



**Belgium**  
partner in development

# THE STATE OF GIRLS' RIGHTS IN TANZANIA

March 2022



## GIRLS' RIGHTS AT A GLANCE<sup>1</sup>

Tanzania has an increasingly **strong policy and legal framework** that shows a favourable position regarding the protection of children and girls, and the advancement of their rights, with reference to gender equality at national level, as reveals the lift on November 2021 by the government of the ban on pregnant students and adolescent mothers from attending school. However, **gaps still exist in the formulation of the policy, as well as between policy formulation and implementation**. Overall, the country ranks low (159/189) in terms of women's empowerment, from educational attainment of girls and intimate partner violence to the unfavourable legislation regarding girls' marriage. Children, especially girls, those living with disabilities, at risk of CEFMU and early pregnancy, continue to face challenges and often slip through social safety nets because of several exclusion factors.

Girls and young women in Tanzania experience **violations of their rights that are deeply rooted in social and gender norms**, that state different and clear expectations on girls and boys. To comply with norms, **girls face a double sentence, because of their gender and their age**; according to these norms, girls and young women are expected to be submissive and obedient. As a result, **seven women out of ten, currently married, do not make any decisions, either alone or jointly, on their own healthcare, household purchases and visits to their family and relatives**. Per traditions and customs, leadership roles can only be assumed by men within households, while **girls are socialised to embrace motherhood, be attached to the domestic sphere and bear the burden of domestic work**, in addition or in substitution to paid and income-generating work.

Despite free and compulsory education from primary to secondary level, **school drop-out remains significant for girls**, with almost all of them going to primary education, but only two in ten following secondary school. The taboo associated with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services, the lack of relevant, reliable and accessible information and services regarding SRHR, previous ban on pregnant girls and teenage mothers from attending school, gaps in the legislation with minimum legal age of marriage for girls at 15 – and 14 years through court decision – drive **violence and discrimination, including CEFMU, as well as early pregnancies, which are among the main reasons behind school drop-outs**.

Among **adolescents and young women aged 15-24, one in three has already experienced physical or sexual violence**. In the majority of cases, perpetrators were the current or former partner. Abiding by gender norms at stake, violence continues to be accepted in the household because it is normalized and justified by harmful stereotypes, limiting gender roles and limited access to protection, SRHR and legal services. In a context where violence is normalized, **six adolescent girls and young women out of ten agree that it is justified for a husband to beat his wife for stated reasons** (if she burns the food, goes out without asking, argues with him or neglects the children). This is further reinforced by the legal framework in place as, on the one hand, corporal punishment is legitimized, and, on the other hand, rape in marriage is not recognized as a sexual and gender-based violence.

Though Tanzanian women are responsible for 70% of the food production, they face **barriers on their economic opportunities and lack critical skills to access decent, income-generating and protective jobs**. Because of discrimination in the law with regards to inheritance, less than one woman in ten owns a land and has her name on the title or deed of a land she owns. Lack of access to credit, skills development and control of productive resources are obstacles to young women's autonomy and empowerment. Men are more likely to be employed in the formal sector and earn almost three times more than women, who in urban areas, occupy low paying jobs and are at risk of engaging in unsafe, worst forms of labour (including sexual exploitation). Four women out of ten remain unpaid when employed, compared to one man in ten, a situation further exacerbated by the fact that young women have to find a difficult balance between paid work, domestic chores and their school attendance or professional life.

Poverty is highly prevalent and has not been decreasing significantly over the past decades: for four citizens who moved out of poverty, three fell below the poverty line. The situation is worsening with

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<sup>1</sup> The executive summary contains references that are made available across the report

political fragility, climate change related events, and COVID-19 impacts, threatening agricultural production and livelihood. As nine women in ten are engaged in vulnerable employment, they are particularly at risk.

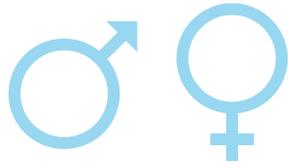
As **gender and poverty strongly interact, socio-economic factors and external shocks affect girls' health, education and protection, and prevent them from lifting themselves out of poverty.** Harmful practices being linked with poverty and lack of resources, **girls experience a series of traps**, as teenage childbearing is correlated with poverty, with teenagers in the lowest wealth quintile are more than three times more likely to have started childbearing than those in the highest quintile.

The legal framework includes ratification of international instruments and adoption of national laws that are protective and promoting gender equality at various levels; yet, it proves insufficient. Ambiguities in applicable law with competing systems, discriminatory policies and lack of access to justice and accountability are the major shortcomings to ensure that girls can thrive, by knowing and claiming their rights.



**Young peer influencer in Tanzania.**  
Plan International, 2020

RANKS

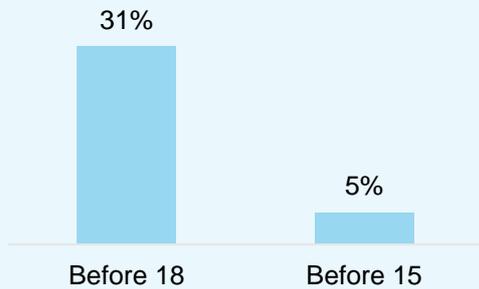


159/189



ON THE GENDER DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Share of **girls married**,  
before 18 and before 15

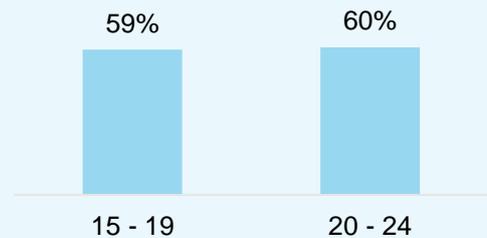


23%

OF WOMEN CANNOT READ AND  
WRITE

ONLY 9%  OF  
WOMEN WITH NO EDUCATION  
USE A BANK ACCOUNT

Share of young women  
having experienced  
**physical or sexual  
violence**, by age range



67%

OF EMPLOYED WOMEN ARE ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE

## HOW GIRLS SHOULD BEHAVE – GENDER NORMS AT WORK IN TANZANIA

Tanzania has an increasingly strong policy and legal framework that shows a favourable position regarding the protection of children and girls, and the advancement of their rights, with reference to gender equality at national level. Yet, Tanzania ranks low in terms of women empowerment (159/189 of Gender Development Index), with **women and girls facing issues ranging from educational attainment of girls, intimate partner violence or the unfavourable legislation regarding girls' marriage.**<sup>2</sup>

Daily, girls and young women experience violations of their rights, **from discrimination to violence, that are enabled and perpetuated by the strength of limiting gender norms.** Such norms translate into clear expectations from boys and girls. Boys as they grow up, and men, are expected to be heads of households, to bring income for the family members, to exercise power and control over girls and women, including their sisters of the same age or older. On the other hand, girls and women are expected to be submissive and obedient to their husband, father or brothers.<sup>3</sup>

Globally, social norms around early marriage, son preference, domestic and unpaid care work, and women in the workforce and politics limit girls and young women's opportunities based on their gender.

### “Even if you have an opinion, you just don't talk”: everything that girls and young women do not decide for themselves

A woman, respondent to a focus group discussion conducted by Plan International, stated: “*even if you have an opinion, you just don't talk. You only talk when you are asked to explain yourself or provide information on something*”<sup>4</sup>. **65% of currently married women report not making any decision, either alone or jointly with their husband, about all of the following: their own healthcare, major household purchases, and visits to their families and relatives.**<sup>5</sup> Customs and traditions, that are expressions of gender norms and expectations, and participate to shape stereotypes and roles, play an important role in these differences as they keep on providing justifications for gender inequality; for instance, as per Masai custom, women cannot lead men and roles of leadership can only be assumed by old male members.

Widespread misconceptions about gender relationships include that **women are men's property**, and that therefore a property cannot decide.<sup>6</sup> This has an **impact also on the division of labour and allocation of resources within the household.** Respondents to a study conducted on Tanzanian university students and secondary students “*explained that although both boys and girls work on the farm together, afterward the girl would collect water, and cook while the boy is resting, waiting for food. The boys are taught how to become men and perform men's duties while girls are socialised to perform mother's duties*”.<sup>7</sup>

Gender norms are particularly challenging to influence, as they are unwritten rules of behaviour, that provide justifications for gender inequalities, unequal power and domination of men over women, and that are not questioned. In addition, **because girls and women lack agency, skills, access to relevant and reliable information and services, particularly in rural communities - where two third of women live**<sup>8</sup> – **not complying with social expectations and experiencing social sanctions is not an option.**<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> UNDP, *Gender Development Index*, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, *National Guideline for Gender and Respectful Care Mainstreaming and Integration Across RMNCAH services in Tanzania*, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> J. Mgomia, *Scoping study report on gender norms in selected wards of Illemela and Nyamagana districts, Mwanza region, Tanzania*, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> DHS, *Tanzania*, 2015-2016.

<sup>6</sup> United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Feinstein et al., *Gender Inequality in the Division of Household Labour in Tanzania*, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> DHS, *Tanzania*, 2015-2016.

<sup>9</sup> United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, *op. cit.*

## The life-changing impact of teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy for a girl in Tanzania has life-long effects, as **her education is highly likely to end, and her economic empowerment perspectives fade away**, resulting in her becoming more vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. Teenage pregnancy, therefore, results in a **cohort of young girls with little education and limited economic opportunities, with critical barriers to lift themselves out of poverty**.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the percentage of women aged 15 - 19 who have either had a birth or are pregnant is 26%, a share that has been increasing, aligned with the increase in adolescent fertility rate from 2010 and 2015.<sup>11</sup>

**Praising motherhood, expecting girls to comply with the expectations of domestic life contributes to making sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) a taboo topic to discuss.** As early as for young women aged 20-24, 18% of them report having **unmet needs for family planning**, and half of them do not have a comprehensive correct knowledge about AIDS. Adolescents report: *“I didn’t have the information about pregnancies and what could happen”*<sup>12</sup>. This context encourages child, early and forced marriage and early pregnancies associated with it, contradicting the right to education of girls, resulting in extreme numbers of school drop-out. Teenage childbearing is correlated with poverty, with **teenagers in the lowest wealth quintile being more than three times more likely to have started childbearing than those in the highest quintile** (42% compared to 12%).<sup>13</sup>

Girls’ health is impacted by their socio-economic situation. Girls and women are both “affected” and “infected” by HIV more than men, which, in turn, decreases their income generation abilities and increases their poverty. 6% of women, aged 15 to 49, are positive to HIV, which is twice the prevalence among men (3%).<sup>14</sup> Reasons explaining such rate are girls and women’s low negotiation power to use protection rooted in power imbalances, girls engaging or forced to engage into sex earlier than boys, transactional relationships in order to cater for their needs, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation.

The **impact on education, especially secondary education, is detrimental.** With the provision of free and compulsory education from primary to secondary level, Tanzania has a rate of more than 70% for both boys and girls in primary school attendance.<sup>15</sup> However, these numbers drop drastically

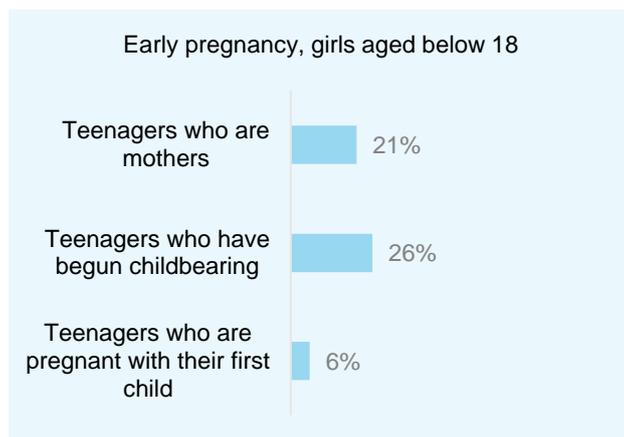


FIGURE 1: DHS, TANZANIA, 2015-2016

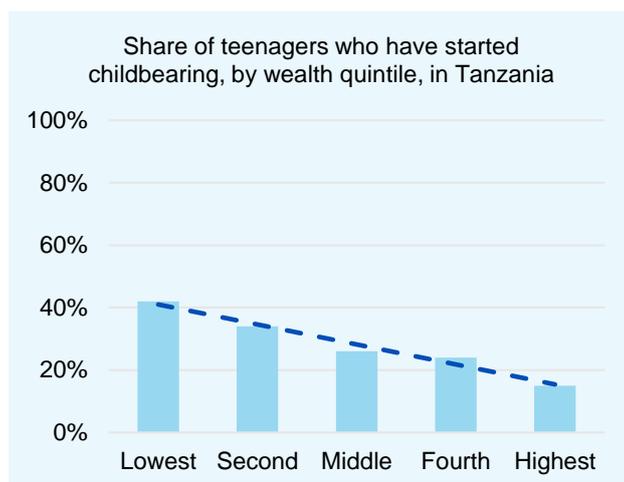


FIGURE 2: DHS, TANZANIA, 2015-2016

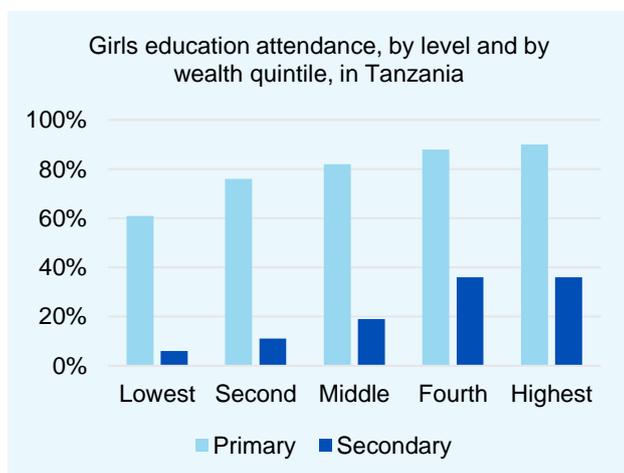


FIGURE 3: DHS, TANZANIA, 2015-2016

<sup>10</sup> UNFPA Tanzania, *Teenage pregnancy*, Fact sheet.

<sup>11</sup> DHS, *Tanzania*, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch, *“I had a dream to finish school”: Barriers to secondary education in Tanzania*, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> DHS, *Tanzania*, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF, *Sustainable Development Goals and Children in Tanzania*, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> DHS, *Tanzania*, op. cit.

as girls enter in secondary education. Only 24% of women and 22% of men have attended secondary level, almost three times less than in primary.<sup>16</sup> There is also a crucial need to **focus on the quality of learning outcomes** as the literacy rate - which can be a measurement proxy for the quality of education – of girls still lag behind the boys': for 100 boys knowing to write and read, only 97 girls can. Yet, evidence shows that quality of learning is a much better predictor of women empowerment than school enrolment alone.<sup>17</sup>

For girls, part of the reason comes from **lack of access to SRHR services, as well as missing school for 3-5 days every month due to menstruation, and the related policy adopted by the government which banned on pregnant girls and teenage mothers attending school.** In 2017, the President stated that girls getting pregnant when attending school will have no chance to return to the school system after giving birth. Police have arrested pregnant school girls and their families to force them to reveal the identity of the man or boy who had sexual intercourse with them and schools subjected girls to forced pregnancy tests.<sup>18</sup> An adolescent confirmed: *"They take all the girls to the hospital and one by one they test them. If a girl is pregnant and they find out, she will be expelled from school"*<sup>19</sup>, which is a grave violation of their human rights.

Thanks to consistent and long-term advocacy from civil society organisations and women and girls' rights organisations, Tanzanian government just lifted this ban on November 2021, which will encourage girls who dropped out of school to go back to it.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, the *Marriage Act of 1971*, still in place, sets the **minimum age for marriage for girls at 15 with parental consent, and 18 for boys, and gives permission for the marriage of 14-year-old children** when a court is satisfied that there is the existence of special, but unspecified, circumstances.<sup>21</sup> Advocacy efforts were made by civil society to raise such minimum age. An advocate even won a case against the Tanzanian government in 2019, with the court recognizing it to be a human rights violation. However, no changes in the legislation were done yet, with the government defending it through the respect of cultures and religions present in Tanzania.

### Justified violence, limited agency: at age 24, more than one young woman in two has ever experienced physical or sexual violence

These deeply entrenched social norms **justify the acceptance of violence against girls and women, and perpetuate it. 57% of women, aged 15 to 49, have ever experienced physical or sexual violence;** the high prevalence of violence, attitudes justifying violence drive violence also for adolescent girls and young women, as **59% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 and 60% of young women aged 20-24 have ever experienced physical or sexual violence.**<sup>22</sup>

The normalization of violence lies in **commonly shared harmful conceptions about gendered roles.** *"Women must be submissive to male family members, men are expected to exercise coercive control, men have the right to discipline women, women cannot deny their partner sex, women experience violence because they are dressed provocatively and sexual harassment is normalised"*.<sup>23</sup>

Almost 100% of women ever-married reported that the perpetrators of their violence were **current or former husband or partner.**<sup>24</sup>

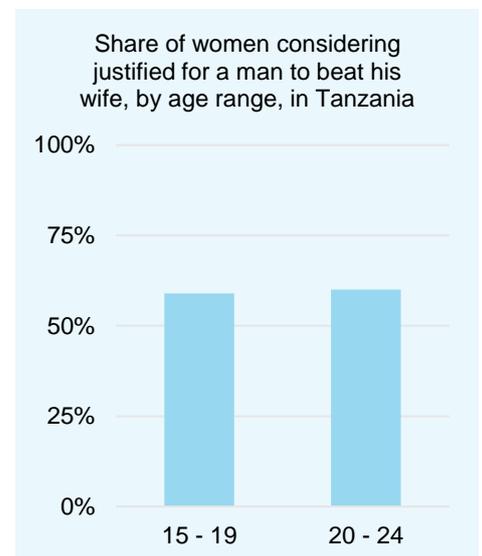


FIGURE 4: DHS, TANZANIA, 2015-2016

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> M. Kaffenberger, L. Pritchett, *Effective investment in women's future: Schooling with learning*, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Watch, *"I had a dream to finish school": Barriers to secondary education in Tanzania*, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> B. Wambura, *Tanzania lifts ban on pregnant school girls*, The Citizen, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch, *"I had a dream to finish school": Barriers to secondary education in Tanzania*, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> DHS, *Tanzania*, 2015-2016.

<sup>23</sup> Tanzania Commission for AIDS, *Gender assessment of the national HIV/AIDS response*, Tanzania, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> DHS, *Tanzania*, 2015-2016.

Domestic violence is the most frequent and remains highly accepted. **59% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 and 60% of young women aged 20-24 agree that it is justified for a husband to beat his wife** for any of these specific reasons: if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children and refuses sexual intercourse.<sup>25</sup> Acceptance of violence is further reinforced by **legal frameworks** that, on one hand, legitimize corporal punishment of children at home and in schools<sup>26</sup>, and, on the other hand, fail to recognize forms of violence in the law, such as rape in marriage not recognized as a form of gender-based violence.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, a number of **traditional harmful practices continue to be exercised against girls and women and are seen as acceptable practices, rarely challenged at community level**: widow sexual cleansing, initiation rites, ceremonies for girls that lead to abuse, killings of older women accused of witchcraft and the practice of prescribing sex with girls or women with albinism as a cure for HIV.<sup>28</sup>

### The barriers to economic empowerment

As a result of limiting norms, **multiple barriers to their empowerment, lack of technical and non-cognitive skills, young women face specific barriers to access sustainable, decent, productive employment, entrepreneurship and livelihood opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty**<sup>29</sup>. They lack skills as well as networking, financial and operational opportunities. Men are more likely to be employed in the formal sector and earn almost 3 times more than women, who in urban areas, occupy low paying jobs and are at risk of engaging in unsafe, worst forms of labour (including sexual exploitation).<sup>30</sup>

Economic empowerment and limiting gender norms are strongly intertwined. Literature reviews regarding women's agency and empowerment highlight that gender norms surrounding women's agency moderate the impacts of many interventions that aim at alleviating material constraints. Access to financial resources alone, without addressing gender-specific constraints, is not a mechanism that consistently improves young women's agency. However, giving young women more direct control over resources, often by employing design or program features such as privacy or digital payment systems, appears to be a mechanism that consistently leads to improvements in women's agency.

### Yet, working with girls and young women as early as possible is a unique opportunity to strengthen their agency

Based on the literature review, programs show a greater impact when aiming to support young women in delaying marriage and childbearing, compared to programs that aimed to change household decision-making dynamics within a marriage, perhaps because women did not have good outside options.

Adolescence is a crucial time in the transition from childhood to adulthood, a time at which the expectations, opportunities, risks and needs for girls and boys diverge considerably.

Legal barriers, enshrined in low value of girls and women, **make it possible for girls and women to be discriminated by the custom and the law in terms of inheritance**. By the Customary Declaration Order of 1963, girls and women cannot inherit and benefit from the estate of their deceased husband, even if such estates were matrimonial assets which were jointly acquired. Girls

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF, *Child protection fact sheet*, Tanzania, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Tanzania Commission for AIDS, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> CEDAW Committee, *Tanzania Concluding Observations*, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Wei Chang, Eleonora Guarnieri, Seema Jayachandran, Lucia Diaz-Martin, Akshara Gopalan, Claire Walsh. *Enhancing Women's Agency: Cross-Cutting Lessons From Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Studies in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, July 2020. J-Pal Working Paper

<sup>30</sup> National Bureau of Statistics, *Formal sector employment and earnings survey 2016*, Tanzania Mainland, 2018.

and women can only inherit movable property which they have used during their lifetime, and cannot sell them unless there are no surviving male members in the family.<sup>31</sup>

Though women account for **70% of the food production, they face many challenges of lack of access to credit and skills development, and control of productive resources**.<sup>32</sup> 42% of women, aged 15 to 49, remain unpaid when employed, compared to 10% for men. Economically, girls and women are already at a disadvantage and all these barriers increase their vulnerabilities by pushing them to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as engaging in transactional sexual relationships.<sup>33</sup>

As a result, women have significantly **less access to productive assets, leverage tools for income-generating activities**. Owning agricultural productive asset is the exception, as only 8% of women, aged 15 to 49, own a land alone<sup>34</sup>, and even when they do own one, the plots are smaller.<sup>35</sup> In addition, among women owning a land, only 8% of them have their name on the title or deed of a land they own, compared to the double - 17% - for men.<sup>36</sup> Only 28% of women use a bank account, which is less than men (43%), and this is positively correlated with education - 9% for no education in contrast to 46% for secondary and higher level - and wealth - 8% for the lowest quintile as opposed to 53% for the highest quintile.<sup>37</sup>

## **POVERTY TRAP, SHOCKS AND RESILIENCE: HOW POVERTY ACTS AS A BARRIER TO EMPOWERMENT IN TANZANIA**

Poverty remains widespread across Tanzania, despite positive evolutions in recent years. Significant efforts resulted in a reduction in the proportion of stunted children by more than one third between 1992 and 2018, a 40% decrease in under-5 child mortality since 2005 and more than 30% reduction in new HIV infections among children between 2005 and 2017.<sup>38</sup> However, with a Human Development Index of 0.529, ranging Tanzania at place 163 out of 189 countries<sup>39</sup>, **about half of the country's population continues to live below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per person per day**<sup>40</sup>, with the most marginalized populations being left behind.

More than a third of children still grow up stunted, attendance in primary school has been falling (99% in 2008, but 81% in 2018<sup>41</sup>), and neonatal and maternal mortality rates remain high (1 in 33 women will die during pregnancy, at childbirth or during the 2 months after giving birth<sup>42</sup>). For every four Tanzanians who moved out of poverty, three fell below the poverty line.<sup>43</sup>

### **Missed opportunities for poorest girls' empowerment and agency when poverty and gender interact**

Yet, in Tanzania, as in any part of the world, **poverty acts as an additional exclusion factor for the realization of girls' rights**<sup>44</sup>; girls in situation of poverty have **less opportunities, skills and agency for empowerment, including empowerment to challenge limiting gender norms**. While school dropout is driven by limiting norms and lower value for girls' education, poverty interacts strongly, as girls from wealthiest families are six times more likely to attend secondary schooling. In situation where economic resources are scarce, girls remain less prioritized than boys.

In addition, adolescent girls and young women **from wealthiest households adopt less risky behaviours, adhere less frequently to harmful beliefs and experience less violations of their**

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<sup>31</sup> United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> UNWomen, *Women and Men Facts and Figures*, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> DHS, *Tanzania, op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> I. Idris, *Barriers to women's economic inclusion in Tanzania*, UK, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> DHS, *Tanzania, op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF, *Sustainable Development Goals and Children in Tanzania*, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> UNDP, *Tanzania Human Development Report*, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> World Bank, *Tanzania*, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> World Bank, *Tanzania*, 2021.

<sup>42</sup> DHS, *Tanzania, op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> World Bank, *Tanzania*, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Wei Chang et al., *op. cit.*

**rights, ranging from CEFMU** (among the wealthiest households, 9% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are married or living in a union, while among the poorest households, girls are five times more likely to be married or living in a union<sup>45</sup>), **to the use of a contraception method** (among young women from the wealthiest families, 39% of young women use a method of contraception, almost twice as much as young women from the poorest families<sup>46</sup>), including **attitudes towards violence**, with 45% of women from wealthiest families justifying wife-beating, compared to 70% of women from poorest families.<sup>47</sup>

Women in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) on average report less freedom of choice, control over one's life and life satisfaction compared to men in the same countries and women in wealthier countries. Globally, the average rate of respondents agreeing that wife beating is acceptable, that women have no say in decisions on large household purchases, or that agree that men make better business executives than women do, is strongly correlated with wealth of the country – the lower the GDP per capita, the more likely respondents will report negative attitudes towards gender equality and women and girls' empowerment.

In addition, as **poverty and rural residency interact**, it is worth noting that 20% of women, aged 15 to 49, have no education in rural areas, compared to 6% in urban areas. Hopefully, the gap tends to close, with 76% of rural girls and 87% of urban girls attending primary school, and 19% of rural girls and 33% of urban girls attending secondary school.<sup>48</sup>

Already disadvantaged by their position in society, **girls and women experience higher incidences of poverty and suffer negative consequences on their health, education and protection**. 86% of women are engaged in vulnerable employment, preventing them from formal work arrangements, social protection and safety nets to guard against economic shocks, such as the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>49</sup>

### Complexity of future shocks & resilience

Political fragility, climate change, COVID-19 **crises and their consequences increase the risks of remaining or falling into poverty for the poorest families**. This could entail potential civil disturbances with young people becoming a potential recruiting pool for radical forces, including rebel groups and terrorists, present in the region.<sup>50</sup> Tanzanian communities are also dealing with a **high prevalence of people on the move**: large movements of internal migrants from rural to urban areas and rural to rural areas, large movement of refugees to Northwest Tanzania from neighbouring countries (mainly Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo), international labour migration and irregular migration - with women and girls making up half of the immigrants in 2015, putting them at high risk of experiencing violence, exploitation and abuse.<sup>51</sup>

**Climate change effects also severely impact the Tanzanian population**. Rising temperatures, longer dry spells, more intense heavy rainfall and sea level rise make Tanzania the 26th most vulnerable country to climate risks.<sup>52</sup> Extreme climatic events put pressure on the lands, resources, livestock and harvest. On the one hand, droughts affect on average almost 6 million people annually. On the other hand, floods affect on average almost 150,000 people annually.<sup>53</sup> These disasters threaten agricultural production and livelihood for millions of Tanzanians, especially women, as 75 to 80% of Tanzanians are employed by the agricultural sector<sup>54</sup> and 67% of employed women are engaged in agriculture.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> DHS, *Tanzania, op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> World Bank, *Tanzania*, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Regional Analysis of Youth Demographics, *Briefing note*, Tanzania.

<sup>51</sup> IOM, *Facts and Figures*, 2021.

<sup>52</sup> USAID, *Climate Risk Profile Tanzania*, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> CIMA; UNISDR, *United Republic of Tanzania Disaster Risk Profile*, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> USAID, *Climate Risk Profile Tanzania, op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> World Bank, *Tanzania*, 2019.

## COVID-19 as a setback for girls' rights

Finally, the **COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have major negative impacts on the long-term perspectives of the country**. It is estimated that an additional 500,000 Tanzanians could fall below the poverty line in the next years, particularly those in urban settings relying on self-employment and the informal sector, which is mainly composed of girls and women.<sup>56</sup>

Shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic have consequences on other aspects of girls' life with an **increase in female genital mutilation without the protective environment of school for girls<sup>57</sup>, a rise in emotional, physical and sexual violence and lack of access to food and shelter**. This situation prevents girls and women from lifting themselves out of poverty and denies girls any form of economic opportunity.

## PROTECTING GIRLS' RIGHTS WITH STRONG LEGAL FRAMEWORKS: OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS IN TANZANIA

Tanzania ensures a **protective legal framework with the ratification of major international instruments and adoption of several laws**. The country has ratified, amongst others, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 without any reservations, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1986, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2003. National legislation in favour of child rights and women rights have also been adopted, such as the law of the child act (2009) and the sexual offences special provision act (1998). Finally, the **government showed concern in these questions with the development of policies aiming to protect girls and women**, including the Universal Primary Education Policy in 1995, the Women and Gender Development Policy in 2000, the National Micro-finance Policy in 2000 which provides guidelines to achieve gender equity in accessing financial services in order to empower girls and women economically.

It remains, however, insufficient because of **ambiguities in the applicable law and discriminatory policies**. The Local Customary Law Order of 1963 allows each ethnic group to follow and make decisions based on its customs and its traditions. Hence, customary and statute law coexist with some contradictions and differences in interpretations. This impact girls' rights as, for instance, communities have the power to apply their own body of sanctions or legality with regard to the minimum age for marriage in contradiction to statutory law and international instruments ratified.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, **government's attitude regarding girls' rights remains contradictory with practical policies that are more a hindrance to girls' rights than an advancement, some creating barriers to their most basic rights**. The discriminatory ban of students who become pregnant presented before impacted the lives of thousands of girls, forcing them to end studies abruptly and deprived them of a better economic future.<sup>59</sup>

Respect for girls' rights is also **hampered by lacks of access to justice and of accountability**. Girls and women face barriers in claiming their rights because of the high cost of justice, the limited availability of legal aid and corruption. Furthermore, they fail to demand the respect of their rights at a previous stage because of the lack of knowledge and awareness of human rights – rights girls and women are also entitled to, but fail to know. Finally, exacerbated by the patriarchal beliefs, the judicial structures and the society in general fail in the accountability for justice. Poor investigation and evidence gathering, ineffective prosecution, low sentences imposed for crimes of violence against women and girls, are the norms in Tanzania. This entails further negative consequences for girls and women survivors.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> A. Robi, *COVID-19 exposed girls in Tanzania to FGM*, 2020.

<sup>58</sup> United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, *National Guideline for Gender and Respectful Care Mainstreaming and Integration Across RMNCAH services in Tanzania*, 2019.

<sup>59</sup> Legal and Human Rights Centre, *The Tanzanian Human Rights Report: Policies to protect Children's Rights*, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children in Tanzania, 2016.

## YET, THERE IS HOPE.

Across Plan's areas of intervention, **girls challenge restrictive gender norms and promote gender equality, empowerment, protective environment**. They lead change to ensure that girls from their communities access inclusive quality education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, and that they live free from violence in their communities. With a strong attention to inclusion, gender-transformative and human-rights based approaches, programmes and influencing work focusing on education, agency, youth economic empowerment, protection from GBV, access to services, have the potential to equip girls with the relevant tools to challenge norms, claim their rights, thrive, empower themselves to be active drivers of change and lift themselves out of poverty.

## Methodological note

Most of the statistical data is taken from [the Demographic and Health Surveys](#), [the World Bank Open Data](#), [Girls Not Brides Atlas](#), [UNICEF data](#), [International Labour Organization data](#), [the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys](#). This report was written on the basis of a literature review conducted by Plan International Belgium in 2021, including internal reports and documentation from Plan International's projects and programmes, as well as guidelines from peer organisations, institutions, UN Agencies and global legal frameworks.

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**Disclaimer:** The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the DGD. All remaining errors and opinions expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

**Cover photo: young people in Tanzania, 2020**

Credits: Plan International

**Plan International strives to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world.** We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected. As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 75 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 70 countries.

## ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL BELGIUM

Plan Belgium has been committed since 1983 to a fairer and more secure world for all children and young people, by addressing the root causes of challenges and obstacles encountered by girls and vulnerable children. All our projects seek to promote **gender equality, by analysing the root causes of unequal access to opportunities for girls and boys and of gender-based violence.** We are working alongside children, youth, our advocates and partners to address the root causes of the barriers that vulnerable girls and children face. Our programs contribute to Plan's overall ambition, that is by 2025, **100 million girls can learn, lead, decide and thrive.** Currently, Plan Belgium is working in Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Malawi, Bolivia, Ecuador, Vietnam. Plan Belgium implements programs and projects in the impact areas of: i) protection against abuse and violence; ii) youth participation and leadership; iii) inclusive and quality safe education, both formal and non-formal; iv) economic strengthening of young people through employment and entrepreneurship.

In Belgium, Plan is particularly involved in the fight against gender-based violence, in the School of Children's Rights, in order to help teachers and students to be aware of their rights and those of their peers in Belgium and around the world. Finally, Plan as a civil society organization carries the voice of girls in civic and political mobilizations, including within development cooperation.

## ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL TANZANIA

Plan International Tanzania is a child-centred organisation that advances children's rights and promotes equality for girls. We have been operational in Tanzania since 1991 and currently work in 13 regions. We work with communities, the government and other development partners to support vulnerable children, adolescent girls and their families to access health care, education, clean water, sanitation, protection to help improve their livelihoods and protection of their well-being.

Our key priority areas include child protection, adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, inclusive, quality education, water, sanitation and hygiene, youth economic empowerment, both in development settings, and in responding to emergencies as well.

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