4TH CYCLE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW ON TANZANIA

ADVOCACY FACT SHEET

Until we are all equal

WHO WE ARE

Plan International Tanzania is an independent development and humanitarian organisation advancing children's rights and equality for girls. We have worked in Tanzania since 1991, partnering with children, young people, communities, civil society organisations and government institutions to address discrimination, violence, harmful practices and barriers that prevent girls from realising their full potential. Through advocacy and evidence-based programming, we promote girls' rights to education, protection, participation and equal opportunities.

ISSUE 01

ISSUE NO. 1: ELIMINATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND REFORM OF THE LAW OF MARRIAGE ACT

THE COMMITMENT

During Tanzania's 3rd Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2016, Tanzania accepted several recommendations calling for the amendment of the Law of Marriage Act, 1971 to establish 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys. These recommendations included 147.122 by Australia, 147.123 by Belgium, 147.124 by Canada, 147.125 by Ireland, 147.126 by Malawi, 147.127 by Mexico, 147.128 by Norway, 147.129 by Slovenia, 147.130 by Germany. These recommendations were reinforced by the landmark Court of Appeal decision in Attorney General v. Rebeca Z. Gyumi (Civil Appeal No. 204 of 2017), which declared Sections 13 and 17 of the Law of Marriage Act unconstitutional and discriminatory because they permit child marriage.

Current Status: Despite the judgment and the recommendations, these provisions remain in force. The Government has not amended the Law of Marriage Act to establish 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys. Instead, public consultations on proposed amendments (whether the public supports amending the law to establish 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage for girls) have continued despite the Court of Appeal ruling.

Key impacts of the continued existence of child marriage

29% of women aged 20-24 in Tanzania were married before the age of 18.	Child marriage prevalence is higher in some regions, reaching 59% **in** Shinyanga and 58% **in** Tabora, among the highest rates in the country.
55% of women with no education were married before age 18, compared to only **8**% of women who completed secondary education.	Girls' net enrolment drops from **82.1%** in primary education to **43.8%** in lower secondary education and only **7.8%** in upper secondary education.
Adolescent pregnancy affects **22%** of girls aged 15-19 nationally and **25%** in rural areas.	Adult female literacy is **79.5%** compared to **86.8%** among males.

THE COST OF INACTION

Child marriage remains a significant barrier to girls' education, health, protection, and economic empowerment. Girls who marry early are more likely to drop out of school, experience early pregnancy, and face lifelong poverty and reduced employment opportunities. The continued existence of legal exceptions permitting child marriage undermines the protection of children's rights and national efforts to achieve gender equality.

Recommendations:

- Amend the Law of Marriage Act, 1971 to establish 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage for both girls and boys without exception.
- Implement the Court of Appeal judgment in Attorney General v. Rebeca Z. Gyumi by repealing the discriminatory provisions under Sections 13 and 17 and implementing the relevant recommendations.
- End further public consultations on provisions already ruled unconstitutional by the Court of Appeal.

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United Republic of Tanzania. Law of Marriage Act, Cap. 29 R.E. 2019.

Court of Appeal of Tanzania. Attorney General v. Rebeca Z. Gyumi, Civil Appeal No. 204 of 2017 (2019).

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Human Rights Council. (2021). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: United Republic of Tanzania (Third Cycle Recommendations on Child Marriage).

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ISSUE 02

ISSUE NO. 2: SCHOOL RE-ENTRY FOR PREGNANT GIRLS AND ADOLESCENT MOTHERS

THE COMMITMENT

During Tanzania's 3rd Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2016, Tanzania accepted Recommendation 145.77 made by Bulgaria, calling on the Government to review laws and policies to ensure that pregnant girls and young mothers can re-enter and continue their education.

In response, the Government adopted Education Circular No. 2 of 2021 and the Guidelines for Re-entry of Students who Dropped Out of Primary and Secondary Education for Various Reasons (2022). These reforms ended the expulsion policy against pregnant girls and enabled adolescent mothers to return to school. More than **10,000** girls have reportedly benefited from the re-entry framework.

Current Status: While important progress has been achieved, discriminatory provisions continue to exist, including a two-year re-admission timeline and restrictions preventing a girl from re-entering school after a second pregnancy. Further, the re-entry framework remains based on administrative measures rather than legislation. The provisions have not been incorporated into the Education Act, Cap. 353 (R.E. 2023).

Impact: This gap has practical implications for girls. As the framework is not legally guaranteed through legislation, future administrations may withdraw the provisions. Further, the 2025 study conducted by Mwakililo & Mauki on the implementation of the school re-entry circular shows that girls continue to face barriers, including stigma, discrimination, limited awareness of the policy, and challenges in accessing support necessary for successful school reintegration.

THE ACTION REQUIRED

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Fully implement Recommendation 145.77 from the 3rd UPR Cycle, made by Bulgaria, by guaranteeing pregnant girls and adolescent mothers' equal access to education.
- Remove discriminatory provisions contained in Education Circular No. 2 of 2021 and the 2022 Re-entry Guidelines.
- Incorporate the Education Re-entry Framework into the Education Act, Cap. 353 (R.E. 2023) to ensure sustainability and legal protection.
- Strengthen social, psychosocial, educational and financial support systems for adolescent mothers returning to education.

References

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2021). Education Circular No. 2 of 2021 on Re-entry into Formal Education for Students who Dropped Out of School.

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Mwakililo, T. & Mauki, J. (2025). Assessment of Barriers Affecting Implementation of the Education Re-entry Policy for Adolescent Mothers in Tanzania.

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