

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT END OF THE CSO PARTNERS
CONSULTATION MEETING HELD ON 28 -29 OCTOBER
2024 ON RE-ENTRY PROGRAM AND STRENGTHENING
LEGAL FRAMEWORKS TO COMBAT CHILD MARRIAGE
AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TANZANIA**





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ISSUED AT THE END OF THE CSO PARTNERS CONSULTATION MEETING ON RE-ENTRY PROGRAM AND STRENGTHENING LEGAL FRAMEWORKS TO COMBAT CHILD MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TANZANIA

Preamble

We, the undersigned representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), human rights legal experts, and education and health sector leaders, convened for the CSO Partners Consultation Meeting held from 28th to 29th October 2024 at Coral Beach Hotel, Dar es Salaam. The meeting, co-organized by Children Dignity Forum (CDF), TECMN, Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA), and Equality Now, sought to address critical issues affecting girls' rights in Tanzania, including re-entry programs, child marriage, sexual violence, and teenage pregnancies.

The objectives of the meeting were:

1. Building evidence to support the reform of the Law of Marriage Act, ensuring 18 years as the minimum age for marriage for both boys and girls.
2. Ensuring the implementation of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) decision, particularly on re-entry policies.
3. Advocating for the re-entry program and girls' right to education, ensuring its effective implementation.
4. Strengthening legal frameworks to protect girls from child marriage and sexual violence.

Key Issues and Recommendations

1. Re-entry Program for Teen Mothers and Girls

Despite the introduction of Education Circular No. 2 of 2021 and the 2022 Guidelines, challenges remain: limited time for re-entry, lack of financial support, stigma, and barriers such as mandatory pregnancy testing.

Recommendations:

- Expand re-entry programs to include all dropouts without a time limitation.
- Provide financial and childcare support to ensure retention.
- Strengthen awareness campaigns to reduce stigma.
- Enact the circular and the guidelines to have a force of law under the Education Act

3. Addressing Sexual Violence Against Adolescent Girls

According to TDHS 2022, 28% of girls experience sexual violence, compared to 13% of boys. The Legal and Human Rights Centre Report on Human Rights for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021 have been continuously reporting the challenges faced by girls in schools including long distances to schools that put them in a vulnerable state to be sexually violated and hence get pregnant. Moreover, women who become mothers in

their teens are more likely to drop out of school. According to TDHS 2022, in Tanzania, 22% of women aged 15-19 have ever been pregnant.

Recommendations:

- Integrate comprehensive sexuality education into school curricula.
- Strengthen law enforcement against perpetrators of sexual violence perpetrators.
- Improve school safety measures, including transport solutions and safe school routes.



Recommendations to Key Offices

Office	Recommended Actions
The President's Office	Consider issuing Executive Directives to fast-track legal and policy reforms on re-entry, child marriage and sexual violence/teenage pregnancies.
Ministry of Education	Review and strengthen Circular No. 2 of 2021 to remove re-entry time limits. Enact circular no. 2 of 2021 and the 2022 guidelines on re-entry to have a force of law under the National Education Act.
Ministry of Health	Increase access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.
Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs	Expedite the amendment of the Law of Marriage Act (1971), according to the Rebecca Gyumi case. Also, amend other relevant provisions of other laws.
Attorney General's Office	Lead the legal reform process to criminalize child marriage.
Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Women & Special Groups	Strengthen awareness programs on child protection. Fast-track implementation of the ACERWC decision.

Parliament	Prioritize and fast-track the amendment of laws related to child marriage and re-entry policies.
Law Reform Commission	Conduct a comprehensive legal review to align child protection laws with international standards.
Ministry of Home Affairs	Improve law enforcement ensuring justice for survivors; and enhance community protection against child marriage and sexual violence Strengthen the police Gender and children's desk in all police stations by increasing personnel, training officers on gender-responsive policing and ensuring survivors feel safe reporting cases

We urge the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and all relevant stakeholders to consider implementing these recommendations to protect girls' rights in Tanzania effectively.

Signing Organizations

Children's Dignity Forum (CDF), Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA), Equality Now, MyLEGACY, TCRYRO, WiLDAF – Tanzania, ICS-SP, Elimu Mwanzaga, Wadada Solution, Yuna Tanzania, WFT, GAI, TCRF, TGGA, TGNP, Medea Tanzania, HakiElimu, Hodari Hub, Msichana Initiatives Organization, GRLF, LECRI Consult, Umati, WOI, WOWAP, WLAC, LHRC, BFC, World Vision, Agape Frontiers, TAMWA, Plan International, WGNRR Africa, Camfed-Tanzania, UNICEF, SFF and Save the Children.

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