

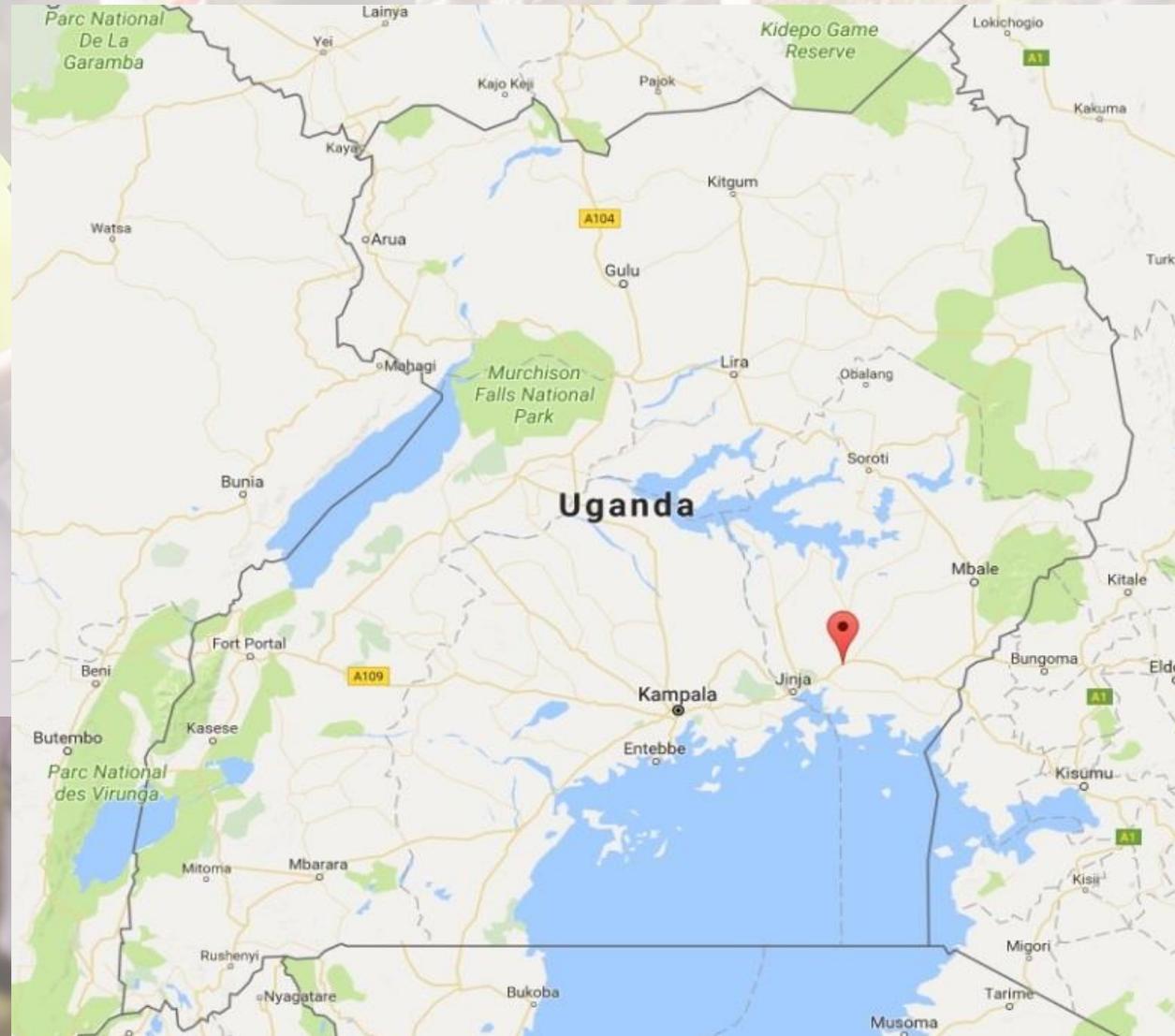
‘We are born to get married’

A case study exploring young men and women’s understandings and agency around (child) marriage in Iganga, Uganda



Research

- Her Choice alliance
 - ICDI
 - Kinderpostzegels
 - THP NL
 - UvA
- THP Uganda
- Based in Iganga



Research

Problem statement

Childmarriage recognized as a violation of human rights

Critics emerged: human rights in Western view and 'too universal'

Local contexts, traditions, norms, values?

And: young people's voices?

Hence, there is a demand for more in-depth insight in local understandings of (child)marriage:

"How do young people in Iganga, Uganda understand marriage and how do they exercise agency in relation to marriage decisions, in the context of (changing) community values and norms?"

Research

Theoretical framework

- Dominant discourse on child marriage (human rights-based)
- Critics on dominant discourse of child marriage
- Universalists vs Cultural relativists
- Agency / Youth agency
- Gender structures
- Conceptual scheme

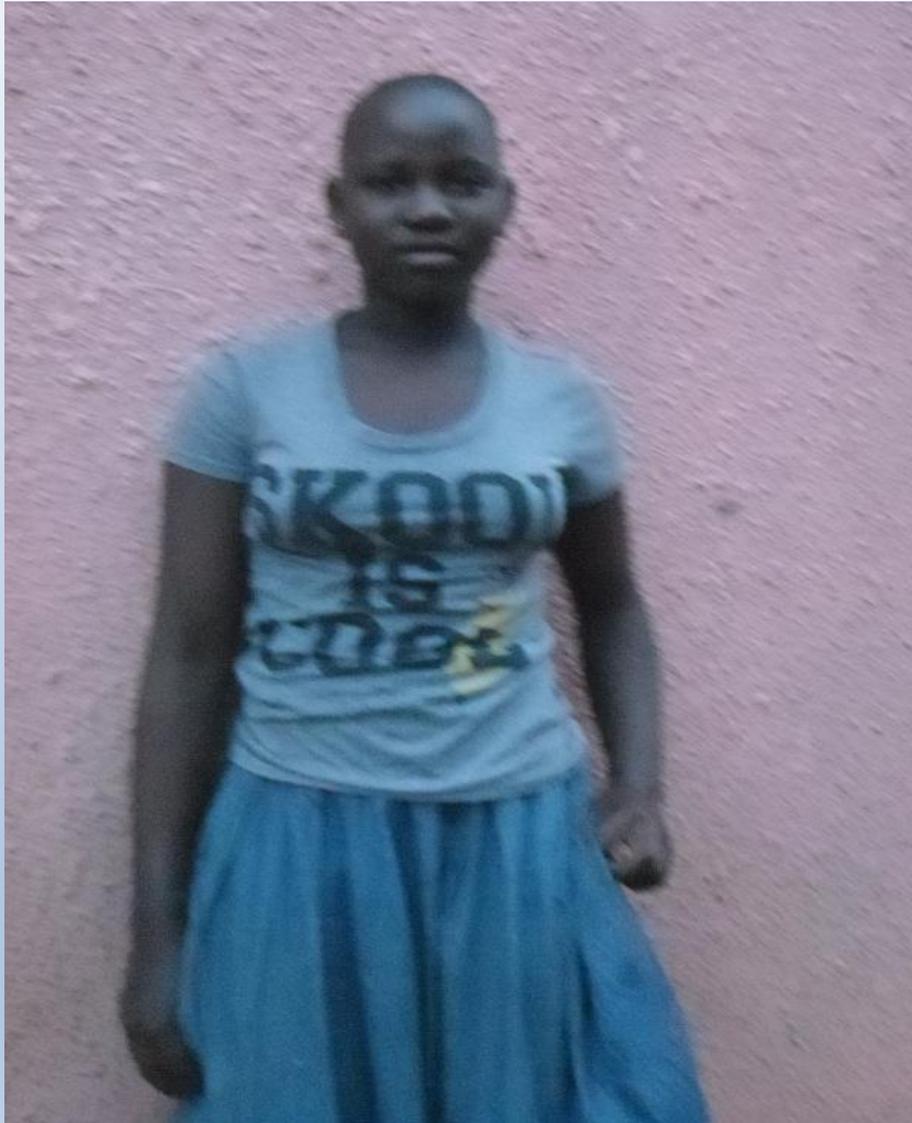
Methods

- Photo voice
- 105 indirect respondents (interviewed by participants photo voice groups)
- 47 respondents in-depth interviews
- Observations through working with, and staying in, the office of The Hunger Project Uganda in Iganga. Close contact with my Ugandan colleagues and friends
- Articles from newspapers, Facebook pages etc.

Photo Voice

- Two sessions (and a re-take)
- 14 participants
- 105 indirect respondents: interviewed by the photo voice participants





She was 15 years. She was forced [by her family] to go with the owner of the pregnancy because the boy stayed with her until she delivered the baby. After that she did not agree to see him anymore. She sells tomatoes, onions, cabbage alongside the road. But yet she was to pay for school fees for her daughter in baby class [she has not gotten enough moeny for her child to go to school], buy food, clothes and also pay rent. She says married life is death indeed. Because, she didn't expect that, and she was not ready for marriage.

Picture & Interview by Female, 16, student.
Nakalama 18.07.2017



She got married in 2007, she was 13 years. She faced problems: the situation that she is in since she is married is bad. The mistreatment of the man [her husband], the man wasn't giving enough care. The lady delayed in giving birth, and the man [her husband] came home with a knife and speared it in her eye.

Picture & Interview by Male, 16, student.

Nakalama 03.08.2017



R.13: In that family, I decided to take their photo because that man, I see him as hard working. And that woman, there is love in that family. Sincerely, the woman [on the right] is married to this man [on the left]. The man is a boda boda driver, but he rides the bicycle. In the morning, very early, he gets up and goes to town, Iganga town, riding the bike as the woman goes to the garden. They had a small hut, where they lived before. But now, out of the little income the man is getting they build this house here. So I decided to take their photo because they were cooperative and very happy.

I: Is it a happy marriage?

R.13: Yes. They live in a happy marriage, how poor the man is and the woman.

Photo & Interview by Male, 18, student.
Nakalama 18.07.2017

Marriage is part of life, there is not an option not to get married. Young people in this research believe they are expected by their community to marry – risking (physical or mental) abuse when unmarried.

I: Would you like to get married?

Female, 18, student: Yes, but not now.

Female, 17, student: In the future we shall.

Female, 17, student: One is born for that. You cannot avoid that. We are future mothers.

I: So a woman is born to be a mother and wife?

Female, 17, student: Yes

I: What happens when a women doesn't marry?

Female, 18, student: Problems, conflicts.

Female, 17, student: Abusing here, around, waiting her to get married, engaging her prostitution because she is not married and doesn't belong to one man.

Female, 16, student: They'll ridicule the parents.

Female, 17, student: Then you don't fit in the society.

Female students during discussion prior to the Photo Voice assignment.

18/07/2017 Nakalama

There are three major functions to marriage: reproduction, economic support and status. Marriage is seen as the only socially accepted manner to fulfill these functions and fulfilling these is necessary for a successful life.

My neighbor had a wife and when the wife was not producing. Every day the man could beat the wife and abuse her and say that the hens are better than you. He said that because the hens can produce.

18/07/2017 Female student, 16, during discussion prior to Photo Voice assignment.

Respondents consider marriage to be a non-disputable part of life. A small majority of respondents show negative associations towards marriage. However, marriage being functional could also explain the negative association with marriage as marriage is more a 'must' than a 'want'.

There is no happy stories about marriage

18/07/2017 Female student, 16, during discussion prior to Photo Voice assignment.

The most common reason for early marriage relate to girls being forced by their parents to get married when they fall pregnant.

Remarkable is how young people emphasize that a seemingly increasing proportion of child marriages results from the own choice of minors.



Female, 17, student: Those are also school drop-outs.

I2: Are they married?

Female, 17, student: Yes

I: And children?

Female, 17, student: No.

I: They look young, what age are they?

Female, 17, student: This one is 17 and this one is 19.

I: So 17 and 19. And do they work?

Female, 17, student: The man just stays there at home and then when the boda boda comes, he does that work. He doesn't have a permanent work.

I: Are they planning to have children?

Female, 17, student: Yes.

Female, 17, student. About an interview she held within the photo-voice method. Nakalama 18.07.2017

The agency young people exercise towards marriage- and family formation decisions are dependent of / influenced by:

- Poverty
- Education
- Gender

She [sister] feels pressured because she is at home [not schooling], [...] our parents begin putting pressure on her, the village men, the neighbours they [all] begin putting pressure: [...] “She is not in school, why is she staying at home?”

Female, out of school, 19. During interview 07/08/2017



Thank you for your attention, any questions?