



Ending Child Marriages and creating sustainable cities for Girls in Bondo, Kisumu and Homabay in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Nyanza region where the three focus counties are located bears one-third of the national HIV/ AIDS burden in Kenya. The region also has the highest HIV prevalence rate among adolescents aged 15–19 at 8%, with females nearly four times as likely to be infected as their male counterparts. The area also hosts the largest proportion of orphans in Kenya at 19%. The region has the highest poverty incidence in Kenya with 65% of the population living below the poverty line, on less than one US dollar per day, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2007). Report on the Nyanza Province Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, conducted in 2011 on status of the world's children show that, child marriage in Kenya is at a prevalence of 25%. It is higher in rural (27%) than urban (17%) areas. UNFPA (2009) shows that one out of four girls is married before their 18th birthday in Kenya. UNFPA (2005) notes that Early and forced marriage is most prevalent where poverty, birth and death rates are high, there is greater incidence of conflict and civil strife and lower levels of overall development, including schooling, employment and healthcare. The prevalence of child marriage in Nyanza region is high with regional disparities. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics³ shows that prevalence in Homa Bay County at 58%, Migori County 56%, Bondo County 45%, and Kisumu 42%.

The above statistic shows that incidences of child marriage in Kenya is high, despite the fact that Kenya has signed and ratified a number of international and regional legal instruments relating to the protection of children's rights and Kenyan legislation prohibiting marriage before the age of 18. However, the practice under "customary" law marriages and Islamic law sets no minimum age. Child marriage is a life-changing reality for many young girls in the world and indeed Kenya. Young girls are forced to trade their childhoods for a life that denies them basic human rights and their specific rights as children. This practice is mainly rooted in tradition, economic and religious custom. Child marriage is associated with school dropout and poor quality of life for these young mothers and their families.

Child marriage is a practice that traps millions of girls a year⁴ into a cycle of poverty, ill health and inequality, and which hindered the achievement of six of the eight MDGs. This practice will affect the



achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 4 and 5: to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, for all at all ages, Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all and achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls respectively. Child marriage also undermines progress towards reducing maternal and infant mortality.

The KDHS (2014), gives evidence of the extent of teenage fertility, fifteen percent of women age 15-19 have already had a birth while 18 percent have begun childbearing (had a live birth or are pregnant with their first child). The survey shows that the rural-urban differences are small, indicating that early childbearing is nearly the same across place of residence. Prevalence of early childbearing is highest in the Nyanza region followed by Rift Valley and Coast; it is lowest in Central and North Eastern region. This is attributed to whether the women were living in rural areas and among those with low levels of education or no education at all. Women from poor families also recorded higher birthrates.

African Journal of Reproductive Health (2012) suggests that Sociological, cultural, economic, traditions and religious, factors interrelate to keep the children especially girls at risk of child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa. Child marriage is an effective mechanism for transferring a father's patriarchal rights over his daughter to an often time older male in the community. The underlying causes of child marriage include poverty, lack of educational or employment opportunities for girls, and traditional notions of the primary role of women and girls as wives and mothers. Religious and cultural practices have often been used to justify the preference for Child marriage by both fathers and mothers with an aim of reinforcing the family's social status and consolidate economic relationships.

Poverty is another major trigger of child marriage. Poor families may regard a young girl as an economic burden and her marriage as a necessary survival strategy for her family. Her marriage relieves the family financially and socially (ICRW, 2007). In some cases, parents willingly marry off their young girls to receive payment of bride wealth in order to increase the family income (UNICEF, 2001). According to the 2014 Economic Survey Report on the poverty level indicated Siaya (38.2%), Kisumu (39.9%) and Homa Bay (48.4%).

Early pregnancy has also significantly contributed to child marriage. KDHS, 2014 show that 15% of women age 15-19 are already having children, while 18 percent have had live births or are pregnant with their first child. Prevalence of early childbearing is highest in the Nyanza region followed by Rift Valley and Coast. With this background in focus the study sought to determine the extent of child marriage in three study areas of Homa Bay, Bondo and Kisumu.

KEY WORDS: Marriages, Child, Girls, education, communities, safe spaces and counties



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Child marriage infringes rights of children globally, undermining initiatives to raise involvement in education, reduce maternal mortality, increase employment and enterprise levels, and which hindered the achievement of six of the eight MDGs. This practice may affect the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 4 and 5: to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, for all at all ages, ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all and achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls respectively. Child marriage equally undermines progress towards reducing maternal and infant mortality. In Kenya, the prevalence of Child marriage is at 25%. It is higher in rural (27%) than urban (17%) areas with prevalence in Homa Bay County at 58%, Bondo County 45%, and Kisumu 42%.

The holistic approach to sector development was embraced by Kenya as a critical in realizing Vision 2030, the road map for Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). The Basic Education Act 2013 emphasizes on the basic education which is free and compulsory (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The Free Primary and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) have led to the improvement of access, retention and equity, Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2012). A Triennale Meeting 2012 Towards Inclusive and Equitable Basic Education System: Kenya's experience estimated the overall dropout rate was 2.3% (Girls=2.1% and boys=2.5%) in 2011. The report indicates that the main factors causing drop out were; poverty (45.5%), pregnancy and

early marriage (35.7%) and inadequate parental support (30.3%).

In pursuit of reproductive health agenda Kenya adopted the National Reproductive Health Strategy (NRHS) for Kenya 1997-2010 The priority areas for the strategy include: family planning and unmet needs; safe motherhood and child survival initiatives; promotion of adolescent and youth health; gender and reproductive rights. But despite these initiatives, reproductive health service utilization among the youth still faces a lot of challenges related to the sensitive nature of adolescent sex and sexuality.

WHO2015. Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health highlights negative health outcomes associated with adolescent pregnancy include anemia, malaria, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), post-partum hemorrhage, obstetric fistula, and mental disorders such as depression. The report further shows that 23% of the overall burden of disease due to pregnancy and childbirth is borne by adolescent girls, although they only account for 11% of all births globally. The study was commissioned seeking to provide interpretation to behavioral and cultural practices that perpetuate child marriage

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A mixed methods study design was adopted for this task. It involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Quantitative data was collected using a structured survey questionnaire designed to capture data on age specific groups and in generating study variables, objectives and



results. In total 630 respondents were reached across the three Programme Units. In each of the Programme Units 210 (105 males and 105 females) were reached. In regards to qualitative data, 20 key informant interviews were conducted in each of the programme units thus leading to a total of 60 key informant interviews. A total of 24 Focus Group Discussions were conducted, 8 in each Programme unit. There were also case studies that were undertaken based on interest and details of the emerging stories of experience from the children and adults. The study methodology was based on rigorous triangulation of sources and validation by existing secondary data from authentic government and other official literature. Quantitative data was subjected to SPSS analysis where upon descriptive statistics including averages, frequencies and percentages have been used to give meaning to the results and study variables and objectives. Qualitative data was subjected to content/thematic analysis and findings thereof in cooperated as verbatim citations to give credence to the quantitative figures. The report findings were also validated in Siaya, Kisumu and Homa Bay Counties, where various stakeholders and children participated and confirmed that, the report findings reflect the true picture and situation on the ground.

Research Design

A mixed methods descriptive survey design was adopted for this task. It involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

Sampling Design

The study adopted a mixed sampling design including probability and non-probability methods of sampling. Multi-stage Cluster sampling method was used during household survey, since in most instances a complete list of beneficiaries does not exist in the study.

Calculating Sample Size for Cluster sampling per county

The exact number of target population was unknown so the consultants used a sampling formula that assured the largest and robust sample; the team used the estimation formula for sample size calculation as shown below.

$$n = \left[\frac{(z^2) * (r) * (1 - r) * (f) * (k)}{(p) * (\bar{n}) * (e^2)} \right]$$

Where

n is the parameter to be calculated and is the sample size in terms of number of households to be selected

z is the statistic that defines the level of confidence desired; (1.96 for 95% level of confidence)

r is an estimate of a key indicator to be measured by the survey; (it is estimated that the prevalence of child marriage is 30%

f is the sample design effect, deff, assumed to be 2.0 (default value);

k is a multiplier to account for the anticipated rate of non-response; (approximately 20% in sensitive surveys in Kenya)

p is the proportion of the total population accounted for by the target population and upon which the parameter, r, is based; (approximately 45% of the Kenyan population constitute the 15 – 45 age group)

n is the average household size (number of persons per household) (approximately 5);



e is the margin of error to be attained (recommended to be set at 10% of r, i.e. e=0.1r)

Substituting the recommended values gives

$$n = \left[\frac{(1.96^2) * (0.3) * (1 - 0.3) * (2) * (1.1)}{(0.45) * (8) * (0.03^2)} \right] = 548$$

Thus the computed sample size arrived at is approximately n = 548. The sample size was adjusted to 630 and equally divided across the three areas thus we interviewed 210 households in each unit (Homa Bay, Bondo and Kisumu) This sample size took recognition of the diversity of households including single mothers, widow headed households, children headed households among other unique characteristics.

Survey instruments

Household survey Questionnaire

Household survey was conducted using 3 separate questionnaires in 630 sampled households in Bondo, Kisumu and Homa Bay programme Units. The three categories of respondents at the household level were as follows;

- i. Parents of adolescent children 9 – 18yrs
- ii. Adolescent children 9 – 18yrs from households in (1) above
- iii. Married boys and girls 9 – 24 yrs.

The respondents were selected in the villages surrounding the schools selected in stage 1 of multi-stage cluster sampling. The tools were designed by the consultants and reviewed by implementing agencies before finalization. The questionnaires were then translated into local language (Luo) and back translated into English to ensure no meaning was lost.

Literature and Documentation Review

A number of documents were reviewed, some of them received from the project Country office (Project document and list of indicators), more literature were received from Kisumu, Homa Bay and Bondo PUs, Children’s and youth department in Kisumu, Homa Bay and Bondo counties and sub-county. The team also reviewed various documents from like-minded organizations and other relevant documents that added value to the process from the relevant ministries at national and county government levels.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The respondents who participated in the KIIs were identified by the project teams and the consultants. Key informants Interviews were conducted per area, targeting representatives of Ministry of Education, Ministry of youth and social development, County child protection desk, Area Advisory Council (ACC), various schools head teachers, Local Provincial administration, Community leaders and other relevant stakeholders). Structured questionnaires based on child marriage context were used during this process. The team ensured that female and male leaders were purposively sampled and interviewed to bring out gender dimension and inclusivity.

Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)

Focus Groups Discussion was facilitated by moderators and note takers in groups of between 6 - 8 discussants per target group. The discussions were guided by pre-set themes and sub-themes from FGD guidelines based on issues of child marriage. A total of 8 FGDs



were conducted per county. The following was taken into consideration; age, gender disaggregated (adolescent girls, adolescent boys)

Case studies

This is a form of qualitative descriptive research that was used to look at individuals, and small groups of participants. The team carried out interviews and direct observations that were used to develop a case study. For the purpose of this study, Exploratory (or pilot) Case Studies was adopted. The documentation of case studies was guided by clear gender sensitive questions.

Qualitative Data Analysis

For the qualitative study, each team comprised of a note taker and a facilitator. The teams had a set of two recorders for note taking. Prior to and following the discussions, the team leaders (facilitators) reviewed the hand written materials (notes) for completeness and complete any missing information. Qualitative data accruing from this was transcribed in Ms Word then analyzed through triangulation, content analysis with key gender and cultural issues are corroborated to address the assignment objectives. Where applicable, verbatim quotations was extracted to justify and augment key study findings.

Quantitative data

Data was captured in a pre-designed SPSS interface. To ensure high quality data is entered, checks were built into the data capture interface. Before analysis commenced, the data entry manager checked for quality by sampling 10% of the entries and confirmed with the

questionnaires. If the data quality falls below the acceptable level of 95%, then entire set by the entry clerk was redone. The training, mock pre-test and field testing was used to confirm the skip patterns and quality checks. Data was processed in a systematic way, disaggregated appropriately by gender and by county. Data analysis by objectives and desired outcomes Confidence Intervals (CI) was calculated for each indicator for use during subsequent evaluations to establish whether or not the change achieved is significant. Odds ratios were also calculated for selected indicators by identified disaggregation to identify risk factors associated with the outcomes measured. These will inform priority effective strategies for better programmatic results.

Validation of study Findings

The study findings were validated in; Siaya, Kisumu and Homa Bay Counties, where various stakeholders and children participated. Some of the stakeholders who attended the Validation meeting were drawn from; ministry of education, magistrate courts, CSO, children department, ministry of youth and gender, the police, paralegals, girls' advocate and representatives of local communities. The stakeholders confirmed that the study findings reflect the true picture and situation on the ground.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Adolescent girls make informed choices that enable them to realize their developmental potential in Kisumu, Homa Bay and Siaya County



Readiness for marriage:

The study established that 41.9% of the respondents (married women) and 40.3% of married men believe that the body morphology of children both boys and girls in regards to size, height and shape connotes their readiness for marriage. Another 34.4% also believe the onset of puberty signs in the children is a good enough indication of readiness for marriage besides the legal age.

Knowledge of the legal age for marriage:

According to the survey, the age of spouses of married girls at the time of marriage indicated were aged below 15 years (2.3%), 15-18 years (14.2%), 18 – 24 years (41%) followed by 25 – 30 years at 27.7% then above 30yrs at 17.3% an indication that young boys also marry before the legal age. While the married boys indicated the age of their spouses at aged below 15 years (3%), 15-18 years (16.2%), majority were aged between 18 – 24 years (41.4%) followed by 25 – 30 years at 27.1% then above 30yrs at 12.3%. Respondents were conversant with the legal age for marriage for boys 15-17 years (1.9%) from 18 years (84.7%) while for the respondents said the legal age for marriage for girls 15-17 years (.5%), from 18 years (84.7%). even though there were few 13.3% on legal age for boys and 8.8% on legal age for girls indicated they did not know the legal age for marriage.

Parental approval for child marriage:

The study established that majority of parents of adolescents Homa Bay (94.4%), Kisumu (91.7%) and Bondo (92.9%) would not marry off their children below age 18 years. However in contrast 54.2% of married girls in Kisumu,

47% in Bondo and 32.9% in Homa Bay were willing to marry at the time they married clearly showing that many girls determine when they want to get married. However there were a few respondents who were forced into child marriage. For example, in Homa Bay .8%, Bondo .5% and Kisumu 4.1%. The leading factors attributed to forced marriage were for economic benefits and in isolated cases to take care of deceased aunt's husband and children.

Criminality of child marriage:

The survey found out that many of the respondents were well aware that child marriage is criminal offense under the laws of Kenya. Majority of the respondents in Homa Bay (95%), Kisumu (88%) and Bondo (77%) knew that it is criminal offence for a girl or boy to get married before age 18. Even with such awareness and knowledge, child marriage is still being practiced clearly showing disparity between knowledge and attitude and practice.

Access to reproductive health services

The study findings established that access to adolescent sexual reproductive health services is high among both girls and boys in the three geographical areas. Up to 80% of both boys and girls have reported access and utilization of ASRH services with greater percentage of boys (83%) reporting access and utilization. In overall Homa Bay Program Unit has reported a greater access and utilization of the services

School based life skills and sexuality education

The study examined the life skills and sexual reproductive health behaviour in schools. results showed that only 40% of the schools offered life skills and sexuality education as per the MoE curriculum with Homa Bay reporting a



better performance of 54.8%. Kisumu reported the lowest indicator ratings. It was also reported that only 44% of the schools had peer education clubs formed that address child marriage, promote ASRH and life skills. Kisumu again had the lowest ratings of 19% thus creating a major gap within the schools. It was however important up to 70% of the schools in the three geographical areas were monitoring school drop outs and cases of child marriage

Enrolment rates

Enrollment rates are important indicator reference points for girls' participation in school (secondary and primary). The study established that overall up to 80% of the girls are in school both primary and secondary. The figures are however much lower in secondary (29%) compared to primary at 50%. As at the time of study, no girl was reportedly in vocational training.

Safe spaces and legal services for girls

The survey established that the three counties do not have a formal safe space for rescued girls. However it's worth noting that Kisumu County has a child protection unit at Kisumu Police station. The finding shows that majority of girls access the informal safe space Kisumu 65.3%, Homa Bay 74% and Kisumu 63%. In addition the study established that access to legal aid for girls is still very low with only 39% overall indicating they have access to legal aid services. The figure is much better in Homa Bay than in Bondo and Kisumu.

Community based campaign and initiatives against child marriage

The study examined some of the indicators that showed community involvement on issues

around child marriage. It was established that up to 60% of communities of Homa Bay, Bondo and Kisumu had communal structures/work sites sensitized on child marriage. The numbers of community champions in all the areas are very low (21%) with the lowest reported in Kisumu. Only 45% of the communities have public activities addressing child marriage, exploitation, and violence (e.g., campaigns, rallies, participatory discussions). In overall Kisumu has the lowest rates of these indicators. Only 11% of families are supporting adolescent girls to stay in or return to school thus

Life skills and support from parents and community

The study established that up to 84% of adolescent's girls report having support to stay in school and not get married. Another 51% feel able to say no to sexual activity this means another 49% are still not in a position to say no thus are increasingly vulnerable to those forces such as peer influence and influence from adults that may easily take advantage of their vulnerability.

Exit of girls from child marriages

Once girls get into child marriages, reversal is hindered by complex factors that prevent them from getting back and picking up the broken pieces. The survey sought to establish the proportion of girls exiting marriages Bondo had the highest (34.3%), followed by Homa Bay (31.5%) and Kisumu at (25%). This finding therefore shows that young girls who get married rarely exit the marriages and get back to their homes, however if and when they do it is because of factors such as Lack of financial support from spouse lack of emotional support



from spouse and in-laws and too many family responsibilities.

Drivers of child marriage:

Child marriage is driven by a number of behavioral, social and cultural practices. The married girls considered preventing girls from having illegitimate pregnancies (54.7%) and alleviating the girls' family burden (in case of girls) at (45.3%) as major factors. These similar sentiments were expressed by adolescent girls and boys. Other factors established through FGDs and KIIs includes poverty, pregnancies, neglect, peer pressure and preference of boy child among other factors pushing young girls into child marriage either through their own decisions or decisions from parents and community.

Consequences of child marriage:

The significant consequences of child marriage according to the respondents included school dropout. The findings showed that 77% of the married girls across the three counties dropped out of school into marriage. Homa Bay 86.3%, Kisumu 63.9% and Bondo 81.4%. Dropout rate seemed to have a sharp increase overall from 2014 boys from 29 to 70 while girls 44-82. With an average increase from 73-152.

Health risks associated with child marriage:

Up to 61% of those in child marriages experienced difficulty/ complications during delivery. Delivery related difficulties 47.4%, Infant mortality risk 38.7% and maternal mortality risk 29.8%. These sentiments are confirmed by UNFPA's Maternal Mortality Update 2004: and International Women's Health Programme (2010). Furthermore, research demonstrates that child marriage also increases the risk of HPV transmission and

cervical cancer. Other consequences mentioned include exposure to HIV, immunization related challenges for the new born babies as a result of insufficient information among the young mother on advantages of immunization, and domestic violence.

Perpetrators of child marriage:

FGD and KII representatives from provincial administration, civil society organizations, representatives, Children Officers, parents and children themselves unanimously pointed out that the common perpetrators of child marriage are people within the same locality. Though some cases of child marriage are forced by the parents and other close relatives, children themselves have also in most cases made independent decisions to get into child marriage occasioned by circumstances often beyond their control. Motorbike operators popularly known as boda boda, herdsmen and fishermen were the leading groups mentioned in connection to child marriages. They also have some law enforcing agencies such as chiefs that help the young girls through request from parents and or caregivers to conceal the crime. In Homa Bay County, the other unique categories included teachers, sugarcane cutters and People working in road construction sites, while in Kisumu home caretakers and chiefs were mentioned as common perpetrators.

Age at first sexual debut

The average age at first sexual intercourse for girls was found to be 15.5 years for boys and 13.2 years with a standard deviation of 2.51. About 3% of the respondents were married at age 9 and 10.

Cultural practices that perpetuate child marriage



Preference of boy's education over girl

child: Boys are still preferred over girls according to findings of the study. Remark from a parent in South Sakwa, Bondo explains this observation, "there are some families around here who still believe that girls are "ogwenge" ("wild cats") who will be married elsewhere and investing in their education is just wasting resources." Another sentiment for another parent was, "...when resources are scarce, I will pay for my son's school fees since he is here with us throughout while my daughter will be married and all the investment will go to her husband and her new family.... The husband's family will end up enjoying all the efforts we have made in our daughter....." This preference of boys over girls has been described as propulsive force that pushes girls to early marriages.

Seclusion of older boys: The survey established through FGD that seclusion of the older boys into a small boys' house known as Simba has been one of the major factors fueling child marriage. Among the luos, an adolescent male is traditionally expected to build himself a 'simba', a small house where the boy can host his age mates and female friends who are potential wives. Once established the Simba without supervision by parents become a place where the boy child easily mingles with girls leading to early pregnancies that fuel child marriages.

Payment of bride price: The survey established that parents living in poverty are often tempted to marry off their young daughters to obtain dowry which they believe will relieve them from economic hardship. Kisumu (81.6%), Bondo (73.6) and Homa Bay (69.8) indicated that poverty and inability of

parents to pay school fees was a major cause for child marriage. When parents get promises of returns for bride price they easily sacrifice the girls.

Traditional Night dances: Through FGDs, the survey established that night traditional dances were another social practice that was reported by FGD in the three counties. During the night dances especially during funerals (Disco matanga) the children are un supervised therefore most engage in drinking alcohol and drug abuse, sexually provocative dancing styles, dress codes especially for girls is provocative and indecent this often leading to unplanned sexual activities that ultimately lead to pregnancies.

Constraints in tackling child marriage: Constraints in tackling child marriage included poor coordination of rescue of child marriage survivors between relevant government ministries, department, national and County government in the efforts to protect the survivors of child marriage and supporting them to access justice. The challenges on law enforcement and policy implementation were identified during this study. Though clear laws exist to curb child marriage, implementation of these laws is still a challenge due to inadequate capacity of the implementing institutions and officers to perform the tasks incumbent upon them. Other factors affecting addressing this problem include poor documentation, referral and support systems at the community level. The survey established that many of the child protection referrals are done informally, without adequate records and documentation, leading to possibilities of frustration and further psychological trauma to the affected children.



Increased institutional, political and societal intolerance of and support for ending child marriage in Kisumu, Homa Bay and Siaya Counties

Case management, referrals and stakeholder knowledge of child marriage

The study examined the cases that were effectively addressed as per the formal referral systems. It was determined that up to 77% of the cases reported in the three regions were effectively addressed with Homa Bay reporting a greater percentage (86.4%). The study established that 80% of the key stakeholders know about the harms of child marriage, discrimination, and violence. Homa Bay had the highest percentage of 93.2% followed by Kisumu (79.2%) and Siaya the least (67.1%).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

International, Regional and National legislative frameworks clearly indicated that child marriage is a violation of child and human rights with clear legal repercussions for violators of the laws. The constitution of Kenya 2010 and other relevant laws including the sexual offences act and children act have defined the legal age for marriage. However even though the legal age is known by parents and children, it has been established that the child marriage is still practiced.

This practice is either forced on the child by parents or by choice from the child. Research has shown that both boys and girls are affected; it is also evident that girls are more affected. Child marriage consequences have severe effect on the parents, the girls the boy, and to a large extent the children born from that union.

The challenges during delivery, maternal and infant mortality have been established as major health related consequences. Other consequences include school dropout, violence, increased gender inequality. All these factors subsequently perpetuating the poverty circle. Meaning children born out of such union are likely to drop out of school and be victims of child marriage too.

It has been established that there are various drivers of the practice including behavioral, social economic and tradition factors. Therefore efforts to address this practice, should evaluate the root cause of the problem and address those if this initiative of ECM is to be successful. Targeting those encouraging the practice and the children with information, and engaging the parents, adolescents and married girls on economic empowering venture so that poverty is not used as a reasons and girls are not lured into child marriage because of their circumstances. A joint effort in policy implementation with proper coordination and documentation is therefore needed to ensure this challenge is successfully addressed.

The survey concludes that the various actors on child marriage have failed children at risk and survivors of child marriage. Though levels of awareness on general child protection and child marriage specifically are growing these awareness levels are fatally undermined by widespread complicity in handling child marriages. Interviewees consistently described inadequacy in the part of law enforcers in enforcing laws on child marriage even where the perpetrators have been apprehended. Parents and children themselves also have significantly contributed in harnessing this



negative practice, even when marriages are prevented by officials from the Department of Children Services, families and sometimes the children themselves find it easy to lie or bribe in order to let the perpetrators free.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report findings presented provide a foundation of solutions recommendations for each stakeholder in order to curb child marriage. This survey has established that the causes of child marriage are complex and therefore addressing this practice requires multi sectoral innovative strategies. This survey therefore recommends working at multiple levels and targeting all sectors; community; policy makers and health and education sectors. The following are specific recommendations for different multi-level stakeholders.

Implementing Agencies

- 1) Build capacity of community resource persons including paralegals who will provide various services including psychosocial support, health and counselling to the child marriage rescued survivors. Where there is no safe space within the community the resource persons should be encouraged to use free buildings in schools, health facilities and homes. Provision of such space will enable the children to deal with the traumatic situations they have been through as well as start a journey to recovery.
- 2) Enhance programmes targeting children to help them develop proper life skills that will prevent them from taking child marriage especially girls as an option to exit to considered 'safe heavens'

- 3) Mobilize religious leaders and community elders who are the decision makers in communities where child marriage is prevalent. Engaging and educating these leaders is key to changing the attitude of a community on child marriage
- 4) Implementing organization should have trained paralegals within the community to support the AACs and the chiefs in dealing with child marriage issues. The paralegal can provide the case management and monitoring to ensure adequate reporting and referrals of such cases
- 5) Through the trained paralegals at the community level duty bearers should support the department of children services in mobilizing and coordinating child marriage rescue
- 6) Poverty was identified as one of the drivers to child marriage, providing economic support to families may be a way of helping parents who do not want to their daughters to get married early

Other civil society organizations

- 7) The CSOs organizations should have initiatives that seek to empower both boys and girls through capacity building and information sharing regarding referrals systems, their rights and negative effect of child marriage. CSO should also support creation of sensitization forums for community leaders such as chiefs, AAC members, men, women and children.
- 8) CSOs and other law enforcement agencies should enhance promotion of education, taking measures to alleviate poverty through household economic strengthening this will enable the parents to be able to provide basic need and pay for school requirements



for their children. This can be done through issuing business start-up capital, Promoting value addition for production that the parents are already involved in, Group marketing especially for products like groundnuts in Homa Bay and mangoes in Bondo

- 9) Engage police administration and local government bodies to raise their understanding of the impact of violence against girls on their education and their future. Discuss the actions that should be taken to create safe spaces free from violence and harassment for girls.
- 10) The CSOs organizations should have initiatives that seek to empower both boys and girls who are survivors of child marriage through capacity building and information sharing regarding referrals systems, their rights and negative effect of child marriage. CSOs should also support creation of sensitization forums for community leaders such as chiefs, AAC members, men, women and children on consequences of child marriage to the community family and even to the children
- 11) Promote and highlight positive deviance among parents, girls, boys, law enforcement officers, and leaders.

Law enforcement agencies

1. Conduct regular training for police and other law enforcement officers regarding the negative consequences of child marriage and the importance of enforcing child protection legislation.
2. The existing laws on child marriage should be synthesized into a simpler readable hand book and disseminated to key stakeholders e.g. police, teachers, chiefs, court officials

VCOs and church leaders since the levels of knowledge of the law among this actors was identified as a major factor hindering addressing child marriage .

3. This study established that though there is awareness on existence of the laws governing child marriage, enforcement of these laws. Poor record keeping and documentation of cases is a major gap, therefore this survey recommends development of child marriage case management flow chart and clear referral and follow-up mechanisms that stipulates how each duty bearer should handle records and refers the case appropriately. The development of this mechanism should bring together the CSOs, Court administrators, police, and provincial administration under the leadership of children officers to enhance coordination.

Department of Children Services

- 1) Support County and Sub County technical working committee and build capacity of members to offer strategic guidance and support the implementation of the child protection policy
- 2) Lobby the county government and CSOs to allocate resources for the construction and equipping the safe spaces for rescued girls where none exists.
- 3) Whereas there is apparently high knowledge regarding the illegality of child marriage, DCS should involve all the players to ensure Coordination and implementation of the law on child marriage. Law enforcement authorities that abet this crime should be identified and involved in reform actions.
- 4) Establish and Promote partnership with elected representatives at county and sub



county levels as strong advocates against child marriage through community engagements

Ministry of education

- 1) Facilitate access to, retention and persistence of girls in primary and secondary education through awareness campaigns, refurbishment of facilities (e.g. wash rooms for girls separate toilets for boys and girls)
- 2) Ensure that schools are safe spaces for children by enforcing the code of conduct and ensuring the children understand the existence of the safe reporting mechanisms

The community

1. Parent may know the disadvantages of child marriage; however the survey established that poverty is driving them to accept child marriage to alleviate the economic burden, Engaging in economic activities may be a way of helping parents who do not want to their daughters to get married early
2. Men and boys are central to challenging gender norms and changing deeply entrenched traditional practices like child marriage. This survey therefore finds it important that men are educated on the rights of girls and how child marriage can be harmful to her education, health and how child marriage perpetuates poverty. Through education equip men and boys with knowledge to speak out against child marriage.
3. Identify, nurture and promote role models in the community

Boys and girls

- 1) The boys and girls should be agents of change through advocating for their rights.

Through the support groups, they can enhance awareness among fellow children on their rights, reporting channels and awareness on existence of safe spaces.

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