



BRIEF

A feminist vision on education for meeting the needs of married girls

PARTNERS

The Women's Refugee Commission
Rozaria Memorial Trust
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Participatory action research using consensus-building methods was conducted from 2021-22 with feminist and women-led civil society organisations, experts, and practitioners to learn how best to end child marriage and support already married girls in forcibly displaced and crisis-affected communities in East Africa. This brief summarises findings on education that study participants identified as a priority for **meeting the needs of married girls**. Direct quotes from participants are included in italics throughout the brief. For additional details about the study, this brief can be read in conjunction with a separate brief outlining the research process.

CONSENSUS DATA FROM GRASSROOTS FEMINIST ACTORS IN EAST AFRICA



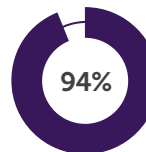
Agree that access to formal education is an essential component of programming for married girls.



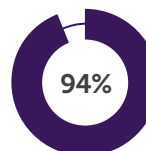
Agree that collaboration across sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is essential for ensuring married girls access formal education.



Agree that lack of services designed to specifically address the needs of married girls hinders their re-entry in education.



Agree that programming for married girls must include health and nutrition education for young mothers and their children.



Agree that encouraging school retention is an essential component of programming for married girls.

WHY IS EDUCATION ESSENTIAL FOR WORKING WITH AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF MARRIED GIRLS?

- Education is a right of all children, including married girls.
- Supporting education re-entry for married girls can provide a '*second chance*' for girls to expand their reach and potential, see what alternatives are available to them, and have access to opportunities to enable them to thrive.
- Education is a way of obtaining skills for future employment – and also skills for life as an '*empowered*' and '*autonomous*' woman.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

Forty-one per cent (41%) of our participants believe that a shared learning environment created through formal education processes with both unmarried girls and boys is better than formal education for only married girls or informal education only.

Priority should therefore be given to facilitate the return of married girls to school. Multiple elements need to be in place, such as:

- girl-safe schools;
- flexible schooling options;
- decision-making power for girls;
- national legislation to mandate married girls to return to school;
- provision of school materials;
- childcare;
- rooms in schools for lactating mothers;
- access to menstruation hygiene products.

CRITICAL ISSUES

There are many barriers to girls returning to school at many levels, including:

- policies that prevent them from accessing formal education;
- lack of support from their husband and/or his family;
- child care responsibilities.

Safe spaces that also offer education (boarding schools) are needed for those who have experienced child marriage, as education can increase their socio-economic empowerment.

LEARNINGS FOR ACTION

- Specific attention to education for married girls is needed, as currently there is very little evidence of sufficient programmes, funds and approaches.
- Supporting married girls' re-entry to formal education requires strengthened working that is informed by a gender transformative lens across the education and GBV sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
- Specific policy and legal changes need to be made at national level to explicitly state that married girls must continue their education. This must be complemented by concrete administrative policy changes within schools to reduce girls' barriers to accessing education.

