of violence against children are girls.

Rape is the most reported act of sexual abuse of girls.

Since 2015, police reports show that more than 5000 rape incidents have been reported each year, overwhelming majority of the victims being girls.



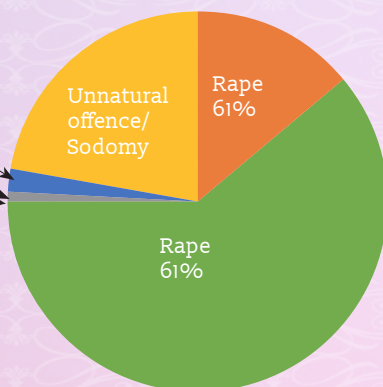
Rape also accounts for over 60% of crimes against person documented by police.

Child dissertion 2%

Child stealing 1%

Defilment 0%

Human trafficking 0%



%Distribution of crimes against person by type documented by police in 2022

Girls are also subjected to physical violence, psychological violence, and economic violence. Acts of such violence include denial of inheritance and property rights, child marriage, undergoing FGM, child neglect, verbal abuse and humiliation, and denial of education. Cyberviolence is also a growing problem for girls in Tanzania, leaving them vulnerable to online abuse.

Key challenges in combating violence against girls (VAG) include shortages of safe houses/shelters, fit persons, and fit families; shortage of social welfare officers (SWOs); inadequate budget for implementation of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (NPA-VAWC); inadequate legal protection for girls; prosecution challenges; social acceptance of violence; poverty; limited access to justice; and discriminatory cultural practices.

Child Marriage

Child marriage remains a key barrier to girls' rights, including right to education.

The Law of Marriage Act, 1971 (revised in 2019) is a key driver of child marriage, as the Government and Parliament are yet to take action to amend in line with the Court of Appeal decision in the Rebecca Gyumi case.

Other drivers of child marriage include discriminatory social norms, high rates of social acceptance of child marriage and bride prices, poverty, FGM/C, dowry/bride price, customary laws, limited access to education, teenage pregnancy, and family pressure and threats.



#MillardAyoUPDATES INADAIWA ALIPIGWA FIMBO

ALIELAZIMISHWA
KUOLEWA, AFA

ayo TV

BREAKING NEWS? Pakua APP ya 'millardayo' ...subscribe YouTube ya 'millardayo'

10,962 likes

millardayo Jeshi la Polisi Mkoani Kigoma linawashikilia Watu watatu akiwemo Baba mzazi Kulwa Juakali (40) Mkazi wa kijijicha Lufubu Wilaya ya Uvinza kwa tuhuma za kumpiga fimbo Mtoto wake Mbaru Juakali (17) hadi kusababisha kifo chake huku chanzo cha tukio hilo kikitidaiwa kuwa ni kumlazimisha Mtoto huyo kuolewa chini ya umri kwa mahari ya ng'ombe 13 bila ridhaa yake.

Discriminatory social norms encouraging or justifying child marriage are more likely to be held by poorer individuals with a low educational background, regardless of sex.

Girl child marriage is more common in rural areas and is perpetuated by social acceptance of the practice.

Child marriage causes lower educational attainment, affect girls' prospects, and increases likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence and birth complications.

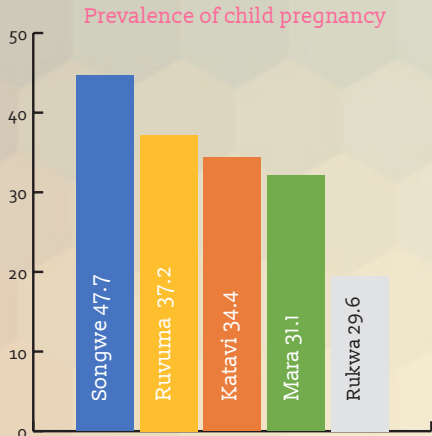
Other consequences of child marriage have been well documented. They include increased likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence, reduced economic opportunities, and increased risk of mental ill-health.

Child/Teenage Pregnancy

Child pregnancy also continues to be a threat to girls' rights and wellbeing. It is mostly prevalent in Songwe, Ruvuma, Katavi, Mara, and Rukwa Regions.

6% of women aged 15-19 in Tanzania are currently pregnant, while 22% have ever been pregnant.

Factors contributing to prevalence of child pregnancy in Tanzania include: poor parenting/child neglect and abandonment; peer pressure; household poverty/economic hardships; low knowledge about sexual and reproductive health education; child marriage; family breakdown/parental separation; FGM; and lack of self-awareness.





Access to and Control over Resources

Girls' right to access and control over resources is stipulated in various human rights conventions and domestically under the Constitution of Tanzania and land laws.

However, girls, especially in rural areas, continue to face barriers in enjoyment of property rights.

Limited access to and control over resources restrict women's and girls' voice and agency and this is largely contributed by discriminatory customary property acquisition and inheritance law and practices.

4.5. Best Practices in Advancing Girls' Rights and Wellbeing

- 1 —> Letting girls lead and choose their own priorities
- 2 —> Keeping girls in school
- 3 —> Investing in girls' mentorship programmes
- 4 —> Creation of forums for girls to meet and discuss their issues
- 5 —> Utilizing school clubs





5. Key Recommendations

Enforce Relevant Legal Reforms to Strengthen Equitable Access to Education

1. Ministry of Constitution and Legal Affairs, Attorney General and Parliament of United Republic of Tanzania to make relevant legal reforms to remove legal barriers to girls' rights and wellbeing, starting with amendment of the Law of Marriage Act of 1971 to outlaw child marriage by setting 18 years as the minimum age for marriage.
2. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Parliament to classify sanitary pads as essential needs and adopt pads free program for school going students to ensure better access to sanitary pads for girls in and out of school.
3. Ministry of Education to back the re-entry policy for pregnant and married girls with the law to that effect to better guarantee their right to education. The law should also cater for girls who could not continue with school for any other reasons, in line with international human rights standards.
4. Government to ensure girls have access to quality education by addressing the existing barriers highlighted in this report.

Create and sustain spaces for girls and young women, and ensure they include diverse groups

1. Stakeholders to support girl-centered, girl-informed safe spaces like forums, physical and online, where girls can meet, discuss their issues and supported with tools to better organize
2. Improve access to information for girls, especially those living in rural areas, to ensure they have accurate information about issues relating to their rights and wellbeing
3. Mentor and build the capacity of girls, especially in rural areas.
4. Government and CSOs to provide human rights, gender and SRHR education in schools, from primary school to university levels.



Implement gender norms approach programs with communities, for society to understand power relations, interest and socialization and how they affect girls and young women

1. Conduct nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about girls' rights and wellbeing
2. Government, CSOs, and media to sensitize community members about girls' rights and wellbeing.
3. CSOs to engage religious leaders, traditional leaders, and other influential members and leaders of the community to raise awareness about girls' rights and wellbeing and promote gender equality
4. Government and CSOs to conduct specific campaigns against violence against children and girls as well as harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM/C

Ensure identified barriers to girls' meaningful participation in decision-making processes are addressed to ensure girls' voices are heard and their opinions considered and respected

1. Support programs which enhances girls' understanding of democratic values and participation in decision making processes, like debates, school leadership, children councils etc
2. Invest in the socialization of girls as equal from family level, challenging stereotypes and notion of girls as 2nd level citizens

Ensure the justice system is more child and gender responsive to enhance girls' access to justice.

1. Support the in-school gender clubs, gender desk and opinion boxes to encourage girls to report violence and seek justice
2. Address the tension between use of the law and the need to reconcile communities when girls' rights are violated. Invest in survivor-centered justice which will contribute in communities to not shift blame to victims when they are seeking justice.

Media houses to increase reporting and conduct investigative journalism on key issues affecting girls' rights and wellbeing.

1. Commission special reports and coverage on girls' issues to strengthen the prioritization and enforcement of their rights
2. Amplify girls' power and potential so the gaze is not always on the negative side of the story.



Derm House, 3rd Floor, Kijitonyama
Bagamoyo Road,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
info@msichana.or.tz | 022 277 4100
www.msichana.or.tz

@msichanainitiative

