CHILD MARRIAGE IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS IN THE ARAB STATES REGION

STUDY RESULTS FROM DJIBOUTI, EGYPT, KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ AND YEMEN

Synthesis Report

December 2020

The Global Programme to End Child Marriage is implemented by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Programme is generously funded by the Governments of Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom, the European Union and Zonta International.

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, Global Affairs Canada, and the European Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP II) for Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, which is supported by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland, and Switzerland. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of UNFPA and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the RDPP or its donors.

Disclaimer

Cover photo © UNFPA Egypt

Canada

international.gc.ca

Kingdom of the Netherlands

government.nl/

ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY
CAIRO

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

eda.admin.ch/sdc

SIDA

sida.se/English/

RDPP
LEBANON JORDAN IRAQ

https://rdpp-me.org

Contents

Acknowledgements i

Introduction 1

Review of existing evidence 3

Methods and design 5

Djibouti study 6

Egypt study 8

Kurdistan Region of Iraq study 10

Yemen study 12

Implications for practice 14

Abbreviations 17

Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund Arab States Regional Office (UNFPA ASRO), through the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, with additional financial support provided by the Government of Canada.

The advisory group was led by Nishan Krishnapalan, Regional Programme Specialist in Human Rights and Gender, UNFPA ASRO, Shadia Elshiwy, Regional Programme Analyst in Harmful Practices, UNFPA ASRO, Enshrah Ahmed, former Gender, Human Rights and Culture Regional Advisor, UNFPA ASRO, and Sunita Joergensen, Gender-Based Violence and PSEA Specialist at UNICEF. The study team would also like to thank the following regional colleagues for their critical support during the conduct of the research: Valentina Volpe, Line Baago Rasmussen and Anthony MacDonald.

This report was written by Kara Hunersen (JHU), W. Courtland Robinson (JHU), Nishan Krishnapalan (UNFPA) and Janna Metzler (WRC). Kathryn Paik and Katherine Gambir from the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) and Shatha Elnakib and Allison Jeffrey from Johns Hopkins University (JHU) provided additional support and input to the project and preparation of the report.

This report is the product of collaborative efforts with UNFPA country offices in Djibouti, Iraq, Egypt and Yemen.

In Djibouti, field implementation of the study and technical support were provided by Amen Allah Ben Hamida (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), Robleh Hersei Doualeh (UNFPA), Yacin Doualeh Aden (Direction Statistique et des Études Démographiques, DISED), Hemeda Houssain Barkat (Ministry of Women), Hussein Chardi (Office National d'Assistance aux Réfugiés et Sinistrés) and Yahya Djimaleh (DISED). In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, field implementation of the study and technical support were provided by Luqman Karim (University of Sulaimani), Matthew Goers (CDC), Lionel Laforgue and Ali Zedan (UNFPA).

In Egypt, field implementation of the study and technical support were provided by Salma Abou Hussein (American University in Cairo), Sali Hafez and May El Sallab (UNFPA) and Reem Elshirbini and Ahmed Mahrous (UNICEF).

In Yemen, field implementation of the study and technical support were provided by Bothaina Attal (University of Sana'a), Kais Al-Abhar and Ahlam Sofan (UNFPA) and Tareq Alkibsi (Central Statistical Office).

The authors are grateful for the participation of adolescent girls and their families in each of these research studies. These studies would not have been possible without their time and thoughtful participation.

Suggested Citation:

Hunersen, K., Robinson, W.C., Krishnapalan, N., and Metzler, J. (2020). Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in the Arab States Region: Study results from Djibouti, Egypt, Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Yemen. New York: Women's Refugee Commission.

Introduction

Child marriage is a prominent concern across global contexts, especially in humanitarian settings. Globally, about one in five women were married as children.[1] Girls who marry young face many adverse effects that negatively impact their health and well-being. About 90 percent of adolescent pregnancies are among married girls, which puts them at a greater risk of birth complications.[2] Other studies have shown that child marriage is associated with lower educational attainment and poverty, often due to their resulting lack of vocational opportunities.[3] Without these opportunities, girls married as children face a lifetime of poverty that perpetuates the practice of marrying children to relieve familial economic burden.[4] They also have increased risk of mental health consequences due to social isolation, decreased autonomy and intimate partner violence.[5]

The Arab States region has shown quickly declining rates of child marriage compared to other regions of the world. However, current regional rates region show about one in six girls are married before the age of 18.[6] There is now increased concern that the fragility resulting from the multiple conflicts in the region may also significantly impact rates of child marriage. Nine of ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage are considered fragile states.[7] However, the relationship between fragility and child marriage is complex and not fully understood. There is a significant body of qualitative research to date that highlights factors that drive child marriage practices during conflict, suggesting that rates may increase. Although survey data exist on rates of child marriage in fragile states, they do not fully reflect the rates during, or resulting from, conflict.[8] [9]

As a result, data are not currently available to confirm how many girls may be affected by the practice of child marriage in emergencies, nor what can be done to effectively address this issue. Thus, the extent of its impact, the number of girls ultimately affected, or what can be done about it, remains unknown. To address this knowledge gap, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

1 UNICEF, Press Release: 25 million child marriages prevented in last decade due to accelerated progress, according to new UNICEF estimates (2020, March 6). Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/25-million-child-marriages-prevented.

2 Annabel Erulkar, "Early marriage, marital relations, and intimate partner violence in Ethiopia." *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* (2013).

3 UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage*. (New York, NY: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2014).

4 F. Roudi-Fahimi, *Ending Child Marriage in the Arab Region* (Population Reference Bureau, 2013).

5 Aysen Ufuk Sezgin and Raija-Leena Punamäki, *Impacts of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy on mental and somatic health: the role of partner violence* (Women's Mental Health, 2019).

6 UNICEF, *Child Marriage Data: Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 15; percentage of women and percentage of men aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18* (2020, April). Retrieved from https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Child-marriage-database_Apr2020.xlsx.

7 Council on Foreign Relations, *Working Paper: Fragile States, Fragile Lives* (2014). Available at: http://www.cfr.org/global/fragile-states-fragile-lives/p33093.

8 Sanyukta Mathur, Margaret Greene and Anju Malhotra, *Too Young to Wed: The Lives, Rights, and Health of Young Married Girls* (Washington D.C.: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) (2003).

9 Megan Arthur et al, "Child Marriage Laws around the World: Minimum Marriage Age, Legal Exceptions, and Gender Disparities," *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy*, 39:1, 51-74 (2018).

commissioned the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) and Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Center for Humanitarian Health in 2018 to expand research on child marriage in humanitarian settings in the Arab States region. Four conflict-affected contexts were selected that required a rigorous assessment of prevalence and drivers of child marriage to inform strategic priorities within country offices. Field studies were conducted amongst Somali and Yemeni refugees in Djibouti, Syrian refugees in Egypt, Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and IDPs in Yemen. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What is the prevalence of child marriage?
- How does conflict impact child marriage trends?
- What risk factors are associated with child marriage?
- Do conflict and displacement affect norms around child marriage and, if so, how?

Review of existing evidence

Prior to the Syrian conflict, the Arab States region was experiencing the fastest decline in child marriage rates of any region.[10] However, recent data show that this trend may have stagnated due to several ongoing conflicts. A recent study in Yemen found that about 32 percent of girls were married before 18, which is the highest in the region.[11] In Iraq in 2017, 24 percent of girls had been married before age 18, which lowers to 20 percent reported in KRI in 2016.[12],[13] In pre-war Syria, girls under 18 made up 12 percent of registered marriages, but evidence from 2015 shows that number increased to 34.6 percent.[14] This trend suggests that conflict adversely affects child marriage rates, which is especially critical as the number of displaced persons continues to rise.[15]

Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) states that "the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage".[16] Though many Arab States have ratified CEDAW, integration of this mandate into national policies is inconsistent. Marriage before the age of 18 is permitted with parental consent in 52 percent of countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which is higher than in the South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa regions.[17] Within these countries, laws are often vague or non-existent; for example, Saudi Arabia and Yemen do not set a minimum legal age of marriage, while countries like Lebanon and Iran allow marriage for girls as young as 13.[18] Though some countries, such as Egypt and Iraq, have more prohibitive laws, child marriage occurs through informal traditional or religious mechanisms and marriages are often not registered with the state until the minimum age is reached.[19] This makes it challenging for the state to protect girls, and also difficult for married girls to access essential services, including birth registration for children born of these marriages, education, health facilities, and justice systems.[20]

Research on drivers of child marriage in the Arab States region highlights how community beliefs and social norms affect decision-making and agency. In many countries, girls are limited in their ability to voice opinions or self-advocate.[21] Although there is diversity across contexts, many community members who have been interviewed regarding child marriage support the traditional domestic role of the woman as a wife and mother. Thus, parents consider marriage as a way to secure their daughters' future and prevent (intentional or forced) premarital sex.[22] Additionally, marriage is a way to build economic or social capital for the family, which is supported by patriarchal laws that give men the ability to restrict girls' movement.

10 UNICEF MENA Regional Office, Progress for Children with Equity in the Middle East and North Africa (2017).
11 UNICEF MENA Regional Office, *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa – Yemen Country Brief,* in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (IRCW) (2017).
12 UNICEF, *State of the World's Children: Children in a Digital World* (New York: 2017).
13 UNFPA Iraq, *Child Marriage in the Kurdistan Region* (2016).
14 Higher Population Council, *A Study On Child Marriage in Jordan* (2017).
15 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018* (2018).
16 UNICEF, *Child Marriage and the Law,* Legislative Reform Initiative Paper Series, Division of Policy and Practice (2007).
17 Megan Arthur et al., "Child Marriage Laws around the World: Minimum Marriage Age, Legal Exceptions, and Gender Disparities," *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy*, 39:1, 51-74 (2018).
18 Ibid.
19 Rima Mourtada, Jennifer Schlecht and Jocelyn DeJong, "A qualitative study exploring child marriage practices among Syrian conflict-affected populations in Lebanon," *Conflict and Health*, 11(1):27 (2017).
20 ICRW & UNICEF, *Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa* (2017).
21 Ibid.
22 UNICEF, *A study on early marriage in Jordan* (2014).

Though limited research has been done in humanitarian settings, some studies show that the aforementioned drivers are exacerbated by conflict and displacement. A recent study estimated that 86 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan now live below the poverty line.[23] Respondents from a qualitative study in Yemen believed that high rates of child marriage among IDPs are driven by a need for money after loss of property or income.[24] This suggests that while pervasive gender norms are an underlying driver, insecure economic status increases reliance on traditional marriage practices to alleviate increased burden due to conflict. However, this association has not yet been explored in depth throughout the region.

23 Girls Not Brides, *Child marriage in humanitarian settings: Spotlight on the situation in the Arab region* (2019).

24 UNICEF and Youth Leadership Development Foundation (YLDF), *Tadhafur Program for Safe Age of Marriage: Child Marriage Survey* (2017).

Methods and design

The research methodology adopted for the studies included the following:

1. A cross-sectional household survey assessing prevalence and associated risk factors

To assess the effect of displacement, IDPs and/or refugees and the nearest host population to act as a comparison group were surveyed in Djibouti, Yemen and KRI. Within each sampled household, data collectors interviewed one female adult and one female adolescent aged 10-19. The female adult was asked to provide a roster of all household members who lived there at least one month in the last year. Egypt did not collect quantitative data in this study.

2. Participatory discussions and in-depth interviews with adolescents, caregivers and community leaders

In Egypt, KRI and Yemen, qualitative data were collected through structured participatory sessions and interviews with key actors involved in child marriage decision-making and prevention. This included adult caregivers, community leaders, married and unmarried adolescents, and service providers. Qualitative participants were sampled using a mix of purposive and snowball sampling, with emphasis on ensuring equal representation by those who have and have not been exposed to local programming.

3. Random selection of participants

Within each of the populations of interest in the quantitative study, households were selected using a multistage cluster sampling design with probability proportional to size (the number of clusters in one area corresponds to the size of the population in that area). Within each cluster, data collectors identified a random start location and proceed to the nearest household to determine eligibility. They would continue in this manner until the cluster size was reached. Clusters were based on the most updated population numbers provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNFPA in each context. However, Djibouti had to adapt its sampling strategy in one location due to unanticipated inaccurate population estimates.

4. Locally validated quantitative measures

The quantitative survey was modeled after the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) with added questions to ascertain characteristics of the head of household, perceptions of child marriage, beliefs about gender roles and exposure to interventions. Qualitative interview guides were developed based on interest from the country research teams, but included common themes to address drivers and consequences of child marriage. All tools were translated into local languages.

Djibouti study

Yemeni refugees in Djibouti City and Markazi refugee camp, and Somali refugees in Ali-Addeh and Holl Holl refugee camps

EMERGENCY > Conflict in Yemen (2014 - present), conflict in Somalia (1991 - present)

POPULATIONS > Somali refugees, Yemeni refugees, Djibouti host community

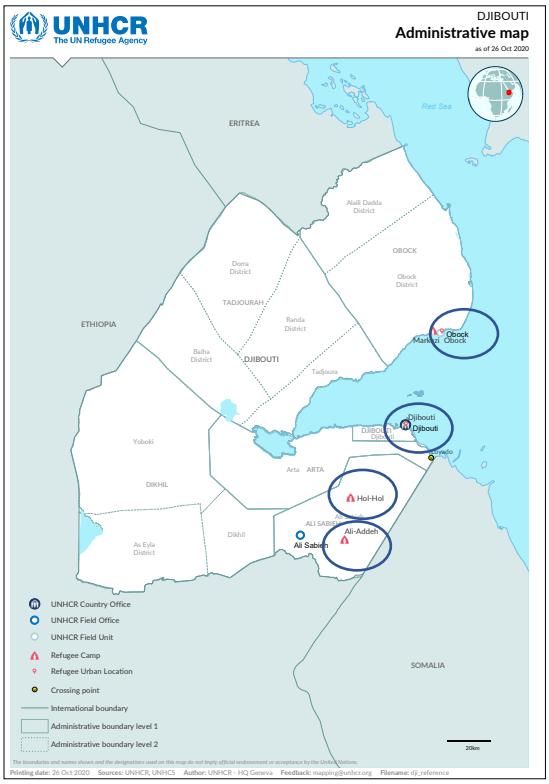
LOCATIONS > Obock, Djibouti City, Hol Hol, Ali Addeh

DATA COLLECTION > January – March 2019

MEASURES USED > Female Adult Survey; Household Roster; Adolescent Survey

SAMPLE > 1,282 adolescent girls; 1,276 adult women, 6,784 household members

PARTNER > Ministry of Women; Direction Statistique et des Études Démographiques (Statistics and Demographic Studies Department)(DISED)



Djibouti is situated near multiple conflict settings, and experiences frequent migration by populations from neighbouring countries. As of January 2019, UNHCR indicated there were 29,214 refugees and asylum seekers in Djibouti, mostly from Somalia, Ethiopia and Yemen.[25] While the Yemeni refugees were recently displaced, some of the Somali refugees have been in Djibouti for up to 20 years. The median length of stay for study participants was four years for Yemeni refugees and eight years for Somali refugees.

25 UNCHR, Djibouti Fact Sheet, January 2019 (2019).

Key findings

Refugee populations had lower rates of current marriage for girls aged 10 to 19 than their host community counterparts. The prevalence of currently married girls aged 10–19 was 7.8 percent for Yemeni refugees and 11.8 percent for nearby host populations. For those currently married girls residing in Somali sampling locations, the prevalence rate was 6.6 percent for refugees and 14.5 percent for adjacent host communities. These findings also suggest that host communities and refugees that reside close to one another in relatively similar settings may allow for closer alignment of social and demographic characteristics.

Education was a moderator of child marriage. Girls who had obtained higher educational levels were 56 percent less likely to be married compared to girls who did not have any education. Conversely, higher education level of head of household correlated to higher rates of child marriage with heads of households 2.65 times as likely to have a married child.

The nature and length of displacement played a role in the practice of child marriage. The cultural norms and values that are faced after forced displacement likely impact child marriage patterns and practices. The study revealed that most refugee households had already been settled in Djibouti for several years, with a median length of stay of four years for Yemeni refugees and eight years for Somali refugees. Marriage rates of both refugee populations were lower than their host community counterparts, and also substantially lower than their country of origin. Taken together, it is likely that the existing norms and values of the host community influenced marriage practices, further facilitated by the integration of refugee protections into national plans and systems. The 2017 Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education is one example of how the government of Djibouti has worked to mitigate the effects of conflict through the promotion of refugee integration into national systems, shifting towards a supportive and protective environment for adolescent girls.

Egypt study

Syrian refugees in Giza, Damietta and Qalyubia

EMERGENCY > Conflict in Syria (2011 – present)

POPULATIONS > Syrian refugees in residing in Greater Cairo and Damietta

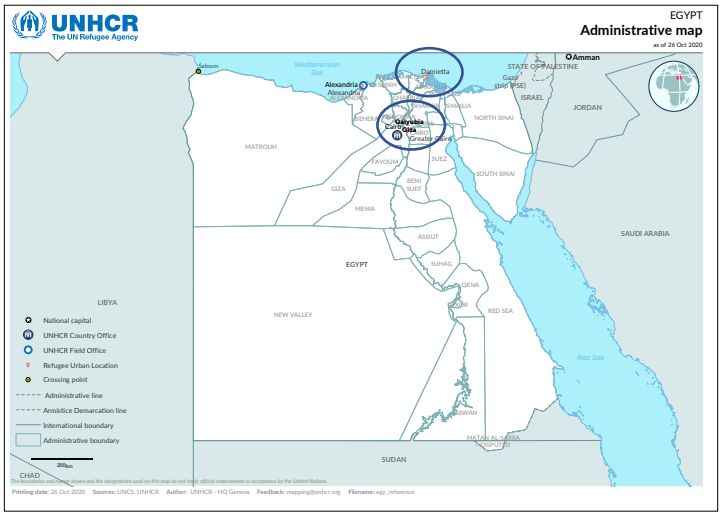
LOCATIONS > Giza, Damietta, and Qalyubia

DATA COLLECTION > February – August 2019

MEASURES USED > In-depth interviews (IDIs), key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs)

SAMPLE > 55 married and 68 unmarried adolescent girls, 116 parents, 24 key informants

PARTNERS > Terre des Hommes; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Etijah



Egypt, which had hosted around 130,000 Syrian refugees as of September 2019, has not adopted a policy of encampment. Refugees mostly live in urban areas alongside Egyptian communities. The majority of this community is located in Greater Cairo, with additional large concentrations in the coastal city of Damietta. While Syrian refugees have been granted access to resources like public school and health care, there are still issues that pose challenges with integrating refugees with Egyptian host populations.

Key findings

The drivers of child marriage are multi-dimensional. The drivers varied across both nationalities and place of origin. Among Syrian refugees, leading drivers of child marriage include cultural norms and traditions, groom availability and the concept of *qisma w naseeb* (destiny), economic burden stemming from displacement, schooling and protection concerns. Notably, religion was not mentioned as a key driver unless directly probed.

Implicit gender norms govern girls' sexuality and parents' justification of early marriage. Normative gender roles and values constituted an underlying contextual driver of child marriage amongst Syrian refugees in Egypt. Marriage was framed as a way to "control," "mold" and "shape" girls, thus protecting their sexuality and provide *sutra* (social and financial protection). Girls who join the labor force and postpone marriage become "difficult to control" and are less marriageable.

These harmful gender norms often led to devaluing girls' education and their contribution to the workforce. Some parents deemed some girls "disinclined" toward education and used that as justification for removing them from school at an early age so they can fulfil traditional gendered roles in society.

Displacement was both a driver and a moderator of child marriage amongst Syrian refugees. Disruption to communal and social systems of support, care and protection of girls, as well as increased financial insecurity within households, contributed to the consideration of child marriage as a coping mechanism. However, traditional norms and changes to the family structure have eroded over time to lessen restrictions on adolescent autonomy and familial expectations due to interactions with host populations that were perceived as more liberal. While arranged marriages prevailed as the dominant form of marriage, with abrupt transitions from childhood to adulthood, there were some notable signs of changes in marriage and family formation due to displacement.

Impact of displacement varies across time and across families. For some, displacement to Egypt relaxed social rules that curtailed girls' mobility and educational attainment. Families were more willing to keep girls in school and allow them to work. These shifts in family structure and roles led to changes in traditional marriage practices, such as reduced grandparent involvement and decreases in cousin marriages.

Certain legal barriers posed risks to both refugees and host populations that increase vulnerability. Many refugees were facing a long and difficult process to renew their residency, preventing children from enrolling in school. As child marriage is illegal in Egypt, most families resorted to religious marriages and did not seek legal registration, which was then a barrier to obtaining birth registration and access to education for children born of young mothers.

Certain legal barriers posed risks to both refugees and host populations that increase vulnerability. Many refugees were facing a long and difficult process to renew their residency, preventing children from enrolling in school. As child marriage is illegal in Egypt, most families resorted to religious marriages and did not seek legal registration, which was then a barrier to obtaining birth registration and access to education for children born of young mothers.

Kurdistan Region of Iraq study

Syrian refugees, IDPs, and host communities in Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah governorates

EMERGENCY > Conflict in Syria (2011 – present); Emergence of ISIS (2013 – 2019)

POPULATIONS > Refugee and IDP camps in KRI

LOCATION > Dohuk; Erbil; Sulaimaniyah

DATA COLLECTION > March – October 2019

	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
MEASURES USED	Female Adult Survey, Household Roster, Adolescent Survey	In-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions
SAMPLE	1,976 adolescent girls; 1,870 adult women; 10,351 household members	36 married adolescents; 9 key informants with stakeholders and related ministries; 12 FGDs with humanitarian actors and community leaders

PARTNER > University of Sulaimaniyah

The three governorates of KRI (Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah) receive refugees from Syria and IDPs from Iraq. As of May 2019, nearly half of Iraq's 382,909 IDPs live in KRI, and KRI hosted about 250,000 Syrians.[26] Local and international actors have set up separate refugee and IDP camps throughout the region. However, ongoing and recent conflicts force a continuous flow of displaced persons to occupy growing camp settings.

26 UNHCR, Iraq Camp Master List and Population Flow: May 2019 (2019).

Key findings

The prevalence of child marriage was highest amongst internally displaced persons compared to refugees and host populations. About one in eight internally displaced girls aged 10-19 were currently married. Only roughly one in ten host community and Syrian refugee girls of the same age were married. For internally displaced women aged 20-24, 12.9 percent were married before 18. Again, Syrian refugees and the surrounding communities demonstrated smaller prevalence rates, at 3.5 and 4 percent, respectively. The difference in rates between age cohorts suggests a potential increase in child marriage rates amongst refugees.

Education was a protective factor. Lower educational levels and unemployment of the head of household showed increased risk of child marriage. Notably, girls with a head of household with a lower education level had 10.5 times the risk of being married before 18. Refugee girls had the lowest percentage of staying in school after marriage.

Economic insecurity is driving decision-making around child marriage and inter-ethnic marriages. Many displaced respondents believed child marriage rates have increased due to increased financial pressures after displacement. Though marriage with host populations was seen as a way to relieve economic burdens and give children a chance at a better life, many IDPs and refugees expressed preference for marriage within their ethnic community to preserve their culture during displacement. While host respondents believed host men marrying displaced girls was a charitable act, refugees described this act as a transaction that takes advantage of displaced families' poor economic situations and low dowries.

Agency and decision-making power for girls was diminished and related to serious mental health consequences. Most participants believed marriage decision-making was the role of parents, especially fathers. This lack of agency in decision-making also caused some girls to resort to extreme measures, with girls threatening, and sometimes committing, suicide. After marriage, girls' agency was perceived as secondary to their husbands, who expected their wives to fill domestic roles and raise children. Girls, especially those displaced, often mentioned depression or anxiety regarding these pressures in marriage and child rearing. However, men portrayed seeking help for marital problems as shameful and should instead be resolved within the family.

Gender norms and associated practices regarding family honor and education are grounded in gender discrimination that drives child marriage. Participants believed "socially deviant" behavior, such as premarital sex or intimate relationships, among girls was a bigger threat to family honor than the same behavior among boys. Married girls also are also disadvantaged in education, due to the domestic responsibilities to her husband and family.

Yemen study

Internally displaced persons in Sana'a, Ibb and Aden

EMERGENCY > Yemen civil war (2015 – present))

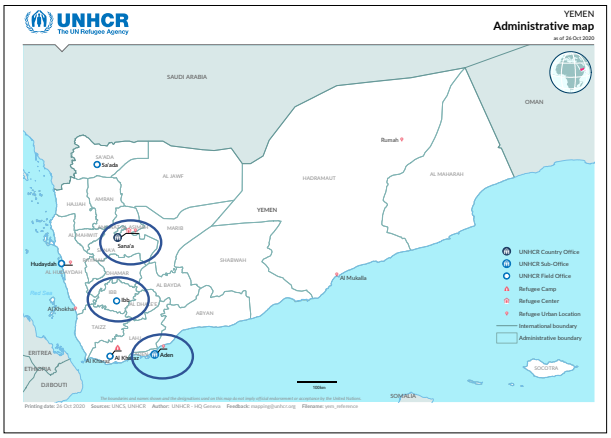
POPULATIONS > IDP populations throughout Yemen

LOCATION > Sana'a; Ibb; Aden

DATA COLLECTION > February - March 2019

	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
MEASURES USED	Female Adult Survey, Household Roster, Adolescent Survey	Focus group discussions, key informant interviews
SAMPLE	133 adolescent girls; 278 parents; 30 key informants	1,209 adolescent girls; 1,212 adult women; 8,400 household members

PARTNER > Central Statistical Office



The civil war that started in Yemen in 2015 has internally displaced almost 3 million people, and about 70 percent of the population is in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The economic instability and political turmoil have prevented much assistance from being adequately distributed. Child marriage is considered a major issue in Yemen and the government did introduce a law that would set minimum age of marriage at 18, though that law was never ratified.

Key findings

The prevalence of child marriage was highest amongst internally displaced persons. Rates of child marriage were highest among displaced girls, with about one in five displaced girls aged 10–19 currently married compared to one in eight in the adjacent host community. The mean age of marriage was 16.1 years. Overall, girls had roughly five times greater odds of being married than boys of the same age. Taken together, these findings could suggest that those who remain geographically close to conflict face increased risk of child marriage.

The effect of displacement on economic security impacts decision-making for child marriage. Displacement was seen as a primary reason for growing economic insecurity. Having a secure source of income was the primary factor that participants believed made boys (and sometimes girls) ready for marriage. However, lack of income was also cited as a facilitator for participants that used marriage to relieve financial burden. Internally displaced respondents noted their economic

instability made them more inclined than their host counterparts to relieve financial burden through marrying their daughters. Interestingly, unemployment coupled with higher education level of the head of household was associated with decreased odds of being child married. Taken together, the findings suggest that higher education, particularly of the head of household, is protective in delaying the age of marriage for girls and boys even in the context of financial hardship.

Imbalanced power dynamics within the household and pervasive gender norms reduce girls' autonomy and agency and drive child marriage. Nearly a third of the respondents had a spouse that was 6 to 10 years their senior. Marriage decision-making practices are dependent on gendered beliefs, where "readiness" defined as economic security for boys and reproductive age for girls. Girls were expected to take on domestic household roles and raise children, so earlier marriage assured parents she will not be a "spinster" (a negative term used by many participants to refer to an unmarried and childless older woman). For girls, being ready for marriage pertained to physical maturity (i.e., development of the pelvis and spine) to support childbirth, while for boys it related to completing education and having a source of income. In participatory discussions with adolescent girls and boys, child marriage was linked to early childbirth for girls, and maternal morbidities were of the highest concern among male and female participants.

Enhanced perception of protection risks impact decision-making for child marriage. Internally displaced respondents noted the close proximity of living conditions to others, many of them perceived as strangers. There was an increased perception of risk of sexual harassment to daughters; having a husband was seen as a protective factor that would alleviate these concerns.

Implications for practice

Conflict-related displacement and its associated risk factors on child marriage are context specific. Participatory and in-depth interviews with Syrian married and unmarried adolescent girls residing in urban areas in Egypt revealed that displacement acted as both a driver and moderator of child marriage; its effect changing for those who experience protracted displacement. A similar situation was noted by Somali refugees in Djibouti and Syrian refugees in KRI, which had lower rates of child marriage compared to other populations that were more recently displaced or to host populations. Marriage practices among internally displaced adolescents and families in Yemen faced with immediate threats to safety and security were notably altered in relation to the conflict.

These results highlight the context-specific nature of child marriage and its variability based on the cause of the emergency, the length of displacement and the diversity of group composition for those forcibly displaced. The integration of gender analysis within and across sectors with ongoing monitoring would ensure programming remains adaptive to address the changing nature of drivers throughout the programming cycle.[27] Adaptive programming approaches will support thoughtful reflection on how to avoid or adjust programming should unanticipated adverse incentives or unintended consequences occur. Adaptive programming would also enable tailored services to be available to adolescent girls, including the application of these recommendations to increase safe spaces and reproductive health clinics in Egypt.

The way in which forced displacement is addressed by host communities and governments can have lasting effects on the health and well-being of adolescent girls. Integration into existing legal, health and other national systems to support refugees and internally displaced populations provides an opportunity to mitigate risk of child marriage over the traditional camp-based methods. Providing greater access to civil registration and vital statistics systems, including birth and marriage registration, can support positive health and development for adolescent married girls and their children.

Further understanding of the cultural and contextual nature of drivers of child marriage within different emergency contexts, as well as across the humanitarian-development nexus, would examine what can feasibly be done to prevent or mitigate the effects of child marriage across the continuum of humanitarian action. More research is required to explore the different "destination effects" on child marriage and how the nature of the displacement, its duration, its trajectory and the norms and patterns of child marriage encountered at the destination after forced migration affect attitudes and behaviors among displaced populations.

Meaningful engagement with communities regarding child marriage should include men and boys. Engaging with men and boys is critical to the elimination of child marriage for both girls and boys. Across the study series, when participants were asked about who is most involved in decision-making for child marriage, the most common responses were fathers, male relatives and the boy to be married. In Yemen and Egypt, participants cited being influenced by stories in their communities that were perpetuated by influential families or community leaders. In KRI, participants' comments revealed that it was vital to work with men and boys acting as gatekeepers to shift gender normative roles in marriage decision-making. In Egypt, socially grounded work to dispel misconceptions about gender roles needs to be done when engaging men and boys as decision-makers and allies. Men and boys should be engaged by all humanitarian practitioners in the planning and implementation processes of any intervention to ensure girls have a supportive and protective environment.

27 Women's Refugee Commission, *"We Need to Write Our Own Names": Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Rohingya Humanitarian Response in Cox's Bazar* (2019). https://s33660.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Gender-Operational-Review-Cox-s-Bazar-09-2019.pdf.

Gender transformative education and livelihood approaches should be used to support household economies and priorities. Household economies rely heavily on livelihood and educational opportunities available to different household members; these are closely linked to family decisions to marry their daughters. In Egypt, KRI and Yemen, many adults stated that education was more important for boys than girls, since they would be the main source of income for their households, and that when faced with economic instability after displacement, they will be more inclined to marry their daughters early. These beliefs were present in girls themselves as well, who overall believed girls should marry at a younger age than boys.

In order to create sustainable solutions that span generations, programs should address access to livelihoods and education for caregivers and adolescents and raise awareness of and seek to transform harmful gender norms in communities affected by child marriage. Practitioners should support livelihood programs among displaced populations who have faced shifts in economic status, as well as programming that addresses economic support through life skills training that includes addressing shifting power dynamics through conflict management and gender transformative approaches. In Djibouti, providing girls with access to education should be considered for both refugee and host populations. In Egypt, improving girls' retention in education through grants, curbing sexual violence and improving overall quality of education in public schools is warranted. In KRI, investing in education for married and unmarried girls to support the growth of female empowerment would further mitigate risk of child marriage. In Yemen, access and quality of education and vocational training programs should be enhanced for girls and caregivers.

Include married girls in all aspects of program design and implementation. Findings from Egypt, KRI and Yemen showed that married girls experience negative physical and mental health consequences of child marriage. As seen in Yemen, young women who were married and had children reported experiencing pregnancy complications and negative health outcomes for their children. Additionally, being married and displaced meant these girls were isolated and often lived far from support networks.

To address this, practitioners should increase access to sexual and reproductive health services, along with education on family planning. In Egypt, many girls reported incorrect knowledge of proper contraceptive use. In Yemen and KRI, contraception was considered inappropriate for adolescents to discuss. Addressing this lack of information, as well as ensuring referral pathways and services are available and adolescent-friendly, is important, especially for married adolescent girls who are at greater risk of pregnancy complications.

Many married girls were not allowed to continue their education after marriage, either by husbands or due to increased household responsibilities. When designing educational programs in humanitarian settings, measures should be taken to make education more accessible for married girls who may have more restrictions on time and movement.

Sustainable humanitarian responses are multi-level and cross-sectoral. Key elements of sustainable humanitarian action revealed in these studies include the importance of supporting or, when lacking, building local partnerships to drive risk mitigation programming; bridging the division between humanitarian and development policy and practice; and leveraging cross-sectoral collaboration to holistically address the needs of adolescent girls.

The context-specific nature of child marriage in humanitarian settings necessitates collaboration with local partners to support ownership and capacity building. Research findings should also be brought back to communities to ensure implications and interventions are informed by and co-designed with communities. Advocacy efforts should focus on enacting the previously proposed changes to marriage practices and engaging women in policymaking and leadership roles.

As conflicts and natural disasters become more protracted in nature, more coordination and integration of programming approaches is required by development and humanitarian actors. Effective responses to child marriage should include preparedness before emergencies occur, as well as creating long-term strategies that can operate in a protracted humanitarian setting. Child marriage includes risk factors that span sectors, including education, gender-based violence, child protection, reproductive health, economic security and others. Research and programming should integrate sectoral responses in order to support systematic transformation and sustainable change.

Practitioners focused on addressing child marriage should undertake (or support) additional research on what works to prevent or delay marriage. Though these studies are addressing an important gap in knowledge of child marriage in humanitarian settings, they do not examine what interventions are best suited to prevent or delay child marriage. In order to make more informed programmatic decisions, more work should be done to assess the effectiveness of interventions and determine what research is needed to improve the overall response to child marriage in humanitarian settings. Examining existing social and gender norms associated with child marriage should also be further investigated through participatory community engagement, especially regarding shifts before and after displacement.

Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys Demographic and Health Surveys
DISED	Direction Statistique et des Études Démographiques
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDI	In-depth interview
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JHU	Johns Hopkins University
KII	Key informant interview
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
RDPP II	European Regional Development and Protection Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WRC	Women's Refugee Commission

arabstates.unfpa.org unicef.org womensrefugeecommission.org jhu.edu