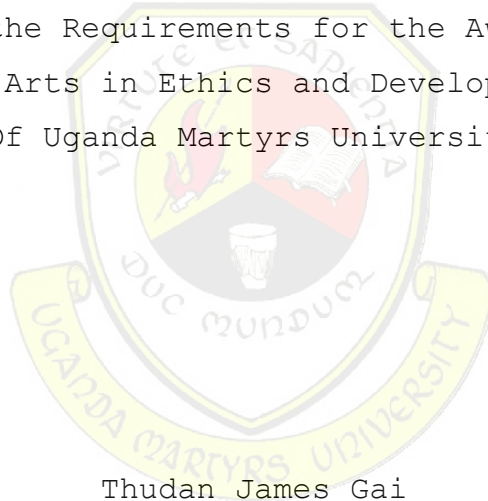


EXAMINING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RAMIFICATIONS OF EARLY GIRL-  
CHILDREN MARRIAGES IN THE VICTIMS' MARRIED HOMES IN UNITY  
STATE:

A Case Study of Bentiu Town

An Undergraduate Dissertation Submitted to The  
Institute of Ethics and Development Studies in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of Degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in Ethics and Development Studies  
Of Uganda Martyrs University



Thudan James Gai

2008-B103-10139

November, 2016

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife (Man Pachier) and my daughters, Pachier, Nyagaak, Nyatong and Chudier whose love and patience enabled me to successfully finish my undergraduate degree at Uganda Martyrs University. I will always be thankful to you and will always support you to reach where I have not reached.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge the immense support and encouragement that my wife, Martha Nyanath Michael (Man Pachier), rendered to me during the conduct of this study. It was not an easy moment but she continued audaciously supporting me throughout the study. I also grant her my zealous respect for her great responsibility in taking care of our lovely daughters, Pachier, Nyatong, Chodier and the entire Gai's family.

My second elder brother, Clinical Officer, Joseph Kuet Gai, deserves my heartfelt thanks for if it were not him; I would not be able to obtain this magnificent academic achievement.

I would also like to acknowledge the scholastic guidance that my supervisor, Dr. Najjuka Solome, provided during my dissertation writing.

I cannot hesitate to acknowledge the great support that my colleagues, Alimure Ali, Jame Kolok David, Lutfiyah Ahmed, Petronella Masabane and uncle, James Mabor Puot Deng provided every time I asked for their collegial support during my study.

**TABLE OF CONTENT**

Dedication..... ii

Acknowledgement..... iii

TABLE OF CONTENT..... iv

List of Tables..... vi

List of figures..... vi

List of Acronyms and abbreviations..... vii

**CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION..... 1**

1.1. Introduction ..... 1

1.2. Background of the study ..... 2

1.3. Statement of the Problem ..... 5

1.4. Objectives of Study..... 5

1.4.2 Specific Objectives..... 5

1.5 Scope of the study..... 6

1.6 Significance of the study..... 8

1.7 Justification for the study ..... 8

1.8. Definition of Key Terms..... 10

1.9. Conclusion..... 12

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REIVIEW..... 12**

2.1 Introduction..... 13

2.2. International, regional and local views on the ramifications of early girl-children marriages.....14

2.3. Economic ramifications of Early Girl-Children Marriages-----18

2.4. Social ramifications of Early Girl-Children Marriages.....20

2.5.Cultural Influence, promoting Early Girl-Children Marriages-----26

2.6. Conclusion..... 27

<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	29
3.1. Introduction.....	28
3.2. Case Study Design.....	28
3.3. Area of the Study.....	29
3.4 Study Population.....	30
3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques.....	31
3.6 Data Collection methods and instruments.....	32
3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions.....	34
3.6.5 Documentary Analysis.....	35
3.9 Ethical Considerations.....	36
4.0. Conclusion.....	38
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION</b> .....	39
4.0. Introduction.....	41
4.1. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion.....	41
4.2. Response Rate.....	41
4.3. Early Girl-Children marriages.....	42
4.4. Causes of early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, Unity Stat.....	44
4.5. Effects of early girl-children marriages on the social welfares of the girl-children in their married homes.....	48
4.6. Effects of Early Girl-children Marriages on the economic welfares of the girl-children in their married homes.....	52
4.7. Financial Challenges faced by girl-children in early girl-child marriages.....	54
4.8. Challenges encountered when trying to curb early girl-children marriages.....	55
4.9. Conclusion.....	56

<b>CHPATER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....</b>	<b>60</b>
5.0. Introduction.....	74
5.1. Summary of the findings.....	74
5.1.1. Factors contributing to Early Girl-Children Marriages.....	78
5.1.2. Social effects of Early Girl-Children Marriages.....	79
5.1.3. Economic Effects of Early Girl-Children Marriages.....	80
5.2. Recommendations.....	83
5.3. Conclusion.....	84
5.4. Suggestions for further research.....	85

**List of Tables**

Table 4: showing the responses on the meaning of early marriages **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Table 5: showing the responses on the meaning of early marriages **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Table 6: showing the responses on the occurrence of early marriage.. 42

Table 7; showing the responses on the minimum age at which girls marry ..... 43

Table 8: showing responses on the culture values influencing early marriages..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Table 9: showing responses on the social and economic effects of early marriages on the social welfare of girls..... 49**

Table 10: responses on the challenges encountered when stopping early marriages..... 55

**List of figures**

Figure 2: Showing responses on the causes of early marriages..... 44

Figure 3: Financial challenges faced by girls in early girl-children marriages..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## **List of Acronyms and abbreviations**

**AIDS**-----Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

**AFD**-----American Film Documentary

**CEDAW**-----Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of  
Discrimination Against Women

**CCM**-----Convention on Consent on Marriages

**CRC**-----Convention on the Rights of the Child

**DDS**-----Democracy and Development Studies

**FMRWG**-----Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls

**GOSS**-----Government of South Sudan

**HIV**-----Human Immuno-deficiency Virus

**INGOs**-----International Non-governmental Organizations

**TCOSS**-----Transitional Constitution of South Sudan

**UNICEF**-----United Nations Children's Education Funds

## **ABSTRACT**

The study sought to examine the social and economic effects of early girl-children marriages on the welfare of the girl-children in Bentiu Town, Unity State. The study was guided by the following objectives; to assess the factors contributing to early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, examine social and economic challenges brought on by early girl-children marriages on the victim's married family in Bentiu Town and suggest ways to overcome the magnitude of early girl-children marriages among the communities living in Bentiu Town, Unity State. The study adopted a case study research design with a sample size of 80 respondents. The data was collected from young women (victims of early girl-children marriages), parents of the victims, civil society groups, teachers, community health workers, traditional birth attendants, traditional authorities and public officials from the State Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender (SMOSWG) using self-administered questionnaires and an interview guide.

The findings on the nature of early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town revealed that early girl-children marriages are frequent incidences with 85 teenage girls on average married each year in Bentiu and this causes dreadful developments in the community. The existing statistics show that most weddings conducted in Bentiu Town were weddings between teenage girls and elderly men. This has been evidenced by weddings observed by the researcher of this study in Bilnyaang, Kuerboni and Biemruok villages between May, 2011 and July, 2011.

The findings also revealed that young girls themselves were so uninformed that they did not know that early girl-children marriages had fatal social effects such as committing suicides due to failure in life, prostitution due to high rate of poverty among the early married women, sexual transmitted diseases as a result of young women selling their bodies to make a living, high rate of unwanted pregnancies and abortions, high rate of deaths caused by fistulas, obstructed deliveries, prolonged labour and stillbirths, gender-based violence caused by age-gap between the early married women and their elderly husbands and high rate of burglaries as a result of too many street children produced by early married women and could not be cared for and economic effects such as unemployment among the early married women since most of them did not finish their basic education to be able to get jobs, temptation to steal to make a living, highway robberies and road killings to make a living, imprisonments as a result of crimes and starvation, homelessness and fighting over land ownership due to lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and



medication. They were uninformed because they were not allowed to go to schools because their parents hypothetically perceived that sending girls to schools would make them prostitutes and that would eventually make them (parents) lose the bride prices they would get from their girls.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0. Introduction**

The study examined the social and economic effects of early girl-children marriages on the welfare of the girl-children in their married homes in Bentiu Town, unity state. The dissertation contains five chapters of which chapter one includes the general introduction, the definitions of the key terms used in the research, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives, and the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the justification of the study and the conceptual framework of the study. All this is given to orient the reader in order to follow the study adequately.

Chapter two consists of a review of the existing literature which was written by other scholars in line with the study. This literature review enabled the researcher to see the gaps not covered by other past scholars and researchers and to deepen his understanding of the topic under study. It is believed that the reader may find this chapter very informative in view of the work ahead. In chapter three, the researcher presented the methods used to collect data. The sample size used in the study is also described. The instruments used in the study were also included in chapter three.

Chapter four contains the findings of the study compiled in accordance with the objectives and questions of the study and Chapter five comprises of the summary, conclusions and

recommendations of the study. The summary was made in line with the objectives and questions and the study and the conclusions were drawn from the study findings in Chapter four. Let us begin with the backdrop of the study here below.

### **1.2. Background of the study**

The terms early girl-children marriages are used to refer to both formal marriages and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2005). For UNIFPA (2006) early girl-children marriages, also known as Children marriages, are defined as any marriages carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girls are physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriages and child bearings. Children marriages, on the other hand, involve either one or both spouses being children and may take place with or without formal registration and under civil, religious or customary laws. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the most comprehensive international bill of rights for women, states that any marriages of children should not have any legal status. The Committee that monitors this convention state further in General Recommendation 21 (Article 16(2)) that the minimum age for marriages for both males and females should be 18 years, the age when they have attained full maturity and capacity to act responsibly and consciously.

Oyortey and Pobi (2003) state that most early girl-children marriages are arranged and based on the consent of parents and often fail to ensure the best interests of the girl-children.

Early girl-children marriages often include some elements of force. The lack of an overarching definition of early girl-children marriages in international conventions has generated some debate. Some scholars and activists argue that instead of looking for a universal age at which girls and boys should not marry, the focus should be put instead on eliminating the unwanted effects of early girl-children marriages (Women's human rights resources,

Jal et al (1999) suggest that a universal age of marriage is not appropriate, in part because societies have different understanding of what it means to be a child as well as different socio economic and cultural realities. Bunting (1999) proposes that governments should be allowed to set the age of marriage below 18 years of age, but that the onus is on them to demonstrate that this lower age does not result in any discrimination or adverse consequences for women.

Samara et al (1996) cite that more women are now marrying at later ages, in many regions, early girl-children marriages remain a norm. Overall, 20-50 percent of women in developing countries are married by the age of 18, with the highest percentages in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Early motherhood has been the subject of a growing number of studies, research projects and intervention programs in Africa.

On the other hand, ICRW (2003) stated that early girl-children marriages were highest in West Africa and in South and Central Asia. Although rates varied considerably from country to country, in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Mali, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Uganda, more than half of today's 20-24 year old women married before 18. According to a demographic Health

Survey(1996-97) conducted in Bangladesh which provided tangible data for the current level of this prevalence, it was found out that early girl-children marriages were the most common practices in the World's poorest countries. The highest rates of those recorded were in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia as well as parts of Latin America and Caribbean.

According to UNICEF (2005), early girl-children marriages in many African countries including South Sudan, particularly Bentiu Town, Unity State, where this study took place, were linked to poverty and high fertility. In Bentiu Town, parents married off their girls as early as 14. The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (FMRW & IPPF, 2003) emphasized that, early girl-children marriages before the age of 18 years are violations of a number of International human rights conventions (2003). Conversely, these international human rights conventions were not ratified by South Sudan.

Bentiu Town, Unity State in South Sudan is a town populated by 70,000 people and 42,000 of its population are below the age of 18. It is one of the poorest towns in South Sudan; roughly 65% of its population lives on less than \$2 a day (Sudan Housing Census, August 2008).

According to South Sudan Child Act, 2011, section 5, sub-section 5 b, specifies that "neither a man nor woman who has not attained the full age of eighteen years shall conclude marriage". Despite this law, the town has significantly suffered from the prevalence of early girl-children marriages for decades. This Child Act has never been enforced; hence its existence is not felt by the communities in Bentiu Town. This

study focused on examining the impacts of early girl-children marriages on the welfare of the girl-children.

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

Social and economic ramifications of early children marriages are regional and international problems. According to Jal el at (2008) in developing countries, an estimated one in three girls is affected by social and economic ramifications of early girl-children marriages. These problems persist to varying degrees around the globe. In South Sudan, the rates at which social and economic ramifications affect early married girls happen are very high. It is very disturbing that young women, roughly at the ages of 14 to 16 could be seen with babies or working on the farms of their marital homes. However, the effects of early girl-children marriages in South Sudan are yet to be ascertained, hence the reason this study is carried out in Bentiu Town, Unity State.

### **1.4. Objectives of Study**

#### **1.4.1 General Objectives**

The main objective of the study was to examine the social and economic ramifications of early girl-children marriages on the welfare of the girl-children in their married homes in Bentiu Town, Unity State.

#### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

The study seeks to:

1. Assess the factors contributing to the social and economic ramifications of early girl-children marriages in the victim's married homes in Bentiu Town, Unity State

- II. Examining the socio effects of early girl-children marriages in the victims' married homes
- III. Examining the economic effects of early girl-children marriages in the victims' married homes
- IV. Suggest ways to curb the socio-economic effects of early girl-children marriages in the victims' married homes

### **1.5. Research Questions**

- I. What are the factors contributing to the social and economic ramifications of early girl-children marriages in the victim's married homes in Bentiu Town, Unity State?
- II. What are the challenges faced by policy implementers in reducing ramifications brought on by the early girl-children marriages on the victim's married homes?
- III. How can social and economic ramifications of early girl-children marriages be curbed in Bentiu Town, Unity State

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

#### **1.6.1 Content**

This study focused on examining the social and economic effects of early girl-children marriages on the welfare of the girl-children in Bentiu Town, Unity State. The spiritual, psychological and political aspects were left out during the study because the study project did not have enough time, human and finance resources to cover all the above aspects. However, the study also further looked at the personalities involved in perpetrating early girl-child marriage.

### **1.6.2 Geographical scope**

The area of the study was Bentiu Town. Bentiu Town is found in Bentiu Payam (District), Rubkona County, which was located in the central part of Unity State, near the international border with the Republic of Sudan. It is situated on the Southern bank of the Bhar al Ghazal River which separates it with Rubkona Town. Bentiu Town also hosts the government of Unity State and is the capital city of the State. It is an administrative, political and commercial centre predominantly inhabited by Nuer and Dinka. These two tribes ( Nuer and Dinkas) form the majority population in Bentiu Town followed by other nationalities, such as Sudanese from Western Darfur, Blue Nile and Southern Kordafan States, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Kenyans, Ugandans and Congolese who had come to make businesses in the town (Bentiu).

Bentiu Town is comprised of eight villages but because of inaccessibility, the vastness of the town and the time constraint, the researcher carried out the study on three villages. The eighty (80) respondents targeted for the study by the researcher were sampled and interviewed in Bilnyaang, Kuerboni and Dar El Salaam villages because of their accessibility and time constraint of the study.

### **1.6.3: Periodic scope**

The study was conducted to cover data on the socio-economic economic ramifications of early girl-children marriages from 1983 to 2011 because this was the period the prevalence of early girl-children marriages. This was stated in the report presented by Jal on Early Girl-Children Marriages in Unity State, South Sudan, (Jal, 2008)



### **1.7 Significance of the study**

This study was meant to help community find solutions to the socio-economic ramifications brought about by early girl-children marriages. This study will help policy makers, researchers, authors on children development, civil society organizations and theoreticians to advocate on issues concerning children and the suffering the married victims and their families go through. This study must be carried out to establish the socio-economic effects of early girl-children marriages and the ways these effects should be curbed.

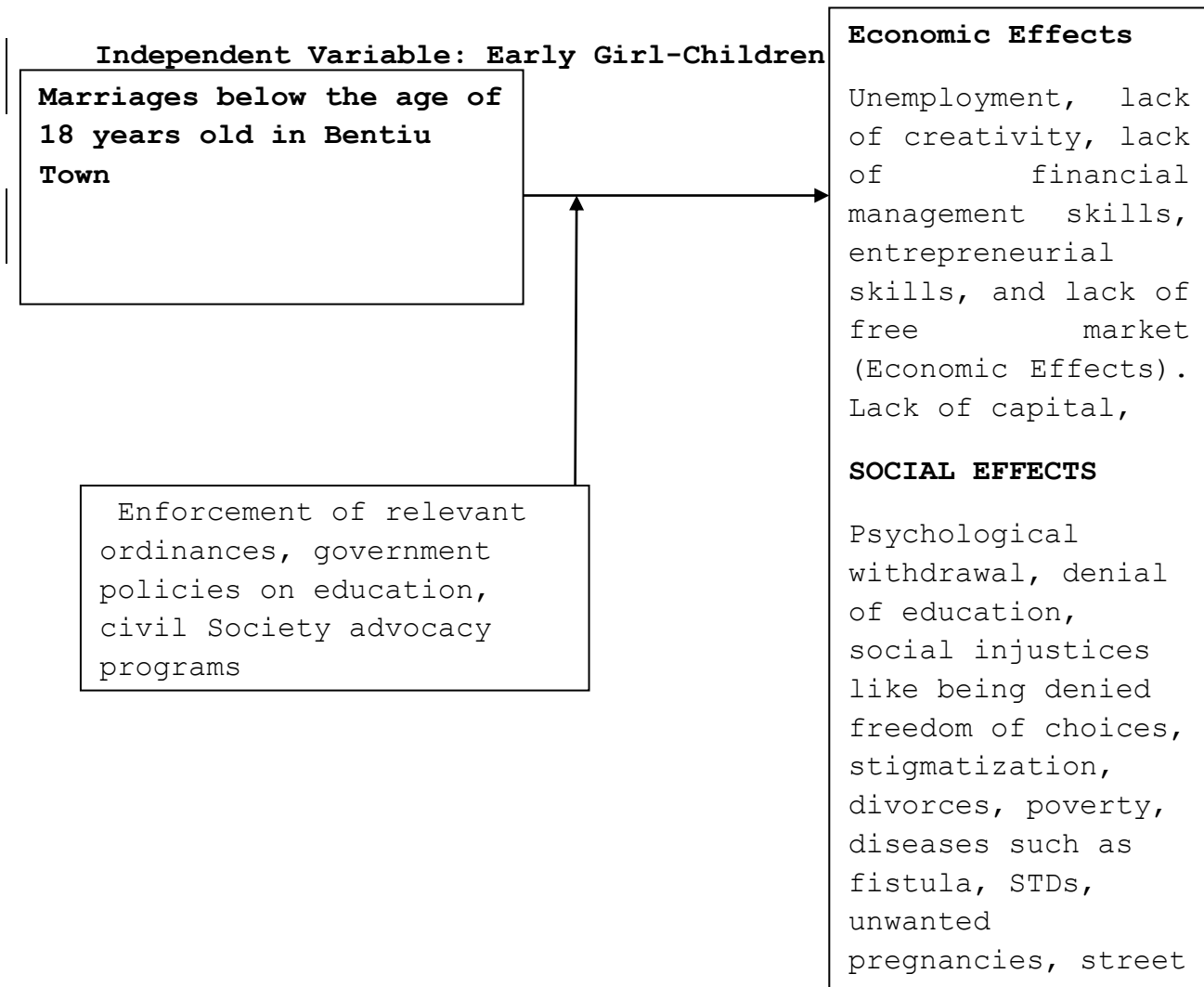
### **1.8 Justification for the study**

The researcher of this study was motivated by the fact that social and economic ramifications of early girl-children have caused serious harms on the welfare of the young girls and at large to the inhabitants of Bentiu Town. According to the observations of the researcher of this study and many Bentiu Town dwellers, early girl-children marriage was frequently and forcefully happening everywhere in the town (Bentiu). Therefore, the researcher got a strong intent to study this dreadful situation in Bentiu Town.

### **1.9 Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework was developed after review of related literature on the study variables. The conceptual framework shows the relationship between study variables under investigation. The independent variable is sensitization of community on early girl-children marriage with the reduced rates of early girl-children marriage as dependent variable. The intervening variables are community culture, government policy and political environment in the state.

## Dependent Variables-Homes



The above conceptual framework shows fundamental linkages between independent, dependent and intervening variables. Independent variable of this study is Early-Children Marriages below the age of 18 years old in Bentiu Town. Whereas the dependent variables show the socio-economic effects such as unemployment, lack of creativity, lack of financial management skills and lack of free market, Psychological withdrawal, denial of education, social injustices such as being denied freedom of choices, stigmatization, divorces, poverty, diseases such as fistula, STDs, unwanted pregnancies, street children, begging, imprisonment among others and the intervening variables as shown in the conceptual framework are

factors that help reduce the socio-economic effects affected the married victims and their families. These intervening factors (with the arrow showing up) are enforcement of relevant ordinances, government policies that thwart early girl-children marriages and civil society advocacy against early girl-children marriages. These intervening variables are meant to curb the prevalence of early girl-children marriages and therefore to stop the adverse socio-economic effects of this anathema called 'early girl-children marriages.

## **2.0. Definition of Key Terms**

### **Appalling Cultural practices**

According to Surur (2013), appalling cultural practices are those cultural practices which are damaging to the social and economic wellbeing of the girl-children. The term 'appalling cultural practices' was used in this study as one of the social effects affecting girl-children's welfare

### **Child prostitution**

According to Estes (2001), child prostitution is a social practice where a girl-child sells herself and sexually exploited by rich people and those that are sexually discontented at their homes. The term 'Child Prostitution' was used in this study as one of the social factors which contributed to early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, Unity State.

### **Gender discrimination**

According to gender forum (2009), the term 'gender discrimination' is a condition in which girls and boys, men and women are being discriminated against based on their social realities. The term 'Gender discrimination' was used in this study because girls or underage married women were being

discriminated against by their husbands or by their male relatives.

### **Girl-Child**

According to United Nations (1995), 'girl child' is a female child below the age of 18. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that girl child as a female person below the age of 18 and cannot be married before attaining maturity age (18 above years). The term 'girl-child' was used in this study as the one of the main themes of this study.

### **Health Risks**

According to United Nations' World Health Organizations (2009, press release), health risks are dangers which jeopardize the health of the girl-children when married off at early age. The term 'health risks' was used in this study to denote some of the health risks encountered by underage married girls/women.

### **Poverty**

The term 'poverty' as has been used in the study means a state of being poor, a state of lacking social, economic and educational stability. Sachs (2005) states that early girl-children marriages are linked to poverty as one of the social and economic factors, contributing to early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, Unity State. Therefore, in this study the term 'poverty' was used as one of the social and economic factors which encouraged early girl-children marriages

## **Ordinance**

According to Mende of Cambridge University (2009), the term 'ordinance' as used in legal perspective means an authoritative decree or direction or a law set forth by a government authority, specifically a municipal regulation. In this study, the term 'ordinance' was used to mean a bill, an act or a law that would be designed to thwart early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, Unity State.

### **2.1. Conclusion**

In chapter one, the researcher tackled the general introduction to the study where the general themes of the study were introduced. The background of the study which emanated the rationale of the study was also presented. The researcher also gave details of the statement problem of the study, outlined the study objectives and research questions which emanated from the study objectives, outlined the social and economical and geographical scopes of the study. The significance, justification and the conceptual framework of the study were also outlined. This chapter also defines the key terms used in this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter relates relevant facts about the effects of early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town were provided based on the existing literature. The literature reviewed was on the factors contributing to the occurrence of early girl-children marriages, social and economic effects of early girl-children marriages and ways used in overcoming early girl-children marriages. The literature will be presented and reviewed following these same themes.

#### **2.2. International, Regional and Local Reviews on ramifications of early girl-children**

According to UNICEF (2005), early girl-children marriages affected hundreds of young girls throughout South Sudan. It was at greater extent practiced in almost all the ten states in South Sudan. However, it was mostly practiced in Unity, Upper Nile, Central Equatoria, Western Bar El Gazal and Warrap States. In these states, it was apparently noted that underage girls became the wives of older men. Due to family pressure, young girls were married when they were still children and as a result, they were denied fundamental rights and freedoms. Consequently, early girl-children marriages compromised their development and often resulted in early pregnancies and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational trainings, reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty. UNICEF Report (2005) stated that young girls were required to perform heavy amounts of domestic work, under pressure to demonstrate marital commitment and responsibility. Married girls and

teenage mothers faced constrained decision-making and reduced life choices.

Dhital (2000) stated that early girl-children marriages were by no means a new phenomenon. The prevalence of early girl-children was a socially established practice that had been carried on from generation to generation. It frequently occurred despite the existence of international and regional instruments that were ratified by the government of South Sudan and its ten states. The government in South Sudan and other state governments also settled upon 18 as the minimum legal age for marriages. However, they were often either unable to enforce such law, or fail to reconcile discrepancies between national laws and customary laws. The national and state lawmakers could not follow up on the implementation and breaches of such laws.

According to South Sudan Customary Act, 2011 (SSCA, 2011), "early girl-children marriages are considered a family matter and are governed by customs and cultures, which ensure their continuity". However, Gatluak (2012), the Unity State Education Director warned that, early girl-children marriages remained therefore widely unnoticed violation of the rights of girl-children and women and they exposed them to multiple risks, including sexual abuse, diseases and exploitations.

Florence (2001) stated that it was very difficult to fight early girl-children marriages in Unity State and particularly in Bentiu urban settlements because there were no accurate data on the true extent of early girl-children marriages. According to her, curbing early girl-children marriages was not easy because most marriages were conducted in rural settlements and not officially registered and many parents

resorted to faking their daughters' ages. Some parents would try to say that their married daughters were 18; some would also say 20 and 23 despite their immature physical appearances. Other factors that made it also hard to fight early girl-children marriages were that most early girl-children marriages were made in rural areas where birth certificates were often non-existent or not properly recorded. She further emphasized that available data were often outdated or failed to provide adequate information.

Although early girl-children marriages were said to be declining in many parts of South Sudan and particularly in Unity State, the total number of girls at risk or affected by the practice was very significant and could not be ignored. Florence (2001) also added that it was estimated that there were worldwide more than 51 million adolescent girls aged 15-19 who were married and bearing the burden of domestic responsibility and the risks associated with early sexual activity, including pregnancies. In South Sudan (UNICEF, 2005), 48% (nearly in all the ten states) of young women were married before the age of 18, as shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Percentage of girl-children married under 18 years in South Sudan**

State	Eastern Equatoria	Unity	Jonglei	Upper Nile	Western Equatoria	Central Equatoria	Western Bar El Gazal	Warrap
Rural	33	78	45	55	22	60	63	37
Urban	21	59	32	26	12	34	37	15
Total	54	137	77	81	34	94	100	52

Source: UNICEF Report on early girl-children marriage in South Sudan (2005)



The table above shows that South Sudan's eight states are struck by early girl-children marriages in recent years. Young girls are married at early age in most parts of South Sudan. In Eastern Equatoria State, small girls, 8% got married in rural areas and 5% got married in urban areas. In Unity State, small girls of 14 to 16 (19%) got married in rural areas and 15% of the same age got married in urban areas. In Jonglei State, 11% of small girls got married in rural areas and 8% of the same category got married in urban areas. In Upper Nile State, 14% of young girls got married in rural areas and 7% of teenage girls got married in urban areas. In Western Equatoria State, 6% of the young girls, below the age of 18 got married in rural settlements and 3% of the same age got married in urban areas. In Central Equatoria State, 15% of the teenage girls got married in rural areas and 9% of small girls also got married in urban areas. In Western Bar El Gazal State, 16% of small girls got married in rural settlements and 10% below the age of 18 got married in urban areas and in Warrap State, 10% of young girls got married in rural areas and 4% below the age of 18 got married in urban areas.

The above details imply that Unity State, particularly Bentiu Town had been the most affected town in South Sudan, followed by Western Bar El Gazal State (Wau). The least affected state according to the above table is Western Equatoria State (Yambio). This means that the customary law of South Sudan is more valued in Unity State than the Constitution of South Sudan, 2011, article 56 (a), which guarantees the rights and freedoms of children. The State government of Western Bar El Gazal had done commendable job in ensuring that early girl-children marriage were minimized.

### **2.3. Economic Effects of Early Girl-Children Marriages in the victims' married homes**

Kool (2010), in South Africa young girls below the age of 18 are married not because they accepted to get married but because they had been forced to get married by different circumstances given their different communities social, economic and cultural statuses. Globally, most of the early girl-child marriages were motivated by different factors such as poverty, lack of knowledge, peer pressure and cultural norms. However, according to Kool (2010), poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early girl-children marriages around the globe. Poor families married off their underage daughters either to settle debts or to get cows or money just to escape the cycle of poverty. They also married off their small daughters because they could not afford to send them to schools since the school fees kept increasing every year of school enrolments.

Poor families may regard young girls as an economic burden and the practice of early girl-children marriages, as an act of relieving and a coping strategy. When poverty is acute, a young girl's presence in the house is felt as unbearable and her marriage to a much older or even elderly man who can pay a very high price may be seen in her interest. Children marriages are valued as economic coping strategy which reduces the costs of raising daughters.

Dhital (2000) says that in Asia and Africa, the importance of financial transactions at the time of marriages also tends to push families to marry their daughters early. For example, in many sub-Saharan cultures, parents get a high bride price for

a daughter who is married at puberty. In Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, parents feel that their burden of paying a dowry at their daughter's marriage will be lower if she is married at a young age. In this sense, poverty becomes a primary reason for child marriage because of perceived benefits to the family and the daughter (Rupa).

Rubin (2009) also says that in Uganda Poverty is a major factor driving parents and girls to support early girl-children marriages. Where poverty is severe, a young woman may be considered either an economic burden or an asset from which families can gain property and livestock from bride wealth exchanges. Parents participating in FGDs mentioned poverty as one of the most significant factors that influence girls to marry early.

According to the study conducted by Dawin (2009) poverty forces parents to marry off their young girls because they are a source of wealth in the form of bride price. The same study also revealed that older men and sometimes women seek sexual intercourses from children and adolescents in exchange for money or other goods. FGD participants also said that orphans and other vulnerable children were sometimes married off to relieve the financial and social burden on their caretakers. To earn money, some parents were said to encourage their daughters to take jobs that place them in circumstances where they meet with men (e.g., working in bars or selling alcohol). Such associations could lead to early marriages, especially in the case of premarital pregnancy.

UNICEF Report No. 7(2001) supports that early girl-children marriages is one way to ensure that a wife is protected or placed firmly under male control; that she is submissive to

her husband and works hard for her in-laws' household; that the children she bears are legitimate and that bonds of affection between couples do not undermine the family unit. Parents may genuinely feel that their daughter will be better off and safer with a regular male guardian. In conflict-torn Northern Uganda for example, some families marry their young daughters to militia members in order to defend family honour or secure protection for themselves and the girls. The same thing has happened to girls in Sudan and Somalia during Sudan and Somalia civil wars.

#### **2.4. Social Effects of Early Girl-children Marriages in the victims' married homes**

The same report (UNICEF, 2001) says that one important impetus for marrying girls at an early age is that it helps prevent premarital sex. Many societies honour virginity before marriage and this can manifest itself in a number of practices designed to protect girls from unsanctioned sexual activities. In effect, they amount to strict controls imposed upon the girls themselves. They may, for example, be secluded from social interaction outside the family. They may be told what they can and cannot wear. In North-East Africa and parts of the Middle East in particular, control may also include the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) surgically restricting entry to the vagina (infibulations) or removing the clitoris (excision), to restrict sexual pleasure and temptation. In some societies, parents withdraw their girls from school as soon as they begin to menstruate; fearing that exposure to male pupils or teachers puts them at risk. These practices are all intended to shield the girls from male sexual attentions, but in the eyes of concerned parents, marriages are seen to offer the ultimate protection measure.

Early girl-children marriages deprive a girl of her adolescence. In many traditional societies, the idea of an adolescent period between puberty and adulthood is alien. A girl who menstruates can bear a child, and is therefore a woman. This sits awkwardly with the fact that the CRC covers everyone up to age 18 and regards childhood as a process of development, one that does not end with a definitive physical maturity marker.

According to Jal (1999), in Nuer's and Dinka's cultures (the cultures of two major tribes living in Bentiu Town), unmarried girls are presumed to be virgins. "Virginity of our girls is not just very important but is an honour and pride in our community. This is the reason they have to be married off before their dignities (virginities) are broken. Most girls who are living in town these days are not virgin and it is a big shame to parents whose daughters are not virgin and this poses a great risk to community's credibility. In Bilnyaang village, many parents feared their girls stigmatized if they reached 18 years before getting married. Some of the parents also feared crimes such as rape, which would not only be traumatic but might lead to denial of girls by their potential husbands.

Alan (1997) says that in many countries, early girl-children marriages fall into what amounts to a sanction limbo. It may be prohibited in the existing civil or common law, but is widely condoned by customary and religious laws and practice. This is common where marriages typically take place according to customary rites and remains unregistered in most African societies. The situation is further complicated in countries

where legislation was introduced by the colonizing power on the understanding that many customary practices would continue even if they were inconsistent with new laws. Some were even codified to make them legal. In Benin, for example, Article 68 of the 1931 Customary Ordinance which regulated customary marriage states that, "marriage is not settled by the interested parties, but by their fathers, or in their absence; it can be settled by their older brothers or by the heads of the family". In Suriname, the legal minimum age of marriage is 15 according to the Civil Code; but under the Asian Marriage Act, which codifies practice for a particular group, the minimum age for girls is 13.

Although most countries have laws that regulate marriage, both in terms of minimum age and consent, these laws may not be applied and few prosecutions are ever brought against lawbreakers, parents, officiators or spouses. Some laws do not prescribe sanctions. The only outcome of a case would be to declare the marriage invalid, leaving the wife without legal protection. Moreover, such laws usually do not apply to customary marriages.

Boyden (1993), in some countries such as Uganda and Zambia, where prevalence of HIV/AIDS is very high, the legal minimum age of marriage set for girls is clearly aspirational but still violated by girls and their parents. However, some countries either do not have legislation to regulate marriage, or do not set any minimum age for girls. For example, in Afghanistan, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and Niger, age limits for marriage for girls are not clear and this has paralyzed efforts in curbing early girl-child

marriage. In these countries, the situation is exacerbated by the fact that birth registration is so irregular that age at marriage may not be known. In addition, many marriages go unregistered; if there are problems in the marriage, the wife has no means of legal redress.

According to Shobha (1999) acceptance of early girl-children marriages do not mean that legal reforms on early girl-children marriages should not be sought. The Indian Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 stemmed from a campaign that helped reposition women, family life, and childbearing within modern India. While the Act did not declare child marriages invalid; it helped pave the way for change. In 1978 it was strengthened to hamper marriages of girls until the age of 18. However, the number of prosecutions under the Act did not exceed 89 in any year between 1994 and 1998. Some governments have taken steps to unify their customary law and civil or common law, or have passed legislation designed to protect those in customary marriages.

Since independence (2011), South Sudan has never put in place a law that would be enforced to combat the prevalence of early girl-children marriages. Instead, senior government and military officials arrogantly got involved in the practice without being arraigned or punished. According to one elderly respondent, "Even government and military officials who are supposed to be the ones to help fight this plight, are the ones who are doing it openly. They are doing it because they know there is no law that discourages early girl-children marriages here. A week ago, one Member of Parliament (from the state parliament) wedded an underage girl and his wedding was

attended by many government officials who even knew that the girl being wedded was 16 years”.

Some of the discussants also explained that early girl-child marriage was exacerbated by lack of knowledge. It was thought that parents approved and practiced early girl-children marriages because they were ignorant of its negative consequences upon their daughters. However, reports from key informants as well as personal observations during the fieldwork for this study revealed that lack of knowledge about negative impacts could never be an explanation for its prevalence in Unity State. For example, two respondents mentioned that they knew a number of parents who vehemently disapproved early girl-children marriages decried its negative impacts at public gatherings, but they at the same time pursued the practice in their own homes. One woman from the Unity State’s Ministry of Gender and Social Development reported that people often disapproved early girl-children marriages and even temporarily stopped the practice, but some relapsed back into the practice due to the strong cultural and traditional values attached to early girl-children marriages.

Abadian (1996), low educational attainment in Uganda is linked with early girl-children marriages. According to 2006 UDHS data, among married women ages 25-49, a larger percentage of them got married before their 14th birthday had no education (37%), compared with those who married later (26%). A larger percentage of women married after age 18 attained secondary education and above, compared with those who married at younger ages. In the Western region, few women attained secondary school education at all. Between the 2001 and 2006 surveys, there is a slight increase in the percentage of those



who first married at age 18 or older and had completed secondary school or higher.

Parents who participated in this study stated that the government's policy changed to boarding schools in 2011 and had encouraged parents to keep their daughters in schools. Parents expressed a desire for more schools for their daughters. They also raised concerns about sexual exploitation of students by teachers in boarding schools, lack of supervision, and poor examples set by teachers and other students. One parent stated, "Sending girls to boarding school is very dangerous because they become more sexually active when they (girls) away from their homes". On the other hand, parents recognized that there were few good schools in urban areas and sending children to urban areas for school was a way to ensure high quality education.

Abadian (1996), the low status of women contributes to the broad acceptance of early girl-children marriages. According to him, Women's status can be defined as empowerment, the degree to which women have access and control over resources, can act autonomously, and are able to express independence in decision making. He added that, for women to improve their lives and social positions, education can empower women with knowledge and create the potential to engage in meaningful work that gives them an identity beyond that of wife and mother. Another thing that he said can upgrade women's social status is work. Work empowers women to earn a living and enables women to contribute to household expenses.

## **2.5. Cultural Influences, promoting Early Girl-children Marriages**

According to Kishor (2004), women's autonomy may be hindered in polygamous marriages that tend to be rural and poor. The widespread phenomenon of gender-based violence is indicative of the low status of women. It is true that Wife-beating is widely common and seems culturally accepted in South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan and many other African countries. Marriage and childbearing provide social status and respectability for most women. Parents choose to marry off their daughters young in order to achieve social status and economic security for them and to protect their daughters from premarital sexual activity that may result to unplanned pregnancy and exposure to HIV.

According to Rosen and Edena (2005), parents and grandparents have negative influence over young girls. Parents are not cooperating on their responsibility of bringing up their children. Some parents also are negligent and unresponsive about their children's morals. Children are copying the behaviors of their female parents. The study also noted that there was a lack of communal discipline and responsibility among the parents and other relatives. This is clearly evident by the fact that communal values that would discourage early girl-children marriages are not properly passed on to children by elderly people. Rosen and Edena (2005) also cited lack of obedience amongst the children of 21<sup>st</sup> century. They said that "children of these days do not comply with good communal values instilled in them by elderly people and that is why many young children do not behave well in the communities and elderly people have succumbed to their irresponsible acts and

behaviors". The study also mentions the role of paternal and maternal aunts, who are responsible for the sexual education of young girls prior to marriages.

Jal (2001) states that parents are under pressure to marry off their daughters as early as possible in an effort to prevent them from becoming sexually active before marriage. A woman who does that brings disgrace to her family and community. Because marriage often determines a woman's status in many societies and parents also worry that if they don't marry off their daughters according to social expectations, they will not be married at all. Some respondents in Bilnyaang village (Bentiu Town) expressed that "marriage also is a way of cementing family, clan, and tribal relationships. For example, in many rural and urban marriages, parents marry off young girls to help the grooms' families offset debts or to settle inter-family disputes.

UNICEF (2006), when families live in unsafe places, parents may genuinely believe that marrying off their daughters is the best way to protect them from danger despite their tender ages. In war-affected areas in Afghanistan, Burundi, Northern Uganda or Somalia, for example, girls may be married off to warlords who can ensure that the girls and the families remain safe. In the Democratic Republic of Congo and other places, girls have been abducted or recruited by armed groups and made into the bush wives.

Respondents who participated in FGD in Bentiu also expressed the same scenario in their communities. During the Sudan civil war, many parents married off their girls to commanders because it was risky to keep girls at homes. It was better for

parents to give their daughters to army officials although with less dowry. They also said that girls surrendered to soldiers' demand for sex because they feared to be shot dead or gang-raped. Those girls, who succumbed to soldiers' demands for sex, ended up becoming wives even without dowries to their parents. Although some of the early married girls later ended up getting divorced due to ill-treatment by their husbands, they chose to marry as early as they could not expect. They ended up traumatized because they could not get love they expected but they better get married than being killed or raped by armed soldiers and those that took an advantage of the lack of law. Hence, such incidences had forced parents to marry off their girls at such early ages because even the abductors or those involved in early girl-children marriages were not apprehended by the existing authorities or the parents of the victims were able to arraign the perpetrators.

#### **2.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed literature on the social and economic effects contributing to early girl-children marriages globally, regionally, nationally and at the local levels. Some of the social and economic effects on girl-children marriages reviewed in this chapter are poverty, lack of knowledge by the victims, community leaders and girls, civil wars perpetrated by warlords, suppressive regimes of Khartoum, appalling cultural practices and lack of relevant ordinances according to Boyden ( 1996), Abadian (1996), Alan (1997), Jal and Shobha (1999), Dhital ( 2000), Kishor, Florence ( 2001), ( 2004), Rosen and Edena ( 2005), Rubin and Dawin ( 2009), Kool ( 2010) and Gatluak (2012).

The researcher also looked at and discussed the best resolutions to end early girl-children marriages in the world and in the region. Resolutions such as sending girls to schools, creation and enforcement of relevant laws, creation and enforcement of government girl-child education friendly policies and creation of civil Society advocacy programs that thwart early girl-children marriages were suggested.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methods and techniques used in gathering and analyzing the research data. In this chapter, the researcher also presents the research design, sample size, data gathering methods and the instruments used in data collection plus the data analysis methods used during the study.

#### **3.2 Case Study Design**

Kumar (2005) says that case study is an in depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey. It is a method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easy researchable topic. The first foundation of the case study is the subject and relevance. In a case study, one is deliberately trying to isolate a small study group, one individual case or one particular population.

The advantage of the case study research design is that one can focus on specific and interesting cases. The researcher of this study used a case study design because it presents a rigorous, expressive and holistic analysis of many data not covered by other methods because it is simple and less expensive in terms of time and financial resources.

#### **3.3 Area of the Study**

The area of study was Bentiu Town. Bentiu Town is found in Bentiu Payam (District), Rubkona County, located in the central part of Unity State, near the international border with the Republic of Sudan. It is situated on the Southern

bank of the Bhar El Ghazal River which separated it with Rubkona Town. Bentiu Town also hosts the government of Unity State and was as well a capital city of the State. Bentiu Town is an administrative, political and commercial centre predominantly inhabited by Nuer Nyuong of Payinjiar, Nuer Dok of Leer, Nuer Jagei of Koch, Nuer Haak of Mayendit, Nuer Jikany of Guit, Nuer Leek of Rubkona and Nuer Bul of Mayom Counties, Dinka Ngok of Abiemnhom and Panrieng Counties. These local tribes mentioned above, formed the majority population in Bentiu Town followed by other nationalities, such as Sudanese from Western Darfur, Blue Nile and Southern Kordafan States, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Kenyans, Ugandans and Congolese who had come to make businesses in the town (Bentiu).

According to Kali (2003) Bentiu Town is made up of eight villages with an estimated area of square 80km big with 9'15, 3600 N, 29'48, 00 E coordinates. These villages were Bimruok to the east, Haigas and Kordavdav villages to the north, Dar el salaam to the Southeast, Kalibalek to the centre, Bilnyaang and Nyuenypiu villages to the west and Kuerboni to the south. According to UNICEF Demographic Report (2006) the population of Bentiu Town was 7,700 people. However, the researcher conducted the study in three villages due to their accessibility and time constraint.

### **3.4 Study Population**

Orodho (2004) defines population as all the people under consideration. For this study, the study population consists of eighty (80) respondents drawn from study area including young women, parents, civil society groups, teachers, community health overseers, traditional birth attendants,

traditional authorities and from the State Ministry of Gender and Social Development.

### 3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The researcher conducted interviews in three villages and managed to interview eighty (80) respondents. The researcher could not send out questionnaires to dependable respondents due to high rate of illiterate in Bentiu Town.

**Table 2: The Sample Frame**

<b>Sample size</b>		
<b>Categories of respondents</b>	<b>Questionnaires</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Civil society organizations	8	8
Health workers	10	10
Community chiefs	12	12
Parents	12	12
Married teens ( victims)	20	20
Teachers	10	10
Traditional Birth Attendants	4	4
Social Welfare and Gender	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>

**Source: Field research data**

Sampling techniques are shortcut methods for investigating a whole population. The most important consideration in the sample selection for any study is to include representative and adequate numbers of cases in order to perform a meaningful analysis. To ensure this, a four-stage stratified random sampling technique was used. The Bentiu Centre formed the primary sampling units, Bentiu East constituted the secondary sampling units, Bentiu South constituted the third sampling units and Bentiu West constituted the fourth sampling units.



As mentioned earlier, the main focus of the study was to generate data to examine the social and economic effects of early girl-children marriages on the welfare of the girl-children in Bentiu Town. Bentiu Town composed of eight villages which were found in the centre, east, south and west. In this respect, Bentiu Town was divided into three strata, namely (1) Bilnyaang (2) Dar El Salaam and (3) Kuerboni due to their accessibility and time constraint of the study.

Nsubuga (2010) says that stratified sampling refers to a sampling method of which the population consists of elements and the population is divided into groups called strata. As far as its significance was concerned, the researcher used the stratified sampling technique because it provides greater accuracy than a simple random sampling of the same size. Because it provides greater precision, a stratified sample often required smaller sample which saves money, time and energy.

### **3.6 Data Collection methods and instruments**

Kisilu and Kombo (2006) state that a researcher mainly collects the data using the primary and secondary methods. During this study, the researcher used magazines, newspapers, books, relevant websites and research documents to collect secondary data. Whereas primary data are collected from the interviewees selected from the study population.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaires**

Kombo and Tromp (2006) say that a questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data over a large sample. The questionnaires used during the study were open ended and closed ended questions which were used to interview

respondents who participated during the study. The questionnaires were not distributed to the respondents because most of the respondents interviewed were illiterate and would not be able to administer the questionnaires by themselves. 80 copies of questionnaires were printed and used during the research in Bentiu Town and surrounding villages in Bentiu.

The researcher chose questionnaires because they enabled the researcher to ask respondents as many questions as he could. Questionnaires with open ended questions also allowed respondents time and freedom to answer questions the way they wanted and since they had enough time to answer questions they felt confident and proud of the information they gave to the researcher. Closed questions were also used in the questionnaires because the researcher needed some information which did not require explanation. This type of information solicited for statistics where needed and short responses.

### **3.6.2 Interviews**

During the study, the researcher conducted 20 face to face interviews in Bentiu Town and its surrounding villages with teenage mothers, parents, traditional authorities, civil society organizations, traditional birth attendants, health practitioners and teachers. Some respondents, who were not able to attend the interview sessions physically, were reached and interviewed on phones. That enabled the busy respondents to participate during the study and it also allowed the researcher to network with all the sampled respondents because if the busy respondents were not interviewed on phones, it would be very difficult for the researcher to get their views and feelings on the issue

studied. Eighty (80) respondents were interviewed in Bentiu Town and in surrounding villages.

According to Nsubuga (2010) the advantage of interviews is that it allows enough time for respondents to express their views and that it provides flexibility for those that may not attend interviews physically and can also participate as long as they have the interest to play a part in the study.

The researcher used the interview schedules to guide the interview conducted in Kuerboni, Bilnyaang, Bimruok, Dar Es Salam, Nyuenypiu, Haigas, Kordavdav and Kalibalek villages order to systematically gauge the interview success.

### **3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions**

The researcher conducted focus group discussions with parents (14) and traditional authorities (8) because these respondents could not be interviewed separately as done with other respondents. The significance of this was that these parents and traditional authorities could consistently give information when they were gathered together in one session and could give apparent examples on the relevant matters. For example, some of the parents and elderly men provided good examples on early girl-children marriages that they experienced in their communities.

### **3.6.4 Observation**

During the study, the researcher observed in Bentiu Civil Hospital that many underage girls, roughly 15 to 16 years old were mothers. He saw these teenage mothers carrying babies on their shoulders. Some of these mothers were sitting, waiting for the doctors to treat their sick babies. Nobody could

imagine that the babies were theirs. The researcher also observed that most of the women who came to file divorce cases at Bentiu customary courts were underage women. One of the women who came to the court to file a divorce case against her husband was observed to be 16 years old when she was filling in her lawsuit form.

This method was a non-participant observation because the researcher managed to attend some of the teenage weddings. During these weddings, the researcher was able to learn through other friends who knew the women that most of the women wedded were between 15 and 17 years old. This method was used because it was not expensive and it helped the researcher get the actual information during the study. It also helped the researcher use his analysis to come to some conclusions (Mbaaga, 2013).

### **3.6.5 Documentary Analysis**

According Heffernan (2001), documentary analysis is a social research method and is an important research tool which involves reading lots of written materials. The researcher used this method because it enabled him to qualitatively scrutinize the already existing information related to the study such as books, materials on the websites, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, reports, journals and other relevant recorded materials.

### **3.7 Quality Control Methods**

The study strictly focused on the intended respondents who were assured of the confidentiality of their information. The researcher also used his own personal computer to ensure that the information collected from the respondents was not seen by

another third party. Adsit ( 2007) states that quality control methods ensures information collected is kept in accordance with the project scope and should not be divulged to people not meant to see it.

#### **4.8. Pilot Study**

The study also pilot tested the topic of study by interviewing 10 residents in Bentiu Town before rolling it out to Bilnyaang, Kordavdav, Bimruok, Haigas, and Kuerboni among others. The advantage of pilot study is that it helps the research to properly develop research objectives, questions and plans, it also convinces sponsors that the main study is feasible and worth sponsoring and also assesses the data analysis techniques to uncover potential problems.

#### **3.9 Data Analysis Technique**

The researcher organized and interpreted the data collected from the field using descriptive statistics.

#### **4.0 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher sent a formal request to the respondents, soliciting their willingness to participate and freely give their information to the researcher. On the other hand, the researcher guaranteed that he would not disclose the names of the respondents but would share the information provided by the respondents. The researcher assured the respondents that he would respect their safety, social and psychological well being. The researcher also officially sought the clearance from the concerned authorities since the people of Bentiu Town were habitually very suspicious of any event taking place in the town without the prior knowledge of the area authority.

#### **4.1 Study Limitations**

During the study, the researcher experienced limitations in making appointments with some respondents. It was very difficult to bring parents of the teenage mothers, traditional authorities and traditional birth attendants together. Some parents particularly men were not friendly because they thought they would be accused and arrested for marrying off their teenage daughters (Matai, 2009).

The researcher also lacked sufficient funds for transport to the distanced villages where research would also take place, for hiring research assistants and for buying study materials.

Since there were no internet cafes and libraries in Bentiu Town, it was very difficult for the researcher to get related literature and hence forced the researcher to travel to Juba (the Capital City of South Sudan) by air in order to get the internet and libraries.

Language barrier was also one of the limitations during this study. The researcher had to read the questions and explain to them in Nuer (the language of the respondents). Because the researcher could not also speak and write Arabic and Dinka languages, he had to hire someone who knew English, Arabic and Dinka languages to help translate what I was reading to the Arabic and Dinka speaking participants.

Insecurity was also a very big concern to the researcher and respondents. Respondents who attended focus group discussions feared that drunken gunmen could shoot at them during the sessions. These fears came about because there were similar incidents in the past in Bentiu Town.

Another arduous situation faced during this research study was the weather conditions. The weather conditions of Bentiu Town during this study period were not favourable to both the researcher and the respondents. The weather was so hot during the day that nobody could stay in the houses and to make the matter worse, Bentiu Town had very few trees where people could have shelter during day. The researcher opted to conduct some of interviews under trees and in concealed place for fear of being arrested by security agents. The topic of the research itself was also very challenging because the researcher faced resistance from the community members and victims of early girl-children marriages.

#### **4.1. Conclusion**

In chapter three, methods and techniques used in the study were presented. The researcher carried out his study in Bentiu Town. Bentiu Town is composed of eight villages and several blocks and because of time constraints, the investigations were carried out in three villages only instead of eight villages as planned. The researcher only targeted 80 respondents for the whole study due to time constraint and inaccessibility of some areas in Bentiu. Bentiu Town is one of the largest towns in Unity State and also one of the towns with poor road networks. Most of the roads inside the town were impassable by cars and motorcycles. The researcher and his assistants had to foot from place to place during the research period.

The data were collected through the use of questionnaires which were distributed to the respondents through research assistants and documentary analyses were also done to get the secondary information. The names of the respondents strictly remained confidential for security purposes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0. Introduction

In this chapter presents the findings of the study in accordance with the study objectives; to assess the factors contributing to early girl-children marriages, examine social and economic challenges brought on by early girl-children marriages on the victim's married family and suggest ways to overcome the magnitude of early girl-children marriages among the communities living in Bentiu Town, Unity State. The main data presented, discussed and analyzed were responses of the respondents, categories, ages and sexes of the respondents among others.

#### 4.1. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The findings of the study were gathered in relations to the objectives and questions of the study. The researcher also presented the findings in accordance with the instruments used in the study.

#### 4.2. Response rate

**Table 3: Categories of participants/respondents**

Category	Female		Male	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teenage mothers	15	25	-	-
Parents	6	7.5	6	7.5
Civil Society	3	3.8	5	6.3



Organizations				
Teachers	2	2.5	8	10
Health Practitioners	3	3.8	7	8.7
Traditional authorities	1	1.2	11	13.7
Traditional Birth Attendants	3	3.8	1	1.2
State Ministry of Social Development and Gender	3	3.8	1	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48.7</b>

**Source: Field raw data**

The above table shows the different categories of the respondents whom the researcher met during the study. The researcher met more females 51.3% (41) than men 48.7% (39) during the study. As the study dictated, there were no men interviewed in the first category because the study focused much on the teenage mothers because they were the very people affected most by the studied phenomenon, which are the early girl-children marriages. This implies that the research was meant to target more women than men because men could not give true information of early girl-children marriages phenomena because majority of them (men) were the beneficiaries and proponents of early girl-children marriages in the community. Unlike women were gave the true information of the prevalence.

**Table 4: Ages of the participants/respondents**

<b>Age in years</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
15-20	20	25%
25-30	20	25%
35-40	15	19%
45-50	15	19%
55-60	10	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field raw data**

The table above shows the ages in years of respondents who participated during the study. The table shows that 25% of participants were between the ages of 15 to 18 and these were the teenage mothers (victims) married at the ages between 14 and 16. The researcher also found that 15% were between 19 to 25, 13% were between 26 to 30, 14% were between 31 to 35, 6% were between 36 to 40, 10% were between 41 to 45, 4% were between 46 to 50 and 13% were between 51 to 55. The statistics above shows that the researcher involved different categories of people in the research.

**Table 5: Sexes of the respondents**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>No. of males or females</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	39	49%
Female	41	51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field raw data**

The researcher worked very hard to make sure that both males and females were almost equally represented in the study. This

means that there were 39 (49%) men and 41 (51%) women. The rationale behind men being less than women was that the study was mainly focused on women and women gave more true information than men in the study. Hence more women than men were studied on.

### 4.3. Early Girl-Children marriages

Respondents had varying views on early girl-child marriages and their views are presented below.

#### 4.3.1 Occurrence of early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, Unity State

**Table 7: showing the responses on the occurrence of girl-children early marriages**

Where early girl-children marriages occurred	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Bentiu Town	21	24.7%
Bilnyaang Village	8	9.4%
Kordavdav Village	5	5.9%
Kuerboni Village	12	14.1%
Biemruok Village	3	3.5%
Nyuenypiu Village	9	10.6%
Kalibalek Village	10	11.8%
Haigas Village	17	20
Total women early married	<b>85</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source; primary data (2015)**

The table above shows that Bentiu Town has the highest number of early girl-child marriages (24.7%) and followed by Haigas village with 17%.

**Table 8: showing the responses on the minimum age at which girls marry in Bentiu Town**

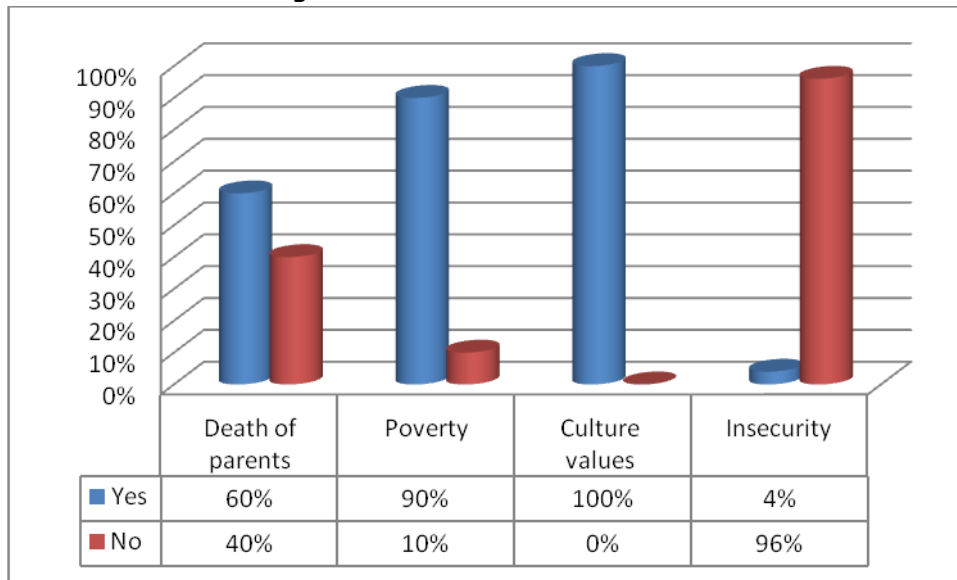
<b>Age of marriage</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
10-12	10	12.5%
13-14	30	37.5%
15-16	35	43.75%
17-18	5	6.25%
19 and above	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source; primary data**

The above table shows that 35 (43.75%) respondents said that young girls got married between the ages of 15 and 16 and 30 (37.5%) respondents also agreed that young girls got married between the ages of 13 and 14. Whereas 10 (12.5%) respondents said that there young girls who got married between the ages of 10 and 12 and 5 (6.25%) respondents said that there young girls who got married between 17 and 18 years of age. This implies that the minimum age of marriage in Bentiu Town, Unity State is between 13 and 16 and these ages are not sanctioned by law for marriage.

#### 4.4. Causes of early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, Unity State

**Figure 1: Showing responses on the causes of early girl-children marriages**



**Source: primary data (2015)**

Findings in the figure above shows that 100% of the respondents accepted that bad cultural values contributed to the causes of early girl-children marriages while 90% of the respondents agreed poverty is also a cause of early girl-children marriages, 60% accepted that death of parents also resulted into early girl-children marriages while 4% of the respondents accepted that insecurity caused early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town.

Thus, the interview findings show that bad cultural values are the major cause of early girl-children marriages in the area since all the people strongly believe in their cultural values and norms. Poverty also causes early girl-children marriages as parents do not take their children to schools, they have nothing to feed them and at times they are interested in the

bride price mostly in the families of a low income. Girls are viewed as economic burdens in this community.

The perception of girls' potential to earn an income as comparatively poor push girls out of their homes and into marriages and death of the parents is also a cause of early girl-children marriages as the caretakers tend to throw away their responsibilities and resort to forcing these young girls to marriages. However to a smallest extent, insecurity also results into early girl-children marriages given the fact that the area has been previously invaded by Sudan Armed Forces during the civil war, thus parent make their daughters to get married early so that men protect them from rapes and abductions. Therefore, early girl-children marriages linger on as culturally, economically and socially sanctioned practices according to some traditional sets of values and norms.

According to the interviews conducted with early girl-children marriages' victims in Dar El Salaam, Bilnyaang villages and other surrounding areas of Bentiu, gender inequality was reported one of the factors. "Women and girls often occupy a lower status in societies as a result of social and cultural traditions, attitudes, beliefs that deny them their rights and stifle their ability to play an equal role in their homes and communities"( 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2012, Dar El Salaam, Jal Deng\*).

During the interview in Bilnyaang village, one woman also cited negative traditional or religious practices as impediments to ending early girl-child marriages. "In many countries the importance of preserving family 'honour' and girls' virginity is such that parents push their daughters into marriages well before they are ready. There is a belief

that marriage safeguards against 'immoral' or 'inappropriate behaviour" (23<sup>rd</sup> April 2012, Dar El Salaam, Luol Tap\*)

Another factor contributing to early girl-children marriages as portrayed by the interviewees was failure to enforce relevant laws. One respondent cited that:

"Sometimes families are not even aware they are breaking the law. In some countries early girl-child marriage is so prevalent, prosecutions are seldom brought. The legal age for marriage is 18 for girls in Uganda. But many younger girls are made to give up their education to marry and raise families when they reach puberty because they are seen as a financial burden with less potential to contribute to the household income than a son" (Bilnyaang, 2012, Florence).

They added that "arranging for a daughter to marry an older man can seem like a good way to secure her future and a younger bride can mean lower dowry payments for her parents" (Bimruok, 2012, Martin).

The interviewees also mentioned another cause to be Conflicts, disasters and emergencies. They cited that disasters and emergencies increase economic pressures on households and many families that wouldn't previously have considered early girl-children marriages turn to it as a last resort.

From the interviews, most civil society organization members, teachers, health practitioners and State Ministry of Social Development and Gender staff homogeneously agreed that early girl-children marriages contributed to the backwardness of their community. According to Matai:

"the reason why we are backward is because our people do not accept to send girls to school. They primitively think that if girls are sent to schools,

they will be aware of their rights and obligations and will be able to determine for themselves when they will be married and will choose wisely their own partners or husbands”(12<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 in Dar El Salaam village, Matai\*)

Most of them believed that if the war (1983-2005 civil wars) did not break out, the early girl-child marriage prevalence would have been dealt with long before it ruined their community. “The civil war that broke out here between Sudan and the SPLA/M has contributed to this problem of girl-child marriage. If it were not because of this, we would have deal with it long time ago” (13<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in Kuerboni village in Bentiu Town, Nyakai Par\*). One civil society organization member said “All these happenings cannot be blamed on us. They can be blamed on war and those who initiated it. Before the war, marriage of underage girls was a taboo but I was shocked to learn that what our forefathers did not practice is now being practiced by us”( 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013 in Dar El Salaam village in Bentiu,Chiok Gatkuoth of USHERF organization).

Some key respondents also blamed the early girl-children marriages on the poor economy in Bentiu Town. As a result of that, most parents opted to marry off their daughters to wealthy men once the girls attained 14 to 16 of age. In most cases, most girls were married to men twice older than them or who already had two to five wives because of wealth that their parents wanted.

One of the State Ministry of Social Development and Gender members mentioned that “generally young girls were unable to shoulder parental responsibilities and could not financially sustain their families and as a result of that, many teenage



mothers ran away from their marital homes and applied for divorces because they wanted to live free lives where no husbands would inconvenience them. Those practices consequently caused many suicidal deaths among many energetic young women when denied divorces by their parents and husbands" (15th March 2012 in Dar El Salaam village, In Bentiu Town, Nyajuoi Liem\*).

Most parents and traditional authorities supported early girl-children marriages because they relieved them from poverty and economic insolvency. One traditional chief complained that the reason they married off their small daughters was that many of their scarce resources got destroyed during the civil war (1983-2005) between Khartoum successive regimes and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM/A). He further lamented that when peace came to South Sudan, they were not compensated for the property lost. "Who can stand tall to tell us not to marry off our daughters to men of our choices? We need the government to compensate us for our destroyed wealth if it wants us to stop these practices (early girl-children marriages)" (15th March 2012, Tony Kong\*, a chief from Kuerboni village in Bentiu).

#### **4.5. Effects of early girl-children marriages on the social welfares of the girl-children in their married homes.**

When the respondents were asked about the category of the youth that mostly affected by early girl-children marriages, all the respondents (100%) agreed that females (young girls) are vulnerable to early girl-children marriages and the social effects are presented in the table below;

**Table 9: showing responses on the socials effects of early girl-children marriages on the girl-children in their married homes.**

<b>Effects</b>	<b>Response rate</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Psychological drawbacks	12	15%
The denial of education	18	23%
Self-harm and suicide	4	5%
Stigmatization	22	27.5%
Rampant divorces of women	21	26.25%
Abuse of girl-child rights	3	3.75%
Total responses	80	100%

**Source: primary Data (2013)**

The findings in the table above show that early married women were highly stigmatized (27.5%) and 26.25% of them were divorced. The finding also reveals that early married women were denied education and 15% of them were psychologically affected.

According to the interviews conducted on social effects of early girl-children marriages on the welfare of the girl-children in their married homes, Violence, abuse and forced sexual relations were some of the effects cited by the interviewees. One respondent cited that women who married much younger were more likely to be abused, beaten and divorced, just to believe that husbands could justify it. Some nurses interviewed in Bentiu Civil Hospital alluded to Poor sexual relations and reproductive health as another effect. One of respondents mentioned that:

*"young married girls are more likely to contract HIV/AIDS and other lethal sexually transmitted diseases than their*

*unmarried counterparts because of their greater sexual exposure, often with an older husband who by virtue of their ages is more at risk of being HIV positive” ( 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012 in Bentiu Civil Hospital, Nyakan Chany\*)*

Another social effect expounded by the interviewees was illiteracy and lack of education among the early married victims. They cited that young girls tended to drop out of schools shortly before or when they got married:

“There is a common view in Bentiu here that once a girl is married she has crossed the threshold into adulthood and no longer needs an education. That is why many school girls are married and do not come back to schools because their husbands and the entire community do think that the married school girls have become wives and will only be confined to doing domestic work”( 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 in Bentiu town, Nyakong Tai\*).

Once married, they could only be confined to performing family chores and should not be allowed to go schools because schools are meant for unmarried girls, people who have no homes. In Nuer and Dinka, “a girl who goes to school is associated to prostitution” (20<sup>th</sup> May 2012, Bilnyaang Village in Bentiu, Nyatap\*)

The following views were obtained on the effects of early girl-children marriages:

From the interviews conducted with teenage mothers, most teenage mothers uniformly deplored early girl-children marriages and wanted it stopped. One of the victims expressed that there was nothing gained in being married at early age.

"To me I can't say that early girl-children marriages have a good end. Look at me now, I am now hopeless. Most of my age mates went to schools and have now earned better living. When I got married, I was 14 years old and I immediately got pregnant but miscarried. I miscarried four children one after the other because my hips did not accommodate children I was expecting. I successfully delivered in 2001 when I reached the age of 19. Now, as someone who faced a big challenge in my life, I would like to advise my fellow sisters that there is nothing gained in being married at early age. Instead, it causes a lot of harmful situations that you can't improve on in life. I would like to encourage girls to go to schools to be in charge of their lives in the future" (17<sup>th</sup> March 2013 in Dar El Salaam, Kur Chuol\*).

According to traditional birth attendants, teenage mothers faced a lot of childbearing related illnesses such as fistula, obstetric labour and still childbirths. This is emphasized in the response below:

"As traditional birth attendants, we have been facing a lot of challenges with teenage pregnant women who are always brought to us for deliveries in the hospital. There are some who are brought to us with dead babies in their stomachs and there are those ones who have been in labour for two to three days. When we try to help deliver them, they end up getting ruptures in the process and hence contract fistulas" (17<sup>th</sup> March 2013 in Bentiu Hospital, Nyaliah Dong\*).

The researcher conducted Focus group discussions which were conducted with 20 volunteers who were divided to two groups,

from Bilnyaang, Dar El Salaam and Kuerboni villages. The volunteers were identified by local leaders of these areas. These volunteers were moderated by the researcher himself, with some translations by the local leaders from Arabic to English because majority of the focus group discussions volunteers could not speak English and the researcher could not speak fluent Arabic. The researcher could understand how the volunteers felt about the effects of early girl-children marriages in their communities.

From the focus group discussions, the discussants said that early girl-children marriages had bad effects. Poor health, family disintegration, prostitution, difficulties in childbearing, diseases such as fistula, sexually transmitted diseases, mental disorders and economic hardship were some of the social and economic effects discussed by the volunteers.

Each focus group discussion took about 30 minutes to complete. However, focus group discussions were hampered by lack of enough time since most of the participants were local business people and came to attend discussions for 45 minutes and went back to the markets to attend to their customers. Others were female participants who feared to be beaten by their husbands of arriving late at homes.

During the study, the researcher observed that the teenage mothers in Bentiu were heavily affected by the early girl-children marriages in that 65% of them were not staying in their conjugal homes because they either divorced or got separated with their husbands because they could not withstand conjugal responsibilities withstood by women ready for marriages. 34% of their children stayed on the streets and the teenage mothers indulged in drinking alcohol.

Another observation was that most (26.25%) of the gender-based violence cases brought to local court known as Juoi Machar's court in Bentiu were caused by early girl-children marriages. The underage married women could not undertake their marital responsibilities as expected of them by their marital families, and so could lead to misunderstanding and quarrels and eventually could lead to violence.

The researcher also observed in Kuerboni village when an underage married woman died as a result of an obstructed labour. She underwent labour and suffered for two weeks and later died when taken to one of the clinics near their homes.

#### **4.6. Effects of early girl-children marriages on the economic welfares of the girl-children in their married homes.**

According to the youths and teachers interviewed during the study, teenage mothers are economically affected by early girl-child marriages. The youths and teachers were asked economic-based questions to find out what they would think about early girl-children marriages on young girls.

**Table 10: showing responses on the economic effects of early girl-children marriages on the girl-children.**

<b>Effects</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Unemployment	49	61.25%
Lack of creativity	12	15%
Lack of financial management skills	10	12.5%
Lack of free market	9	11.25%
Total	80	100%

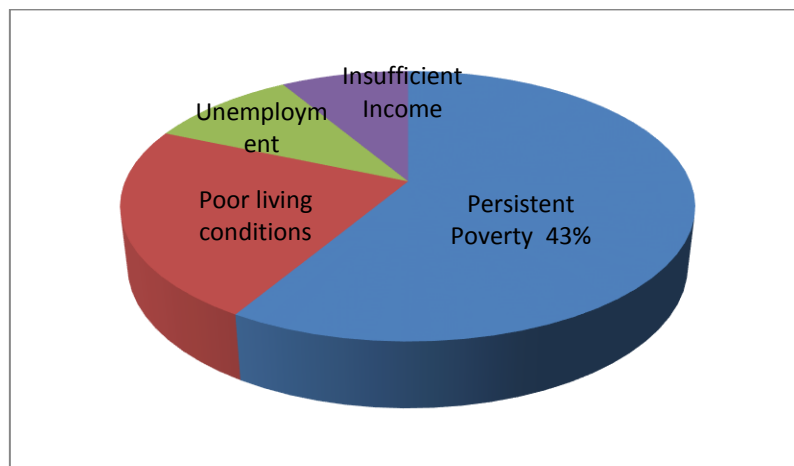
**Source: Primary Data (2013)**

The table above shows that unemployment with 61.25% prevalence has affected early married women and the community of Bentiu generally and early married women and the community little finance management skills, lack creativity and lack free market for their produce.

#### **4.7. Financial challenges faced by girls in early girl-children marriages.**

The pie-chart below shows the financial challenges faced by underage married women in Bentiu Town, Unity State

Figure 3: Financial challenges faced by married young girls



**Source: primary data (2015)**

The study finding above indicates that 23% of the respondents mentioned that in early girl-children marriages, the major financial challenge faced is persistent poverty, 21% strongly agreed that there is always insufficient income as it is only one partner working while the other is taking care of the children, also 21% mentioned inability to continue with education as the teens are forced out of schools to bear children and work hard to support the family, 19% mentioned

unemployment while 16% mentioned poor living conditions. This implies that young married couples face a number of financial constraints mainly including persistent poverty,, insufficient income to support the family for example food, medication and education for children. There is also inability to continue with education, unemployment and poor living conditions.

#### **4.8. Challenges encountered when trying to curb early girl-children marriages**

The following were the challenges established as the major challenges encountered when stopping early girl-children marriages

**Table 10: responses on the challenges encountered when trying to curb early girl-children marriages**

Method	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	TOTAL
	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
Poor applicable policies	-	21	56	77
Community resistance	2	16	52	70
Cultural norms	4	24	43	71
Poor education policy	-	27	50	77
Ignorance	1	12	61	74
Poverty	2	21	31	54

**Source; primary data (2015)**



The table above shows that 56%, 52%, 43%, 50%, 61% and 31% respectively strongly agreed that poor applicable policies, community resistance, bad cultural norms, poor education policy, ignorance and poverty respectively were some of the challenges in curbing early girl-children marriages cited by the respondents who participated in the study. One of the respondents said:

"early girl-children marriages cannot end easily in this community because I have never heard that parents who married off their teenage daughters had one day been arrested". Another female respondent blamed the national and state government for being too lenient on the issue of early girl-child marriages. She said "those we expect to respect the law are the ones who violate the law. Most government officials are the ones marrying school girls (teenage girls) because they have money to pay to the poor parents. Instead they can enforce relevant laws; they either violate them or do not want to enforce them at will".

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

In chapter four, the findings of the study were gathered in relations to the objectives; to assess the factors contributing to early girl-children marriages, examine social and economic challenges brought on by early girl-children marriages on the victim's married family and suggest ways to overcome the magnitude of early girl-children marriages among the communities living in Bentiu Town, Unity State questions and methodologies of the study. The researcher also used the research instruments, tabulated response rates, age

categories, sex categories, early girl-children marriages occurrence rates, minimum age of marriage, social and economic effects on the early married girls, and challenges faced when trying to curb early girl-children marriages to present the findings. From the interview results, focus group discussions and observations, the researcher found out that bad cultural practice, lack of relevant laws, poverty, civil wars, lack of law enforcement agents, economic pressures on the households, lack of education from both parents and girls and community stigmatization towards girls who passed the marriage age were some of the causes of early girl-children marriages. Interview results, FGDs and observations revealed that early married women suffered from main health problems such as fistula, sexually transmitted diseases among others.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0. Introduction**

In this chapter, I give the general summary of the research work presented in the last chapters and recommendations to the study. The researcher used the research objectives; to assess the factors contributing to early girl-children marriages, examine social and economic challenges brought on by early girl-children marriages on the victim's married family and suggest ways to overcome the magnitude of early girl-children marriages among the communities living in Bentiu Town, Unity State.

The recommendations drawn from the respondents' views are meant to help policy makers, lawmakers, human rights activists, gender-based institutions and government to improve the girl-children welfare.

#### **5.1. Summary of the Findings**

##### **5.1.1. Factors contributing to early girl-children marriages**

In the study findings, gender inequality was found to be one of the factors contributing to early girl-children marriages. The study reveals that women and girls often occupy a lower status in societies as a result of social and cultural traditions, attitudes, beliefs that deny them their rights and stifle their ability to play an equal role in their homes and communities.

Negative traditional or religious practices were also said to be some of the causes of early girl-children marriages in many

countries including South Sudan. The study said that the importance of preserving family 'honour' and girls' virginity in Nuer and Dinka societies is that it encourages parents to educate their daughters into marriages well before they are ready. There is a belief that marriages safeguard against 'immoral' or 'inappropriate behaviour' in Nuer and Dinka communities in South Sudan.

#### **5.1.2. Social effects of early girl-children marriage**

Another objective of the study was to examine the social challenges brought on by early girl-children marriages on the victim's married family. The findings stated that early married women considerably suffered from psychological drawbacks, denial of education, committed suicides, ill-treatment from their husbands, community stigmatization, family disintegration and abuses of the early married women's rights. Young married women could not enjoy their conjugal families due to poor relationships with their husbands. The young women interviewed revealed that they had been mistreated, battered and were not fed well in their married homes.

#### **5.1.3. Economic effects of early girl-children marriages**

Another objective of the study was to examine the economic challenges brought on by early girl-children marriages on the victim's married family. The findings stated that most of the early married women were unemployed, lacked creativity skills and lacked financial management skills because some of them dropped out of schools at Primary three (3) and four (4) and some of them never joined schools before marriage. For those of them who ran away from their married homes or who divorced,

could not afford to buy a salt for themselves and their families.

#### **5.1.4. Ways to mitigate the early girl-children marriages in Bentiu Town, Unity State**

Another objective of the study was to suggest ways to mitigate the magnitude of early girl-children marriages among the communities living in Bentiu Town, Unity State. The findings of the study stated that creation of awareness on cultural beliefs, enactment of relevant ordinances and strict enforcement of such laws, Promotion of girl-children education, provision of income-generating activities for girls and teenage mothers among others were some of the mitigations suggested by the respondents.

#### **5.2. Recommendations**

Diana (2006) early girl-children marriages globally are documented as a violation of human rights and a critical social problem with awful consequences (impacts), particularly for women and children. The practices are also recognized as a barrier that inhibits young girls from attaining education that would otherwise have a lasting positive impact on their life and well

Based on the findings of this study, the following programmatic recommendations are set forth to help design interventions that may reduce and ultimately eliminate the practice of early girl-children marriages and lessen the despair of hundreds of teenage girls in Bentiu Town.

### **Creating of awareness on cultural beliefs**

The findings of this study indicate that parents believed that if their daughters were not married as early as when they were 14 to 16 years of age, they would not be married because they would bypass the age of marriage. Men would refuse to marry them because they would be regarded old and would not fit to be wives. What can be done to discourage this belief is that youth should be empowered by providing them with information and knowledge they can use to convince family and community members that early girl-children marriages has negative impacts on the girl-children and the community as a whole. Sensitization discussions for community leaders such as women, church, civil society and youth should also be created.

Anti-harmful traditional practices dram clubs should also be formed and strengthened at schools because they are effective tools in fighting against harmful traditional practices. Efforts to educate parents on the dangers of early girl-children marriages should also be made such that they should join the fight against the prevalence. Traditional leaders should be educated on the prevalence because chiefs and headmen in South Sudan and particularly in Bentiu are very important and what they say in their communities is final.

### **Enactment of relevant ordinances and strict enforcement of such laws**

The lawmakers in Unity State and local councilors should enact laws and ordinances that should fight against the prevalence of early girl-children marriages and a more thorough enforcement of such laws should be done to the letter. After the enactment of such ordinances, police personnel should be

trained to help enforce such laws. Community leaders and civil society organization advocates and activists should also be trained to educate communities on the importance of such laws in combating early girl-children marriages and on their roles in enforcing such laws. They will also be able to help inform law enforcement agencies on the breaches of such laws. The gender-based institutions and law-implementing agencies should work with local courts to prosecute early girl-children marriages perpetrators.

#### **Promotion of girl-children education**

The findings of this study show that girls could not make informed decisions when about to marry and who to marry because they did not attend schools to be properly informed. Parents should be advised to send their girls to schools so that in the future they will be able to make responsible and informed decisions for themselves, their communities and families. Organizations supporting education should also build boarding schools for girls and should train matrons that will help bring up girls in schools.

#### **Provision of income-generating activities for girls and teenage mothers**

The government and charitable organizations should provide some income-generating loans to girls and teenage mothers so that they could be able to develop their financial capabilities and be able to independently cater for their needs and the needs of their children so that they do not fall prey to rich men as a result of poor financial situations.

Governments and civil society are doing much to abolish early girl-children marriages through campaigns, laws, policies and individual support from the community. Girl-Children protection orders; these are orders established to terminate any early girl-children marriages in the courts of laws when the case is reported to the enforcers. Educational campaigns; Getting and keeping girls in schools may be one of the best ways to foster girl-child education, stifle early girl-children marriages, while also contributing to the delay of sexual initiation, lower rates of HIV/AIDs and promotes gender equality.

Free education; Education opportunities should be free. Schools should be built closer to the communities so that parents and their girls will not have an excuse to not send them to schools. Schools should also build separate sanitation facilities and parents and communities should be involved in running schools for the benefit of their children.

The state and national governments should increase their efforts to end early girl-children marriages through enhanced co-operation across the states and by using their influence to push for effective international policies and actions on early girl-children marriages.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is relevant to enforce the fight against early girl-children marriages. Thus signatories to such conventions should ensure that commitments are implemented and enforced at national and local levels.



Plan International and other NGOs are running education programmes around the world which have increased girls' school attendances and reduced the frequency of early girl-child marriage. Such programmes increase awareness of girls' rights and empower girls to resist early girl-child marriage.

During the study, most respondents had suggested that state and national governments should enact and strictly enforce laws to ensure that marriage is only entered into with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. They emphasized that governments should enact and strictly enforce laws concerning the minimum legal age of consent and the minimum age for marriage and raise the minimum age for marriage where necessary.

Respondents also suggested awareness raising on the dangers of early girl-children marriages among community leaders, religious leaders, women's associations, youth associations and community members and these leaders should again go to the counties, Payams and Bomas to disseminate the same information to the public. Laws should also be strewn through active participation of the various stakeholders, including school clubs, the judiciaries, teachers, Bentiu public and private sector officials and other pertinent partners.

Government, international and national organizations should provide access for girls to trainings, information and the media on social, cultural, economic and political issues and enable them to articulate their views.

Malhotra and Mather (1997) suggested that much focus should be made on forming and strengthening anti-harmful traditional

practice clubs in schools, as they have proven to be very effective and efficient in fighting against bad cultural practices because Schools are basic stakeholders in early girl-children marriages issues, since they are the first institutions to be affected by the practices.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

In Bentiu Town, early girl-children marriages are frequent incidences and have caused dreadful developments in the community. The existing statistics show that in every five weddings conducted in Bentiu, there are at least three women wedded at the age of 14 to 16. The main objective of the study was to examine the impact of early girl-child marriage in Bentiu Town. This objective was intended to guide the researcher to design interventions of early girl-children marriages.

The data were collected using the stratified sampling, purposive and snowball sampling techniques, covering 8 villages in Bentiu Town. A total of 41 women and 39 men were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Focus group discussions were also conducted to collect qualitative data on the factors contributing to early girl-children marriages and impact.

Many findings including the findings of this research indicate that early girl-children marriages are highly common in the world and that they are the most serious of all the harmful traditional practices (Pathfinder International, 2006). My hope is that with this research, South Sudan and Bentiu Town in particular will be a better place for most young women who

may be destined to end up as child mothers, parents, and spouses.

#### **5.4. Suggestions for further research**

The research suggests the following topics to be researched in other states in South Sudan;

1. Assessing the lenience of government in enforcing laws that prevent early girl-children marriages in South Sudan
2. The role of traditional leaders in curbing early girl-children marriages in South Sudan
3. The importance of women's organizations in promoting girl-children education in South Sudan

## REFERENCES

African Commission on Human and People's Rights (1990), *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

African Union (2008), *"Strategy to revitalize Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Africa"*

Akande P, Debo m. (1979), *"Law and the Status of Women in Nigeria"* a report prepared for the African Training and Research Centre for Women:

Amhara region (April, 2006), *having home at an early age is a pride of parents in Amhara Region, Ethiopia*

Bruce F. (2002), *Early Marriage in a Human Rights Context, United Nations Special Session on Children* "Married adolescent girls; human rights, health and development needs of a neglected majority, paper presented by the Population Council at the Supporting Event"

Catherine A. (2004), *a guide to Liberia cultural and social norms; On behalf of Resettlement Inter agency partnership (RIAP), Refugee Council Child marriage means child labour for daughters*

Clark Z. (2002), *HIV and early marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Clark Z, Bruce T, Dude K. (2004), *Protecting young women from HIV/AIDS; the case Against child and adolescent in International Family Planning perspectives*

Cooke Y. et al (2003) *Reproductive Health and Human Rights; Integrating medicine, ethics and law, Oxford:*

Dhillon D, (2002), *a mum at 11, a great grandmother at 38', the Times*

Diana K. (2006), *International Humanist and Ethical Union*

Doctoral Thesis, University of Toronto, Faculty of Law(1999), *Particularity of Rights, Diversity of Contexts, Women, International Human Rights and the Case of Early Marriage*

Ouattara H, Thomson L. (1998) *Forced marriage, forced sex; the perils of childhood for girls, in Gender and Development*

<http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/Diana/index.htm> (Retrieved, 2009), *Strengthened as the Law is implemented? Kigali, Rwanda. Women's human rights resources*

Jelacica G. (1999) and Innocenti Research Centre (2001), *Early Marriage, Child Spouses, UNICEF Digest no. 7: Outcast in land where rape is a proposal of marriage.*

Jensen F, and Thornton S, (2003), *Early female marriage in the developing world' in Gender and Development:*

*Journal of the International African Institute, Edinburg University Press, Smedt (1998), Child marriage in Rwanda Refugee Camps Africa*

Khan C.(2000), *Sexual violence in Bangladesh; Observations from a field study'*, paper presented for Consultation on Sexual Violence Against Women, Melbourne, Population Council

Kishori A. (2002) *Baseline Survey Report on Rural Adolescents in Bangladesh, Future Directions for Programs and Policy, Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*

Malhotra K and Mather V. (1997) & MIGEPROF (2003), *Do Schooling and Work Empower Women in Developing Countries? Gender and Domestic Decisions in Sri Lanka*

Mane P. et al, (1998), Gupta (2000) *Approaches for empowering women in the HIV/AIDS pandemic; A gender perspective'*, International Center for Research on Women, paper presented at the Expert Group Meeting on The HIV/AIDS Pandemic and its Gender Implications

Mathur M, Malhotra J. (2003), *Too Young to Wed; the Lives, Rights, and Health of Young Married Girls: International*

Mbaaga F. et al (2013), *Ethical Issues in Social Research*

Mensch H, Singh G, Casterline A. (2005), *Trends in the Timing of First Marriage Among Men and Women in the Developing World;* Population Council, Policy Research Division

Oyortey T, Pobi M. (2003), *Gender assessment in Rwanda*

Ramachandran (2002) and

<http://www.panos.org.uk/newsfeatures/featuredetails>

Segno E. (2002), *Poverty and illiteracy aggravate abduction; ICEDA-Ethiopia, a paper presented at the 46th session of the CSW, New York:*

Singh W, Samara P. (1996) 'Early marriage among women in developing countries', in *International Family Planning Perspectives*, vol. 22, issue 3, December 1996

Singh W, Samara P. (1996) Umashankar (2006), *Early marriage among women in developing countries in International Family Planning perspectives*

Surur M. (2013), *Bad Cultural Practices in Barkina Faso*

Tallis T. (2002), *Gender and HIV/AIDS; Overview report*, BRIDGE Development Report, BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton: *Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration; Report of the Secretary-General, General Assembly, Fifty-seventh session of UN*

Therese A. (2008), *Early marriage and motherhood in sub-Saharan Africa, brief article 'African environment, woman and African cutting both ways' editions*

UN Population Division (2000), *Educating girls and family heads on child protection strategies; World Marriage Patterns*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Washington: *Expert Panel Calls for Action Against Early Marriage: UNFPA*

UNICEF report (2001) and Lefebvre Q, Murphy H. (2004), *Girls Who Marry Early & Early Marriage, Child Spouses*

Uvuza and Brown (2006), *Woman's Land Rights in Rwanda: How can they be protected*

West Africa, Population Council (2008), *Early Marriage and Poverty: Exploring links for policy and program development*  
The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls in collaboration with the International Planned Parenthood & *Child marriage in Francophone*

WHO (1996), *Early sex, early motherhood; facing the challenge*

World Bank (2001) and Abdul and Mustafizur, (2012), *Attacking poverty, Oxford University Press: Age at First Marriage in Bangladesh; Socio-economic Differentials and Determinants:*

## APENDIX

### Questionnaire

**Dear respondent,**

As part of the requirements for the fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Ethics and Development Studies, I am conducting a research on examining the impact of early girl-child marriage on the welfare of the girl-child at Uganda Martyrs University. Therefore, I am requesting for your participation by filling this questionnaire. All responses you will provide will only be used for academic purposes.

Thanks for your time and energy

Thudan James Gai

[Gatwangaak@yahoo.com](mailto:Gatwangaak@yahoo.com)

+256781045697



**SECTION A:**

Please tick the appropriate box for the question that follows below;

1. Gender

Male

Female

**2.Age Categories**

15-20	25-30	35-40	45-50	60 above

**Table 6: Age categories of respondents**

**3.Level of education**

Less than primary	Primary school	Secondary	Diploma	Bachelors	Masters

**Table 7:Level of education of respondents**

**4.Marital status**

Married	Single	Separated	Divorced

**Table 8: Marital Status of respondents**

**5.Occupation**

Health Officer	Administrator	Teacher	Farmer	Student

**Table 9: Occupation of respondents**

**SECTION B:** Please tick an appropriate rating number that you prefer.

Response made	Rating	Description
Strongly agree at all	4	Agree with no doubt at all (ADA)
Agree	3	Agree with some doubt (ASD)
Disagree	2	Disagree with some doubt (DSD)
Strongly disagree	1	Disagree with no doubt at all (DDA)

**Table 10: Ratings of answers**

Note: 'ADA, Agree with no doubt at all, 'ASD' Agree with some doubt, 'DSD' Disagree with some doubt, 'DDA' Disagree with no doubt at all.

**SECTION C:**

**THE EFFECT OF EARLY MARRIAGES ON HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN NGOMA SUB  
COUNTY NAKASEKE DISTRICT.**

1. Marriage is a formalized, binding partnership between consenting adults.

Strongly disagree  disagree  not sure

Agree  strongly disagree

2. Cultural values are ideas about what is good, right, fair, and just.

Strongly disagree  disagree  not sure

Agree  strongly disagree

3. Early marriage refers to a marriage conducted with the valid consent of one or both parties below 18 years of age

Strongly disagree  disagree   not sure

Agree  strongly disagree

4. Does early marriage occur in your area?

Strongly disagree  disagree  not sure

Agree  strongly disagree

5. What is the minimum age at which girls marry?

10-12       13-14       15-16       17-18   
19 and above

6. What are the various causes of early marriages?

Death of parents

Poverty

Culture values

Insecurity

Others, specify

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7. Mention the social and economic effects of early girl-child marriages

<b>Appalling cultural values</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
Poor standards of living					
High dependence level					
Malnutrition					
Persistent poverty					
Denial of education					

Others, please specify .....

.....  
 .....

8 Does the education level of parents impact on early girl-child marriages?

Yes  No

9. Which category of the youth is most affected by early girl-child marriage?

Young Girls  Young Men

10 What are the social and economic effects of early girl-child marriages on the welfare of the girl-child?

<b>Effects</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Freq</b>
Psychological drawbacks						
The denial of education						
Self-harm and suicide						
Injustice						
Stigmatization						
Rampant divorces of women						
violation of girls' rights						

Others, please specify .....

.....  
 .....

**SECTION C:**

**THE CHALLENGES OF HOUSEHOLDS WHICH LEAD TO EARLY GIRL CHILD  
FORCED MARRIAGES**

11. What are the financial challenges encountered by early married couples?

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
Unemployment					
Inability to continue with education					
Poor living conditions					
Persistent poverty					
Insufficient income					

Others, specify

.....

.....

.....

.....

**12:** responses on the challenges encountered when trying to curb early girl-child marriages

Challenges	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	TOTAL
	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
Poor applicable policies						
Community resistance						
Cultural norms						
Poor education policy						
Ignorance						
Poverty						

**Source; primary data (2015)**

Others, please specify  
 .....  
 .....

**SECTION D:**

THE MEASURES ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF IN EARLY GIRL-CHILD MARRIAGE



13. What interventions have been established to reduce the vice of early girl-child marriages?

By the government

.....  
.....  
.....

By NGOs/practitioners

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

By the community

.....  
.....  
.....

By local leaders

.....  
.....

**SECTION C:** Please answer the below questions as much as you can, using the space provided below the question

1. What are the factors contributing to Early Girl-Child Marriages in Bentiu Town?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

2. What are the social and economic effects of Early Girl-Child Marriages in Bentiu Town?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

3. How can Early Girl-Child Marriage be curbed in Bentiu Town?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**SECTION D: RESEARCH SCHEDULE**

Activity	Date	Person responsible	Expected outcome
Develop research proposal	March- June, 2011	Thudan	Proposal developed
Submit proposal for review	July, 2011	Thudan	Proposal submitted
Review of Proposal	July- August, 2011	Supervisor	Proposal reviewed
Construct	September-	Thudan	Research

research instruments	November, 2011		Instruments constructed
Pilot test research instruments	December, 2011	Thudan	Instruments pilot tested
Mobilize research assistants	January-March, 2012	Thudan	Research assistants mobilized
Train research assistants	April, 2012	Thudan	Research assistants trained
Construct sampling frames	May, 2012	Thudan	Frames constructed
Identify respondents	June, 2012	Thudan & research assistants	Respondents identified
Conduct interviews and FGDs	July-November, 2011	Thudan & research assistants	Data collected
Analyze Data	January-March, 2013	Thudan	Data analyzed
Write preliminary report	April-May, 2013	Thudan	preliminary report written
Present findings to the supervisor	June, 2013	Thudan	Findings presented
Review preliminary report	July-August, 2013	Supervisor	Preliminary report reviewed
Correct preliminary report	September-October, 2013	Thudan	Preliminary report corrected
Write final report	November-February, 2013	Thudan	Final report written
Submit final report	March, 2013	Thudan	Final report submitted
Review final report	April-June, 2013	Supervisor	Final report reviewed
Final dissertation for final marking	July-August, 2013	Supervisor	Final dissertation marked

**Table 11: Drawn by the researcher himself**

**SECTION E: PROPOSED BUDGET**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>AMOUNT (Ug shs)</b>
Stationary work and all items	50,000/=
Transport and Making of calls	100,000/=
Internet usage	30,000/=
Typing and printing	50,000/=-
Other items	200,000/=
<b>Total</b>	<b>530,000/=</b>

Table 12: Drawn by the researcher himself