

July 2014

THEATRE  
FOR A **CHANGE**



# Early Marriage of Girls in Primary School

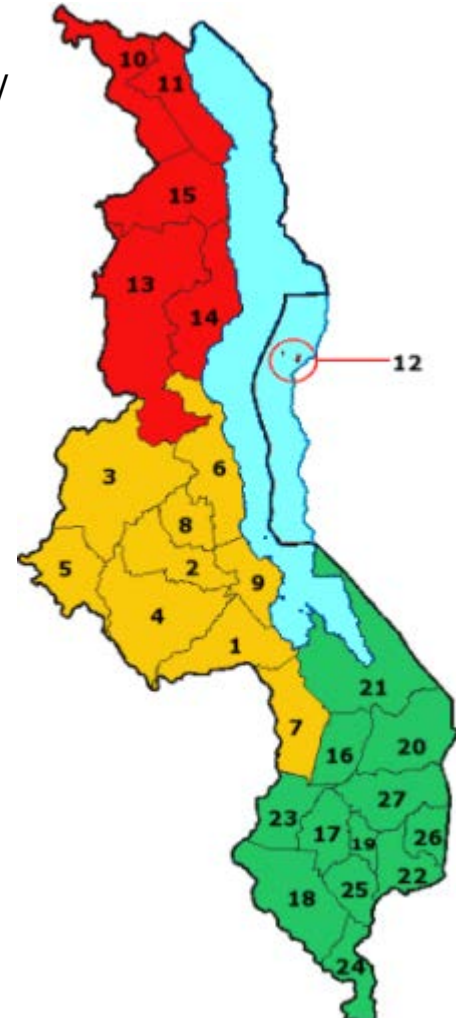
TfaC Malawi

Education • Awareness • Action

# Introduction

- Research was conducted across 7 districts in central and southern Malawi
- A total of 71 teachers were interviewed across 45 Primary Schools all of which are currently involved TfaC programmes
- In Dedza, Lilongwe Rural West, Nkhotakhota, Salima, Balaka and Chikwawa data was collected using phones and the mobenzi software and in Nsanje data was collected during face to face interviews
- All results are presented at a total level however where relevant the differences between the districts are highlighted
- Where there are two teachers in a school their results have been combined to give a score for the overall school and community
- During the research Early Marriage was defined as marriage before the age of 18 years

1 - Dedza  
4- LLW Rural West  
6 - Nkhotakhota  
9 - Salima  
16 - Balaka  
18 - Chikwawa  
24 - Nsanje



# Result Summary

▶ The majority of schools report that Early Marriage is a common occurrence in their community with girls marrying on average between the ages of 15 and 16 years old

▶ Just over half of teachers still felt that early marriage was increasing in their area with the girls' family taking the lead in the marriage decision

▶ Betrothal is only common in 14 of the schools surveyed with the average age of betrothal at 13-14 years. Chikwawa, Dedza and Nkhotakota are the districts where this is most prevalent

▶ The key causes of continued early marriage are highlighted as poverty and continued traditional and social pressures

▶ The majority of schools felt that they have a large number of girls who get pregnant outside of marriage with Chikwawa and Salima stating the biggest problem and Nsanje the least

▶ Both early marriage and pregnancy have a detrimental effect on girls' education with the majority unable to complete a primary education as a result

▶ Greater civic education as well as enforcement of national and local laws (particularly by traditional leaders) was highlighted by all as the key to changing the current trend for early marriages

# Recommendations

It's clear from the teachers' feedback and from the positive result seen in some areas of Nsanje, that the enforcement of by-laws created by the chiefs will be key in reducing early marriages

## For TfaC we could consider:

- How we address this issue in our advocacy plan
- How we support Chiefs to enforce the laws (there was anecdotal feedback that they are often scared to enforce laws with their community that are unpopular or may threaten their rule)
- Provide training for mothers groups or similar as to how they can work with the community to reduce the practice (this was also highlighted as key to success in Nsanje)

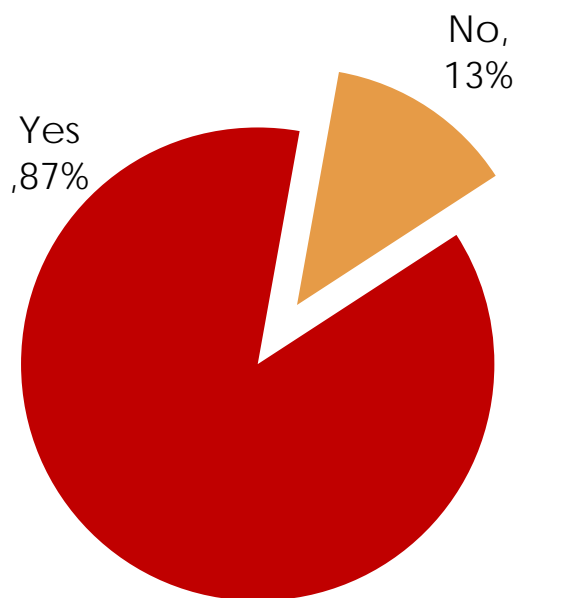
Civic education and chiefs making by laws on those who marry early

Also highlighted as a challenge is peer pressure and a lack of positive role models for girls. TfaC is a good position to address this with the GEC project and we may also want to consider more talks from role models at community events such open days and wider GEC meetings

The girls still have the attitude of saying school is for boys, they need to see women role models and be encouraged on education

# Main Findings

# The majority of schools report that Early Marriage is a common occurrence in their community with girls marrying on average between 15 and 16 years old



There were only 6 schools that reported that early marriage was not a challenge in their area all of which were in the **Nsanje District** (however only 4 of these schools report marriage age being on average 18 plus)

## Age at Marriage



Over 18 years = 4%



**Nsanje** has the highest average marriage age



17 - 18 years = 7%



15 - 16 years = 60%



13 - 14 years = 27%



**Chikwawa** has the lowest average marriage age



10 - 12 years = 2%

Q1: Is Kukwatira uli wang'ono (Child / Early marriage) common in your area? Base size: n=45 Schools

Q3: At what age are girls commonly getting married? Base size: n=45 Schools

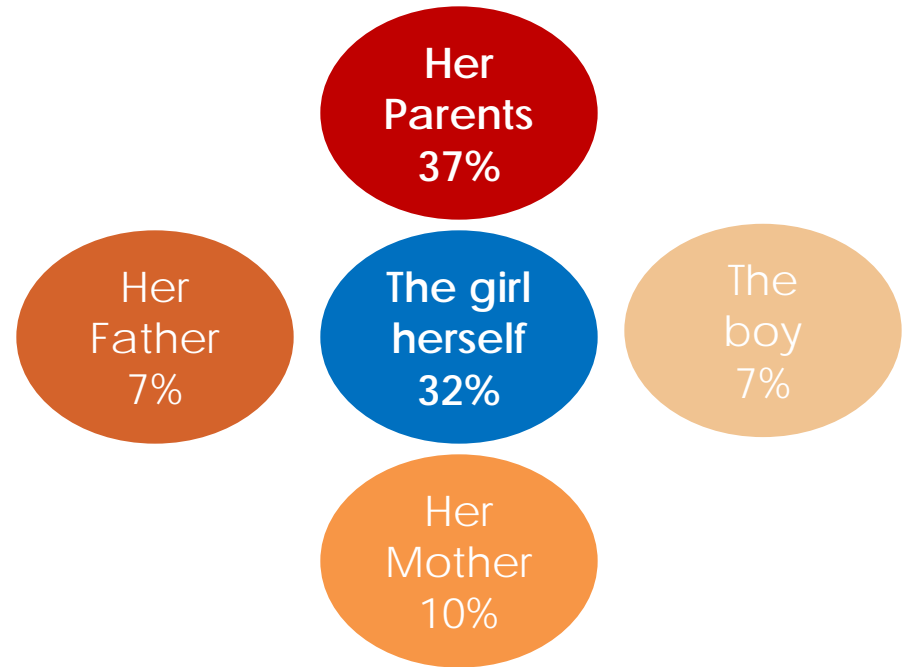
# Just over half of teachers still felt that early marriage was increasing in their area with the girls' family taking the lead in the marriage decision

## Early marriage is ...



\*11% Don't know or unsure

## Key decision makers of whether a girl should get married



▶ Salima and Nsanje district are the only districts that feel that early marriage is decreasing in general. Decision making largely falls on to the girls' family and the girl herself to decide that she is ready for marriage in all areas.

The key causes of continued early marriage are highlighted as poverty and continued traditional and social pressures

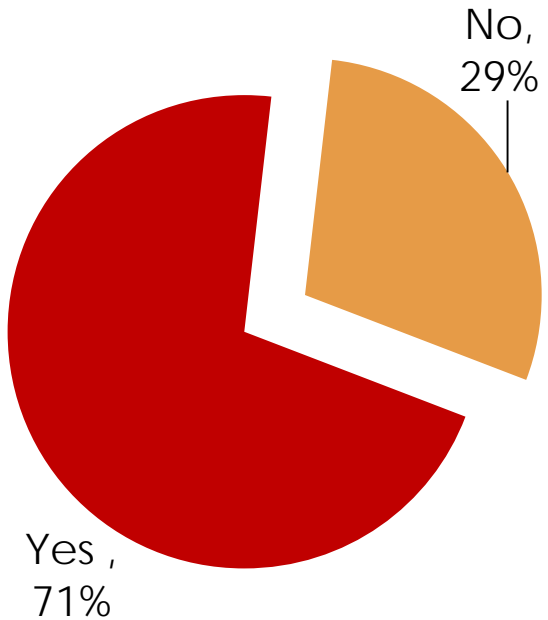


Causes of early marriage are varied dependant on the school however there is no one key cause across the districts



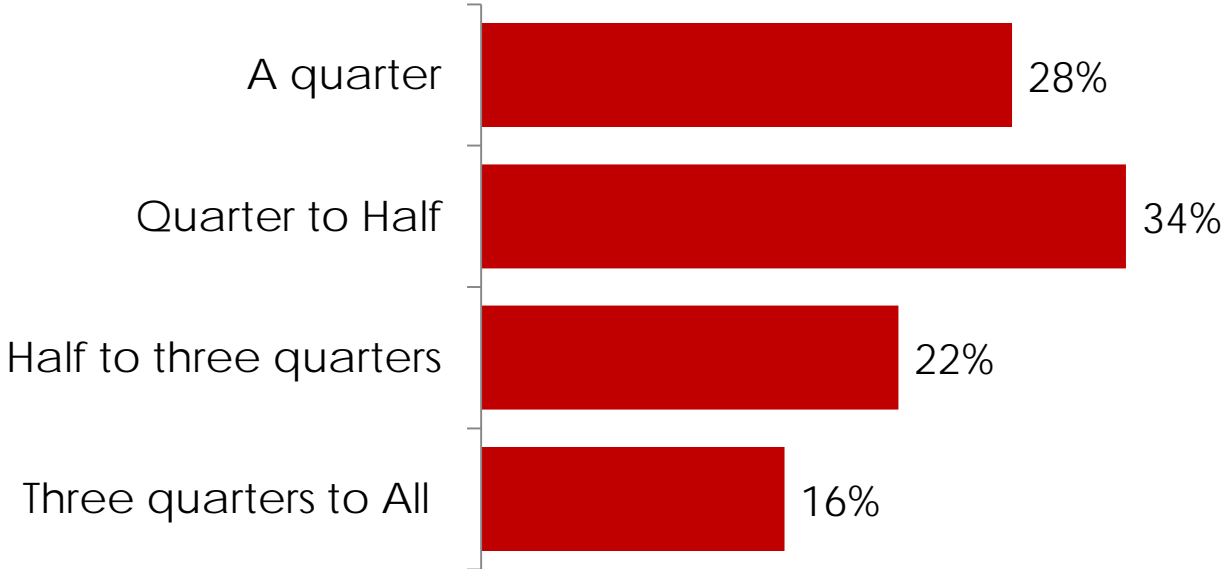
The majority of schools felt they have a large number of girls who get pregnant outside of marriage with Chikwawa and Salima stating the biggest problem and Nsanje the least

Are teenage pregnancies (outside of marriage) common ?



Roughly how many are outside of marriage?

n=32 schools with a perceived issue with single mothers



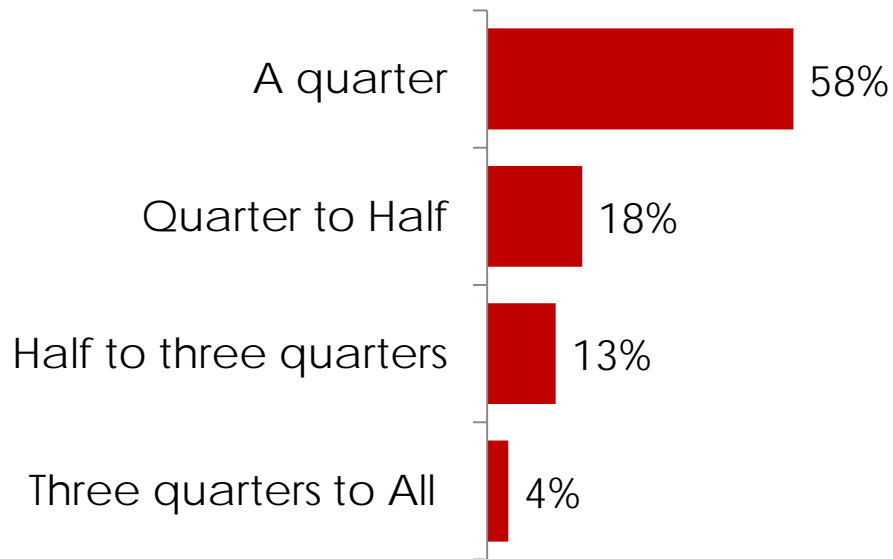
▶ All of the Chikwawa and Salima schools and the majority of Lilongwe and Nkhotakota feel that pregnancies are an issue for their communities

Q11 Is it common for unmarried girls to get pregnant in your area? Base size: n=45 Schools

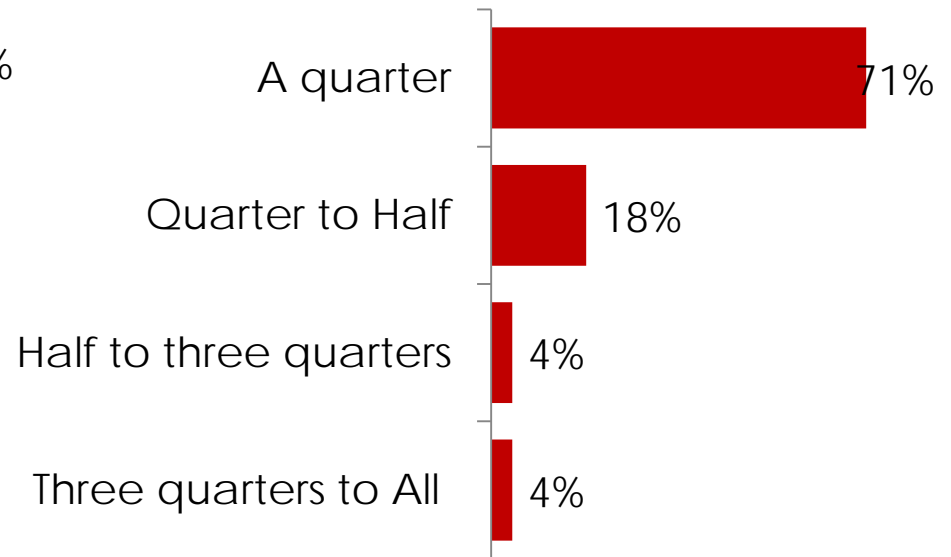
Q12 About how many teenage pregnancies are outside of marriage? Base size n= 32 Schools

Both early marriage and pregnancy have a detrimental effect on girls' education with the majority not finishing primary education as a result

### Number of girls who finish primary after marriage



### Number of girls that finish primary after pregnancy



The outlook for girls' education in both scenarios is consistently poor in all districts. From the research it appears that pregnancy has a greater negative impact on educational chances in general than marriage alone

Q8 About how many girls who get married early finish their primary education? Base size n= 45 Schools

Q13 About how many girls who get pregnant unmarried finish their primary education? Base size n= 45 Schools