The Drivers of Child marriage and how they can be mitigated in Masindi District

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Abstract

Uganda has made strides toward ending child marriage; however, the numbers remain high. According to the UNFPA 2020 State of the World Population Report, 43% of girls in Uganda are married before the age of 18, and 25% of girls aged 15-19 either have a child or are pregnant. Shines Children’s Foundation (SCF) is a Non-Governmental Organisation that addresses the challenges that hinder Ugandan children from reaching their full potential. In 2021, SCF conducted a study to explore the drivers of child marriage and how they can be mitigated in Masindi District. This study included in-depth interviews with focus groups made up of young married girls, local leaders, district leaders, cultural leaders, and religious leaders. The findings indicate that young girls were often lured into marriage without their consent under the guise of cultural normality. Young girls are seen as a source of income since they can be married off early in exchange for a bride price. Child marriages result in lower enrolment and retention rates of girls in school and high levels of poverty. Limited access to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programs, poor parenting, and poor implementation of child policies are all factors that lead to a higher prevalence of child marriages. Increasing girls’ access to education, dissemination of SRHR, continuing dialogue with cultural and religious leaders about the effects of child marriage, supporting the livelihood of young mothers, and increasing social protection are will significantly lower the rate of child marriage in Masindi District.

Keywords: Child Marriage, Uganda, poverty, culture, policies