VULNERABILITY, MARGINALITY AND BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION: A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION OF THE CASE OF "HOUSE GIRLS" IN TANZANIA

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**Abstract:** Women make significant contributions in social and economic development of any society but face discrimination, marginalization and multiple barriers to formal education which could further challenge their developmental roles. Many communities in Tanzania still hold outdated traditional practices which favour the male child in the provision of basic rights such as education. This paper discusses the experiences of house girls in Tanzania. In poverty stricken families, the girl-child is forced to take up jobs like that of the house-girl which often limit or curtail their ability to acquire formal education. This study was conducted in Northern Tanzania, in the rural areas of Mwanza region. A qualitative research approach which utilized a critical ethnographic research design was employed. Data was collected through in-depth individual interviews and observation methods. A total of ten house-girls participated in the interviews. In addition, data obtained from a review of literature, anecdotal evidence and informal conversations with various community members also contributed to this study. The results highlight the circular and cumulative causational relationship in which education is both a symptom, and simultaneously a cause of the problem. The study indicates that house girl employment typically begins at a very young age and it disrupts girls' education and blights educational outcomes. Likewise, the study indicates that regardless of how hard a girl works does not lead to an improvement in economic outcomes. Recommendations are made for the government and non-governmental leaders to devise strategies and policies that will promote and safeguard the rights of girls.

**Key words:** Vulnerability, marginality, education, gender equity, house girls, child labour

1.1 Introduction

"If you educate a man you educate an individual if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)" African Proverb

The improvement of education for girls across the globe is a critical component on the fight to end world poverty because significant benefits accrue from providing more education for girls (MacArthur Foundation, 2012). Girls who are well educated delay marriage and child bearing age. They tend to have fewer children and are associated with lower infant mortality rates. More so, well-educated girls are associated with higher survival rates of childbirths and experience lower rates of HIV infection (MacArthur Foundation, 2012). A child born to a mother who is able to read, has a 50 percent higher chance of living to age five than a child with a mother who is unable to read (UNESCO, 2010b). Girls with higher levels of education are also likely to earn more and contribute more to overall economic growth. According to the MacArthur Foundation "More participation and better quality education for girls could be a game changer for international development. Accordingly, giving girls ample opportunity to quality formal education offers a potential for large economic and social gains at the individual, family, community and the world at large" (http://www.macfound.org/press/press-release/philantropic-groups).

Quality education for girls is positively correlated with lower fertility rates, lower infant mortality rates, and improvements in child health (Lloyd and Young, 2009 cited by Center for Universal Education at Brookings, 2011). The failure of girls to complete school has been linked to negative economic indices. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are thought to have lost hundreds of millions of dollars which were spent in providing an education which did not have much impact on improving the wellbeing of girls (Antonowicz, 2010).

Gender is considered to be a major factor in the observed disparity in education in many developing countries (Center for Universal Education at Brookings, 2011). They argue that despite remarkable progress in gender parity in primary education in the past 20 years, millions of girls are missing from the education system. Even where girls are in school they are often being out-performed by boys. For example, research from the Democratic Republic of the Congo show that girls were lagging behind boys in reading, science and mathematics (Piper, da Silva & Miksic, 2011; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010). Piper, da Silva and Miksic, (2011) argue that in countries where girls are treated the same as boys their performance is at least equal. Girls' under-performance is often the result of neglect by teachers and systematic practices that marginalize them. They are more susceptible to dropping out of school and the earlier this happens the graver the implications for their future and their future family. Girls who live in poverty are particularly affected. They start school later and when domestic responsibilities increase as they do dramatically in adolescence (Center for Universal Education at Brookings, 2011) the risk of dropping out increases dramatically. The Center for Universal Education at Brookings (2011) posits that the earlier girls acquire competency in literacy and numeracy the longer they are likely to remain in school. For girls and women living in poverty, education is the key to survival and a brighter future (PLAN Tanzania, 2012). Providing girls with suitable education can also provide a forum for changing attitudes about violence towards women and promoting greater gender equality.

1.2 Brief Overview of the Status of Girls' Education in Tanzania

Education in Tanzania is characterized by a large disparity between boys and girls in school attendance and performance (Tanzania Gender Education Initiative (TGEI), nd) with the gender gap most noticeable at the secondary school level (Vavrus, 2002). Whinney (2012) attributes this gender disparity to a preference for educating boys and sexual violence that girls often experience. Enrolment and retention data are skewed towards boys although Tanzania has made real gains in closing the gap (TGEI, nd). The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) concurs with this position conceding that while

> "Tanzania made an important step toward improving access to education with the abolition of school fees in 2000, there is still a great need to encourage and support school enrollment, especially for girls. As is the case in some African countries, young girls in rural areas are often married at an early age and assume duties of their household, limiting their educational opportunities. Traditional roles for woman, therefore, may not support the concept of educating girls" (http://www.acei.org/programs-events/Tanzania-school.html).

But while significant gains have been achieved at the primary level girls still lag behind boys in enrolment, retention and educational attainment at the secondary school level. Furthermore, the disparity at the secondary school level might actually be getting worse. For example, the Secondary School Development Programme (SEDP II) reports declining gender parity ratio from about 48 percent girls and 52 percent boys in 2004 to about 45% and 55% respectively (cited by Nyirenda, 2012).

Vavrus (2010) points out that Tanzania's government's economic policy shifted much of the cost of schooling from the national to the household level, and that the privatization of schooling has put the cost of secondary schooling beyond the means of most families. Vavrus' research in Northern Tanzania indicates that among the Chagga people there has always been a strong desire to educate girls as much as boys but that, economic constraints are serious obstacles. Nyirenda (2012) also argues that gender disparities remain persistent challenge at upper secondary and tertiary levels of education despite commendable efforts by the Tanzanian Government. Early pregnancies and marriages contribute significantly to school dropout and the low retention of girls in secondary education. Low rates of retention and weak academic performance of girls in secondary education are impediments in promoting gender equity in education provision (Nyirenda, Ibid).

The importance of educating girls is getting more public attention in Tanzania. As a result, strategic efforts to achieve gender parity are being implemented by both the government and non-governmental organizations such as HakiElimu and Tanzania Girls Education Movement (TGEM which strives to create awareness and to promoted girls right to education. These organizations among others, view girls education at various levels as critical to overall social and economic development, healthy, stable families, and peaceful productive communities. Based on the significance of girls education as highlighted by TGEM and HakiElimu, more mechanisms to empower girls are urgently needed (HakiElimu, 2019). Similar appeal is made in Kassanga, and Lekule (2021) whose study sought to assess the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations in supporting girl's education especially those who had become teenage mothers and dropped out of school. Kassanga and Lekule (Ibid) argue that despite several efforts being made in Tanzania, gender parity in education remains noticeable mostly among marginalized rural communities. This situation is associated with a number of factors including, abject poverty, gender inequality, outdate

cultural practices such as genital mutilation, forced marriages among others. Moreover, as argued by Kassanga and Lekule (Ibid), deficiency of effective support from key stakeholders is one of the major issues contributing to gender parity in education. Hence, to overcome gender parity in education, there is a need of advancing further to make sure that girls are not simply getting enrolled in schools but rather making sure that the schools they are enrolled in provides them with a safe and conducive learning environment for effective learning.

1.3 Barriers to Girls' Education in Tanzania
There are many barriers to girl's education in Tanzania. These include poverty, early pregnancy, early marriage, unsupportive learning environments in schools, insensitive instructional approaches, and cultural beliefs practices that favour boys at the expense of girls. In the context of this discussion of house girls, the greatest barriers are poverty and cultural beliefs and practices.

Poverty
According to PLAN Tanzania 2012,
> Low levels of income, economic growth and employment often act as major barriers to girls' education. Many families are unable to meet the direct costs of putting their children through school. This includes the cost of school fees, books and uniforms. As a result of poverty many families are forced to choose which of their children to send to school. In many cases, it is the girl that is kept back (http://www.plan-uk.org/what-we-do/campaigns/because-i-am-a-girl/blog-for-girls/key-facts).

PLAN's research shows that there is a cultural economic imperative that influences the entrenched gender disparities in education as,
> Girls are made to either work in order to earn additional money for the family or are kept at home in order to do chores or care for siblings. Boys are seen as the future breadwinners of the family whilst girls are often viewed as being destined to be a non-earning wife and mother   (http://www.plan-uk.org/what-we-do/campaigns/because-i-am-a-girl/blog-for-girls/key-facts).

Poverty is a function of multiple variables including environmental factors like long droughts and floods, and economic factors, especially lack of employment and economic opportunities and operates side by side with cultural beliefs that prioritize boy's education over that of girls (Ministry of Community Development, Women's Welfare and Children, 1996). When families are experiencing severe economic hardships, they often send their daughters into the cities in search of work. Unfortunately the only jobs they can find with their limited level of education are paid poorly, unregulated work such as household domestic helpers. According to the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (nd), the girl child is the first victim of household poverty and hunger. The grounds for such favoritism is that girls will get married to a different family which means the education to be obtained will not benefit the immediate family as it would if boys were educated (Rendell & Gergel, 2009). Such beliefs and other socioeconomic factors such as gender roles, mistrust, and personal preferences jeopardize girl's education.

1.4 Impact of Cultural Attitudes on Girls' Education
Cultural attitudes significantly affect the education of girls in Tanzania. Many people and entire societies still misunderstand the benefit of educating girls and the roles that women can play in the economy. Early marriage is a feature in many communities and many young girls end up in forced

marriages. Early marriage and child bearing bring obvious responsibilities that often curtail women's education. PLAN Tanzania has found that argues that,

> In many poor communities there is a lack of knowledge of the potential long-term benefits educating a girl can bring. The low status of women along with deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes often result in girls 'education being perceived as a low priority. Furthermore, girls may face sexual and non-sexual violence from staff, male pupils, family and other members within their community. This therefore contributes towards low attendance, high-dropout rates and under-performance (http://www.plan-uk.org/what-we-do/campaigns/because-i-am-a-girl/blog-for-girls/key-facts).

In addition, girls are prevented from achieving education because they are traditionally perceived as housewives and caregivers (Meena, 1996). The HIV/AIDs pandemic affects many families and girls are the first to be denied or asked to voluntarily terminate their education in order to take care of the dying parents and to look after the younger siblings when they become orphaned.

1.5 House Girls in Tanzania

House girls may be defined as domestic household helpers, servants or maids. Issues relating to child labour and exploitation arise among children as young as 12 years old may be involved. The house girls' phenomenon in Tanzania is taken for granted and plight of the child victims are largely ignored. Child domestic workers are a sizeable group of working children in Tanzania and many come from poor families in rural areas and many are orphans (Sangi, 2010). House girls' accounts suggest that many these children suffer various forms of abuse including sexual violence, and denial of their rights.

The Ministry of Community Development, Women's Affairs and Children (1996) highlighted the problems faced by children in Tanzania. In its Child Development Policy, the Ministry points out that the problems facing children are largely the same but differ from rural to urban communities. Urban children face overcrowding, early employment, poor living conditions and a myriad of temptations that place them at risks including drug abuse and crime and violence. Rural children suffer from inadequate social services such as schools, health and environmental services in addition to poor communication, poor roads and lack of access to information. The gender bias in the society exacerbates these problems for girls in both rural and urban communities and increases their vulnerability.

1.6 Methodology

The study utilized qualitative research techniques to investigate the experiences of former house girls in Tanzania. The phenomenological experiences of these young women are captured through their stories told in in-depth interviews through which data were collected. A total of five former house girls shared stories of their lived experiences as house girls. All the participants were from rural areas in Tanzania who ended up in urban areas working as domestic helpers in private homes. The in-depth interviews allowed for rich data to be collected as participants were able to speak confidentially about their experiences in a positive non-threatening and non-judgmental environment. Phenomenology allowed for participants to self-report their lived experiences as house girls. Narrative inquiry allowed participants to reflect on these profound personal experiences and communicate and share them in their own voices. According to Clandinin & Huber (2010) and Connelly & Clandinin (2005) narrative inquiry is a powerful way for participants to tell their stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggested that this is an effective way of

studying human experiences. This is appropriate because peoples' experiences are captured as they are lived, through narratives (Wood 2000 as cited in Kambutu & Nganga, 2006).

1.7 Findings
The data from the interviews were analyzed and several key themes emerged. These are identified and discussed in the next sections.

Reasons for Participants Becoming House Girls
Poverty
Family home condition was the major factor which contributed to entry into the life of a house girl. More, specifically poverty played a major role in all of the participants becoming house girls. All of the five participants were from rural districts and described a life or growing up in abject poverty. In several cases they lost a parent at a very young age –seven days old in one case- which, created hardships and instability in their lives. Where fathers were lost, the absence of the main breadwinner forced exacerbated poverty and economic deprivation. Where mothers died, fathers remarried and conflicts emerged between children and stepmothers. As one participants said, "…when I reached standard four the harassment from my stepmother began." She explained that she was deprived of food in the home and over worked with household chores. Conflict with her stepmother led to severe beatings from her father. "When I saw that the situation was getting worse everyday, I ran away from home when I was in form two." She became a house girl in a nearby town. Another participant explained that: "...when I was in Standard Four my father became ill and died. My uncles took our small property and belongings." Her father had had four wives and they all lived together before his death. After his death the women started other lives and she found herself moving from one place to another with her own mother living in poverty. In her first year of secondary school she moved to a town to become a house girl to care for her now sick mother. Yet another participant recounted that: "My father died when I was in Standard 7. I became a house girl because of my family's poverty. I decided to go and work to help my mother." Similar experiences with poverty were shared by the other two participants. These experiences led them to choose to work to help their families or escape other hardships. In many cases this meant forfeiting their education.

Education
Education has complex interrelationships with poverty and the house girl phenomenon. On the one hand, the lack of education leads to girls becoming house girls as they have very little other employment prospects. On the other hand, the need to work to support ones family leads them to forfeiting their education. One of the participants in the study had not gone to school at all and had no education. She became a house girl for an aunt at 10 years of age. The other four participants all gained entry to secondary school but none actually completed their secondary education as their schooling was disrupted by the imperative of work. One was unable to attend because her family could not afford it. Others dropped out of high school along the way. Some of the circumstances around school dropout are complex. In one case a stepmother was reported to have actively worked to influence a father to stop the participant's secondary education. She eventually ran away from home. Three of the 5 participants did not attend school after age 15. All but one was a house girl by age 15 as well. One started when she was ten years old. In explaining their experiences one of the participants said:

'I became a house girl because I had only primary education.' Another participant said 'My

father died when I completed Standard Seven. I was selected to join my secondary education but I failed to join because life was so difficult at home.' A third participant said: 'I just stopped studying after I finished my primary school education because my family could not afford to pay for me secondary school education.'

How Participants Became House Girls
The literature review suggested that there were several ways by which girl became house girls some of which were not voluntary. We asked participants to describe how they became house girls. There responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Pathways to becoming a house girl

Participant	Statements
1	Run away from home. She was recruited by a friend who had been asked by a family in Mwanza to find them a house girl. She voluntarily went to Mwanza with this 'recruiter' and was employed as a house girl.
2	When she was in form one she was influenced by a friend to go to Dar es Salaam to find work that was promised by a man. This turned out to be a trafficking scam and they required the intervention of the police to ensure their security and safe return home. She went back to school and continued until Form Three when her mother's illness forced her to drop out of school to nurse her and then work to provide for her family.
3	'I got out of town through my primary school teacher who had shifted [moved] from our home area to the city. She asked my father if I can work for her as a house girl and he gave her the go ahead'
4	'Someone come at home [came to our home] searching for a house girl. Because of the hardship at home I had to agree to go with her to town to work as her house girl'.
5	She went to live with an aunt who had promised to send her to school if she helped her with the housework. However, she ended up becoming a full-time house girl instead.

Source: Interviews, 2017

The results showed that there were a number of avenues towards becoming a house girl. For most of the participants the decision may be described as voluntary. In one case however, the decision was made by a parent for his daughter to go work for a former teacher while in case number five the participant became exploited when the agreement to do household work in return for education was violated. These findings confirmed aspects of the extant literature that families often sent their children into domestic servitude for economic reasons and that recruiters were active in rural areas influencing young women to go to cities and towns for work.

Working conditions
Participants reported a variety of different experiences working as house girls. All of the participants reported long days that typically start between four and six o'clock in the morning and ending as late as eleven o'clock in the evening. The most significant finding here was that how

there was variation in treatment and some families treated their house girls better than others. When asked to describe life as a house girl one participant said: 'I lived well with the family especially my bosses the mother and father of the family. They had three children and I was treated like one among their children.' She went on to explain that she was treated as a member of the family and was paid a fair wage on top of it. However, she also pointed out that if there was work to be done she would be the first one asked to do it and might even have to disrupt a meal she was having to attend to a chore. Another participant had this response: 'Well with my teacher for whom I was a house girl life was normal. Life changed completely after I began working as a house girl in another family. My new boss was very different from my first boss who treated me like one of her family members.' A third participant indicated that 'They took care of me like one among [of] the family members. They even know my home place'.

The other two participants had very different experiences, however. One said; 'They treated me… like someone who had no power, a total nobody in the family.' She went on further that 'I was getting up at 4:00 am early in the morning… I was the only person who did all the domestic works without assistance from anybody… I was denied my salaries'. She reported frequently going without adequate food and being charged for broken utensils and things like that. Another participant reported very negative experiences with one of her employers where she was overworked, harassed and generally mistreated. One of the participants described her experience in the following words: "Life was difficult because I was promised to be sent to school but on the contrary I was not taken so I kept working as a house girl at the same time I was not given my monthly salary although my parents had agreed with my aunt that she would pay me" A significant theme emerging from the data was the general isolation of house girls. Most were not allowed to have friends or go out socially. One even reported that she was not allowed to go to church. Cut off from the outside world this made it easier to control them. A few of the participants said they were unable to leave abusive employment because of distance from home, a lack of local social networks and connections and lack of money as they very often did not get their wages and were not allowed to keep any money.

Disruption of Education
All the participants spoke to the importance of education and expressed their regret that poverty disrupted their academic goals and forced them into a dead end life. Some had hoped that they could continue their education at some point but one of the women we interviewed had managed to resume their education. One of the participants became a house girl for a relative who promised her parents that she would be sent to school. This promise was not fulfilled however. None of the respondents pursued education while they worked as house girls. Their duties did not accommodate student life. One person did say that her boss allowed her to start evening classes for a brief period. She said: "I wished I had not lost my opportunity to study, though my boss took me to evening classes for my further secondary education. I only study for one month because of too much work at home it was difficult for me to have my private studies." We asked respondents to provide some advice to young girls and communities in Tanzania. All of the responses included the importance of getting a good education. Here are some synopses of their response:

    "I will tell young girls in school to study hard and I will urge the community members to treat house girls like their own relatives."
    "I would tell students to concentrate on their studies and not otherwise. In the community living with children I would urge people to live with other people's children to be kind to

them and they should not mistreat or harass them."
"I would tell girls to study hard"
"I will tell the young girls to study hard and not lose hope. I will tell the community members to live with other people's children nicely."
"I would tell the young girls to study hard because education is everything to them... As for community members, I would tell them not to torture the house girls and they should treat them like other people."

The importance of education cannot be overemphasized. Even after leaving house girl work, the options for an under educated young woman are limited. Of the five participants in this study two were bar maids, two were housewives and one was preparing to open a small business. All had endured some amount of trauma as house girls. Some of the words used to describe their experiences speak to this. These words include torture, harassment, and mistreatment, tormented, powerless, and exhausted.

1.8 Discussion
Domestic Work
The phenomenon of house girls in Tanzania has been the subject of very little academic exploration. There have been some media reports about the issue and civic organizations and NGOs concerned with women's and children rights have been working on behalf of house girls for years but, the issue seems to have escaped the attention of academics both in Africa and in the western world. As a result the literature on the subject is sparse and the institution of house girls as a social justice and human rights issue with intractable interrelationships with girls education has barely reached the consciousness of the masses. Our interpretation of literature we reviewed and the interview data is that there is evidence that the girls who are involved in working as house girls are conscious of the loopholes of exploitation and abuse into which they fall. But, due to the socio-economic and cultural realities of their lived experiences they still opt to be involved and become trapped.

D'Souza (2010) argued that domestic work is an avenue of employment to poor, rural women who have had little access to education, often from marginalized ethnic groups - those with otherwise low employability. Since, most girls are driven by poverty to search for domestic work, D'Souza (Ibid) contends that if there were good arrangements where the girls can be given good working conditions, domestic work could be viewed positively as a way of transferring resources from the rich to the poor and could make a vital contribution to poverty alleviation. "If treated humanely, the independence and exposure to other lifestyles that domestic work offers is often a source of empowerment for women" (D'Souza, Ibid).

"Domestic work is one of the occupations in which the decent work deficit is largest and in which situations of quasi-slavery are still to be found" (D'Souza, 2010, p.19). It is a work done by economically challenged and desperate girls from rural villages who migrate from villages to urban areas searching for better opportunities (Kigwangallah, 2007). Like other forms of child labour the issue of house girls is both poverty-induced and adult-initiated (Munene & Ruto, 2010). Their work is characterized by economic exploitation and abuse, as some of them are beaten, raped, and intimidated by their employers (Kigwangallah, Ibid; Munene & Ruto, 2010; D'Souza, Ibid). Domestic work is a female-dominated sector, poorly regulated and often unprotected by labour

law. It is also often embedded within socio-cultural structures, which may make it acceptable generally and difficult for employers to see the injustice of their relationship with house girls. D'Souza (Ibid) argues that "the exploitation and abuse that many domestic workers face stems from the non-recognition of domestic work as work, from the hidden nature of the work place and from the informality of the employment relationship" (p.1) and that in relation to female domestic workers, "it is rooted in gender discrimination, replacing as it does women's unpaid work in the home" (p. 1).

In Tanzania, the structure of the education system inadvertently functions to create a population of young people susceptible to entering the child domestic worker web. In order to go on to secondary school, primary school students must pass the national Standard Seven examinations that transition them to secondary school. For many children who do not, that is the end of their formal education. Some students whose parents can afford it will go on to private secondary schools and a few to vocational training colleges. But the vast majority does no further formal education. Many children and their parents will thus be tempted to seek a better life in urban centers where domestic work and the sex trade turn out to be their best hope for employment. Even girls who do go on to secondary school may end up in the child domestic worker trade if they do not do well academically. Our own current research shows that schools in rural Tanzania are beset by numerous problems related to lack of resources. They have few textbooks and other curriculum materials, poor science laboratories and science equipment, lack of teachers and inadequately prepared teachers (Lekule, 2014). Many have poor attendance records and poverty causes hunger which adversely impacts performance. Many secondary school graduates therefore end up almost as unemployable as they were when they left primary school and are just as susceptible to the pull of the big cities and domestic work.

Treatment of House Girls in Tanzania
We identified a number of common features that are characteristics of the house girl experience in Tanzania.
   a) Over-worked: House girls are known for working very long hours with days that might begin as early as 5:00AM and end at 10:00 PM. For example, they must be awake by 5:00 am to prepare breakfast for their employers to be ready to go to work and the children ready for school. It is important to note that the daily chores are usually done by hand as modern domestic labour saving appliances such as washing machines, and vacuum cleaners are uncommon.
   b) Low and delayed salary: Although house-girls are forced to work for longer hours than any other person in the household, most of them are underpaid and may not be paid at all. To silence them, some employers promise them that they are saving the money for them and they can take it anytime as they wish. Informants reported that with holding pay is a common ploy householders used to keep house girls from running away.
   c) Fear and Intimidation: It is not unusual for house girls to be insulted, called names, mocked, and sometimes beaten and harassed for reasons such as burning the food, breaking a cup, or ruining an article of clothing during washing or ironing. Various studies have identified similar problem including that of Kigwangallah (2007); Munene & Ruto (2010) and D'Souza (2010) whose studies identified various characteristics of house girl work which included economic exploitation, rape and sexual harassment and physical abuse by their employers.

d) Social isolation**:** Because of most probably the fear that the house girls brought from rural area to the city would find their way out for a different job or to return to their homes, they are prohibited from visiting home families and friends. In many cases they are not even allowed to go grocery shopping. They are often denied social contact with the outside world and have no friends. Especially in cases where girls are being sexually abused this isolation is designed to keep them dependent on the family and to avoid being reported.

e) No time off**:** House-girls are known to work 7 days in a week with the exception of a few who can be given Sundays off depending on the religious beliefs of the employer family. If the house-girls religious affiliation is different from that of their employers, they likely will not be allowed to practice their faith.

f) Poor accommodation: House girls often live in situations where they encounter lack of privacy, and may not have a proper room or bed. Some are required to give up their sleeping quarters when the family has visitors. Employers sometimes deduct expenses such as food and rent, thus reducing or even eliminating the pay.

g) Sexual exploitation: Many house girls have reported sexual abuse and exploitation by their employers and care givers. Sometimes the abuse is at the hands of the employer while at other times employers sell their house girls to male customers for sex. House girls are often impregnated by their employers and turned out, given money to disappear or forced to have abortions. Sometimes it is family members who put children at risk by forcing them into prostitution for economic reasons.

House Girls and Human Trafficking

In Tanzania, the phenomenon of house girls has a strong link with the issue of human trafficking. Kamazima (2009) refers to human trafficking as "a modern day form of slavery" (p. 4). The majority of the victims of this type of slavery are young girls who are usually recruited and transported from poor rural and marginalized communities to far away cities in the country where they end up becoming house girls, barmaids and in worse cases, others are forced into commercial sex. The nature of this kind of recruitment provides clear evidence that the basis of this vicious cycle of labor migration, which leads to the growing of house-girl phenomenon, is a serious form of exploitation. Although this is a very critical problem in Tanzania, it remains unacknowledged and ignored. Kircher-Allen (2007), quotes Justa Mwaituka, a prominent Tanzania social justice activist who is also the executive director of Kiota Women Health and Development Organization (KIWAHONDE) who confirms this argument saying that, "in Tanzania many people do not see buying sex from a teenager as a serious crime"(No page). It is also true that the majority of Tanzanians do not see trafficking a thirteen year old girl who has only completed primary education to work as a house-girl as an issue of concern. In fact, many treat it as a positive thing. This could be the reason, which prompted Mwituka as quoted by Kircher-Allen (2007) to say that the problem of girls being exploited is not simply a criminal act but rather a community problem. For this reason, it can be argued that communities must take responsibility in protecting girls from becoming victims. In order to eradicate this kind of exploitation of girls, the ability to understand major factors that lead to victimization of girls into this kind of criminality is important. It is certain that poverty and lack of education are the main root courses. Some researchers indicate that there are many recognizable factors, which drive Tanzanian young girls into this vicious cycle. For example, in a report based on a research, which was conducted in some regions of Tanzania about human trafficking Kamazima (2009, p. 44), highlighted some inter-related factors which drive girls from school to vulnerable conditions.

See Figure one below:
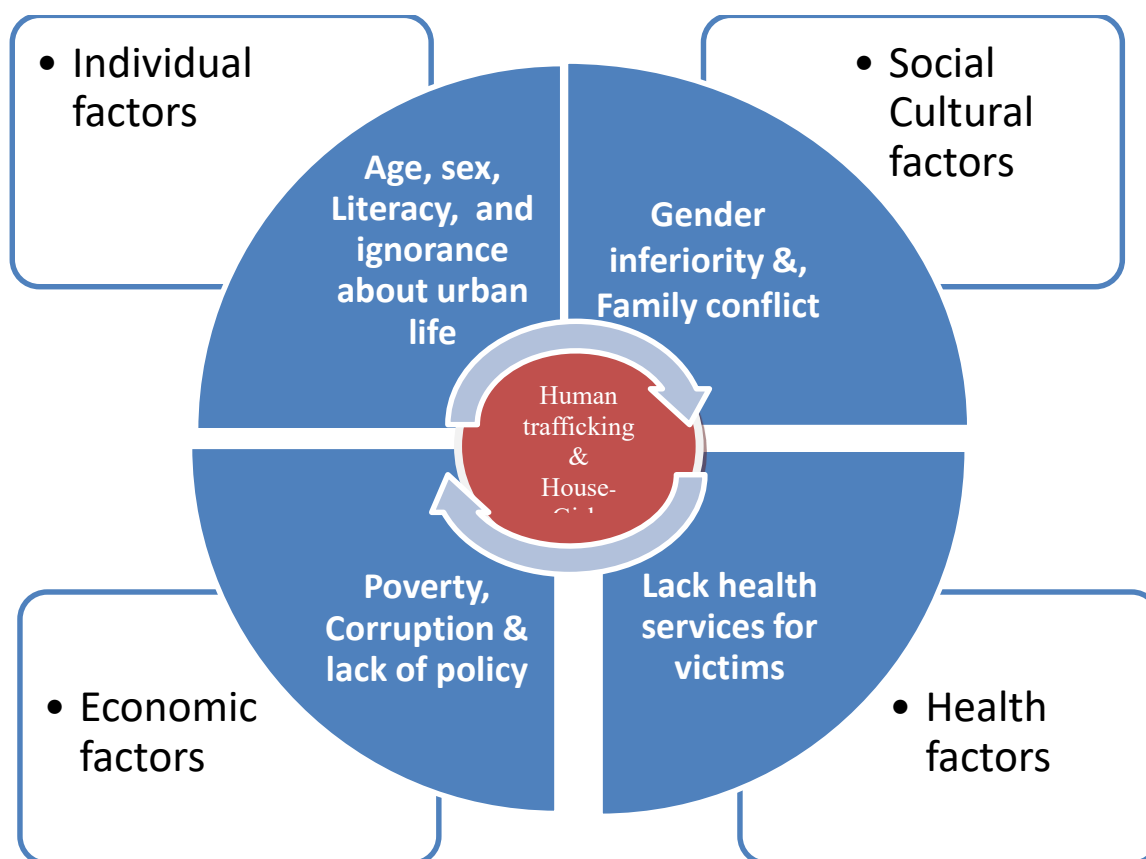
Figure 1: Factors driving girls from school to vulnerable conditions.
Source: Kamazima (2009, p. 44).

Likewise, Angela (2011) indicates that Tanzania has a very high rate of child trafficking for the purpose of becoming house-girls with many traffickers being family members and relatives. Not surprisingly, Angela noted that many victims of child trafficking and exploitation were from poverty-stricken families. She also noted the role of sociocultural beliefs and outdated cultural practices such as treating girls "as temporary member of the family since they will be married and move to another family" (Angela, 2011, p. 4). This helps to explain why many girls tend to give in quickly to the traffickers who promise them 'safe havens' and a life which their families could not provide. Unfortunately, this positive outcome rarely materializes (Angela, 2011). Instead, Angela's research in Dar es salaam, found that most of these children, including those who were trafficked by their own relatives found themselves in conditions similar to slavery. The conditions were characterized by forced labor, cruelty, multiple abuse, isolation, denial of their basic human needs including the right of communication. Situations such as these, explain the argument made by Justa Mwituka, the executive director of KIWAHONDE, that girls who are trafficked to the cities to become house girls are often so traumatized that they can get disoriented and forget their

own home (Kircher-Allen, 2007).

Empowering House Girls

Despite the abuse and exploitation that have been attached to child domestic work, research has argued that domestic work can in fact have tremendous potential for reducing poverty and empowering women (D'Souza, 2010, p. 2). However, based on our findings on the experiences of the house-girls, we argue that the young women who have been employed as house girls will be empowered only if the following is improved: The right to humane working and living conditions; Decent treatment, a normal working week, overtime pay, eight hours of continuous rest every day, a weekly day off, annual leave, statutory wages, social security coverage, proper food and adequate private and safe living conditions; Specifying the rights and duties of each party and The right to improve themselves through education and or skills training.

It is also critical for Tanzania to implement the terms of Article 4 of the Domestic Worker Convention, 2011 to which it is a signatory. Among other issues, article four of the convention calls upon each member country to take measures to ensure that work performed by domestic workers who are under the age of 18 and above the minimum age of employment does not deprive them of compulsory education, or interfere with opportunities to participate in further education or vocational training (Mbashiru, 2011).

The evidence from this study shows that the experiences of house girls vary as some families treat them better than others. However, what does not seem to vary is the role of education in terms of cause and effect. In this study none of the participants completed secondary school education, one did not start secondary school at all and one did not even attend school. She was taught to read by one of the children in the family she worked for. Poverty and a lack of education influence young women to accept life as domestic workers. Once this starts it effectively puts an end to their education. Based on this standpoint, the house girls who were involved in this study suggested that other young girls should learn from their horrifying experience and remain focused on their education as a matter of priority. Likewise, they suggested that in order to improve the lives of house girls, employers should treat their domestic workers as human beings, with dignity and respect.

1.9 Conclusion

Our study indicates that the house girl phenomenon is a serious issue in Tanzania. It is important from the standpoint of children's rights and child welfare, human trafficking and has implications for the education and development of women and girls. The house girl situation cannot be separated from girls' education and poverty. Lack of education and poverty are key factors that make girls susceptible to rural-urban migration, trafficking, and child domestic labour. Many girls go off to the city willingly but many are lured into it. Wealth families recruit village girls who have completed primary school but could not enter secondary school. They offer these girls money and employment and promise them a better life if they accompanied them to urban areas and the island of Zanzibar. However, some of these girls end up in domestic servitude and prostitution. Some domestic workers fleeing abusive employers fall prey to forced prostitution. The conditions of house girl work effectively lock young girls in a cycle of illiteracy, under-education and poverty. Our exploratory study also indicated that not all house girls experience the same level of abuse and that some consider their employers to be good to them. Our research

also indicates that parents, relatives and adult care givers are both deliberately and inadvertently at fault. For example, low-income parents sometimes entrust a child to a wealthier relative or a respected member of the community charged with caring for the child as one of his/her own. Some persons take advantage of this traditional practice and place the child in a situation where he/she is at risk of being exploited or abused. At other times parents send the child off to the city with recruiters expecting them to regularly send money to take care of the family back home. It is clear that further research is needed to elucidate the issues and form a basis for a coherent policy response to the problem and to educate the public about the house girls' phenomenon.

Although many people are aware of the struggles and experiences of these young girls, very little research has been conducted to investigate their experiences and the short term and long term impact it might have in the lives of these girls and the society at large. Until recently the work done by house girls, was not recognized by law. For this reason, house girls have been largely invisible and their experiences and alleged exploitation have not received adequate attention by lawmakers and enforces. In addition most house girls are under-educated, uneducated and illiterate. They themselves eventually raise illiterate families thus perpetuating the cycle. Kigwangallah (2007) situated the house-girl phenomenon in the context of adverse socioeconomic conditions in their region that act as push factors for rural to urban migration. These conditions, highlighted by high unemployment and poverty provide the impetus for the migration of young girls to urban centers in search of work.

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