

# An Analysis of Gender Equality in Uganda and Kenya.

The Thinking Watermill Society

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## Introduction

The cries for gender equality are not in vain. The discussion on the significant disparities between men and women within our society is one that should be taken into serious consideration. This research paper aims to facilitate this discussion in the East African Community (EAC), mainly focusing on Uganda. The end goal is to analyse the main factors that contribute to early marriage and adolescent pregnancies within Uganda and, thus, contribute to gender inequality.

Uganda's average life expectancy has steadily increased annually. The current life expectancy for Uganda in 2020 is 63.41 years which is a 0.51% increase from 2019.<sup>3</sup> It is the second-lowest in the EAC after Burundi, with an average of 61.70 years, and this is associated with birth trauma, maternal conditions and low birth weight<sup>4</sup> which are commonly linked to early pregnancies and early marriages.

A comparative analysis with Kenya is also a topic of this research. This comparison is due to proximity and the similarities in cultural practices and societal perceptions of women in both

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<sup>3</sup> < <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/UGA/uganda/life-expectancy> > accessed on 13 August 2020.

<sup>4</sup> < <https://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/uganda-life-expectancy> > accessed on 15 August 2020.

countries. In addition, whilst life expectancy in Kenya is significantly higher compared to other lower-middle-income African countries,<sup>5</sup> the current Kenyan 2020 average life expectancy is 66.70 years, which is not much higher than that of Uganda. This is as a result of a 0.39% increase from 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Furtherly, Kenya has a maternal mortality ratio of 200 per year, resulting in population growth.<sup>7</sup> The Kenyan Government attributes these statistics to poor healthcare, lack of education on reproductive healthcare and social injustices that lead to discrimination.<sup>8</sup>

The conclusion this paper draws is that the EAC, as a whole, faces similar challenges regarding gender equality which inadvertently affects every aspect of a woman's life in the African society today.

## An Analysis of Gender Equality In Uganda

Uganda's efforts to transform the lives of girls and young women are well articulated in Chapter 4 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. In light of this, any form of discrimination at all levels of development of girls and young women is prohibited. Furthermore, it provides for the protection and promotion of women's rights and other marginalised groups in Uganda.

Regardless of Uganda's efforts, the country has a gender inequality index<sup>9</sup> value of 0.531, ranking it 127<sup>th</sup> out of 162 countries in the 2018 index.<sup>10</sup>

What's more, in Uganda, 34.3 % of parliamentary seats are held by women,<sup>11</sup> and 27.4% of adult women have reached at least the secondary level of education compared to 34.7% of their male

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<sup>5</sup> Kenya to 2030 and beyond, Institute for Security Studies, 2018

<<https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/kenya-report.pdf>> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>6</sup> <<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/KEN/kenya/life-expectancy>>, accessed 14 August 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Kenya Population Situation Analysis, Government of Kenya and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), July 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Kenya Population Situation Analysis, Government of Kenya and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), July 2013.

<sup>9</sup> GII, the loss in human development due to inequalities between men and females.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-5-gender-inequality-index-gii>> accessed on 4 August 2020.

counterparts.<sup>12</sup> In addition, for every 100,000 live births, 343.0 women die due to pregnancy-related causes,<sup>13</sup> and the adolescent birth rate is of 118.8 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19 years.<sup>14</sup>

From the above statistics, there appears to be a clear gap between male and female participation in governance, education, and access to good healthcare. The ability of girls and women to fully engage and participate in the development of Uganda is hindered by gender inequalities which are perpetuated by formal and informal institutions, such as religion, patriarchy, socio-cultural norms, and harmful traditional practices, like early marriages. These factors later result in early pregnancies.

In this case, let us focus on early teen pregnancies and early marriages and their relation to gender inequality in Uganda.

## Early Marriages in Uganda

Early marriage occurs where one or both of the partners is under the age of 18.<sup>15</sup> Across developing countries, an estimated 1 in 3 girls is married before turning 18, and 1 out of 9 girls is married before the age of 15.<sup>16</sup>

Uganda also battles with the same vice. In 2013, Uganda was ranked 16th among 25 countries with the highest rate of early marriages in the world.<sup>17</sup> This indicates that early marriages are still a devastating reality. Early marriages prevail in the country's rural areas, mostly because of the continuity of harmful practices embedded in the social and cultural norms.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Share of parliamentary seats held by each sex: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2019).

<sup>12</sup> Population with at least some secondary education: United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (2019) and Barro and Lee (2018).

<sup>13</sup> Maternal mortality ratio: United Nations Maternal Mortality Estimation Group (2017).

<sup>14</sup> Adolescent birth rate: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2019).

<sup>15</sup> Article 31 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda; the Penal Code (Amendment) Act (CAP 120) (2007); Children's Act, CAP 59 and 1996 Statute; Uganda's Teachers Code of Conduct (1996).

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA), 2015.

<sup>17</sup> World Vision, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Uganda Demographic Health Survey (UDHS) 2011. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and ICF International Inc., 2012.

However, the practice varies in each region. The Northern region of Uganda has the highest early marriage prevalence rates estimated at 59%, followed by the Western region (58%), the Eastern region (52%), the East-central (52%), the West Nile (50%), the Central (41%), the Southwest (37%), and the lowest in Kampala, the capital of Uganda (21%).<sup>19</sup>

Early marriages are commonly fuelled by gender norms which appear to consider females inferior to males in the society. This contributes to the increasing gap in gender inequality in Uganda. Here below is an analysis of the factors contributing to the widespread of early marriages in Uganda today.

## A. Education

Most parents in rural areas believe that furthering a girl's education beyond high school is a waste of resources. They believe that girls belong in the kitchen and should get married.

*'Parents have different aspirations for boys and girls. Girls are educated, so they know how to read and write or be better mothers rather than for employment.'*<sup>20</sup>

The gender disparities in the retention and enrolment numbers of girls at both primary and secondary levels are the proof of the statement above.

The 2018 Statistical Abstract of the Uganda Bureau of Statistics continues to illustrate the gender disparities between boys and girls in education. The report shows a decrease in the transition rate of students to S.5 class in 2016 from 30% to 25% in 2017; it also states that boys were more likely to complete S.4 class/grade as well as to evolve to S.5 class/grade compared to girls<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA), 2013.

<sup>20</sup> The Journal of Social Development in Africa Vol 16 No 2 2001, pp. 115-146.

<sup>21</sup> Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2018 Statistical Abstract, pp. 22-23.

## B. Poverty

Due to the high poverty levels in Uganda, parents forcefully engage their children into labour to create extra income for their families, especially during the COVID-19 global pandemic outbreak. During this period, men have taken advantage of young girls.

The economic strain due to the pandemic has also prompted a rise in early and forced marriages, whereas some parents are marrying off their daughters to get the bride price and dowry to make ends meet. According to the Daily Monitor Newspaper, at least 128 school girls were married off, with 48 cases registered in Kyegegwa, 60 in Rakai and 20 cases recorded in Kamira sub-county, Luweero district during the lockdown.<sup>22</sup>

## C. Traditional Norms and Customs

Most communities in Uganda consider the start of a girl's maturity or adulthood when she begins to menstruate and develop breasts. In some cultures, for example, among Sabinu in Eastern Uganda, Pokot, Tepeth, and Kadama in Karamoja region, the girl's adulthood is marked through Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C).<sup>23</sup> This deprives a woman of her femininity.

According to this practice, a girl is expected to get married as soon as she has completed the FGM process.<sup>24</sup> An article from The Thinking Watermill Society on Women's Access to Finance as a solution to ending FGM, clearly articulates how the practice of FGM further perpetuates gender inequality in communities that carry out this practice, and its harmful and long-term effects on women's health.<sup>25</sup> This, therefore, hinders girls from completing school which results in an inequality gap between girls and boys in education and, thus, encourages the continued prevalence of gender inequality in Uganda.

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<sup>22</sup><<https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/2-300-school-girls-conceive--128-married-off-during-lockdown/688334-5599830-dvcfs9/index.html>> accessed on 27th July 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and ICF International Inc., 2012; UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> UNFPA and MOGLSD, 2009; 28 Too Many, 2013.

<sup>25</sup><<https://thethinkingwatermill.com/article-on-womens-access-to-finance-as-a-solution-to-ending-female-genital-mutilation/>> accessed 14 August 2020.

## Early Pregnancies in Uganda

Early marriages are often linked to early pregnancies, and vice versa in Uganda. Uganda's adolescent pregnancy rate is one of the highest in the world, stagnating between 24% to 25% among girls between the age of 15 to 19 years in the last decade.<sup>26</sup> This appears to be higher than the average prevalence of 19% and 11% to 16% in the developing<sup>27</sup> and developed countries<sup>28</sup> respectively.

In Uganda, 1 of every 4 girls aged 15 to 19 years begins childbearing, more commonly in rural areas (27%) than urban areas (19%).<sup>29</sup> The high adolescent pregnancy prevalence has often been attributed to poverty and cultural traditions, which often lead to early marriages, lack of access to adequate knowledge about reproductive health services, and sexual abuse. These factors constrain the country's efforts towards the achievement of gender equality and the overall empowerment of girls and women.

The consequences of adolescent pregnancy include premature births, low birth weight of the new-borns, high risks for medical health dangers and complications such as obstructed labour, obstetric fistula, leakage of urine and mortality.<sup>30</sup> Adolescent pregnancies contribute up to 20% of maternal death in Uganda (Ministry of Health, 2016).

Currently, the global pandemic (COVID-19) has exposed girls to situations that have increased chances of early pregnancies and early marriages in Uganda due to the lack of basic needs and poverty, which have in turn sprouted gender inequality.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education and Sports on teenage pregnancy in Uganda, Busoga - in the Eastern region - has reported the highest cases. Luuka district alone, in

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<sup>26</sup> Health Survey 2011. Kampala, Uganda: UBOS and Calverton, Maryland: ICF International Inc.

<sup>27</sup> Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and ICF. 2018. Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2016. Kampala, Uganda and Rockville, Maryland, USA: UBOS and ICF.

<sup>28</sup> United Nation Population Fund. Technical guidance on prioritizing adolescent health and Adolescent pregnancy (2017).

<sup>29</sup> UNFPA Uganda Report "World's Apart in Uganda: Uganda's Situation," Issue Brief 5, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Kassa GM, Arowajolu AO, Odukogbe AA. Prevalence and determinants of adolescent pregnancy in Africa: a systematic review and Meta-analysis. *Reprod Health* 15 (2018): 195.

the Busoga region, has reported more than 60 cases during and post COVID-19 lockdown.<sup>31</sup> West Nile and Ankole regions are also reporting many cases. In Kitgum, Ngora, Kyegegwa, Kasese and Lyantonde districts, a total of 2,372 girls have been impregnated during the lockdown.<sup>32</sup> This implies that there will be a high school dropout rate of girls when schools resume post-pandemic.

## A Comparative Analysis With Kenya

With both Uganda and Kenya being in the East African Community, they appear to have similarities in the pertinent issues that girls and young women face today.

Early marriages and early pregnancies are manifestations of the deeply rooted gender inequalities in both these jurisdictions. Above all, they are a display of patriarchal mentalities that appear to form the basis of these societies.

Let us further examine these issues through the Kenyan lenses.

### Early Marriages in Kenya

Current statistics show that the highest levels of child marriage are found in sub-Saharan Africa, with women who are currently between 20 to 24 years old, indicating that they were in a marriage or union before the age of 15 and 18.<sup>33</sup> It is, therefore, pertinent to examine this aspect in light of the two Sub-Saharan countries which are the focus of this paper.

Within these two states, child marriage has been a significant issue since time immemorial. Early records of child marriages are seen during the pre-colonial periods when there was the abduction of girls and their pawnship within East African trade networks.<sup>34</sup> For example, during this

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<sup>31</sup> NBS news issue, 6th June, 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=qSfVh4vhe1M>> accessed 31 July, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Daily Monitor newspaper issue; July 2020 <<https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/2-300-school-girls-conceive--128-married-off-during-lockdown/688334-5599830-dvcfs9/index.html>> accessed on 27th July 2020.

<sup>33</sup> UNICEF, 'Child Marriage' (UNICEF Data April 2020) <<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>> accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>34</sup> B.K Chaha et Peter Waweru, 'Ekebete Marriage in the Historiography of Pawnship and Female Abduction in East Africa, 1890-1945' [2014] Les Cahiers D'Afrique De L'est The East African Review 123.

period, the Kuria community practised *ekebete* marriage (pawn marriage). This is where the marriage was made by dowry payments in instalments or in full while waiting for the girl to grow and attain marriage age.<sup>35</sup> In most cases, this happens after a girl experiences menarche (first menstrual cycle), which is often around the age of 12 years old.<sup>36</sup>

Fast forward to the 21st Century, where this practice is far from gone in Kenya. Today, Kenyan girls are married off or forced into unions, such as cohabitation, at tender years.

For instance, a 2016 research study by “Yes I Do” alliance in Kajiado County found a total of 310 (22.7%) respondents reported to have ever been married.<sup>37</sup> Of these respondents, close to half were married when they were below the age of 18. Of the married respondents, 19.4% were married when they were below 14 years old, while 43.9% were married between the ages of 15 to 18 years, and 36.7% were between the ages of 19 to 24 years. From this, it is evident that the child marriage rate among female respondents aged 18 to 24 years was 22%.<sup>38</sup> Significantly more females than males had experienced child marriage.<sup>39</sup> This appears to match up to the statistics in Uganda, where the prevalence of child marriages is more among girls than boys. This comes as no surprise, especially with the proximity of the states and the similarity in beliefs that girls are solely good for domestic-related purposes.

Moreover, this practice appears to be common in Kenyan rural areas, such as Turkana county. This county serves as another point of focus to illustrate the harrowing experiences of girls and young women in similar Kenyan rural areas.

The Turkana county is famous for its burst of culture and aesthetic tourist attractions. However, behind the scenes, the underage girls of the Turkana community are deemed open to the prospect

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<sup>35</sup> B.K Chaha et Peter Waweru, 'Ekebete Marriage in the Historiography of Pawnship and Female Abduction in East Africa, 1890-1945' [2014] *Les Cahiers D'Afrique De L'est The East African Review* 123.

<sup>36</sup> S Vincenzo, B Sergio, B Luigi, ' Onset of menstrual cycle and menses features among secondary school girls in Italy: A questionnaire study on 3,783 students' [ 2014] *IJEM*.

<sup>37</sup> G Tabitha, K Lincie, K Maryse, K Anke van der, 'A baseline study on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation/cutting in Kenya' (Yes I Do, 2016) accessed 3 Aug 2020.

<sup>38</sup> G Tabitha, K Lincie, K Maryse, K Anke van der, 'A baseline study on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation/cutting in Kenya' (Yes I Do, 2016) accessed 3 Aug 2020.

<sup>39</sup> G Tabitha, K Lincie, K Maryse, K Anke van der, 'A baseline study on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation/ cutting in Kenya' (Yes I Do, 2016) accessed 3 Aug 2020.



of marriage to men, who are often as old as their fathers.<sup>40</sup> In this community, it is quite normal to see a 10-year-old girl married off to a 40-year-old man (sometimes older).<sup>41</sup>

What does the Turkana community have to gain from this practice? The dowry paid by the man is often viewed as a compensation for the girl taken from her family home. Hence, the term “*bride price*” is used interchangeably with the word “*dowry*.”

The dowry, once given, may be returned if the girl is not a suitable wife. Nevertheless, the girl’s family accepts the dowry in exchange for her hand in marriage to an older man, so they can use it to accommodate their daily needs.

Well, it is no surprise that the Turkana community languishes in poverty. It is the poorest county among the 47 in Kenya, according to the Kenya National Statistics office.<sup>42</sup> Despite this area being the source of rich minerals, like oil, the community faces other major setbacks that are similar across the state. These setbacks are identified as contributing factors to the popularity of early child marriages in rural Kenyan areas.

## A. Illiteracy

As Nelson Mandela once said, “*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*” Indeed, it is through knowledge that girls can gain knowledge of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

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<sup>40</sup> Tracy Mwaura, 'Early Child Marriages (The Situation on the Ground)' (Akili Dada ) <<http://akilidada.org/early-child-marriages-behind-the-scenes/>> accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Tracy Mwaura, 'Early Child Marriages (The Situation on the Ground)' (Akili Dada ) <<http://akilidada.org/early-child-marriages-behind-the-scenes/>> accessed 1 August 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Duncan Miriri, 'Kenya's Poverty-Stricken Turkana District Dreams of Oil Wealth' (Thomson Reuters) <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-turkana/kenyas-poverty-stricken-turkana-district-dreams-of-oil-wealth-idUSKBN1FU0JH#:~:text=Turkana%20is%20the%20poorest%20county,compared%20with%2045%20percent%20nationally.>>> accessed 1 August 2020.

According to research by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the scant exposure of girls to education makes them more vulnerable to poverty after the death of their spouse.<sup>43</sup>

Above all, halting a girl’s education for her to engage in early marriage is a direct violation of her universal right to education, as enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).<sup>44</sup> The link between educational attainment and higher age at marriage has been proven by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).<sup>45</sup> Through the opportunity to receive a formal education, girls in rural communities can gain survival skills, gain independence and confidence to openly seek consent for marriage or refuse forced marriages.<sup>46</sup> With access to education, girls have the opportunity to become headstrong and defend themselves or their age mates from harrowing early marriages.

The first step towards providing equal educational opportunities for boys and girls is by first creating awareness of early marriages in the affected communities, and providing adequate training to teachers on implementing gender fairness in classrooms. Evidence of the success of education in ending child marriages is seen in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In these regions, the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) was conducted to increase enrolment and quality of education in the respective communities. As a result, since 2014, the program has supported over 500,000 girls to join secondary school.<sup>47</sup> Thus, it is clear that the problem is not with the girls themselves; instead, it is the failure of the community in educating girls and giving them equal opportunities to boys.

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<sup>43</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Digest, “Early Marriage Child Spouses,” No. 7, March 2001, <<http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf>> accessed 3 August 2020, p.12.

<sup>44</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, article 26.

<sup>45</sup> Ganira K., Inda A., Paul A., Joseph O. & Boniface N, 'Early and Forced Child Marriage on Girls' Education, in Migori County, Kenya: Constraints, Prospects and Policy' [2015] WJE 72, 74.

<sup>46</sup> Ganira K., Inda A., Paul A., Joseph O. & Boniface N, 'Early and Forced Child Marriage on Girls' Education, in Migori County, Kenya: Constraints, Prospects and Policy' [2015] WJE 72, 74.

<sup>47</sup> Camfed International, ‘Camfed International Annual Report 2016,’ (2017), <<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Addressing-child-marriage-through-education-what-the-evidence-shows-knowledge-summary.pdf>> accessed 3 August 2020.

## B. Poor Food Production

The rate of poverty in a country directly affects the income of the residuals. Now, of 1.3 billion people in poverty globally, women are the ones who are mainly found in rural areas.<sup>48</sup> This is directly linked to gender inequality in the labour market, their poor treatment in society, and their inferior power in the family.

Similar to the Ugandan traditional norms and customs, the contribution of women in Kenya is seen in nurturing children, cooking and cleaning; their participation in other areas is seen as faulty. Traditionally, these aforementioned roles are the main purpose of being a woman. Thus, this is input into girls from the onset of birth. Girls are taught to cook, clean, serve, and help care for their younger siblings before they are married off to older men.

On the other hand, boys and men must do anything that involves heavy lifting. One of these activities includes food production. Because agriculture is seen as more of a brawn-based duty, more men are hired formally to work in crop fields, compared to women. In this field, women are powerless as they face discrimination and limited bargaining power.<sup>49</sup>

As women form the majority of the workers in the African informal economy,<sup>50</sup> the stringent social beliefs, discriminatory practices and insufficient protection in the laws make it difficult for them to actively participate in food production.

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<sup>48</sup> K Tabitha, T Clem, 'Gender Inequality, Poverty and Human Development in Kenya: Main Indicators, Trends and Limitations' [2003] SOCIAL ECONOMICS, POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT 1, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Oxfam, 'Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity: Ten years after the food price crisis, why are women farmers still food-insecure?' (Oxfam 2019) <<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/gender-inequalities-and-food-insecurity-ten-years-after-the-food-price-crisis-w-620841>> accessed 2 August 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Rara Reines, 'Why Women Hold The Keys To Africa's Future' (World Economic Forum 2018) <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/why-women-hold-the-keys-to-africas-future/#:~:text=Women%20face%20gender%20biases%20in,participate%20in%20formal%20economic%20activity>> accessed 2 August 2020.

## Early Pregnancies in Kenya

It's important to note that this is another challenge battled by both Kenya and Uganda. Akin to Uganda, Kenya currently faces a steady rise in early pregnancies. According to national statistics, it appears that Kenya has the third-highest teen pregnancy in the world, with a rate of 82 births per 1,000 births.<sup>51</sup>

The rising numbers of early teen pregnancies, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, caused the Kenyan Government to launch the National Campaign against Teenage Pregnancies, through the National Council for Population and development.<sup>52</sup> The lockdown enforcement procedures in Kenya involved the closure of schools nationwide, forcing girls to stay at home, where they experience sexual violence. As a result, a recent research found that 98% of pregnant girls were not in school while 59% of the pregnancies among girls aged 15 to 19 years were unintended.<sup>53</sup>

At the root of it, early pregnancies directly depart from the embodiments of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). Early pregnancies are often borne by adolescent girls, who are below the age of 18 years. In this manner, simply, adolescent girls are recognized as children<sup>54</sup> falling under the protection of the CRC. As a result, adolescent girls have the right to receive protection and care that is necessary for their well-being from their State.<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, in this respect,<sup>56</sup> the State must facilitate this by ensuring that the child's parents or legal guardians follow through with their rights and duties via legislative and administrative measures.<sup>56</sup> In this respect, the institutions, services, and facilities established for the protection of the child need to conform to safety and health standards.<sup>57</sup> Into the bargain, the International

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<sup>51</sup> Glory Muturi, 'Teenage Pregnancy in Kenya: Gloom and Doom In Education, Health' (National Council for Population and Development 2020) <<https://ncpd.go.ke/teenage-pregnancy-in-kenya/>> accessed 3 August 2020.

<sup>52</sup> Glory Muturi, 'Teenage Pregnancy in Kenya: Gloom and Doom In Education, Health' (National Council for Population and Development 2020) <<https://ncpd.go.ke/teenage-pregnancy-in-kenya/>> accessed 3 August 2020.

<sup>53</sup> Plan International, 'COVID-19: LOCKDOWN LINKED TO HIGH NUMBER OF UNINTENDED TEEN PREGNANCIES IN KENYA' (Plan International 2020) <<https://plan-international.org/news/2020-06-25-covid-19-lockdown-linked-high-number-unintended-teen-pregnancies-kenya>> accessed 3 August 2020,

<sup>54</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, article 1.

<sup>55</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, article 3 (2).

<sup>56</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, article 3 (2).

<sup>57</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, article 3 (3).

Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) makes it a priority to encourage the development of adolescents and their empowerment.

The culmination of the above issues forms the basis for the main contributing factors of early pregnancies in Kenya. These factors, which are similar to Uganda's, appear to be the direct opposite of the CRC requirements for child protection and therefore require specific reforms, as suggested here below, to deal with the rise of early pregnancies in these two states.

## Conclusions

The real questions for us to answer in the East African Community are:

1. What encourages the prevalence of patriarchal practices in Kenya and Uganda today?
2. What effects do these practices above have on the girls?

We conclude that the answer to these questions is: **gender inequality**.

There is a dire need to focus on empowering girls through education and normalizing gender equality and women empowerment. In this sense, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right that should be upheld, but it is also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.<sup>58</sup> Besides, there is a pertinent need to change the laws that govern early marriages/unions, to back the efforts by locals and organizations. As a result, fundamental human rights are respected and upheld, while bridging the large gender gap that costs the African economy 95 billion dollars yearly.<sup>59</sup> We hope that the above-identified and analysed obstacles to achieving true gender equality in the EAC region will be lifted to pave a way for African girls and women to have a bright future.

*“The road to women’s economic empowerment is irreversible. It’s taking a while to get it, but it’s coming; no one can stop it.”*

*-Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former president of Liberia.*

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<sup>58</sup> United Nations, 'United Nations Sustainable Goal 5' (United Nations)  
<<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>> accessed 3 August 2020.

<sup>59</sup> Kingsley Ighobor, 'Economic Empowerment of Women Good For All' (United Nations 2019)  
<<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2019-july-2019/economic-empowerment-women-good-all>>  
accessed 3 August 2020.