

Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa

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• UNICEF Middle East and
North Africa Regional Office



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The views expressed and information contained in the report are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, UNICEF.

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ACRONYMS

3RP	Regional Resilience and Refugee Plan
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
C4D	Communication for Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
EVAC	Ending Violence Against Children
EU	European Union
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBViE	Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMS	Gender Equity Movement in Schools
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRP	Humanitarian Response Programme (HRP)
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMC	International Medical Corps
IPV	Intimate-Partner Violence
L3M	Level 3 Monitoring Approach (UNICEF MoRES)
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MENARO	UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoRES	Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (UNICEF)
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NCW	National Council for Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Population Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office

Study Rationale

01 The overall rate of child marriage in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been declining for decades and is now meaningfully lower than the global average. The current rates remain nonetheless alarming, with serious concerns about the impact of instability on child marriage within the region. At the regional level, 18 per cent of girls are married before the age of 18 whilst 3 per cent of girls are married before the age of 15.¹ However, prevalence varies across the region, masking the wide variation in prevalence between different countries in the region which ranges from 3 per cent married before 18 in Algeria to 32 per cent in Yemen.² Moreover, data on national averages do not capture trends of child marriage prevalence at sub-national level where rates are much higher, particularly in countries affected by conflict.³ Although the relationship between conflict and increase in the incidence of child marriage has not yet been clearly established, this is a worrying trend in what is a fragile region affected by conflict and prevailing humanitarian contexts in a number of countries (see box 1).

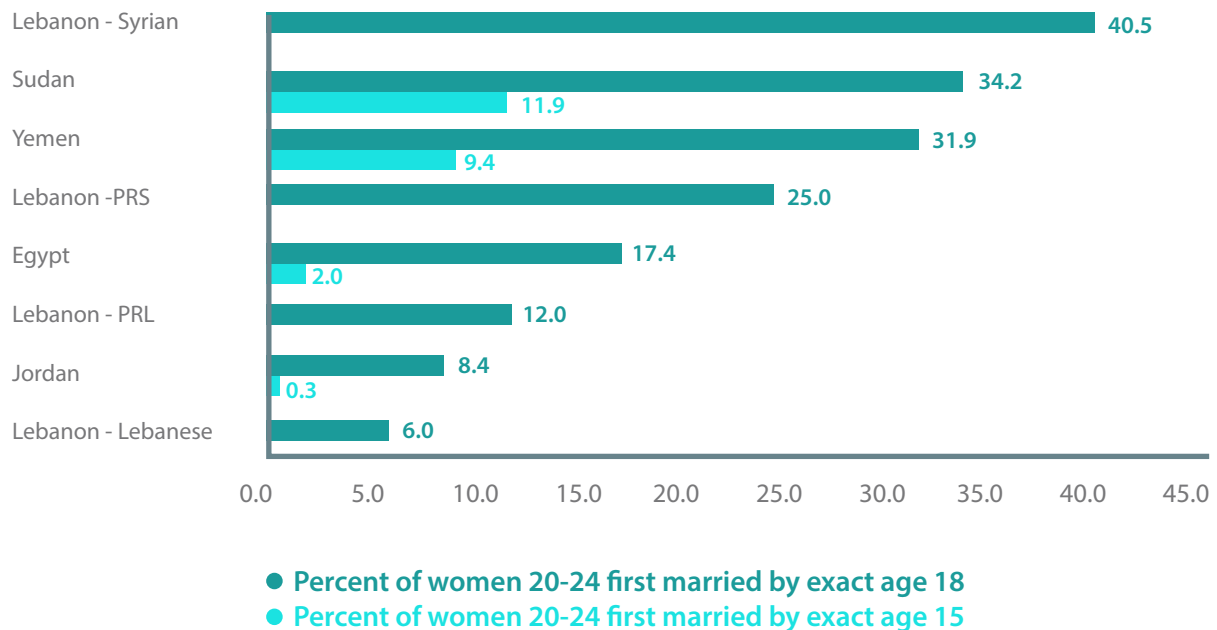
BOX 1

How conflict influences child marriage

In the MENA region, where child marriage is practiced in peacetime, its prevalence increases during violent conflict. In Yemen a survey undertaken in 2013 showed the prevalence of respondents married before the ages of 15 and 18 had increased since the start of the conflict. This is also true of girls affected by the conflict in Syria, as evidenced by the growing number of Syrian refugee girls being married in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. Of the top ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage, nine are considered fragile states, illustrating the reality that conflict impacts child-marriage decisions. As CARE International's 2015 report put it, the increased prevalence of child marriage in conflict situations is largely the result of the, 'fatal confusion between protecting girls and sexual violence'. In an environment where girls and young women are more susceptible to rape, families choose marriage as a method to protect girls from the dishonour of being raped and having children out of wedlock. This increased need to secure girls' honour (as a method of securing family honour) is seen in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan, where girls from urban Syrian communities – areas where child marriage was not commonly practiced before the conflict – are increasingly being married before age 18.

02 In the six countries of interest, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen, prevalence rates vary greatly, with high rates in regions affected by conflict. These statistics are based on the most recently available DHS, MICS (see figure 1), or equivalent population-based representative house hold survey. For the countries with available data, the percentage of women aged 20-24 years married before age 15 ranged from a low of 0.3 per cent in Jordan⁴ to a high of 11.9 per cent in Sudan.⁵ The percentage of women aged 20-24 years who married before age 18 was lowest amongst Lebanese women in Lebanon at 6.0 per cent and highest amongst Syrian women in Lebanon at 40.5 per cent.⁶ Median age at first marriage of women 25-49 ranged from 18.2 years in Yemen to 26.3 in Morocco.⁸

Figure 1: Percentage of women 20-24 first married by exact ages 15 and 18.



Source: Egypt DHS 2014; Jordan PFHS 2012; Lebanon UNICEF Baseline Survey 2016; Sudan MICS 2014; Yemen DHS 2013

03 There is progress in the international and regional responses to child marriage prevention but important gaps remain. Several international conventions have committed to eradicating child marriage, detailing states' responsibilities for protecting children from marriage, defining minimum age of marriage, and requiring free and full consent in any marital decisions. Amongst them, the African Union has recently urged its Member States to develop comprehensive action plan for marriage at 18.⁹ More recently, the global community agreed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 5.3, which proposes to eliminate harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, a key initiative to advance gender equality. Although some progress has been made, these legal reforms and commitments to prevent marriage and safeguard children's rights have not been carried out adequately in many MENA countries. Commitments made by several states in the region can be followed more intently by drafting national action plans and adopting a minimum age of marriage for girls at 18 as important first steps to eradicating child marriage. The enforcement of such laws and plans are critical, however, ensuring sustainable change requires collaboration and commitment across ministries, from the national to local levels within countries. Indeed, efforts to prevent child marriage will be in vain unless translated into action, which requires not only rhetoric, but funding to support action.

Background

01 The Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage is a joint initiative between UNICEF and UNFPA focused on proven strategies, including:



Increasing girls' **empowerment**



Access to **education and health care** services



Raising awareness among parents and communities on the dangers of child marriage



Increasing **economic support** to families



Strengthening and **enforcing laws** that establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage.



The programme also emphasizes the importance of **using robust data** to inform policies related to adolescent girls.

02 In light of the Global Programme, this study was designed to inform the scaling up of efforts to address child marriage in the MENA region. In 2016 the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) partnered with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) to take stock and assess current and ongoing programmatic responses, explore promising approaches, and identify gaps with a view to accelerate and scale up efforts to address child marriage across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, specifically in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen and Morocco. The study provides country-level and regional-level analyses and recommendations for programming at the local, national and regional levels to strengthen work to end child marriage.

03 This study followed a five-phase methodology, and was carried out in 2016-2017.

- Desk review of legal policies and national strategies/action plans as well as programmes and interventions related to child marriage prevention.
- Evidence gap mapping.
- Primary data collection with key experts (representatives from governmental institutions, UN organizations, and non-governmental organizations and service providers) and subsequent analysis highlighting promising approaches and where gaps remain.
- Stakeholder consultation during which the findings and recommendations were validated, resulting in a draft report on how to strengthen and expand promising practices in addressing child marriage.
- Revision and finalization of results and recommendations.

Key Findings

The key findings and recommendations for the regional analysis are summarized in terms of the 5 outcomes of the Global Programme.

5 Outcomes of the Global Programme

- 01 Outcome 1:**
Girls' Voice & Agency
- 02 Outcome 2:**
Household and Community Attitudes and Behaviours
- 03 Outcome 3:**
Service Delivery
- 04 Outcome 4:**
Legal Context
- 05 Outcome 5:**
Evidence Generation

Outcome 1: **Girls' Voice & Agency:**

Across the six countries of focus, restricted social and spatial mobility outside of the household is a significant factor driving child marriage, contributing to limited access to education, economic opportunities, and health facilities, as well as vulnerability to gender-based violence, and limited access to justice.

For example, in Yemen, the Personal Status law requires a wife's obedience to her husband and his consent to leave the home or travel abroad (Art. 40).¹⁰ Similarly, in Egypt and Morocco, a woman's ability to move freely within and outside of the household is restricted by men's control over women's mobility. Interviews with child marriage experts at all levels indicated that mobility restrictions have important implications for accessing education and health services.

Outcome 2: **Household and Community Attitudes and Behaviours:**

Across the six countries, the drivers of child marriage are complex, diverse and contextual; they are the outcomes of the interplay between the macro-social forces and the local traditions and cultural experiences. In this regard, child marriage serves multiple social and cultural functions which together reinforce gendered social roles: that of maintaining kinship and securing inheritance/economic stability; marking transition to adulthood; providing financial security; protection from (sexual) violence; and promoting social cohesion in the community; amongst others. These functions vary in degrees of strength depending on the country's historical, economic, political and cultural heritage as well as global social changes that can affect the country. This is because these factors can lead to political conflict, extreme economic insecurity, deterioration of infrastructure and service delivery, or reinforcement of dominant cultural models related to women's femininity and sexuality.

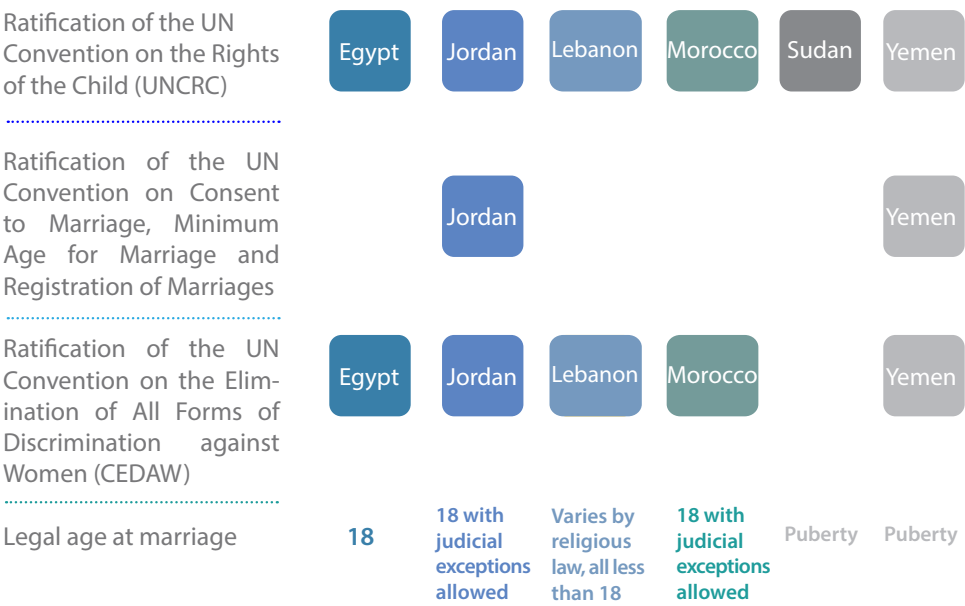
Outcome 3: **Service Delivery:**

Service delivery was the domain in which findings were most different between countries, reflecting the need for services to be tailored to their diverse, specific contexts. However, some gaps in service provision related to child marriage were identified across multiple countries. For example, key informants from both Egypt and Jordan discussed the urgent need for appropriate reporting mechanisms to effectively report and respond to child marriages. Respondents from both Jordan and Yemen recognized a need to develop better services for girls at risk of child marriage and for those already married. Both Sudan and Yemen called for a critical need in funding to provide effective prevention and response services. Finally, both Lebanon and Yemen identified the health sector as a promising point of contact through which to reach at-risk and married girls.

Outcome 4: Legal Context:

Despite the fact that most countries studied have ratified international conventions, including CEDAW and CRC, which set the minimum age of marriage at 18, exceptions to key provisions of these conventions allow child marriage to remain legal in certain circumstances in most countries. Of the six countries, all have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Committee for the Rights of the Child considers that the minimum age for marriage must be 18 years. Additionally, apart from Sudan, all countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which restricts states from giving legal effect to marriages that involve children, and urges states to specify a minimum age for marriage. However, although most countries have ratified CRC and CEDAW, many reservations remain outstanding. Egypt remains the only country with a minimum age for marriage of 18 without judicial exception. Jordan and Morocco have both set the legal age for marriage as 18 but provide judges with the discretion to marry girls that are younger. In both Sudan and Yemen, puberty is broadly used as the age at which marriage of girls is appropriate and acceptable. In Lebanon, religious law determines the age of marriage, which varies depending on the religion and denomination.

Figure 2: International commitments



Outcome 5: Evidence Generation:

Across the six countries, the most common need articulated by stakeholders related to evidence generation was the need for better coordination amongst different groups conducting research and programming related to child marriage. According to them, this lack of coordination directly contributes to the perpetuation of evidence gaps. Additionally, respondents from several countries identified the need for better data on child marriage, a need which is discussed more thoroughly in the following paragraphs. Two countries identified specific domains where further evidence is needed—respondents in Egypt wanted more evidence on the link between child marriage and education, whilst respondents in Yemen wanted more evidence on the link between child marriage and conflict. Promisingly, robust studies on child marriage are currently underway in both Lebanon and Sudan.

It is currently difficult to assess the prevalence of child marriage in the MENA as most of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) data on child marriage prevalence precede conflicts in the region, making them largely unreliable. Jordan is a positive example in terms of addressing this data gap. The country's most recent Population, Family and Health Study (conducted in 2012) specifically included data collection amongst Syrian refugees in a way that allows for comparison with other populations and regions within and outside the country. It is critical that updated, nationally-representative population studies be conducted in all countries, with an eye to sampling that will reinforce understandings of child marriage amongst refugee and migrant populations.

In addition to prevalence data, additional tools and methodologies are needed to better understand the social norms that may be underlying child marriage in these countries. Social norms are not well captured in traditional surveys such as the DHS and MICS.

The following regional recommendations address general recommendations that apply broadly in all cases where child marriage programming is being developed. These represent the key overriding findings from this study and should be considered as critical to effective child marriage programming.

Key Regional Recommendations

- 1 There is a need to strengthen the focus of interventions in a context-specific way to improve its scalability; a comprehensive situational analysis must be implemented, including a gender analysis to understand the disparities in power and resources as well as conflicts of interest.¹¹
- 2 Support, nurture and consult with local gender expertise in the form of local women's organizations as well as those focusing on child marriage, including capacity development to engage men and boys, to ensure that programming is driven and informed at the grassroots level.¹²
- 3 Ensure high quality interventions by establishing a theory of change and including stakeholders in a participatory approach to design and implementation; where possible, conduct a pilot phase.¹³
- 4 Guarantee multi-year funding of programmes to ensure sufficient time for rigorous evaluation over a several-year period; funding to governments should have clear tranches linked to monitoring so that results are seen before new money is released.
- 5 Focus on programming that targets child marriage and the structural factors that drive it; programmes that incorporate child marriage as a smaller part of broader goals (i.e. empowerment, SRH, HIV) are less likely to have impact.¹⁴
- 6 Improve scalability to ensure reliable service delivery to the most rural and remote communities. This can be achieved through sustained and expanded funding to programming that is proven to effectively reach remote communities, such as mobile units to provide safe spaces and health services.
- 7 Emphasize the socioecological framework when designing effective programming, by recognizing the interplay between interventions and child marriage at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels.¹⁵

- 8 Countries' legal frameworks must be strengthened to meet international standards by eliminating exceptions that grant judges authority to sanction child marriages.

The following recommendations set out evidence-based programme recommendations specific to the five outcome areas of the Global Programme, drawing from the key recommendations at the country levels.

Recommendations specific to the 5 outcomes of the Global Programme

Outcome 1: Girls' Voice & Agency



Create safe spaces for girls

- ✓ Create adolescent girls' empowerment groups through safe spaces in schools and the community, using peer-to-peer methods to develop skills, discuss life and sex, and report violence and child marriage.¹⁶
- ✓ Support schools to apply a zero-tolerance policy to the use of violence and sexual behaviour in schools.¹⁷
- ✓ Use health and Sexual and Reproductive Health as a gateway for girls' access, establish clinics in communities and schools that provide health advice and services, in addition to discussing issues of acceptable sexual behaviour and child marriage.¹⁸
- ✓ Provide out-of-school girls aged 15 to 17 with literacy classes, life skills programming, and sport activities whilst also intervening with their parents and communities in order to change norms about girls' roles in society.¹⁹
- ✓ Support the adoption of women's safety audits at the community level.²⁰
- ✓ Take a 'whole of community' approach to identifying, reporting and preventing harassment and abuse of women in public places.²¹
- ✓ Model and upscale UN Women's 'Women and Girls Oasis' at the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan.²²
- ✓ Model and upscale the safe spaces initiative in Lebanon which works through national Listening and Counseling Centers, offers activities for children whilst mothers participate in their own activities.²³
- ✓ Create opportunities for healthy interactions and communication between boys and girls.²⁴



Build on girls' empowerment through education

- ✓ Provide direct incentives (cash, food) to keep girls in school, conditional on children's school attendance (evidence shows that this does work, albeit that it is largely unsustainable in terms of cost alone).^{25,26}
- ✓ Replace direct cash transfers to families with delivering incentives through the school. Work with ministries of education to decrease the cost of school through provision of safe transport, uniform, school meals, and equipment.²⁷
- ✓ Partner with national level governments to ensure that curricula do not affirm detrimental gender norms and raise awareness of harmful practices.²⁸ One example of a gender-sensitive curriculum currently being implemented in the MENA region is the Life Skills and Citizenship Education initiative.²⁹
- ✓ Cultivate critical thinking in girls, recognizing and investing in their agency, so that they are better able to make informed choices when given the opportunity.³⁰
- ✓ Train teachers to recognize their own gender biases and promote a gender transformative approach to teaching which includes sessions on gender, violence, bodily changes, emotions and conflict resolution.³¹
- ✓ Support the training of female teachers to keep girls in school (in Yemen, for example, male teachers can be an obstacle for girls' enrolment).³²
- ✓ Ban all forms of discrimination that prevent access to school based on marital status, pregnancy or motherhood, whilst addressing needs for child support to enable young mothers to return to school.³³



Build on girls' empowerment by providing economic opportunities

- ✓ Provide girls with workforce education and vocational training.³⁴
- ✓ Provide girls with opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.³⁵
- ✓ Provide girls with financial literacy and savings and loan opportunities, including opportunities for saving and investment where access is not controlled by male relatives.³⁶



Increase opportunities for girls' participation

- ✓ Build mechanisms for girls to participate at the local/community level along with creating an environment that will allow them to participate.³⁷
- ✓ Consider a wide range of opportunities for girls' participation, including community activities, initiatives, digital engagement and volunteering activities.³⁸

- ✓ Support girls to participate in UNICEF's Voices of Youth initiative, which provides an online platform for young people to share information and perspectives.³⁹

Outcome 2: Household and Community Attitudes and Behaviours.



Engage receptive religious leaders

- ✓ Work with religious leaders to build their capacity to communicate accurate information to communities on child marriage,⁴⁰ including by working with other religious leaders to develop their understanding of scriptural support for girls' education and delaying marriage.⁴¹ For example, see box 2.

BOX 2

Good Practice from Morocco on the importance of engaging religious leaders

Based in Morocco, La Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas (Mohammadia League of Scholars) has been particularly successful in engaging religious leaders and communities on gender-based violence, including child marriage. Their peer-educator model is being replicated in several other African countries. In addition, La Rabita has a production of audio-visual aids (short films) aimed at sensitising children. La Rabita trains young men to use new methods of public speaking and persuasion to teach children and youth about human rights. Peer educators also play a major role in enhancing children's critical thinking and implementing a culture that respects human rights. The use of the New Technologies of Information and Communication has proven to be a powerful eye opening and leadership building approach.



Implement holistic community programming

- ✓ Mobilize gatekeepers (community leaders, religious leader, teachers, doctors) and build their capacity as champions of girls' education and the benefits of delaying marriage.⁴²
- ✓ Using 'communication for development' and 'behaviour change' strategies, employ the media, radio and television, mosques and schools to relay messaging on the negative consequences of child marriage and the benefits of delaying marriage (including examples of benefits and achievements experienced by individuals and families who delayed marriage);⁴³ whilst undertaking local community outreach programmes that focus on child participation and education of parents in changing social norms.⁴⁴
- ✓ Develop initiatives that work with men and boys using a peer-to-peer methodology, introducing and encouraging more progressive ideas of gender norms, the roles of men and women, and the benefits to delaying marriage.⁴⁵

- ✓ Train 'youth agents of change' to lead transformative actions in schools and other settings to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality and safety in public spaces.⁴⁶
- ✓ Engage the community through group and community education sessions on the consequences of and alternatives to child marriage.⁴⁷
- ✓ Establish community committees, devoted to detecting and intervening in cases of child marriage.⁴⁸



Work directly with men and boys



➤ Work with young men to discuss and challenge social perceptions and expectations placed upon them, building their understanding and capacity to exercise agency in a way that is more gender equitable and less harmful.⁴⁹



➤ Model and scale up the MenCare approach of Promundo and Wold Vision, working with fathers, uncles and male family leaders to understand the harm of early marriage, and address gender norms and roles within and without the household alongside their female family members.⁵⁰



➤ Build the capacity of civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, to work with men and boys on addressing and reducing harmful normative attitudes and behaviour.⁴⁸

BOX 3

Good practice on the importance of engaging men and boys

The review of programming in the region included Save the Children's CHOICES curriculum, which worked with young adolescent girls and boys to question gender roles and norms. Results from this project included an increased agreement amongst participants that girls make their marriage decision and that girls should discuss the unsuitability of potential grooms with their fathers. This project highlights a critical point for programming on child marriage – the importance of working with men and boys. Working with men and boys in the community can increase the ability of girls to obtain permission to access services and opportunities; it may also address the risks associated with the hostility that men can have towards programming that is restricted to women and girls. Working with men and boys is also necessary to challenge the norms and behaviours in relation to women, which can be enhanced when messaging and normative change is passed from men to men through peer networks.

One approach to behaviour and socio-normative change is to address the roles and responsibilities that drive male relationships with women. Working with the framework of what 'responsible' or 'real' male behaviour is towards women, programming can start to reframe this as actions and behaviours that do no harm to women and girls, including sisters, cousins and daughters. Such actions and behaviours include sexual conduct and early marriage. The notion that young men are considered to be wild and reckless, whilst older men are more responsible and stable, can be the basis of the reason why older men are considered more desirable for a girl to marry. However, this framing of young men being associated with risky sexual behaviour, violence and lack of engagement in care work, can be challenged directly when men and boys are given adequate support, with evidence showing that they can adopt equitable attitudes and behaviours which have protective effects against harmful practices.

In societies where girls and boys are often separated, there is a lack of understanding about what is considered acceptable behaviour with the opposite sex. In a report by Girl Power Alliance, this was identified as an important reason behind harassment of girls in Pakistan, for example. As such, programming should include the establishment of safe spaces, in which girls and boys can safely explore different ideas of their gender roles and experiment with new forms of interaction. Such spaces need to be established in ways that do not generate conflict with parents (or include programming approaches to increase parental permission). However, examples could include sports, dance, arts and culture and other activities that could be complemented by education on transforming gender norms, relationships and sexuality.

Programming can be framed around work with parents, in particular fathers and uncles, to understand the harm of early marriage. Such work can also look at the financial implications on early marriage for the girl, as well as exploring and illustrating how a greater balance between the genders may look in the household. As part of the MenCare campaign, for example, Promundo and World Vision engaged fathers in India in the promotion of gender equality in the home and the prevention of child marriage through encouraging men, their partners and daughters, to reflect upon the cultural and gender norms that devalue girls and present barriers to men's participation as caring, involved fathers.



Identify and support positive deviants



Learn from the actions and attitudes of positive deviants in order to identify emic methods for improving gender-equitable attitudes at the household and community level.⁵¹

Outcome 3: Service Delivery



Build technical capacity of stakeholders

- ✓ Develop tools and build capacity in order to clarify referral and reporting processes.
- ✓ Strengthen training for case managers on how to ensure access to services for child brides.
- ✓ Develop country specific technical reference materials for service providers, that include relevant information on laws, regulations, processes and services relevant to child marriage.
- ✓ Increase the number of Syrian staff working with child marriage-affected refugee communities.
- ✓ Incorporate knowledge and capacity building on identifying and preventing child marriage in the training of service delivery providers in the health and education sectors.



Increase financial resourcing and support of local/rural organizations /service delivery

- ✓ Provide financial support to women's rights activists/groups who work on child marriage advocacy, outreach and legal advocacy groups that bring cases of child marriage to courts. Engage donors in advocacy with governments and other stakeholders on child marriage.⁵²
- ✓ Ensure funding to the state on child marriage is attached to conditions that require cooperation with civil society and contains clear monitoring frameworks and benchmarks that must be met in order to get further funding.⁵³
- ✓ Reach out to new stakeholders, especially those working in rural areas and young gender activists who are able to promote messaging at the ground level and locally.⁵⁴
- ✓ Ensure that women's rights organizations and implementing partners for programming are key strategic partners and involved in monitoring.⁵⁵
- ✓ Support greater donor coordination to prevent competitive behaviour between organizations.⁵⁶
- ✓ Provide long-term, multi-year, core funding to women's rights organizations who are working on child marriage, so that they can engage in activism as well as project implementation, as necessary.⁵⁷
- ✓ Make grant mechanisms more accessible in terms of technical and language requirements.⁵⁸
- ✓ Use OECD's 'Strategies to Improve Rural Service Delivery' to strengthen delivery of services to rural and remote communities.⁵⁹
- ✓ Develop joint capacity development efforts, coordinating resources for service delivery.⁶⁰

Employ a multi-sectoral approach

- ✓ Integrate prevention and response services across various sectors to create a holistic approach for reducing child marriage and mitigating its effects by meeting the needs of married adolescents.⁶¹
- ✓ Integrate child marriage prevention and response into broader structural efforts.⁶²
- ✓ Seek opportunities to leverage funding and resources across funders and implementers from all sectors.⁶³

Outcome 4: Legal Context



Build understanding of politicians and judges to understand girls' rights and the detrimental impacts of child marriage

- ✓ Develop 'bench books' or judicial guides for judges and judicial officers on child rights and child marriage.
- ✓ Build the capacity of judges and justice professions, including on international norms on child rights and child marriage and how they differ to domestic frameworks; access to fair trials; and gender considerations.
- ✓ Provide capacity development and leadership forums for female parliamentarians to strengthen the weight of their advocacy on child marriage, whilst providing broader training on child marriage prevention for parliamentarians in general to recognize risks and rights related to the practice.



Develop national strategy plans and implementation plans

- ✓ Support participatory processes to developing national strategies and implementation plans with a monitoring framework.
- ✓ Support the development of inter-ministerial taskforces and strengthen their ability to coordinate a national approach to addressing child marriage.
- ✓ Advocate for incorporation of child marriage in strategies addressing violence against women (e.g. in Egypt) and women's empowerment.⁶⁴



Strengthen child marriage laws and enforcement

- ✓ Set the minimum age for marriage as 18 in law without judicial exception, codifying Sharia law to eliminate subjective interpretation.⁶⁵
- ✓ Prohibit and criminalize marriage to a person under the age of 18.

- ✓ Introduce statutory rape laws.
- ✓ Build capacity of judicial officers and marriage registrars to understand and apply the minimum age law where it exists; to understand the detrimental impact of child marriage and benefits in delaying marriage; and to promote counselling for couples seeking marriage where one or more party is under eighteen.⁶⁶
- ✓ Once laws are in place, build girls' and communities' knowledge of girls' and women's legal rights related to marriage.⁶⁷

Outcome 5: Evidence Generation



Strengthen the coordination of research amongst stakeholders

- ✓ Take a participatory approach to establishing a system of coordination and collaboration on research and data collection and analysis.
- ✓ Ensure that government and civil society are engaged in any coordination mechanisms.
- ✓ Develop an evidence-based regional programming framework.



Standardize key indicators and ensure all programming is coupled with high quality interventions⁶⁸

- ✓ Revisit indicators used for household surveys to ensure gender-disaggregated data and data on the social norms driving child marriage.
- ✓ Ensure that Monitoring and Evaluation identifies unintended impacts: For example, when coupled with provision of school uniform, the presence of teacher training rendered the positive impact of uniform provision invisible; likewise, the impact of increasing the age of marriage was that the dowry price increased; some schools demanded payments when they knew that there was a cash-based programme in action.
- ✓ Strengthen monitoring systems, using surveys and real-time monitoring to track incidence of child marriage, and using UNICEF's global monitoring framework, Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES) to monitor child marriage programme activities.
- ✓ For UNICEF implementers, ensure interventions are aligned with the new version of the UNICEF gender action plan (GAP) and new strategic plan 2018-2021 at the global level and the Country Programme Document (CPD) at the local level, paying specific attention to how this can link up with the adolescent girls' empowerment lens stipulated in the new CPD.

Results from the study identified the need for further evidence on the drivers and consequences of child marriage. These should be designed in accordance with the priorities identified by Synanemyr et al (2015)⁶⁹

Causes:

- Research the impact of structural and geopolitical factors, including conflict, migration and urbanization.
- Better understand the normative shifts in perceptions and expectations of marriage.
- Study what works in delaying marriage, including education, structural factors and normative changes.
- Build understanding of how girls exercise their agency in deciding to marry. In identifying their agency as 'thin', 'opportunistic' and 'oppositional', there is room to build and strengthen agency.⁷⁰

Consequences:

- Research health and social consequences of child marriage, beyond maternal and perinatal health, including specific vulnerabilities of younger adolescent girls.
- Gather longitudinal data on the intergenerational impact of child marriage and its relationship to social, development, health, and gender issues.
- Collect data on the economic costs of child marriage including early childbearing, maternal morbidity and mortality, abortion, violence, and decreased educational and employment potential.

Prevention:

- Identify essential components of child marriage interventions to scale up, the required intensity and duration of implementation, mechanisms for delivering these interventions, and the cost of scaling up.
- Measure sustainability of changes in child marriage norms and practices, and the wider benefits of these changes on girls' and women's lives.
- Conduct research into prevention and response initiatives to identify the effective mix of sanctions and incentives.
- Identify lessons that can be learned from other areas of social and cultural norm change.

Key Conclusions and Implications for Programming

- Throughout the region, structural and geopolitical factors influence the drivers of child marriage. In particular, conflict increases the risk of economic insecurity and poverty which together, exacerbate child marriage practices and sexual violence. In addition to increasing prevalence, these structural and geopolitical forces further affect funding to programming focused on child marriage with drastic cuts, whilst presenting challenges to the implementation of such programming, especially in relation to securing government commitment and overcoming logistical issues.
- Where government and donor priorities turn towards humanitarian needs, women's rights organizations

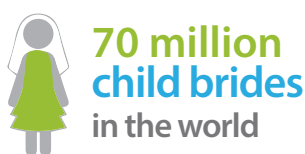
are often the first to be stifled by competing priorities. Yet women's movements have been seen to be at the forefront of democratization in the region and should be at the centre of the efforts to cease conflict and instability. These movements are also key to the efforts to change social norms on child marriage. However, they must have the core resources necessary to be able to allow activism to grow and develop organically.

- Effective programming on child marriage engages the whole community; that is, community leaders, parents, teachers, children and adolescents, and health professionals. Due to the significance of religion in those communities, especially amplified in times of conflict, displacement and extreme poverty, engaging religious leaders is also key. However, it is important to recognize that there remain significant differences in opinion on the message of religious scripture when it comes to child marriage. As such, it is necessary in the first instance, to work separately with religious leaders and scholars to strengthen agreement on scriptural support for delaying marriage, before rolling out programming that relies on such actors as advocates for delaying marriage.
- Data shows that understanding the benefit of education influences child marriage decisions by reducing its prevalence. One of the main approaches to increasing girls' attendance and retention at school is the use of cash incentives which, whilst effective, are acknowledged to be financially unsustainable. Evaluations of programmatic results have indicated, however, that quality teaching is a significant driver for increased retention of girls in school. As such, and in recognition of girls' agency, there is wide scope to focus programmatic interventions on strengthening the capacity of teachers, and increasing the number of female teachers, as a way to incentivize girls' attendance.
- While it is critical that child marriage is seen within the wider frame of violence against women and patriarchal gender norms that prevent women and girls' empowerment, child marriage initiatives are less likely to be effective if they are subsumed into other broader programming. Similarly, at the national level, it is not enough to incorporate child marriage into a broader violence against women policy.
- Across the region, the domestic legal frameworks as they relate to child marriage do not meet international standards, on paper or in practice. Where child marriage laws do exist, evidence shows that they will only be effective in reducing prevalence where resources are invested in enforcement, in particular, through capacity development of law enforcement, public and judicial officials. Since the legal framework and its enforcement are inextricably embedded within socio-cultural norms, work towards strengthening the legal framework must not be pursued in a vacuum.
- This research has shown that positive progress is being made in the region to address child marriage. There are signs that there is an increasing understanding that girls can benefit from spending a longer time in school and delaying marriage. However, the prevalence of child marriage in the region is still rooted in the perception that it is an appropriate method for protecting girls from financial and/or physical insecurity – perceived or real. As such, programming must address both the societal gender norms that constrain the agency and potential of girls, whilst addressing the physical and structural barriers that affirm these norms and practices. Programming must be holistic, incorporating all levels of the socio-ecological model in its approach. Not only will this approach address child marriage, it has the potential to address the women and girls' empowerment deficit in the region more generally.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and mandate

Child marriage, defined below, is a practice that violates individual human rights and negatively influences health, wellbeing, gender equity, and development at the individual, community and societal levels.⁷¹ There are nearly 70 million child brides in the world: that is one in three girls in the developing world.⁷² Global attention and momentum to end child, early and forced marriage is building, as evidenced by its inclusion as target 5.3.1 in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



As part of their mandate to combat child marriage, outlined in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Gender Action Plan 2014-2017, UNICEF joined efforts with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) through the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, a multi-country initiative that aims to protect the rights of millions of the world's most vulnerable girls. The Global Programme focuses on proven strategies and offers a framework to promote the rights of girls to delay marriage, address the conditions that perpetuate the practice, and care for girls who are already married.⁷³ The programme aims to ensure that "girls fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of marriage" and that "they experi-

ence healthier, safer and more empowered life transitions whilst in control of their own destiny, including making choices and decisions about their education, sexuality, relationship formation/marriage, and childrearing."⁷⁴ The Global Programme focuses on five key outcomes:

- Adolescent girls at risk of and affected by child marriage are better able to express and exercise their choices.
- Households demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours regarding gender equality and equity.
- Relevant sectoral systems deliver quality and cost-effective services to meet the needs of adolescent girls.
- National laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights are in line with international standards and properly resourced.
- Government(s) support and promote the generation and use of robust data and evidence to inform programme design, track progress and document lessons.

In light of the Global Programme's goals, UNICEF partnered with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) to conduct a study with the aim to identify and strengthen promising practices in addressing child marriage in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and specifically in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen. The main objectives of this assignment were to assess programmatic responses, explore promising approaches, and identify gaps in efforts to address child marriage across the region, thereby providing country offices with the information they need to accelerate and strengthen their work to end child marriage.

1.2. Defining child marriage

Child marriage includes any legal or customary union involving a boy or girl below the age of 18. This definition is based on Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which defines a child as any human being below the age of 18 years. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that men and women of “full age” have the right to marry (Article 16.1) and that marriage shall be entered into only with the, “...free and full consent of the intending spouses” (Article 16.2). The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) further provides that the marriage of a child will have no legal effect (Article 16.2).

1.3. Objectives of the study

1.3.1. Statement of the problem

Effective programmatic prevention of and response to child marriage cannot be achieved without first understanding the prevalence of child marriage, the nature of child marriage practices, the political and socioeconomic factors influencing child marriage practices, and the existing prevention and response activities in a given country or region. Only then can gaps in existing approaches and promising new approaches to prevent and respond to child marriage be identified.

1.3.2. Research questions and objectives

The following table outlines the two objectives of this research study and the research questions used to address them.

Objective 1

To understand the prevalence of child marriage, the nature of child marriage practices, and the political and socioeconomic factors influencing child marriage practices in the MENA region and the six countries of interest.

Research Questions

- A.** What is the prevalence of child marriage and other related indicators (adolescent’s use of modern contraception, early pregnancy and childbirth, violence, education) in each country and in the MENA region as a whole?
- B.** What political and socioeconomic factors influence the practice of child marriage in each country/region? How?
- C.** What impact does conflict have on the practice of child marriage?

Objective

To generate regional and country-specific recommendations for accelerating scaling up and strengthening and/or scaling-up promising practices in addressing child marriage.

Research Questions

- A.** What, if any, existing activities to address child marriage have been shown to be effective in each country?
- B.** What promising practices to address child marriage in other countries or regions can be adapted for use in the MENA region and/or these six countries, and how?
- C.** According to stakeholders in each country, what are the priority areas and types of support needed to address child marriage?

1.4. Methodology and limitations

This study was carried out in 2016-2017 and followed a five-phase methodology that consisted of:

- 1 Desk review
- 2 Evidence gap mapping
- 3 Primary data collection and data analysis
- 4 Stakeholder consultation
- 5 Revision and finalization of results and recommendations

1.4.1. Desk review

The research team reviewed multiple databases to identify relevant academic publications, journal articles, programme evaluations, survey data, and other influential sources. The following key search terms included: child marriage; early marriage; forced marriage; child brides; harmful traditional practices; age at first marriage.

The search then prioritized the inclusion of documents that provided detail on programming and policy efforts to address child marriage, and noted key documents that provide insight into the prevalence, risk factors, and consequences of the practice. Box 1 summarizes the primary domains of inquiry included in this search.

BOX 1

Domains of inquiry:

- Prevalence
- Religion/ethnicity

- Prevalence
- Religion/ethnicity
- Rural/urban residence
- Household wealth
- Parents' education
- Number of siblings
- Consequences
- Costs
- Use of health & financial services
- Informal education
- Education/school drop-out
- Early child-bearing/pregnancy
- Decision-making ability
- Total fertility
- Birth spacing
- Mobility
- Age difference with spouse
- Intimate partner violence
- Economic factors, (participation in paid employment, control over earnings, savings)
- Service needs and help-seeking
- Barriers to help-seeking
- Health and schooling of children
- Conflict
- Refugee status/IDP

Simple inclusion criteria for the search created a comprehensive list of data sources, including data from peer-reviewed journals, grey literature and other sources. Most documents included in this review consisted of grey literature publications such as reports by UNICEF, UNFPA, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Population Council, the Population Reference Bureau, Pathfinder, Human Rights Watch, Girls Not Brides, Equality Now, the World Bank and ICRW. The academic literature was clustered into a few journals, including studies in Arabic and French.

In synthesising secondary quantitative data for the desk review, initial priority was given to each country's Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) data, where available. Since both surveys collect nationally representative data at regular intervals, with standardized questions used in all surveys, together they provide an ideal platform for cross-national and regional comparisons. The quantitative analysis focused on assessing the prevalence of child marriage, adolescent girls' use of modern contraceptives, early pregnancy and childbearing, and violence. For the purpose of this analysis, data were extracted according to different age brackets, with a primary focus on women in the 20-24 years age group married before age 18, which is the global standard indicator for child marriage. Summary statistics also included women who were married before age 15 to show greater detail on the patterns of child marriage in each country. In the absence of DHS data on the prevalence of child marriage in Lebanon, data from UNICEF's 2016 Child Protection Baseline Survey was used.

To meet the objectives of this study, the main results of the desk review are included in this report to complement the qualitative analysis and strengthen the regional recommendations.

1.4.2. Evidence gap mapping

Once all relevant data sources were identified and collected through the desk review, a five-part evidence gap map was created to visually depict:

- Child marriage data availability and indicators of severity in the six countries of interest.
- Ratification of international conventions in the six countries of interest.

- Presence of national laws and strategies related to child marriage in the six countries of interest.
- Presence of national laws and strategies related to women and girls' equal rights in the six countries of interest.
- Organizations working on and interventions related to child marriage in the six countries of interest.

Indicators of child marriage also included the following (see Gap Map1 in Annex 10).

1.4.3. Primary data collection and analysis

Findings from the desk review and evidence gap mapping were complemented by key informant interviews and roundtable discussions in the six countries of interest. The data presented here were collected via key informant interviews and focus group discussions conducted in November 2016, December 2016, January 2017 and May 2017 with representatives of governmental institutions, UN organizations, and non-governmental organizations and service providers. Interviews with Yemeni key informants were conducted via skype and phone due to the protracted high intensity conflict and ongoing acute humanitarian crisis. In Morocco, data was collected through a combination of four roundtables and three key informant interviews with staff from governmental institutions, multi-lateral agencies and non-governmental organizations. Interviews were conducted by ICRW staff and local consultants. All interviews were coded independently by two researchers, using NVivo 11 to distill key themes which were then organized through thematic content analysis according to the Global Programme's five outcomes. Findings were then cross-checked with the local researchers to ensure that the data were consistent with their overall impressions during the field missions.

1.4.4 Stakeholder consultation & finalization of results and recommendations

To validate findings, ICRW, in close coordination with the UNICEF MENA Regional Office (MENARO) team, facilitated a regional workshop with key stakeholders, including participants in the key informant interviews, end users of the project results and other relevant policymakers and programme owners across the MENA region. ICRW presented the study's key findings and received feedback and critiques from the attending stakeholders, including from all UNICEF country offices and the regional office. Input from the workshop as well as follow-up feedback and comments from UNICEF country offices and regional office were used to improve the buy-in for the final report, and validate and generate new recommendations for strengthening scale up of efforts to address child marriage.

This final report brings together the findings from all five phases of the study and triangulates information collected in each phase, thereby providing a more well-rounded view of child marriage in the MENA region that is based not only on published evidence, but also on the knowledge and insight of key informants and stakeholders in the region, including those of UNICEF country offices and the regional office.

1.4.5. Limitations

Since child marriage has, until recently, been largely neglected as a research topic in the MENA region, the desk review and gap mapping exercises were limited by the low levels of documentation on existing or evaluated best practices, particularly for countries in which political unrest remains, such as in Sudan and Yemen. This is one reason why primary data collection through key-informant interviews and focus groups was necessary, to fill in gaps in published documentation, where possible. The desk review and gap mapping exercises were also limited by the low levels of comparable

quantitative data, which presented challenges for comparing key indicators related to child marriage between countries. In addition to this limitation, data on child marriage prevalence mostly pre-date current conflicts in the region, making them largely unreliable. Every effort was made to obtain comparable indicators where possible. The study is also intentionally limited by its types of key informants, which included service providers, government officials, multilateral agencies, and donors, but not community members or girls at risk of and affected by child marriage themselves. Primary data collection was mainly aimed at addressing the study's second objective, to generate regional and country-specific recommendations for strengthening and/or scaling-up promising practices in addressing child marriage.

Therefore, the study focused on service providers, government officials, multilateral agencies and donors—all of whom were critical to identify 'best practices' to end child marriage.

1.4.6. Structure of the report

The report is separated into three substantive sections. 'MENA Region: Gender Inequality' provides a contextual background to gender in the region in order to set out the sociodemographic context, the challenges facing gender equality, and the societal norms at play. 'MENA Region: Analysis and Synthesis' provides an overview and analysis of child marriage in the region, including prevalence. Within this section, and framed around the five outcome areas of the global programme, the main findings and promising approaches from the six countries of study are provided. The 'Recommendations' section presents programmatic recommendations at the regional level based on a synthesis of the feedback and findings from the country level research, shaped by programmatic findings on child marriage and connected gender programming in the region and globally, in order to provide a comprehensive, relevant and practical set of recommendations for regional programming on child marriage going forward. This section also sets out the recommendations by country. The 'Summary Conclusions' section sums up the key findings from the report.

2. CONTEXTUALIZING CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE MENA REGION

Child marriage is the outcome of multiple interlinked social norms which constrain adolescent girls' ability to make choices and access resources and affects them in every domain of life: institutions, laws, and policies; practices and participations; access to assets; and beliefs and perceptions. Girls at risk of and affected by child marriage in the MENA region face limited access to: resources, behaviour and participation, time use, mobility, rights, and exercise of power. These discriminatory norms based on gender are mediated by the broader sociocultural (including ideational/religious), political and economic context—all of which act as facilitators of child marriage.

2.1. Political context

2.1.1. Religion, governance and gender

The MENA region includes a wide variety of governance structures and legal systems, many of which are explicitly informed by Islam. Regardless of the governmental hybridity, "The legal system in every country in the MENA region contains provisions which could be considered discriminatory against women from a human rights perspective, in particular in relation to the personal status codes."⁷⁵ Islam's instantiation in personal status codes reflects attitudes of gender complementarity rather than equity, which institutionalize different gender roles and rights for men and women in the public and private spheres. Feminists in the region have noted that although these codes and laws are informed by Muslim faith and clerical representation in legis-

lative systems, Islam should not be cast as the culprit for the continued inequality of women and girls in governance structures. Rather, patriarchal readings and interpretations of Islamic texts continue to enshrine the unequal positions of men and women.⁷⁶ A more meaningful analysis of the linkages between governance and religion should examine the extent of clerical power within national legislative systems and the extent to which conservative interpretations of Islam align with the general populace's beliefs and readings of religious texts. These patriarchal biases tend to place women in subordinate roles to men, restrict their mobility and ability to participate in political or civil society, and limit their agency in dictating the terms of marriage, divorce, citizenship or inheritance.

Patriarchal readings have direct implications on family affairs, particularly as they relate to marriage. Marriage remains a deeply valued practice that not only maintains or secures community relations and a family's social standing, but is also emblematic of a commitment to the continuity of cultural traditions,⁷⁸ the reification of gender norms surrounding domesticity, purity, sexuality, fertility, and the protection of honour.^{79, 80} The restricted position of women in political and religious leadership has implications for child marriage prevention. According to a study on the economic impacts of child marriage, "research suggests that women's greater involvement in political decision-making increases the likelihood of greater investment in social services," including education, which then may influence child marriage.⁸¹

Women are, indeed, vastly under-represented in parliaments across the region. Many countries still have no female members of parliament although several countries – Sudan, Tunisia and Algeria – have over 30 per cent of seats held by women.⁸² Many countries have now introduced a quota for women in parliament.⁸³ Gender quotas have been instituted throughout the region to increase women's political participation, although

the inclusion and representation of women in official governance structures remains uneven.⁸⁴ Significant gaps in female voter participation remain, influenced in part by education, knowledge of the country's political process, and age demographic.⁸⁵

BOX 2

Promising practices – Women's participation at the local level

There is a history of feminist organizations and women's rights groups in the region, putting it at the forefront of gender equality reform and government accountability. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, women have played an active role in the resistance since the time of the British Mandate; the democratic movements in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia can also be linked to the organization and efforts of women's movements. The centrality of women to increasing democracy gained international attention during the Arab Spring of 2011, with Yemeni women effectively leading the 2011 revolution and Egyptian women being central to the activism in Egypt. Islamic feminists in the region work to advance women's rights within an Islamic religious framework. Secular feminists, on the other hand, tend to separate their activism from Muslim faith, although their platforms are informed by nationalist, Islamic, and human rights schema. Sustained wom-

en's activism in situations of uprising and conflict do, however, appear to be curtailed. In Egypt, pervasive sexual violence during protests forced women out of these revolutionary spaces; and there is a "sense" that the crackdown on civil society is specific to women's groups. In Yemen, women's activism was replaced by a brutal armed conflict and women's rights organizations report more checks and barriers to movement of female staff.

2.1.2. International commitments, legal frameworks and policies affecting child marriage

Several international conventions and norms have committed to eradicating the practice, detailing states' responsibilities for protecting children from marriage, defining minimum age of marriage, and requiring free and full consent in any marital decisions. The United Nations Human Rights Council has unanimously adopted a resolution, co-sponsored by over 85 States, to strengthen efforts to prevent and eliminate child (as well as early and forced) marriage, constituting the first-ever substantive resolution on child marriage adopted by the council.⁸⁶ Similarly, the 2016 resolution at UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to end child, early, and forced marriage worldwide whilst the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990, Art. 21) prohibits child marriage and betrothal, and recommends a minimum age of marriage of 18 years for both girls and boys across Africa. Moreover, the African Union has recently urged its Member States to develop comprehensive action for marriage at 18.⁸⁷ More recently, the global community agreed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 5.3, which proposes to eliminate harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, a key initiative to advance gender equality. In some countries, progress has

been made towards the prevention of child marriage through, for example, the implementation of a uniform minimum legal age of marriage at 18. However, much remains to be done in terms of ensuring the efficacy of legal protections against child marriage. In many MENA countries, states provide exceptions to the minimum age of marriage, upon parental consent or endorsement from the court. Customary or religious laws (Sharia law) setting lower minimum ages of marriage, in many cases, take precedence over national law.⁸⁸ According to UNFPA (2012), 158 countries reported in 2010 that 18 years was the minimum legal age for marriage for women without parental consent or approval by a pertinent authority. In 146 of those countries, state or customary law allows girls under 18 to marry with the consent of parents or authorities. In 52 countries, girls under 15 can marry with parental consent.⁸⁹ Granting a judge judicial exception to allow an underage marriage is seen, for example, in Jordan and Morocco where despite having set the legal age for marriage as 18, both countries provide judges with the discretion to marry girls that are younger. In both Sudan and Yemen, puberty is broadly used to determine the age at which marriage of girls is appropriate and acceptable. In Lebanon, religious law sets the age of marriage, which varies depending on the religion and denomination.

As noted, there is often a contradiction between national law and customary and religious law under which many marriages are conducted. Many national constitutions provide exceptions for personal or family law, facilitating many other avenues for child marriages to be practised.⁹⁰

Although some progress has been made, these legal reforms and commitments to prevent marriage and children's rights have not been carried out adequately in many MENA countries. Commitments made by several states in the region should be followed more intently by drafting national action plans and adopting a minimum age of marriage for girls at 18 as important first steps to eradicating child marriage. The enforcement of such laws and plans are critical, however, in ensuring sustainable change, which requires collaboration and commitment across ministries, and from the national to local levels within countries.

2.1.2. Conflict and displacement

Conflict and instability present both structural and physical challenges to adolescent girls' empowerment, with a direct impact on child marriage. Of the top ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage, nine are considered fragile states, indicating the reality that conflict affects child-marriage decisions.⁹¹ In the MENA region, where child marriage is practiced in peacetime, its prevalence increases during violent conflict. In Yemen a survey undertaken in 2013 showed the prevalence of respondents married before the ages of 15 and 18 years had increased since the start of the conflict.⁹² This is also true of girls affected by the conflict in Syria, as evidenced by the growing number of Syrian refugee girls being married in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey.⁹³ Of the top ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage, nine are considered fragile states, illustrating the reality that conflict impacts child-marriage decisions.⁹⁴ As CARE International's 2015 report put it, the increased prevalence of child marriage in conflict situations is largely the result of the "fatal confusion between protecting girls and sexual violence."⁹⁵ In an environment where girls and young women are more susceptible to rape, families choose marriage as a method to protect girls from the dishonour of being raped and having children out of wedlock.⁹⁶ This increased need to secure girls' honour (as a method of securing family honour) is seen in Syrian

refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan, where girls from urban Syrian communities – areas where child marriage was not commonly practiced before the conflict – are increasingly being married before age 18.⁹⁷

The physical threat of conflict also limits both the ability and the motivation to allow girls to attend school, with girls commonly being the first to be pulled out of school in times of conflict.⁹⁸ Beyond attending school, girls' overall freedom of movement is significantly reduced during conflict, increasing their confinement within the home. Women and children also tend to suffer more from the indirect impacts of conflict, in particular the breakdown of infrastructure and health systems.⁹⁹ Limited education and increased confinement leads to increasing the sense that the girls in the family will become a financial burden.¹⁰⁰ This, in turn, leads to further social stigma against older unmarried girls.¹⁰¹ As such, child marriage in times of conflict takes the form of transactional arrangements to secure the financial sponsorship of the daughter.¹⁰²

In time of conflict, many refugees struggle to find work, affordable housing, or access education for their children; conditions in refugee camps may predispose families to perceive marriages for their daughters as a form of protection, financial gain (for the bride's family) and financial security (for the bride), as well as an opportunity to resettle—none of which they would otherwise be able to access.¹⁰³ The influence of conflict also increases the desire to reinforce old family alliances and traditional forms of bonding families, especially in refugee camps.¹⁰⁴ As conflict and instability disrupt families and communities, religion may also be used as a coping mechanism, which in turn justifies gendered power relations that disadvantage women and girls.¹⁰⁵ In-

deed, conservative religious norms have gained momentum in recent years, reinforcing stricter ideologies related to gender roles and norms.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, conflict challenges the male role as breadwinner and protector, making it harder to attain and leading to increased frustration and the urge to reassert male control.¹⁰⁷

In legal and policy terms, development and implementation of legal and policy frameworks that promote gender equality rank low in the list of governmental priorities in times of conflict, especially in comparison to issues such as maintaining or increasing power or control over resources.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, decision makers may actively discourage or prevent development of gender-sensitive initiatives – including those that address child marriage – seeing them as at best, a distraction from the priorities of the state; or at worst, in opposition to a perceived benefit of maintaining inequalities, i.e. the ability to maintain oppression and control.¹⁰⁹ Conflict environments also demand a lot of resources to be directed towards technical support including logistics, health and electricity, making programming on gender issues (deemed as social issues) less urgent; they are also seen as too difficult, too complicated and too private.¹¹⁰ This is reflected in the shift in donor priorities in conflict, with a move from development towards humanitarian programming. This is the case in Yemen, where donor focus on humanitarian aid has obscured the long-term gender agenda, directly affecting child marriage prevention efforts.¹¹¹

It is worth noting that conflict also has the potential to disrupt gender roles in ways that may enhance women's empowerment. In some instances, women become the key breadwinner in the family (albeit often temporarily), increasing their voice and responsibility.¹¹² Additionally, despite the hardships of being a refugee, including the impact of increased insecurity and lawlessness, studies have shown that displacement disrupts typical family and community patterns and presents the opportunity for female refugees to assume different gender roles.¹¹³ This observation makes it an important entry point for programming aimed at reducing child marriage.

2.2. Socioeconomic context and its impact on child marriage



2.2.1. Economic insecurity and poverty

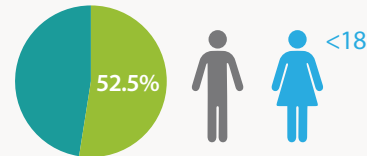
Across the MENA region, political instability and conflict increased the risk of economic insecurity and poverty. This is evidenced in the case of Jordan and Lebanon, both of which have been deeply affected by the Syrian conflict and as a result, have become central hubs for Syrian and Palestinian refugees fleeing violence. In the case of Jordan, the total refugee and displaced population, including Iraqis and Palestinians, is 1.5 million, representing a quarter of the country's overall population.¹¹⁴ The influx of refugees has strained the country's infrastructure and led to an increase in social and political tensions.¹¹⁵ It has also had a negative effect on the Jordanian economy, resulting in disrupted trade routes, decreased tourism and lower investments.¹¹⁶ Jordan faces high unemployment rates and increased competition for jobs.¹¹⁷ These difficulties have led the Jordanian public to focus on the negative impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis, hampering the government's ability to effectively respond to the influx of refugees.¹¹⁸ Similarly, in Lebanon, over 1 million Syrian refugees were registered with the UNHCR, 52.5 per cent of whom are women and girls, over half of those displaced under the age of 18.¹¹⁹

December 2016:

**over 1 million
Syrian refugees
in Lebanon**



52.5 % are women and girls, over half of those displaced are under the age of 18.



Source: UNHCR in Lebanon

The country also plays host to several other refugee communities, including Palestinian refugees from Syria, and Palestinian refugees from Lebanon. The Syrian refugee influx in Lebanon has aggravated economic and security challenges, affecting major drivers of economy, such as trade, banking and tourism, further decreasing job opportunities as well as impeding efforts to achieving the key Millennium Development Goals.¹²⁰ Whilst GDP grew from 1.3 per cent in 2015 to 1.8 per cent in 2016 due to improving real estate and tourism sectors, Lebanese citizens still struggle with unemployment – approximately 300,000 citizens are unemployed, most of whom are unskilled youth.¹²¹

Syrian refugee influx in Lebanon



Political challenges



Economic challenges



Security challenges



Decreasing job opportunities

**300,000 Lebanese
citizens are unemployed**

In both Sudan and Yemen, much of the socioeconomic context is defined by conflict. In the case of Sudan, decades of sustained conflict have limited opportunities for economic and social development and increased poverty across the country.¹²² According to the Sudanese National Baseline Household Survey 2010, 46.5 per cent of the population are impoverished, with 57.6 per cent of the rural population living below the poverty line.¹²³

In Yemen, ongoing conflict has severely crippled the economy, driving the country into extreme poverty and making it the world's worst humanitarian crisis.¹²⁴ The destabilization of commercial and governmental structures that facilitated the trade of basic commodities has further increased the risk of famine, which together with a staggering number of civilian deaths, diseases, internal displacement and the obliteration of infrastructure, has exacerbated service delivery across all main sectors.^{125,126}

In Morocco, the arrival of the moderate Islamist Party for Justice and Development to the Government in 2011 brought stringent social and economic reforms making way for a more open and democratic society.¹²⁷ Whilst this has contributed to eradicating extreme poverty and significantly reducing poverty overall, disparities still remain, with nearly 19 per cent of the rural population still living in poverty or categorized as vulnerable. Inequality also remains a major problem for Moroccans, and continues to increase.¹²⁸

In Egypt, following the step down of the formal regime in 2011, the tourism sector which constitutes the country's main income sources of the economy has seen a downturn, combined with a reduction in revenues from the Suez Canal, oil, and remittances from Egyptian expatriates, due to global economic turndowns.¹²⁹

Poverty and economic insecurity play a critical role in the perpetuation of child marriage in the region. Parents of daughters may see child marriage as a way of securing economic security and easing the family's financial burden.^{130,131} For poor households, marrying off a daughter means that they not only have one fewer mouth to feed—critical in times of conflict—but that they receive a dowry, either in cash or in kind in exchange for

the bride.¹³² Orphan girls may also be particularly at risk of child marriage in poverty-stricken contexts.¹³³ Conditions of poverty have also opened the door to illegal trafficking of girls through, for example, tourist marriages.¹³⁴ This practice is observed in Egypt and Yemen where poor families marry off their young daughters to rich husbands in the Gulf in exchange for money (see *Box 1*).¹³⁵ Due to the limited educational and employment opportunities available to women and girls,^{136,137,138,139} as well as the economic uncertainty in the region, marriage remains one of the few options available to families seeking to “secure a future” for their daughters.



2.2.2. Education

Global evidence shows that child marriage is both a cause and consequence of school dropout. The incompatibility of marriage with school often leads to school drop-out. Children with less-well educated mothers are less likely to receive proper nutrition, less likely to be immunized against childhood diseases, and are at higher risk of childhood mortality.¹⁴⁰ Women with low levels of education often face limited formal earning opportunities and have lower lifetime earnings.¹⁴¹ As a result, their households' income streams may be less diversified, causing them to be more susceptible to economic shocks such as droughts or conflict.¹⁴² Not only do child brides often have limited ability to contribute financially to the family, they also have little decision-making power and control over household resources.¹⁴³ Yet research demonstrates that when women have greater control over decision-making and allocation of resources, they tend to invest money in their families and communities, with important intergenerational as well as macroeconomic benefits.¹⁴⁴

The MENA region's low rates of women in the labour force have been characterized as 'paradoxical' because improvements in female school enrolment and literacy over the past three decades

have yet to translate into higher rates of labour force participation.¹⁴⁵ Although primary education is almost universal and the gap between boys' and girls' enrolment in secondary education has shrunk considerably, school dropout rates remain high,¹⁴⁶ particularly amongst girls in rural, impoverished, displaced or nomadic communities. Given that schooling involves direct costs (school uniform, supplies, school fees), families see it as an opportunity cost (as girls in school are not readily available for child labour, household production, or care work). Dropout rates are further influenced by the belief that investing in a girl's education may not necessarily ensure employment. The perceived quality of the materials as well as conditions within the classroom may also affect school attendance. Several countries in the region currently host large numbers of refugees and internally displaced populations, leading to increasingly crowded school spaces.¹⁴⁷ Conflict in the region has also led to concerns about the safety of children, particularly girls, traveling to and from school, which has a negative impact on attendance and dropout rates.¹⁴⁸

Data suggests that education plays a critical role in the prevalence of child marriage—both the education of the parents and the educational attainment of the daughter.^{149,150} Indeed, education is a key determinant of reproductive health and age of marriage for women and young girls. Evidence shows that educated women tend to access and use sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services more readily than those with lower or no education. Women with an education also tend to have smaller families.¹⁵¹ Very few schools in the MENA region, however, provide information on sexual and reproductive health directly to students.¹⁵²

The reticence to discuss sexuality and provide youth with information about reproductive health rights and services originates from traditionally conservative attitudes towards premarital sex.¹⁵³ A family's honour is intimately connected to women's purity, placing a high value on virginity and chastity prior to marriage.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, young women's premarital sexual activity in some MENA countries is locally perceived to bring dishonour to her family and community, leaving parents under tremendous pressure to marry off their young daughters as early as possible to protect their chastity.^{155,156} Taboos surrounding sexuality inhibit open discussions or information-sharing about SRH, meaning that youth in the MENA region struggle to obtain information or services related to SRH.¹⁵⁷

2.2.3. Health

In many MENA countries, women and girls have limited social status with restricted rights, privileges, and opportunities which greatly impedes their social and economic development and as such their health and well-being. At the individual level, child marriage is detrimental to a girls' healthy transition from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Evidence from UNICEF shows that child marriage contributes to the early onset of sexual activity, early pregnancy and early childbearing. It often compromises a girl's development by resulting in early onset of sexual activity, in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupting her schooling, limiting her opportunities for career and vocational advancement and placing her at increased risk of domestic violence.¹⁵⁸ Amongst its poor health outcomes, child marriage may also increase girls' risk of HIV and other sexually-transmitted infections, maternal morbidity and mortality, malnutrition, isolation, and depression.¹⁵⁹ Child marriage also affects boys, but to a lesser degree than girls.¹⁶⁰

Data on SRH and maternal and child health in the MENA region remain limited, in part due to governments' failure to frame the issue as a national health priority in accordance with CEDAW and Sustainable Development Goal 3.7: "By 2030,

ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.”¹⁶¹ Family planning services have expanded throughout the region but predominantly serve already married women. Contraceptive use amongst unmarried women and girls therefore remains irregular.¹⁶² Even amongst married women, although the use of contraceptives like the pill or an IUD is permitted by Islam, women may fear unintended side effects or forego using a method of birth control because of their husband’s or partner’s objections. Regional data on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), particularly HIV/AIDS, is scarce but suggest that infection rates are rising and that youth are more vulnerable to infection than older populations.¹⁶³

Whilst child marriage may be motivated by the belief that young girls are left with more “healthy” years to bear children and take care of their extended family, most significantly, improvements still need to be made in maternal mortality and maternal morbidity rates in the region.¹⁶⁴ Access to antenatal care and skilled birth attendants has increased but still varies throughout the region depending on women’s geographic setting, level of education, and ethnic identity.¹⁶⁵ According to data from UNICEF’s global database, rates of adequate antenatal care (four visits) amongst pregnant girls aged 15 to 17 years ranged from a low of 34 per cent in Morocco to 91 per cent in Jordan.¹⁶⁶ Fertility, especially adolescent fertility, remains high and health complications related to pregnancy and delivery are dependent upon differential knowledge of SRH resources, women’s decision-making power in the home, the infrastructure of health services, and economic capacity to pay for the trans-

portation and medical fees associated with antenatal, emergency obstetric, and postnatal care.

2.2.4. Adolescent girls and employment

Whilst the region has benefited from investments in human development and rapid globalization and modernization since the 1990s, women’s labour force participation in the MENA economy is often characterized as ‘paradoxical’.^{167,168,169} Despite advances in gender parity in education, the MENA region has the lowest rate of female labour force participation in the world, as well as the highest rate of young female unemployment globally.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that, “women’s share of the total labour force was 18.4 per cent in 1990 and 21.3 per cent in 2014 which means that only one fifth of the MENA’s labour force are females, compared to 39.7 per cent of the world’s average.”¹⁷¹ Similar trends are also observed in employment of youth. As of 2014, youth unemployment was highest in the Middle East and North Africa, at 28.2 per cent and 30.5 percent, respectively,¹⁷² and unemployment rates of young women exceeded those of young men by 22 and 20 percentage points, respectively. This is particularly significant in a region which has the second youngest population after sub-Saharan Africa; “one in five people living in the MENA region, or nearly 90 million in 2010, are between the ages of 15 and 24,” with youth under the age of 25 accounting for half of the population.¹⁷³ Additionally, according to stock-taking exercises conducted by UNICEF for the Regional Resilience and Refugee Plan (3RP) and Humanitarian Response Programme (HRP), only 4.5 per cent of male youth and 2.4 per cent of female youth reported that they have ever volunteered.¹⁷⁴

1 in 5 people in the MENA region are between the ages of 15 and 24



Women's limited participation in the formal work force is attributed to a number of factors, including prevailing sociocultural norms. In some MENA countries, women and girls' place belongs to the domestic sphere and care work, whilst men assume the role of primary or sole breadwinner for the family. Such a perception perpetuates the idea that women do not work and have no earning potential. For girls in particular, the centrality of their role in household labour (e.g. caring for siblings and household duties) further reinforces the perceived cost-benefit disadvantages associated with girls' education, placing them at a greater risk of unemployment.



2.2.5. Gender-based violence (GBV)

Child marriage is, in and of itself, a form of Gender-based violence (GBV). According to Girls Not Brides, "girls who marry before the age of 18 are more likely to experience physical, sexual, and emotional abuse than those who marry later."¹⁷⁵ Additionally, married girls may experience violence from their relatives and in-laws and may be at risk of forced marital sex.¹⁷⁶ The violence experienced by married girls may also be transmitted inter-generationally, as children who witness violence in their childhood are twice as likely to perpetuate violence as adults.¹⁷⁷ Although most countries in the MENA region are signatories of CEDAW, GBV, including IPV, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and honour killing, remains a prescient, though often invisible threat. The obligations established by CEDAW have yet to be fully translated into comprehensive legislation or changes in social norms related to GBV.¹⁷⁸ Data on GBV prevalence in the region remains limited, yet studies

indicate that violence against women is widespread. For many countries in the region, IPV is considered to be an acceptable and legitimate tool for husbands to 'discipline' their wives; wives are also expected to be sexually available whenever their husbands want, leaving little room for sexual negotiation in domestic partnerships.¹⁷⁹ According to data from UNICEF's global database, 43 per cent of women ages 15 to 49 in the MENA region consider wife-beating acceptable in at least one scenario.¹⁸⁰ A review conducted by USAID found that 20 per cent of ever-married Egyptian women aged 15-49 reported having experienced some form of IPV in the last year; 32 per cent of ever-married women aged 15-49 in Jordan reported experiencing emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence at the hands of their husbands; 35 per cent of Lebanese women accessing services at four primary health centres reported experiencing one or more types of IPV in their lifetime; and 55 per cent of Moroccan women experienced some form of IPV.¹⁸¹ FGM/C is still widespread in Egypt, with estimates that 92 per cent of Egyptian women have undergone the procedure.¹⁸² Whilst legal impunity for perpetrators is considered common in the region, limited financial and human resources are available to GBV survivors.¹⁸³



43% of women ages 15 to 49 in the MENA region consider wife-beating acceptable in at least one scenario

Source: UNICEF's global database



20% of ever-married Egyptian women aged 15-49 reported having experienced some form of IPV

Source: USAID



32% of ever-married women aged 15-49 in Jordan reported experiencing emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence

Source: USAID

3. MENA REGION: ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

This section presents a synthesis of primary and secondary data on the policy, legal, and programmatic response to child marriage in the six countries of interest: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, and Yemen.

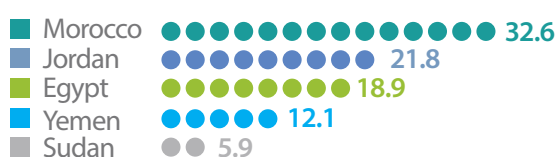
3.1. Child marriage prevalence

From 1985 to 2010, the prevalence of child marriage decreased more quickly in the MENA region than in any other region of the world, from 34 per cent to 18 per cent.¹⁸⁴ As of 2014, just 3 per cent of women ages 20-24 in the region were married before the age of 15 and about one in five (18 per cent) were married before the age of 18.¹⁸⁵ The prevalence of child marriage in the MENA region is now lower than in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁸⁶ However, the MENA region's comparably low overall child marriage prevalence masks the wide variation in prevalence between different countries in the region, which ranges from 3 per cent married before 18 in Algeria to 32 per cent in Yemen.¹⁸⁷ It also fails to capture the impact of political and social instability due to conflict in the region, which may be causing rates of child marriage amongst refugee populations to rise.

In the six countries of interest, prevalence statistics are based on available DHS, MICS, or equivalent after 2010. For the countries with available data, the

percent of women 20-24 married before age 15 ranged from a low of 0.3 per cent in Jordan¹⁸⁸ to a high of 11.9 per cent in Sudan.¹⁸⁹ The percentage of women 20-24 who married before age 18 was lowest amongst Lebanese women in Lebanon at 6.0 per cent and highest amongst Syrian women in Lebanon at 40.5 per cent.¹⁹⁰ Median age at first marriage of women 25-49 ranged from 18.2 years in Yemen¹⁹¹ to 26.3 in Morocco.¹⁹²

Figure 3. Use of contraception and childbearing amongst girls and women 15-19



Percentage of married girls and women 15 - 19 currently using any modern method of contraception



Percentage of all girls and women 15 - 19 who have begun childbearing

Source: DHS, MICS - 2010

With respect to adolescent use of contraception, early pregnancy, and childbirth, for the countries with available data, the percentage of married adolescents ages 15-19 who were currently using any method of contraception ranged from just 5.6 per cent in Sudan¹⁹³ to 32.6 per cent in Morocco.¹⁹⁴ Adolescent fertility ranged from a low of 26 girls per 1000 in Jordan¹⁹⁵ to 87 in Sudan.¹⁹⁶ Overall, the percentage of girls and women 15 to 19 who had begun childbearing ranged from 4.5 per cent in Jordan¹⁹⁷ to 10.9 per cent in Egypt.¹⁹⁸

Only two countries—Egypt and Jordan—had nationally-representative data on violence. Overall, 16.5 per cent of married women and girls ages 15 to 19 in Egypt¹⁹⁹ had experienced physical or sexual spousal violence in the past 12 months, compared to 18.2 per cent in Jordan.²⁰⁰

Overall, Sudan appears to be faring the worst, relative to others, with the highest percentage of girls married before age 15, the second-highest percentage of girls married before age 18, the lowest adolescent contraceptive use, and the highest adolescent fertility rate. Yemen and Egypt also are of some concern, Yemen with the lowest median age of first marriage and Egypt with the highest percentage of adolescent childbearing.²⁰¹ Countries that seem to be faring better, relative to others, are Morocco, with the highest median age of first marriage and highest adolescent contraceptive use, and Jordan, with the lowest percentage of marriages under age 15, lowest adolescent fertility rate, and lowest percentage of adolescent childbearing. Unfortunately, data for Lebanon was not sufficient for comparison across most indicators.

See Map 1 in Annex 10 for a full review of child marriage prevalence in the region.

3.2. Girls' voice and agency

Findings from the six countries point to a combination of factors related to patriarchal traditions and unequal gender norms that limit girls' ability to express their voice and exercise their choices. This discriminatory condition affects girls in many aspects of their lives, including domestic chores, healthcare,

psychological and emotional health, education, and their ability to build social capital through a network of friends and activities outside of the confines of their home. It also limits their ability to make marriage decisions both in terms of when to get married and who to marry.

In Egypt, findings focused on honour and the need to protect girls, through restricting their movement outside the home; this protection of honour was passed from the family to the husband, with the girl herself having limited rights when it comes to expressing ideas and opinions or influencing decisions. Findings from Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco also pointed to restricted mobility as a barrier to girls' ability to express their voice and exercise their agency. However, girls being perceived as an economic burden was a major factor affecting their ability to make choices over their lives. Overall, girls are not seen in terms of their economic potential, making education an opportunity cost for families who see their role as caring for younger siblings and supporting the mother or female guardian in doing household chores. Child marriage is therefore considered the only viable option. In Sudan and Yemen, economic factors were the main drivers of child marriage, albeit that conflict also played a critical role in restricting the movement of girls in more physical terms.



3.2.1. Familial protection of honour and restrictions on mobility

Almost all key informants in Egypt indicated that girls cannot move freely within and outside the household due to a culturally prescribed norm of men's control over women's and girls' mobility. For example, one key informant cited how "a girl moves from the protection of her parents to that of her husband." In addition, deeply engrained notions of honour and shame permeated all interviews and were cited as a key factor that drives families into marrying their daughters early. For example, when discussing the drivers of child marriage in Egypt, a key informant stated that:

““

“...girls are married young as way to protect the girl and preserve the family honour, in addition to reserving the family wealth in some cases. It is most common in remote rural areas especially in Upper Egypt. It is totally acceptable by the community and even the girls themselves do not mind it because they want to reach up to the community expectations.”

””

The notion of protection is framed in terms of physical security, albeit that threats to physical security are also threats to the honour of the girl and, in turn, her family. Public spaces being seen as dangerous for girls with the risk of street harassment and physical and sexual violence in public spaces being high. A need to address safety in public spaces was recognized, as an alternative to constraining girls' movements. Many key informants noted that restricting the freedom of movement of girls at risk of and affected by child marriage is also a common factor in Jordan and Lebanon, and is further reinforced in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis. Interviews with child marriage experts in Jordan indicated that mobility restrictions have important implications for girls' access to education and health services. As one Lebanese NGO put it, in order to access services, a girl's first obstacle is leaving her house. Once a girl reaches puberty, her mobility becomes increasingly restricted in many poor refugee and Lebanese communities. Once a young girl is married, the obstacles to leaving the house become even higher – as one Lebanese NGO key informant said:

““

“They're seen differently, they're seen as having these responsibilities now that they're married even though they're young, they have different restrictions placed on them in terms of their movement because of the perception of honour and protection and community gossip.”

””

Indeed, again according to the Egyptian key informants interviewed, further limiting a girl's voice and agency is the notion that she belongs to the home and, once married, to the home of her husband and in-laws. After marriage, she is expected to move in with her husband and in-laws and to take on the household chores and care responsibilities. Respondents felt that this discriminatory practice drives married girls out of school because school demands are often incompatible with the burden of domestic chores and childcare. They also stated that limited alternative educational opportunities severely constrains a girl's life choices and affects her ability to make household decisions.

This restricted mobility is symptomatic of girls' limited agency and voice within the home – one Lebanese key informant noted that as young brides, “there are so many people deciding for them, where they can go, what they can do and what they can access.”

A girl's agency can be limited in these scenarios by both her family, her spouse, and her spouse's family. Several Lebanese NGO key informants cited the difficulty in accessing at-risk and already married girls:

““

“It's very rare for them to go to community centres for service provision, most of the times they can't go alone, they need to be accompanied by their mother, they don't have the freedom of mobility (they don't have the financial means) and the freedom of decision making.”

””

Even Lebanese NGOs who reach out to girls in their own homes face similar issues – “if we go to them and the girl is at risk of child marriage, she won’t speak up in the presence of her parents.” Some Lebanese NGOs noted that the most effective way to provide services to the girl was to engage the whole family:



“The whole family comes, and we divide them into groups to attend the needed sessions. This way the girl feels more comfortable coming with her family, and they don’t have to pay to come.”



Lebanese NGO key informants identified the need for more safe spaces for women and girls in Lebanon. The UNFPA defines safe spaces as “a formal or informal place where women and girls feel physically and emotionally safe.”²⁰² Safe spaces can be instrumental in building a girl’s agency and voice, giving them the opportunity to meet other girls in similar situations, and creating a peer support network.²⁰³ Safe spaces also offer services for mothers, an important provision as there is evidence that empowered mothers can help delay the age of marriage of their daughters.



3.2.2. Perceived economic value

Whilst many girls are restricted from exercising their voice and agency through physical limitations to their freedom outside of the home, findings show that the perception of women as having no independent economic opportunities also has a significant impact on decisions related to education and child

marriage. Whilst access to school and particularly secondary education is an important deterrent to child marriage around the world as demonstrated in several studies,²⁰⁴ respondents from across all study sites reported girls not being able to continue their education; instead they were being forced to marry due to prevailing gender inequalities, further reinforced by the perceived notion that they are an economic burden. As noted by a key informant from Jordan’s National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA):



“Financial instability of families and their thinking of girls as an economic burden may justify early marriages especially when families are not able to support their daughter’s education. Another reason for early marriage is gender inequality – 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.”



One Lebanese key informant reported that even when families are able to access and afford education for multiple children,



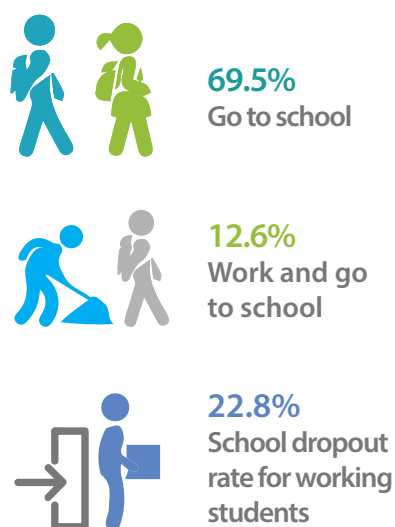
“...families will still feel that this is not their best option, they don’t see the validity of education; they don’t think the education in Lebanon will give them an added value.”



When school is not seen as an avenue to future social and economic stability, refugee families may instead turn to child labour and child marriage. A recent study from the Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut (USJ) found a strong association between work and going to school amongst Syrian refugee children:

69.5 per cent who do not work go to school, whilst only 12.6 per cent who work also go to school.²⁰⁵ Additionally, the report found that the school dropout rate is much higher for working students at 22.8 per cent, reflecting the temptation to drop out of school in order to increase time available for work.²⁰⁶

Syrian refugee children in Lebanon:



Source: Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut (USJ)

Although the USJ study did not break child labour out by gender, several key informants indicated that for Syrian refugee families, child labour is the preferred alternative to school for boys, whilst child marriage is the preferred alternative for girls. As one NGO informant noted:



"When teenage boys are exposed to school dropout, they will become workers, but for girls in the same age, school dropout will lead them to early marriage."



Several key informants noted that the mother's education level has a significant impact on girls' school drop-out and the decision to marry off a child. In fact, two reports recently found that amongst Syrian refugees in Lebanon, a mother's education was significantly associated with her children attending school,²⁰⁷ corroborating a previous USJ study findings that a mother's level of education was associated with child marriage decisions.²⁰⁸ This suggests that limited education opportunities for at-risk girls not only increases her own risk of child marriage, but also increases the risk that her children will also marry young.

In Morocco, marriage impacts the economic activity rates of women in both rural and urban areas. Indeed, estimates from the World Bank indicate that being married invariably reduces the probability of participation for women, regardless of their residence.²⁰⁹ These figures confirm that if marriage determines a woman's participation in economic life, then being married before the age 18 decreases a girl's access to economic participation. Most participants supported this observation, noting that once a girl is married, she is likely to drop out of school to devote her life exclusively to motherhood and care work.

High unemployment rates in Sudan limit the value parents place on giving their daughters quality education. One key informant noted that:



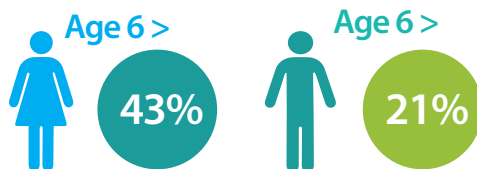
"The value for girls' education in terms of contribution to the household and family income is very low, especially with the high levels of unemployment."



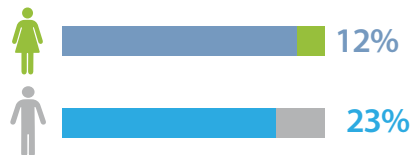
Thus, girls are often perceived as better able to support her family when a husband pays a bride price for her marriage. In addition to being confirmed by the DHS 2013 data, key informants in Yemen reported, that a substantial gender gap in educational attainment exists with 43 per cent of females aged 6 and above have

never attended school, compared to only 21 per cent of males, and only 12 per cent of females reached secondary school or higher, compared with 23 per cent of males.²¹⁰

Have never attended school



Reached secondary school or higher



As a UNICEF official in Lebanon noted:

"In Yemen, there is a low level of education and high illiteracy rates, which makes it difficult because it has important implications for accessing health services and also for engaging with families about the importance of education... Education programmes are hard to implement because many people don't understand how they are effective."

In addition to being confirmed by the DHS 2013 data, key informants in Yemen reported, that a substantial gender gap in educational attainment exists. 43 per cent of females aged 6 and above have never attended school, compared to only 21 per cent of males. Furthermore, only 12 per cent of females reached secondary school or higher, compared with 23 per cent of males.

As a UNICEF official in Lebanon noted:

"School dropout is often because of economic issues. Families are aware of education but because of economic pressures and social norms, they usually prefer sending boys."

To address this issue in Yemen, the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW) reported that:

"We are implementing a return to school campaign in three governorates. We target boys and girls and we use community awareness campaigns to encourage parents to enrol their children in school. Lack of awareness [of education] is a major issue."

Quote from Université Saint-Joseph (Lebanon)

"It turns out education was the only variable that we can control when it comes to child marriage, especially the mother's education; the more educated the mother is, the less her children are at-risk of early marriage"



3.2.3. Other barriers to education

In addition to girls being prevented from accessing education due to prevailing norms about their roles within the home and their economic opportunities, physical barriers to education are also common. For example, key informants from Egypt stated that distance to school further affects a girl's voice and agency by preventing her from attending school. Several respondents noted that schools are often far away from girls' homes, exposing them to various risks such as physical and sexual violence.

This observation was confirmed by one key informant from a UN agency who explained that access to schools was playing a major role in school dropout and, hence, child marriage. In this context, respondents reported that parents prefer relying on religious education, which is offered in close proximity to girls' homes.

Quote from UN official [Egypt]

"Some villages do not have schools, and the girls have to walk a very long distance to reach the nearest school, which is not safe sometimes, leading many girls to drop out."

In Morocco, similar findings indicate the presence of structural discrimination in girls' access to education that continue to place rural girls at a disadvantage.²¹¹ According to a World Bank report, "the net enrolment rate is 79 per cent for boys in urban areas but only 26 per cent for girls in rural areas" in lower secondary education.²¹² In addition to prevailing social and cultural norms, limited adequate infrastructure and physically accessible schooling facilities constrains girls' opportunities and capabilities in expressing their voices and agency, making them more vulnerable to early marriage. As the participants from the Moroccan roundtable stated several times, distance to school puts girls at a disadvantage which is further exacerbated by social norms because it is often not acceptable for young girls to walk to school alone. As the Moroccan Minister of Islamic Affairs noted:

"There is injustice to the girl; she is not protected. She does not have the same access to resources as boys."

In Yemen, key informants also identified geographic distance, mobility restrictions, and limited transportation as obstacles for girls to attend school. A key informant from the Youth Leadership Development Foundation (YLDF) found in a recent programme assessment that "schools are too far away and girls are not allowed to walk alone all the way to school." This restriction is further exacerbated in times of insecurity, creating a significant barrier to girls' obtaining an education, as noted by CSSW:

"In some communities, girls are not allowed to walk to school alone because of traditional [mobility] restrictions and with the security situation deterioration now... it's more challenging."

To address these issues, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) implemented a project that "in communities where women and girls are not allowed to walk outside of their home, we go door-to-door to do our awareness program."

In Jordan, although progress has been made to facilitate access to education for both Jordanian and Syrian refugee children by, for example, waiving tuition for Syrian refugee students,²¹³ or ensuring equal access of both genders to education, much remains to be done in terms of removing gendered barriers to education for girls in Jordan. A combination of stigma with respect to being married (related to the assumption that the girl has engaged in a sexual relationship with her husband), gender norms affecting household responsibilities of married girls, financial constraints, and early pregnancy still prevent most pregnant, parenting or married girls from returning to school. As noted by a UN official during an interview,

"principals normally don't want girls who are married to come back to school, as they are afraid it will 'taint' the other girls with talk of sex."

In Sudan, key informants also noted that the quality of education is relatively poor, especially in public schools. The curricula are not gender sensitive, and as one key informant noted, “educational curriculums have stereotyping that feeds the concepts of early marriage and identify marriage as the ultimate goal for girls.” The school infrastructure is relatively poor, with old buildings that often do not have latrines. When latrines are available, they are often not hygienic. Key informants highlighted that the compilation of these challenges can lead girls to drop out of schools, leaving child marriage as the best option for many families.

Quote from NGO Expert [Jordan]

“Pregnant girls and young mothers can go to school if the family will care for them, but chances of girls returning to school after childbirth is slim.”

BOX 3

Promising practices – Increasing girls’ voice and agency through education:

Making spaces safer for girls

The Ishraq programme in Egypt, provides out-of-school girls aged 15 to 17 years with literacy classes, life skills programming, employability and entrepreneurial skills programming, and sport activities, whilst also intervening with their parents and communities to change norms about girls’ roles in society.

■ UN Women’s ‘Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls’ Global Programme, now the ‘Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces’ initiative, included Cairo, Egypt as one of its founding cities. Thus far, the initiative has resulted in Egypt’s Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development adopting women’s safety audits as part of its gender approach to urban planning and has trained 100 youth agents of change to lead “transformative activities in schools and other settings in the programme intervention sites to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality, and safety in public spaces” in Cairo.

■ UNICEF’s ‘No Lost Generation’ programme relates to the creation of safe spaces.

■ In Lebanon, a safe spaces initiative works through national Listening and Counselling Centres, offering activities for children whilst mothers participate in their own activities.

Providing financial incentives for sending girls to school.

■ Egypt’s Ministry of Social Solidarity’s Takaful cash transfer programme (supported by World Bank’s Strengthening Social Safety Nets Project), provides monthly income to 1.5 million poor households in Egypt, conditional on 80 per cent school attendance as well as medical check-ups for mothers and young children.

■ The Girls’ Education Initiative led by the Egyptian Ministry of Education and World Food Programme (WFP), encourages girls’ education and helps girls who have dropped out of school to return and complete their primary education. Students’ families receive monthly, nutritious take-home rations of food for each girl student who maintains an 80 per cent class attendance.

■ WFP in Egypt offers vocational training to the mothers of students attending the community school providing micro-loans to start small businesses and encourage financial independence.

■ In Jordan progress to facilitate access to education for both Jordanian and Syrian refugee children included waiving tuition for Syrian refugee students.

■ A 2016 systematic review of interventions to prevent child marriage in low and middle-income countries found that cash-transfer programmes and programmes to decrease school-associated costs “had a significant impact on decreasing the rate of child marriage or increasing age at marriage in the intervention group.”

■ UNICEF is currently running an unconditional cash transfer pilot initiative to help children attend public primary school in Mount Lebanon and in Akkar, areas with large amounts of Syrian refugees. Similar programmes are planned, although not specifically targeted to at-risk or already married girls.

For example, a Back-to-School (BTS) initiative will be implemented which, amongst other things, will help to subsidize enrolment fees, books and stationary, and transportation to school.

In Morocco the Tayssir programme, a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme instigated by the Government of Morocco, greatly increased school participation.

Increasing opportunities for girls' participation.

■ UNICEF's Voices of Youth initiative in Egypt provides an online platform for young people to share information and perspectives.

■ UN Women's 'Women and Girls Oasis' at the Za'atari Refugee Camp for Syrian refugee girls in Jordan established a 'safe space' for women and girls, promoting women's capacity to support themselves and engage them in a peer support network. The centres provide training in tailoring, handicrafts, hairdressing, and computer classes, amongst other skills.

■ Following the Literacy through Poetry Project (LTPP) model, a World Bank and Social Fund for Development project was piloted in several rural communities in Yemen in 2002 and 2003. The project offered women who had limited access to education the opportunity to gain literacy skills based on their cultural heritage, utilizing local poetry, stories and proverbs as teaching materials. The pilots reported success with 74 per cent of participants acquiring fundamental literacy skills, and another 12 per cent exhibiting the ability to sound out new words.

3.3. Household and community attitudes and behaviours

As is well established, child marriage is a practice that is rooted in deep-seated norms related to gender. In all countries of study, the connection between child marriage and cultural beliefs was evident. Religious beliefs were also identified as significant in reinforcing the norm of child marriage, the practices of which were also exacerbated by the instability of economic vulnerability and conflict. In Egypt, specifically, the practice of child marriage was identified as being inextricably linked to the community atti-

tudes and beliefs that drive female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Because of the significance of widely held beliefs on child marriage, the need to include the entire community in child marriage interventions was identified as paramount.



3.3.1. Cultural and religious beliefs reinforce discriminatory gender norms and practices

A key obstacle to ending child marriage as identified by all informants is the culture, social norms, and tradition which perpetuate community support for the practice – a point confirmed by one key informant from the Egyptian NPC:



“We have two main types of child marriage in Egypt; the first one is very traditional and related to culture and is common amongst certain tribes and is very acceptable by the community. The second is economic where the girl’s families decide to marry them to a rich man in exchange of a sum of money that will support the rest of the family for a while. The husband is very rich and usually from the Gulf region or a rich business man from Egypt. This kind of marriage is usually temporary and tends to end with divorce without any benefits or maintains for the girls afterwards. The practice is most common in pockets in slums and poor areas of the big cities like Cairo and Alexandria.”



In Morocco participants spoke of the mentalités (attitudes) of the families as being the major driver of child marriage, requesting that more research be done on better understanding change in attitudes, along with ethos (behaviour). The majority of institutions interviewed for this study identified the importance

and difficulty of changing social norms at the household and community levels. Indeed, as per the example from the Lebanese context, one key informant said that it’s important to recognize that:



“[Child marriage] has multiple faces; it’s probably not the same situation when we talk about Lebanese and Syrians, when we talk about one community compared to another, in terms of sexual and religious background.”



Whilst child marriage is reported to be increasing amongst Syrian refugees due to conflict and instability,²¹⁴ several Jordanian NGO key informants noted that child marriage for Syrians is not a new phenomenon – women have generally been encouraged to marry younger in Syria. As one NGO key informant noted, younger wives are often considered to be ideal, as they do not have previous intimate relationships, and they are better able to serve their husbands at old age. Similarly, a key informant from International Medical Corps (IMC) indicated that:



“A main driving factor for early marriage is the cultural belief amongst Syrian refugees in Jordan that girls should be married young. Shifting a cultural belief and cultural understanding is extremely difficult even with a huge amount of resources.”



In Sudan, key informants identified two key perceptions that reinforce child marriage:

- Child marriage as offering physical and economic protection to girls, especially in areas that have experienced high levels of conflict.

- Girls should give birth whilst they are young because the birth will be easier and younger women make better mothers.

The majority of key informants identified the difficulty of changing social norms at the household and community levels. A key informant from an

international NGO based in Sudan highlighted that their main challenge is:



"...the mind-set of the people; whether they are ordinary people in the villages or high political decision makers or even people who works in the field including our own staff."



Similarly, a Sudanese government official worried that because child marriage is so integrated into communities with high poverty levels, "even if the law was passed the biggest problem will be how to enforce this law to be implemented and respected."



Quote from NGO Expert [Jordan]

"Young is better. She will serve you at old age. She will not have had previous relationships."



According to Jordanian respondents, amongst Syrian refugee families in Jordan, marrying off a daughter early also functions as a means to protect family honour. As a key informant from the Arab Women Organisation observed:



"The biggest difficulty is to persuade mothers and fathers to forget the idea of marrying their daughter. This is the problematic challenge that we face during the implementation of early marriage prevention services, particularly amongst displaced populations, in which early marriage is a solution for the father to protect the honour of his daughter."



Quote from UN official [Egypt]



"It's because of social norms and how they are related to honour."



Likewise, a key informant from the Mizan Law Group for Human Rights in Jordan described the obstacles they face when implementing a programme on child marriage prevention, saying that:



"The obstacles we face during the implementation of early marriage prevention services or any activities/programmes related to early marriage... [are] asylum conditions that drive the family to marry their girls who are under 18 years of age to get rid of their financial burden and protect the family honour."



Other key informants from Morocco added that prevailing social norms related to honour and stigma add pressure on families to marry their daughters at an early age. Social pressure to marry a daughter at an 'acceptable' age (usually right after puberty) to avoid social sanctions from the community (i.e. gossip, shame, stigma) force families into marrying their daughters early. There are also cases of families who resort to child marriage in cases of a daughter's suspected sexual relationship (or in some cases a pregnancy) outside of marriage, an act that in Morocco is still perceived as a crime.

Although not a religious phenomenon, child marriage is endorsed by religious narratives which guide the practice. As such, religion serves to reinforce many of the cultural beliefs that drive child marriage. In Morocco, a key informant from the Initiative pour la Protection des Droits de la Femme succinctly noted, "the real problem is the mentalités, particularly of the parents. They think it's going against Islam."

In Morocco, Family Law is embedded in sacred texts of the Qu'ran, making it difficult to separate religion from family affairs. The reforms brought by the Moudawana have considerably challenged the traditional view of a woman and a child's rights in a country where the social order is founded on the superiority of the man in terms of rights and power.²¹⁵ This has led to resistance from traditional communities and families (rural and urban) who, despite the legal age at marriage being established at 18 for girls, continue to marry off their daughters before 18. Many participants said that the challenge lies in the misinterpretations of religious principles which enables child marriage in Morocco. Some participants further noted that the Arab Spring has had an impact on reinforcing conservative beliefs in terms of traditions in gender roles. Furthermore, participants from the Civil Society roundtable stated that most families with whom they work typically have limited knowledge of the negative consequences of child marriage.

Indeed, traditional attitudes towards child marriage include the view that child marriage is acceptable in Islam, and that child marriage is necessary to avoid social sanctions including gossip, shame and stigma. As such, it is necessary to take a whole of community approach when addressing these norms and attitudes. In Sudan, one government official noted that:

“

“The problem is whenever we start criticizing child marriage, people think we are criticizing Islam because there is a deep-rooted belief that Islam is sponsoring child marriage.”

”

A Sudanese NGO expert also said that:

“

“Many religious leaders believe that child marriage is part of Islamic principles, and they resist any idea prohibiting child marriage... this is why the National Strategy (NS) is still in draft and the endorsement is delayed.”

”

Key informants from Sudan believe that the main reason for this perception is that the Prophet Mohammed was reported to have married a nine-year-old girl. However, one Sudanese key informant reported that a religious scholar recently completed a study that:

“

“Did a calculation, went back to history, and proved that he [Prophet Mohammed] married her [his wife] when she was 17 or 18 years old not 9 years as some of stories report.”

”

The National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan is advocating for this study to be adopted and for a fatwa to be written recognizing this new information. Additionally, there is a specific strategy within the NS to engage with religious leaders on these child marriage issues. Almost all key informants cited the importance of working with religious leaders to change the social norms around child marriage in Sudan.

Quote from UNICEF official [Egypt]

“

“We need to have religious leaders who can deliver the message with the current language so young people can understand it and adopt it in addition to convincing other religious leaders that child marriage is harmful.”

”

Almost all informants from Egypt underscored the importance of working closely with religious leaders, whose authority in the community is key in shaping decision making within households, particularly when related to marriage practices. Indeed, the need to engage the wider community (including religious leaders) pervaded all interviews across all of the study countries. Findings from Jordan and Lebanon reported that child marriage programming is more likely to be successful if it engages a variety of community actors. Because girls have limited voice and agency, only engaging with girls on child marriage issues will have limited efficacy – as such it is imperative to engage their families and community leaders if norms around child marriage are to change.

The importance of working with local religious leaders was identified in the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Where engagement with Sharia Courts in the Za'atari refugee camp changed the process of registering marriages, addressing issues of statelessness and undocumented children. In Lebanon key informants cited the “significant impact” that religious leaders can have on the social norms within communities. Through dialogue and awareness workshops, organizations are encouraging religious leaders to challenge and address social norms surrounding child marriage.

3.3.2. Conflict and instability exacerbate child marriage

According to those interviewed in Jordan, the most significant driver of child marriage is the instability and uncertainty emerging from the Syrian refugee crisis which creates a sense of physical and economic instability. It has opened avenues for child marriage to occur in

several forms. Whilst child marriage is not uncommon in Syrian culture, the ongoing instability has caused rates of child marriage to increase, transforming an acceptable social practice into a perceived imperative to keep young girls safe.

Lebanese government officials, UN officials, and NGO experts all noted that the trend of early marriage has grown exponentially as a result of the influx of Syrian refugees. Many Lebanese NGO key informants believed that the financial instability experienced by Syrian refugees is a key driver behind the increasing rates of child marriage. When refugee families are uncertain of their financial and physical security, child marriage is increasingly perceived as a way to secure a daughter's safety and financial future, as observed in the following quote: “[Child marriage] is not seen as a negative thing by the [refugee] community – they see it as a way of securing the future of their daughter” (Lebanese NGO key informant). Another key informant suggested that:



“The only way to make effective and sustainable change is to provide these families with what they need in order for them to stop using marriages of young girls as a way to secure their economical positions in the informal settlements.”



Key Lebanese informants also noted that child marriage amongst Syrian refugees is extremely difficult to address because child marriage is a symptom of much more pervasive underlying issues unique to the refugee situation. One UN official noted that:



“[Child marriage] is not an isolated issue, it's a mechanism to cope with a larger issue; without robust programming to address the underlining causes, it becomes very difficult to address early marriage directly.”



Findings from Yemen suggest that child marriage is a coping mechanism for families, serving multiple functions. One key informant from the IRC noted that:



"Before the start of 2015, early marriage was not high, but after the conflict started, people were forced to move out from their areas - with families in bad economic situations, child marriage rose dramatically."



According to all key informants from Yemen, the war and its subsequent displacement of populations have resulted in extreme socioeconomic insecurity amongst many Yemenis. Key informants stated that these conditions, combined with social norms around traditional gender roles, make child marriage seem like a sensible option, as illustrated by a quote from a UNICEF key informant:



"Family size, depending on which governorate, combined with economic hardship is a driver of child marriage. When you marry off a girl, it is less of an economic burden to the family. Especially with massive displacement, families deal with distress and life survival. So, child marriage becomes a coping mechanism for them."



Quote from NGO Expert [Yemen]



"In our latest assessment, we asked communities if they had observed an increase and overall, they said that whilst prior to the conflict, child marriage had decreased, war and displacement had increased the practice."



3.3.3. Economic hardship reinforces the importance of bride price

As discussed, marrying a daughter at a young age offers many social and economic benefits to the family: it increases the dowry, alleviates a burden in the home, decreases the risk of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, avoids stigma and ensures family honour. In addition, respondents from Morocco indicated that many families perceive child marriage as a source of security for the girl who remains under parental/guardian care until marriage and, once married, under her husband's responsibility.

In Morocco, it was recognized that the ways in which these multiple factors interact to reinforce the practice of child marriage are more pronounced in communities that continue to suffer from marginalization, particularly in terms of accessing education, services and information.

In the Sudanese context, a deteriorating economy, increasing poverty, and skyrocketing inflation rates make surviving challenging, especially for poor families. Two key informants noted that child marriage had previously been abandoned in certain areas, but had returned due to increased poverty and conflict. As in other countries, marrying a young daughter off provides both an alleviation of household expenses previously spent on the daughter, and can be a source of income if the husband pays the family a bride price. There is also the belief that a husband with a stronger financial status will be able to provide regular financial support for the bride's family, feeding into the perception that a girl is more secure if she marries at a young age.

In Yemen, as in the other MENA countries included in this study, economic hardship, together with increasing cost of life and unemployment, leads families to resort to child marriage as a form of economic gain through bride price (mahr) received for their daughter. The practice is seen as offering physical and financial security to a daughter.

ter, whilst allowing her family to reduce their expenses by having fewer children to support. One official from UNFPA stated that, "Since the crisis [in Yemen], families have become very poor, and they see girls as an economic burden, so they give them in marriage." This is also confirmed in INTERSOS' latest assessment on child marriage which states that,



*"Poverty, economic hardship, unemployment and increasing cost of life were all raised as reasons for families to resort to child marriage as a coping mechanism to permit them to alleviate poverty or the burdens of a large family with many daughters. Girls from poor families are more likely to marry before 18."*²¹⁶



Moreover, key informants reported that in some cases, acute poverty forces poor Yemeni families to resort to what is known as "tourist marriages," defined by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as "a temporary, formal union between a Yemeni female and a man from an Arabian Gulf country." According to several key informants, conflict has created avenues for tourist marriages and trafficking to occur with wealthy men from the Gulf Arab region. Families are led to believe that these marriages will provide financial stability to the girl and an opportunity for her to escape the dire conditions of Yemen and acquire citizenship in a more stable country.²¹⁷ This is a particularly attractive option when faced with bride price inflation,

rendering Yemeni men unable to afford marriage.²¹⁸ As one key informant reported:



"In the study we did with IOM, this was particularly the case where families saw it as a good opportunity to preserve their family honour, especially for displaced people. Plus, they think it will provide new citizenship for their girls."



3.3.4. Limited knowledge on the negative consequences of child marriage

Several key informants from Lebanon discussed the effect that a community's social norms and traditions have on girls' own perceptions of child marriage. Their biggest concern lied in at-risk girls' limited awareness regarding child marriage's potential negative health, safety and socioeconomic impacts on their wellbeing. One government official noted that:



"marriage itself is related in the girl's mind to her honour; it will be her destiny no matter what and where." An NGO expert remarked on the "symbolic violence that's been fed into the mind of girls, making it a given that she should find the right man who will make her life better."



Marriage is thus viewed by many young girls as being both inescapable and beneficial, which, especially for Syrian girls who are refugees, can lead to the hope and expectation of early marriage.

Across all interviews in Yemen, a general low level of awareness on child protection also came out as one of the main factors driving child marriage.

One UNICEF key informant pointed to a different understanding of childhood in Yemen:



“A boy and a girl can be considered adults, and so it makes it difficult for them to understand that they are marrying children. We actually managed to include it in the national dialogue and we succeeded. But unfortunately, it is now on hold due to conflict.”



Another key informant from the Yemen Women's Union also referred to the

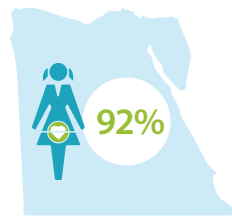


“lack of awareness amongst parents who expose their girls to early marriage. They don't know the negative consequences on them and this is where we need to intervene.”



3.3.5. The connection with female genital mutilation/cutting

Unique to the Egypt context was the inextricable link between female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage which, although illegal since 2008, remains widespread in the country. Based on data from the DHS, MICS, and SHHS from 1997-2012, UNICEF estimates that 91 per cent of girls and women aged 15 to 49 in Egypt have undergone FGM/C.²¹⁹ Findings from this study support this evidence, with almost all informants noting that it is one of the most important human rights issues girls still face in Egypt, particularly in rural areas.



Girls and women aged 15 to 49 in Egypt have undergone FGM/C

Source: Egypt DHS 2014

Respondents also suggested that child marriage tends to follow immediately after FGM/C has been performed. They felt that a combination of religious misconceptions and cultural expectations drive families to perform FGM/C on their daughters prior to marriage. Whilst some key informants referred to FGM/C as being associated with maintaining family honour, others pointed to its role in controlling a girl's sexual activity. However, respondents noted that the main driver of FGM/C was the cultural expectation to conform to the practice for fear of social sanctions, such as not being accepted by the community. This echoes a UNICEF report on FGM/C, which stated that “Amongst girls and women, as well as boys and men, the most commonly reported benefit of FGM/C is gaining social acceptance.”²²⁰ Unfortunately, as noted by a key informant from UNICEF, changing social norms and their relation to family honour is a challenge. Even if a service provider can dissuade a girls' parents, her grandparents and future in-laws often remain unconvinced:



“If you want to get married, the mother in law has to make sure that the girl is circumcised and even if we convinced the parents that FGM/C is bad we face the grandparents, and then we go through the in-laws and their expectation for the girl.”



Although not a religious phenomenon, FGM/C is endorsed by religious narratives which guide the practice. Almost all informants underscored the importance of working closely with religious leaders in the community, who strongly affect decision making within community households.

BOX 4

Promising approaches – Changing social norms related to child marriage and FGM/C

Leverage social networks to change collective beliefs and practices related to child marriage and FGM/C.

■ In Egypt, the CHOICES Programme works with boys and girls between 10-14 on addressing and challenging gender roles.

■ The Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) programme from India trains teachers to identify their own gender biases before leading both male and female students ages 14 to 16 in 24 sessions related to gender, violence, bodily changes, emotions, and conflict resolution over two years. A 2016 evaluation of the GEMS programme demonstrated that both girls and boys who participated in the programme showed improvements in the gender-equitability of their attitudes and that the improvements were larger for those who had participated in more sessions.

■ The Promoting Protective Social Norms for Children project, funded by the Government of Belgium in Morocco conducted both a national campaign and local community outreach programmes (including child participation and parenting education), to attempt to change the norms around violence against children in Morocco.

■ The 'Safe Age of Marriage' programme piloted in 2009 covering communities in the Al-Sawd and Al-Soodeh districts of Yemen, showing promise in changing perceptions related to child marriage. The intervention was aimed to foster change in social norms and communities' attitudes to child marriage, promote girls' education, and advance the rights of the girl child. The programme trained community educators to conduct education outreach through monthly awareness-raising sessions and health fairs with mobile clinics. It also highlighted the achievements of individual families whose daughters delayed their marriages and completed secondary education. According to a case study published about the programme, within one year, community awareness of the benefits of delaying marriage increased 18 per cent and agreement that there is a relationship between child marriage, early pregnancy and childbearing increased 16 per cent.

Engage receptive religious leaders.

■ UNICEF has worked in Egypt with Al Azhar University and the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR) engaging both Muslim and Christian religious leaders in efforts to address violence against children.

■ A social reform Initiative, Al-mawda wa Al-rahma was launched end of 2012 from inside the Islamic Fiqh Congregation. The Initiative is led by the Sudanese Ministry of guidance and endowment (MoGE) with a wider partnership between government institutions, civil society organizations, academia, media and UNFPA. Al-mawda wa Al-rahma has been implemented since 2013 through a 3-pillar multi-discourse communication campaign: religious discourse; policy dialogue/legal reform; social discourse and dialogue at national, state and community level with the overarching goal to reduce physical violence and violation of human rights through revival of positive values of Al-mawda wa Al-rahma and the social value systems. The first phase of the Initiative focused on GBV issues, especially FGM/C and child marriage.

Implement holistic community programming

■ Lebanese community committees run by KAFA, are devoted to detecting and intervening in cases of child marriage.

■ UNICEF's No Lost Generation programming in Lebanon educates communities about the negative impacts of child marriage.

■ La Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas has been particularly active in successfully engaging religious leaders and communities on GBV, including child marriage in Morocco. Their peer-educator model is being replicated in several African countries. In addition, La Rabita has a production of audio-visual aids (short films) aimed at sensitising children. La Rabita trains young men to use new methods of public speaking and persuasion to teach children and youth about human rights. Peer educators also play a major role in enhancing children's critical thinking and implementing human rights culture. The use of the New Technologies of Information and Communication has proven to be a powerful eye opening and leadership building approach.

■ The Spring of Dignity coalition in Morocco is an advocacy movement that started in December 2013 with the goal of ending child marriage.

3.4. Service delivery



3.4.1. Restricted mobility and access to services

Cultural norms around a girl and woman's mobility emerged as a significant challenge deterring girls at risk of child marriage and child brides from accessing social services. Informants from Lebanon identified the challenges accessing at-risk and already married girls in Lebanon as centred around two factors:

- Girls restricted mobility.
- Familial scepticism of the organization and its services.

For example, service providers noted that



"is very rare for girls to go to community centres for service provision, most of the times they can't go alone" and, "when women approach us to get psycho or legal support, men do not like it, and they start questioning us, and our work," and "we can face challenges from religious parties that do not understand why do we intervene and why do we think we have a say in what's happening."



Thus, in order to provide services to at-risk girls, several Lebanese NGOs noted that they devised programming that engages the whole family or whole community:



"The challenge is having the time to reach these girls; it's not about identifying them, we know what is required to identify and find these girls, but if you have to engage the parents on several occasions, once a week for 3 weeks, before you can even get the girl to attend the sessions, the cost per beneficiary increases, and that's what we don't have."



As illustrated in this quote, despite their apparent effectiveness in allowing service providers to access at-risk girls, these ‘whole family’ approaches are very expensive, which limits the number of families an organization can work with. This was a commonly cited obstacle to these programmes’ successes.

In addition to devising ‘whole family’ approaches to programming, service providers also frequently cited the importance of building a relationship and trust with the community as a whole and the specific families it serves. A key Lebanese informant at an international NGO summarized this best:



“I think some of the challenges are getting the trust of the girls and their families so that they’ll be able to participate, which takes time, and it helps if the organization is known and respected in the community... It’s also about not thinking that you’re going to meet with these families once and assume that they will feel comfortable when you drive by your bus up and pick up their daughters, they’ll just let their daughters get on your bus, it just wouldn’t happen like that, maybe you will have to take the girls and their parent to the centre where you’ll provide the activities, help them understand, invite them in the first few activities.”



Another way to build trust within the community is to have community members involved in the implementation of activities – several key informants noted how their organizations in Lebanon are working with local community members: one NGO hired women from around the

region to implement activities; another NGO conducting a study hired a woman field researcher from the community; another simply focused on delivering services with cultural and contextual sensitivity. Several NGO key informants commented that once trust is built within a part of the community, they rely on their good reputation to access at-risk girls. For example, one Lebanese NGO remarked that “we have good credibility within the community, which helps us a lot not to face resistance, people have heard about us by ‘word of mouth,’” whilst another said that “we have a protection shield in the community; even if someone wants to attack our work, we have enough testimonials on our work in other areas, so they accept us.”

In Yemen, health was identified as an effective gateway for child marriage interventions and services. As one international NGO respondent in Yemen explained, “sometimes, it is very difficult to introduce the topic of early marriage in communities in Yemen. So, we do it through our reproductive health and family planning programme, where we do group discussions with communities and engage with midwives.” Addressing child marriage through health programming is a proven way to increase the age of marriage for at-risk girls, and to decrease the number of pregnancies for child brides.

Integrating child marriage efforts into health programmes can be especially useful in contexts like Yemen, where conflict and instability may prohibit the implementation of more expansive child marriage specific interventions. Whilst the integration of child marriage programming into broader health programming has practical benefits, it is important to note that such an approach is likely to have a lower impact than programming that is targeted at reducing child marriage. Indeed, whilst issues surrounding child marriage prevention and response can be directly addressed through typical health sector programmes, they should, according to Girls Not Brides, “...target the unique needs of adolescents—married and unmarried—to ensure they have the information and resources to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights.”

The cross over between health services and child marriage interventions was also identified as necessary in Jordan, where key informants highlighted that child brides may suffer from multiple health problems. These include birth complications, early pregnancy and childbearing, sexual and reproductive health complications, sexually transmitted diseases, and psychosocial trauma, such as suicide. An NGO expert explained that:



“Child marriage victims often face other problems such as taking drugs, rejecting her child in the case of giving birth or inability to care for her child (sometimes the child is placed in the orphanage or children shelter) and others have severe mental disorders and attempt to suicide.”



Stigma was also noted as an obstacle for girls and women in seeking help. A representative from the Yemen Women’s Union stated that:



“Culture and tradition with the fear of being exposed to the community if you seek help seriously affect women and girls to access any kind of services.”



Additionally, key informants saw limited knowledge of the type of services available as a major impediment to effective service delivery. One key informant from Yemen explained that, “often you deal with populations who don’t know what services there are, so it’s simply lack of awareness.”

Physical barriers to accessing services were also identified as a significant challenge, with one key informant from the Yemen Women’s Union highlighting the need to account for transportation costs, saying that, “The issue is also that women and girls can’t afford transportation to access services.”

However, some key informants working in service delivery in Jordan reported that these issues were less present in the Syrian refugee communities. For example, a key informant from the Institute for Family Health (IFH) stated that they:



“...don’t face any challenges in reaching those children who are married or at risk of marriage, because usually girls from the Syrian refugee community come to IFH centres to receive services and to participate in the different activities and they don’t have any fear coming forward with the fact they are married and pregnant or even already have a child.”



3.4.2. Human resources/ capacity of service providers

Significant to the effectiveness of child marriage programming, is the capacity of those delivering it. In this regard, Jordanian NGO key informants emphasized the need for capacity-building and training staff with adequate skills. They insisted that it is important to “develop training programmes to empower persons working with children and children’s rights but it does not have adequate financial, human, and material resources for them.”

In addition, several Jordanian NGO key informants expressed the need to engage more Syrian staff working with child marriage affected communities.

For example, one NGO expert explained that,



"The main challenge is the cultural acceptance of child marriage amongst the target group. Most of the staff working with the Syrian community are Jordanian staff. More involvement from the Syrian community themselves is needed."



The IMC has made a conscious effort to employ Syrian volunteers on child protection programme in Jordan, and has seen a positive impact in some individual cases.

Sudanese service providers also frequently noted their limited technical capacity to provide effective services. Key informants at the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan (National Taskforce) believed that training was needed for all actors working on child marriage, especially since coordinated efforts to end child marriage are still just starting.

A UN official noted that:



"Civil society [in Sudan] can act more effectively...they have the potential but they do not have the capacity, they need exposure and information sharing."



This comment points to the need for better coordination between all stakeholders working on child marriage. Strong linkages and partnerships need to be built between civil society and different government entities to ensure that progress on ending child marriage in Sudan presses forward. As an NGO expert said, "coordination is key" – if the work is coordinated with other efforts, programmes can complement rather than duplicate each other's work.

This need to build capacity and coordination goes beyond services providers, and extends to other stakeholders, such as law enforcement officials and parliamentarians. Key informants in Sudan noted that the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage has attempted to implement trainings and awareness sessions on child marriage with members of the police and military, but due to regular transfers to other areas, there is frequent turnover. To mitigate this problem, the Taskforce is calling for regular training for Family and Child Protection Units (FCPU).

Additionally, several Sudanese key informants called for capacity building of women parliamentarians. A respondent from an International NGO said that an article criminalizing FGM/C that was developed as part of the Rights of the Child Act in 2010 was dropped because the women parliamentarians did not have the skills to defend it. Other key informants cited that these women do not have adequate skills to tackle women's problems at the policy level, and need training on how to raise and defend women's issues in the parliament. Overall, findings from Yemen indicated that NGOs working on gender-related issues suffer from a severe deficiency in staff capacity and material resources, which dramatically weaken service delivery.

Additionally, informants cited that they had difficulty finding staff with relevant skills for efficient service delivery. YLDF explained that:



"It's difficult to find the right person with the right qualifications to address the issue at hand. For example, it is very hard to find women who have the right skills. And this with the difficulty of finding facilities to work in, finding the right information... it makes it very challenging for us to deliver our services."



It is important to note, however, that the majority of key informants from NGOs in Lebanon were proud of the work their organization was doing, and believed they were effectively addressing child marriage.

Despite the many challenges they noted in providing services to girls at-risk of child marriage, or who are already married, many organizations said that they were satisfied with the effects of their outreach and participation levels. A quote from an international NGO sums up the general sentiment well:

"I think what we're doing [in Lebanon] is really solid work and I think what we provide right now is a good step forward in terms of what we're able to provide for married adolescents, to make sure they're having this information, life-skills... but then I'm not sure if we should be 100 per cent satisfied with what we're doing, because there is always more to do and things that can be improved."



3.4.3. Organizational challenges

In addition to the challenges related to human resources and capacity, challenges with organizational effectiveness were also identified as a barrier to service delivery, and in particular, funding. In Lebanon, the majority of organizations identified limited financial resources as a key challenge to offering more comprehensive and expansive services to their communities.

Similarly, in Sudan, a key barrier to effectively addressing child marriage was limited funding. An NGO expert believed that it is due to "country policies [that] make Sudan less attractive for many donors," and because child marriage prevention itself is not an attractive issue. This limited funding has led to situations where NGOs are only able to support around 1000 cases per year compared to more than 30,000 demands per year, as one NGO key informant noted.

Other respondents said that the legal and regulatory environment in Sudan made their work more difficult. Key informants reported that NGOs working on gender issues often experience long hold-ups when registering with the government. Additionally, many informants cited that the policies of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) has restrictive guidance for NGOs working on gender issues which often limits the type of interventions they can implement, which partners they work with, and the geographic areas in which they operate. Additionally, one key informant reported that there was very little transparency or civil society engagement when these regulations were developed. The effect of these restrictions is illustrated in one NGO's current predicament:



"[In Sudan] We are still working through the offices of the lawyers volunteering with us and using their licenses. We are not a legal institute and do not have the official recognition to provide services because the government does not recognize civil society as a legal body."



The need for greater communication and coordination amongst services providers was voiced by several key informants in Yemen. As noted by YDLF:



"Often we don't know who is doing what. For example, we know that UNFPA is doing something but it's not clear what. We don't know that other NGOs are working on early marriage. We need more info and it needs to be published even across other MENA countries."



Strong linkages and partnerships need to be built between civil society and donors to ensure that at-risk and already married girls can access needed services. Coordination is key – if the work is coordinated with other efforts, programmes can complement rather than duplicate each other's work.

Quote from NGO expert [Yemen]

"We need to cross the info with more communication and collaboration, not just in our own country but in others in the MENA region that suffer similar problems."



3.4.4. Legal/Referral systems

In Egypt, Jordan and Yemen, key informants placed the emphasis on improving legal, identification and case referral systems. Several key informants in Egypt noted that there is a need to identify girls at-risk of child marriage, but legal measures to report cases are limited, as observed by the NPC, "Protection committees at the village level are very important to identify girls at-risk of child marriage and report the cases." For Syrian refugees, although standard operating procedures (SOP) established by the Jordanian National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) in 2013 included specific instructions for referring child marriage cases amongst Syrian refugees, NGO key informants reported continued confusion over the tasks and responsibilities within the referral systems. Informants identified this confusion as limiting the abilities of NGOs to refer child marriage cases to appropriate services. One Jordanian respondent noted that:

"For early marriage, there is no mandatory reporting [in Jordan]. In practice, early-married children are usually identified by UNHCR through their registration process. UNHCR then often refer the case to IMC or another CP agency to conduct a thorough assessment and provide case management, if UNHCR is not case managing the case themselves"

For Jordanian girls, one key informant from the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) noted that:

"It's difficult to find the right person with the right qualifications to address the issue at hand. For example, it is very hard to find women who have the right skills. And this with the difficulty of finding facilities to work in, finding the right information... it makes it very challenging for us to deliver our services."

Findings suggest that standard operating procedures for child marriage cases are weak or unclear. For example, in Jordan one key informant stated that:

"Case managers are becoming more experienced in dealing with cases, and they are able to provide awareness and examples of risks to children and their families to explain why marriage should be delayed. However, case managers often feel powerless in being able to make any significant change if the child is already married and the family does not see any issue with this."

This quote indicates the need to expand training to case managers on how to ensure access to services for child brides. Case managers need to be adept at both prevention, or managing cases of girls at-risk of child marriage, and at ensuring effective response and access to services for child brides.

NGOs in Jordan also frequently cited the need for a standard reference sheet with a "list of laws" pertaining to child marriage and information on the risks of child marriage, that could be easily distributed to individuals, and used as a reference guide for service providers. In particular, one key informant from Jordan further cited the need to "promote legal awareness" of child marriage for both institutions and individuals.

This awareness needs to include an understanding of both the personal status law that allows girls to be married before 18, and legal strategies available to prevent child marriage. One Jordanian key informant noted that their organization addressed this issue by:

“

“Holding training courses for all those workers and parties concerned with children’s rights for the purpose of making them aware of the conventions of children’s rights and the principle of the best interest of the child.”

”

Several key informants in Yemen noted that there are many structural obstacles to case management and case referrals related to gender-based violence. For example, INTERSOS noted that:

“

“There is a general lack of understanding of how the referral mechanism works [in Yemen]. Also, the staff often doesn’t have the capacity to address case management and referral adequately.”

”

To address this, a UNICEF official explained that they are currently working with the Yemen Ministry of Social Affairs to establish a system of case management in seven governorates as part of an effort to strengthen institutional capacity.

BOX 5

Promising approaches – Strengthening legal/referral systems

Outreach

■ Though not specific to the MENA region, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) “Strategies to Improve Rural Service Delivery” is a helpful resource for understanding both the challenges and range of strategies for extending and improving rural services.

■ In Sudan, the UNFPA have supported a Communication Behavioural Impact (COMBI) Plan on Child Marriage.

Develop the capacity of local organizations to provide services to at-risk and already married girls.

■ The International Medical Corps’ (IMC) make a conscious effort to employ Syrian volunteers on child protection programme in Jordan.

■ The Jordanian Supreme Judge Department focus on the consequences of child marriage at two levels:

The first level targets individuals inside the camps by using the Sharia court’s reconciliation office to provide child marriage counselling to all individuals intending to marry before turning 18;

The second level targets people outside the camps who intend to marry early – the Supreme Judge Department requires they attend counselling. The sessions inside and outside the camps are intended to raise the family’s and the couple’s awareness of the risks of child marriage.

BOX 5

Promote legal awareness of girls' rights and child marriage laws.

■ Protection committees at village level in Egypt are identified as important to identifying girls at-risk of child marriage and the reporting of cases.

■ The Amani prevention campaign in Jordan promotes individual and institutional awareness of child marriage. Built on a strong principle of collaboration, the Amani campaign developed a pool of basic key messages and tools in response to the major child protection issues in Jordan in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis.

■ Yemen Ministry of Social Affairs' are working to establish case management for social workers addressing child marriage.

■ The Women's Initiative for Learning and Leadership (WILL)'s Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership for Effective Democratic Governance in Pakistan initiative, has provided training events and leadership forums for female MPs in Pakistan since 2011 and resulted in their increased ability to network within and across party lines and engage the media on their priority issues, whilst increasing their visibility as female leaders.

■ The PRACHAR (meaning 'promote' in Hindi) programme in India developed a reproductive health communication model that was successful in, "...delaying age at marriage and onset of childbearing, increasing contraceptive use for spacing of pregnancies, and generating positive impact on contraceptive use amongst the socioeconomically least advantaged." The PRACHAR programme offers a proven model for integrating child marriage issues into health programming, and should be used as blueprint for future health behaviour-change campaigns in Yemen. Inside and outside the camps are intended to raise the family's and the couple's awareness of the risks of child marriage.

3.5. Laws, policy frameworks and mechanisms to protect and promote adolescent girls' rights



1. International obligations

Of the six study countries, all have ratified the Child Rights Convention (CRC), which defines a child as being a human below the age of eighteen years, or the legal age of majority if attained earlier (Article 1). The CRC considers that the minimum age for marriage must be 18 years for both men and women.

In addition, all study countries apart from Sudan have ratified CEDAW. As of 2013, the Sudanese Ministry of Justice was reviewing CEDAW, with plans of conducting a study and submitting it to the Council of Ministers for their consideration.

CEDAW restricts states from giving legal effect to marriages that involve children and urges states to specify a minimum age for marriage and make registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory (Article 16.2). Whilst CEDAW does not specify a minimum age, both CRC and CEDAW have emphasized the complementary and reinforcing features of the two conventions. In the case of Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan, the ratification of CEDAW is subject to reservations that seek to ensure that compliance does not conflict with Sharia law. In the case of Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt however, reservations under Article 16 also limit women's rights in marriage.

Both Jordan and Yemen have ratified the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, which provides that states shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage and that marriages must be subject to the full and free consent of both parties. Egypt and Sudan have also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children which provides at Article 21 that child marriage shall be prohibited and that legislation should stipulate the minimum age of marriage as 18 years.

See Map 2 in Annex 10 to view the evidence gap map on the ratification of international conventions and presence of national laws and strategies related to child marriage in the six countries of interest.



2. National marriage laws

Of the six countries, Egypt is the only one with a minimum age for marriage of 18, with no judicial exceptions. However, as identified by the CRC, the law does not explicitly criminalize the act of child marriage. Additionally, customary laws do not

consider customary (urfi) non-registered marriages as illegal; a man and a woman may marry in secret without having their marriage registered. Therefore, families may evade legal obligations by arranging a religious marriage and then waiting until the bride turns 18 to register the marriage with the state. Respondents noted that marriages involving a child under 18 that are not officially registered create legal consequences for children who are subsequently born as they cannot obtain birth certificates.

Another legal mechanism influencing child marriage in Egypt is the Ministerial Regulation No. 9200 of 2015 which requires a specific payment (about \$6,400) to be paid in the case that the wife is 25 years or younger than her intended husband.²³⁰ This regulation has been identified by the Egyptian Ministry of Justice as intended to protect younger women. However, human rights organizations and activists have identified it as legalizing and formalizing the sexual exploitation of young women and girls in Egypt.²³¹ In particular, the regulation is linked with the increase in the practice of 'tourist' or 'seasonal' marriages, a practice through which parents sell girls into temporary marriages with wealthy men in return for payment.²³²

While Jordan has set the legal age for marriage as 18, marriage at 15 calendar years is permitted by obtaining approval from the Chief Justice.²³³ This discretionary practice was highlighted by CEDAW, which called on Morocco to strictly implement the provisions of the minimum age of 18.²³⁴

Similarly, whilst the Government of Morocco's 2004 family code, known as the Moudawana, raised the minimum female marriage age from 15 to 18 years, it also provided discretion to judges to authorize marriages of girls below the age of 18.²³⁵ The Personal Status Code also allows marriage under the age of 18 years when deemed by a judge to be in the best interest of the minor. According to one report, because the Moudawana allows families and couples to circumvent the legal age of marriage, petitioners may travel "from one family court to another until they find a judge who provides the authorization of marriage 'effortlessly'."²³⁶ While programmatic initiatives exist that focus on building the capacity of judges on child rights, respondents have identified that there is scope for more work in this area.

In Lebanon, religious law determines the age of marriage, which varies depending on the religion and denomination. However, boys and girls can receive marriage licenses under the age of 18 across all religious groups.²³⁷ Both the CRC and CEDAW have made recommendations to set the minimum age for marriage as 18 in law and practice.²³⁸ Amongst Sunni and Shiite communities, marriage is permissible for girls as young as 9 years old, although it is no longer customary to marry at such a young age.²³⁹ Amongst other religious communities, a marriage can be licensed as young as 15 amongst Greek Orthodox and the Assyrian Church of the East, and as young as 14 amongst Druze, Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and Evangelical communities in Lebanon.²⁴⁰ The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), a state body on women's rights, and the Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering (RDFL) are currently working on drafting legislation that would increase the age of marriage amongst all religious groups.²⁴¹

In May of 2016, the Higher Council for Children, the National Commission for Women's Affairs in Lebanon, the Organisation of ABAAD, the Arab Institute for Human Rights—Lebanon Office and UNICEF hosted the first consultative meeting on child marriage in Lebanon. Experts and practitioners reviewed existing legislation and regulations pertaining to child marriage, and provided recommendations for legal revisions, health care service delivery, capacity building amongst communities, advocacy and lobbying.²⁴² However, many key informants noted challenges in coordination and collaboration across organizations advocating to end child marriage in Lebanon. As one UN official noted, "the law translates what the community thinks is acceptable," which raises the question: is it best to change the law and hope that social norms will follow, or

should the law follow the social norms? The majority of key informants asserted that in order to end child marriage in Lebanon, the legal age of marriage first had to be established at 18.

In Sudan, in legislation and in practice, Sharia law defines adulthood at the age of puberty and thus does not include protection against child marriage.²⁴³ Article 40 of the Personal Status Law of Muslims (1991) provides that pre-pubescent girls as young as 10 may be married with the consent of a male guardian and a Sharia court judge.²⁴⁴ Under Sudanese law, for a civil marriage contract to be valid, one of the criteria requires that the minimum age for men be 18 and for girls 16 and both parties must consent to marriage. However, a woman needs permission from a male guardian to validate the marriage.²⁴⁵ The CRC has identified recommendations focused on the priority need to adopt legislation that sets the minimum age for marriage as 18 years and criminalizes child marriage.²⁴⁶ However, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is working on revising the 1991 Personal Status Law, with a key informant at the MoJ reporting that the review has been a collaborative process with other government entities and civil society organizations. They expect to make several important changes, including setting the minimum age of marriage for girls to 16 or 18 years of age.

Yemen currently has no minimum age for marriage.²⁴⁷ Article 15 of the Personal Status Law of 1992, stipulates that a marriage cannot be consecrated until the bride is "ready." However, "ready" is defined as having reached puberty. To address this ambiguity, both CRC and CEDAW have focused on the priority need to adopt legislation that sets the minimum age for marriage as 18 years and criminalize child marriage.²⁴⁸

Efforts to establish a minimum age for marriage in Yemen have thus far been unsuccessful. A proposed bill to set the age at 17 was rejected in 2009.²⁵⁰ More recently, between March 2013 and January 2015, the country went through an extensive process of negotiating and planning political and social aspects of the country by appointing Yemeni women and men and different political parties to

discuss and agree on governance, structural, and social issues through the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC provided a platform to discuss and agree on a wide range of children's and women's rights, including establishing 18 as the minimum age of marriage.²⁵¹ The outcomes of the NDC directly informed a draft Law on the Rights of the Child, which would have set the minimum marriage age at 18 years for both boys and girls.²⁵² However, the process was stopped following the political crisis in February 2015 and the scale up of the conflict in March 2015.²⁵³

See Map 3 in Annex 10 to view the evidence gap map on the national laws and strategies related to child marriage.



3. National strategies on child marriage

Egypt and Sudan are the only countries to establish national strategies for the prevention of child marriage, with Egypt introducing their strategy in 2013 and Sudan following in 2015. It is notable that both countries have also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children, especially as the work towards Sudan's national strategy came as part of an African Union campaign.

The Egyptian Strategy aims to reduce the prevalence of early marriage by 50 per cent within a five-year timeframe.²⁵⁴ Egypt's National Population Council led the process of strategy development with input from a range of different stakeholders, with support from the Ford Foundation and technical assistance from Pathfinder International.²⁵⁵ The strategy focuses on two approaches:

- A rights-based approach, ensuring children's rights are upheld by religion and customs, not just by the Constitution.

- A partnership approach, bringing together government, civil society and the private sector to work together. However, the Ministry of Population has since been reorganized into the Ministry of Health, which, combined with increasing political insecurity and restrictions on civil society, slowed down the implementation of the strategy.²⁵⁶

In Sudan, civil society and government leaders were galvanized towards the drafting and launch of the first National Strategy for the Abandonment of Child Marriage in 2014 following the release of MICS data from 2010 which reported a 37.8 per cent rate of marriage under age 18.²⁵⁷



However, as of November 2016, key informants at the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in Sudan said that the National Strategy had yet to be finalized and approved. Coordination and collaboration amongst organizations and government entities advocating to end child marriage in Sudan, whilst improved, continue to face challenges. Further strategizing and coordinating of resources is needed to ensure the National Strategy is endorsed by the government and the Ministry of Justice is able to complete its revisions of the 1991 Personal Status Laws. As one NGO expert said:



"[Organizations] need to join forces at the national level to reinforce the change of the mindset because until now there are some people who believe in child marriage even at very high levels in the government."



Whilst a strategy on child marriage in Jordan has not yet been developed, a humanitarian agency working on the refugee response has set up a

Child Marriage Task Force, which will work in partnership with National Council for Family Affairs' Child Marriage Task Force to assist the Government of Jordan's to tackle the issues of child marriage. Notwithstanding this effort, several key informants noted the need for more synergy between UN Agencies and local governments to address child marriage.

There is currently no national plan to prevent child marriage in Lebanon, though there is an action plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labour that briefly mentions child marriage. The adoption of a national strategy on child marriage was identified as a recommendation specifically by the CRC in relation to Lebanon. Since May 2015, there has been a consensus that a national strategy to address child marriage needs to be developed under the leadership of the High Council for Childhood.²⁶¹ As of June 2017, efforts are currently underway to begin developing the national strategy and action plan.

4. Impact of legal framework on child marriage prevalence

Map 4 illustrates that, with the exclusion of Lebanon, there is a seeming correlation between the strength of the legal framework and child marriage prevalence, with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco having lower child marriage prevalence and Sudan and Yemen having the highest.

While this correlation indicates a positive relationship between setting a minimum age for child marriage and child marriage prevalence, it does not identify in which order the positive correlation works. It is indeed arguable whether changing social norms reduces prevalence and

influences legislative change. For example, a recent study found that setting a minimum age for child marriage was, in and of itself, not enough to increase the age at which people get married. Law enforcement was crucial to this behaviour change, suggesting that the urgent need for capacity development to support the enforcement of legislative change.²⁶²

5. The broader legal and policy environment related to women and equal rights

In considering interconnecting issues, gap map 4 in Annex 10 looks at the national laws and strategies related to women and equal rights, providing some illustration of the broader legal environment in the six countries.

Amongst the top national priorities in Egypt, FGM/C has taken precedence over child marriage because of its high prevalence.²⁶³ The National Female Genital Mutilation Abandonment Strategy was developed in 2015;²⁶⁴ and in 2016, the Egyptian People's Assembly amended article 242 of the Penal Code, criminalizing FGM/C and specifying a five- to seven-year prison term for practitioners.²⁶⁵ According to key informants, whilst FGM/C serves as an entry point for addressing child marriage as both practices are inherently linked, more could be done to build government awareness on the interconnections and to integrate child marriage prevention strategies within these and other initiatives.²⁶⁶

Violence against children (physical, verbal, emotional and sexual) also ranks high as a priority.²⁶⁷ However, while Egypt has publicly called for "clear national policies to eradicate all forms of abuse that prevent women from fully enjoying their human rights,"²⁶⁸ and committed to "combating all forms of violence against women — particularly domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, harmful traditional practices and violence against migrant women,"²⁶⁹ there is still no law in

Egypt specifically prohibiting domestic violence. So-called ‘honour killings’ still occur and sentences to men convicted of crimes of ‘honour’ remain lenient under Egypt’s penal code.²⁷⁰ In addition, according to a UNICEF report on equality profile in Egypt, “rape is a crime but marital rape is not.”²⁷¹

In Jordan, a study on family law reforms reveals that women’s rights related to marriage and divorce access were enhanced through their right to add stipulations to the marriage contract from which they could benefit (e.g. a wife’s “access to no-fault divorce, forbidding husbands from moving to the family residence to a new city, restricting a husband from taking a second wife, and guaranteeing the wife’s right to work outside of the home”).²⁷² However, the study notes that “men still remain legally the default head-of-household, and women must be obedient to their husbands.”²⁷³ The study further observes that the reforms to the Personal Status Code (2010) also “left a number of discriminatory provisions in effect, such as unequal grounds for accessing divorce, requirements for guardianship over women, and default legal custody of children in case of divorce.”²⁷⁴ Respondents further raised concerns over nationality laws that do not allow Jordanian women with foreign husbands to pass their citizenship rights to their children.

Jordan is one of the only MENA countries to have issued a domestic violence law, which was enacted in 2008.²⁷⁵ Jordan is also currently drafting “a new proposal for a domestic violence law that would take into consideration the definition of violence against women as well as clear procedures and by laws.”²⁷⁶ This proposal was endorsed in 2017.

In Lebanon, the National Action Plan 2017-2019 includes efforts to address

discrimination in Lebanese law, including efforts to remove Lebanon’s Reservations on CEDAW Articles 9 and 16 and efforts to address discrimination against women in personal status laws, both in their text and implementation.²⁷⁷ However, Human Rights Watch notes that, “Lebanon has 15 separate personal status laws for its recognized religions but no civil code covering issues such as divorce, property rights, or care of children. These laws are administered by autonomous religious courts with little or no government oversight, and often issue rulings that violate women’s human rights.”²⁷⁸ As such, across all religions, Lebanon’s religious personal status laws create greater barriers for women than men when terminating a marriage (even if one partner is abusive), initiating divorce proceedings, ensuring custody and access to children after divorce, or securing alimony from a former spouse.²⁷⁹

In the absence of a comprehensive child protection code in Lebanon, Law No. 422 of 2002, the ‘Protection of at-Risk Children or Children Violating the Law’, extends some protection to children victims of violence, albeit that key informants still identify some gaps.²⁸⁰ Despite the provisions of Law No. 422 many children seeking asylum are still at risk of violence and exploitation.²⁸¹

Some progress has been achieved in Lebanon with respect to addressing domestic violence in marriage. The Law on Protection of Women and Family Members from Domestic Violence (Law 293) was passed on April 1, 2014.²⁸² There are criticisms that include the law not being adequately enforced and containing gaps, leaving women and girls at risk of marital rape and other forms of abuse.^{283,284} According to a 2015 Human Rights Watch report, “the law defines domestic violence narrowly, thus failing to provide adequate protection from all forms of abuse and falling short of United Nations guidelines on protection from domestic violence.”²⁸⁵ Lebanese criminal law also does not recognize marital rape as a crime.²⁸⁶ However, in February 2017, a proposal to repeal Article 522 was approved by the Lebanese Parliamentary Committee for Administration and Justice, and is expected to be voted on in 2017.

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (LCRP) aims to strengthen “existing national systems to address the immediate needs of all those affected by the Syrian crisis and its protracted nature, both those displaced from Syria and Lebanese communities.”²⁸⁷ The LCRP activities aim to strengthen national protection, child protection and GBV systems including interventions to GBV survivors and persons at risk, including for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.²⁸⁸

In Morocco, legal frameworks made numerous reforms towards enhancing gender equality making the country stand out as one with the most liberal and progressive legal frameworks in the MENA region in terms of gender equality.²⁸⁹ The 2004 Moudawana, considerably expanded the rights of women towards equality within the family, including the removal of the legal obedience clause, allowing women to initiate divorce citing mutual consent or irreconcilable differences, rescinding the spousal approval requirement for women to work, and giving women the right to child custody.^{290,291} Notwithstanding this progress, gaps remain in relation to the provisions under which women can take legal guardianship of children,²⁹² and with respect to the specifics and conditions of divorce.²⁹³

There is no specific legislation against domestic violence in Morocco.²⁹⁴ Bill 103-13 on combatting violence against women was approved by the House of Representatives in July of 2016, however, though the bill defines violence against women to include “any act based on gender discrimination that entails physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm to a woman,” there

is no explicit discussion of domestic violence.²⁹⁵ Additionally, although rape is criminalized under the penal code, spousal rape is not.²⁹⁶

Since signing the CRC in 1990, Sudan has worked on a comprehensive Child Act that was enacted in 2010. The Child Act “supports the implementation of international treaties at national level, and ensures that national child-related legislation conforms to the CRC.”²⁹⁷ It also establishes a comprehensive Justice for Children System, and defines a child as “every person who is not above 18 years old.”²⁹⁸

Gender inequity in marriage and divorce remains a challenge for women in Sudan, with men having legal power over their wives and children. Sections 25(c), 33, 34, 40(3), 51, 52, 91 and 92 of the Muslim Personal Law Act of Sudan, 1991 provide that the contract of marriage for a woman shall be concluded by a male guardian; confer different rights in marriage to men and women; and mandate wife obedience.²⁹⁹ Sudan does not have a specific law prohibiting domestic violence or marital rape.³⁰⁰

In Yemen, according to the Personal Status Law, a man can divorce his wife for any reason but a woman can request divorce only under specific circumstances.³⁰¹ A woman can also seek divorce without the burden of evidence only if she agrees to give up any financial rights.³⁰²

To date, there is no law protecting against domestic violence in Yemen.³⁰³ Marital rape is not recognized as a crime while rape itself is a crime.³⁰⁴ Additionally, the penal code has discriminatory laws against women, permitting lenient punishment to men who are convicted of “honour” killings. For example, article 273 criminalizes “shameful” or “immoral” acts, making women vulnerable to arrest for reasons such as being alone with a man who is not her relative.³⁰⁵

BOX 6**Promising approaches – Civil society engagement in promoting womens’ and girls’ rights**

The presence of civil society organizations makes Morocco one of the most proactive North African countries in its fight against gender inequality. Following the reform of the Moudawana in 2004, feminist groups have been playing a critical role in building a social movement to address gender inequality and GBV. They are also at the forefront of service provision and programmatic responses in terms of issues related to GBV, including child marriage. These groups include the Union de l’Action Féminine (UAF – Women’s Action Union), Insaf Ytto, Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM – the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women), Initiatives pour la protection des droits des femmes (IPDF), and the Association el Amane pour le Développement de la Femme (El Amane Association for the Development of Women). These women’s rights organizations, along with international human rights advocates, continue to press the Moroccan government for intensive reforms to the penal code designed to better protect women and girls. “Avaaz, a global advocacy group, recently submitted a petition signed by more than one million people to Morocco’s Parliament, demanding the adoption of promised legislation to address violence against women.” The group stresses three critical areas: treatment for survivors of sexual abuse; revision of the prohibition on rape, to widen its applicability; and strengthened prohibitions against child marriage.

3.6. Evidence generation



3.6.1. Cooperation and collaboration

Several key informants urged better coordination of research activities in child marriage in order to understand the dynamics of the practice. They indicated that greater coordination and collaboration between research institutes and NGOs working on child marriage could be the answer to addressing the evidence gaps on the factors driving the practice. In Lebanon, informants highlighted the need to share both the evidence itself and research methodologies, identifying that the transparency of methodology would reduce duplication of effort. Participants from the bilateral agencies roundtables in Morocco agreed that the limited communication and coordination between the various stakeholders widens the gap in reliable data. Many participants also suggested that more qualitative studies should be done, not only amongst communities that resort to child marriage but also amongst those who delay marriage beyond 18. Similarly, in Yemen, although there are clear actions from civil society organizations to address child marriage through research, assessments, and programmes, findings indicate there being room to strengthen efforts amongst all stakeholders working on child marriage to coordinate and communicate evidence. In Egypt, UNICEF’s gender action plan (GAP), global strategic plan 2018-2021 and Country Programme Document (CPD) were specifically identified as being useful in strengthening coordination.



3.6.2. Gaps in evidence

Informants from all countries of study, highlighted a number of gaps in the evidence in their country context, identifying the importance in addressing these gaps, to greater understanding of child marriage, and strengthening evidence based policy and programming. In Egypt, although recent data

are generally available and provide good statistical evidence related to trends in child marriage and related indicators in Egypt, there is less comprehensive literature on the drivers and factors contributing to child marriage. In particular, respondents in Egypt indicated that more evidence is needed on the link between education and child marriage. As one UNICEF key informant in Egypt noted,



"So far there is no evidence that schools are succeeding in delaying child marriage. We need evaluations to understand what is working and what needs to be improved."



In Jordan, the findings highlight that mobility restrictions have important implications for girls' access to education and health services. Restricting mobility also impedes girls' socialization and their ability to build social capital. UNICEF reports that whilst economic considerations impact the decision to marry in Jordan, "More research into how and when poverty impacts on decisions around child marriage will be needed in order to properly target poverty-related interventions designed to reduce child marriage." In addition, the informal nature of marriages in refugee camps around Jordan makes it difficult to track and document the true number of girls being married before the age of 18.³⁰⁷

In Lebanon, government officials, NGO experts, and UN officials have become increasingly concerned with rising rates of child marriage in Lebanon in recent years. To better understand the increasing prevalence, several organizations have conducted exploratory studies to:

- Understand the reality behind the incidents of early marriage in the Lebanese community.
- Estimate the volume of the targeted population.
- Recognize the economic and cultural traits of the communities in which child marriage is highly prevalent.

For example, in Lebanon the Organisation of ABAAD and Queens University are collaborating on a study using a new interactive methodology that has not been used before, called 'Sense Maker', which tries to show the inter-linkage between socio-economic factors and other factors. As ABAAD noted, "It's easy for us to just blame it on poverty or just blame it on culture but it would be more interesting to see how these are inter-linked." The first phase of data collection is complete, with over 1,300 survey responses collected from women, girls, men and boys. ABAAD reported that they are now in the data analysis phase. However, despite many studies that focus on the issues of child marriage in Lebanon, such as UNICEF/MoSA's 2016 Baseline Survey many key informants cited that large gaps exist in the evidence on child marriage, citing that data is frequently outdated and methodologies are not transparent.

Overall, participants from Morocco pointed to the discrepancies in the legal system in terms of recording customary marriages, making it difficult to obtain accurate data. One UNICEF researcher in Morocco said:



"To account for this complex phenomenon, we need a variety of indicators. We need to collect data from the Ministry of Justice, UNICEF and the National Observatory of Human Development. We also need to conduct surveys on households, for they are close to reality."



One key informant from Insaf in Morocco confirmed this point, adding that:



“The problem with Al Fatiha is that we can’t quantify it. The statistics from the Ministry of Justice don’t speak for the customary marriage, which is so prevalent in rural areas.”



In addition, more robust methodologies, using gender analysis, including sex-disaggregated data, would not only produce more robust data but it would also contribute to a clearer understanding of the correlation between child marriage and poverty in Morocco as well as education, which to date, is not well understood. Data enumerators should be trained to undertake household surveys with a gender lens.

The UNICEF 2012 KAP survey indicated a limited number of studies on child marriage in Sudan, particularly those that take into account the cultural variations within tribal communities and between nomadic and non-nomadic groups in the country.³⁰⁸ This 2012 KAP survey, which focused on the six states with the highest prevalence in Sudan, is the only substantial research looking at child marriage in Sudan. Some researchers have also conducted secondary analyses of the 2014 UNICEF Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS) and the 2010 Sudan Household Health Surveys.³⁰⁹ However, these have their limitations—AUW cited that there is a problem in the disaggregation of the age groups in the Sudan Household Survey (SHHS). The age groups are divided to children and 15+ year-old women as one age group, rendering the data inadequate to anal-

yse factors surrounding child marriage. To date, there are also no qualitative studies exploring the drivers of child marriage in Sudan.

Respondents from Yemen in particular, identified the need for more evidence on the links between child marriage and conflict. Conflict is affecting social norms and traditions differently depending on the regional location in Yemen. Families have different motivations that compel them to marry off their daughters at an early age. Key informants noted that more robust evidence is necessary to understand not only the reasons why families have recourse to child marriage, but also the ways in which conflict affects decisions regarding child marriage. One key informant noted that there needs to be more research done on communities where child marriage is low to understand why some families, under the same conditions of poverty and conflict, do not resort to child marriage.



3.6.3. Evaluation of prevention programming

Key informants stressed the need for robust evaluation of prevention programming. Despite the many programmes that address child marriage under the auspices of gender equality, child protection and/or GBV in Lebanon, very few were identified to have conducted studies to evaluate the efficacy of their interventions. The gap in programme evaluation severely limited knowledge of the effectiveness and sustainability of various programmatic approaches to ending child marriage in Lebanon.

Due to the conflict in Yemen, conducting research and evaluations remains challenging. All key informants pointed to challenges in relation to resources – human, material and financial—which impedes the evidence base needed to understand what works and what does not work. For example, one key informant noted that while NGOs believe in the effectiveness of engaging religious leaders in combatting issues of child marriage, her own experience proved the opposite. She explained that,



“When we tried to work with community and religious leaders, it ended up being a headache because there was so much opposition...Imagine, in every corner, you have a mosque with, say, 30 people who attend it. So, when you have a religious leader who opposes it, then it’s everyone else who attends the mosque who opposes it. Then it was used for political reasons against each other... Everyone keeps talking about how we need to engage religious leaders. But no, for us, it was a waste of time. The most effective message was by far the health message and the negative consequences that marrying a young girl has on her health and her children. That totally changed their knowledge and attitude.”



BOX 7

Promising approaches – Strengthening cooperation and collaboration towards robust evidence

Increase research cooperation and collaboration.

■ UNICEF is supporting ongoing development of an Integrated Information System on justice for children as part of the Hima ya project. In addition, UNICEF is supporting a networking of NGOs aimed at monitoring the application of children’s right at the local level.

■ The National Bureau of Statistics in Sudan recently established a gender unit, and is starting to include gender related questions in their upcoming surveys.

Develop an M&E framework and tools.

■ The level 3 monitoring approach (L3M) pilot for child marriage activities in Bangladesh was the first attempt to use UNICEF’s global monitoring framework, Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES), to monitor child marriage programme activities. The L3M monitored two of UNICEF’s child marriage activities in Bangladesh – adolescent stipends and conditional cash transfers – to assess their effectiveness in addressing social norms, financial access, and legislation/policy. The results from this pilot document the successes and challenges in changing social norms through multifaceted community based programming.

Recently, there have been significant efforts to produce quality evidence on child marriage in Sudan. These include:

■ The Chief of Justice of Sudan commissioned CVAW to conduct 3 studies: a religion study to prove that the Prophet Mohamed did not marry a nine-year-old girl; a medical study showing the complication of early motherhood on a girl’s health and development; and a social study explaining the limited contributions young mothers are able to make to their communities, and the side effects of those limitations.

■ The Gender Centre is writing a proposal to get funding for a baseline survey that will be used to explore the drivers of child marriage in Sudan, and to propose interventions accordingly.

■ SORD recently started a database where they are attempting to identify links between different variables, for example between divorce rates and child marriage.

■ The National Taskforce is coordinating between different partners to conduct a medical study that shows the impact of child marriage on a girls' health and development. They are working with OB/GYNs, paediatric doctors, and the midwifery union to get expert opinions, and are reviewing scientific papers on the issue.

■ The National Taskforce plans to present the findings to religious leaders, with the hopes they will then endorse the NS and agree to set minimum age of marriage.

■ One key informant noted that the M&E system at the Ministry of Education is a great source of information because it can give good information on the average age of marriage by monitoring schools drop outs. It is unclear if the Ministry of Education is already collecting these statistics, or if this is something they are planning on doing in the future.

■ The Development Studies and Research Institute (DSRI) is planning a qualitative study to explore the causes and drivers of child marriage. The study is being designed around an analysis of the 2014 MICS results in order to explicate its findings. The NCCW is currently conducting a qualitative study with girls ages 9-13 in order to understand their perception of child marriage.

3.7. Programmatic interventions on child marriage

Based on all relevant data sources identified and collected through the desk review, an evidence gap map was created to visually depict organizations working on and interventions related to child marriage in the six countries of interest (see Map 5 in Annex 10). The gap mapping illustrates that the majority of the international organizations currently working on child marriage have programming focused on Jordan and Lebanon. Sudan has the smallest number of international organizations working on child marriage, with just UNICEF, UNFPA, and PLAN active in the country. Egypt and Jordan, which have lower prevalence of 20-24-year-old women married before age 15, benefit from a broad range of programming, focusing heavily on changing national laws or policies but also incorporating interventions that increase knowledge and awareness and engage youth, amongst others. Again, Sudan has the lowest level of interventions and one of the highest rates of prevalence. Yemen presents an interesting case, with the relatively high engagement of international organizations and interventions not reflected in child marriage prevalence figures. However, this could be due to the limitations faced when programming in a conflict scenario. Very few programmatic interventions employed peer education and mentorship methods, or involved religious leaders, despite being identified by stakeholders as having the potential to be very effective.

3.7.1. Egypt



Four key programmes working towards child marriage prevention in Egypt have been: Pathfinder's Preventing Child Marriage in Egypt project; Ishraq; CHOICES; and TAHSEEN. Whilst Pathfinder International's Preventing Child Marriage in Egypt project's sole target was to eliminate child marriage through the provision of technical assistance to

key entities within the Egyptian government, Ishraq, CHOICES, and TAH-SEEN employed integrated programmatic models to work with children on literacy training, education and health awareness to provide opportunities for civic engagement and promote community-wide discussions about gender empowerment.

Pathfinder International, with the support of the Ford Foundation, conducted a Preventing Child Marriage in Egypt project from 2013 to 2016. As part of this project, Pathfinder International supported the NPC of Egypt to lead the development a national strategy for prevention of early marriage, which aims to reduce the prevalence of early marriage by 50 per cent within five years from 2013.³¹⁰

Ishraq was initially piloted in rural Upper Egypt in 2001 and then scaled up between 2009 and 2011.³¹¹ The programme employed village Youth Centres (YCs) as safe spaces for out-of-school girls between the ages of 11 and 15.³¹² Participants attended classes four times a week, three hours each day, for 20 months.³¹³ Topics covered included literacy, financial literacy, sports, and life skills, including girls' education, gender roles, reproductive health and girls' rights.³¹⁴ An evaluation of Ishraq found "positive impacts on literacy, attitudes towards sports, and reproductive health knowledge" amongst its participants, as well as a 15 per cent increase in their intention not to perform FGM on their own daughters and an 11 per cent increase in agreement that the appropriate age for marriage is 18 or above.³¹⁵ "Ishraq girls expressed a desire to marry at older ages and to have a say in choosing a husband" and that, compared to non-participants, 22 per cent of whom married during the time of the intervention, just 12 per cent of girls who participated in Ishraq for 13 to 29

months and 5 per cent of girls who participated in the full term married.³¹⁶ However, the intervention failed to change attitudes of participants' mothers or brothers, highlighting the challenge of achieving community-level attitude change.³¹⁷

The CHOICES curriculum implemented by Save the Children was developed to complement Ishraq's programming with school-aged girls, parents and community members in Upper Egypt.³¹⁸ Piloted in the governorate of BeniSeuf and As-suit with boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 14, the curriculum was conducted to change girls' and boys' perceptions of gender roles.³¹⁹ Participants in the programme demonstrated an increased agreement with both the idea that girls must take their marriage decision and the idea that girls should discuss the unsuitability of potential grooms with their fathers.³²⁰

USAID's TAHSEEN project (2003-2005) addressed poor health outcomes and access in impoverished communities, whilst addressing the linkages between reproductive health/family planning (RH/FP) and child marriage through behaviour change communication activities with youth and parents in Doweika, Egypt. The programme was eventually scaled up to include 1.5 million people across five governorates of Egypt, but no evidence has been published to evaluate whether or not the programme had a demonstrable effect on preventing or forestalling child marriage.

Although important barriers remain in terms of increasing women's participation in political and religious leadership, efforts are currently underway in Egypt.³²¹ According to a report released in early 2017, "women in religious leadership is also growing in the Middle East: Rola Sleiman began her role as the Arab world's first ordained female pastor in Lebanon, and the Egyptian Religious Endowments Ministry announced it would appoint 144 female imams—a first for the country."³²² Altogether, evidence suggests that some programmes have helped to shift youth and com-

munity members' attitudes and beliefs about the proper age of marriage and the role girls should play in marriage decisions, whilst others have not. Additionally, evidence suggesting that these attitude changes have been translated into behaviour change amongst the participating populations is limited.

3.7.2. Jordan



Two programmes were identified as directly related to child marriage, the Amani Campaign, implemented by Save the Children; and No Lost Generation, implemented by UNICEF. Both the Amani Campaign and No Lost Generation use educational services to teach children about their rights and prevent exploitation amongst vulnerable populations. The 'Safe Me and Safe You' curriculum employed by the Amani Campaign also involves both Jordanian and non-Jordanian parents to discuss the use of discipline or violence within the home and address the growing phenomenon of child marriage in the country.³²³ Whilst both the Amani Campaign and No Lost Generation seem like promising models for addressing the vulnerable Syrian refugee population, results about the outcomes of the programmes are still forthcoming.

The Amani Campaign was launched in Jordan in 2014 as a child protection initiative targeted at vulnerable populations in the country, particularly the boys and girls affected by the Syrian crisis.³²⁴ The campaign works within communities to raise awareness on identified safety concerns, including child marriage and response to survivors of violence.³²⁵ The tools also include messaging for Syrian and Jordanian youth about children's

rights, safety planning, psychosocial support, and the negative consequences of child marriage.³²⁶

UNICEF's Makani programme in Jordan coordinates multi-sectoral services to provide alternative education, skills building and psychosocial support to vulnerable girls and boys in the country.³²⁷ Makani helps to access the numerous out-of-school Syrian children through informal and alternative education opportunities.³²⁸ Makani community outreach teams also facilitate youth empowerment programming, including a life-skills curriculum for adolescent girls between the ages of 13 and 17, which aims to strengthen peer networks, unpack gender roles, identify the impacts of GBV, and discuss the components of a healthy relationship.³²⁹ UNICEF's Makani programme in Jordan coordinates multi-sectoral services to provide alternative education, skills building and psychosocial support to vulnerable girls and boys in the country. Makani helps to access the numerous out-of-school Syrian children through informal and alternative education opportunities. Makani community outreach teams also facilitate youth empowerment programming, including a life-skills curriculum for adolescent girls between the ages of 13 and 17, which aims to strengthen peer networks, unpack gender roles, identify the impacts of GBV, and discuss the components of a healthy relationship.³³⁰ The multi-tiered Makani approach also promotes awareness-raising sessions in communities and amongst caregivers about child rights and child marriage. An evaluation of Makani's deliverables was conducted in 2016.³³¹

In April 2017, a new task force was created by humanitarian agencies in partnership with UNHCR, UNICEF, and the Government of Jordan to respond to the increasing prevalence of child marriage. The Child Marriage Task Force will "work closely with the National Council for Family Affairs' Child Marriage Task Force to exchange information, provide technical support, develop joint actions and strategy, and build the capacity of various national stakeholders."³³²

3.7.3. Lebanon



A review of programmatic actions shows evidence of programmes addressing child marriage within the broader objective of child protection. Please note that the work of very few organizations is highlighted in this section as it was not possible for ICRW to meet with all of the organizations working on child marriage in Lebanon. ICRW and UNICEF are conscious that this section does not reflect all the good practices in child marriage programming taking place in Lebanon. The four discussed here are implemented by ABAAD; KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation; Save the Children; and UNICEF as well as initiatives under Lebanon's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) National Task Force and MoSA.

ABAAD is an organization founded in 2011 and comprised of human rights activists, lawyers, consultants, social workers and researchers.³³³ ABAAD operates in Lebanon, as well as throughout the MENA region, to prevent violence against women and girls.³³⁴ Since 2012, ABAAD has served as co-chair of Lebanon's National Technical Task Force to End GBV against women and girls, which is chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs.³³⁵ Their programme and advocacy work focuses broadly on gender equality, but has also addressed child marriage through an educational video called "Marriage Is Not A Game."³³⁶

KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation is a feminist, non-profit Lebanese civil society organization that works to combat discrimination against women. Their Child Protection Programme (KAFA-CPP) aims to protect and empower children through capacity building, awareness-raising activities and legislative advocacy on issues such as child marriage, child sexual assault

(CSA), and reproductive health. KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation is a feminist, non-profit Lebanese civil society organization that works to combat discrimination against women. Their Child Protection Programme (KAFA-CPP) aims to protect and empower children through capacity building, awareness-raising activities and legislative advocacy on issues such as child marriage, child sexual assault (CSA), and reproductive health.³³⁷ They also screened a film about child marriage called 'I AM NOOJOOM' and work within refugee communities to foster Adolescent Friendly Spaces (AFS) for vulnerable children.³³⁸

Similar to KAFA, Save the Children works with Syrian refugees as part of their Regional Response to the Syrian crisis. Save the Children's Child Protection Teams "respond to issues related to child marriage and forced marriage, referring cases of GBV to specialized agencies so that victims get specialist support," although information about the success of these efforts is limited.³³⁹

As a part of their Child Protection Programme, UNICEF has specifically developed a range of Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) services for vulnerable refugee women and girls in Lebanon.³⁴⁰ One of the central pillars of their 'No Lost Generation' initiative specifically aims to reduce child marriage and other harmful traditional practices through community awareness and empowerment activities.³⁴¹ Whilst UNICEF has worked to educate communities about the negative impacts of child marriage, provide safe spaces and case management services to women and girls, and train health and education workers, a 2016 Country Report indicates that: "the legal ban on refugees working seriously limits attempts to address the economic hardship faced by many families which are a key contributing factor to early marriage and increase household stress which contributes to GBV."³⁴²

Additionally, Lebanon has a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) National Task Force that coordinates prevention and response in the country. As a part of the SGBV programming, community leaders and gatekeepers are involved in engagement or training on GBV issues,

including child marriage, although they focus primarily on providing safe access to services for vulnerable individuals and survivors.³⁴⁴

Relatedly, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 notes that in coordination with the Government of Lebanon, as per the 2017-2020 strategy, “protection activities will aim at strengthening existing national systems to address the immediate needs of all those affected by the Syrian crisis and its protracted nature, both those displaced from Syria and Lebanese communities.” In order to ensure sustainability of these planned interventions, all activities will be aligned with national plans, such as the National Social Development Strategy, National Ten Year Strategy for Women in Lebanon, and the MoSA’ National Plan to Safeguard Children and Women in Lebanon. These activities will aim at providing a combination of service provisions (protection services), capacity-building and community-based interventions through MoSA and local service providers which carry-out psychological, medical, legal, shelter, life skills and social empowerment interventions for SGBV survivors and persons at risk, including for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.³⁴⁵

3.7.4. Morocco



Very little evidence has been found on existing programmes and interventions in Morocco, except for the Foundation YTTO, which focuses on ending all forms of violence against women, including child marriage, and Spring of Dignity Coalition, a movement advocating for the eradication of child marriage.

The Foundation YTTO provides accommodation and rehabilitation of abused women, conducts outreach programmes

– such as its annual child marriage prevention campaign – and advocates for economic reintegration of violence survivors, women in particular.³⁴⁶ The review was not able to find evidence or evaluations of their programme outcomes. Furthermore, UNFPA is supporting the development of a Communication for Behavioural Impact Plan (COMBI) focusing on child marriage and gender-based violence.

Spring of Dignity Coalition is not a programme or intervention, but rather a movement that started in December 2013 with the goal of ending child marriage. The movement gathered tens of thousands of people – including women, survivors of violence, organizations, and the media who marched to the Moroccan Ministry of Justice in solidarity with the families of victims and the women and girls who have died because of GBV.³⁴⁷ The movement resulted in the Moroccan Ministry of Justice and Liberties approving of amendments to abolish Article 475 of the Penal Code, which allowed rapists freedom from prosecution of penalty under the law if they married their victims.³⁴⁸ An amendment to prevent judges from being able to authorize the marriage of those under the age of 18 was proposed, but is not yet approved.³⁴⁹

Prevention measures against child marriage fall primarily under the purview of the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Development and the Ministry of Justice and Liberties. The Ministry of Women, Family and Social Development approaches child marriage prevention through a protection of rights framework by enacting educational awareness activities with families and girls about the rights of the child. Although the Ministry has initiated campaigns that outline the negative consequences of violence against children and child marriage, budgetary restrictions prevent more comprehensive and widespread programming.³⁵⁰

3.7.5. Sudan



As there are almost no specific programmes de-

voted to child marriage in Sudan, and no evidence on effectiveness, it was difficult for key informants to identify promising programmatic approaches to ending child marriage. Instead, several key informants highlighted creating child marriage-specific programming as the most promising way to begin addressing child marriage in Sudan.

A UN official hypothesized that the efforts to end FGM/C in Sudan are what laid the groundwork for action on child marriage. This key informant explained that since the approaches and the target populations are very similar, efforts to end child marriage will be able to build off the networks and partnerships built through FGM/C interventions. Currently however, child marriage interventions are diluted across many different programmes—this situation makes it very difficult to receive adequate resources and funding. It also makes it challenging to measure progress towards ending child marriage.

3.7.6. Yemen



The Safe Age of Marriage, a programme piloted in 2009 that covered communities in Al-Sawd and Al-Soodeh districts was amongst the few programmes addressing child marriage in Yemen. The intervention was aimed to foster change in social norms and communities' attitudes to child marriage, promote girls' education, and advance the rights of the girl child.³⁵¹ According to a case study published about the program, "this one-year programme adapted promising practices and developed a model to raise awareness of the effects of child marriage in rural communi-

ties."³⁵² The project also helped a female school principal to be appointed in Al-Sawd District, encouraging parents to enroll and keep their daughters in school.³⁵³ However in 2016, a recent KAP assessment was conducted in 30 communities covering six governorates (Sana'a, Hudaydah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Ibb and Aden) to identify the attitudes of local communities towards child/early marriage and assess knowledge level of the impact of early marriage on adolescents, as well as available services and response mechanisms. The total number of completed questionnaires reached 1,054 whilst FGDs involved 227 women and 229 men. The KAP's results show a widespread incidence of child marriage practices in target communities: 72.5 per cent of respondents indicated that they married before they reached 18 years of age, whilst the percentage of those who married at the age of 15 or younger accounted for 44.5 per cent.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has also been working with UNICEF to establish case management for social workers addressing child marriage. Child protection services in the country works with both the Ministry and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior to assist children at risk of child marriage and trafficking, particularly in emergency settings. Multi-sectoral packages have been developed on social, legal, health and economic empowerment, as well as vocational training, while promoting dialogues in communities about the consequences of child marriage and the benefits of delaying marriage and keeping children in schools. Religious and community leaders are integral to addressing the traditional customs and informal structures that support child marriage. The collaboration with UNICEF focuses on primary and secondary education as a means of addressing children's vulnerability and educating parents, but more needs to be done to strengthen the education sector and ensure that married girls can return to school.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following regional recommendations are based on a synthesis of the elements of this research including the desk review; the political and socioeconomic context in the MENA; key informant interviews at the country level; validation of the findings by key stakeholders, including all comments by UNICEF country offices and regional office; and a careful review of effective programme approaches within the MENA region but also in other contexts. The recommendations are divided into two sections; the first addresses general recommendations that apply broadly in all cases where child marriage programming is being developed. These represent the key overarching findings from this research and should be considered as critical to effective child marriage programming. The second section sets out evidence-based programme recommendations specific to the five UNICEF/UNFPA Global Programme outcome areas drawing on the key recommendations from the country levels, informed and strengthened by effective programme approaches.

4.1. General Recommendations

There is a need to strengthen the focus of interventions in a context-specific way to improve its scalability; a comprehensive situational analysis, including a gender analysis must be considered in order to understand the disparities of power and resources as well as conflict of interests.³⁵⁴

Support, nurture and consult with local gender expertise in the form of local women's organizations as well as those focusing on child marriage, including capacity development and engaging men and boys, to ensure that programming is driven and informed by the grassroots level.³⁵⁵

Ensure high-quality interventions by establishing a theory of change and including stakeholders in a participatory approach to design and implementation; where possible, conduct a pilot phase.³⁵⁶

Focus on programming that targets child marriage and the structural factors that drive it; programmes that incorporate child marriage as a smaller part of broader goals (i.e. empowerment, SRH, HIV) are less likely to have impact.³⁵⁷

Improve scalability to ensure reliable service delivery to the most rural and remote communities. This can be achieved through sustained and expanded funding to programming that is proven to effectively reach remote communities, such as mobile units to provide safe spaces and health services.

Guarantee multi-year funding of programmes to ensure sufficient time for rigorous evaluation over a several-year period; funding to governments should have clear tranches linked to monitoring so that results are seen before new money is released.

Legal frameworks need to be strengthened to meet international standards by eliminating exceptions that grant judges authority to sanction child marriages.

Emphasize the socioecological framework when designing effective programming, by recognizing

the interplay between interventions and child marriage at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels.³⁵⁸

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The following recommendations set out evidence-based programme recommendations specific to the five outcome areas of the Global Programme, drawing from the key recommendations at the country levels.

4.2. Recommendations specific to the five outcomes

4.2.1. Outcome 1: Girls' voice and agency

4.2.1.1. Create safe spaces for girls

- Create adolescent girls' empowerment groups through safe spaces in schools and the community, using peer-to-peer methods to develop skills, discuss life and sex, and report violence and child marriage.³⁵⁹

- Support schools to apply a zero-tolerance policy to the use of violence and sexual behaviour in schools.³⁶⁰

- Use health and Sexual and Reproductive Health as a gateway to accessing girls, provide clinics in communities and schools that provide health advice and services, in addition to discussing issues of acceptable sexual behaviour and child marriage.³⁶¹

- Provide out-of-school girls aged 15 to 17 with literacy classes, life skills programming, and sport activities whilst also intervening with their parents and communities in order to change norms about girls' roles in society.³⁶²

- Support the adoption of women's safety audits at the community level.³⁶³

- Take a 'whole of community' approach to identifying, reporting and preventing harassment and abuse of women in public places.³⁶⁴

- Model and upscale UN Women's 'Women and Girls Oasis' at the Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan.³⁶⁵

- Model and upscale the safe spaces initiative in Lebanon which works through national Listening and Counselling Centres, offer activities for children whilst mothers participate in their own activities.³⁶⁶

- Create opportunities for healthy interactions and communication between boys and girls.³⁶⁷

4.2.1.2. Build on girls' empowerment through education

- Provide direct incentives (cash, food) to keep girls in school, conditional on children's school attendance (evidence shows that this does work, albeit that it is largely unsustainable in terms of cost alone).^{368, 369}

- Replace direct cash transfers to families with delivering incentives through the school. Work with ministries of education to decrease the cost of school through provision of safe transport, uniform, school meals and equipment.³⁷⁰

- Partner with national-level governments to ensure that curricula do not affirm detrimental gender norms and raise awareness of harmful practices.³⁷¹ One example of a gender-sensitive curriculum currently being implemented in the MENA region is the Life Skills and Citizenship Education initiative.³⁷²

- Cultivate critical thinking in girls, recognizing and investing in their agency, so that they are better able to make informed choices when given the opportunity.³⁷³

- Train teachers to recognize their own gender biases and promote a gender transformative ap-

proach to teaching which includes sessions on gender, violence, bodily changes, emotions and conflict resolution.³⁷⁴

- Support the training of female teachers.³⁷⁵
- Ban all forms of discrimination that prevent access to school based on marital status, pregnancy, or motherhood, while addressing the child support needs to enable young mothers to return to school.³⁷⁶

4.2.1.3. Build on girls' empowerment through providing economic opportunities

- Provide girls with workforce education and vocational training.³⁷⁷
- Provide girls with opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.³⁷⁸
- Provide girls with financial literacy and savings and loan opportunities, including opportunities for saving and investment where access is not controlled by male relatives.³⁷⁹

4.2.1.3. Increase opportunities for girls' participation

- Build mechanisms for girls to participate at the local/community level along with a supportive environment to allow them to participate.³⁸⁰
- Consider a wide range of opportunities for girls' participation, including community activities, initiatives, digital engagement, and volunteering activities.³⁸¹
- Support girls' participation in UNICEF's 'Voices of Youth' initiative, which provides an online platform for young people to share information and perspectives.³⁸²

4.2.2. Outcome 2: House hold and community attitudes and behaviours

4.2.2.1. Engage receptive religious leaders

- Work with religious leaders to build their capacity to communicate accurate information to communities on child marriage,³⁸³ including by working with peers of religious leaders to develop their understanding of scriptural support for girls' education and delaying marriage.³⁸⁴ For example, see box 8.

BOX 8

Good practice – from Morocco on the importance of engaging religious leaders

Based in Morocco, La Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas (Mohammadia League of Scholars) has been particularly active in successfully engaging religious leaders and communities on gender-based violence, including child marriage. Their peer-educator model is being replicated in several African countries. In addition, La Rabita has a production of audio-visual aids (short films) aimed at sensitizing children. La Rabita trains young men to use new methods of public speaking and persuasion to teach children and youth about human rights. Peer educators also play a major role in enhancing children's critical thinking and implementing human rights culture. The use of the New Technologies of Information and Communication has proven to be a powerful eye opening and leadership building approach.

4.2.2.2. Implement holistic community programming

- Mobilize gatekeepers (community leaders,

■ religious leaders, teachers, doctors) and build their capacity as champions of girls' education and the benefits of delaying marriage.³⁸⁵

■ Using 'communication for development' and 'behaviour change' strategies, employ the media, radio and television, mosques and schools to relay messaging on the negative consequences of child marriage and the benefits of delaying marriage (including examples of benefits and achievements experienced by individuals and families who delayed marriage),³⁸⁶ while undertaking local community outreach programmes that focus on child participation and education of parents in changing social norms.³⁸⁷

■ Develop initiatives that work with men and boys using a peer-to-peer methodology, introducing and encouraging more progressive ideas of gender norms, the roles of men and women, and the benefits to delaying marriage.³⁸⁸

■ Train 'youth agents of change' to lead transformative actions in schools and other settings to promote respective gender relationships, gender equality and safety in public spaces.³⁸⁹

■ Engage the community through group and community education sessions on the consequences of and alternatives to child marriage.³⁹⁰

■ Establish community committees, devoted to detecting and intervening in cases of child marriage.³⁹¹

4.2.2.3. Work directly with men and boys

■ Work with young men to discuss and challenge social perceptions and expecta-

tations placed upon them, building their understanding and capacity to exercise agency in a way that is more gender equitable and less harmful.³⁹²

■ Model and scale up the MenCare approach of Promundo and Wold Vision, working with fathers, uncles and male family leaders to understand the harm of early marriage, and address gender norms and roles within and without the household alongside their female family members.³⁹³

■ Build capacity of civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, to work with men and boys on addressing and reducing harmful normative attitudes and behaviour.

BOX 9

Good practice on the importance of engaging men and boys

The review of programming in the region included Save the Children's CHOICES curriculum, which worked with young adolescent girls and boys to question gender roles and norms. Results from this project included an increased agreement amongst participants that girls make their marriage decision and that girls should discuss the unsuitability of potential grooms with their fathers. This project highlights a critical point for programming on child marriage – the importance of working with men and boys. Working with men and boys in the community can increase the ability of girls to obtain permission to access services and opportunities; it may also address the risks associated with the hostility that men can have to programming that is restricted to women and girls. Working with men

and boys is also necessary to challenge the norms and behaviours in relation to women, which can be enhanced when messaging and normative change is passed from men to men through peer networks.

One approach to behaviour and socio-normative change is to address the roles and responsibilities that drive male relationships with women. Working with the framework of what 'responsible' or 'real' male behaviour is towards women, programming can start to reframe this as actions and behaviours that do no harm to women and girls, including sisters, cousins and daughters. Such actions and behaviours include sexual conduct and early marriage.

The notion that young men are considered to be wild and reckless, whilst older men are more responsible and stable, can be the basis of the reason why older men are considered more desirable for a girl to marry. However, this framing of young men being associated with risky sexual behaviour, violence and lack of engagement in care work, can be challenged directly when men and boys are given adequate support, with evidence showing that they can adopt equitable attitudes and behaviours which have protective effects against harmful practices.

In societies where girls and boys are often separated, there is a lack of understanding about what acceptable behaviour with the opposite sex is. In a report by Girl Power Alliance, this was identified as an important reason behind harassment of girls in Pakistan, for example. As such, programming should include the establishment of safe spaces, in which girls and boys can safely explore different ideas of their gender roles and experiment with new forms of interaction.

Such spaces need to be established in ways that do not generate conflict with parents (or include programming approaches to increase parental permission). However, examples could include sports, dance, arts and culture and other activities that could be complemented by education on transforming gender norms, relationships and sexuality.

Programming can be framed around work with parents, in particular fathers and uncles, to understand the harm of early marriage. Such work can also look at the financial implications on early marriage for the girl, as well as exploring and illustrating how a greater balance between the genders may look in the household. As part of the MenCare campaign, for example, Promundo and World Vision engaged fathers in India in the promotion of gender equality in the home and the prevention of child marriage through encouraging men, their partners and daughters, to reflect upon the cultural and gender norms that devalue girls and present barriers to men's participation as caring, involved fathers.

4.2.2.4. Identify and support positive deviants

■ Learn from the actions and attitudes of positive deviants in order to identify emic methods for improving gender-equitable attitudes at the household and community level.³⁹⁴

4.2.3. Outcome 3: Service delivery

4.2.3.1. Build technical capacity of stakeholders

■ Develop tools and build capacity in order to clarify referral and reporting processes.

■ Strengthen training for case managers on how to ensure access to services for child brides.

■ Develop country-specific technical reference materials for service providers that include relevant information on laws, regulations, processes and services relevant to child marriage.

■ Increase the number of Syrian staff working with child marriage-affected refugee communities

■ Incorporate knowledge and capacity building on identifying and preventing child marriage in the training of service delivery providers in the health and education sectors.

4.2.3.2. Increase financial resourcing and support of local/rural organizations in service delivery

■ Provide financial support to women's rights activists and legal groups who work on child marriage advocacy, outreach and who bring cases of child marriage to courts.³⁹⁵

■ Engage donors in advocacy with governments and other stakeholders on child marriage.³⁹⁶

■ Ensure funding to the state on child marriage is attached to conditions that require cooperation with civil society and contains clear monitoring frameworks and benchmarks that must be met in order to get further funding.³⁹⁷

■ Reach out to new stakeholders, those working in more rural areas and young gender activists who are able to promote messaging at the ground level and locally.³⁹⁸

■ Ensure that women's rights organizations and implementing partners for programming are key strategic partners and involved in monitoring.³⁹⁹

■ Support greater donor coordination to prevent competitive behaviour between organizations.⁴⁰⁰

■ Provide long-term, multi-year, core funding to women's rights organizations who are working on child marriage, so that they can engage in activism as well as project implementation, as necessary.⁴⁰¹

■ Make grant mechanisms more accessible in terms of technical and language requirements.⁴⁰²

■ Using OECD's 'Strategies to Improve Rural Service Delivery' to strengthen delivery of services to rural and remote communities.⁴⁰³

■ Develop joint capacity-development efforts, coordinating resources for service delivery.

4.2.3.3. Employ a multi-sectoral approach

■ Integrate prevention and response services across various sectors to create a holistic approach for reducing child marriage and mitigating its effects by meeting the needs of married adolescents.⁴⁰⁴

■ Integrate child marriage prevention and response into broader structural efforts.⁴⁰⁵

■ Seek opportunities to leverage funding and resources across funders and implementers from all sectors.⁴⁰⁶

4.2.4. Outcome 4: Legal framework

4.2.4.1. Build understanding of politicians and judges to understand girls' rights and the detrimental impacts of child marriage.

- Develop 'bench books' or judicial guides for judges and judicial officers on child rights and child marriage.

- Build the capacity of judges and justice professions, including on international norms on child rights and child marriage and how they differ with regard to domestic frameworks, as well as access to fair trials, and gender considerations.

- Provide capacity development and leadership forums for female parliamentarians to strengthen the weight of their advocacy on child marriage, while providing broader training on child marriage prevention for parliamentarians in general to recognize risks and rights related to the practice.

4.2.4.2. Develop national strategy plans and implementation plans

- Support participatory processes to developing national strategies and implementation plans with a monitoring framework.

- Support the development of inter-ministerial taskforces and strengthen their ability to coordinate a national approach to addressing child marriage.

- Advocate for incorporation of child marriage in strategies addressing violence against women (e.g. in Egypt) and women's empowerment.⁴⁰⁷

4.2.4.3. Strengthen child marriage laws and enforcement

- Set the minimum age for marriage as 18 years in law without judicial exception, codifying Sharia law to eliminate subjective interpretation.⁴⁰⁸

- Prohibit and criminalize marriage to a person under the age of 18 years.

- Introduce statutory rape laws.

- Build capacity of judicial officers and marriage registrars to understand and apply the minimum age law where it exists; to understand the detrimental impact of child marriage and benefits in delaying marriage; and to promote counselling for couples seeking marriage where one or more party is under eighteen.⁴⁰⁹

- Once laws are in place, build girls' and communities' knowledge of girls' legal rights related to marriage.⁴¹⁰

4.2.5. Outcome 5: Evidence Generation

4.2.5.1. Strengthen the coordination of research among stakeholders

- Take a participatory approach to establishing a system of coordination and collaboration on research and data collection and analysis.

- Ensure that government and civil society are engaged in any coordination mechanism.

- Develop an evidence-based regional programming framework.

4.2.5.2. Develop an evidence-based regional programming framework

- Standardize key indicators and ensure all programming is coupled with high quality interventions.⁴¹¹

- Revisit indicators used for household surveys to ensure gender -disaggregated data and data on social norms that drive child marriage.

- Ensure that Monitoring and Evaluation identifies unintended impacts: When coupled with provision of school uniform, the presence of teacher training rendered the positive impact of uniform provision invisible; the impact of increasing the age of marriage was that the dowry price increased; some schools demanded payments when they knew that there was a cash-based programme in action.

- Results from the study identified the need for further evidence on the drivers and consequences of child marriage. These should be designed in accordance with the priorities identified by Synanemyr et al (2015).⁴¹²

Causes:

- Research the impact of structural and geopolitical factors, including conflict, migration, urbanization.
- Better understand the normative shifts in perceptions and expectations of marriage.
- Study what works in delaying marriage, including education, structural factors, normative changes.
- Build understanding of how girls exercise their agency in deciding to marry. In identifying their agency as “thin” “opportunistic” and “oppositional”, there is room to build and strengthen agency.⁴¹³

Consequences:

- Research health and social consequences of child marriage, beyond maternal and perinatal health, including specific vulnerabilities of younger adolescent girls.
- Gather longitudinal data on the inter-generational impact of child marriage and its relationship to social, development, health, and gender issues.
- Collect data on the economic costs of child marriage including early childbearing, maternal morbidity and mortality, abortion, violence, and decreased educational and employment potential.

Prevention:

- Identify essential components of child marriage interventions to scale up, the required intensity and duration of implementation, mechanisms for delivering these interventions, and the cost of scaling up.
- Measure sustainability of changes in child marriage norms and practices, and the wider benefits of these changes on girls’ and women’s lives.
- Conduct research into prevention and

- response initiatives to identify the effective mix of sanctions and incentives.
- Identify lessons that can be learned from other areas of social and cultural norm change.

4.2. Country Specific Recommendations

4.3.1. Egypt

4.3.1.1. Girls’ voice and agency

Strengthen girls’ voice within the design and implementation of child marriage prevention programmes and policies.

Make public spaces safe for girls.

- Implement projects that focus on provision of safe spaces through forums, clubs and meetings that allow girls to meet, gather, connect and socialize outside of the home;⁴¹⁴ including using the Ishraq programme as a model.

- Model future interventions on UN Women’s “Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls” Global Programme, now the “Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces” initiative.

Continue to provide financial incentives for sending girls to school

- Model and upscale Egypt’s Ministry of Social Solidarity’s Takaful cash transfer programme including providing monthly income conditional on children’s 80 per cent school attendance as well as medical check-ups for mothers and young children.

- Model and upscale The Girls’ Education Initiative including providing monthly, nutritious take-home rations of food for each girl student who maintains an 80 per cent class attendance.⁴¹⁵

- Provide mothers with microloans to start small businesses as a way to encourage financial independence.

Increase opportunities for girls’ participation

- Consider a wide range of opportunities for girls' participation, including community activities, initiatives, digital engagement, and volunteering activities, including through projects such as UNICEF's Voices of Youth initiative.

4.3.1.2. Household and community attitudes and behaviours

Leverage social networks to change collective beliefs and practices related to child marriage and FGM/C.

Use media to raise awareness of child marriage's negative consequences and to address social norms related to women's and men's roles. As one key informant suggested:



"Introduce these issues through a simple language that can be understood by the general population."



Model and upscale programmatic interventions that engage the community through group and community education sessions on the consequences of and alternatives to child marriage. Use positive role models within communities and social networks to communicate messages, as one informant advises,



"Building trust and credibility with the communities in order for them to accept our interventions is crucial. Using positive models; using peers to communicate with youth; and using religious leaders and doctors has also been very useful."



Integrate into child marriage prevention programming successful activities from the CHOICES programme, working with boys

and girls between 10-14 on addressing and challenging gender roles. Incorporate gender-transformative programming in the school environment, modelled on the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) programme from India.

Engage receptive religious leaders.

- Make religious leaders aware of the consequences of child marriage, and support them to become vocal advocates for prevention of child marriage, including building on lessons learned in UNICEF's work with Al Azhar University and the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR).⁴¹⁶

4.3.1.3. Service delivery

Increase reporting mechanisms for child marriage.

- Strengthen protection committees at the village level to identify at-risk girls and support community dialogues.

- Provide access, at the local level, to services including legal aid, vocational training, and health support.

Increase investment in secondary education.

- Build secondary schools that are closer to the communities or subsidize transportation costs.

- Offer child care for young mothers who have not completed schooling.

- Train and hire more female teachers.

Link child marriage programming with Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC) and positive parenting efforts.

- Learn from and link with both violence against children prevention and positive parenting efforts, as appropriate.

4.3.1.4. Legal context

Develop strategies to ensure implementation of the National Strategic Plan.

- Engage political actors in a highly participatory process, fostering champions from all sides of the political spectrum, to build support for the NSP and ease restrictions on civil society organizations that are working on it.

Strengthen legal enforcement of existing child marriage laws.

- Criminalize the practice of child marriage.
- Ensure that all children have access to birth certificates notwithstanding the status of their parents' marriage.

Capitalize on related government priorities.

- Build government awareness and knowledge on the interconnections between child marriage, overpopulation, reproductive choice for women and FGM/C; and advocate for the importance of integration of child marriage prevention strategies within these other initiatives.

Consider the unintended consequences of the formalization of "seasonal marriages" through Ministerial Regulation No. 9200.

4.3.1.5. Evidence generation

Strengthen the coordination of research initiatives.

- There is a need for better coordination of child marriage research activities across organizations at all levels in order to avoid duplication of existing research and perpetuation of research gaps.

Build evidence on girls' perceptions of child marriage and how education impacts marriage timing.

- Conduct additional qualitative studies to better understand girls' perceptions of child marriage, so that future studies can better emphasize the voice of the girls themselves when developing solutions to end child marriage.

- Generate more evidence on the link between education and child marriage in Egypt, and in particular, whether and how additional education for girls succeeds in delaying marriage.

Use findings to inform the National Strategic Plan.

- Increase analysis of data on child marriage and FGM/C in the frame of overpopulation, which can be used to advocate for and coordinate a stronger government response to these interconnected issues.

Ensure internal alignment.

- Pay specific attention to how child marriage programming can link up with the adolescent girl's empowerment lens stipulated in UNICEF's gender action plan (GAP) and new strategic plan 2018-2021 at the global level and a Country Programme Document (CPD)

4.3.2. Jordan

4.3.2.1. Girls' voice and agency

Eliminate gendered barriers to education.

- Ban all forms of discrimination in schools against girls based on marital status, pregnancy, and motherhood.
- Introduce programming, (following legal precedent) to train school officials as well as girls and their communities about girls' right to access education after marriage.

- Address mobility limitations that prevent access to education.

Implement vocational training programmes for girls ages 15-18.

- Follow the model used by the UN Women's 'Women and Girls Oasis' at the Za'atari Refugee Camp for Syrian refugee girls.⁴¹⁷ Including promoting women's capacity to support themselves and engage them in a peer support network.
- Develop new vocational training programmes that specifically target young refugee girls between the ages of 15-18 who are at-risk of child marriage, including giving girls the tools to become financial assets, instead of financial burdens, to their families.
- Invest in vocational training programmes that consider the restricted mobility of Jordanian at-risk and already married girls.

4.3.2.2. Household and community attitudes and behaviours

Implement holistic community programming to address social norms around child marriage and family honour.

- Develop behaviour change strategies intended to address the norms around child marriage to mobilize the entire community, and engage Communication for Development (C4D) strategies to work with both adults and children in the community to identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them.
- Utilize C4D strategies to support public education programmes that raise awareness of the negative consequences of child marriage on a girl's health and that of her children.
- Evaluate the possibility to reactivate the Amani campaign to target domes

tic violence with a C4D and behaviour change perspective.

- Model successful interventions from UNICEF's Makani programme focused on raising community awareness.

Engage receptive religious leaders.

- Make religious leaders (in particular female preachers) aware of the consequences of child marriage, and support them to become vocal advocates for prevention of child marriage.

Address gender-based violence.

- Ensure that the specific needs and circumstances of child brides are integrated and addressed in the government, UN, and NGO stakeholders' joint initiative to develop national standard operating procedures and referral pathways.
- Take a "whole of community" approach to initiatives that address the issue of harassment and abuse of women in public places.⁴¹⁸

- Model new initiatives on long-term programmes that engage men and boys through sports that seek to shift the attitudes of athletes, coaches, and mentors towards gender equity and violence against women.⁴¹⁹

4.3.2.3. Service delivery

Develop the capacity of local organizations to provide services to at-risk and already married girls.

- Develop tools and build capacity in order to clarify referral and reporting systems.
- Expand training to case managers on how to ensure access to services for child brides. Case managers need to be adept at both prevention, or managing cases of girls at-risk of child marriage, and at ensuring effective response and access to services for child brides
- Support and strengthen the capacity building programme for national service providers.

- Develop a standard reference and information sheet including the laws and regulations pertaining to child marriage and information on the risks of child marriage, that could be easily distributed to individuals and institutions, and used as a reference guide for service providers.

- Building on the positive results of the International Medical Corps' (IMC) conscious effort to employ Syrian volunteers on child protection programme, increase the number of Syrian staff working with child marriage affected communities.⁴²⁰

- Model and upscale the positive practices of the Supreme Judge Department including by providing child marriage counselling to all individuals intending to marry before turning 18.

Promote legal awareness of girls' rights and child marriage laws.

- Build on the Amani campaign model to develop a new child marriage prevention campaign to promote individual and institutional awareness of child marriage.⁴²¹

4.3.2.4. Legal context

Increase coordination on child marriage prevention.

- UNICEF should lead on the coordination of UN agencies and others in efforts for child marriage prevention.

- Stakeholders should strengthen and support the Child Marriage Task Force set up by humanitarian agencies working on the refugee response, which will work in partnership with National Council for Family Affairs' Child Marriage Task Force to assist the Government of Jordan in tackling issues of child marriage.

Close legal loopholes.

- Coordinate campaigns to reform the personal status law's loopholes on child marriage, and to change the discriminatory nationality laws that do not allow Jordanian women with foreign husbands to pass their citizenship rights to their children.

4.3.2.5. Evidence generation

Generate evidence on nature and impact of restricted mobility on child marriage.

- Develop more context-specific conceptual frameworks for understanding the particular nature of restricted mobility in Jordan for both Jordanian and Syrian girls, as it may vary depending on the local context.

Address gaps in evidence.

- Informal marriages in refugee camps.

- How and when poverty impacts decisions around child marriage

4.3.3. Lebanon

4.3.3.1. Girls' voice & agency

Maintain and strengthen safe spaces for women and girls.

- Focus on assessing the adequacy and relevance of offered activities for all the cohorts and ensure linkages with other key sectors for women's and girls' empowerment.

- Pay specific attention to ensuring effective spaces and services for girls at immediate risk of child marriage, and for girls who were recently married.

- Model and scale-up the successful interventions of UNICEF's 'No Lost Generation' programme as it relates to the creation of safe spaces.

- Model and scale-up the safe spaces initiative that works through national Listening and Counselling

Centres, offer activities for children whilst mothers participate in their own activities.⁴²²

- Offer concurrent programming for mothers and daughters in safe spaces initiatives, to engage and empower mothers on issues related to child marriage. Consider adapting positive parenting interventions, for example, those previously applied to reduce violence against children in Egypt.

Increase financial incentives for sending girls to school.

- Evaluate the LCRP 2017-2020 incentive-based initiatives and scale-up programmes where proven to be effective in the Lebanese and Syrian refugee context. A range of incentives should be considered, including social protection benefits, transportation costs, compensation for a lost day of work, cash for participation, hot meals, etc. In addition, 'one stop shop' models should be considered, which can address multiple health and education needs of the family.

- Recognize that cash incentives may be unsustainable in terms of cost, and should thus couple all financial incentive programmes with community norm-changing interventions.⁴²³

- Recognize that increased educational attainment for girls should be paired with meaningful opportunities for employment and labour force participation.

Provide girls with economic opportunities.

- Provide girls with workforce education and training.⁴²⁴

- Provide girls with opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.⁴²⁵

- Provide girls with financial literacy and savings and loan opportunities, including opportunities for saving and

investment where access is not controlled by male relatives.⁴²⁶

4.3.3.2. Household and community attitudes and behaviours

Implement holistic community programming.

- Engage girls, their families and community leaders using UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) strategies to work with both adults and children in the community, including approaches that work peer-to-peer, engage men and male youth, target families with young girls, and are appropriate to specific cultural background, to identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them.

- Undertake activities within the communities, not just in centres outside the community, to increase trust and the perception of safety that will increase the girls' ability to attend.

- Model and scale-up the successful community committees run by KAFA, devoted to detecting and intervening in cases of child marriage.

- Standardize the approach, methodology and tools (including an M&E framework), based on piloted models around child marriage prevention interventions in the community, developed with community participation and validated by the government.

- Utilize C4D strategies to support public education programmes that raise awareness of the negative consequences of child marriage on a girl's health, and address the perception amongst Syrian refugees that child marriage is a method of protecting girls from financial and physical instability.

- Model interventions from UNICEF's 'No Lost Generation' programming to educate communities about the negative impacts of child marriage.

- Consider the needs of married girls and include them in programming as appropriate.

Scale-up the engagement of receptive religious leaders.

- Engage in careful monitoring and evaluation of programmes that engage religious leaders, and replicate effective methods.

4.3.3.3. Service delivery

Ensure sustainable services through long term funding and capacity building of local organizations.

- Increase funding and organizational support to build the capacity of NGOs and government to deliver sustainable programming.

Increase capacity development training and tools.

- Review and develop tools and curricula for the different sectors and roll out capacity development (child marriage, GBV prevention and response), establish a multi-sectoral framework that highlights interconnection of these issues in the prevention of child marriage.

Use health as the entry point for service delivery.

- Employ targeted, mobile, sexual and reproductive health services as a key entry point for delivery of information and services on child marriage.

Employ people from the targeted community to increase the cultural and contextual sensitivity of interventions.

4.3.3.4 Legal context

Coordinate advocacy efforts to end child marriage.

- Coordinate partners to unify efforts towards producing a unified draft law setting the legal age for marriage at 18.

- Establish a national advocacy group – with significant and effective participation by men and women – to lobby for the adoption of the unified draft law.

Develop a national strategy to end child marriage in Lebanon.

- Ensure domestic and international stakeholders are engaged in the development of the national plan at an early stage to provide input on the plan and to ensure maximum buy-in and high-level political support.

- Ensure that the national strategy is holistic, addressing the five focus areas of the UNICEF/UNFPA Global Programme on child marriage. Additionally, while changing laws is important, the plan should also look at other potential policies that can effectively address child marriage in Lebanon.

4.3.3.5. Evidence generation

Increase research cooperation and collaboration.

- Take a participatory approach to establishing a system of coordination and collaboration on research and data collection and analysis.

Support evaluation of current prevention programming.

- Ensure that pilot programmes like UNICEF's unconditional cash transfer initiative to help children attend public primary school and the Back-to-School initiatives have sufficient funding and resources to adequately evaluate their programmes to strengthen the evidence base and allow practitioners to make appropriate adjustments before scaling up these interventions.

Develop an M&E framework and tools.

- Develop M&E framework and tools to be able to collect and analyse data (through a multi-sectoral database) on child marriage and related issues, including through GBVIMS, PRIMERO, and DEVInfo.

- Use the MoRES as the basis for an improved monitoring framework of child marriage activities in Lebanon.

4.3.4. Morocco

4.3.4.1. Girls' voice & agency

Build on promising approaches to enhance social and economic empowerment of girls through education and legal rights.

- Ensure that civil society, bilateral agencies and the Government of Morocco continue to work hand in hand to strengthen and replicate initiatives that seek to support the school to work towards transition for girls and their vocational training.

- Replicate models for creation of safe spaces in which girls can build their agency and voice, providing them with the opportunity to meet other girls in similar situations, and create peer support networks.

- Use the existing possibilities within UNICEF programming on gender equality and social inclusion of vulnerable youth to mainstream child marriage prevention.

- Consider whether ICRAM, a national programme on gender equality, can present an effective entry point to mainstream child marriage prevention.

Continue to provide financial incentives for sending girls to school.

- Support and strengthen initiatives that incentivize girls' education, including public social transfers, covering transportation costs, compensating for a lost day of work, cash for participation, to hot meals, etc.

- Recognize that cash incentives may be unsustainable in terms of cost, and should thus couple all financial incentive programmes with community norm-changing interventions.⁴²⁷

4.3.4.2. Household and community attitudes and behaviours

Raise awareness of girls' productive potential.

- Raise families' awareness on their daughters' productive potential as being an advantage to the household. Specifically, programmes should involve parents, girls, and boys in developing ways of allowing girls to go to school or work and emphasize girls' productive potential.

- Attempt to shift social norms and perceptions, building on the model established by the Promoting Protective Social Norms for Children project, including through a national campaign and local community outreach programmes addressing norms around violence against children.

Provide opportunities for girls to support themselves financially.

- Provide alternate opportunities for girls to independently support themselves to reduce girls' economic burden on their parents and remove an incentive for families to marry them off.

Implement holistic community programming.

- Model and replicate the peer-educator approach to working with men and boys.

- Model and replicate the foundation YTOO child prevention campaign, including the use of mobile caravans to encourage families in remote villages to educate their daughters and sensitize them about the negative consequences of child marriage.

- Mobilize the entire community to address norms perpetuating child marriage, using UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) strategies to work with both adults and children in the community to identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them.

- Support the Spring of Dignity coalition to continue their advocacy.⁴²⁸

4.3.4.3. Service delivery

Increase funding and investment in education.

- Invest in secondary schools that are closer to the communities; hire more female teachers and integrate harmful traditional practices and their negative consequences in school curricula; subsidize transportation costs.

Strengthen rural service delivery.

- Increase thinking about mechanisms to strengthen the delivery of programming and services at the rural level, both directly related to child marriage and indirectly related, such as education and health services.

- Consider the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 'Strategies to Improve Rural Service Delivery'. Though not specific to the MENA region, the report may be a helpful resource for understanding both the challenges and range of strategies for extending and improving rural services.⁴²⁹

4.3.4.4. Legal context

- Findings suggest that there are several concrete areas in which the judicial sector can and should improve its performance and accountability.

Address gaps in the Moudawana.

- Strengthen and support NGOs and activists in their advocacy to address gaps in the legal framework.

- Encourage and support legislators to address the gaps in the Moudawana that allow the extensive use of discretion; for instance, eliminating the waiver procedure for underage marriage.

- In recognition that introducing mar-

riage laws before communities are ready may lead to limited enforcement of the law through illegal marriages and increased vulnerability of at-risk and already-married girls,⁴³⁰ support advocacy efforts and community norm change programmes that work in tandem to end child marriage both de jure and de facto.

Increase legal protections through knowledge-building with judges.

- Establish a 'bench book' or judicial guide for judges and judicial officers on child rights and child marriage.

- Model and scale up successful interventions from the European Union (EU) funded Himaya Project 'Access of children to justice', in particular the capacity development of judges and justice professionals on child rights and the issues related to child marriage, educating parents, and providing family guidance and mediation.

- Scale up capacity development efforts to include substance on fair trials and gender issues.

- Address inadequate legal infrastructure by ensuring courts are adequately staffed, particularly with social workers as mandated under the Moudawana, to ensure that the medical and psychological well-being of minors is given adequate consideration.

4.3.4.5. Evidence generation

Improve data on child marriage.

- Develop stronger methodologies, using gender analysis, including sex-disaggregated data, to produce more robust data but also contribute to a clearer understanding of the correlation between child marriage and poverty as well as education.

- Carry out a national study on the prevalence of the phenomenon, but also on the determining factors. This will help to adapt the relevant policies and actions against the marriage of minors, and strengthen advocacy amongst decision-makers (legislators).

- Contextualize child marriage within the framework of broader socio-economic transformations – generally overlooked in child marriage research – which affect child marriage practices. These include a thorough analysis of geopolitical factors, including migration, urbanization, climate-change related droughts and food insecurity and how those affect normative shifts in marriage practices (e.g. improved access to education for girls, changes in family structures from extended to nuclear families, changes in relationships, etc.).

- Train data enumerators to undertake household surveys with a gender lens.

Increase coordination between stakeholders.

- Build strong linkages and partnerships between civil society and government entities to ensure that work on ending child marriage in Morocco continues to progress. Coordination is key– if stakeholders work in partnership with one another they can share information, capitalize on experience, and develop integrative approaches and activities.

4.3.5. Sudan

Create child marriage specific programming.

- Develop interventions specific to child marriage to ensure that efforts to end child marriage get the attention and funding they deserve.

4.3.5.1. Girls' voice and agency

Provide financial incentives for sending girls to school.

- Increase funding to NGOs to provide these incentives, and/or provide public social transfers for school attendance. Incentives can range from covering transportation costs, to covering school fees, to giving cash transfers for attendance, to providing hot meals.

- Recognize that cash incentives may be unsustainable in terms of cost, and should thus couple all financial incentive programmes with community norm changing interventions.⁴³¹

4.3.5.2. Household and community attitudes and behaviours

Engage receptive religious leaders.

- Support the specific plan within the National Strategy to engage with and train religious leaders on child marriage issues, including developing terms of reference for the religious and Sufist groups to coordinate advocacy against child marriage.

Implement holistic community programming.

- Mobilize the entire community to address norms perpetuating child marriage, using UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) strategies to work with both adults and children in the community to identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them.

- Utilize C4D strategies to support public education programmes that raise awareness of the negative consequences of child marriage on a girl's health and that of her children.

4.3.5.3. Service delivery

Develop a law enforcement plan.

- Implement advocacy, training, and sensitization of all stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the revised Personal Status Law and the National Strategy after their approval.

- Develop guidelines on the process of reporting child marriage cases and the required steps needed to manage those cases.

- Increase resources and training to government officials, NGO workers, and law enforcement personnel on enacting, implementing and enforcing any legislation passed on child marriage.

Increase coordination between stakeholders.

- Develop joint capacity development efforts, addressing capacity and coordination within the same interventions.

- Support the National Taskforce to End Child Marriage in their call for regular training for Family and Child Protection Units (FCPU).

- Link identified receptive religious leaders with other sectors such as the Medical Council, CEVAW and academic institutions. The networks and partnerships formed around ending FGM should be used as a reference point on effective coordination in Sudan.

- Build on coordinating initiatives such as the Communication Behavioural-Impact (COMBI) Plan on Child Marriage supported by UNFPA.

Capacity building for women parliamentarians.

- Model and scale-up the Women's Initiative for Learning and Leadership (WILL)'s Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership for Effective Democratic Governance in Pakistan initiative, which, since 2011, has provided training events and leadership forums for female MPs in Pakistan and resulted in their increased ability to network within and across party lines and engage the media on their priority issues, whilst increasing their visibility as female leaders.⁴³²

Increase funding to NGOs for child marriage specific programming.

- The UN should work to garner attention and funding for child marriage issues and programming in Sudan, highlighting the Government of Sudan's recent steps towards action on child marriage.

4.3.5.4. Legal context

Coordinate advocacy efforts to end child marriage.

- Stakeholders need to coordinate so that advocacy efforts to change the law work in tandem with community norm change programmes to end child marriage both de jure and de facto.

- International and domestic organizations need to support the Ministry of Justice amendment of the 1991 Personal Status Law including: setting the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years of age, revising the definition of marriage, changing the age of child custody for mothers, and modifying the procedures needed in case of divorce.

4.3.5.5. Evidence generation

Support the National Bureau of Statistics' Gender Unit.

- Provide technical and financial support to the Bureau to ensure that they include the information needed for child marriage as part of the national surveys, adding questions to those surveys in order to generate data that can guide the planning and implementation process of child marriage prevention.

- Provide technical and financial support for the collection of data that can address cultural variations within tribal communities and between nomadic and non-nomadic groups.

Strengthen and standardize key indicators.

- Wherever possible, capture data on the sex of respondents to allow gender disaggregation of all statistics.

- For more complex indicators, ensure coordination and standardization across existing data collection bodies such as the National Council of Child Welfare's Information Management System (IMS) and the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

Establish strong M&E systems

- Refer to the lessons learned and best practices emerging from the level 3 monitoring approach (L3M) pilot for child marriage activities in Bangladesh. This pilot was the first attempt to use UNICEF's global monitoring framework, Monitoring Results for Equity Systems (MoRES), to monitor child marriage programme activities. The L3M monitored two of UNICEF's child marriage activities in Bangladesh – adolescent stipends and conditional cash transfers – to assess their effectiveness in addressing social norms, financial access, and legislation/policy. The results from this pilot document the successes and challenges in changing social norms through multifaceted community based programming, and could form the basis for an improved monitoring framework of child marriage activities in Sudan.

Study social norms.

- Support the social norms study in 10 states.

4.3.6. Yemen

4.3.6.1. Girls' voice & agency

Provide financial incentives for sending girls to school.

- Increase funding to NGOs to provide these incentives, and/or provide public social transfers for school attendance. Incentives can range from covering transportation costs, to covering school fees, to giving cash transfers for attendance, to providing hot meals.

- Recognize that cash incentives may be unsustainable in terms of cost, and thus couple all financial incentive programmes with community norm changing interventions.⁴³³

Implement literacy programmes for women & girls no longer in school.

- Model the Literacy through Poetry Project (LTPP) including offering women who have limited access to education the opportunity to gain literacy skills based on their cultural heritage, utilizing local poetry, stories and proverbs as teaching materials.

4.3.6.2. Household and community attitudes and behaviours

Implement holistic community programming to address social norms around child marriage.

- Mobilize the entire community to address norms perpetuating child marriage, using UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) strategies to work with both adults and children in the community to identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them.

- Utilize C4D strategies to support public education programmes that raise awareness of the negative consequences of child marriage on a girl's health and that of her children.

Change community perceptions of the appropriate age for girls to marry.

- Follow the 'Safe Age of Marriage' programme model, in addressing social norms and communities' attitudes to child marriage and promoting girls' education by training community educators to conduct outreach through mobile clinics.

4.3.6.3. Service delivery

Incorporate child marriage prevention and response efforts into GBV and health programming.

- Incorporate messaging on the negative consequences of marrying too early, into health services directed at all women, whether girls at risk, or their parents and community.

- Integrate child marriage concerns into health programming by offering sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education to married adolescents; sensitizing service providers to the needs of at-risk and already married girls; educating adolescent girls about proper infant care, breastfeeding and birth spacing; and training adolescents on negotiation skills related to SRH.⁴³⁴

- Conduct health behaviour-change campaigns, which have proven effective at addressing child marriage.

Develop the capacity of local organizations to provide services to at-risk and already married girls.

- Support greater financial and technical resourcing of child marriage programming;

- Strengthen and improve clarity of referral systems and case management systems for prevention and response;

- Develop guides and toolkits as well as training to increase the capacity of service providers in relation to the law, regulations and international norms.

- Continue to support the Ministry of Social Affairs' work to establish case management for social workers addressing child marriage. Once a system is in place, service provider staff should receive training on identifying, managing, and referring cases of girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.

Increase long-term funding to NGOs for child marriage programming.

- Ensure that donors understand that programmes in Yemen take time to be implemented, due to the current conflict and instability in the country. To provide effective prevention and response services to at-risk and already married girls, donors need to be willing to invest over multiple year periods, taking into account the current operating environment in Yemen.

4.3.6.4. Legal context

Promote legal awareness of girls' rights and child marriage laws.

- Establish awareness campaigns in schools, communities, and amongst parents and guardians to ensure that adolescent girls and boys have access to correct information about their legal rights.

4.3.6.5. Evidence generation

- Strengthen the coordination of research initiatives, including clarifying whether initiatives to address child marriage have been coordinated across the sectors and the extent to which different Ministries within the government bear responsibility for data collection, intervention strategies, implementation and evaluation.

Research the impact of conflict on child marriage in Yemen.

- Develop new quantitative and qualitative studies to shed light on the current prevalence of child marriage and its association with conflict as well as to illuminate how the conflict interacts with social norms and other socioeconomic factors to drive child marriage.

- Generate more robust evidence on effectiveness of programming. Due to the conflict, conducting research and evaluations remain challenging. All key informants pointed to limited resources – human, material and financial—which impedes the evidence base needed to understand what works and what does not work.

5. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the region, structural and geopolitical factors influence the drivers of child marriage. In particular, conflict increases the risk of economic insecurity and poverty which together, exacerbate child marriage practices and sexual violence. In addition to increasing prevalence, these structural and geopolitical forces further affect funding to programming focused on child marriage with drastic cuts, while presenting challenges to the implementation of such programming, especially in relation to securing government commitment and overcoming logistical issues.

Where government and donor priorities turn towards humanitarian needs, women's rights organizations are often the first to be stifled by competing priorities. Yet, women's movements have been seen to be at the forefront of democratization in the region and should be at the centre of the efforts to cease conflict and instability. These movements are also key to the efforts to change social norms on child marriage. However, they must have the core resources necessary to be able to allow activism to grow and develop organically.

Effective programming on child marriage engages the whole community; that is, community leaders, parents, teachers, children and adolescents and health professionals. Due to the significance of religion in those communities, especially amplified in times of conflict, displacement and extreme poverty, engaging religious leaders is also key. However, it is important to recognize that there remain significant differences in opinion on the message of religious scripture when it comes to child marriage. As such, it is necessary in the first instance, to work separately with religious leaders and scholars to strengthen agreement on scriptural support for delaying marriage, before rolling out programming that relies on such actors as advocates for delaying marriage.

Data shows that understanding the benefit of education influences child marriage decisions by reducing its prevalence. One of

the main approaches to increasing girls' attendance and retention in school is the use of cash incentives which, while effective, are acknowledged to be financially unsustainable. Evaluations of programmatic results have indicated, however, that quality teaching is a significant driver for increased retention of girls in school. As such, and in recognition of girls' agency, there is wide scope to focus programmatic interventions on strengthening the capacity of teachers, and increasing the number of female teachers, as a way to incentivize girls' attendance.

While it is critical that child marriage is seen within the wider frame of violence against women and patriarchal gender norms that prevent women and girls' empowerment, child marriage initiatives are less likely to be effective if they are subsumed into other broader programming. Similarly, at the national level, it is not enough to incorporate child marriage into broader violence against women policy.

Across the region, the domestic legal frameworks as they relate to child marriage do not meet international standards, on paper or in practise. Where child marriage laws do exist, evidence shows that they will only be effective in reducing prevalence where resources are invested in enforcement, in particular, through capacity development of law enforcement, public and judicial officials. Since the legal framework and its enforcement are inextricably embedded within socio-cultural norms, work towards strengthening the legal framework must not be pursued in a vacuum.

This research has shown that positive progress is being made in the region to address child marriage. There are signs that there is an increasing understanding that girls can benefit from spending a longer time in school and delaying marriage. However, the prevalence of child marriage in the region is still rooted in the perception that it is an appropriate method for protecting girls from financial and/or physical insecurity – perceived or real. As such, programming must address both the societal gender norms that constrain the agency and potential of girls, while also addressing the physical and structural barriers that affirm these norms and practices. Programming must be holistic, incorporating all levels of the socio-ecological framework the whole society in its approach. Not only will this approach address child marriage, it has the potential to address the women and girls' empowerment deficit in the region more generally.

Annex 1:

Key Informant Interview Guide for Government Officials

KII Identification Number: _____

Country: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time Started: _____ Time Ended: _____

Participant Summary: ☒ Female ☐ Male

Organization type: _____

Organization name: _____

Participant title: _____

Interviewer name: _____

Agrees to participate in interview? ☒ Y / ☐ N

Agrees to be named in report? ☒ Y / ☐ N

Agrees to be recorded? ☒ Y / ☐ N

Note for interviewer

Please make sure you are asking questions only about their professional experiences. Before beginning the interview, please read the brief informed consent section below and confirm the participant's agreement. Note that in this introduction and throughout the guide, there are suggestions for how to adapt the language based on the profile of the participants you are speaking with- i.e., preferred language, type of policy and programme relevant work done on early marriage.

Informed Consent:

Hello, my name is _____ as I/we told you in our first contact, I am part of a research team with the International Center for Research on Women in Washington, DC, in partnership with UNICEF. We are conducting a document review about early marriage across the MENA region to understand what some of the promising approaches are and also where gaps remain. This study includes your country, and we are interested in talking to you because you develop/implement activities and programmes related directly or indirectly to early marriage.

This information will help us inform regional efforts to address early marriage in line with a current initiative called the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme which is a multi-country programme that seeks to Accelerate Action to End Early Marriage.

Thanks for agreeing to participate to this interview; I would like to spend about one hour asking you questions about the activities and programmes you manage, and any relevant budgetary processes involved in early marriage that you may be able to discuss.

If you agree to being acknowledged in the report as one of our key informants, we may acknowledge your participation in our report (quoting your name and institution), but we will not link your name to any specific responses.

With your approval, we would like to record the interview so we don't miss anything. The recorder, which records your voice, will be taken to a secure office, which will be locked and only accessible to the research team. All the recordings will be written down and saved as computer files and then the audio files with your voice will be destroyed. The notes we take will also be locked away and available only to the research team. Three years after the study is completed we will destroy all data collected.

Note for interviewer: *Confirm respondent's agreement to participate, have his/her name included in the report, and consent to being recorded. Circle the appropriate responses in the box above.*

Questions Guide

General information about the ministry

1 What government ministries and division do you currently work for?

.....

.....

2 Could you please describe your current position and role in the division?

.....

.....

3 What type of programmes does your division provide or support?

.....

.....

Note for interviewer

No need to read the below checklist. Just let them answer and whatever groups they mention, mark or write them down.

- ☐ Girls' education
- ☐ Adolescent health including reproductive health
- ☐ Gender / women's affairs
- ☐ Access to justice
- ☐ Infrastructure and transport
- ☐ Water, hygiene and sanitation
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Finance and Social welfare / livelihoods
- ☐ Rule of law (e.g. police, judges, etc.)
- ☐ Migration/refugees
- ☐ Early protection
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Note for interviewer: Probe on programme and provide details

4 What challenges and obstacles do you face in addressing early marriage? Please, specify.

.....

.....

5 How are these challenges and obstacles overcome? Or how could they be overcome? What action steps should be taken?

.....

.....

6 In your ministry, could you please talk about action plans, strategies, and/or programmes you have that are specifically addressing early marriage [policy level, service level, outreach level, evidence (statistics)]?

.....

.....

Note for interviewer

If not specifically on early marriage, then probe on whether the programme relates in any way to early marriage. If services or policies are available to address this issue, provide more details.

If nothing on early marriage, then ask the following questions:

■ Do you know of any other programmes in other ministries?

.....
.....

■ Could you talk more about what are some of the ways in which your ministry could engage in addressing early marriage?

.....
.....

■ Would you recommend someone who we could speak to in that ministry?

.....
.....

SKIP TO RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION

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

7 Do you have a system in place to target or measure early marriage/your intervention to address early marriage? If so, what is the process?

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

8 Which or whom of these following groups are targeted from your activities and programmes that are related to early marriage? It would be great if you could give us also the proportion of these targeted groups.

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

Note to interviewer: No need to read target groups in the table. Just let them answer and whatever groups they mention, ask for proportions

Target Groups	Proportions
Adult women	
.....	
Girls (under age 18)	
Girls married before age 18	
Girls at risk of early marriage	
.....	
Boys? (under age 18)	
Boys married before the age 18, willingly and / or forcibly	
Refugees or displaced people Specify nationality, gender/age	
.....	
Religious leaders	
Community leaders	
Other vulnerable groups	
Others Please specify	

Note for interviewer: Make sure to probe for other groups or organizations who benefit from these activities/programmes and add that detail as well.

.....
.....

Budget allocation and costs of early marriage

9 Do you know what the overall annual budget is for your ministry/division (capacity building, training, development of tools, awareness campaigns, advocacy, etc.)?

.....

.....

10 Can you tell me about the interventions you implement or have witnessed in the context of these activities/programmes to prevent early marriage, along with the budget allocated for these interventions?

.....

.....

Types of interventions

Actual/ approximate costs

■ Girls' empowerment	
■ Improving girls' access to education	
■ Improving girls' access to health	
■ Improving girls' access to livelihoods	
■ Economic support and incentives to girls and their families	
■ Early marriage awareness-raising amongst parents and community members	
■ Empowering girls who were married before 18 with information and skills	
■ Health/Medical and sexual and reproductive health	
■ Case management of CM/including Legal	
■ Training of service providers	
■ Policy makers/advocacy/policy briefs	
■ Others? Please specify	

Note for interviewer: *If the interviewee has difficulty providing the associated cost (education, employment, health), please ask for an approximation.*

Background on National Action Plans and Strategies to Prevent CM

11 Does the country have a national action plan or a country wide initiative to end early marriage?

.....

.....

Note for interviewer

If no action plan/strategy, please ask:

- Could you talk about some of the reasons there is not a strategy or a plan to prevent from early marriage?

.....
.....

- Do you have other strategies that are not specifically related to early marriage but that include it as a component of that strategy?

.....
.....

If answer no to question 12 a. and b. then skip to next section (Challenges and Successes)

If there is a clear strategy/action plan, then ask:

- 12** *At what level has the strategy been approved (highest level)?*

.....
.....

- 13** *Could you describe the political commitment to implement the strategy within your division? For example, are there any challenges or barriers that you may face in implementing the strategy?*

.....
.....

Note to interviewer: *Ask about budget, reporting line, cabinet decree, action plan, and engagement of high level personnel (e.g. first lady, prime minister, president engagement).*

.....
.....

- 14** *Do you know if the consultation process involves or has involved other relevant sectors to discuss how the strategy could be implemented?*

.....
.....

If NO, move to next question.

Note to interviewer: *No need to read all the below sectors. Just let them answer and whatever sectors they mention, tick box or write down.*

If YES, for example:

- Girls' education
- Adolescent health including reproductive health
- Gender / women's affairs
- Access to justice
- Infrastructure and transport
- Water, hygiene and sanitation
- Nutrition
- Finance
- Social welfare / livelihoods u Rule of law (e.g. police, judges, etc.)
- Other? Please specify.

15 *Has the consultation involved other relevant stakeholders?*

- Girls and boys already married .
- Girls and boys at risk of being married as children (under 18).
- Affected communities, such as minorities, refugees from different origins (including key decision-makers in the family and key actors in the community) and other vulnerable groups.
- Civil society organizations, including Girls Not Brides members and National Partnerships, international NGOs and community based organizations.
- UN agencies.
- Donors.
- Other actors who could have an impact on whether and how the strategy will be implemented (e.g. religious institutions, the media, private sector and business, regional bodies, independent human rights institutions, legislative councils, parliamentarians, etc.).

16 *Were there any groups that were excluded from or did not participate in the process and if so, why do you think they were excluded or did not participate? For example, refugees, Internally Displaced People, etc.*

.....

.....

17 *Does the strategy include provisions to both prevent early marriage and support girls already married who may seek out divorce, or girls who run away from a marriage?*

.....

.....

18 *Is the strategy related to any other policy initiatives in the country?*

.....

.....

Note for interviewer

No need to read all the below sectors. Just let them answer and whatever sectors they mention, check the box or write them down.

- Education
- Adolescent and Maternal Health (including sexual and reproductive health)
- Gender Equality
- Social protection
- Water, sanitation and hygiene
- Nutrition
- Early protection
- Poverty reduction
- National Development Strategy
- Civil registration
- Other? Please specify.

19 *Does the strategy align with the government's international and regional human rights obligations?*

.....

.....

20 *Does the strategy contain a research agenda to collect evidence about what works and what does not work in terms of early marriage prevention? If yes, could you please give some examples of the kind of research?*

.....

.....

21 *Who will hold organizational, financial and technical leadership for the development and implementation of the strategy? Probe for challenges and barriers in implementation.*

.....
.....

22 *Does your ministry/division regularly evaluate the early marriage prevention programmes/activities that you support? If yes, what action steps are taken?*

.....
.....

23 *What is your overall impression regarding the national plan/strategy? And coordination mechanisms between the different actors who are engaged?*

.....
.....

Challenges and Successes

24 *What do you think would help to assist programmes and services better in terms of early marriage prevention?*

.....
.....

Note to the interviewer: *Read all list below.*

List all that apply:

- ☐ More information on early protection laws and national plans related to early marriage?
- ☐ More information and factsheet for those at risk of early marriage?
- ☐ More resources/funding for the services or programmes in place?
- ☐ More services to provide assistance? Which type?
- ☐ Training on issues related to early, early, or forced marriage?
- ☐ Community support?
- ☐ Government support?
- ☐ Civil society support?
- ☐ Law enforcement service support?
- ☐ Social worker working with youth?
- ☐ Social worker working with parents and community?
- ☐ Counselling services?
- ☐ Services provided according to international standards?
- ☐ Others: Please specify

25 *Do you think that providing a list of recommended guidelines on how best to support/assist programmes working on early marriage related issues would benefit these programmes?*

Yes: Please specify which ones?

- ☐ List of laws protecting children
- ☐ Research, reports, assessments on lessons learned addressing early marriage
- ☐ A list of first contacts and referrals
- ☐ Action steps to be taken
- ☐ Risk assessments
- ☐ Models of girls' empowerment
- ☐ Conduct evaluations on early marriage service
- ☐ Other: Please specify

Note for interviewer: *Make sure to account for the local context (if country is politically unstable or facing conflict) and how that might affect challenges related to early marriage prevention.*

26 *Do you feel like the programmes you support are successful in terms of reaching their goals towards the prevention of early marriage and related issues? What are some examples of good practices?*

.....

.....

27 *Are there any other activities/programmes your ministry/division would like to develop or support but does not have adequate financial, human, or institutional resources? If so, what would be those activities/programmes and how do you plan to obtain resources to support them?*

.....

.....

Closing and Recommendations

28 *What could be done better in terms of addressing early marriage in your ministry/division?*

.....

.....

29 *Is there anything that you would like to add?*

.....

.....

30 *Is there anyone else or any specific institutions or facilities that you recommend we should contact in regard to early marriage prevention policies/services/programmes?*

.....

.....



Suggested
Contact/Type
of organization



Phone
Number



Email



Type of program/
service/support
provided

Note for interviewer

Here, show a list of the organizations or sites from your mapping exercise (not names of individual respondents). If the participant has any other suggested contacts who are not already on your list, make note of the suggested new contact person and, where possible, confirm his/her contact details (phone number, email, location) and type(s) of services provided.

Thank you very much for your time today.
When our report is published, we will be sure to share it with you.

Note for interviewer: *After thanking the key informant interview for his/her support to this project close the interview.*

Annex 2:

**Key Informant Interview Guide
for NGOs / Donors / Institutions**

KII Identification Number: _____

Country: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time Started: _____ Time Ended: _____

Participant Summary: ☒ Female ☐ Male

Organization type: _____

Organization name: _____

Participant title: _____

Interviewer name: _____

Agrees to participate in interview? ☒ Y ☐ N

Agrees to be named in report? ☒ Y ☐ N

Agrees to be recorded? ☒ Y ☐ N

Note for interviewer

Please make sure you are asking questions only about their professional experiences. Before beginning the interview, please read the brief informed consent section below and confirm the participant's agreement. Note that in this introduction and throughout the guide, there are suggestions for how to adapt the language based on the profile of the participants you are speaking with- i.e., preferred language, type of policy and programme relevant work done on early marriage.

Informed Consent:

Hello, my name is _____ as I/we told you in our first contact, I am part of a research team with the International Center for Research on Women in Washington, DC, in partnership with UNICEF. We are conducting a document review about early marriage across the MENA region to understand what some of the promising approaches are and also where gaps remain. This study includes your country, and we are interested in talking to you because you develop/implement activities and programmes related directly or indirectly to early marriage.

This information will help us inform regional efforts to address early marriage in line with a current initiative called the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme which is a multi-country programme that seeks to Accelerate Action to End Early Marriage.

Thanks for agreeing to participate to this interview; I would like to spend about one hour asking you questions about the activities and programmes you manage, and any relevant budgetary processes involved in early marriage that you may be able to discuss.

If you agree to being acknowledged in the report as one of our key informants, we may acknowledge your participation in our report (quoting your name and institution), but we will not link your name to any specific responses.

With your approval, we would like to record the interview so we don't miss anything. The recorder, which records your voice, will be taken to a secure office, which will be locked and only accessible to the research team. All the recordings will be written down and saved as computer files and then the audio files with your voice will be destroyed. The notes we take will also be locked away and available only to the research team. Three years after the study is completed we will destroy all data collected.

Note for interviewer: Confirm respondent's agreement to participate, have his/her name included in the report, and consent to being recorded. Circle the appropriate responses in the box above.

General information about the organization

1 What type of organization is your organization?

- ☐ A private organization (please specify)
- ☐ A non-governmental organization (please specify)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

.....

.....

2 Could you please describe your current position in the organization?

.....

.....

3 What type of programmes does your organization provide or support?

- ☐ National Development Plan
- ☐ Poverty reduction strategy
- ☐ Micro-credit programmes
- ☐ Health policy and programmes
- ☐ Family planning programmes
- ☐ Domestic violence support programmes
- ☐ Family and relationship support
- ☐ Youth services
- ☐ Health services
- ☐ Disability services
- ☐ Counselling
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Migrant and refugee support services
- ☐ Legal services
- ☐ Child protection programmes
- ☐ Case management of child marriage
- ☐ Other (please specify)

.....

.....

4 Do you currently work with the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage?

The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage is a new multi-country initiative with the goal of accelerating action to end child marriage that will help protect the rights of millions of the world's most vulnerable girls. This global programme focuses on proven strategies, including increasing girls' access to education and health care services, educating parents and communities on the dangers of child marriage, increasing economic support to families, and strengthening and enforcing laws that establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage. The programme also emphasizes the importance of using robust data to inform policies related to adolescent girls.

- 5 Please describe your current work (advocacy or programmes) specifically addressing early marriage [policy level, service level, outreach level, evidence (statistics)].

Note for interviewer

If not specifically on early marriage, then probe on whether the programme relates in any way to early marriage. If services or policies are available to address this issue, provide more details. If not, then ask the following questions:

- Do you know of any other programmes in other organizations?

- Could you talk more about what are some of the ways in which your organization could engage in addressing early marriage?

- Would you recommend someone who we could speak to in that organization?

- 6 What challenges and obstacles do you face in addressing early marriage? Please specify.

- 7 How are these challenges and obstacles overcome? Or how could they be overcome? What action steps should be taken?

- 8 Do you have a system in place to target or measure early marriage/your intervention to address early marriage? If so, what is the process?

- 9 Which or whom of these following groups are targeted from your activities and programmes that are related to early marriage? It would be great if you could give us also the proportion of these targeted groups.

Target Groups

Proportions

Adult women

Girls (under age 18)

Girls married before age 18

Girls at risk of early marriage

Boys? (under age 18)

Boys married before the age 18, willingly and / or forcibly

Refugees or displaced people Specify nationality, gender/age

Religious leaders

Community leaders

Other vulnerable groups

Others Please specify

Note for interviewer: *Make sure to probe for other groups or organizations who benefit from these activities/programmes and add that detail as well.*

.....

.....

10 *Have you ever encountered – directly or indirectly – a child client/participant married or at risk of marriage?*

.....

.....

If yes, please explain what the situation of that child was.

- ☐ A child citizen of the country
- ☐ A child refugee (If so, add nationality _____)
- ☐ A child married in another country and then in this country
- ☐ A pregnant girl or a child mother was unmarried?
- ☐ A pregnant girl or a child mother who was married?
- ☐ Other (please specify)

11 *Did the child reach out to you directly or was she/he referred to you by another person or agency? If by a person, please specify who. If by an agency, please specify which type?*

Person

- ☐ A family member: **Specify who:**
- ☐ A friend
- ☐ A community leader
- ☐ Other: **Specify:**

Agency

- ☐ School
- ☐ Youth program/worker
- ☐ Migrant/refugee service
- ☐ A public health service: **Specify**
- ☐ what type:
- ☐ Social worker
- ☐ Police or law enforcement service
- ☐ Community legal service
- ☐ Other: **Specify:**

Service Provision

12 *What do you usually do to assist children at risk of child marriage or who are already married?*

- ☐ Help them directly. If so, please specify the steps taken.
 - ☐ Refer them to another place. If so, please specify what type of other place and the steps taken.
-
-

13 *Do you know of any laws that may be relevant to child marriage issues?*

- ☐ No
 - ☐ Yes. If so, please specify what those are.
-
-

14 *In the steps taken to support the client/participant, do you consider the laws in line with the child protection rights and/ or Standards Safety Procedures for Gender-Based Violence?*

- ☐ No. If so, why not? Could you please elaborate?
- ☐ Yes. If so, please specify what those are.

.....

.....

15 *Could you talk about what is the mandatory procedure in terms of reporting violence against children? What about reporting early marriage?*

.....

.....

Note for interviewer

Ask the respondent any challenges related to reporting cases of child marriages. Please take into account local context (if country is affected by conflict and how that might affect reporting) and all obstacles related to reporting.

16 *What are typically the outcomes on the client/participant that you support?*

- ☐ Does client/participant stay in the marriage?
- ☐ Early pregnancies
- ☐ Drop out from school
- ☐ SRH issues
- ☐ Domestic violence including sexual violence (there is no rape within marriage in Jordan)
- ☐ Does client/participant proceed to a divorce?
- ☐ Does client/participant marry despite efforts to prevent the marriage?
- ☐ Other, please specify

.....

.....

17 *Do you feel there are enough financial, human and material resources for service providers to assist children at risk of early marriage?*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, please specify

.....

.....

18 *Do you feel you have the necessary information and capacity to assist children at risk of early marriage?*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, please specify

.....

.....

19 *What do you think are some of the obstacles or challenges that married children or at risk of marriage face in terms of accessing these services? Could you please elaborate?*

.....

.....

Note to interviewer: Probe on possible differences between girls and boys.

20 What are some challenges or barriers that you face in terms of identifying and reaching out to those children who are married or at risk of marriage?

.....

.....

Note to interviewer: Probe on possible differences between girls and boys.

21 Do you feel satisfied in terms of the support you provide to the clients/participants who are married children or children at risk of early marriage?

■ No. If so, could you please talk about the reasons you are not satisfied?

.....

.....

■ Not very/little satisfied. Explain what could be done better.

.....

.....

■ Satisfied. Explain why.

.....

.....

Budget allocation and costs of child marriage

22 Do you know what the overall annual budget is for your division (capacity building, training, development of tools, awareness campaigns, advocacy, etc.)?

.....

.....

23 Would you know the percentage of the budget allocated to early marriage prevention services and programmes?

.....

.....

24 Can you tell me about the interventions you implement or have witnessed in the context of these activities/programmes to prevent early marriage, along with the budget allocated for these interventions?

.....

.....

Types of interventions

Actual/approximate costs

■ Girls' empowerment

.....

■ Improving girls' access to education

.....

■ Improving girls' access to health

.....

■ Improving girls' access to livelihoods

.....

■ Economic support and incentives to girls and their families

.....

■ Early marriage awareness-raising amongst parents and community members

.....

■ Empowering girls who were married before 18 with information and skills

.....

Types of interventions

- ☐ Health/Medical and sexual and reproductive health
- ☐ Case management of CM/including Legal
- ☐ Training of service providers
- ☐ Policy makers/advocacy/policy briefs
- ☐ Others? Please specify

Actual/approximate costs

Note for interviewer

If the interviewee has difficulty providing the associated cost (education, employment, health), please ask for an approximation.

Best Practices

25 What do you think would help you to better assist children at risk of early and forced marriage?

List all that apply:

- ☐ More information on child protection laws and national plans related to child marriage
- ☐ More information and factsheets for those at risk of child, early, or forced marriage
- ☐ More resources/funding for the service you provide
- ☐ More services to provide assistance. Which type?
- ☐ Training on issues related to child, early or forced marriage
- ☐ Research, assessments, reports on good practices to address CM
- ☐ Community support
- ☐ Government support
- ☐ Law enforcement service support
- ☐ Social worker working with youth
- ☐ Social worker working with parents and community
- ☐ Counselling services
- ☐ Other: Please specify

26 Do you think that providing a list of recommended guidelines on how best to support/assist those at risk of early marriage would benefit your organization?

Yes. If so, which of the following?

- ☐ List of laws protecting children
- ☐ Research, assessments, reports on good practices to address CM
- ☐ International guidelines and standards
- ☐ A list of first contacts and referrals
- ☐ Action steps to be taken
- ☐ Risk assessments
- ☐ Conduct evaluations on child marriage services
- ☐ Other: Please specify

No

Challenges and Successes

Note for interviewer: Make sure to account for the local context (if country is politically unstable or facing conflict) and how that might affect challenges related to child marriage prevention.

27 Did you face any challenges and obstacles during the implementation of early marriage prevention services or any activities/programmes related to early marriage? If yes, what are/were these challenges and obstacles?

.....
.....

28 Were you able to overcome such challenges and obstacles? If yes, what action steps were taken?

.....
.....

29 Is there a system in place in your organization to monitor progress?
If no, then ask why there isn't a system in place.

.....
.....

30 Does your organization regularly evaluate the early marriage prevention services? If yes, what action steps are taken?

.....
.....

31 How successful would you consider your organization's early marriage prevention services in reaching your target group and achieving the service provision/programme activity targets or goals?

.....
.....

32 What could be done better in terms of addressing early marriage in your organization?

.....
.....

33 Are there any other services/activities/programmes your organization would like to implement or develop but does not have adequate financial, human and material resources for? If so, what are they and how do you plan to obtain resources?

.....
.....

34 What are your thoughts in terms of the sustainability of your early marriage program(s)? What kind of challenges do you foresee in continuing the programme long term? And what support would you need in order to sustain it?

.....
.....

Closing and Recommendations

35 *Is there anyone else or any specific institutions or facilities that you recommend we should contact in regard to early marriage prevention policies/services/programmes?*

.....

.....



Suggested
Contact/Type
of organization



Phone
Number



Email



Type of program/
service/support
provided

Note for interviewer

Here, show a list of the organizations or sites from your mapping exercise (not names of individual respondents). If the participant has any other suggested contacts who are not already on your list, make note of the suggested new contact person and, where possible, confirm his/her contact details (phone number, email, location) and type(s) of services provided.

36 *Do you have any specific recommendations to make other than those already discussed?*

.....

.....

37 *Is there anything that you would like to add?*

.....

.....

Thank you very much for your time today. When our report is published, we will be sure to share it with you.

Note for interviewer: After thanking the key informant for his/her support to this project, close the interview.

Annex 3:

Key Informant Interview Guide for UN Agencies

KII Identification Number:

Country:

Location:

Date:

Time Started: Time Ended:

Participant Summary: ☒ Female ☐ Male

Organization type: _____

Organization name: _____

Participant title: _____

Interviewer name: _____

Agrees to participate in interview? ☒ Y / ☐ N

Agrees to be named in report? ☒ Y / ☐ N

Agrees to be recorded? ☒ Y / ☐ N

Note for interviewer

Please make sure you are asking questions only about their professional experiences. Before beginning the interview, please read the brief informed consent section below and confirm the participant's agreement. Note that in this introduction and throughout the guide, there are suggestions for how to adapt the language based on the profile of the participants you are speaking with- i.e., preferred language, type of policy and programme relevant work done on early marriage.

Informed Consent:

Hello, my name is _____ as I/we told you in our first contact, I am part of a research team with the International Center for Research on Women in Washington, DC, in partnership with UNICEF. We are conducting a document review about early marriage across the MENA region to understand what some of the promising approaches are and also where gaps remain. This study includes your country, and we are interested in talking to you because you develop/implement activities and programmes related directly or indirectly to early marriage.

This information will help us inform regional efforts to address early marriage in line with a current initiative called the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme which is a multi-country programme that seeks to Accelerate Action to End Early Marriage.

Thanks for agreeing to participate to this interview; I would like to spend about one hour asking you questions about the activities and programmes you manage, and any relevant budgetary processes involved in early marriage that you may be able to discuss.

If you agree to being acknowledged in the report as one of our key informants, we may acknowledge your participation in our report (quoting your name and institution), but we will not link your name to any specific responses.

With your approval, we would like to record the interview so we don't miss anything. The recorder, which records your voice, will be taken to a secure office, which will be locked and only accessible to the research team. All the recordings will be written down and saved as computer files and then the audio files with your voice will be destroyed. The notes we take will also be locked away and available only to the research team. Three years after the study is completed we will destroy all data collected.

Note for interviewer: Confirm respondent's agreement to participate, have his/her name included in the report, and consent to being recorded. Circle the appropriate responses in the box above.

General information about the agency

31 What UN agency do you currently work for?

.....

.....

32 Could you please describe your current position and role in that agency?

.....

.....

33 What type of programmes does your division provide or support?

.....

.....

Note for interviewer

No need to read the below checklist. Just let the respondent answer and whatever group(s) they mention, mark, or write down if it's not on the list.

- ☐ National Development Plan
- ☐ Poverty reduction strategy
- ☐ Micro-credit programmes
- ☐ Health policy and programmes
- ☐ Family planning programmes
- ☐ Domestic violence support programmes
- ☐ Family and relationship support
- ☐ Youth services
- ☐ Health services
- ☐ Disability services
- ☐ Counselling
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Migrant and refugee support services
- ☐ Legal services
- ☐ Child protection programmes
- ☐ Case management of child marriage
- ☐ Other (please specify)

34 Please describe your current work (policies, strategies or programmes) specifically addressing early marriage [policy level, service level, outreach level, evidence (statistics)].

.....

.....

Note for interviewer: *If not specifically on early marriage, then probe on whether the programme relates in any way to early marriage. If services or policies are available to address this issue, provide more details.*

Budget allocation and costs of child marriage

If nothing on early marriage, then ask the following questions:

Do you know of any other programmes in other agencies?

.....

.....

Could you talk more about what are some of the ways in which your agency could engage in addressing early marriage?

.....

.....

Would you recommend someone who we could speak to in that agency?

.....

.....

SKIP TO RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION

.....

.....

35 *What challenges and obstacles do you face in addressing early marriage? Please specify.*

.....

.....

36 *How are these challenges and obstacles overcome? Or how could they be overcome? What action steps should be taken?*

.....

.....

37 *Do you have a system in place to target or measure early marriage/your intervention to address early marriage? If so, what is the process?*

.....

.....

38 *Which or whom of these following groups are targeted from your activities and programmes that are related to early marriage? It would be great if you could give us also the proportion of these targeted groups.*

Note for interviewer: No need to read target groups in the table. Just let the respondent answer and whatever group(s) they mention, ask the proportions.

Target Groups	Proportions
Adult women	
Girls (under age 18)	
Girls married before age 18	
Girls at risk of early marriage	

Target Groups	Proportions
Boys? (under age 18)	
Boys married before the age 18, willingly and / or forcibly	
Refugees or displaced people Specify nationality, gender/age	
Religious leaders	
Community leaders	
Other vulnerable groups	
Others Please specify	

Note for interviewer: Make sure to probe for other groups or organizations who benefit from these activities/programmes and add that detail as well.

Budget allocation and costs of early marriage

39 Do you know what the overall annual budget is for your division (capacity building, training, development of tools, awareness campaigns, advocacy, etc.)?

.....

.....

40 Would you know the percentage of the budget allocated to early marriage prevention services and programmes?

.....

.....

41 Can you tell me about the interventions you implement or have witnessed in the context of these activities/programmes to prevent early marriage, along with the budget allocated for these interventions?

.....

.....

Types of interventions

Actual/approximate costs

■ Girls' empowerment	
■ Improving girls' access to education	
■ Improving girls' access to health	
■ Improving girls' access to livelihoods	
■ Economic support and incentives to girls and their families	
■ Early marriage awareness-raising amongst parents and community members	
■ Empowering girls who were married before 18 with information and skills	

Types of interventions

- ☐ Health/Medical and sexual and reproductive health
- ☐ Case management of CM/including Legal
- ☐ Training of service providers
- ☐ Policy makers/advocacy/policy briefs
- ☐ Others? Please specify

Actual/approximate costs

Note for interviewer

If the interviewee has difficulty providing the associated cost (education, employment, health), please ask for an approximation.

Background on National Action Plans and Strategies to Prevent CM

42 Does the county have a national action plan or a country wide initiative / strategy to end early marriage?

.....

.....

Note for interviewer: *If no action plan/strategy, please ask:*

Could you talk about some of the reasons there is not a strategy or a plan to prevent from early marriage?

.....

.....

Do you have other strategies that are not specifically related to early marriage but that include it as a component of that strategy?

.....

.....

If answer no to question 12 a. and b. then skip to next section (Challenges and Successes)

If there is a clear strategy/action plan, then ask:

43 At what level has the strategy been approved (highest level)?

.....

.....

44 Could you describe the political commitment of the country to implement the strategy? Do you know of any challenges or barriers that others may face in implementing the strategy?

.....

.....

Note to interviewer: *Ask about budget, reporting line, cabinet decree, action plan, and engagement of high level personnel (e.g. first lady, prime minister, president engagement).*

45 *What is the role of your UN agency in supporting that strategy / plan and specific ministries or other actors that are responsible for implementing the strategy? What are some of the challenges and barriers you experience in supporting these efforts?*

.....

.....

46 *Do you know if the consultation process of that strategy / plan involves or has involved other relevant sectors to discuss how the strategy could be implemented?*

Note for interviewer: No need to read the below checklist. Just let the respondent answer and whatever sector(s) they mention, mark, or write down if it's not on the list.

If NO, move to next question.

If YES, for example:

- ☐ Girls' education
- ☐ Adolescent health including reproductive health
- ☐ Gender / women's affairs
- ☐ Access to justice
- ☐ Infrastructure and transport
- ☐ Water, hygiene and sanitation
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Social welfare / livelihoods under rule of law (e.g. police, judges, etc.)
- ☐ Other? Please specify.

47 *Has the consultation involved other relevant stakeholders?*

- ☐ Girls and boys already married
- ☐ Girls and boys at risk of being married as children (under 18)
- ☐ Affected communities, such as minorities, refugees from different origins (including key decision-makers in the family and key actors in the community) and other vulnerable groups
- ☐ Civil society organizations, including Girls Not Brides members and National Partnerships, international NGOs and community based organizations
- ☐ UN agencies
- ☐ Donors
- ☐ Other actors who could have an impact on whether and how the strategy will be implemented (e.g. religious institutions, the media, private sector and business, regional bodies, independent human rights institutions, legislative councils, parliamentarians, etc.)

.....

.....

48 *Were there any groups that were excluded from or did not participate in the process and if so, why do you think they were excluded or did not participate? For example, refugees, Internally Displaced People, etc.*

.....

.....

49 *Does the strategy include provisions to both prevent early marriage and support girls already married who may seek out divorce, or girls who run away from a marriage?*

.....

.....

50 *Is the strategy related to any other policy initiatives in the country?*

.....

.....

Note for interviewer: No need to read the below checklist. Just let the respondent answer and whatever sector(s) they mention, mark, or write down if it's not on the list.

- ☐ Education
- ☐ Adolescent and Maternal Health (including sexual and reproductive health)
- ☐ Gender Equality
- ☐ Social protection
- ☐ Water, sanitation and hygiene
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Early protection
- ☐ Poverty reduction
- ☐ National Development Strategy
- ☐ Civil registration
- ☐ Other? Please specify.

.....

.....

51 Does the strategy align with the government's international and regional human rights obligations?

.....

.....

52 Does the strategy contain a research agenda to collect evidence about what works and what does not work in terms of early marriage prevention? If yes, could you please give some examples of the kind of research?

.....

.....

53 Who will hold organizational, financial and technical leadership for the development and implementation of the strategy? Probe for challenges and barriers in implementation.

.....

.....

54 Does your division regularly evaluate the early marriage prevention programmes/activities that you support? If yes, what action steps are taken?

.....

.....

55 What is your overall impression regarding the national plan/strategy? And coordination mechanisms between the different actors who are engaged?

.....

.....

56 Could you tell us why you think that the ministry or other government sector has a national plan/strategy on early marriage?

- ☐ Is there international pressure?
- ☐ Is there pressure from donors?
- ☐ Is there pressure due to political conflict?
- ☐ Is there pressure due to refugee crisis?
- ☐ Is there pressure from the top-level administration of the government to be seen as doing something about early marriage?
- ☐ Is there pressure from civil society (NGOs, women's groups/missionaries, etc.) who is for it?
- ☐ Because it's the right thing to do?

Challenges and Successes

57 What do you think would help to assist programmes and services better in terms of early marriage prevention?

.....

Note for interviewer: *Read out loud the entire list below.*

List all that apply:

- ☐ More information on early protection laws and national plans related to early marriage?
- ☐ More information and factsheet for those at risk of early marriage?
- ☐ More resources/funding for the services or programmes in place?
- ☐ More services to provide assistance? Which type?
- ☐ Training on issues related to early marriage?
- ☐ Community support?
- ☐ Government support?
- ☐ Civil society support?
- ☐ Law enforcement service support?
- ☐ Social worker working with youth?
- ☐ Social worker working with parents and community?
- ☐ Counselling services?
- ☐ Services provided according to international standards?
- ☐ Others: Please specify

.....
.....

58 *Do you think that providing a list of recommended guidelines on how best to support/assist programmes working on early marriage related issues would benefit these programmes?*

Yes: Please specify which ones?

- ☐ List of laws protecting children
- ☐ Research, reports, assessments on lessons learned addressing early marriage
- ☐ A list of first contacts and referrals
- ☐ Action steps to be taken
- ☐ Risk assessments
- ☐ Models of girls' empowerment
- ☐ Conduct evaluations on early marriage service
- ☐ Other: Please specify

.....
.....

Note for interviewer

Make sure to account for the local context (if country is politically unstable or facing conflict) and how that might affect challenges related to early marriage prevention.

59 *Do you feel the programmes you support are successful in terms of reaching their goals towards the prevention of early marriage and related issues? What are some examples of good practices?*

.....
.....

60 *Are there any other activities/programmes your division would like to develop or support but does not have adequate financial / human / institution resources? If so, what would be those activities/programmes and how do you plan to obtain resources to support them?*

.....
.....

Closing and Recommendations

61 What could be done better in terms of addressing early marriage in your division?

.....

.....

62 Is there anything that you would like to add?

.....

.....

63 Is there anyone else or any specific institutions or facilities that you recommend we should contact in regard to early marriage prevention policies/services/programmes?

.....

.....



Suggested
Contact/Type
of organization



Phone
Number



Email



Type of program/
service/support
provided

Note for interviewer

Here, show a list of the organizations or sites from your mapping exercise (not names of individual respondents). If the participant has any other suggested contacts who are not already on your list, make note of the suggested new contact person and, where possible, confirm his/her contact details (phone number, email, location) and type(s) of services provided.

Thank you very much for your time today. When our report is published, we will be sure to share it with you.

Note for interviewer: After thanking the key informant for his/her support to this project, close the interview.

Annex 4:

Priority areas and needed support identified by Egyptian workshop participants

Note that no feedback was received from Egyptian workshop participants on priority areas or needed support.

Annex 5:

Priority areas and needed support identified by Jordanian workshop participants

Girls' voice and agency priorities include:

- **In the refugee context**, review livelihoods interventions to ensure there is a link with child marriage prevention;
- **Carefully review recommendations** to encourage adolescents to work, but ensure adolescents, particularly girls stay in school, child labour is avoided, and financial assistance is given to Jordanians and Syrians prioritizing prevention of child marriage; ensure inclusion of girls at risk of child marriage and married children to participate in skill development programmes for youth (15-18yo); ensure access to education and vocational training for married children, particularly girls;
- **Integrate child marriage prevention** messaging within sexual and reproductive health services targeted at adolescent girls and boys;
- **Ensure access to information of resources**, services and opportunities for children at risk of child marriage (emphasis on education opportunities, grants and financial support, etc.); Implement behavioural change components in current interventions in order to engage communities in child marriage prevention;
- **Ensure mobility limitations** are addressed to enable adolescents to access services. Also ensure access to education, including vocational training and health including sexual and reproductive health, are made accessible for married children;
- **Evaluate the possibility** of implementing parenting sessions and informal/remedial education in order to help girls complete their education. UNICEF Education to assess with Ministry of Education if they would support a pilot to ensure this;
- **The humanitarian response** has a strong GBV response with standard operating procedures and referral pathways and specialized case management implementing partners/service providers; Evaluate the possibility of reactivating the Amani campaign to target domestic violence with a communication plan for development and behavioural change perspective;
- **Government, UN, INGO and NGO** stakeholders are working to develop national standard operating procedures and referral pathways that incorporate a survivor centre approach and limit mandatory reporting to 3 instances (suicide, risk for her life and risk for her children's life) and will be applicable to all service providers (refugee and Jordanian response).
- **Support** is requested from the regional UN/UNICEF teams to provide successful experiences and lessons learned from different initiatives.

Household and community attitudes and behaviours priorities include:

- **UN Action MPTF** pilot project (UNHCR, UNFPA and UNICEF) that includes behavioural change strategies and C4D as positive interventions.
- **Support required** to ensure that any religious leaders engaged are allies to the strategy;
- **Support also required** to ensure a participatory approach when identifying needs and strategies to address child marriage with communities.

Service delivery priorities include:

- **Interventions are ongoing** for the humanitarian response in Jordan with periodical capacity building activities led by JRF (with the support of UNICEF) who train Jordanian and international humanitarian staff on GBV and child protection case management principles, standard operation procedures and referral pathways, including a specific module on case management for early marriage (UNICEF funded);
- **The National response** will implement a similar programme for national service providers within 2017, building upon the capacity building programmes developed at key Ministries and Governmental organizations with the support of UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR.

Legal context priorities include:

- **Stakeholders** did not identify any key priority actions of support needed.

Evidence generation priorities include:

- **Stakeholders** did not identify any key priority actions of support needed.

Annex 6:

**Priority areas and needed support
identified by Lebanese workshop
participants**

Girls' voice and agency priorities include:

- **Focus** on long-term, sustainable projects, with a need to measure effectiveness and impact;
- **Include** sexual reproductive health in child marriage prevention strategies;
- **Develop programming** and approaches for education, not just financial incentives;
- **Develop social economic** empowerment programming and approaches based on financial skills building;
- **Develop programming** directed at married girls; map and record lessons learned and roll out tools for addressing girls' agency and empowerment;
- **Ensure targeted social protection** for girls at risk of or already married;
- **Support** was requested in the form of evidence of successful models for projects based around social protection and financial incentives;
- **Support** was requested in the form of advocacy for the right to work for Syrians.

Household and community attitudes and behaviours priorities include:

- **Interventions** need to be targeted so that they are implemented peer-to-peer, that engage men and male youth, that target families with young girls, and are appropriate to the specific cultural background;
- **Standardize the approach**, methodology and tools (including an M&E framework) around child marriage, with validation from the government and ensuring community participation.
- **Support** is requested in the form of support to M&E and impact measurement;
- **Support** is also requested in the form of sharing good practices from the region on how to engage religious leaders;
- **Support** is requested to develop a Community of Practice at the regional level.

Service delivery priorities include:

- **Employ targeted**, mobile, sexual and reproductive health services as a key entry point for delivery of information and services on child marriage;
- **Increase funding** and organizational support to build the capacity of NGOs and government to deliver sustainable programming;
- **Review and develop** tools/curriculum for the different sectors and roll out capacity development (child marriage, GBV prevention and response), establish a multi-sectoral framework that highlights interconnection of these issues in the prevention of child marriage;
- **Support** requested in the form of sharing existing tools from other countries that address child marriage within the frame of different sectors, including health and Education;
- **Support** requested in the form of facilitating field visits for stakeholders to visit other countries to see how they are addressing child marriage.

Legal context priorities include:

- **Work with religious** institutions to amend the personal status laws;
- **Conduct a systematic review** of policies and regulations with a view to develop a comprehensive and consistent policy approach to issues related to child marriage;
- **Support** is requested in the form of sharing examples (strategy/action plan) of successful national strategies that have more than one cohort and significant geographic disparities.

Evidence generation priorities include:

- **Develop M&E framework** and tools to be able to collect and analyse data (through a multi-sectoral database) on child marriage and related issues, including through GBVIMS, PRIMERO, and DEVInfo;
- **Support** the digital recording of all marriage;
- **Support** requested in the form of extending the UNICEF/UNFPA Global Programme to Accelerate Action to end Child Marriage for implementation in Lebanon.

Annex 7:

**Priority areas and needed support
identified by Moroccan workshop
participants**

Girls' voice and agency priorities include:

- **Use** the existing possibilities within UNICEF programming on gender equality and social inclusion of vulnerable youth to mainstream child marriage prevention;
- **Consider** whether the 2nd Phase of national programme on gender equality (IKRAM) can be used as an opportunity to mainstream prevention action of child marriage;
- **Implementation** of Tamkine on economic empowerment of women;
The centre vocational training of the YTTTO Foundation promoting the knowledge and empowerment of women and girls at risk.
- **There is a need** for more technical expertise, supported by partnerships of stakeholders, so that stakeholders have the capacity to integrate child migration prevention into multiple programmes.

Household and community attitude and behaviour priorities include:

- **The project** 'promoting protective social norms for children' (funded by Government of Belgium) to conduct a national campaign and community outreach communication, including child participation and parental education, to reduce violence;
- **Community communications** interventions, in particular communications campaigns and the YTTTO foundation communicate caravans project, which provides the additional possibility of provision of information and services on justice and health;
- **There is a need** for more resources to support community communication interventions, in particular to support the mobile interventions approach.

Service delivery priorities include:

- **EU-funded Himaya Project** 'Access of children to justice', in particular the capacity development of judges and justice professionals on child rights and the issues related to child marriage; educating parents; and providing family guidance and mediation;
- **Support is required** in relation to technical assistance in terms of the tools, training modules, and international best practices on child marriage prevention.

Legal context priorities include:

- **Advocacy** for reform of Moudawana to remove articles 20-21;
- **Initial training** programme for judges on the rights of children;
- **Within the integrated public child protection policy**, establishing a task force to follow-up on the child marriage work plan;
- **Support** is required in relation to technical assistance in terms of the tools, training modules, and international best practice on child marriage prevention.

Evidence generation priorities include:

- **Integrated Information System** on justice for children related to the Himaya project;
- **UNICEF is monitoring** children's rights at local level;
- **Support** is required in relation to technical assistance to undertake evidence-gathering and analysis in line with current best practices.

Annex 8:

**Priority areas and needed support
identified by Sudanese workshop
participants**

Girls' voice & agency priorities include:

- **No priorities** or support was identified by stakeholders.

Household and community attitudes and behaviours priorities include:

- **Developing terms of reference** for the religious and Sufist groups to coordinate advocacy against child marriage;
- **Support** is required in conducting and disseminating regional studies on child marriage jurisprudence.

Service delivery priorities include:

- **Amending Article 40** of the Family Law and adding a new article to determine the minimum age of marriage;
- **Support** is required in the provisions of an expert to develop a law enforcement plan;
- **Support** is also required to conduct an exchange visit for parliamentarians to discuss child marriage with other parliamentarians and law makers.

Legal context priorities include:

- **Organizing an advocacy** meeting with the Federal Minister of WSS to expedite the endorsement of the National Strategy;
- **Launching** the National Action Plan document by engaging CSOs, donors and key ministries;
- **Implementing** the existing BCC in eight states;
- **Support** is required to identify a consultant from the regional UN/UNICEF roster to help finalize the National Action Plan;
- **Support** in the form of expertise in social norms communication is also required.

Evidence generation priorities include:

- **Building capacity** in gender disaggregation statistics and researching social norms;
- **Strengthening** the coordination between the IMS at National Council of Childhood Welfare and CBO-Gender Unit;
- **Alignment** of indicators of National Council of Child Welfare's Information Management System (IMS) and the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS);
- **Conducting** social norms driver study on child marriage in 10 states;
- **Support** is required in relation to conducting training workshops on social norms measurement indicators.

Annex 9:

**Priority areas and needed support
identified by Yemeni workshop
participants**

Girls' voice and agency priorities include:

- **There were no identified priority** actions shared by stakeholders, however support was requested in relation to:
Conducting broader discussions with relevant stakeholders on programming around adolescents.

Household and community attitudes and behaviours priorities include:

- **There were no identified priority** actions shared by stakeholders, however support was requested in relation to:
*Advocacy and technical assistance to design and implement prevention programming;
Advocacy and technical assistance to raise the profile of importance of prevention of harmful practices.*

Service delivery priorities include:

- **The proposal** to create a Child Marriage Working Group under the GBV sub-cluster;
- **Finalization** of data base for case management;
- **Expanding the workforce** (possibility of on line vocational and training courses);
- **Support** is requested in relation to guidance as to how to operationalize advocacy and support at the regional level;
- **Support** is also requested in the form of technical assistance on the design of the database linked to case management.

Legal context priorities include:

- **Stakeholders** did not identify any key priority actions of support needed.

Evidence generation priorities include:

- **More evidence** collection and research on the prevalence of child marriage as an impact of the crisis;
- **Clarity** over whether it is more useful to undertake research or evaluate existing programmes;
- **Support** required in the form of technical assistance on developing the best framework to gather evidence related to the impact of the conflict on child marriage prevalence;
- **Support** required in relation to the global framework support and guidance on indicators that would support a humanitarian context.

Annex 10:

Gap Maps

Map 1: Child Marriage Data Availability and Indicators of Severity in the Six Countries of Interest

	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Sudan	Yemen
DATA AVAILABILITY Available DHS, MICS, or equivalent after 2010	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
CHILD MARRIAGE Percentage of women 20-24 married before age 15	●	●			●	●
Percentage of women 20-24 married before age 18	●	●	●●		●	●
Median age at first marriage, women 25-49	●	●		●		●
ADOLESCENT GIRLS' USE OF MODERN CONTRACEPTION Percentage of married women 15-19 currently using any modern contraception	●	●		●	●	●
EARLY PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH Adolescent fertility rate (per 1000 women ages 15-19)	●	●		●	●	●
Percentage of girls and women ages 15 to 19 who have begun childbearing	●	●		●		●
VIOLENCE Percentage of women 15-19 experiencing spousal physical or sexual violence	●	●				
EDUCATION Percentage of women 25-29 completing secondary or higher education	●	●		●		●
POVERTY Percentage of population living below the national poverty line	●	●		●	●	●
KEY:	● Value falls within the most optimal quartile of the indicator's range across the six countries.	● Value falls within the second most-optimal quartile of the indicator's range across the six countries.	● Value falls within the second least-optimal quartile of the indicator's range across the six countries.	● Value falls within the least optimal quartile of the indicator's range across the six countries.		

Map 2: Ratification of international conventions related to child marriage

	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Sudan	Yemen
Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)						
Ratification of the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages						
Ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)						

Map 3: National laws and strategies related to child marriage

	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Sudan	Yemen
Legal minimum age of marriage for girls						
Criminal law provisions and enforcement mechanisms						
National strategy for the prevention of early marriage						

KEY: 18 years 18 years, but allows for exceptions with judge's permission Either no minimum age, or allows for marriage upon puberty

Map 4: National laws and strategies related to women and equal rights

	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Sudan	Yemen
FGM/C criminalized						
Women have equal rights in divorce						
Domestic violence prohibited in law						
Marital rape criminalized						
Marriage of rape victims permitted in law						

Map 5: Evidence Gap Map: Organizations Working on and Interventions Related to Child Marriage in the Six Countries of Interest

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CURRENTLY WORKING ON CHILD MARRIAGE	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Sudan	Yemen
Care International	✓	✓	✓			
International Rescue Committee		✓				
Oxfam International						✓
Pathfinder International						
Save the Children	✓	✓				
UNFPA		✓	✓	✓		✓
UNHCR		✓	✓			
UNICEF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
USAID						

RECENT (SINCE 2010) INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT CHILD MARRIAGE

Interventions to change national laws or policies	●	●		●	●	
Interventions to increase individual knowledge and awareness	●	●	●	●		●
Interventions that include family planning or reproductive health components	●	●				●
Interventions that include livelihoods components	●	●				
Interventions that employ peer education and mentorship methods	●					
Interventions that engage youth	●	●	●			●
Interventions that address gender equality in marriage and divorce	●					
Interventions that employ mass media or social media		●	●	●		
Interventions that involve religious leaders			●		●	●

KEY:

- Single intervention at the sub-national level.
- Multiple interventions at the sub-national level.
- At least one intervention at the national level.

Implementation ended between 2010 and 2015.

Implementation is ongoing or ended in 2016.

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