



Adolescent girls in the balance: Changes and continuity in social norms and practices around marriage and education in Uganda

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Key messages

- Despite progress in poverty reduction, significant numbers of adolescent girls in Uganda are still poor, propelled into child marriage or early pregnancy and deprived of full educational attainment.
- Girls' education now has greater social value and the universal primary education policies has greatly expanded access; however, many girls drop out due to poverty or early pregnancy, while secondary education remains a distant dream for most.
- Marriage forms and practices are changing, with more fluid and individual arrangements emerging; however, these leave girls vulnerable and with limited social support.
- Lack of access to reproductive health information and services leaves adolescent girls vulnerable to early or unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses, while sexual and gender-based violence remains widespread.
- Some social norms and practices are shifting, but others persist as part of deep-rooted value systems that continue to subordinate girls and women: these need to be addressed through integrated approaches that engage traditional cultural and religious leaders and men as well as women and girls.

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Table of contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Abbreviations	iv
Glossary of local terms and common sayings	vii
Executive summary	viii
Study overview	viii
Trends in marriage and adolescent pregnancy	ix
Trends in education	x
Key drivers of change and persistence	x
Mediating sites and institutions	xi
Effects on adolescent girls' capabilities	xii
Key recommendations	xiii
Policy-influencing strategies and potential ways forward	xv
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Adolescent girls: an urgent priority in Uganda	1
1.2 Multi-country study context	2
1.3 Findings from Year 1 research in Uganda	2
1.4 Focus of the Year 2 research in Uganda	3
1.5 Organisation of the report	4
2 Conceptual framework and understandings of social norm change	6
3 Research methodology	11
3.1 Study design, methodology and processes	11
3.2 Study sites and site selection	12
3.3 Selection of study participants	13
3.4 Data collection methods and tools	13
3.5 Data management and analysis	15
3.6 Ethical considerations	15
4 National and subnational context	16
4.1 National and regional setting	16
4.2 Mayuge district setting	27
4.3 Sub-county study site profiles	30
5 Changing experiences of marriage and education for adolescent girls	35
5.1 Changing experiences of marriage	35
5.2 Changing experiences of education	68
6 Drivers of change and continuity over time	81
6.1 Overview	81
6.2 Key drivers of change and forces of persistence	81
6.3 Mediating sites and institutions	92

7 Effects on girls' capabilities and gender justice	103
7.1 Developing capabilities through education	103
7.2 Exercising voice and agency in a supportive household	104
7.3 Maintaining physical integrity and sexual and reproductive health	105
7.4 Preparing for productive employment and livelihoods	106
7.5 Ensuring psychosocial and emotional well-being	107
8 Conclusions, policy priorities and recommendations	109
8.1 Conclusions	109
8.2 Policy priorities and recommendations	112
References	120
Annexes	126
Annex 1: Statistical tables and figures	126
Annex 2: Research instruments	129
Annex 3: Key actors and agencies, national and district levels	161
Figures	
Figure 1: Conceptualising drivers of change and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescent girls	7
Figure 2: Map of study sites in Mayuge district, Uganda	12
Figure 3: Trends in early marriage and median age at first marriage, 1995/96-2010/11	19
Figure 4: Community timeline	82
Tables	
Table 1: Conditions in which gender norms are most likely to change	10
Table 2: Overview of research tools and study participants	14
Table 3: Trends in monogamy and polygyny, currently married women aged 15–49, 2006–2011	17
Table 4: Household division of labour in Mayuge district	29
Table 5: Supply and demand constraints in education in Kityerera	31
Table 6: Intergenerational perspectives on trends in age at marriage	36
Table 7: Intergenerational perspectives on the rise of informal cohabitation	41
Table 8: Intergenerational perspectives on changes in ability to choose partner	49
Table 9: Which is worse - premarital pregnancy or early marriage?	56
Table 10: Gender roles and responsibilities in the household	57
Table 11: Ideals of femininity and masculinity	60
Table 12: Marital happiness rating of adolescent girls and their husbands	63
Table 13: Community perspectives on changes in marital stability	64
Table 14: Intergenerational perspectives on changing attitudes and practices for girls' education	70
Boxes	
Box 1: Is the bride wealth system contributing to early marriage in Uganda?	18
Box 2: Marriage legislation in Uganda	23
Box 3: Busoga and traditional cultural institutions in Uganda	28
Box 4: Perspectives on changes in customary marriage practices	40
Box 5: Changing perspectives on bride wealth	43
Box 6: Community views on polygamy and its changing forms	44
Box 7: The <i>senga</i> as 'gate-keeper' of traditional social norms about women and marriage	47
Box 8: One girl's harsh initiation into unwed motherhood	55
Box 9: Perceptions that men are abandoning expected household roles and responsibilities	58
Box 10: Marriage is central to a woman's social identify	62
Box 11: Key informant explanations for domestic violence in the two study communities	66
Box 12: How marriage has changed the lives of married girls	67
Box 13: Gender threats in education	74
Box 14: Intergenerational views on links between education and marriage	76

Box 15: Intergenerational views on education and marriage for boys	79
Box 16: Socioeconomic changes, poverty and emerging issues for young people (Kityerera)	83
Box 17: The impact of socioeconomic and livelihood changes on young people (Baitambogwe)	84
Box 18: Men are beginning to feel like 'empty trousers'	87
Box 19: 'Museveni's children' – trying to make sense of child rights	88
Box 20: Coming to terms with the minimum age of marriage and law on defilement	89
Box 21: Local perspectives on the proposed Marriage and Divorce Bill	90
Box 22: Case study – girl graduate supported by parents	93
Box 22: Case study – a story of misfortunes	94
Box 23: Case study – positive support at home and school	95
Box 24: Failure to address problems of 'defilement' of girls by teachers in school	96
Box 25: Case study – a girl successfully returning to school after childbirth	96
Box 26: Ambiguities surrounding provision of adolescent-friendly health information and services	98

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
ABEK	Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja
ACFODE	Action for Development
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANPPCAN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
BEUPA	Basic Education for Urban Poverty Areas
BROSIDI	Busoga Rural Open Source for Development Initiative
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CDO	Community Development Officer
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHANCE	Child-Centred Alternative, Non-Formal Community-based Education
CM	Community Mapping
COPE	Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education
CORP	Community Resource Person
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DELTA	Development Alternatives
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FAL	Functional Adult Literacy
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHRI	Foundation for Human Rights Initiative

FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
FOWODE	Forum for Women in Democracy
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEM	Girls' Education Movement
GREAT	Gender Roles Equity and Transformation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IT	Intergenerational Trio
KII	Key Informant Interview
LC	Local Council
MNA	Marital Network
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MOGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
MP	Member of Parliament
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NCC	National Council of Children
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PIASCY	President's Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission
RDC	Resident District Commissioner

RHU	Reproductive Health Uganda
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
SCORE	Sustainable Comprehensive Responses for Vulnerable Children and Their Families
SESPEL	Southeastern Private Sector Promotion of Entrepreneurship
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UDHS	Uganda Demographic and Health Survey
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPPET	Universal Post-Primary Education and Training
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USE	Universal Secondary Education
UWONET	Uganda Women's Network
VHT	Village Health Team
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary of local terms and common sayings

- **Abann ba Museveni** ‘*Children of Museveni*’: Children of the current generation who have grown up within the context of promotion of child rights and education
- **Kawundo kakubye edirisa** (Luganda/Lusoga) ‘*Marriage through the window*’ or, commonly ‘*through the back door*’: Informal ‘marriage’ or cohabitation that takes place without formal rituals, sanctions or practices
- **Kwandula** (Lusoga) Traditional marriage introduction: When the prospective groom is formally introduced to the girl’s family and the payment of bride wealth is effected
- **Kyabaazinga** (Lusoga) Traditional leader of the Basoga: Local term for and explanation of cultural leader, Busoga
- **Mukulu webika** (Lusoga) Cultural leader and head of clans among the Basoga
- **Okufukamila** (Lusoga) Kneeling: The manner in which a girl/woman is supposed to show respect to men and elders – kneeling on greeting; traditionally one of the key qualities of ‘good behaviour’ in women and girls
- **Obufumbo bwenakuzino buli nga enoga yalumonde elamira was mukisa** (Lusoga) ‘*Marriage of today is like a bowl of potatoes with soup, it is the lucky one who can eat it intact*’: Saying that denotes the instability of marriages
- **Okuwerera enku** (Lusoga) ‘*Going to visit the bush*’: Practice by means of which girls are expected to pull the labia to enhance the sexual pleasure of the future husband
- **Omusadda kyakoba kye koby** (Lusoga) ‘*What the man says, the woman says also*’: A woman has to agree with and obey whatever a man says
- **Omusadha atekwa kusajjalata** (Lusoga) ‘*A man has the liberty to marry many wives*’
- **Omusadha tabalirwa nzalo** (Lusoga) ‘*A man is expected to have children from different mothers regardless of the official nature of the marriage*’: Highlights the value of children and fertility in Basoga culture
- **Omuwala kasukali** (Lusoga): ‘*The girl brings sugar to the parents*’: Shows the expectations that girls, even after marriage, will bring gifts and sweet things to their natal families
- **Omwana muwala akira kaduka** (Lusoga) ‘*A girl is better than a little shop*’: Highlights the cultural expectations of both married and unmarried girls that they will bring in wealth and support the family
- **Senga** (Luganda /Lusoga) The paternal aunt: Traditionally played an important role in preparing young girls for marriage

Executive summary

Study overview

Uganda has made significant progress in terms of overall poverty reduction, expansion of educational opportunities for young people and improving gender equality. Nevertheless, analysis of national and regional survey data reveals alarming proportions of adolescents still living in poverty, deprived of full educational attainment and – for girls – impelled into child marriage or early pregnancy, with sexual and reproductive health indicators revealing high levels of vulnerability. At national level, over a third of the girls who drop out of school do so because of marriage, and a quarter because of pregnancy. Economic discrimination against girls and women persists, and the limited data available indicate continued high levels of gender-based violence (GBV), with over a quarter of young women reported to have experienced physical and sexual violence. Meanwhile, current national debates about law reform to regulate marriage and divorce reveal deep resistance to any change to today's discriminatory practices at the household and family level. Two of the three top policy recommendations of a recent analysis of adolescent girls' vulnerability in Uganda included increasing educational attainment and keeping girls in school; and targeting social values and cultural norms that promote child marriage and early child-bearing.

Poised at the intersection between childhood and the world of adults, adolescent girls face unique challenges to the full development and exercise of their capabilities. And yet they may also hold the key to effecting positive development outcomes that could reverberate across future generations. Investments in the empowerment of adolescent girls are increasingly recognised to be critical in breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. For such investments to have maximum impact, more evidence is needed to make adolescent girls more visible in policy and planning processes and to identify more precisely the multiple social and cultural forces that shape their experiences and conditions of life.

A multi-year, multi-country qualitative study is exploring the complex ways in which gender-discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices shape and/or constrain adolescent girls' capabilities. It is also investigating how other overlapping and intersecting experiences of poverty, deprivation and exclusion serve to intensify and perpetuate vulnerabilities.¹ The study is being conducted by the Overseas Development Institute in partnership with national research teams and has been commissioned by the UK Department for International Development as part of a flagship programme on Transforming the Lives of Girls and Young Women.

In Uganda, the study has focused on rural communities, in the East Central district of Mayuge, selected as an area where poverty indicators are high, at 28% (compared with the national rural poverty rate of 25%) and where overall social indicators are poor. The study incorporated a literature review and fieldwork using a wide variety of qualitative methodologies involving community members (women, men, girls, boys) in individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) as well as key informants at national and district levels, including policy leaders, development partners and experts, district planners and authorities, teachers, health service workers, non-governmental organisation (NGO)/and civil society organisation (CSO) representatives and cultural and religious leaders.

Year 1 research (2012) provided an overview of the complex interplay of different capability domains that shape adolescent girls' well-being, analysing social norms and the way they affect girls' capabilities alongside a range of other individual-, meso- and macro-level drivers. The study showed that, despite an enabling legal and policy framework capable of addressing adolescent girls' vulnerabilities as they prepare for crucial transitions to adult roles, such girls still face a myriad of challenges in education; household and family relations; economic

¹ Countries involved in the study are Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam.

empowerment/access to resources; physical safety and health; psychosocial well-being; and political/civic participation. Discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices were seen to be compounded by conditions of poverty and lack of quality service provision to constrain overall opportunities and development.

Building on the first year's results, the Year 2 research (2013) has aimed to provide more in-depth understandings of how and why discriminatory gendered social norms are or not changing so as to better inform related policies and programmes. Drawing on a newly developed broad-based conceptual framework on social norm change, the accent is on norms and practices around early marriage, pregnancy and girls' education, selected as being pivotal in shaping girls' current and life-course opportunities and capabilities.

The current report presents detailed findings from the second year of research. It reveals that norms and practices around marriage and education among adolescent girls in the two study communities are both changing in response to broader socioeconomic and cultural transformations occurring within an overall setting of generalised poverty and 'sticky' – that is, resistant to change. Policy priorities and recommendations arising from the findings suggest coordinated action on a variety of fronts is needed by multiple actors in order to address both the underlying discriminatory social norms and their manifestation in limiting capabilities of adolescent girls.

Trends in marriage and adolescent pregnancy

The study revealed both change and continuity in marriage norms and practices as well as in the expectation of marital roles for women in the rural study communities. Despite national laws setting the age of marriage at 18, with infringement punishable under the category of 'defilement', early marriage persists for adolescent girls, with some reported to be marrying as young as 13. While this trend continues to be fuelled – in part – by parental pressure for daughters to marry early in order to bring in bride wealth, a major contributing factor stems from a rise in the establishment of 'informal' marriages or cohabitation arrangements ('through the window'), which young people contract themselves – often to escape unfavourable home environments. On the one hand, this implies more individual choice of partner than in the past, when arranged marriages were the norm; on the other hand, cohabitation offers limited stability or protection for adolescent girls. While parents may be against such arrangements, some tacitly consent and claim a new form of bride wealth in the form of 'compensation' from the young man or his parents.

Transactional sex encounters – outside of any kind of marriage arrangement – are also reported to be on the rise, with some girls, facing poverty at home and limited economic opportunities for themselves, seen to be entering into relationships *for the price of a chapatti*.

The role of the *senga* – or paternal aunt – in preparing girls for marriage is diminishing, and new sources of information and support are developing slowly. Adolescent girls thus currently have extremely limited access to appropriate reproductive health information and services – including family planning services. This contributes to early pregnancies and childbirth both inside and outside of marriage, with the latter increasingly common – becoming a 'descriptive' norm in the study communities. However, pregnancy and childbirth outside marriage, when the adolescent girl is living with her parents, is still viewed negatively and surrounded by social stigma and 'injunctive' social norms, adding social burdens to the economic burden of single motherhood.

Polygamy remains a strong cultural norm in some communities, backed up by both religious and ethnic precepts for men. A commonly expected practice of 'informal polygamy', in which men have relationships with multiple women, is also apparently on the rise, under the term 'modern polygamy'.

Traditional gender norms and expectations within marriage remain strong, with the husband considered the head of household and main decision-maker and the wife valued primarily for her primarily reproductive role and tasks. However, both women and men find it increasingly difficult to adhere to such ideals as marriages grow more fragile, women take on new roles and men are seen to 'abandon' household responsibilities. Male power within marriage has in a sense 'fractured', creating a sense of hopelessness or alienation among men, but also contributing to domestic violence, which is common in the study communities. Sources of support for girls

within marriage remain largely family-based. While local government and religious leaders offer some services and/or counselling in cases of marital conflict, such services are often out of reach of adolescent girls.

Trends in education

A clear trend emerging from our research is the greater opportunity for schooling that girls have today, in comparison with their mothers' and grandmothers' generations, and the greater social value placed on education for girls. This is largely attributed to national policies of expanding education, and in particular Universal Primary Education (UPE). This, in turn, has fuelled girls' aspirations for education, which is seen as important both in and of itself and as a means to pave the way for a better life for themselves and their families.

At the same time, girls face many gendered risks along the way, including risks of dropout owing to pregnancy or early marriage, poor quality of schooling and sexual harassment in schools themselves, or continuing parental preference to invest in the education of sons, particularly at higher levels. In spite of policies of Universal Secondary Education (USE), the continuing lack of full educational opportunities for secondary education in the study communities visited, where long distances to schools increased opportunity costs and risks for girls along the way, was also among the lived realities that girls experience.

Most study participants agreed education added to the value of a girl, as reflected in higher bride wealth payments, and also made her a better wife and mother because of the higher capabilities it conferred on her. At the same time, some cautioned that much also depended on the character of the girl, noting that education would not automatically make a woman more caring of children or loving of in-laws; education could, in fact, make girls 'lazy' at home or impel them into work outside the home, causing them to neglect their family duties. Some made distinctions between the beneficial effects of a woman's education on her children and more mitigated effects on relations with in-laws. Education of boys, meanwhile, was seen as generally positive insofar as it increased their income-earning capacity to make them better providers for household needs.

Key drivers of change and persistence

Our study suggests key 'drivers' have differential effects on both change processes and stasis around particular sets of norms. Most study participants identified multiple drivers of change and continuity in social norms and practices around education and marriage for adolescent girls, and set these within the broader context of overall socioeconomic, political and cultural transformation accompanied by persistent poverty.

- **Socioeconomic transformation:** The rural study sites are characterised by broad-based processes of socioeconomic transformation from rural subsistence to cash-based economies, with livelihoods, however, remaining extremely insecure and household poverty levels high. These conditions are seen to affect marriage forms and processes in a number of ways, contributing, among other things, to 1) a rise in informal marriages among young people as girls seek young men engaged in the cash economy who can provide for their needs better than their own parents; 2) transactional sex encounters for the same reasons, which in turn fuel premarital pregnancies; and 3) a persistent tendency, among some parents at least, to consider their daughters sources of bride wealth – or at least compensation in the case of informal marriage. Such socioeconomic transformation is also contributing to the heightened value placed on education, which is seen as one of the few paths available to secure livelihoods and jobs; in the absence of adequate opportunities for secondary education or technical training, however, neither girls nor boys are always able to realise the full transformative potential of education in such a changing socioeconomic context.
- **Legal and policy environment:** Laws and policies produce forces for positive change intermingled with reactions against this, leading to a considerably uncertain terrain. National education policies promoting UPE are particularly positive forces for change, opening up opportunities for both girls and boys and contributing to more positive values on girls' education. But inadequate protection for

girls in school and lack of policy attention to pregnant girls and young mothers continue to deprive many girls of their right to education. At the same time, continued limitations in implementation of USE policies coupled with neglect of vocational training has left a void at these levels of education that could be most transformative for girls.

- The promotion of women and children's rights can also be seen to be an overall 'positive' step forward in terms of greater respect for the rights of both boys and girls and overall gender justice; however, many study participants pointed instead to the 'negative' effects in terms of its contribution to the breakdown in family structures and authority, and a clear backlash among parents in general and fathers in particular was apparent. The constitutional guarantee of age 18 as the legal age of marriage, and efforts to enforce the law on 'defilement' prohibiting relations between under-age children, can be seen as strong reinforcement of the rights of adolescent girls to remain unmarried; however, some evidence suggests these measures have merely driven early marriage underground, contributing to the rise of early informal 'cohabitation' arrangements, where the rights of married girls and their children find no legal or material protection.
- **Sociocultural transformation:** A complex nexus of sociocultural transformation brought about by what many study participants labelled the forces of 'Westernisation' or 'modernisation' are seen to be driving out traditional socio-cultural norms and values. There is a general sense of cultural unravelling – '*a sense of chaos*' – expressed by many study participants, who see old values breaking down and the younger generations adopting behaviours they consider 'immoral', influenced by what some see as the most negative aspects of Western culture. Study participants pointed to the rise of trading centres, video halls and discos – even smartphones conveying 'inappropriate' images – as responsible for a general breakdown in morals and a laxity in relations between young men and women.

Mediating sites and institutions

The study identified a number of mediating sites and institutions through which gendered social norms were both reinforced or subject to questioning and change. These include the family and household; schools; health centres; local government structures and legal services; ethnic and religious institutions and ideologies; and NGO/CSO projects and activities.

As with the overall drivers of change, specific sites seem to be able to serve as forces of both persistence and change. This is the case, for example, for families, which generally serve as sites of socialisation into traditional gender norms, but which can sometimes offer support structures as springboards for positive change. So, too, in the case of schools, which offer avenues and opportunities for girls' empowerment but can also serve as sites for gender discrimination and risk. Health centres have the potential to promote adolescent-friendly health information and services; however, ambiguities in adolescent health policy combined with limited resources severely restrict such potential.

Local government structures and the legal system are key purveyors and enforcers of government laws and policies on universal education, women and children's rights and protection from early marriage and are indeed making significant inroads on these issues. Nevertheless, the sheer weight of the caseload in the face of severe capacity gaps; community backlash against some of these policies; and widespread collusion – in the case of arrests for early marriage – between police and parents for 'compensation' money paid by the parents of the boy – is eroding confidence and trust in such institutions.

Cultural leaders and religious authorities remain the guardians of both ethnic and religious values in the ideational sphere, which they urge community members to apply in practice. Many, however, seem to be struggling in the face of the larger forces of socioeconomic and cultural change described above.

A number of non-governmental and community-based organisations are active in the district. While their overall reach is limited and both documentation and evaluation materials on their activities are rare, discussions with key informants indicated that their interventions can have a potentially transformative impact on the women and

girls who are involved in their projects. They have a presence in the field and are often able to reach communities that stretched government services cannot cover, and/or to strengthen services offered.

Effects on adolescent girls' capabilities

While national educational policies and promotion of gender equality have expanded educational opportunities for girls, those who become mothers or are married at an early age cannot take full advantage of such opportunities and, so, find their educational trajectories sadly truncated. Early marriage, cohabitation and pregnancy are continuing to rob girls of the full capabilities they could develop through education, if they were supported to remain and finish both primary and secondary schooling.

Girls who marry young, or who move into unstable cohabitation relationships, may find themselves in a position of relative powerlessness within the newly formed couple, as they have not yet completed the education or developed the confidence they need to prepare them to assert themselves in household decision-making or to contribute to the economic well-being of the family. This hereafter reinforces traditional social norms on the 'proper' behaviour of a wife, who is expected to be subordinate to the husband, as she is not in a position to contest such norms. Those who, in addition, give birth early, are soon preoccupied with their care-giving functions and may no longer have the time or opportunity to develop new skills, cultivate relationships with peers or – indeed – continue with schooling. Given the instability of many of the cohabitation arrangements arising, girls may find themselves abandoned by partners, with no legal recourse to demand economic support.

Lacking access to appropriate sexual and reproductive health information or services, adolescent girls are unable to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies or against sexually transmitted infections – including HIV – as well as GBV and sexual abuse. The physical consequences of early pregnancy are clear; because they are not yet physically mature, girls risk dying in delivery, or need to deliver through Caesarean section, after which their partner may reject them as 'sexually weak'. With abortions illegal, those who seek recourse to 'silent' abortions face significant health risks, as well as legal risks and social censure. Once they are pregnant, girls fail to get the proper care.

The combination of early marriage or pregnancy leading to school dropout has a significant impact on an adolescent girl's potential to develop the skills needed to engage in productive activities beyond those involved in farming or petty trade. Additionally, taking on the early burden of child care and other considerable reproductive activities in the household contributes to limiting the time available for engagement in productive activities outside of the home. If married – particularly in informal cohabitation arrangements – the husband himself is often himself struggling to support the family. If unmarried and living at home with her family, the economic burden of care falls on her parents. In both cases, the girl and her child or children can be caught up in a spiral of poverty.

Psychosocial and emotional well-being depends on a number of factors, and girls' experiences of marriage within the changing context described above were both positive and negative. Some relish the independence from their own families that early marriage or cohabitation brings; find satisfaction through recognition as 'social adults'; appreciate the economic support husbands provide; and are happy about the protection from abusive natal families or promiscuous behaviour afforded by married life. Others, however, recognise that early marriage and motherhood stunt their opportunities for further skills development leading to jobs, and also soon realise marriage cannot solve all of their problems – whether economic or psychosocial.

Pressure to conform to ideals of wifely behaviour is strong; dismay and disappointment when those ideals cannot be fulfilled all the stronger. A number – particularly in the informal marriage arrangements they have contracted themselves – face economic difficulties in the new household; these informal unions are in turn said to be highly unstable, with little formal protection for girls, who may be abandoned with their children after break-up of the couple. Some girls retain strong relations with their natal families, but social norms tend to restrict the number or length of visits and, outside of the family network, sources of support that girls can turn to in the case of difficulties in their marriages are limited.

Key recommendations

Study participants at all levels identified a number of key priorities and recommendations for moving forward in efforts to address gender-discriminatory norms related to early marriage and practices that negatively affect adolescent girls' capabilities, as well as to address specific obstacles to girls' education. These include priorities within the following clusters of interventions:

- ***Promoting communication, raising awareness and mobilising communities:*** Community dialogue processes are considered by many to be a productive approach to 'research/action', useful both in uncovering underlying potentially discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes and raising awareness of the need to change these. In establishing such processes, study participants confirmed that cultural and faith-based leaders were critical actors with whom engagement needs to be deepened so that all are brought on board. Continuous outreach and sensitisation of parents is also critically needed to support them in their parenting roles and ability to communicate with their children while protecting them and promoting their best interests. Affirmative action for girls and women is still needed and recommended as a way forward; however, further sensitisation and engagement with boys and men – particularly fathers – is important as a means of both combating discriminatory attitudes and practices and offsetting backlash or feelings of marginalisation that are seen to be arising from the focus on girls and women. Men overall need to be enlisted as allies in the promotion of gender justice.
- ***Enhancing girls' self-esteem and providing positive role models:*** Our research has highlighted the important positive influence that can be exerted by 'success stories' of girls who 'have made it' – sisters or friends who have graduated from school or women from the community who have taken on a profession or risen to positions of political leadership, successfully balancing such roles with family commitments. Such examples should be celebrated, shared and made more visible to girls. Role models from outside the community are equally important to cultivate so girls can gain an expanded vision of what is possible for them to attain.
- ***Strengthening legal provisions, enforcement and awareness:*** While a plethora of relevant laws and policies exist in Uganda, problems of implementation remain critical. Stakeholders identify in particular the need to enhance the effectiveness of legal redress mechanisms and child protection systems (including the police, probations officers and local councils) in addressing child marriage and defilement, and to enact district-level ordinances to back up and pave the way for implementation of national laws. Further advocacy is still needed around key themes, issues and clauses in proposed laws, such as the Marriage and Divorce Bill. Such advocacy will undoubtedly need to proceed through extensive processes of community dialogue and sensitisation to counter the currently strong sociocultural resistance that is abundantly apparent in current debates. A number of stakeholders also highlighted the importance of working with families and communities to strengthen both awareness and understanding of laws around defilement, early marriage and obligatory primary education.
- ***Improving educational provision and strengthening demand:*** Study participants agreed on the need for measures to address both demand- and supply-side issues that are posing obstacles to adolescent girls' educational attainment and completion, as well as the quality of education they receive. The education ministry recognises 'deep-rooted sociocultural norms' around early marriage, the gender division of labour in the household and – despite progress – lingering parental preference for education of sons as key barriers, and has designed a series of community dialogues to sensitise stakeholders on these issues. These initiatives should be both continued and expanded and could be further supported through media campaigns on the importance of education. Financial support for poor students was also identified as a potential measure to address barriers arising from household poverty and the opportunity costs of sending girls to school and keeping them there, while strengthened sanctions for parents who do not ensure their children go to school was seen to be equally important.

Study participants highlighted the need for improvements in the educational environment in schools, ranging from strengthened codes of conduct for teachers as a means of combating sexual harassment within schools to the reintroduction of school lunch programmes and stronger school health initiatives as a means of improving the ‘pull factor’ of schools. Promoting the important roles and status of senior female teachers was seen to be instrumental in creating a favourable environment for girls at school. Meanwhile, improved facilities and infrastructure at all levels, accompanied by increased investment in particular in secondary schools, were identified as critical priorities to expand equitable access to quality education at all levels. Specific back-to-school programmes for pregnant girls/young mothers were highlighted as a key priority, accompanied by community sensitisation processes around this issue.

- ***Clarifying policies and strengthening services for adolescent sexual and reproductive health:*** While an adolescent health policy exists in Uganda, with guidelines on implementation, there is still considerable uncertainty about whether reproductive health information and services can actually be provided to adolescents under the age of 18, particularly in view of the law on defilement, which defines all sexual acts involving under-18s (consensual or not) as a crime. A recent conference on adolescent sexual and reproductive health highlighted such ambiguity, which is negatively impacting on the health of adolescent and – in particular – on their reproductive health rights and need for protection. Lack of clarity at policy level is coupled with strong social and religious norms and taboos about imparting sexual information and services to girls and – in particular – providing access to methods of contraception. With abortion also illegal, the result is continuing high levels of teenage pregnancy; recourse to unsafe abortion; and severe repercussions for the health of adolescent girls. There is an urgent priority, therefore, to clarify the legal and policy framework; massively upscale sexual and reproductive health information; and ensure services are available and provided by adolescent-friendly health workers.
- ***Promoting inter-sectoral coordination and integrated approaches at all levels:*** It is clear that discriminatory gender norms and the specific vulnerabilities they produce for adolescent girls span sectors; there is a need, therefore, for integrated approaches and provision of services that will engage multiple actors and address multiple needs. This is to ensure the benefits of service provision in one area are not blocked and/or contradicted by the lack of service provision in another, and that positive synergies are created. Strengthened reproductive health information services in schools, for example, require stronger coordination between the health and education sectors. Problems of school dropouts cannot be tackled by the education sector alone, but need support from community development officers and local authorities. Community mobilisation and outreach around HIV and AIDS can be usefully harnessed for mobilisation around other issues of sexual and reproductive health, including the gender-discriminatory practices that render women and girls more vulnerable.

Addressing sexual and gender-based- violence – including early marriage – also requires collaboration between gender activists, the police and justice systems and others. Girls’ access to justice is currently severely limited and counselling services – for example to help with the repercussions of ‘defilement’ or with problems within marriage – are rare. Community members in both study sites were particularly interested in more counselling services for young people. Religious leaders, community workers, CSOs and the justice system need to work together on such issues and to ensure appropriate services are in place. Overall, greater resources for capacity-building and mobilisation of partnerships at district level will be needed to expand and improve needed service delivery of all kinds.

- ***Expanding economic opportunities and empowerment for girls in the context of overall poverty reduction efforts:*** Socioeconomic conditions setting the context for high levels of household poverty have been identified as a key force for both persistence and change in social norms, practices and structures (e.g. within the household), with important consequences for girls.

Household poverty is driving both child labour (sugarcane cutting for boys; petty trade for girls) and early marriage, which together contribute to school dropouts. The specific economic vulnerabilities of women and girls were also highlighted, with teenage mothers struggling on their own and facing particularly severe economic constraints. Priorities are therefore twofold: overall socioeconomic development as a driver of positive change in the district, and specific measures for the economic empowerment of girls and women, along with financial support for young couples to start up small businesses and expanded access to savings and loans schemes.

Both district and sub-county informants also highlighted the importance of greater investment in technical training and employment promotion for young people, particularly girls. High rates of unemployment in the district are accompanied by extremely limited technical training opportunities (just one technical training institute in the district), which in turn are underpinned by attitudes that considered technical education less prestigious than academic courses. Identified priorities include bringing skills training back into schools; establishing skills training programmes for school dropouts; and developing appropriate vocational training opportunities for adolescent mothers, with additional measures needed to provide child care facilities so the mothers can attend. Efforts are also needed to overcome gender stereotypes around the types of vocational training considered suitable for girls and women, which in turn limit their employment opportunities.

- ***Deepening the knowledge and information base for evidence-based policy development:*** Many study respondents highlighted the need for further research and studies to better understand the workings and configurations of gender-discriminatory social norms operating at different levels in different contexts. Region-specific vulnerabilities also need to be better understood as a basis for context-specific design of interventions. In all such efforts it will be important to listen to adolescent girls themselves to understand their own perspectives and learn more about their lived experiences. Early marriage was identified as a particularly urgent topic for research, along with teenage pregnancy – both of which need greater understanding and visibility. Statistics on the issue point to a problem of alarming proportions, but factors perpetuating the problem need to be further understood. A nation-wide study has been suggested as a priority, with the aim of generating recommendations for action. Such research needs to be accompanied by urgent, scaled-up measures to address the issue, including engaging families who are faced with the problem; getting girls back to school; addressing issues of poverty and economic livelihoods; and enhancing communication between parents and children – all of which are priorities for action moving forward recommended by other study participants above.

Policy-influencing strategies and potential ways forward

Dissemination of study findings should target key decision-makers and policy organs in order to furnish them with evidence needed to advocate for policy and programme review and development. These would include policy-makers and planners at the level of permanent secretaries in government institutions – the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Health – as well as the National Council of Children, appropriate parliamentary committees, sector working groups and monitoring and evaluation groups. It was suggested that the Office of the Prime Minister also be involved.

Key actors at all levels need to be engaged, and coordination and positive synergies in different programme areas around adolescent girls reinforced through the development of an advocacy campaign by a partnership forum under the leadership of a key ministerial actor. Prioritisation and sequencing of actions need to be determined both within individual sectors (health, education, community development, legal affairs) and in a crosscutting manner, so a holistic approach to the elimination of gender disparities and the empowerment of women and girls can be pursued. As noted, entry points include building on initiatives that already exist, mobilising current partnership networks and building on results of research that point to particularly critical issues.

1 Introduction

1.1 Adolescent girls: an urgent priority in Uganda

Uganda has made significant progress on overall poverty reduction, expansion of educational opportunities for young people and gender equality. The country has a framework of national laws and policies to address the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls as they make the crucial transition to adult life. The Constitution (1995) prohibits all forms of discrimination and provides for the protection and promotion of women's rights. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2010-2015 promotes affirmative action in all spheres and recognises gender inequality and inequity, as well as negative attitudes, mindsets, cultural practices and perceptions, as some of the most binding constraints on Uganda's national development.

A number of key sectoral plans, policies, legal provisions and programme initiatives promote gender equality and the capabilities of girls and young women. A whole raft of interventions are underway to improve women's access to, and control over, productive resources; implement affirmative action; create training programmes; protect against exploitation; expand access to education and training; protect physical and bodily integrity through the promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights; and promote women's participation in politics and civic affairs. Progress in education has been particularly strong, promoted through government policies of Universal Primary Education (UPE) (1997) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) (2007) that highlight national commitment to the empowerment of girls.

Nevertheless, analysis of national and regional survey data reveals high proportions of adolescents still living in poverty, deprived of full educational attainment and – for girls – impelled into child marriage or early pregnancy, with sexual and reproductive health indicators revealing high levels of vulnerability. While more girls are going to primary school and gender equality has nearly been achieved at this level, girls' completion rates (66%) continue to lag behind those for boys (68%); moreover, fewer than half (46.6%) of all girls enrol in secondary compared with 53.4% of boys, and only a third of those (34%) actually complete their education at this level (compared with 52% for boys) (MOES, 2012b).

At national level, according to 2011 statistics, over a third (35%) of the girls who drop out of school do so because of marriage, and a quarter (23%) because of pregnancy (UBOS, 2012b). Over 15% of ever-married women aged 20-49 are married by the age of 15 and nearly half (49%) by the age of 18. Teenage pregnancy rates are also high, at 24% nationwide. Being poor and rural heightens the likelihood of teen pregnancy and child-bearing: across the country, 34% of teenage girls from the poorest households and 24% of rural girls become mothers compared with 16% of wealthier teenagers and 21% of urban girls. Regional variations are apparent, with rates in the East Central region of our study (30.6%) among the highest in Uganda. There is also a clear positive relationship between a woman's education and the initiation of child-bearing (*ibid.*).

The limited data available indicate continued high levels of gender-based violence (GBV), with over a quarter of young women (29.1%) reported to have experienced physical and sexual violence (UNICEF, 2013). Economic discrimination against girls and women persists, including as a result of the complexities arising from attempts to combine productive and reproductive roles – with reproductive responsibilities for household and children continuing to fall solely on the shoulders of women and girls. Meanwhile, current national debates about law reform to regulate marriage and divorce reveal deep resistance to any change to today's discriminatory practices at the household and family level. Two of the three top policy recommendations of a recent analysis of adolescent girls' vulnerability in Uganda were increasing educational attainment and keeping girls in school; and targeting social values and cultural norms that promote child marriage and early child-bearing (Amin et al., 2013).

1.2 Multi-country study context

Poised at the intersection between childhood and the world of adults, adolescent girls face unique challenges to the full development and exercise of their capabilities. And yet they may also hold the key to effecting positive development outcomes that could reverberate across future generations. Investments in the empowerment of adolescent girls are increasingly recognised as critical in breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. For such investments to have maximum impact, more evidence is needed to make adolescent girls more visible in policy and planning processes and to identify more precisely the multiple social and cultural forces that shape their experiences and conditions of life.

A multi-year, multi-country study is exploring the complex ways in which adolescent girls' capabilities are shaped and/or constrained by gender discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices, and how other overlapping and intersecting experiences of poverty, deprivation and exclusion serve to intensify and perpetuate vulnerabilities.² The study is being conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in partnership with national research teams and has been commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as part of a flagship programme on Transforming the Lives of Girls and Young Women.

In Uganda, the study has focused on adolescent girls in rural communities in East Central and Central 1 regions of the country, selected as an area where poverty indicators are high and social indicators poor. The study combines a literature review with key informant interviews (KIIs) at national level with qualitative fieldwork, making use of a variety of methodologies involving community members (women, men, girls and boys) as well as district planners and authorities, teachers, health service workers, non-governmental organisation (NGO)/civil society organisation (CSO) representatives and cultural and religious leaders.

1.3 Findings from Year 1 research in Uganda

Year 1 research (2012) in two hard-to-reach communities of Mayuge (East Central region) and Sembabule (Central 1 region) (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2013) provided an overview of the complex interplay of different capability domains that shape adolescent girls' well-being, analysing social norms and the way they affect girls' capabilities alongside a range of other individual-, meso- and macro-level drivers. The study highlighted challenges to the fulfilment of adolescent girls' capabilities in education; household and family relations; economic empowerment/access to resources; physical safety and health; psychosocial well-being; and political/civic participation.

Research findings showed the interconnectedness of gendered marriage, family and household norms and practices with other capability domains of adolescent girls in Uganda and indeed posited the household as foundational for an understanding of adolescent girls' capabilities. Early marriage was a widely accepted norm and practice in the respective communities, with significant consequences, particularly in terms of girls' education.

In a reflection of national statistics, changes were observed in attitudes and practices around early marriage across the different study communities. Age at marriage was said to be shifting from around 14 to 17 years, for example, and younger women (and often their mothers) were expressing a desire to complete their schooling and/or find employment before getting married. Community leaders were also advocating for later marriages, at least consistent with the law. Such trends in attitudes and practices were being observed even amid the persistence of bride wealth across the different communities, one factor that may be contributing to tensions in the norms and values surrounding marriage.

Nevertheless, findings from our Year 1 study highlighted significant challenges for adolescent girls in Mayuge. As one 15-year-old girl put it, *'For us girls, what are we expected to do? It looks like we are not liked in many places including home.'* Their capabilities on the whole were seen to remain severely constrained by household and family structures, with patriarchal norms, attitudes and practices permeating girls' lives through socialisation processes they then internalise. Such patterns were then observed to be replicated across the wider

² Countries included in the study are Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam.

community and institutional structures that reinforce these underlying norms and values. Families often give boys space to build their own huts, for example, whereas girls, who are seen as ‘transient’ dwellers in their natal households, have no permanent place of abode, which relegates them to a vulnerable status. This, coupled with strong taboos against shedding menstrual blood in their natal homes, was one of the reasons identified for why girls may choose, or submit to, child marriage and early pregnancy, regardless of the high risks involved.

The unequal division of labour within the household was found to significantly burden women and girls with most of the ‘care’ work, limiting their time for other activities, including education, training and productive labour. Practices such as bride wealth payments were seen to contribute to child marriages and, in effect, turn girls into commodities that pass from being owned by fathers to being owned by husbands. ‘Compound’ families and family break-up were also seen to create situations of particular vulnerability. A lack of any voice or role in family decisions was normal for girls in our study sites, who, in the patriarchal models of family that are most common in Uganda, are doubly vulnerable on the basis of both their gender and their age. At the same time, violence within households – including GBV – was a common experience.

As a result of national policies of UPE and USE, educational opportunities for girls have expanded significantly. Intergenerational interviews showed that, while very few older women had attended any school at all, most of the younger women had at least some primary education, and a number were also continuing on in secondary school. This, in turn, had inspired changing aspirations for future opportunities and employment. However, significant challenges remain.

- On the one hand, these stem from weaknesses on the service provision side, characterised by the absence of secondary schools close to home, gender-insensitive teaching/learning processes and school environments and violence (or the fear of violence) in school and on the way there.
- On the other hand, we see the continuing weight of social norms that limit the expectations of girls beyond marriage and the family; child marriage fuelled in part by bride wealth; and the need for girls’ labour at home all make parents less likely to invest in the education of their daughters. Adolescent pregnancy and childbirth also lead to high levels of school dropout among adolescent girls.

Overall, findings from our first year of field research in Uganda showed that, in spite of positive changes, sociocultural norms combine with a lack of quality service provision to undermine the ability of adolescent girls to realise their full potential through education.

1.4 Focus of the Year 2 research in Uganda

The Year 2 research (2013) aims to provide more in-depth understandings of how and why discriminatory gendered social norms are or not changing so as to better inform related policies and programmes. As one key informant put it, *‘We are what we are because of our culture. And it’s in the communities where culture is embedded’* (KII, MOES, Kampala). The accent is on norms and practices around early marriage, pregnancy and girls’ education, selected as being pivotal in shaping girls’ current and life-course opportunities and capabilities.

In Uganda, in order to build on the findings from Year 1, the Year 2 research focuses on adolescent girls in communities in two sub-counties within the district of Mayuge – one of the initial study districts. Key questions in our Year 2 fieldwork include the following:

- What are the specific social norms underpinning early marriage and what are the key factors contributing to changes in these? How are these operating and why?
- What are the social norms surrounding adolescent pregnancy and childbirth outside of marriage, and how/why have these been changing?

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- What are the predominant forms of marriage and marriage practices in the community? How have these been changing and what meanings do different actors ascribe to these changes?
 - What are the specific effects of early marriage/pregnancy for girls' capabilities? How do married girls/adolescent mothers themselves perceive or experience these?
 - What are the specific social norms underpinning girls' education and what are the key factors contributing to changes in these? How are these operating and why?
 - What are the linkages between norms and practices around early marriage/pregnancy and education?
 - What incentives or sanctions are serving to perpetuate or enable change in social norms and practice around early marriage/pregnancy and education? At what levels, and with whom?
 - How do different actors perceive the value of early or late marriage and the value of changes in prevailing norms around this? Are there clear differences (by gender, generation, relationship, function, religion etc.)?
 - How do different actors perceive the value of education for girls and the value of changes in norms and practices in this domain?
 - How do factors in the broader context affect early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and related practices?
 - What laws, programme and policies are in place to address issues around early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and girls' education. What are some of the gaps and priorities?

Drawing on a newly developed broad-based conceptual framework on social norm change, our field research confirms that norms and practices around marriage and education among adolescent girls in the two study communities are both 'sticky' – that is, resistant to change – and changing in response to broader socioeconomic and cultural transformations occurring within an overall setting of generalised poverty. Policy priorities and recommendations arising from the findings suggest coordinated action on a variety of fronts is needed by multiple actors in order to address both the underlying discriminatory social norms and their manifestation in limiting capabilities of adolescent girls.

1.5 Organisation of the report

After this initial introductory section (1), Section 2 sets out the conceptual framework guiding our analysis of changing social norms, and Section 3 outlines the research approach and methodology. Section 4 offers an overview of the national context in Uganda, including national and regional trends in marriage age, teen pregnancy and girls' education and related indicators as well as laws, policies and programmes that address these issues. It also provides a profile of Mayuge district and the two sub-counties where field research took place.

Section 5 presents our key findings on adolescent girls' changing experiences of marriage and education. Section 6 analyses key forces for change and continuity in the underlying social norms around these issues, identifying as well some of the mediating sites and institutions that contribute to change and continuity. Section 7 examines the effects of changes in marriage practices on adolescent girls' key capabilities.

Section 8 concludes with the policy implications of our research findings, identifying a number of recommendations and areas for further research. It also offers comments on the conceptual framework, informed by processes observed during fieldwork.

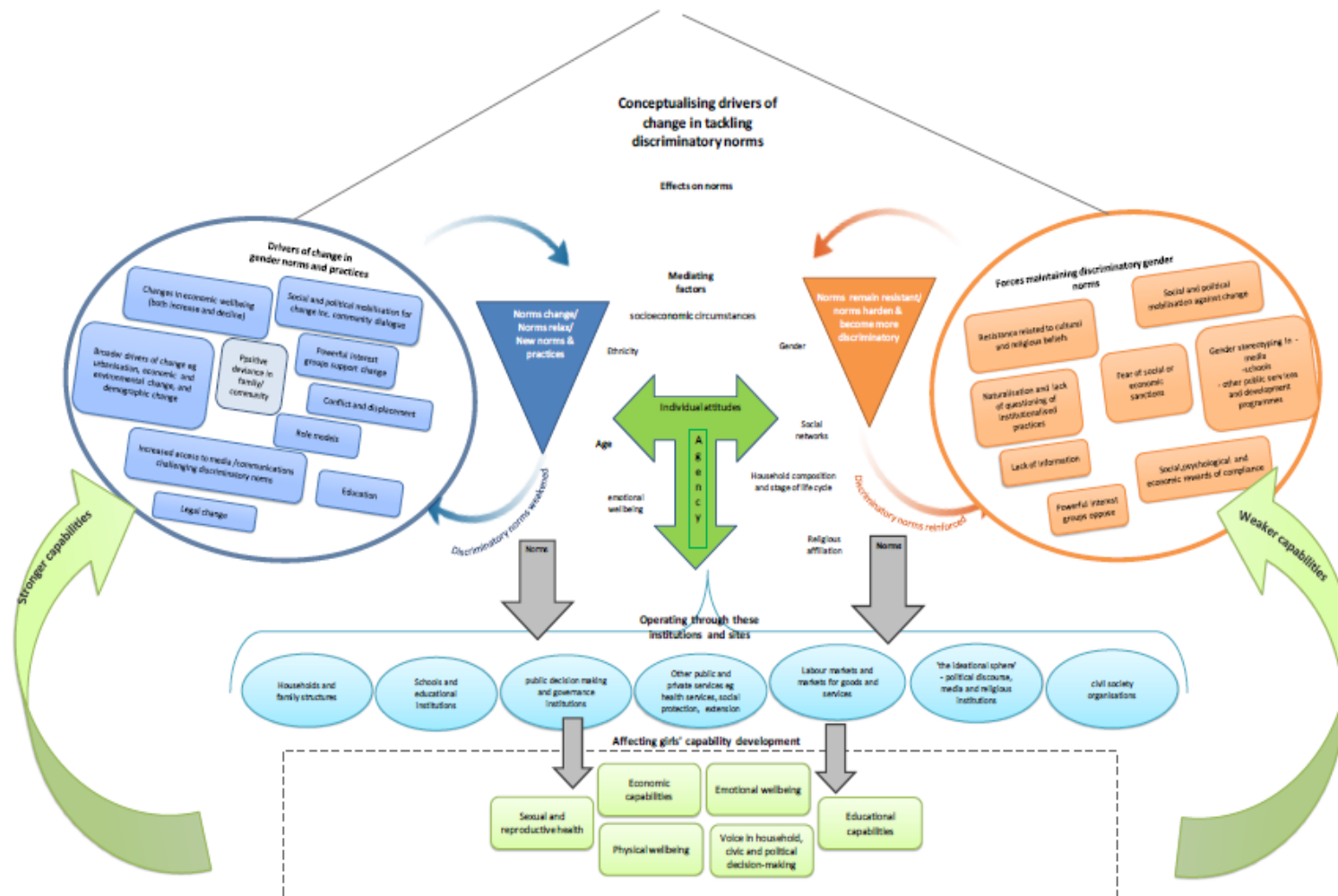
Full references are found at the end of the report, along with a number of statistical tables and technical annexes, including copies of all research instruments and a list of some of the key NGOs and agencies we met that are active on adolescent girls' issues.

2 Conceptual framework and understandings of social norm change

The conceptual framework for the Year 1 research was informed by the capabilities approach to development and underpinned by current thinking around gender justice and entitlements. As reflections on the findings of Year 1 research have progressed, the conceptual framework has also evolved. The current framework (see Figure 1) illustrates how both the drivers of positive change in social norms and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms may be mediated by a variety of factors, operating through a variety of institutions and sites to affect adolescent girls' capability domains.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the main forces that contribute to change in gender norms (on the left) as well as those that contribute to the maintenance of discriminatory gender norms (on the right). Some forces – such as education or the media – can both promote change and help maintain discriminatory norms, and they thus appear in both clusters of forces. This is important for the overall conceptualisation of change and persistence, as our research findings strongly support the perspective that change processes in gender norms are neither uni-directional nor uni-causal, and that the same factors and mediating institutions can affect outcomes in different ways.

Figure 1: Conceptualising drivers of change and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescent girls



Source: Marcus (2014)

In the conceptual framework above, the blue and orange spheres represent forces of positive change and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms, respectively, though, as we see in our research findings, the reality is not quite as simple. The interests of powerful groups appear in both spheres – as drivers of positive change and forces resisting norm change. The blue and orange spheres illustrate both structural drivers of change in gender norms and more contingent or social psychological factors that may promote or impede change in gender norms. Neither forces promoting change nor those maintaining norms are determinant; they are in constant interaction with each other.

Norms – and processes of change or stasis – affect agency and what individuals actually do. Agency is also affected by a myriad of factors, which mediate the effects of gender norms on behaviour; selected influences are shown in grey. Both norms and adolescent girls' agency operate through a range of institutional sites, illustrated by the turquoise ovals, and affect the ultimate outcomes – adolescent girls' capabilities (indicated in green). Feedback arrows indicate these are not one-way processes: girls' capabilities affect their agency and thus their capacity to challenge discriminatory norms.

The following are some of the key messages and issues identified from a review of literature on social norms and norms change (Marcus, 2014) that have particular relevance for our study:

- No one theoretical perspective on norm maintenance and change fully captures the processes and range of factors that hold gender norms in place or underpin change in particular situations. It is productive to combine insights from analysis of structural processes that facilitate norm change, studies of social convention and conformity and analysis of agency and resistance.
- Social norms are part of the way gendered power inequalities are maintained. Analysis of these power inequalities is thus vital for understanding different groups' capacity to challenge norms.
- Processes of norm change can be rapid and abrupt or incremental and unnoticed, or somewhere in between. Such processes are often complex, messy and non-linear.
- Because gender norms are often held in place by several factors simultaneously, challenging discriminatory norms frequently requires action on more than one factor simultaneously.
- While the key drivers of change are specific to particular sociocultural contexts and gender norms, an emerging consensus indicates increasing levels of education and the growth in economic opportunities for young women have played a particularly important role in changing gender relations, and frequently in changing norms.
- Social mobilisation and campaigning by feminists have played a critical role in shifting public policy, with impacts on gender relations. There is also some evidence that large-scale activity to promote gender equality, such as communication campaigns and subsidies for girls' education, have contributed to norm change.
- In some cases as a response to changing social norms and to activist pressure, and in some cases as a response to leadership by an elite group, legal change can also drive changes in gender norms and in well-being outcomes for women and girls. Enforcement of gender equality laws can stimulate and reinforce compliance with expected behaviour that underpins and feeds into norm change.
- The vast majority of the world's population lives in contexts affected by large-scale structural changes such as globalisation, increasing access to education and the rapid spread of communications technology, which can affect gender norms profoundly. While in the main these are leading to more egalitarian gender norms, these changes can evoke resistance movements asserting discriminatory gender norms.

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- The role of the multiple potential drivers of norm change is mediated in any given context by the broader cultural and ideational (including religious) context from which social norms governing gendered behaviour derive; the strength with which norms are held in any particular reference group; individual views (which do not necessarily accord with social norms); and socioeconomic factors that facilitate or limit individuals' and households' room for manoeuvre. Thus, even in a context where expansion of affordable secondary education, structural change in the economy and new normative and empirical expectations concerning sending daughters to secondary school are in place, an individual household may be unable to comply with norms because of poverty, or because, in the absence of others to undertake care work, the eldest daughter is needed to look after a sick relative.
 - Since gender norms reflect deep social structures, it is rarely only social conventions that hold discriminatory norms in place: gender norms also reflect moral codes, religious codes and cultural values, and the social and economic interests of specific groups, encapsulated in specific gender ideologies. Where there is more than one set of factors holding a norm in place, change in one area only (e.g. social convention) is likely to be insufficient, and addressing all determining factors may be necessary.
 - Social norms are often held in place by a number of factors simultaneously; likewise, change may be driven by multiple factors occurring at the same time, which may be operating on different levels. Thus, for example, structural forces of change or stasis set the context in which psychological processes promoting or undermining change take place. Analytically and practically, it is vital to disentangle the different processes that are taking place simultaneously.
 - Both empirical analysis of the processes of norm change in particular contexts and a more theoretical literature identify role models as critical to catalysing norm change processes. Role models may persuade people to adopt new norms; they also influence norms where less powerful or lower-status people are inclined to imitate. Role models may be community leaders, religious figures or celebrities such as music or sports stars, but they may also be other girls or adults who challenge particular norms, or who have done so in the past and can be seen as living proof that new norms can lead to positive outcomes.
 - It is increasingly recognised that adolescent girls, just like adult women, do not all accept the gender *status quo*. As interest in girls' empowerment has grown, so has understanding of the ways girls already influence decisions about their own futures, those of their younger siblings and, in the case of married girls and young women, the areas in which they have decision-making power in relation to their children. Although not all girls experience prevailing gender norms as constraining, and although not all those who do are able to challenge patriarchal patterns of power and authority within households, there are increasing examples of girls directly challenging discriminatory gender norms. These processes have been particularly well documented in relation to early marriage and girls' right to secondary education.

Table 1 summarises an analysis of what factors contribute to or detract from the likelihood of social norms to change.

Table 1: Conditions in which gender norms are most likely to change

More likely to change when	Less likely to change when
No parties have strong economic interests at stake (e.g. stand to lose from change, or to gain from continuation of old norms) or parties have a strong economic interest in changing	There are strong economic interests in continuation of a practice
No one's power is directly threatened by change	Certain groups perceive their power and status to be directly undermined by change
One key factor underpins a norm	A norm is underpinned by multiple causal factors ('over-determined')
There are no religious injunctions to continue a certain practice	There are religious injunctions in favour of a particular practice
A critical mass of others have already changed their practices	Very few others have changed practice
Role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote changed norms	Role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote the <i>status quo</i> or more inequalitarian norms
A changing institutional or political context provides opportunities for changed practices	The institutional or political environment is resistant to change
Norm change communications are paired with opportunities for action	It is unclear to people how they would implement new norm

Source: Marcus (2014).

Changing gender norms and relations can evoke both hidden and overt resistance, sometimes involving political mobilisation against gender equality. Resistance to more egalitarian gender norms may be motivated by perceived challenges to an individual's or group's power, status or economic interests, by ideational factors, such as a perception that traditional values or religious traditions are under attack, or by both simultaneously. 'Injunctive' gender norms (views about what people *should* do in a given society) are often different from, and may change at different paces or directions from, 'descriptive' norms (what most people are actually *doing*); reference groups holding these norms may differ, depending on the norm. Some norms have been identified as particularly 'sticky' and resistant to change – normally those where powerful vested interests uphold them or where a multiplicity of factors contribute to their persistence.

3 Research methodology

3.1 Study design, methodology and processes

Building on findings of adolescent girls' capabilities in Year 1, the Year 2 research aims to provide more in-depth understandings of how and why discriminatory gendered social norms are or are not changing so as to better inform related policies and programmes. The accent is on norms and practices around marriage practices and girls' education, selected as being pivotal in shaping girls' current and life-course opportunities and capabilities. An additional theme in the Ugandan study, given its importance, is teenage pregnancy (which occurs both within and outside of marriage).

The study had two main components: 1) an extensive literature review, which built on and deepened the broad-based literature review of Year 1, including statistical analysis from the Uganda Demographic Health Survey (UDHS), analysis of available district and sub-district documentation and key results of the global systematic literature review currently underway; and 2) a field-based exploratory inquiry. A qualitative participatory research approach was adopted for the field-based inquiry to capture community-level views and girls' experiences of the existing social norms and practices around early marriage and girls' education and the extent to which these have changed. The field-based study was informed by the country literature review.



Picture 1: Qualitative field research employed a number of interactive techniques to encourage discussion

Year 2 research started with development of the research proposal (August-September 2013); the literature review (August-October 2013); and identification of key stakeholders in a policy-influencing mapping (May-August 2013).

A planning workshop for all research teams involved in the multi-country study was held in the UK to discuss the conceptual framework and develop research tools (September 2013). This was followed by training of researchers, piloting and refining of research instruments (October 2013) and five days of field scoping (November 2013). The fields scoping enabled the team to:

- Provide feedback to the district and sub-district officials on Year 1 findings;
- Introduce the second phase research aims;
- Identify specific study communities and respondents;
- Identify key informants at both district and sub-county levels and gather initial information;
- Gather district secondary data/documents;
- Work out the field research schedule.

Field research was conducted over a period of ten days - five in each of the study sites (November 2013). This was followed by transcription and translation of data (January 2013) and data analysis and report production (February-March 2013).

Preliminary findings from the research were presented and discussed at a district dissemination workshop (May 2014) and a national roundtable (July 2014), during which key stakeholders confirmed our study results and helped strengthen our conclusions and recommendations.

3.2 Study sites and site selection

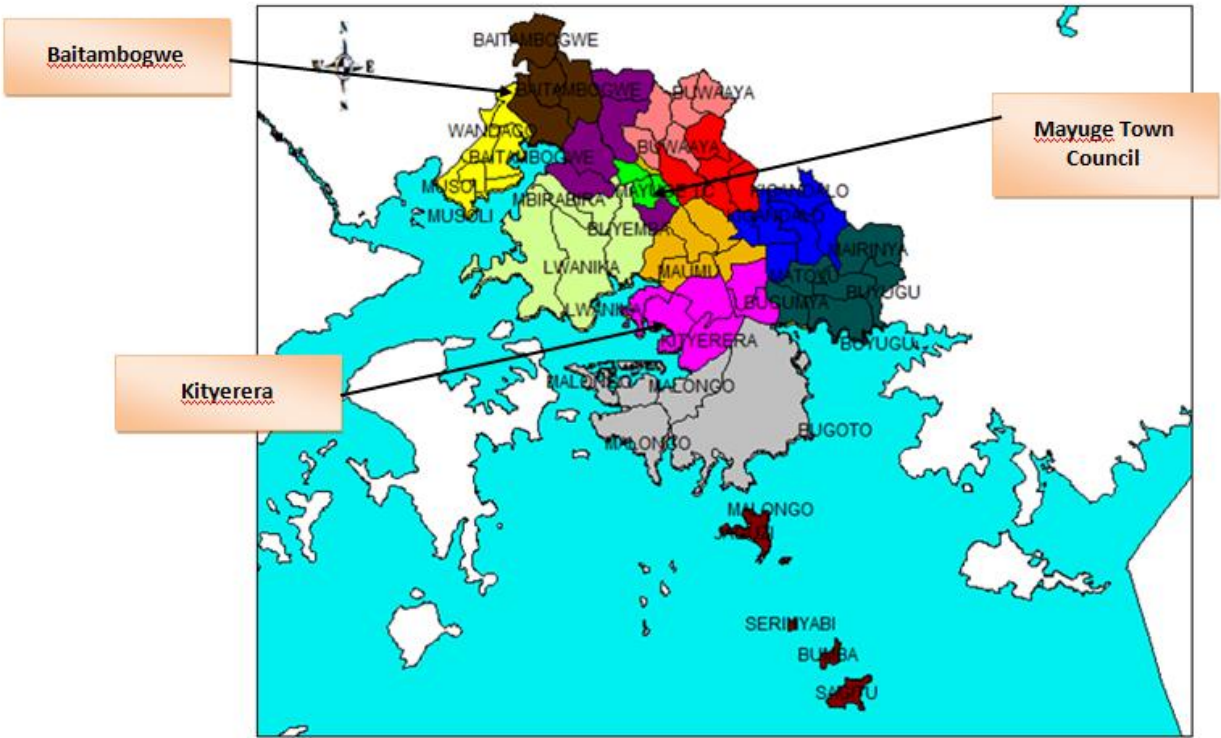
Fieldwork took place in two purposively sub-counties of Mayuge district – Kityerera and Baitambogwe. The first was selected as representative of a purely rural setting; the second was intended as a rural site but with more peri-urban characteristics – the intention being that such differences would provide a point of contrast in terms of change and persistence in social norms around marriage and education for girls.

Our major hypothesis was that these norms and practices may be changing more rapidly in a more urbanised context where socioeconomic change is also more advanced and the availability of schools for girls, particularly at secondary level, is higher. Households within these communities were also selected purposely, in collaboration with the sub-county CDO and a community leader based on the presence of adolescent girls of different marital and educational status.

In the course of fieldwork, however, and in subsequent analysis, it was found that the two research settings were actually quite similar – with little difference in levels of urbanisation and more variability within than between the two sites. The findings and factors for change and continuity are therefore not presented in a comparative manner.

The same is true about findings related to ethnic or religious differences. Both localities are multi-ethnic and multi-religious: sampling of respondents sought mostly to generate comparisons between generations, or between categories such as married/unmarried and in school/out of school. Consequently, while some ethnic or religious differences were occasionally identified, the sampling does not permit a systematic comparison (see Section 4 for fuller details on the district and sub-county setting).

Figure 2: Map of study sites in Mayuge district, Uganda



3.3 Selection of study participants

Marriage is an institution that involves multiple actors (parents, in-laws, elders of the clans, grandmothers and aunts and community leaders) at different levels (individual, household and community). Consequently, the study population included a variety of key actors at different levels who either are directly affected by changes in marriage norms and practices and processes around girls' education or are known to be key gatekeepers, attitude holders and opinion leaders with key roles in enforcing current attitudes and practices or enabling change.

- Adolescent girls/young women and boys/young men aged 14/15-19, both married and unmarried and in and out of school – to capture views on and experiences of marriage and education;
- Young women who either were able to successfully complete secondary school or attend college or were forced to drop out owing to marriage/pregnancy, to serve as 'outliers' for case studies;
- Parents (mothers and fathers) of unmarried girls and girls who had married before and after the age of 18 to explore the causes, incentives and existing sanctions around marriage practices and what it means for their children to marry at an early age as well as their expectation about their daughters/sons-in-law;
- In-laws (mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law) of married adolescent girls – to understand what is at stake for them in their marriage negotiations for their sons;
- Paternal aunts, known as *senga*, of married and unmarried adolescent girls – to understand any changes in their traditionally important roles in preparing nieces for marriage;
- Grandparents – to explore the changes in marriage practices, sanctions and incentives as well as the link to education;
- Religious leaders, clan leaders, elders or other community leaders – to capture their views on the values, incentives and sanctions for different marriage practices prevalent in the community;
- Government and civil society representatives/officials – to provide insights about change and continuity in marriage practices, early pregnancies and education affecting adolescent girls as well as information on existing interventions and their role in either changing or reinforcing such social norms and practices

The study adopted a purposive sampling strategy targeting the key categories of respondents sought in the selected communities. In addition to pre-selected participants identified in consultation with district/sub-county officials during the initial scoping visit, the snowball technique was used during the FGDs and/or the individual interviews to select participants for intergenerational pairings, marital networks and case studies. Purposive sampling was also used to select key informants at national, district and sub-district levels.

3.4 Data collection methods and tools

The nature and aims of the study demanded a mixed methods approach. The main methods for data collection included community mappings (CMs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), case studies, intergenerational trios (ITs) and marriage network analysis (MNA). Key informant interviews (KIIs) at national, district and sub-county levels contributed substantially to the information and understandings drawn from the community-level research instruments. A complete set of tools, adapted to the Uganda-specific context and revised after piloting, is included in Annex 2.

Uganda-specific elements, adapted from the generic set of tools developed for the multi-country study, include 1) a CM exercise with the elderly, to get a long historical perspective; 2) a specific interview instrument for the traditionally important paternal aunt as part of the MNA analysis; 3) specific questions on and participants drawn from unmarried mothers, since this is a key issue in Uganda and the study site district; and 4) a focus on daughters, mothers and grandmothers in the IT discussions (as we felt men's generational perspectives come out elsewhere). Table 2 provides a summary of the type and number of tools used for the study.

Table 2: Overview of research tools and study participants

Instrument type + #	Study participants (per site)	Purpose
6 CMs and timeline, 3 per site (Total of 53 participants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 with mixed younger people (18-30) 1 with mixed older people (40-45) 1 with older men (60+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand basic forms, types and practices of marriage To understand availability of education services and values and practices around girls' education To understand shifts over time in social norms and practices To contextualise findings
10 FGDs, 8 with girls and 2 with boys (Total of 64 girls and 15 boys)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unmarried school girls Unmarried girls out of school Married girls out of school (with or without children) Unmarried school boys Unmarried teen mothers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore adolescents' perspectives on social norms and practices around marriage and education To understand the reference groups that monitor and enforce the social norms and practices around marriage and education To understand the changes over time
8 IDIs with boys, 4 per site (Total of 8 boys)	Boys with adolescent sisters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 boys in school per site 2 boys out of school per site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore adolescents' perspectives on social norms and practices around marriage and education To understand the reference groups that monitor and enforce the social norms and practices around marriage and education. To understand the changes over time
9 FGDs with parents, 3 mothers/2 fathers, Site 1; 2 mothers/2 fathers, Site 2 (Total of 42 mothers and 34 fathers)	Parents of adolescent girls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 with mothers 2 with fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore parents' views on social norms for adolescent girls – and the extent to which they are or are not changing over time and why
8 ITs, 4 per site (Total of 24 individuals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 generations of women: grandmothers, mothers and daughters (unmarried adolescent girls – 2 in school 2 out of school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore shifts in the relative importance and framing of social norms and experiences of marriage and education across generations
5 MNA, 2 in Site 1, 3 in Site 2 (Total of 33 individuals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Married girl and her husband (those with children and those without) Married girl's mother and father Married girl's mother-in-law and father-in law At least one paternal aunt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore intra-household relations including power relations and decision-making, views and expectations on marital roles and responsibilities
11 case studies – typical and outliers, 6 in Site 1, 5 in Site 2 (Total of 11 individuals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adolescents girl and young women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore examples of adolescents who fall at one end of the spectrum or other (full compliance, or non-compliance/ transformation) and to unpack what contributed to their experiences
12 district and 17 sub-district KIIs (5 with district officials – total of 20 individuals; 7 with district NGOs – total of 12 individuals; 17 with sub-district representatives – total of 37 individuals) 13 national KIIs (Total of 16 individuals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field level: Local government officials, representatives of technical departments, police/judiciary, NGOs/CSOs; religious leaders; clan leaders/elders National level: Government policy-makers and programme planners (gender, education, health, law); NGOs/CSOs; development partners; academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain expert insights into why a social norm is sticky or flexing or transformation (local blockages to political ideologies which sought to operate directly on norms) To explore the actions that have been taken to address these social norms and practices around marriage and girls' education To understand how different reference groups (national/local) might be working to promote different sets of norms
Total study participants: 284 at community level; 85 key informants at national, district and sub-district levels.		

3.5 Data management and analysis

Data management involved transcription and translation of recordings from the CM, FGDs and interviews. Content analysis was used to make sense of the massive amount of data collected from the multiple tools – to identify emerging themes and issues of interest to the study. Narrative reporting of the findings, including quotations and case studies of key issues, is structured around the main themes of the study.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The study was conducted following national and international ethical standards for research on children, given our focus on adolescent girls and the sensitivity of the topic under study. The basic ethical framework was built on principles of respect for the rights and needs of children and doing no harm. Key ethical considerations included measures to enhance participation and inclusion of excluded groups in the research, to ensure informed consent, to protect children and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. An information checklist for informed consent was prepared and measures aimed at safeguarding the confidentiality of responses set out.

The research team was fully briefed on all ethical issues related to studying children, including the need for sensitivity around topics that may be particularly sensitive for respondents to discuss, and the potential need to assist participants in accessing appropriate help or support if required (but within professional limits). The team followed appropriate national guidelines in all respects. The real names of study participants in the examples cited in the report have been changed to protect their identity.

4 National and subnational context

4.1 National and regional setting

4.1.1 Changing marriage forms and practices

Multiple forms and types of marriage

Uganda is a multi-ethnic country with varied marriage customs among the broad ethnic groups of the Bantu, Nilotics, Nilo-Hamitic and Sudanic people (Otiso, 2006). Marriage and family are key social institutions of social reproduction and conferral of status in society. They are important markers of the transition from childhood to adulthood, as well as a significant repository of social expectation. An unmarried woman or man is considered incomplete and is accorded little respect (Nangoli, 1994; Otiso, 2006).

The three legally recognised marriages or unions are i) traditional/customary (based on local customs of different ethnic groups – arranged by parents, intermediaries and close clan members); ii) religious (conducted by religious leaders – Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Bahai – using state-issued marriage certificates); and iii) civil (conducted by government officials such as district registrars with state-issued certificates). A fourth kind of union, which is increasingly common but not legally recognised as marriage, is cohabitation (a man and woman unmarried but living together – and often procreating – as if they were husband and wife).

Marriages in Uganda are both monogamous (one husband with one wife) and polygynous (a man with more than one wife); polygyny is legally accepted in both customary and Islamic marriages.

According to statistics from the 2011 UDHS (UBOS, 2012b), 25% of women and 32% of men aged 15-49 years have had a customary marriage; 27% of women and 15% of men are cohabiting; 9% of women and 8% of men have had a religious marriage; and 1.1% of women and 1.0% of men have had a civil marriage.

A quarter of married women are in polygynous unions, a decline from 32% in 2000/01 and 28% in 2006. Polygyny has been declining in all regions except for East Central region, where our study community is located. This region has the second highest rate of polygyny in Uganda, at nearly 40% (see annex 1 for details).



Picture 2: A young woman and child in front of their home

The prevalence of polygynous marriages in Uganda is associated with the continuing high prevalence of customary marriages (Izama, 2003). However, while traditionally polygynous men were highly honoured, a decline in traditional culture, rising urbanisation, conflict among wives, changing gender roles and poverty, as well as increasing rates of HIV infection, have been linked to profound changes in the forms of marriage and a gradual increase in monogamous forms (Otiso, 2006).

Overall, the prevalence of polygynous unions generally increases with age: young women are more likely to be in a monogamous marriage than older (33.9% and 29.1% for women aged 45-49 compared with 18% and 13.7% among women aged 15-19 for 2006 and 2011, respectively).

Rural women are more likely to be in polygynous unions than urban women; rates also vary by education, with the

least educated women most likely to be living in polygynous unions (see Table 3). The relationship between wealth quartile and polygyny is not clear.

Table 3: Trends in monogamy and polygyny, currently married women aged 15–49, 2006–2011

Background characteristics	No. of co-wives			
	2006		2011	
	0	1 or more	0	1 or more
Age				
15-19	82.5	14.2	82.4	13.7
20-24	78.7	19.1	80.2	15.8
25-29	71.5	26.1	72.6	23.4
30-34	66.0	30.9	67.4	29.4
35-39	60.4	38.0	64.7	32.5
40-44	57.7	38.9	65.1	31.2
45-49	63.9	33.9	68.7	29.1
Residence				
Urban	72.8	22.7	73.5	20.2
Rural	68.8	28.9	71.5	25.5
Education				
No education	63.4	35.3	65.4	32.6
Primary	70.4	26.8	71.8	24.4
Secondary +	74.5	22.1	76.4	19.5
Total 15-49	69.3	28.1	71.8	24.6

Source: UBOS (2007; 2012).

Marriage in Uganda involves various individuals, including the boy and the girl, parents, relatives, clan and community leaders. Traditionally, marriages were arranged by parents, intermediaries or close clan members, who organised complex ceremonial exchanges to codify a range of marital relationships, which differed by ethnic group and were normally initiated by parents (Davis, 2000; Mukiza-Gapere and Ntozi, 1995). Today, there is increasing freedom, with boys and girls finding their marriage partners before seeking the consent of their parents (Kaduuli, 2010; Otiso, 2006; [Rubin et al., 2009](#)).

Across most ethnic/cultural groups in Uganda, family formation commences with courtship initiated by either the boy or his parents, followed by payment of bride wealth/price or dowry (see Box 1), after which the marriage ceremony is conducted (Kaduuli, 2010; Otiso, 2006). As in many parts of Africa, in Uganda the principal requirement for the marriage union is parental blessing and consent to the proposals, and the union is usually sealed in a public ceremony after certain issues are agreed on (Kaduuli, 2010).

In Busoga (East Central region), the initial ceremony is known as the *kwandhula*, commonly called the 'introduction', which serves as an engagement ceremony, followed by a religious wedding (ibid.). Across all regions, marriages are initiated by men. Marriage among close kin members, or incest, is a taboo (Kaduuli, 2010; Otiso, 2006) and illegal as provided for in the Ugandan laws (Section 34(1) of the Uganda Marriage Act (1904) and the Customary Marriage Act (1973)). In some communities, courtship was traditionally supervised to guard against premarital sex.

Box 1: Is the bride wealth system contributing to early marriage in Uganda?

There is a growing body of evidence in Uganda that indicates that payment of bride wealth – in some form – remains widespread (FIDH and FHRI, 2012; Kakuru-Muhwez, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Nordic Consulting Group, 2008; Perezniето et al., 2011; [Rubin et al., 2009](#); Tumushabe et al., 2000). Across all ethnic groups, payment of bride wealth is an obligation that is made before the marriage ceremony (and sometimes in instalments thereafter) except for those cohabiting (Otiso, 2006). Bride wealth is a traditional marriage seal perceived as compensation to the girl’s family for the loss of her labour and productivity. However, the amount of bride wealth paid differs widely from one community to another and one family to another, with the most common items including cows, goats and digging implements, which in modern Uganda are sometimes converted into cash.

Traditionally, the amount of bride wealth paid depended whether the girl was a virgin, had been married before or had a premarital pregnancy; on family status; on the groom’s socioeconomic status and titles; on the clan or ethnic group; and on the conditions under which the girl was married (whether forced into marriage or elopement). With modernisation and intermarriages, the material obligations and conditions have changed. For instance, premarital chastity is no longer a consideration in bride wealth negotiations, and more emphasis is now placed on a woman’s educational status, and hence her earning potential, the socioeconomic status of the groom’s family and whether the couple has children or not. In addition, cash or other modern materials are increasingly becoming a substitute to the livestock and hoes, as well as there being a reduction in livestock quantity. However, in Uganda’s pastoral communities, livestock is still the predominant mode of bride wealth.

Recent studies (Hague and Thiara, 2009) suggest the impact of bride price can be particularly severe for young girls, especially where parents may have an urgent financial need for the bride price she will attract. The main impacts on young girls, identified from all the datasets, include early or forced marriage; withdrawal from education in order to marry and earn bride price for the family; withdrawal from education because fees cannot be paid since bride price is needed for brothers; HIV infection owing to marriage to older, richer men; exposure to sexual abuse by older dominant men with no way to escape owing to youth, inexperience and lack of power; and early pregnancy, sometimes accompanied by severe medical problems and fistulas, followed in several cases by subsequent rejection by the community and family.

Forced marriages are still in existence in a number of communities (Otiso, 2006; Sekiwunga and Whyte, 2009; UN Human Rights Committee, 2004). Up through the early 2000s, forced marriages were a common phenomenon in areas such as northern Uganda that were affected by prolonged armed conflict – where young girls and women were abducted and coerced into marriage with the rebels (Rubimbwa and Komurembe, 2012).

Forced marriages are also reportedly common in Kapchorwa and Palisa districts in Eastern Uganda. A study of Teso region observes that forced child marriages have taken the form of economic activity as, the bride wealth paid is increasingly seen as an important source of income in the context of the heightened poverty and ill being created by insurgency (Mishambi, 2004). The UN Human Rights Committee (2004) raised concern about early and forced marriage in Uganda, calling on the Ugandan government to ‘take effective steps to do away with this practice’.

Prevalence and trends in early marriage³

Marriage and motherhood are the normal routes to social recognition and economic security, especially for young people who are out of school or those who have few prospects for continuing education and securing a job (Sekiwunga and Whyte, 2009). While the legal age at marriage is set at 18 years (Republic of Uganda, 1995; 2007), traditions of child marriage persist in many cultural groups in the country. Globally, Uganda has been ranked 16th among 25 countries with the highest rates of early marriage, with nearly half (46%) of all girls marrying before the age of 18, and more than 1 out of 10 (12%) before the age of 15 (World Vision, 2013). Myers and Harvey (2011) cite the country as having one of the highest estimated rates of child marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa.

³ In this report, ‘early marriage’ and ‘child marriage’ are used interchangeably to refer to marriages below the age of 18.

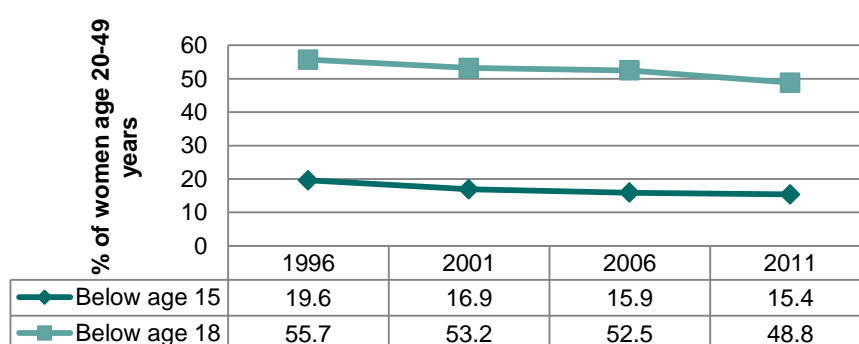
A recent Population Council report (Amin et al., 2013) records Uganda as being in the middle of the range, with over 20% of girls (15-19 years) ever having been married. Many adolescent girls, therefore, continue to be subject to marriage at an early age, in marriages arranged by parents, leaving them little choice in either timing or marriage partner (Jensen and Thornton, 2003; Rutaremwa, 2013).

In 2011, according to the latest national statistics, over 15% of ever-married women aged 20-49 were married by the age of 15 and 49% were married by the age of 18. The median age at first marriage among women aged 25-49 was 17.9 years (18.1 among women 20-49) and has been fairly stable for the past 30 years. However, the trend is gradually shifting towards fewer women marrying at very young ages: almost a fifth (10%) of women currently aged 45-49 were married by age 15, compared with just 3% of women currently aged 15-19 (UBOS, 2011a).

There remain clear variations in the age of first marriage by residence, educational level and wealth quintile. Women aged 25-49 living in urban areas marry about two years later than rural women (20 years compared with 17.6 years), and median age at first marriage is higher among the better educated and the wealthier. Median ages for women aged 25-49 range from a high of 20.7 in Kampala to a low of 16.7 in the North. East Central region has the lowest age at first marriage of all regions in Uganda (17 years compared with 17.9 nationally).

As seen in Figure 3, statistics show an increase in the age at first marriage between 1996, when over half (55.7%) of women aged 20-49 were married below the age of 18 and a fifth (19.6%) were married below the age of 15, and 2011, when under half (48.8%) were married below the age of 18 and 15.4% below the age of 15.

Figure 3: Trends in early marriage and median age at first marriage, 1995/96-2010/11



Source: UBOS (2007; 2012b)

But the rise in age of first marriage has not been even across the regions. While some regions (Kampala, North, Western) show a decline in very early marriages (below the age of 15), others show either no change or an actual rise in the percentages of women who marry below the age of 15. This is the case for East Central region, where percentages have risen slightly, from 25% in 2005 to 26% in 2011. There is slightly more consistent downward regional trend in percentages of women marrying between the ages of 15 and 17 years. This is the case for East Central region, where the percentage dropped from 42% in 2006 to 38% in 2011. It is this drop in the marriage for the age group 15-17 (and not for the age group 10-14) that brings the overall rise in the percentage of girls married at 18 or above up to 37% from 33% in 2006.

Prevalence and trends in teenage pregnancy

Early marriage is recognised as a critical policy concern in Uganda. Evidence suggests it is one of the key factors contributing to high levels of adolescent pregnancy and child-bearing in Uganda (Rutaremwa, 2013). Early marriage is also associated with continuing high levels of fertility overall, contributing to rapid population growth. With an average 6.2 children per woman, child-bearing begins early: over a third (39%) of women aged 20-49 have given birth by age 18, and nearly two-thirds (63%) by age 20 (UBOS, 2011a). According to the Population Council (Amin et al., 2013), about 17.4% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 years have ever given birth.

National statistics indicate teenage pregnancy, while overall very high in Uganda, has been declining over time, from 43% in 1995 to 25% in 2006, but remaining thereafter fairly stable at 24% in 2011. Median age at first birth for women aged 20-49 was estimated at 18.9 years in 2011 compared with 18.7 years in 2006. Across the country, rural girls become mothers at an earlier age (24%) than girls in urban areas (21%), with regional variations also apparent. The rate of teenage pregnancy in East Central region (30.6%) is much higher than the national average (24%).

Statistics from UDHS 2011 (UBOS, 2012b) further show that teenagers from the poorest households have higher rates of pregnancy (34%) compared with those from the wealthiest households (16%). There is a clear positive relationship between a woman's education and the initiation of child-bearing. Women with at least secondary education on average start giving birth at age 20.8 years, 2.7 years later than women with no education. A total of 16% of girls with secondary education begin their reproductive life compared with 45% of those with no education. Amin et al. (2013) note a similar trend, finding that 28.2% of girls with no education had ever given birth and 18.9% were currently pregnant, compared with 11.3% and 4.9%, respectively, for those with secondary education or above.

Ochan et al. (2013) attribute high levels of teenage pregnancy in Uganda to early sexual debut, forced child marriage, coerced first sexual intercourse, fertility desire and limited access to sexual and reproductive health education and services. Family situation, including orphanhood, single parenthood and poverty, was also identified as a risk factor for teenage pregnancy. The associated consequences of teenage mother include death from pregnancy and delivery complications leading to the persistent high maternal and infant and child mortality and fertility rates; school dropout; and exposure to risk of HIV infection (FIDH and FHRI, 2012; Ochan et al., 2013; UWONET, 2010).

Early marriage and pregnancy: the weight of social norms

Studies in Uganda indicate child marriage and early pregnancy are rooted in traditional and social norms, including the high value placed on women's fertility, traditional sociocultural expectations of the girl child and the persistence of practices such as the bride wealth system. These are combined with factors such as women's disadvantaged status in society and overall poverty (Rubin et al., 2009; Walker, 2012). Parents often justify early marriage of daughters as a form of protection against premarital sex and pregnancy, thus keeping the family's dignity/honour as well as offering the young girls lifelong security (Rubin et al., 2009).

Early marriage is further attributed to the low value attached to girls' education – where parents feel educating a girl is a waste of time and resources when they are supposed to get married (Rubin et al., 2009; Sekiwunga and Whyte, 2009). Ochan et al. (2013) note many teenage girls drop out of school owing to unwanted pregnancies, and early marriage tends to be the only practical survival solution. Moreover, under custom, a girl's capacity to marry is determined not by her age but by her apparent physical development; consequently, young girls end up in risky unions with older men (Izama, 2003).

In a study conducted in Eastern Uganda, adolescents attributed teenage pregnancy to lack of parental care and concern, especially inadequate provision of basic necessities, lack of control over girls' mobility and inadequate parental guidance, mistreatment of girls and inadequate enforcement of the defilement law. Older people, especially mothers, associated it with moral decay and indiscipline, greed for material things and peer pressure (Sekiwunga and Whyte, 2009). In a more recent study, in East Central region (Iganga and Mbale districts) and Central 1 region (Mpigi district), early marriage was noted as a better option than continued experiences of insufficient support (provision of basic necessities) from parents (Bell and Aggleton, 2014). The views of both parents and children, though contradictory, are both supported by the findings of other studies (Rubin et al., 2009). Still others attribute continuing high levels of child marriage to poverty (Lubaale, 2013).

Current widespread resistance to reforms in marriage laws proposed by the Marriage and Divorce Bill tabled in the ninth parliament underscores the deeply entrenched social norms and expectations of marriage as well as male bias: the proposed reforms more explicitly recognise women's rights within marriage – to property, freedom from domestic violence and the like – and, in one of the most contentious clauses, proposes making bride wealth non-mandatory, rendering it more in the nature of a gift.

4.1.2 Girls' education: progress but continuing gender gaps

In Uganda, school enrolments of both boys and girls have increased over the years, particularly with the introduction of UPE in 1997, providing for free access to education for all children in government-aided primary schools. This has contributed to closing the gender gap, with current gender equality in primary enrolment of girls and boys, although girls' completion rates (ranging between 44% and 66% between 2007 and 2012) continue to lag behind those for boys (between 50% and 68% over the same period).



Picture 3. It is important to understand the intersections between early marriage and education for girls

Gender equality at secondary level has proceeded more slowly over the same period. Data show that, in spite of the introduction in 2007 of USE, which grants every child with an acceptable pass rate on primary

leaving examinations (PLEs) the right to a free secondary education, girls' enrolment (47.6% on average between 2007 and 2012) remains below that of boys (53.4%), and there is an even greater disparity in completion rates (34% for girls compared with 52% for boys) (MOES, 2012b) (see annex 1).

At regional level, data show Eastern region is among the regions that have attained gender parity at primary level, with girls' enrolment (50.5%) slightly higher than that of boys (49.5%) and comparable to the national figure (50.1%). But girls' enrolment in secondary level in Eastern region continues to lag behind that of boys, ranging between 42.7% and 44.5% of overall enrolment since 2009. It also remains lower than the national average (46.3%)⁴ (see annex 1).

Government and NGOs have instituted a number of non-formal school programmes to cater to the needs of children who have missed out on formal education.⁵ According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES, 2009a), over half the students in these programmes are female (54.6%), although a significant proportion drops out before completing the cycle. The literacy rate for persons aged 10 years and above has been estimated at 73%, with women's literacy (66%) well below men's (79%) (UBOS, 2012)⁶. As with most other indicators in Uganda, rates are higher in urban than in rural areas, and higher in Kampala than in other regions.

These statistics bring to the fore the persistent gender disparities in education despite the policies in place. Such disparities are attributed to sociocultural attitudes and practices that privilege male children's education over that of female children, thus leading to low parental investment in girls' education (FOWODE, 2011; Kakuru-Muhwezi, 2006; Kwesiga, 2002; Nordic Consulting Group, 2008; Perezniето et al., 2011; Tumushabe et al., 2000).

Other constraints include the discriminatory gender division of labour in the household (Blackden, 2004; Huntington, 2008; Jjuko and Kabonesa, 2007; Kakuru-Muhwezi, 2006; Perezniето et al., 2011); lack of learned professional women as role models (FIDH and FHRI, 2012; Kwesiga, 2002; Tumushabe et al., 2000); late age of entry into school combined with practices of early marriage (Grogan, 2008; Tumushabe et al., 2000); pregnancy as a key cause of dropout (FIDH and FHRI 2012; Muhanguzi et al. 2011); family instability (Atekyereza, 2001; MOES, 1999); and restricted movement of girls and women (UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009). While societal attitudes towards girls' education and women's status in general are reported to be changing positively (Nordic Consulting Group, 2008), the pace is slow.

⁴ The current East Central region (where our study district of Mayuge is situated) has been carved out of the previously designated Eastern region, which was split in two in 2006 (now comprising East Central and East). Sectoral statistics often retain the earlier designations.

⁵ These include Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education (COPE), Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK), Basic Education for Urban Poverty Areas (BEUPA) and Child-Centred Alternative, Non-Formal Community-Based Education (CHANCE).

⁶ Data used are for 2010.

Other factors that hinder girls' participation in education are associated with the school environment. These include lack of schools (particularly secondary) close to homes and lack of or inadequate educational facilities (FIDH and FHRI, 2012; Huntington, 2008; Nordic Consulting Group, 2008; UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009); lack of sanitary facilities – particularly problematic for post-pubescent girls dealing with menstrual hygiene issues (Huntington, 2008; Perezniето et al., 2011); sexual harassment and abuse from male students and teachers and from others on the way to school when long distances must be travelled (ACFODE, 2009; Jjuko and Kabonesa, 2007; Jones and Norton, 2007; Kakuru-Muhwez, 2006; Mirembe and Davies, 2001; Muhanguzi, 2011; Muhanguzi et al., 2011; Ndyababangi et al., 2003; Perezniето et al., 2011); and negative gender stereotyping in the curriculum, instructional materials and teaching/learning methodology, including negative/biased teacher attitudes towards girls, inadequate career guidance and corporal punishment (Kwesiga, 2002; Tumushabe et al., 2000).

Financial and material resource constraints linked to poverty at the household level limit girls' education capabilities through limited access to scholastic materials and other essentials such as school lunches, uniforms and sanitary supplies. Resource constraints also influence parental choice on who should go to school and the age at which children, especially girls, begin schooling (Atekyereza, 2001; Grogan, 2008; Kakuru-Muhwez, 2006; Tumushabe et al., 2000). In cases of resource scarcity, the boy child is given priority and the girl either is married off or remains at home (Kakuru-Muhwez, 2006; Perezniето et al., 2011; Tumushabe et al., 2000). Some girls who are sent to school without adequate resources are reported to engage in risky sexual relationships with teachers and 'sugar daddies' in exchange for basic necessities (Huntington, 2008; Jones and Norton, 2007; Kakuru-Muhwez, 2006).

The quality of some UPE schools is so poor that many parents will try to afford to send their children to fee-paying schools; this is less likely for girls. Studies further highlight inadequate enforcement of education laws and ineffective implementation of policies (Ahikire and Madanda, 2011; Jjuko and Kabonesa, 2007); inadequate allocation of resources to girls' education initiatives (Kwesiga, 2002); and insufficient focus on the social and cultural obstacles to gender equality in education.

4.1.3 Key laws, policies and programmes to address early marriage and girls' education

Multiple laws and policies

Uganda is signatory to a number of human rights instruments that promote children's rights and gender equality. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); the African Charter on the Rights of the Child; the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights – Women's Rights Protocol; the UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women; and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – which all provide for the protection of girls against child marriages and for the education for girls. Uganda's commitment to the international standards and codes for upholding children's rights is reflected in the legal and policy framework in place to address human rights violations and to promote girls and young women's advancement.

... On child marriage

The 1995 Constitution of Uganda provides in Chapter 4 for the protection and promotion of fundamental and other human rights and freedoms for all Ugandan citizens (special provisions for the protection of women and girls are stipulated in Arts 20, 21, 24, 33, 34 and 50 of Chapter 4). The same Constitution provides for the right to marriage and family formation (Art. 31) and criminalises child marriage. The article prohibits child marriage, clearly spells out the age at which men and women should marry as 18 years⁷ and provides for equal rights at and during marriage, and its dissolution (1a). Art. 31 further prohibits forced marriage and provides for free consent of the man and woman to enter into marriage (3). Art. 33(6) prohibits laws, cultures, customs or traditions that are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or that undermine their status. Box 2 outlines some of the main pieces of national marriage legislation.

⁷ Provides for the right to marry only if one is of the age of 18 years and above

Box 2: Marriage legislation in Uganda

- **The Marriage Act of 1904** CAP 251 provides for the acceptable marriage type being monogamous; prohibits incest; and sets 21 years as the age of consent; it allows written consent of father/mother/guardian/registrar for the marriage of minors – those below the age of 21 years.
- **The Marriage of Africans Act of 1904** provides for Christian and Mohammedan African marriages and allows marriage of minors on the consent of their parents or guardian or registrar in case the parents are dead and no guardian is capable of consenting. However, it does not state the year of consent.
- **The Marriage and Divorce of Mohammedans Act of 1906** relates to the marriage and divorce of Mohammedans but the law is silent on the types and forms of marriage as well as the age of consent.
- **The Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act of 1961** provides for marriages conducted under the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain or Sikh religions. It only allows monogamous marriages (2 (1)), with the age of consent set at 16 years for girls and 18 years for boys (2 (3)); it allows marriage of minors on consent of parents or guardian (2 (4)) and prohibits incest (2(5)).
- **The Customary Marriages (Registration) Act 1973** provides for the registration of customary marriages and types of marriages (both monogamous and polygamous (Art. 4 – 1, 2); the age of consent is set at a much lower age of 16 years (Art. 11a) for females (that of boys is set at 18 years – (11b)); it also provides for the consent of the father/mother/guardian to the marriage of minors and prohibits inbreeding (incest) (Art. 11d, Schedule 11), among others.
- **Muslim marriages** are provided for under **the Marriage Act 1904 as guided by Sharia law.**

A number of these laws, however, contradict the constitutional provisions of the age of consent and freedom of consent for both men and women, as well as Article 2(2) stipulating that, if any other law or any custom is inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Constitution, the Constitution shall prevail. Fuelled by the force of custom, arranged marriages for minors are still practised, especially in rural areas (FIDH and FHRI, 2012). Benschop (2002) reveals the existence of customary marriages that are often carried out without the consent of the girl. In addition, most of the customary marriages in Uganda are not registered, which makes women more vulnerable on divorce from or death of their husband. In practice, the right to ‘full, free and informed consent’ to marriage for Ugandan women and girls remains a significant challenge (UNICEF, 2001). Women are most often frustrated by the courts of law whenever they present cases of discrimination and violation of their rights, which cases are referred to as private and family matters.

Amendments to the old Marriage Act have stipulated that statutes be brought in line with the law setting 18 years as the legal age of marriage for boys and girls. Further protection of adolescent girls against child marriage is provided for in the Penal Code (amendment) Act (CAP 120) 2007 (Republic of Uganda, 2007), which puts 18 years as the ‘age of consent’ (the legal age at which boys and girls should engage in any sexual union/marriage). Section 129 stipulates that any person who performs a sexual act with another person below the age of 18 years commits an offence (defilement) and is liable to life imprisonment. A death sentence can be imposed in cases of ‘aggravated defilement’ which includes sex with a child below the age of 14. Other Ugandan laws that are potentially useful in the prevention of child marriage and teenage pregnancy include the Anti-Trafficking Act (2010), the Domestic Violence Act (2010) and the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Act (2009); the laws protect girls from early sex and penalise coerced sexual intercourse and forced marriage.

Enactment of a Domestic Relations Bill was under discussion from 1987, with the objectives of consolidating the law relating to marriage, separation and divorce and providing for marital rights and duties, and presented to Parliament in 2009. The Bill dealt with establishing a national statute stipulating 18 years as the official minimum age at marriage and preventing marriage without the consent of both parties; sexual rights; and the offences of adultery and marital rape. The Bill also prohibited widow inheritance (a situation where men ‘inherit’ the widows of their deceased brothers (FIDH and FIHR, 2012). When the Bill was presented to Parliament, it met with resistance, in particular from some sections of the Muslim community, on areas that were

said to be contrary to Sharia Law, such as prohibition of polygynous unions (ibid.), and from some men on provisions relating to property ownership. It was then withdrawn and split into three different laws: the Domestic Violence Act (enacted in 2010), the Marriage and Divorce Bill (pending enactment) and the Muslim Personal Law (currently shelved).

The current Marriage and Divorce Bill (2009) (applicable to all but Muslim marriages) proposes reforming and consolidating the law relating to marriage, separation and divorce and more explicitly grants equality within marriage or cohabitation (to property ownership and freedom from sexual violence, among others). It aims to provide for 18 years as the legal age of marriage and the consent of each party; to prohibit practices such as widow inheritance; and to demand the refund of marriage gifts or bride wealth. It does not introduce entirely new concepts to those included, but rather sets minimum standards for all regimes of marriage provided for under the law, supplemented by separate provisions governing the conclusion of Christian, Hindu, Customary and Bahai marriages (FIDH and FIHR, 2012).

When the Marriage and Divorce Bill (2009) was presented to Parliament in 2012, it met opposition and sparked off acrimonious public debate and conflicts, largely related to religious and cultural norms. The debate arose from the Bill's focus on sociocultural issues and power relations within the family, which men saw as a threat to male power (UWONET, 2013a). Consequently, consideration of the Bill was again withdrawn and shelved – on the grounds that there was a need to gather sufficient support from religious and community members, in particular men. Areas of contention include provisions on marital rape/conjugal rights, cohabitation, refund of marriage gifts and co-ownership (UWONET, 2013a; 2013b). The Bill is currently before Parliament after going through the first, second and third reading with 23 clauses passed. The Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) (2013b) identifies the implications of not enacting this law, including continued denial of human rights and an arbitrary approach to individual rights during marriage and at its dissolution; inconsistency of the laws; continued prevalence of GBV; and perpetuation of poverty and injustice, with men and women within cohabitation having no recourse to justice.

The Muslim Personal Law (the law for Muslim marriages) has also been also put aside indefinitely. Moreover, it has been argued that the creation of separate laws for different groups of people violates international human rights norms and law and in particular the principle of non-discrimination, which is also enshrined in the Ugandan Constitution (FIDH and FIHR, 2012).

... *On bride wealth*

None of the old laws prohibits bride wealth. The current proposed Marriage and Divorce Bill does not prohibit bride wealth or marriage gifts, but it does prohibit a refund of bride wealth. Art. 4 of the Bill states that marriage gifts (defined as a gift, by whatever name known, in cash or in kind given by either party to a marriage in respect of that marriage and including bride price and bride wealth) is not an essential requirement for couples to enter into a marriage (Republic of Uganda, 2009). It further stipulates that 1) marriage gifts are not an essential requirement for any marriage under this Act; 2) where a marriage gift has been given by a party to a marriage under this Act, it is an offence to demand the return of the marriage gift; and 3) a person convicted of the offence under subsection 2) is liable to a fine not exceeding 24 currency points or imprisonment not exceeding a year, or both. These provisions are meant to help prevent women from staying in abusive relationships because they cannot pay back the bride wealth, as many studies have shown (Benschop, 2002; FIDH and FIHR, 2012; Mishambi, 2004; Muthегheki et al., 2012; Ndira, 2004). At the local level, in some districts, communities have come up with bylaws and ordinances on bride wealth, for instance the Bridal Gifts Ordinance in Tororo (Hague and Thiara, 2009). However, the extent to which national legislation recognises the latter remains unclear.

... *Within national development plans and policies*

The 2005 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) recognised bride price as one of the significant factors holding back women's empowerment. The NDP 2010-2014/15 acknowledges child marriage as a negative social cultural practice that increases the rate of early pregnancy, and as partly responsible for the country's persistent high poor health outcomes for women and children, especially maternal and infant mortality, and its high fertility rate, and therefore a major constraint to sustainable population growth; and also a constraint to education, causing school dropout for many girls.

The NDP commits to increase access to education through UPE and USE as one way of delaying marriage, and pledges to reduce the social cultural barriers to school attendance as well as to promote positive cultural values, norms and practices through strengthening the family unit by sensitising communities about family values, developing family curricula on marriage and parenting and ensuring respect and promotion of human rights. There is, however, no specific explicit strategic intervention for addressing child marriage. The plan indicates government commitment to promote rule of law and due process through fostering enactment and availability of laws and their continuous revision by supporting comprehensive and demand-driven law reforms to enhance access to justice and equality before the law, among others.

Despite this commitment, the passing of the domestic relations laws, which among others aimed to further strengthen enforcement of the age at marriage, has been a major challenge in Uganda. Enforcement of existing laws on defilement has remained weak (DELTA, 2011; Nordic Consulting Group, 2008), and the Uganda Gender Policy acknowledges limitations in access to justice created by gender-biased laws relating to defilement and delays in delivery of justice (MGLSD, 2007a).

In spite of the enabling legal and policy framework in place, the Uganda Gender Policy (MGLSD, 2007a) acknowledges high incidence of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and early sexual debut, all of which are violations of girls' rights that have impacts on their health, the health of their children and future advancement. In addition, the policy acknowledges persistent cultural norms and values that condone gender discrimination that have rendered the abuse of women's rights socially acceptable in Ugandan society. Under its 'gender and rights' priority area, the Gender Policy pledges to enact and reform laws to address gender-discriminatory practices, cultural norms and values; to develop and implement interventions to address GBV of all forms and at all levels; to promote sexual and reproductive health rights; and to sensitise communities about children's rights; however, the strategies remain broad, with no specific explicit intervention to address early marriage.

The National Population Policy (MOFPED, 2008) pledges government commitment to ensuring quality of life for the people of Uganda. It acknowledges the persistent cultural practices, customs and norms regarding polygamy, widow inheritance, child marriage and bride price, among others, that have negative implications for the status and welfare of women and children. It further identifies teenage motherhood as a major contributor to persistent high fertility and maternal mortality in the country. These challenges are envisaged to be addressed through promotion of UPE and USE.

Other policies that acknowledge early marriage as a negative practice include the National Youth Policy (MGLSD, 2001), which expressly acknowledges the right of youth to marry at the legal age of consent and pledges to promote the enjoyment of this right. The policy highlights commitment to:

- Mobilise and sensitise youth, parents and school authorities to support girls' education and retention in schools;
- Equip youth with appropriate life skills and mobilise adults, families, communities, institutions and policy-makers to create a safe and supportive environment for growth and development of youth;
- Ensure full protection of young women and men from all forms of violence, including GBV, sexual abuse and exploitation;
- Promote the psychological recovery and the social and economic reintegration of victims;
- Advocate for a conducive sociocultural environment that involves youth and protects them against harmful traditional practices, beliefs and culturally based gender-discriminatory practices.

These commitments, however, remain very broad and mask the importance of addressing early marriage as an obstacle to girls' advancement.

The National Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (MOH, 2004) pledges commitment to advocate for, coordinate and monitor implementation of programmes for the readmission of adolescent mothers into the school system. The policy commits government to advocate for the review of existing legal, medical and social barriers to adolescents' access to information and health services; protection of the rights of adolescents to health information and services; provision of legal and social protection for adolescents against all forms of abuse and

harmful traditional practices; and promotion of gender equality and provision of quality care for adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues.

... On girls' education

The NDP 2010-2014/15 prioritises the education of girls as critical to sustainable development. It commits to supporting girls' education (enrolment and retention of girls and boys at all levels of education including technical and vocational training) by reducing the costs of education through school fees waivers by promoting UPE (introduced in 1997) and USE (introduced in 2007) and providing capitation grants to cover school costs.

The promotion of education for girls is a key priority in the Uganda Gender Policy (1999, revised 2007), and the respective plans of action for women (1999 and 2007, respectively). The National Equal Opportunities Policy (MGLSD, 2006) emphasises education and skills training for youth and affirmative action to redress gender imbalances (e.g. 1.5 points for girls on admission to tertiary institutions and promotion of girls' access to and retention in schools, as well as non-formal education).

The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007-2015 (MOES, 2008) has pledged to increase equitable access to quality primary education, including through enactment of a law on compulsory and free primary education. One of the strategies relevant to early marriage highlighted in the plan is to lower sociocultural barriers to girls' attendance by supporting initiatives in this area and deploying women teachers to rural schools, as well as supporting initiatives to increase girls' participation. Some of the gender-sensitive policy initiatives that seek to expand and improve the education of girls and young women include abolition of school uniforms; flexible timetabling in pastoral communities through programmes such as ABEK, COPE and support to the Girls Education Movement (GEM); affirmative action; establishment of a gender unit and committee in MOES to oversee gender mainstreaming efforts in education; and development of the National Strategy for Girls Education 1999 (currently under review), which outlines the key constraints to girls' education and strategies to address them.

MOES also has a Gender in Education Sector Policy (2009), which provides a framework for integrating gender in the sector. The main goal of the policy is achieving gender parity at all levels of education. It emphasises gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusiveness, among other principles. The policy suggests a number of strategies for increasing access and improving retention and achievement of girls in schooling at all levels of education. The policy pledges government commitment to facilitating re-entry of girls who drop out as a result of teenage pregnancy and early marriage, among other strategies to ensure equity in access, achievement, delivery and management of secondary education.

Several interventions will also help in this regard, including gender and life skills training for teachers; the appointment of senior women and men teachers to guide and counsel students about various challenges they face, including academic, social and sexual matters; the additional 1.5 points for girls, which was introduced in 1989 at universities and later taken up in other tertiary institutions; and female scholarship for girls from disadvantaged families at Makerere University. The National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan (MGLSD, 2008) aims to attain equitable access to basic and continuing education for women and out-of-school female youth.

The right to education for all is enshrined in the Uganda Constitution (Arts 30; 34(2) – basic education). It pledges to provide for women's rights, including full and equal treatment and dignity with men (33) and facilities and opportunities to enhance women's welfare and enable them to realise their full potential (32). The Children's Act and Children's Statute (Republic of Uganda, 1996; 1997) provide for the right to education, whereas the Uganda Teachers Code of Conduct and the Penal Code Amendment Act (Section 129) provide for protection against sexual abuse/harassment (Republic of Uganda 1996 and 2007).

In addition, the Education Act 13 (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act (Republic of Uganda, 2008) provides for access to education for all and gives full effect to UPE and Universal Post-Primary Education and Training (UPPET) policy (Objectives 1c&d). The Act commits the government to providing basic education for all as a right (Art. 4(2)). In Art. 10 (3c), the government pledges to ensure alternative approaches to education for all those children who drop out of school before completing their primary education. It further provides for affirmative action with respect to female representation in the management of schools, where two out of the six

members of the management committee should be female (Second Schedule – Sections 58, 59 – 2(a)). One out of five members of the Board of Governors should be a woman (Third Schedule – Sections 58, 59 – 3(a)).

Strategic plans to implement the policies

A National Action Plan of Women (first adopted in 1999 and reviewed in 2007; MGLSD, 2007b) is in place to implement the National Gender Policy (MGLSD, 2007a). This acknowledges early marriage and pregnancy as discriminatory practices that regressively affect girls' confidence and interest in schooling; hinder their self-advancement; and lead to their poor health. Strategic objectives include elimination of sociocultural practices that endanger the health of women; sensitisation of communities about the importance of girls' education; and initiation of educational programmes on positive and negative social cultural practices that aim to deal with the problem of early marriage. However, the plan does not suggest any direct interventions to address early marriage as a priority area, despite its negative implications for girls and women's advancement.

The National Population Policy Action Plan (MOFPED, 2010) identifies child abuse, including, defilement, early marriage and teenage pregnancies, as big challenges to the attainment of quality of life for Uganda's population. It suggests some strategies that, although not directly linked to early marriage, have the potential to address the practice. These include advocacy for sexual and reproductive health rights, including prevention of GBV, institutionalising youth-friendly services and promotion of compulsory UPE and USE.

The National Action Plan for Children was developed and adopted in 1992 (Republic of Uganda, 1992), following ratification of both the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1990. While the plan provides a policy framework for guiding and directing policies and action on issues related to children's survival, protection and development, it is silent about early marriage and teenage motherhood.

The National Action Plan on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (MGLSD 2003) was developed after realisation that the National Action Plan for Children did not include issues to do with commercial sexual exploitation of children, such as child prostitution, trafficking (sale of children for sexual purposes) and child pornography. A draft of the plan (2003-2007) is still being discussed.

There is an overall acknowledgement that Uganda has good laws and policies but gaps remain in policy coherence; effective enforcement; inter-sectoral collaboration; and adequate financing, as well as overall capacity for service delivery (Ochan et al., 2013). This represents a key challenge in national efforts to promote girls' education and to reduce the prevalence of early marriage and teen pregnancy and their negative impacts on the lives of individual girls.

4.2 Mayuge district setting

Overview

Mayuge is in East Central region of Uganda – a well-watered area bordering Lake Victoria to the south. Over three-quarters of its territory is made up of lakes and rivers. Its population is projected at over 400,000 (2012), of whom 58.9% are below the age of 18 and 4.4% over 60, denoting high dependency ratios. (Mayuge District Local Government, 2011; 2012).

The district is ethnically diverse, with Basoga the predominant group. It is one of several districts that make up the sub-region of Basoga, one of the pre-colonial entities that is currently recognised as a cultural unit or 'institution' (see Box 3). Common languages include Lusoga,



Picture 4. Typical homestead in Mayuge district

Luganda, Swahili and some English. According to 2002 district census figures, Muslims make up about 36% of the population and Christians of the Anglican and Catholic faith 33% and 23%, respectively, with 4% Pentecostals and other smaller denominations (UBOS, 2011).

Box 3: Busoga and traditional cultural institutions in Uganda

The sub-region of Busoga comprises a number of districts in the south east corner of Uganda, to the west of the Nile, with its capital in Jinja. Although multi-ethnic, the dominant ethnic group in the sub-region is the Busoga (singular Musoga; adjective Basoga), who are classified as a Bantu group – along with the Banyoro and Baganda, with whom they share similarities – with origins in Central Africa. The language is referred to as Lusoga. The Basoga are estimated to account for around 8% of the total population of Uganda. As with other patriarchally organised traditional groups, the clan system is central to their culture. In Busoga, every Musoga is a member of a patrilineal clan (*e'kika*) – a group with a common clan name, whose members are considered close relatives such that intra-clan marriages were considered incestuous and taboo. Marriage is traditionally one of the most important social customs, functioning as a means of uniting families, clans and lineages (*nda*), as well as reproducing the system. Polygynous marriages were favoured, with male prestige measured by the number of wives. The extended families of both the bride and the groom have historically played an important role in organising marriages and ensuring their survival. Older and experienced clan members were relied on to solve marital conflicts, with their judgments binding.

In pre-colonial times, the Basoga were organised into principalities or chiefdoms, whereas other groups, such as the Baganda, were organised as full-fledged kingdoms. British colonisation pursued a policy of indirect rule through accords with these indigenous structures, starting in 1900 with the kingdom of Buganda (from which Uganda takes its name) and later with others, including Busoga. On independence, these kingdoms at first retained varying degrees of power in a federated state; in 1967, Milton Obote, the first president of Uganda, abolished them in an attempt to consolidate power; leaders of many of the ethnic groups across the country were forced into exile. In 1993, the kingdoms were reinstated under Yoweri Museveni as 'cultural institutions' headed by cultural leaders but without political power.

As outlined in the 1995 Constitution, 'cultural leaders' refer to a king or similar traditional leader who derives allegiance from the fact of birth or descent in accordance with the customs, traditions, usage or consent of the people led by that traditional or cultural leader. By 2009, some 11 cultural institutions had been restored in this way, including what was by then referred to as the Busoga kingdom, with its leader called the *kyabazinga*. Subsequent legislation established a system of regional assemblies to handle cultural matters relating to the traditional or cultural leader, clan and sub-clan leadership, cultural and traditional practices and cultural institutions. Each restored cultural institution has a legal mandate, a council or a parliament with officers and ministers parallel to official state institutions. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MOGLSD) oversees their functioning.

Traditional and cultural leaders have therefore embarked on a programme of revival, struggling to reinvent their roles and working primarily towards the goals of preservation of the culture; promotion of unity within their ethnic groups; promotion of development; and promotion of education. Cultural preservation takes precedent for many. Busoga, for example, has established a Cultural Research Centre dedicated to the study and documentation of traditional practices and values. There is still some question, however, about the place of such cultural institutions in Uganda, given the forces of modernisation and attendant weakening of ethnic nationalism that undergirded these institutions in pre-colonial Uganda, coupled with a growing national identity, especially among the many Ugandan ethnic groups that have no monarchic history, and the large number of Ugandans who grew up without traditional kingdoms in the period between 1967 and 1993 when these institutions were banned.

Sources: Kaduuli (2010); Otiso (2006); Quinn (n.d).

Rural livelihoods

The population is largely rural (95.5%), and dependent primarily on subsistence farming, with a traditional emphasis on food crops such as millet, sweet potato, beans, *simsim* (sesame) and sunflower. Cash crops of coffee and cotton are also grown, and sugarcane has been expanding rapidly with the introduction of an out-growers' scheme and seven sugar cane factories. Fishing is also a significant source of livelihood for the

district's coastal and island populations. Child labour is reported to be on the increase because of the demands of the lucrative sugarcane industry and fisheries. Animal husbandry is also practised – including of cattle, goats and poultry. About 91% of women are involved in agriculture, compared with 72.4% of men; however, women's access to extension services is limited. This is attributed to women's work burden of home care, men's control over women's mobility to attend extension service training and women's limited access to information on training programmes (Mayuge District Local Government, 2011; 2012).

While women and children do the cultivation and harvesting, men sell the produce and decide how the proceeds will be used. Fishing is another important means of livelihood for coastal populations (Lake Victoria and rivers), with over 56 landing sites producing over 4,000 tonnes of fish, both for export and for domestic consumption. Women and girls perform most of the household chores (Mayuge District Local Government, 2011; 2012; UBOS, 2011).

Table 4: Household division of labour in Mayuge district

Men	Women	Girls	Boys
Building/carpentry	Cooking	Going to school	Going to school
Trading	Looking after young ones	Fetching water	Grazing
<i>Bodaboda</i> (motorcycle taxis)	Fetching water	Handicrafts	Fetching water
Grinding	Farming	Washing clothes	Farming
Farming	Small businesses	Collecting firewood	<i>Bodaboda</i>
Grazing/livestock	Helping pupils with their homework	Farming	Building
Fishing	Washing clothes	Other household chores	Fishing
Stone quarrying	Collecting firewood		Making bricks
Handicrafts			
Burning charcoal			
Making bricks			

Source: Mayuge District Local Government (2011).

Social development challenges

District-level poverty rates are not available; however, social indicators remain worrying. District literacy rates are relatively low, at 63% (2002), and the ratio of literate women to men aged 15-24 years is estimated at 1:2. School enrolment has improved significantly with the introduction of UPE and USE, but dropout rates are high and learning performance is low. Only 44% of pupils sit for exams in the first term (Mayuge District Local Government, 2011; 2012; 2013; UBOS, 2011). Enrolment in the technical training institute is just 100, with mostly male students learning skills such as brick-laying, plumbing and electricity, mechanics and tailoring – primarily male-oriented skills programmes (Mayuge District Local Government, 2012; 2013). There is a district quota for government-supported university tuition; however, those in rural schools in the district are disadvantaged because of the inferior quality of education, so higher education is out of reach for most (KII, DEO, Mayuge).

The district health department reports life expectancy at birth of 47 (2009/10); other district sources place it at 52. Immunisation reaches 78% of children, but only 45% of the population have access to safe water sources. The population to doctor ratio is extremely high at 54,112/1, and there is only one midwife and one traditional birth attendant, respectively, for every 4,731 and 974 women of reproductive age. Only 27% of deliveries occur in district health facilities. Access to family planning is a major challenge in the district, owing to a shortage of skilled technical staff and poor quality of services, which, combined with traditional attitudes and women's fear of men's disapproval, limit service uptake. Contraceptive prevalence is 15% and teenage pregnancy is common (Mayuge District Local Government, 2011; 2012; UBOS, 2011). HIV and AIDS are also a major health issue in the district (prevalence rates are not available, but one NGO representative estimates it at around 8% (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge)).

Among the most urgent development priorities identified by the local government are investment in provision of basic service delivery and establishment of infrastructure, small- and medium-term industries and projects to support job creation, appropriate technology development and youth activities (Mayuge District Local Government, 2012).

4.3 Sub-county study site profiles

Mayuge district is made up of a town council and 12 sub-counties. Field research took place in two of the sub-counties, Kityerera and Baitambogwe. While both are rural, Baitambogwe is the most densely population sub-county and the seat of the district administrative centre (Mayuge Town Council). Kityerera is more sparsely populated and distant from urban settlements. Baitambogwe has 4 parishes and 30 villages; Kityerera has 6 parishes and 37 villages (Mayuge District Local Government, 2012).

Both sub-counties have a number of trading centres that have developed within the rural areas; however, the population depends largely on subsistence farming and cash crops, including coffee, cotton and sugarcane. Baitambogwe is considered the best-off and most advanced sub-county in the district; however, poverty in both sub-counties is reported to be increasing as a result of changing ecological conditions, climate patterns, economic liberalisation and privatisation, demographic features including large family size and political factors. The 1990s were seen to be difficult because of – among other things – drought and a falling market for agricultural produce. Increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns have severely affected agriculture; lack of post-harvest handling technology hampers storage and processing of produce; and poor rural road infrastructure has left marketing largely in the hands of exploitative middlemen. The poorest are those with no land or other assets who engage in casual labour (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Access to primary and secondary schooling and literacy levels has improved in both study sites – associated with the introduction of UPE and USE – although education of girls lags behind that of boys, characterised by lower completion rates. On gender discrimination, men are the key decision-makers and controllers of household production systems (properties and assets), whereas women are considered merely care-takers, although they contribute over 70% of labour in agricultural production.

4.3.1 Kityerera sub-county

Overview

Kityerera sub-county is located in the southern part of Mayuge district, bordered to the south by Lake Victoria. Its 2012 projected population is 50,600, distributed in 6 parishes and 37 villages (Mayuge District Local Government, 2012). Bugadde is one of the key trading centres. With a fertility rate of 7.1 (above the national average of 6.9), annual population growth is 3.8%, and there is a high dependency ratio (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b). According to the 2002 census, 41% of the population is Muslim; 33% Anglican; 20% Catholic; 3% Pentecostal; and 3% 'Other'. As in the whole of Mayuge, the Basoga are the dominant ethnic group; others include the Bagisu, Bateso, Banyoro and Busamia (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera).

The population is primarily rural, and livelihoods are largely dependent on rain-fed agriculture, which engages over 90% of the total population (only 0.3% of the population engages in commercial agriculture). Average land holdings are 2.5-3 acres and farming is undertaken using simple farming tools (hoes, pangas [bladed cutting instruments] and animal traction). Family members constitute the single most important source of labour, and yields are generally low.

The major food crops include cassava, beans, groundnuts, rice, potatoes, millet, maize and bananas. Coffee, cotton and sugarcane are the major cash crops, with renewed interest in the promotion of coffee-growing owing to recent increases in prices. Livestock-rearing is also practised. Fishing is a key economic activity on Lake Victoria, where landing sites form poles of population settlement and commercial transactions. Only 0.5% of the population is engaged in formal employment, and another 0.7% in petty and formal trade. Youth unemployment is high, and many are said to resort to gambling (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Education

Kityerera has 25 primary schools (13 government schools) and 5 private secondary schools (there is no government secondary school). Total enrolment in government-aided primary schools is 9,940 (Mayuge District Local Government, 2013). Schooling opportunities and enrolment have increased at both primary and secondary level, particularly since 2000, with investment in school construction and implementation of UPE; literacy rates have also risen.

Nevertheless, major bottlenecks have hampered positive achievements, including failure of different stakeholders to play their roles and failure of schools to come up with proper guiding school missions. School dropout remains high, particularly among girls as the cycle of education advances; this is attributed largely to poverty at home; preferential investment in the boy child by parents; girls' greater responsibilities for domestic chores; early marriage and/or pregnancy; and gender-insensitive school environments, including sexual harassment in schools and lack of counselling.

Quality indicators overall are far below expected norms: a classroom to pupil ratio of 1:111 (compared with the national average of 1:52); a text book ratio of 1:10 (1:3); a latrine stance to pupil ratio of 1:81 (1:40); and a desk to pupil ratio of 1:6 (1:3). Key challenges identified by government officials stem from constraints in both supply and demand. UPE and USE are among the key development priorities foreseen by local government in their current three-year development plan (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Table 5: Supply and demand constraints in education in Kityerera

Supply	Demand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate classroom space in some schools • Poor reading culture in some schools • Poor utilisation of text books and non-text book materials • Lack of sufficient land for school gardens • Unfavourable learning conditions in schools • Inadequate financial support to the sector • Delayed release of UPE capitation grant, negatively affecting implementation of school programmes • Persistent absenteeism of head teachers coupled with poor teacher supervision and lack of teacher preparation. • Poor staffing in some schools owing to inadequate housing accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of role models in villages • Cultural beliefs • Negative attitude of parents towards education of their children • Failure of parents to provide the necessities (lunch, books, pens, mathematical sets, uniforms and other requirements)

Source: Developed from Mayuge District Local Government (2010b).

Health

The main causes of morbidity and mortality in the sub-district include malaria, acute respiratory infections (ARIs), HIV and AIDS, intestinal parasites and diarrhoeal diseases. Latrine coverage is just 24% (compared with overall district coverage of 48%) and the nutritional status is poor.

There are three government health centres (Levels II and IV) supervised by the sub-district medical officer, and 51 village health teams (VHTs) (although not all are functional), as well as community-based health care services including traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and other community resource persons (CORPs), such as traditional healers, immunisation scouts etc. It is estimated that 60% of the population lives within a five km. distance from the nearest health unit.

Key health sector challenges identified by government staff pertain most to issues of supply, including inadequate funding, staffing levels, infrastructure, transport, medical equipment and facilities. Improving primary health care along with provision of accessible clean safe water and improved sanitation are among the key priorities identified in the sub-district's current three-year development plan (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Gender discrimination

Gender-based discrimination and inequality are seen to be a key factor hindering development in the sub-county. Aside from their significant reproductive and household roles, women contribute up to 76% of labour for agricultural production. But most women do not own their own land, livestock or fishing equipment; they have little control over household production systems, are unlikely to engage in cash crop production and have little access to market information or extension services. Women do engage in petty trading as market vendors, and are also involved in illegal trade (smuggling). Some engage in prostitution in the urban centres like Bugadde Trading Centre, seen as a survival strategy in the absence of entrepreneurship skills, capital and other assets. Microcredit programmes are available for women; however, debt-servicing conditions limit their financial empowerment (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Most technical staff at district and sub-county level are men, and men also occupy key sub-county/sector decision-making positions (although women occupy a minimum of a third of all elective positions at all levels). Women are more involved than men in the formation of community groups such as rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), burial societies etc.; men participate more in community meetings organised by local government authorities (for which wives normally need permission from their husbands to attend). The Community Development Department – tasked with, among other things, gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment – is understaffed, has no means of transport for outreach activities and lacks proper facilities and equipment. It also notes a general misperception of gender as a uniquely woman’s issue (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Development challenges

Key challenges include high levels of poverty, illiteracy, low yields in agricultural production, poor road infrastructure and a limited market for agricultural produce. A fall in local revenue has occurred as a result of policies doing away with the previous graduated tax system (which used to contribute 80% of the sub-county’s local resources), compounded by limited local resources. According to a participatory poverty assessment study conducted in Mayuge, the key causes of poverty and vulnerability are shortage of land and soil exhaustion; environmental degradation and deforestation, with settlement encroachment into forest reserves; poor markets for produce; dwindling fish stocks in Lake Victoria; and lack of extension services (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Large and extended families – to which the practice of polygamy contributes – and high dependency rates are seen to contribute to household poverty, but traditional and religious beliefs work against family planning efforts, and women have limited control over fertility or sexual and reproductive decisions. Young couples with limited to no income are unable to cope with the high cost of living and many end up moving to towns or on the street in the busy trading centre of Bugadde (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

4.3.2 Baitambogwe sub-county

Overview

Baitambogwe sub-county is located in the northern part of Mayuge district, with a population projected in 2012 at 43,512 (52% female), distributed within 4 parishes and 30 villages (Mayuge District Local Government, 2012). According to the 2002 census, just under a third (31%) of the population is Muslim; 38% Anglican; 26% Catholic; 3% Pentecostal; and 2% ‘Other’.

The sub-county is primarily rural, with over 70% of the population engaged in subsistence farming on average landholdings of 2.5 acres. Sweet potatoes and cassava are grown as staple foods, along with beans, maize, bananas and horticultural crops. Other



Picture 5. More and more land is being given over to sugar-cane production

crops grown for cash include coffee and cotton, as well as – increasingly – sugarcane, which is expanding as a result of the outgrowers' scheme of Kakira Sugar Works (some 15% of the population is estimated to be engaged in sugarcane-growing, which is now estimated to cover 60% of the total area). Men keep cattle while women look after goats and poultry at home. There has been a general decline in the numbers of livestock in the sub-county owing to the ever-decreasing acreage of land available as a result of sugarcane expansion. Fishing on the lake and rivers is a male occupation, although women are engaged in fish drying (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a).

The climate is tropical and includes three main forest reserves; however, improper use of the wetlands and deforestation by sugarcane growers are depleting resources, and erratic rainfall and droughts are frequent. Land degradation and fragmentation are serious problems, with growing conflicts over land. The majority of the population (95%) uses firewood or charcoal for cooking, and charcoal is also commercialised, leading to further deforestation. Agriculture is characterised by low productivity, with limited access to credit and high levels of crop diseases (coffee crops have been particularly affected); poverty rates are high; and there is high incidence of stunting owing to inadequate nutrition. Most people live in mud and wattle houses with iron roofing. Average life expectancy is 48 for men and 50 for women (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a). Nevertheless, according to one of our key informants, Baitambogwe is considered the best-off and most advanced of the other sub-counties, with most of the education elite (KII, DEO, Mayuge).

Education

As a result of the government UPE programme and the Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme, literacy in the sub-county has increased to about 75%. Baitambogwe has a total of 24 primary schools (15 government-aided) and 6 secondary schools (only one government-aided) (Mayuge District Local Government, 2013), as well as around 10 nursery schools run on a private basis. Overall enrolment in primary in both government and non-government schools is 21,162 (10,145 boys/11,017 girls) (2010 figures); the enrolment ratio of boys to girls rises in upper primary school (Levels 5-7). Secondary school enrolment is much lower, with dropout rates at 30% (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a). Yet, according to our KIIs, this is one of the best-performing sub-counties in Mayuge – close even to Jinja, where overall educational levels are high and parents know the value of education.

In spite of the government's policy of UPE, many parents are unable to meet the costs of maintaining their children in school, contributing to high dropout levels; girls in particular tend to drop out after Primary 7 owing to pregnancy and early marriage. Absenteeism among students is also high. With rising primary enrolments owing to UPE coupled with limited school infrastructure, congestion in classrooms has affected the quality of education; students generally show poor academic performance. At secondary level, key challenges include low pay for teachers, limited infrastructure, limited funding and high fees. The sector development plan for the sub-county includes a special emphasis on girls' education (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a).

Health

Major diseases in the sub-county are malaria, diarrhoeal diseases and intestinal parasites. Ongoing programmes on immunisation, hygiene and sanitation, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), malaria control and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV and AIDS are in operation, but lack sufficient staff. Immunisation rates remain low (49% measles); HIV rates are said to be high (statistics not available); and food insecurity is rising in part because of a shortage of land for food crops, with malnutrition affecting in particular children and the elderly. Two-thirds of households (66%) have access to safe water; however, under half (47.5%) are equipped with usable latrines (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a).

While government policy is to ensure one health unit per parish, there are only three government health centres (Levels II and III) for the four parishes of the sub-county. Buluba Hospital provides health services for the surrounding catchment area and VHTs exist to provide outreach, but, as in Mayuge, coverage is constrained (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a).

Gender discrimination

In most households, men are the primary owners of assets such as land, cattle, houses, means of transport and all household property, including radios and other sources of information. Women are considered merely care-takers, with little or no say on key issues concerning this property. They are engaged for the most part in household maintenance and child-rearing, as well as farming, although increasingly also engaging in income-generating activities including the sale of food products and produce in the markets and work in small shops and restaurants. In both the public and the private sector, employment favours men: Baitambogwe sub-county headquarters has only three female staff and very few women are engaged in management activities in the private sector. Women are more involved than men in group activities such as credit and saving schemes, burial societies and HIV and AIDS post-test groups; men participate more in community meetings organised by the local government authorities (women commonly have to seek permission from their husbands in order to participate). The sub-county has only one CDO – responsible, among other things, for gender mainstreaming, a sector that remains – as others – under-resourced (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a).

Development challenges

A fall in local revenue has occurred as a result of policies doing away with the previous graduated tax system, compounded by limited local resources. Key challenges in the sub-county include limited human and financial resources; inadequate road networks and difficult access to electricity; unfavourable climatic conditions; instability of population settlements; and limited participation of women, youth and people with disabilities in development activities. There is a lack of suitable land for agriculture and settlement; extensive deforestation; and low educational levels. There is increased emigration, particularly on the lake shores. Gambling, excessive drinking and idleness are also highlighted as problems, as is high unemployment among youth (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a).

The government's National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme is being implemented in Baitambogwe, and a community-driven development approach is being followed. A number of NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) are active as development partners in the sub-county, focusing on agricultural and livelihood development; HIV and AIDS prevention, care and treatment; health care; good governance; and gender mainstreaming. Programmes for youth, women, persons with disabilities and vulnerable children, UPE and primary health care are among the priority development activities identified by the local government (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010a).

5 Changing experiences of marriage and education for adolescent girls

5.1 Changing experiences of marriage

Our field research analysed both trends and current conditions in marriage among adolescent girls through a variety of instruments. The main trends uncovered include a continued early age at either marriage or first pregnancy; a rise in ‘informal’ marriages or cohabitation arrangements; more individual choice of partner; perpetuation of traditional gender-typed ideals around marriage in terms of gender role expectations and what makes a good wife and a good husband; limited reproductive health information and services – including family planning services – and a changing role for the *senga* or paternal aunt in preparing girls for marriage.

Trends on monogamy and polygamy⁸ were not entirely clear, as most girls interviewed were in monogamous relationships, although these can later turn into polygamy, and polygamy among old women was widespread. There is – moreover – a common (and commonly expected) practice of ‘informal polygamy’, in which men have relationships with multiple women. Early pregnancy – both within and outside of marriage – is increasingly common – becoming, in a sense, a ‘descriptive’ norm in the study communities. However, pregnancy outside marriage, when the adolescent girl is still living with her parents, is still viewed negatively and surrounded by social stigma and ‘injunctive’ social norms.



Picture 6. Girls’ and women’s experiences of marriage are changing in a number of ways

Girls’ experiences of marriage within this changing context are both positive and negative: some relish the independence from their own families, find satisfaction through recognition as ‘social adults’ and appreciate the economic support husbands provide. Others, however, recognise that early marriage and motherhood have stunted their opportunities for further education or skills development leading to jobs. A number – particularly in informal marriage arrangements that they have contracted themselves – face economic difficulties in the new household, as young husbands themselves struggle to support the family; these informal unions are – in turn – said to be highly unstable, with little formal protection for girls, who may be abandoned with their children after break-up of the couple.

Sources of support for girls within marriage are largely family-based; local government and religious leaders offer some services and/or counselling in cases of marital conflict, but such services are often out of the reach of adolescent girls.

⁸ The generic term ‘polygamy’ is most commonly used in Uganda, over the more specific term ‘polygyny’.

5.1.1 Trends and perceptions related to age at first marriage

Early marriage is common among girls in both communities

The study communities show high prevalence of early marriage, with girls commonly married by the age of 16, and some as early as 12 or 13. Early marriage was described as being more common among out-of-school girls, but was also clearly linked to school dropouts. Early marriage persists in the face of laws against this and potential punishment of transgressors under laws pertaining to ‘defilement.’ Study participants were aware of 18 as the legal age of marriage; the rise of informal marriage practices may be one way of attempting to circumvent this law with unions, so to speak, driven underground.

While there was near unanimity that early marriage is not good for either the girl or her family, its prevalence was attributed to a number of factors. These include parental desire for bride wealth; premarital pregnancy precipitating marriage; conditions of poverty or mistreatment of girls at home – particularly by stepparents; peer pressure; films that provoke ‘experimentation’ with adult relationships; and continuing perceptions within local communities that sexual maturation equals readiness for marriage, such that ‘Once a girl has developed breasts she is eligible for marriage!’ (FGD, in-school boys, Kityerera).

Cultural prescriptions against girls starting their menses in their parents’ home were also evoked and reported to be particularly strong among Muslims, associated with the value placed on virginity at marriage. As a religious leader explained, ‘Our religion (Islam) tells us that, when a girl enters into her periods, she is ready for marriage – this is the ‘ripe’ age. The prophet says that some things should not be delayed – these include burial of the dead and marrying a girl when she starts her periods. This is to avoid them having a child with no father and being “spoilt”’ (KII, Islamic imam, Kityerera). Section 6 on key drivers of change and persistence discusses these factors and others in more detail.

Contradictory perceptions of trends towards lower ages of marriage now than in the past

Some respondents said the age of marriage had been rising over time, partly as a function of the decline in arranged marriage formalised through bride wealth and partly through expanded education. Many respondents, however, suggested age at first marriage had instead been declining – for both girls and boys. A number of respondents affirmed that, in the past, girls would not ‘rush into marriage’ but would get married at ages ranging from 18 to 30 years; today even girls aged 12-15 years were getting married. The same was true of boys.

Reasons advanced for this perceived trends towards lower ages of marriage included an increase in orphans (FGD, fathers, Kityerera); earlier onset of first menstruation (FGD, mothers, Kityerera); and – most commonly – greater freedom given to young people, who no longer listen to parents but just go off together (IT, 19-year-old girl, Kityerera; IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). Still other respondents perceived little change, stating that early marriage was common in the past and remains common today, even if the key contributing factors may be changing.

Table 6: Intergenerational perspectives on trends in age at marriage

Those days	These days
Perceptions of trends towards higher age at marriage	
<i>‘In my mother’s time, girls were given into marriage very young – 14 or 15. They didn’t know the value of a girl; they only wanted wealth so they would say, “Let us sell off this girl so they give us cows” [...]</i>	<i>[...] It is different today – people now think a girl can get married even at 25-30 years. This is good’ (IT, 35-year old mother, Kityerera).</i>
<i>‘Parents used to send us into marriage as early as 12 years old. One would give the father a bottle of alcohol and he would give him the girl [...] Men would even start buying girls from the early age of nine! [...]</i>	<i>[...] Girls are now getting married around 18-20, although some may be younger’ (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i>

Perceptions of trends towards lower age at marriage	
<i>'In our time, people thought a girl should get married at 20. I think this is because they thought a girl would be able to handle family matters then and the girl would have learnt all the home chores. Before you got married, you have to learn how to mingle flour for a large family – can a 13-year-old girl manage that? I think also girls who were older would not have difficulties in giving birth because the bones would be strong [...]</i>	<i>[...] But these days, girls are marrying early – 15, 16 – by 17 it is already late for most of them. Most girls marry early – around 15. They are not being forced by their parents – they just go. Only God can help you see your daughter remains home and does not get married early' (IT, mother, Kityerera).</i>
<i>'In my day, most girls got married around 16, when they knew what to do in marriage and were not just experimenting [...]</i>	<i>[...] These days, girls get married even younger – at 13, 14, 15 years. They no longer wait to grow older, but just get married' (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe).</i>
<i>'When I was growing up, most people believed 18-20 was a good time for girls to marry; at 18 a girl was believed to be old enough to handle family matters[...]</i>	<i>[...] But these days we call it a dangerous time because children no longer listen to their parents, a boy can marry any time as can the girl; children make decisions when they want because of children rights brought by the government [...] parents can say nothing' (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i>
Perceptions of little change but persistence of early marriage	
<i>'In my grandmother's time, girls would be forced into marriage even at age 12 [...]</i>	<i>[...] Many girls in the community continue to get married at an early age – some because of mistreatment at home, others because of peer pressure' (IT, 17-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).</i>
<i>'Our grandmother told us girls used to get married at 13 years [...]</i>	<i>[...] Today, it is not allowed to marry a young girl still in school - they will arrest you. But some girls are still marrying young – at 14 or 15; however, this is done in secret now' (IT, 19-year-old unmarried mother of 2, Baitambogwe).</i>
<i>'Most people in my time thought 15 was a good age – they thought girls would be old enough [...]</i>	<i>[...] and even today it is still the same' (IT, 18-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).</i>

It is difficult to deduce actual trends from such diverse perceptions. For one thing, the past was not clearly defined among the different study cohorts, described variously as the 1950s, 1980s, 1990s and 2004. Moreover, exact ages for marriage among older women were not always recalled with certainty, and perceptions did not always correspond with reality in terms of actual ages at marriage across the generations. Some of the ambiguity may also owe to the definition of marriage: women who married 'informally' by running off with their men, only later coming back to the parents for the 'introduction' and payment of bride wealth/compensation, might be reporting the later date as the age of marriage. It could also be that some study participants are romanticising the past.

In IT discussions, ages given in Kityerera suggest a range within 15 and 19 within which most marriages – across the generations – take place (although one grandmother said she was not married until age 28!) In Baitambogwe, mothers and grandmothers married between the ages of 14 and 18, whereas the girls – two of whom were unmarried mothers – all gave much (perhaps unrealistically – higher ages for when they would like to marry (from 25 to 30). In the MNAs in the two communities, age at marriage ranged between 14 and 19 years for the girls; between 14 and 20 years for the mothers; between 16 and 20 years for the mothers-in-law; and between 16 and 17 for the paternal aunts. In contrast, all the men interviewed in the MNAs married when they were above 18, with ages ranging from 19 to 27.



Picture 7. Older women provide perspectives on changes over time in marriage forms and practices

While the evidence is not conclusive on actual trends in age of marriage, the fact remains that early marriage is currently a common phenomenon in the two study communities.

Ideal ages for marriage are for the most part higher than actual ages

While it was acknowledged in the two study communities that early marriage was the behavioural norm, both adults and adolescents themselves felt marriages should ideally be postponed until later when each partner would be ready to take on the associated roles and responsibilities.

Many adult study participants suggested girls should wait until the ages of 18-25 to get married; one group of fathers noted that, although 18 was the legal age for a girl, they considered this too low for a girl, who *'should get married at 20 years because that's when she will have mentally matured and physiologically – capable of going through pregnancy and birth without complications'* (FGD, fathers, Kityerera); others, however, noted that 19 would be a better age: *'If a boy waits to marry an older, more mature girl, he will end up with a faded/second hand woman who has already given birth – a used bicycle (egali ekozeko)'* (FGD, fathers, Kityerera). Some adults were of the view that out-of-school girls should get married earlier; those in school should wait until they have completed their studies. It was felt boys, meanwhile, should wait until at least 20, if not 30, when, in the words of our respondents, *'The boy would have had time to prepare – first buy household items that will be used at home'* (MNA, paternal aunt, Kityerera); and, *'The boy would have grown maturely and can handle family matters'* (MNA, paternal aunt, Baitambogwe).

Echoing the adults, all the boys and girls, both in school and out and married and unmarried, stated a later ideal age for marriage than the current norms and provided explanations for this. Most gave an age range for girls of between 18 and 25 and for boys of between 25 and 30.

For girls to marry, it was seen as important that *'they would have grown maturely and finished schooling'* (FGD, married girls, Baitambogwe), with some adding in this regard, *'If a girl is not in school, she should marry at 18 as the Constitution decided. But if in school she should wait to marry until she completes'* (FGD, unmarried girls in school, Kityerera). Some evoked the girl's ability to take on adult responsibilities and to *'know how to handle marriage'* (FGD, unmarried adolescent mothers, Kityerera); others stressed the importance of learning and preparation for economic roles, should the woman in future need to shoulder such tasks. One young unmarried mother, having learned from her experience, said she would like to get married around age 25, *'after I have gotten a job to look after myself [...] I want to prepare for my marriage because men deceive us – making us believe that they will provide each and everything, but after marriage these things begin diminishing slowly until*

they become a nightmare' (IT, 18-year-old girl, Baitambogwe). Boys agreed with this assessment of why girls should wait to prepare herself: *'By this age the girl will have attained some education and/or skills to enable her maintain herself, as these days men are only interested in sex after which they abandon the girl'* (FGD, in-school boys, Kityerera).

Some study participants made specific reference to the law in setting the ideal age: *'A girl should get married at 18 years because the law doesn't allow her to marry below that'* (FGD, unmarried adolescent mothers, Kityerera). Interestingly, some of the boys who made reference to the legal age of marriage suggested it should actually be higher and girls should be free to decide whether or not to marry at all:

'I know the legal age of marriage as 18 years, but I feel it should be increased to 20 years. It increases a girl's chance for education. There are no advantages for a girl to marry before 18 years, unless she is lucky to get an industrious husband. A girl who waits longer to get married has ample time to choose a proper partner and increased opportunity to meet her marriage expectations. If a girl chooses not to marry at all she enjoys her freedom to the full, not bogged down by marriage problems' (FGD, in-school boys, Kityerera).

A group of married girls, drawing on their experience, summarised the advantages of postponing marriage as follows:

'When a girl gets married when she is older, she can make decisions, get a job, she does not have to deal with a child who is always crying and making her cry too. When she gets married early, she is filled with admiration for what she cannot have, and she cannot make decisions in the home. Also, in marriage there is fighting and you are separated from your parents' (FGD, married out-of-school girls, Baitambogwe).

To explain the later age of marriage for boys, it was reasoned that, *'The higher age given to the boy is because he is the head of the family and should be older than the girl and by then his reasoning capacity has grown'* (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Baitambogwe); *'They would have planned for the family, learnt how to handle the family issues, left off the business of watching football and would be able to buy clothes for his wife and become smart'* (FGD, married girls, Baitambogwe); and, *'That's when he will have acquired household basics'* (FGD, unmarried adolescent mothers, Kityerera).

5.1.2 Changing marriage forms and processes

A variety of marriage forms

Different forms of marriage identified by study participants in the two communities include customary/traditional marriage, civil marriage, religious marriage (Christian, Islamic) and other (mainly informal) forms, which include elopement and cohabitation. Customary marriages are still being formed; however, they are increasingly giving way to more informal unions. Religious marriages in the mosque or church seem to be less common than either customary or informal marriages; sometimes, they represent a later religious confirmation of a previously contracted customary marriage.

Changes in customary marriages as unions between families or clans

Customary marriages are commonly arranged by parents – although children sometimes have some say. They are normally preceded by an exchange of visits between the two families during which an assessment of family status and individual attributes takes place. As one informant put it, *'The status of the family counted: including education, wealth, behaviour. The girl should be hard-working and well behaved, i.e. kneeling when greeting. Physical appearance was also important – she should have significant hips, a sign of fertility and not walk straight like a man'* (KII, community development officer, Mayuge).

The formal introduction, kwandula, is accompanied by negotiation and payment of an agreed bride price representing the transfer of the girl, her labour potential and reproductive capacity from the natal to the marital household. As our informant explained, *'Basically, it was a marriage between families – the children were just*

links between the families. When problems arose, it was up to the families to settle them' (KII, community development officer, Mayuge). But most participants noted that such practices were rapidly changing.

Box 4: Perspectives on changes in customary marriage practices

'They no longer follow the traditional culture. In earlier days, a boy would identify a girl he would like to marry and tell his parents. But today the boys think they are wise enough so they don't follow that cultural norm which actually was good because the parents used to appreciate the family their child is going marry from' (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera).

'Family marriage negotiations took place in the past, but now there is no culture. The grandparents would negotiate on behalf of the parents of the girl to stamp the relationship. Eventually, dowry was determined and paid to the girls' family' (KII, male headmaster, Kityerera).

'In the olden days, it was before the formal introductions were made that parents could find out about the background of the intended spouse, to see if he was suitable for their daughter. Only afterwards would the negotiations between families be made. Today, such introductions are optional [...] Our children have lost the culture' (KII, sub-county vice chair, in charge of children and women affairs, Baitambogwe).

'A parent would go with his son and visit the family of the girl and request to be "born into" that family [...] People would look at the hard work of both children. Some people would get a mediator or 'go-between' to act as linkage between the parent of the boy and girl. The mediator was any person (man or women) who knew the girl very well and was able to speak to and convince her of the marriage. It was a person who knew both families. But this is now changing' (FGD, men, Baitambogwe).

The rise of 'informal' unions

The most significant change in marital patterns observed by most study participants is the rise of informal living arrangements among young people who – foregoing customary practices of introductions through parents and family accompanied by the payment of traditional bride wealth – are 'running off' to live together, either without their parents' knowledge or against their wishes. This is commonly referred to as 'marriage through window' (*kawundo kakubye edirisa*) and was estimated to represent nearly 7 out of 10 of all new marriages in the study communities. In FGDs with married teen mothers (aged around 19) in both study sites, only 2 (out of 16) said they were married officially (religious or customary marriages); the others were in informal cohabitation arrangements. In the MNAs, all five of the girls were informally married 'through the window'.

One group of adults explained that this phenomenon had to do with reduced parental control over children and the multiplication of opportunities young people had to meet each other outside of the confines of family:

'These are what we call road marriages – abrupt marriages – meaning "I go with what is going." A girl goes to the well to fetch water, abandons the jerry can at the well and by the time her parents realise it, she is married somewhere. Or a girl boards a bus to Tororo and on the same bus she meets a man – a total stranger – but before you know what is happening they are married. Or they go to a video hall (kibanda) and come out with a girl ready for marriage' (CM, mixed adults, Kityerera).

Adolescents confirm this assessment:

'They meet at the well or coming from fetching water; the girl does not return home but goes off with the man/boy – they call it kahundo kakubye edinisa. They marry and start producing children. In the community they are regarded as married, in that village they call you the wife of that man' (FGD, unmarried girls in school, Baitambogwe).

The rise of informal unions has entailed a shift in marriage as an institutional arrangement between families, and indeed entire clans, to one that is more an agreement between individuals. Formal bride price no longer cements such unions, although parents often demand 'compensation' from the boy and his family after the fact. *'Afterwards, the boy may bring the girl's parents an "appreciation" in the form of an envelope with money'*

(KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). This is sometimes referred to as a ‘fine’, as in the words of this girl who entered into an informal union:

‘My parents did not like the form of marriage I entered into because they wanted an official/formal arranged marriage, but this could not happen due to the prevailing conditions – the boy was still in school and was not ready for marriage but because he loved me he accepted that I come and stay with him. A fine was paid to my parents – salt, sugar, soap and a letter’ (MNA, girl, Kityerera).

Cohabitation, although increasingly common, is not one of the legally recognised forms of marriage in Uganda and – as such – does not provide any legal protection for the girl. Such ‘marriages’ are also usually quite unstable and can easily break up, leaving the girl with offspring to bring up without support. Some consider them a form of ‘trial marriage’. As one informant explained, *‘Such “marriages” are highly unstable, leading to a situation of multiple marriages or cohabitation arrangements in serial form’* (KII, cultural leader, Kityerera). Another sums it up this way:

‘More and more go into “loose” marriages/cohabitation. Two teenagers get married, have a child and then the marriage breaks and the girl is left with the child. Her best option is to go back to the parents for help in caring for the child – it is her parents to bear the burden. When the child reaches 13 – if a boy – the father’s clan will take him back, but if a girl, she will often stay with the mother – “no one cares”. Boys go from one “marriage” to another, producing more children along the way. There is a big knowledge gap – people entering into marriage without knowing what they are getting into’ (KII, sub-county vice chair, in charge of children and women affairs, Mayuge).

Girls themselves recognise the risks: *‘It is bad and risky because the parents do not know where you went. In case of serious problems, the man will just dump you at home when your parents are away, or and when you die the man can just dump your corpse at your home and run away’* (FGD, unmarried girls in school, Kityerera). Some girls, although married informally, state a preference for a more formal marriage, which they are planning to contract later, craving the perceived security and respect that is accorded through formalisation ceremonies: *‘I am not happy with this type of marriage because they have not gone to my parents but we are preparing to go there’* (MNA, girl, Kityerera). Yet the practice continues unabated.

Some study participants linked this rising phenomenon to poverty – with girls from impoverished households seeking economic security through such unions: *‘Now, girls are attracted by small things that boys, who have money from fishing or other things, can offer them’* (KII, cultural leader, Kityerera). Others linked it to girls’ attempts to escape mistreatment at home – often by stepparents: *‘Before, there was proper marriage with the parents grooming their children well. But now you find children are growing with their stepmother and so are mistreated so much’* (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera). Table 7 summarises some of the perspectives on changes from ‘those days’ to ‘these days’ in terms of the rise of ‘marriage through the window’.

Table 7: Intergenerational perspectives on the rise of informal cohabitation

Those days	These days
<i>‘In earlier times, girls would get married with their parents’ knowledge [...]</i>	<i>[...] Nowadays, girls just run away from home and get married [...]</i> Some girls say they love the boy but the parents refuse so they just run away with their boys (IT, 19-year-old married girl, Kityerera).
<i>‘Customary marriage was typical in my day - where parents of both sides meet to negotiate the bride wealth and make party arrangements for their children [...]</i>	<i>[...] but these days, the lifestyles of children have changed, many of them are jumpy’</i> (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
<i>‘I was married through “introduction”. When you find a man, you would take him to your parents for introduction and they tell him what to bring [in her case, two cows, six goats, clothes for her mother,</i>	<i>[...] Things are changing today, with most girls “just going for marriage” Girls just leave school and get married in marriage a parent might not want for her so she won’t have peace in her marriage’</i> (IT, 35-

<p><i>father and senga); then he pays them and he takes you [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In my day marriage was done in an organised way with singing and dancing accompanying them and payment of cows. In those days, girls were more patient [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In our time, a man would take time to court a girl for some time before they got married [...]</i></p> <p><i>'What I saw was that it was the parents on both sides who would talk to each other and agree to marry off their children. Then the two sets of parents would meet each other and talk about the introduction. Then after that, they would bring the bride wealth and they take you for marriage. That is what I saw [...]</i></p>	<p>year-old mother, Kityerera).</p> <p><i>[...] Today, girls just run off and get married without anything' (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).</i></p> <p><i>[...] unlike today where a girl sees a boy and they move in together that very day' (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Things have changed - now they get married when they are at school, at the bore hole, after eating chapattis. Maybe girls are greedy for sex – or for food. A boy might ask the girl – are you equal to the juice and chapatti? You see, the girl is like juice and chapatti so the boy starts from there (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
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While the prevailing view among our study respondents was that the rise of 'marriage through the window' was a new phenomenon, others suggested it also occurred in the past, albeit perhaps not as frequently, and that it could later be 'formalised' into a customary form of marriage through payment of 'compensation' in lieu of traditional bride wealth by the boy or the couple to the girl's parents, thus marking a 'transitional form' of marriage. In our intergenerational exercises, this seemed to be particularly the case in Baitambogwe – where four out of the five mothers interviewed and one of the grandmothers had indeed run off first, before later formalising the arrangement. In Kityerera, customary marriages were more the norm among the older women. In the marital networks, three out of the five mothers had contracted informal unions, with customary marriages for the other two. All the paternal aunts interviewed were also initially married informally but later formalised their unions through an introduction and payment of bride wealth, turning them into customary marriages.

5.1.3 Changes and persistence in bride wealth practices

All respondents observed that a marriage commands respect only on exchange of bride wealth between the two families. In traditional marriage systems in Uganda – as in much of Sub-Saharan Africa – bride wealth flows from the groom's family to the bride's family, in comparison with dowry systems in other parts of the world, for example South Asia, where payments flow from the family of the bride to the family of the groom.

A number of our study participants noted that bride wealth in our study communities – though still a potent symbol of the transactional nature of marriage solidifying relations between two families, representing as it does the transfer of girls' productive and reproductive capacity from one family to another – was changing in value, composition and frequency.

Some respondents said the value was diminishing in the context of widespread poverty, and parents were eager to accept any amount on the marriage of their daughters, a factor that continued to fuel early marriages. *'Nowadays, bride price is no longer a major issue'* (IT, unmarried 18-year-old girl with child, Baitambogwe). *'These days also, girls don't want to be bought – that is why some people give different amounts of money in the letter and others don't give any at all'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera). Others noted, to the contrary, that bride price was rising: *'Bride wealth in the past was not high – even 50 shillings was a lot, and getting it was not easy, but today they can ask for a million'* (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe). By some accounts, cows as the standard currency for bride wealth seem to be giving way to money and other in-kind payments: *'Things have changed – I don't know – maybe this modernisation of whites. Bringing cows as bride wealth had ended by the time girls were being educated'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).

As noted above, informal relationships can be formalised at a later time through ‘compensation’ or ‘fines’ paid by the boy or his parents, and – perhaps – later arranging for payment of full bride wealth to the girl’s family. Since the informal cohabitation arrangements are so instable, however, payment of actual bride wealth is often forgone completely and is therefore fading as a form of ‘social cement’ for marriages. *‘Today, very few parents ask for bride wealth because most girls don’t stabilise in marriage and they would be expected to refund it’* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera). *‘Buying a woman these days is a miracle: men don’t buy women because women don’t stabilise in families. In earlier times, bride price was common because women used to stay in marriage. Now men don’t marry because of the family demands; gender equality has spoiled women, so they don’t listen to their men’* (CM, younger men and women 18-30, Baitambogwe).

In Box 5, participants describe the varying forms and meanings of bride wealth in the customary system and how some of these are changing.

Box 5: Changing perspectives on bride wealth

A good practice that should be retained

‘Bride wealth and fines in form of money, chairs, cows, goats are paid to the girl’s parents. Bride wealth gives the women and her parents respect’ (FGD, in-school boys, Baitambogwe).

‘The bride price exchange is good and the ceremony involves a lot of merry-making and happiness. The in-laws bring cows and goats and the bride is much respected’ (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

Mixed views

‘People pay bride price as long as there is consensus. It may be two or three goats, one or two cows or cash from 300,000 shillings (\$122). It is good because the man respects you, but also bad because a man may make you work like a slave to recover his cash or cows. Yes I want to be bought, men have to pay for us’ (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Kityerera).

‘For me I would say that we go back to the system of appreciating the parents but not buying because it leaves some people poor’ (FGD, in-school boys, Baitambogwe).

‘There is payment of bride wealth in form of money, a goat, a cock, clothes for the mother and father and sugar. It is good because it gives respect to the girl on one hand. On the other hand it is not good because the girl might not behave well and the boy can mistreat the girl’ (FGD, out-of-school married girls, Baitambogwe).

‘A woman whose bride wealth was paid will persist in marriage whatever the challenges because she is aware her family may not be able to refund the bride price if she deserts her husband and marital home’ (FGD, married girls, Kityerera).

‘For me my father does not ask for anything as bride wealth. He says children were given to him freely by God. But we provide for him. The disadvantages of bride price are more than the advantages’ (FGD, married girls, Kityerera).

‘I do not support bride wealth – which is viewed as selling the girl, but the boy can bring gifts. We don’t want to sell our girl but the man can decide on what to bring to us as gifts’ (MNA, mother, Kityerera).

5.1.4 Trends in monogamy and polygamy

Persistent practice of polygamy

Two types of marriage were identified in the study communities – monogamy and polygamy. Trends in polygamy (whether growing or decreasing) were difficult to discern, but it seems to be a persistent practice. Many informants described it as the most common form of marriage in the past: ‘They were picking women like millet – a man could even have five wives. They wanted to have many children and would also use them as farm labourers to get wealthy’ (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). But it was also described as the most common practice in the community today, condoned in both traditional marriages and Islamic marriages. Moreover, ‘informal’ forms of polygamy were observed to be taking place whereby a man might cohabit with more than

one woman without marrying either officially, or a man marries one wife officially but has other women on the side with whom he is not married. As one woman explained, ‘Men want to test everyone they come across’ (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera). It was observed that even marriages that are legally required to be monogamous (civil and church) can eventually turn into polygamy when the men acquire more wives, whether formally or informally.

Intergenerational interviews in the two study communities suggest polygamy was the prevailing norm in the grandmothers’ generation (five out of eight) and common in the mothers’ generation as well (four out of eight). Even in officially monogamous relationships, as one woman explained, ‘A man cannot fail to have other women’ and her husband, although officially monogamous, ‘had other women as side dishes’ (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). While the one married girl in the intergenerational interview was in a monogamous relationship, all girls expressed a real concern that husbands might eventually take on other wives. The girl whose father had ‘side dishes’ specifically hopes for a marriage that is better than that of her mother. In the MNAs, all five girls were in monogamous marriages; four out of five of the mothers had had polygamous marriages. Three of the mothers-in-law, on the other hand, had monogamous marriages. Of the paternal aunts, three were in monogamous and two in polygamous marriages.

Community explanations of polygamy

Community explanations for polygamy range from religion, demography and ethnic identity to men’s sexual urges. There continued to be strong cultural associations of prestige for a man having many women and children, and girls recognised this. ‘Men also get respect when they have more than one woman’ (IT, 19-year-old girl, Kityerera). There were some signs that socioeconomic changes and household poverty may be eroding men’s capacity to support many wives; other community perceptions pointed, on the contrary, to its persistent – and even growing – presence, particularly in its ‘informal’ manifestations. Some respondents pointed to the rise of new types of informal polygamy and others traced changes in trends to the 1980s, although there were contrasting views on the direction of these trends. Box 6 presents community views on polygamy.

Box 6: Community views on polygamy and its changing forms

Cultural and religious justifications

‘Polygamous marriages are the most common in the community because we are Muslims’ (FGD, married adolescent women, Kityerera).

‘Men in Busoga have a tendency for many wives – the more wives, the more prestigious’ (KII, male CSO coordinator, GBV network, Mayuge).

Economic considerations

‘Men have taken the lead in marrying so many women since the 1980s. Women have become too many and men have become more lustful. It is very easy to pick a woman and take her home as it has become so cheap’ (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera).

‘Before in 1980 most men had two wives but today most have one because they cannot afford more owing to the poor standard of living and reduction in land’ (FGD, men, Baitambogwe).

‘Polygamy used to be more common, but now this is changing. Our parents and grand fathers were economically better off, owning a lot of land and could afford to marry many women formally. However poverty has now set in, agricultural yields are very poor and engaging in polygamy is not an option of choice for many men’ (FGD, fathers, Kityerera).

The ‘modernisation’ of polygamy

‘Polygamy is the most common form of marriage in the district – 60-70%, with an average of three wives – though this can go up to six or seven. Even in so-called monogamous marriages, a man will often have someone else in the trading centre. Polygamy has been around for a long time – today it is just modernised’ (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

'Having multiple partners in loose marriages is now more common than formal polygamy. They are now trying to give it a name – "modern polygamy"' (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge).

'In "cultural" (or customary) polygamous arrangements, the wives would all live together in the same compound – but in the 'modern' form wives do not know each other and are all spread out. Culture has changed. Traditionally, a woman accepted polygamy, but now she wants to be alone – particularly if she is educated – so she stays alone, but men still have their other wives hidden elsewhere. To be a "real man" in Busoga, you have to have at least three or four women' (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe)

Gender-differentiated preferences for polygamy and monogamy

Many men argued in favour of the practice of polygamy, asserting that it was essential for clan expansion and posterity. They further argued polygamy was advantageous especially in terms of family/child labour, in instances where the husband owns a lot of agricultural land. Monogamy was described as risky from the view of genetic variability of the children. Men also took pride in the practice of polygamy as a status symbol in the rural study communities.

'When I grow maize and harvest a numbers of sacks, I sell them and marry another wife' (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera).

'Marrying many wives has advantages for the man. Men acquire the women at no cost and produce many children who provide free family labour. The man only buys hoes for the women. A wise man marries two wives, one from a poor family to produce many children and another from a wealthy family to access her family riches. A foolish man marries several women just to show them off to gain social status. He has nothing to offer them, and remains wallowing in poverty' (CM, mixed adults 40-60, Kityerera).

'Mainly we consider it a source of labour; as you marry more women labour increases and as you produce more children they produce more labour. It helps you raise the children which one wife could not afford' (CM, mixed adults 60+, Baitambogwe).

'It offers men a variety of children and women; we are able to improve the variety of children and thus get blessed children. Polygamy enables us get many children very quickly. We are able to expand our clans very quickly. Our wives compete in working to please men, thus leading to development in the region' (CM, mixed adults 40+, Baitambogwe).

Women and girls, on the other hand, identified monogamy as the ideal, and painted a largely negative picture of polygamy. Many of them equated it to a social evil whose effects translate into emotional pain and suffering for the women trapped in such relationships. One woman defined polygamy as *'endless tears'*; other respondents mentioned increased vulnerability to STIs, GBV, tension between co-wives and fears of *'bewitchment'*, sickness and malnutrition among children and chronic poverty and ill-being as some of its major disadvantages. *'Monogamous marriages are preferred because with polygamy there are lots of conflicts, women are jealous, the resources may not be adequate'* (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Baitambogwe).

Some men, particularly among our key informants, but also in the community, agreed with these perceptions.

'In polygamous family, in case of divorce, the children are left with the stepmother, who starts mistreating them. When a wife leaves, she must leave the children behind – there is a belief that children are for the man. In situations of many wives, there are inevitable wrangles among the parents; a girl may get impatient and go out to form her own family as a means of escape' (KII, male CSO coordinator, GBV network, Mayuge).

'In earlier times, it was easier to manage up to 10 wives. But polygamy is contributing to poverty – men can't care properly for all of their children/wives. Also, having these women scattered around makes the man worry about the wives he is not spending the night with – thinking that some other

men might be sleeping with his women and bringing in various infections’ (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

‘These days when you have many women, violence increases and children don’t like one another – unlike earlier days where women used to cook together – five women could be in same house and cook from the same pot. In those days, men used to buy meat and call women together so that he could share it out and leave no room for complaint. But today the man will bring different bags and tell you to pick one; if you pick the one he has not told you to, he will be furious and tell you to take it back. Today, “where the man will sleep is where the meat will go”. In families that do not live in the same place, women cannot know what happens in another woman’s house’ (CM, mixed adults 40+, Baitambogwe).

5.1.5 Changing preparations and information sources for marriage

The traditional importance of the senga

Our study findings show that, in the past, marriage proceedings and preparations were the responsibility of the parents and close relatives of the boys and girls. It was the parents, for instance, who would recognise and decide their daughter was ready for marriage. Thereafter, the responsibility for preparing the girl to assume her roles as wife and mother would be delegated to the girl’s paternal aunt (senga). The senga’s role was usually rewarded through provision of necessities, sugar and food but also with cash. It was believed a girl could not maintain her marriage unless she was prepared by the senga. Study participants below describe different aspects of the traditional role of the senga.

‘Girls are prepared for marriage by their paternal aunts who instruct the girl on what to expect in marriage, and how to satisfy a husband’s sexual needs and deal with other challenges. They provide her with linen cloths (embago) to clean the husband after sexual intercourse’ (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

‘For a girl, pre-marriage rituals include counselling by aunts and mothers about handling marital issues and herbal baths for blessings’ (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Kityerera).

‘A girl going to get married is trained on good manners such as how to listen to her husband, how to protect herself. A woman is a visitor in the village (omukyala mugeni) but she does not go back home – she is provided with what she needs’ (FGD, women, Baitambogwe).

‘To prepare for marriage, girls were taken to aunts who would tell them about everything related to marriage’ (FGD, in-school boys, Baitambogwe).

A girl’s preparation would focus on sensitisation about her expectations and roles and responsibilities in marriage. She would be taught how to cook, keep herself and her home clean, take care of children and perform other household chores according to the strict traditional gendered division of labour in the household. She would be counselled on a wide range of domestic issues with the aim of instilling in her a strong sense of discipline and self-confidence essential to manage her future family.

‘Premarital counselling was conducted by the paternal aunt – focusing on how to handle the man very well, iron his clothes, cook for him, welcome the man’s people. Also she tells you to cut your nails because you can hurt yourself when bathing, and to bathe with herbs to prevent odours’ (FGD, married out-of-school girls, Baitambogwe).

‘A girl is prepared for marriage by her aunts. She is counselled not to shame her family by sleeping about with boys, and to respect her in-laws. The aunts provide her with a piece of linen (enkumbi) also known as a “hoe” as the last item of her sex education, and invoke blessings to stabilise the forthcoming marriage. These preparations have not changed over time, and are done so as long as a girl marries formally’ (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

'I received information from my aunt on what to do in marriage. I was taught about how to please my husband and take care of the home – particularly caring for my husband – taking water for him to the bathroom, washing and ironing his clothes' (MNA, girl, Baitambogwe).

Sex education was a crucial and compulsory component of traditional preparations, and for girls included a wide range of issues such as menstrual and genital hygiene, some of which is still transmitted: *'Our senga have started teaching us – telling us about good manners, genital hygiene, washing knickers etc.'* (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Kityerera).

Girls were also traditionally instructed on how to satisfy a man's sexual needs. For this, she would be sensitised about the mandatory ritual of 'visiting the bush' (*kukyalira ensiko*), which involved self-seclusion in the bush or banana grove where a girl was instructed how to pull, manipulate and elongate her external genitalia using local herbs (Sodom apple, *entengotengo*) prescribed by the *senga*. It was disclosed that ethnic Basoga and Baganda men preferred such genitalia and could reject a bride whose genitalia were intact – likened to a 'gaping hole', 'a house without curtains' that is not capable of generating sexual pleasure for a man. Such practices were therefore often strictly enforced: *'If you don't visit the bush you cannot be sexually attractive to your husband because your vagina is an open big hole. In the past if a girl refused to visit the bush they would punish her by holding her, opening her legs wide, pouring millet in her vagina and letting chicken peck the millet from there (baja kufukamu oburo balete enkoko zirye)'* (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Kityerera).

For boys, it was the paternal uncle or fathers who would take on the role of preparing them for marriage. Instructions for boys focused more on skills needed to assume their roles as heads of household but were less emphasised than those for girls. *'For boys there is not much apart from counselling by uncles and being imparted with economic skills to enable them work and raise money to pay bride price and to buy land'* (FGD, in-school boys, Kityerera).

Box 7: The senga as 'gate-keeper' of traditional social norms about women and marriage

'As a paternal aunt, my role is to teach the girls basic bodily hygiene home cleanliness. On marriage, I escort the girl to the boy's home to ascertain whether the girl knows what to do, whether she understood my lessons/counsel. I also have to ascertain whether the girl is a virgin. I follow them to bed, they sleep on the bed, and I also get the mat and sleep besides the bed, listen to what they are doing. When the girl is a virgin you come back with bed sheets; if she is not virgin, you don't get anything.'

'I give other lessons relating to pulling of the labia – referred to as "visiting the bush" or "collecting firewood", and on how to behave in marriage – to be submissive, well-behaved wives. The counselling continues even after the girl is married, especially helping them resolve conflicts. My counselling is very helpful to the girls – it gives them confidence. Those who do not get such counselling fail to perform or do what is expected.'

'As a senga, I am rewarded for my work by the son-in-law, who is expected to give me sugar. I have so far counselled three girls in my family, and was given clothes. While the girls have the sengas to counsel them, the boys have no one to teach them about marriage issues. The uncles used to counsel them but they no longer do so. That is why these days, when the boy is misbehaving, the father talks to him' (MNA, paternal aunt, 50, Kityerera).

Diminishing role of the senga

Findings from the study show a diminishing role for sengas in the counselling and preparation of girls before marriage. This is linked both to the diminished influence of extended families in general and to the increase in informal marriages, which leave no space or time for her interventions. Traditionally, such preparations for marriage were not initiated until marriage negotiations themselves started up; this period of negotiation, however, is short-circuited by the rise of informal arrangements between the girl and the boy. 'These days, girls and boys get married and move away and so there are no way parents can get them for counselling. Even when you counsel children these days, they don't take it. So things have changed [...] I don't understand the situation of children' (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera). 'In the past, aunts used to counsel girls, telling them about marriage responsibilities and what to expect in marriage. But today aunties no longer matter because girls undermine them' (FGD, women, Baitambogwe).

In the MNAs, only one of the mothers had been prepared by her *senga*, and only two of the aunts themselves. None of five girls themselves had received information or counselling before getting married because they all went without their parents' knowledge; one was given such information after the fact. *'No preparations (information or other form of preparation) were made for me before marriage as our marriage was informal. The aunt who would have done the counselling normally given to girls just before they get married was not aware that I was getting married until after I was married'* (MNA, girl, Kityerera).

Some of the study participants link the diminishing role of the *senga* to the rise of 'loose' morals' – highlighting the previous 'gate-keeper' function of the *senga* in reinforcing traditional cultural norms and expectations around women and marriage, based on a very conservative vision of gender roles and expectations.

'Before marriage, a girl was counselled about marital issues by her paternal aunts, after which there is an introduction ceremony to welcome in-laws. I was mostly counselled on abstaining from sex, keeping clean, having good behaviour and coping with marital challenges. But now things are changing. The parents are too shy to do counselling and the paternal aunts are not available. Some live very far. Girls are getting into marriage without counselling and by the time they get married they have already practised what was hitherto reserved for marriage' (FGD, married girls, Kityerera).

'Girls used to get educated by sengas about marriage issues, but now girls just go for marriage without learning these things [...] These things have changed because we have copied the Western culture' (IT, unmarried 18-year-old girl with baby, Baitambogwe).

Other study participants put the blame more squarely on the shoulder of parents, who are accused of neglecting their own duties in preparing children for marriage.

'If the child doesn't know what to do, it means the parent is the one to blame because she didn't help her learn these house chores (omuzaire aba amuremize mwine). The parent should send the girl to start fire, cook and others things because she will meet them in her marriage' (MNA, mother, Baitambogwe).

'Children are not given what they need from the parents – parents are also not advising of the dangers/risks of early sex – not counselling children about the dangers of diseases like HIV. Parents are giving up on their roles. Marriages would be arranged by aunties and parents. But now children don't tell parents anything and parents don't reason with their children' (KII, sub-county vice chair, in charge of children and women affairs, Baitambogwe).

Lack of sufficient alternative sources of information

As the role of the *senga* diminishes, girls get information on marital expectations and roles from a number of other sources; however, it is not always clear from our study findings that these sources actually provide girls with the full information on sexual and reproductive health they need, or advice, counselling and support for marriage.

Alternative sources of information some girls mentioned include schools, religious institutions and peers as well as parents, who either supplement or replace the *senga*. One of the girls, for example, explained, *'I knew what was in marriage before my senga told me [...] I would see it from my mum sharing with others, so I grew up knowing that [...] Teachers also used to talk about: when you have your period, be clean and protect yourself'* (IT, 19-year-old girl, Kityerera).

But sexual education information in schools is not always forthcoming. As one girl explained, *'We used to have marriage information in school [...] for me I saw that it was good, but they no longer do this because some feel shy and others say the information is used to spoil the girls'* (IT, unmarried 18-year-old girl with baby, Baitambogwe). Moreover, what is provided may not be complete; one girl reported that, *'The nurse at school came once to explain about periods and to warn girls against "playing sex" for fear of pregnancies'* (IT, daughter, 15, Kityerera). And, while some mothers and senior teachers provide information, this is not always

the case: *‘Today, girls learn from their mothers or senior women teachers at school. But even girls with no preparation get married today – even those who don’t know how to bathe, dig and wash – you find them getting married’* (IT, mother, Kityerera).

One mother describes her discomfort in substituting for the senga in providing information on sexual issues. She counsels her daughters on how to behave in marriage: *‘to welcome visitors, not to quarrel with a man, clean the home, respect elders, but other things that I don’t manage I cannot tell them [...] these are the bedroom issues the senga is responsible for telling [...] I cannot; it would be disrespecting myself – like opening the whole room wide. I try to keep my daughters in line if they get wrong information from others – also to talk to them through proverbs’* (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). One girl confirmed the tendency for mothers to shy away from sexual and reproductive health discussions with their daughters. While her mother told her she must work hard and sustain the family, treat her in-laws well and behave well, she did not teach her about ‘bedroom matters’. *‘Thinking about men is not helpful – they say that when you think about things they come to you’* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera). Another girl reports having had no sexual or reproductive health information provided to her by anyone such that, when she got her first periods (in Primary 6), she thought a snake had bitten her (IT, 18-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).

Some parents hire ‘commercial’ *sengas* to play traditional roles, although some consider these spurious. *‘Some buy sengas who are pretenders to counsel girls, yet the information such people give to girls is useless’* (IT, unmarried 18-year-old girl with baby, Baitambogwe). Some cited the media as a source of information. As one girl explained, her own *senga* lived far away but she had learnt some things about sexuality from the newspaper and radio (IT, 17-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe). Other, less trustworthy, sources are also cited as springing up to fill the void: *‘There are no aunties today: girls pick up information at discos, on videos’* (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe).

5.1.6 Greater individual choice of partner

Our research findings show a growing tendency away from marriages arranged by parents towards more freely chosen partners. To some extent, this reflects an overall move away from customary marriages, and all these entail in terms of family-based negotiations and transactions, to more individualised arrangements, including informal cohabitation, or ‘marriage through the window’. But, even within customary marriages, the girl and the boy may actually choose each other, and then convince their families to initiate negotiations. In extreme cases, when parents are indeed set on ‘marrying off’ their daughters against their will, some girls are finding the courage to resist and run away – often establishing informal marriages with boys of their own choosing as the only viable option. Many respondents feel greater individual choice is a positive development. Others are not so sure. Intergenerational interviews provide perspectives on the perceived changes underway.

Table 8: Intergenerational perspectives on changes in ability to choose partner

Those days	These days
<p><i>‘In my parent’s time, both parents would meet and decide on behalf of their children [...]</i></p> <p><i>‘In those days, girls couldn’t refuse; when you refused, they would still force you into marriage. The boys (brothers) would beat them because they wanted the bride wealth to be able to marry. It was not unusual in the past for a man to marry sisters [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] But today the girl and a boy first agree to each other and by the time parents know of this the children are already in love. I don’t know why this has changed, but they say you might get the wrong person if you’re not the one who chose the partner, and if anything happens you won’t blame your parents’</i> (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).</p> <p><i>[...] This is no longer the case; it is changing now and it is better. If a girl wants to get married, she can get married, but if she wants to study and get a job before marriage, she can do so. Children can now choose their marriage partners, which is a good thing because no one is crying’</i> (IT, 73-year-old grandmother, Kityerera).</p>

<p><i>'In my mother's time, the father of the boys would choose the girl who is to marry his son; those days, the parents used to get involved into courtship [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In those days people would say we should marry from that family because they have good manners. I appreciated this and whether you accept or not, you have to go; in any case, in those days most men used to behave well [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In my mother's time, they gave girls away without their consent [...]</i></p> <p><i>'There was no choice whether you liked the man or not – you had to go because the parent would have already gotten the property from the man [...]</i></p> <p><i>'Before the partners would be chosen by the family, and if you refused you were chased from home. A boy used to fear doing something wrong to the girl because he feared the people who chosen her for his partner [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] but today a boy is the one to look for the girl (IT, 19-year-old girl, Kityerera).</i></p> <p><i>[...] These days, girls want to choose their own partners – they say that “Am I a hen to bring for me a man?” (ndinkoko okundetera omusada) (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe)'</i></p> <p><i>[...] I expect to choose my own husband' (IT, 19-year-old unmarried mother of two, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Girls can refuse the man chosen for her and make her own choice (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] But now we choose for ourselves. I expect to choose my marriage partner. That is what usually happens nowadays. It is good to choose your own partner – both partners will learn each other's behaviours before marriage (IT, unmarried 18-year-old girl with baby, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
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Intergenerational findings on women's individual marital experiences confirm in part these perceptions of rising ability to choose one's partner. In Kityerera, three out of four grandmothers had no say in their marriage partner, and one was even compelled to marry her sister's husband, reported to be a common practice at the time. Of the mothers' generation, three chose their own partners while the fourth said she had some choice in refusing suitors who were presented to her before settling on her current husband. Of the girls, three are unmarried, but all expect to choose their own partners; the fourth ran off with a man of her own choice in an 'informal' marriage. Trends are not as explicit in Baitambogwe, where a significant number of women in the older women's generation (one out of four grandmothers and all of the mothers) actually themselves 'ran off' with their men in 'informal marriages' before coming back later for the official introduction and payment of bride wealth/compensation by the man. Still, such choice was clearly less of an option in the grandmother's generation, where one was 'stolen' by the man as she was tending rice and two were forced into marriage (one married off at 15 in order to pay school fees for her brother), saying, *'In those days we couldn't refuse – we were like goats'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe). The girls, on the other hand, all expect to choose their own husbands. One of the girls, who has a child by rape, exercised choice in refusing her father's attempt to get her to marry the rapist.

In our marital network samples, all five of the girls interviewed had chosen their own partner, while only two out of each of the generation of mothers, mothers-in-law and aunts had done so, confirming the perceived trend. Both men and women in the MNAs reflected on such changes, with some welcoming the new freedom, while others harboured reservations. *'Our marriage passed through the elders'*, reported one of the fathers-in-law. *'But girls these days decide which man to marry – marriage processes have changed and you cannot really compare marriage of today with those in the old days. Today it is by chance that you get a good girl who is well behaved and will bring respect at home'* (MNA, father-in-law, Kityerera). *'Parents choosing for their children spouse is out-dated and for animals'*, asserted a young husband in Kityerera. *'That kind of thinking remains for animals because they cannot decide on their own'*.

FGDs with mothers, fathers and other community members confirmed the trend towards greater individual choice but also brought up the mixed feelings this incites. In the past, *'Like it or not the parent's choice was always the final. Parents of the girl and the boy would share ideas on who to marry and they knew the*

behaviours of both children and knew who was right for whom and they always made the right choices' (FGD, men, Baitambogwe). Today, however, *'The good things in choosing your own partner are that you will respect the woman. When problems arise, you can persevere and there is love between the two'* (FGD, in-school boys, Baitambogwe). One key informant highlighted the increased agency of girls in resisting some parents' attempts to continue to choose partners for them – particularly with older men. *'Some girls run away with boyfriends in order to escape arranged marriage with an older man – often with other wives – who has been selected for her by parents seeking bride wealth. Some six out of ten girls in villages are running away like this, saying, "This is not my man; this is not my future; this is not my age"'* (KII, SESPEL, Mayuge).

5.1.7 Teenage pregnancy and motherhood

High rates of teenage pregnancy

One of the Uganda-specific areas of focus in this study was teenage pregnancy among girls who are either married early (in both formal and informal marriages) or still living at home. Teenage pregnancy is a policy issue of national concern in Uganda, where the most recent statistics (2011) show nearly a quarter of teenagers nationally have started child-bearing. While these percentages have been declining over time at national level, they are still high and are even higher in East Central region where the study district is located and where teenage pregnancy rates rise to 30.3% according to UDHS statistics. Health statistics at the Health Centre III in Mayuge show every month some 60 women (2-3 a day) come to give birth (of whom some 5-10 are under 18).

Most study participants acknowledge high rates of adolescent pregnancy and childbirth as a significant problem in their communities and moreover perceive that pregnancy outside of marriage is a growing phenomenon.

'It was not common in those days for girls to give birth while still at home – they would be chased from the home because this brought a bad omen [...] But today – eeh! It has now become a habit [...] It is really too much' (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe).

'It was not common for girls to produce babies before marriage [...] but these days it has become a custom' (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).

Bending of norms on virginity?

Virginity before marriage was highly valued in the past – surrounded by a number of sanctions for those who did not adhere to the expectation and rewards to those who maintained it. *'It was important to be a virgin'*, explained a 50-year old mother in Kityerera, *'so a girl would protect herself so much! Some girls may have entered marriages as non-virgins, but it was kept hidden – a secret – and was very embarrassing'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera). *Sengas*, as we have seen, played an important role in advising girls about maintaining virginity and in providing proof of it in the form of bloody sheets on the marriage night, on which the *senga* would be rewarded with a goat.

'The grandmother would tell the girls that they should put up a struggle until the man puts you down in your new house. The man could take even a week before he could have sex with the woman because of that struggling [...] If a girl didn't struggle, it meant she has had sex already; one who struggled had not. The boy's parents would ask whether the girl had fought and if the boy said no they would tell him to send her away. Virginity was highly valued – they didn't want the girl to get pregnant while still at home' (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).

'My auntie and mother told me to remain a virgin; aunties used to go with girls [on the wedding night] to get their gifts [once it was proved the girl had remained a virgin]' (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).

Our research findings indicate social norms around virginity may be bending somewhat in the study communities. The obvious sign of non-virginity – in the form of premarital pregnancy – continues as a source of shame and stigmatisation (see below). However, premarital sexual relations in themselves are becoming so common – with sexual debut as early as age 10 in some communities – that there seemed to be the beginning of a tacit acceptance among some that loss of virginity before marriage was inevitable – particularly among young

people. Others, however, for example religious authorities and in particular Muslims, continue to uphold premarital virginity as a strong social norm to be guarded at all costs, including through early marriages.

What young people are saying:

'Being a virgin is good as it brings respect for the girl. A man who finds his bride a virgin rewards his mother-in-law with a goat in addition to the bride price. A bride who was not a virgin was devalued, sometimes seen as mad or a prostitute. But these days a girl no longer cares about virginity. If she declines men's sexual advances, they say she is a fool (omudofu), which is socially stigmatising' (FGD, married girls, Kityerera).

'It is good to get married when a virgin. There is no need for premarital sexual experience. Many girls want to get married but others are enticed into sexual relationships by money, rolex/chapatti, boda boda and others are simply impatient' (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Kityerera).

'A good bride is one who is physically attractive, beautiful with a pretty face and nice figure. She should be at least five years younger than me for easy control, of good family background and not a virgin. Virgins are so shy – I would rather marry someone with experience.' (FGD, in-school boys, Kityerera).

'I would prefer a virgin because she cannot be HIV positive' (FGD, in-school boys, Kityerera).

'You cannot find an 18-year-old virgin today' (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Baitambogwe).

'Today people no longer mind about virginity because they even lose it at 10 years of age. Those days they would get virgin girls but today girls are not' (FGD, in-school boys, Baitambogwe).

What adults are saying:

'Children today are also told to keep their virginity, but they don't follow this. I don't know why [...] Maybe they are sex-hungry' (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).

'Today, there is an over-indulgence in sex – it used to be more controlled but now there seems to be a breakdown in social control. A new promiscuity is the trend' (KII, RDC, Mayuge).

'Our cultural beliefs include favouring marriage of girls when they are virgins, though these days it is hard' (KII, cultural leader, Mayuge).

'Our religion (Islam) tells us that, when a girl enters into her periods, she is ready (ripe) for marriage [...] This is to avoid them having a child with no father and being "spoilt" [...] We have rules in Islam like covering the whole body for women; separating boys and girls in school [...] We are trying to avoid problems during early age' (KII, Imam, Kityerera).

'In earlier days, girls would be kept virgin before marriage; these days they are running with boys all over the place' (KII, Protestant pastor, Kityerera).

Relaxing of strict sanctions, but continuing stigmatisation

While pregnancy within marriage – even at an early age – is accepted as normal, girls who become pregnant while at their parents' home are often stigmatised. In the past, sanctions against girls ranged from chasing the girl away from home to deliver at the aunt's home to looking down on the girl, forcing the girl into marriage, cutting off her ears, setting her ablaze, beating and even killing her.

'In our grandparents' time, the girl would be killed if found pregnant while still living at home [...] In our time, they would chase her away or give her to the man who impregnated her whether the man was beating her or not because she would have brought disrespect in the family' (KII, DEO, Mayuge).

'According to our culture, it was bad for the girl to get pregnant at home and produce a baby without a father – it would end up with a curse [...] In those days people were very strict with

culture and it was very hard to find such issues as they are today' (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

'In the past, there were sanctions – a child who had gotten pregnant and came back to the family could not eat in the same pot with the family unless some ritual cleansing ceremony was performed – such as killing a chicken' (KII, political leader, Baitambogwe).

In both study sites, our findings show that, while serious sanctions are fading around loss of virginity, premarital pregnancy is still perceived negatively. It was and is still associated with disrespect, bad omens, embarrassment, shame, disgrace to the family and curses. Unwed mothers were and are looked at as being bad examples/role models to the rest of the girls in the community.

'When our married daughters have babies, the husbands all provide for them and the babies [...] The babies are a source of happiness. If our daughters are not married, the babies are a resource of disgrace and reduce her chances of getting married in church, She is referred to as "second hand woman"' (CM, mixed adults 60+, Baitambogwe).

'A girl child who gets pregnant while in marriage is not stigmatised. People just make subtle remarks like "an immature banana doesn't ripen" (eito tilyenga) or "one who goes to dig likes what is harvested" (ogenze kulima oyagala kokungura) or "what you would have harvested in six months you harvest in three months" (kyewandikungudde mumwezi mukaga okikungudde mu mwezi esatu). However, the situation of a girl who gets pregnant while at her father's home and still schooling is terrible. She faces shame and stigma at both home and school and refuses to ever attend school again. She may even commit suicide by taking poison' (CM, mixed adults 60+, Kityerera).

'Giving birth before marriage is seen badly in the community. You are referred to as "second hand", "scrap". It has always been like this and to avoid it Muslim families marry off their daughters before or as soon as the onset of menstruation' (FGD, married girls, Kityerera).

A pragmatic coming to terms with the situation

Nevertheless, giving birth to a child before being married is becoming such a common occurrence that 'empirical' norms are, in a sense, outpacing 'injunctive' norms, such that overall perspectives are relaxing and community members are just trying to deal with the problem.

'Yes, daughters giving birth while still at home is embarrassing. But people are now used to it, though it was bad in Busoga culture. You might get embarrassed today but tomorrow it is your neighbour's daughter' (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera).

'In the past, there were sanctions. Now that is gone – the family just takes back the child and starts looking after the grandchildren [...] There is still some shame, but not as strong as before – girls don't feel the same shame, though parents do' (KII, political leader, Baitambogwe).

'If my daughter gets pregnant before marriage, as a parent I feel bad. I quarrel but in the end I come to terms with reality and start looking after her, and her child when she delivers' (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

'Children out of marriage: it is not good, but when the thing happens, children are taken to the parents or grandparents and they take care of them. Right now this seems normal because it is happening in almost every household' (KII, Protestant pastor, Baitambogwe).

'If my daughter gets pregnant, I won't chase her away, because the baby who is born is also a child like any other – this child born in the family won't be given away [...] We have many cases like this now' [...] If my daughter has an "accident" at school, her child is ours [...] We will look after the child because we might get something good from him/her but even if we don't it's no problem [...] If my son brings home a child that he has fathered that one is also my child [...] I don't beat my

girls for this so why should I punish the boy, unless the parents of the girl want to arrest the boy – then we go and solve the problems together’ (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).

‘So what to do? When the girl comes home, we welcome her with her child and start a new chapter’ (KII, sub-county vice chair, Baitambogwe).

Community explanations for the rising phenomenon

While following sections analyse overall causes more deeply, study participants offered a variety of explanations for the rising phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy and motherhood outside of marriage. These ranged from a loosening of morals, to a loss of culture, excess liberty for young people and *‘too many exciting things like videos, discos’* (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). It is as a combination of all of these factors, one woman explained, that, *‘Girls begin playing sex, “scratch themselves” at an early age and sleep with men and get pregnant, and men mistreat them so much’* (IT, mother, Baitambogwe). One woman was convinced, *‘It started when girls started interacting with boys in schools. When they are schooling, they start other things and before you know it, the girl is seven months pregnant’* (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). Others attribute it to girls’ desire for money from boys: *‘Today, the girls we have go on begging boys to give them money – they don’t fear men’* (IT, 35-year-old mother, Kityerera).

Multiple consequences for adolescent girls

Adolescent pregnancy was reported to be one of the factors propelling girls into early marriage. As seen in the example of Muslim families above, marrying a daughter off as soon as she begins her menses is seen as one way to forestall premarital pregnancy. *‘There is nothing good in it and this is why Muslims give away their girls early, to avoid such situations’* (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

When a daughter does become pregnant, forcing a marriage with the boy who impregnated her is often seen as the best available solution. Sometimes this is under duress – as a boy who impregnates a girl under the age of 18 can be imprisoned, parents of the girl have some leverage in forcing him to marry their daughter and arranging a settlement with the boy’s family. *‘These days they can arrest and imprison the boy and remand him; other times the boy’s parents negotiate with parents and then look after the girl and her baby or bring bride wealth and the son marries her’* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).

But fear of arrest can also cause boys who have impregnated girls to flee, revoking their responsibilities and leaving the girl to have her baby alone or at her parents. *‘Boys who impregnate girls in this community don’t take responsibility – they run away, fearing arrest’* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera). When this happens, it is seen to seriously curtail the girls’ chances for future marriage partners. *‘I advise young men not to marry women with children because they may cause a lot of disagreements in the home [...] Having a child without being married [...] hinders one’s chances of getting married again’* (MNA, aunt, Baitambogwe). *‘These days men don’t accept children who are not theirs – they do not want to take a responsibility for another man’s child’* (FGD, women, Baitambogwe).



Picture 8. Adolescent pregnancy, both inside and outside of marriage, is on the rise

It is also seen as an automatic impediment to further schooling, as girls drop out when pregnant and to care for their babies. *‘She faces shame and stigma both at home and school, and refuses to ever attend school again. She may even commit suicide by taking poison. And when a girl drops out of school owing to pregnancy there is*

nothing one can do except look on' (CM, mixed adults 60+, Kityerera). One grandmother put it succinctly, *'They spoil their future: they lose their virginity, some fail to give birth'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe). The risk of physical consequences was also acknowledged to be dire: *'Girls can die while giving birth, it affects their health, some have abortions'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).

Girls' experiences of motherhood inside and outside of marriage

Interviews with married and unmarried teenage mothers reveal largely negative experiences of trauma, lack of self-confidence and feeling out of place and being a burden to the parent. The girls themselves felt there was nothing good in early pregnancy – especially premarital pregnancy. The age range at which the teenage mothers in our study gave birth was between 15 and 17, with the majority around 16. The majority of girls with children in our sample (including intergenerational interviews, MNAs and FGDs) had one child, but one had three, giving birth to her first baby at age 15. Most of the teenage mothers reported that the pregnancy was an accident, after which they were forced to get married.

'I got pregnant by accident when I was aged 17. I felt so bad! Me I was 15 and I also felt terrible. There is totally nothing good in such pregnancies. You become a burden to your parents who now have to care for two people' (FGD, unmarried teen mothers, Kityerera).

'The girl who gets pregnant doesn't fit in the community, she lacks care from parents and the boy runs away from her so she doesn't get help for the pregnancy' (FGD, married out-of-school girls, Baitambogwe).

'About 50% of the girls in the community have children before marriage. Giving birth outside marriage you lack care for the child; basic needs; respect; parents and relatives see you as a burden; parents chase you away; the boys refuse to take responsibility and run away. Most boys deny responsibility of the pregnancy, they do not provide for the child. It is better to give birth when you are married because the man will take care. The boys only want to get children' (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Baitambogwe).

'I became pregnant while in school. When I went home, they told me to go to the man who impregnated me and I went' (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

'I got pregnant and gave birth at home but I decided to get married because my father was mistreating me. Since I was the one in the wrong, I had to leave and come here [her husband's home]. My husband doesn't say that he needs bride wealth but the way he behaves [...]' (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

'I was 15 when I gave birth to my first child and now have two children from different fathers – both of whom have since married other women and are off somewhere else. Neither supports me with the children [...]' Girls who give birth outside of marriage don't get help – they don't even know the fathers of their children because they would have slept with many men – and they get no medical care at all' (IT, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

Box 8: One girl's harsh initiation into unwed motherhood

'I got pregnant while on vacation when I was in boarding school – I was raped. My father didn't believe my story, but my mother did [...]' The young man accepted to marry me and his parents told me to marry him, but I refused; he now does not accept the child because I refused to marry him. The community says that I am a "left over" and a fool – they wanted to force me into marriage when I was pregnant [...]' My father says he made a loss in me because I refused to get married to the man.

'Many girls have children before they get married in this community. The community says girls of these days are spoiled – that we want easy things.'

'Most boys who impregnate girls do not take responsibility – they wait until the child is older and then take it. In my case, I don't have help to look after the baby, and my parents don't care about me. The one good thing is that I didn't abort' (IT, 18-year-old unmarried mother, Baitambogwe).

Although most experiences were negative, some girls reported some positive aspects. While the teen mothers would have preferred to give birth when married, some felt respected by the community because they took on the burden and shame and never terminated their pregnancies.

‘People respect us because we never aborted. They begin calling us by the child’s name – “Mama Fred”. But we prefer giving birth in marriage because it limits your mobility and opportunities for development, for example when they call you somewhere you have to carry the baby with you, it’s an extra burden. So you are no longer one but two’ (FGD, unmarried out-of-school teen mothers, Baitambogwe).

Choosing between very early marriage or premarital pregnancy

While both premarital pregnancy and early marriage are reported to have bad consequences for adolescent girls, the majority of study participants, when asked to choose, felt premarital pregnancy was worse. Table 9 records views weighing up which would be considered worse – a 14-year-old girl getting married or an unmarried 18-year-old girl who gives birth while still at home. The findings reveal that that majority of the participants believed there were more negative consequences associated with premarital pregnancy than with very early marriage.

Table 9: Which is worse - premarital pregnancy or early marriage?

Early marriage worse	Premarital pregnancy worse
<p><i>‘Most girls I have seen suffer from early marriage. Boys get other women and leave the girl alone, whereas you can produce (have a baby) from home and parents might take you back to school’</i> (IT, 17-year-old girl, Kityerera).</p> <p><i>‘Each is bad, but when she gets married while she is young, you would have a complete loss; while the one who gives birth is better and can go back to school’</i> (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).</p> <p><i>‘Better for the unmarried girl at 18 because she would have grown maturely and I can counsel her and she can get a good marriage later’</i> (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</p> <p><i>‘Getting married when you are young is worse because your thinking would not have grown – you don’t differentiate good from bad’</i> (IT, 18-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).</p> <p><i>‘The situation of a girl of 14 years is very worrying since her body would not have grown well but this one who is 18 years can persevere with the prevailing conditions’</i> (IT, 49-year-old, Baitambogwe).</p> <p><i>‘For a girl to get pregnant at home is bad but getting married at 15 years while still studying is worse. The boys who impregnate them in most cases they run away’</i> (FGD, women, Baitambogwe).</p>	<p><i>‘The unmarried girl would have shamed me as a parent: to produce from home and its very shameful in our tribe’</i> (IT, 15-year-old girl, Kityerera).</p> <p><i>‘It is better to be married young and pregnant in marriage than to be pregnant outside of marriage because then the girl is not causing a burden on her family’</i> (IT, 17-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).</p> <p><i>‘If a girl has a baby before being married, she will lack the basics for her child; she may be rejected by her parents, who are disappointed in her, and will lack even the necessities to look after herself during pregnancy when she drops out of school [...] even the boy will not accept that he is responsible for the pregnancy so he will not provide you with nothing, so you lack basic care [...] When you produce and you have no care, you become like an old woman’</i> (IT, 17-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).</p> <p><i>‘Both are bad; but somewhat better is the unmarried 18-year-old girl who gets pregnant because the younger one is still very young to get married’</i> (IT, 18-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).</p> <p><i>‘Getting pregnant while unmarried at home is worse than marrying young, because people say that our girls who produce from home failed to get men – that is why they are producing. The family won’t get respect from the community. When one gets married, on the other hand, people will say that so and so’s daughter went for marriage “you hear that, she got married before getting pregnant from home”. You see me - people have put</i></p>

pressure on me because my children have produced from home, so I have turned into “this one” (kanno)’ (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

5.1.8 Gender roles, ideals, and expectations within marriage and the household

Persistence of ‘traditional’ gender expectations, but some change in practice

Norms held on the gender division of labour within the household remain quite ‘traditional’ or ‘stereotyped’. The man is expected to be the head of household, the main decision-maker and the overall bread-winner, in control of the family resources – land, animals and other household assets. Women and girls are responsible for mainly reproductive tasks – cooking, cleaning, bearing and caring for children, caring for the husband. Women also engage in productive activities including in farming and small businesses and have control over household utensils and food crops. Such norms are reflected in our study participants’ depictions of the ‘ideal man’ and ‘ideal woman’ (see below).



Picture 9. Gender norms and expectations within the household remain quite rigid, although changes are occurring

For the most part, these norms are quite strongly adhered to in the two study communities; however, some changes in actual practices are acknowledged, and difficulties in adhering to the ideal are identified. Study participants acknowledge there are consultations between the husband and wife on major decisions in some families, and a number note that women’s increasing entry into the labour market reinforced by government efforts to promote ‘women’s rights’ are contributing to changes in gender relations at the household level. Some blame this for increased marital instability and sexual immorality. In parallel, some men are seen to be ‘abandoning’ their household responsibilities and ‘relinquishing’ their bread-winner role to women – hanging out in the ‘trading’ centres instead where they gather to drink, gamble and talk about ‘important issues.’

Table 10: Gender roles and responsibilities in the household

Wife/woman (with daughters)	Husband/man
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweeping the house, washing clothes, getting food from the garden, cleaning the compound, ironing clothes, gardening/farming • Cooking, fetching water • Looking after the children and family • Caring for the husband, including taking him water to the shower • Looking after the home • Welcoming visitors • Ensuring children go to school • Picking coffee • Looking after self • Providing sugar, salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying things for the home including salt, clothes, shoes, food, soap and any other things needed • Taking family to hospital/medical care • Fishing, farming, grazing cows and goats • Providing for, looking after and planning for the family • Making final decisions • Ensuring there rules and regulations/laws in the family • Making money, educating children, solving problems at home • Enforcing discipline, security – protecting family members and property

Source: FGDs, IDIs, MNAs, ITs in both study sites

Opinions were divided among the girls in our marital networks as to whether these roles have changed or are still the same. One girl found even the question unimaginable: ‘A man cannot wash clothes because – why did he marry a woman?’ (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe). Another in the same community felt, ‘The roles of men and women have changed. Women used to care for their men/husbands but these days women don’t care for their husbands – they have left their roles to the men. Men get their water, cook, wash clothes’ (MNA, 19-

year-old girl, Baitambogwe). Still another opined, *'The roles of men and women have changed. Women take care of their families and most men are drinking'* (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe). Their mothers and mothers-in-law had even more varied perspectives on changes: *'Gender roles have not changed [...] When a man gets a wife, he expects her to cook for him, help him, look after the young children she finds in the family'* (MNA, 43-year-old mother-in-law, Kityerera). *'Women never had authority over the property at home'*, said another, *'but now they do'* (MNA, 55-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

A number of girls and women in the intergenerational interviews noted an increase in women's authority within the household, attributing this to expanded economic opportunities for them outside the household and policies favouring gender equality. *'Before, women stayed at home and were ruled by men [...] But today women work and have liberty. This started under the current regime. Men feel powerless – they talk about "Museveni's liberty"'* (IT, 19-year-old unmarried mother of two, Baitambogwe). *'These days marriages are modern'*, asserted one older woman. *'You make decisions with the man; what a woman tells the man, he does it'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe). Some men and women, however, noted that such increased authority within marriage had been accompanied by and/or figured as a causal factor in trends for men to abandon their own household roles. As this happens, women are forced to take on more and more responsibilities within the household (see Box 9).

Box 9: Perceptions that men are abandoning expected household roles and responsibilities

From the point of view of women

'Men have relinquished their responsibilities to the women. Husbands are not supporting their wives and have become irresponsible. I am single-handedly educating my young children' (MNA, 42-year-old mother, Kityerera).

'Today's women have more authority to resources and participate in decision-making more compared with our generation. However, many women do not respect their husbands – especially educated women. Men have abandoned their responsibilities of providing for their families having a burden on women' (MNA, 55-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

'The gender roles have not changed: I still do the cooking, collecting firewood, digging [farming], washing. The man is expected to do farming, look after the family, provide basic needs, but my husband doesn't do it. I take care of my family single-handedly' (MNA, 43-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

'There have been changes in roles at home these days [...] Some of the men take family responsibilities but others have become marijuana users. Maybe for me, I got a chance to have a better man. Girls no longer want their mother-in-law, maybe because they are greedy and want to eat things alone' (MNA, 57-year-old mother-in-law, Baitambogwe).

'Men have failed to fulfil their obligations – most men abandon their families' (MNA, 43-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

'Men now days are irresponsible – they have taken to drinking and do not look after their families – the woman struggles to feed the family, clothe and pay school fees for the children' (MNA, 43-year-old mother-in-law, Kityerera).

From the point of view of key informants

'Previously, women used to be kept in the kitchen, but now they are involved in businesses of various kinds. Men do mostly casual labour like loading sand and gamble and the elderly men are working in factories. Men tend to suppress the voice of women. They also commonly neglect their family responsibilities, abandoning their wives to go live with another woman. In the church, we try to reconcile them' (KII, Protestant pastor, Baitambogwe).

'Men these days take on few responsibilities – women shoulder the most, including family responsibilities. There are changes, because you might go in one of the family and you find that some men have very little responsibilities. He wakes up early in the morning goes for betting games, drinking and other, and then women take care of all the responsibilities, for example for farming' (KII, male Catholic catechist, Kityerera).

'In earlier times, men used to take responsibility for their family but now men have neglected them and left the whole role to women' (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera).

While women are taking on some new roles and gaining new authority within the household, many study participants agreed that, when it came to final decision-making authority in the home, men still ruled. The Basoga saying, 'What a man says, the woman also says', reflects the deeply ingrained patterns of male authority within the culture, and the consequent subordination of women, starting within the household. Men interviewed in the MNAs all indicated they were the heads of the household and responsible for decision-making; all of the younger men said they involved their wives in such decision-making; only about half of fathers and fathers-in-law said that this was the case.

Views from the girls and women show a somewhat different pattern – girls indicate they have less decision-making power than the older women, some of whom have gained economic assets and authority over the years. Representative views of girls and women are presented below.

What the married girls say

'The man is the head of the family and controls all the family resources – land, goats, tree plantation and other household assets such as a bicycle and crops. He makes decisions in everything and no one can stop him. Maybe in the case of land, his parents might stop or allow him to sell – he [the husband] would have to consult them on that. I only decide on the household utensils – saucepans, plates, cups, my clothes' (MNA, 18-year-old girl, Kityerera).

'My husband is the head of the household and makes all the decisions. I don't make any decisions because I am a woman – I am under the shoes of the man. He is my boss because he buys everything at home' (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

What their mothers and mother-in-laws say

'The man is the sole decision maker in the family. All the resources on our home are under his, including my own, personally initiated projects' (MNA, 41-year-old mother, Kityerera).

'While the husband is the sole decision-maker, he values my ideas and views before making decisions. He cannot sell any food or animals reared under my control – we sit and make decisions together, something that is rare in the Muslim community' (MNA, 41-year-old mother, Kityerera).

'The husband is the head of the family – I am a helper. We make decisions together with my husband so he cannot sell anything without telling me' (MNA, 55-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

'The husband is the head of the family and this is how it has been. He owns and controls the cows, land, and coffee plantation. With land, he makes decisions on its sale. But I have my own land and I decide on what to do with it. Also the things in my compound, he cannot just come and take them' (MNA, 43-year-old mother-in-law, Kityerera).

Expectations about marriage linked to 'traditional' ideals of masculinity and femininity

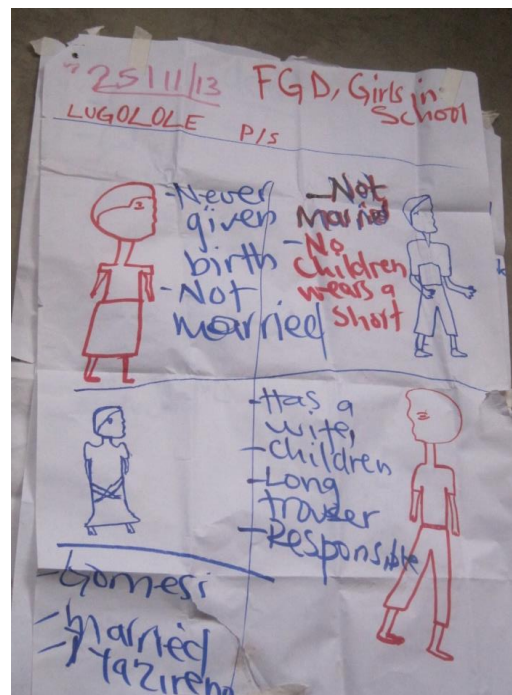
From intergenerational interviews, women's expectations about marriage are quite common across study sites and the generations – involving giving birth, raising a family and – in the grandmothers' generation – 'carrying on the lineage'.

One of the mothers expected her husband would 'protect' her and also 'take care of her people' (IT, mother, Kityerera). Another noted she was responsible for caring for both husband and in-laws 'They would say that, when you get married, you take care of your in-laws, husband and those are the good things in marriage, and the rightful marriage' (IT, 35-year-old mother, Kityerera).

A number of women mentioned the ‘respect’ that comes from being married and mentioned that an unmarried woman would be an aberration. A grandmother put it succinctly, ‘If you accepted to marry, people would respect you, but if you refused they would call you a mad person’ (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe), and this seemed to hold across the generations.

One mother expected good things in marriage, including ‘producing children, helping my parents, visiting my parents with dignity, carrying gifts for them’ (IT, mother, Baitambogwe). Others said they had no clear expectations about marriage besides the additional farm labour it would entail. As one grandmother attested, ‘In those days, we got no pleasure out of marriage – we were just “digging” [working on the farm]’ (IT, 73-year-old grandmother, Kityerera).

Ideals of femininity and masculinity over the life-cycle as expressed by our study participants underscore in many ways the strongly held cultural values around gender and the norms that should guide the behaviour of the ‘ideal’ woman and man. As such, they reflect both the actual division of labour within a household and the expectations about what men and women should bring to marriage and the family.



Picture 10. Study participants identify ideals of masculinity and femininity in their communities

Table 11: Ideals of femininity and masculinity

The ideal girl	The ideal woman	The ideal boy	The ideal man
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not married and has never given birth • Disciplined • Kneels down to greet elders; welcomes visitors • Dresses decently (long skirts, dresses) • God-fearing, trustworthy and not a thief; exemplary • Faithful to boyfriend • Does not engage in premarital sex • Does domestic chores – washing utensils, clothes, mopping house, cleaning compound, washing, cooking, collecting firewood • Cares for the children • Goes to the garden to cultivate/farming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be married and have children • Disciplined • Respects her husband and herself • Is humble and obedient • Loves her children • Dresses decently • Does domestic chores – cook, wash clothes, collect firewood, water • Ensures general household/home hygiene/sleeping arrangements • Takes care of girls’ needs – purchases knickers, bras, sanitary pads • Cares for husband – gives food in time, water for bathing, washes clothes, welcomes him • Faithful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplined and hard-working • Goes to farm; grazes animals/milks cows • Sweeps the yard • Engages in productive activities such as business • Does some domestic chores – fetching water and firewood; washing his clothes, slashing the compound, cooking, washing plates • Dresses decently • Provides security • Does not drink alcohol or take drugs • Avoids peer pressure • Respects parents and adults • Faithful • Greets people • Helps parents • Trustworthy and honest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household head • Provides/cares for the family – buys clothes, pays school fees, shelter, paraffin • Plans for the family • Hard-working/has a job/business/brick laying/construction • Cares for wife • Respects/loves and is faithful to his wife • Respects in-laws and other people • Helps wife in chores when she is sick • Allows wife to work • Does not beat wife • Transparent to his wife • Provides security • Ensures the home has a toilet • God-fearing/religious • Hospitable/welcomes visitors • Should be patient/persistent in

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not move around at night • Does not watch movies, go to discos/bars, engage in peer groups • Humble and obedient • Should be clean • Does not gossip • Not supposed to sit on a chair; does not cook while seated; seated while eating • Listens to, respectful of and helpful to parents and elders • Should marry before age of 18 years • Consults mother for advise • Does not give birth while at her parents' home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respects and cooperates with husband and in-laws • Cares for and nurtures children; counselling/teaching morals • Welcomes visitors; social; relates well with other people in the community • God-fearing • Patient and persistent in marriage – able to bear all situations • Hard-working/has a job/farming • Does not engage in gossip • Ensures children attend school • Innovative and transparent • Does not move/loiter in the village and bars • Confident to talk in public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humble • Does not rape girls • Engages in charity work • Avoids moving around at night • Has built his own house 	<p>marriage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes decisions with wife • Humble – asks for forgiveness
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Source: FGDs, IDIs, MNAs, CMs.

A clash between ideals and reality

Nevertheless, both girls/women and boys/men express difficulty in fulfilling many of these ideals of behaviour – some because of individual shortcomings or peer pressure, some because of changing circumstances, others – perhaps – because of slow changes in the ideals themselves that are not yet fully articulated or even understood. The voices from our marital networks and FGDs express some of the gaps our study participants perceived between the ideals (what we might term ‘injunctive’ norms) and the realities (actual ‘descriptive’ norms of common behaviour) in their lived experiences. *‘Men who meet these expectations are few [...] Maybe two out of ten. Men who strive to meet their expectations are ridiculed and despised by fellow men who say that they have been bewitched by their wives’* (FGD, mothers, Kityerera). So too, *‘Most girls do not have the qualities of an ideal girl. About 20% of girls in the community meet the ideals of a girl. What hinders girls from meeting the ideals is lack of discipline – most girls in the community are undisciplined’* (FGD, women, Baitambogwe).

Many girls in our study feel more pressure is placed on them than on boys to meet expected ideals of character and behaviour. Married girls in particular feel under strong pressure to protect their marriage and keep the husband and in-laws happy: *‘I have to work hard and do what I am expected to do because, if I do not, my in-laws and husband will not be happy. It brings about disharmony, violence. My husband will quarrel’* (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Kityerera). Unmarried girls, at the same time, have to prepare themselves as appropriate marriageable material: *‘If you fail to be an ideal woman, the man will marry another woman and you may also get diseases because the man will become a womaniser’* (FGD, married out-of-school girls, Baitambogwe). Consequences of not meeting ideals in both cases are serious: *‘It is difficult to meet the ideal expectations of a girl but some try and others do not. If you don’t try to fulfil them you can be segregated at home and nobody will admire you in the community’* (FGD, unmarried girls, Kityerera).

Through all of the gender norms and social expectations, and irrespective of their ability to meet them, marriage itself remains central to a woman’s identity, social standing and position as an adult (Box 10).

Box 10: Marriage is central to a woman's social identity

Marriage – and motherhood – is central to a woman's identity in the two study communities and it is a state that all aspire to. An unmarried woman is considered an aberration and social norms militate against this.

- *'While marriage is full of suffering, a girl should not remain unmarried because of the negative perception about unmarried women. People will think she has a problem'* (MNA, 50-year-old aunt, Kityerera).
- *'If a girl remains unmarried, they also laugh at her, saying that you have a problem, were bewitched or are ill mannered. A girl who remains unmarried is not burdened with responsibilities and controls her life. The alternatives of not marrying include going to work as a house maid, becoming a nun or merely staying at home'* (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Kityerera).
- *'The community views an unmarried girl as a prostitute who therefore has no respect'* (FGD, unmarried out-of-school teen mothers, Baitambogwe).
- *'The bad things about not getting married are no respect, no planning, no settling in one place and prostitution'* (FGD, married out-of-school girls, Baitambogwe).

Girls therefore actively seek marriage to gain social respect, independence and the status of an adult; to have children; to be protected from both the physical and the social consequences of promiscuity; and to gain economic support from a husband who will provide for their needs. *'We expect to get good things from the men, to be cared for. We want sex, want to produce children and be independent. We expect to have children and to get our own home when married, to gain respect; to make decisions together and plan for the family'* (FGD, unmarried in-school girls Kityerera). Some, however, also see clearly some of the challenges in marriage, and so expectations can be tempered with fear. *'Girls are expected to get married, but many do not want to. Marriage is not good because it makes girls age very fast. Some men mistreat women, even beating them to death'* (FGD, unmarried teenage mothers, Baitambogwe).

5.1.9 Experiences within marriage

Individual marriage experiences are varied across the study sites. While many women rate themselves as 'happy' in their marriages, others recount significant levels of violence and misunderstandings – sometimes fuelled by alcohol – leading to marital instability and break-up. Older women in polygamous relationships cite conflict with co-wives as a source of unhappiness. Others cite problems with in-laws. Unequal power relationships within the household are also a source of dissatisfaction to some.

Degree of happiness within marriage expressed by adolescent and women

Based on the happiness scale in our MNA, the five girls in our sample rated themselves from 'moderately happy' (5-7) to 'very happy' (9-10). The highest levels of happiness were recorded by two girls who felt their husbands treated them well or saw to their needs. Their husbands were also happier than the others, although one mentioned occasional misunderstandings. One girl rated her marriage only moderately happy because of misunderstandings, quarrelling and problems with the mother-in-law. Her husband was even less satisfied with the marriage than she was. Two others rated their marriages as just moderately satisfactory, with reasons ranging from problems during delivery, lack of money, dissatisfaction with the informal cohabitation arrangement and lack of support from the father, who was opposed to the marriage. The husband of the latter confirmed that problematic relations with the father-in-law impinged on his happiness. Table 12 shows the happiness scale rating for married adolescent girls and their husbands.

Two of the mothers and three of the mothers-in-law in our marital networks indicated they were also happily married and respected by their husbands. *'I am happily married and have worked together with my husband to raise the children. I married him when he was a young boy; we worked and we have all these children together. We also bought land where we are now'* (MNA, 41-year-old mother, Kityerera). *'My marriage has been good, I am the only woman in this home – we have been peaceful and we respect each other'* (MNA, mother in law, Baitambogwe). The others, however, have been struggling in their marriage with abusive husbands: one of them

was abandoned and the other divorced. According to these women, such experiences are common for many women in the community.

'It [married life] was bad because I got married when I was young and become a second wife. I was not getting the basic needs that I needed at the time, because there was no money. I came into conflict with my co-wife because she did not have children (she was barren). My marriage experience is similar to others, but also different. Some people are doing well compared with us but others are the same. For example, our neighbours' husband would drink all the alcohol the woman used to sell to try to educate her children [...] so there are some families that are still mistreating women' (MNA, 43-year-old mother-in-law, Kityerera).

Table 12: Marital happiness rating of adolescent girls and their husbands

Adolescent girl		Husband	
Rating	Reason	Rating	Reason
10	<i>I'm happy in my marriage so far, my husband treats me very well.</i>	7	<i>I am fairly happy in my marriage; we have had some misunderstandings, but life is like a road – it has humps and smooth path; we have not fought.</i>
9	<i>My needs are provided by my husband</i>	9	<i>A bit unhappy when I am sick, but most of the time I am happy</i>
7	<i>I am not very happy because of misunderstandings and quarrelling with my husband. We don't visit nice places, my mother in-law talks badly about me – she tells other people that I don't dig [farm] and other things.</i>	5	<i>I am not very happy in marriage.</i>
5	<i>I had a painful experience during delivery. At times I ask my husband for things that I need, but he doesn't have money. I am not happy with cohabiting but we have no money for making a customary marriage.</i>		Husband not interviewed
5	<i>My dad is the source of unhappiness because we don't know what he thinks about us.</i>	4	<i>I am not so happy because of my in-laws the way he treats us.</i>

Note: *On a scale of 1-10: 1=not happy; 5=moderately happy; 10=very happy.

Intergenerational interviews also uncovered distinct differences between expectations of marriage and actual conditions. In Kityerera, one grandmother, whose husband turned into an alcoholic, told us, *'I used to think that when one is married she gets peace with man she has married but for me I didn't get the peace I wanted'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera). Even among the younger generation, one of the girls' expectations was reduced to having a man who would not beat her or leave all of the household responsibilities and care to her. Another girl explained she expected to produce children, help her husband, cook for him and wash his clothes. Her worries about marriage included the potential for her husband to become a drunkard and start beating her, or marrying many women – *'like four, so that you are the fifth'* (IT, 17-year-old daughter, Kityerera).

Findings were similar in Baitambogwe. But one mother with more positive expectations about marriage feels these have been largely borne out: *'My expectations were to be in marriage, produce children, be called someone's wife and be happy; I realised these expectations'*, though she has some lingering dissatisfaction that her husband does not provide her with sufficient clothing (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). One girl, even more hopeful, said, *'When I marry, I expect to have a loving man who cares for his children and provides the necessities at home – whatever he tells me, I will do it. I hope my marriage will be better than my mother's'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).

Rising marital instability

Findings from both study sites reveal marital instability has become a common experience in many households. Volatility in marriage is associated with increasing informal marriages and domestic violence, both characterised by changes in gender relations, lack of respect between partners, engagement in extra-marital relations and indiscipline. Marriage break-ups are reportedly high in the study communities, especially among young couples in informal marriages. *‘Young people get married when actually they do not understand each other and this has caused a lot of marital instability [...] In most marriages there is lack of mutual respect’* (MNA, aunt, Baitambogwe). *‘The problem in marriages today is that men want to run with every girl that they come across [...] The men have big eyes. The boys marry girls and after a short time abandon them’* (FGD, women, Baitambogwe). But some of the older women also report broken marriages. The findings reveal adolescent girls face double jeopardy – facing domestic violence in their natal home, they run off to get married in informal relationships, but these can also be instable and male violence is a continual threat.

Key informants identify trends of rising marital instability and point to a number of contributory factors. Some blame the expanded economic roles for women outside the household and ‘misinterpretation’ of gender equality: *‘People say families of those days were solid unlike the ones of today, which are loose. What has brought that is gender equality, when women think they are equal to men – so we misinterpreted it’* (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera). Others fault the increasing individualisation of marriages, which are no longer embedded in the extended family network of rewards and sanctions, including payment of bride wealth to solidify the union:

‘These days’ marriages have become loose. When misunderstandings arise, no one can help them because it is an issue just between two individuals. Traditionally, when marriage was broken, the man could go to the parents of the girl to sue for the return of bride price. But the parents of the girl would have already, most likely, used those cows received to provide payments for their sons’ marriage, so they would be unable to pay back [so there was an incentive for them to try to ensure that their daughter remained in the marriage]’ (KII, CDO, Mayuge).

Women’s increased recourse to divorce as an exit out of unsatisfactory marriages is noted by some: *‘In earlier times, there were very few women who would divorce compared with today, where women have become landlords [...] It was hard for the woman to divorce even when they were being beaten so hard’* (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera). Still others point to the hasty development of informal marriages when the partners are too young to support each other: *‘Boys who marry young girls find they cannot sustain them economically, so they abandon them and run off. Of girls who have children outside of marriage, an estimated six out of ten will find themselves without the support of the child’s father’* (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). *‘They stay together for two or three years, have a child or two and then discover they cannot support that child, so the marriage breaks off’* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

Community members also reflect on the changes they see in terms of the increasing fragility of marriage ties (see Table 13).

Table 13: Community perspectives on changes in marital stability

Those days	These days
<i>‘In my mum’s time women used to stay in marriage [...]</i>	<i>[...] But these days any small misunderstanding with a man, a woman wants to run away’</i> (IT, 17-year-old girl, Kityerera).
<i>‘Marriage used to be more lasting [...]</i>	<i>[...] Women no longer stay in marriage as they did in my time, and also men of today are very fragile because they don’t have persistence in marriage or to go and consult in-laws. And girls also say they cannot remain in marriage as if I am buried (ndimagombe) [...] Men are “stylish” these days – they are not content with the women they get even when they suffer together and have children [...] Only the women remain to counsel the children’</i> (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).

<p><i>'It was hard for a girl to go back and sit at the parents' home when she has been already married and even the parents would not allow you to do this because girls never used to divorce[...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] Today, some people get married because they want to but spend just a few months and then are at home again. They will have a chance to get married again – you can see women with five children – each with a different father. Parents are not happy about this – nor is the community. It started sometime in the 1980s [...] that is, when the girls began getting intelligent in men's issues (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).</i></p>
<p><i>'Me I have never moved from here. We would produce children and remain in our marriages [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] But marriages of today are very unstable. Girls of today marry for a few months and leave for other men. Girls today do not stay in marriage. You might find that some women have married to more than three men. She can produce [give birth to] a child here and go and produce another one there. Women are no longer persistent in marriage the way we used to be' (MNA, mother-in-law, Kityerera).</i></p>
<p><i>'In the old days, there was no divorce after marriage [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] But now when a wife is beaten, she will run away; this refusal to be beaten started under Obote's regime' (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
<p><i>'I wanted to have my own husband – that is why I married - I admired married women but then we produced [gave birth] children and afterwards he became a problem, then I left [...] He married another wife – don't you know that when he gets another wife you become a scrap. I had never left my house until I divorced. I could not move about with my fellow women – if he found me he would beat me [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] I don't know about today because a girl gets married today and tomorrow she divorces, so you cannot know' (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
<p><i>'Women used to stay in marriage [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] But a woman of today when she asks for sugar and it is not there she divorces' (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
<p><i>'In the 1970s and 1980s, divorce was not so common [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] These days, marriages have become very unstable – when girls get into marriage and do not find what they expected there, they divorce, return home' (MNA, 81-year-old father, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
<p><i>'Marriage is where there is perseverance and respect [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] These days children get married on their way to markets, discos and they disappear, a boy deceives girl that he has things when the girl gets there, the things she expects are not there, and she runs away. Some girls are bad mannered and they don't stay in marriage and such marriages when there is a problem, nobody will help them. Marriage of today is based on admiration for things – they are money/material oriented; some women refer their husband to men who have money without reflecting on how those men got the money' (FGD, men, Baitambogwe).</i></p>

Domestic/marital violence

The findings suggest high levels of marital violence are experienced in the two study sites. Sexual violence in marriage (marital rape) is not recognised as violence: *‘If he is your husband then that is not rape and anyway who will report?’* (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). Those who have not had violence in their own homes report that it is common in the community and violence, after polygamy, was one of the key worries adolescent girls expressed in terms of marriage. Some study participants feel that, in comparison with the past, domestic violence may be diminishing: *‘Men of those days used to beat women so much, but these days because of the government laws men don’t beat them’* (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Baitambogwe). But what progress there is may be quite relative: *‘There was a lot of violence at home – my mother used to be beaten so much and that is why she left us we were still young. Although men still beat their wives, the violence has reduced’* (MNA, 42-year-old mother, Kityerera).

Some of the older women in particular recount terrible experiences of being beaten by their husbands, but younger women also experience violence.

‘Men would beat women a lot, and afterwards they would ask for food. He would beat you in the evening, and the following day you get a hoe to go and dig. In our time, men were beating us wherever they could find us, whether you were cooking, digging, they would beat you. If the man sent you to get something for him and you delayed, he would beat you seriously’ (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).

‘My daughter is married to a very abusive man – verbal and physical. Her marriage experience is common in Bukoba village – domestic violence in marriage is rampant’ (MNA, 42-year-old mother, Kityerera).

Key informants provide insights and interpretations of the causes of gender-based and domestic violence in the community (Box 11).

Box 11: Key informant explanations for domestic violence in the two study communities

‘Domestic violence is a very big problem, with a huge caseload. Many of the people coming to sensitisation sessions are women. Causes of domestic violence include drunkenness, child neglect, cheating [...] Many marriages are “loose”, which can be a source of tension/violence. For those who have no marriage certificate, the police can do nothing to support them (e.g. the woman in the case of abandonment). They do, however, do counselling to try to get couples back together. But people are becoming ‘wild’ – both partners, with issues of drunkenness, child neglect, adultery and cheating very common. Everything is breaking’ (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

‘GBV arises out of cultural beliefs of male power over women – no issue of power sharing. If a man decides not to pay school fees, the woman cannot do anything. In the past, the woman stayed at home and man worked to support her; now women are also working and she feels she can control the man because she is also supporting the family. The man feels bad, and misunderstandings begin from there. To deal with GBV, both men and women have to be brought on board’ (KII, CSO coordinators, GBV network, Mayuge).

‘Domestic violence can occur in some of these marriages. Some men also abuse their women in the presence of the children. Some men beat a woman in order for her to divorce so he can bring in another woman; but a woman can decide what she wants, for example not producing [giving birth] many children. It is good to make a decision with a woman; you won’t become a woman if you sit down and talk to her’ (KII, cultural leader, Mayuge).

‘Relations between spouses are generally not good – there are a lot of arguments particularly around money – everything turns around money. The church tries to deal with this by passing out leaflets and teaching that when parents quarrel, children suffer’ (KII, male Catholic catechist, Kityerera).

How has marriage changed the lives of married girls?

Overall, the life of a married adolescent girl is characterised by both positive and negative experiences. Girls interviewed in the marital networks feel – on one hand – that they have matured, have become adults independent of their parents and have their needs provided for by husbands in a stable relationship. On the other hand, some feel their future has been wasted; they experience economic difficulties and see limited opportunities for progress.

Box 12: How marriage has changed the lives of married girls

'I have matured and am different from my peers because I have someone to provide for me. My husband brings me what I want, which is not the case for unmarried girls, whose parents do not buy things for them. Unmarried girls dress any which way, but for me I dress decently and also decide on what I should do [plans her activities]' (MNA, 18-year-old girl, Kityerera).

'I have a child and am married. Marriage has made me grow into an adult. The thinking has changed because now I think like an adult – I differentiate bad from good; greeting people correctly. My husband gives me what I want. I am different from other girls, I see some of them sleep with many men – married girls are better because they have their own man' (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

'I am very different from my peers because my thoughts are more mature – centred around the responsibilities of raising and providing for my household. But some of my peers have finished school and have become nurses and teachers. Unlike them, I have a family and responsibilities. Their standard of living is much better than mine for they have salaried jobs unlike me. See my mother is more beautiful than me; they have a better house than mine [...] My parents are economically better off. They have coffee. We lack land for food crops – all the land is under sugarcane growing' (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

'My life has changed because I have a child, am overworking and I have no time to rest or for other people' (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

5.1.10 Support structures for dealing with problems within marriage

Some sources of support ...

Young people, especially girls, who enter into formal or informal marriage arrangements need support systems to help them deal with the myriad challenges that can arise. Our study findings reveal a generally weak social support system. Although the married girls in both the marital networks and FGDs said they had not yet had any major tensions in their marriages, the family appears to be their core source of support – with mothers, sisters, the paternal aunt and mothers-in-law the most frequently cited. *'If problems arise in marriage, we consult our mothers-in-law, and when the problems are not resolved we run to our parents. Others run to their aunties or consult religious leaders for counselling'* (FGD, married girls, Kityerera). Parents – particularly mothers – expect their daughters to consult them if they face problems in their marriage: *'When there are tensions, I expect my daughter and the husband to come to me for advice and guidance. I believe in reconciliation. They come to my home and we reconcile them'* (MNA, 41-year-old mother, Kityerera).

Other, less frequently cited, sources of potential support in the community include the mothers' union (*nabakyala*), elders, local councils (LCs), police probation officers (the police are seen to be increasingly opening up to women's issues) or religious leaders. *'When a girl is abused at home she goes to the LC, and then the health centre. Married girls run to their parent's home. They can also run to the police if they no longer love the husband and are sure they will never go back. In such cases the police will go and arrest the husband'* (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Kityerera). *'If there are any tensions and issues, they consult the priest (for religious marriages), court (for civil marriages) and the probation office'* (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Baitambogwe).

Key informants note that public structures are increasingly available to support women and girls: 'Things are changing in the family unit's relations with the public: before, people didn't know about the magistrate or family courts etc. and they used to fear the police; now, however, the communities are used to them – they call her "Mama Police" and see the uniform as a sign of authority. Now they are also coming to report cases – before

they just used to kill each other’ (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge). Some older women confirm this and note that girls these days have more options for support than in earlier days: ‘Most of the time [when I had problems in my marriage] I was not going anywhere but into my bed and crying a lot; however, at times I would turn to my mother [...] When my children have problems, they can turn to me, or religious leaders when I see that things are hard for me to solve’ (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe). ‘In case of problems, we could turn to the senga or the parents and they could reconcile us. In those days LCs never used to help women – only men. These days, when a man disturbs you, you run to the LCs and they help you’ (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

... *But certain limitations*

While the natal family appears a key source of emotional and psychosocial support to girls, frequent interaction is not always possible – owing to distance or expense (girls feel obliged to bring gifts when visiting parents and are dependent on husbands for the money to buy such gifts). *‘I visit my parents once a month. I would love to visit even more frequently – twice a month – but I find it hard because of financial constraints because visiting requires carrying some gifts like sugar, salt, bread and other things [...] I also get time to visit my aunt at least once every two weeks’* (MNA, 18-year-old girl, Kityerera).

Visiting home is not always encouraged, for fear of causing tensions with either husband or in-laws. Parents themselves feel reticent about visiting daughters in their marital homes, as this is seen as intrusive and liable to cause conflict. *‘I don’t encourage frequent visits and want my daughter to visit after one year because the man is likely get tired of her visits to her home’* (MNA, 41-year-old mother, Kityerera). *‘A well-brought-up girl does not frequently visit her parents; nor does her mother frequently visit her. They should be both focused on developing their homes through hard work’* (MNA, 60-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

For the most part, married girls – because of their changed status – tend to lose contact with unmarried friends, cutting them off from a potent source of social capital: *‘I do not have any contact with my old friends – I am married and they are not – their parents may see it badly’* (MNA, 18-year-old girl, Kityerera), although some manage to maintain friendships with their peers, or create new ones with girls in similar situations.

While public state-supported support systems exist, they are thinly stretched and more accessible to girls who are in official marriages (over the legal age of 18) and who possess marriage certificates. Consequently, adolescent girls who are married informally and are below the age of consent may not find it safe to turn to these institutions. Moreover, *‘Girls don’t know their rights or where to find services’* (KII, SESPEL, Mayuge).

5.2 Changing experiences of education

This section examines trends in girls’ educational access and experiences as well as the links between education and marriage in terms of dropouts owing to early marriage or pregnancy and the perceived implications of education as a factor determining the value and desirability of spouses.

The clearest trend that emerged from our research is the greater opportunity for schooling girls have today in comparison with their mothers’ and grandmothers’ generations, and the greater social value placed on education for girls.

This is largely attributed to national policies of expanding education and – in particular – UPE. This in turn has fuelled girls’ aspirations for education, which is seen as important both in and of itself and as a means to pave the way for a better life for themselves and their families.



Picture 11. Growing numbers of girls are attending school, particularly at primary level

At the same time, girls face many gendered risks along the way, including risks of dropout owing to pregnancy or early marriage, sexual harassment in schools themselves or continuing parental preference to invest in the education of sons, particularly at higher levels.

In spite of policies of USE, the continuing lack of full educational opportunities for secondary education in the study communities visited, where long distances to schools increased opportunity costs and risks for girls along the way, was also among the lived realities girls experience.

5.2.1 Rising value of education for girls, but continued gender-specific risks

Increased social value and investment in girls' education

Discussions at community level confirm both the rising value placed on girls' education and increased opportunities for girls' schooling as well as the positive changes this can bring about for all involved, making parental investment in a daughter's education a wise choice overall:

'I expect my children to help me in old age and this cannot happen if they are not educated. If a girl is still enrolled in school after age 18 she stands a high chance of getting a job to be able to help me and to take care of her needs. An educated girl also makes a better wife and mother. She acquires good manners in school that she teaches her children, and the same applies to an educated man. An illiterate man will make you carry two hoes and wakes you up at dawn to go and dig [farm]' (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

'Education for girls is a ladder for everyone because, when a boy gets married, he plans for his own family and the family of his wife. It is hard to plan for his parents but a girl does so and people who never educated girls did us wrong. There is no level to stop education, it is continuous skills development, if you stop in Senior 4, it is like you never studied; even me I want a house girl who is educated to look after this baby [...] Getting married in an uneducated family can bring problems more especially with your mother in-law and co wives [...] I advise educated girls to look for educated men other than getting married to men who are making bricks who will abuse them when they ask for anything' (maternal network analysis, paternal aunt, Baitambogwe).

Some study respondents were in fact insistent that education for girls was actually more important than education for boys. Community members in Baitambogwe explained it in this manner (CM, mixed adults, Baitambogwe):

- Girls support their natal families than boys; boys support in-laws more than their natal family;
- Education of girls lead to development of the nation because female-headed families are many educated mother educate their children;
- Educated women assist in educating their young siblings;
- Women are becoming heirs and better managers of family property than men.

Men in the CM exercise explained the changes in thinking about the value of education for girls as follows:

'When resources are limited, it is better to educate a girl because she never forgets her parents. She always brings yield/help like a coffee tree where coffee berries are harvested every season (omwana omuwala muti gwa mwanyi buli sizoni bakugula). But in the past girls used to be seen as treacherous, risky to invest in including education presumably (omwana omuwala mpiringiti muyigiriti obwatalwita maninuka akuta mayinuka). She is like climbing a thorny tree where you may not feel the thorns piercing when you are climbing, but feel their full impact (excruciating pain) when climbing down' (CM, men 60+, Baitambogwe).

The intergenerational interviews provide particularly powerful testimonies of changes and continuity in girls' experiences of education. In Kityerera, three of the four girls interviewed had reached secondary school level; the fourth was still attending primary. The mothers had all dropped out of primary (Levels 2, 3, and 4) mainly because of lack of school fees or because of marriage. None of the grandmothers went to school at all. As one explained, *'In our times, girls were not taken to school'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera). Another explained that

parents in those days were mostly interested in gaining cows as bride wealth through the marriage of their daughters. But women of all three generations staunchly upheld the value of education; those who did not get it or were forced to drop out early recognised how this had negatively affected their lives: *‘Not going to school affected me a lot: if I had studied, I would be very far’* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera). Many linked education with getting a good job. Staying in school *‘will enable me to get a good job, friends and be okay’*, asserted one of the girls (IT, daughter, Kityerera). Women will now go to great lengths to ensure their daughters are educated as they fully see the value of schooling, as this mother explained: *‘When I got married and produced a girl child, I told my husband that I will educate my child till she becomes a nurse, and I have done it. Right now I have three children who are nurses [...] I have personally benefited from this – even now if I call them to say I have headache, they bring medicine for me!’* (IT, mother, Kityerera).

The same trends were observed in Baitambogwe, where three of the four girls interviewed had reached secondary (one completing S4 and now enrolled in a tailoring training programme). One had dropped out of primary owing to a rape-induced pregnancy. This is compared with either no schooling or limited primary education in their mothers’ generation, and no schooling at all for all but one of the grandmothers (who stopped in P4). The value placed on girls’ education has changed, and role models of educated women have played a part. As one girl put it, *‘They used to say that educating a girl child is waste of time but I see a speaker of parliament being a woman’* (IT, daughter, Baitambogwe). A grandmother explained that, *‘In those years fathers didn’t want to educate girls or even boys who would waste their money’*; girls especially were not sent to school since, *‘We were only guarding rice’* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe). The grandmothers felt the lack of education keenly: *‘Even now, I still feel this in my heart [...] Cooking only was not enough!’* cried one (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe). They, in turn, have passed on their ambitions for educational advances to their daughters (the mothers’ generation), who themselves are struggling to put their own daughters through school because, as one explained, *‘I don’t want them to grow up like me.’* (IT, mother, Baitambogwe).

The girls understand the sacrifices their parents are now making for their education. As one put it, *‘Right now my mother is struggling for my education in order for to have a better life’* and this has influenced her own thinking that girls marry only after finishing schooling – she herself wants to wait until she finishes her studies and gets a job – even if she is 30 (IT, daughter, Baitambogwe). All observe that trends are changing, with parents these days more willing to invest in their girls; most link this with policies set in place under the Museveni regime. *‘The government has encouraged girls to study. We have realised that a girl child is more useful than a boy child’* (IT, mother, Baitambogwe).

Table 14, drawn from the intergenerational materials, provides a snapshot view, in the women’s own words, of changes over time in relation to girls’ education.

Table 14: Intergenerational perspectives on changing attitudes and practices for girls’ education

Those days	These days
<i>‘Girls never used to study [...] I think they didn’t know the usefulness of the girl’s education [...]</i>	<i>[...] These days girl go to school – people now see it is important [...] They want the girl child to be the same as the boy child’</i> (IT, 19-year-old married girl, Kityerera).
<i>‘Some parents would educate their children and others not [...]</i>	<i>[...] Things started changing during the time of Amin. Changes that came in were that schooling increased under Amin and Lule, and now under Museveni, schooling for girls in particular is increasing. Maybe the biggest change that came was recently in Museveni’s regime of UPE where you only pay very little money and schools are many; when you have money you can take children to any school’</i> (IT, 73-year-old grandmother, Kityerera).
<i>‘I heard that parents never used to educate girls [...]</i>	<i>[...] ‘Now things have changed and I see many girls going to school. An 18-year-old girl today is expected to be in</i>

<p><i>'Most girls did not go to school in her time – parents would pull their girls out of school to get married and bring in bride wealth in the form of cows – people would educated boys only [...]</i></p> <p><i>'People in my day didn't see the use of educating girls – yet those who educated girls benefited a lot [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In our time girls were not being taken to school. I don't know what their thinking was, but the girl would leave home to go for marriage so some would say that they don't see the use of education to girls [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In my time, some girls went school, but some parents didn't have the money [...]</i></p> <p><i>'We used to go to school but our studying was very short and could stop in P7. Most children's education was hindered by their parents [...]</i></p> <p><i>'They used to say that educating a girl child was waste of time [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In earlier times, parents did not know the value of educating girls – they used to say they cannot spend money on the girl child [...]</i></p> <p><i>'Those days girls didn't study – they thought we could not do anything so they used to educate boys so they would get jobs [...]</i></p> <p><i>'Girls were not sent to school – we were only guarding rice.'</i></p>	<p><i>school – it helps her to be a responsible woman in whatever she does [...] Many people will admire her. Nevertheless, there are still some parents who pull their daughters out of school to get married – at 16 or so; I also had one friend at school who had a child' (IT, 17-year-old girl, Kityerera).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Now they have seen that educating girls is good – Museveni has put in laws for girls to go to school' (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).</i></p> <p><i>[...] These days girls go to school till they are tired and or parents educate them till they run out of money, but they study [...] Educating girl started during the current regime – they want all children to study. These days you cannot find children who are not schooling; whoever is not schooling, the LCs take charge to force them to go to school' (IT, mother, Kityerera).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Attitudes around education have changed – especially around girls; more parents agree to send girls to school. When a girl has studied, she gets married to an educated person and they start working together to develop themselves' (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Today parents want to educate girls, at times its only girls who refuse to study and run with men' (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] but now the government has encouraged girls to study. We have realised that a girl child is more useful than a boy child' (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] but I see a speaker of parliament being a woman' (IT, 17-year old girl, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] but now they are sending her for schooling. These days, a girl can study and become an important person rather than just thinking about farming all the time. Museveni's government has brought these change; a girl has to study till she finishes school; if she refuses she can be punished or counselled and then goes back to school' (IT, 19-year old unmarried mother of two, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] but now it is different [...] Most girls are now in school To get good things in a girl, don't count the age but let her go to school and you'll get good things afterwards when she has finished school' (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] This is changing today (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
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<p><i>'Schooling is one of the changes since my grandmother's day – before, people had not seen the light [...]</i></p> <p><i>'Most girls went to school when I was growing up – but stopped between P5 and P7 (they would be 12-13 years old in P7). They would leave school when pregnant (sometimes becoming pregnant at school) or would leave to get married [...]</i></p> <p><i>'In my time an 18-year-old girl was expected to be in marriage [...]</i></p> <p><i>'Those days parents never wanted to educated children. There was no money. Even most of the boys did not go to school and there were only a few girls [...]</i></p> <p><i>'Before, girls were meant to be in the kitchen and education was not needed [...]</i></p> <p><i>'My father educated his two boys, but we four girls didn't study at all. They never took us to school, they only wanted wealth; they wanted us to bring in cows [...]</i></p>	<p><i>[...] But now this has started under the current regime of Museveni with the government paying school fees and sending food to some government schools' (IT, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] People's attitudes to girls' education have changed over time – these days girls study to uplift them from a deep hole so that they can be okay. It is a time for educating girls, to know how to read and write – Museveni initiated this' (IT, mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Today, out of five girls in a village, three will be in school. The change has been brought about by aspirations for having a graduate in the family – which were not there those days. We now have many people who have graduated in this community (IT, mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Nowadays, girls have become spoilt because of education. They need to be taught good manners' (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Attitudes about girls' education have changed and nowadays most parents send their girls to school' (IT, unmarried 18-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p> <p><i>[...] Ideas about educating girls have changed. These changes have come from admiration for other people's children who are studying and seeing children working in hospitals stepping with sounding shoes' (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).</i></p>
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But continued dropouts owing to marriage or pregnancy

At the same time as values are changing around girls' education, girls are still dropping out of school because of pregnancy. *'Today parents want to educate girls. At times it's only girls who refuse to study and run with men' (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe)*

Of the eight girls in our sample for intergenerational interviews, one dropped out in primary and two in secondary. Most respondents in the intergenerational interviews – girls, mothers and grandmothers – were in favour of programmes to support married or pregnant girls to continue their schooling, but recognised the very practical challenges in doing so.

These changing views and experiences are reflected as well in our MNAs, where both men and women asserted the value of education for girls, but the difficulties for girls continuing their education beyond primary was also evoked and confirmed by the actual experiences of our sample of married girls. Of the five girls in our sample (aged 18-19), only two were able to make it into secondary school, with both dropping out in S2 to get married – one because she got pregnant first. The other three dropped out in primary school: one stopped in P5 when she got pregnant and her parents forced the boy to marry her, the two others in P7 because there was no money to continue. One of the latter girls said her father withdrew her from school at this level because her sister had got pregnant and – influenced by prevailing community views – the parents decided it was a wasted investment to spend more money on daughters' education since they only get pregnant anyway.

'We were two girls in the family going to the same school [...] When my sister got pregnant, people in the community told my dad that he was wasting his time paying school fees for girls saying, "You

see? One is already pregnant.” So my dad withdrew my payment. Then my current husband started paying my school fees and buying all the necessities while he was in S5 and I was in P7, but my father got angry and he stopped because he also has other school fees to pay’ (MNA, 18-year-old girl, Kityerera).

The girls themselves in our MNAs regretted having to leave school prematurely.⁹ *‘I loved school because I wished to become a better person in future, at least reach S-4,’* said one. *‘It spoilt my future,’* said another about dropping out. *‘I thought I would study and get a job’.* Two stated that they had liked school, and felt bad when they left owing to pregnancy and marriage, but found it hard to go back now because of family responsibilities. *‘I have a child,’* explained one. *‘She has not started walking, I cannot leave her with mother – my father will quarrel with her.’* Only one of the girls interviewed stated that she did not like school and actually preferred dropping out to get married.

Some mothers, aunts and mother-in-laws in the marital networks also expressed regret that they had to stop their schooling, and clearly saw the value of education. Said one of the mothers-in law, *‘Those who are educated are different from us. An educated person earns a living and is not like us, like me who just sells katogo (cooked food – cassava mixed with beans) in that trading centre down there,’* and she felt dropping out of school affected both a girl’s opportunities for employment and her ability to be a good mother. Said one of the paternal aunts, *‘Education of girls is beneficial to the girls, to their families and to their in-laws. An educated woman will support her relatives through school. She also economically supports them.’* Another put it even more bluntly: *‘It is good to educate a girl child in this era. If you don’t educate a girl child you won’t get any benefits from her.’* Some blame the girls themselves for dropping out. *‘Girls are jumpy,’* said one paternal aunt. *‘Some just leave their school fees and books at school and get married thereby discouraging their parents from educating girls at all.’* Others evoke the economic hardships limiting parents’ ability to maintain their children in school.

Male views and experiences from our MNAs add another dimension to the analysis. Of the four husbands interviewed (aged 22-24), all had themselves dropped out of school – two in primary and two in secondary, most commonly because of lack of money. They expressed regret for both themselves and their wives. Said one, *‘While I am happy that I have a wife, her future hopes and aspirations were put to an end.’* Said another, *‘My own hopes and aspirations were cut short.’* Three of the fathers explained that they would have liked their daughters to continue schooling but were disappointed when *‘they ran away to get married’.* Two felt their daughters wasted their money when they dropped out to get married; a third regrets that his daughter did not follow his advice to finish her studies and start up a drugstore with his help; had she done so, *‘Maybe her life would have been better and she could also support us and other family members.’*

In individual interviews, boys generally noted that, while girls behaved better in school than boys, they performed less well on work and dropped out earlier and more frequently, usually through marriage or pregnancy. They also noted that, once married, girls found it very difficult to go back to school.

Key informants confirmed both the rising trend towards education of girls as well as continuing challenges faced along the way. Some identify early marriage as a key problem and blame parents for being *‘irresponsible’* and not maintaining their children in school. *‘The issue of early marriage is on the increase. We thought some government programmes like UPE would curb this, but dropout is high [...] Those girls are out in the community and parents are not responsible enough’* (KII, Mayuge District Technical Team, Mayuge). They continue that attitudes are still divided over the value of education and that short-term economic gains – from the perspective of both parents and children – often win out over longer-term investments in school.

‘Responsible parents take their children in school – you don’t have to be rich – the mind-set is important. Some parents just don’t appreciate the value of education. Some think education is for boys. Some people see no value in education in general – given high unemployment. The father pays school fees but is jobless, so he gets demoralised – also loses morale at the example of educated people who are unemployed. Girls therefore see men with money as a shortcut’ (KII, Mayuge District Technical Team, Mayuge).

⁹ Quotes in the following paragraphs are from the marital network analyses in Baitambogwe and Kityerera.

Some noted that parental neglect was to blame, with parents away for long periods for work in distant fields or forests; child labour was also mentioned as a key issue. *'Some parents send their children out to cut sugarcane or to fish, even though there are laws on child labour. The police try to sensitise parents on child labour, but parents are benefiting from the money earned'* (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge). Sociocultural beliefs linked to social norms are also strong: parents continue to believe that, *'Paying out money for a girl for school is actually benefiting in-laws, whereas paying for a boy stays within the family'* (KII, CSO coordinator, GBV network, Mayuge). As the deputy resident district commissioner (RDC) puts it, *'There is a shift in thinking that girls are ready to marry the instant they grow breasts, and that they should be given time for school. Nevertheless, parents also want quick cash and wonder why they should waste time on a girl's education when they will just go to some other family'* (KII, deputy RDC, Mayuge).

In both study communities, prevailing cultural views tending towards early marriage among parents who – themselves – were often uneducated and had married early, combined with conditions of poverty faced by most households and with either poor-quality education at primary level or lack of schools at secondary to limit girls' education – in spite of the growing positive opportunities and trends and changing values around girls' education. Moreover, conditions at school or on the way to school for girls can be fraught with risk. Apparently, parents in the community are valuing education for girls more, as in earlier times they only used to take boys to school: *'They want children to reach secondary and higher, but the problems the girl faces at school are not the same as for boys – the hazards facing girls are numerous'* (KII, CDO, Mayuge).

Community members overall recognise the gendered risks girls face in continuing and completing their education.

'There are some parents who stop girls from going to school in favour of boys, but this is no longer common. All children are enrolled in school and encouraged to study, but it is girls who drop out most because of pregnancy despite assurances by teachers that girls are more protected than boys. Many girls, even those in secondary school, feel shy to tell us how they experience school' (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

'At school, girls face more challenges than boys. They are disturbed [seduced] by both boys and old men, and as a result perform poorly in class and in games and sports. However, girls are better behaved than boys at school. Overall, girls drop out of school at a higher rate than boys' (FGD, fathers, Kityerera).

'Some girls are simply not interested in education. When a girl is sent to school she might end up in a disco hall or lodge. If she unsuccessfully introduces a prospective suitor to her parents she runs away from home with the man' (CM, mixed youth, Kityerera).

'At lower levels (P1-P7, S1-S2), children – including girls – drop out of school because of their own or their parents' lack of interest. But in S4 or S6 it owes to lack of money. Boda boda drivers and boys who smoke marijuana also discourage girls from attending school [...] It is the wish of most parents to educate their daughters to a high level and girls who study to tertiary level are morally supported by the community. However, most girls drop out in primary level, and if a girl decides this, there is nothing the parent can do because of children's rights. Such girls miss out on the opportunity of becoming a nurse or doctor' (CM, mixed adults, Baitambogwe).

Girls themselves graphically described the problems they face in terms of sexual harassment within school or enticement along the way – Box 13 highlights particular examples.

Box 13: Gender threats in education

A 17-year old girl is currently in secondary school in Baitambogwe. Her day lasts from 8 am to 4.40 pm. Here is how she describes her day: *'There are problems of men or boys wanting to talk to you along the way – even though they know you are a school girl – sometimes you get confused. The school also sometimes chases you away because you have failed to pay the necessary fees. You wanted to learn, but they are chasing you away [...] It might be the week of exams, but when you get back home your mother says, "You see me – I have no money at all [...]" Go back and beg the bursar to let you learn – say you will pay back later.'* On the way back

from school, the same man who was there on the way thinks you have come back for him. You are thinking about school fees, so you become confused. Or you are in school but are hungry, so the teacher tells you to go out and get lunch [...] Or other children bully you like I was bullied in S1. A girl can be trapped in a situation about lack of school fees and boys waiting for them on the way. She might report this to her parents, who may punish the boy, in which case you feel at ease. Otherwise, if the parent does not intervene, the girl might go with him willingly. Some can resist this temptation – others not. The male teachers also behave badly towards the girls. Instead of teaching, they come to select who is beautiful and who is ugly; this happens every year (IT, in-school 17-year-old girl, Baitambogwe).

A mother recognises that, 'School children face problems on the way to school: bad boys can disturb girls on the way and a boy might also engage in groups and fail to study. A girl is affected most because she is easy to deceive – a boy can say to her, "You are hungry – why don't you come and I'll give you a chapatti" and afterwards he asks her if she thinks the chapatti she is eating is free' (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

An 18-year-old girl who dropped out of high school because of pregnancy said, 'In secondary, I enjoyed dressing in shoes and uniform. I got new friends. Speaking English at school was a problem and when they caught you speaking vernacular, you would wear a smelly bone around the neck. Another thing was the teachers: if the teacher wanted you and you refused he would make sure that you didn't understand his lessons in class. There was nothing we could do – we would tell the senior teacher but [...] she said there was nothing we could do if we had already accepted the teacher's advances – we should report it right away. You might find boys befriending the same girls as the teachers; eventually they begin fighting' (IT, unmarried 18-year old girl with baby, Baitambogwe).

5.2.2 Intersection between education and marriage

In order to assess changing values around education for girls and how these might intersect with values around marriage, study participants were asked their views on whether an educated girl makes a better woman/mother/daughter-in-law and is she valued as such.

Increased value of an educated girl but potential problems

Girls in our FGDs clearly saw that their value (in terms of bride wealth) and their effectiveness as wives and mothers could be enhanced through education, and mothers generally agreed, although some pointed to potential problems with in-laws when a girl was too educated.

'As for bride price, the man has to pay according to the girl's level of education. He cannot expect to pay 300,000 shillings (\$122) when the parents invested 1,000,000 shillings (\$408) or more in her education. But for a girl who never went to school, the man will bring an envelope of about 100,000 shillings (\$40) and I cock and take you' (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Kityerera).

'An educated girl has much marriage value as she fetches a high bride price for her parents compared with an illiterate girl. Being educated also makes a good wife – one who can work jointly with the husband to support the family and her in-laws, and does not produce many children. Education also makes men better husbands who respect and do not fight with the wife, and do not want to produce many children' (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Kityerera).

'A highly educated woman has no problems getting a husband as most men want to marry such a woman. Education of a girl attracts a big bride price. Even if it is my son marrying a highly educated woman I would not mind if he is asked to pay a high bride price. After all, he stands to reap many benefits like having a good mother for his children. However, some highly educated women despise the in-laws' (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

'For an educated girl getting a husband poses no challenge. In the past men did not care whom they married but these days many prefer an educated woman. Education makes a girl a better woman and increases her marriage value in terms of bride wealth. If I had an educated daughter I would demand a lot of money as bride price' (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

Most boys and fathers agreed education contributed to higher value of girls as wives, but some expressed fears that educated women would be harder to control or would not respect them:

'The educated girl is priced higher than the non-educated one because they have already invested a lot in their studies. An educated girl makes a good wife because she can make informed decisions' (IDI, boys, Kityerera).

'I fear marrying a girl who is more educated than me, because she might not respect me' (IDI, boys, Baitambogwe).

Some fathers agreed an educated girl stood a higher chance of getting a husband than an uneducated one. But one father in an FGD in Kityerera would like to marry an uneducated girl *'because she cannot run away from me'*. Others in the same FGD preferred educated girls because *'she would be able to run my business'* and *'she will listen to me and understand what I'm telling her [...] An educated girl can get a job and work, and I want to marry such a girl.'* One was adamant that education does not make a woman a better mother: *'The only thing she talks about is equality.'*

Most respondents in our intergenerational exercises in both Kityerera and Baitambogwe agreed education added to the value of a girl as reflected in bride wealth payments and also made her a better wife and mother because of the greater degree of capability it conferred on her. At the same time, some cautioned that much also depended on the character of the girl, noting that education would not automatically make a woman more caring of children or loving of in-laws; education could, in fact, make girls 'lazy' at home or impel them into work outside the home, causing them to neglect her family duties. Some made distinctions between the beneficial effects of a woman's education on her children versus more mitigated effects on relations with in-laws. One grandmother was also adamant more educated women would not make good wives because they would not know how to make the local brew. Some felt educated girls might have slightly more difficulty finding husbands, either because they want to hold out for rich men or because men fear approaching educated girls for marriage, but most felt this was not the case because men were looking for educated girls these days. When all factors were positive, *'Educated girls have fewer problems than uneducated girls in getting men; also parents who have educated their girls ask for higher bride wealth. Educated girls make better mothers because they don't have problems educating their own children'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera). Intergenerational perspectives on the links between education and marriage are presented below.

Box 14: Intergenerational views on links between education and marriage

Education and marriage payments

Higher value ...

- Education changes marriage payments – a boy has to pay more for an educated girl. *'The one who is educated can be bought for 500,000 shillings compared with one who is uneducated at 200,000 shillings.'* The education of the boy has no effect on marriage payments (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'In my time, more bride wealth was being paid to educated girls because they would charge her education expenses; today very few parents ask for bride wealth because most girls don't stabilise in marriage and they would be expected to refund it'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *'Educated girls could bring in more bride wealth'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'An educated woman is more likely to find an educated man to marry in her day; an educated woman would also bring in more bride wealth'* (IT, 73-year-old grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Men want educated girls who have done something for themselves. That is what I hear from people.'* This is reflected in the bride wealth: *'When you are not educated, a parent might ask only 100,000 shillings for a letter. But when you have studied you will be respected and they will make a better party for you than for a less educated girl'* (IT, 17-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'Educated girls bring a bigger "envelope" on marriage. Men like such a girl because she can get a job and work – she can contribute to the family income'* (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

- *'Educated women do not have more problems finding men than less educated girls; men like educated women – everyone wants an educated woman. It affects marriage payments – when you are not educated the man will say "I am buying you for what?" A boy will pay more for the girl who is educated than for one who is not'* (IT, 18-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education also influences marriage payments. The parent who educated the girl would want many things in the form of payback for what he spent as school fees. The boy will be affected and end up in debt because he will try to get those things and buy the girl'* (IT, 18-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education increased on the girl's payment; because when one is going to marry an educated girl he can bring everything he has to get her'* (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

... **but not necessarily**

- *'Education does not influence the bride price parents ask because the girl (who has chosen someone already) will not leave her boyfriend and she will tell parents to negotiate'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Those who are less educated – they pay less and at times they don't pay anything but those who are educated, they pay more. In terms of the education level of the woman: it depends on how much the man respects her'* (IT, 17-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).
- *'In my day, men had no choice on girls, whether educated or not – I only hear it today that they want educated girls. Bringing cows as bride wealth had ended by the time girls were being educated so education did not affect the bride wealth'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).
- *'[With educated girls] we have stopped taking or receiving bride wealth because girls have no good behaviour. We only take letters'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).

Effects on marital roles/responsibilities

Positive effects

- *Education makes a girl a better wife and mother – 'Whatever I want I can get it, take my child to a school of my choice' – a better woman overall and even a better daughter-in-law – 'because I can handle every situation in my marriage and also help my in-laws'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'Education would make me a better wife, woman because I would be able to get what I want when I have something to do'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *'Educated girls are better off than uneducated ones; it also helps the man when he has education. This is also how it was in my time'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *Being educated makes a girl a better woman 'because she could get many things – get a job to earn money and cater for herself instead of being there without anything, as she is'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Men want to marry educated girls. Education makes a girl "modern". She would want to educate her children; when a child wants school fees she won't tell them that I have no money in tough language. Education is also good for the man, who will become a better husband and will have love for the family'* (IT, 35-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *'Educated girls make better wives – there are even uneducated girls who are hard to manage – because God made them like that'* (IT, 73-year-old grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Education makes a girl a better woman and she gets more respect'* (IT, 17-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'An educated girl makes a better wife because she can copy things she admires where she moves and improve her home'* (IT, 80-year-old grandmother, Baitambogwe).
- *'As far as whether being more educated will make you a better mother and better woman; cleanliness, good behaviour, looking after children is mostly done by educated mothers. Also, after you are married, you bring more things when visiting your parents'* (IT, 18-year-old daughter,

Baitambogwe).

- *'Being educated makes a girl a better woman because she can plan for her family, she can write while the other cannot; she can educate her children better than the less educated'* (IT, mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'Being more educated will make me a better wife – I will be able to provide certain things. The in-laws might not see any benefit of me being educated'* (IT, 18-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education makes a girl a better mother and wife because the child will admire what others have and work to get better; the child can differentiate bad and good things in whatever people are talking about'* (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education does make a girl a better woman in families'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).

More mitigated effects

- *'Men want educated women these days – in my time no one thought much about education [...] But education doesn't necessarily make a girl a better wife – someone who has not studied may be better at looking after herself than someone who has studied – it all depends'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *'It's up to God whether she gets an in-law who is educated or not – you can have an educated one who doesn't care about you, though she would, in the end, choose an educated woman'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *'Education makes a girl a better woman because "they go with respect"; nevertheless, when they reach home, they don't know how to make the local brew'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Uneducated girls do not make good wives because they expect all the needs to be provided by the husband so they just sit and look on'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'Educated girls become good mothers because she will educate her children, as she was educated; but most mothers-in-law have problems with their daughters-in-law'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'It is not sure a more educated woman will be a better wife: if the woman is educated, she will have no time for the children because she wakes up very early in the morning and gets back late at night and even when it is Sunday she will be doing other things and when the child comes, she will say that I am tired I want to sleep [...] but on the other hand, she might become a good mother because she can provide you with everything since she will have the money [...] The same things are true for an educated man'* (IT, 17-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education makes a girl a better wife, but not necessarily a better daughter-in-law: they are not so helpful to parents-in-law, she will only get good things since she will be working, she might not even produce a child'* (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

Effect on finding husbands

No problems or actual benefits

- *'More educated girls do not have difficulty finding men who want to marry them – most men want educated girls – unlike our time where they didn't care about education'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *'Educated girls do not have more problems than uneducated ones in finding a husband; education does not influence bride wealth; being educated makes one a good woman, mother, daughter in-law, because when they are looking for an educated girl, people can call you to help them and be their secretary'* (IT, mother, Kityerera).
- *Educated girls have a better chance of getting a good husband than uneducated girls: 'All her opportunities are open and she can get a well-educated man because they will be admiring her because in this era they are looking for a girl who can earn rather than just spend'* (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'Educated women get better men – they can first ask if the man is educated or just a sugarcane cutter'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).

- *'An educated girl finds it easier to get a man – when an educated girl is getting married, they bring more than that one who is not educated'* (IT, mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'Most men want educated girls as wives, because they want girls who can contribute to the family income. This is a new development, before they used to fear educated girls but now they want them'* (IT, 18-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).

Potential problems

- *'Some educated women have problems finding men – others don't want to get married, but others have no problems. In my day, men did not want educated women because such women never knew how to make the local brew (marwa)'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Educated girls might have more trouble than uneducated girls in finding husbands because some want to get rich men'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'More educated girls have more problems in finding a husband than less educated girls. Men don't approach educated girls as frequently as they do less educated girls; when you're not educated, every man you meet would want to talk to you but if you are educated a person to come to you can even plan it for a full year because of your level of education. If a woman gets a degree here in Lugolole, you have a car and driving you might be looking for him and you don't see him yet he is also looking for you but you eventually get the right man'* (IT, 17-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).
- *'Girls who are educated are feared to be approached by many boys but the less educated are easily approachable'* (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).

Does education make for a better marriage partner?

To compare prevailing views on the benefits of education for girls and boys in terms of its effects on marriage, study respondents were also asked whether they thought an educated boy made a better man/father/husband/son-in-law. Some women in our FGDs felt educated men would make better husbands, but others were not so sure. In individual interviews, boys reasoned that educated men were more likely to have good jobs and so be in a better position to support the family: some equated education with wealth. They also thought an educated man would provide a good example for his children. Some men argued that a man's wealth mattered more than his educational status in terms of his desirability as a marriage partner: in their view, women sought to marry rich men. Views from the intergenerational exercise on educated men were generally favourable – with most agreeing that educated men made better husbands and fathers, although one grandmother cautioned that a more educated man might also take on more wives with the wealth that their education conferred on them. These intergenerational views are presented below.

Box 15: Intergenerational views on education and marriage for boys

Educated boys as better men/husbands/sons-in law?

Positive

- *'Education also makes a man a better husband because 'he is in a position to get a job that can help the family's income then solve all the home problems'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'Education is also important for boys, to allow them to get a job to help look after the family'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Education makes men better husbands 'because their thinking becomes different from those who didn't study'* (IT, 73-year-old grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Education also makes boys better men – they study and get jobs; they also get constructive friends'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'Education has also made boys and men better husbands – though even some boys who were educated would come back and start farming and so were no better off than those who were not educated at all'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).

- *'An educated boy helps his in-laws more than his parents, while educated girls help their parents more than in-laws'* (IT, 50-year-old mother, Kityerera).
- *'Uneducated men do not make good fathers because they will not have a good job to earn a living and take care of their families'* (IT, 19-year-old daughter, Kityerera).
- *'Education also helps boys become good men, husbands – they can participate in programmes that come to the community but people who never studied, they think about farming only'* (IT, mother, Kityerera).
- *'Education also helps boys become good fathers, though there are some problems because educated boys might want to get other women because they can afford to look after them'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Education makes boys better husbands and sons-in-law: 'Very much because a good son-in-law will help the children from his wife's family. We have one whose daughter married a rich man who constructed a house for her and also installed for her solar panels'* (IT, 49-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'Uneducated men will not care so much for their wives and parents; an educated man can beautify me'* (IT, 18-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education also makes boys better men – what the man does takes brains to help the family'* (IT, mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education makes a man a good husband because he will respect his wife, fear her and when he gets something he will give it to her. Also his family will have respect from other people'* (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'A man should also be educated and have good behaviour'* (IT, grandmother, Baitambogwe).

Some room for caution

- *'Education also helps boys become good fathers, though there are some problems because educated boys might want to get other women because they can afford to look after them'* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera).
- *'Some men when they get money, they want to marry many women because they have money so they get spoilt – though some become good husbands'* (IT, 47-year-old mother, Baitambogwe).
- *'Education could also make a man a better husband, but it depends on his behaviour – he should be able to provide necessities at home. If he is educated he might also be able to provide for his in-laws; as for being a better father – it is a heart of the person that decides'* (IT, 18-year-old daughter, Baitambogwe).

6 Drivers of change and continuity over time

6.1 Overview

This section presents perspectives from study participants on the key drivers of changes in social norms and practices around adolescent girls as well as the forces of persistence of particular discriminatory gender norms and the various mediating sites and institutions through which these are transmitted.

It discusses both change and continuity under the same categories of analysis, as it became quite apparent in our research that a particular change in overall context or situation could be seen to have both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ effects, depending on the perspective and the frame of analysis. For example, the promotion of ‘child rights’ in Uganda can be seen to be an overall ‘positive’ step forward in terms of greater respect for the rights of both boys and girls; however, many study participants pointed instead to the ‘negative’ effects in terms of its contribution to the breakdown in family structures and authority.

So too, the constitutional guarantee of age 18 as the legal age of marriage, and efforts to enforce the law on ‘defilement’ prohibiting relations between under-age children, might be seen as strong reinforcement of the rights of adolescent girls to remain unmarried; however, many study participants noted how, instead, these measures merely seemed to drive early marriage underground, contributing as well to the rise of informal ‘cohabitation’ arrangements where the rights of married girls and their children found no legal or material protection. Mediating sites and institutions such as the family, school or legal system could also serve as forces of both change and persistence in gendered social norms.

6.2 Key drivers of change and forces of persistence

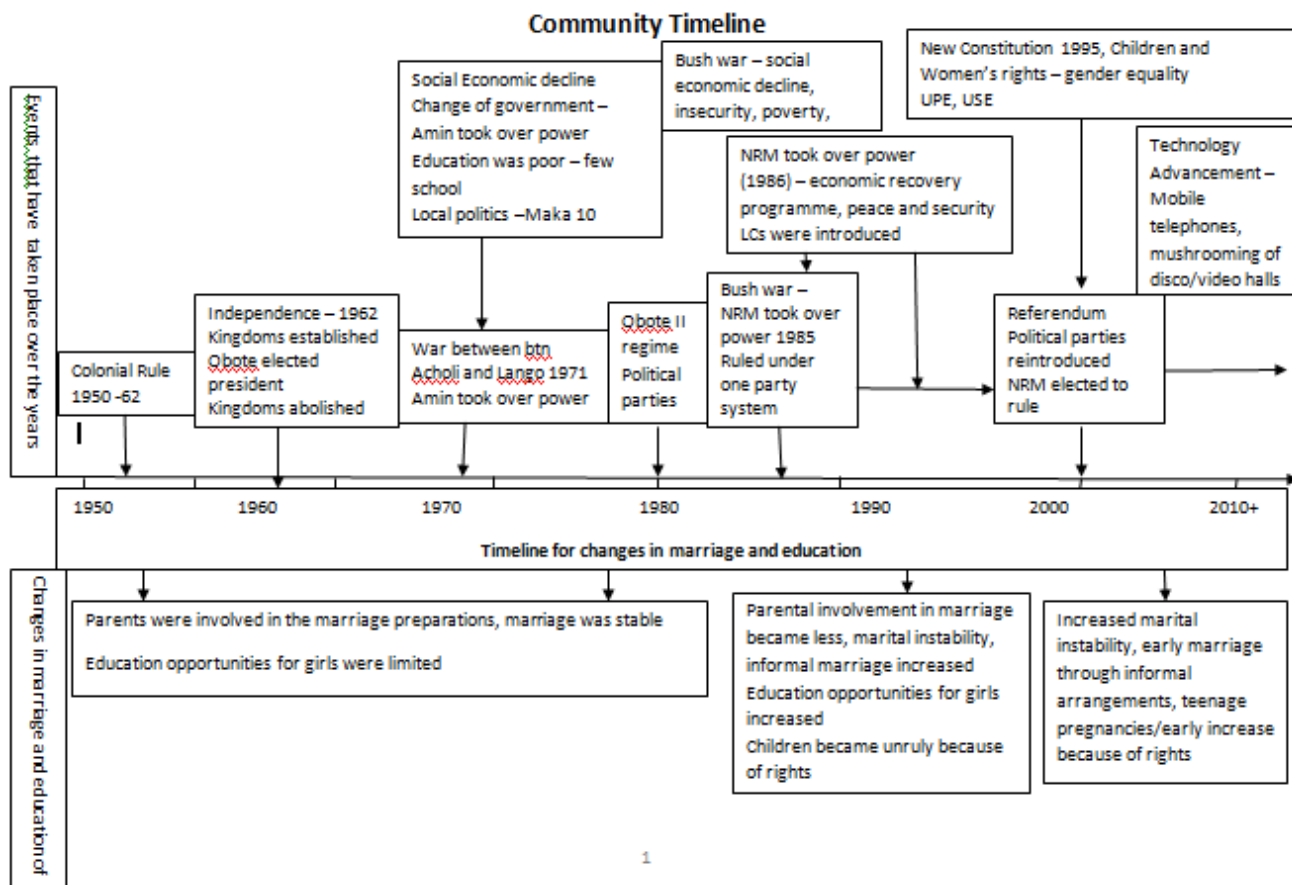
Most study participants mentioned multiple drivers of both change and continuity in social norms and practices around education and marriage for adolescent girls, and set these within the broader context of overall socioeconomic and political transformation accompanied by persistent poverty. Some crystallised these changes in terms of ‘modernisation’, which encompasses what is seen as the erosion of traditional values, customs and forms of social control in the face new influences (often encapsulated under the term ‘Westernisation’) around which social consensus is deeply divided.

Discussions with traditional cultural leaders were particularly poignant in this regard. Many participants evoked – sometimes in quite critical manner – the impact of policy changes around gender equality, child rights and the promotion of girls’ education, which they saw as coming to the fore under the current regime. While some positive aspects were noted (particularly around education), these were often seen to be in conflict with ‘traditional’ value systems and processes and provoked various forms of resistance or were turned into the ‘scapegoat’ to blame what some saw as processes of social deterioration.

6.2.1 Broad-based socioeconomic transformation

Community timelines constructed by elderly study participants set out in graphic form the major trends experiences over the past few decades. The one reproduced below (Figure 4) is a composite of the different ones produced in the course of the study.

Figure 4: Community timeline



The timeline plots socioeconomic and policy changes against the political history of Uganda, from colonial times through independence in 1962 under Obote and the establishment of kingdoms in a federated system – later abolished in 1966 (see district overview in Section 4 for a discussion of kingdoms). Obote was overthrown by Amin who ruled the country until 1979 in a period characterised by our study participants as one of socioeconomic decline and insecurity, when commodities were hard to find and social services were destroyed. Amin was overthrown by Obote, who again assumed power and established political parties. A period of bush wars and ensuing hardship and insecurity brought the National Resistance Movement (NRM) of Museveni into power in 1986, with a return to peace, and, beginning in the 1990s, an economic recovery programme and promulgation of a new constitution in 1995. Study participants saw this latter as critical in establishing the rule of law and human rights, including women and children’s rights.

Study participants and available documentation from both study communities confirmed that broad socioeconomic changes over the past couple of decades had set the scene for changes within families and households that had had significant implications for young people in general.

Box 16: Socioeconomic changes, poverty and emerging issues for young people (Kityerera)

Poverty is said to be pervasive in the sub-county of Kityerera, with our key informants indicating that four out of ten households could be classified as extremely poor – not being able to afford the necessities – and the rest as relatively poor. Landholdings are becoming increasingly fragmented: *‘We have very little and even the soil is exhausted because of over-cultivation [...] Most people have 3-4 acres of land – the richest will have around 10 acres’* (KII, Catholic catechist, Kityerera). *‘In Busoga, we are still very poor owing to industrialisation – we used to have food crops but because of sugarcane plantations we have nowhere to get food but to buy it. In earlier days, people were very few and land was enough but now there is an increased population’* (CM, mixed adults 40+, Baitambogwe).

Coffee production used to be a significant source of cash and was vital in, among other things, a household’s ability to pay school fees. *‘Before, people used to have coffee plantations that were providing school fees and other necessities to the children’* (KII, sub-country technical team, Kityerera). But there has been a drop in coffee production, primarily because of coffee wilt disease, and the soil has become increasingly infertile, so people are encroaching onto forest preserves to plant food crops for consumption as well as income. *‘The coffee harvests have failed and now families grow subsistence crops, left with nothing to help themselves. They cannot afford to send their children to good schools’* (KI, imam, Kityerera). *‘Coffee is no longer there so households have resorted to digging in the forest [...] The soil has become infertile and we have resorted to planting maize’* (KII, sub-country technical team, Kityerera). This can entail splitting the family, with parents off in the forests for long periods of time, leaving children home alone.

Sugarcane plantations are also on the rise in the sub-district, and fishing is a significant source of livelihoods around Lake Victoria. Boys are engaged in fishing, leading to school dropouts, but this is said to be changing as fish catches diminish: *‘Boys study up to S4: some used to spend their time instead at the lake fishing but the lake has changed – fish are no longer being caught as before’* (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera). Boys are increasingly at work on the sugar plantations, cutting cane and loading it onto trucks – which pulls them out of school; older boys and men also drive *boda bodas*. Both boys and girls work in sand quarries, and girls market produce in trading centres (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). With formal income generation opportunities more restricted for girls than for boys, some key informants indicate they turn to other means: *‘But, even if girls have no jobs, they earn money their own way – that is, by befriending boys who give them money’* (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera).

There are a number of trading centres in the sub-county, which are cited as a problem for the young people who frequent them, as they include discos and video halls where what is described as ‘pornography’ is shown, and centres for gambling. Parents also send girls to the trading centres to sell food, leading to problems when they take up with boys or men who entice them with treats (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). There are also drugs coming into the area, with boys in particular smoking marijuana. *‘We need to counsel the youth but they do not come to mosques – they are in video halls’* (KII, imam, Kityerera). Largely as a function of the social behaviours stimulated by these trading centres, increased population mobility and the rise of new information and communication technologies, people see that urban–rural distinctions are being erased. *‘There are no villages anymore – all children are the same, and children here behave like those in Kampala and Busoga’* (KII, imam, Kityerera).

Key social problems overall are identified as family breakdown and disobedience; increased immorality by the girl child in a bid to look for survival; high rates of child defilement (sexual intercourse with children under 18); child labour at its peak owing to poverty; youth unemployment, gambling and rising crime, particularly in trading centres; and foreign values – including pornography – infiltrating into the urbanising areas of the sub-county (Mayuge District Local Government, 2010b).

Box 17: The impact of socioeconomic and livelihood changes on young people (Baitambogwe)

Key informants in Baitambogwe concur that there has been an increasing shift from subsistence-based food production – particularly maize – coupled with cultivation of coffee as a cash crop to integration into commercialised sugarcane plantations and a more fully cash-based economy. People have given out their land for sugarcane growing, leading to land fragmentation and a neglect of food crops, which they say are increasingly difficult to grow without the necessary inputs, such as fertiliser. *‘Some parents have lost their land entirely to sugarcane growers because they rent it out for some years, but with continuing demand they eventually sell it off’* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

The rise of sugarcane plantations is seen to be contributing to school dropout and child labour as children go to work on the plantations – boys in cutting cane, girls in weeding. Often, it is the cash-strapped parents – who no longer grow their own food but must buy it on the market – who send them off to work like this: *‘Parents are the ones who send their children to these sugarcane plantations to work and get money for use at home’* (KII, sub-county chair in charge of women and children, Baitambogwe).

Socioeconomic changes are also affecting family formation. Traditionally, fathers would provide plots of land to sons for farming, but, with a growing population accompanied by land fragmentation, this is increasingly less possible. *‘Now children are looking for their own survival since the land is no longer there [...] That is also why girls are running off with some boys, looking for survival in others ways’* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

As in Kityerera, the proliferation of trading centres in the district, accompanied by new forms of communication and social behaviours, is also seen to be the root of new forms of negative social behaviours. As our key informants put it, these trading centres are growing up, with video halls and even solar panels. New communications and media are also coming in – and lots of people have televisions. The use of drugs and alcohol is on the rise, along with a rise in crime, with most thefts reportedly committed by youth between 15 and 18 (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

Study participants highlighted that all of the above factors combined to contribute to changes in basic social structures, which remained – in many ways – out of tune with traditional social values and norms. They contributed in this way to the development of new ‘descriptive’ social norms around marriage forms and practices without societal concurrence around these as ‘injunctive’ social norms.

6.2.2 Household poverty and the rise of the cash economy

Almost all study participants pointed in some way to the underlying influence of poverty on household stability, economic survival strategies – including early marriage, cohabitation and adolescent pregnancy – and child labour-limiting opportunities for both boys’ and girls’ education and advancement.

In the context of transformation from a subsistence- to a cash-based economy, in which young boys engaged in labour activities and had new sources of income, this further paved the way for the rise of transactional sex of different forms, as well as early marriage through ‘cohabitation’ (in which girls turn to boys for the material support they cannot get from parents) and growing parental acquiescence in these arrangements in return for ‘compensation’, which is beginning to take the place of the traditional bride wealth system. Even the police are seen to be complicit in this, as cases of defilement (the term in Uganda identifying all sexual relations – including marriage – under 18 as a crime) are brought to them for settlement.

The quotes and examples below illustrate some of these points:



Picture 12. Boys are increasingly engaging in sugar-cane cutting in the district

'A lot of informal marriages are taking place and it also appears that bride wealth is fading – this is because of poverty – people living day to day. So formal bride wealth is giving away to small payments that parents get [...] A recently widowed woman with a 14-/15-year-old girl “sold” her to a man for 50,000 shillings in the form of “bride wealth”. Even small amounts like that the parents are interested in. After a neighbour reported this, the man was arrested and is now in prison, but the mother has not gone to the police’ (KII, deputy RDC, Mayuge).

'Young people are moving from place to place – some with disposable income that they can dish out to girls in the form of transactional sex. With roads passing through, restaurants and hotels established in trading centres, many landing sites with fishing and smuggling activities, there is a lot of money circulating in the district. This money has to move around and one of the things this money is buying is sex’ (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge).

'Poverty is a driving factor for many things, including “defilement” [sexual relations – including marriage – under 18], as families cannot support all of their children, so if a “sugar daddy” comes along, parents will be tempted to give their daughters to him in exchange for some small benefits’ (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

'A girl is seen as a “small shop” (kaduka) out of which parents can gain income when she marries – even when she goes into the cohabiting arrangements, they can gain something from this. There is even a song about a young girl being more beneficial than a small shop (mwana muwala akyira akaduka kenembera)’ (KII, DEO, Mayuge).

'The simple envelopes they are given may be the incentives [parents need to marry girls off early]’ (KII, headmaster, Kityerera).

'There are very few girls who get married the way we used to. A girl these days can be deceived by just a chapatti and she gets married; then the boy hides her and she may come back with a pregnancy’ (KII, sub-county vice chair, in charge of children and women affairs, Baitambogwe).

'Poverty contributes to teenage pregnancy – the sooner you can get rid of an extra mouth to feed and get dowry, the better off you are. Teenage pregnancy is higher in lower wealth quintiles throughout the country. Even when a family is genuinely concerned about defilement, the process of going to the police is so laborious that sometimes it is just easier to negotiate with the defiler’ (KII, female advisor, World Health Organization (WHO)/UN Population Fund (UNFPA)/Makerere College of Health Sciences).

6.2.3 National education policies

CM exercises and key informants evoked some of the key aspects in the historical evolution of education in Uganda, starting under colonial times, and with church-based schooling that conveyed the values of the time. Educational opportunities were overall limited and for girls particularly so, given prevailing social attitudes that said education was primarily for boys. *'In those days education was not taken as important. It was not until 1990 when the government emphasised it. There is now development in most communities’ (CM, mixed adults 40+, Baitambogwe).*

Introduction of the national UPE in 1996, followed by USE in 2001, has significantly expanded educational opportunities for girls and has contributed, according to most of our study participants, to changing social norms and values around girls' education. The majority of our study participants indicated that girls today were attaining higher levels of education than women of previous generations; girls and their parents – particularly mothers – generally both place high value on education; district officials and other key informants also espouse such values and attempt to enforce them through law – for example rounding up children who are not in school and considering measures of community service for parents who do not send their children to school; developing bylaws against child labour; and – as above – enforcing the ‘defilement’ act to stem practices of child marriage or premarital pregnancies that fuel girls' school dropouts.

Nevertheless, problems of educational quality continue. High costs to parents and lack of access to schools at secondary level remain critical obstacles to the transformative potential of education. For girls in particular, a host of factors continue to hinder opportunities, with policy issues intertwining with lingering gender-discriminatory norms and practices to create specific challenges and constraints.

District statistics show greatly expanded opportunities for girls to attend school at primary level. According to the district education officer (DEO), there are now a total of 286 primary schools (142 government-aided; 144 private) compared with just 80 government-aided primary schools when he arrived in the district in 2001. But opportunities narrow significantly at secondary level. While government policy is to establish at least one government-aided secondary school per county, this is not yet the case in Mayuge. An acute problem of access therefore arises at secondary, with just 47 secondary schools (7 government-aided), which, in addition, are unevenly distributed. *'It's a big challenge because children are educated freely in primary, but have to look for money to pay in secondary. Girls also face challenges when they go to secondary schools that are more distant from their villages – they have to take boda boda. So these motorcycle riders give them a ride and the next thing is to befriend them and then impregnate them [...] The girls are then lost'* (KII, senior woman teacher, Baitambogwe).

As the DEO highlights, it is at secondary level that *'the gate is so narrow for children to pass through. Children therefore really have to struggle to make it into secondary, and if parents are not so keen, education is difficult for children to get'* (KII, DEO, Mayuge). Meanwhile, there is only one technical institute, but with a very small number of students (around 700), and university opportunities remain out of reach for most.

The lack of educational opportunities at secondary level is a significant factor contributing high levels of primary school dropout. But dropouts, according to many of our study participants, also owe to fees imposed. In spite of government policies of UPE and USE, funds (capitation grants) are not enough, or come too late, so schools are imposing new charges – maize, beans, fees for grinding maize etc. (KII, district planning committee, Baitambogwe). Parents must supply uniforms, school materials and lunches for their children as well – in some schools parents pitch in for meals to be prepared by schools, but there is no government policy of school lunch provision as seems to have existed in the past. The economic burden of sending many children to school can therefore remain quite high for parents – some of whom may not be totally convinced about the value of school in the first place, particularly for girls. *'It is mainly poverty that means people can't educate their children'* (KII, sub-county vice-chair, in charge of children and women affairs, Baitambogwe).

Primary completion rates in Mayuge therefore remain extremely low – at around 30-35%. For example, out of 21,300 pupils enrolled in P1 in 2005 only 7,663 sat for the PLEs in 2012 (KII, DEO, Mayuge). Girls in particular start dropping out at P5 because of 1) parental failure to promote education for their girls; 2) economic conditions within the household, with children needed to help out at home or to work cutting sugarcane, fishing or selling pancakes and in other petty businesses; and 3) all of the forces that continue to propel girls towards early marriage, cohabitation or pregnancy (KII, DEO, Mayuge). As the deputy RDC notes, *'There is a shift in thinking that girls are ready to marry the instant they grow breasts, and that they should be given time for school. Nevertheless, parents also want quick cash and wonder why they should waste time on a girl's education when they will just go to some other family.'* *'If a girl reaches S4,'* added a Catholic catechist in Kityerera, *'She is considered to have studied a lot.'*

For school dropouts caused by pregnancy, the DEO affirms there is no clear national policy, but just an attitude that *'A pregnant girl is finished and cannot study.'* When a girl gets pregnant, the parents believe that is the end of education. Then they try to *'send them off'* as punishment. They feel the girl has disappointed the family, created mischief (KII, CDO, Mayuge). *'Some girls who get pregnant at school come back to study after giving birth. But the community sees this negatively as the girls are seen as a bad influence to other pupils'* (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Kityerera). National policy on this seems to hesitate, primarily, it would seem, out of a moralising fear that supporting child mothers to return to school would in a sense condone 'bad behaviour' and encourage teen pregnancies among other girls. But other obstacles also arise: significant efforts would be needed, for example, to put in place the structures needed to support child mothers to continue with their schooling.

Community attitudes, however, seem to be generally shifting and more favourable to allowing married girls or teen mothers to return to school, if the proper arrangements were in place. As a mother notes: *'If I had a daughter who dropped out of school owing to pregnancy I would support her to go back after delivery since such pregnancies are mostly accidents. It is a pity there are no programmes to support such girls. They need sensitisation to understand teenage pregnancy is not the end of life'* (FGD, mothers 21-40, Kityerera).

Girls themselves say, *'We know some girls who are married and attending school, which was never the case in the past. It is good if a girl is pregnant or married but still attending school, but we don't know how such girls can be supported'* (FGD, married girls, Kityerera). Even some fathers and men appear supportive: *'If a girl is married and can at the same time attend school it would be good because she will have seen the light. It would also be good for a girl who has delivered to return to school, because in most such pregnancies are regretted accidents. Unfortunately, there are no programmes in the community to help such girls return to school'* (FGD, fathers, Kityerera).

But study respondents are also realistic. *'It is good if a girl is married but at the same time schooling, but I don't know of any. There are no programmes or legislation to support such girls in the community, but parents should play this role'* (FGD, in-school boys, Kityerera). It may be that, on this issue, national policy is lagging behind evolving community perspectives.

6.2.4 Laws and policies on gender equality, marriage and children's rights

Outside of the policy of UPE discussed above, the four sets of laws and policies that study participants evoked most frequently in their discussions of changing norms and practices around adolescent girls were 1) the promotion of women's rights; 2) the promotion of child rights; and 3) the law against defilement/early marriage, set within the overall context of current debates on 4) the Marriage and Divorce Act in Uganda. Both the content of the policies or laws in themselves and the way they have been enacted on the ground have been sources of much tension among community members, as in essence they each challenge different established power relations based on gender and age. As many of our key informants were 'gate-keepers' of some sort, many of the views recorded were of those who felt they had something to lose in the changes these laws and policies are bringing about.

While the rights movement that came with the NRM regime was appreciated, especially by women, for causing a reduction in mistreatment/violence and discrimination, it was associated with some negative implications, including undisciplined children, dropping out of school, broken families and men's neglect of family responsibilities among others. The quotes and examples below attempt to shed light on study participants' views and experiences of these different laws and policies and to illustrate contradictory effects of their enforcement as well as the different forms of resistance to or reactions against them.

Promotion of 'women's rights'

This was seen by many of our male study participants to pose a direct threat to men's authority over women in society and was identified as the source of family break-up, social disintegration and the development of loose morals. Among other things, equal rights in the household are seen to threaten the dominance of the male 'household head'; economic empowerment of women leaves many men feeling marginalised as 'providers'; enhanced participation of women in public affairs shocks cultural prescriptions against women's voice; and protection against GBV including in marriage runs counter to many men's feeling of entitlement to women's sexual availability. Box 18 shows the perspectives of key informants and community members.

Box 18: Men are beginning to feel like 'empty trousers'

'When my mum used to make a mistake, my father would slap her and she would stop repeating the same thing and she would kneel and ask for forgiveness from him but now days she will take you to be arrested [...] There are many broken families these days' (CM, mixed adults, 40+, Baitambogwe).

'Before, men were on top – they were the decision-makers in the family. Community development and probation officers are now advancing the rights of women – protecting women's rights. But what about men's rights? Some men are coming in to report abuse by their women, but most do not – they feel ashamed. They feel it is a

sign of weakness, failure, as if they cannot control their women [...] Before, women would be sitting in the meetings and not talking – they were supposed to be silent: “What a man has said cannot be refuted, it is the correct thing.” But now women are becoming aggressive in their demands’ (KII, CDO, Mayuge).

‘The community sees women’s work as positive, but men still want to control the income. Men feel like they are “empty trousers”. Many development programmes come in targeting women – even NAADS target women over men for microfinance because women are considered more trustworthy so men are feeling left out’ (KII, CSO coordinators, GBV network, Mayuge).

‘Marriages these days are no good in part because of women – they go into business, leaving their husbands alone all day with all the household responsibilities, so what kind of marriage is that? Before, a woman was not allowed to go into business – when a visitor came, a man would kill one of his wife’s chickens as hospitality, but nowadays, he cannot touch her property; also, the aunt used to have the right to beat and discipline her nieces – but no longer’ (KII, imam, Kityerera).

‘The husbands never used to meander because the women were at home doing their house work unlike now where most work is done by house girls. Men need someone to care for them at home, and this is being compromised’ (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

‘Women’s rights have been misinterpreted by the community. Communities, for example, are mixing “gender balance” and rights. They are saying, “The government has spoiled women with their rights.” Women, for example, are refusing sex, and these are common complaints from men’ (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

Promotion of child rights

This was seen to pose a direct threat to parental control and authority over children and again was blamed for causing children to run wild – a factor seen to explain the rise of informal marriages and teenage pregnancy. Many adults – particularly men – saw outlawing practices of corporal punishment as one of the most bewildering aspects of the law: many could simply not conceive of any other means of maintaining authority over children than through physical discipline. Granting children the ability to bring legal complaints against their parents or other adults was also seen as a direct undermining of parental controls. In many ways, the promotion of women and children’s rights, combined with other broad-based processes of socioeconomic transformation and limited opportunities for employment can be seen as causing a real crisis of masculinity among men in the community, whose former basis of patriarchal power over women and children is being eroded. Box 19 captures some of the perplexity expressed by both men and women over how to interpret and deal with child rights.

Box 19: ‘Museveni’s children’ – trying to make sense of child rights

‘We try to counsel their children but cannot beat them because of the rights. They are Museveni’s children – they do not listen to our counsel. You cannot beat them; they will take you to police [...] This has been since the current Movement (government) came to power and brought rights’ (FGD, women, Baitambogwe).

‘People are misinterpreting child rights [...] Children are now increasingly drinking alcohol and taking drugs – becoming addicted. Some parents have neglected their responsibilities – they see their children moving with bad influences, coming home at all hours and they don’t say anything because – they say – they are “Museveni’s children”’ (KII, sub-county vice-chair, in charge of children and women affairs, Baitambogwe).

‘Because of government policies, parents have no say on their children. If you try to discipline your child they call it harassment/child abuse and you might end up in prison unlike in previous days when parents were harsh on children [...] In the Obote and Amin regimes during the 1980s, for example, I might find your daughter and try to cane her if I found her doing wrong [...] Now it is a police case because of the conditions the government has put in place [...] Right now you can find a child who has finished S4 failing to write even a letter because they don’t discipline them in school, fearing the consequences’ (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera).

‘Some 10-15 years ago, local leaders had power over the local population – and girls were introduced to men through formal introductions as part of the marriage practices. But today, with child rights, etc. community

controls have broken down, parents have lost control and local leaders are disempowered because so many rights have been given to children’ (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

‘Child rights is contributing to the rise of cohabitation by girls. Decision-making in the home gives more say to girls and boys who have had some education and think they now also have the right to have a say’ (KII, CSO coordinators, GBV network, Mayuge).

‘Early marriage is growing, because ‘These are Museveni’s children – they have their freedom. Even here at school we cannot beat the children. The consequences are that the girl drops out of school, their childhood is stunted, parents chase them from home and they suffer with their children alone’ (KII, senior woman teacher, Baitambogwe).

The minimum age of marriage and law on defilement

The age of 18 as the legal age of marriage (as stipulated as well in the Constitution) is seen by many to be in direct contradiction to the traditionally early timing linked to cultural perceptions of physical maturity among young girls (thought of as ‘ripe for the picking’ as soon as breasts begin to bud, with cultural taboos in many groups against menstruation in the parents’ home); inability to support older children economically in the context of large families; and needs for bride wealth at critical cycles in household development (to supplement household livelihoods and contribute to bride wealth for brothers). Together with the law on defilement, which backs up the minimum age of marriage, it touches directly on traditional family and clan control over marriage as an economic and social transaction bringing what is seen to be established benefits to the group as a whole and the individual as a member of that group.

The law defines ‘defilement’ as any sexual act, consensual or not, involving minors under the age of 18 as a crime punishable by law. It makes a distinction between simple defilement (ages 14-17) and aggravated defilement (age 13 and below), which some suggest has led to the unintended message that someone at age 14 is more or less ready for a sexual relationships. While many see benefits in both the minimum age and the law on defilement, some see strict enforcement measures as driving early marriages underground – in the form of informal cohabitation arrangements in which parents are sometimes complicit.

Box 20: Coming to terms with the minimum age of marriage and law on defilement

Some feel this law, in the context of the promotion of child rights, is empowering for girls. ‘In the past a girl could not refuse to get married if her parents wanted her to. But these days a girl can refuse although this may attract curses by her parents. Now girls are aware of the benefits of not getting married like avoiding catching AIDS and being bewitched by co wives’ (FGD, unmarried out-of-school girls, Kityerera)

The police believe cases of early marriage have dropped because of implementation of 18 as the legal age of marriage, but admit that there are loopholes in its application. The law on defilement has changed and now even juveniles – both boys and girls – are brought to court. Even consensual sex can be prosecuted if someone is under age. ‘Sometimes, however, families prefer to handle the problem privately – they go home and negotiate a settlement with each other’ (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

Others feel that the police, RDCs and LCs blatantly exploit legislation prohibiting early marriage to extort money from culprits, and use the child rights statute to undermine parental authority and promote sexual immorality and indiscipline among young girls, driving them into underage marriage. ‘We are well aware of these issues but cannot report them fear of being hated in the community’ (CM, mixed adults 40-60, Baitambogwe).

Some point to problems in interpretation that affect older adolescents in particular. ‘There is a problem – the law has put in a clause in the law on defilement on “aggravated defilement [13 and below]”. This kind of terminology confuses people because the law seems to say that, at a certain age [14 and above], someone is almost ready’ (KII, district technical team, Mayuge).

The proposed Marriage and Divorce Bill

This Bill, whose intent is to provide additional protection to women within marriage, has met massive resistance at both national and local level – with men, religious leaders, some politicians and even some women speaking out violently against it. Men especially feared it would erode their authority over women in marriage; particular objections were raised to clauses on marital rape (an unknown concept in most of traditional Uganda) and the sharing of marital goods in the case of divorce.

There is some evidence that fear of this last issue is contributing to a preference for informal marriages, which property-sharing stipulations cannot touch. An earlier clause, suggesting recognition of cohabitation arrangements as legal marriages in view of their rising commonality and in order to provide safeguards to women within them, met with such concerted outcry (including from religious authorities) that it has been dropped from the current version being proposed. As a key informant at national level explained, in case of dissolution of both official and ‘unofficial’ (cohabitation) unions, courts can decide on child support; this does not come automatically by law – a case has to be filed. In official unions, the woman may also be given support, but not in cohabitation. This is an aspect the Bill was trying to add, but with much opposition, including from the church. Other particularly contentious issues were around property and sexual rights. In public discussions of the Bill, *‘Everyone went back to culture – women as the embodiment of culture’* (KII, UWONET, Kampala).

Box 21: Local perspectives on the proposed Marriage and Divorce Bill

‘The Marriage and Divorce Bill was packaged badly – it is as if you are getting married but at the same time preparing for divorce. Many fought against it – including religious leaders’ (KII, district technical team, Mayuge).

‘Others opposed it because it looked like it was geared to young people, whose marriages were already highly unstable’ (KII, cultural leader, secretary to Cultural Chief of Bunyole, Kityerera).

‘People are saying marriage should remain in its cultural “customary” forms, as this type binds a woman with her man. One clause in the bill on domestic rape is contentious: if a woman refuses sexual relations with her husband, this is a cause of domestic violence’ (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

People are said to be opposed to the proposed Marriage and Divorce bill, objecting in particular to the concept of marital rape (*“If he is your husband,” they ask, “then that is not rape, and anyway, who will report it?”*) and the sharing of marital property in the case of separation – seen as particularly problematic when marriages are so unstable. In any case, they ask, *“Why should women have a share in property that the man has acquired?”* Women themselves are opposed to the Bill because they fear it will prevent men from marrying them (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera).

‘It is felt that this could be used by girls just to get property – for example, staying in a marriage for two years and then leaving [...] Before, very few women would divorce compared with today where women have become “landlords”’ (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera).

‘Once a woman produces a child, according to our customs, the child is a beneficiary of the family property, so there is no point in saying we need to share property [in the case of divorce]. Share what? The problem of the Bill was generalisation, if they had looked at how long the couple has stayed together, maybe the Bill would work. For instance, I stayed with someone’s daughter for a year and we separate then she asks for the share of the property is that applicable’ (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera).

‘When the man sees he may end up sharing the property, he decides to run away from home and leaves the woman and children behind and starts a new life [...] Normally, the property would still be theirs both of them. But when the court decides that they share property, each would have his/her own share’ (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera).

‘There are so many loopholes in the Bill that antagonise the Bible – yet it is supposed to complement it. For example [...] the Bill is advocating for divorce – some people can turn it into business because couples have to share property’ (KII, Catholic priest, Baitambogwe).

'Men are afraid of the property-sharing clause in the Bill; when they leave after a cohabitation arrangement, they do not have to share: this is one of the reasons cohabitation is becoming more common' (KII, CSO coordinators, GBV network, Mayuge).

6.2.5 Sociocultural transformations

In the words of one analyst, *'Contemporary Ugandan culture is neither strictly traditionalist nor modern but is a complex mix of the two. Rural Ugandans generally lead more traditional lives because of the higher degree of cultural homogeneity and lower impact of Westernization in these areas. They are often sceptical of the values and lifestyles of their urban counterparts. Others can best be described as 'cultural chameleons' changing their aspect depending on circumstance'* (Otiso 2006).

KIIs conducted over the course of our fieldwork in Mayuge certainly revealed a sense of cultural unravelling – *'a sense of chaos'* as the deputy RDC in Mayuge put it – as old values break down and the younger generations adopt behaviours influenced by what some adults see as the most negative aspects of Western culture. *'There is a breakdown in families and also a breakdown in cultural institutions, which are also changing according to political dynamics,'* reported the deputy RDC. *'Girls have lost morals,'* stated an Islamic religious leader, *'They no longer kneel to greet people.'* The Musoga clan coordinator noted that clan leaders were responsible for cultural development – *'to make sure children grow culturally as good citizens [...] and follow the norms and customs of the community'* and a cultural leader in Kityerera maintained that *'Cultural chiefs are the ones to provide advice to their subject.'* However, their authority is being challenged as cultural controls and sanctions are lost. *'That was in the past, but now there is no culture,'* explained the district technical team in Mayuge. *'Actually, cultures have been washed away [...] For example, if a musician comes to town and we also have the cultural leader in the area, people will go to see the musician and leave the cultural leader.'* There may also be some competition for influence over value-setting between religious and cultural leaders. As one NGO representative put it, *'Cultural leaders are more influential with people who do not go to church'* (KII, CSO coordinator of GBV network, Mayuge).



Picture 13. The rise of trading centres marks a process of urbanisation that affects even remote rural areas

The clan coordinator felt that, in many ways, *'Modern education has taught children to forget their cultural behaviours [...] and older men and women have lost control over their own children who say, "Leave us alone. What do you know, you old man/woman?"'* Conflicts occur around, among other things, marriage, given its central importance to the traditional social structure and the rapid forces of change that are affecting it. In the past, he felt, marriages were properly kept and respected, but not today. *'These days, marriage no longer carries the same meaning for boys and girls because they marry today and they want to separate tomorrow.'*

He also felt children should be taught not to copy bad ways, but to respect culture and customs. *'They should not go about wildly in these modern ways.'* For him, the key question was how to adapt to the changing environment – and adopting positive new approaches but resisting negative ones while maintaining a sense of cultural values. *'My worry is how we can preserve our culture while at the same time adapting to current developments. Because we must adapt but live culturally.'* As the district technical team concluded, *'Uganda is a developing country, undergoing transformation from where it has been to where it wants to go – from traditional to modern [...] This is not a smooth process.'* But as the deputy RDC put it, poignantly, *'Once culture breaks down, how do we go back?'*

Study participants highlighted some of the tensions and disjuncture they observed or experienced in this transition between and interpenetration of the 'traditional' (itself evolving) and the 'modern' (linked in some ways to urbanisation and the influence of Western society). A political representative spoke of how local cultures had become 'infected' by the West; a religious authority spoke of modernisation as the source of immorality.

Others identified some of the particularly disruptive influences on gender relations, the family and adolescent girls as follows.

New media and information technologies

Many saw television, video and smart phones as dangerous vehicles for the transmission of images and accompanying values that may not be in line with local value systems. One of the respondents noted that, when he was growing up, people had to walk for 25 miles to see a television, but nowadays these are more widespread – including in trading centres – and children are exposed to programmes for mature people. *‘When they see these, they themselves want to do “practicals”. Many trading centres are growing up, with video halls, TVs, even solar panels and lots of people have TVs. Early pregnancy, sex – children are seeing all these things on TV’* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe). Television is also seen – here as in other parts of the world – as interfering in family communications. *‘Before, TV used to be far away; parents would interact with children – sitting around the fire, telling stories. But no more – children are not getting that experience’* (KII, district technical team, Mayuge).

There is in general a deep distrust of new technologies: *‘Another reason for early marriages/pregnancies is the phones that can store movies and pictures that are not good for children. Some parents with televisions at times live their children and they tune to different channels that are not good for them’* (KII, male Catholic catechist, Kityerera). Respondents also note that conventional media, such as radio, are not being used for their educational potential: *‘Radios do not broadcast proper programmes’* (FGD, men, Baitambogwe).

Urbanisation, mobility, trading centres and Western-style entertainment

There are a number of trading centres in the sub-county, which are cited as a problem for young people who frequent them, as they include discos and video halls where what is described as ‘pornography’ is shown. *‘Parents also send girls to the trading centres to sell foodstuffs, leading to problems in taking up with boys or men who entice them with treats’* (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). New ‘avenues of interaction’ arising for young people are seen to be replete with temptations of all sorts and are considered factors contributing to early and unstable marriages: *‘Children go to study in different places, they meet, and then agree to be partners [...] People are searching on the Internet and getting married [...] Then the way we are spending our time in night clubs – someone finds a woman, they “get married” for about two or three weeks, and then separate [...] That is why these days marriages have become loose’* (KII, CDO, Mayuge). A church leader asserted baldly that, *‘Girls are getting married or cohabiting at early ages because of the influence of discos, video halls’* (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera).

With the rise of trading centres and sugarcane, boys are giving girls gifts and things the parents themselves cannot afford, so girls turn more and more to boys. *‘These young people meet each other mostly in the trading centres and when a girl asks for something small, the boy provides it, but also demands sex; eventually this results in a pregnancy and “marriage” which – in most cases – doesn’t last’* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe). *‘Also girls – they are going to down to karaoke spots saying “We are here to expend our capital”’* (KII, deputy RDC, Mayuge).

6.3 Mediating sites and institutions

Following our conceptual framework, this section identifies key mediating sites and institutions through which gendered social norms are either reinforced or transformed. These include the family and household; schools; health centres; local government structures and legal services; ethnic and religious institutions and ideologies; and NGO/CSO projects and activities. As with the section above, it argues that specific sites seem to be able to serve as both as forces of persistence and forces for change – sometimes at the same time. This is the case, for example, for households, which generally serve as sites of socialisation into traditional gender norms, but which can sometimes offer support structures as springboards for positive change. So, too, schools, while offering avenues and opportunities for girls’ empowerment, can also serve as sites of gender discrimination and risk.

6.3.1 The family and household

As in our Year 1 research, the family/household was found to be a foundational domain and site wherein prevailing social norms around gender and the development of capabilities were played out, patterned and either challenged or reinforced. In this year's research, focusing more specifically on girls' transition from natal homes to marital homes through different forms of marriage, household conditions, structures and forms were seen to be even more pivotal as forces for change as well as continuity. As with the drivers of change overall, the household as a mediating site had both positive and negative effects. These are presented below. While most examples are of the natal households of adolescent girls, there are also some examples of support or lack of support received from households of the boy.

The family as a positive source of support for adolescent girls

Case studies on 'outliers' illustrate clearly how powerful supportive family structures can be in enabling girls to overcome obstacles, develop new aspirations and strengthen capabilities.

Box 22: Case study – girl graduate supported by parents

Hajara (name changed) from Kityerera is one of three girl graduates in her community. She is the 13th in a polygamous family with 19 children, out whom 16 are girls. Her parents are both peasants, with cash crops providing some, but not all, of the school fees for the children; even with her grandmother chipping in, most of her brothers and sisters did not complete school. She, however, managed to go to university. This case demonstrates the positive influence of family and social support in enabling a young girl to continue with her studies.

'During my school life, I had many friends, although some would get pregnant or married and leave. As a teenager, my dad had no money, so my mother used to send us with my siblings to sell bananas at the market but I hated this because we were touched by men. We reported this case to our mother who stopped us from selling at the market.'

'I attribute my staying in school till university level among other children to the support and advice I got from my mother and father. When I was in S1 my mother used to sit me down and tell me how keep myself together. If I spent time at the trading centre or in seminars late, she would tell me that it was bad to stay away from home in late hours. She used to ask me about my performance, and our dad used to surprise us with gifts when we performed well in class. He would also take us to graduation parties to motivate us.'

'I faced challenges of a boy trying to lure me with gifts, but I refused and would tell my mother about it. He was persistent over the years and even tried to knock me down with a motorcycle. I told my mum and she went to talk to him.'

'My future plans are to get a job and support my mother who is sickly. My advice to mothers who have girl children is to support them and take them to school and provide for their basic needs. I advise the other children to have patience because it pays.'

The family as a site propelling early marriage, cohabitation, and pregnancy

Many of our study participants, when asked to cite the reasons for the persistence of early marriage or for the rise of new forms of early cohabitation, pointed to conditions within the girl's natal household as critical. One aspect of this has to do with household poverty, which 1) continues to impel some parents to seek to withdraw girls from school in order to save on expenses and to 'marry off' their daughters in order to gain bride price; and 2) impels girls themselves to either engage in transactional sex or establish cohabitation arrangements with boys/men who are seen as better able to provide for them economically. Another aspect, however, has to do with parental abuse or neglect, particularly – but not always – in situations where the family structures have broken down and the girl is an orphan or living for some other reason with a stepmother (the father's co-wife) rather than her own mother.

'We parents have abandoned our responsibility of guiding and counselling our children about the dangers of early marriage. We are not providing basic needs to our girls who drop out of school because they have got men who provide them with what they desire. Girls are running off and marrying early to escape poverty at home. We parents are not being good examples to our children. We use abusive languages and are involved in fornication in the presence of our children who follow suit. We parents do not value marriage. We marry every year this also influence our children into early marriage' (CM, adult men and women, Baitambogwe).

'We cannot say poverty alone [is the cause] but also mistreatment where girls grow up with their stepmothers and at times cannot with stand the mistreatment' (KII, headmaster, Kityerera).

Box 23 illustrates some of the hardships facing girls who lack strong family support.

Box 22: Case study – a story of misfortunes

Shalifa (name changed) was born to a mentally disabled mother. Both parents died when she was in P3. During her childhood, she saw more suffering than joy. She recounts her story.

'My life was at first good, when my parents were still alive looking after us, feeding us, buying clothes for us and educating us. My mother was mentally disturbed but loved us – we are six children and I am the third born. When my parents died, we really started suffering, with no food, no shelter because our relatives grabbed our land and fought with us. We became destitute and "twarya ne kusasiro", meaning we ate from the dustbins like mad people.

'We started renting land for cultivation and started I digging for my siblings. I had to drop out of school at this time. I begged my grandmother to help me and take me in. Later, my brothers helped me go back to school. However, I still needed to take responsibility for my siblings – that is how I became pregnant. The boy was 19 and in S2 and later abandoned me I delivered at home with the help of my grandmother.

'When I was pregnant, people laughed at me, rejected me and I was left alone. There was one girl who used to help and counsel me, but the boy did not give any help. I reported him and he was arrested but later released.

'I have no social support, no telephone. Despite the dark cloud that hovers around me, I look forward to being better off in future, and to being there for my siblings – nda kubaburungi abaseka ngabarikwegomba.'

6.3.2 Schools

Schools, as sites where children spend a significant portion of their time into adolescence, serve as intermediating institutions for the change and persistence in social norms and practices in a number of ways. As with education as a main driver of change analysed above, the influence of schools can be both positive and negative.

Factors influencing positive changes:

- Schools are serving as sources of new information and learning; a number of the girls we spoke to told us that they gained (limited) knowledge about sexual and reproductive health issues in school rather than through the traditional *senga*. The older generation – both parents and cultural leaders – sometimes complained their children no longer listened to them because they had gained education and thought they now knew more than their parents.
- Schools are establishing processes whereby children – both boys and girls – can increasingly consider aspiring to different ways of life from their parents. Role models identified by a number of girls in our study included former students who had graduated and moved on to successful endeavours, contributing to such aspirations. *'They have seen their fellow classmates especially girls who studied and now have jobs, and the government campaign has also encouraged them'* (KII, Protestant pastors, Kityerera). The female speaker of Parliament who is from this district is also an inspiration to many of the heights to which an educated girl can aspire.

- Schools serve as sites for new forms of interaction – among peers, between children and adults, between potential mates – that were not available to earlier generations. These could, of course, have both positive and negative effects. Girls interacting with other girls form bonds, building up social capital that goes beyond the household and neighbourhood; friendships with schoolmates can also contribute to psychosocial well-being. Strong relationships, for example, with senior teachers, provide girls with adult support structures that can either complement or palliate deficiencies of actual parental support.

Box 23: Case study – positive support at home and school

Shakira (name changed) is 19 and an S6 leaver from Bunya Secondary School in Mayuge. She attended schools from home for primary and lower secondary, and went to boarding school for upper secondary. The last born in her family, she is an orphan who lives with her brother. She tells her story here:

I can not quite remember when I started school, but I remember getting what I needed for school from my brothers and sisters including pocket money, scholastic materials and school fees among others. I had a good environment at school because they enabled us to watch films (gospel songs) and have friends – mainly girls and not boyfriends because I would like to preserve my virginity and respect. I learnt this virtue from my teacher who used tell us that a girl who keeps her virginity will always gain respect from her husband.

Walking long distances to school was one of my nightmares because boys could chase after us when coming from school and also the bullying at school – for example they would call us “silent burners”. I also hated the beating at school for those who failed exams although this helped me pass my exams with 17 aggregates in P7 and 34 points in S4.

I attribute my staying in school to my patience and also to having school fees. I have been patient because my mother told me to abstain and respect others. Also, the information I got from school about early pregnancies helped me abstain. I consider myself lucky because most girls have become pregnant in school. I had the courage to tell off boys who would con me. I would say, "Back off, I am still young!" I advise young girls to be patient until they finish school, respect elders and abstain.

I admire the responsible people in this country and aspire to be like them. Early marriages can be controlled through counselling, formation of clubs and straight talk. My future plans are to join university, be rich and responsible so that people can respect me. I hope to be an information technologist.'

Factors constraining positive changes

- According to most sources, the quality of education is very low, which limits the potential of new information to make a difference to girls. Limited extra-curricular activities or clubs further impinge on the development of girls' social capital and leadership skills.
- With high unemployment in the district, there are numerous examples of school leavers who remain without jobs. 'Some people,' observed the district technical team in Mayuge, 'continue to see no value in education as even those who have studied are at home so it is demoralising.'
- Our findings suggest the role of senior female teachers who are supposed to help guide, advise, and support girls has diminished, and only a few older women – mothers themselves – see the importance of supporting girls in school – and are really doing their job (KII, DEO, Mayuge).
- Not all schools are adequately addressing gender-specific needs, such as menstrual hygiene management and the like. The DEO estimated that only three of ten schools were providing for such needs. 'When the girl starts her periods and it happens in class, she starts thinking of dropping out of school because of a lack of necessities' (KII, CDO, Mayuge). Moreover, sexual and reproductive health education is provided only in secondary, not in primary, so the many girls who drop out at primary level do not benefit from this new knowledge at all. For secondary school girls, the information may come too late.
- Gender-based harassment within schools is an ever-present threat that turns into a reality for many girls, as recounted in detail by the girls themselves. 'Boys often “disturb” girls in school,' reported a senior woman teacher in Kityerera. 'At school, girls face more challenges compared with boys.'

They are disturbed [seduced] by both boys and old men, and as a result perform poorly in class and in games and sports' (FGD, fathers, Kityerera). Defilement by teachers is a persistent problem (see Box 25).

Box 24: Failure to address problems of 'defilement' of girls by teachers in school

The district planning team in Mayuge identified 'defilement' of girls by teachers as one reason for dropouts. *'They say some teachers defile these girls, and also senior women teachers are not doing their work.'* The DEO in Mayuge knows cases of defilement of girls by teachers have been brought to the police, but these have never been referred to him (in the 13 years he has been there) so he has no evidence on which to base dismissal of the identified teachers.

According to many accounts, in many cases of defilement, while the police might first detain the offender, the offender will pay something to the police and the case will be dropped. *'If the teacher defiles the girl, the police will get money from him and evidence disappears'* (KII, DEO, Mayuge). Girls are often powerless to resist these advances: *'When a teacher talks to the girl, she cannot say no,'* explained the district technical team, *'they call them masters.'* The girls therefore often fear to report teachers who make advances (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

Parents are aware of what goes on: *'Yes, girls tell us what they experience at school [...] how male teachers gossip about them and even try to seduce them, how they find it difficult to report such teachers to the headmaster for fear of risk of undesirable backlash and how they are sexually harassed even by their fellow male pupils. In fact, the situation of girls in some schools is getting out of hand. Male teachers have turned them into sex objects, to the extent of infecting them with HIV. When we complain, the culprit teachers are merely transferred'* (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

The school as a site, on the one hand, for a prolonged – and protected – childhood and adolescence and, on the other hand, for the replication of the same gender threats that exist in the outside world is a theme that came out quite strongly from our study. While the value of girls' education is being promoted through policies such as UPE – district officials are geared up to enforce this; some parents are putting higher value on the education of their daughters; and girls themselves are increasingly aspiring to higher levels of education – these processes often find themselves in direct contradiction with lingering traditional norms considering a girl ready for marriage and motherhood and/or sexual relationships 'as soon as the breasts start to bud'. This, in addition to cases of actual defilement in schools by teachers, or sexual harassment by boys in or outside of school, creates additional gender problems linked to sexual maturation processes. So, while girls themselves and many parents might want them to reach secondary and higher, the *'problems a girl faces at school are not the same as for boys – the hazards facing girls are numerous'* (KII, CDO, Mayuge).

Children, and particularly girls, also often start their school careers late, so that by the time they reach upper primary or lower secondary, they begin to *'grow out of school'* (KII, Equal Opportunity Commission officer, Kampala). According to the CDO in Kampala, many girls do not start school at age six, or repeat years so they are over-age for their grade. Those who are *'coming up'* – with breasts becoming apparent – may be called *gaga* ('grandmother') in class by others and feel shame at being the biggest. There is a feeling that she has outgrown school; she is subject to intimidation and teasing, told. *"You go marry."* So, *girls normally start to drop out in P5 – between the ages of 13 and 15'* (KII, CDO, Mayuge).

For girl mothers, married or unmarried, there are very few options or support structures to enable them to continue with their schooling. Although many long to do so, as we have seen from testimonies in the previous section, challenges for these girls are immense – but some girls do manage to persist. Such was the case with our case study below.

Box 25: Case study – a girl successfully returning to school after childbirth

Manjeri (name changed), 18, got pregnant in S1 after being 'tricked' by a boy she thought of as her friend. She now has a one-and-a-half-year-old baby and is living with her mother, after her mother separated from an abusive husband. She was able to continue in school and is now in S3, with support for school fees provided by the parents of the boy who impregnated her (previously, her uncles paid her school fees).

Manjeri wants to be a nurse and likes subjects such as chemistry and biology. She says, *'We young girls are misbehaving because when we get men we become wild.'* This is a result of peer pressure because when girls see their classmates with something good, they want to get the same. Manjeri says she did not receive counselling about pregnancy at school or from her mother. She advises her age mates to listen to their parents, stay in school and stop admiring others.

6.3.3 Governance institutions and the justice system

There have been concerted attempts to strengthen the police, probate and justice services to support women and children's rights and access to justice. According to the district police, things are changing in the Child and Family Protection Unit's relations with the public: *'Before, people didn't know about the magistrate or family courts, and they used to fear the police; now, however, communities are used to them – they call me "Mama Police" and see the uniform as a sign of authority. Now they are also coming to report cases [of GBV]; before they just used to kill each other'* (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge). As seen above, police are trying to crack down on cases of 'defilement' and on children out of school. The police also see many cases of domestic violence or abandonment of women by men. According to the same KII,

'Many marriages are "loose", which can be a source of tension/violence. For those who have no marriage certificate, the police can do nothing to support them (for example, the woman in the case of abandonment). They do, however, do counselling to try to get couples back together. But people are becoming "wild" – both partners, with issues of drunkenness, child neglect, adultery and cheating very common. Everything is breaking' (KII, police officer, Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

A mother interviewed in our intergenerational interviews also noted that these days the LCs at village level (elected bodies called LC1s in the tiered decentralised system of governance in Uganda) can actually be called on to respond to women's needs; before they dealt only with men. The LC1 in the village is in charge of children's affairs, often working in collaboration with CDOs. However, outreach is severely limited (lack of human, financial and logistical resources) and the sheer magnitude of the problems combined with community attitudes and resistance can make enforcement tough.

On impelling parents to send their children to school, for example, we heard, *'Where do the resources come from?'* (KII, sub-county officials, Baitambogwe). *'The structures are there, but the logistical capacity and resources are weak/non-existent. There are so many children out of school, that if you begin going from village to village asking why, you will have no time for any of your other work [moreover] if we arrest parents for not sending their children to school, the community will chase us away. We need to empower communities with what is being done'* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe). *'If parents do not send children to primary school, the police can impose community service, but there are just too many drop-outs'* (KII, police officer Child and Family Protection Unit, Mayuge).

In cases of defilement and early marriage, one of the key problems study participants mentioned was one of corruption, or collusion between the perpetrator, the parents and the police. As one key informant put it, *'If an [under-aged] daughter gets pregnant, parents will take the case to the police, but the police urge them to negotiate so they can also get a cut of the settlement – so two parties are benefiting, the police and the girl's parents'* (KII, CSO coordinators, GBV network, Mayuge). The tendency of parents whose daughter has been impregnated or who has run off with a man is to seek and accept 'compensation' from the man or – if a boy – his parents, in lieu of earlier forms of actual marriage transactions such as exchange of bride wealth. In this way, therefore, bringing the matter to the police seems to be more of a strategy by which parents can obtain monetary compensation than (in the case of actual rape) to punish the perpetrator and seek justice for the girl. *'The police have initiated criminal and civil procedures [...] But when a girl gets pregnant, the parents connive with the police and get something from the boy's family'* (KII, Protestant pastor, Baitambogwe).

As community members in Baitambogwe put it, *'The police, RDCs and LCs are not helpful. They blatantly exploit legislation prohibiting early marriage to extort money from culprits, and the child rights statute to undermine parental authority and promote sexual immorality and indiscipline among young girls, driving them*

into underage marriage. We are well aware of these issues but cannot report them fear of being hated in the community' (CM, adult men and women, Baitambogwe). When cases are not concluded – when the perpetrators are not brought to justice, with poverty sometimes forcing parents/guardians to marry off girls if defiled and perpetrators given money - this leads to 'a loss of trust in the justice system. Such issues are the same throughout the country' (KII, female officer, ACFODE, Kampala).

Moreover, there seem to be very limited – if any – services for victims, with the exception of some that NGOs support (see below). As parents put it, 'We know about the anti-defilement law, but there are no programmes to help girl victims of defilement or those who get pregnant in the community' (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

6.3.4 Health services

Both the overall lack of quality health services in the district (described in previous sections) and the ambiguity surrounding the provision of adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services (in a context where all sexual relations involving children under 18 – consensual or not – are classified as 'defilement' and are against the law) severely restrict adolescent girls' access to the information and services they need to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies and STIs and contribute, therefore, to high rates of both.

An NGO working in the district explains its policy is to give under-18s information only, and over-18s services. Under-18s cannot easily get condoms from health services. 'It is very difficult because they shouldn't be having sex at that age' (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge). Inside schools, reproductive health information is discussed, but no demonstrations or distributions of condoms. 'There is a policy or guideline that you cannot teach condoms in school, but there are mature students above 18 years so we target them as adults outside school' (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge). Moreover, 'It is illegal to abort, so most girls who become pregnant keep their pregnancies' (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge). Illegal abortion can be both dangerous and expensive (KII, Baitambogwe Health Centre 3).

Some study participants blame reproductive health promotion organisations for promoting early sex. 'Children are moving with condoms and these have encouraged them to play sex whenever they want. The promotion of condoms has promoted sexual activities' (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera).

A key informant at national level stresses there are actually clear guidelines from the Ministry of Health (MOH) on adolescent reproductive and sexual health services. 'For health workers, there are no boundaries – no restrictions – they are supposed to deal with the problem presented. There are clear guidelines for young people – once a young person comes to you and presents a condition, it is up to you to respond' (KII, WHO advisor, Kampala). However, uncertainty seems to persist about treading into an ambiguous legal situation on the ground (see Box 27 for national perspectives).

Box 26: Ambiguities surrounding provision of adolescent-friendly health information and services

MOH attributes the high level of maternal mortality in Uganda to early pregnancy among adolescent girls, but still the status of contraceptives is unclear. 'The intention is to protect girls as long as possible, but how to do this in a context of sexual laxness? There are now also issues of HIV, which doesn't discriminate, so these are things we have to talk about' (KII, female activist and lawyer, Kampala).

'Even with more affluent families we haven't properly answered the question of teen pregnancies – they just have access to abortion. Just because the pregnancy doesn't grow doesn't mean they were not pregnant. Up to 68% of admissions for incomplete pregnancies per day (out of 60 per day) at Mulaga Hospital, which is the national reference hospital in Kampala) are of adolescents. This prevalence is higher just before school starts. 'Health workers are nervous about giving contraceptives to adolescents – among other things they fear causing infertility. The adolescent health policy does not make it very clear about giving contraceptives to young adolescents' (KII, female advisor, WHO/UNFPA/Makerere College of Health Sciences).

6.3.5 Ethnic and religious leaders and ideologies

The ideational sphere and the real struggles underway between ‘traditional values’ and forces of – for want of a better word – ‘modernisation’ has been developed in full above: it is seen as both a driver of change bringing positive new values (issues of women’s rights, child rights, girls’ education), coming in through various laws and policies, and other more negative influences (perceived largely as the ills of ‘Western’ civilisation), coming in through new forms of information and communication technologies such as videos and the rise of trading centres and urbanisation bringing new venues of interaction.

The sense of anomy, of things changing but without being able to exert a guiding hand in the changes in this confrontation between such forces and a set of traditional cultural values – themselves not always clearly articulated or – perhaps – shared by all community members, is one of the defining features of the communities studied, as transmitted by both cultural and religious leaders. It is reflected in a clear ‘generation gap’ – parents at a loss about what to do with ‘children these days’ in the era of child rights and exposure to forces beyond their control. It is also seen in a ‘gender gap’, with traditional gender norms about early marriage and women’s place within the household struggling to come to grips with new laws and policies around these issues as well as emerging trends, for example, towards greater engagement of women in paid economic activities linked to the rise of a cash culture.

It was not always possible to disentangle cultural or ethnic norms and identities from religious ones. Our field sites were multi-ethnic and multi-religious, and our samples did not permit any clear comparative perspectives. It was said that, in Busoga (the cultural region), where most people are Muslims, Muslim beliefs that a girl should not menstruate in her natal home were continuing to fuel trends for early marriage (KII, CSO coordinator, UWONET; sub-county technical team, Kityerera; Protestant priest, Kityerera; imam, Baitambogwe; CM, mixed adults 40-60, Baitambogwe; FGD, mothers, Kityerera). An imam in Kityerera explained it in this way, showing as well how Muslim leaders were trying to reconcile religious beliefs and customs with state laws:

‘Our religion [Islam] tells us, when a girl enters into her periods she is ready (ripe) for marriage – this is the “ripe” age. The prophet says certain things should not be delayed – these include burial of the dead and marrying a girl when she starts her periods. This is to avoid them having a child with no father and being “spoilt”. But nowadays, they will not be married at 13/14 in a mosque – government law is against it [...] We have laws in Islam like covering the whole body for women; Muslim children don’t study together [mixed schools] unlike churches where there is a mixture of boys and girls. So we are trying to avoid problems during early age’ (KII, imam, Kityerera).

One study participant mentioned a greater tendency among Muslims to arrange marriages (KII, senior woman teacher, Baitambogwe), and Muslim acceptance of polygamy was also highlighted, but so were non-Muslim cultural practices that favoured polygamy in forms of traditional marriage that are legally accepted under Ugandan law, so ethnic identity was also a strong contributing factor to these social norms. As some study participants explained, *‘To be a real man in Busoga, you have to have at least 3 or 4 women’* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee). The Christian church, on the other hand, was said to uphold the age of 18 for marriage and promote values of monogamy, but was strongly opposed to divorce; yet the injunctive norms (what people should do) were often clearly in contradiction with ‘empirical norms (what people were actually doing), as explained by a Catholic priest, who is battling on this front.

‘Christians believe in monogamous marriages between a man and a woman, but there are many polygamous marriages in the community [...] There is no dissolution allowed of a marriage when men and women are united. Separation is brought about by economic factors or reckless living, with people moving to other areas. There is a Christian movement – bafumbo – which teaches people about morals in marriage’ (KII, Catholic priest, Baitambogwe).

Religious precepts promoting procreation as the aim of marriage coalesced, in many ways, with traditional values placed on women’s fertility. *‘Children are considered a gift from God,’* stressed the Catholic priest in Baitambogwe; *‘The aim of marriage is to produce children and replace the parents’ lineage’* (IT, grandmother, Kityerera). Having many children is valued in the culture – the more children a wife or woman has, the prouder men are. *‘Many community members do not agree with family planning, believing that it is up to God to give the number of children and that the sexual act is for procreation. The doctor’s mother herself gave birth to 12*

children, 10 of whom are alive. The “Born Agains” in particular think that it is up to God to stop births when he wants’ (KII, Baitambogwe Health Centre 3).

Such beliefs, combined with ambiguous messages in public health policy on adolescent sexual and reproductive health information and services and the actual dearth of such services, mean adolescent girls are left largely unprotected against unwanted pregnancies or the transmission of STIs. So, too, with abortion against both prevalent moral precepts and the law in Uganda, girls with unwanted pregnancies are either compelled to bring them to term or to seek unsafe ‘silent’ abortions.

Social attitudes and practices around premarital sex and virginity also hover in the realm between religious teachings and cultural norms and taboos. Key informants at national level put it this way:

‘It is mainly the Muslim religious that promotes early marriage – and virginity in Muslim culture is highly valued. This seems to be a mainly religious thing, but it is also mixed up with culture. But in Kampala, even Muslims are advancing, so urbanisation is one factor of change’ (KII, female WHO advisor, Kampala).

‘It’s a mixed picture [in terms of changes over time]. It depends on how steeped in culture, tradition, religion a girl is at any one time. The [legal] cases I see are all over the place, from “No, my children can’t get married” to “Yes, they can do everything.” There was a time when they were much stricter – if a girl got pregnant without being married she would be thrown over a cliff. Now, this no longer happens, but it is still frowned on’ (KII, female activist and lawyer, Kampala).

On the other hand, social norms around women’s subordinate status in society seem to be conveyed primarily through cultural rather than religious customs and belief systems. The basic form of traditional society was organised around the patriarchal and patrilineal household, with men holding power at both household and polity level. This is deeply engrained in psyches and gender role expectations and – as seen above – is a potent source of resistance to the promotion of women’s rights and to the new forms of organisation that are emerging as women takes on jobs outside the home and move into the political sphere. ‘Women are there to be told what to do by men – to follow men’s orders’ (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge). After all, there is a saying in Lusoga that, ‘What a man says is also what a woman has said,’ that is, the woman must both agree with and obey everything the man says (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

Finally, poverty and culture often combine to maintain gender-discriminatory norms and practices.

‘For example, why wouldn’t a parent give a girl an opportunity to go to school? Poverty often enters into this: even with UPE, some parents can’t afford to buy school uniforms, books etc.; moreover, when parents are struggling to feed the family, including young children, they figure it is not beneficial to continue to feed adolescent girls, so it is better to marry them off. Whereas trends towards cohabitation might be more linked to poverty, early marriage (including forced marriage) is deeply rooted in culture.’ And in terms of factors contributing towards shifts in norms and practices: ‘Some people just disregard culture or religion. It also appears that some values may be eroding. Some girls no longer see marriage as a permanent thing, but go into it with an eye open to potential divorce’ (KII, UWONET, Kampala).

‘Within a community sharing beliefs by culture, it is the very poor who are marrying their daughters early – largely for bride wealth. This may be done under the pretext of culture and traditional practice. They know the law, but want to have gains, so they overlook the law in order to get gains. But, when they don’t get what they want, they again call on the law’ (KII, UNICEF, Kampala).

In any case, whether cultural or religious or a combination of the two intertwined with poverty, traditional sites of authority and social sanctions are shifting and parents and community leaders often find their power to enforce norms has been eroded. Parents find it hard to understand, let alone control, the behaviour of their children and religious and cultural leaders are struggling with their flocks.

6.3.6 Non-governmental and community-based organisations

Our conceptual framework posits non-governmental and community-based organisations as intermediary sites where positive changes can be promoted. A number of NGOs and CSOs are active in the district (*see* Annex 3 for table of NGOs/CSOs encountered during fieldwork). While their overall reach is limited and both documentation and evaluation materials on their activities are rare, discussions with key informants indicate their interventions can have a potentially transformative impact on the women and girls involved in projects. They have a presence in the field and are often able to reach communities that stretched government services cannot cover, and/or to strengthen services that are being offered. The following is a brief review of some of these projects and the key informants' views on impact.

BROSIDI (Busoga Rural Open Source for Development Initiatives), Mayuge

A national NGO established in 2003 and operating in more than 17 districts, BROSIDI focuses primarily on the promotion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) including for agriculture, education and health. The farmers' programme (with many made up of groups of women farmers, who are the most active) provides links through ICT between producers and buyers and enables farmers to sell their produce at higher than local prices (example of sale of cabbages at 700 shillings a head in Kampala compared with 400 locally). Girls in the education programme are also more active than boys, and outnumber boys in the centre where training is provided by a factor of two to one (KII, BROSIDI, Mayuge). ICT is known to have transformative effects as it spreads to different segments of society; its potential to facilitate gender transformation is being explored, among other things, in the systematic review currently underway by ODI on communications initiatives and gender.

UWONET (Uganda Women's Network) GBV Network, Mayuge

UWONET has been conducting network activities in the district since 2004, with a GBV component since 2010. It focuses in the latter on spreading awareness among communities of available support institutions and services – such as the police desk, probation officers and CDOs and NGOs working in the field. This, according to our key informants, has led to higher rates of reporting on GBV. Sensitisation sessions are held with traditional elders – religious leaders, district administrators and cultural leaders at community level. Follow-up services and victim support is also sometimes provided.

Restless Development, Mayuge

Restless Development is an international youth-led agency based in the UK working with and for young people, who are considered an asset and not just a liability for society – aiming to tap into that energy and potential. Its programme in Mayuge, a district of high HIV prevalence, focuses on HIV prevention targeting key populations at landing sites, *boda boda* drivers, fishermen, long distance drivers, sugarcane truckers and commercial sex workers. Youth volunteers are placed in communities with the objective of promoting safe sexual behaviour and raising awareness of prevention, screening/testing and counselling (KII, Restless Development, Iganga).

SESPEL (Southeastern Private Sector Promotion of Entrepreneurship), Mayuge

SESPEL works with adolescent girls to build confidence, teach skills and support income-generating activities and savings and loans associations. It also conducts sensitisation sessions on early marriage. The transformative power of its confidence-building efforts, which follow a 'mind management' approach, is illustrated through a number of examples. One woman, after following their programme, had the courage to run away from an HIV-positive husband who refused to wear a condom, even though her parents were ordering her to stay with him. '*So it was as a result of the training given to her that she managed to escape the HIV infection from her husband*' (KII, SESPEL, Mayuge). Other examples are of girls separating from abusive husbands – refusing to submit to beatings or drunkenness. Fathers, mothers and husbands have confronted project organisers, accusing them of turning their girls against them, '*but we tell them that we are just instilling confidence in their girls [...] encouraging self-respect.*' The names of the girls' groups formed include Rays of Hope, Rise and Shine and Bright Future. Adolescent mothers interviewed during our research were aware of SESPEL and the practical skills training it offers.

SCORE (Sustainable Comprehensive Responses for Vulnerable Children and Their Families)

SCORE operates in 35 districts in Uganda as an economic strengthening project targeting 20,000 households of vulnerable children, many affected by HIV and AIDS, aiming to benefit 150,000 children and family members overall. It uses household development plans to support each household along a pathway towards reduced vulnerability and increased stability, well-being and self-reliance. It also promotes safe schools (primary and secondary) through clubs, including girls' rights clubs, established in schools; and facilitates pregnancy tests in these schools, involving midwives to counsel them and support those found pregnant.

RHU (Reproductive Health Uganda)

RHU provides reproductive health information and services for young people 15-30 (offering counselling, STI testing, pregnancy tests and cervical cancer screening) through static clinics and outreach. Its 'Voices for Health Rights' in Baitabogwe works to sensitise communities about maternal health issues, family planning, antenatal care, immunisation and other services. It also runs 'The World Starts with Me' programme for young HIV-positive people aged 9-24 and 'United for a Healthier Tomorrow' for youth aged 9-24 both in and out of school. It encourages male participation in programmes by stipulating that women whose husbands accompany them are given priority service. It also conducts community dialogues and carries out dramas and works with VHTs to mobilise people in the communities.

PIASCY (Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth)

PIASCY is a national programme designed to provide all school-going children and teachers with information on HIV and AIDS in order to prevent further infections, and to help both the HIV-infected and those affected cope with the disease. The programme had started up campaigns against violence in school and developed 'talking compounds' in schools in Mayuge where messages against violence, transactional sex and other risky behaviours were written on the school walls (KII, DEO, Mayuge).

Other NGOs mentioned by study participants as being active around adolescent or sexual and reproductive health issues, HIV or early marriage include STAR-IC; STRIDES and Straight Talk (CM and FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

7 Effects on girls' capabilities and gender justice

This section draws out the implications of adolescent girls' experiences of marriage – including early marriage, early pregnancy and conditions within marriage – as they affect the development of current and future capabilities. It is organised according to the key 'capability domains' that were the object of the Year 1 research, but does not deal specifically with 'civic' capabilities, as the Year 2 research did not focus on this domain.

7.1 Developing capabilities through education

While national educational policies and promotion of gender equality have indeed expanded educational opportunities for girls, those who become mothers or are married at an early age cannot take full advantage of such opportunities and, so, find their educational trajectories truncated.

Early marriage, cohabitation and pregnancy are continuing to rob girls of the full capabilities they could develop through education, if they were supported to remain and finish both primary and secondary schooling. While other factors, such as generally low quality of education, gender-insensitive educational environments, lack of access at secondary level and extremely limited post-secondary options, also contribute to diminishing the transformative potential of education for girls, dropouts owing to the abrupt transition from childhood to adulthood remain a critical factor. The lack of appropriate policies, encouragement, support and opportunities to continue with schooling after marrying or giving birth means such girls are denied the right to the education they need and indeed aspire to.

Key informants confirmed that, *'Girls who are married or get pregnant will drop out of school and not return – there are no programmes to support them in school'* (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). Some parents continue to marry their girls off at an early age, and girls themselves enter into informal marriages while young. Our study findings show that, when a girl gets pregnant, the parents believe this is the end of education. Many try to *'send them off'* in marriage as the only solution. While parents might increasingly value the education of girls, and might want them to reach secondary and higher, they are often not able to support them economically; moreover, as seen above, *'The problems the girl faces at school are not the same as for boys – the hazards facing girls are numerous'* (KII, CDO, Mayuge).

Yet study respondents are unanimous in their identification of the benefits education can and does bring to girls and their families. In addition to making girls better wives and mothers and valuing the education of their own children (as detailed in Section 5), they cite such positive effects as economic empowerment and expanding 'thinking capacity'. Older women regret not having had the opportunity to have studied: *'Ignorance pains you when you are old (ubutasoma buluma bukulu)'* (MNA, 38-year-old aunt, Kityerera), and many parents go to great lengths to ensure their children can remain in school as long as possible. The quotes below show recognition of the transformative potential of education.

'Educated girls/boys make better marriage partners. They value education of their children. They are responsible and have jobs for a stable source of income; thus better standard of living' (MNA, aunt, Baitambogwe).

'This era is for children to study so I want my daughter to study and be better off. She should reach university [...] Education gives one respect. Education also brings peace in marriage' (MNA, aunt, Baitambogwe).

'I felt bad when I dropped out of school because those who are educated are different from us, an educated person earns a living and is not like us, like me who just sells katogo (cooked food – cassava nixed with beans) in that trading centre down there' (MNA, 42-year-old mother-in-law, Kityerera).

Girls themselves aspire to a better life for themselves and for new roles. *'I want to be a nurse,'* said one. *'I dream of being a doctor,'* said another. *'For me I want to be a teacher and help children,'* said yet another. They realise that, *'There are many barriers to attaining our aspirations, misfortunes like lack of money, death, getting married early'* (FGD, in-school unmarried, Kityerera). But they see in education an opportunity towards fulfilling those aspirations. *'If I had not gotten pregnant,'* sighed another married girl, *'I would still be in school and when I see and hear about other girls getting degrees/graduating I wish I could go back'* (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe). It is clear, however, that intensified measures to address both supply and demand issues in education will be needed before aspirations can be turned into reality.

7.2 Exercising voice and agency in a supportive household

Girls who marry young or who move into unstable cohabitation relationships may find themselves in a position of relative powerlessness within the newly formed couple, as they have not yet completed the education or developed the confidence they need to prepare them to assert themselves in household decision-making or to contribute to the economic well-being of the family. This hereafter reinforces traditional social norms on the 'proper' behaviour of a wife who is expected to be subordinate to the husband, as she is not in a position to contest such norms. Those who, in addition, give birth early, are soon preoccupied with their care-giving functions and may no longer have the time or opportunity to develop new skills, cultivate relationships with peers or – indeed – continue with schooling.

Given the instability of many of the cohabitation arrangements arising, girls may often find themselves abandoned by partners, with no legal recourse to demand economic support. *'Boys who marry young girls find they cannot sustain them economically, so they abandon them and run off. Of girls who have children outside of marriage, an estimated six out of ten will find themselves without the support of the child's father'* (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). They are thus thrown back on their own devices, or must seek support from parents who – not having condoned the relationship in the first place – may not be entirely willing or able to provide this.

Girls who have run off or fall pregnant outside of marriage *'may be cursed from the family'* (KII, female Protestant priest, Kityerera) and left without a household of any sort. Prospects of subsequent formal marriage for girls with babies from partners who have abandoned them, or who were never in a relationship to begin with, are further dimmed, as men may not be willing or able to take on the additional responsibilities this entails. As one key informant noted, *'Once a girl gets pregnant and has a baby like this, she faces many additional problems. She will have a harder time getting married because of social norms that devalue her as a marriage partner. This in turn puts her in a position of vulnerability as she seeks alternative options such as commercial sex, exposing her to even greater risks'* (KII, ANPPCAN, Kampala).

Study participants recognise that early marriage *'is both caused by and leads to further household poverty, with young, inexperienced mothers and fathers not able to provide proper care for their children'* (KII, Baitambogwe Health Centre 3). Concerted measures are crucial to ensure the needed investments in human capabilities contribute to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty, with investments in adolescent girls particularly critical.

7.3 Maintaining physical integrity and sexual and reproductive health

One of our key informants put it starkly in identifying the physical risks of early pregnancy for adolescent girls: *'The after-effects of early marriage, in addition to dropouts, are seen in the health facilities'* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe). Others provide further details on the consequences of adolescent pregnancy or its termination:

'Girls die in childbirth, give birth prematurely or have to have operations' (KII, senior woman teacher, Baitambogwe).

'The consequences for girls who marry early is they get pregnant, must deliver through operations, get no medical care or other care and are filled with regret' (KII, cultural leader, Mayuge).

'The medical consequences of early marriage/sex/pregnancy include cases of fistula. Some don't present, out of shame/stigma. HIV prevalence is four to six times higher for girls than boys in the age bracket 15-25. Obstetrical problems include malaria, anaemia, hypertension, eclampsia, obstructed labour, and many are unable to access services. Midwives have been told to make sure first deliveries are in facilities, but many are unable to access these' (KII, female WHO advisor, Kampala).

'Those who terminate pregnancy and experience cases of septic infection and are either unlikely to survive or will be permanently damaged. Traditional abortionists insert a small herb (its stem) into the cervix, causing tissue damage and gangrene. It is really quite toxic. The mother normally seeks out such solutions because, when a girl gets pregnant, both the mother and daughter are in trouble' (KII, female advisor, WHO/UNFPA/Makerere College of Health Sciences).

Lacking access to appropriate sexual and reproductive health information or services, adolescent girls are unable to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies or STIs – including HIV. The physical consequences of early pregnancy are clear: because they are not yet physically mature, girls risk dying in delivery, or need to deliver through Caesarean section, after which they may be rejected by their partner as *'sexually weak'* (KII, sub-county technical team, Kityerera). With abortions illegal, those who seek recourse to *'silent'* abortions face significant health risks, as well as legal risks and social censure. Once they are pregnant, girls fail to get the proper care:

'Some are not given appropriate care at home while they are still living with their parents – they need nutrition, love, basic requirements for delivery (clothes, pads, cotton panties, gloves). Most men also don't take care of these young mothers when they bring them to health centre and so they suffer all forms. Most young people do not deliver from the health facilities. Only about three in ten referred to the hospital actually go – the others use village women' (KII, female nursing officer, Kityerera).

The problem is also seen as one of going into marriage without knowing about the risks and responsibilities of pregnancy, childbirth and child care, and with a lack of means to support these new responsibilities. Those who come to the facilities are often too late, in the worst condition. Pregnant girls may be afraid to go to health centres. Men fear to be seen as husbands of young girls, so they also do not go with them. Early marriage is also linked to GBV in that younger girls have limited power or authority *vis-à-vis* husbands.

Early marriage/sexual debut is identified among the social structural drivers of HIV in the district, along with polygamy and its *'modern'* form of having multiple partners in loose marriages. High rates of GBV and *'defilement'* and risky behaviours fuelled by alcohol contribute to the problem, which is accentuated by social norms that say women cannot say no to men in terms of sex (KII, Restless Development, Mayuge). According to one key informant, the loose and multiple informal marriage arrangements increase the risk of HIV: *'Even those who know their HIV status get married [they do not disclose their status]. You find even young girls joining the system and then chain continues'* (KII, female nursing officer, Kityerera). *'We also have a problem of long distance drivers who have spoilt our young girls and in the health centre we are getting children infected with STIs and HIV and at times we don't have the medicine these girls need for treatment'* (KII, sub-county technical planning committee, Baitambogwe).

Condom use is not widespread or accepted by men. A key informant cited the case of a man who took a second wife who soon took sick and tested positive for HIV; the man still refuses testing or wearing a condom during sexual relations with his first wife, whose only resort is to come to the clinic for continued testing. *'There are many cases like this, which leads to violence in the household'* (KII, Baitambogwe Health Centre 3). Early age at marriage has also been seen to intensify the risk of GBV (KII, CSO coordinators, GBV network, Mayuge).

Girls themselves describe the risks they run and experiences they have had in terms of painful deliveries and miscarriages. They recognise that, *'All women young and old can die during childbirth but it is more common for young girls'* (FGD, unmarried adolescent mothers, Kityerera). The physical risks and consequences of early marriage cause many to fear it: *'Girls are expected to get married, but many do not want to. Marriage is not good because it makes girls age very fast. Some men mistreat women, even beating them to death'* (FGD, unmarried adolescent mothers, Kityerera). Other voices express similar concerns:

'Girls face many health problems when pregnant. Death during delivery is not uncommon. We have a health centre which provides us with a range of services including antenatal care check-ups, referrals for scans, treatment with tablets, male condoms, information about sexual and reproductive health, but not contraceptive pills [...] However, the health centre lacks a weighing scale for babies, it is understaffed and antenatal care is under resourced. Services could be strengthened by building another delivery ward' (FGD, married girls, Kityerera).

'The bad things of getting married at an early age; men mistreat you, they beat you and you grow old so fast. When you marry at an old/mature age – after 18 years – you are more respected by your partner and the in-laws' (FGD, out-of-school teen mothers, Baitambogwe).

'When a girl gets married early, she will produce many children, she might have health problems when giving birth, she might not be able to give birth' (FGD, in-school boys, Baitambogwe).

With the health hazards so clearly recognised by study participants at all levels, this should serve as a clarion call to further action in engaging communities around support for ending early marriages, and expanding access to appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services to adolescents and young people.

7.4 Preparing for productive employment and livelihoods

The combination of early marriage or pregnancy leading to school dropout has had a significant impact on adolescent girls' potential to develop the skills needed to engage in productive activities beyond those involved in farming or petty trade. Additionally, taking on the early burden of child care and other considerable reproductive activities in the household has contributed to limiting the time available for engagement in productive activities outside of the home. If married – particularly in informal cohabitation arrangements – the husband himself is often himself struggling to support the family. If unmarried and living at home with her family, the economic burden of care falls on her parents. In both cases, the girl and her child or children can be caught up in a spiral of poverty.

Study participants recognised education was essential: *'When you study you are able to get a job [...] People don't want uneducated girls because they cannot even run a business'* (MNA, aunt, Baitambogwe). Girls recognised that, by dropping out before reaching or completing secondary school, they were severely limiting their futures: *'It spoilt my future,'* said a married girl who dropped out when pregnant and was later forced to marry. *'I thought I would study and get a job [...] But now at 20 years old I look 40 instead'* (MNA, 19-year-old girl, Baitambogwe). The dearth of technical training options, and the complete absence of any tailored specifically to the needs of adolescent wives and mothers, cuts options for the development of economic capabilities even further.

Economic opportunities overall are limited for women in our study communities, although increasing numbers are engaging in work outside the house. This, as we have seen, is also causing a significant backlash, with men complaining they felt displaced from their providers' role and that women's work was 'ruining' the family. Moreover, girls who engage in the sale of foodstuffs in trading centres do so under the generally negative social

stigmatisation of such places as conducive to prostitution and loose morals. Many were felt to be at risk of being 'bothered' by boys in such centres; some were thought to easily succumb to advances in exchange for small gifts or food. Transactional sex *'for the price of a chapatti'* was said to be on the rise as girls – lacking other options – seek economic security through boys.

Failure to address the economic constraints hindering adolescent girls' empowerment and to nourish both their reproductive and productive potential will result in continued challenges of this sort. It is therefore urgent that integrated programmes be developed for adolescent girls within the overall context of poverty reduction efforts.

7.5 Ensuring psychosocial and emotional well-being

Some of the married adolescent girls rated themselves as happy in their marriages, citing – among other things – the newfound respect they felt was accorded to them as married women; the economic support husbands provided them with; and the protection from promiscuous behaviour they felt married life afforded. Marriage is such an essential part of women's identity in the community that girls could easily see themselves as fulfilling societal expectations in becoming married women.

Some – particularly those in informal marriages that they contracted themselves – were also happy to be out of neglectful or abusive families where they felt their needs were not being met. Some, however, soon realised marriage could not solve all of their problems – whether economic or psychosocial – and quarrels and tensions were inevitable. Pressure to conform to ideals of wifely behaviour is strong; dismay and disappointment when those ideals cannot be fulfilled are all the stronger. Some girls retained strong relations with their natal families, but social norms tend to restrict the number or length of visits, and, outside of the family network, there are limited sources of support to which girls can turn in case of difficulties in their marriage. This includes in cases of domestic GBV, which by all reports was common in the study communities.

Unmarried mothers and girls who had been living in loose cohabitation arrangements and were then abandoned by their partners seemed to fare the worst in terms of psychosocial well-being. Running away to marry without the parents' knowledge or against their wishes can itself be fraught with tension and worry, with both the boy and girl uncertain as to whether their actions will eventually be accepted and with the fear of arrest for 'defilement' hanging over their heads. *'Issues of a girl's marriage may generate serious tension in the family. If there is disagreement on whether or not a daughter gets married, severe violence breaks out between the parents and the wife is chased away. The marriage may permanently crumble. If the disagreement is between clan members and the family, hatred breaks out and the parents report their fellow clansmen to the police'* (FGD, mothers, Kityerera).

Girls living in cohabitation arrangements were seen to be taking risks at the outset, in terms of later abandonment and feelings of rejection and worry about their futures: *'There is nothing good in marrying at an early age. You are still young and inexperienced in handling family issues, you risk dying while giving birth, your children are sickly and you fade very fast where after the man will abandon you to look for another woman. Although you are married the community does not respect you, they laugh at you'* (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Kityerera).

Meanwhile, social stigma is still strong around girls who give birth while still at home. Adolescent boys paint a particularly dismal picture of the emotional well-being of unmarried mothers in their community. Parents talk of the disappointment they feel and the damage done to girls' self-esteem. Girls themselves express how they feel:

'These days, a girl who gets pregnant before marriage can approach her parents or the responsible boy for help. Most of them, however, drop out of school, become hopeless, feel inferior, lose parental love, attempt to abort, suffer extreme ill being; a few commit suicide. These girls also face pregnancy and birth-related complications that may lead to death. If they manage to give birth normally their children lack basic needs and are miserable. The young mothers are still despised in their families. They lose condition – they 'fade''. A girl who produces before marriage is also viewed negatively' (FGD, in-school boys, Mayuge).

'We get very disappointed with our daughters and this may result in quarrels and collapse of the family unity owing to blame games. The chances of finishing schooling are induced; this affects her self-esteem and reduces her chances of getting married in church; she is referred to as "second hand woman"' (CM, mixed adults 60+, Baitambogwe).

'The negative effects of producing a child outside marriage include lack of care for the child; lack of basic needs for the girl; lack of respect; parents and relatives seeing you as a burden; abandonment by both parents and the boy who impregnated you' (FGD, unmarried in-school girls, Baitambogwe).

Stronger social support structures are clearly needed for adolescent girls, from local councils, religious authorities, CDOs, peer networks and family-based systems. Further efforts are also needed to eliminate the negative and gender-discriminatory social attitudes that surround teen mothers.

8 Conclusions, policy priorities and recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

Our field research confirms that norms and practices around marriage and education among adolescent girls in our two study communities are both changing in response to broader socioeconomic and cultural transformations occurring within an overall setting of generalised poverty, and ‘sticky’, that is, resistant to change.

Trends in marriage and adolescent pregnancy

Key trends identified include the persistence of either early marriage or first pregnancy; a rise in the establishment of ‘informal’ marriages or cohabitation arrangements which young people contract themselves but which offer limited stability or protection for adolescent girls; and – associated with this – more individual choice of partner. Polygamy remains a strong cultural norm in some communities, backed up by both religious and ethnic precepts for men. A commonly expected practice of ‘informal polygamy,’ in which men have relationships with multiple women, is also apparently on the rise, and given the term ‘modern polygamy’.

Traditional gender norms and expectations within marriage remain strong, with the husband considered the head of household and main decision-maker and the wife involved in primarily reproductive tasks; however, both women and men find it increasingly difficult to adhere to such ideals as marriages grow more fragile, women take on new roles and men are seen to ‘abandon’ household responsibilities. The role of the *senga* in preparing girls for marriage is diminishing and new sources of information and support are developing slowly.

Adolescent girls have extremely limited access to appropriate reproductive health information and services – including family planning services; this contributes to early pregnancies both inside and outside of marriage. Early pregnancy – both within marriage and outside of marriage – is increasingly common, becoming, in a sense, a ‘descriptive’ norm in the study communities. However, pregnancy outside marriage, when the adolescent girl is still living with her parents, is viewed negatively and surrounded by social stigma and ‘injunctive’ social norms.

Trends in education

A clear trend emerging from our research is the greater opportunity for schooling girls have today, in comparison with their mothers’ and grandmothers’ generations, and the greater social value placed on education for girls. This is largely attributed to national policies of expanding education and in particular UPE. This, in



Picture 14. Girls look forward to a better future for themselves and their families and are active agents of change

turn, has fuelled girls' aspirations for education, which is seen as important both in and of itself and as a means to pave the way for a better life for themselves and their families.

At the same time, girls face many gendered risks along the way, including risks of dropout owing to pregnancy or early marriage, poor quality of schooling and sexual harassment in schools themselves and continuing parental preference to invest in the education of sons, particularly at higher levels. In spite of policies of USE, the continuing lack of full educational opportunities for secondary education in the study communities visited, where long distances to schools increased opportunity costs and risks for girls along the way, was also among the lived realities girls experience.

Most study participants agreed education added to the value of a girl as reflected in higher bride wealth payments and also made her a better wife and mother because of the higher capabilities it conferred on her. At the same time, some cautioned that much also depended on the character of the girl, noting that education would not automatically make a woman more caring of children or loving of in-laws; education could, in fact, make girls 'lazy' at home or impel them into work outside the home, causing them to neglect family duties. Some made distinctions between the beneficial effects of a woman's education on her children and more mitigated effects on relations with in-laws. Education of boys, meanwhile, was seen as generally positive insofar as it increased their income-earning capacity to make them better providers for household needs.

Drivers of change and persistence

Our study findings suggest key drivers of change might have differential effects on both change processes and stasis around particular sets of norms. Most study participants mentioned multiple drivers of both change and continuity in social norms and practices around education and marriage for adolescent girls, and set these within the broader context of overall socioeconomic, political and cultural transformation accompanied by persistent poverty.

Among the key drivers of both change and persistence, we identified, in the first instance, broad-based processes of socioeconomic transformation from a rural subsistence to a cash-based economy, with livelihoods, however, remaining extremely insecure and household poverty levels high. These conditions are seen to affect marriage forms and processes in a number of ways, contributing, among other things, to 1) the rise in informal marriages among young people as girls seek young men engaged in the cash economy who can provide for their needs better than their own parents; 2) transactional sex encounters for the same reasons (what one study respondent called '*for the price of a chapatti*'), which in turn fuel premarital pregnancies; and 3) a persistent tendency, among some parents at least, to consider their daughters as sources of bride wealth – or at least compensation in the case of informal marriage. Such socioeconomic transformation is also contributing to the heightened value placed on education, which is seen as one of the few paths available to secure livelihoods and jobs; in the absence of adequate opportunities for secondary education or technical training, however, neither girls nor boys are always able to realise the full transformative potential of education in such a changing socioeconomic context.

A second cluster of key drivers emanates from the legal and policy level; here, again, forces for positive change intermingle with reactions against this, leading to a considerably uncertain terrain. National education policies promoting UPE were seen as particularly positive forces for change, opening up opportunities for both girls and boys and contributing to more positive values on girls' education. But inadequate protection for girls in school and lack of policy attention to pregnant girls and young mothers continue to deprive many girls of their right to education. At the same time, continued limitations in implementation of USE policies, coupled with neglect of vocational training, has left a void at these levels of education that could be most transformative for girls.

The promotion of women and children's rights in Uganda can be seen to be an overall 'positive' step forward in terms of greater respect for the rights of both boys and girls and overall gender justice; however, many study participants pointed instead to the 'negative' effects in terms of its contribution to the breakdown in family structures and authority, and a clear backlash among parents in general and fathers in particular was apparent. So, too, the constitutional guarantee of age 18 as the legal age of marriage and efforts to enforce the law on 'defilement' prohibiting relations between under-age children can be seen as strong reinforcement of the rights of adolescent girls to remain unmarried; however, some evidence suggests these measures have merely seemed

to drive early marriage underground, contributing as well to the rise of early informal ‘cohabitation’ arrangements where the rights of married girls and their children find no legal or material protection.

A third driver of change stems from the complex nexus of sociocultural transformation brought about by what many study participants termed the forces of ‘Westernisation’ or ‘modernisation’, seen to be driving out traditional sociocultural norms and values. Many participants mentioned a general sense of cultural unravelling – ‘*a sense of chaos*’ – with old values breaking down and the younger generations adopting behaviours they consider ‘immoral’, influenced by what are seen by some as the most negative aspects of Western culture. They pointed to the rise of trading centres, video halls and discos – even smart phones conveying ‘inappropriate’ images – as responsible for a general breakdown in morals and a laxity in relations between young men and women.

Mediating sites and institutions

Our study identified key mediating sites and institutions through which gendered social norms were both reinforced or subject to questioning and change. These include the family and household; schools; health centres; local government structures and legal services; ethnic and religious institutions and ideologies; and NGO/CSO projects and activities.

As with the overall drivers of change, specific sites seem to be able to serve as both forces of persistence and forces for change. This is the case, for example, for families, which generally serve as sites of socialisation into traditional gender norms but which can also sometimes offer support structures as springboards for positive change. So, too, in the case of schools, which, while offering avenues and opportunities for girls’ empowerment, can also serve as sites for gender discrimination and risk for girls. Health centres have the potential to promote adolescent-friendly health information and services; however, ambiguities in adolescent health policy combined with limited resources severely restrict such potential.

Local government structures and the legal system are key purveyors and enforcers of laws and policies on universal education, women and children’s rights and protection from early marriage and are indeed making significant inroads on these issues. Nevertheless, the sheer weight of the caseload in the face of severe capacity gaps; community backlash against some of these policies; and widespread collusion – in the case of arrests for early marriage – between police and parents for ‘compensation’ money paid by the boy’s parents – is eroding confidence and trust in such institutions.

Cultural leaders and religious authorities remain the guardians of both ethnic and religious values in the ideational sphere, which they urge community members to apply in practice. However, many seem to be struggling in the face of the larger forces of socioeconomic and cultural changes described above.

A number of NGOs and CSOs are active in the district. While their overall reach is limited and both documentation and evaluation materials on their activities are rare, discussions with key informants indicate their interventions can have a potentially transformative impact on the women and girls involved in their projects. They have a presence in the field and are often able to reach communities that stretched government services cannot cover, and/or to strengthen services that are being offered.

Effects on adolescent girls’ capabilities

While national educational policies and promotion of gender equality have expanded educational opportunities for girls, those who become mothers or are married at an early age cannot take full advantage of such opportunities and so find their educational trajectories truncated. Early marriage, cohabitation and pregnancy are continuing to rob girls of the full capabilities they could develop through education, if they were supported to remain and finish both primary and secondary schooling.

Girls who marry young or who move into unstable cohabitation relationships may find themselves in a position of relative powerlessness within the newly formed couple, as they have not yet completed the education or developed the confidence they need to prepare them to assert themselves in household decision-making or to contribute to the economic well-being of the family. This hereafter reinforces traditional social norms on the ‘proper’ behaviour of a wife who is expected to be subordinate to the husband, as she is not in a position to

contest such norms. Those who, in addition, give birth early, are soon preoccupied with their care-giving functions and may no longer have the time or opportunity to develop new skills, cultivate relationships with peers, or – indeed – continue with schooling. Given the instability of many of the cohabitation arrangements that are arising, girls may often find themselves abandoned by partners, with no legal recourse to demand economic support.

Lacking access to appropriate sexual and reproductive health information or services, adolescent girls are unable to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies or STIs – including HIV – as well as sexual abuse. The physical consequences of early pregnancy are clear; because they are not yet physically mature, girls risk dying in delivery, or need to deliver through Caesarean section, after which they may be rejected by their partner as ‘sexually weak’. With abortions illegal, those who seek recourse to ‘silent’ abortions face significant health risks, as well as legal risks and social censure. Once they are pregnant, girls fail get the proper care.

The combination of early marriage or pregnancy leading to school dropout has had a significant impact on adolescent girls’ potential to develop the skills needed to engage in productive activities beyond those involved in farming or petty trade. Additionally, taking on the early burden of child care and other considerable reproductive activities in the household has contributed to limiting the time available for engagement in productive activities outside of the home. If married – particularly in informal cohabitation arrangements – the husband himself is often struggling to support the family. If unmarried and living at home with her family, the economic burden of care falls on girls’ parents. In both cases, the girl and her child or children could be caught up in a spiral of poverty.

Psychosocial and emotional well-being depend on a number of factors, and girls’ experiences of marriage within the changing context described above were both positive and negative. Some of the married adolescent girls rated themselves as happy in their marriages, relishing the newfound respect they felt accorded to them as married women and ‘social adults’; the economic support husbands provided; and the protection from abusive natal families or promiscuous behaviour married life afforded. Others, however, recognised early marriage and motherhood stunted their opportunities for further skills development leading to jobs, and many also soon realised marriage could not solve all of their problems – whether economic or psychosocial.

Pressure to conform to ideals of wifely behaviour is strong; dismay and disappointment when those ideals cannot be fulfilled are all the stronger, contributing to quarrels and tensions. A number – particularly in the informal marriage arrangements that they have contracted themselves – face economic difficulties in the new household, as young husbands themselves struggle to support the family; these informal unions are – in turn – said to be highly unstable, with little formal protection for girls who may be abandoned with their children after break-up of the couple. Some girls retain strong relations with their natal families, but social norms tend to restrict the number or length of visits, and, outside of the family network, there are limited sources of support that girls can turn to in case of difficulties in their marriage.

8.2 Policy priorities and recommendations

Study participants at all levels identified a number of key priorities and recommendations for moving forward in efforts to address gender-discriminatory norms related to early marriage and practices that negatively affect adolescent girls’ capabilities, as well as to address specific obstacles to girls’ education. These can be grouped under categories of interventions designed to 1) promote communication, raise awareness and mobilise communities; 2) enhance girls’ self-esteem and provide positive role models; 3) strengthen legal provisions, enforcement and awareness; 4) improve services and service delivery; 5) expand economic opportunities and empowerment for girls; and 6) deepen the data and information base for evidence-based policy development.

Stakeholders confirmed the findings from our research have relevance for the country as a whole – beyond the specific study communities – albeit with sociocultural differences to be taken into account in each area. Key actors at all levels need to be engaged, and coordination and positive synergies in different programme areas around adolescent girls need to be reinforced through the development of an advocacy campaign by a partnership forum under the leadership of a key ministerial actor.

8.2.1 Promoting communication, raising awareness and mobilising communities

Key actors: District and sub-county officials; CDOs; civil society; teachers and VHTs; community, cultural and religious leaders; Ministries of Gender and Education

Community dialogues designed to share views and perspectives, create greater awareness and change discriminatory attitudes and practices

Many consider community dialogue processes a productive approach to ‘research/action’, useful both in uncovering underlying potentially discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes and raising awareness of the need to change these. A number of NGO and CSO actors are already engaged in such processes on the ground and others are intending to embark on them. Such efforts should be strengthened and expanded and supported by district authorities. Community sensitisation about the dangers of early marriage and the importance of sending children to school was seen by a number of study participants to be particularly important.

Deepened engagement with cultural leaders, religious authorities and other local ‘gate-keepers’ and opinion leaders

In establishing such processes of community dialogue, study participants confirmed it was critical to engage with cultural leaders and religious authorities who, if given the right information, can create change in society. As one key informant put it, ‘Unless you engage these people, you will not go far on women/girls’ rights.’ Stakeholders recognise, however, that, while cultural and religious institutions can be key mediating forces in effecting positive change around gender-discriminatory norms and practices, there may also be underlying tensions and instances where their ‘gate-keeper’ function is instead working to uphold gender-discriminatory practices. Moreover, some of these institutions may currently have more appeal to older generations than to young people. In these cases, further study and engagement would be necessary to identify the most effective allies, coupled with ongoing engagement with others.

Continuous outreach and sensitisation of parents

As one aspect of community dialogue processes, many study respondents highlighted the need to engage with parents around their responsibilities for children. Many service providers seemed to feel parents were largely ‘to blame’ for either withdrawing their children from school (for early marriage or child labour) or allowing them to drop out on their own; also for neglecting children’s needs, failing to guide them in proper behaviour and bypassing laws on early marriage. Community sensitisation was in this sense seen as vital to combating negative attitudes and dispelling misinterpretation of laws.

Many study respondents felt parents needed to communicate more with their children – particularly their daughters – and programmes should be developed to inform parents how to deal with their children. The role of community development workers was highlighted as critical, with the need for ongoing, continuous outreach into communities. Study participants suggested using platforms such as clubs and associations, including parent–teacher associations; radio programmes could also be used to sensitise parents and entire communities on issues to do with girls’ education and early marriage.

Affirmative action for girls and women but further sensitisation and engagement with boys and men, including fathers

Affirmative action for women and girls is still needed and recommended as a way forward: ‘The emphasis must be on the girl child – she is our future – the future of us all,’ said the Mayuge deputy RDC. Current measures such as quotas for girls in universities must be maintained as compensatory devices to help girls overcome the particular gender-based obstacles they face in education; targeting of women for empowerment and support is also still needed. At the same time, however, many study participants point to the backlash such measures have created and the feelings of marginalisation that are arising on the part of men and boys that may, in turn, lead to resistance. It is recognised that, as one of our key informants put it, ‘Culture is in the hands of men and men are still benefiting from certain aspects.’ For this to change, male engagement and leadership is needed. Some, therefore, stress the importance of enlisting men and boys as partners, ensuring appropriate programmes of

support for them as well. Some study participants highlight, in particular, the role of fathers, as in this testimony from personal experience from one of our key informants:

‘At the bottom of it all is society’s perception of women, and this starts within the family. Women in society who have made it – highly educated, those who have achieved success – a significant proportion of them had fathers who believed differently from the rest of society, saying “I have girls, but/and I will take them as far as I can.” Fathers are the household decision-makers – we could gain mileage if the father leads. If the father made clear to his village mates that, “These are my girls – hands off,” the others would respect them. Girls who have had a lot of support from their fathers are very assertive – so much so that some men are afraid to marry them [she cites her late marriage as a case in point]. It may take a long time for all of society to change, but it can change through individuals [positive deviance]. A teacher would not mess with the daughter of someone who is protective. This is important both for girls, to know that their father is on their side no matter what, and to those around them who know that if they harm the daughter they will have to contend with the father’ (KII, advisor, WHO/UNFPA/Makerere College of Health Sciences).

8.2.2 Enhancing girls’ self-esteem and providing positive role models

Key actors: Civil society; education officials (national and local); community development workers; individuals

Promoting ‘success stories’ from the community

Study participants highlighted the need to develop programmes to build girls’ self-esteem and sense of self-worth such that they would not consider going with men *‘for the price of a chapatti’* and also to encourage girls to look beyond early marriage as their only option. Our research highlights the important positive influence that can be exerted by ‘success stories’ of girls who ‘have made it’ – sisters or friends who have graduated from school and women from the community who have taken on a profession or risen to positions of political leadership, successfully balancing such roles with family commitments. Such examples should be celebrated, shared and made more visible to girls.



Picture 15. It is important to give voice to adolescent girls and promote measures to build confidence

Some study respondents highlighted the importance of encouraging such individuals to think of *‘giving back’* and nurturing *‘private philanthropy’*. In this way, communities could promote their own success stories; local women who have gone out and ‘made it’ could potentially serve as the core of a system of mentors, with mentorship programmes established, for example, around girls’ schools. Role modelling at family level is considered equally important, with parents to be encouraged – through words as well as actions – to set examples of gender-equitable attitudes and practices.

Facilitating role models from outside the community

Cultivating role models from outside the community is also, and encouraging them to share the experiences of the wider world in order to open up a vision of different possibilities for young people who have not had a chance to move beyond the confines of their rural communities. As one sub-county key informant put it, *‘We need people from other parts to freshen the minds of these girls.’*

8.2.3 Strengthening legal provisions, enforcement and awareness

Key actors: Justice ministry and local officials; civil society

Stronger enactment and enforcement of laws in critical areas

Both the literature review and the field study confirmed that well-developed policies on young people, gender equality and girls' education exist and are often backed up by laws. However, there are certain gaps in focus, coordination and clarity, and significant problems remain in implementation or enforcement. A number of study participants raised difficulties in particular in the enforcement of the minimum age of marriage and the law on defilement. Often, parents choose to settle outside of court, sometimes because they believe it is a family matter, but also because they perceive greater benefits in 'compensation' in that way; some study participants confirmed that LCs and police services were often complicit in these informal settlements.

Study participants identify in particular the need to enhance the effectiveness of legal redress mechanisms and child protection systems (including the police, probations officers and LCs) in addressing child marriage and defilement. Others noted the importance of enacting district-level ordinances to back up and pave the way for implementation of national laws, citing as an example the draft bylaw on child labour adapted to the district situation through a focus on quarrying, sugarcane cutting, fishing and domestic housemaids. Stricter enforcement of the law on UPE is also critically needed, through what stakeholders suggested was a combination of community sensitisation efforts and penalties for infringement. However, the manner in which laws are enforced can either serve as an example or create a backlash: police sensitisation is therefore important.

Continuing advocacy for legal reform

While actions on one front require appropriate enforcement of existing laws, further advocacy is still needed around the development of additional positive legislation. Such advocacy will undoubtedly need to proceed through extensive processes of community dialogue and sensitisation to counter the currently strong sociocultural resistance that is abundantly apparent in current debates, for example around key themes, issues and clauses in the proposed Marriage and Divorce Bill. One of the challenges highlighted in these debates has been resistance to the perception of 'elites' pushing a bill that is in contradiction to local social norms and values. As one legal activist put it in frustration, 'It is as if they expect we can go from a "traditional girl" to a "traditional girl plus education" without any other attendant cultural changes that need to go along with her becoming an entirely "new girl."' Mobilisation at grassroots level will be needed to confront such dilemmas.

Community sensitisation on laws

A number of stakeholders highlighted the importance of working with families and communities to strengthen both awareness and understanding of laws by the individuals who have both rights and responsibilities under these laws. Community sensitisation was seen as particularly important around laws on defilement, early marriage and obligatory primary education. One key informant pointed out that, especially around issues of defilement, there are clashes between what is understood in the cultural context (where age is defined by physical attributes of the adolescent) and what is provided for in the legal context (where age 18 is established as the objective age cut-off): lawmakers and parents need further dialogue on these issues so such clashes can be minimised.

8.2.4 Improving education services and strengthening demand

Key actors: Education ministry and education officials at local level; teachers; community development workers; civil society

Study participants agreed on the need for measures to address both demand- and supply-side issues that are posing obstacles to adolescent girls' educational attainment and completion, as well as the quality of education they receive.

Enhanced quality and investment in infrastructure

Study participants highlighted the need for improvements in the educational environment in schools, to make them more conducive to quality learning and improve student retention. The reintroduction of school lunch programmes, more clubs and extra-curricular activities, including sports, and strengthened school health initiatives are an important means of strengthening the ‘pull factor’ of schools. Promoting the important roles and status of senior female teachers is seen to be instrumental in creating a favourable environment for girls at school. Strengthened codes of conduct for teachers is needed as a means of combating sexual harassment within schools themselves.

Greater policy clarity and specific back-to-school programmes for pregnant girls/young mothers were highlighted as key priorities, accompanied by community sensitisation processes around this issue. *‘It is a really big loss for a girl to fail to complete school,’* stressed one key informant. *‘Then she is just “a pregnancy machine” who will be married off; without skills she cannot access employment; without literacy she cannot access justice and the vicious cycle continues as she will in turn require help from her daughters at home.’* Meanwhile, improved facilities and infrastructure at all levels accompanied by increased investment in particular in secondary schools to bring them closer to home were identified as critical priorities to expand equitable access to quality education at all levels.

Measures to strengthen demand

The education ministry recognises ‘deep-rooted socio-cultural norms’ around early marriage, the gender division of labour in the household and – despite progress – lingering parental preference for education of sons as key barriers, and has designed a series of community dialogues to sensitise stakeholders on these issues. These initiatives should be both continued and expanded and could be further supported through media campaigns on the importance of education, targeting parents and other community members; community leaders, including parish chiefs, cultural leaders and religious authorities could be enlisted to support such processes. Financial support for poor students has been identified as a potential measure to address barriers arising from household poverty and the opportunity costs of sending girls to school and keeping them there, accompanied by measures to address child labour. Strengthened sanctions for parents who do not ensure their children go to school are seen to be equally important.

8.2.5 Clarifying policies and strengthening adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services

Key actors: Health ministry and local health officials; CDOs; civil society

While an adolescent health policy exists in Uganda, with guidelines on implementation, there is still considerable uncertainty about whether reproductive health information and services can actually be provided to adolescents under the age of 18, particularly in view of the law on defilement, which defines all sexual acts involving under-18s (consensual or not) as a crime. Such ambiguity is negatively impacting on the health of adolescent and – in particular – on the reproductive health rights and needs of protection of adolescent girls.

Lack of clarity at policy level is coupled with strong social and religious norms and taboos about imparting sexual information and services to girls and, in particular, providing access to methods of contraception. With abortion also illegal, the result is continuing high levels of teenage pregnancy; recourse to unsafe abortion; and severe repercussions on the health of adolescent girls.

There is an urgent priority, therefore, to clarify the legal and policy framework; massively upscale sexual and reproductive health information; and ensure services are available and provided by adolescent-friendly health workers.

8.2.6 Strengthening inter-sectoral coordination for integrated approaches at all levels

Key actors: Government service sectors at national and subnational level (health, education, legal affairs, gender and community development); civil society; Ministry of Finance

Holistic responses

It is clear that discriminatory gender norms and the specific vulnerabilities they produce for adolescent girls span sectors; there is a need, therefore, for integrated approaches and provision of services that will engage multiple actors and address multiple needs. This is to ensure the benefits of service provision in one area are not blocked and/or contradicted by the lack of service provision in another, and that positive synergies are created.

Strengthened reproductive health information services in schools, for example, would require stronger coordination between the health and education sectors. Problems of school dropouts cannot be tackled by the education sector alone, but need support from CDOs and local authorities. Community mobilisation and outreach around HIV and AIDS and current campaigns against sexual and gender-based violence can be usefully harnessed for mobilisation around other issues of sexual and reproductive health, including the underlying gender-discriminatory practices that render women and girls more vulnerable.

Addressing sexual and gender-based-violence – including early marriages – also requires collaboration between gender activists, the police and justice systems and others. Girls’ access to justice is currently severely limited, and counselling services – for example to help with the repercussions of ‘defilement’ or with problems within marriage – are rare.

Community members in both study sites were particularly interested in more counselling services for young people. Religious leaders, community workers, CSOs and the justice system need to work together on such issues and to ensure appropriate services are in place, while sociocultural and religious norms will once again need to be addressed. Moreover, adolescents currently have limited access to information on what services currently exist, where to go or how demand rights. Information services therefore need to be strengthened along with the services themselves.

Local capacity-building for service provision

Overall, greater resources for capacity-building at district level will be needed to expand and improve holistic service delivery. It is already difficult for existing district service structures in the different sectors to cover all of the communities, let alone coordinating with other sectors for the needed holistic response. The district education department, for example, has no vehicle for inspection; the police often require victims to pay for their transport to the scene; outreach for all services is severely constrained. Greater investment in district service structures, facilities and human resources will require appropriate budget allocations.

8.2.7 Expanding economic opportunities and empowerment for girls

Key actors: National and local government; civil society; private sector

Economic empowerment measures for girls and young women within the context of overall poverty reduction measures

Our analysis identifies socioeconomic conditions setting the context for high levels of household poverty as both an important force contributing to the persistence of certain social norms and practices and a driver of change in social structures (e.g. households), with important consequences for girls. Household poverty is driving both child labour (sugarcane cutting for boys; petty trade for girls) and early marriages, which together contribute to school dropouts. As a female legal activist in Kampala put it, *‘The issues around are many, and however much you try to enforce the laws on early marriage, what comes around is poverty; people are pushed around the wall by poverty.’*

The specific economic vulnerabilities of women and girls are also highlighted, with teenage mothers who are struggling on their own facing particularly severe economic constraints: *‘Because girls don’t have a share in their families’ wealth, because the boys are not there to support them, they need to find a way to support their children. Parents, especially fathers, are not happy about taking on a new responsibility,’* explained one key informant.

Priorities are therefore twofold. The first is overall economic development as a driver of positive change in the district. As a key informant put it, *‘Above all, we need to have socioeconomic development as a driver of change – to show that there are opportunities. We need to have hope for change in order for change to come [...] with real development at community level and economic empowerment key.’* But at the same time, specific measures are needed for the economic empowerment of girls and women. Study respondents at community level were particularly vocal on this recommendation, stressing that expanded education opportunities were needed for both girls and young couples, including financial support, access to savings and loans schemes and support for entrepreneurial activities.

Strengthened technical training for young people, particularly girls

Both district and sub-county informants highlighted the importance of greater investment in technical training and employment promotion for young people, particularly girls. They noted problems of high rates of unemployment in the district and the limited nature of technical training opportunities (just one technical training institute), as well as overall attitudes considering technical education as less prestigious than academic courses. Some recommended bringing skills training back into schools, stressing that practical lessons were needed in addition to academic ones.

Skills training programmes for school dropouts are also particularly important, as are appropriate vocational training opportunities for adolescent mothers, with additional measures needed to provide child care facilities so mothers can attend. Study participants further highlighted the need to overcome gender stereotypes in vocational training considered suitable for girls and women that in turn limit their employment opportunities.

‘Girls don’t take on “serious” professions such as electricity, mechanics and the like – they go to tailoring instead. We need to encourage girls to take on new jobs. But the family background and background of primary and secondary education is pushing against that. In Rwanda, women are builders, but in Uganda a girl is supposed to be gentle, calm – how can she climb up on a pole to string a wire? Society will look at is as awkward’ (KII, district technical team, Mayuge).

8.2.8 Deepening the data and information base for evidence-based policy development

Key actors: Sectoral ministries; Uganda Bureau of Statistics; university structures and research institutes; civil society; development partners

Further research to understand social norms underlying gender-discriminatory practices

Many study respondents highlighted the need for further research and studies to better understand the workings and configurations of gender-discriminatory social norms operating at different levels in different contexts. Region-specific vulnerabilities also need to be better understood. Key forces of change and persistence and particular bottlenecks posing barriers to positive change need to be identified as a basis for appropriate programming for adolescent girls. We also need to listen to adolescent girls themselves more on these issues and ensure research processes capture their voices, perspectives and suggestions for the future.

Investigation of particularly urgent issue

Early marriage has been identified a particularly important topic of research, along with teenage pregnancy – both of which need greater understanding and visibility. *‘Before adolescent pregnancy wasn’t so well recognised – it was hushed. It was gender issue – the girl gets pregnant so it’s her fault. But society has to face up to what they are doing to their girls [...] We can’t bury our heads in the sand while our girls are dying’* (KII, Kampala). Statistics on the issue (produced by UBOS and presented in the 2013 State of Uganda Population report (Republic of Uganda and UNFPA, 2013)) pointed to a problem of alarming proportions; factors perpetuating the problem need to be further understood; a nation-wide study has been suggested as a priority, with the aim of generating recommendations for action.

Such research needs to be accompanied by urgent, scaled-up measures to address the issue, including engaging families who are faced with the problem; getting girls back to school; addressing issues of poverty and economic

livelihoods; and enhancing communication between parents and children – all of which are priorities for action moving forward recommended by other study participants above.

8.2.9 Policy influencing strategies and potential ways forward

Critical issues of adolescent girls’ education, early marriage and teenage pregnancy need to be brought to a higher level of policy influence. Dissemination of findings from this study and other research should target key decision-makers and policy organs in order to furnish them with evidence needed to advocate for policy and programme review and development. These would include policy-makers and planners at the level of permanent secretaries in government institutions – MOGLSD, MOES and MOH – as well as the National Council of Children (NCC), appropriate parliamentary committees, sector working groups and monitoring and evaluation groups. It was suggested that the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) also be involved.

An advocacy programme on child marriages and teenage pregnancy could be developed similar to that on child and maternal health that was taken up by Parliament. This could be the work of a forum or lobby group that could help reach high-level policy-makers and mobilise partners. It would be possible to tap into existing partnership networks (such as the development partners’ gender working group) to promote such actions, with a multi-sectoral thrust under a lead actor who would be recognised and supported in this role.

Prioritisation and sequencing of actions will need to be determined both within individual sectors (health, education, community development, legal affairs) and in a cross-cutting manner so a holistic approach to the elimination of gender disparities and the empowerment of women and girls can be pursued. As noted above, entry points include building on initiatives that already exist, mobilising current partnership networks and building on the results of research that point to particularly critical issues.



Picture 16. Concrete actions are needed at all levels so girls can realise their full potential

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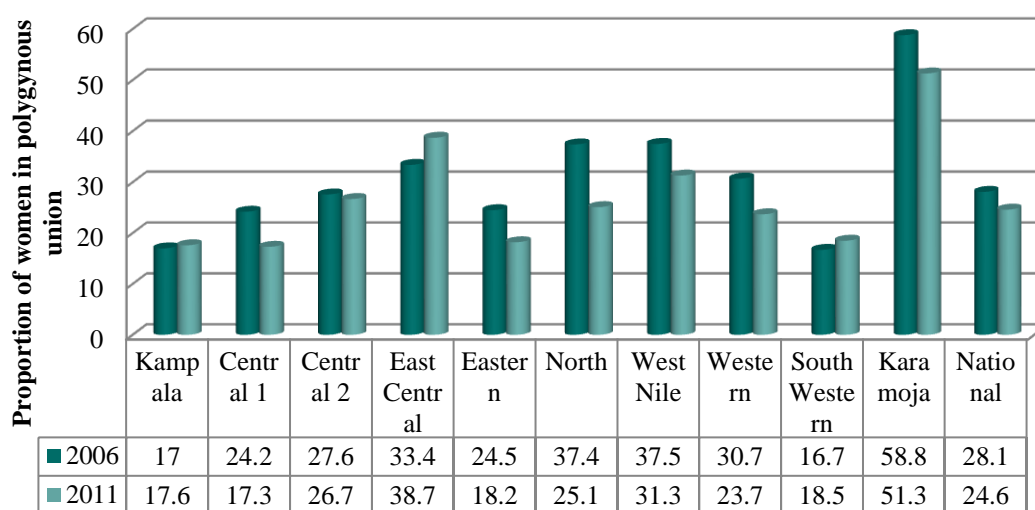
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Annexes

Annex 1: Statistical tables and figures

Regional distribution of women aged 15-49 in polygynous unions, 2006 and 2011,



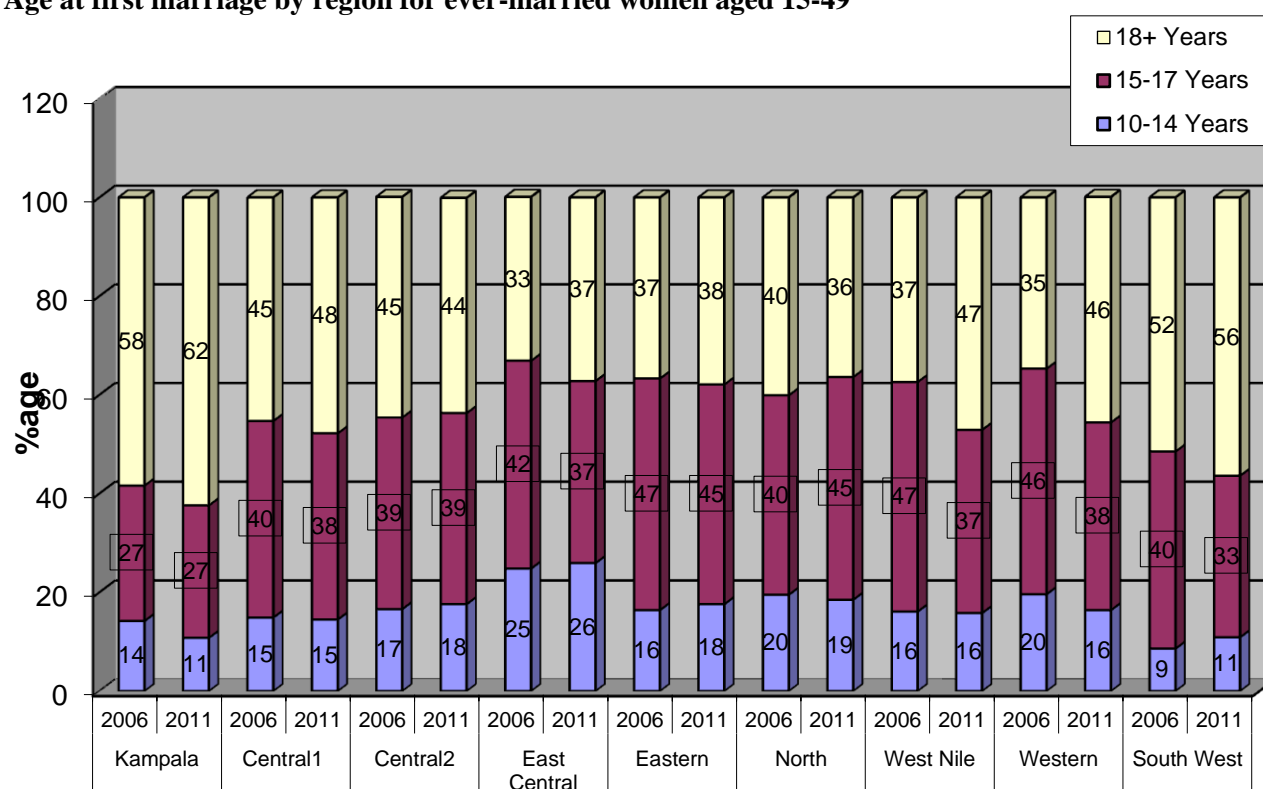
Source: UBOS (2007; 2012).

Trends in age at first marriage for women aged 15-49, 2001-2011

	2001	2006	2011
National	17.8	17.6	17.9
Regional variations			
Central 1	N/A	17.9	17.7
Central 2	N/A	17.7	17.6
Kampala	N/A	19.6	20.7
East Central	N/A	16.7	17.0
Eastern	N/A	17.2	17.5
North	N/A	17.7	16.7
West Nile	N/A	17.4	17.9
Western	N/A	17.2	17.9
South West	N/A	18.2	18.6
Urban/rural variations			
Urban	18.7	18.8	20.0
Rural	17.7	17.5	17.6
Variations by wealth quintile			
Richest (1st or 2nd)	N/A	19.0	19.7
Poorest	N/A	17.4	17.5

Source: UBOS (2002; 2007; 2012).

Age at first marriage by region for ever-married women aged 15-49



Source: UBOS (2007; 2012).

Trends in key primary and secondary education indicators in Uganda, 2007-2012

Education level indicators	Years					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Primary						
Males	3,779,338	3,987,160	4,150,037	4,179,248	4,039,734	4,168,939
Females	3,758,633	3,976,819	4,147,743	4,195,400	4,058,443	4,168,130
Total	7,537,971	7,963,979	8,297,780	8,374,648	8,098,177	8,337,069
% of girls in total enrolment	50	50	50	50	50	50
Completion rate (%)						
Males	50	51	55	56	65	68
Females	44	47	48	51	63	66
Secondary						
Males	517,254	589,358	648,014	654,971	662,003	669,334
Females	437,074	499,386	546,440	570,721	596,081	578,103
Total	954,328	1,088,744	1,194,454	1,225,692	1,258,084	1,247,437
% of girls in total enrolment	46	46	46	47	47	46
Completion rate (%)						
Males	39	39	42	45	48	52
Females	31	31	31	32	33	34

Source: MOES (2012).

Male and female primary school enrolment, by region, 2009-2011

Region	2009		2010		2011	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Central	48.9	51.1	48.9	51.1	49.0	51.0
Eastern	49.6	50.4	49.6	50.4	49.5	50.5
North Eastern	51.0	49.0	55.4	44.6	55.9	44.1
Northern	52.1	47.9	51.5	48.5	51.3	48.7
South Western	50.7	49.3	49.0	51.0	49.0	51.0
Western	49.1	50.9	50.2	49.8	50.0	50.0
National	50.0	50.0	49.9	50.1	49.9	50.1

Source: MOES Education Statistical Abstract 2009, 2010 and 2011

Male and female secondary school enrolment, by region (2009-2011)

Regions	2009		2010		2011	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Central	49.4	50.6	48.9	51.1	49.7	50.3
Eastern	57.3	42.7	55.8	44.2	55.5	44.5
North Eastern	54.4	45.6	61.0	39.0	64.5	35.5
Northern	64.8	35.2	63.3	36.7	62.6	37.4
South Western	55.7	44.3	50.3	49.7	50.0	50.0
Western	51.9	48.1	55.5	44.5	55.9	44.1
National	54.3	45.7	53.4	46.6	53.7	46.3

Source: MOES (2009b; 2010; 2011).

Trends in literacy rates, 2006-2010

	2002/03			2005/06			2009/10		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Uganda	77	63	70	76	63	69	79	66	73
Residence									
Urban	90	84	87	89	83	86	90	86	88
Rural	74	60	67	74	58	66	77	62	69
Region									
Kampala	94	91	92	92	90	91	95	90	92
Central	82	74	79	82	78	80	84	81	83
Eastern	72	54	63	71	56	64	75	60	68
Northern	72	42	56	74	45	59	77	52	64
Western	79	69	74	74	60	67	77	65	71

Source: UBOS (2012).

Annex 2: Research instruments

1. Community conceptual mapping and timeline

Instructions

Respondents:

Per research site, undertake one discussion with each of the following:

- Younger people male and female mixed (18-30) involving youth leaders, NGOs workers, ok if they are from outside the community as they might have an interesting perspective (e.g. young teachers or government employees)
- Middle-aged people male and female mixed (30-50) involving community leaders and respected persons who feel free to talk
- Older men (60+) (male only – for grandfathers' perspectives; could be the village elder or others)

Procedures:

Plan to take at least 2 hours. Start with the conceptual mapping (general discussion first), then proceed to the community timeline. You can start with the marriage theme, then education in one group; reverse the order with the other group in case things get more rushed towards the end.

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers, tape and pins; drawing board

Thematic focus

- What sorts of norms and practices are there in this community around early marriage and other marriage practices? Around girls' schooling?
- Are there differences between girls and boys?
- Have these norms and practices shifted over time? If so how and why?
- What sorts of interventions if any exist or have existed to change these norms?

Background information to collect

- Date: _____ Location _____
- Number of participants (at beginning): ____ (at end): _____
- Kind of participants (older men/women; younger men/women): _____
- Ages (average): _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____
- **How was the process?** Was it participatory; did everyone take part in the discussion; did anyone dominate? Did anyone walk out, why? Was it difficult/easy to manage, why? Were people comfortable/uncomfortable, Why? etc.

Question guide

Timeline of changes

Draw a timeline on a large sheet of paper or the ground to map changes in marriage practices and girls education at community level against the backdrop of major events in the country and district/locality.

- Political/governmental/administrative changes (national and local levels).
- Introduction of particular policies, laws, programmes, services.
- Economic changes, conditions.
- Environmental events (droughts/floods, harvest failures).
- Introduction of new technologies (ICTs, e.g. mobile phones, others).
- Conflict, war, displacement.

Discussion of 1) whether the types of changes being mapped affect other communities in the district or are unique to this community; and 2) how these changes intersect with marriage and education – as you go along with the other questions

Community timeline framework

Conflict					
Technological					
Environmental					
Economic					
Laws/policies/ programmes/ services					
Local political					
National political					
Changes in:	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Marriage					
Girls' education					

Marriage

We would like to talk about marriage in this community.

Forms/types and practices

What do you understand by marriage in this community?

- Can you please describe the most common forms of marriage and marriage processes/practices here?
 - Forms: Religious/civil/customary/cohabitation.
 - Types: Monogamy/polygamy.
 - Practices: Preparation; bride wealth; arranged/by choice; marital residence patterns.
- Are these forms/types of marriages/practices common throughout this district? Or do they vary by group? Explain.
- Are there any advantages or disadvantages of one form/practice over another? (For men/women?)
- Have these practices changed over time? Since when? Why/why not/causes? What are your views/feelings on these changes/lack of change?

Evolving marriage practices

Before and after exercise: Ask group participants to provide 2 statements following the same pattern following reality in their communities.

- **We used to think X about marriage but now we think Y.**
- **We used to do X but now we do Y about marriage.**

Give hypothetical examples that illustrate change or stasis or partial change – to avoid leading them in a particular direction.

In-depth discussion of age at marriage. To explore changes or lack thereof around early marriage norms and practices in their community and their views on these changes /non-changes – positive/ negative and why.

- What is the usual age for marriage in this community (for girls/boys)? Has this been changing? How/why?

-
- What do most people think is the appropriate age for girls to marry in this community and why? Is it different for boys and why?
 - Do you know what the legal age for marriage is (for girls/boys)? What do you think about this?
 - Do some girls marry later or not at all? Who/which girls? (Individuals or groups.) Why? And how do people here think about this?
 - Have these attitudes evolved over time and if so how and why? Are you able to link any of these changes to events in your timeline?
 - Are there some ideas/customs/ attitudes that promote or discourage girls' marriage at early or late age [separate when you ask people so as not to get muddled!]? Have these ideas/attitudes etc. changed over time? Why? In what ways?
 - Are there specific people/groups who actively work to maintain girls marrying at age X [fill in early expected age of marriage]? Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? Why are they influential?
 - Are there specific groups working to move the desirable age of marriage for girls? Who are they? [If national-level actors] How are their views communicated/conveyed at local level? Does their opinion carry weight here? Why?
 - What are some of the positive or negative consequences for a girl who marries very early or very late?

Incentives. For each probe as follows: *Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*

- What are the incentives for parents to marry their girls at an early or later age?
- What are the incentives for girls to marry at an early or later age?

Sanctions. For each, probe as follows: *Are the consequences economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?*

- If a girl's parents want her to get married early and she refuses, what happens?
- If a family is not willing to marry their daughter off early, what happens?
- If the expected age of marriage here differs from the legal age, how do people decide what to do? What motivates this decision-making process? What happens?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing her family what happens?

Special questions on children outside of marriage. Probe for all: *Have there been any changes over time?*

- Is it common for girls in this community to have children before they are married? Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried girl's life? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others?)
- How is having a baby when not married viewed by others? (Parents, peers, relatives, authorities, future marriage partners etc.) and how does the unmarried girl view herself?
- What differences are there in having a baby when married or unmarried?
- Does having a baby when not married create any particular problems/challenges for the girl?
- How are boys who have fathered children when not married viewed by the community? How do they view themselves?
- Do boys who have fathered children when not married usually take some responsibility for them? If so, what? If not, why not?

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage?
- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy?
- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy?
- What are some of the services that exist for young married couples? How could these be strengthened?

Education

We would like to talk about education services in this community and differences between education for girls and boys.

Services

Can you please describe what exists here [this is supposed to be a quick answer]?

- Primary; secondary; tertiary; alternative; skills training; religious; informal education?
 - Since when have these services been available? [Remember to add to timeline exercise later.]
 - What do you think about these services? Accessibility, quality, value?

Comparative value of education for girls and boys

The following for quick and animated discussion

‘Education is important for boys’ Why or why not?

‘Education is important for girls’ Why or why not?

Is education more important for boys than for girls? Why or why not?

- Until what age or grade do you think it is appropriate for girls to get an education and why?
- Is it different for boys and why?
- Do some girls not go to school? What influences this? Are there any particular groups of girls who are less likely to go to school and why? Is it different for boys? Why?
- Are there some ideas/customs/ attitudes that promote or discourage girls’ education? Do these change with the age of the girl? Have these ideas/attitudes etc. changed over time? Why? In what ways?
- Are there specific people/groups who actively work to resist girls’ school attendance beyond primary level? Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? Why are they influential?
- Are there specific groups working to promote girls’ education beyond primary level? Who are they? [If national level actors] How are their views communicated/conveyed at local level? Does their opinion carry weight here? Why?
- Have attitudes and practices around girls’ education changed over time? How? Why? In some places more than others? What do you think about these changes?

Incentives. For each of the scenarios below probe: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?

- Why would parents want their girls to leave school after their primary education? [Ugandan can talk about completion.] [The emphasis here is on what they hope to gain.]
- Why would girls want to leave school after their primary education?
- Why would parents want their girls to continue in school?
- Why would a girl want to continue in school?

Sanctions. For each of the scenarios below probe: Are the consequences economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?)

- If a family wants their daughter to continue in school beyond what most girls do, what happens?
- If the expected level of education for girls here differs from the legal level of compulsory education, how do people decide what to do? What motivates this decision-making process? What happens?
- If a girl tries to stay in school beyond what her parents want, what happens?
- If the parents want the girl to continue her schooling, and she refuses, what happens?

Intersection of early marriage/pregnancy and girls’ education norms (to be integrated above)

- How does marriage affect a girls’ education trajectory? (Does it prevent girls from staying in school?)
- How do people feel about this? (Parents, parents-in-law, community members, teachers, local authorities, religious authorities, husbands?)
- Are these feelings/attitudes and practices/consequences different for particular groups of girls [probe for social class, ethnicity, religion etc.]?
- Does this change if the married girl has a child? If so, how and why?
- What about having a child outside of marriage – how does this affect a girls’ education trajectory?

- How do people feel about this? (Parents, parents-in-law, community members, teachers, local authorities, religious authorities, husbands?)
- How does later education [education beyond primary education/expected norm] for girls affect marriage practices and prospects? (Girls' individual outcomes; family outcomes?)
- What are some of the laws/policies and programmes to support girls' education?
- What do you think could be done to strengthen laws/policies and programmes to support girls' education?

2. FGDs with adolescent girls and boys

Instructions

Respondents

- Total of five groups (approximately 5-6 participants per group):
 - Girls and boys – 14/15-19 years. In and out of school; married and non-married.
1. Unmarried girls – in school
 2. Unmarried girls – out of school
 3. Married girls – out of school
 4. Unmarried boys – in school
 5. Unmarried adolescent mothers – out of school (special questions)

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers; tape; pins; drawing box

Thematic focus:

- Ideals of being a woman/man; wife/husband
- Social norms and practices around marriage and education
- Changes in the above

Background information to collect

- Date: _____ Location: _____:
- Number of participants (at beginning): ____ (at end): _____
- Kind of participants (girls/boys; married/unmarried; in/out of school/adolescent mothers): _____
- Ages (average): _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____
- **How was the process?** Was it participatory; did everyone take part in the discussion; did anyone dominate? Did anyone walk out, why? Was it difficult/easy to manage, why? Were people comfortable/uncomfortable, why? etc.

Question guide

Ideals of masculinity and femininity

Warm-up exercise

Start with drawings of girl/woman and boy/man – then use post-its to brainstorm on characteristics of ideal boy/girl/man/woman.

- What are girls expected to do and how are they expected to behave? What about boys?
- What types of things are girls told that they shouldn't do? [e.g. girls are not supposed to do ...] What about boys?
- What are the key roles and responsibilities of boys/girls, men/women in the family?

Views on girls

- Do you think many girls are able to meet those expectations? [Referring back to the drawings.]
- Are they difficult to achieve?

- Do girls feel under pressure to live up to those expectations? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do you gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if you don't?
- Do some people/individuals have different expectations for girls and women?
 - Peers, adults, religion/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, occupational status.

Views on boys

- Do you think many boys are able to meet the expectations? [Referring back to the drawings.]
- Are they difficult to achieve?
- Do boys feel under pressure to live up to those expectations? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do boys gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if they don't?
- Do some people/individuals have different expectations for boys and men?
 - Peers, adults, religion/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, occupational status

Views on marriage and fertility

Age

- What do you think is a good age for girls to be married? Why? How about for boys? Why? Do adults feel the same?
- What is the usual age in this community?
 - Has it changed? Since when and what drove that change?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is (for girls/boys)? What do you think about this?
- What are some of the advantages (practical/economic/social) for girls to marry early? Marry later? [What do you mean by later if not already mentioned – use the specific age that they have already given.] Not marry at all?
 - For parents, for girls, for other family members (e.g. brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins)?
- What are some of the disadvantages (practical/economic/social) of marrying at an early age? Marrying later? Remaining single?
 - For parents, for girls, for other family members (e.g. brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins)?

Qualities of a marriage partner

Get the group to fill in the blanks ... ask for quick responses.

- A good wife is/does _____?
- A good husband is/does _____?
- A bad wife is/does _____?
- A bad husband is/does _____?

Probe: reasons for these, change over time, similarities and differences with their parents, vary according to different types of girls/boys (socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity etc.)?

Some themes you might like to explore would be: ideals of virginity vs. experience; marrying for love vs. marrying for money; children or marriage etc.

Rationale for marriage. Probe: Have there been any changes in the above over time?

- Do most girls want to get married in this locality? If so why/why not?
- What are your expectations from marriage – positive and negative? [Including probes around children, protection/family honour, economic security, emotional well-being etc.]
- What if a girl in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are her alternative options?
- Do most boys want to get married in this locality? If so why/why not?
- What are their expectations from marriage – positive and negative? [Including probes around kids, family honour, economic security, emotional well-being, fear of GBV, concerns about care work burden etc.]
- What if a boy in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are his alternative options?

Choice of marriage partner. Probe: Have there been any changes in the above over time?

- Do girls get to choose their husbands? Why/why not? Who makes the choice and enforces it? Are there particular groups of girls who have greater agency/flexibility in the process? Has this been changing over time?
- What are your feelings about arranged marriages? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?
- Do boys choose their wives here? And has this custom been changing over time – if so how? Why?
- How do girls think about polygamous relationships?

Marriage arrangements. Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?

- What are the differences between different forms of marriage (religious, civil, customary, cohabitation)? Which type is most practised here and what do you think about it?
- Is bride price given at marriage in this community? Why/why not? By all groups or some? What does it consist of? How do you feel about it? What if it is not given?
- Are there any special preparations for girls and boys before marriage? (Physical/informational? Other?) Who conducts this preparation? When does it occur?
- Where does the married couple live after marriage? (With the boys' parents? With the girls' parents? With other relatives? Alone?)
- What happens if there are problems in the couple? Who can you turn to? How do they help you?
- Do you think there could be any programmes that could help you in married life?

Fertility/children. Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?

- What is the usual size of the family here? How many children would you want?
- What about the gender of the child? Does it make any difference to you, your husband, your parents/parents-in-law?
- What if you can't have a child?
- What if you have a child when you are not married?
- How are these views/expectations different between you and your parents/grandparents? Now/long ago?

Access to services. Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?

- What do girls do when they get pregnant? Who do they turn to? Where do they go?
- What are some of the problems and/or challenges adolescent girls face when pregnant, giving birth and after giving birth? [Probe: health, social, material etc.]
- Do adolescent girls have access to reproductive health services in this community? (Contraception, safe deliveries?)
- What are some of the obstacles to using these services? (Awareness, language, attitudes of service providers, perceptions of quality/confidentiality, distance, costs?)
- Do you have to be married to have access to these services?
- Is there sufficient information about sexual and reproductive health accessible to girls in this community? What do you think could be done to improve this situation?
- In the case of domestic/gender-based violence who can girls turn to for help? Are there specific services? What about legal aid?
- If a girl is divorced/abandoned/ widowed, how is she supported? (Do families take them back in?) Is there legal protection? If there is, do the courts treat girls equitably?
- What do you think could be done to strengthen services for girls who are having trouble in their marriages?

Special questions on children outside of marriage. Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?

- What effect does having a child have on an unmarried girl's lives? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others?)
- How does having a baby make the unmarried girl feel?
- How is having a baby when not married viewed by others? (Parents, peers, relatives, authorities, future marriage partners etc.?)
- What differences are there in having a baby when married or unmarried?
- Does having a baby when not married create any particular problems/challenges for the girl? If so, what?

- How do boys feel about having children when not married?
- Do boys who have fathered children when not married usually take some responsibility for them? If so, what? If not, why not?

Views on education

- [For those out of school] Have you all been in school at some point? [For those in school] What grade are you in school?
- Do most children go to school here and until what age? Are there any differences between boys and girls? Has this been changing?
- What are the expectations for sons vs. daughters – if there are differences, why? Has this been changing over time?
- Who should ensure all children go to school and to what age? Is it different for boys and girls?
- Are the experiences of boys and girls similar or different in school? If different, why?
 - Treatment by teachers (favouritism, discipline, abuse); peer group relations; teaching/learning experience; school environment – safety/sanitation; leadership/participation in schools; extra-curricular activities; sports; discipline/subjects; performance; retention/dropouts?
- What has your school experience been like? Are you learning important and useful things? Do you think it is preparing you well for your future? What could be done to improve this?
- What about your future plans about school? Beyond school? What thinking informs these plans? Are there barriers for you to achieve those plans?
- If you have children, what would be the ideal school trajectory for your children?

Intersections between marriage/pregnancy and education for girls [integrated into the above]

- Should an 18-year-old girl be in school or married? What are advantages/disadvantages? What is most common here, and are things changing over time?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing?
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What do you think might be done to support married girls/unmarried mothers to continue with schooling?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated girls? If so why/why not? Is this changing?
- Does education have any influence in the marriage payments? For the girl? For the boy? Has this been changing at all over time?
- Do you think being more educated makes you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [For example ...] Is this changing over time?
- Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers? Is this changing over time?

3. IDIs with unmarried boys, 15-19, who have adolescent sisters

Instructions

Respondents: A mix of in- and out-of-school boys

Materials needed: Flip chart, markers; tape; pins; drawing board

Thematic focus:

- Boys' views of ideals of being a woman/man; wife/husband
- Social norms and practices around marriage and education
- Changes in the above

Background information to collect

- Date: _____ Location: _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Individual information as follows:

• <i>Name</i>	
• <i>Age</i>	
• <i>Place of birth</i>	
• <i>Place of residence</i>	
• <i>Education status/level – own</i>	
• <i>Education status/level – siblings</i>	
• <i>Education status/level – parents</i>	
• <i>Work or occupation</i>	
• <i>Parents' occupations</i>	
• <i>Parent's marital status (includes polygamy) of parents (and number of children)</i>	
• <i>Household living arrangements (who lives in his household; who is considered the head of household?)</i>	
• <i>Ethnicity/ language</i>	
• <i>Religion</i>	

Question guide

Ideals of masculinity and femininity

Warm-up

We'd like to start by drawing the members of your family and then talking about their main roles and responsibilities within the household. [Have them draw members of their family.]

- Similarities and differences with siblings
- Roles of parents
- Have these always been so or are they changing? If changing, why?

Now we'd like to sketch your community and ask you to identify places where boys and girls go – either jointly or separately. [Have them sketch their community]

- What do you do in these different spaces?
- If there are differences between girls and boys, why?
- Have these always been so or are they changing? If changing, why?

Ideals of masculinity. Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?

- What are the characteristics of an ideal boy in your community? Of an ideal man? Are there any common sayings or proverbs that people use around here?
 - Do you think many boys obtain this ideal?
 - What do you think about this in your own case? Is it important to you? If it is, is it difficult to achieve?
 - Do you feel under pressure to live up to that ideal? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do you gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if you don't?
 - Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Peers, older brothers, adults, religious leaders, others?

Ideals of femininity. Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?

- What are the characteristics of an ideal girl in your community? Of an ideal woman? Are there any sayings or proverbs that are used around here?
 - Do you think many girls obtain this ideal?
 - Are these ideals important to you? Why/Why not?
 - Do you think it is difficult for girls to achieve these ideals? In what way?
 - Do you think your sister feels under pressure to live up to these ideals? If yes, where do you think the pressure comes from? What do girls gain by living up to this ideal and what happens if they don't?
 - Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Peers, adults, religious leaders, others?

Views on marriage/children outside of marriage

- Why would you want to get married? What do you hope to get out of it?
- What would you look for in a girl you would like to marry? What sort of girl would you want to avoid?
- When you are married, what do you think will make you a good husband? Do you envisage any obstacles in becoming a good husband?
 - Employment prospects; housing arrangements; assets; land; affordability of marriage; meeting parents' expectations for a marriage partner?
- What sort of boys do you think girls seek to avoid?
- What do you think your father's view is in terms of ideal wife/ideal husband? If different, what accounts for this difference?
- What do you think is the best/most appropriate age for a girl to marry? For a boy to marry? Why? What is the expected age in this community? Has this changed over time?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is in Uganda? (For girls/boys?)
- Who decides on the appropriate age for marriage? How is it enforced? What happens if it is not followed? Has this changed over time?
- Who if anyone provides you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality? What sorts of things do you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What are the gaps? What else would you like to know more about? What about girls – who helps them?
- Do you or your parents have to prepare in any way for you to get married? (Economic contributions (including bride wealth), rituals, sharing of information on what to expect (role of uncles?)) If so how? What about your sister? What are your views on these customs? Have they been changing over time and why?
- Do boys choose their wives here? What about you – what do you want? What is likely to happen to you in reality? And has this custom been changing over time – if so how? Why?
- Do girls get to choose their husbands? Why/why not? Is this changing over time? Are there particular groups of girls who have more choice in the process? What about the case of your sister or close relative?
- Do you expect to have multiple wives? What are your views on this? Is this practice changing over time?
- What happens if a boy fathers a child without being married? How does he feel? What does he do? How does the girl feel/what does she do? How do others view them? Do they view the boy and the girl differently?
- If you fathered a child without being married, what would you do?
- Is this common here? What could you do to prevent this?

Views on education

- Do most children go to school here and until what age? Are there any differences between boys and girls? Is this changing over time?
- What about in your family? What are the expectations for sons vs. daughters – if there are differences why?
- Who should ensure all children go to school and to what age? Is this different for boys and girls?
- Are the experiences of boys and girls similar or different in school? If different, why?
 - Treatment by teachers (favouritism, discipline, abuse); peer relations; teaching/learning experience; school environment – safety/sanitation; leadership/participation in schools; extra-curricular activities; sports; discipline/subjects; performance; retention/dropouts?

- What has your school experience been like? Are you learning important and useful things? Do you think it is preparing you well for your future? How could your education be improved?
- What about your future plans about school? Beyond school? What thinking informs these plans? Are there barriers for you to achieve those plans?
- If you have children, what would be the ideal school trajectory for your children?

Intersections between marriage and education for girls [to integrate into the questions above]

- Should an 18-year-old girl be in school or married? What are advantages/disadvantages? What is most common here, and are things changing over time?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing?
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any classmates or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated girls? If so why/why not? Is this changing?
- Does education have any influence in the marriage payments? For the girl? For the boy? Is this changing at all over time?
- Do you think being more educated makes girls better wives, mothers, daughters-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [For example ...]
- Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?

4. FGDs, mothers and fathers

Instructions

Respondents: Mothers and fathers with adolescent girls – 4 per site (2 with mothers/2 with fathers)

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers (if optional drawing to be done)

Thematic focus

- Comparative views of men and women on ideals of masculinity and femininity
- Comparative views of mothers and fathers on social norms around marriage and education for sons and daughters
- Views and perceptions on changes over time
- Views and perspectives on laws, policies and programmes to address these issues

Background information to collect

- Date: _____ Location: _____:
- Number of participants (at beginning): _____ (at end): _____
- Kind of participants (mothers/fathers): _____
- Ages (average): _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____
- **How was the process?** Was it participatory; did everyone take part in the discussion; did anyone dominate? Did anyone walk out, why? Was it difficult/easy to manage, why? Were people comfortable/uncomfortable, why? etc.

Ideals of masculinity and femininity

Optional: Start with a visual – asking one of the participants to draw a picture of a man, a woman, a boy and a girl. As the discussions below advance, or at the end, conduct a brainstorming on the following and write on the flip chart:

A good girl is/does _____ A bad girl is/does _____
A good boy is/does _____ A bad boy is/does _____
A good woman is/does _____ A bad woman is/does _____

Ideals of masculinity. Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?

- What are the characteristics of an ideal boy in your community? Of an ideal man? Are there any common sayings or proverbs that people use around here?
- Do you think many boys/men obtain this ideal?
- What do boys and men gain if they manage to obtain this ideal?
- What are some of the challenges faced in obtaining this ideal?
- What happens if a boy or a man is not able to obtain this ideal? (Who enforces the ideal?)
- Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Men/women, girls/boys, religious or clan leaders, district authorities/government workers, others?
- Are any of the above ideals changing over time?

Ideals of femininity. Probe: Are these ideals changing over time?

- What are the characteristics of an ideal girl in your community? Of an ideal woman? Are there any sayings or proverbs that are used around here?
- Do you think many girls/women obtain this ideal?
- What do girls/women gain if they manage to obtain this ideal?
- What are some of the challenges faced in obtaining this ideal?
- What happens if a girl or a woman is not able to obtain this ideal? (Who enforces the ideal?)
- Do some people/individuals have different ideals?
 - Men/women, girls/boys, religious or clan leaders, district authorities/government workers, others?
- Are any of the above ideals changing over time?

Views and perspectives on marriage

Marriage forms/types/roles

- We would like to talk about marriage in this community. Can you please describe the most common forms of marriage and marriage processes/practices here?
 - Forms: Religious/civil/customary/cohabitation (comparative advantages/disadvantages)
 - Types: Monogamy/polygamy (comparative advantages/disadvantages)
 - Practices: Preparation; bride wealth; arranged/by choice; marital residence patterns
- Are these forms/types of marriages/practices common throughout this district?
- Have these practices changed over time? Since when? Why/why not/causes? What are your views/feelings on these changes/lack of changes?
- What are the qualities/characteristics that make a good husband/wife? Have these changed over time?
- What kind of husband/wife would you like for your daughter/son? [Probe on what makes a good husband and a good wife and what they most hope for their child.]
- What kind of husband/wife would you NOT like your daughter/son to have? [Probe on what makes a bad husband and a bad wife and what they most fear for their child.]
- Do you think your spouse shares your views of ideal husbands/wives?
- Would you like your daughter's/son's marriage to be the same or different from your own? Please explain.

Early marriage

- At what age do most girls and most boys marry in this community? Has this always been the case, or is it changing over time?
- Do you know what the legal age for marriage is (for girls/boys)?

-
- What do you as parents (mothers/fathers) think is the appropriate age for girls to marry in this community and why?
 - Is it different for boys and why?
 - Are these views held by everyone in the community, or are there differences? (Do mothers and fathers agree? Do daughters and sons agree? What about have religious leaders, district officials, government leaders, others?)
 - Do some girls marry later or not at all? Who/which girls? (Individuals or groups?) Why? And how do you as parents think about this?
 - Have attitudes and practices about the age at marriage evolved over time and if so how and why? (How do these attitudes and practices compare with the time you were married?)
 - Are there some ideas/customs/attitudes that promote or discourage girls' marriage at early or late age [separate when you ask people so as not to get muddled!]? Have these ideas/attitudes etc. changed over time? Why? In what ways?
 - Are there specific people/groups who actively work to maintain girls marrying at age X [fill in early expected age of marriage]? Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? Why are they influential?
 - Are there specific groups working to move the desirable age of marriage for girls? Who are they? [If national-level actors] How are their views communicated/conveyed at local level? Does their opinion carry weight here? Why?

Incentives. For each probe as follows: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?

- What are the incentives for parents to marry their girls at an early or later age?
- Why are the incentives for girls to marry at an early or later age?

Sanctions. For each probe as follows: Are the gains economic? Social? Legal? Mixed?

- If you as a parent want your daughter to get married early and she refuses, what happens?
- If you and your spouse disagree about the age at which your daughter marries, what happens?
- If you as parents are not willing to marry their daughter off early, what happens?
- If the expected age of marriage here differs from the legal age, how do people decide what to do? What motivates this decision-making process? What happens?
- If a girl gets married or cohabits early without informing you first, what happens?

Special questions on children outside of marriage. Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?

- Is it common for girls in this community to have children before they are married? Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried girl's life? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others?)
- How do you as parents view girls having babies when not married? How do others view this? (Relatives, authorities, future marriage partners etc.?) How does the unmarried girl view herself?
- What do you as parents do if your son/daughter has a child without being married?
- What differences are there in having a baby when married or unmarried?
- Does having a baby when not married create any particular problems/challenges for the girl?
- Which is worse for your daughter – getting married at an early age or getting pregnant without being married?
- How are boys who father children when not married viewed by the community? How do they view themselves?
- Do boys who have fathered children when not married usually take some responsibility for them? If so, what? If not, why not?

Laws, programmes, policies and services

- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around marriage – particularly early marriage?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the existing laws, programmes or policies around adolescent pregnancy?

- What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?
- What are some of the services that exist to help young married couples in their family life?
 - What do you think could/should be done to strengthen these?

Views and perspectives on education

- Do most children go to school here and until what age? Are there any differences between boys and girls?
- Is the situation in education different from in your time? (Did most girls/boys go to school, until what age, etc.?)
- What about in your family? What are your expectations for your sons vs. daughters – if there are differences, why?
- Who should ensure all children go to school and to what age? Is this different for boys and girls?
- Are the experiences of boys and girls similar or different in school? If different, why?
 - Treatment by teachers (favouritism, discipline, abuse); peer relations; teaching/learning experience; school environment – safety/sanitation; leadership/participation in schools; extra-curricular activities; sports; discipline/subjects; performance; retention/dropouts?
- What have your daughters' school experiences been like? Are they learning important and useful things? Do you think it is preparing them well for their future?
- What could be done to improve education – for girls/for boys?
- What about your daughters' future plans about school? Beyond school? What thinking informs these plans? Are there barriers for them to achieve those plans? Any difference between your sons and daughters?

Intersections between marriage and education for girls [integrate into questions above if possible]

- Should an 18-year-old girl be in school or married? What are advantages/ disadvantages? What is most common here, and are things changing over time? [Ask also about their own daughters.]
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing? [Ask also about their own daughters.]
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have friends or relatives who have had any experience of this? [Ask also about their own daughters.]
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this? [Ask also about their own daughters.]
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated girls? If so why/why not? Is this changing? [Ask also about their own daughters.]
- Does education of the girl or the boy have any influence in the marriage payments/bride wealth? [Ask also about their own daughters/sons.]
- Do you think being more educated makes girls better wives, mothers, daughters-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [For example ...] [Ask also about their own daughters.]
- Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers? [Ask also about their own daughters/sons.]

5. Intergenerational trio

Instructions

- Start – if possible – by interviewing the grandparents or mothers in order to have a baseline to compare with the daughters
- The first set of questions are for the grandparents and parents
- The second set of questions are for adolescent girls

Respondents

- 3 generations of women – grandmother, mother, daughter

- 2 with in-school girls; 2 with out-of-school girls; all unmarried.
- Likely because of girls marrying and moving away that would be working with younger girls – 13-15 years olds? [Key is the three generations – even if a younger girl would be ok.]

Thematic focus

- To explore shifts in the relative importance and framing of norms and practices around marriage and education across 3 generations

General background information on trio (to attach)

- Date: _____ Location: _____:
- Names of full trio
- **Grandmother:** _____
- **Mother:** _____
- **Girl:** _____

Notes on the process: Challenges in finding everyone; different residential places; other.

A. Question guide: grandmothers and mothers (IT)

- Date: _____ Place: _____
- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on grandmothers/mothers

- Person interviewed: _____ Relation: _____
- Age: _____ Ethnic group: _____ Religion: _____
- Current marital status?
- When married? (Age/date?)
- What type/form of marriage? (Monogamy/polygamy; civil/religious/customary/cohabitation?)
- How many children? Ages? Where living?
- Residence after marriage/currently/since when?
- Household living arrangements: extended or nuclear family (who is living in the household; who is considered the head of the household?)
- Schooling? Level? If left early, when and why?
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)?
- What is/was your husband's occupation (subsistence, income)

Marriage

Age at marriage

- When you were a child, what were the ideas and customs/beliefs as to when a girl should get married? And what age did they usually get married?
- What were the ideas/customs/beliefs as to why a girl should get married at a particular age? [For example honour, fertility, virginity.]
 - Have these ideas on age of marriage been changing over time? Since when? What do you think about the changes?
- What were the reasons for you to get married at the age you did? [For example filial piety, obedience, resistance, reluctant agreement, willingness.]
 - Were your reasons for getting married at the age you did in line with common attitudes and customs? Why/why not?
 - If they were in line with typical attitudes/customs, what were the positive gains that you expected from following the attitudes/customs? And were these gains realised?
 - If it wasn't in line with typical attitudes/customs, what were the expected consequences from resisting the typical attitudes/customs? And what happened in practice [to you or to others]?

-
- Did your family support your approach or not? If so why/why not?
 - If they didn't support you, was there ever any threat or practice of violence? Would violence have made a difference to your views/ practice?

Type and forms of marriage

- What was the type and form of marriage that was typical in your day (religious/customary/civil; polygamous/monogamous) and what type did you have?
 - Is this changing today? If so, since when? How and why?
- Did you choose your partner? Why/why not? How did you feel about that?
 - Have these processes been changing over time? Since when? How, why, why not? What do you think about the changes?

Processes and preparations for getting married

- What was the process for getting married when you got married? [Economic preparation – bride wealth, dowry, material to prepare etc.; rituals etc.] What were your views about this?
 - Has this process been changing over time? Since when? How, why, why not? What do you think about the changes?
- Who told you what to expect during the marriage process and after marriage? What was your experience?
- Who if anyone provided you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality? What sorts of things did you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What were the gaps? What else would you have liked to have known more about?
 - What about girls today – who provides them with information/helps them prepare for marriage? Explain any differences from your day.

Main reasons/expectations of marriage

- What were the main reasons to get married when you were growing up (Children? Security? Companionship? Social acceptability? Prestige? Other?)
- What were your reasons?
 - Have reasons for getting married changed today? If so, how? Since when? What do you think about the changes?
- Before you got married how did you view marriage? What did you think it would bring you? Did you have any concerns? After you got married, did your views stay the same or change? Why?
- Who did you turn to when you had problems in your marriage? What kind of help did you receive?
- If your daughter/granddaughter has problems in her marriage, who can she turn to and how can they help her? What kind of services do you think could be provided to support people in marriage and family life?
- What were your expectations in terms of marriage age for your daughter? And for your granddaughter? Have they been met? Why/why not?

Special questions on children outside of marriage. Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?

- Was it common in your time for girls in your community to have children before they are married? Did you know of girls who did?
 - Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What effect (positive/negative) did having a child have on an unmarried girl's life in your day? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others?)
 - Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What about the boys who fathered children outside of marriage? How were they usually viewed? What did they usually do in your day? Did they take responsibility for them?
 - What happens today?
- Which is worse for your daughter/granddaughter – getting married at an early age or getting pregnant without being married?

Education for girls

Her experiences

- Did most girls go to school when you were growing up? Why or why not? If so, until what age?
- If you went to school, tell us about your schooling experience. Was it any different from your brothers? If so, how?
- If you went and dropped out, would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why/not? What prevented you from this?
- Did school experiences vary for boys or girls? If so, how and why?
 - Attitudes/treatment by teachers; attitudes of parents; length of schooling; time for homework; school environment/facilities; getting to school – distance/transport?
- Have you been influenced by any particular role models? E.g. teachers, older sisters, successful business women, community leaders?
 - How? In what way? How did this change your perspective as to what you could be? Relationships with others etc.
- Did going to school/not having gone/having dropped out of school have an influence on your later life?
 - Material, psycho-emotional, intellectual, social capital?

Perceptions of changes

- Do you think that ideas/attitudes/customs around girls' education have changed since your day? If so, how and why? What were the drivers of change? What do you think about these changes?
- What were your expectations in terms of education for your daughter? And for your granddaughter? Have they been met? Are they the same or different *vis-à-vis* your expectations for your sons/grandsons?

Intersections between marriage and education for girls [to integrate into discussion above and ensure to probe perceptions of change over time...]

In your day ...

- Would an 18-year-old girl have been in school or married? What were the advantages/disadvantages?
 - Have things been changing over time and if so how?
- Was it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What did you think about this?
 - Has it been changing? What is it like today?
- What did you think about married girls and schooling? Were you aware of any laws on this? Did you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
 - What about today?
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Were you aware of any laws on this? Did you have any friends or relatives who had any experience of this?
 - What about today?
- Were there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers to continue their schooling?
 - What about today? Should there be? What kinds?
- Do you think more educated girls had more problems finding husbands than less educated girls in your day? If so why/why not?
 - Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?
- Did education have any influence in the marriage payments? In what way? For the girl? For the boy?
 - Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?
- Do you think that being more educated would make you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this would have created create problems? [For example ...]
 - Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?
- Do you think education made boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?
 - Is this changing nowadays? What is it like today?

B. Question guide: daughters(IT)

-
- Date: _____ Place: _____
 - Time start: _____ Time end: _____
 - Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
 - Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on the daughter

- Name: _____
- Age: _____ Ethnic group: _____ Religion: _____
- Marital status: _____
- If married, type of marriage _____ Children? _____
- Current household living arrangements (extended or nuclear family; who is living in the household? Who is considered the household head?): _____
- In school? _____ If not in school, what level reached (if any)? _____
- What level of education do your siblings have? If dropped out did your brothers leave school at the same age/grade? What about sisters? If different, why? _____
- Would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why not? _____
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)? _____

Marriage

Age

- What are the current ideas/customs/beliefs as to when a girl should get married?
- At what age do girls usually get married today? Is this different from the time of your mother/grandmother?
- What are the ideas/customs/beliefs as to why a girl should get married at a particular age? [For example honour, fertility, virginity.]
- If married: At what age did you marry? Was this in line with general expectations? If not, what happened when you married at the age you did? Did anyone try to stop you from this?
- If not married: At what age do you expect to get married? Is this in line with general expectations? If not, what will happen if you do not get married at the age you are expected to?

Types and forms of marriage

- What type of marriage is typical today (religious/customary/civil) and what type do you have/expect to have?
- What about polygamy/monogamy? Which is more common today and what type do you have/expect to have?

Processes/preparation

- What are processes for getting married today? [Economic preparation – bride wealth, material to prepare etc./rituals etc.] What are your views about this? Do you think these processes are changing?
- Did you/do you expect to choose your partner? Is this what is usually done? What happens if you refuse to marry a partner chosen for you?
- Who usually informs girls about what to expect during marriage? Has anyone told you what to expect during the marriage process and after marriage? What was your experience?
- Has anyone provided you with information or guidance on marriage and sexuality? If so, who? What sorts of things did you get information/guidance on? Is it helpful? What were the gaps? What else would you like to know more about?

Expectations of marriage

- What do you expect to get out of marriage? What do you think it would bring you? Do you have any concerns?
- Who do you think you can you turn to if you have problems in a marriage? (Relatives? Religious leaders? Others?) Are there any services to support you in your family life?

- Do you think there have been any changes in ideas/attitudes/customs around marriage from the time of your mothers/grandmothers to today? If so, how and why? What were the drivers of change? What do you think about these changes?
- Do you expect your marriage to be the same as or different from the marriage of your mother? Please explain.

Special questions on children outside of marriage. Probe for all: Have there been any changes over time?

- Is it common for girls in your community to have children before they are married? Do you know of girls who have?
 - Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What effect (positive/negative) does having a child have on an unmarried girl's life? (Physical, social, economic, schooling, marriage prospects, others?)
 - Has this been changing over time? If so, how and why?
- What about the boys who father children outside of marriage? How are they usually viewed? What do they usually do? Do they take responsibility for them?
- Which do you think would be worse for you – getting married at a very early age or getting pregnant without being married?

Education for girls

- If you went to school, tell us about your schooling experience.
 - Where? When? For how long? Did you stop? Why did you stop? How did you react? Would you have liked to have continued? What was/is positive? What was/is challenging?
- Do school experiences vary for boys or girls? If so, how and why?
 - Attitudes/treatment by teachers; attitudes of parents; length of schooling; time for homework; school environment/facilities; getting to school – distance/transport?
- Have you been influenced by any particular role models? E.g. teachers, older sisters, successful business women, community leaders?
 - How? In what way? How did this change your perspective as to what you could be? Relationships with others etc.
- Do you think that going to school/not going to school will have an influence on your later life?
 - Material, psycho-emotional, intellectual, social capital?
- Do you think that ideas/attitudes/customs around girls' education have changed since over time (since your mother's/grandmother's time)? If so, how and why?
 - What were the drivers of change? What do you think about these changes?

Intersections between marriage and education for girls [integrate into the above, if easier. Probe perceptions of change over time]

Today

- Is an 18-year-old girl likely to be in school or married? What are the advantages/disadvantages? Have things been changing over time and if so how?
- Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? What do you think about this? Has it been changing?
- What do you think about married girls and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?
- What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who had any experience of this?
- Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?
- Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated? If so why/why not? Has this been changing?
- Does education have any influence in the marriage payments? In what way? For the girl? For the boy?

- Do you think that being more educated will make you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems? [For example ...]
- Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?

Marriage network analysis

Instructions

Respondents

- Start with girl and husband as the centre of analysis (Questions A). Then interview the parents and in-laws (Questions B); also include at least 1 paternal aunt (Questions C)

Thematic focus

- Intra-household relations including power relations and decision-making
- Views and expectations of marital roles and responsibilities
- Sources of support for married girls

Materials required:

- Flip chart and markers

General background information to collect on the network

- Date: _____ Location: _____
- Names of full network.
- Girl: _____ Husband: _____
- Girl's mother: _____ Girl's father: _____
- Boy's mother: _____ Boy's father: _____
- Paternal aunt: _____

Notes on the process: Any challenges in identifying/locating/interviewing the different members of the marriage network? Did they live in different communities/areas?

A. Questions for the girl and her husband (MNA)

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note: taker _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on the girl and her husband

- Name: _____ Relation (husband or wife): _____
- Age: _____
- Residence: _____
- Ethnic group: _____ Religion: _____
- When married (age/date)? _____
- Any children? How many/gender and ages? _____
- Residence after marriage (with parents/parents-in-law/ on their own (specify if same or different village):

- Current household living arrangements (extended or nuclear family; who lives in the household?)

- Schooling: In school? Level? If left when and why (age/level)? _____ How did you feel about it at the time? _____
- What level of education do your siblings have? If dropped out did brothers/sisters leave school at the same age/grade? If different, why? _____
- Would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why not? _____
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)? _____

Views on marriage and childbearing

- What type and form of marriage did you have? (Customary/religious/civil; monogamy/polygamy?) How did you feel about this and why? Were the views the same as your parents? If no, how was this difference resolved?
- Was your marriage arranged or did you choose your partner? What are your feelings about this? Was your opinion sought? Is this the same as or different from your parents?
- Did anyone provide you with any information, instructions or physical preparation for marriage before you were married? Please explain. Are these preparations the same as in your parents' time?
- What did you or family have to prepare for your marriage – e.g. bride wealth/goods? How did this make you feel? Is there any change in this practice from your parents' time?
- How is life different for you now vs. unmarried peers or relatives? How do you feel about these differences?
- Did your marriage have any impact on your education/schooling? In what way?
- Has anything about your education had any impact (positive/negative) on your marriage?
- What did you expect from married life? What has really happened? Has marriage fulfilled your aspirations or not? How/why?
- What is the biggest change being married has made in your life?
- Do you have children? (How many/ages/gender?)
- How many children are you expected to have? How many would you like to have?
- Does it matter if girl or boy?
 - To you? To your husband/wife? To your parents? To your in-laws?
- What would happen if you don't have children?
- Do you (your wife) have access to sexual and reproductive health services? Do you (your wife) use them now/before marriage? Why/why not?
 - For girl: What does your husband or in-laws think about this?
 - For boy: What do you think about this?
- If you have a child, did you (your wife) give birth in hospital or home? Were there any complications?
- What are your hopes and worries for your family currently and for the future?
- Do you think your marriage is different from your parents? In what way and how?

Intra-household power relations/decision-making

- How would you characterise your experience as a married woman/man?
 - What is expected of you?
 - By mother-in-law/father-in-law?
 - By your own mother/father?
 - By your husband/wife?
 - What do you feel about those expectations?
 - Is it difficult or easy to meet those expectations?
 - What happens if you don't meet these expectations?
- Who is considered the head of your household?
 - What roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority does that person have?
 - What resources are under that person's control?
- What roles, responsibilities or decision-making authority do you have? What resources do you have control over?
- Do you think your experience within your married household is common around here? Why/why not?
- Do you think these roles and relations in the household have changed over time?
- Have household living arrangements (i.e. who is living together in the household) changed over time?

Time use chart

Ask the husband and the wife to draw a pie chart indicating how they spend their time on different activities; then discuss the difference and the implications.

- How would you describe an ideal wife/husband?
(A good/bad wife is/does _____ A god/bad husband is/does _____)

Sources of support

- On a scale of 1-10 with 1 very unhappy and 10 very happy, where would you put yourself and why?
- In many households there are tensions/differences between household members at different times. Does this happen here and if so between whom? How are the tensions manifested – does this ever result in violence? If so how do you deal with this situation? Do you feel you have adequate support?
- What links, if any, do you have with your natal family (mother/father/siblings)? If so, with whom, how, how frequently? Would you like more or less contact or ok with the *status quo*?
 - For girl: What links, if any, do you have with your paternal aunt? If so, with whom, how, how frequently? Would you like more or less contact or ok with the status quo?
- What links, if any, do you have with your childhood friends/friends from natal residence? If so, with whom, how, how frequently? Would you like more or less contact or ok with the *status quo*?
- What is your main source of psycho-emotional support?
- What kinds of additional forms of support/programmes of support do you think would be useful to you to support you in your family life? (Include all forms of support – psychosocial/legal/education/economic?)

B. Questions for parents and parents-in-law (MNA)

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____
- Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law

- Name: _____ Relationship: (girl's father/mother; boys' father/mother: _____)
- Age: _____ Religion: _____ Ethnic group: _____
- Current marital status: _____ When married (age/date)? _____
- What type/form of marriage? (Monogamy/polygamy; civil/religious/customary/ cohabitation?) _____
- How many children? Ages? Where living? _____
- Residence pattern after marriage? _____
- Current household living arrangements: extended or nuclear family (who lives in the household)? _____
- Schooling? If left when and why? What were your feelings at the time? _____
- Would you have liked to have continued in school? Why/why not? _____
- What is your occupation (subsistence, income etc.)? _____

Themes to focus on with parents and parents-in-laws

Their own marriage

- Tell us a little about your married life? How would you characterise your experience as a married woman/man?
 - What was expected of you? (At first/over time?)
 - By mother-in-law/father-in-law?
 - By your own mother/father?
 - By your husband/wife?
 - How did you feel about those expectations?
 - Was it difficult or easy to meet those expectations?
 - What happened if you didn't meet these expectations?
- Who was/is considered the head of your household?
 - What roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority does/did that person have?
 - What resources are/were under that person's control?

- What roles, responsibilities or decision-making authority do/did you have? What resources do/did you have control over?
- Do you think your experience within your married household is common around here? Why/why not?
- Do you think these roles and relations in the household have changed over time?
- Have household living arrangements (i.e. who is living together in the household) changed over time?
- How would you describe an ideal wife/husband?

Their view on their daughter/son's marriage

- What are your hopes for your children's marriage?
- How was the partner selected – and what criteria led to the choice or acceptance of the choice?
- Did you and your child agree on this?
- Would the decision have been different if it were a son/daughter?
- Did you and your spouse agree? Why/why not?
- What do you think about the ages at which your daughter/daughter-in-law was married?
- What preparations (economic, information, guidance, skills training) were entailed in the marriage transaction? What did you think about this? Did it go as expected? How is this similar or different to your day?
- What are your views and expectations about the spouse? Are they being realised?
- Were there trade-offs with the daughter/daughter-in-law's schooling? What were your feelings about that? Satisfied/regrets?
- What are your expectations of your daughter/daughter-in-law/son/son-in-law?
 - Economic support; care work; psycho-emotional support; reproduction – children; community standing; social capital?
- What are your expectations for grandchildren?
 - How many? Grandsons vs. granddaughters? Care expectations? What happens if the couple doesn't have any?
- Do you know of any problems or tensions in the marriage/tensions (of your children)
 - What kinds? What do you do? What do you counsel your children to do? Are there support structures?
- Frequency of interaction between parents and married daughter?
- What do you think would be good to have as programmes of support for married couples (man/woman) (include all forms of support – psych-social/legal/economic/educational etc.)

?

C. Questions for the paternal aunt (MNA)

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Specific background information on the paternal aunt (in addition to general ones at outset)

- Name: _____ Relation (paternal aunt): _____
- Age: _____ Ethnic group: _____ Religion: _____
- Residence (place): _____ Household (living with whom?) _____
- Marital status/ and type/form: _____
- Any children? How many/boys/girls ages? _____
- Schooling? _____
- Occupation (subsistence, income etc.)? _____
- Occupation (subsistence/income etc.) of husband (past/present) _____

Themes to explore

Marriage and education

- Can you tell us a little about your marriage?
 - Age at first marriage
 - Type/form

- Preparations for marriage
- Residence pattern on marriage
- Age at birth of first child
- Expectations of marriage vs. realities
- What do you feel about
 - Different kinds of marriage contract; bride wealth; polygamy; unmarried girls having children?
- Do you see any changes in the way marriage is practised in this community? What changes and why? What do you think about these changes?
- What do you think the appropriate age of marriage is (for girls/boys)?
- Which is worse: getting married early or having a child without being married?
- What makes the ideal husband/wife?
- What do you think about education for girls?
 - Until what age should girls remain in school? Until what age do girls in this community usually stay in school? Has this been changing over time?
 - Is education considered more important for boys than for girls? If so, why? What do you think?
 - What has been the effect of education for girls and marriage? (Positive and negative; age at marriage?)
- Do you think educated girls/boys make better marriage partners?

Role of paternal aunt in marriage preparation

- What is the role of the paternal aunt in the life of her niece?
 - Is this role important only during marriage processes or does it go beyond that?
 - Why is the paternal aunt so important?
 - What happens if a girl does not receive preparations from her paternal aunt?
 - Are there any changes over time?
- Can you describe your role as paternal aunt for your niece?
 - Before, during and after the marriage process?
 - What was expected of you with your niece?
 - What did you do? What kinds of information did you give? How did you prepare for this?
 - What are the benefits to the girl?
 - What did you gain out of this?
 - Were there any challenges in this role?
 - Do you have other nieces for whom you fulfil the same role?
- Do boys have similar relatives who perform functions of preparing them for marriage?
- If you have a daughter, did you provide her with pre-marriage information, or was that provided by her own paternal aunt?
- Do girls get sexual and reproductive health information from any other sources, besides the paternal aunt?
 - From whom and what do you think about it?
- What kind of additional services do you think girls need to help them in their marriage and family life?

7. Case studies (typical cases and outliers)

Instructions

Respondents

- Girls/young women aged between 16-25 years. The below are examples rather than exhaustive
- Apparently positive*
- Girls with tertiary education – e.g. from the community but could be residing elsewhere now such as capital cities
 - Girls who are married but continued with their education
 - Girls who have a child but continued with their education
 - Girls with a successful business/income-generating opportunity
 - Girls who proactively escaped early marriage
 - Girls who entered into love marriages/relationship
- Apparently negative*
- Girls who were married early [and willingly] and have very constrained life opportunities

- Unmarried girls who had a child early and have very constrained life opportunities
- Girls who dropped out of school early or who never had an education (e.g. housemaid)
- Girls who were married early but unwillingly but gave in because of social norms
- Girls who were trafficked or forced into marriage
- Divorced/separated/widowed/abandoned girl
- Girls who were married at a young age as a second/third etc. wife into polygamous households

Thematic focus

- Examples of adolescents would fall at one end of the spectrum or the other (full compliance/non-compliance/transformation)
- Perspectives on these situations (feelings about; reasons for; consequences of etc.; available sources/programmes of support; recommended additional support needed)

Materials needed: Flip chart and markers; tape; pins; drawing table

Background information to collect

- Date: _____ Location: _____
- Name: _____ Age: _____
- Case study type: _____
- Current residence (place): _____ Household (with whom?) _____
- Education: _____
- Marital status/children: _____
- Ethnicity: _____ Religion: _____
- Parents' marital status/residence: _____
- Parents' main occupation/livelihood (mother/father): _____
- Current livelihood (herself/ her husband, if applicable): _____

- Time start: _____ Time end: _____
- Facilitator(s): _____ Note taker: _____
- Language in which the interview was conducted: _____

Note: Describe why this girl was selected for a case study: i.e. she is an example of _____

Warm-up: timeline

Start by drawing a timeline of their life until now – divided by positive and negative experiences/key events and ask them to talk about their life history and how they evaluate it.

Themes to cover include [but as appropriate depending on girl in question]:

Life stages including positive and negative experiences

- Education
- Adolescent transition (e.g. menstruation, sexuality etc.)
- Marriage
- Pregnancy/childbirth
- Child-rearing
- Family relationships and fortune/misfortunes
- Occupational/income-earning history
- Care work – within their natal home, marital home
- Health history
- Migration history

Informal and formal support

- Support people, e.g. peers, friends/networks/organisations
- Access to services (e.g. health, school, justice, credit/economic assets, legal aid)
- Access to media, technology, phones, internet and the role this has played in their life and well-being

- n) Role models; people they look up to; inspiring individuals (can be family, service providers, famous people)
- o) Recommendations for other types of support needed (psychosocial; legal; economic; information/education; other)

Assessing life quality – past, present and future

- p) Assessment of their life trajectory compared with siblings and/or others and drivers thereof
- q) Views on role that community and family attitudes/values/practices/beliefs have played in shaping or constraining their trajectories
- r) Aspirations and how they have evolved over the course of adolescence
- s) Aspirations for their own children/future offspring

Potential framework life history discussions

Work					
Sexual maturation/health					
School					
Home life					
Changes in:	Birth	five years	10 years	15 years	2010
Marriage					
Girls' education					

8. KII guides

A. National level

Date and place of interview: _____
 Name of key informant: _____ Gender: _____
 Ministry/department/agency/institution: _____
 Function: _____
 Facilitator: _____
 Interview start: _____ End: _____

Key categories of respondents;

- Government: ministries of gender, community development and youth; education; health (sexual and reproductive health for adolescents); other?
- Development partners: UN (UNICEF and UNFPA); DFID; other bilateral; key international NGOs (Plan, World Vision, others?)
- Local NGOs/CSOs
- Academics: legal experts; others
- Religious authorities

Introductions

Thank key informant for taking the time to meet us. Introduce team (Makerere/ODI) and explain research context (DFID-funded multi-year/multi country study). Follow up to Year 1 research on broad capability domains for adolescent girls (results presented at national stakeholder meeting in August). Explain Year 2 research aims: to explore in more depth social norms around early marriage (and different marriage forms/practices) and adolescent girls' capabilities – particularly in education. Year 2 will be looking at 2 different communities in Mayuge (peri-urban and rural) to try to understand change and persistence in social

norms and practices around early marriage and education. Ultimate aim: to contribute to knowledge base to address discriminatory social norms in order to enhance gender justice for adolescent girls and young women.

Background information (will depend on respondent)

- Key programmes and policies respondent is involved in
- Overview of issues around young people in general, and adolescent girls in particular – what are the key challenges?
- What are some of the programmes underway to address these challenges?

Key questions to explore (will depend on respondent)

- **Overview of marriage forms and practices that may inhibit adolescent girls' capabilities.** Probe throughout for changes over time
 - Forms of marriage (monogamy, polygamy)
 - Type of marriage contract (civil, religious, customary)
 - Customary practices (arranged marriages, marriage by abduction)
 - Practice of bride price, age differential between husband and wife
 - Women's roles/rights/responsibilities within marriage
 - Issues of consent to marriage; issues to do with the dissolution of marriage (divorce/widowhood /abandonment)
 - Domestic violence
 - [Probe in particular on issues around the proposed reforms in the Marriage and Divorce Bill]
- **Existence and scope of problem of early marriage in Uganda**
 - Is there a problem? At what age do girls normally get married? Does it vary from place to place? By ethnic group and/or religion? By urban/rural? At what age do you think girls should get married? Boys?
- **Causal factors for persistence in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Why do girls continue to marry at early ages? How are social norms for early marriage enforced? Who is most responsible for keeping these norms alive? Are these factors different in different places?
- **Consequences of early marriage**
 - Educational/physical/psychosocial
- **Changes in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Any changes over time? In particular regions? Urban/rural? How/where/why are norms and practices around early marriage changing?
- **Adolescent pregnancy and childbirth outside of marriage**
 - Is this a common problem in Uganda? Or is it rather rare? Does it vary from place to place? What factors lead to differences?
 - Has the situation been changing over time?
 - Is pregnancy/childbirth out of marriage accepted by the community (by families, by religious leaders, by others)?
 - Existing laws, policies and programmes to address this
 - What more needs to be done?
- **Laws/policies and programmes to address issues of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy (in particular) and gender-equitable marriage practices (in general)**
 - Existing laws, programmes and policies? (Who is doing what? What seems to be working best? What are some of the key challenges?)
 - Recommended laws, programmes and policies? (What more is needed? Suggestions for moving forward?)
- **Girls' education: progress and challenges**
 - Key issues in girls' education in Uganda today (Primary? Secondary? Tertiary?)
 - Factors contributing to progress in girls' education
 - Challenges to progress in girls' education
 - How are social norms around girls' education changing over time (or remaining the same)? (Does this vary from place to place? How/why?)
 - Any specific linkages between early marriage/girls' education (including dropouts owing to early marriage/pregnancy; lack of parental investment; parental desire for bride wealth etc.)?

- Existing laws/programmes/policies to promote girls' education – including UPE; USE; re-entry policies/programmes for pregnant girls/adolescent mothers etc. (Describe progress and challenges)
- Problems of gap between policies/programmes on paper and implementation on the ground
- Recommendations on what more is needed to move forward on girls' education
- **Specific suggestions/recommendations for the research**
 - Other key issues to explore
 - Further references/sources of information
 - Additional stakeholders/programmes/key informants
 - Particular information re Mayuge/Eastern Central district

B. District/sub-district level

Date/place of interview: _____
 District/sub-district/parish: _____
 Name: _____ Gender: _____
 Ministry/department/agency/institution: _____
 Function: _____
 Facilitator _____
 Start: _____ End: _____

Key categories of respondents

- Local government representatives (LC; technical departments such as gender, community development, youth; other)
- Teachers, health workers, community development workers, child protection officers, police, justice officials
- Religious leaders
- Cultural leaders
- Other elders, including women's group leaders
- CSOs, NGOs, project personnel

Introductions

Thank key informant for taking the time to meet with us. Introduce team (Makerere/ODI) and explain research context (DFID-funded multi-year/multi country study). Follow-up to Year 1 research on broad capability domains for adolescent girls (results presented at national stakeholder meeting in August). Explain Year 2 research aims: to explore in more depth social norms around early marriage (and different marriage forms/practices) and adolescent girls' capabilities – particularly in education. Year 2 will be looking at 2 different communities in Mayuge (peri-urban and rural) to try to understand change and persistence in social norms and practices around early marriage and education. Ultimate aim: to contribute to knowledge base to address discriminatory social norms in order to enhance gender justice for adolescent girls and young women.

Background issues on district/locality

- Population; main sources of livelihood; religions; ethnic groups
- Services (schools/training institutes; health structures; social centres; commercial centres)
- Overview of issues around youth/young people
- Over view of key issues around gender

Key questions to explore (will depend on respondent)

- **Basic forms of marriage and marriage practices that might have implications for girls**
 - Forms of marriage (monogamy, polygamy)
 - Type of marriage contract (civil, religious, customary)
 - Customary practices (arranged marriages, marriage by abduction)
 - Practice of bride price; age differential between husband and wife
 - Women's roles/rights/responsibilities within marriage
 - Issues of consent to marriage; issues to do with the dissolution of marriage (divorce/widowhood/abandonment)

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- Domestic violence
 - [Probe in particular on issues around the proposed reform of Marriage and Divorce Bill]
 - **Existence and scope of problem of early marriage in Mayuge (Mayuge in general – at district level; and specific communities at sub-district level)**
 - Is there a problem? At what age do girls normally get married? Does it vary from place to place? By ethnic group and/or religion? By urban/rural?
 - **Causal factors for persistence in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Why do girls continue to marry at early ages? How are social norms for early marriage enforced? Who is most responsible for keeping these norms alive? Are these factors different in different places?
 - **Consequences of early marriage**
 - Educational/physical/psychosocial etc.
 - **Changes in social norms and practices around early marriage**
 - Any changes over time? In particular areas/communities? Urban/rural? How/where/why are norms and practices around early marriage changing?
 - **Adolescent pregnancy and childbirth outside of marriage**
 - Is this a common problem in Uganda? Or is it rather rare? Does it vary from place to place? What factors lead to differences?
 - Has the situation been changing over time?
 - Is pregnancy/childbirth out of marriage accepted by the community (by families, by religious leaders, by others)?
 - Existing laws, policies and programmes to address this
 - What more needs to be done?
 - **Laws/policies and programmes to address issues of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy outside of marriage (in particular) as well as gender-equitable marriage practices (in general)**
 - Existing laws, programmes and policies
 - At national level
 - Implementation at local level (Who is doing what? What seems to be working best? What are some of the key challenges?)
 - Recommended laws, programmes and policies (What more is needed? Suggestions for moving forward)
 - **Girls' education: progress and challenges**
 - Key issues in girls' education in Mayuge today (Primary? Secondary? Tertiary?) [Get details on education statistics/infrastructure/enrolments and any district-level reports available]
 - Factors contributing to progress in girls' education in Mayuge
 - Challenges to progress in girls' education in Mayuge
 - How are social norms around girls' education changing over in time (or remaining the same)? (Does this vary from place to place? How/why?)
 - Any specific linkages between early marriage/girls' education (including dropouts because of early marriage/pregnancy; lack of parental investment; parental desire for bride wealth etc.)
 - Existing laws/programmes/policies to promote girls' education – including UPE; USE; re-entry policies/programmes for pregnant girls/adolescent mothers etc. (Describe progress and challenges in implementation at local level)
 - Recommendations on what more is needed to move forward on girls' education in Mayuge
 - **Specific suggestions/recommendations for the research**
 - Other key issues to explore
 - Further references/sources of information on Mayuge
 - Additional stakeholders/programmes/key informants
 - Other

9 Areas of inquiry

Use these themes as a background checklist, especially during training of the research teams, to make sure important issues are captured. It doesn't have to be exhaustive but do try to get a rich complex picture of key concerns etc.

Broader context

Ideological dimensions/ context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion • Political ideologies • Ethnic identity • Socio-economic system • Social/community prestige [community pressure] • Patriarchy
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Marriage

Sub-themes	
Family codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family codes – formal (national laws) and informal • Inheritance laws and practices (including for widows) • Divorce – ease of/views about/consequences/conceptualisation thereof • Polygamy, monogamy • Civil, religious, customary • Cohabitation • Son preferences • Age of marriage [includes definitions of adolescence]/readiness for marriage
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to family planning (practical and social) • Access to justice (child support, divorce, abandonment)
GBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage by abduction • Partner age gaps
Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginity • Value of fertility • Knowledge brokers/aunties/schools/peers/media • Honour/shame/chastity • Taboos about menstruation before marriage
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bride price • Dowry • Hope chests/preparation of goods • Inheritance • Commodification of girls' labour • Migration • Son preference • Economic security
Care economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender division of labour • Expected roles of husband and wife – ideal vs. reality • Ritual privileging
Kinship and affinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residence patterns • Choice of spouse (parents vs. girls; identifying partner and related processes) • Inheritance • Lineage/name
Psycho-emotional well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affection vs. indifference • Love vs. hatred • Companionship vs. loneliness/lack of communication • Protection/security vs. fear • Happiness vs. sadness/depression • Respect vs. lack of respect • Identity vs. alienation • Belonging/inclusion vs. isolation • Social acceptance vs. stigma • [Positive deviance....]

Education

Supply		Demand	
Access to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance Boarding schools Safety/security/en route 	Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct Indirect (school donations, uniforms etc.) Opportunity costs – foregone child labour Extra tuition
		Girls' mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logistical Normative
Educational content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevance of curriculum Sexual and reproductive health curriculum Textbooks – gender stereotypes Ideologies – embedded in curricula (moral/ etiquette/ natural laws of femininity) Life skills Gendered disciplines 	Gender division of labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time poverty Son preference Household chores
Teacher/ learning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrimination of girls Discrimination of minority/socially excluded children Female teachers; senior women teachers Language of instruction Class size Performance/assessment Teacher favouritism Teacher use of girls' vs. boys' labour in classroom 	Household conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of light for study
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilets/sanitation/menstruation facilities (access to pads/napkins etc.) School meals 	Family/peer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic investment Parental encouragement Friends Role models Mentors
Safety and security in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher violence/abuse Student violence/bullying Physical punishment 	Outcomes of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material Perceived economic value Opportunities post-education Psychosocial Aspirational Status attached to education Perceived psycho-emotional value – confidence, well-being, self-esteem, new horizons Curiosity, questioning, understanding Raised expectations Intellectual ability Higher capabilities New knowledge New information
Extra-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School clubs 	Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical/body

curricular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports • Mentors • Career guidance • Participation in school governance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early pregnancy • Menstruation • Sexuality • Body image/physical appearance • Psychosocial • Stigma re overage in school • Lack of sense of belonging in school environment • Mixed aged classes • Fears of scaring of prospective male partners • Peer pressure • Son preference
National policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory free education • Re-entry policies • Social protection related to education (stipends, cash, in-kind transfers) • Mixed age 	Informal education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning outside of school environment • Other sources of information • Learning family traditions/skills etc.
Alternative education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-formal education • Religious education • Vocational education/training 		

Annex 3: Key actors and agencies, national and district levels

NGOs and CSOs working on gender and adolescent issues, Mayuge

Organisation	Sector/focus	Activities	Key insights, impacts, information
UWONET (Uganda Women's Network)	GBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising of support institutions/services (police, probation officers, CDOs, NGOs) • Victim support • Community sensitisation (including of traditional elders, religious leaders and cultural leaders) 	<p><i>(See national KII for background)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Religious leaders are respected by believers in places of worship – church; mosque – people see them as intermediaries between humans and God' • Capacity-building at district level is important to improve outreach to all communities • Sessions are conducted on the basis of a needs assessment
BROSIDI (Busoga Rural Open Source for Development Initiatives)	ICT/education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT training • Support to rural production groups – including marketing information, particularly for women • School support (tuition, scholastic materials, internet training; holiday camps, school gardens) • Youth-friendly health information on HIV and related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National NGO working in more than 17 districts, established in 2003, funded by HIVOS, with 6 staff – 3 in Kampala. Focuses support on vulnerable groups • Women and girls the most active in their programmes: <i>'Men go to centres to talk and shout [...] and work on boda bodas. Most of the farmers are women. Men dislike farming. Women farmers are more active than men farmers: when you have 15 members in the group, 9 are women. Most men are lazy. Girls in the education programme are also more active than boys – the ratio of girls to boys in the centre is 2 to 1'</i> • Use of opinion leaders: uses MPs to advocate for different issues and also religious leaders etc. Each year, a summer children's camp is organised around different themes, with speakers coming to speak – including the minister in charge of Busoga culture and the Busoga youth minister – on what is expected of young girls and boys in Basoga culture • Potential new programmes: <i>'It takes a village for a child to be educated'</i> – calling people to contribute to educational costs for children; organisation of educational expo to exchange information on different schooling possibilities/scholarships and encourage interaction between parents and teachers
Restless Development	HIV/youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV awareness and prevention among groups most at risk • Youth livelihoods and employment training and promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International youth-led agency based in UK working with and for young people, who are considered an asset and not just a liability for society • Uganda programme, with head office in Jinja, supported by Civil Society Foundation • Since 1997, 2,000 volunteers nationally, who join to <i>'contribute to the well-being of</i>

Organisation	Sector/focus	Activities	Key insights, impacts, information
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth civic participation 	<p><i>the community; develop life skills in finance management, monitoring and evaluation; and others'</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Mayuge (staff of 4 plus volunteers), a district of high HIV prevalence, 3-year programme in 4 sub-counties on HIV prevention targeting key populations at landing sites, <i>boda boda</i> drivers, fishermen, long distance drivers, sugarcane truckers and commercial sex workers Youth volunteers placed in communities to promote safe sex and raise awareness of prevention, screening/testing and counselling. Also coordinates with other agencies No current programme activities in the sub-counties of our research
SESPEL (South-eastern Private Sector Promotion of Entrepreneurs)	Adolescent girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training, life skills, livelihoods and confidence-building programmes for out-of-school adolescent girls Village savings and loans (community microfinance, and income e-generating activities) Agricultural projects and SCORE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started as government programme supported by UNDP (2005-2010). Head office in Busia; with some projects funded by CARE – others in past by Plan and VECO Adolescent girls' project (Shongolapu): started April 2013; targets adolescent dropouts 13-18 (reasons for dropout include forced marriage, lack of school fees, rape resulting in pregnancy). 10 centres 30 girls each in the different sub-counties; 285 girls in total Sensitisation on early marriage after a community drummers' exhibition; also engages in community dialogues on negative impact of marriages and how they need to be stopped Training takes a 'mind management' approach to build confidence. Girls' group names include Rays of Hope; Rise and Shine; Bright Future Example of woman who ran away from HIV-positive husband who refused to wear condom; her parents said she had to stay. After the man tested positive a second time, <i>'When they went back home the man tried to rape her and she ran away. So it was as a result of the training given to her that she managed to escape the HIV infection from her husband'</i> Some girls (some six in ten) run away with boyfriends to escape arranged marriage with older men – often with other wives – selected by parents seeking bride wealth. They are saying, <i>'This is not my man; this is not my future; this is not my age.'</i> Other examples are of girls separating from abusive husbands – refusing to submit to beatings, drunkenness etc. <i>'Parents at times confront SESPEL, but we tell them we are just instilling confidence in their girls [...] encouraging self-respect'</i>
SCORE (Sustainable Comprehensive Responses)	Strengthening resilience of orphans and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Savings and loans, financial literacy, Skills training with local artisans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented through CARE, with funds from USAID; runs 2011-2016, in three districts, including Mayuge. 19 field officers, each managing a parish Promotion of safe schools (primary and secondary) through clubs, including girls' rights clubs, established in the schools. The main aim is to provide a voice to

Organisation	Sector/focus	Activities	Key insights, impacts, information
for Vulnerable Children and their Families)	vulnerable children and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer food demonstration school • Nutrition demos and information • Legal clinics • Promotion of safe schools 	children so they know their rights. They also support pregnancy tests in these schools, involving midwives to counsel them and support those found pregnant
RHU (Reproductive Health Uganda)	Reproductive and maternal health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive health information and services for young people 15-30 • Maternal health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services (counselling, STI testing, pregnancy tests, cervical cancer screening) through static clinics and outreach; Voices for Health Rights in Baitambogwe to sensitise on maternal health issues, family planning, antenatal care, immunisation etc.; The World Starts with Me for young HIV-positive people aged 9-24; United for a Healthier Tomorrow for youth aged 9-24 both in and out of school • Encourage male participation in programmes by stipulating that women whose husbands accompany them are given priority service • Conduct community dialogues and dramas; VHTs mobilise people in the communities • On the requests of schools, and in collaboration with other NGOs, they used to run school advocacy sessions, but these are no longer running
Habitat for Humanity	Improved shelter, vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building shelters with sanitation facilities for vulnerable groups • Reproductive health training (adolescents and young people) • Skills training children out of school • Succession planning and support against land grabbing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congested housing conditions can contribute to early exposure to sexual activities • In the case of polygamous households, the situation of the wives is assessed to identify the most vulnerable for housing– this is sometimes difficult • Each shelter costs 15-19 million shillings; since 2001 has built 120 houses for 95 widows and 25 men (350 girls/181boys); • Average number of people per household 10 or below. Funding comes from corporations and proposals

Selected actors at national level

Organisation	Description and focus
Gender Unit, MOES	Initiated 2 years ago, focusing on policy influencing to integrate gender at national level – engendering processes, programmes, projects and M&E (with gender-responsive indicators, targets and reporting). It supports MOES to implement and report on international commitments – EFA Goal 5; MDG 3 – to ensure commitments made are translated into operational strategies. Its support is mainly in the form of technical assistance, working with MOES and structures within MOES (such as the CCTS) to reach districts. Now national strategies, policies, tools and information are in place, they plan in the coming year to reach down – need to move beyond paper into practice through pilots in a few districts. Next year it will work in Mayuge (1 of 10 districts in Busoga) on community sensitisation around gender norms for early marriage linked to girls’ education. Key activities of the unit are as follows:

Organisation	Description and focus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive gender-specific monitoring tool: EMIS collects disaggregated data, but what about more qualitative information and issues such as teenage pregnancy, menstruation, school management committees and sanitation. Used the new monitoring tool twice in 10 districts and will be developing indicators. Trying to find trends and identify 3 critical issues to get into EMIS as routine • Review of national strategy for girls' education (not really operationalised since its initiation in 2000) and take into account new context and 'soft' issues (teenage pregnancy, child mothers, early marriage, menstruation). The revised national strategy is now in final draft and with external review • Menstrual reader has been developed providing information on this topic, which is not spoken about in homes anymore as norms have broken down (owing to HIV, poverty, work); also, children are spending more time now in school and not learning about menstruation, which is beginning at earlier ages (as early as 9). Communication is important, but also such issues as making sanitary towels out of local materials and drawing in stakeholders – senior teachers, parents, boys. Hope to develop video out of the reader, which has already been translated into 405 local languages • Reviewed gender in education policy (2009) as overall policy reviewed in line with new context, including questions 'What about boys?' and new thinking on males/masculinities as well as other vulnerable groups • Gender in education strategic plan – to implement the policy; goes beyond MOES and national level to encompass districts, schools and stakeholders, tying the policy to funds • Gender audit in MOES – looking at all processes; already started implementing some of the recommendations including the institutionalisation of gender in education (much work currently being done is donor-funded with no budget or specific system in place) • Gender task force within the ministry – not yet finalised into permanent working group with a budget and decision-making power, but this is being proposed. Advocacy has led – for the first time – to a small percentage of the budget being allocated to support gender work in MOES
<p>FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists)</p>	<p>Pan-African organisation started in 1992/93 with headquarters in Nairobi initiated by 5 women ministers of education seeking at the time to focus on gender parity in terms of access, in order to meet the EFA goals and MDGs. Now there are national chapters across Africa. The Uganda chapter started in 1997 with members drawn primarily from education (teachers, universities, student activities). Main partner is MOES (minister is patron of the board, elected for 3 years). Key development partners are Oxfam, Irish Aid, MacArthur Foundation, Wellsprings, Beautiful World (Canada), UNICEF (research), UNGEI, Gender Task Force, Kerry Foundation (Canada). Programme response to girls' school dropouts in Uganda includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships at secondary, university and vocational levels. Since 1997, over 5,000 girls and also some boys (since 2005) • Mentoring children (on concerns such as school fees, self-confidence etc.) – mentors and women role models • Advocacy – to bring different stakeholders on board – radio, community meetings with parents, events, child participation, for work on social norms • Children's empowerment: life skills, menstruation management, relationships 'Let's Speak' – Tuseme. • Capacity-building for schools, teachers including gender for teaching/learning processes, life skills, club equipment and books, some solar panels

ACFODE (Action for Development)	Women and girls' empowerment through policy and legal advocacy; adolescent girls in schools, GBV, sociocultural practices. Other programmes include governance, women's rights, institutional-strengthening. Support from Diakonia, justice sector basket funding, EIRENE, Netherlands, EU
ANPPCAN (African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect)	Pan-African child rights organisation. After pilot project in north, supporting 3-year project on child mothers in Iganga and Jinja districts (Eastern region), with focus on both prevention and response, including facilitating access to vocational training and skills development for child mothers and changing community perceptions about letting them go back to school. Baseline study on factors leading to early pregnancy highlighted rise of unstable teenage relationships (cohabitation), which often leave girls abandoned with babies, and the problem of unmarried girls giving birth at home (formerly a taboo). Some end up leaving home, going to urban centres and working as housemaids or commercial sex workers and so are exposed to other vulnerabilities
Naguru Teenage Information Centre	Reproductive health programme for over 19 years. Comprehensive services delivery – not just clinical services, but broader, including health education, psychosocial support and counselling and clinical treatment and diagnosis. Services include HIV screening and treatment; treatment for other STIs; maternal health care including ante and postnatal, contraception and post-abortion care. Large numbers of young people from Kiswa parish (around Kampala) but open to all. Branches elsewhere, beginning to scale up in 2010, starting with divisions in Kampala and Central 1 district – in all 8 districts.
GREAT (Gender Roles , Equity and Transformation Project)	<p>Run by consortium composed of Institute of Reproductive Health at Georgetown University internationally, and in Uganda PathFinder and Save the Children. Supported by USAID. 5-year project: 1) formative research (2011); 2) development of interventions and tools, based on research (2012); 3) initiation of interventions in communities (2013), with mid-term review; 4) further implementation and scale-up (2014); 5) final year implementation and scale-up, final evaluation (2015). Covers adolescents in post-conflict areas in Northern Uganda (Lira and Amuru). Looking at behaviour and attitude change around gender equity issues and norms, early marriage, sexual and reproductive health, family planning, GBV, school dropout etc. Interventions focus on 1) community groups to make change (tool-kit of games etc.); young adolescents 10-14; old adolescents 15-19 (both in and out of school); married mothers. Produces radio dramas aired every week and initiates community action groups (elders, local leaders, VHTs – gateway to the community, helping overcome barriers, sensitise and counsel communities.</p> <p>Baseline conducted and cohort study run every 6 months, with both control and treatment groups, to measure transformation as a result of the project. Preliminary results of mid-term review already show significant change. Links with 3 ministries – Health, Education and Gender – at local level, works with VHTs, teachers and CDOs. Interested in partners to help scale up and could offer technical support in use of the tools, facilitation and the like. Has produced excellent communications materials – high-quality games and illustrated flip boards and Q&A cards to provoke discussion – many of which cover themes we are working on. One of the tools, called 'Pathways to Change', leads participants in a game to analyse enabling factors and obstacles to change at 3 levels – personal, social and environmental.</p>
UWONET (Uganda)	Network of 16 national women's organisations, established in 1993 and aimed at rallying support for women's rights and gender equality by bringing a collective voice to the hitherto disparate women's rights organisations. Members include technical organisations such as

<p>Women's Network)</p>	<p>Association of Women Doctors, Association of Women Lawyers, School of Women and Gender at Makerere University among others.</p> <p>Key strategic areas of focus include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's leadership: working to engage more women in the public sphere in order to reduce gender disparity • Violence against women: since violence has such far-reaching effects on women's psychology, self-esteem and dignity • Economic empowerment: including enhanced control over decision-making and control over assets and resources <p>Crosscutting issues include legal aspects, poverty, education. Current strategy moving away from policy development/advocacy focused exclusively at national level to integration of more community-based approaches. This is based on realisation that network had no real grassroots constituencies. There are policies and laws, but who are the actual beneficiaries? The assumption that, just because a law is passed, everyone will know about it and it will be implemented is erroneous. Mostly only elite women know about or can access laws: entirely different for most women. Therefore need district-and village-level voices. So, while UWONET continues with national advocacy, this is now informed by learning and experience on the ground.</p> <p>Early marriage considered a type of GBV. The GBV programme operates at different levels, involving different stakeholders and duty-bearers at each level. UWONET (targeting information and skills for service providers – health workers, police and judiciary) works on this programme in coordination with MOGLSD (in charge of coordination) and Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (responsible for community mobilisation and communication. At community level, community activists are supported to engage in community dialogue (e.g. with <i>boda boda</i> drivers) and others to interrogate reasons why GBV is occurring at sub-county and parish levels. There is also a media and communications aspect that UWONET implements. The GBV programme is implemented in 16 districts – including Basoga, where Mayuge is situated. At district level, it works through government structures, including community development and gender departments of MOGLSD. Government is appreciating such CSO contributions in these areas more and more.</p>
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Note: List not intended to be comprehensive, instead reflecting some of the key actors interviewed, with the intention of expanding in the Year 3 research.



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