



# **Marriage in Goromonzi District**

**Research and Advocacy unit (RAU)**

**May 2015**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>**

This is the second report on child marriage in Goromonzi District, following on a preliminary report of a study carried out in 2014 (RAU.2014), and series of legal reports prior to this (Dube.2012; RAU. 2011(a); RAU. 2011(b)). These reports are a contribution to the rapidly growing debate in Zimbabwe and the international world on the undesirability of early marriage for girls. While it is imperative to acknowledge that poverty and patriarchal attitudes are the drivers of early marriage it is equally important to be aware of the other underlying issues that foster child marriage. While it was confirmed that poverty is the biggest driver of child marriage as families, this second study undertaken by the Research and Advocacy Unit was also able to provide empirical evidence on how child marriage is viewed by a community from a cultural perspective.

Drawing on Phenomenology and Critical Realism, the study, which was carried out in the district of Goromonzi sought to understand how the community views marriage, including the phenomenon of early marriage, and possibly child marriage. Women were able to relate their experiences of marriage, how they got into marriage and ways of preventing child marriage.

A key theme that came through in responses is the issue of morality. The study shows that the interpretation of morality plays a significant role in the manner that thorny issues are resolved.

Most child brides reported that once their parents found out they were pregnant, they were pushed into marriage. Additional responses from child brides clearly showed that their perception of morality was quite different from that held by their parents. All girls who were seen associating with male acquaintances in public were viewed as having loose morals, and generally viewed as leaning towards prostitution. Thus, when a girl reported to her parents that she was raped, the parents and the wider community doubted her story. More importantly, when she fell pregnant she was attacked for seducing the man and generally for exhibiting herself to men as a sex object. Religious coercion of girls was also identified as a major driving factor responsible for child marriages. After conducting virginity tests on young girls, church officials were accused of basically “handing over” supposedly non-virgins into forced child marriages with older men in the church.

Overall, marriage was found to be a negative experience for most child brides with the marriages being blighted by financial difficulties and abuse of the child brides by the older husbands and his other wife (or wives).

The issue of child marriages deserves considerably more investigation to interrogate the interactions between the factors and processes. Any possibility of changing the behaviour and attitudes of communities that encourage child marriage is only likely, if there is an understanding of the more complex and multi-faceted issue of the influence of culture and tradition in decision making processes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Report prepared by Daniel Mususa, Researcher, RAU

## Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	2
1. Background.....	5
1.1 Afrobarometer Data on Goromonzi.....	6
2. Rationale and Objectives .....	8
2.1 Methods.....	9
3. Results.....	11
3.1 Demographics .....	11
3.2 Circumstances leading to Child Marriage.....	11
3.2.1 Poverty and unemployment .....	11
3.2.2 Family disruptions and ill-treatment by guardians.....	12
3.2.3 Unplanned teenage pregnancies.....	13
3.2.4 Materialism/Consumerism.....	14
3.2.5 Moral decadence and the spread of transactional sex .....	14
3.2.6 Immaturity of the child brides.....	15
3.2.7 Coercion by parents .....	15
3.2.8 Religious coercion .....	16
4. Marriage as Coming of Age /Ticking of the biological clock.....	17
4.1 Degradation of the sacred to the profane .....	17
5. Descriptions of Marriage .....	17
5.1 Religious affiliation .....	19
5.2 Loss of companionship .....	20
5.3 Sexual dissatisfaction.....	21
5.4 Living with the risk of HIV infection and abuse.....	21
5.5 Livelihoods .....	21
6. Self-Efficacy .....	23
6.1 Psychological well being .....	24
7. Prevention of Child Marriages.....	25
7.1 Avoid abandoning the pregnant child .....	25
7.2 Need for convergence of ideas on.....	25
7.3 Provision of Counselling services.....	25

7.4 Eminence of the Law over Culture .....	26
7.5 Fathers must play their proper roles as fathers.....	26
8. Conclusions.....	27
Recommendations.....	28
References.....	43
Appendix 1.....	30
Structured Interview Form.....	30
Appendix 2.....	37
Variables and Questions about Early Marriage .....	37
1. Description of marriage.....	37
3. Causes of marriage .....	37
4. Life experiences.....	37
5. Types of child marriage .....	37
6. Prevention of child marriage .....	37
7. Circumstances leading to marriage.....	37
8. Marital disruptions .....	38
9. Livelihoods .....	38
10. Self-Efficacy .....	38
11. Prevalence.....	38
12. Perceptions of marriage .....	38
13. Life before marriage .....	39
14. Experiences of marriage .....	39
Appendix 3.....	40
Systematic Review of Child Marriage .....	40

## 1. Background

Early marriage is internationally regarded as extremely disadvantageous for the psycho-social and economic development of women, and currently is the subject of a sustained campaign to eradicate this. Early marriage is apparently common in Zimbabwe, although the statistics are unclear and misleading.

For example, A UNICEF report argues that 29% of women are married by age 18, and 5% are married by age 15<sup>2</sup>. The Zimbabwe censuses for 2002 and 2012 add more confusion to the picture. As can be seen from Table 1 (below), the census data show an enormous increase in girls married by age 19 between 2002 and 2012, a jump of 20%. Thus, according to the available public data on Zimbabwe, early marriage dropped from 5% in 1999 to about 2% in 2002, and then rose to 22% in 2012. This enormous rise deserves careful examination, more especially since the period between 2002 and 2012 corresponds to dramatic changes in the political economy of Zimbabwe, with consequent impoverishment on a vast scale.

**Table 1: Percentages of girls aged 15-19, marital status**

	Never Married	Married	Divorced/ Separated	Widowed	Not Stated	Total Number
2002 Census	98.19%	1.68%	0.10%	0.03%	0.00	736686
2012 Census	74.5%	21.9%	1.6%	0.1%	1.8%	712809

Adding to the difficulty in understanding the prevalence of early marriage, the 2012 Census reports on the prevalence of ages of women at their first live birth do not show the age at which they got married or gave birth to a stillborn child. As can be seen from Table 2, nearly 10% of women were between 15 and 19 years, which presumably has some bearing on the prevalence of early marriage, but this is only inferential.

**Table 2: Percentage of Women by Age at First Live Birth and Current Age**

[Source: ZimStat.2012]

Age at First Live Birth	Current Age of Woman						
	15 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 34	35 - 39	40 - 44	45 - 49
15 - 19	9.4	23.3	21.0	17.1	13.3	8.7	7.1
20 - 24	-	18.0	26.4	20.3	16.6	11.3	7.4
25 - 29	-	-	25.5	27.8	20.6	15.9	10.2
30 - 34	-	-	-	30.0	30.8	22.0	17.2
35 - 39	-	-	-	-	37.3	36.7	26.0
40 - 44	-	-	-	-	-	51.7	48.3
45 - 49	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0
<b>[Total: 2226983]</b>	<b>105003</b>	<b>420639</b>	<b>517666</b>	<b>432412</b>	<b>345414</b>	<b>235386</b>	<b>170463</b>
<b>Median Age [20.6]</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20.4</b>

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2005) *Early Marriage. A Harmful Traditional Practice. A Statistical Exploration* New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

So the official data are of limited value in understanding the prevalence of early marriage for women in Zimbabwe.

It is equally clear that there are no good data on the consequences of early marriage, even though there are a reasonable number of organisations with expressed public concern about the phenomenon. The UNICEF report (mentioned above) does report on a number of factors that are importantly related to early marriage – polygyny, education, and understanding about contraception and HIV – but there is little information about its cultural acceptability, role of religion in promoting or dissuading it, the psycho-social effects, and, in general, any understanding about the effects of early marriage from the perspective of those that have experienced this. The State of the World’s Children Report (2014)<sup>3</sup> ignores the issue of child marriage despite its ramifications for the children’s health.

This lack of information in Zimbabwe is not surprising, for this is a deficit internationally. A literature search on the question “*How are local constructions of child marriage researched?*” revealed a paucity of reliable studies. The full details of this literature review are given in Appendix 3, but, in summary, this revealed very few studies that were methodologically sound. 1437 articles, of which 775 were left over after removing the duplicates, were found with the search terms. When more selective criteria were applied, the 775 articles reduced to 23, and only 11 were found that met the screening criteria of explicit methodology.

The present study attempts to provide more detailed information about early marriage from the perspective of those that have experienced this. It does so through an investigation of women’s view on marriage generally, but includes some women that were married early in order to provide a contrast in experiences. The study follows on an earlier (preliminary) study carried out in Goromonzi District by RAU (RAU.2014).

### ***1.1 Afrobarometer Data on Goromonzi***

According to the 2012 Census, Goromonzi District has a total population of 224,987 persons, of whom 113,661 (50.5%) are female. This was derived from 58,013 households, with an average household size of 3.9 persons, which is also the average household size for Mashonaland East Province as a whole. The Census is somewhat misleading in one respect: it suggests that poverty is considerably less than the reality, classifying 72% of Mashonaland East Province as “economically active”. When compared with the Afrobarometer data on Goromonzi (see Table 3 below), it is clear that those surveyed in Goromonzi for the Afrobarometer place economic issues very high in their priorities of what needs attention by the government.

Data available from the Afrobarometer 5<sup>th</sup> Round (2012) for Goromonzi was examined in order to see whether this data might assist in building a better picture of Goromonzi than could be provided by 2012 Census. The Afrobarometer Goromonzi sample was only 32 respondents, but this does allow a flavour of the District through the eyes of residents of the District.

---

<sup>3</sup> The State of the World’s Children 2014 in Numbers: Every child counts  
[www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC\\_2015\\_Summary\\_and\\_Tables.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2015_Summary_and_Tables.pdf)

**Table 3: Main priorities for problems that government should address**

*[Source: Afrobarometer.2012]*

	<b>Problem 1</b>	<b>Problem 2</b>	<b>Problem 3</b>
Unemployment	47%	16%	13%
Wages, income	19%	3%	9%
Food shortage	9%	9%	13%
Management of economy	6%	3%	6%
Poverty, destitution	6%	16%	9%
Farming/Agriculture,	1%	13%	6%

As was noted above, the Census argued that 72% of Mashonaland Province were “economically active”, but, as can be seen “unemployment” was the major problem identified by the respondents to the Afrobarometer survey for all three choices. Furthermore, of the first six choices for each of the major problems, virtually all spoke to poverty: lack of income, food shortages, management of the economy, and poverty or destitution all speak to self-perceived poverty. The 2012 Census reported that only 17% of women in Mashonaland East were in full employment, with 78% either “own account workers” (62%) or “unpaid family workers” (16%), so it is hard to see how the 72% “economically active” can be strongly justified.

Attitudes to women were interesting, with some differences between men and women, which has a bearing upon the perceived strength of patriarchy in Goromonzi. Both men and women felt that the government was doing well in fostering equality between men and women, but, in answer to the question about whether women might make good leaders<sup>4</sup>, more women (75%) than men (67%) answered in the positive. However, less women (19%) than men (40%) felt that women were actually equal, and, of high relevance to this present study, significantly more women (81%) felt that education was a priority for boys than men (67%).

On actual equality between the sexes, all the men felt that women were treated unequally by traditional leaders, and more men (73%) than women (69%) felt that women were treated unequally by employers. Concerning issues of trust, as can be seen from Table 4, there were some interesting differences between female and male respondents from Goromonzi. Women are apparently more trusting of most people and neighbours than they are of their own families, and deserves some future investigation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women. Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.

**Table 4: Views on Intimate Trust**

[Source: Afrobarometer. 2012]

	Female	Male
Trust most	25%	13%
Trust relatives	81%	87%
Trust neighbours	69%	40%
Trust others you know	31%	33%

As for religion, which is argued to be an important factor in fostering early marriage, 69% of women reported belonging to an “Alternative Christian” religion<sup>5</sup>, and most of these belonged to either “evangelical” or “pentecostal” churches.

The Afrobarometer was also helpful in developing a perspective on the living conditions in Goromonzi, complimenting the Census and the perspectives of the respondents in the study. 53% of the respondents had access to water “Outside the compound”, 25 % had access to a toilet “Outside the compound” while 47% had access to a toilet “Inside the compound”. Perhaps critically, none of the respondents had access to water or a toilet “Inside the house”. An overwhelming 82% owned a radio and there was a marked decline (38%) in the number of people who owned a television, while none of the respondents owned a motor vehicle or motor bike.

The Afrobarometer data also looked at other dimensions that defined quality of life. The data indicate that poverty is rampant and the general standard and quality of living was very low. Unemployment was very high and there was little in terms of other income generating projects/enterprises in which locals were involved. 56% of respondents frequently did not have “...a cash income”, 22% “...without medical care”, 22% “...without cooking fuel”, 6% “...without food”, and 6% “...without water”.

Thus, the Afrobarometer gives a more nuanced picture about Goromonzi District, which is useful as background to the qualitative study on early marriage.

## **2. Rationale and Objectives**

This is a study of community perspectives on marriage in one District, Goromonzi District, in Zimbabwe. Drawing on Phenomenology and Critical Realism, the study seeks to understand how the community views marriage, including the phenomenon of early marriage, and possibly child marriage. The study will examine women’s experiences of marriage, how they got in marriage and ways of preventing child marriage.

The major research questions were as follows:

- What are women’s experiences of their marriages in Goromonzi District?
- What are their assessments of their own marriages?
- Are the experiences of child brides different?

---

<sup>5</sup> Evangelical, Pentecostal ( e.g., “Born Again” and/or “Saved”), Independent (e.g., “African Independent Church”), Jehovah’s Witness, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormon, Church of Christ, Zionist Christian Church.

## 2.1 Methods

Following the previous preliminary study, Goromonzi district of Mashonaland East was retained as the setting for the study. Convenience sampling was used to select respondents to ensure that the sample included both women that had been married before, and those married after 18 years. This would allow for comparison between early and “normal” marriages. Participants for the interviews and focus groups were selected with the help of a local contact person and the support of a partner organisation, the Tree of Life. Thirty-two women agreed to participate in semi-structured individual interviews and a further thirty-one women participated in two Focus Group Discussions. For the individual interviews, only 25 interviews could be finally used. Seven forms were lost.

The theoretical framework drew from both Phenomenology (Groenewald, 2004)<sup>6</sup> and Critical Realism (Easton, 2010)<sup>7</sup>. This allowed triangulation of the individual interviews, which were phenomenological in nature, with some quantitative questions to produce a balanced understanding and interpretation of the “reality” about marriage in Goromonzi District.

The instrument for the interviews (see Appendix 1) used both open-ended questions and specific quantitative questions, had some characteristics of storytelling and a questionnaire. The interviews started with a ‘river of life’ exercise. The exercise was previously used by RAU in earlier research on youth and violence, and was found to be helpful in focusing interviewees on key aspects of their lives<sup>8</sup>. Here the focus was upon key life experience from the interviewees’ perspective, which would hopefully include aspects of marriage. This was followed by a structured interview, focusing on key points around marriage: before, during and after marriage, including quantitative questions related to each phase in the marriage. Some questions only required a binary – YES/NO – response, whilst others were scored along a four-point Likert scale.

The last part of the interview consisted of administration of the Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-8). This is shortened version of the SRQ-20, developed by the World Health Organisation as an instrument for screening for non-psychotic mental disorders (CSVR, 2006; SACST, 2008). The SRQ-20 has been widely used throughout Africa and other developing countries, and the shortened version was developed specifically for Zimbabwe (Patel & Todd, 1996). All scores of 4/5 or higher on the SRQ-8 are indicative of significant psychological disorder (Patel & Todd, 1996), and the instrument was used as another critical realist measure. The measure was used to examine whether the sample had any significant psychological disorder, and whether this was a consequence of marriage or other life events. It was also possible that the instrument might indicate whether early marriage was more related to such disorder than conventional marriage.

As pointed out above, in addition to the interviews FGDs were held to gather commonly held views on the phenomena (child marriage) under investigation. In the first FGD there were 16 participants and in the second group 15 participants. Six hypothetical stories were derived from

---

<sup>6</sup> Groenewald, T (2004), *A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated*. International Journal of Qualitative Methods 3 (1), 1-25.

<sup>7</sup> Easton, G (2010), *Critical realism in case study research*. Industrial Marketing Management, 39, 118–128.

<sup>8</sup> Osteroom, M.& Pswarayi, L (2014), *Being a Born-free. Violence, Youth and Agency in Zimbabwe*. RESEARCH REPORT, Vol. 2014, No, 79. INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES.

the previous RAU study in Goromonzi (RAU.2014), and the participants were asked to comment on each story in turn with two focused questions: “what was happening in this story?”, and “was this common in your community?”

The individual interviews ranged in duration from 30 minutes to an hour, whilst the FGDs took around three hours.

All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, as well as noted being taken, and then transcribed in Shona and later translated into English. The transcripts were analysed through Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis was used as a tool to conduct the analysis.

The Nvivo analysis was done by the RAU staff as team, with the support of two other researchers, highly experienced in both qualitative research and the use of Nvivo. The analysis revealed 13 key variables (see Appendix 2), which were all linked to specific analytical questions. In addition, 21 “attributes” were derived for the analysis, these key demographic features providing the basis for both understanding marriage as a whole as well as the basis for various cross-tabulations and comparisons. The “attributes” are summarized as follows:

- **Age:** current age; age when married; husband’s age when married
- **Length of marriage:** year of marriage
- **Child marriage:** married under 18 years
- **Current marital status:** married; separated; widowed
- **Number of marriages**
- **Place of residence:** rural; urban; per-urban; combinations of these
- **Employment:** informal sector; housewife; farming; employed; none
- **Education:** primary school; secondary school; did not finish school; none
- **Religion BEFORE marriage:** formal Christian; alternative Christian; Apostolic; none
- **Religion AFTER marriage:** formal Christian; alternative Christian; Apostolic; none
- **Family of origin:** size of family; birth order in family; number of children
- **Type of marriage:** UCLU; Eloped; Chapter 5 marriage; Co-habiting
- **Current mental health:** SRQ-8 score; suicidal ideation

Some of these “attributes” deserve some brief comment. The husband’s age at marriage was deemed important as previous research had suggested that there were cases where young girls were married off to older men to relieve family pressure or to conform to religious practices. This is linked to several other attributes; level of education (early marriage results in girls leaving school), and religion, both before and after marriage. These latter were included to examine the possible effects of apostolic religious practices, and to determine whether there might be voluntarism amongst women in joining an apostolic church as opposed to being brought up in such a religion, marrying within that religion (whether early or not), and remaining in the religion. Finally, the questions about the family of origin were included to examine whether large families (and economic pressures) are contributory factors in girls being forced into or choosing early marriage.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Demographics

The study's respondents were all female and included both those who were married 18 years and over, and those married below 18 years of age. The participants were drawn from Gwaze, Mwedzi, Yafele, Murape, Chibamu and Musonza villages in Goromonzi. The average age for the five respondents who were "Under 18" when married was 35.2 with a standard deviation of 14.5 years. The range of ages when they married was from 15 to 17 years, so none were children per se and all were adolescents. The average age for respondents in the "Over 18" group age was 35.9 at the time of their marriage, and with a standard deviation of 11.9, with a range in age at time of marriage from 18 to 28 years.

**Table 5: Demographic data, Over and under 18 years at marriage**

	<b>Over 18 [n=19]</b>	<b>Under 18 [n=5]</b>
<b>Residence:</b>		
Rural	13[65%]	3[43%]*
Urban	3[15%]	3[43%]
Peri-urban	4[20%]	1[14%]*
<b>Employment:</b>		
Informal employment	3[20%]	1[20%]
Unemployed	9[60%]	3[60%]
Housewife	0	1[20%]
Farming	3[20%]	0

Among the "Under 18" category 40% of the respondents did "Not finish school" while 20% completed "Primary school" and another 20% completed "Secondary school". Of note should be the high of 68% among the "Over 18" who completed secondary compared to 20% among the "Under 18".

80% of the respondents believed that child marriages were very common in Goromonzi, and 47% of respondents knew of somebody who was involved in a child marriage.

#### 3.2 Circumstances leading to Child Marriage

##### 3.2.1 Poverty and unemployment

Respondents explained that being redundant and spending the whole day sitting at home without anything to do forced them to get married. According to respondents, being redundant was arguably the biggest causative factor for child marriage. Explaining the role of poverty in their decision to get married before the legal age, three respondents said:

*"I married too early because of poverty with the hope that I would get a better life. So for me poverty was the reason I got married."*

*“If the money had been there I would have made a choice to get married at 19, but as it is it was the circumstances of just sitting at home forced me to get married earlier.”*

*“I wanted to do my A levels but I realised that it would be a problem for my mother especially after my brother passed away. Since primary school, all my fees were being paid by my brothers. My father used to work but they wanted to make it easier on him. So I thought if I got married maybe my husband would understand and take me to school.”*

For the Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) respondents, it was clear beyond debate that, in Goromonzi, it was very common for people to get married because they did not have money for school fees. This corroborates with individual responses such as those cited above.

Poverty and unemployment were rife in Goromonzi (as suggested by the Afrobarometer data), to the extent that people were trying out any and every option available in order to make ends meet. For young women and girls one such option was transactional sex with international haulage truck drivers. As respondents highlighted “...if a child starts getting into lorries you cannot control her”. Truck drivers and other buyers of transactional sex are viewed as a temporary solution to poverty hence the perception that marriage is a more durable alternative leading to child marriages.

Poverty affected respondents’ ability to continue with their formal education. Some of the interviewed child brides bemoaned the fact that they were just stuck at home, unable to complete secondary education or to enroll in any further vocational courses such as cutting and designing. Many were adamant that, if they had had such opportunities, they would not have gotten married. They further pointed out that since they were not doing anything they were being pressured by relatives to get married. This illuminates the nexus between poverty, transactional sex and child marriage.

### 3.2.2 Family disruptions and ill-treatment by guardians

For the majority of respondents, encountering unfortunate circumstances such as the death of parents or divorce forced them to live with guardians such as uncles and aunts. Respondents were unanimous in their view that family disruptions, sudden changes in household composition and household living arrangements created situations of instability in which foster children were ill-treated by guardians. According to respondents, this ill-treatment caused them to misbehave, leading to their engagement in under-age love relationships, which, in turn, led to child marriage, usually when the girl fell pregnant.

A major catalyst for the child marriages was the guardians’ eagerness to chase delinquent girls away from home. Of concern was how that delinquency was defined especially by step mothers. Several child brides and elder non-child brides reported that parents arbitrarily defined delinquency. There was a very vague and thin line between behavior that was acceptable and unacceptable. As a result, some guardians chased away girls for merely standing in the street with boys or for just holding hands with boys in public. Once the girl was chased away they had no option but to return to the “responsible” boy or man and get married to him. Step mothers were seen as the most common instigator in chasing girls away from home under this ‘immorality’ justification.

Young brides contested this morality explanation and accused the stepmothers of wanting to rid themselves of the responsibility of feeding the girl. Older female respondents argued that once a girl's hormones began 'raging', and she became sexually active, it was difficult to talk to her about abstinence, contraception, the dangers of early sexual encounters and the need to further their education. They argued that once girls became active they mistook their sexual activity for maturity and readiness for marriage. Inevitably, this clash between the younger generations led to the girls being chased away by the guardians once suspicions of sexual activity were roused. The following response from Sheila (*not her real name*) exemplifies the cumulative contributory roles of family disruptions and ill-treatment by guardians as drivers of child marriages:

*"...I went to Goromonzi Committee Primary School from grade one up to grade 5. I then went and stayed with my aunt in Ruwa where she worked at a farm called Bob and I only did grade 6 there. I came back to Goromonzi and finished my grade 7. My father got a job in Chitungwiza so we were left in the care of our aunt whilst my father and mother went to Chitungwiza. I then stayed with my aunt from form 1 until form 4. Life was really hard there. She stays at Gwaze. Things were hard there because we didn't stay with our mother. It's always difficult to stay with somebody else. She only bore boys. We would go to school and come back only to find that no chores had been done and we had to do it in the evening. When we wanted to study in the evening we couldn't because she would switch off the lights. So our chances of passing in school were low so we failed. It is not what we expected but there was nothing we could do because we were not staying at our own place. So we just had to do what was required of us there. Sometimes my uncle would come and take us for holidays but we were not treated well. But my uncles didn't know that this was happening and we couldn't exactly report them. I failed my form four. My other uncle took us in his custody. I couldn't even do a course or go back to school because we were suppressed, so I failed to do any of these. So I had to flee their residence in Budiro. I fled and came here and explained to my mother what was happening. My uncle was not amused with that and shouted at my mother. When you are poor things are difficult for you."*

One respondent specifically reported that her husband told her that he married her because he pitied her and wanted to help her to get out of the tough conditions she was living under at home. Most of the respondents who eloped cited the very uncomfortable conditions in which they were staying previously as their major reason for entering into marriage. Thus, for some, marriage and "starting my own home" was viewed a panacea for such problems and the young women get into marriage in the hope that things would get better. Their families were in support of the idea of the marriage.

### 3.2.3 Unplanned teenage pregnancies

Several respondents indicated that due to pressing economic hardships, they had to look for employment and frequently, employment was secured in other towns far from home. This exposed them to opportunities for engaging in sexual relations while they were still in their teens. It was these sexual relations, which several respondents blamed for their unplanned pregnancies. Many child brides commented that they would not have got married if they had not worked or stayed apart from their parents.

Most child brides reported that, in most cases, the young women were actually forced by their parents to get married once they fell pregnant. To avoid burdening the girl's parents with the added financial responsibilities of taking care of the coming grandchild, getting married to the responsible man was the only viable option available to the girl. Marriage was easiest when the responsible male partner was agreeable to the marriage.

### 3.2.4 Materialism/Consumerism

An idea that reverberated through the FGD responses was that the young girls were too materialistic and exhibited a very strong consumeristic behaviour in which they chased after the latest clothing labels, music and dining in fast food outlets. This allegedly was so rife to the extent that young women were willing to simply "throw themselves" at any man who could provide for their consumeristic tendencies and materialistic egos. Thus, eloping and subsequent marriage were driven by the need to secure oneself a man who could afford these niceties and could shower the girl with "bling"/ adorn the girl with splendor beyond what the husbands of other girls could afford. Essentially, there was competition among young girls to secure themselves a wealthy man, and thus eloping was one of the surest ways through which the young women-cum brides, could outdo their rivals. A case-in-point is the following story as narrated by a respondent:

*"...One of those people we know encountered a scenario where the girl eloped and when she got to the boy's house, the boy said I need to get some food items and he did. While he was away the girl saw the man next door who had a better lifestyle than her boyfriend and she eloped to that man. It was so embarrassing. How does someone do that?"*

According to respondents, young girls are getting into child marriages because they ignored the advances from young men because they were not rich and had less to offer financially.

### 3.2.5 Moral decadence and the spread of transactional sex

According to most respondents, society was experiencing a general moral decline, and this was clearly reflected in the behavior of society's young. For example, for girls coming from very poor backgrounds, seducing their teachers appeared to be a sound plan to improve their lives. They end up having affairs for money, and, for many respondents, this indicates the perversity of loose morals across the wider society. Other respondents expanded on this theme, and implicated school teachers in this moral decline and transactional sex thesis, saying teachers took advantage of poor and hungry children by offering them money in exchange for sex. Other respondents blamed the parents for buying very short skirts and other "*revealing clothes*" for their children, allowing children to take condoms to school, and, generally, being lax when monitoring their children's behavior.

Some respondents thought the blame should be shared between the parents and the children arguing that "*Kunyange dai watenga refu anocheke ega*" meaning: "*Even if you [a parent] buy a long dress, the girl will cut and shorten it herself*". Some respondents lamented the perversity of sexual images and thought in society which made children generally predisposed to sex. Nowadays simple things like swimming were now viewed as sexual activities by children. One respondent posited that in the old days swimming was just swimming, but now, "*Zvino ikozvino vakatuhwina vanotobuda vese vaanevana*", meaning "*once children go swimming they would engage in sex and they would be pregnant by the time they emerged from the water*".

Still others heaped blame on parents for not following cultural protocols in advising and teaching children about sexual behaviour. This school of thought pontificated that when a girl child starts menstruating her hormones start raging, sending massive sexual urges and it was specifically at such a time when the mother and aunts are critically needed to teach and advise her about sex and relationships. Respondents sharing this idea, contended that mothers and aunts had not failed in this respect, but had effectively abdicated this responsibility, which the media and peers had taken over very quickly. Thus, with aunts not being consulted and parents being complicit to the moral decay, there were very few people left who could provide some sort of a moral compass for the children leading to their wayward behavior. Child marriages thus, became quite an expected consequence of the moral decadence.

### 3.2.6 Immaturity of the child brides

According to respondents, girls were rushing into marriage without advice from parents or guardians; hence, they married too early whilst they were still immature and not yet ready for marriage. According to these respondents, young girls aged between thirteen and sixteen years were reportedly perceiving themselves as old enough and mature for marriage. One child bride explained her decision to get married:

*“I was young (16) and my father was able to take care of me, but at church an older man had told me he wanted to marry me. He was my father’s friend. My father was willing to pay for me to go to school but I had other ideas so I insisted on getting married to the older man.”*

Thus, it is seen here that some child brides exercised their free will and rushed into marriage with older men, without any pressure from parents, financial or otherwise. But this was not without problems. When married, child brides were often blamed for demonstrating an unawareness of their responsibilities as wives and mothers in charge of households by playing with other single teenagers. Other child brides would openly indulge in typical “*childish, single, girlish*” play outside the house in the mothers-in-law’s presence. Respondents accused some child brides of being spoilt, unable to carry out household chores since they grew up in families where workers and servants did all the work for them. The child brides’ immaturity was allegedly pointed out as one major reason for their willingness to get into marriage early; hence, girls born around 1998- who are below the legal age of marriage- were now getting married.

### 3.2.7 Coercion by parents

Some older female respondents vehemently argued that child marriages were caused by parents who forced young children into arranged marriages. According to the older respondents, some materialistic parents, especially mothers, would systematically coerce their daughters into marrying local businessmen in the hope that their financial problems would be addressed by these marriages. The respondents in the FGDs said it was common to hear a mother declare “...*it will be better if my daughter is taken by a businessman instead of any other person because he is rich...*” despite the fact that the businessman would be much older than their daughter. This violated the cultural norms where every parent is expected to desire for their child to have a good life. The extent of coercion by parents was reportedly rampant that some Focus Group Discussants were left to grumble, “*Even prostitutes tell their children not to be prostitutes*”. According to these respondents it was common for mothers to intimidate their daughters into marrying older men simply because of their supposed riches. According to this line of thought, a

huge number of mothers and aunts had effectively abdicated their traditional functions of protecting and nurturing girls into becoming good women.

According to the respondents from the FGDs, the age difference between the child brides and the older men was usually so large that the girl would be young enough to be a daughter to the husband. Several responses aptly drive home this view commonly held among respondents: “...ivo madhara iwaya anendebyu anenge akagara mumota akagukuchira mwana mudiki iye ariye munhu mukuru anofanirwa kucounsellor mwana” meaning the old men with big bellies should be the ones to counsel their children instead of being involved in relationships with them and “...at some funeral I went to the man who was said to be the son-in-law was so old his death was really imminent.”

According to some Focus Group Discussants, when a “*mudhara*” (older man) was interested in a particular girl, he would buy groceries for the mother of the child so that the mother would entice her daughter to seduce that man. One respondent described how another woman tried to coerce her daughter into marrying an older man. Even though the girl cried and refused, the mother insisted and refused to pay the child’s examination fees only to regret it later after discovering that man was putting up appearances and did not have the wealth he was pretending to have. One child bride said she accepts that her reasoning and intellect were not yet fully developed at the time she agreed to be married as a child bride. The parents, especially the mothers, were not bothered by the age dynamic and would view their daughter only in an instrumental perspective and showed no regard for the girls’ desires, fears or whether or not the older husband would abuse her in that said marriage.

However, this perception is not matched by the data from the interviews with the individual respondents. Here it was the case that those respondents that reported being child brides were not married to much older men: for the five cases, none of the husbands were older than 25, and the women were all older than 15.

### 3.2.8 Religious coercion

Several respondents who claimed to belong to the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect gave an interesting insight into child marriage within their church. They laid the biggest blame on virginity testing which they said was done by the church “*kurukova*”/ by the river/stream. In this process, girls were forced to undergo virginity testing, and those so found to be virgins were encouraged to marry “normal” ordinary boys with whom they would have developed love relations on their own accord. However, the girls who would be deemed to have lost their virginity were the given over to the old man to be married as second wives.

*“What I know is that those who are given in marriage are the ones who would have been found to not be virgins when they are checked for virginity at the river, those are the ones who are married off to old men. No, let me explain, I was a member of that church for years, the church elders come and pray for you and start asking you questions about your identity and who you are with and if you tell them they will not give you rest they will follow you until you give in”.*

#### **4. Marriage as Coming of Age /Ticking of the biological clock**

Respondents generally agreed that marriage was the objective of their dating; it was the fulfillment of the hopes they carried while growing up. When asked for the specific reason why they decided to get married, several respondents indicated that there was no specific reason for their choice and timing of getting married. Many felt, at the time they got married, they had come of age and the time was right for them to start their own families. Some reported that their decision to marry was propelled by their pursuit of success; as they explained, at the time they married, getting married was a huge achievement. Resultantly, marriage was something they actively pursued such that when a girl met a male partner who was also interested in marriage, all efforts would go towards getting married. This would also please the parents, guardian and community too. Some of the child brides indicated that they were not under any undue pressure to get married, but they got married under their own volition. They said they were working and earning some money which they felt was enough for them to get married and meet the financial demands of supporting a family. Many child brides indicated that they were not pressured by anyone to get into marriage. Rather, at the time they got married, marriage was a huge achievement, so, when a girl had boyfriend who wanted to marry her, they would quickly get married despite being ill-prepared for it.

##### ***4.1 Degradation of the sacred to the profane***

Consumeristic behavior and chasing after the latest clothing and rich men was roundly condemned as culturally inappropriate, with respondents arguing that, culturally, a woman was expected to live with and get married to the person they elope to in the instance. Respondents were adamant that parents were violating culture by engaging in actively searching for husbands for their children. In incidences where a girl was impregnated and had given birth to a child belonging to another man, parents would compare the wealth levels between the responsible man and another suitor of their child, and would then choose who their child should marry. According to this particular view, parents were guilty of abandoning culture by calculatedly going out of their way to make sure that they marry off their daughter to an older man whose finances and wealth appeared brighter than the person responsible for the pregnancy. Girls were condemned for disrespecting culture which required them to remain virgins until they got married. As detailed by respondents, culturally, girls are traditionally expected to visit their aunts and get advice on relationships, sex and marriage, but had departed from the practice in recent times. This was pointed out as the reason for their sexual indiscretions and general radar less behaviour.

Young husbands were also blamed for their lack of cultural awareness and inability to safeguard culture. According to this perspective, young husbands did not return the deflowered girls because they did not know how to tell a virgin from a non-virgin. Thus, the whole notion of child marriage could be located within the broader degradation of sacred behaviours, and their subsequent replacement with profane attitudes, values and practices.

#### **5. Descriptions of Marriage**

Descriptions of marriage are intricately bound to the circumstances that led to the marriage. For example, a child bride who eloped because of love/without any undue pressure from family will presumably describe the marriage differently from one who was raped and forced to marry the culprit. Thus it is interesting to see what type of marriage was reported by the respondents.

Unregistered Customary Law Unions (80%) were the dominant type of marriage for those married under 18 years of age and it was also the dominant type for 74% of those married after turning 18 years. The other types of marriages were Eloping (11%), Chapter 5 (11)<sup>9</sup> and Cohabitation (5%) for those married after turning 18 years. None of the child brides were married under “Eloping”, “Chapter 5” or “Cohabitation”.

The majority of child brides indicated that marriage was a negative experience for them, as they were either abused by the senior co-wife or by the husband or both. They also lamented the poor relations they had with the children of the first/senior wife. In some instances, the second wife who was also a child bride was around the same age as the senior wife’s children. Some child brides were forced by their parents to get married to the person who raped them. They described the marriage as tough, and highlighted that they were forced to work like slaves, taking care of many people and doing domestic chores, while the children and first wife basically did nothing. One respondent reported that her marriage was difficult to the point that she left the man, his family, the house and went back to stay with her original family.

In the accounts given by some child brides, it was evident that their marriages were riddled with problems, including emotional and psychological abuse and being economically neglected by the husbands and co-wives. The households rarely had enough food to eat or the young child bride was the one who was not allocated enough food by the senior wife.

Marriage was a very big step which the child brides made as a mistake and were ill-prepared for. Some child brides said they could not conduct themselves in the manner they were expected to as wives including carrying out domestic chores. Respondents recounted how as children, the child brides had not been taught how to carry out domestic chores and were thus, unable to take care of their new families.

According to non-child brides, child marriages were usually a negative experience for the young girls. As an example, in a polygamous marriage (as narrated by one child bride), the husband had seventeen wives, hence he could not sexually satisfy all of them. This led to the child bride’s infidelity whereby she had an illicit sexual affair with one of the husband’s children because they were of the same age. For this particular child bride the situation was compounded by the restrictions on contraception by the Johanne Masowe sect. As a consequence of not using protection when having sexual intercourse, the child bride fell pregnant with her stepson’s child.

One non-child bride respondent explained how child brides were usually ill-treated by the husbands who generally did not relate to them with the respect and affection they would to a wife. In instances of polygamy, it was difficult for the new and younger wife to be accepted as part of the family. The first wife usually did not give the new wife anything to eat. In some instances the men married the child brides simply because they wanted another sex partner. Thus, members of the (previously nuclear) family ostracised the child bride for bringing troubles and complications into their families. The child brides’ marriages seemed fraught with difficulties.

---

<sup>9</sup> Chapter 5:11: Marriage Act -This marriage is conducted at the Magistrate Court or in church before a registered marriage officer. It allows a man to have one wife at any given time. Only the High Court of Zimbabwe can dissolve this marriage.

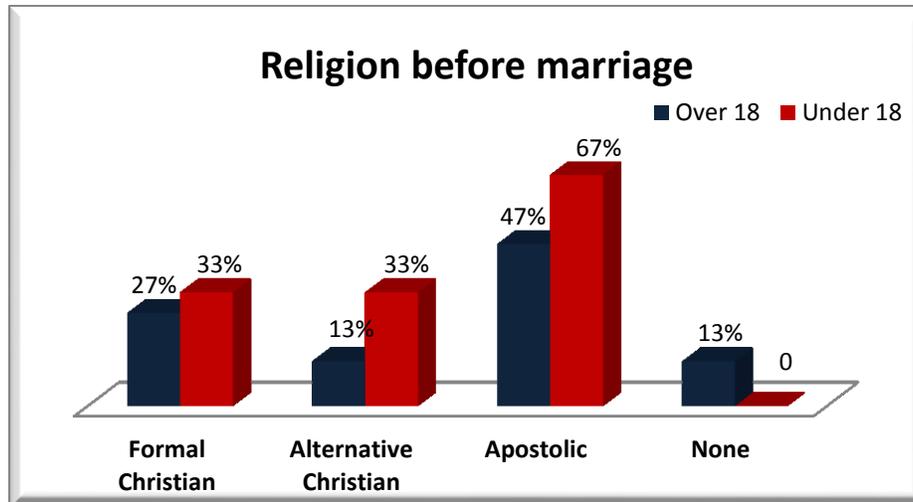
Several child brides narrated various conflicts between them and their husbands and between them and their in-laws. They described how difficult it was to resolve those conflicts because their own families did not support them in times of conflict. Most child brides accused their families of only being interested in material things which they got from the “*mukwasha*” (son-in-law). Frequently, the child brides’ families chose to settle disputes informally without taking their daughters’ abusive husbands to court for fear of losing out on the groceries and other financial benefits. One respondent said she told her mother the problems she was having with her older husband, but the mother ignored her because she had just been blinded by the material things. Due to the marital problems, some of the child brides professed that they believe they mistimed the time to get married and should have waited a bit more. Others respondents bemoaned their lack of financial freedom after marriage as they were now wholly dependent on the spouse. They reported that since they were getting money from someone else they could not do simple things which they could previously could like buying things like pizza without having to seek permission from the husband. They felt like they had surrendered their independence and control of their lives to the husbands. Essentially, marriage was a process that de-individualised the child brides as they became more of subjects than partners of the older husbands.

However, problems were not unique to those married early.

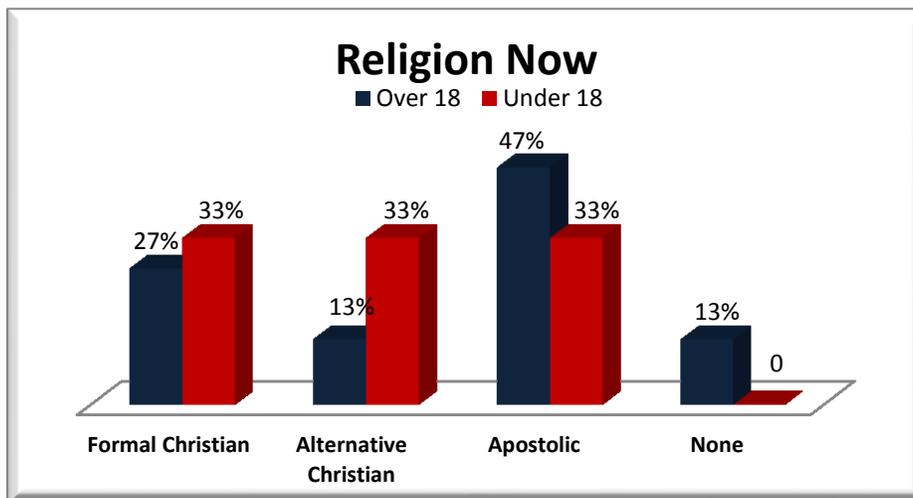
Many respondents complained that their marriages were blighted by spousal fighting about finances. One particular respondent indicated that, when she and her husband got married, she was the one who was taking care of her husband, paying for all household expenses with her money, including paying for him to get his passport. Later on in their marriage, the husband went to Mozambique to fetch his other clothes and personal belongings but never came back, even when the wife fell ill and could not work in the fields anymore. Another respondent said that her husband did not respect her and the fights over finances were so deep to the point that she and her husband separated for months, and reconciled later after “...*aripa* ” when he paid appeasement to the wife’s family. Husbands generally did not tell the wives before they got married that they would have to quit working after marriage. Many respondents indicated that if they had been told or asked before, they would have insisted on keeping their jobs after getting married. In the reported cases, the husbands denied their wives the chance to work and earn some money for the reported fear that the wives would become prostitutes. According to respondents child brides were traumatised by their marriage experience so much that some of them often found it better to return to their original homes even if that meant staying with abusive stepmothers and fathers.

### ***5.1 Religious affiliation***

Available literature on child marriages is inconclusive on the role of religion in child marriages. However, the study’s data indicates that among the study setting the Apostolic sect was the most practiced religion among both child brides (47%) and non-child brides (67%) before marriage. Of note as well was the 33% for both “Formal Christian” and “Alternative Christian” before marriage for child brides.



After marriage, membership of Apostolic sects fell by 34% among child brides, but it remained the same (47%) among non-child brides. Membership to “Formal Christian” and “Alternative Christian” among child brides remained the same after marriage at 33%. This is a very interesting change, and it may be hypothesised that it represents a reaction by child brides to their marriage.



### 5.2 Loss of companionship

Some child brides complained that their marriages were characterised by a lack of companionship. They lamented that they did not communicate well with their husbands and generally found companionship in neighbours and other children of the same age as her. For one respondent, this lack of companionship between herself and her husband was very sudden and difficult to explain. While she thought that they (her and her husband) were happy, she was shocked when her husband sent her to the rural areas to live with the in-laws within a month of getting married. For another respondent, the death of her first son was so traumatic to the point that she left her marriage, but eventually returned to the husband. Another child bride narrated how she was married for 22 years, but has not stayed with her husband for the past eight years because he went to Mozambique and never came back.

### **5.3 Sexual dissatisfaction**

Some respondents decried the sexual performance of their husbands. One respondent alleged that her husband having extra marital affairs with a woman who bewitched them and made him unable to satisfy her sexually.

*“...so even when I try to have sex with him his penis cannot become erect because the woman he had an affair with tied him so that he is unable to have sex with anybody other than her. People would ask me what was wrong and I would tell them he is not a man at all. Right now he went to Mutare for four days because he runs away from the bedroom and the fact that he cannot have sex with me... He lies about being sick so that he does not have to have sex with me.”*

Other respondents indicated that sexual dissatisfaction was rife in polygamous marriages. In one marriage alluded to by some respondents the man had seventeen wives. In such instances it became doubly difficult for the one man to meet the needs of all his 17 wives. Inevitably, infidelity arose (see case above).

### **5.4 Living with the risk of HIV infection and abuse**

Many respondents indicated that the early days of their marriages were happy without major fights between the spouses. However, many respondents also indicated that there always was a turning point in the marriages when the husband either became violently abusive or would financially neglect the family and indulge in beer drinking binges which resulted in struggles to take care and provide for the family. It was at that stage when the husbands would also engage in sexual intercourse with multiple partners, thereby exposing their wives to the risk of HIV infection. According to most of the respondents, the husbands could not be easily confronted about their behaviour since they would quickly resort to violent physical abuse. As a result, the women lived under a very real and constant fear of being infected with HIV by the promiscuous husbands.

Some child brides reported that they felt let down by their siblings. According to some respondents, because of marriage they were able to pay for their siblings' schools fees, but, once the siblings finished school and secured jobs, they did not even visit the elder sisters who supported them earlier. Another respondent thought she was so poor that her siblings felt ashamed of loving her back and visiting her, even though she initially helped them get through school. She said her siblings looked down on her because she was a child bride.

For some women, returning home was their only option when the husband abused them. Returning to their parents' homes was perceived as a sign of failure and the communities generally looked down upon the women coming from such failed marriages, implying that a failed marriage was the fault of the woman.

### **5.5 Livelihoods**

Virtually all child brides did not return to school after getting married, whilst most (68%) of the non-child brides had some form of secondary education. Given that education levels strongly correlate with future income, it was important for women to continue with education after marriage. According to young respondents, the husbands disliked the idea of the child brides going back to school because they could meet up with young men and could end up in relationships with them. Child bride respondents also explained their husbands' fear of

empowering the child brides through education. For the girls who were married to the men that raped them it was difficult to proceed with education. This impacted on their employment prospects. Some respondents revealed that parents would chase away their child under the assumption that if they sent that child to school she could not achieve much because she had been raped and traumatised. Hence when they got married, they would become mere housewives, fully dependent on the husband financially.

All of the child bride respondents reported that their daily work and chores caused them to “suffer”, while only five (26%) of the non-child brides felt the same towards work and household chores. The marriages were so dominated by spousal conflicts and disagreement to the extent that most child bride respondents found it “difficult to make decisions” about their lives. Some child brides left the abusive husbands but did not return to their original families and people did not know where they went afterwards. According to some respondents, the child brides who fled abusive marriages mostly ended up as prostitutes or street kids in other towns.

According to respondents girls were rushing into marriage whilst very young. As a result, the child brides would not have even an Ordinary level certificate or a vocational training certificate. According to both child brides and non-child brides, children were interested in living a high life dominated by materialism and consumerism yet they cannot afford that kind of life.

The inevitable result of the materialism was that the girls got into marriages and became entirely dependent on the husband. When that husband withdrew his money and began to neglect the child bride poverty ensued. Such poverty would be deep-seated and difficult to deal with for the child brides since they would usually be residing in completely new locations far from their families and friends who can help them with money or in kind. As one older respondent summarised “...*she will grow up and age whilst her life is full of problems*”.

According to respondents, most households were finding life tough due to the economic hardships affecting the nation. Some families were farming on their pieces of land and were able to sell some of their produce. However, others lamented the low rainfall that Goromonzi had received in successive seasons recently and said agriculture was no longer producing as much yields as in the past. For many families it had become impossible to make a living from subsistence agriculture. Other families were struggling to buy inputs for their fields and had to work as labourers in other people’s fields in exchange for money. One particular respondent expressed her dislike of working as a farm/field labourers saying it was painful and its rewards were not commensurate with the level of effort invested. Other respondents indicated that they were surviving on proceeds from income generating projects such as hair salons at Majuru growth point in Goromonzi. Other respondents indicated that they were dependent on the earnings of one or more individuals who were involved in the informal economy in activities such as ad-hoc panel beating, fixing cars, spray painting tubs and working as farm labour. Another respondent expressly said her family was poor as they did not have anything to do to improve their livelihood and that even if she was to find work she had no one to leave in charge of her home in her absence. While some respondents were dependent on remittances from their children in South Africa, others indicated that they did not hold their breath for those remittances since times were also tough for those children in the diaspora.

Another group of respondents indicated that they were living comfortably since their husbands were gainfully employed in the formal and informal sector. One said her husband was a builder and she was previously a house maid, whilst another was a tailor who made seat covers and many other “fancy” crafts which she made for people who placed orders with her. She said she made seat quality covers which her customers would take for resale in South Africa. Some respondents said they practiced poultry but reported that business was very poor in Goromonzi. Despite the poor business, they felt life was a bit better in Goromonzi as they could afford to pay only \$30 rent per month as compared to Harare where they used to pay \$100 per month. Paradoxically, other respondents said they could afford to pay \$100 when they were staying in Harare but they could not afford the same \$30 per month in Goromonzi because of the economic challenges they were facing. This paradox will need to be looked at more deeply in future research on livelihoods for child brides.

## **6. Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a crucial aspect of human functioning (Bandura. 2002), and, for the purposes of this study, we were only interested in two of the three forms of self-efficacy: direct personal agency, and proxy agency, agency that relies on other’s acts in order to achieve one’s own desired outcome. We ignored collective agency, ways in which groups work to determine their future, since our study was looking mainly at individuals. Both of the other forms of self-efficacy are obviously important in a marital relationship, and both forms develop through childhood and adolescence, and can be facilitated or impeded by one’s upbringing and experience.

It seems evident that early marriage may have deleterious effects on the development of self-efficacy, and one of the most deleterious effects would seem to be early marriage preceded by rape. Here, one of the themes that ran through the respondents’ submissions was that when a girl was raped, society was angry with her, believed that she had seduced the culprit and frequently, she was chased away and forced to live with the rapist. It was believed that most people thought that girls/women who get raped were prostitutes, and, thus, the society’s sympathies lay with the “aggrieved rapist” and less with the “guilty victim”. As highlighted earlier, the families were quite keen to avoid the legal route when addressing rape cases and other cases of older men having supposedly consensual sex with under-age girls precisely because they apportioned a huge portion of the blame on the girls.

Several respondents indicated that the child brides were getting into the marriages against their wishes but they were often powerless to change the course of events once the family knew of the rape issue or of the sexual relation between the girl and the boy/man. Younger respondents were unanimous in their view that, if given a choice between staying at home and living with the rapist, girls would rather remain single. It was interesting to note that older respondents accused young girls of making false rape reports when they were willing partners of the sexual relations. In the same breath, the young girls accused parents and guardians of working in cahoots with older men such as businessmen and elders in the Johanne Marange church in pushing young girls into forced marriages. Child brides reported that child marriage signaled the end of their formal education and effectively sealed their fate as slaves working for the older men’s households.

A girl was caught by her family while having sexual intercourse with a boy who then ran away. Her family beat her up and took her to the boy’s house and told him that they had brought this

wife to live with him. The boy acted as if he was in agreement with his newly found status of being a husband and waited for the girl's aunts to leave. After they had gone back the boy told his new "wife" that his employers did not allow him to live with a woman at the staff quarters where he lived at work and he also chased her away. The girl asked was clearly disempowered by this process which deprived her of the chance to express herself and to actively decide her fate after being caught having sex.

The whole idea of chasing the child away and forcing her to live with an older man, irrespective of whether he was the one who had raped her or she had consensual sex with him was the main constraint on the young girls' self-efficacy. The police were accused of preferring that families informally resolve such conflicts. As several child brides reported "...there is an agreement (not to take each other to court.)...that is when I realised that it is such a waste of time going to report the matter to the police" and "The policeman said to them you need to talk to each other and sort this matter out of court." Parents/guardians also tended to agree with the police in preferring cultural means of conflict resolution over the legal route. That was another factor which disenabled young girls' ability to determine the direction of the lives once they were raped or were suspected of having premarital sex with boys and older men. Culture was thus, a critical component of machinery that foiled child brides' self-efficacy.

Another factor shaping the child brides self-efficacy was the fact that the older and richer old men took advantage of poor families' financial problems to coerce the parents into marrying off their child. Because of the poverty, the possibility of having their teenage daughter marrying a rich businessman or a church elder was too tempting for poverty stricken families. As one older respondent put it, "The challenge is that because the old man has money he can do anything. There is nothing you can do as the mother of that child". Once the parents showed preference for the informal conflict resolution strategies it became difficult for the young girls' voices to be heard. Inevitably, they would be sent away to live with men even if they had no feelings and affection for each other leading to the abuse of the child brides.

### **6.1 Psychological well being**

One key measure for self-efficacy was the use of the Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-8) to assess whether of the respondents were suffering from significant psychological disorder<sup>10</sup>. Interestingly, seven (29%) of the whole sample scored in the clinical range – scores of four or more – but there was no difference between those married under 18 years and those married later than 18 years. Of further interest was the finding that none of those married under 18 years reported suicidal ideation, whilst three of the over 18 group did.

The percentage of those reporting significant psychological disorder is very much in line with previous general epidemiological studies in Zimbabwe (Reeler et al.1989), but is lower than recent estimates: previous estimates put significant psychological disorder, usually termed Common Mental Disorders, at between 20-30% of persons attending a health facility, whereas one recent study put the figure much higher, at between 30-40%.

---

<sup>10</sup> The Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-8) is a psychiatric screening instrument, developed from the SRQ-20, which was originally developed by the World Health Organisation in the 1980s. Widely used through Africa and other developing countries, the SRQ-20 was also used widely in Zimbabwe. The SRQ-8 is a short version of the SRQ-20, developed specifically for Zimbabwe and validated for local use (Patel & Todd. 1994).

Thus, it cannot be concluded from this data that early or child marriage has any more deleterious consequences than later marriage, and, furthermore, the high prevalence of reported suicidal ideation in the non-child bride group suggests rather that marriage itself may be a cause of significant stress for women.

## **7. Prevention of Child Marriages**

### ***7.1 Avoid abandoning the pregnant child***

When a girl became pregnant, it was culturally accepted that she be sent away to stay with the man responsible. After parents prepared for their children to go to school, had bought uniforms and paid school fees among other things, a child who then fell pregnant was perceived as a very big disappointment; hence many parents would withdraw that child from school in anger. However, many respondents indicated that, while anger was a logical reaction to the disappointment, it was also a major cause of child marriage. After being chased away from home, and being withdrawn from school, effectively the child would be left with no other viable alternatives except to run to the man who impregnated her and plead with or coerce him into marrying her. Respondents felt that parents should assist their children by taking care of the children born out of such unplanned pregnancies, as this would enable their child to continue with her education so that she can be able to fend for herself and her baby in future. Abandoning the child exposed the child to ills such as prostitution and drug abuse. According to younger respondents this was synonymous with condemning their own child to a career of part time menial work, dependence on the husband and most critically, a life of poverty.

### ***7.2 Need for convergence of ideas on morality***

One main theme reverberating through the child brides' responses was that their perception of morality was quite different from that held by their parents. For the younger generations, it was perfectly normal and acceptable for a girl to be seen moving around while holding hands with boys. On the contrary, the older generations saw such behaviour as intrinsically immoral and reflective of a depraved youth. Inevitably, younger girls would innocently associate and play with boys in public in full view of their parents and relatives who did not approve of such behaviour. In fact, all girls who were seen associating with male acquaintances in public were viewed as having loose morals, and generally viewed as leaning towards prostitution. Thus, when a girl reported to her parents that she was raped the parents and the wider community doubted her story. And more importantly, when she fell pregnant she was readily attacked for seducing the man and generally for exhibiting herself to men as a sex object. In terms of preventing child marriages, there is a need for more dialogue between parents and their teenage daughters to create some sort of convergence of views about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This would go a long way towards preventing the ill-informed chasing away of children by their parents as this was a major catalyst for child marriage.

### ***7.3 Provision of Counselling services***

It is inescapable that when the girl child became pregnant in her teenage it is a shocking and disheartening encounter. The resulting anger, disgust and feelings of anguish and being betrayed are unavoidable and are bound to happen to most parents who will be looking forward to their child being properly married. The provision of counselling services will help the parents to re-

look their default response to the situation and enable them to make informed decisions about what they want to do and what they want for their child in light of the pregnancy. If parents and their children could be counselled on moving on in support of their children, giving them second chances and not rushing through emotional decisions, many child marriages can be prevented. As shown earlier, parents rush to chase away their child and the child also loses hope of ever making it in life save for being a fulltime housewife. Counselling services could assist in showing these children that or if they could get back to school. If they are getting into marriage because of rape, counselling could help them see that being raped is not the end of life and that there could still be another chance at fixing her life. Likewise, the counselling would help the parents to accept the new reality and not move on rather than dither with their plans for their child because she has been raped.

#### ***7.4 Eminence of the Law over Culture***

When a young boy impregnates a young girl, both sets of parents usually try to handle the matters using a cultural lens, using the avenues available under culture. Frequently, these avenues include appeasement of the girl's family through the payment of cows and money as a fine, "*kuripa*". While this may be effective in ordinary boy-girl relationships, the same cannot be held to be true in instances where a girl is "*damaged*" by an older married man. Respondents demonstrated that the cultural means of resolving these conflicts were not effective. They always left the girl at a disadvantage as the resolutions are not legally enforceable and the girl's family has no other available recourse once the older man reneges on keeping their side of the agreement. In one instance a girl who was raped went to the police but her mother asked her to withdraw the report so that they could amicably resolve the issue with the boy's family. The girl's father charged the boy's family just two cows since they believed the girl and the boy were in love.

In many cases when a boy and a girl's family resolve such conflict informally, the girl ends up marrying the boy/man. Several respondents were emphatic in stating that marriage under such circumstances is rarely the girl's preferred option and that such marriages had high chances of being abusive. If given a choice, girls preferred to have rape cases reported to the police. However, due to the prevailing preference for culture over the law, girls effectively had no rights. Going forward, there is a need for the police and the wider communities to give eminence to the law over culture since conflict resolution using the law produces binding decisions.

#### ***7.5 Fathers must play their proper roles as fathers***

Most respondents alluded to the point that due to the widespread poverty and unemployment in Goromonzi many people were no longer structuring their behaviour on the axis of good moral conduct. Women were engaging in prostitution just as a way to make a living. People had generally become more materialistic and conscious of money and were actively seeking an opportunity to make a living. According to respondents, parents had abandoned their protective roles and were now actively moving away from their responsibilities as care givers and moral authorities to their children. Parents were reportedly working in cahoots with rich people in trying to marry off their daughters. This was now happening in plain view and the parents were not ashamed whether or not this would impact their relationship with their children. As shown by the narration below, fathers were also at the forefront of this dereliction of parental duty:

*“...My father found a man who was the same age as him who wanted to marry me. I was 14. I did not like the situation and decided to run away the very day that I was supposed to go to that man. I walked all the way to town and eventually I went to Botswana. Life was difficult in Botswana because I did not know how to work yet I needed food to eat and clothes to wear. I lived there for two years but life was very difficult....”*

The fathers were actively working with older men whom they knew in trying to marry off their children to these men. Such untenable situations demonstrate the need for fathers to return to their protective roles as moral authorities within their family. There is a need to empower parents with knowledge on the emotional, moral and psychological which they expose their children to by pushing them into marriages with older men. Society as a whole needs to return to its senses and stop condoning the idea that there can be a relationship between a teacher and a child or between any old man and an underage girl.

## **8. Conclusions**

The economy in Goromonzi district revolves around agriculture and the informal manufacturing and services provision. Due to the economic challenges bedeviling the national economy, the local economy in Goromonzi has slumped, causing widespread unemployment and poverty which are operating hand-in-glove with multiple religious ideologies that pervade the district. As a consequence of the economic and social problems being experienced in the district, the moral fabric was torn, leading to the proliferation of social ills such as corruption, rape and sexual immorality. These then acted as antecedents to child marriages as people grappled with poverty.

Poverty was identified as the biggest driver of child marriage as families and the girls themselves saw marriage as a way out of poverty. Religious coercion of girls was also identified as a major driving factor responsible for child marriages. After conducting virginity tests on young girls, church officials were accused of basically “handing over” supposedly non-virgins into forced child marriages with older men in the church.

Overall, marriage was found to be a negative experience for most child brides with the marriages being blighted by financial difficulties and abuse of the child brides by the older husbands and his other wife (or wives). It did not seem to be a greater cause of psychological problems than later marriage, and marriage in the context of deepening poverty and changing mores may well be a source of stress for all women, whether married early or not.

A qualitative case study such as the present inevitably raises more questions than it can answer, but the views of the women interviewed in Goromonzi are considerable food for thought. The causes of early marriage are clearly multiple and complex, and, accordingly, any policy to address this will need to take into account the many factors seen to be operating. There are no easy answers, and simply prohibiting child marriage, while necessary, will not deal with the complex problems of poverty, family disruption, and changing cultural values. It is evident that much more research is necessary before the very tentative conclusions of a small case study can be generalized.

## **Recommendations**

The issue of child marriages deserves considerably more investigation, and in larger samples, to interrogate the interactions between the factors and processes identified in this study. Several areas for future study are:

- Politicians being used by culprits' families to plead/negotiate with the family of a rape victim to settle out of court;
- The processes through which simple verbal agreements are reached between the rapist family and victim's family;
- Allegations that the police validate the precedence of culture over the law in their execution of duties especially with regards to domestic violence and rape cases;
- The problems around dialogue between children and their parents on sexual health;
- The suitability and acceptability of different teenage pregnancy prevention strategies, especially the paradox of parents taking own children to the clinic to give them contraceptive injections, or decisions to provide condoms in schools and churches.



## Appendix 1

### Structured Interview Form

#### SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT

**RESEARCH QUESTION: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF MARRIAGE IN GOROMONZI**

**NAME OF INTERVIEWER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** (04) 741 511

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This project seeks to understand women's experiences of marriage in the Goromonzi district of Zimbabwe.

#### YOUR RIGHTS

Before you decide whether or not to volunteer for this study, you must understand its purpose, how it may help you, the risks to you, and what is expected of you. This process is called informed consent.

#### PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY

This study is being carried out to understand your experiences of marriage and how you think these experiences have shaped your life.

#### WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY?

The researcher will ask you questions that seek to understand your life history especially on the issue of marriage. Your responses shall be captured on an audio voice recorder. This process is voluntary. You can choose not to participate if you do not wish to do so. You may also choose to participate but choose not to be recorded but capture the interview on paper. RAU does not give anything (money, goods or services) in exchange for the information you provide.

#### STUDY WITHDRAWAL

You may decide not to participate in the study at any time.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

All the recordings and notes will not contain any information that can be traced back to you or any of the participants. Once the information has been collected, all information that could be linked to you will be removed for purposes of the analysis. The information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

#### PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS

You may contact the RAU office on the number provided above if you have any doubts or questions.

**AUTHORISATION**

Your consent, as indicated by your signature below, confirms that you understand what RAU is doing through this process, that you grant permission to RAU to interview you, that you are not receiving anything in exchange for your testimony, and that the process will take place at your house. Your signature also signifies that you understand that by providing us with your consent, you have considered the potential risks and your participation is voluntary and can stop at any time. (Initial all the previous pages of the consent form)

---

Client Signature Date

---

Client Name (Printed)

---

Researcher Signature Date

---

Witness Signature Date

## **Exercise 1**

### **River of life exercise**

The exercise invites the participant to think of their life as a river. The spring is where they were born. That spring then flows on as they grew up, represented by the flowing river. The challenges that the participants experience shall be signified either by rocks in the river or heavy weather. The participants can also show the moments that were very good for them and those that influenced who they are in ways they prefer. The exercise will unfold as follows:

A - Can you draw a river that shows your life? In drawing this river please include:

- *Your family situation and important people in your life, those who brought both negative and positive effects into your life;*
- *Where you lived throughout your life, indicating instances when you moved from one place to another;*
- *Important events in your life, both positive and negative. These events must reflect how you think they are Important in determining how you developed and the person you have become.*

B – Please explain what you drew and all the things that you put on your river. What do they mean?.

## **Exercise 2**

### **Life Story**

This element of the research will seek to interrogate in great detail, participants' understanding of their own marriage. The exercise will seek to know how the participants describe their married lives in four stages namely;

- The period prior to the marriage;
- The point at which they entered into marriage;
- The period immediately after they got married;
- Their perception of their marriage now

For each specific stage, the researchers will seek to understand the following:

- a. When did the marriage happen?
- b. How did it happen?
- c. What else was going on in the lives of the participants at that time?
- d. What were the prevailing circumstances in the lives of the participants at the time that they got married? This will set the context of the event

How common was it, for people of the same age or circumstances as the participant, to get married at the time that the participant did?

Did this happen to a lot of people?

Do you know anybody?

Yes	NO

Yes	NO

In asking all these questions the researchers must be clear on the following aspects as explained by the participant themselves. If need be, these aspects must be asked as specific and direct questions, if the information has not already been volunteered.

- a) Does the participant consider the time that she got married to have been the right time?
- b) Would she wish the same for her daughter?
- c) Did this also happen to her sisters, friends or peers (age mates)?
- d) Does she think that something could have been done to prevent the marriage from happening when it did? If so what does she say should have been done?
- e) Was it common in her community for people to marry as she did?

The following instrument shall be used for this part of the research to guarantee that all the interviews will produce the same values of data, which would be easy to code:

**2.1 – Before you were married, was there anything that you thought affected your life in an important way?**

*When did this happen?* [record the year]

*What happened?*

*What else was happening at that time?*

*Was this a common occurrence in the community?* [tick as appropriate]

Very common	Common	Not common	Very uncommon
-------------	--------	------------	---------------

*How did you feel about this?* [tick as appropriate]

Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy
------------	-------	---------	--------------

*How was your life before you got married?* [tick as appropriate]

Very good	Good	Not very good	Very bad
-----------	------	---------------	----------

*How would you describe your economic status before you got married?* [tick as appropriate]

Very rich	Rich	Comfortable	Poor	Very poor
-----------	------	-------------	------	-----------

**2.2 – How was getting married for you?**

*When did this happen?* [record the year]

*What happened?*

*What else was happening at that time?*

*Was this a common occurrence in the community?* [tick as appropriate]

Very common	Common	Not common	Very uncommon
-------------	--------	------------	---------------

*How did you feel about this?* [tick as appropriate]

Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy
------------	-------	---------	--------------

*How was your life at the time you got married?* [tick as appropriate]

Very good	Good	Not very good	Very bad
-----------	------	---------------	----------

*How would you describe your economic status at the time you got married?* [tick as appropriate]

Very rich	Rich	Comfortable	Poor	Very poor
-----------	------	-------------	------	-----------

**Can I ask you a few other questions about getting married?**

a) *Was it the right time for you to get married?* [tick as appropriate]

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

b) *Would you wish the same for your daughter?* [tick as appropriate]

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	----------

c) *Did this happen to any other of your female relatives?* [tick as appropriate]

Yes	No
-----	----

d) *Did this happen to any other of your female friends?* [tick as appropriate]

Yes	No
-----	----

e) *Did this ever happen to any other women in your community?* [tick as appropriate]

Yes	No
-----	----

**2.3 Immediately after you were married, how did you find being married?**

*What happened?*

*What else was happening at that time?*

*Was this a common occurrence in the community?* [tick as appropriate]

Very common	Common	Not common	Very uncommon
-------------	--------	------------	---------------

*How did you feel about this?* [tick as appropriate]

Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy
------------	-------	---------	--------------

## **2.4 How were the first three years of your marriage?**

*What happened?*

*What else was happening at that time?*

*Was this a common occurrence in the community?* [tick as appropriate]

Very common	Common	Not common	Very uncommon
-------------	--------	------------	---------------

*How did you feel about this?* [tick as appropriate]

Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy
------------	-------	---------	--------------

*How was your life in the first three years of your marriage?* [tick as appropriate]

Very good	Good	Not very good	Very bad
-----------	------	---------------	----------

*How would you describe your economic status in the first three years of your marriage?* [tick as appropriate]

Very rich	Rich	Comfortable	Poor	Very poor
-----------	------	-------------	------	-----------

## **2.5 What has happened in your marriage that you now think is important?**

*What has happened?*

*What else was happening at that time?*

*Was this a common occurrence in the community?* [tick as appropriate]

Very common	Common	Not common	Very uncommon
-------------	--------	------------	---------------

*How did you feel about this?* [tick as appropriate]

Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy
------------	-------	---------	--------------

*How would you describe your married life now?* [tick as appropriate]

Very good	Good	Not very good	Very bad
-----------	------	---------------	----------

*How would you describe your economic status now? [tick as appropriate]*

Very rich	Rich	Comfortable	Poor	Very poor
-----------	------	-------------	------	-----------

**F – Can I ask you a few questions about health in the past week? We ask these questions because we want to know something about women’s health in the community.**

*Have you had any of these problems during **the last week?***

Do you sleep badly?	<b>Hamurare zvakanaka here?</b>	YES	NO
Do you cry more than usual?	<b>Munochema here sezvamakanga musingaite?</b>	YES	NO
Do you find it difficult to enjoy your daily activity?	<b>Zvinokuomerai here kufarira zvinhu zvamunoita mazuva ose?</b>	YES	NO
Do you find it difficult to make decisions?	<b>Munozviona zvakakuomerai here kusarura zvokuita?</b>	YES	NO
Is your daily work suffering?	<b>Mabasa enyu emazuva ose haasi kufamba zvakanaka here?</b>	YES	NO
Are you unable to play a useful part in life?	<b>Munozviona somunhu asina kukodzera here?</b>	YES	NO
Has the thought of ending your life been in your mind?	<b>Munombofunga here zvokuda kuzvipfuudza?</b>	YES	NO
Do you feel tired all the time?	<b>Munonzwa kuneta nguva dzose here?</b>	YES	NO

## Appendix 2

### Variables and Questions about Early Marriage

1. *Description of marriage*
  - Does age < 34 help to describe the type of marriage
  - does age < 18 help to explain whether marriage was early
  - Does getting married before 1985 help to explain the description of marriage
  - Does getting married before turning 18 affect the description of marriage
  - Do married women feel contended in marriage than the single or divorced
  - does location of a person affect description of marriage
2. Second marriage
  - Does age < 34 help to explain second marriages
  - Does getting married before turning 18 explain prevalence of second marriage phenomenon
3. *Causes of marriage*
  - does location cause child marriage
  - does religion have a bearing on causes of child marriages
4. *Life experiences*
  - Does a woman married as a child have a negative life compared to women married older
5. *Types of child marriage*
  - Does age help explain child marriage
6. *Prevention of child marriage*
  - Does the age when a person was married have a bearing on the types of marriage that people end up in
  - Does a rural, urban, or peri-urban upbringing have a bearing on the types of marriage that people end up in
  - Does the religion followed determine the type of marriage entered into?
  - does the level of education determine the preferred type of marriage
  - Does the family size from which one comes from determine the type of marriage the type of marriage they themselves go into?
7. *Circumstances leading to marriage*
  - What are their thoughts about prevention, Age of the men who marry young girls, marital status, does upbringing have a bearing on child marriage, type of marriage, employment, married as child, religion both before and after, education
  - how old are the man who marry children and why

- what are the thoughts of those who got married early on child marriages
- what is the marital status of those who were married as children?
- Does a rural urban peri urban upbringing have a bearing on the types of marriage that people end up in
- Does getting employed early lead to child marriage
- did religion have anything to do with child marriage?
- Does level of education have anything to do with the type of marriage entered into or does it lead to child marriage
- Does family size lead to child marriage

#### 8. *Marital disruptions*

- Does age lead to marriage
- does upbringing have anything to do with the circumstances leading to child marriage
- Does family size lead to being married as a child

#### 9. *Livelihoods*

- type of marriage, employment-does it affect marriages, type of marriage, times married, religion, number of children, age of husband when married
- Married as a child or not versus experience. Does age experience change marital experience?
- does type of marriage have anything to do marital disruptions

#### 10. *Self-Efficacy*

- is employment formal or informal when married as a child or as an adult
- Does education have anything to do with livelihoods?

#### 11. *Prevalence*

- Does older (>34) have greater prevalence of sexual abuse, poverty, etc?
- Do less than 18 have higher incidence of poverty, etc?
- Does poverty, etc, result in getting older husbands?
- Are poorer women more likely to report abuse?
- Do women from poor families turn to religion?
- Do women from abusive families turn to religion?
- Are educated women more likely to report abuse?
- Do larger family result in greater reports of poverty, abuse, etc?

#### 12. *Perceptions of marriage*

- Do older (>34) have more positive views of marriage?
- Do less than 18 have adverse perceptions of marriage?
- Do women married as children have more negative perceptions of marriage?
- Do rural women have more negative perceptions of marriage?
- Do employed women have more positive perception of marriage?

- Do women who report religious affiliation also report positive perceptions of marriage?
- Do educated women have more positive perception of marriage?
- Do more children result in negative perceptions of marriage?
- Does the number of children before marriage result in negative perceptions of marriage?
- Do negative perceptions of marriage result in higher SRQ-8 scores?
- Do negative perceptions of marriage result in psychological disorder?
- Do women reporting negative perceptions of marriage also report suicidal ideation?

### 13. *Life before marriage*

- Do older (>34) have more positive pre-marriage experiences?
- Do less than 18 less positive pre-marriage experiences?
- Do rural women report less happy lives before marriage?
- Do employed women have more positive report of pre-married life
- Do women who report being affiliated to religion also report more positive pre-marriage life?
- Does family size affect when one gets married?
- Does birth order affect positive views of life before marriage?
- Do negative perceptions of life before marriage result in higher SRQ-8 scores?
- Do negative experiences of life before marriage result in psychological disorder?
- Do women reporting negative pre-marriage life also report suicidal ideation?

### 14. *Experiences of marriage*

- Do older (>34) have more positive experiences of marriage?
- Do less than 18 have less positive experiences of marriage?
- Do older husbands mean unhappier marriages?
- Do unhappy marriages result in divorce or separation?
- Do rural women report more unhappy marriages?
- Do employed women have more positive report of married life?
- Do women who report being affiliated to religion also report more positive marriage life?
- Do educated women have more positive report of pre-married life?
- Do more children result in negative perceptions of marriage?
- Does the number of children before marriage result in negative perceptions of marriage?
- Does not being properly married result in negative experiences of marriage?
- Do negative perceptions of life after marriage result in higher SRQ-8 scores?
- Do negative experiences of life after marriage result in psychological disorder?
- Do women reporting low self-efficacy also report suicidal ideation?

## Appendix 3

### Systematic Review of Child Marriage

*This review was commissioned by Dr Peter Tamas on behalf of RAU, and carried out by Kristal van Anrooij, both from the University of Wageningen, the Netherlands. This was supported by a NUFFIC grant from the Netherlands government.*

In order to answer the question “How are local’s constructions of child marriage researched?” a systematic literature review was done. A systematic methodology was used to structure the literature review (Gough, Oliver and Thomas.2012). According to Gough et al, there are main two types of reviews; namely, aggregative and configurative reviews. The synthesis of this study is on configuring data from the included studies to answer the review question and is therefore more a configurative as an aggregative review.

The first step was to find search terms including inclusion and exclusion criteria. This was done by looking for articles on the theme in the literature. Terms used in these relevant articles, for instance their keywords, are used as search terms. The search term included *child marriage, early marriage, juvenile marriage OR teen marriage*, in combination with *attitude, perception, construction, stakeholder, knowledge, local, belief, opinion, "social influence" OR value*. Wildcards (\*) were put behind these terms to also look for plurals. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the screening of the titles/abstracts and articles were that the search terms should be incorporated and that the research is empirical. Old articles were not excluded since the aim of this study is to find out which methods are used to study child marriage instead of how child marriage is nowadays viewed.

A search for articles in PubMed, Scopus and Web of Science was conducted with those search terms and selection criteria. Only articles which were available in online databases and written in English or Dutch were used. Useful references in those articles were also used for the analysis.

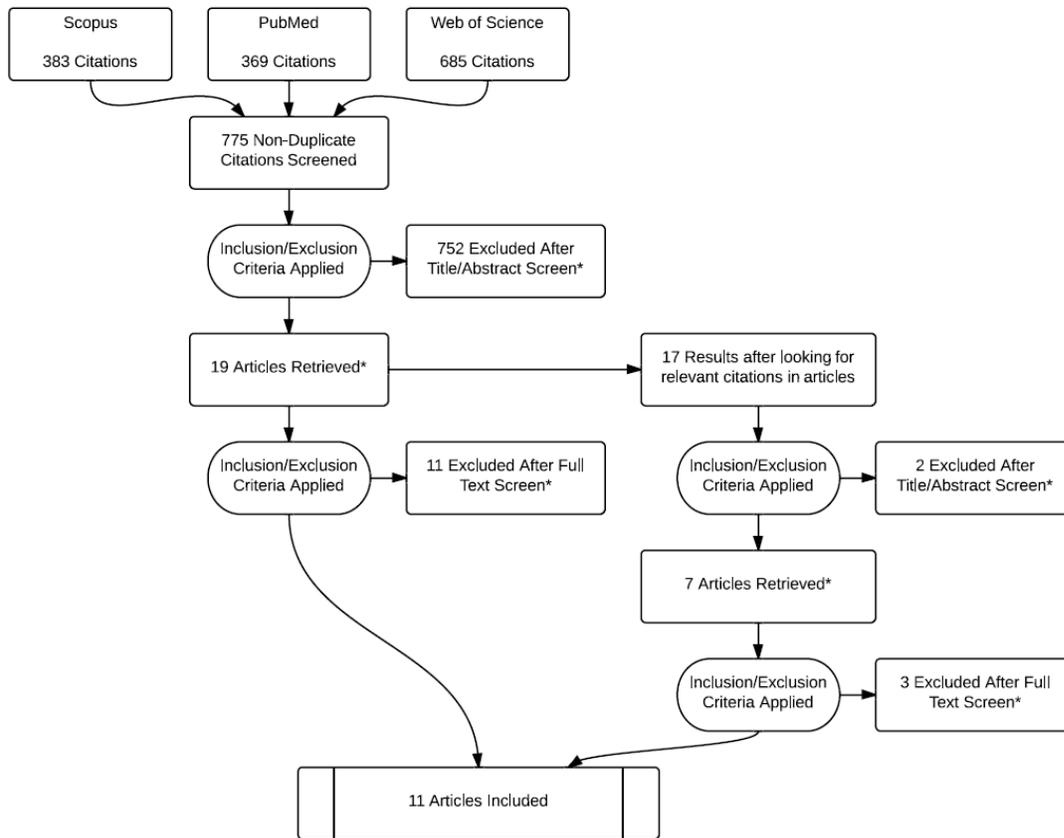
All the titles and abstracts of the found articles were put in Atlas and the duplicates were removed. The articles were screened in a two-stage process. In the first stage, all the titles and abstracts were screened to decide if the articles are about empirical research and if the search terms are included. Of the articles which fit these criteria the full text version was retrieved. In the second stage, the full text articles were screened to decide if the research was empirical and the search terms were included. The articles which fit these criteria and the articles found from their references which also fit the criteria were placed in a new database for the in-depth analysis of the articles.

#### **Results**

1437 articles, of which 775 were left over after removing the duplicates, were found with the search terms. These articles were screened in a two-stage process. In the first stage, all the titles and abstracts were screened to decide if the articles are about empirical research and if the search terms are included. Many articles were not useful and 23 abstracts have met those criteria from which the full texts articles were retrieved. Not all the articles were available in full text version or in English or Dutch (figure 1).

In the second stage, the full text articles were screened with the same criteria and 7 were incorporated for the analysis. From the references of these articles, 4 relevant articles were found that met the criteria. All these steps are visualised in the PRISMA diagram in Figure 1. The PRISMA diagram displays the operation of the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the process leading to the final selection of the 11 relevant studies.

Figure 1: PRISMA diagram of the results



**Reasons for excluding titles/abstracts from the 775 citations:**

- 690 citations excluded on Criterion 1;
- 62 on Criterion 2;
- none excluded on Criterion 3.

**Criterion 1:** the title/abstract should be about studying child marriage, early marriage, juvenile marriage or teenage marriage. **Criterion 2:** the title/abstract should be about: attitude, perception, constructions, stakeholder perspective, knowledge, local beliefs, opinions, social influence or values about child marriage(or early/juvenile/teenage marriage). **Criterion 3:** the title/abstract should be about empirical research (in this stage articles were only excluded when it was certain that this study was not based on empirical research).

Of the 23 articles finally selected, access was obtained only to 19 articles because 2 were not available and 2 were not in English/Dutch. All the full text articles fulfilled Criterion 1, but 8 were excluded on Criterion 2, and 4 were excluded on Criterion 3.

In the articles finally selected<sup>11</sup>, it is apparent that many different methods are used to study local constructions of child marriage. In four studies, surveys are used to collect information about the study population (Chowdhury. 2004; Ertem & Kocturk. 2008; Gangoli et al. 2009; Rahman. 2009). Only in one study was it made clear what was asked in these surveys (Ertem & Kocturk. 2008). In these surveys the situation of child marriage in the study population was explored with questions about age at marriage, level of education, type of marriage etc. In one study, participant observations are used during the survey (Chowdhury. 2004).

Interviews are a frequent method to study local understandings of child marriage (Chowdhury. 2004; Gangoli et al. 2009; Human Rights Watch. 2011; Rahman & Kabir. 2005; Rahman. 2009; Sabbe et al. 2013; Schlecht et al. 2013; World Vision. 2013). All different kinds of interviews are described in these studies.

In-depth interviews were used in two studies (Chowdhury. 2004; Rahman. 2009). Telephone interviews are used in one study (Gangoli et al. 2009), but it is not made clear which questions were asked. The interviews used in one study were semi-structured and looked at the phenomena child marriage from a stakeholder perspective (Sabbe et al. 2013). Key informant interviews were used in one study because participants were chosen who had a key role in the community as the community leaders, head teachers, health workers, legal officers, religious leaders, etc. (Schlecht et al. 2013).

One method which is frequently used is focus group discussions (FGD's). They are used as a method in several studies (Ertem & Kocturk. 2008; Gangoli et al. 2009; Ouis. 2005; Ouis. 2009; Rahman & Kabir. 2005; Schlecht et al. 2013; World Vision. 2013). In some articles like in article 2 and 11 the method used is not clearly described (Ertem & Kocturk. 2008; World Vision. 2013), but in at least one study the methods are described with some detail (Ouis. 2005), and here the researcher discussed four different themes without a fixed set of questions.

Storytelling is only mentioned in one study in order to get an insider's perspective into the experiences, opinions and views of children (Ouis. 2009). However this method was considered potentially useful in choosing the methods for RAU because it gives an deep insight in a personal perspective of the situation and in which contextual factors are incorporated.

---

<sup>11</sup> See section on references (below).

## References

- Bandura, A (Bandura, A (2002), *Social Cognitive Theory in Cultural Context*, Applied Psychology: An International Review, 51 (2), 269-290.
- Chowdhury, F. D. (2004). The socio-cultural context of child marriage in a Bangladeshi village. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 13(3), 244-253
- Dube, R, (2012) *Sold to the Highest Bidder-The Role of Lobola in Modern Zimbabwe*. April 2012. HARARE. RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY UNIT.
- Ertem, M., & Kocturk, T. (2008). Opinions on early-age marriage and marriage customs among Kurdish-speaking women in southeast Turkey. *Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care*, 34(3), 147-152
- Gangoli, G., McCarry, M., & Razak, A. (2009). Child marriage or forced marriage? South Asian communities in north east England. *Children & Society*, 23(6), 418-429.
- Gough D, Oliver S, Thomas J. (2012). *An introduction to systematic reviews*. Sage Publications
- Human Rights Watch. (2011). "How Come You Allow Little Girls to Get Married?"
- Child Marriage in Yemen*. New York: Human Rights Watch. [Retrieved February 24, 2014 from [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/yemen1211ForUpload\\_0.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/yemen1211ForUpload_0.pdf)]
- IPPF (2007). *Ending Child Marriage: A guide for Policy Action*. [Retrieved February 25, 2014 from [http://ippf.org/sites/default/files/ending\\_child\\_marriage.pdf](http://ippf.org/sites/default/files/ending_child_marriage.pdf) ]
- Ouis, P. (2005). *Woman or child? Voices of teenage girls in the Middle East* .Sweden, Save the Children. [Retrieved February 24, 2014 from <http://www.ponline.org/node/264527>]
- Ouis, P. (2009). Honourable Traditions-Honour Violence, Early Marriage and Sexual Abuse of Teenage Girls in Lebanon, and Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen. *Int'l J. Child. Rts.*, 17, 445.
- Rahman, M. M., & Kabir, M. (2005). Do adolescents support early marriage in Bangladesh? Evidence from study. *Journal of the Nepal Medical Association*, 44(159).
- Rahman, N. A. A. (2009). Teenage Marriage in the Malay/Muslim Community of Singapore: Problems, Perceptions and Programmes. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 37(5), 738-756.
- Sabbe, A., Oulami, H., Zekraoui, W., Hikmat, H., Temmerman, M., & Leye, E. (2013). Determinants of child and forced marriage in Morocco: stakeholder perspectives on health, policies and human rights. *BMC international health and human rights*, 13(1), 43.

RAU (2011)(a), *'Forced Concubinage' in Zimbabwe*. Report produced for the Women's Programme of the Research and Advocacy Unit. April 2011. HARARE: RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT.

RAU (2011)(b), *Married too soon: Child marriage in Zimbabwe*, Maureen Shonge. October 2011. HARARE: RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT.

RAU (2014), *Let Them Grow First: Early Marriage in Goromonzi, Zimbabwe*. March 2014. HARARE: RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT;

Schlecht, J., Rowley, E., & Babirye, J. (2013) Early relationships and marriage in conflict and post-conflict settings: vulnerability of youth in Uganda. *Reproductive health matters*, 21(41), 234-242.

World Vision. (2013). *Untying the knot. Exploring early marriage in fragile states*. London, World Vision UK.

[Retrieved February 24, 2014 from [http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/press-reports/\\$file/Untying-the-Knot\\_report.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/press-reports/$file/Untying-the-Knot_report.pdf)]