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Frontline Work Against Child Marriage

*Social workers' responses to child marriage
among girls in Tanzania.*

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Abstract

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Child marriage remains a persistent challenge in Tanzania despite legal reforms and international commitments. The aim of this study was to explore how social workers understood the causes of child marriage, how they worked with prevention in practice, what challenges they face and what conditions they identified as necessary for long-term change. The study was based on qualitative semi-structured interview with ten social workers in Dar es Salaam, recruited through Girls First Initiative (GFI). The material was analyzed using thematic analysis guided by an empowerment lens and a decolonial feminist perspective. The findings showed that social workers described child marriage as shaped by intersecting structural factors including economic insecurity, gender norms, limited educational opportunities and weak legal enforcement. Prevention work mainly relied on dialogue-based and community-oriented strategies such as engaging families, collaboration with local leaders and supporting girls' education. However, participants also highlighted major institutional constraints, including limited resources, gaps in protection systems and legal contradictions that reduced accountability in practice. Long-term prevention was therefore framed as requiring stronger institutional support, sustainable funding and closer cooperation between NGOs and government actors. The findings showed that prevention largely depends on community level work and relationship building, especially when legal framework don't fully protect girls in practice.

Keywords: Child marriage in Tanzania, Front-line work, Decolonial, Empowerment, Social work

Preface

This thesis was conducted as a Minor Field Study (MFS) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and was funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The MFS program aims to support knowledge production in low-middle-income countries and to strengthen understanding of development challenges through field-based research.

The study relates to Sweden's development cooperation strategies in Tanzania, (Regeringskansliet 2020) particularly the focus on strengthening human rights, democracy, and gender equality. Child marriage remains a harmful practice that affects girls' education, health and long-term life opportunities and is closely connected to broader issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). By exploring how frontline workers in both NGOs and government sectors understand and address child marriage, this project connects to Sweden's thematic strategies on SRHR in Africa (Regeringskansliet (a) 2022) and on global gender equality and the rights of women and girls (Regeringskansliet (b) 2022).

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1. Problem Statement, Research Aim and Research Questions

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

Child marriage among girls is a wide-spread violation of children's rights that affects girls and young women in multiple areas of their lives (UNICEF 2023). Child marriage is addressed in several international frameworks, these frameworks emphasize free and full consent in marriage and call for the elimination of child, early and forced marriage (UNFPA n.d.). The consequences of early marriages affect everything from health to education and long-term life opportunities. According to UNICEF's most recent data, nearly one-third (29%) of Tanzanian women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18 (UNICEF Data 2022). This demonstrates the persistent problem of child marriage despite ongoing legal and policy efforts to reduce and address this issue.

UN sources link child marriage in Tanzania to a mix of structural constraints and social norms, including poverty, limit access to education and weakness in protection systems and law enforcement (UNFPA n.d.; UNICEF 2023). The legal landscape is also described as complex, with gaps between formal rights and practice (UNFPA n.d.). This can make prevention and response challenging, particularly where resources are limited.

Given this complexity, understanding how child marriage can be prevented and addressed in practice requires attention to those working closest to the issue. Social workers, both in non-governmental sectors and government sectors are closest positioned at the intersection of policy, protection systems, service provision and community engagement. Social workers can provide important knowledge about the difficulties through their experience in these areas. They often work with the distribution of resources and can give important insights into where the problems are primarily rooted and what is needed to make the work profitable in the long run. By focusing on frontline social workers' perspectives, this study seeks to understand how prevention and response efforts are carried out in practice and what challenges shape their work, thereby addressing the research questions of this thesis.

1.2 Research Aim

The study aims to explore how social workers in both non-governmental organizations (NGO) and government sectors in Tanzania understand the causes of child marriage among girls, what strategies they use to prevent and address it, what challenges they encounter in practice and what factors they identify as necessary for long-term and sustainable prevention.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do social workers in Tanzania understand the main causes and drivers of child marriage among girls?
2. How do social workers in NGO and government sectors address child marriage among girls in their everyday work, and what strategies do they use for prevention and response?
3. What challenges do social workers identify in their work with preventing and responding to child marriage among girls?
4. What conditions do social workers describe as necessary for sustainable prevention of child marriage among girls?

1.4 Delimitations

This study is limited to frontline social workers in Tanzania. The interviews focus on their understandings of child marriage among girls, their prevention and response work and the challenges they face in practice.

1.5 Definition of “Social Worker”

In this study, “social worker” is defined functionally rather than by formal title or educational background. The term refers to individuals who, in their professional role, for example engage in social support, protection or counselling. The functional definition is used because participants come from diverse organizational contexts where job titles may vary, while their core responsibilities align with the focus of the study.

2. Research overview

2.1 Global Research on Child Marriage

Global research on child marriage included in this study identifies recurring drivers, consequences and prevention approaches across different settings, while also emphasizing that the practice takes context-specific forms. UNICEF (2023) states that although causes vary between countries and cultures, certain common causes maintain the practice. These causes of child marriage globally include cultural contexts, poverty, lack of educational opportunities and limit access to healthcare. UNICEF (2023) further points out that factors such as unequal gender roles as well as the risk of pregnancy outside of marriage are factors that maintain child marriage. The following section summarizes key findings from the global literature on drivers and impacts, as well as ongoing debates about what effective prevention requires.

A large-scale systematic scoping review by Siddiqi and Greene (2022) mapped the child marriage research field between 2000 and 2019 and identified 1,068 publications after screening a much larger pool. The literature included publications across all major geographic regions and in four languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French). The authors show that the literature has grown rapidly, with roughly two-thirds of the publications produced in 2015-2019. The review of these publications concluded that most studies focused on prevalence, determinants and consequences and highlighted the need for stronger evidence on interventions and how to respond to the needs of those married as children (Siddiqi & Greene 2022, p.9). Based on these patterns, Siddiqi and Greene (2022, p.15) argue that the field now needs to move beyond identifying problems to instead priorities concrete actions and interventions. To do this, strengthening is needed in the evidence on what interventions work, including attention to implementation, cost and feasibility and by expanding research in several high prevalence but under-researched settings.

Evidence on drivers and impacts further underscores that child marriage is shaped by intersecting socio-economic pressures and normative expectations, and that these dynamics may intensify under broader disruptions. To add global, multi-country evidence beyond single-country case studies, Krafft et al. (2024) analyze georeferenced Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from 19 conflict-affected countries combined with conflict event data, showing that the relationship between conflict and child marriage is diverse across

settings (Krafft et al. 2024, p.18-19). This highlights that risk factors do not operate uniformly but are mediated by local economic and social conditions. As an illustrative example, a study from Ethiopia notes that early marriage may constrain adolescents' agency and increase vulnerability to intimate partner violence (IPV) and mental illness (Alamdo, Manu & Kotoh 2025, p.6). Taken together, this research frames child marriage as producing interconnected consequences across health, agency and longer-term educational and livelihood trajectories, reinforcing the importance of context-sensitive prevention.

Alongside impact-focused research, scholarship also debates how child marriage is framed in global policy, advocacy and media, and warns against narratives that portray "Africa" as a uniform or inherently "deviant" context. Rather than treating child marriage as a single phenomenon with a single logic, Nyamutata (2023, p.10) argues that it must be understood in context and that a narrow "force/violence" frame does not always capture the variation in how child marriages are entered, experienced and sustained. Nyamutata (2023) further notes limited evidence that legal bans or penalties alone reduce child marriage. In settings characterized by plural legal systems, and where there is a gap between statutory law and locally legitimate norms, compliance and enforcement may be undermined (Nyamutata 2023, p.10). This is relevant to our study because it highlights that prevention and response work depends not only on formal rights frameworks, but also on local legitimacy and institutional capacity. Conditions, which frontline practitioners must navigate in everyday practice.

2.2 Local Context: Child Marriage in Tanzania

This section summarizes key conditions that shape child marriage in Tanzania and situates the study in prior research done within the country. Tanzania has a large and predominantly young population with half of its citizens being children (UNICEF 2019). Despite national and international commitments to end the practice, the country is reported to have one of the highest child marriage rates in the world (UNFPA n.d., p.2).

The persistence of child marriage is closely linked to limited educational and economic opportunities particularly in settings where alternative life options for girls are perceived as scarce (UNFPA n.d., p.1; Almohammadi 2023, p. 2-3). Studies highlight that child marriage is not evenly distributed and tends to be more common in poorer and more rural settings (Almohammadi 2023, p. 2). For many families, economic insecurity can lead to the struggle to meet basic needs and to cover cost related to schooling. In this context parents may arrange early marriage as a way of securing economic protection for their daughters or

reducing household hardship (UNFPA n.d., p.2). Marriage practices in Tanzania may also include the payment of bride price commonly in forms of livestock or financial compensation. According to UNFPA (n.d., p. 2) bride price may be viewed by families as a strategy to reduce poverty thereby creating incentives for early marriage in some communities.

Alongside structural factors, research points to the importance of norms related to gender, sexuality and family honor. According to UNFPA (n.d., p. 2) parental decisions to arrange early marriages are often motivated by concerns about girls' sexuality, premarital pregnancy and family honor. Marriage is sometimes perceived as to protect girls from social stigma associated with pregnancy outside marriage as well as from sexual violence or coercion (UNFPA n.d., p. 2; Avalos et al. 2015, p. 647).

Furthermore, it is described how early marriage can increase girls' vulnerability. A child bride faces high levels of violence, limited autonomy and severe restrictions on their life choices. Abuse is a daily reality for many married girls, and they often lack the power to leave violent relationships. Child brides may also face violence from their families if they attempt to leave their husbands when families are unable to return the bride price (Buske 2024, p. 123-127).

Finally, the legal context has been described as complex and sometimes contradictory. Almohammadi (2023, p. 4-5) highlights that there is a contradiction between the Constitution, which supports equality, and part of the Law of Marriage Act, which include rules about minimum age and consent. At the same time, marriage is not only regulated by state law. Customary and religious norms may also guide marriage practices, which can make it unclear how the minimum age is applied in real life (Avalos et al. 2015, p. 669-670). Overall, the literature here suggest that child marriage in Tanzania is shaped by poverty and limited school access, gendered social norms and a legal system with several overlapping rules (UNFPA 2017; UNICEF 2022; Almohammadi 2023, p.4-5).

2.2.1 Legal landscape

The Law of Marriage Act, section 13 allows girls as young as 15 to marry while the age for boys is 18. The law also provides judicial discretion to permit marriage below these ages, down to the age of 14 for both sexes if there are special circumstances (Law of Marriage Act, sec. 13). In the year of 2019 the Tanzania Court of Appeal upheld a landmark decision affirming that marriage under the age of 18 is unconstitutional and directed changes to align the minimum age of marriage with 18 (Girls Not Brides 2019; Equality Now 2019).

Unfortunately, no implementations or enforcement of the decision has been made since then.

2.3 Approaches and Challenges when Addressing Child marriage

Regarding approaches when addressing and combating child marriage, the literature used in this study says similar things. Working closely with girls and young women and together with their families and local community is one of the recurring themes (Salim & Lombard 2020; Erulkar et al. 2020). Family-based interventions involve educating families about rights and helping them recognize their responsibilities toward their daughters. For the individual girl, these efforts can also include counseling to counteract depression or isolation (Salim & Lombard 2020, p.198). The importance of involving local groups via dialogue and education about the various, serious consequences of child marriage is something that is particularly emphasized. This, to be able to change current attitudes in the long run (Girls not Brides 2014, viewed in Salim & Lombard 2020, p.199). Regarding conversations in the local community, the literature says that these should be constructed in a way that maintains high quality and emphasizes the messages you want to convey. This is necessary for it to make a realistic difference (Erulkar et al. 2020, p.68).

Another approach discussed in the literature focuses on schools, education and economic development. Girls dropping out of school, never attending school or not having access to their own resources to support themselves is a cycle that, among other things, perpetuates child marriage (Salim & Lombard 2020, p.199-201). The importance of social workers being present in schools and having a good dialogue with school staff is highlighted as essential when reaching out to girls who are at risk of being married off at a young age. It is also said that keeping a girl in school may result in the opportunity for more jobs, which provides a push for breaking a poverty cycle and to achieve improved wellbeing (Salim & Lombard 2020, p.199-201). School based inputs are also highlighted as central in scalable models for prevention. Erulkar et al. (2020) describes an education promotion approach in Tanzania where girls are registered at the local school, and where follow-up is linked to school attendance. Overall, the results indicate that school-based and locally based interventions can help reduce the incidence of child marriage (Erulkar et al. 2020, p.75-79).

Regarding challenges for social work in this field, Salim and Lombard (2020, p.201) mentions in their findings that norms or stereotypes hinder the work of social workers in their context. An example from a study in Ghana highlights similar findings where the

authors describe this as cultural and religious barriers. The authors describe how the structure of families and local groups is difficult to mediate as these traditions are deeply rooted in the prevailing culture (Gariba & Rømer 2024, p.10).

Girls Not Brides (2024) addresses the challenge of ensuring that existing laws are effectively enforced with consequences. In many countries there are laws that prohibit child marriage, but violations of these laws rarely have any real consequences (Girls Not Brides 2024).

2.4 Syntheses and rationale for the present study

The above section concerning previous research and the review of the literature shows that the issue of child marriage is shaped by both structural constraints and gender norms. Studies often highlight factors such as poverty, limit access to education and uneven access to services. The literature also describes many consequences for girls' education, health and wellbeing. However, fewer studies focus on prevention and response work in everyday practice. There is still limited knowledge about how frontline workers understand child marriage and how they act when they face limit resources and strong community expectations. This matters because prevention often depends on what professionals can do in real situations, including follow up work and coordination with other actors. Against this background, this study examines how frontline-social workers understand the causes of child marriage, what strategies they use to prevent and address it and what challenges they face in their work. The aim is to add practice-based knowledge about how prevention efforts are shaped in context.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is going to draw on an integrated empowerment lens as the theoretical framework. Empowerment is conceptualized as shifting power relations, to understand and operationalize this we are going to draw on the concepts of power within, power to, power with and power over (Cornwall 2016; Rowland 1997). Furthermore, because empowerment is shaped by what is practically possible, we will also examine different conditions within the data that results as enabling or constraining the different forms of power in everyday practice. Lastly, a decolonial feminist perspective guides our interpretation of context and normative authority, helping us avoid reducing cultures to stereotypes and instead see to and respect their specific and situated meanings.

3.1 Conceptualizing empowerment

Our empowerment lens starts from the premise that empowerment concerns shifting power relations rather than achieving predefined indicators. Women's empowerment today is widely used in development policy, and the concept of empowerment is often used in a diluted or instrumental way (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p. 397-398; Cornwall 2016, p.342). In contrast to this, we will adopt a feminist understanding that treats empowerment as a process of change in power relations and not as a technical end-goal and program indicator (Cornwall 2016, p.344). Included in Cornwall's article it says: "If power means control, then empowerment therefore is the process of gaining control" (Sen 1997, viewed in: Cornwall 2016, p. 344).

We will furthermore understand the concept of empowerment as something multidimensional. It can partly be understood as changes in individual perceptions and aspirations, as well as the practical capacity to act, and partly as a collective form of agency shaped by social and institutional power relations that define what is possible and legitimate (Cornwall 2016, p. 344-346). This multidimensional viewpoint makes the framework particularly relevant for the issue of child marriage in Tanzania, which is embedded in gendered and age-based power relations within both families and communities, institutional conditions within schooling, protection systems and contradicting legal framework. Lastly, we proceed on empowerment as something that the individual must do for herself, not something that can be given to her. Even though financial aid, for example, or other means of providing support can be seen as a way of removing barriers, it should not be seen as

empowerment at first hand, but a way to help women empower themselves (Cornwall 2016, p. 345, 352).

3.2 Dimensions of power

To make the empowerment concept analytically usable, we look at it through four interrelated dimensions of power. Empowerment is an ongoing process concerned with transforming unequal power relations rather than as a fixed outcome or individual attribute (Cornwall 2016, p.344). Central to this perspective is the distinction between different dimensions of power. Rowland (1997) emphasizes that empowerment can be understood through different dimensions of power including *power within*, *power to*, *power with* and *power over* (Rowland 1997, p. 11-14). These dimensions make it possible to analyze empowerment as relational, contextual and embedded in both individual experiences and collective processes.

Rowland highlights *power within* as closely connected to processes of consciousness-raising and critical reflection. She describes empowerment in this sense as involving shifts in self-understanding where individuals come to recognize themselves and others (Rowland 1997, p.13). Such processes are central to feminist approaches to empowerment as they address internalized oppression and enable individuals to see themselves as capable of acting to change their circumstances (Cornwall 2016, p. 348, 356-357).

Power with refers to the collective dimension of empowerment (Rowland 1997, p.13). Cornwall repeatedly emphasizes that empowerment is inherently social and relational emerging through collective action, solidarity and shared struggle (Cornwall 2016 p. 345–346). She argues that when individuals come together to reflect on shared experiences of inequality, they are more likely to develop the capacity to challenge unjust power relations and to mobilize for social change (Cornwall 2016, p. 356-357).

Power to concerns the capacity to act and to translate choices into action (Rowland 1997, p.13; Cornwall 2017, p.356-357). For example, Rowland mentions that a helping organization can use their *power with* clients to enable their own *power to* act (Rowland 1997, p. 127). Cornwall also stresses that empowerment is not limited to internal change but also involves access to resources (and vice versa) and the ability to exercise agency within existing social and institutional contexts (Cornwall 2016, p. 345-346).

Power over is used to describe forms of domination embedded in social structures, institutions and cultural norms (Rowland 1997, p.13). Rowland stresses that if one starts

from the concept of power over, empowerment therefore means involving individuals who are outside of positions of power, into these decision-making positions (Rowland 2007, p.13). From this perspective, empowerment requires attention to how such forms of power limit the action and how they may be contested through individual and collective processes.

These dimensions allow empowerment to be understood as a dynamic and ongoing process involving shifts in consciousness, agency and social relations. Cornwall underscores that empowerment cannot be given or imposed from outside but must be understood as unfolding through changes in power relations at multiple levels (Cornwall 2016). In this study these dimensions of power are used as sensitizing concepts to analyze how social workers describe constraints, possibilities for action and collective strategies in their work related to child marriage.

3.3 Structural constraints and enabling conditions

Because empowerment is always situated, our framework also attends to the conditions that shape what empowerment can look like in practice. Empowerment unfolds in line with the opportunities that are formed from the structures given by the institutional and social conditions that determines what choices that are realistically available. Improved prosecution, new policy's, new safety-systems and improved schools are often seen as proxies to empowerment. However, in this theoretical framework we will view these parts as *enabling conditions* or partial outcomes that may support empowerment and not as empowerment itself (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p. 404-407). Given this perspective, structural conditions can either widen or narrow the alternatives that are available. These conditions include resources, access to services and infrastructure, legal and policy frameworks (and their enforcement) and the normative authority of cultural and religious expectations. In our analysis, these conditions will be viewed as *constraints or enabling conditions* that shape what strategies social workers in the field can implement and what long-term prevention of child marriage in Tanzania can look like in practice (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p. 404-407; Cornwall 2016, p. 345).

Resources such as funding, staffing and material conditions shape what is possible in practice and may enable or constrain the empowerment process. Following Cornwall and Rivas (2015, p. 404-407), we treat resources as part of the opportunity structure that may support empowerment, without making this empowerment itself.

Service accessibility and infrastructure also influence empowerment pathways by shaping whether education, health care and protection services can be reached by the people. We therefore understand access to these things as part of the opportunity structure.

Legal and policy frameworks define rights and routes to accountability but may remain ineffective without enforcement. We will treat legal environment as an institutional dimension of power that shapes what kinds of protections can be claimed in practice. This while still maintaining the distinction between enabling conditions and empowerment as a broader shift in power relations.

Finally, social norms and expectations within families and communities shape which actions are seen as legitimate or possible. These norms may function as forms of power over (Rowland 1997, p.13) by influencing everyday choices and the acceptance of institutional protection. However, we approach norms cautiously and avoid treating culture as fixed or homogeneous.

This distinction clarifies that resources, services, policies and norms may enable empowerment, without being equivalent to empowerment itself.

3.4 Contextualizing empowerment (decolonial perspective)

To apply an empowerment lens responsibly in a Tanzanian setting, we complement it with a decolonial feminist perspective on knowledge, context and normative authority. The concept of empowerment must be anchored in the context in which it is spoken of. Universal theories or theories that have their origins in Western culture can tend to place an external grid over local realities. Tamale (2020) describes this phenomenon in her book by expressing herself like this: “We are oriented to apply alien concepts” (Tamale 2020, p.41). Having a decolonial perspective generates a vigilance on how colonial legacies can tend to shape what is seen as legitimate knowledge or the “right” solution when it doesn’t fit the local context. This becomes essential in connecting the framework to where power/knowledge belongs in the analysis.

Furthermore, in the analysis, we want to avoid decontextualized descriptions such as “culture as an obstacle” and instead analyze variation. Concepts or terms like “third world women” are, in our framework, seen as too generalized and should instead be changed to see all women as a group where there are different variations. “Culture as an obstacle” will also be recast and instead norms that are negotiable and changeable will be observed (Tamale 2020, p.205).

In the analysis, we will lastly follow the mindset of seeing culture as a tool for equality. Culture can become a resource or arena for change and should not be seen as something to be eradicated. To avoid treating culture as a fixed barrier and to tie together the decolonial critique and provide an alternative conceptual apparatus, we will explore the concept of Ubuntu (Tamale 2020, p.221). Ubuntu refers to a relational ethic that emphasizes mutual dependence and shared responsibility (among other things) within the community (McAllister 2010). This offers a useful lens for interpreting community-based social work interventions and collective prevention efforts, aligning with the empowerment dimension of power with.

3.5 Linking the framework to the research questions

The theoretical framework guides our analysis by specifying what we attend to in participants' accounts and how we interpret it. Firstly, we organized interview segments in relation to the research questions (causes, strategies, challenges and conditions for sustainable prevention). Secondly, we interpreted these segments through the empowerment-lens by coding for dimensions of power, these include power within, power to, power with and power over (Rowland 1997; Cornwall 2016). We do this to capture how agency and constraints are described by the interview-participants. Thirdly, we code references to structural and institutional conditions as enabling factors or constraints, this may include cross-references to resources, service accessibility, legal frameworks and enforcement, and normative authority. We recognized that such conditions may support empowerment without being equivalent to empowerment itself (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407). Finally, codes are compared across interviews and clustered into analytical categories within each research question, which form the basis for the themes presented in the result. A decolonial feminist perspective informs interpretation of normative authority and context, helping us avoid decontextualized "culture-as-barrier" framing and to foreground situated meanings (Tamale 2020).

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was suitable because the aim was to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in depth rather than to measure variables (Bryman 2018, p.487). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, since this format combines structure with openness and allows follow up questions and more detailed reasoning. Semi-structured interviews are useful when the researcher wants participants to express themselves in their own words and to capture nuance and context (Bryman 2018, p.562-564). The interviews were all conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which made it possible to carry out the study in the local setting rather than through online interviews from Sweden. An interview guide with key themes was used to keep the conversations focused while still allowing new questions to be asked when relevant issues emerged (Bryman 2018, p.565). This flexibility supports a responsive interview process and makes it possible to adapt the interview to each participant's role and experience (Ahrne and Svensson 2022, p.60-61). During the field period we also attended a meeting with the host organization and received one internal document. This material was used as background and to understand the context more but was not included in the formal analysis.

4.2 Sampling and data collection

Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Bryman 2018, p.498). The selection was guided by the aim of the study and the need to interview people with relevant experience of work related to child marriage. Recruitment was organized fully through Girls First Initiative (GFI) in Dar es Salaam. GFI is a locally led Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) working to improve the lives of adolescent girls and young women. GFI focuses on education, health and economic empowerment aiming to break cycles of poverty and strengthen opportunities for girls in underserved communities. At first, the study planned to include only participants working in NGOs. During the field period, the scope was expanded to also include government workers. This change was made because the organization, GFI, identified several relevant participants who worked in government but had previous NGO experience, or the other way around.

We included frontline workers only. We did not exclude participants based on sector as long as they had relevant experience and worked close to practice. In total, ten participants were interviewed. All participants described themselves as social workers. In this study, the term social worker was used in a broad way to include frontline practitioners who work directly with cases and prevention work, even if their formal job titles varied. There were no dropouts. However, one interview was cut short because the phone call ended when the internet connection was disrupted.

Data collection took place during an eight-week field period in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The interviews were conducted over approximately two weeks. All interviews were organized from the host organization's office. About half of the interviews were conducted in person at the GFI office and about half were conducted via phone-call.

Semi-structured interviews were used, supported by an interview guide with key themes. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes up to one hour. The interviews were conducted in English and Swahili. An interpreter was always present during interviews conducted in Swahili and was also available when needed in interviews conducted in English. All interviews were audio recorded using a voice recorder. The recordings were transcribed by the researchers. Transcription was mainly verbatim, but repeated words and short repetitions were removed to make transcripts easier to read.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

This study followed common ethics principles. We made an active choice to interview professionals only, and to frame our aim of the study and our research questions according to this. We did not interview individuals under 18 or other vulnerable groups. This reduced the risk of harm and reduced the risk of asking people to revisit traumatic experiences (Vetenskapsrådet 2024, p.57). We avoided asking too personal and distressing questions, but some participants still chose to share sensitive experiences and stories that may have been traumatic. Before each interview, participants received clear information about the aim of the study, how the data would be used and that participation was voluntary. Interviewees also received an information letter and some of the potential interview-questions, so that they were given a chance to prepare themselves (Ahrne & Svensson 2022, p.86). They were also informed that they could withdraw at any time without negative consequences (Bryman 2018, p.170). Participants signed a written consent form. Confidentiality was emphasized and participants were promised anonymity in the thesis

(Bryman 2018, p.178). All raw material, such as audio recordings and transcripts, was destroyed after the thesis was completed.

We treated consent as a process and paid attention to power relations in the interview situation, especially in a field setting where researchers and participants may have different positions (Eldén 2020, p.108-111). We also considered the four principles described by Vetenskapsrådet, including doing good, not doing harm, respecting autonomy and maintaining justice (Vetenskapsrådet 2024, p.58).

4.4 Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed by us, the researchers. The transcripts were produced as soon as possible after each interview to keep details and meaning close to the original conversation (Ahrne & Svensson 2022, p.87). After transcription, the material was read several times to get an overall understanding before coding (Bryman 2018, p.700).

The analysis was based on thematic analysis, meaning that we coded the material and looked for patterns and themes relevant to the study focus (Bryman 2018, p.702-703). Coding started early in the process (Bryman 2018, p.700). The initial coding was mainly deductive and guided by the research questions and key theoretical ideas. At the same time, we also created new codes when participants raised issues that did not fit the initial structure. We used the coding-program NVivo provided by Lund University to do our coding, in the program, coded extracts were organized in three parallel structures: folders linked to the research questions, folders linked to theory, and a content code folder. The content code folder included concrete labels describing what each extract was about. In the early phase, attention was also paid to repetitions and recurring expressions as a basis for coding (Bryman 2018, p.705).

In the next step, we merged and grouped the content codes into broader themes. These themes were then placed under the research questions to create a clear structure for the results and analysis chapter. As an overall approach, we followed the three-step model described by Ahrne and Svensson (2022 p.244): sorting the material, reducing it by selecting the most relevant parts and arguing for interpretations by linking the empirical material to the study focus.

We coded half of the interviews each. We then compared coding and discussed differences. Smaller parts of the material were also coded together to improve consistency. The results and analysis in this thesis are based on the interview data only.

4.5 Researcher Role and Reflexivity

In this study, we as researchers were not neutral observers. In qualitative research, the researcher is a key part of how data is produced and interpreted, which makes reflexivity important throughout the process (Bryman 2018, p. 471). We therefore reflected on our assumptions, expectations, and possible influence before, during and after the interview. Before data collection, we developed the interview guide and discussed it with our host organization, Girls First Initiative (GFI). This was done to check that the questions were clear, relevant to the local context and aligned with the study aim. At the same time, we kept responsibility for the final guide and aimed to use open, non-leading questions. During the interviews, we paid attention to how our wording and follow-up questions could shape what participants shared. We used clarifying and probing questions and avoided interpreting too quickly in the moment. After each interview, we debriefed and discussed reflexive observations (for example first impressions and potential bias).

We conducted the study as visiting students in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Our position as outsiders may have influenced the interview situation, including what participants chose to share and how they framed their answers. Participants were recruited through the host organization, GFI, which may have affected who was invited and how the study was perceived. In addition, several interviews involved translation between English and Swahili, which may have influenced wording and nuance.

To address these conditions, we treated ethics and reflexivity as ongoing and situation based. We were attentive to power relations and to how our role in the field could shape the interaction. During transcription and analysis, we paid close attention to meaning and discussed unclear parts together to reduce the risk of misunderstandings. Overall, we continuously reflected on how context, recruitment and translation could influence the material and our interpretations (Eldén 2020, p.108-111).

5. Results and Analysis

Table 1 summarizes how the Results and Analysis chapter is structured. It shows how the key causes identified in Research Question 1 (RQ1) are linked to strategies in Research Question 2 (RQ2), challenges in Research Question 3 (RQ3), and conditions for long-term change in Research Question 4 (RQ4). The sections that follow are organized according to this structure. Repetition of the purpose for this study is as followed: *The study aims to explore how social workers in both Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and government sectors in Tanzania understand the causes of child marriage among girls, what strategies they use to prevent and address it, what challenges they encounter in practice and what factors they identify as necessary for long-term and sustainable prevention.*

Table 1. Overview of key themes across RQ1-RQ4.

<i>Thematic area</i>	RQ1: Causes	RQ2: Strategies	RQ3: Challenges	RQ4: Long-term change
<i>Economic insecurity</i>	Poverty, bride price, financial pressure	Family support, economic empowerment	Resource constraints, economic dependence	Sustainable funding, social protection
<i>Social norms & honor</i>	Cultural expectations, religion, honor/shame	Community dialogue, engagement of leaders	Resistance to change, gender norms	Norm transformation
<i>Access to education</i>	School dropout, limit access, stigma	Scholarships, retention initiatives	Institutional barriers, weak enforcement	Education as empowerment
<i>Legal framework</i>	Legal loopholes, weak enforcement	Legal awareness, institutional support	Enforcement gaps, legal pluralism	Accountable institutions

5.1 Understandings of the causes of child marriage

This section addresses Research Question 1 by analyzing how social workers in both NGO and government settings explain the causes of child marriage in their local context. Participants rarely point to one single factor but describe child marriage as emerging from different causes such as economic hardship and poverty, gendered norms and expectations, educational access and legal framework. Together, these explanations highlight how constrained resources and unequal power relations structure what is perceived as possible for girls and families in everyday life.

5.1.1 Economic insecurity

Interviewees consistently frame poverty as a central condition which is shaping family's decision-making and girls' vulnerability to child marriage. One interviewee described poverty as the "big issue" in relation to child marriage within the local context:

The big issue here is of poverty, many families are living in a poor situation
(Interview 3).

In the accounts concerning poverty, child marriage is not presented as a purely individual or cultural "choice", but as a response to limited options and immediate household pressures. Economic insecurity is further described as creating a sense of urgency that can make early marriage appear like most attainable solution. As one participant explained:

Living in poverty makes people desperate that they need to marry their child
(Interview 9).

From a power perspective, this illustrates how structural deprivation can operate as power over girls' lives, even if a girls may not want to marry, the material dependence of the household restricts the range of viable alternatives (Rowland 1997, p.13). In other words, economic vulnerability narrows the space for agency by making refusal costly or perceived as impossible within the family's logic. Interviewees also link poverty to the concept of bride price as a concrete mechanism through which economic hardship translates into pressure for marriage. One interviewee described how families may explicitly seek bride price to secure income when other options have failed:

Yeah, it's all come down to poverty. (...) But the main factor is that they're looking for the bride price. They're looking for the money to survive, and they have already tried all those businesses that didn't work. But we have a person, we can just get her, get the money. (Interview 4).

The quote illustrates how economic insecurity shapes family decision-making around child marriage. When households experience persistent poverty and previous income-generating strategies have failed, marriage is described as one of the few remaining options to secure immediate financial resources. As the respondent explained, the bride price becomes a means of survival rather than a cultural preference. This framing shows how economic pressure limits available choices and turns marriage into a transaction, where the girl is treated as a resource to cope with financial hardship. In this context, unequal power relations are reinforced, as the girl's ability to influence decisions about her own life is severely constrained. Rather than being recognized as an individual with rights and agency, she is positioned as a solution to the family's economic crisis.

Respondents also connect the persistence of child marriage to poverty, to a structurally embedded condition. In doing so they make a casual logic that links economic hardship to broader enabling conditions. One participant stated:

...because of the research which we have done by asking these people why you have decided to agree with child marriage. These people are doing so because of the poverty which is affecting them (...) that's why I have said that if we improve the infrastructure it can assist to reduce this problem...
(Interview 3).

Although this part of the account gestures toward intervention, it is included here because it helps explain how participants understand the causes of child marriage, rather than how interventions are carried out. Poverty in this statement can be understood not only as a household-level shortage of money, but as a connection to structural resources and opportunities. This aligns with Cornwall and Rivas' (2015) point that agency depends on enabling conditions. When families lack resources and support, the set of realistic choices shrinks, and child marriage can be framed as a survival option. Improving enabling conditions can expand alternatives and strengthen girls' ability to influence decisions (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407).

5.1.2 Social norms, honor and cultural expectations sustaining child marriage

Across the interviews, social workers describe child marriage as something that is socially normal och legitimate through cultural and religious norms that define what is acceptable for girls and what protects the family honor. Marriage is framed to manage reputational risk and avoid shame linked to sexuality and pregnancy. One interviewee explained that parents may respond to the fear of shame by arranging marriage as a form of damage control:

But the other reason is the fear of shame, having a child then accidentally getting pregnant. Parents be like, let's just get her married off so the man who did that can take full responsibility. So that's one of the reasons why.
(Interview 5).

Here, marriage is constructed as the legitimate pathway that restores respectability and transfers responsibility.

Child marriage is also described as normalized at a community level, where it is widely accepted and therefore rarely challenged. One interviewee explains that marriages involving girls as young as 15 or 16 years old are seen as “normal”, which is reflected in the fact that no one reports it or tries to stop it from happening.

It's not an issue because (...) other community members do not even engage in stopping that because it's their way of life.
(Interview 5).

This suggests that early marriage is not perceived as something that requires outside intervention. In line with Cornwall and Rivas (2015, p.404-407), shared norms shape what people see as possible and acceptable, which narrows perceived alternatives to child marriage.

Further linkage can be found between these norms to gendered power relations that limit girls' agency. One interviewee describes “strong traditions” in which:

A girl child is not seen as a person who needs to do things (...) strong traditions and norms have been installed in the community.
(Interview 2).

The wording “installed” raises the question of where these norms come from and how they have been shaped over time. A decolonial reading suggests that what is described as “tradition” may also reflect historical power relations, including the influence of state and institutional systems introduced or strengthened through colonial rule. At the same time, the interview does not allow us to identify a single actor who “installed” these norms, instead they appear to be reproduced through everyday practices and local authority structures. Read through a power over lens (Rowland 1997, p.13) such accounts highlight how authority over decisions is located with parents, elders and community frameworks rather than with the girls themselves. And these narratives further point to the importance of taking local legitimacy claims seriously while avoiding essentializing “culture” as a single explanation. In participants accounts, norms operate as moral frameworks

intertwined with gendered control and constraints that make child marriage appear expected and justified.

5.1.3 Access to education

Interviewees describe barriers to schooling and education as an important pathway into child marriage. Accounts suggest that remaining in school functions as a protective factor, while dropping out increases the perceived availability to marriage as the next step. One interviewee explains that the moment a girl leaves school, the risk of early marriage rises because parents interpret being at home as having nothing else to do, marriage here becomes framed as economically beneficial:

The moment they drop out they are at higher risk of being married at a younger age because now their parents like, oh you are just home, you are doing nothing, at least you can be married then for us we are getting bride price which is much better for us. (Interview 1).

This highlights how education is not only a personal aspiration but part of the household opportunity structure (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407), when schooling ends, the set of socially and economically alternatives shrinks. Participants connect the risk of school-dropout to concrete access barriers. Distance is repeatedly mentioned as a cause for this:

The children there are required to walk a long distance, around 5 km, just to go to school. (Interview 7).

Furthermore, it is described how the school environment itself can push children away from continued attendance, for instance when they arrive and do not experience a supportive context:

Perhaps they reach the school and they do not find an inclusive environment that can be welcoming for her or him to come back the next day. (Interview 7).

Cornwall and Rivas (2015, p.404-407) emphasize that agency depends on enabling conditions, meaning the practical conditions that make real choices possible. In the interviews, schooling appears as one such condition. When girls have access to safe, supportive education, they can stay in school and keep more future options open. However, when schooling is not realistically accessible, staying in education becomes harder. When education is disrupted, the set of realistic alternatives narrows, and marriage can start to appear like the most achievable option in that situation. In this way, limited access to

supportive schooling does not only affect attendance, but it also limits girls' ability to influence their future by reducing what they perceive as possible.

5.1.4 Legal framework and enforcement

The legal framework can itself contribute to why child marriage continues. Even if a country has laws meant to protect children, the protection can become weak when the laws do not say the same thing. One respondent explained that different laws define “a child” differently. In one law, a child is anyone under 18, but in another law, someone can be considered old enough to marry at 14:

In the child act, it says, the girl, I mean, a child is a person under the age of 18 but in the marriage act it says a person who is eligible to be married is 14 years old.
(Interview 2).

When laws give different age limits, it becomes unclear what protection children have. This kind of legal inconsistency can make child marriage easier to justify or allow, because the legal system sends mixed messages about what is permitted. The same respondent also describes that there is a “law” against child marriage, but that it mainly exists “on paper”:

Okay, so we have a law of marriage, the amended one, so it is well put in words, but on the ground, it's not implemented as it was meant to be.
(Interview 2).

The respondents comment about the law being “well put in words” but not reflected in practice can be understood in relation to both Tanzania's existing Law of Marriage Act (1971), which is still in force in its amended form, and towards the appeal from The High Court to change The Law of Marriage Act. The existing law has been criticized for allowing different minimum ages for marriage depending on gender (for example, permitting marriage for girls under 18), and Equality Now (2021) describes it as a discriminatory law that remains in place. Importantly, the Equality Now organization does not present a new law that has already replaces the old one. Instead, it highlights legal decisions and ongoing pressure on the government from The High Court of Appeal to change and implement the minimum age of marriage as 18 for both girls and boys, this means that the “new” protection the respondent refers to is still something advocates are pushing for, rather than a fully enacted and consistently applied new law (Equality Now 2021).

In this part of the analysis, the point is not to explain why implementation is weak (that fits better under “challenges RQ3”). Instead, the quotes show that having a law is not always enough to change what happens in practice. From the perspective of the theoretical framework, this can be understood as power over (Rowland 1997, p.13). The state has the power to define rules through laws, but if those rules are unclear, contradict each other or are not implemented, they do not protect girls as intended. As a result, the legal context can limit girls’ ability to act and be protected. The unclear legal situation can reduce girls’ power to (Rowland 1997, p.13) claim their rights (because it is not always clear what rights apply) and their power within (Rowland 1997, p.13) (because their status as “a child” becomes uncertain). In this way, the legal framework becomes part of the wider conditions that allow child marriage to continue.

5.2 Strategies to prevent and address child marriage

This section addresses Research Question 2 by analyzing the accounts given by social workers in terms of strategies to prevent and address child marriage. Across both NGO and government settings, participants emphasize approaches that combine work with families and communities, support to keeping girls in school and organization routines and cross-sector cooperation.

5.2.1 Addressing economic insecurity

Engagement work within the families is described as a way of addressing underlying economic pressures that shape decision-making around child marriage. As shown in RQ1, economic insecurity was identified as a key factor contributing to child marriage in Tanzania. In RQ2, social workers describe strategies that aim to reduce this pressure by strengthening families’ financial capacity and creating conditions that allow girls to remain in education.

Several participants link dialogue with families and communities to practical forms of financial support, such as financial literacy and income-related training. One interviewee explains how this work focuses on helping families improve their economic situation in ways that can support girls’ opportunities:

We work closely and working very well around the area of financial literacy and how they can multiply their income so that they can afford to prepare the environment where a girl child can excel.
(Interview 2).

By supporting families to better manage and increase their income, these strategies seek to reduce the immediate financial pressures that make early marriage appear necessary or desirable. Another respondent similarly describes training parents in saving and investment as a way of addressing economic constraints that risk pushing girls out of school and into marriage:

We train the parents (...) in terms of how to invest your money, how to save, how to increase your profit (...) And also to help the girls to be able to continue with education.
(Interview 9).

Rather than addressing child marriage directly, these strategies focus on changing the economic conditions that limit families' available choices. By improving financial stability, social workers aim to expand the range of alternatives available to families. By reducing economic pressure, these strategies primarily strengthen power within (Rowland 1997, p.13) by enabling families to see themselves as capable of improving their situation through their own actions. At the same time, it is important to note that improved economic stability should be understood as an enabling condition and not equivalent to empowerment itself (Cornwall and Rivas 2015, p.404-407). Whether it leads to empowerment depends on whether families can use these resources to gain real, long-term control over their everyday lives, strengthening their power within (Cornwall 2016, p.344; Rowland 1997, p.13).

5.2.2 Challenging social norms, honor and cultural expectations

In RQ1, interviewees in this study described social norms, honor and cultural expectations as central factors sustaining child marriage by defining what is considered legitimate and acceptable for girls and families. In RQ2, these same normative structures are addressed through strategies that focus on dialogue, counselling, and engagement with locally legitimate actors.

One interviewee explains that some parents might arrive "very aggressive" and immediately defend their decision, but the interviewee argues that attitudes can shift through calm and non-judgmental conversations:

Sometimes you may find a person coming into the office very aggressive like, what the hell are you questioning me to why I want to marry my daughter off? (...) the thing we should do as counsellors is questioning them to bring their mind in presence (...) But have you ever imagined the complications which shell encounter while giving birth?
(Interview 5).

Here, counselling functions as a relational strategy that invites reconsideration without escalating conflict.

Local leaders and community representatives are treated as key actors in shifting shared norms within the community. One participant highlights the role of focusing the work through people who already uphold legitimacy and influence:

Using community leaders as they work close with the community, imparting them with the right knowledge so that they can use their voices and the position they have to provide more awareness around the area.
(Interview 2).

Another interviewee similarly describes how engaging local leaders can create changes beyond the single family:

So, there's these changes and I can observe them from the local leaders. We've been sitting with these community representatives, local leaders, in some of the meetings. And when they understand they tend to encourage other people.
(Interview 5).

These strategies are described by participants as highly collaborative and relational. Prevention work is carried out through dialogue and cooperation with families and community leaders, rather than through confrontation or enforcement. By building alliances with actors who hold local authority, social workers seek to create shared responsibility and collective support for delaying marriage. Importantly, this approach does not treat “culture” as something to eradicate. Instead, it works through locally legitimate norms and relationships as an entry point for change.

Engaging local leaders reflects an Ubuntu- oriented understanding of social change where wellbeing and responsibility are shared across the community rather than placed on the individual family alone (Tamale 2020, p. 221; McAllister 2010). In this perspective prevention is not only about stopping one specific marriage but about strengthening collective support systems and encouraging shared norms that protect girls. Local leaders therefore become important actors in creating wider community commitment to delaying marriage, as they can shape what is considered legitimate and supportive in local decision-making processes.

This reflects what Rowland (1997, p.13) describe as power with, where change emerges through cooperation and collective action rather than individual control. At the same time, working through locally legitimate actors allows social workers to gradually influence what is considered acceptable or “right” for girls within the community. In this way normative

authority is not challenged directly, but slowly reshaped, making alternatives to child marriage more socially supported over time.

During the interviews, we asked what empowerment meant to the participants and their answers help clarify why dialogue and work through locally legitimate leaders is described as effective. Several accounts framed empowerment as gaining the space, confidence and support needed to make decisions and act without external control:

Empowerment means it's a tool to giving ability to a person, to have the space, to have the confidence to do things without permission.
(Interview 2).

Another interviewee described empowerment as longer term support across social and economic aspects that strengthens independent decision making:

Empowerment means, is a way to support the person in social aspect, economic aspect, so that. She can have an ability to make decision on her own without any influence.
(Interview 6).

In this sense, counselling and cooperation with community leaders can be understood as strategies that aim to expand what families and girls perceive as possible and acceptable, by shifting shared norms over time rather than attempting to replace them.

5.2.3 Strengthening education access

In RQ1, access to education was identified as a key factor shaping girls' vulnerability to child marriage, where school dropout significantly increased the risk of early marriage by narrowing available alternatives. In RQ2, social workers describe strategies that aim to strengthen educational pathways by keeping girls in school and reducing barriers that push them out of education.

Keeping girls in school is seen as a direct and practical strategy that reduces the risk of early marriage. One participant explains this clearly by stating:

So, by doing that we are helping these young girls to stay in school, so they are able to escape some of the risks like early pregnancies early marriages or even ender-based violence and so forth.
(Interview 2).

Participants describe several concrete ways of supporting school retention. This includes motorship, scholarships and practical support that makes school attendance possible. Interviewee 2 explains that families often face school related costs and that social workers sometimes help cover those:

You need to pay contribution, this contribution needs money. Sometimes money, sometimes other school you need to provide goods like food (...) So we chip in and provide, paying the contributions making sure the girl child gets the education she needs to be getting.
(Interview 2).

One respondent also said:

And make sure that they stay in schools. So, we do that through mentorships. We do that through scholarships as a mission.
(Interview 9).

Interviewees stress that prevention is urgent because marriage can make it very difficult to return to school. Participants state:

But also, again, they can't go back to school once you get married.
(Interview 9).

As soon as they are married, they are no longer eligible to go to school.
(Interview 10).

The work conducted around education also includes school outreach, where social workers visit schools to create awareness and meet girls separately in some instances. Interviewee 5 describes this kind of activity (children attending Standard 5 to Standard 7 are approximately 11 to 13 years old.):

Being there we conduct different outreaches and when we meet with the student we do all of our activities based on creating awareness and in some instances, we meet girls by themselves. Referring to the outreach which we did on [late July] at [a primary school] when we were dedicated to meet girls from Standard 5 to Standard 7 where we spoke about gender-based violence and sexual reproductive health (...) we went beyond and discussed the matter of early marriages.
(Interview 5).

5.2.4 Working around the legal framework and enforcement

While the legal framework was described as a contributing cause of child marriage (RQ1), it describes a challenge in prevention work (RQ3) and as a condition for long term change (RQ4), it plays a limited role in social workers' immediate strategies. Social workers did not describe the law as something they could actively rely on or use consistently in their day-to-day prevention work. Instead, the legal context was often described as contradictory or ineffective which limited its usefulness as a practical tool.

Rather than working through formal legal mechanisms, social workers focused on preventive and rights-based approaches, such as education, counselling and engagement with families and communities. In this sense, the law was not absent from their work, but it

functioned more as a background condition than as a concrete strategy. As a result, social workers navigated this situation by prioritizing protection and prevention over legal enforcement. Their strategies were shaped by awareness that the law, in its current form, could not be relied upon to challenge child marriage effectively, even though it remained an important reference point in discussions about rights and long-term change.

5.3 Professional challenges in child protection work

This section addresses Research Question 3 by analyzing the challenge social workers encounter in their professional work related to child marriage. Social workers describe how their effort to prevent and respond to child marriage are shaped by multiple barriers. These challenges include limitations within education pathways, environmental and geographical constraints, legal institutions and resistance from culture and religion.

5.3.1 Economic insecurity and resource constraints

In RQ1, poverty and economic insecurity was described as key factors contributing to child marriage. In RQ2, these economic pressures were addressed through strategies aimed at strengthening families' financial capacity and supporting girls' continued education. In RQ3, participants emphasized that economic hardship also creates major challenges for prevention work, as limited resources restrict what support can be provided in practice.

Participants described that prevention efforts often require long-term support, follow-up and stable funding. However, participants described that they frequently work under conditions where resources are limited which affect the ability to respond consistently to girls at risk. One interviewee talked about how prevention work becomes difficult when organizations experience short-term and restrictive project funding.

I think the challenge for my work is just our resources, limited resources. You also meet a donor who wants you to do a thing through project-based funding, and they are very restrictive. Do you feel like you have enough resources now? No, it's a struggle. (Interview 9).

This shows how economic constraints operates not only at a household level but also within the system meant to support prevention work. When resources as limited or tied to donor priorities, social workers may struggle to sustain long-term interventions or provide meaningful alternatives for families facing urgent financial pressure. This can also mean

that even when social workers identify girls at risk, they may lack the capacity to provide support that could prevent marriage.

These constraints limit girls access to education and opportunities while also reducing the capacity of organizations to provide long-term support. Economic insecurity therefore remains a structural opportunity barrier that makes sustainable prevention more difficult (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407).

5.3.2 Social norms, honor and cultural expectations as resistance to intervention

In RQ1, social norms, honor and cultural expectations was identified as key factors sustaining child marriage by shaping what is seen as acceptable for girls and families. In RQ2, these same norms were addressed through strategies focused on dialogue, counselling and engagement with locally trusted leaders. In RQ3, social workers emphasized that these norms can also create resistance to intervention and limit what social workers are able to do in practice.

Respondents described the social meaning attached to marriage as one challenge. Respondents explained that marriage can carry status and legitimacy in the community which can make efforts to question or delay marriage appear inappropriate or unnecessary. One interviewee stated:

Marriage here is quite important. It provides status.
(Interview 2).

Gendered norms were also described as limiting towards social workers ability to engage directly with girls at risk to marriage. One participant described:

There are gender-based barriers, especially when it comes to consent. You cannot have a conversation with an under-18 girl without the consent from the parents.
(Interview 5).

This makes it difficult for social workers to provide protection since girls cannot easily be reached without family approval.

Religious beliefs were further described as shaping resistance to prevention work and that child marriage sometimes is defended through religious reasoning. Social workers described encountering limited openness to dialogue, particularly when intervention are perceived as confliction with faith- based understanding of what's right or acceptable. One interviewee said:

The hardest challenge is poor perception and speaking of poor perception, you can find those religious beliefs.
(Interview 5).

Gender norms were described as a practical barrier in prevention work. In some contexts, expectations about appropriate interaction between men and women limited who social workers could engage with, which restricted access to information and reduced opportunities for intervention:

But going to other communities as I told you, in Zanzibar I am woman, am not allowed to interact with men despite their age. So, it becomes a barrier in acquiring enough information which should be used within intervention.
(Interview 5).

From a decolonial perspective it's important not to treat these norms as fixed or timeless cultural traits. What is often described as "tradition" is shaped over time through wider historical and institutional power relations where authority has been located with elders, religious leader and family structures. These gendered expectations shape who social workers can speak to and how interventions are received and they are reproduced through everyday authority structures in the community (Cornwall & Rivas 2016, p.404-407).

Another participant similarly pointed to community resistance linked to strong cultural beliefs as a recurring challenge in their work.

But the other challenge he faces is community resistance. It can be linked to strong cultural beliefs in the community.
(Interview 4).

In relation to the theoretical framework, these challenges can be understood through power over (Rowland 1997, p.13) where authority is exercised by family, elder and religious leaders who define what is considered appropriate for girls.

5.3.3 Barriers to education access and protection

In RQ1, limited access to education was described as an important pathway into child marriage where dropping out of school increases girls' vulnerability. In RQ2, social workers highlighted strategies aimed at keeping girls in school through mentorship, outreach and practical support. In RQ3, social workers emphasized that institutional and educational barriers can limit the protective role of schooling in practice.

One major challenge described by the interviewees was that marriage can lead to immediate exclusion from education. As one participant explained:

As soon as they are married, they are no longer eligible to go to school
(Interview 10).

From the social workers' perspective, this means that prevention efforts must happen early since marriage quickly will close off education as an alternative pathway. Interviewees described this as limiting their ability to rely on schooling as a long-term protective option for girls at risk.

Participants pointed to practical barriers within the school system that shape their prevention work. They described that primary education is formally free in Tanzania but that families still face indirect cost such as uniforms, school materials, contributions or food requirements:

You need to pay contribution, and this contribution needs money, and sometimes in other schools you need to provide goods like food.
(Interview 2)

For social workers these everyday expenses become a concrete professional challenge. Even when they encourage families to prioritize schooling, they can't always address the financial pressure that make attendance difficult. As a result, education can't function as a reliable protective pathway in practice when families lack the resource needed to keep girls in school.

5.3.4 Challenges in legal framework and enforcement

In RQ1, the legal framework was described as a contributing factor to persistence of child marriage, particularly through contradictory age definitions within national legislation. In RQ2, social workers emphasized that law played a limited role in their everyday prevention strategies as it could not be relied upon as a consistent tool in practice. In RQ3, participants instead highlighted how weak enforcement and legal contradictions create major challenges in their professional work related to child marriage.

Social workers described weak enforcement of child marriage legislation as a major challenge in their prevention work. Participants explained that although laws exist, accountability is often missing in practice:

We have laws but there is no enforcement (...) To make sure the laws are being enforced and people are being held accountable
(Interview 1).

Legal protection does not automatically lead to change if it is not followed by real consequences. For social workers, weak enforcement means that the law cannot always

function as a clear tool for prevention. Even when child marriage is prohibited, the absence of accountability can allow the practice to continue with limited interruption. This can also place social workers in a difficult position where they are expected to protect girls but do not have strong institutional support to rely on.

The same participant also described how limited follow-up from authorities can reduce trust in the legal system. Even when cases are reported, communities may experience that nothing happen:

You go to police... the police do not work on cases... the communities live within the cycle of nothing happens
(Interview 1).

Such experience can reinforce the perception that reporting does not lead to action which weakens the role of the state in providing protection. When institutions fail to respond, families and communities may view law as a serious barrier. This makes prevention more challenging as social workers may have to rely mainly on dialogue and persuasion rather than formal legal measures.

These enforcement gaps reflect power over where institutions and legal systems shape whether girls' rights can be protected in practice (Rowland 1997, p.13). In this way, weak accountability and inconsistent legislation become structural barriers that limit social workers ability to prevent child marriage effectively and reduce girls' ability to access effective protection through the legal system.

Another challenge the interviewees described was the contradiction between legal framework, the law of marriage act and the child act. These inconsistencies in law create confusion at both institutional and community levels:

So we, for us, adult is 18. Yeah. But our marriage act, say, a girl who is 14, can get married (...) I feel like that's, that law was actually created out of the religion perspective (...) Because that is, at the age of 14, these girls already have their first period, but now girls have period, even at nine. So, and also, also some get their period late.
(Interview 9).

A risk associated with contradictory legal frameworks is that they can create room for individual interpretation both at institutional and community levels. This uncertainty can limit social workers ability to intervene effectively and increases the risk that girls fall between legal framework where they are not adequately protected by the law when facing early marriage.

These challenges can be understood primarily through power over as state authority and legal frameworks determine what is permitted, prohibited and enforced (Rowland 1997, p.13).

Overall, participants showed that weak enforcement and contradictory legislation limit the protective function of the legal framework. These dynamics illustrates power over as state institutions ultimately determine whether legal rights translate into meaningful protection for girls in practice (Rowland 1997, p.13).

5.4 Social change and shifting norms

This section addresses Research Question 4 by analyzing how social workers identify social change and shifting norms as key factors for achieving long-term and sustainable prevention of child marriage. Participants describe change as gradual process in which attitudes, expectations and social practices related to child marriage are slowly evolving over time.

5.4.1 Sustainable economic resources as enabling conditions

In RQ1, economic insecurity was described as a key factor contributing to child marriage. In RQ2, social workers highlighted prevention strategies that depend on organizational support. In RQ3, limited resources were also described as a challenge in everyday practice. In RQ4, participants therefore emphasized that sustainable funding and long-term cooperation are necessary enabling conditions for lasting prevention work.

Interviewees described long-term change as dependent on stable resources and long-term funding. They explained that prevention work cannot depend only on short-term project but needs continued support over time. One respondent described how much of their everyday work involves securing resources to keep programs running:

I work as an executive director. What I do most of the time, I fundraise. So, I fundraise for the program that's related around girl empowerment. So, my daily work is just looking for money and partnerships around that
(Interview 9).

This shows that prevention is not only what social workers do in practice but also about whether organizations have the financial conditions to continue their work. When funding is temporary or uncertain effort risk stopping or becoming difficult to sustain. Another respondent also stated:

So having a long-term fund, a long-term donors and partners who can work along the mission and values of the organization that will help to push a lot.
(Interview 2).

While long-term funding was described as necessary for sustaining prevention work, reliance on external donor support also raises questions about power and control over resources (cf. power over; Rowland 1997, p.13). From a decolonial perspective access to funding cannot be seen as neutral. Decisions about which programs receive support, for how long and under what conditions are often made by actors outside the local context. This reflects global inequalities where organizations in lower income countries depend on resources controlled elsewhere. In this sense, colonial legacies continue to influence how prevention work is organized and sustained. This connects to Cornwall and Rivas (2015, p.404-407) argument that agency and empowerment depend on enabling conditions, but that these conditions are always shaped by wider structural power relations.

Effective long-term prevention was described as requiring a good collaboration between NGOs and government services, as neither actor alone has the capacity to address the issue comprehensively, one interviewee stated:

It's important to have a good cooperation between NGOs and governments
(Interview 9).

When NGOs and government service cooperate, social worker can access stronger network support, including referrals, shared responsibilities and more consistent responses to girls at risk. Cooperation is important since it makes preventions less dependent on single organizations and more anchored in broader systems of protection.

5.4.2 Shifting social norms, honor and cultural expectations

In RQ1, social workers described social norms, honor and cultural expectations as central factors sustaining child marriage by shaping what is considered acceptable for girls and families. In RQ2, participants highlighted strategies that address these norms through dialogue, counselling, and engagement with community and religious leaders. In RQ3, participants also described how norms and religious authority can create resistance to intervention. In RQ4, social workers instead emphasized that long-term change depends on gradual shifts in these shared norms over time.

Social workers described social change as a gradual process in which attitudes, expectations and norms related to child marriage are slowly being renegotiated over time.

Participants in this study reflected on how changing times influence both community expectations and professional approaches:

Things have changed and so are we, we need to change and we need to provide an eco-environment and fendering environment where a boy child can excel and a girl child can excel.
(Interview 2).

This statement highlights that prevention is not only about individual choices but also about the wider social environment that surrounds children. It can be linked to an Ubuntu perspective which views wellbeing as something relational and shared within the community. Ubuntu emphasizes mutual responsibility, meaning that children's opportunities depend on how families, communities and local institutions support them. In this way, social change involves creating collective conditions where both girls and boys can thrive (Tamale 2020, p.221; McAllister 2010).

Changes over time were described in relation to how child marriage is understood and discussed within communities. Early marriage is increasingly questioned compared to the past, creating space for alternative views on girls' future and supporting long-term prevention efforts:

I think looking from the four, five, ten years behind on the area of the early marriage there have been, there have been an improvement. How people look at it, it's quite different, how people look at it right now, it's quite different how people look at it way back.
(Interview 2).

5.4.3 Education access as a pathway for long-term social change

In RQ1, limited access to education was described as an important factor contributing to girls' vulnerability to child marriage, where school dropout often increased the likelihood of early marriage by narrowing available alternatives. In RQ2, social workers highlighted educational support as a key prevention strategy, including scholarships, mentorship, and outreach aimed at keeping girls in school. In RQ3, participants also highlighted institutional and educational barriers that can limit schooling as protection in practice. In RQ4, participants framed education not only as an immediate protective measure, but also as a central pathway for long-term social change.

If a girl stays in school to get an education she can get exposed to alternative life possibilities beyond early marriage, school also helps to prevent other risks such as early pregnancy and violence:

So by doing that we are helping these young girls to stay in school, so they are able to escape some of the risks like early pregnancies early marriages or even gender-based violence and so forth.
(Interview 2).

Another respondent also mentioned that educated girls are more empowered economically by stating:

When a girl child is educated and probably, she is empowered economically she has a job she is highly likely to come back home to support the parents' compatible child that is according to my mother's perspective
(Interview 1).

This can be understood through power within, as education may strengthen girls' self-confidence and sense of capability. It also reflects power to, since education provides access to employment and resources, enabling girls to act independently and support their families, demonstrating increased agency (Rowland 1997, p.13).

5.4.4 Sustainable legal implementation and enforcement

In RQ1, legal contradictions were described as enabling child marriage. In RQ2, social workers noted that the law had limited use in everyday prevention. In RQ3, weak enforcement was highlighted as a major challenge. In RQ4, participants emphasized that long-term change requires stronger legal implementation and accountability.

Interviewees described legal change as an important part of long-term efforts to prevent child marriage. One respondent said that a stronger and more updated legislation could make a big difference in reducing the practice:

I feel like that law, yeah, like a new law will be very game-change. But also I mean more work needs to be done on a religious level (...) the law will be very game changing.
(Interview 9).

What the interviewee described shows that change should not be understood as a single situation but as one part of a wider process. Laws can be linked to power over, since they reflect institutional authority and define what is allowed, prohibited and protected (Rowland 1997, p.13). A new law can become enabling condition by setting clearer boundaries and making child marriage harder to defend as acceptable or normal.

At the same time, the interviewee is clear that legal reform must be combined with continued engagement with community and religious. This relates to power with since change is described as requiring collective work, dialogue and shared efforts to influence

attitudes over time (Rowland 1997, p.13). In other words, legal implementation can strengthen prevention, but it becomes more effective when it is connected to everyday work that builds support for that change even within the community.

Sustainable legal implementation can therefore be seen as part of the conditions that expand what becomes realistically possible for girls. Clear legal protection may strengthen girls' power to claim right and access protection while also supporting power within by reinforcing the idea that girls are entitled to safety and alternatives beyond early marriage (Rowland 1997, p.13). At the same time legal reform should be understood as an enabling condition rather than empowerment itself since empowerment remains a broader process of shifting power relations (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407). Long- term prevention depends on both institutional change (law) and social change (norms) where formal protection and community-based work together create a stronger foundation for reducing child marriage.

6. Discussion

This thesis has explored how social workers in Tanzania understand the causes of child marriage, the strategies they use to prevent and address it, the professional challenges they encounter and how they perceive social change over time.

6.1 Child marriage as Structured Constraint Rather Than Cultural Choice

Rather than treating child marriage as a cultural choice, our findings support reading it as a structured constraint produced through the interaction between economic insecurity, locally legitimate gender norms, uneven educational access and weakly functioning legal protection (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407). This shift matters because it changes what the problem is understood to be. If early marriage is framed mainly as tradition, prevention risks becoming a project of correcting culture. If it is framed as constraint, the analytical focus moves to how opportunity structures are narrowed and why marriage can appear as one of the few workable options within that narrowing.

This interpretation aligns with research that links child marriage in Tanzania to poverty, limited life options and bride price incentives, while also showing that material pressures gain force through normative authority and legitimacy (UNFPA n.d., p.2). Families may experience poverty as urgency, while community expectations define what counts as a respectable response to that urgency (UNFPA, n.d., p. 2; Avalos et al. 2015, p. 647). This helps explain why participants in this study describe marriage as both a survival strategy and a pathway that can restore respectability.

Agency depends on enabling conditions, that is, the material and institutional circumstances that make real choices possible (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407). When these conditions are weak, agency becomes constrained and costly. In our material, refusal of marriage becomes difficult when schooling is unsafe or inaccessible, resources are scarce, and protection systems do not reliably intervene. In such contexts, what appears as a choice is better understood as constrained agency shaped by power over within the family and community authority structures (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407).

Lastly, a decolonial feminist perspective is important because it cautions against treating culture as a fixed obstacle or applying alien concepts (Tamale 2020, p. 41, 205). We therefore approach norms as situated and reproduced through everyday practices and authority, which avoids culture blame while still taking normative power seriously. This also helps to explain why legal reform alone is unlikely to be sufficient. In contexts of

legal pluralism and normative distance, legal bans may have limited effect if legitimacy and enforcement remain weak (Nyamutata 2023, p. 10). Tanzania specific research also points to contradictions in the legal framework and uncertainty in implementation, including how statutory law interacts with customary and religious norms (Almohammadi 2023, p. 4-5; Avalos et al. 2015, p. 669-670). Taken together, our synthesis of RQ1 supports the argument that child marriage emerges through intertwined economic, normative and institutional structures that constrain agency rather than reflecting a simple cultural choice.

6.2 Working Through Norms and Structures: Relational Prevention Strategies

Prevention in this study can be discussed less as a set of separate activities and more as a way of working through social worlds in which child marriage is made meaningful and legitimate. Rather than to assume that change only happens by replacing culture with different policies, social workers strategies illustrate a relational logic: they try to shift norms by engaging the actors who hold authority in the community and by building a shared responsibility for alternatives to early marriage. This aligns with prior research that emphasizes that community conversations need to be well sustained to have realistic effects (Erulkar et al. 2020, p. 68). This emphasis on relational change also resonates with Ubuntu, where wellbeing and responsibility are understood as collective, making prevention a shared social project rather than an individual task (McAllister 2010).

The most important contributions of these strategies are not that they deliver information, but that they attempt to widen the conditions under which girls and families can act differently. Dialogue, counseling and mediation can be read as efforts to expand power within and power to by reducing fear, stigma and conflict, and by making non marriage options more thinkable and defensible in the family (Cornwall 2016, p. 343-346); Salim & Lombard 2020, p. 198-201). Working with community leaders and other locally legitimate actors further reflects power with, where change depends on collective endorsement rather than individual persuasion alone (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407); Cornwall 2016, p. 344, 348; Rowland 1997, p.11-14).

At the same time, the data invite a more critical discussion of what relational prevention can achieve under structural poverty. Economic support and education focused measures are often describing as prevention because they create alternatives, yet

empowerment theory cautions that resources only matter when they become enabling conditions that translates into real opportunity and control (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p. 404-407; Salim & Lombard 2020, p. 199-201). This helps clarify both the promise and the limit of the approach. Relational work may reduce normative pressure and open space for negotiation, but when schooling is unsafe or inaccessible and services are underfunded the opportunity structure remains narrow (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p. 404-407). A decolonial feminist reading therefore supports treating culture as an arena for change, while insisting that long term prevention requires material and institutional investment, not only better messaging (Tamale 2020, p. 221; Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p. 404-407).

6.3 The Limits of Law and the Need for Multi-Level Change

Prevention work can't rely on community-based strategies even when dialogue and relation approaches are effective. Participants described how child marriage is sustained not only through norms and economic pressure but also through institutional conditions that limit protection in practice. Legal protection was often described as unclear and weak on the ground which limits the law's role as a reliable tool for prevention.

Even when laws exist, accountability is often missing in everyday practice. This creates a situation where social workers are expected to protect girls but can't always rely on legal institutions to respond consistently. When cases are reported but no action follows, the law loses its practical authority and child marriage can continue with limited consequences. Prevention therefore becomes dependent on counselling and community engagement rather than formal legal measures. This gap reflects how power operates through institutions that shape whether rights are realized in practice (Cornwall 2016, p. 344; Rowland 1997, p.11-14).

Long-term change was framed as requiring stronger institutional support, sustainable resources, and cooperation between NGOs and government actors. Participants described that community-level interventions are important but, they need implementation of legal responsibilities and functioning protection systems. This connects to the critique of Tanzania's marriage legislation, where legal contradictions and uneven implementation continue to undermine protection for girls (Equality Now 2021). International work similarly highlights laws must be accompanied by functioning institutions and social support systems to create lasting change (UNICEF 2022).

Cornwall and Rivas (2015, p.404-407) argue that empowerment depends on enabling conditions that make meaningful choices possible.

6.4 Contributions, Implications and Reflections

This study contributed to research on child marriage by highlighting how social workers understands the practices as shaped by intersecting economic, normative and institutional constraints rather than as a purely cultural choice. By entering perspectives from both NGOs and government settings, the findings provide insight into how prevention is carried out through everyday empowerment-oriented strategies while also being limited by structural barriers such as poverty, weak enforcement and resource insecurity.

The study suggest that effective prevention requires more than awareness-raising alone. Long-term efforts must strengthen girls access to education, expand economic alternatives for families and ensure accountable protection systems alongside community-based work. In this sense, empowerment depends not only on individual agency but also on enabling conditions that make meaningful choices possible (Cornwall & Rivas 2015, p.404-407)

Some limitations should be noted. Since the study is based on qualitative interviews with social workers, the findings reflect professional accounts rather perspective of girls or families affected by child marriage. The contextual focus and limited sample size also mean that the findings are not intended for broad generalization. Social workers described prevention as deeply relational and dependent on community dialogue but also limited by poverty, weak enforcement and institutional gasps. This leads to questions about how sustainable change can be achieved when structural constraints remain strong. How do girls themselves experience prevention efforts and what kind of support feel meaningful form their perspective.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Information Letter



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

Information Letter – Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Hello,

We are Michelle Nilsson and Fanny Rudstedt, undergraduate students at Lund University, School of Social Work in Sweden. We are conducting a study about social workers' strategies in preventing child marriage in Tanzania. The purpose of the study is to understand how social workers and volunteers work to prevent and address child marriage and which strategies are considered the most effective.

How the study will be conducted

We would like to invite you to a 20–30 minute interview which will take place in person. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. The recording will only be used for research purposes and when the study is finished and the thesis has been approved all recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

You have been selected via the organization Girls First Initiative and have experience working on issues related to child marriage.

Possible benefits and risks

The study aims to increase knowledge about effective strategies against child marriage. There is no direct personal benefit for participants. Your participation involves no known risks, but some questions may feel sensitive. You may skip any questions or stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All information you share will be kept completely confidential. Any details that could identify you, such as place of residence or workplace will be changed or removed to ensure anonymity.

Voluntary participation

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may decline or withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Timeline

Interviews are planned to take place in November and December 2025 and the thesis is expected to be completed in March 2026.

Ethical aspect

Prior to participation, all interviewees will receive clear and comprehensive information about the purpose of the study, the use of their data, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent will be obtained and confidentiality will be strictly maintained. Any sensitive or identifiable information will be anonymized and excluded from the final thesis. Furthermore, all raw data will be securely stored during the research process and permanently deleted once the project is completed in accordance with standard ethical procedures for data protection.

This ethical framework aims to ensure transparency, respect, and responsibility toward participants while also promoting trust and integrity throughout the research process. The study adheres to principles outlined by the Swedish “Vetenskapsrådet” (2024) including informed consent, voluntary participation and the obligation to minimize any form of harm or discomfort.

We thank you in advance for considering participating in our study.

If you have any questions, please contact us:

- Fanny Rudstedt: frudstedt@gmail.com
- Michelle Nilsson: michan9@hotmail.com

Thank you for considering participation!

Kind regards,

Fanny Rudstedt & Michelle Nilsson

Lund University – School of Social Work

<https://www.soch.lu.se/>

8.2 Interview-guide

Interview-guide

(Note: Since we are doing a semi-structured interview, it is OK to jump between questions or let the participant drift off on their own if it proves interesting for the purpose)

- Is it okay if we record the interview to make sure we remember correctly?

1. Introduction

- Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We are conducting a study about how social workers in the voluntary sector work to prevent child marriage and empower girls in Tanzania.
- The interview will take about 30-45 minutes. You can skip any question or stop at any time. Everything you share will be anonymous.
- Do you currently or have you worked previously in the field of work against child marriage?
- What does the term “empowerment” mean to you in your work?

2. Background and professional role

Question:

1. Can you tell us a little about your role and what you do in your daily work in the organization or from previous organizations?
2. How long have you been working in the field of social work / child protection?
 - How did you first become involved in this field?
3. What kind of activities and initiatives does your organization do (or did do) to support girls or prevent early marriage?
 - Which of these programs are you most involved in personally, or was involved in?
4. What motivates you personally to work in this area, or to have been working?
5. Can you describe the community or area where you work or have been working?
 - What are some of the main challenges that children or families face there?

3. Views on the causes and consequences of child marriage

Questions:

1. From your experience, what are the main reasons why child marriage happens in this community?
2. How do cultural, religious, or economic factors influence these practices?
3. How do you think child marriage affects girls — for example in terms of education, health, or empowerment?
4. Are there community beliefs or expectations about girls and marriage that make prevention difficult?
5. Have you noticed changes over time in attitudes toward child marriage?
6. What age groups are most affected, and why?

(Follow up questions)

- Can you give an example?
- How do people in the community talk about this issue?

4. Working methods and strategies (empowerment perspective)

Questions:

1. How do you and your organization/work (or previous organization) work to prevent child marriage?
2. How do you involve families or community leaders in your work?
3. What approaches seem to work best when trying to change attitudes or behaviors?
4. How do you think your work contributes to empowering girls — individually or in the community?

5. Challenges and dilemmas

Questions:

1. What are the main challenges you face in your work to prevent child marriage?

2. Are there cultural or gender-related barriers that make your work difficult?
3. How do you handle situations when traditional norms or beliefs conflict with your organization's goals?
4. What kind of support do you wish you had to make your work more effective?
 - Do you have enough resources to do the work you want to do?

6. Future and long-term change

Questions:

1. What do you think are the most important changes needed to prevent child marriage in the long term?
2. What role do you think social workers, NGOs and government can play in that change?
3. What gives you hope in your work?

7. Closure

Questions:

- Is there anything else you would like to add or think is important that we haven't talked about?
- Thank you so much for sharing your experiences. Would it be okay if we contact you later if we have follow-up questions?

8.3 Consent-form



Consent to Participate in a Degree Project at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Lund University, Sweden

I consent to participate in a student project conducted as part of a degree at Lund University, Sweden. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that no personal data or identifying information will be collected or shared. The information I provide will be used only for this academic project and will be securely destroyed once the thesis has been completed and approved.

Information on the processing of personal data

The following personal data may be processed: Name, email-address, and professional role.

The following sensitive personal data may be processed: None.

Note: While the interviews may include discussions about work experiences, no sensitive personal data about the participants or their clients will be collected. All information will be treated confidentially and anonymized where relevant.

How your personal data will be handled:

Your name, email, and job role will be stored safely and only seen by the students conducting this degree project and supervisor. The information will be used only for this study, and any identifying details will be removed in reports. All data will be deleted once the thesis has been graded and finalized.

We do not share your personal data with third parties.

Lund University, Box 117, SE-221 00 Lund, with organization number 202100-3211, is the data controller. You can find Lund University's privacy policy at www.lu.se/integritet.

You have the right to receive information about the personal data we process about you. You also have the right to have any incorrect personal data about yourself corrected.

If you have complaints about our processing of your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer at dataskyddsbud@lu.se.

You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority (the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection, IMY) if you believe that we are processing your personal data in an incorrect manner.

I consent to participate in this degree project:

Location	Signature
Date	Name in block letters