

The Regional Action Forum to End Child Marriage in Arab States/MENA (RAF) is delighted to share its March 2024 newsletter covering end-of-year achievements and updates.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

On 6 February 2024, RAF members held an online discussion on the linkages between child marriage and FGM in the MENA region.

Contributors included:

- Rachael Hongo, Senior Data, Evidence and Policy Officer at Girls Not Brides who gave a global overview of available evidence and key programmatic recommendations;
- Tamador Ahmed Abdalla, UNICEF Sudan CP Specialist and Dr Amira Azhari, Director of States Coordination Unit at the National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) in Sudan, who gave an overview of the linkages between child marriage and FGM in Sudan; and
- Nunow Abdirahman, UNFPA Somalia GBV/Gender Analyst, who gave an overview of the linkages between child marriage and FGM in Somalia.



THE ONLINE DISCUSSION CONCLUDED WITH 3 KEY ADVOCACY CALLS:

INVEST IN EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS:

Stakeholders looking to invest further in prevention efforts should emphasize the importance of understanding the correlation between FGM and child marriage and the need for evidence-based interventions.

ADOPT HOLISTIC APPROACHES THAT ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES & CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE & FGM:

It is crucial to adopt holistic approaches that address the root causes and consequences of child marriage and FGM. By combining legislative reforms, community engagement, comprehensive programming and innovative strategies, stakeholders can work towards ending these harmful practices.

ENGAGE WITH BOYS, MEN & RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR LASTING CHANGE:

Engaging with boys, men and religious leaders for lasting prevention of FGM and child marriage is key, particularly in contexts where patriarchal norms and misconceptions persist. This can be done through innovative and contextually sensitive approaches such as engaging through sports, art or community dialogue.

The online discussion recording is available [here](#)

A summary brief is also available [here](#)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

This International Women's Day, 8 March 2024, join the United Nations in celebrating under the theme Invest in [women: Accelerate progress](#).

The MENA region is currently facing many challenges, ranging from geopolitical conflicts to complex socio-economic crises. These barriers can only be addressed through the empowerment of women and girls as real agents of change in their families, communities and countries.





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UPCOMING RESEARCH

In April 2024, RAF is hoping to conduct a much needed and timely desk review analysis of available data and research gaps related to the impact of child marriage on girls living with disabilities in the Middle East.

STAY TUNED FOR MORE UPDATES

RAF MEMBER FEATURE!

In January 2024, RAF member Ghenwa Schinder, Director of Women Alive Lebanon, was interviewed by Equality Now regarding the move by the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee in Lebanon to discuss a draft law on the minimum age for marriage in the country.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE.](#)



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