THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE GENEVA

INSTITUT DE HAUTES ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT

GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE MASTER'S IN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES (DPP)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

DPP Thesis

Assessing radio sensitization initiatives on early marriage and teenage pregnancies and the consequences on access to secondary education - `Salongo Pi Somo' Project, Zombo district, Uganda.

DPP participant's name: Serika Ramlall
Supervisor: Prof. Claudy Vouhé
Date: 30.06.2021

Table of Contents

Table of Contents I
1. ABSTRACT II
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY III
3. LIST OF ACRONYMS, TABLES, CHARTS, FIGURES V
4. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1
5. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE 2
6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS 3
a) Research objective 1: To describe the challenges faced by male and female secondary school students, 15-20 years old, as they relate to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and how this affects access to education in terms of enrolment and dropout rates. 3
b) Research objective 2: To understand the relevance and process of implementing radio sensitization initiatives at community level that aim to address some of the causes of early marriage and teenage pregnancy that affect students 3
7. MAIN CONCEPTS AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK 3
8. RESEARCH METHODS 5
a) Primary data 5
b) Sampling 5
c) Secondary data: 6
9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 6
10. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 7
a) Findings question 1.1: What are the main reasons for the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the community, how have they changed over time and what are the differential effects on male and female students? 7
b) Findings question 1.2: How does early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect the students' education and what support is provided at school to prevent and manage these cases? 11
c) Findings question 2.1: Why were radio sensitization initiatives chosen and what were some of the challenges in implementation? 16
d) Findings question 2.2: How relevant was the content of these initiatives to address students' needs as they relate to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and has it increased community awareness of these issues that directly affect students' access to education? 18
11. CONCLUSION, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS 21
12. Bibliographical references 27
13. ANNEXES 28
Annex 1: List of respondents, function, date of interview or questionnaire and contact information 28
Annex 2: List of participants in Focus Group Discussions 28
Annex 3: Tables/Charts 30
Annex 4: Figures 32
Annex 5: Photos 35
Annex 6: Interview guidelines 36

1. ABSTRACT

Acknowledging the effect that gender-based violence (GBV) has on students, the 'Salongo Pi Somo' project implemented radio sensitization initiatives to address these issues and create awareness about the importance of education. However, there has not been any evaluation of these activities throughout the duration of the program. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap and assess the relevance and process of implementing these radio sensitizations and the potential consequences on enrolment and dropout rates at two secondary schools, Warr Girls and Aluka Secondary. The study examined the factors contributing to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and school interventions to prevent and manage these cases, which are linked to messages broadcast on the radio. The analysis is based on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs) and secondary data from project reports, statistics from district and school officials and scholarly articles.

The study revealed significant differential effects on male and female students, including the practice of mandatory pregnancy testing at school, exclusion of pregnant and/or married students, stigmatization and a lack of follow-up procedures for dropouts. Amidst increasing dropout rates, recommendations include intensifying the frequency of radio sensitizations in conjunction with community dialogues, involving other critical stakeholders and ensuring that male and female students are consulted and participate in these initiatives. Keeping accurate, up-to-date, sex-disaggregated records on dropouts, providing gender specific sexual and reproductive health talks for students and psychosocial training for teachers to improve counselling support is also suggested.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the years, the Ugandan government has adopted a wide array of progressive policies and legal frameworks, which has resulted in significant progress in improving certain indicators, particularly in terms of enrolments, to close the gender gaps between male and female students. However, persistently high dropout rates and lower uptake of girls in secondary education continue to perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty and disempowerment, especially in rural areas of the country. In Zombo district, a region that is beset with socio-economic challenges, the 'Salongo Pi Somo' project, has been working to improve the quality and access to education. Despite the achievements of the project, there are still a number of students who do not complete their secondary education and teenage pregnancy and early marriage are among the reasons contributing to school drop outs.

In order to understand the scope of early marriage and teenage pregnancy, it is first necessary to provide an overview of the factors in the community that contribute to its prevalence. Main results from this study show that several inter-related factors, including, but not limited to poverty, inadequate parental support and guidance, unsafe home and social environments, negative peer influence, lack of reporting and access to legal recourse all have a direct impact. These are exacerbated by entrenched gender norms, practices and expectations that favor boys over girls, as well as the Covid-19 lockdown, which has contributed to a high prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy. The causes and consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancies often intersect and reinforce each other, further complicating prevention strategies and interventions, particularly in one of the most impoverished districts in the country.

In terms of the effect that early marriage and teenage pregnancy has on access to education, vis-à-vis enrolment and dropout rates, it was found that girls are more affected than boys. They are subjected to pregnancy tests at school, usually at the start of each term and sent home if they are found to be pregnant, thereby infringing on their right to education. Furthermore, female students also face stigmatization, increased health risks including HIV/AIDS, STDs, illegal abortions, complications during childbirth and even death. Male students are generally able to remain in school, since they rarely marry early or drop out due to fatherhood. Both schools have implemented health sensitizations and school-based programs reflecting similar messages as the radio sensitizations, in order to encourage students to stay in school. These include school clubs, career guidance, role model talks and delegated teachers to provide guidance and counselling support to the students. However, there still seems to be an acute lack of adequate, gender specific sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and psychosocial support provided to students. This is epitomized by a lack of comprehensive sex education programs in schools, due to conservative religious, patriarchal and cultural norms, which further jeopardizes students' health and educational outcomes.

The study subsequently sought to understand the relevance and process of implementing radio sensitization initiatives at community level, which was largely based on targeting the widest possible audience and reducing the incidence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy. While there was positive feedback concerning these initiatives from several respondents in this study, others noted that the messages were not broadcast regularly or consistently enough for the community to internalize them. In some instances, they simply weren't open to these messages because they are impoverished and rely on their children to contribute to the household or believed that there was an overemphasis on children's rights, to the detriment of the parents. The findings also revealed that students themselves were not consulted regarding the radio sensitizations, but topics were chosen based on the need reflected by parents at meetings and as a

result of statistics from district officials. Moreover, key stakeholders such as religious and cultural leaders, who hold significant power to influence the community, were not consulted or involved in the implementation of these initiatives. This arguably contributed, in part, to the failure of the radio sensitization initiatives to meet their overall objective, namely, reducing the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy. However, the radio sensitization initiatives seem to have played a role in increasing the awareness about the importance of education. It has also disseminated information about the risks and consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancy and ensured that the relevant laws and referral pathways for victims were publicized. Therefore, the study advocates that these sensitization campaigns should continue, however any future intervention should be more targeted, frequent and implemented in conjunction with an increase in community engagement meetings, as well as efforts to improve all students' access to gender specific SRHR talks, for instance.

Some of the additional recommendations that have been proposed as a result of the findings are aimed not only at the radio sensitization initiatives, but also explores the steps that the project can take at school and community level, to ensure that sensitization interventions are reinforced and sustainable. Fostering greater engagement with a broader cross section of the community through campaigns and initiatives that mobilize people, particularly men and boys, to participate and act as agents of change in society is imperative. As is facilitating open discussions that allow the community to reflect on socially constructed norms and practices that consistently define and confine the roles and identities of men and women, boys and girls. It is necessary to frame issues of children's rights and laws that are often ignored or simply not understood in a local context, so that they are not perceived as threats, but are instead recognized as essential tools for improving the lives of everyone in the community.

At school level, it is vital to establish an accurate, detailed sex-disaggregated record of school dropouts and ensure that there are mechanisms in place to follow up on these students on a case-by-case basis. This includes providing gender sensitive training and improving the psychosocial counselling skills of teachers, in order to facilitate engagement with the students and to improve reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, due to the fact that students who have dropped out have limited financial resources, a further recommendation is to develop a complementary project to provide vocational and skills training specifically for dropouts from the Salongo project schools, as well as training for couples since married girls are restricted in decision making processes. The importance of maintaining economic support, bursaries and other incentives for parents to keep their children in school, was also highlighted. Finally, and most crucially, allowing male and female students' voices (including those who have dropped out of school) to be heard on critical issues that directly affect them was emphasized, in order to address deeply embedded social norms and empower them to actively participate in decision making processes.

3. LIST OF ACRONYMS, TABLES, CHARTS, FIGURES

3.1 Acronyms

CDO	Community Development Officer
CEFORD	Community Empowerment for Rural Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/ Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LC	Local Councilor
MEMPROW	Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SMT	Senior Man Teacher
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SWT	Senior Woman Teacher
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UGX	Ugandan Shillings
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

3.2 Tables/Charts

Table 1: Research questions, data collection method, description, number and sex of the respondents
Chart 1: Teenage pregnancy statistics Zombo district, 2016-2020
Chart 2: Aluka SS and Warr Girls Enrolment Trends, 2017-2020

3.3 Figures

Figure 1: Enrolment, attendance, dropout and graduation statistics for Aluka SS and Warr Girls
Figure 2: Dropout statistics and reasons provided by Aluka SS and Warr Girls
Figure 3: Returning dropout statistics provided by Aluka SS and Warr Girls

4. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

4.1 Introduction

There are numerous challenges that students face in accessing education across Africa, particularly in rural areas such as Zombo district, Northwestern Uganda. According to project reports the secondary enrolment rate in the district is 24% and the literacy rate is 29% amongst women (Salongo Pi Somo, 2021). For many, the cost of attending school is prohibitively high and school facilities are inadequate. This situation is further compounded by gender-based violence (GBV), which is a common phenomenon in Zombo district and manifests in various forms, such as domestic violence, sexual violence and traditional harmful practices such as child marriage (Ibid). Uganda has been identified as a hotspot for early marriage in various studies, despite the fact that the legal age of marriage is 18 years old (UNICEF, 2015; Wodon et al., 2017). A 2012 study conducted by the MoES found that 25% of secondary school dropouts could be attributed to early marriage and 59% as a result of teenage pregnancy (Watson et al., 2018). This highlights that early marriage and teenage pregnancies are linked to persistently high dropout rates of girls, who are often excluded and not given a choice about returning to school and continuing their education.

Boys are also affected by GBV, often through physical abuse, forced labor and in some instances, child marriage. Poverty is also a driver for them to drop out of school and marry early. In some cases, boys who are responsible for impregnating a girl may run away or be forced to marry her, to avoid social stigmas and potential financial or legal consequences. Socially constructed norms and unequal power relations are at the core of both gender-based violence and gendered roles and responsibilities, which directly affect access to education for both girls and boys (Fergus & Van't Rood, 2013). Girls constitute a particularly vulnerable group as they are often denied the opportunity to further their education and are instead obliged to take on a heavy burden of domestic and caregiving responsibilities.

4.2 Background

Co-operaid is a Swiss-based NGO, which supports primary, secondary and vocational education projects in Africa and Asia. They have launched a four-and-a-half-year project, `Salongo Pi Somo` (hereafter referred to as the 'Salongo Project'), in Zombo, from 2016 – 2020, with an additional three-month extension until 31 March 2021, in order to complete all crucial program activities. This project has been implemented in conjunction with their local partner in Uganda, Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD).

Project objectives include, amongst others, creating child friendly learning environments and improving retention and completion rates, teaching and learning processes and educating pupils, caregivers and teachers on basic life skills and GBV. The project directly benefits Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in 2 pre-primary schools, 8 primary schools and 2 secondary schools. However, the Salongo project reaches the wider community through the facilitation of income generating activities, public health care and awareness raising activities to promote the value of education, SRHR and support community empowerment. Through its work, it has therefore indirectly benefitted over 30 000 members of the community.

As part of the project's community outreach, radio sensitization campaigns include radio talk shows and radio spots. The former is aired every three months and deals with a range of issues, including GBV and other health issues facing the community. Radio spots are short, GBV story-based audio recordings that are aired a few times a day over a certain period, as the need arises. These sensitization initiatives are also undertaken in conjunction with other prominent community members, including officials from the District Probation and Welfare Office and Police Community Liaison Office. The aim is to inform and generate

awareness of issues relating to GBV throughout the community and thereby contribute to addressing some of the underlying causes. The service rendered may be particularly important in a rural context in which radio is often the only medium to reach the majority of households and engage the community on issues relating to GBV and access to education.

The project also engages secondary school students directly by conducting health sensitization and education campaigns, career guidance and talks from female role models to encourage girls to stay in school. Gendered norms are particularly acute as students approach puberty and low educational attainment, particularly of the mother, has also been correlated with early marriage, which further suggests that empowerment of women who have not completed or ever attended school is crucial in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. (Fergus & Van't Rood, 2013; Stoebenau, 2015; Watson et al., 2018). International research on GBV and access to education has shown that secondary education in particular has a protective effect on girls, who are less likely to be victims of GBV and it also reduces the likelihood that boys will be perpetrators of GBV in the future (Fergus & Van't Rood, 2013). Hence the importance of ensuring that access to education is unhindered. The inability to complete secondary education can have a detrimental lifetime impact on employment opportunities and escaping the cycle of poverty, whilst at the same time reinforcing unequal power relations and patriarchal norms and attitudes that are prevalent in society and at the root of GBV (Ibid).

5. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

5.1 Problem statement

The Salongo Project has implemented activities with a view to address early marriage and teenage pregnancies, which has a consequence on access to education. The main initiatives meant to alleviate the consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancies on access to education have been 1) radio sensitization and 2) community engagement meetings, however no assessment of these initiatives have been performed.

Despite the implementation of Salongo Project's radio sensitization initiatives since 2016, the continued number of dropouts suggest that access to education remains challenging for students in Zombo district. Hence, there is a need to assess whether the activities implemented are appropriate and helpful in changing community perceptions on the issues of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and the importance of education.

5.2 Rationale

As there are no studies that have been conducted relating to the Salongo project's radio sensitization initiatives, this study aims to bridge the knowledge gap that exists. Amidst continued school dropouts, this study proposes to focus on the relevance and process of implementing the radio sensitization initiatives in addressing the causes of early marriage and teenage pregnancies and students needs on these issues. The results of this analysis will provide feedback to Co-operaid and CEFORD and possible recommendations for future areas of research and intervention relating to this topic. This study may also be relevant for other organizations operating in similar developmental contexts to help inform their community interventions directed at early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

6.1 Research Objectives

This study has two main research objectives (ROs)

1. To describe the challenges faced by male and female secondary school students, 15-20 years old, as they relate to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and how this affects access to education in terms of enrolment and dropout rates.

2. To understand the relevance and process of implementing radio sensitization initiatives at community level that aim to address some of the causes of early marriage and teenage pregnancy that affect students.

6.2 Research Questions

a) Research objective 1: To describe the challenges faced by male and female secondary school students, 15-20 years old, as they relate to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and how this affects access to education in terms of enrolment and dropout rates.

- Research question 1.1: What are the main reasons for the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the community, how have they changed over time and what are the differential effects on male and female students?
- Research question 1.2: How does early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect the students' education and what support is provided at school to prevent and manage these cases?

b) Research objective 2: To understand the relevance and process of implementing radio sensitization initiatives at community level that aim to address some of the causes of early marriage and teenage pregnancy that affect students.

- Research question 2.1: Why were radio sensitization initiatives chosen and what were some of the challenges in implementation?
- Research question 2.2: How relevant was the content of these initiatives to address students' needs as they relate to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and have they increased community awareness of these issues that directly affect students' access to education?

7. MAIN CONCEPTS AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

7.1 Main Concepts

The following concepts have been identified as relevant to the study:

- Gender-based violence:
  - Includes acts or threats of acts that inflict emotional, physical or sexual harm, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty that is directed in public or private life, against a person on the basis of their gender. (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)

- Early marriage/child marriage:
  - Any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. It is considered to be a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent. (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)

- Teenage pregnancy:
  - A teenage girl, usually between the ages of 13-19, becoming pregnant and refers to girls who have not reached legal adulthood, which varies across the world. (United Nations Children Fund – UNICEF)
  - For the purposes of this study, teenage pregnancy refers to pregnancies between the ages of 13-18.

- Access to education: includes on-schedule enrolment and progression at an appropriate age, regular attendance, learning consistent with national achievement norms, a learning environment that is safe enough to allow learning to take place and opportunities to learn that are equitably distributed. (UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning)

- Secondary School education:
  - In Uganda, this is composed of four years of ordinary level education (O Level) leading to the award of the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) and two years of Advanced Level (A Level) education leading to the award of a Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). (UNESCO Background Paper on Uganda)
  - For the purposes of this study, access to secondary school education refers to enrolment and retention of boy and girl students from Senior 1 (S1) until completion of Senior 6 (S6) in Uganda.

- Radio sensitization initiatives:
  - Sensitization may be seen as a propensity or disposition which is shaped and formed by awareness, and which aims at modification of behaviour so that it is sensitive to certain issues or situations. (International Journal of Scientific Research)
  - For the purpose of this study, radio sensitization initiatives refer to the radio talk shows and radio spots that were developed under the Salongo project to sensitize the community on various issues, including teenage pregnancy, early marriage and the importance of education.

7.2 Analytical Framework

This study made use of a gender analysis to examine the differences in gender roles, needs, expectations and opportunities of both male and female students with regards to issues of teenage pregnancy, early marriage and access to secondary education. It highlights how gendered access to resources and gendered division of labor reinforces the subordinate position of females, determines access to education and other practical

gender needs. The importance of addressing strategic gender needs and empowering both male and female community members was also included in the framework of the study.

8. RESEARCH METHODS

a) Primary data

In order to carry out this qualitative study, an analysis was conducted on information gathered through 10 semi-structured interviews and 5 questionnaires administered to key informants. This included 4 Salongo project staff (1 from Co-operaid and 3 from CEFORD), 3 Education officials (1 District Inspector of Schools, 1 Senior Woman Teacher and 1 male teacher from Warr Girls School), 1 law enforcement official (1 Senior District Probation & Welfare Officer), 6 local community leaders (2 Community Development Officers, 2 Local Councilors, 2 radio Paidha moderators) and 1 NGO worker from the feminist organization, MEMPROW. Due to the difficulties in contacting some of the respondents because of poor network connections, respondent 1 also provided assistance in printing 4 of the questionnaires for respondents 4, 5, 13 and 15, who could not be contacted by email and scanned their written responses. As far as possible, this study attempted to capture a balance of male and female perspectives with a total of 5 female and 10 male respondents. (See Annex 3, Table 1)

Semi-structured interview guidelines (Annex 6) were designed with the aim of obtaining more information on the prevalence and reasons for early marriage and teenage pregnancy, the support provided by the school, as well as the process of implementing radio sensitization initiatives and perceived effect on the community. Prior to commencing the interview, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked for consent to record their responses. The duration of the semi-structured interviews was approximately 1 – 1.5 hours. The questionnaires for the other respondents were focused on their professional experiences and perceived changes in the community on issues of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and girls' education as a result of the radio sensitization initiatives.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with 3 separate groups of students (11 female students at Warr Girls, 10 male students and 13 female students at Aluka Secondary School) were carried out. The mean age of the 34 FGD respondents is 17.8 years old. The headmasters of Warr Girls and Aluka Secondary School granted permission to conduct the FGD's, which were facilitated by two members of the CEFORD project staff (one of whom was respondent 1, who was interviewed). FGD questions were formulated to understand the perception of the students on issues pertaining to teenage pregnancy and early marriage, their perceptions of gender roles in the community, school environment and the radio sensitization initiatives.

b) Sampling

This study employed purposeful and opportunistic sampling of respondents who shared their perceptions, experiences and expertise relating to the issues of teenage pregnancy, early marriage and radio sensitization initiatives. In addition, engagement of stakeholders was enhanced by employing diverse interview methods such as semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and FGDs. The respondents were selected in consultation with the project co-ordinator, based on the following criteria: direct participation in the radio sensitization initiatives, stakeholders who can provide information on education, the community, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, who are able to understand and express themselves in English.

c) Secondary data:

Document analysis of Salongo Pi Somo annual and bi-annual reports and documents relating to project activities, enrolment, attendance and dropout data, documents from the Ugandan MoES, MGLSD and UNICEF relating to early marriage and teenage pregnancies, multimedia strategies for addressing GBV, and reports from International Organizations concerning GBV, access to education, and campaigns to address these issues. Finally, scholarly articles relating to early marriage, teenage pregnancy and community mobilization and participation were also consulted.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and limited time for data collection, the ability to conduct interviews and facilitate FGDs in-person was severely restricted and made it more challenging to contact and conduct interviews with key stakeholders based in Uganda. Despite several attempts, 4 respondents who were initially part of the group of respondents to be interviewed (1 SWT and 1 male teacher at Aluka Secondary school, 1 Police Community Liaison Officer and 1 District Education Officer) were not interviewed, as they were unavailable, unwilling or unable to participate in the study without completing further paperwork. While other law enforcement and education officials could be contacted, in the case of the teachers at Aluka Secondary School, there was no alternative available, limiting the information that could be obtained about that particular school.

While project staff in Zombo stepped in to facilitate the FGDs with students due to poor internet connection in those areas, two male staff members administered the prepared questions to male and female students, which may have compromised the responses of the latter, as ideally a female would have facilitated the discussions with female students. In addition, as a result of the staggered school re-openings after the lockdown, S1 and Senior 2 (S2) students had still not returned, Senior 4 (S4) students had completed their final examinations, while S6 students had just started their examinations and could not participate in the FGDs. Therefore, the majority of participants are in Senior 3 (S3) and some Senior 5 (S5) students, between the ages of 15-20 years old. They may not provide a complete insight into the challenges faced by lower secondary school groups (S1, S2) in relation to early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Another noteworthy limitation of the study was the inability to contact and interview high school dropouts to provide first-hand accounts of their experiences, which would have enriched the study.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, it was also a challenge to obtain accurate statistics regarding GBV and school dropouts, as well as objective and unbiased responses from respondents. There was firstly the issue of data availability, with records either not being collected or maintained. Secondly, there were significant discrepancies and inconsistencies in statistics on the same issue or occasionally an unwillingness by some respondents to share specific data, nevertheless, participants were largely willing to engage and speak candidly about these issues affecting their community. Finally, it was not possible to obtain and translate the radio recordings to analyze the content of the messages that were broadcast.

10. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

a) Findings question 1.1: What are the main reasons for the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the community, how have they changed over time and what are the differential effects on male and female students?

Several vulnerable groups and intersectional factors that contribute to the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in Zombo district have been identified by the respondents and participants involved in this study. **Disabled children** were regarded as an at-risk group by a few respondents (5, 8 and 13), with a senior female district official (n. 8) adding that men engaged in substance abuse sexually assault disabled children, many of whom are kept at home and denied access to education. Other respondents (2, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 14) mentioned that **orphans** were a particularly vulnerable group and child marriage is perceived to be a viable option by their caregivers who may be unable to provide for them. Orphans who are heading households may also be forced to find other ways to support themselves. For instance, a female NGO worker (n. 14) articulated that ''*…you will find maybe there is some girl who is brewing and selling the local alcohol to buy their own scholastic materials, so it reaches a point where the girl can easily get fed up and abandon school.*'' Some male respondents (1, 2 and 7) also emphasized that generally girls in higher levels at primary school (P5, P6, P7) and those at lower levels in high school (S1 and S2) are most at-risk of early marriage and teenage pregnancy. They are less well informed, receive less support from their parents to remain in school and there is an expectation in the community that once a girl reaches puberty, she is ready for marriage. This gendered expectation is often internalized by girls themselves, as they start to believe that once they reach a certain age, they should be married (Subrahmanyam, 2016). The FGD participants also unanimously agreed on the age range that most boys and girls get married in Zombo as 13-17 years for girls and 18-22 for boys.

Boys are more valued than girls. One of the recurring themes in the feedback from the interviews, questionnaires and FGD's is the status of girls being inferior to that of boys in the community. This is further reflected in the differential impacts of early marriage and teenage pregnancy on male and female students. A female project member (n. 10) stated:

> *It's a very male dominated culture and girls have nothing to say. Women have little to say, but girls have nothing to say. This is one of the things we are trying to change and improve at least a little bit with the sensitizations also, but it's very hard to change these mindsets, which needs generations. But I think that with the youth that got these sensitizations, when they will have families, maybe that will change.*

The same respondent also mentioned that if help is needed in the home, it will be the girls who are withdrawn from school first, illustrating the negative effect of gendered divison of labor in households on girls' education. Another female project member (n. 3) also alluded to the fact that girls are sent to the market to sell produce or undertake the vast majority of unpaid care work, such as staying at home to take care of younger siblings rather than going to school. When the focus group participants were asked if girls and boys are treated the same in the community, the resounding response was 'no'. Both male and female students at Warr Girls and Aluka Secondary School responded that girls are overworked at home, overlooked in the community, suffer sexual harassment and do not have the ability to attend school, as some parents still do not approve of girls' education.

Some respondents (1, 2, 3, 6, 8 and 14) specifically highlighted that **domestic violence** is rampant in the community and children are often witnesses or victims of abuse at home. This creates a childhood environment in which girls in particular, do not feel safe. Respondent 1 observed that in rural settings, domestic violence is commonplace and normalized in communities. ''*GBV is seen as part of life. If a man*

beats up a wife…most people will think the wife did something wrong, so the husband beat her. No-one goes deeper to understand the causes and it's everyone for themselves''. A few respondents (3, 14 and 15) added that men in the community, whose social lives often include alcohol, return home and are abusive. Wives may decide to abandon the home, leaving the girl child to take on a larger domestic burden. This in turn makes it less likely that she will continue to attend school and even if she does, her ability to focus on her studies is severely diminished. In a bid to escape a difficult home environment themselves, girls may regard early marriage or pregnancy as a viable way out. A male radio moderator (n. 6) reflected that there are consistently high rates of physical violence in the community and ''*the girl child is mostly affected because for them once the violence goes to the extreme and they are forced to do worse things than the boy child, who still stays at home and goes to school.*''

Inadequate parental care and guidance was also cited by several respondents (3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13 and 14). According to a senior female district official (n. 8):

> *Our challenge has really been with parenting in Zombo. 70 to 80% of parents are kind of irresponsible…by the time a girl is getting into adolescence, literally the parents assume she should be able to provide for her needs, so most of them opt into getting into relationships and because they're not mature, they can't make mature decisions, so by the time they're 13 or 14 they're already pregnant*.

Through her work in the community, respondent 14, an NGO worker, related that during recent community dialogues, some men express that it is solely the woman's responsibility to nurture children, reflecting patriarchal social norms. They believe that women have not been fulfilling their obligations because they have not been checking in on where girls are at night, or sending them to areas where they are unsupervised. A male respondent (n. 7) added that the home and community environments are ''porous'' and ''*there are so many avenues for a girl to get 'spoiled' like going to fetch water in the valleys…going to the market…there has been a lot of that because of the weaknesses…of their parents.*''

Immediate family members may be perpetrators of sexual abuse themselves: Two male respondents (2 and 13) also indicated that the extended family system in which children are sent to live with aunts, uncles and other relatives, may also expose them to the risk of sexual abuse by relatives, resulting in pregnancy. While two female respondents (3 and 14) further highlighted that there is very limited to non-existent input from parents when it comes to talking to their children about SRHR, because talking about sex is regarded as a taboo. A female NGO worker, recalled that in her experience, parents point out that they were never taught about sex when they were growing up and now their children are learning about it even at school, which is encouraging them to practice what they are learning. Thus, some parents believe that this information at school is contributing to teenage pregnancies in the community. Whilst other parents are of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the school to provide sex education, absolving themselves of any responsibilities in this regard. The same respondent also said that there is a very low percentage of mothers who may try to address these 'taboo subjects' with their daughters, but it is done in a very subtle way, without properly informing their children about these issues. *''They won't say directly don't have sex, they will just attribute it to the menstrual cycle…so they will say, 'you have to be careful'. But careful in what?''*

Negative peer influence was touched upon by numerous respondents (1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12 and 15) as another factor that contributes to teenage pregnancy and early marriage. During school vacations for instance, some girls who do not have adequate information about SRHR, may rely on their friends to provide this information. In turn, they may be influenced to initiate sexual activity early, which could lead to teenage pregnancy. A majority of respondents (4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15) mentioned that children's presence at discos

and other social gatherings such as traditional dances like the 'Agwara' and 'Ndara', burial and marriage ceremonies in which social interactions are largely unsupervised, leads to a greater vulnerability when it comes to teenage pregnancy and early marriage.

Furthermore, **traditional norms and customs** such as dowry or bride wealth is commonly practiced in Zombo district. According to respondent 14, a female NGO worker, ''*when they take the dowry there are different activities - young girls have to serve water, food and so on. In that process, some of them are raped and defiled - even some get married to these men*.'' She and a male respondent (n. 6) noted however that because these issues were raised several times on different platforms, including the radio, the Alur King has reduced the number of days for marriage celebrations to 2-3 days. Nevertheless, the widespread acceptance of these cultural practices and norms in turn means that cases of rape, sexual abuse and defilement resulting in teenage pregnancy are rarely, if ever, reported to officials. A male respondent (n. 6) said that girls are viewed very differently compared to boys ''*Parents look at them like property. They aren't treated equally as a boy. When a girl doesn't go to school, it sends the message that you're going to get married and I can't waste my money on you*''. This was reinforced by respondent 8, a senior female district official:

> …*we have a whole menu of cultural norms and practices that have had very negative impacts on the education of the girl child. The community still views the girl child as a source of wealth, so meaning as she's growing up the parents are looking at one or two goats or something. So, for them it's an advantage when she gets pregnant because they know they are able to realize two to four goats from somebody.*

Lack of reporting and access to legal recourse. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2020), at a rate of more than 50%, defilement, which is the act of engaging in sex with a minor, was the most common serious crime in 2019. This despite the fact that it is an offence that can result in life imprisonment or even the death penalty, in the case of aggravated defilement of a victim below 14 years of age (CEHURD, 2020). As a senior female district official (n. 8) pointed out, ''*people believe once a girl has reached adolescence and developed breasts, if a man defiles her, it is considered a normal thing. So, people prefer negotiating cases of defilement rather than reporting it to formal justice systems.''* To illustrate this point, she revealed that the number of defilement cases reported to police in the district last year was 58, which was only a fraction of the actual number of cases that go unreported. This tendency to negotiate rather than report sexual offenses was also corroborated by respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 14 and 15. A male and female project member (2 and 3) also emphasized that the victim is not even consulted or part of these negotiations but suffers further, as she ends up abandoned to be the wife of the man who violated her.

A male respondent (n. 7) provided the following explanation to highlight the challenges of law enforcement in the community: ''*Somebody who is meant to enforce the law is also going behind the door to negotiate marriage or penalties for defiled girls.…ensure there's some money which the defiler can pay…for the police and the girl's parents also.''* A male project member (n. 2) also echoed these views and added that cultural beliefs in the community were more powerful and played a much more prominent role in influencing people's behaviors compared to policies and laws that were imposed by the government. This respondent also mentioned a local Swahili term '*kitu kidogo*' meaning 'something small' in reference to the bribes that are commonly paid to police or other authorities. Some respondents (1, 3, 8, 14 and 15) also mentioned that the cost of accessing justice was prohibitively high for the vast majority of the community who are impoverished, which leads them to abandon the idea of seeking justice at all. For instance, payments would need to be made to the police for them to affect an arrest and to the medical workers to conduct an examination. This is in addition to other related costs of pursuing a case that may take several months, if not years, to conclude. Respondent 8 also specified that there are Child Protection Committees and the national

toll-free child line also known as 'Sauti' is widely publicized to encourage anonymous reporting, however, in a rural context, it is not as accessible for the population, particularly children.

Poverty is one of the key drivers and consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancy as well as a leading reason for school dropouts, as parents may be unable to afford the cost of school fees and scholastic materials. A male teacher (n. 9) mentioned that the cost of school fees alone at Warr Girls School, which is government assisted, is on average 312 000 UGX (approximately $87) per term, in a region where at least half the population subsists on less than $1 a day (Salongo Pi Somo, 2021). Furthermore, poverty and lack of resources may lead girls to engage in **transactional sex**, which may result in pregnancy and/or early marriage, forcing them to drop out of school. This also makes them more vulnerable to other types of GBV such as intimate partner violence (IPV), because their autonomy is restricted and undermined as a result of age and power differentials (UNICEF, 2015). Female FGD participants at Warr Girls and Aluka Secondary School, as well as all the interview and questionnaire respondents, highlighted the fact that poverty and illiteracy have been major obstacles to ensuring access to education and preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancies. Parents who themselves have either not attended school or have dropped out, generally do not see the value of education for their children, whom they may depend on for labor or household chores instead, thus perpetuating a ''double faced link to poverty'' (UNICEF, 2015, p.33). A female project member (n. 3) commented that parents

> *…look around and see the majority dropped out or didn't go to school at all, but they are living their life. If they can see the value of education and how even an educated child can get back and help the community and family, I think they will be able to support children…. so that they don't look at the child as income and use that to meet their needs.*

From the literature, it appears that interventions to mitigate poverty are often effective in delaying child marriage. Incentivizing parents through a stipend program conditional on school attendance or delay of marriage, has been used successfully in other countries, suggesting it can be a powerful tool (Wodon et al., 2017; Subrahmanyam, G., 2016).

There was also widespread agreement amongst all FGD participants that early marriage and teenage pregnancy were problematic in the community because it could *''spoil the future''*, lead to school dropouts, poverty, deaths of teenagers and their unborn babies and *''brings burden to our parents''*, but this is predominantly the case for female students. Three male respondents (5, 12 and 15) highlighted the risk of death, abortions, contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as some of the consequences for girls, as well as other health complications during birth, including fistulas. While it was widely noted by all respondents that boys affected by early marriage and teenage pregnancy are able to continue their studies at school, male respondents (4, 5, 12, 13 and 15) also specified that some of the negative effects on boys are that those who remain in school may face a decline in their academic performance due to their responsibilities as a young father. Alternatively, and rarely, they may drop out of school and run away for fear of legal ramifications.

While some respondents (1, 2, 3, 7, 14) were convinced that the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy had been reducing prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, in part due to the awareness created by the radio sensitization initiatives, the majority of respondents (4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15) felt that the prevalence has remained constant over the years. All respondents, including the students in the focus group discussions, noted that one of the strictest **Covid-19 lockdowns**, which saw the closure of all schools countrywide on 20th March 2020, has resulted in an increase in teenage pregnancies and early marriage in the district. The MoES permitted a partial reopening of schools on October 15th 2020, exclusively for

candidate classes (S4 and S6 in secondary school), with a staggered reopening for other students in March, April and May 2021 (Salongo Pi Somo, 2021). An internal Salongo project document from December 2020 entitled 'Response on Teenage Pregnancy and Marriages' concluded that as a consequence of lockdown, children were increasingly vulnerable to *''several dangers such as child labour…hectic activities like long hours of digging, making chairs, charcoal burning and selling in the market. Girls are exposed to violent sexual activities…harassment, defilement, rape, with a number of them married off by their guardians.''* (p.1)

Data which was collected from 19 health clinics in Zombo district (Chart 2, Annex 3), was shared by a senior female district official (n. 8) and demonstrates that even though the percentage of teenage deliveries in the district has remained quite constant, in terms of absolute numbers, pregnancies have been higher each year. She explained that teenage pregnancies are on the rise, made worse by the Covid-19 lockdowns, in which children are spending a disproportionate time unsupervised in the community or at home. Moreover, there has been a lot of tension and hostility because of economic pressures, leading to families breaking up and children having to make their own way. Through that process, many of them have ended up pregnant or married off. A senior male district official (n. 12) even shared that during the lockdown, his own daughter in S3 became pregnant. It is undeniable that Covid-19 has exacerbated and reinforced several existing drivers of early marriage and teenage pregnancy. It has also further compromised already fragile family, health, reporting and legal systems within the community, as schools contend with an upsurge in teenage pregnancies and early marriages that resulted from the lockdown.

b) Findings question 1.2: How does early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect the students' education and what support is provided at school to prevent and manage these cases?

The function of schools is not only educating children but socializing them. It is one of the key environments that can mirror and reinforce unequal gender relations prevalent in communities. It can also be a place where students can raise their awareness and challenge existing socially constructed norms and unfair gender roles, expectations, practices and privileges which have significant, often negative impacts on their life opportunities, rights, freedoms and access to resources (Fergus & Van't Rood, 2013). All three groups of student participants agreed that it is easier for boys to stay in school, because they are not 'victims' of pregnancy and can still study if they have impregnated a girl. A female project member (n. 3) articulated:

> *once a girl gets pregnant, she has to drop out until she gives birth, but when she gives birth…she is not able to return, until possibly the child is 3 or 4 years, and that too depends on the kind of family that she comes from. If the family is willing to support her, then they will take care of the child and allow her to return to school, but on the other side, the boy is always able to get back to school, either the two families sit and ask the boy's parents to make some commitments or pay something to the girl's family and thereafter he gets back to school.*

Some studies in other districts of Uganda, such as Mayuge, have shown that early marriage has significant impacts on boys in terms of dropouts, engagement with their peers and poorer health and employment outcomes (UNICEF, 2015). However, all respondents and FGD participants concurred girls in Zombo district are disproportionately affected by early marriage and teenage pregnancy compared to their male counterparts. Unfortunately, there were no statistics forthcoming when district officials were questioned about the figures for early marriage of both genders. A male project member (n. 1) said that it is very rare that boys will get married early in the district, while another male project member (n. 2) claimed that there have been several cases of male students who were married early when they were in S1, S2 or S3. He further stated that the boys still attended school, because their parents were supportive of their education and they did not face the high level of stigmatization in returning to school as female students.

None of the administrative staff at Aluka Secondary School confirmed that any male students dropped out, for any reason, throughout the duration of the Salongo project. The data that was provided by the schools (Figure 2, Annex 4), who had no record of the exact reasons that students dropped out, was based on the memory of school administrators. In terms of students who dropped out and re-enrolled, the data provided by the school reflected that there were four students at Warr Girls and two at Aluka, however this could not be corroborated by respondents. The lack of accurate data was reflected in the inconsistent answers provided by different respondents. Data provided by the Salongo Project (Figure 1, Annex 4) indicates there have been a total of 12 dropouts from Warr Girls school and 68 from Aluka Secondary School over a period of 3 years, both of which are higher than the figures officially provided by the schools. However, the project could not provide an account of the reasons for dropout linked to these statistics, as they were not tracked.

Another important finding was that while Uganda maintains a policy of inclusive education, whereby the right to education is constitutionally guaranteed to all (MoES, 2020), in practice it is exclusionary. A SWT (n. 11) confirmed that typically the only way to ascertain if a student is pregnant is by administering a pregnancy test, because students generally do not confide in anybody if they know, apart from their close friends. She added that if a female teacher notices changes in a student's body, they may question the student and sometimes they will reveal that they are pregnant, but this rarely occurs. Instead, on the first day of each term, all female students enrolled at both Warr Girls and Aluka Secondary schools are generally subjected to **pregnancy testing at school.** While this has not been an explicit policy from the MoES previously, it is now stipulated under their recent guidelines. A few respondents (1, 11 and 14) contended these tests have been occurring for several years and even extends to some senior primary school students (Primary 5 – Primary 7). A female NGO worker (n. 14) recounted that it is a common practice throughout the country ''*…even personally when I was still in school, every term the midwives would come and check us…many schools conducted that…especially when the first term is starting after Christmas break, the students report to school and they do these check-ups.*'' At Warr Girls School, once it is determined that a girl student is pregnant, she is referred to the SWT, who provides counselling. The student's parents are called into the school, advised that she will not be able to return until after she gives birth and she is then taken home, according to all respondents (1, 3, 9, 11 and 14) who were questioned about this process. The fact that female students are not allowed to continue their education was also confirmed by the student participants in the focus group discussions: they were all aware of cases in which female students at school were in their words ''expelled'' or ''dismissed'' immediately by school administrators when they were discovered to be pregnant or dropped out of school when they were married.

The abovementioned MoES Revised Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in school settings in Uganda (2020), was released in response to a significant increase in cases of teenage pregnancies during the Covid-19 lockdown. **A process of reintegration and reentry for pregnant students** is set out, including the abovementioned practice of pregnancy testing, co-ordinated by health care workers and the SWT. The guidelines explicitly state that ''*All girls should be examined for pregnancy periodically, at least once termly and at well time-tabled timelines*'' (p.18). It further states that ''*The girl should go on mandatory maternity leave when she is at least three months pregnant*'' (Ibid), and be allowed to return to school without any reservations when her child is at least six months old. However it also stipulates that the school should allow her to complete her end of year exams at her discretion and that it is mandatory for pregnant girls in S4 and S6 (candidate classes) to take the national exams. However, this policy is not coherent, since pregnant students cannot attend classes and be adequately prepared for their exams, effectively denying them the right to education. The document also outlines the actions to be taken if a male student is responsible for impregnating a female student, which includes amongst others, that he should also

be put on mandatory leave ''*as a deterrent and lesson to other boys. He will only return to school after she has delivered*'' (p.19). The school will also be required to keep a record on him and this information will be shared, in the event that he transfers schools. This approach to managing cases of teenage pregnancy, while attempting to make the consequences for male and female students more equal, ultimately denies students access to education for at least a year and continues to reinforce discrimination against male and female students affected by pregnancy.

While the official guidelines recommend that schools implement a way of following up on pregnant students until they return to school, a SWT (n. 11) mentioned that while pregnant students currently receive counselling at school, they are not followed up thereafter. A female NGO worker (n. 14) agreed that it is very rare for the school to checkup on a student after she is sent home, unless they enquire with her friends or peers at school about her wellbeing. In addition, these two respondents pointed out that given the stigmatization associated with pregnancy outside of marriage, in most cases, pregnant teenagers do not remain in the same communities. Rather they are sent away to their maternal home and those that do remain in the same community feel ashamed and ''*are just in hiding*'', in the words of respondent 14. As the guidelines themselves observe, early marriage is often the only feasible option available to teenagers who become pregnant. This is particularly the case since abortions, are illegal in Uganda and permitted only in cases where the mother's life is in danger, resulting in high rates of unsafe abortions which can lead to major health complications, including death (Watson, 2018). With regards to students who get married early, the SWT (n. 11) also confirmed that the school is not able to provide counselling or other support services to her, because once married, she moves into her husband's home. This underscores the lack of support that is extended to both pregnant and married students in order for them to continue their education. Indeed, no mention is made in the MoES guidelines regarding reintegration and re-entry of those who have been married early and are marginalized in this process.

The issue of **stigmatization** was consistently raised by all respondents, even those who were not questioned about school related issues, largely because students not only face stigmatization and discrimination at school, but also within the community, which holds conservative religious values. This underscores the paradox that exists in society: while early marriage and teenage pregnancy is commonplace, females who experience this, are discriminated against, profoundly affecting their ability to return to school. A senior male district official (n. 12) highlighted that less than 10% of students affected by early marriage and pregnancy return to school ''*due to stigma, fear, trauma and parental neglect*'' and further added that ''*students and schools need to be sensitized and prepared to receive them.*'' Respondents 2, 3, 11 and 14 cited stigmas as the main reason that constrains students' re-entry. Their views were encapsulated by a male project member (n. 2) as follows:

> *community attitudes think she is shameful if she is married or pregnant and comes back to school. They don't expect her to return and then when she comes back to the same school, she finds the environment very hostile - she often enrolls in another school because of this… because it will be less shameful if they don't find out that she was pregnant or married*.

Both male and female respondents (1, 9, 11 and 14) also mentioned that there is a widespread perception that students who were pregnant and allowed to return to school after, serve as bad examples for the other students and sends the message that promiscuity is permissible. Parents are therefore reluctant for their children to interact with them and they face exclusion.

When student participants were asked if pregnant or married students should still attend school, the response was unanimous that they should, because they have largely ended up in these situations

unintentionally or because of an inability to pay school fees. However, they believed that these students would be more focused on studying because they fully understand the dangers of early marriage and teenage pregnancy and can still strive to attain a career. While it seems that these students hold less discriminatory attitudes, the reality is that students who have become mothers are often mocked and shunned by their peers, as reported by female respondents (3, 8 and 14).

While a range of respondents (1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11 and 12) said that students received periodic talks from health care workers and were provided with school level health sensitizations, a female NGO worker (n. 14) stated that she did not believe these talks were taking place very often. A female project member (n. 10) mentioned that she once witnessed a talk by a health care professional on HIV/AIDS at a school, but she didn't think that the students could understand much of the information that was being transmitted. When asked if they received talks at school about reproductive health, student participants in the FGDs at Warr Girls responded that they received information in biology class, their female counterparts at Aluka Secondary confirmed that they received information which helped them to understand sexually transmitted diseases and urinary tract infections and their male peers responded that they received no talks on this issue and it was ''*only for girls*''. This illustrates that prevention strategies do not reach all male and female students, neither of whom seems to be receiving the necessary and complete information that is required for them to understand and have agency when it comes to issues related to SRHR.

All the respondents (1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14) who were questioned named the SWT as the primary support person in schools for female students. The SWT and Senior Man Teacher (SMT) are delegated roles in Ugandan schools with the mandate to provide guidance and counselling support to female and male students and foster a safe, child friendly environment. These teachers are also tasked with liaising with law enforcement officials and reporting cases of defilement and sexual abuse (MoES, 2020). Nevertheless, the vast majority do not have training nor the skillset to be able to execute their duties competently, often because there is a lack of clear guidance (Ibid). The SWT (n. 11) confirmed that she usually attends a workshop once per year, where there is some kind of training on managing health and academic issues that students may face and her male colleague (n. 9) specified that he had attended one training session on how to mentor students. A senior male district official (n. 12) conceded that while schools may attempt to plan training sessions, they simply do not have the financial resources to execute them, which results in trainings not being conducted regularly as the ''*education department relies on the goodwill of NGOs and development partners*.'' He went further to say that in the district only Save the Children and CEFORD partners with and provides support to the education department. A male project member (n. 1) indicated that while teachers may have been trained to identify and understand problems that students may face, they do not receive any training specifically on early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, the duties of a SWT and SMT are in addition to their regular teaching responsibilities and they do not receive any additional compensation for taking on this role, which may all play a part in how they perform their duties.

A project member (n. 1) mentioned that the SWTs in the Salongo project schools meet with female students perhaps twice or thrice a term, however it is conditional on their teaching schedules, while the male and female teachers (9 and 11) contended that students had weekly interactions with the SWT. When FGD participants were asked about who they seek help from at school if they have a problem, friends were consistently ranked as the first choice, followed by prefects, SWTs and teachers. Female students at Aluka Secondary School believed that they could approach both male and female teachers, however female students at Warr Girls preferred male teachers, labelling female teachers as *''so emotional''* and unable to *''control their words''*. Similarly male students at Aluka Secondary School also preferred male teachers, with some claiming that female teachers ''*are naturally short-tempered*'' and ''*always go for their maternity leave*

and leave their subject vacant.'' Thus, highlighting a concern that the manner in which teachers communicate with male and female students does not foster an environment that is conducive to students seeking help and confiding in their teachers.

Overall, in the district, as in many other districts in the country, there is a **higher ratio of male to female teachers**, which some scholars, such as Subrahmanyam (2016) have argued is another push factor when it comes to girls dropping out of school. Women teachers and administrators cannot advocate for girls' needs, serve as role models or otherwise challenge gender stereotypes and foster an enabling environment for girls' education. This shortage of female teachers not only epitomizes the consequences of female students being unable to attain higher levels of education, but it also in turn replicates and reinforces patterns of gender inequality that marginalize women and girls (Ibid). The focus group participants confirmed that the proportion of male to female teachers was more than 2:1 at Aluka Secondary School (with 15 male teachers to 7 female teachers), while the proportion of male to female teachers was lower at Warr Girls, with 13 male and 10 female teachers respectively, however, none of the students cited this as a reason for school dropouts. One of the findings of this study was that there appears to be a higher prevalence of teenage pregnancy and early marriage at Aluka Secondary compared to Warr Girls School. Some male and female respondents (9, 10, 11 and 12) believed that this phenomenon could be attributed to Warr Girls being a full-time, Catholic, single sex boarding school where they have no interaction with male students and female students are mentored frequently. This is in contrast to Aluka, which is a protestant, co-educational half-day, half-boarding school and therefore highlights the need for an improved gendered SRHR education, particularly in co-educational contexts.

Nevertheless, there was a widespread perception amongst the respondents that the home and social environment is where the girl student is more likely to become pregnant or marry early, rather than the school environment. On the issue of School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV), both male and female respondents (1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11 and 14) reiterated that they were not aware of cases in the Salongo project secondary schools, apart from one or two unconfirmed cases, although a female project member (n. 3) asserted that it is not unusual for a secondary school girl to be impregnated by a teacher in Uganda. A senior male district official (n. 12) believed that while sexual abuse is rampant in the community, the incidence is not comparable in schools. In addition, he maintained that bullying had declined significantly in large part due to sensitizations on this issue. While corporal punishment, often in the form of caning persists in schools in the district, despite being prohibited by law in 2016 (UNICEF, 2015), none of the respondents attested that this was a practice in the Salongo project schools. When participants in the FGD's were asked if they feel safe in the school environment, female students at Warr Girls stated that they felt safe as they attended a single sex school where security was hired for them. The female students at Aluka Secondary who lived in the dormitory replied that they also feel safe because of the presence of the matron. Interestingly, their male counterparts reported that they do not feel safe, as their dormitory is not close and there are few watchmen on duty. The male students' perception was that female students received better facilities compared to them.

In an effort to create more awareness and prevent issues such as teenage pregnancy and early marriage, according to male and female respondents (1, 2, 3, 9, 10 11 and 12), the Salongo project schools implement various activities. This includes debate, poetry, drama, music and dance in various school clubs such as the health club, and posters are displayed prominently with messages relating to teenage pregnancy around the school premises. In addition, some female respondents (10 and 14) observed that the construction of separate washrooms for female students also helps to prevent high absenteeism and dropouts of girls who have started menstruating. Both schools have also implemented career guidance and role model talks to

encourage students to stay in school and this was highlighted by all respondents as an important approach. It exposes female students to more role models who come from similar backgrounds and instills in them a sense of responsibility to continue with their education, in spite of all the challenges they experience. Likewise, providing bursaries for the most underprivileged OVCs and equipping the students with some vocational skills at school, provides them with an opportunity to help sustain their families and minimize the risk that students will drop out because of an inability to pay school fees. While school-level sensitizations and interventions play a vital role in disseminating information to students on key issues affecting them, they need to be linked with interventions that are able to target parents with decision making power in the household and those in the community at large, who are part of maintaining and perpetuating unequal gender relations.

c) Findings question 2.1: Why were radio sensitization initiatives chosen and what were some of the challenges in implementation?

The use of mass media such as radios, to convey information, raise awareness and contribute to changing mindsets and attitudes on issues affecting the community is not a new concept. According to surveys, 64% of Ugandans living in rural areas own a radio and there is a recognition that media can exert significant influence and engender social change by virtue of the perception that ''*messages in the media are the gospel truth*'' (MGLSD, 2016, p.5). This study established how the radio interventions were elaborated and found that there were approximately 20 radio talk shows and 4 radio spots broadcast from 2016-2020. The radio talk shows were broadcast each quarter and lasted for an hour, while the radio spots were short 30 – 60 second announcements broadcast three times a day over a 30-day period. The local radio station, radio Paidha, has a reach of about nine million people in the West Nile region, and even across the border in Congo, according to the radio moderators (n. 6 and 7) interviewed. In part because of its large listenership, this privately-owned station was used to broadcast the Salongo project's sensitization messages to the community. All respondents were in agreement as to why radio sensitizations were chosen, namely in order to reach as large an audience as possible, including beyond the Salongo project communities, in a short amount of time and to be able to receive immediate feedback from the community, which may help to share experiences and perceptions. Additionally, radio talk shows were transmitted in the local Alur language, which the vast majority of the population understands and this incentivizes them to listen and even participate, compared to messages broadcast exclusively in English. UNESCO's empowering local radio through ICTs project in various countries in Sub-saharan Africa, including Uganda, demonstrate that radio is a powerful medium that can be used to empower men and women in society to challenge prevailing gender norms and ''*promoting their participation as sources and experts on air and integrating their concerns into broadcasts, local radio can act as an advocate for gender equality in vulnerable communities*'' (UNESCO, 2012, p.3).

According to all the respondents directly involved in the radio sensitization initiatives, (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8), the objectives were to reduce the rates of GBV, including teenage pregnancy and early marriage and create awareness about the importance of education, particularly for female students. They also served to inform the community about the dangers and consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancies, including related SRHR issues. Legal frameworks, reporting and referral pathways were also publicized to ensure that the community were aware of how and whom to seek help from, if they were affected by these issues. Additionally, these initiatives also communicated the responsibilities and roles of parents and students before the start of school and towards the end of the school terms, including the importance of parental care and ensuring that students are ready to return to school. Additional topics included HIV/AIDS referral paths and managing cases of malaria and candida in schools. All local project staff (1, 2 and 3) mentioned

that the topics chosen for the radio talk shows were based on discussions and meetings that were held in the schools and community with stakeholders such as parents and district officials. When asked if students were part of this consultative process, it was noted that they were only consulted on issues affecting them during role model talks and career guidance sessions at school. This points to a lack of engagement with female and male students on the very issues that affect them most. Furthermore, in terms of actually participating in these radio shows, a project member and radio moderator (1 and 6) confirmed that only on one occasion, students from Warr Girls were invited to share their experiences in order to promote education for girls. All project staff (1, 2, 3 and 10) confirmed that a baseline study was conducted prior to implementing the Salongo project, and early sexual activity was identified as an issue that affects girls' education in particular. Further details about the baseline study were not shared, therefore it was not possible to assess the content of this document in relation to the design and implementation of the radio sensitizations.

Respondent 3 also indicated that an inception meeting was held at the start of the project with key stakeholders in order to consolidate feedback and formulate coherent strategies. She emphasized that the radio initiatives were planned and implemented *''in partnership with the experts in the field''*. Arango et al (2014), emphasize that in order to transform norms related to harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, requires careful communication through community dialogue and participation with other community stakeholders. For example, on radio talk shows relating to child marriage, the police community liaison officer was a part of the broadcast to discuss the relevant laws, healthcare workers were involved when talking about health risks and complications relating to teenage pregnancy. A male project member (n. 1) also added that officials from the Police Community Liaison Office & District Probation & Welfare Office have first-hand experience in responding to cases of GBV in the community as well as liaising with other officials at national level. Consequently, they are able to contextualize and share the statistics relating to GBV and teenage pregnancy and explain the appropriate steps that need to be taken to report cases.

The study then established several challenges in implementation that may have compromised the objectives. Both male and female respondents (1, 2, 3, 8 and 10) recognized that it was not always possible to guarantee that people, particularly parents would be listening, as some people **do not own or have access to a radio**. This was an issue that also emerged amongst respondents working closely with the community (4, 5, 13 and 15), all of whom stated that most people in the community lack access to radios and also added that **parents and children don't have the time** to listen to the radio. Of all the students in the FGDs approximately half responded that they or their parents listened to the radio. In contrast, a radio moderator (n. 6) was adamant that only a small fraction of the population has access to other forms of media such as the internet or TV, so the radio is often the sole source of information for members of the community, including teachers, parents and students. Female students in the FGD at Aluka Secondary School were the only group that affirmed they received information on early marriage and teenage pregnancy from different sources including magazines, newspapers, TV, radio and even social media.

Radio talk shows were not broadcast during the course of the day, but were scheduled for prime time between 7 – 8pm to maximize the chances of reaching a wide listenership once people returned home. However, this late schedule created **logistical difficulties,** as pointed out by female respondents (3 and 8), who declared that it created safety concerns for presenters participating in the radio shows. They had to be provided with accommodation rather than risk returning home late at night. Male respondents (1, 2 and 6) alluded to the technical challenges, indicating that while the radio uses back-up generators, **unreliable power supply and technical issues** could interfere with the broadcasts. Unstable telecommunication network coverage across different parts of the district can result in some disruptions for listeners. Insufficient time was also cited by male and female respondents (1, 2, and 8), who related that **the duration**

of the radio talk shows, while an hour long, is limited for transmitting all the messages and information that is necessary. In general, it also only permits 10 minutes for the listeners to call in, express their opinions, share their experiences or request clarity on what was discussed, which could inhibit community participation on these issues. The male radio moderators (6 and 7) concurred that **more time and resources allocated to the radio sensitizations would have been beneficial**. The former opined:

> *radio works with consistency. Once the messages are consistent, all the time, then it sinks in. But when it comes and goes, then along the way people lose it. The only problem I saw was that messages lacked consistency. When you speak to someone today and come back three weeks later, then people kind of forgotten. (sic)*

Radio Paidha was also tasked with producing a radio spot relating to GBV, on an ad-hoc basis. According to respondent 1, this was broadcast three times a day over a thirty-day period, most recently in September 2020, as a measure to intensify the radio sensitizations during the lockdown, however there was one radio spot scheduled over a month in each of the previous years to emphasize messaging related to education and GBV. As reported by both male project members (1 and 2), the project budget that was allocated to the radio sensitization initiatives was UGX 2600000 (approximately USD 735) annually, which respondent 2 believed was cheaper compared to other radio stations. Divergent opinions were expressed by some respondents (1, 3 and 8), who believed that **the costs were quite high, which significantly impacted on the regularity with which these radio sensitization initiatives were broadcast to the community**. A female project member remarked

> *we can have only 1 or 2 radio programs in a quarter, which might not be so effective. If we had the resources, this is something that could be run on a weekly basis, so there is a lot of engagement and discussion around it. Because of the resources, we do the programs at the beginning and end of the school term, so the radio sensitization is phased over a longer period.*

Another female project member (n. 10) highlighted that the primary focus of the Salongo project is on education and side activities such as radio sensitization activities relating to GBV are included. However, neither Co-operaid nor CEFORD is specialized in GBV and relies on financing from its own fundraising campaigns, therefore resources are limited for these side activities. She also expressed that while the radio sensitizations are a good tool for informing and sensitizing people, more is needed. To this end, the respondent affirmed her belief that in-person sensitization campaigns conducted within communities are more effective and leave a distinct impression in people's minds, because they are more interactive and involve the whole community. As scholars such as Minckas et al., (2020) have established, interventions that engage with communities and encourage them to actively participate in developing and implementing activities are more successful in precipitating behavioral and attitudinal changes. This opinion was shared widely by male respondents in particular (4, 5, 12, 13 and 15), who all maintained that **increasing face-to-face activities through community dialogues and village meetings** would be even more effective than radio programs in disseminating this information to community members and encouraging social changes.

d) Findings question 2.2: How relevant was the content of these initiatives to address students' needs as they relate to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and has it increased community awareness of these issues that directly affect students' access to education?

On average early marriage and teenage pregnancy were discussed on the radio talk shows 4- 6 times over the course of the project, most recently in the second half of 2020, according to the radio moderators and a project member (1, 6 and 7). All of the respondents directly involved in the radio sensitization initiatives (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8), reported that some of the main points discussed were the incidence of early marriage and

teenage pregnancy in the district and nationally, some of the causes such as social norms as well as the consequences, including the health risks and socio-economic effects on households and the community at large. In addition, the channels for reporting these cases were also reviewed. As previously mentioned, male and female students did not participate in these initiatives, nor were they consulted on the content of these broadcasts. While it is understandable that the radio shows are broadcast in the evening, making it difficult to include students in the broadcasts, the importance of relaying both male and female students' voices on issues that directly affect them is imperative to understand and address the students' needs. The male radio moderators mentioned that there were some call-in testimonials, from parents whose daughters had become pregnant, dropped out of school and then re-enrolled to complete their education, however first hand testimonies of students directly affected by early marriage and teenage pregnancy were not part of the sensitization initiatives.

Nevertheless, all the respondents had the impression that to some extent, the needs of students on the issues of early marriage and teenage pregnancy were addressed through the radio sensitization initiatives. A male project member (n. 2) accurately concluded that it is difficult to *''determine the level of attribution of what we have done''* and estimate the impact of the radio sensitizations because ''*the actual realization of a positive outcome – of people delaying marriage, appreciating the importance of education and girls staying in school – it will take time and will not be done overnight.''* A senior male district official (n. 12) shared his viewpoint that without these kinds of initiatives during the lockdown, cases of teenage pregnancy and early marriage could have been much higher, if the risks and consequences were not shared through the radio talk shows. He further conveyed that from the feedback he received from the community, many were surprised when listening to the talk shows, at the high level of teenage pregnancies, particularly during the lockdown. According to him, they appreciated the gravity of the situation more, since cases were in their neighborhoods and affecting families that they knew personally. When questioned about how social norms were approached in relation to early marriage and teenage pregnancy during the broadcasts, radio moderators and a project member (6, 7 and 2) replied that it was reiterated to the community that signs of puberty do not automatically signify that a child is ready to be married. Furthermore, the community were urged to allow children the time to grow and mature before getting married. With regards to bride price, rather than advocating for the practice to be abolished, stakeholders tried to emphasize that investing in a girls' education would result in an increased bride price and other benefits that would accrue and endure for families and the community in the long term.

Almost unanimously all respondents, except respondents 6 and 11, reported that people were well aware of the laws regarding defilement, for instance, because there are several radio sensitizations, CDOs, religious leaders and NGOs publicizing this information in the community. As a female project member (n. 3) remarked, while these messages and information are broadcast on the radio, it is ultimately up to the community to take a stance and act on the information that they are given, in a way that ensures the safety and continued education of children. She also observed that feedback received during PTA and community meetings demonstrate how people find value in the radio sensitizations and follow them. ''*Some of the women turn up in big numbers and the feedback is that the radio also helps creating awareness to their spouses, who don't come to the meetings because when the radio show is running, they are listening.''* Another female project member (n.10) commented about the feedback she receives from parents during project visits: *''they seem satisfied and are generally always happy when there are things happening…they don't get very much from the government and I think that they are always very grateful when something is done.''* Male radio moderators (6 and 7) commented that they had received a substantial amount of positive feedback, with members of the community even calling them when they returned home after these

broadcasts. One respondent (n. 7) said that many in the community have a limited educational background which prevents them from fully understanding the positive role that education can play in their children's lives, but there are signs of mindset shifts for others.

> *Still there are parents who are conservative and who say 'No, when you educate a girl child the girl child easily disappoints', but…surely, if we are to compare the community now to before, definitely there are changes. Right now, school has started in Uganda…you see parents sending the boy child and the girl together, without giving first priority to the boy at the expense of the girl child and that's how I think the attitude of the community has been positively changed.*

While a senior female district official (n. 8) shared similar positive feedback from the community, she also reflected that some community members have been skeptical, since they feel that the radio sensitizations place too much importance on children's rights. They have expressed fear that they might be reported to the police for beating their children and believe that this lack of discipline emboldens children to do whatever they want, including initiating sexual activity early. A male CDO (n. 15) also mentioned that from the feedback he has received on the radio initiatives, the community is not receptive because the economic hardships that they face are more pressing. A male LC (n. 5) believed that the initiatives have instilled fear in some of the men in the community who attempt to manipulate students with gifts. Another male CDO (n. 4) was the only respondent to report that he received no feedback whatsoever from the community regarding the radio sensitizations. A male and female teacher (11 and 9) believed that these initiatives elicit conversations about these topics within the community and help some adolescents, to grasp the seriousness of teenage pregnancy and early marriage. A female project member (n. 10) also described signs of increasing awareness amongst male students of the plight of their female colleagues, however it is not clear whether these changes can be attributed solely to radio sensitizations:

> *Every year we send drawings and little letters of the school children to private donors. This time many letters were tackling early marriage, pregnancy. They are really worried that their colleagues are getting married and pregnant and they want to get back to school but they can't because of Corona. And that is really something that I thought would come more from girls, but it's like half-half.*

The importance and need for constant and continued sensitization not just through radio, but also via school campaigns and other community outreach strategies, were acknowledged by all respondents, who emphasized that the process of changing attitudes and social norms is long and complex. This is particularly true given the fact that the radio sensitizations covered a range of topics and did not focus exclusively on early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Both male and female project staff (1, 2, 3, 10) also voiced their concerns of reversing the progress made in terms of enrollments, stating how difficult it is in the current situation to adequately support students who are affected by the lockdown to return to school. They acknowledge that the full magnitude of the problem will not be evident until after all grade levels return to school by June. There has been a mixed response with regards to the feedback from the community and the changes that these initiatives may have engendered. Respondents received both positive and negative feedback, however several respondents were directly involved in the radio sensitization initiatives and their responses may not have been objective. Furthermore, it was not possible to survey the community directly on their perceptions.

Judging by the steady increase over the years in the numbers of students enrolling in the two schools, (Chart 1, Annex 3), it appears that the community has been receptive to messages regarding the importance and value of education. This was supported by the feedback from male and female FGD participants who voiced that the radio sensitizations were helpful in convincing parents about the importance of education and

sending their children to school. A senior female district official was also adamant that there was a clear link between the radio sensitization and parents being mobilized to enroll their children in school, but she acknowledged that the radio sensitizations have not had the same impact on keeping students in school until they have completed their education. A female project member (n. 10) remarked that initially there are a lot of girls who enroll in primary school and in fact they outnumber the boys, however there is a steep decrease in the numbers of male and female students by the time they reach higher levels of primary school and beyond. '*In Primary 7 you find maybe 10% of those who started in the best-case scenario. Of course, more girls than boys drop out, but it's a general problem in poor, rural areas in Africa*''. The persistent challenge remains in relation to retention levels and unless the root causes of teenage pregnancy and early marriage are addressed through these interventions, students will continue to dropout. Consequently, the challenge of retaining students in schools should inform and prioritize messaging in any future radio sensitization initiatives.

11. CONCLUSION, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to assess the relevance and process of implementing the radio sensitization initiatives in addressing the causes of early marriage and teenage pregnancies in Zombo district. Based on the feedback from the respondents, the study concludes that the radio programs were relevant to a certain extent as they helped to increase awareness of issues affecting education, health risks and consequences of early marriage and teenage pregnancy. They also helped to inform the community about the relevant laws and procedures to follow in order to report cases to authorities, however they ultimately did not achieve their objective of reducing the incidence of GBV such as teenage pregnancy in the community, nor were students consulted to ascertain what their needs were on such issues. The radio sensitizations did not exclusively broadcast messages relating to early marriage and teenage pregnancy, therefore the effect on diminishing the incidence of these cases was inherently limited.

This study supports other studies (Atekyereza, 2001; Stoebenau et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2015, Watson et al., 2018) that have investigated the primary determinants of teenage pregnancies and early marriages as respondents have highlighted poverty, inadequate parental care, unsafe home and social environments, negative peer influence, lack of reporting and access to legal recourse as well as discriminatory gender norms, cultural practices and expectations that favor boys over girls. Based on the statistics obtained from the District Probation and Welfare Office, it appears that the number of teenage pregnancies has been increasing over the years. This has been aggravated by the Covid-19 lockdowns which resulted in widespread, extended disruptions to education. Statistics relating to early marriage have not been obtained, however based on the responses from the respondents, it appears that this is still a socially acceptable practice.

Some of the major findings of this study relate to imposed pregnancy testing on female students, that obliges them to drop out of school, at least for the duration of their pregnancy. Although the students are allowed to return, it is very seldom, if ever, the case that a girl will return to the same school. This is in part due to high levels of stigmatization and discrimination that she will face at school and in the community, since she is regarded as a negative example for her peers. For male students, there seems to be largely no consequences, as they can continue their studies, or in some rare cases may drop out. In terms of early marriage, this was often seen as the only viable option for pregnant students and it was also socially

condoned because of the practice of bride wealth, which is a part of the Alur culture and traditions. For boys, early marriage is very rarely a reality, however they may be required to marry the girl that they have impregnated or pay a sum of money to her family.

It is still too early to fully grasp the magnitude of the Covid-19 pandemic on access to education, and ascertain if the radio sensitization has had any effect on parents' decisions to keep their children in school or prevent more cases of teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Uganda has been in another lockdown since early June, before all of the students could fully return to school, creating further impediments to their education. Feedback from respondents is indicative of a significant increase in teenage pregnancies, early marriages and further economic hardships for families, which imperils access to education for both male and female students. Nevertheless, this crisis also provides an opportunity to review past strategies and develop future interventions to more effectively and sustainably address issues such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

10.2 Lessons Learned and recommendations

This part of the study will elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of the radio sensitizations and provide specific recommendations for the Salongo project on ways in which interventions can be tailored at school level and in the community as a whole, to reduce early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Some of the weaknesses of the radio sensitizations include the fact that they were not broadcast often, the consultative and implementation process did not include students or other critical stakeholders in the community such as religious and cultural leaders and no record was kept relating to these interventions for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Some of the strengths of the radio sensitizations was the ability to reach different segments of the community in the local language, in particular people who may not have access to information because of illiteracy. It appears that the community has been receptive to messages related to the importance of education on the radio, which has been an overarching goal of the project. However, the radio sensitization initiatives do not appear to have had an impact in improving retention rates at the schools, which are still adversely affected by various factors outlined in this study, including early marriage and teenage pregnancy. While these initiatives were a complementary activity, they have an important role to play in disseminating information, generating greater awareness in the community and helping to change norms that are detrimental to girls' education. This study therefore concludes that the **radio sensitization initiatives should be continued and intensified**, especially in the post Covid-19 context, in tandem with more frequent sensitization activities such as community engagement meetings.

One suggestion to increase the number of broadcasts and ensure that messages are transmitted consistently, is to schedule biweekly radio sensitization programs, which can include an array of formats, in addition to talk shows and radio spots. This could include testimonials, short stories, recordings of school debates, extended question and answer sessions, etc. Moreover, the messages conveyed should be carefully designed to ensure that the community feel that they are a part of the solution to the problems and work to minimize any apprehensions they may have to participate. As Minckas et al., (2020, p.10), have established, in certain contexts ''*violence is normalized and communities' reactions to prescriptive messages can backlash into defensiveness, confusion and overall rejection. Activities that are less prescriptive in nature provide a larger space for reflection on the social roots that influence communities' marginalized position*.'' Apart from the necessary information sharing and awareness raising, messages and topics of discussion on the radio should allow the community to reflect and re-imagine gender relations and gendered divisions of labor,

especially at the household level. Furthermore, negative feedback from parents, particularly with regards to misconceptions that an emphasis on children's rights on the radio and sexual education at schools promote indiscipline and promiscuity should be openly, directly and consistently addressed during sensitizations as they can significantly derail community engagement on these sensitive topics. Furthermore, due to the fact that not all households own a radio, to ensure that more community members are reached, portable radios could be strategically placed in different areas of the community, for instance at the marketplace or community gatherings. This would even allow for background listening, if people are simultaneously engaged in other activities.

Several respondents also favored community dialogues and village meetings as the preferred method of sensitization. While they are occasionally held by the program, they should be increased to ensure that communities are reached on a monthly basis and led by both male and female stakeholders involved in the sensitization initiatives. Group activities could be designed to encourage community members who attend these sessions to come up with strategies and action plans to prevent GBV, that can be implemented and monitored on a regular basis. In addition, further research is necessary in order to obtain feedback from a diverse cross-section of the community in order to ascertain the full impact of the radio sensitizations, compared to community engagement meetings and accurately determine the reach and efficacy of each of these approaches. Any future methods of intervention by the project should not only be informed by a cost benefit analysis, but also carefully consider which strategy will result in a greater sense of ownership and enable the community to reflect critically. Based on the feedback from respondents regarding vulnerable demographics of boys and girls in the community, it appears that orphans, lower income households, and girls reaching puberty (around Primary 5 until Senior 2) are particularly impacted by early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Consequently, there should be a **targeted intensification of sensitization and program interventions aimed at these vulnerable demographics and their parents or caregivers**, that specifically addresses socially constructed gender identities, norms and roles that perpetuate GBV.

This study recommends that the **multi-stakeholder approach**, which was employed in developing and implementing these radio sensitization initiatives, should also be extended to include other critical stakeholders, namely, influential religious and cultural leaders and collaborate with them to facilitate sensitization initiatives. Given that conservative, traditional values are widespread in the community, it is important to ensure that these stakeholders, who have a significant reach in the community, are willing to endorse these messages publicly on the radio and during community engagement meetings. While stakeholders were engaging with each other and the community with regards to which issues should be addressed and how, the activities and strategies relating to radio sensitization initiatives were undocumented by the project, therefore another recommendation of the study is to **fully document these initiatives in order to streamline processes and ensure that there is a systematic way to monitor progress**. This could be incorporated in the bi-annual narrative reports and on-site monitoring visits which have been used thus far to evaluate the project's performance. When questioned about the objectives of the radio sensitization initiatives, respondents who were directly involved, consistently provided generic answers such as 'reducing or eliminating teenage pregnancy', however it would be advisable to **set up clear, concrete, specific objectives, outcomes and relevant indicators** in the design and implementation of these interventions. These indicators can also be consulted in monitoring and evaluating these interventions and making changes as necessary to ensure that the objectives are met.

Another significant gap identified in program implementation has been the **lack of accurate and specific sex segregated data** on the numbers and reasons for school dropouts throughout the duration of the program. While there have been attempts to establish what the percentage of dropouts were for each gender as a

result of various factors, including early marriage, teenage pregnancy, inability to pay school fees, loss of interest, child labor, etc., this study was not able to provide a conclusive overview of these trends. The lack of accurate data could be a result of inadequate resources at school and district level and an oversight by the project to follow up on the numbers and reasons pertaining to dropouts from the start of the program. One of the main recommendations of this study is to ensure that the project keeps an **up-to-date, detailed record of the school dropouts, as well as returnees**. This will enable stakeholders to have a better understanding on the linkages between issues such as teenage pregnancy and early marriage on school dropouts and follow up on students affected by this on a case-by-case basis. It will also serve to inform the development of prevention strategies to ensure that there is a greater level of retention and accountability in schools.

It has also been challenging to obtain any statistics at all, particularly with regards to GBV that affects boys in the community. This could also be in part because statistics are not kept on boys, as GBV is regarded as a phenomenon that affects girls and women rather than boys and men. It could also be linked to the fact that the subject matter of this study is sensitive. In general, both male and female respondents were more open about discussing these issues in detail during one-on-one interviews. However, all respondents acknowledged the ubiquitous nature of GBV in the community and the lack of resources and training for them to do more on these issues.

Another key recommendation of this study is that **both male and female students should be consulted about these interventions and their opinions and experiences should also be used to guide decision making and enable their direct participation**. As noted in the National Child Participation Strategy (2017, p.3),

> *decisions believed to benefit children are solely led from an adult perspective with little or no consideration of the child's insights and experiences. This leaves children to feel that their voice is not valued, their experience is irrelevant and their decisions remain invisible across decision making structures*.

In the case of the radio sensitizations, given that students might not be able to attend radio talk shows at night, soundbites and recordings of the students taken at school and replayed on the radio, could be a viable alternative to amplify and validate children's voices in the community. A senior female district official (n.8) mentioned that there have been some discussions with stakeholders to introduce a children's parliament as a forum where children can openly discuss and debate issues that affect them, which could also be a good way to ensure that children are included. Furthermore, **consulting students who have dropped out about their experiences and recommendations** they may have for dealing with these issues to genuinely address their needs is also imperative. While it was not possible to interview students that were directly affected by early marriage and pregnancy, when FGD participants were asked what else could be done to prevent early marriage and teenage pregnancy, they provided several suggestions. Amongst others, these included organizing plays in the community on these topics and providing support to parents so that they are able to keep their children in school. In addition, providing guidance and counselling to parents and children together and issuing 'talking T-shirts' to teenagers in the community with messages that can be used to sensitize their peers and community, could be some of the ways in which the students become engaged and participate.

School-level engagement: School level interventions that have been implemented by the project to provide information and increase awareness, such as the career guidance, role model talks, health and debate clubs, seem to be viewed favorably by the respondents and FGD participants and should be continued. It would be

advisable to **incorporate clubs and talks that disseminate other practical information and life skills** to empower girls and boys, such as awareness of their rights, and helping them to improve their negotiation, communication, mentorship and leadership skills. In addition, the program was able to provide some bursaries, scholastic materials and support for some of the most disadvantaged households to be able to earn a living. It is essential to ensure that these kinds of **economic support programs and schooling incentives** remain in place to complement other interventions such as radio sensitizations and thereby work to improve retention levels at schools.

In addition, while the SWT and SMT have been delegated to provide guidance and counselling to students, the scope of their responsibilities is wide and ambiguous, therefore, another suggestion would be to **provide specialized training from GBV experts on psychosocial counselling for SWT and SMT.** This would enable them to improve their skills, engage with students more comprehensively, particularly on issues like teenage pregnancy and early marriage, and provide improved assistance to both male and female students, who understand and experience GBV in different ways. This training would also be useful in order for the SWT and SMT to provide adequate counselling to parents on these issues. There should be regular, scheduled sessions with the students for them to ask questions and seek help from the SWT or SMT, as currently this seems to be at the discretion of the teacher. If students can access these services and become accustomed to talking with their teachers about a range of issues, then this can support their development and learning and also strengthen reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, it was noted that several FGD participants were older and may have enrolled late in school and their experiences are also different compared to their peers. They should also receive specialized learning support to allow them to continue with their education.

Moreover, the lack of a comprehensive approach to sex education is a major constraint, not only because it restricts the provision of accurate and thorough information to students, but it also curbs their autonomy to exercise their rights, placing male and female students at greater risk of STD's, unsafe abortions and unplanned pregnancies, which in turn has significant consequences relating to their education. This makes it all the more important that the project **ensures that health services and SRH talks are adapted and accessible to both male and female students on a regular basis**. Although sex education in schools may not be fully within the control of the project, influential stakeholders interviewed in this study can use their position to prioritize, mobilize support and advocate for students' SRHR and exert pressure on district officials and the government on the need to implement these measures, particularly in light of the current nationwide increases in early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

Community-level engagement: A concurrent program to provide training and skills support to school dropouts should also be established. While students are provided with some training at the Salongo schools and there is another vocational training program, Aradau Pi Fur, also reaching approximately 600 unemployed youths, many of whom are dropouts (Salongo Pi Somo, 2020), it was found that none of the Aluka Secondary or Warr Girls School dropouts have been beneficiaries of this program. This is largely because it is based in different sub-counties than the schools. Nevertheless, there is a need to **ensure that a comprehensive support program is established** to provide a socio-economic safety net for the dropouts from the Salongo Pi Somo project schools, as they often are not able to access government programs such as the Youth Livelihood program and lack the skills to find gainful employment, according to a project member (n. 2). The implementation of programs that require the participation of couples could also be one way to ensure that girls who are married are able to benefit and participate in these initiatives.

Promoting the engagement and involvement of more men and boys in prevention and response strategies is critical, as men can be positive agents of change and allies in redressing unequal gender relations,

particularly in patriarchal communities where males have a monopoly on decision making power, access to resources and influence. As several respondents had alluded to inadequate parental support and guidance, a further recommendation would be to include **positive parenting trainings** during community and PTA meetings to stimulate a shift in parental attitudes towards discipline, child rearing and help them to understand the responsibilities that they have in supporting their children to complete their education and delay the age of marriage.

Partnerships should also be strengthened with stakeholders who are involved in law enforcement and part of the referral pathways in the community, in order to facilitate the reporting and prosecution of cases such as defilement. From the interviews with respondents, it emerged that stakeholders such as police officers and LCs are not regarded as credible in handling these cases. Until these reporting mechanisms and the justice system is strengthened to manage these cases effectively, perpetrators will not be held to account and victims risk incurring further trauma and stigmatization if they report these cases. In addition, social norms could prevent students from using reporting mechanisms because, as several respondents (1, 2, 3, 8 and 14) commented, GBV is widespread and underreported in the community. Hence the importance of strengthening the referral pathways in the community that exist and ensuring that there are regular lines of communication between the different stakeholders to ensure accountability. Forming partnerships with other local and international NGOs who may work within the community or in other districts, could be another way to collaborate, share resources and best practices, which could potentially enhance these interventions to reduce and prevent child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

It is undeniable that community sensitization to address deep rooted social norms and attitudes is a complex process, requiring multi-sectoral, multi-level co-operation, resources, time and commitment to facilitate the theory of change and mobilize the community to respond to issues such as child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Informing the community and raising their awareness is crucial through interventions such as the radio sensitization initiatives. However it should be followed up by concrete action steps and encouraging all segments of the community to participate and fulfil their responsibilities to eliminate what are ultimately collective problems facing the community. Much can be built on the progress made so far and the nationwide surge in cases of teenage pregnancy and early marriage during the lockdown should be seized as an opportunity to intervene and advocate for improved policies that increase retention and at the same time address and diminish gender inequalities.

12. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Documents

- Salongo Pi Somo Bi-annual report & Annual Reports (2016-2020).
- Salongo Pi Somo detailed project activities document, 2021.
- Salongo Pi Somo Response on Teenage Pregnancy and Marriages, 2020.
- Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) Statistical Abstract, 2020.
- Ugandan Ministry of Education & Sports (MoES). Revised guidelines for the prevention and management of teenage pregnancy in school settings in Uganda, 2020.
- Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). Multimedia Strategy Against Gender-based Violence, 2016.
- Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). National Child Participation Strategy 2017/18 – 2021/22, (2017).

Scholarly Articles

1. Atekyereza, P. (2001). The education of girls and women in Uganda. *Journal of social development in Africa*, *16*(2), 115-146.
2. Arango, D.J., Morton, M., Gennari, F., Kiplesund, S., & Ellsberg, M. (2014). Interventions to prevent or reduce violence against women and girls: A systematic review of reviews. The World Bank.
3. Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (2020, February 16). Sexual violence in Uganda. https://www.cehurd.org/rape-and-sexual-assault/ [Retrieved March 30, 2021]
4. Fergus, L. & Van't Rood, R. (2013). Unlocking the potential for change: Education and prevention of Gender-based violence. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269571845_UNLOCKING_THE_POTENTIAL_FOR_CHANGE_EDUCATION_AND_PREVENTION_OF_GENDER_BASED_VIOLENCE/link/548ebf3a0cf214269f246591/download
5. Green, C., Mukuria, A., & Rubin, D. (2009). Addressing Early Marriage in Uganda. Washington, DC: Futures Group, Health Policy Initiative, Task Order I.
6. Minckas, N., Shannon, G. & Mannell, J. (2020). The role of participation and community mobilization in preventing violence against women and girls: a programme review and critique. *Global Health Action*, *13*(1), 1-11.
7. Stoebenau, K., Warner, A., Edmeades, J.D., & Sexton, M. (2015). Girls are like leaves on the wind: How gender expectations impact girls' education – A closer look from West Nile, Uganda. Washington: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).
8. Subrahmanyam, G. (2016). Gender perspectives on causes and effects of school dropouts. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). https://publikationer.sida.se/contentassets/4334380a5b754ef9924a6e25a4ca6e8a/babf2dad-1010-4035-8bfd-ce7d7f9108d7.pdf
9. The United Nations Children Fund. (2015). Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda: A formative research to guide the implementation of the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda. https://www.unicef.org/uganda/media/3901/file
10. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2012). On Air with rural women.
10. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/unesco_booklet_a5_uk_final_02_0.pdf
11. Watson, C., Bantebya, G. & Muhanguzi, F. (2018). The paradox of change and continuity in social norms and practices affecting adolescent girls' capabilities and transitions to adulthood in rural Uganda in Harper et al. (Eds). *Empowering adolescent girls in developing countries: Gender justice and norm change* (pp. 83-101). Routeledge.
12. Wodon, Q.C., Male, A., Onagoruwa, A., Savadogo, A., & Yedan, A. (2017). The cost of not investing in girls in Uganda: Child Marriage, Child bearing, Low Educational Attainment for Girls and their impacts. Washington, DC. The World Bank.

13. ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of respondents, function, date of interview or questionnaire and contact information

	Name and function	Date of interview/questionnaire	Contact details
1	Jude Oweka, Project Co-ordinator (CEFORD)	03.04.2021	0256 774 765 509
2	Kennedy Ayeyo, Program specialist (CEFORD)	07.04.2021	0256 776 730 030
3	Jean Asipkwe, Director (CEFORD)	07.04.2021	0256 772 383 089
4	Michael Atimnedi, CDO, Warr Sub-county	09.04.2021	0256 774 936 964
5	Albert Susu, LCII, Warr sub-county, Ngira Parish, Akwerali village	10.04.2021	0256 774 099 349
6	Wayu Saviour, Local Radio Paidha Moderator	13.04.2021	0256 788 246 519
7	Bruno Obomba, Former Local Radio Paidha Moderator	14.04.2021	0256 782 882 650
8	Pimer Collins, Senior District Probation & Welfare Officer	14.04.2021	0256 789 864 220
9	Alfred Wokotho, Teacher, Warr Girls School	15.04.2021	0256 754 141 541
10	Nicole Stejskal, Co-director (Co-operaid)	15.04.2021	041 44 363 57 87
11	Doreen Kayenyparwoth, Senior Woman Teacher Warr Girls School	16.04.2021	0256 778 187 329
12	Silvio Jalar, District Inspector of Schools	17.04.2021	0256 772 861 526
13	Jalmoro Ugenmungu, LCI Warr Sub county	19.04.2021	0256 772 538 273
14	Edna Abiko, MEMPROW activity officer	20.04.2021	0256 775 285 038
15	Godwill Owachgiu, CDO Atyak Sub County	21.04.2021	0256 785 572 836

Annex 2: List of participants in Focus Group Discussions

	Name	Age	Sex	Grade Level	School
16	Precious Ayungurwoth	17	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
17	Oliver Katik	17	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
18	Fortunate Muber	18	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
19	Daizy Mungudit	17	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School

20	Gladies Kayenypamungu	17	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
21	Trinity Kwiocwiny	18	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
22	Evalyne Econi	18	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
23	Christine Matruru	18	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
24	Prossy Uyungurwoth	18	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
25	Patricia Cekecan	17	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
26	Easter Kayeny	17	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
27	Monica Nimungu	17	F	S3	Aluka Secondary School
28	Vivian Nimungu	18	F	S5	Aluka Secondary School

	Name	Age	Sex	Grade Level	School
29	Jerry Nenungo	20	M	S5	Aluka Secondary School
30	Michael Openjrwoth	19	M	S3	Aluka Secondary School
31	Robert Munguacel	17	M	S3	Aluka Secondary School
32	Innocent Oparpimungu	18	M	S3	Aluka Secondary School
33	Rogers Upenjmungu	18	M	S3	Aluka Secondary School
34	Britney Rwothungeo	18	M	S3	Aluka Secondary School
35	Lovis Wanadi	18	M	S3	Aluka Secondary School
36	Cosmas Jurua	18	M	S3	Aluka Secondary School
37	Brian Rwothombio	20	M	S5	Aluka Secondary School
38	Edmond Mungujakisa	20	M	S5	Aluka Secondary School

	Name	Age	Sex	Grade Level	School
39	Phionah Nyamundu	18	F	S5	Warr Girls School
40	Scowan Afoyomungu	19	F	S5	Warr Girls School
41	Melody Rono Kwiocwiny	17	F	S3	Warr Girls School
42	Trinity Afoyorwoth	17	F	S3	Warr Girls School
43	Sharon Rachio	18	F	S3	Warr Girls School
44	Daisy Ayungurwoth	20	F	S5	Warr Girls School
45	Faith Alochiparwoth	17	F	S3	Warr Girls School
46	Gloria Lemb-mwu	15	F	S3	Warr Girls School
47	Faith Oyergiu	17	F	S3	Warr Girls School
48	Kelly Agenurwoth	17	F	S3	Warr Girls School
49	Tracy Anirwoth	17	F	S3	Warr Girls School

Annex 3: Tables/Charts

Table 1: Research questions, data collection method, description, number and sex of the respondents

Research questions	Data collection method	Type of respondent	Quantity of respondents	Male/Female
RQ1.1	Semi-structured interview Questionnaire Focus Group	• Co-director, Co-operaid • Director, CEFORD • Project Co-ordinator, CEFORD • Program Specialist, CEFORD • Senior Woman Teacher, Warr Girls • Teacher, Warr Girls • District School Inspector • Secondary School Student • Women's rights activist, MEMPROW • District Probation and Welfare Officer • Radio moderators • Local Councilor (LC) • Community Development Officer (CDO)	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 34 1 1 2 2 2	F F M M F M M 10 M/24 F F F M M M
RQ1.2	Semi-structured interview Questionnaire Focus Group	• Co-director, Co-operaid • Director, CEFORD • Project Co-ordinator, CEFORD • Program Specialist, CEFORD • Secondary School Student • Senior Woman Teacher, Warr Girls • Teacher, Warr Girls • District School Inspector • Women's rights activist, MEMPROW	1 1 1 1 34 1 1 1 1	F F M M 10 M/24 F F M M F
RQ2.1	Semi-structured interview	• Co-director, Co-operaid • Director, CEFORD • Project co-ordinator, CEFORD • Program Specialist, CEFORD • Local radio moderator • District Probation and Welfare Officer	1 1 1 1 2 1	F F M M M F
RQ2.2	Semi-structured interview Questionnaire Focus Group	• Co-director, Co-operaid • Director, CEFORD • Project co-ordinator, CEFORD • Program Specialist, CEFORD • Local radio moderator • District School Inspector • District Probation and Welfare Officer • Secondary School Student • Women's rights activist, MEMPROW • Local Councilors • Community Development Officers	1 1 1 1 2 2 1 34 1 2 2	F F M M M M F 10 M/24 F F M M

Chart 1: Aluka SS and Warr Girls Enrolment Trend, 2017-2020

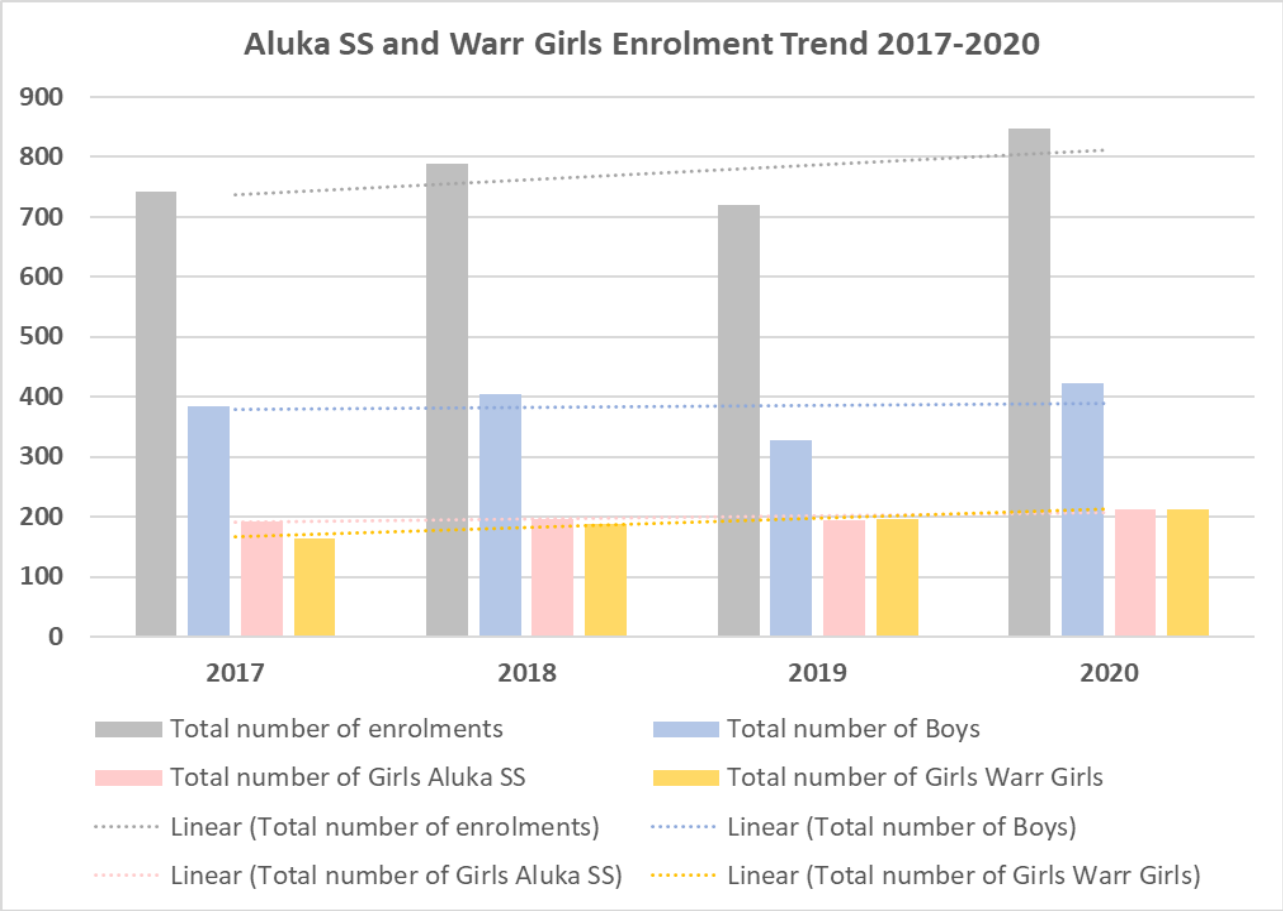
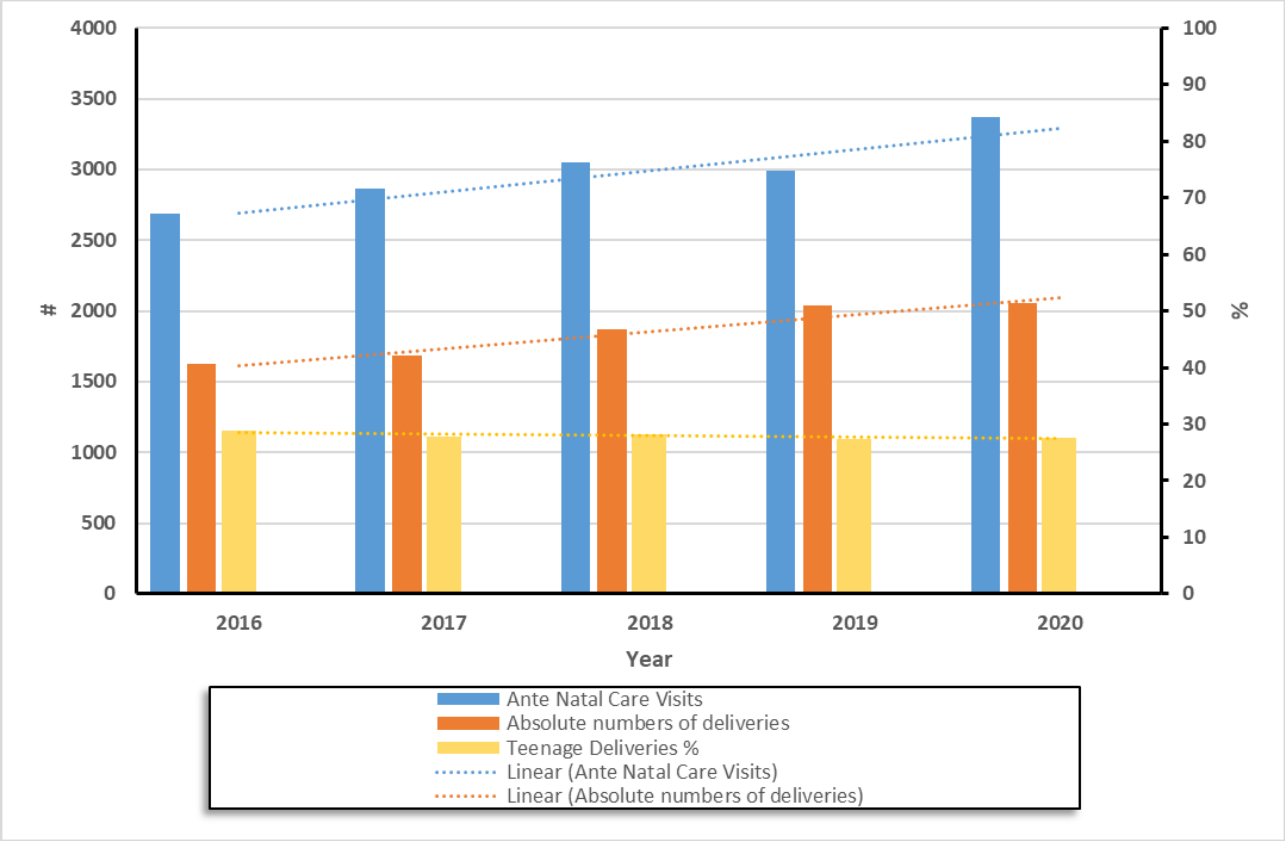


Chart 2: Teenage pregnancy statistics Zombo district, 2016-2020



Annex 4: Figures

Figure 1: Enrolment, attendance, dropout and graduation statistics for Aluka SS and Warr Girls

Name of school	2017				2018				2019			
	Enrolment	Attendance	Drop-out	Graduation	Enrolment	Attendance	Drop-out	Graduation	Enrolment	Attendance	Drop-out	Graduation
Warr Girls	165	98%	2	38	188	96%	4	53	197	96%	6	30
Aluka SS	577	95%	24	99	601	96%	24	89	523	96%	20	101

Figure 2: Dropout statistics and reasons provided by Aluka SS and Warr Girls

Dropouts and Reasons

Warr SS	Girls					Total
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Pregnancy	—	—	01	03	5	9
Early Marriage	—	—	—	—	3	3
Child Labor	—	—	—	—	—	0
Loss of interest	—	—	—	—	—	0
Unable to pay school fees	—	—	01	—	—	01
Other						0
Total	0	0	0	0	8	8

DEPUTY HEADMASTER WARR GIRLS S.S. SIGN.....

Aluka SS	Boys					Total
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Pregnancy	—	—	—	—	—	0
Early Marriage	—	—	—	—	—	0
Child Labor	—	—	—	—	—	0
Loss of interest	—	—	—	—	—	0
Unable to pay school fees	—	—	—	—	—	0
Other	—	—	—	—	—	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

ALUKA SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADMASTER 27 APR 2021 SIGN..... P.O. BOX 119, PAIU

Aluka SS	Girls					Total
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Pregnancy	12	9	4	11	7	43
Early Marriage	—	—	—	—	2	2
Child Labor	—	—	—	—	—	0
Loss of interest	—	—	—	—	—	0
Unable to pay school fees	—	—	—	—	—	0
Others	—	—	—	—	—	0
Total	12	9	4	11	9	45

ALUKA SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADMASTER 27 APR 2021 SIGN..... P.O. BOX 119, PAIU

Figure 3: Returning dropout statistics provided by Aluka SS and Warr Girls

Number of dropouts who have returned

Warr SS	Girls			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Returned after delivery	–	01	–	–
Returned after early marriage	–	01	–	–
Returned after child labor	–	–	–	–
Returned after loss of interest	–	–	–	01
Returned when they were able to pay school fees	–	01	–	–
Returned after other reasons	–	–	–	–
Total	0	0	0	0

DEPUTY HEADMASTER WARR GIRLS SIGN.....

Aluka SS	Boys			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Returned after delivery	–	–	01	–
Returned after early marriage	–	–	–	01
Returned after child labor	–	–	–	–
Returned after loss of interest	–	–	–	–
Returned when they were able to pay school fees	–	–	–	–
Returned after other reasons	–	–	–	–
Total	0	0	0	0

ALUKA SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADMASTER 27 APR 2021 SIGN:..... P.O. BOX 119, PHILIPPINES

Aluka SS	Girls				
		2017	2018	2019	2020
Returned after delivery	–	–	–	01	–
Returned after early marriage	–	–	–	–	01
Returned after child labor	–	–	–	–	–
Returned after loss of interest	–	–	–	–	–
Returned when they were able to pay school fees	–	–	–	–	–
Returned after other reasons	–	–	–	–	–
Total	0	0	0	0	0

Annex 5: Photos

5.1 Focus group discussion with female participants at Warr Girls School

5.2 Focus group discussion with male participants at Aluka Secondary School

5.3 Focus group discussion with female participants at Aluka Secondary School

Annex 6: Interview guidelines

6.1 Semi-structured interview guidelines

	Questions to address to the respondent:
RQ1.1	**What are the main reasons for the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the community, how have they changed over time and what are the differential effects on male and female students?** 1. What forms of GBV affect girls and boys the most? 2. What is the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in Zombo District and what factors contribute to it? 3. Do you think that the incidence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy has increased or decreased over the years? Why? 4. How do male and female students' experiences of early marriage and teenage pregnancy differ and what are their specific needs in relation these issues? 5. In which environments to girls and boys feel safe/unsafe? Who do they turn to for help or support? 6. Are particular demographics more vulnerable or susceptible to early marriage and

	teenage pregnancy (eg. orphans, girls with disabilities, etc)? 7. Are there adequate reporting mechanisms in place and are students at risk easily able to access these channels? 8. What social stigmas do students who are pregnant or married face and how does the community respond to these cases? 9. Who are the main perpetrators of early marriage and teenage pregnancy? What consequences do they face? 10. What is the level of awareness in the community around early marriage and teenage pregnancy and the laws on these issues? 11. Are there any programs or interventions to help pregnant or married students continue their education?
RQ1.2	**How does early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect the students' education and what support is provided at school level to prevent and manage these cases?** 1. How many cases have there been of early marriage and teenage pregnancy at Aluka/Warr Girls since 2016? 2. How does early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect enrolment and dropout rates? 3. How do students respond to early marriage and teenage pregnancies and where do they seek support? 4. Are there mechanisms in place for educators or other school staff to respond to cases of early marriage and teenage pregnancies? 5. What kind of training do educators receive to make them more responsive to early marriage and teenage pregnancies? 6. How does the school respond to teenage pregnancies and early marriage? Is there a policy of exclusion? 7. Do the schools foster a safe, gender-aware learning environment? How? 8. Besides early marriage and teenage pregnancies, what are some of the additional factors that affect student's access to secondary education in Zombo district? 9. What is the feedback from girl students after career guidance and role model talks that encourage them to stay in school? How effective are those interventions? 10. In your opinion, what else could be done to strengthen or improve the support provided to students who are affected by early marriage and teenage pregnancies?
RQ2.1	**Why were radio sensitization initiatives chosen and what were some of the challenges in**

	implementation? 1. What were the specific objectives that you wanted to achieve with these initiatives? 2. Who were the target audience and do you think they were reached by these initiatives? 3. Who were the different stakeholders and what were their roles in developing content for the talk shows and radio spots? 4. Of all the potential interventions and mediums, why was radio sensitization chosen and was this decision reached based on consultation with other stakeholders outside of the program? 5. Was a needs assessment carried out prior to implementation of these initiatives? 6. What were the resources allocated to these initiatives and what were the logistical or technical challenges in implementing them? 7. In your opinion, what are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the radio sensitization initiatives and how can they be improved upon?
RQ2.2	**How relevant was the content of these initiatives to address students' needs as they relate to early marriage and teenage pregnancy?** 1. What are the needs of girl students on the issue of early marriage and teenage pregnancy and how do you think these initiatives addressed their needs? 2. How frequently were these initiatives undertaken and was this adequate? 3. Have the messages and topics of the sensitizations changed and if so, according to what criteria? 4. Who have been the main beneficiaries of these initiatives over the years and how has the project been able to estimate the impact of these initiatives? 5. Are these initiatives linked to actions taken at school to address early marriage and teenage pregnancy?
RQ2.3	**Have the initiatives increased community awareness of early marriage and teenage pregnancy that directly affect students' access to education?** 1. What were the main messages that were conveyed through the initiatives and what was the feedback that you have received about it from different sectors of the community? 2. What are community perceptions around early marriage/teenage pregnancies and access to education and have these changed as a consequence of these initiatives? 3. What are some of the social norms and customs that encourage early marriage? Did these

	initiatives address them? 4. Have the radio sensitization initiatives affected access to education for secondary students? 5. Overall, do you think that the initiatives have been useful and contributed to a sustainable improvement in the community?

6.2 Questionnaire for DIS

Name:_____ Gender: M/F Occupation:_____

Questions about early marriage and teenage pregnancy and the effects on male and female students	
1	What is your role and responsibilities as a District Inspector of schools in Zombo?
2	What are some of the main reasons for early marriage and teenage pregnancy in Zombo?
3	How does early marriage and teenage pregnancies affect male and female students?
4	Can you share some of the data that you have on early marriage and teenage pregnancies and the affect it has on enrolment and dropout rates in the district?
5	Do you think that the cases of early marriage and teenage pregnancies are higher or lower over the years? Why?
6	What kind of support is provided in schools for students who are married or pregnant?
7	Do you think this support is adequate? Why?
8	Do you think you have enough resources and training to respond to these issues that affect education? Why?

9	If you had more resources at your disposal, what would be your priorities for education in Zombo district?
10	Are there any programs or interventions to help pregnant or married students continue their education? If yes, please describe. If no, please explain.
11	Are there any differences in the prevalence of teenage pregnancies and early marriage in Aluka SS and Warr girls compared to other secondary schools in the district? Why?

Questions about schools and education	
1	What are the most important factors that directly affect access to education for boy and girl students in secondary school in the district?
2	What is the proportion of male and female teachers in secondary schools? Do you think this plays a role in the number of dropouts?
3	Are male teachers and students generally involved in discussions about early marriage and teenage pregnancy and ways to address this issue?
4	Do the secondary schools foster a safe, gender-aware learning environment? If yes, how? If no, why?
5	How do schools respond to teenage pregnancies and early marriage? Is there a policy of exclusion?
6	What percentage of students who drop out as a result of marriage or pregnancy return to the same school or a different school?
7	What is the prevalence of school related gender-based violence (eg. bullying, corporal punishment, sexual abuse, etc) in Zombo district?

8	Do teachers receive any training to make them more responsive to early marriage and teenage pregnancies and school related GBV?
10	Do male and female secondary students receive information on sexual and reproductive health and the risks of teenage pregnancy and early marriage? How often?
11	In your opinion, how effective are school level interventions such as career guidance and role model talks in encouraging girls to stay in school?
12	Do you think that there is a difference in the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and early marriage in single-sex schools compared to co-ed schools? Why?

Questions about radio sensitization on early marriage and teenage pregnancy				
1	Radio shows and announcements on early marriage and teenage pregnancy have helped to address the challenges that secondary students face	Fully agree	Somewhat agree/ disagree	Fully Disagree
	Why?			
2	Radio shows and announcements have helped raise awareness of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the community	Fully agree	Somewhat agree/ somewhat disagree	Fully disagree
	Why?			
3	What is the importance of education in the community? Is it the same for girls and boys?			
4	Do you think radio sensitization increased awareness of the importance of education?		YES	NO
	Why?			
5	Do you think these initiatives have had any impact on the enrollment and dropout rates of secondary school students?			

6	Do you think that radio sensitization has helped to address the needs of students?
7	What is your opinion of the radio sensitization initiatives?
8	In your opinion, what else could be done to strengthen or improve the support provided to students who are affected by early marriage and teenage pregnancies, both at schools and in the community?
9	Finally, if you have any additional comments or opinions to add on this issue:

6.3 Questionnaire for CDO's and LC's

Name: _____ Gender: M/F Occupation:_____

Questions about early marriage and teenage pregnancy and the effects on male and female students	
1	What is your role in the community regarding cases of early marriage and teenage pregnancy?
2	What are some of the main reasons for early marriage and teenage pregnancy?
3	What are some of the traditional practices and customs that encourage early marriage?
4	What is the incidence of sexual violence in the district and how does it affect students?
5	How does early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect female students?
6	How does early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect male students?

7	Are there groups in the community more at risk of early marriage and teenage pregnancy?	YES	NO
	Which groups?		
8	Are the number of early marriages and teenage pregnancies higher or lower over the years? Why?		
9	Who in the community responds to early marriage and how do they respond?		
10	Who in the community responds to teenage pregnancies and how do they respond?		
11	Is the community aware that the legal age for marriage in Uganda is 18?	YES	NO
12	Are there any programs or interventions to help pregnant or married students continue their education?	YES	NO
	If yes, can you describe these programs?		
13	Do you think that you have enough resources and training to help students who experience early marriage and teenage pregnancies?	YES	NO
	If no, where are the gaps?		
14	If you had more resources at your disposal, how would you respond?		
15	Is justice accessible for victims?	YES	NO
	Why?		

Questions about education, radio sensitization on early marriage and teenage pregnancy				
1	Radio shows and announcements on early marriage and teenage pregnancy have helped to address the challenges that secondary students face	Fully agree	Somewhat agree/ disagree	Fully Disagree
	Why?			
2	Radio shows and announcements have helped raise awareness of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the community	Fully agree	Somewhat agree/ somewhat disagree	Fully disagree
	Why?			
3	What is the importance of education in the community? Is it the same for girls and boys?			

4	Do you think radio sensitization increased awareness of the importance of education?	YES	NO
	Why?		
5	What feedback have you had from the community about the radio sensitization?		
6	What else do you think can be done to stop early marriage and teenage pregnancy?		
7	What is your opinion of the radio sensitization initiatives?		

6.4 Focus Group Discussion Questions

Name of students, age, gender, grade, school to be collected before starting the discussion

Questions about school	
1	What do you like about going to school?
2	Is it important to stay in school? Why?
3	Can you talk to someone at school if you have a problem? If yes, who can you talk to?
4	Are girls and boys treated the same at school?
5	Is your school close to your home?
6	Do you feel safe at school? Why?
7	Is it hard for you and your friends to come to school? If yes, why?
8	Do you have friends who stopped coming to school? If yes, why?
9	Is it easier for boys to stay in school than girls? Why?
10	Do you have more male or female teachers?
11	Do you prefer male or female teachers? Why?
12	Are there talks at school about early marriage and teenage pregnancy? If yes, do you think the talks are useful? Why?
13	Are there talks at school about reproductive health? If yes, do you think these talks are useful? Why?

Questions about early marriage and teenage pregnancy				
1	Are girls and boys treated the same in the community?			
2	At what age do most girls in Zombo get married?	13-17	18-22	23+
3	At what age do most boys in Zombo get married?	13-17	18-22	23+
4	Are early marriages a problem in Zombo? Why?			
5	Are teenage pregnancies a problem in Zombo? Why?			
6	What do you think about early marriage?			
7	What do you think about teenage pregnancy?			

8	Do you know a girl or boy student who got married early? If YES, was it a girl or boy and are they still in school?
9	Do you know a girl student who got pregnant? If YES, are they still in school?
10	Do you think more or less students are getting married and pregnant than before? Why?
11	What happens at school when a student is married early or becomes pregnant?
12	Do you think students who get married early or become pregnant should still come to school? Why?
13	Who can students that are married early or become pregnant go to for help in the community?

Questions about parents, community and radio	
1	Do you think you have enough information about early marriage and teenage pregnancy? Where do you get this information?
2	What have you heard about early marriage and teenage pregnancy on the radio?
3	How often do you listen to the messages about early marriage and teenage pregnancy on the radio?
4	What do you think about the radio shows on early marriage and teenage pregnancy?
5	Do you think most students listen to these messages on the radio?
6	Do you talk about the radio shows on early marriage and teenage pregnancy? If yes, who do you talk to?
7	Do your parents listen to information about this topic on the radio?
8	What do your parents think about early marriage?
9	What do your parents think about teenage pregnancy?
10	Do your parents think that education is important? Why?
11	Do you think the community listens to messages about early marriage and teenage pregnancy on the radio?
12	Do you think these radio shows help the community? If yes, how?
13	What else do you think can be done to stop early marriage and teenage pregnancy?