'A GIRL CHILD'S HONOUR IS TO BE MARRIED' GENDER NORMS AS DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY LIWONDE, MACHINGA DISTRICT, MALAWI

DARLEN MARTHA DZIMWE, CHIYAMWAKA MALAWI

'A GIRL CHILD'S HONOUR IS TO BE MARRIED'

GENDER NORMS AS DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY LIWONDE, MACHINGA DISTRICT, MALAWI

Thesis submitted as partial fulfilment of Master of Science in Public Health.

By:

Darlen Martha Dzimwe, Chiyamwaka

Malawi

Declaration:

Other people's work used in any form (text, picture, websites), acknowledgment, and referencing has been done carefully as per the department's requirements.

The thesis "**A girl child's honour is to be married' Gender norms as drivers of child marriage in Traditional Authority Liwonde, Machinga District, Malawi,** is my own work

Signature**:**

58th Master of Public Health/International Course in Health Development (MPH/ICHD)

14 September 2021 – 3 September 2022 KIT (Royal Tropical Institute)/Vrije Universiteit

Amsterdam, The Netherlands September 2022

Organized by:

KIT (Royal Tropical Institute), The Netherlands

In co-operation with:

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) Amsterdam, The Netherlands

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Agency

"A process of observed experience that gives reasons for one's actions" (1)

Adolescent

"Individuals in the 10-19 years age group" (2)

Child

"Any person under the age of 18" (3)

Child marriage

"Any formal marriage or informal union involving a child under the age 18" (4)

Norm

"A principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behaviour" (5)

Young people

"Individuals in the age range of 10-24 years" (2)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CBO	Community Based Organization
COC	Champion of Change
CSR	Centre for Social Research
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HIV	Human Immuno-Virus
IDI	In Depth Interview
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KII	Key Informant Interview
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goal
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TA	Traditional Authority
VAC	Violence Against Children
WHO	World Health Organization
YID	Yes I Do!
YONECO	Youth Net and Counselling

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

Background: Child marriage is a gender inequality issue impeding Malawian girls' sexual reproductive health and rights. Driven by poverty, gender and social norms, 46% of girls were married before age 18 as of 2017.

Objective: To explore drivers of child marriage, related to social norms and attitude, at community, household and individual levels, among girls in Traditional Authority (TA) Liwonde in Machinga, Malawi, to make recommendations to policymakers on the improvement of interventions reducing child marriage in Malawi.

Methods: Secondary qualitative data analysis of Yes I Do! data, from a five-year project aiming at reducing child marriage and teenage pregnancy in TA Liwonde, Machinga. Based on Psaki et al's conceptual framework, three drivers of child marriage (lack of agency, lack of opportunity and fear of sexuality and pregnancy) and existing interventions around child marriage were explored.

Results: The high regard of men as decision makers and providers at household level, controls the perception of girls and women in TA Liwonde. The community views girls as weak decision makers, home keepers, and not worthy of education. These norms feed into girls' lack of agency and decision making, lack of alternatives and opportunities. The community views out-of-marriage pregnancy as a sin and an embarrassment to the family, and marriage is a revival and reinstatement of acceptance. Therefore, the analysed drivers are very prevalent in the current context of girls growing up in TA Liwonde making girls susceptible to child marriage.

Conclusion: All five drivers need to be addressed to increase long tern impact and reduce child marriage in TA Liwonde. Several interventions are taking place around girls' empowerment, but the situation still requires attentions on information, education, opportunity, and role models, as well as stricter enforcement of existing laws.

Key words: Child marriage, Gender norms, Agency, Opportunity, Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancy, TA Liwonde, Malawi.

Abstract word count: 287

Thesis word count:12558

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is a double manifestation of gender-based violence, falling under violence against children, and, at the same time, violence against women, and with its high prevalence among girls as compared to boys, signifying power imbalances in society (6). An individual's entire sexual and reproductive health status incorporates a complete package of emotional, social and physical wellbeing regarding their reproductive system (7). Full access to a good sexual reproductive life, centers around people's ability to apply their human rights in relation to sexual health. Freedom means the ability to choose whether, when and with whom to engage in sexual relationships and sexual expression, and to have agency over the decision to get married or remain celibate, to engage in sexual relationships and family planning, and the ease of informed access to supplies, services and reliable sources of information on all aspects of sexual reproduction (8).

Child marriage puts girls at high risk of health problems and violates their human rights. For developing countries at large, the practice impacts sustainability of their struggling economies. Low social economic status, the high poverty rate and the lack of education of parents and children are argued to drive child marriage in Malawi (9,10). The Covid-19 pandemic elevated the magnitude of child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Malawi. A UNICEF-led study revealed that 40,000 teenage pregnancies were registered within a few months of school closure, in 2021, and that cases of child marriage had even worsened in rural settings of the country (11). A local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) YONECO, based in the Southern region of Malawi, reported to have documented 669 child marriages in the second quarter of 2020 (April to June) (12). In general, the United Nations estimates that a concerning average of 1 in 2 girls are having to experience child marriage in Malawi, and that children as young as 9 or 10 are involved (13). International organizations and the government of Malawi try to address child marriage in the context of different driving forces, but the problem persists(11,12)

The Yes I Do! five-year project aimed to contribute to the eradication of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation in its 7 intervention countries, of which Malawi was one (14). Coordinated by Plan International Malawi, the project focused on Traditional Authority (TA) Liwonde, of Machinga district in the southern part of Malawi, a focus area chosen for its high rates of teenage pregnancy and child marriage. The project's strategic goals were to contribute to eliminating child marriage and pregnancy at the community level, through mixed intervention strategies, tailored to the context of its target community (15).

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Child marriage

Internationally, child marriage refers to any marital union involving a child below the age of 18 (4). However, the notion differs by country or state, with some acknowledging a lower or higher age than 18 (16). Both girls and boys are affected by child marriage, but girls bear the brunt, as

they are much more likely to be married as children, are often younger than the husband, and are the ones to get pregnant, and they may not have fully developed physically or emotionally (17,18). In and of itself, child marriage is a key driver of different forms of violence: physical, sexual, psychological, and economic (19). Literature suggests that child marriage contributes to the increase in sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, dangerous pregnancies, unsafe abortions, cervical cancer, and mental health issues, often driven by familial expectations that are too challenging for a child bride (20,21). Socially and economically, the sustainable development of a country is negatively affected by child marriage since it reduces the educational, economic, and employment opportunities for girls, posing a threat to the country's developmental aspirations (22,23)

It is estimated that 1 in every 30 boys faces child marriage compared to 1 in every 5 girls worldwide (24). Also, more than 30% of girl victims of child marriage are from developing countries (25). In Africa, child marriage continues to ravage the continent and poses a threat to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), with more than 75 million women having experienced child marriage (26). UNICEF predicts that half of the global girl child marriage victims will be attributed to Africa by 2050 (26). Sub-Saharan Africa is subjected to considerable child marriages, and as of March 2020, 37% of girls in the region were married before the age of 18 (27)

The drivers for child marriage for girls are similar across Africa, and gender relations and norms play a big role within families and the society at large (28). Substantial literature presents poverty, social ties, family honour, a generally lower level of education (often ended at marriage), and simply acts of gender-based violence as core drivers of child marriage (29,30). Some studies argue beyond cultural norms and talk about the systemic effect of poor implementation of the laws related to child marriage as to why this practice remains a problem (31). Child marriage prevalence varies among girls, with the poor and those living in rural areas registering more cases in most of Africa (32)

The situation of child marriage is worrisome for Malawi, being part of the top 20 countries leading in child marriage worldwide (33). Child marriage, and intimate partner violence (IPV) rank higher among the different forms of gender-based violence: IPV at 38% overall (34), and for child marriage, particularly for girls, it is at 46% for those married before the age of 18, and 9% before the age of 15 (33). Factors driving child marriage are interlinked, with economic constraints, and gender and social norms commonly discussed as the primary driving factors in Malawi (10,33,35).

1.2.2   Malawi's profile

1.2.2.1   Geographical and Population Demographics
Located in the southern, eastern part of Africa, Malawi is small, land locked country with a population density of 512 people per M^2 (36) . The country is divided into three regions: North, Central and South. With a Total Fertility Rate of 2.1%, the country's population stands at 19,431,566 and is growing (37). Most of the population (81.8%) lives in the rural parts of the country and 18.2% in urban areas (38). Young people make up most of the Malawian population, at a median age of 16.5, with 16.4 for males and 16.7 for females (Figure 1).

Malawi Population Pyramid 2022
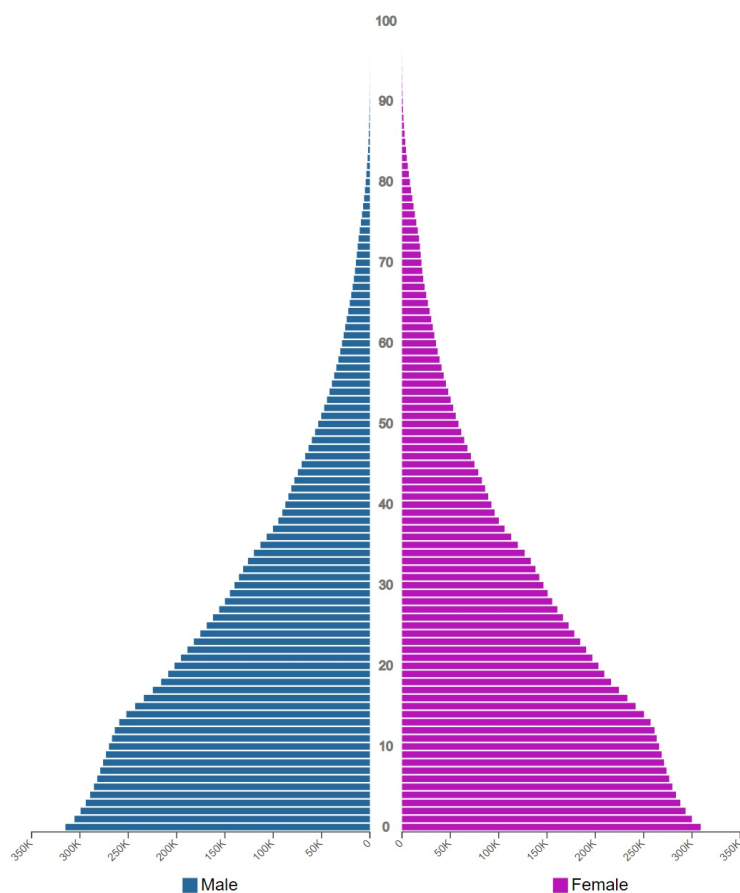
Malawi Median Age

16.5   16.4   16.7

Total   Male   Female

Malawi Population by Age

There are 9,895,700 people over age 18 in Malawi.

Census Years

Year	Date
1987	21 September 1987
1998	21 September 1998
2008	28 June 2008
2018	2018

Figure 1: Malawi population pyramid

1.2.2.2   Economic, health and education status

The Gross domestic product of Malawi is 12.63 billion US$, and 80% of the population depends on agriculture(39). While 70% of the population is classified as poor, 63% of children suffer from multidimensional poverty (40). Malawi's health system is highly dependent on external aid, and this impacts the sustainability of finances for quality health care for her citizens (41). The health and education financing profile of Malawi in 2016 showed the effects of high dependency on donor funding, with health and education ranking low in Malawi's fiscal budget, at 9.9% and 7.4% respectively (42,43). With life expectancy at 59 years, the mortality rate is high across all age groups (44). The country suffers a high burden of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria (45,46).

1.2.2.3   Sexual and reproductive health status

As part of its development goals, sexual and reproductive health is one of the key determinants of the status of the country's health system (47). The Ministry of Health is mandated with coordinating SRHR-related care, guided by national SRHR policy (48). The policy has seven thematic areas; family planning, maternal and neo-natal health, sexually transmitted infection and HIV, reproductive cancer, infertility, young people in reproductive health, and obstetric

fistula and harmful practices/gender-based violence (48). Linked to the HIV and AIDS crisis and Malawi's gender policies, the ministry coordinates the multisectoral gender programs addressing domestic violence issues through prevention and management approaches with key ministries such as Gender, Information and Justice(48–50)

1.2.2.4 Culture, Gender Inequality, Marriage and Social Life

Generally, the country is male-dominated, and men rule society at the family, community, and national levels(44,51). Malawi's Constitution (Section 26) recognizes one's culture as a human right, (52,53) and it influences the co-existence of the multi-ethnic setting of Malawian people (44). Yet within the distinct structures, culture also proves to have negative impacts on human rights issues and the resultant power imbalance makes women and children suffer the most (52,54)

A poor position on the Gender Inequality Index at 145/188, reflects the high levels of gender-based violence that Malawian girls and women continue to face (55). Under the children protection statistics on violence against children (VACs), the gender inequality is evidenced by 65% of female children reported to have experienced violence in their lifetime compared to 35% of male children in Malawi (40).

Marriage is an integral part of life and societal customs that build unity in the multi-ethnic, multi-language, and multi-religious nature of Malawi (56) The unity is evidenced in the high regard for marriage customs shared through weddings, initiation ceremonies, songs, and other social realms in the country (57). Determined by various factors, marriage remains one of the key factors associated with gender-based violence, and, in the 2015/2016 Malawi demographic survey, 42% of married women had experienced intimate partner violence (58,59)

1.2.2.5 Child marriage in Malawi

Child marriage is illegal in Malawi since the passing of the Family Act law in 2015, which prohibits child marriage (60). The issue had been significantly controversial until 2017 when the constitution of Malawi amended the minimum age for marriage from 15 to 18 for both girls and boys (61). Before 2017, the constitution contravened the agreements the country ratified, including: the Convention on Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights, and even the domestic child protection law which synchronized with the international recognition of under 18 years as an official definition for a child (62)

Under the law, section 138 of the penal code indicates that anyone who practices child marriage is punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment (63). Under the domestic law, child marriage is recognized as violence against children and is classified as harmful cultural practices, and cases should be reported and managed by chiefs (64). Irrespective of the legal shift, child marriage continues to be a serious scourge for young Malawian girls, and 46% of girls reported to have been married before the age of 18, and 9% before the age of 15, according to Malawi's Demographic Health Survey (MDHS) of the same year, 2017 (65)

In general, UNICEF classifies the vulnerable populations for child marriage for Malawian girls by wealth quantiles, education, and geographical locations, with high prevalence among the poor, those with less education, and those living in rural areas (Figure 2) (66)

Vulnerable populations

Figure 4. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18
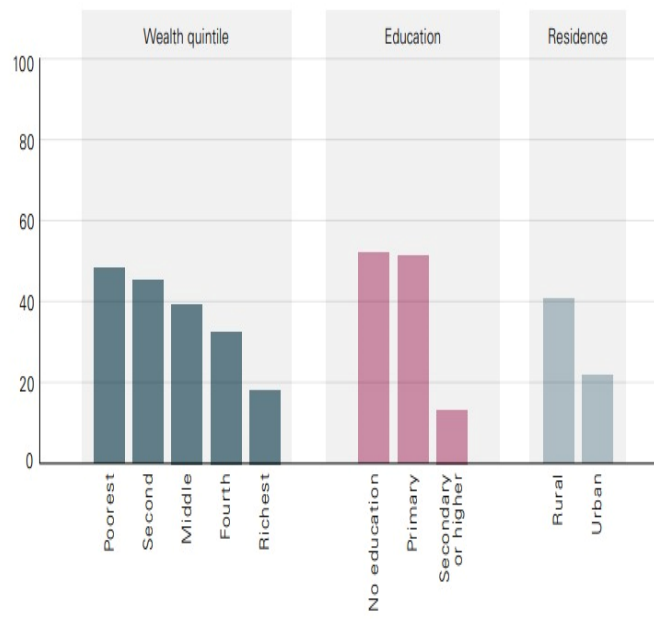
Statistical profile on child marriage: Malawi

Figure 2: Vulnerable population for child marriage, UNICEF Quantiles

2.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

The World Health Organization categorizes child marriage under VAC and by law, the victims are protected under the convention of child rights (67). Henceforth, international frameworks are dealing with child marriage as a human rights issue and object to the notion of consent, for a group of people (children) considered vulnerable and are asserting that it is justifiable for these rights to being protected by law (67,68). Child marriage is clearly a gender inequality issue that affects girls more and steals their childhood, disrupts their education, and debilitates their future, across economic opportunities, and decision making (69,70)

For Malawi, child marriage hinders the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); promoting good health, and wellbeing (SDG3), and gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG5) (71). Literature suggests child marriage increases the number of children a woman has at an early age, the risk of sexually related infections, including HIV, and increased maternal health problems.(72–74)

Malawi's maternal mortality rate is one of the highest worldwide, with 439 deaths per 100,000 live births, of which 29% of live births and 15% of deaths are attributed to adolescent girls (50). Driven by social norms, poverty, and low levels of education, teenage pregnancy is at 38% among women aged 15-19, and is associated with a high unmet need for contraception for Malawian women and girls (50,75,76) About 900,000 people aged 15-49 are living with HIV in Malawi. The prevalence of HIV among adults ages 15 to 64 years in Malawi is 10.6%: 12.8% among females and 8.2% among males. (77)

The World Bank and other sources argue that investing in health and education is a path to sustainable economic growth, because a healthy and well-educated child results in better human capital (78–80). In a low-income country like Malawi, with half its population being under 16.5 years of age, child marriage, which is very much associated with teenage pregnancy and early school dropouts, directly affects the country's demographic dividends, and its economic growth (81). When so many children are having children, this is a major factor that keeps the median age of the population down to nearly half of the global population's median age of 31.0 years (82). A low median age is prevalent in all of Africa, with a median age of 19.7 years (83). The significantly lower median age in Malawi, at 16.5 years, is a self-perpetuating determinant in its vicious cycle of child marriage and a barrier to achieving the above the SDGs (72).

The Malawi government advocates for the protection of all girls under 18 years who are victims of child marriage, in reference to the Child Rights Act (84). In the past few years, the government has focused resources on the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2018-2023); the Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act (2015), which established 18 as the legal age of marriage; the Gender Equality Act (2013); the Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance, and Protection) Act (2011); the Child Care, Protection, and Justice Act (2010); and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2006). (85,86)

Local and international NGOs support the course of action through programs that centre around the driving factors of the practice (20,87,88). As indicated above, the core factors revolve

around social economic issues, and low-level educational attainment, as driving the vicious cycle of poverty in households, and in turn child marriage (10,89)Through its three main studies (baseline, midline and endline), The Yes I Do! project in Malawi has looked at child marriage from primary driving factors and impacts of young people's involvement in combating child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Machinga, Malawi (14,90,91)

The project's studies reveal that underlying social norms and attitudes and social economic status of the girls, and their families drive the child marriage practice in TA Liwonde. This evidence gives a chance for more exploration into other main driving factors of child marriage, that revolve around individuals, family and community. Using Psaki et al's drivers of child marriage framework, this thesis explores agency, opportunity and girls' sexuality and pregnancy as drivers of child marriage, considering social norms and attitudes in TA Liwonde.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

2.2.1 Overall objective
To explore drivers of child marriage that are related to social norms and attitudes that influence child marriage among girls in Traditional Authority (TA) Liwonde Machinga, Malawi, in order to make recommendations to policymakers on the improvement of interventions reducing child marriage in Malawi.

2.2.2 Specific objectives
- Explore views on the acceptability/non acceptability of child marriage among young people in Machinga, Malawi
- Explore girls' agency and decision making, availability of opportunities, and views on sexuality and pregnancy as drivers of child marriage in Machinga, Malawi
- Analyze interventions that have worked in the reduction of child marriage in TA Liwonde, Machinga district
- Provide recommendations to policy makers, donors and activists to contribute to the reduction of child marriage

2.3 METHODOLOGY
Secondary data analysis on the Yes, I Do! data set, a project that ran for 5 years in collaboration with Plan International Malawi. The project ended in 2020 and had conducted three mixed method studies in its intervention area of TA Liwonde, of Machinga district: baseline, midline, and endline. (73,91,93)

2.3.1 Study area
Machinga is a district in the southern part of Malawi, with a population of 627,399 people. The district is predominantly of Yao ethnicity (94). The National statistics data of 2013/2014 depicts a high rate of child marriage in the district, with 42.1% of married women having been child brides, and with 17% of women aged 15-49 having married before age 15 (95).

2.3.2 Qualitative study
To explore human related activities, qualitative research is a good method, because it investigates individual actions, communication, and cultural influence (96). The natural

inquisitive nature of this method led to the choice of focusing on the qualitative components of the Yes, I Do! Project studies.

The Yes I Do! qualitative database consists of baseline, midline and endline folders, and each of these folders had separate folders of focus group discussions (FGDs), and In-depth interviews (IDIs), and Key informants' interviews (KIIs). The FGDs and IDIs, were community level interviews, and study participants consisted of young people aged 15-24, parents/guardians, traditional and religious leaders, and community-based organisation (CBO) leaders. The KIIs were at district level and participants described by government officials' role, and NGOs. Methods and study participants drawn from the database are described in more detail in Table 1 in Annex 1.

2.3.3   Data processing

Transcripts (30 FGDs, 60 IDIs and 24 KIIs) from baseline, midline and endline Yes, I Do! studies, were coded using NVivo, a qualitative data organization software. The codebook was drawn from the research table in reference to the conceptual framework (See Table 2, Research table, in Annex 2).

2.3.4   Data analysis

Content data analysis, using the drivers for child marriage for girl's conceptual framework by Psaki et al., was conducted. The framework classifies five hypothesized main drivers of child marriage into two levels; social norms and attitude and poverty and economic factors in two boxes on the left outer layer, and lack of agency, lack of opportunity, and fear of girls' sexuality and pregnancy, located in the middle (97).

The framework (Figure 3) illustrates the interactive nature of the five drivers using a cycle within an ecological realm to predict the occurrence of child marriage for girls. With arrows, the framework also demonstrates how social norms and attitudes, and poverty and economic factors influence lack of agency, opportunity and fear of girls' sexuality and pregnancy to driving child marriage. The far-right side are the outcomes of all the described processes for the girls, family, and community. The arrows pointing towards the different levels from below represent the complexity of drivers of child marriage and point to suggestive lines of analysis, and interventions that are tailored to context and society's needs.

To serve the thesis' objectives, the setup of the framework and the richness in data on gender and social norms in the Yes I Do! database, led to the choice of the thesis analysing the less explored drivers (lack of agency, lack of opportunity, and fear of girls' sexuality and pregnancy), in light of underlying social norms and attitudes in TA Liwonde.
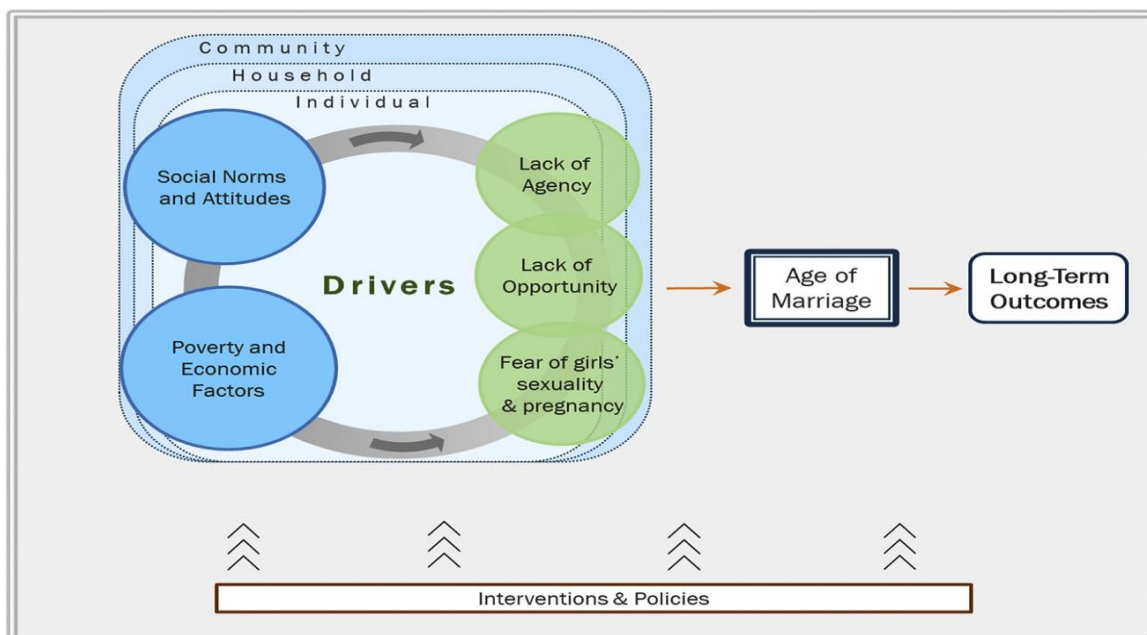
Figure 3 Drivers of child marriage conceptual framework

2.3.5 Ethical considerations

A waiver to use the data was obtained from the Malawi study's principal investigator, Prof. Alister Munthali, of the Centre for Social Research, Zomba, as per Royal Tropical Institute, (KIT) Netherlands, REC recommendations (See Study Waiver in Annex 3).

2.3.6 Limitations

The Yes I Do! dataset focuses on views, drivers and consequences of child marriage and Psaki et al's, framework focuses on drivers only. The Yes I Do! project did not use this framework, so some data specific to the drivers of focus in the thesis might not have been fully probed or explored. With the analysis focused on the in-depth understanding on the drivers of child marriage in light of social and gender norms, I did not analyze how perspectives changed over time between the baseline, midline and endline.

3.1 SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

3.1.2 Sex, age, and marital status

From the 30 FGDs, 60 IDIs, and 28 KIIs used from the three studies, the thesis describes the young people's (15-24) demographic data, because they were the primary study respondents from baseline to endline. The young people were divided in two groups for both FGDs and IDIs: by age groups (15-19 and 20-24), and by sex (male and female). There was a total of 24 FGDs and 12 IDIs conducted with young people aged 15-24. The baseline FGDs had 28 males and 34 females. For the male participants, 24 were not married, 1 was divorced in the 20-24 range, and 4 were married. For the female participants, 20 were not married, and 14 were married with at least 1 child. The IDIs were done with 8 young people, with 2 males and 2 females in the 15-19 age group. In the 15-19 age group, the boys were 16 and 17, and girls were 18 and 19 years of age. The others were with males and females aged 20-24, where the males were 21 and 24, and the girls 20 and 23 years old.

For midline, there were a total of 56 young people in the FGDs; 32 were females and 24 were males. Sixteen of the females were unmarried and 16 were married. For the males, 12 were married and 12 were unmarried. The IDIs were done with 6 young people, 3 females and 3 males. For the females, 1 was unmarried and 24, 1 was married and 19 and 1 was a Champion of Change facilitator, aged 26. For the males, one was married, and one was unmarried, both aged 24, and one was married, and one was unmarried, both aged 19. For endline, there was a total of 50 young people, 13 females in the 20-24 age group (8 married, 4 unmarried and 1 separated, 13 females in the 15-19 age group (4 married and 9 unmarried). For the males, from the 24 males, there were 5 unmarried males in the 20-24 age group. The IDIs were done with 8 young people, 4 males and 4 females. The males in the 15-19 were 19 and 18, in the 20-24 age group were 24 and 21. For the females, in the 15-19, they were 16 and 18 and those in 20-24 age group were 23 and 21.

3.1.3 Ethnicity, religion, education and occupation

Yao was the dominant ethnic group, then Chewa and Lomwe. Most of the participants reported on belonging to Islam, followed by Christianity. Most of the young people dropped out of school, but some were still in school, with more in primary school than in secondary school. Among the unmarried youth (15-19 years), there were some participants who had reached up to secondary school upper classes (Form 3 and 4). Among the unmarried, for both male and female, the highest attained level of education was Primary 8.

The majority of the participants came from relatively big households. The married young people reported living in a maximum of a six-member household. The unmarried reported much bigger household sizes, with 10 and 12 in two cases. Most of the unmarried lived in their parents' home, or with grandparents. The unmarried young men aged 20-24 reported farming and business as a common occupation. The women in the same age group talked about subsistence farming and petty trading or piecework. In the 15-19 group, those in school reported doing

nothing or some small piece work sometimes; those married, were just like the older age group, with farming for girls and farming and business for boys.

3.2 YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON ACCEPTABILITY/NON ACCEPTABILITY OF CHILD MARRIAGE

3.2.1 Young people's positive views of child marriage

The young people, through all the studies, were asked to share their views on child marriage by sharing the positives or benefits they associated with child marriage. From the interviews, the benefits shared were around financial support for the girls and their families. As much as most participants responded to seeing nothing good or beneficial from child marriage, there was some indication that some young people viewed getting married young as having some positives. For example, a few of both males and females shared how getting married young was beneficial because the girls and even their families get to be taken care of by their husbands.

The financial benefits for the girls and their families were associated with the usual belief that a husband is the provider of the household. The moment the girls get married, they are under the man's roof and care, which relieves them of the burden of thinking how they can sustain themselves in life. One male participant from an FGD at midline, illustrated the benefits as an easy way of getting money. The situation was shown to be even better for those who get involved with a boy or man with some money, because it means more financial support for the girls and their families.

"Getting married while you are young, is the same as getting money or being given money without sweating, so you end up using the money anyhow, without any specific plan or budget." **Midline, FGD married men 20-24**

A few of the young participants, especially male, related child marriage as a way to bind young people from practicing unsafe sexual relations. They referred to the single life as a risk factor for promiscuous behavior, and that getting married is a disciplining tool for promiscuity. In the same line, one the male participant described marriage as a safe place, for it means securing a partner without risk of diseases.

"When you are single you have a lot of sexual desires. So, if you are single you just sleep around with so many girls. As a result, you can contract diseases. But when you are married you sleep with your wife. You don't think of finding random girls to sleep with." **Endline, IDI with boy aged 17**

A few attributed child marriage as just an act of love, and the emotional fulfilment of being loved is the benefit. There were some who emphasized this point, saying that even without the girl being pregnant or being forced by parents, love is a justifiable reason for the girls to get married and that marriage is just normal in cases where no one is fighting it and the community views it as love. A few also felt marriage gives a fulfilment through having children and having children in marriage is considered morally acceptable.

"As much as most girls want to get married because their friends are married, but also they get to find someone to support them and give them children as their friends." **Endline, FGD married men 20-24**

One participant linked the idea of having children as even beneficial for some girls who would want to maintain their youthful looks by having children early and later just maintain their bodies.

"Maybe I can say that she gives birth while young and this gives her room to look young and yet has children. Yeah." **Midline, IDI with woman aged 24**

3.2.2 Young people's negative views of child marriage

However, the majority of the young people, through baseline to endline, explicitly shared that they did not see any positives or benefits that come with child marriage. They associated many negative effects for both boys and girls. The negative views were emphasizing economic burden, social responsibility pressure, and maternal health related problems for the girls. Social economically, the young people argued that most of the young people who get married, are usually school dropouts. The lack of employment for the young people in the community, makes it hard for them to take care of their basic needs, like food, clothing and even health.

"Yes. I know a lot of people living sad lives. Some girls have been abandoned by their husbands because the husbands have failed the responsibility of providing for them. So, they just go back home. Unfortunately, they usually already have children." **Baseline, IDI with boy aged 17**

Opinions around child marriage driving poverty was commonly shared by most of the participants and the financial burden and responsibility as challenges were very much associated to the boys, because as a boy, once married, he is the man responsible for providing for his family. In cases where the boy cannot provide for the family, the responsibility gets to fall on the girl's parents.

"The advantage is not there because if she marries young and the man is big with her being young, it is not good. Again, the parents are there now to feed the girl. If the boy is young and he cannot supply the needs of the house. It is now a burden for the parents to support the girl." **Midline, FGD married men 20-24.**

Some participants clearly described child marriage as the beginning of hardships for young girls. Social responsibility at the household level was mostly mentioned as one of the negatives that comes with getting married young. Some participants compared the life of a young girl when unmarried and married and admitted that as much as girls may face problems living under her parents' roof, giving examples of household chores pressure, they still get to have time to play and be a child. However, once a girl gets married, she loses that part of her life, she cannot play anymore, for she has to act as an adult and take on new responsibilities. Most of the female young participants talked of household chores, like cooking, farming, and in some cases the economic burden, because she has to take it on to sustain the independent life with her husband.

F: "What would be the situation if not married?"

P2: "You would just go to school and after you come back, you maybe go to fetch water and you eat and go play." **Baseline, FGD girls 15-19**

Most young people, both boys and girls, thought that child marriage negatively effects girls' education. They considered child marriage as a huge destruction in a girl's education because getting married meant dropping out of school and having the long-term consequences of living in poverty, abuse and even being divorced without support. Some talked about the future consequences of child marriage due to dropping out of school, which has long term effects on their children failing to go to school as well. These views were equally common among the boys and the girls, across the 15-24 age group, as illustrated by one participant of the 15-19 girls FGD at endline:

P2: "It happens that they cannot manage to earn a living or to make income. The end result, they do put on rags because they cannot manage to buy new cloths to put on."
P6: "Once she delivers, the child lacks proper care. The child cannot go to school because the parents did not also finish their education. The illiteracy level in the family just goes from parent to child on and on it goes like a chain." **Endline, FGD girls 15-19**

Sexual related pressure for the girls was mentioned by most of the young people as being a result of marrying early. Since marriage is considered a legitimate space for sexual activities, the participants said the community in TA Liwonde prepares girls to serve their husbands sexually, through the initiation ceremonies. Most participants attributed the girls being young and developing sexual organs as putting them at risk of sexual violence, like painful sex. In one FGD with girls 15-19, participants narrated difficult sexual experiences girls have to endure to cater to their much older husbands.

P8: "In the home, it gets hard, in the bedroom, on some things."
F: "What is hard?"
P2: "Having sex."
F: "How?"
F: "Be open."
P4: "It is hard because the girl is not grown."
P6: "What do you mean?"
P8: "It gets hard because the girl's thing is small, and the man's thing is big."
Baseline, FGD, girls 15-19

The participants shared how child marriage means a procreational institution. If not already pregnant before getting married, the girls are pressured to have children, and the pregnancies come with their own challenges on their developing bodies. They shared maternal related complications and risk of sexually transmitted infections like HIV, fistula, emotional torture that comes with stigma about the girls' being married young and even enduring unconsented polygamous marriages. A 19-year-old boy at midline narrated about the different consequences that getting married brings on a young girl's sexual reproductive and life in general.

"There are a lot of consequences, for example, you can get sexually transmitted infections. You could face a lot of complications during delivery of the baby since you are very young. It could result in increased death rates amongst the infants. Some girls become lame due to the complications that happen during delivery of the baby. Results in fistula amongst the girls. Getting married while you are very young it is very shameful, and you cannot be respected. Poverty amongst the youths since you get married while you are too young hence failing to take care of the family. Results in a lot of marriage break ups because boys are failing to do their responsibilities as head of the families." **Midline, IDI with unmarried boy aged 19**

3.3 AGENCY AND DECISION-MAKING AROUND CHILD MARRIAGE

3.3.1 Limited agency

From a sociological perspective, Emirabayer and Mische analyzed the concept of agency as a process of rooted social construct of the past, projecting the future within the present events (98). The participants were asked to talk about the process of decision-making to determine issues around what drives child marriage in TA Liwonde. The majority of the participants reported that girls do not get married out of their sincere will and for some entirely against their will, because marriage processions are a role of parents and maternal uncles in TA Liwonde.

"Her parents make the decision looking at how things are at the household. If they see that since we are poor, we cannot manage to feed another mouth they send the girl to get married." **Endline, IDI with male aged 19**

"Here in Machinga District, youths are getting married while they are still young because of culture. Some of the youths are influenced by their parents to get married. The parents tend to encourage them to get married because their fellow age mates were married, and they have their own children." **Midline, KII District Social Welfare**

Particularly for girls, most participants attributed failure to decide against getting married as driven by the community perception that girls are weak decision makers, as compared to boys, and that men are providers and girls are home keepers who have to be provided for. Some portrayed the above shared mentality in the community playing a big role in limiting both parents and girls to deciding against getting married.

"No. It is not that equal. Boys have more power that the females. Most of the decisions of the girls are being made for them. If you have a chat with women who were married at a young age, you will realize that it was not their decision to marry. Somebody was influencing their decisions; their decisions are made for them." **Endline, KII District Youth friendly health service coordinator.**

3.3.2 Availability and non-availability of alternatives

Across the different participants, it was clearly expressed that a girl's agency is even more reduced if the girls lack or have limited options against getting married. For TA Liwonde, it was shown that pregnancy out-of-wedlock, meant that a girl is automatically choosing marriage. The participants shared how it is a norm that once a girl is pregnant, the issue is usually dealt with by the parents and maternal uncles, who already hold a deciding power over marriage in general. The parents are responsible for follow-ups on who is responsible for the pregnancy,

and once the girls mention the man/boy, the girl is to be dropped at the boy's or man's house. In these situations, the girls have no say, their fate gets to be decided between the man/boy responsible and the parents pursuing the issue. If the boy/man refuses, then the girl would be saved, even when the parents are forcing it.

For girls who get pregnant while in school, some participants explained some attempt to choose not to get married through by-laws and mother groups community interventions like back to school, which requires from the responsible man/boy to take care of the girl while she lives with her parents until she has a baby, so that she can go back to school after delivery. However, most participants reported this to usually fail, because some parents may refuse to take on the burden of supporting her and the baby to come, and the nine months she stays out of school influences her to choose marriage instead.

"As per tradition, once a girl is pregnant, she is asked to point or mention the man or boy responsible for the pregnancy, from there family is the one to follow up by taking her to the man's home to sort the issue. It is either they get married or support the pregnancy journey and baby as what incorporates sorting the issue, and most cases, it ends to the girl going to live at the man's home since parents don't have the capacity to support both their child and the grandchild." **Endline, IDI with CBO leader**

Some young males shared that in case of pregnancy, the men or the boys are the ones presented with no choice on getting married. One participant gave an example that a girl can opt out of marriage if they choose not to mention the name of the boy or man responsible, but again clarified on the big role parents also play to limit those options.

"I think parents usually force a male to take responsibility for pregnancy, he has no choice. But a female would not be forced if she did not want. That is my thinking. But I also think it depends if the people fear their parents, sometimes these marriages occur because people are afraid of their parents." **Baseline, IDI with boy aged 16**

Besides the above being the situation of most girls in TA Liwonde, a good number of participants also shared situations where girls wanted to enforce some agency and express their voice against getting married by opting to use existing laws against child marriage, like reporting to community key people combating the practice in TA Liwonde (village heads, mother groups, police or CBOs). Some portrayed this to have worked for some girls in the community. However, again circumstances like them not being able to go back to school, or no employment, meant being pushed back to marriage as an option.

"When the girl comes upfront to say she doesn't want to get married we call for the boy together with the parents to explain to them the matter and the boy is forced not to force the girl. If the girl is underage we take it as a crime because they are forcing an underaged girl to get married. We let them know how the police can get involved if they persist. Once the case reaches the traditional leaders, the people start to fear." **Midline, IDI with village head**

Some participants argued that in most situations where the village heads, CBOs or mother groups dealing with protecting young people and bringing girls back to school had been successful, it was because the parents did not want their child to get married as well. When

parents are not in support, then they fight every force, either by sending the girls out of their homes, punishing them, and in the end, marriage is a given.

"There is a number of strategies, the strategies are already there and are written down, even found in the by-laws formulated and kept at TA Liwonde, but I feel the problem is with the parents because when they see that the young girl is pregnant, and when the chief tries to follow the case, the parents do shout at the chief saying the child is not yours, 'I take care of her myself and I gave birth to her by myself so you do not have to order me to send her to school'. I also agree some of the parents say this." **Endline, FGD young women aged 20-24**

In one FGD with parents, a mother shared a scenario on how most parents in the community react to daughters being pregnant. They said in cases where the girl withholds the name of the man or boy responsible for the pregnancy so that they do not get married, the parents punish them until they mention it, and the marriage process begins.

"And if they don't say, you can even not give them nsima for 3 days and they will definitely tell you: it is this one who impregnated me, and we go to the boy's mother and tell them about it and usually the mothers send you back and say they will talk to the boy if not home. When he comes back, they tell him and when he accepts, the parents or himself have to work hard to find money and buy a wrapper, which they take as they are going to accept the responsibilities with the parents and from there you agree and also advise the girl until baby." **Baseline, FGD, female parents**

3.4 LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

3.4.1 Lack of labour market opportunities

As a community, in general, most participants reported a lack of job opportunities for the people, and that most of them depended on farming and business. Participants also differentiated the situation between young women and men when it comes to the labour market and most of them reported lack of opportunities for young women. The participants said since men are traditionally seen as providers in the home, this makes it hard for girls to independently make decisions and stand by them like boys would. They gave examples of how young men have a chance of escaping the community when things get really tough and may opt to go to South Africa for non-skilled job opportunities, but this is not the case for young women. The common reported job opportunities for young women were subsistence farming, or having small businesses, like running hair salons, selling fritters, and piecework with low returns. The majority of the young women in TA Liwonde were unemployed, with the pressure of taking care of themselves making them opt to get the boys and men going to South Africa, or the men doing business, so that they get the support their need.

Lack of labour market opportunities for the girls was also explained as driving some girls into transactional sex or relationships, because as they are growing, there are a lot of things they need for themselves, like clothes, and if they cannot get these from their parents, and are having nothing to do, it makes them opt on getting a man or men to support them, and they may end up living with a man or end up pregnant as an escape.

"Most of them are even getting married to men with wives already, as of my observation: usually they may be the bicycle taxi guys who might give them a little something. Then you look at boys their age, they are together in class, and they have no income generating activity and maybe they may also need the K200 they may get from the men." **Endline, KII NGO**

3.4.2 Lack of value for a girl's education

Most of the key informants emphasized that education is key to keeping girls away from getting married. Again, they emphasized that the low level of value on education in the community as a whole contributes to people having less value on education for girls. It was also mentioned how the district has a lot of school dropouts and that people valued business or going to South Africa as opportunities for their children to get away from poverty. Some participants plainly shared how the situation was even worse for girls, because parents did not value girls' education. The reasons given were about fear of investing in girls through education because they think they would lose money if the girl gets pregnant, as it means dropping out of school. Most key informants attributed less value of girls' education to the cultural and social setting around education and girls, which expects girls to get married and not go to school.

"Yes, and most of all due to culture and tradition here in Machinga especially in TA Liwonde which is our impact area there are these expectations that a female can marry, they do have different expectations even in terms of school they can only support the male youth with the money but as for the female she will get married, it is better for them to support the male child, these are some of the perceptions that people in TA Liwonde have been having, perceptions that are patriarchal in general." **Midline, KII NGO**

Related to gender inequalities, some young male participants expressed their views on girls in general and how the community emphasized weaknesses in girl's characters that could risk investing in them to be educated. In one FGD with boys aged 15-19, one participant shared his opinion on why the community does not support and invest in girls' education:

"A girl's future is weak here, one, we have day schools, and the girls are weak in speaking and even mind and they would be taken up maybe with someone that gave them a lift when going to school. So, parents choose to send the boys to say even if they impregnate a girl, they will still continue with school and not lose money." **Baseline, FGD boys aged 15-19**

Despite some community members having such values, it was also mentioned by many that NGOs are working on empowering girls through education even though sometimes they are constrained with distance, the quality education and gender unequal norms. Along gender inequality and pressures coming from boys, some participant shared how they felt like the NGOs only put focus on girls and that as boys they are not supported and in turn, therefore some boys resort to impregnating the girls, just to make them drop out.

3.4.3 Gender inequality

Participants' descriptions on how the community's expectations for a girl and boy child differ illustrated gender inequality. It was shown that parents expect more from boys, and respect male children more, as they can help in providing for the family. Girls are given less attention and the only time they can bring something valuable home, is if they have a husband who can support the family financially.

Most of the participants shared how traditionally men are the providers and parents even invest in their boy children more than girls. If not school, some participants shared how parents finance young men's trips to South Africa, or to other cities within Malawi, to look for what they call greener pastures (jobs). They talked about how women are expected to stay at home as housewives and not work for provision. A few participants also explained how men and boys use this power and norm to oppress the girls, by marrying them and leaving them at home with their parents, which makes it even harder for girls to escape the situation.

"So, most of the girls fail to independently make their decisions and stand by it like boys. Boys are able to make decisions on their own, they might just decide to travel to South Africa and the parents will not question them or even support them. Even those boys aged 15, 16 and 17 might just travel to South Africa using unchartered routes while for the girls it is not possible to do so. The boys might just marry a girl and leave the girl at her in-law's household and go to South Africa. This is a common practice here." **Endline, IDI with clinician**

Few young people also talked of how even the men and the boys contribute to exploiting girls through child marriage. They gave examples of men using their power of being financially capable to influence the parents to give their daughters. The implication of girls having a chance at a better life puts girls at risk of getting married too young and even be susceptible to other consequences like contracting diseases like HIV, because the men are free to live their life.

"There are a lot of challenges in this area Machinga District, because most girls are being exploited with South-Africa. Once I go to South Africa, and come back to Malawi, the girls/women who were denying being in a courtship with me, will never deny me again. Even if she is a young girl or if I could tell her that I want to marry her it will happen, and the parents will not refuse or deny that fact. Because they will assume that they would be having a better life, yet they do not know what will happen in the future since they do not know whether I am HIV positive or not, or what they are interested in, is that when my child gets married to a man who has come from or who goes to South Africa, my child will be eating better food." **Midline, FGD with married males aged 20-24**

3.5 FEAR OF GIRLS' SEXUALITY

3.5.1 Sexual education: a taboo for parents but stimulated at initiation
The participants at community and district level gave a similar impression that issues of girls' sexuality were much related to the practice of initiation ceremonies in TA Liwonde. Most of the participants shared how culturally, most parents did not communicate with their girls about sexual related information as initiations ceremonies, grandparents or religious councilors were considered a platform for that. The majority also portrayed the role the initiation ceremonies had on influencing child marriage as they link them to introducing sexual activeness among most girls, because the process involved elements of preparing girls for sexual activities after the ceremonies, like asking the girls to try out sex. The key informants talked of ceremonies as not being entirely bad, but the element of poor education given around sexuality leading to pregnancy which drives the practice of child marriage in the community and some suggested need of promoting SRHR communication using the initiation ceremonies and also at household level.

"There are two ways of doing this, for the boys that are in urban areas they are able to talk to

their parents about these issues because they are at least sensitized and educated but for those who are in rural areas like in TA Chikwawa and TA Liwonde, its difficult because the parents are uneducated, and they only believe in initiation ceremonies as their way of communicating. In the remote areas they use the counselors or the grandparents, you will find the parents saying that I can't talk of Sexual reproductive health to my child it is an abomination, but they have to use someone else, and the children are used to hear such issues from someone else than their parents." **Baseline, KII NGO.**

3.5.2 Fear of out-of-wedlock pregnancy

As indicated above, from both community and district level interviews, a strong picture was made on out-of-wedlock pregnancy putting girls and their families to conform to child marriage in TA Liwonde. The majority of the study participants talked about how the community in TA Liwonde considered pregnancy out of marriage a taboo, and, as per religion as sin, and generally as an embarrassment to parents and the girl pregnant because it indicates early engagement in sexual activities for the girls. Out-of-wedlock pregnancy fear was shared by young people and key informants as driven by poor or lack of information around girls' sexuality, or poor information given through initiation ceremonies and religious view against it. Most religious leaders talked of how the religion teaches against sex before marriage, for both Islam and Christianity as predominant religions. One church elder from a catholic church narrated how issues around girls getting pregnant out of marriage are dealt with.

"In our church we refuse child marriages even if they love each other a lot, those are the laws in the Catholic Church. But if the girl is pregnant, before, the parents were called and punished and banned from other church protocols. Now it is the girl who is stopped from church protocols until the baby is of a good age, then they come confess in the church and given a little punishment." **Baseline, IDI with religious leader**

The young people shared the consequences that come if girls try to refuse to get married when they are pregnant. They mentioned being chased away from home, not being supported in anything by parents (not being given food and clothing). Some mentioned ways in which girls try to escape marriage by trying to abort the pregnancy, to escape all these consequences, because they know it is hard to negotiate out marriage when they are pregnant. As it was commonly mentioned by participants that pregnancy out of marriage issues were handled by the parents; the girls were rendered powerless, their fate having to be determined by the man or boy responsible and the parents pursuing it.

"Some of them get pregnant out-of-wedlock and they get to be afraid they will be in trouble with the parents. Also, some get to have been impregnated with an old man and they get to be afraid to say it. Some men are clever, they refuse the pregnancy and in fear of that they just abort." **Baseline, FGD boys aged 15-19**

Participants also talked about programs preventing parents from forcing or influencing girls into getting married in TA Liwonde through bylaws and back to school programs, the village heads and mother groups enforce. Some young people expressed concern of how these fail to work because there is situation that resist or oppose these efforts like corruption or lack of backups from influential NGOs, or Police. Some participants in an FGD, shared their thought around the role of village heads by sharing how leaders intervene when pregnancy has already happened and not before pregnancy.

P3: Yes like if one gets married at a young age, the parents are called and if they are forcing they are told it is a legal case. Some can pay something to the chiefs to stop the case from reaching the police, because people are afraid of police.
P9: For me, I feel leaders intervene on things that have already gone bad, if the girl is pregnant, she will not live in peace with her parents. **Baseline, FGD, Males 15-19.**

3.5.3 Preserving family honor

Some shared that once parents learn that their daughter is sexually active, they suggest marriage or even force it so that they escape the shame of having to follow up on the man or boy responsible. The participants showed how the community and especially parents, did not have a problem with girls getting married young, as compared to girls falling pregnant out of marriage. Pregnancy out-of-wedlock was considered more of an abnormality and parents would rather opt for their children being secured from it by getting married before it happens. According to some participants, most parents associated girls debuting in sexual activities to a high chance of getting pregnant and to preserve their family integrity, most parents suggest, influence or even force their daughters to get married.

"Usually, they look at how the child is conducting herself and they may tell her, 'sister find a man and settle down'". **Baseline, FGD young women aged 20-24**

"They [parents] tell them that 'your friends are married, you should also get married, you might get pregnant out-of-wedlock.'" **Baseline, IDI with young man aged 24**

3.4.5 Marriage as a legitimate context for sex

At community level, most participants shared how parents are more concerned of girls' sexuality, as the community considers girls' engagement in sexual relations and activities outside marriage as promiscuous behavior. This being the case, some participants shared that in case where girls exercise their agency and engage in sexual activities, parents feel marriage is a tool to protect their children from pregnancy and what they called promiscuity. Some participants gave examples of how parents exercise this control through suggesting marriage or in some cases just arranging the marriage for their girls to bind them from being sexually active.

"What makes the parents to allow them to marry it's because the parents are tired of the way the girl is behaving. They tried to talk to her daily that you should not do this' it comes a time when the parents are tired. They beat her and what have you but nothing changing. So, the parents just accept that 'marry so that you should have what you want[sex]' it's out of temper. They are not willing this to take place. They just do this for them to rest. 'Marry to have what you want" **Midline, FGD females 20-24**

Some key informants also seemed to have shared similar thinking around girls' sexuality, that their interventions involve activities that make girls stay away from sexual activities. For example, one key informant gave an example of the focus of their interventions being tailored to delay sexual activities amongst girls.

"For me personally, school is a place to learn, so I advocate for activities that will keep the girls busy and away from engaging in sexual activities before marriage. Young people are

curious, you give them a chance to try these things out with a condom, they will end up trying without it someday, so school first and sex later". **Baseline, KII NGO**

Some young people talked about how these fears of parents and the community around girls being sexually active puts the girls under pressure to conform to the community, and hence they end up choosing to get married so that they can freely have sex in an accepted environment. In cases where the girls are being opposed to get married or have sex, some participants talked of how some girls use their parents' fear of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, to fulfill their desires to get married, and they deliberately get pregnant, which leads to marriage.

"Some is because of sexual feelings. Some parents tell their children not to have boyfriends, so they end up choosing marriage for no other reason but sex. Some beliefs say that when a girl is having stomach pains she need to have sex to feel better, if they do that the end result is pregnancy." **Midline, FGD with girls aged 15-19**

3.6 INTERVENTIONS ON CHILD MARRIAGE

3.6.1 Actions taken around child marriage in TA Liwonde

In TA Liwonde, from the community interviews and the key informants, participants talked of interventions that are making a difference over time. The interventions mentioned included promotion of gender equality through education campaigns to empower young people with knowledge around equal treatment of girls and boys. They also shared interventions targeting on changing the norms and practices through engaging the community, specifically girls and boys. The other key stakeholder mentioned as playing a role or being targeted with these interventions were parents, health workers, CBO leaders, village heads, and religious leaders. The participants mentioned stakeholders like the Police, youth clubs, mother groups and village heads with support from local and international NGOs as championing these activities in TA Liwonde.

"ADRA has come with several projects, but it does not conduct all the projects in one area or village. For example, in our area ADRA is encouraging youths to prevent child marriages, sexual activities and transmission of STIs. It is also encouraging girls to continue with their studies. It encourages youths to use condoms whenever they are having sex. Some youths use the advice and prevent the transmission of STIs while those youths who are not careful, are found reactive or with HIV. Around Mangamba, there are a lot of youths who are HIV positive because they do not follow the advice." **Baseline, FGD, Males 20-24**

Key informants emphasized on the role of education to delay girls from getting married, and programmes around making girls stay in school were mentioned as interventions happening in TA Liwonde. Most participants mentioned these interventions as supported by teachers and health workers, in collaboration with local and international NGOs and in the community working with mother groups, youth clubs, and also Traditional Authorities as gate keepers of the community. Some NGOs also emphasized on involvement of boys in their interventions to address issues around gender equality and for the boys to feel involved

and take a role to protecting the girls as well. Some NGOs shared how the support is in form of financial, school essentials or bicycles for those living far from school and even using role models to enhance girls' stay in school.

"Yeah, in schools through the mother support group and other structures we continuously engage the young girls on the same so that they don't fall in that trap, we have also had engagement with the traditional authorities, okay, that they should spearhead this course, protecting these girls, we have got other partners of course in specific I will tell you about Campaign for Female Education that is with CAMFED, we have had various interventions, various in their localities, in their schools, intervening on the same, we have brought to them role models notably from Zomba so this, we are trying hard." **Midline, KII, NGO**

Economic empowerment was one of the commonly suggested recommendations in the interviews as fitting to address child marriage. Most NGOs also mentioned interventions around economic empowerment as being done in TA Liwonde with young people. Most participants shared interventions that empower girls economically within the community, through income generating activities, so that they do not have to look at marriage as an option.

"We have trained young people especially those that are out of school and cannot go back to school. We have trained them in entrepreneurship, how they can run business. We have also trained them about village savings and loans." **Endline, KII, NGO**

The majority of study participants also mentioned how legal support has had an impact on addressing child marriage in TA Liwonde. They mentioned of the role of village heads, police, CBOs, mother groups and youth-led programmes as supported by international and local NGOs. Most participants mentioned enforcement of bylaws and national laws around banning child marriage even when there is pregnancy.

"We had a girl from this community. She was schooling at Maiwa primary school standard 7. There is a man who married in their village. This man started having sex with this girl. It was actually a husband to his sister. Then the issue came to the attention of the teachers at school. The NGOs also intervened. They went to the home village of the young man. As I am talking the man is in jail. He was sentenced to be a prisoner. He is at Domasi prison. **Endline, FGD females aged 15-19**

4.1 ACCEPTABILITY/NON ACCEPTABILITY OF CHILD MARRIAGE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN MACHINGA

The results of this study have shown that drivers of child marriage are socially inherited in TA Liwonde, and that they start from the way the community treats a girl child. The way boys and girls are raised and expectations about their lives were demonstrated as grooming them for their futures as adults. Girls are raised to serve and support men, and the social setting raises both boys and girls knowing this, which in turn drives disparities between boys and girls, and men and women.

The community expectations about men as providers and decision makers and women/girls as caretakers for the husband and weak at making decisions drive child marriage in being tolerated at individual, family and community level. A literature review for sub-Saharan Africa also shows how gender expectations around men being providers (financially and material) and women having to return the favour through domestic services and satisfying sexual needs of the man drive the practice of child marriage in most African countries (99). For TA Liwonde, the emphasis of parents influencing or forcing their daughters to marry attest to this, for most often it was cited that parents get their girls married so that the girls and their families are relived of financial burden.

Despite high levels of knowledge about the negative impacts of child marriage on girls' schooling, their childhood, their health and their entire future, young people still get married. The benefits the young people associated to getting married young were related to access to liberty they cannot have if not married. This shows a lack of information on SRHR and issues around young people's sexuality, as illustrated under fear of girls' sexuality and pregnancy section.

4.2 GIRLS' AGENCY AND DECISION MAKING

Green's definition of agency has an element of exertion of power (100). Gender inequalities were illustrated as part of driving child marriage. Participants were able to state the lack of agency that prevails around child marriage, as the traditional set-up around marriage in general steals away the power of girls to deciding fully. Even though young people have knowledge of child marriage being a problem and that girls are affected the most, the young people recognize that child marriage is driven by gender and social norms. The thesis also found that girls' agency and decisions about getting married are never truly their own but are influenced by the circumstances that surround them as they grow up, and that parents and maternal uncles decide on the fate of most girls in the community.

The community's little value for a girl child, and poverty, drive the parents to decide on getting their daughter married. The girl's agency is also limited because of lack of alternatives. If not married, the community has nothing tangible or long term to offer them, in fact, it is difficult to sustain their childhood. The government and NGOs try to intervene in situations that lead to child marriage, however, it is questionable whether they target the real problems. Often, the time a local leader, NGOs or even the government intervene, are situations when things have

already gone bad. For example, with teenage pregnancy being one of main drivers for child marriage, intervening needs to be done way before the strongest risk factor for child marriage happens.

As the framework suggests on interventions that are tailored to the society, for TA Liwonde, the perception shown from the study is that parents are not really concerned with sex before marriage as they clearly allow and send their children to initiation ceremonies, where sexual activities are encouraged. As unwanted pregnancy leading to child marriage is shown to have a long-term negative impact on the girl, the boy, and their new, unprepared family, there is a need to see it as a problem with many causes, not just as a culturally normative behaviour, with only one solution. As suggested by other key informants and also literature suggests interventions related to safe sex, contraceptive use is necessary for such cases. Young people will have sex anyway and providing them with the necessities for safe sex and prevention of pregnancy is double win for the girls, they prevent pregnancy and at the same time diseases.(100,101)

4.3 LACK OF OPPORTUNITY AS A DRIVER OF CHILD MARRIAGE

As children grow, they inspire to grow up and be something in future. In a community where a girl has no options, or dreams for the future are limited, then getting married is a big opportunity. The study found out that the lack of job opportunities that are empowering and sustainable for girls or women in general in TA Liwonde, would surely mean continuing to see people getting married too young.

At the end of the day, after trials or interventions, the girl who fights it gets left alone, feeling hopeless. No role model means no hope of any other outcome, without the job opportunities, marriage is a safe haven at the end of the day. It is therefore important that intervention fighting child marriage should look into economically empowering the girls and their families as it has shown that lack of money drive the practice. For the girls' hope to be boosted, intervention that have role model elements are essential, children learn from observing and not just hearing. Some studies have shown how empowering girls and the household financially can work as a way to delay marriage and have used cash transfers. (102)

4.4 FEAR OF GIRLS' SEXUALITY AND PREGNANCY AS DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

The study found that household level communication on SRHR is poor in TA Liwonde. As much, there was an impression that community does not really care whether young people are having sex, they know they will, as some of their cultural activities are supportive of young people having sex, for example initiation ceremonies. At the same time, the community as a whole is more ashamed about a girl's sexuality, girls being pregnant, out-of-wedlock, and not subsequently married. Marriage is celebrated, regardless of age or the law. From the study, it was shown that interventions like targeting the information being given to the girls is insufficient for her to determine her own future, as societal pressures are strong. Information would have to be supplemented with availability and acceptance of contraception, to prevent unwanted pregnancy, which often leads to forced marriage. The Girls Not Brides conceptual

framework on girls' sexuality argues that child marriage cannot be addressed if girls' sexuality is not addressed as part of interventions.(103)

The study found out that indeed interventions on child marriage lack the element of sexuality education, much focus is on preventing teen pregnancy, but how can pregnancy be prevented for young people who acknowledge being sexually active. Just like the community have normalized the practice of initiation ceremonies, contraception and comprehensive sexuality education can also be normalized in the long run to prevent the lead cause of child marriage in TA Liwonde. In a review on adolescent SRHR, Chandra and colleagues' points to sexual education as one way of addressing the psychological and social wellbeing and that it improves practice of safe sex and contraceptive use naturally.(104)

4.5 RELEVANCE OF THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Psaki's five core drivers of child marriage conceptual framework, that has poverty and social norms before lack of agency, lack of opportunity and fear of girls' sexuality as driving child marriage for girls. For TA Liwonde, the premises this framework sets, around these five drivers being interconnected, indeed fit for the situation of girls in the community. The study found that lack of agency, lack of opportunities and fear of girls' sexuality depended on each other and that it was very much influenced by gender and social norms, and also by poverty . The framework also illustrates the ecological setup in which child marriage as a practice exists, and for TA Liwonde, child marriage was found to be driven by individual, family and community set-up. For example, the family financial status, religious background and geographical location (being in the rural) influence child marriage.

The interventions as suggested and presented by the study participants described the multifaceted nature of the problem. Preventing child marriage requires integrated approaches around health, education, gender and economic sectors. The framework has shown that girls are very susceptible to child marriage in TA Liwonde.

4.6 LIMITATION AND STRENGTH OF STUDY

The WHO advocates using health research as a tool towards universal health coverage, and one of the aspects they encourage is the sharing of information and data, to ensure progress in various responsibilities that countries engage in (105). This thesis utilized existing qualitative data from the Yes, I Do! database of mixed methods, and built   on the other reports of Yes, I Do! the study by exploring the less emphasized angles of the database as reflected in the framework.

This study only focused on drivers for child marriage particularly for unmarried girls, the Psaki framework has an element of addressing child marriage even for married girls, which was not directly explored in this study for the dataset does not touch much on that. The only cases married girls were mentioned was only associated with consequences and not on solutions for them.

5.1 CONCLUSION

This thesis reveals that child marriage drivers are internalized social norms that revolve around expectations for a girl child in TA Liwonde. The widespread community expectations and perceptions about girls as weak decision makers, not financial providers and the fear for out of wedlock pregnancy limits the regarded value and consequently the effort around education and economic empowerment. Realizing that girls in TA Liwonde are part and parcel of this upbringing, of shared norms and practices. puts the realization that there is need to initiate opportunities of hope for a better future for them.

As much as hope may sound abstract, it is bigger than small concrete steps. For this reason and with the guidance of the Psaki's framework, that emphasizes context informed interventions to combat child marriage, policy makers, donors and activists working on child marriage in the area need to realize that girls lack and have no other option or hope for the future. They lack opportunities and are governed by what the community considers normal and good for them. These situations translate into young people adapting to the problems that surround them consider getting married as their fate or destiny, and the expected consequences as a burden to be endured.

Most often, the family looks to a girl's marriage as to escape poverty, social stigma, and prevent out of wedlock pregnancy. How is the girl to satisfy all these obligations, and at the same time exercise her freedom of decision-making and behavior if she is not yet an adult?

WHAT COMES FIRST? The family's honour, or the girl's desires? In a society where family honour and economic circumstances are the main drivers, child marriage is almost a given. Without additional options - such as a girl's access to affordable education and contraception, as well as better economic circumstances and job opportunities for the girls and the family itself-, (which, together, would make it possible for a girl to remain longer with her family), the driving forces behind child marriage may well continue to prevail, despite marital age laws. The continuous connection between the drivers of child marriage as illustrated in Psaki's framework is evident that addressing child marriage in TA Liwonde cannot be an immediate course. This thesis states three key interventions as recommendations that touch on the three explored drivers of child marriage in TA Liwonde.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The below recommendations are addressed to policy makers, donors and advocates/activists working on combating child marriage in Malawi. As change is gradual, the thesis encourages the above stakeholders to focus on a mix of long-term interventions.

1. Gender and social norms drive the practice of child marriage in TA Liwonde, it instils feelings of tolerance of the practice among girls and the community they live in. There is need for a change of mindset, this can be done by embracing the agents of change programme already happening in TA Liwonde. The programme focuses on promotion of gender equality through education campaigns about girls' empowerment, involving

both boys and girls. As this champions of change programme looks much into SRHR education in the community, there is an another one for in-school youth focused on keeping girls in school.

NGOs running these programmes need to think of integrating these two programmes to enhance and promote out-of-school girls to go back to school as well.

There is also need for NGOs working on such programmes to capitalize the proximity of the community-based champion of change to the most important actors involved in child marriage, who are the parents, uncles and the community in general.

2. To address the major cause of child marriage, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, there is a need to empower the community around contraceptive use, including information about and availability of contraceptives. International and local NGOs, CBOs, health workers, teachers working in TA Liwonde, need to provide information on contraceptive use and tools to prevent pregnancy and diseases. With evidence that in initiation ceremonies, grandparents are the platforms from which young people get information about SRHR, there is need to add contraception and disease prevention to the initiation ceremonies, and access to contraception services as an ongoing part of health services to be provided in the community.

   Changing societal views about contraception may need to be done both from inside and outside the community. Champions of Change are one way to introduce new ideas. For this to happen, advocates would have to be respected by the community.

   To introduce change for parents, provision of incentives for delaying marriage could be an option. These programmes would create model families, which all feed into role models.

   To reach out to young people at different levels with SRHR information, the ministries of youth, child protection and welfare, and gender can promote youth targeted programmes through local radio stations.

3. To address lack of opportunities for the girls, there is need to create actual jobs for girls in the community. This would entail provision of local work, particularly for Form 4 educated girls. This could be virtual work, call centers, or tailoring, which would make young women remain in their communities as role models for the girls and families to follow. Ministries of youth and labour can collectively work together to promote vocational trainings in community technical colleges within reach for the girls in TA Liwonde. This could address issues around value for girls and provision of alternatives beyond getting married and for the families, a sense of girls being able to financially take care of their families hence no need to marry them off for financial and material support.

Recommendation for future studies (Researchers)
- It would be good for future research to explore experiences of married girls to address child marriage at all levels, before and after.

REFERENCES

1. Kabeer N. Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. Development and Change [Internet]. 1999 Jul 1 [cited 2022 Jul 17];30(3):435–64. Available from: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-7660.00125

2. WHO and United Nations Definition of Adolescent - Public Health [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 12]. Available from: https://www.publichealth.com.ng/who-and-united-nations-definition-of-adolescent/

3. The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version | UNICEF [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 12]. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version

4. Child marriage | UNICEF [Internet]. [cited 2022 Feb 28]. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage

5. Norm Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 12]. Available from: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/norm

6. Understanding and addressing violence against women: intimate partner violence [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-12.36

7. Sexual & reproductive health | United Nations Population Fund [Internet]. [cited 2022 Mar 16]. Available from: https://www.unfpa.org/sexual-reproductive-health

8. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights -SRHR [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jun 3]. Available from: http://nfydmw.org/sexual-reproductive.html

9. Child Marriages In Malawi: My analysis. – The Quite Perspective [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 21]. Available from: https://insidemartinshead.wordpress.com/2020/04/27/child-marriages-in-malawi/

10. Problem of Child Marriage in Malawi Linked to Poverty [Internet]. [cited 2022 May 9]. Available from: https://borgenproject.org/child-marriage-in-malawi/

11. Concern in Malawi as early marriages, teen pregnancies rise amid school closures | CGTN Africa [Internet]. [cited 2022 May 9]. Available from: https://africa.cgtn.com/2020/07/28/concern-in-malawi-as-early-marriages-teen-pregnancies-rise-amid-school-closures/

12. Child marriages skyrocket in Malawi as Covid-19 closes schools, figures show [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jun 10]. Available from: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/women-and-girls/child-marriages-skyrocket-malawi-covid-19-closes-schools-figures/

13. Child marriage: the case of Malawi - Right for Education [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 23]. Available from: https://rightforeducation.org/2021/12/06/child-marriage-case-of-malawi/

14. Yes I Do: Reduce Child Marriage, Teenage Pregnancies and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting - KIT Royal Tropical Institute [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 22]. Available from: https://www.kit.nl/project/yes-i-do/

15. Demographic Statistics of Malawi - knoema.com [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 29]. Available from: https://knoema.com/MWDS2018/demographic-statistics-of-malawi

16. Gastón CM, Misunas C, Cappa C. Child marriage among boys: a global overview of available data. https://doi.org/101080/1745012820191566584 [Internet]. 2019 Jul 3 [cited 2022 Feb 28];14(3):219–28. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17450128.2019.1566584

17. Child Marriage - Rationale, Historical Views, And Consequences - WorldAtlas [Internet]. [cited 2022 Mar 1]. Available from: https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/child-marriage-rationale-historical-views-and-consequences.html

18. Child Marriage: A Violation of Child Rights | Save the Children [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 25]. Available from: https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/child-marriage-a-violation-of-child-rights

19. Gender-based violence | European Institute for Gender Equality [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jun 7]. Available from: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence

20. (PDF) Children's Rights Standards and Child Marriage in Malawi [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 7]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321213390_Children's_Rights_Standards_and_Child_Marriage_in_Malawi

21. Nour NM. Child Marriage: A Silent Health and Human Rights Issue. Reviews in Obstetrics and Gynecology [Internet]. 2009 [cited 2022 Jun 7];2(1):51. Available from: /pmc/articles/PMC2672998/

22. Gender-based violence and child marriage - Girls Not Brides [Internet]. [cited 2022 Feb 28]. Available from: https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-and-health/gender-based-violence-and-child-marriage/

23. Palamuleni ME. Socioeconomic determinants of age at marriage in Malawi. International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology [Internet]. 2011 [cited 2022 May 9];3(7):224–35. Available from: http://www.academicjournals.org/IJSA

24. Child marriage - World | ReliefWeb [Internet]. [cited 2022 Mar 1]. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/report/world/child-marriage

25. Facts and figures: Ending violence against women | What we do | UN Women – Headquarters [Internet]. [cited 2022 Mar 1]. Available from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures

26. The Current State of Child Marriage in Africa - The Borgen Project [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: https://borgenproject.org/the-current-state-of-child-marriage-in-africa/

27. A Profile of Child Marriage In Africa | UNICEF West and Central Africa [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/wca/reports/profile-child-marriage-africa

28. Child marriage around the world | UNICEF [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 25]. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/stories/child-marriage-around-world

29. Petroni S, Steinhaus M, Fenn NS, Stoebenau K, Gregowski A. New Findings on Child Marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa. Annals of Global Health. 2017 Sep 1;83(5–6):781–90.

30. Svanemyr J, Chandra-Mouli V, Raj A, Travers E, Sundaram L. Research priorities on ending child marriage and supporting married girls. Reproductive Health 2015 12:1 [Internet]. 2015 Sep 3 [cited 2022 Apr 25];12(1):1–4. Available from: https://link.springer.com/articles/10.1186/s12978-015-0060-5

31. The law and child marriage - Girls Not Brides [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 25]. Available from: https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/law-and-child-marriage/

32. Steinhaus M, Hinson L, Rizzo AT, Gregowski A. Measuring Social Norms Related to Child Marriage Among Adult Decision-Makers of Young Girls in Phalombe and Thyolo, Malawi. Journal of Adolescent Health. 2019 Apr 1;64(4):S37–44.

33. Karlsson J. CHILD MARRIAGE A MAPPING OF PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERS IN TWELVE COUNTRIES IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA Special thanks to Carina Hickling (international consultant) for her technical expertise, skills and dedication in completing this mapping; to Maja Hansen (Regional Programme Specialist, Adolescent and Youth, UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office) and.

34. The Child Marriage Factsheet | UNICEF Malawi [Internet]. [cited 2022 Mar 20]. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/malawi/reports/child-marriage-factsheet

35. The 2015-16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (2015-16 MDHS) [Internet]. [cited 2021 Nov 18]. Available from: http://www.nsomalawi.mw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=222%3Athe-2016-16-malawi-demographic-and-health-survey-2015-16-mdhs-update-in-progress&catid=8%3Areports&Itemid=6

36. norms influencing child marriage in Malawi - Search [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jun 7]. Available from: https://www.bing.com/search?q=norms+influencing+child+marriage+in+Malawi&cvid=301ec031b93 d4002962fcced8da575e3&aqs=edge..69i57j69i64.9574j0j1&pglt=299&FORM=ANNTA1&PC=U531

37. 2018 Population and Housing Census Main Report [Internet]. Malawi National Statistical Office; [cited 2022 Jul 6]. Available from: http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/demography/census_2018/2018%20Mala wi%20Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%20Main%20Report.pdf

38. Malawi Religions - Demographics [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 6]. Available from: https://www.indexmundi.com/malawi/religions.html

39. Malawi • Country facts • PopulationData.net [Internet]. [cited 2021 Nov 9]. Available from: https://en.populationdata.net/countries/malawi/

40. Malawi GDP - 2022 Data - 2023 Forecast - 1960-2021 Historical - Chart - News [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 2]. Available from: https://tradingeconomics.com/malawi/gdp

41. The situation of children and women in Malawi | UNICEF Malawi [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 28]. Available from: https://www.unicef.org/malawi/situation-children-and-women-malawi

42. MALAWI HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING FACT SHEET | Fact Sheet | Malawi | Archive - U.S. Agency for International Development [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 26]. Available from: https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/malawi/fact-sheets/malawi-health-systems-strengthening-fact-sheet

43. Malawi GDP - 2022 Data - 2023 Forecast - 1960-2021 Historical - Chart - News [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 6]. Available from: https://tradingeconomics.com/malawi/gdp

44. Malawi Health Equity Network wants health budget increased - The Times Group Malawi [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 6]. Available from: https://times.mw/malawi-health-equity-network-wants-health-budget-increased/

45. The Culture Of Malawi - WorldAtlas [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 25]. Available from: https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-culture-of-malawi.html

46. Leading Causes Of Death In Malawi - WorldAtlas [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 6]. Available from: https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/leading-causes-of-death-in-malawi.html

47. malawi disease burden profile - Search [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 8]. Available from: https://www.bing.com/search?q=malawi+disease+burden+profile&cvid=2a4b3e3568c84aeeb35e77e031d996a4&aqs=edge..69i57.12923j0j1&pglt=299&FORM=ANNTA1&PC=U531

48. Starrs AM, Ezeh AC, Barker G, Basu A, Bertrand JT, Blum R, et al. Accelerate progress-sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission The Lancet Commissions. www.thelancet.com [Internet]. 2018 [cited 2022 Mar 14];391. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/

49. Malawi: National SRHR Policy 2017-2022 - Gender Links [Internet]. [cited 2022 Mar 15]. Available from: https://genderlinks.org.za/srhrs/malawi-national-srhr-policy-2017-2022/

50. Reproductive Health [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jun 2]. Available from: http://www.health.gov.mw/index.php/directorates/reproductive-health

51. Do social and cultural factors perpetuate gender-based violence in Malawi? | Gender and Behaviour [Internet]. [cited 2021 Dec 3]. Available from: https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC34559

52. MALAWI HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION Cultural Practices and their Impact on the Enjoyment of Human Rights, Particularly the Rights of Women and Children in Malawi.

53. Constitution of the Republic of Malawi 1994, as amended to 2017 [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jun 1]. Available from: https://constitutions.unwomen.org/en/countries/africa/malawi

54. Understanding and Addressing Gender-based Violence in Malawi - Giving Compass [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 7]. Available from: https://givingcompass.org/article/understanding-and-addressing-gender-based-violence-in-malawi

55. Gender-based Violence in Malawi: A Literature Review to Inform the National Response [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: http://www.healthpolicyproject.com/index.cfm?ID=publications&get=pubID&pubID=436

56. Marriage in Malawi | Stiegs 2012 [Internet]. [cited 2022 Feb 7]. Available from: https://cstiegler12.wordpress.com/2010/03/09/family-life-in-malawi/

57. Kaluwa C. Patriarchy and Domestic Violence in Malawi [Internet]. [cited 2022 Feb 6]. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/34617831/Patriarchy_and_Domestic_Violence_in_Malawi

58. Where we are : Eastern and Southern Africa : Malawi | UN Women – Africa [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 7]. Available from: https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/malawi

59. MALAWI GENDER EQUALITY FACT SHEET | Fact Sheet | Malawi | Archive - U.S. Agency for International Development [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 6]. Available from: https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/malawi/fact-sheets/malawi-gender-equality-fact-sheet

60. The Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Bill (Marriage Age) [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 23]. Available from: https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/africa/malawi/2015/the-marriage-divorce-and-family-relations-bill

61. Malawi Parliament adopts amendment to end child marriage | UN Women – Headquarters [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 25]. Available from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/2/news-malawi-parliament-adopts-amendment-to-end-child-marriage

62. Good News for Child Protection in Malawi | Human Rights Watch [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 21]. Available from: https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/03/good-news-child-protection-malawi

63. Malawi has officially banned child marriages | CGTN Africa [Internet]. [cited 2022 May 9]. Available from: https://africa.cgtn.com/2015/04/16/malawi-has-officially-banned-child-marriages/

64. Tackling child marriage in Malawi | IPPF [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 14]. Available from: https://www.ippf.org/resource/tackling-child-marriage-malawi

65. Child marriage: the case of Malawi - Right for Education [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 25]. Available from: https://rightforeducation.org/2021/12/06/child-marriage-case-of-malawi/

66. Child marriage - UNICEF DATA [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 26]. Available from: https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/

67. WHO and United Nations Definition of Adolescent - Public Health [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 17]. Available from: https://www.publichealth.com.ng/who-and-united-nations-definition-of-adolescent/

68. Calimoutou E, Liu Y, Mbu B. Compendium of International and National Legal Frameworks on Child Marriage. Compendium of International and National Legal Frameworks on Child Marriage [Internet]. 2016 Sep [cited 2022 Jul 17]; Available from: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26762

69. Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children - UNICEF DATA [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 15]. Available from: https://data.unicef.org/resources/hidden-in-plain-sight-a-statistical-analysis-of-violence-against-children/

70. Violence against children [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 15]. Available from: https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children

71. Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations in Malawi [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 22]. Available from: https://malawi.un.org/en/sdgs

72. Malawi - Age Dependency Ratio (% Of Working-age Population) - 2022 Data 2023 Forecast 1960-2020 Historical [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 6]. Available from: https://tradingeconomics.com/malawi/age-dependency-ratio-percent-of-working-age-population-wb-data.html

73. Gaining insight into the magnitude of and factors influencing child marriage and teenage pregnancy in Malawi - KIT Royal Tropical Institute [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 26]. Available from: https://www.kit.nl/publication/gaining-insight-into-the-magnitude-of-and-factors-influencing-child-marriage-and-teenage-pregnancy-in-malawi/

74. HIV and child marriage - Girls Not Brides [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 2]. Available from: https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-and-health/hiv-and-child-marriage/

75. Vlassoff M, Tsoka M. Benefits of Meeting the Contraceptive Needs of Malawian Women [Internet]. 2014 [cited 2021 Nov 11]. Available from: https://www.guttmacher.org/report/benefits-meeting-contraceptive-needs-malawian-women

76. Machira K, Palamuleni ME. Health Care Factors Influencing Teen Mothers' Use Of Contraceptives in Malawi. Ghana Medical Journal [Internet]. 2017 Jun 1 [cited 2022 Jul 29];51(2):88. Available from: /pmc/articles/PMC5611910/

77. Malawi population-based HIV impact assessment (MPHIA) 2015-16 : final report [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/60951

78. Bundy DAP, de Silva N, Horton S, Patton GC, Schultz L, Jamison DT, et al. Investment in child and adolescent health and development: key messages from Disease Control Priorities, 3rd Edition. The Lancet. 2018 Feb 17;391(10121):687–99.

79. Miguel E, Kremer M. Worms: Identifying impacts on education and health in the presence of treatment externalities. Econometrica. 2004;72(1):159–217.

80. Investments in health and education support developing countries on the path to self-reliance | Blog | Global Partnership for Education [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 26]. Available from: https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/investments-health-and-education-support-developing-countries-path-self-reliance

81. Malawi's Pathway to a Demographic Dividend | PRB [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: https://www.prb.org/resources/malawis-pathway-to-a-demographic-dividend/

82. Median Age 2022 [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 11]. Available from: https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/median-age

83. Population of Africa (2022) - Worldometer [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 14]. Available from: https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/

84. Child Rights | Malawi Human Rights Commission [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 15]. Available from: http://website.idiasmw.com/mhrc/thematic-areas/child-rights

85. Switzerland UNICEF G. Government of Malawi Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services Study on Violence Against Children in Malawi A Report prepared by: Government of Malawi. 2005;

86. Wei. LIST OF ACRONYMS AFRIDEP African Institute for Development Policy CBO Community Based Organization CCPC Community Child Protection Committees YACODO Youth Active in Community Development Organisation.

87. Child marriage: the case of Malawi - Right for Education [Internet]. [cited 2022 Apr 25]. Available from: https://rightforeducation.org/2021/12/06/child-marriage-case-of-malawi/

88. "I've Never Experienced Happiness": Child Marriage in Malawi | HRW [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 18]. Available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/03/06/ive-never-experienced-happiness/child-marriage-malawi

89. Child marriage: the case of Malawi - Right for Education [Internet]. [cited 2022 Mar 4]. Available from: https://rightforeducation.org/2021/12/06/child-marriage-case-of-malawi/

90. Yes I Do: Reduce Child Marriage, Teenage Pregnancies and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting - KIT Royal Tropical Institute [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 22]. Available from: https://www.kit.nl/project/yes-i-do/

91. Munthali AC, Kok M, Kakal T, Kusters L. Final evaluation report on the Champions of Change programme in Liwonde, Machinga district 2020.

92.   Report on the midline study in Liwonde, Malawi - KIT Royal Tropical Institute [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 22]. Available from: https://www.kit.nl/publication/report-on-the-midline-study-in-liwonde-malawi/

93.   Machinga (District, Malawi) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map and Location [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 23]. Available from: https://www.citypopulation.de/en/malawi/admin/southern/MW302__machinga/

94.   Malawi MDG Endline Survey 2014 [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 23]. Available from: http://www.nsomalawi.mw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=210&Itemid=98

95.   16 Key Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research Methods – ConnectUS [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 4]. Available from: https://connectusfund.org/16-key-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-qualitative-research-methods

96.   Psaki SR, Melnikas AJ, Haque E, Saul G, Misunas C, Patel SK, et al. What Are the Drivers of Child Marriage? A Conceptual Framework to Guide Policies and Programs. Journal of Adolescent Health. 2021 Dec 1;69(6):S13–22.

97.   Emirbayer M, Mische A. What Is Agency? American Journal of Sociology. 1998;103(4):962–1023.

98.   Petroni S, Steinhaus M, Fenn NS, Stoebenau K, Gregowski A. New Findings on Child Marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ann Glob Health [Internet]. 2017 Sep 1 [cited 2022 Aug 14];83(5–6):781–90. Available from: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29248095/

99.   Greene ME, Stiefvater E. Social and gender norms and child marriage A reflection on issues, evidence and areas of inquiry in the field. 2019 [cited 2022 Jul 15]; Available from: https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/2019/04/social-

100.   (17) Preventing Child Marriage Through Access to SRHR Services - YouTube [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvdkCXYqwow

101.   Malhotra A, Elnakib S. 20 Years of the Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Systematic Review. Journal of Adolescent Health. 2021;

102.   Kalamar AM, Lee-Rife S, Hindin MJ. Interventions to Prevent Child Marriage Among Young People in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review of the Published and Gray Literature. J Adolesc Health [Internet]. 2016 Sep 1 [cited 2022 Aug 14];59(3 Suppl):S16–21. Available from: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27562449/

103.   Girls' sexuality and child, early, and forced marriages and unions: A conceptual framework - Girls Not Brides [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 14]. Available from: https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/resource-centre/cefmu-sexuality-framework-/

104.   Chandra-Mouli V, Lane C. What does not work in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health: A review of evidence on interventions commonly accepted as best practices. 2016;

105.   Health research is essential for progress towards universal health coverage [Internet]. [cited 2022 Aug 7]. Available from: https://www.who.int/news/item/15-08-2013-health-research-is-essential-for-progress-towards-universal-health-coverage

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1
Research table

Objective	Issues
1-Explore views on the acceptability/non acceptability of child marriage among young people in Machinga, Malawi	**Positives views around getting married young** -Independence from parents -Peace of mind -Expression of adulthood -Children -Love **Negative views around child marriage** -Dropping out school -Poverty -Abuse from husband -Health related problems -End of childhood
2-Explore girls' agency and decision making, availability of opportunities, and views on sexuality and pregnancy as drivers of child marriage in Machinga, Malawi	-Limitation of girl's agency -Availability or non availability of opportunities -How agency is exercised -Decision making in regard to child marriage -Why do they marry? -Conditions to make choices -Reasons and ways on how girls refuse to marry -Parental agency -Community agency
	-Girls' sexuality and pregnancy out-of-wedlock -The bride prices -Family honour -Traditional leaders officiating wedding ceremonies -Community, -Gender inequality -Betrothing -Power imbalance -Gender relations -Messaging in ceremonies
3-Analyze interventions that have worked in the reduction of child marriage in TA Liwonde, Machinga district	-Community empowerment -Community engagement -Education -Economic empowerment -Legal support
5. Provide recommendations to policy makers, donors and activists t o contribute to the reduction of child marriage	

Methods and study participants: Yes, I Do! Baseline, Midline and Endline

Study	Method	Number	Participants
Baseline	Key informant interviews (KII)	8	5 NGOs 1 DHO 1 DSWOs 1 Police
	In depth Interviews (IDI)	20	2 Girls 15-19 2 Boys 15-19 2 Girls 20-24 2 Boys 20-24 2 Teachers 2 Religious leaders 2 Local leaders 1 Community Health worker (CHW), 2 parents, 1 CBO leader, 1 elderly woman, 1 female initiation counsellor. 11 IDIs with males, 9 with females
	Focus group discussion (FGD)	10	2 Girls 15-19 2 Boys 15-19 2 Girls 20-24 2 Boys 20-24 2 Parents/caregivers
Midline	Key informant interviews	8	2 Community leaders 4 NGO 2 Government officials
	IDIs	20	3 Male Champions of change 3 Female Champion of change 2 IDI parents 2 Parents/guardians
	FGDs	10	2Girls 15-19 2Boys 15-19 2Girls 20-24 2Boys 20-24 2Parents
Endline	KII	8	2Government officials 4 NGO 2CBOs
	IDI's	20	2 Boys 15-19 Married and Unmarried

			2 Girls 15-19 Married and Unmarried
			2 Boys 20-24 Married and unmarried
			2 Girls 20-24 Married and unmarried
			1 Youth female facilitator
			1 Youth male facilitator
			1 Female parent
			1 Male parent
			1 Female initiator
			1 Male initiator
			1 Health worker
			1 Health Surveillance Assistant
			2 Religious leaders (Pastor and Sheikh)
			1 Group Village head
			1 Headteacher
	FGD's	10	2 Girls 15-19 (Married and unmarried)
			2 Boys 15-19 (Married and unmarried)
			2 Girls 20-24 (Married and unmarried)
			2 Boys 20-24 (Married and unmarried)
			1 Male parent
			1 Female parent

Study Waiver

From: Darlen Martha Dzimwe   Amsterdam, 11/June/2022

To: Principal Investigator of Yes, I Do! project, Malawi.

Dear Ma'am/Sir,

This letter is to request a waiver of ethical clearance for a study on Child marriage in Malawi. The data used will be derived from the "Yes I Do!" project, dataset which aims at reducing child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and female genital mutilation in its operational countries in Africa and Asia. Malawi is a part of the 7 countries, the Yes I Do! project operates.

The study is done by Darlen Dzimwe, in the context of KIT thesis research. The purpose of the study is to explore young people's opinions towards Child marriage in TA Liwonde, Machinga District, Malawi. The research will solely use secondary data analysis as the study methodology.

The study results will be used to provide evidence-informed recommendations to stakeholders combating CM, for sustainable and systematic strategies to address culturally embedded social norms that bleed acceptance of child marriage as hindering factor to fighting CM burden in Malawi.

The research team consists of the main researcher (Darlen Dzimwe).

I would like to kindly request the principal investigator for a waiver of ethical clearance for this study for the following reasons:

- The "Yes I Do!" has a life span of 5 years, baseline to endline and is rich with information since the different studies have touched on young people, community and policy makers opinions on teenage pregnancy and child marriage in TA Liwonde, Machinga district, Malawi.

- To add to the information from a different perspective, by exploring the influence of social norms and attitude on three specific drivers of child marriage (lack of agency, lack of opportunities and fear of girl's sexuality and pregnancy), developed by Darlen Dzimwe, based on feedback received from academic and thesis advisors.

- All information will be derived, processed, stored and published anonymously. The information will be kept in a password-protected drive and only the PI and the supervisors will have access. The names of the respondent will be anonymized in the notes and in the analysis.

I hope to have informed you sufficiently on the objective and content of this study to decide on my request.

Yours sincerely,

Darlen Martha Dzimwe
MPH-ICD student
KIT Royal Tropical Institute

DECLARATION: TO BE SIGNED BY PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Agreement

The purpose of the study was explained to me, and I agree that **Darlen Dzimwe** to use the Yes, I Do! data.

15/07/2022
_____
Signed   Date

If you have any questions or want to file a complaint about the research, you may contact:

Contact information organization	Contact for Ethics Committee
Name: Darlen Dzimwe (Main researcher)	Name: Sandra Alba
Position: Student	Position: Co-chair of the KIT REC
Email: darlendzimwe@gmail.com	Email: s.alba@kit.nl;

*Questions raised by the participants

Questions	Response