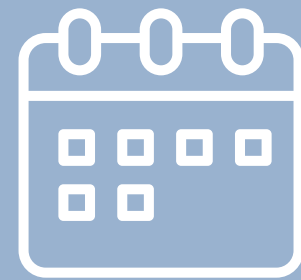


WELCOME TO OUR WEBINAR

REGIONAL STUDY LAUNCH

20 August 2025



15:00 to 16:30
(GMT+3)



United Nations Population Fund

unicef
for every child

BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO PROGRAMMING

Delivering interventions to
address child marriage in
humanitarian settings in Iraq,
Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen



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Opening Remarks



Study methodology, findings & recommendations

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Motivation:

Vulnerabilities of girls are exacerbated during a crisis and risk of child marriage rises. There is little evidence to guide programme implementation in humanitarian spaces to prevent and respond to child marriage.

Research Questions:

- (1) What programmes are being implemented?
- (2) What challenges do governments, practitioners and programme designers face in implementation?
- (3) What factors facilitate effective implementation?



United Nations Population Fund



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METHODOLOGY:

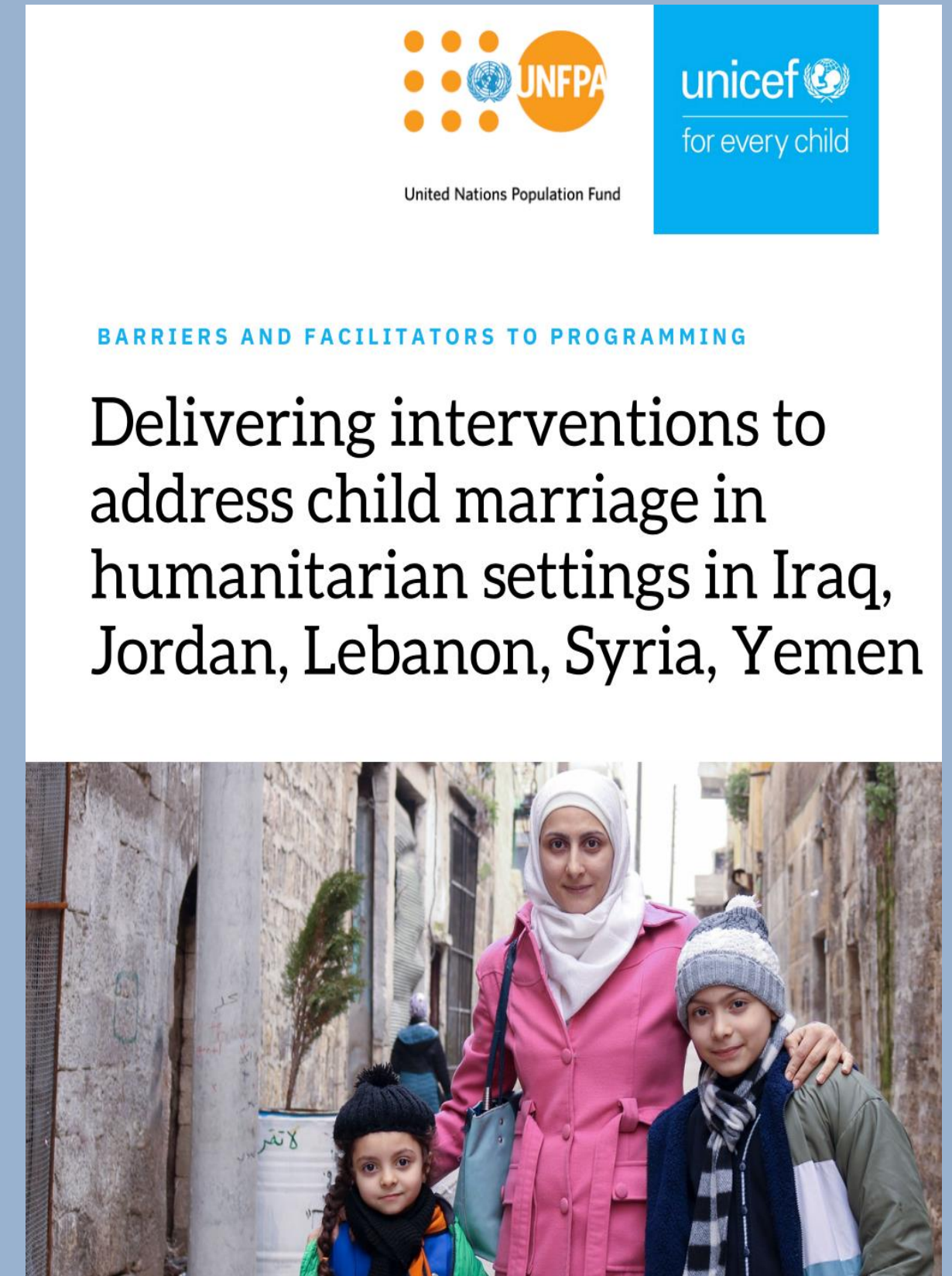
- 66 Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions across five countries using a semi-structured interview instrument, April-May 2024
- Data collection conducted by national consultants who are skilled in qualitative interviewing and experts in their countries on related issues
- Respondent selection conducted in coordination with UNICEF and UNFPA Country Offices
 - Government officials
 - UNO/iNGO management
 - Local NGO management

FINDINGS on PROGRAMMING in humanitarian settings:

- Strategies to address child marriage are often embedded in other interventions
 - Multi-sectoral Programming, gender-based violence, SRHR, adolescent empowerment and safe spaces
- Degree of integration and focus is varied – sometimes CM is explicitly a secondary aim, sometimes CM is acknowledged as a contextual factor
- CM is often not monitored or not explicitly included as part of programming
- Tension between need for holistic, progressive programming and directed efforts
- Coordination between different programmes and stakeholders is challenging

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure child marriage prevention and the needs of adolescent girls are prioritized in crisis response to support long-term investments in girls and their futures.
- Address physical and normative barriers to access of programming through community-based and localized approaches.
- Strengthen existing multi-sectoral programmes by scaling up proven approaches and adapting them to humanitarian contexts.
- Invest in Evidence, including monitoring and accountability for reporting on outcomes.



CONCLUSIONS:

- Social change takes time and investment, and requires full participation and leadership of local communities.
- Dynamic and overlapping crises disrupt long-term investment by generating new needs and priorities in the form of immediate life-saving activities.
- This disruption necessitates adaptation and specific strategies to ensure that child marriage and its drivers continue to be addressed and that long-term investments are not subsumed and do not lose ground.
- Global funding cuts and a changing landscape for humanitarian action mean that spending on child marriage prevention and response should be evidence-based and include accountability through monitoring and continuous learning.

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JORDAN

Coordinated child marriage data collection



Child Marriage in Jordan

- Decrease in Child Marriage Rates from from 7,964 cases (11.8%) in 2020 to 5,033 (8%) in 2024.
- Higher Rates in Camp Settings.
- Under article 10 of the current personal status law, the minimum age for marriage is 18, but Sharia Court judges can make exceptions in cases for children between 15 and 18 if it is judged to be in their “best interest”.
- Root Causes include Customs and traditions, poverty, family disintegration, lack of knowledge/awareness and the concept of “Sutra”.



Coordinated Data Collection on Child Marriage

The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) continues efforts to reduce marriage under the age of 18, following a 2019 mandate from the Prime Minister's Office to monitor the National Action Plan (2020–2024).

In collaboration with UNFPA, NCFA established the National Taskforce on Child Marriage and a liaison officers sub-committee to coordinate data collection and monitor implementation of the plan.

NCFA has:

- Built capacities of liaison officers through targeted trainings.
- Tracked progress and reporting on National Action Plan activities.
- Supported the Development of an awareness booklet on reducing child marriage.



Suggested action Points from the Study



- Continue investing in qualitative and quantitative data collection mechanisms, in coordination with local partners and government institutions, and to better address the drivers of child marriage in Jordan.
- Track judicial exceptions, advocate for mitigation and ensure proper monitoring the application of the conditions for the exceptions.
- Scale multi sectoral response: Keep CM a priority across health/GBV/CP/livelihoods; expand livelihoods/cash; strengthen case management incl. returnees.
- Shift social norms: Engage community/religious leaders; empower girls & boys as advocates; create community-led prevention committees.
- Strengthen national coordination: Update a unified strategy; drive evidence-based advocacy to donors; embed actions in ministry plans & budgets.

Way Forward

2025 — Child Marriage Study in Jordan (NCFA and UNFPA)

In parallel with the conclusion of the current National Action Plan, the study will focus on :

- Understand child marriage exception cases comprehensively
- Analyze legal, social, economic, and cultural dimensions
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers



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LEBANON

Child marriage framework & prioritization



• يعاني لبنان من أزمات متلاحقة بدأت بالنزوح السوري عام 2011 مروراً بالازمة الاقتصادية عام 2020 ومؤخراً الحرب



الاسرائيلية و قدوم عدد من النازحين في البقاع و الشمال اوائل العام 2025 . النساء , الفتيات و الأطفال هم الأكثر تأثراً مع

العلم أنه تم بداية هذا العام تشكيل حكومة جديدة.

• لا يزال زواج الأطفال أكثر انتشاراً بين مجتمعات اللاجئين السوريين الذين لم تتغير معاييرهم الاجتماعية والسلوكية المتعلقة

بزواج الأطفال حتى بعد النزوح... ورغم شيوع زواج الأطفال في سوريا، إلا أن هناك تقارير متزايدة عن حالات زواج أطفال

بين المجتمع اللبناني، وخاصة في المناطق الريفية، ومع استمرار تدهور الوضع الاجتماعي والاقتصادي منذ عام ٢٠١٩.

• المسح العنقودي الشامل لوضع النساء و الأطفال في العام 2023 نسب زواج الأطفال أوضح ان نسبة الفتيات المراهقات

(19-15 سنة) المتزوجات تتراوح ما بين 9% إلى 19% (38% في مخيمات اللاجئين).

عمل لبنان على التصدي لمشكلة زواج الأطفال من خلال :

- تطوير وزارة الشؤون الإجتماعية (المجلس الأعلى للطفولة) خطة العمل الوطنية للوقاية و الإستجابة لزواج الأطفال و التي أطلقت في العام 2023 و التي شملت إستجابة متعددة القطاعات من خلال عدة وزارات و منها وزارة التربية – الصحة – و العدل.
- تطوير الهيئة الوطنية لشؤون المرأة إستراتيجية المرأة في لبنان (2022- 2030) و خطة العمل الخاصة بها و التي تلحظ خصوصية التدخلات مع الفتيات.
- تعمل العديد من الجمعيات الأهلية للتصدي لهذه المشكلة على الصعيد المحلي .



التحديات :

- تأثر قطاع التعليم وكافة القطاعات بالأزمة الاقتصادية و الازمات المتكررة مما اثر على جودة التعليم و بعض الخدمات في لبنان خصوصا في المناطق النائية حيث تدنت أجور المعلمين بشكل ملحوظ.
- حالة عدم اليقين و الأزمات المتكررة , بما في ذلك الحروب و الأزمة الاقتصادية التي تعيق تطبيق الخطط الوطنية و العمل على حل اشكالية زواج الأطفال على المدى المتوسط و الطويل
- غياب قانون موحد يحدد السن الأدنى للزواج ب 18 سنة
- غياب الإجماع على بعض الدراسات و الإحصاءات و عدم مشاركة بعض المناطق في الإحصاءات الوطنية.



الفرص و الحلول:

• مواصلة العمل على إصدار قانون يحدد 18 عاماً كسن أدنى للزواج, بما في ذلك المناصرة و الضغط على

الجهات السياسية لإقراره.

• مواصلة العمل القطاع التربوي: تغيير المناهج , التوعية و تقديم خدمات نوعية للفتيات بما في ذلك الإحالة.

• مواصلة العمل على تغيير السلوك الإجتماعي و التأكد من إجماع الجهات الحكومية على بعض الإحصاءات

حول زواج الاطفال.

• تعزيز التنسيق بين الوزارات المعنية الذي اوصت به خطة العمل الوزارية للوقاية و الإستجابة من زواج



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Q&A #1



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SYRIA

Learnings & opportunities for child marriage prevention



CHILD MARRIAGE IN SYRIA

- Syria remains in a **protection crisis**, worsened by 14 years of conflict and displacement.
- The political transition in Dec 2024 has contributed to an environment of uncertainty about future developments.
- **Child marriage persists** as a negative coping mechanism amid poverty and insecurity.
- Prevailing social norms and expectations around girls' roles in the family and community contribute to early marriage, which is often seen as a form of protection and stability in unstable environments.
- Legal age of marriage is 18, but **judicial exceptions allow marriage at 15**, fueling underage and unregistered marriages.
- Vulnerable groups include **girls with disabilities, widows, and adolescents**—many lacking access to services.
- **One-third of households are female-headed**, often due to conflict-related loss.
- UN agencies are working to **restore civil registration** and improve **community-level data tracking**.





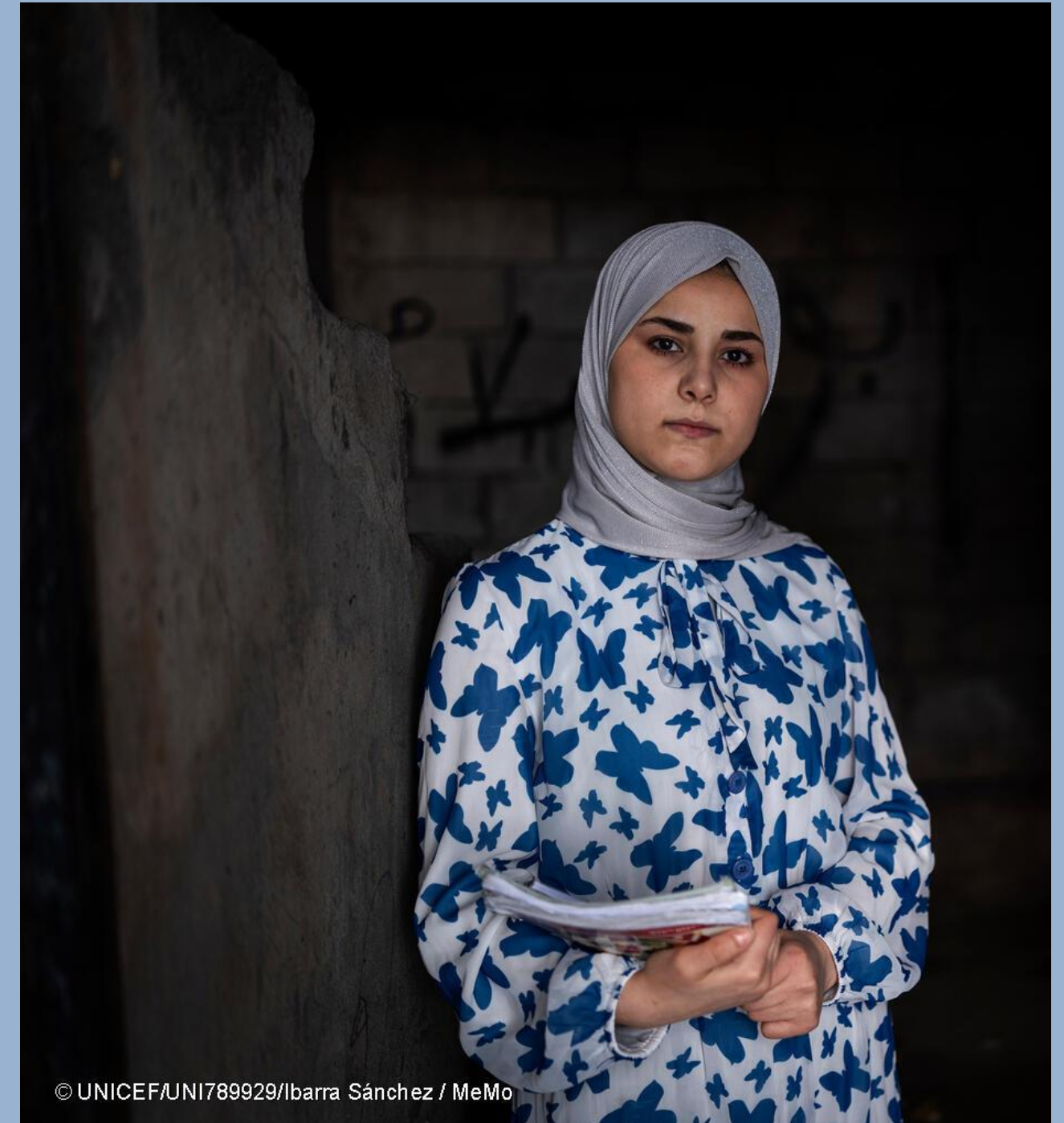
- **Conflict-driven vulnerability and legal loopholes** have normalized child marriage.
- **Negative social norms and economic hardship** remain major drivers.
- **Education access** is critical—girls out of school are more likely to marry early.
- **Multisectoral collaboration** (CP, GBV, health, education, livelihoods) is essential.

Opportunities include:

- Recognizes that all international conventions ratified by Syria (e.g., CEDAW, CRC) are part of the constitutional declaration.
- The new constitutional declaration stated that the state is obliged to protect women from violence, creating a legal entry point to frame child marriage as violence against girls.
- **Civil registry resumption** for better documentation.
- **Emerging civil society** and youth advocacy.
- **Government openness** to judicial and youth engagement.

Challenges faced:

- **Unclear government priorities hinder policy advocacy.**
- **Fragmented legal systems** and disrupted civil registration.
- **Social acceptance** of child marriage remains high.
- **Data gaps**, especially in previously inaccessible regions.
- **Limited funding and coordination** across sectors.
- Protracted conflict, displacement, and poverty reinforce social acceptance of child marriage as a survival strategy



Proposed solutions:

- **Strengthen data systems:** Community-level tracking and national prevalence studies.
- **Engage religious and community leaders** to shift norms and promote girls' rights.
- **Integrate child marriage prevention across humanitarian sectors.**
- **Support civil society:** Build capacity of NGOs and women-led organizations.
- **Promote legal reform and response services** for already married girls, including those with children.
- **Leverage the new Constitutional Declaration:** Advocate for updating the legal framework inline with international conventions ratified by Syria and ensure enforcement of protections against child marriage.



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YEMEN

Community mobilization around child marriage prevention



Context and Overview

Protracted Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

- Conflict ongoing for over a decade
- Economic collapse and breakdown of social services

Impact on Women and Girls

- Deepening gender inequalities
- Increase in child marriage as a survival strategy

Drivers of Child Marriage

- Poverty, displacement, and insecurity
- Dowry, debt repayment, and perceived protection

Legal and Sociocultural Challenges

- Weak legal framework on minimum age of marriage
- Dominance of patriarchal norms and fragmented governance

Gender Inequality Indicators

- Yemen ranks 155 out of 156 countries in Global Gender Gap Report (2022)
- Limited access to education, employment, and political participation

Statistical Evidence

- UNICEF MICS 2024: ECM rates >30% in 9 governorates (e.g., Reimah 38.7%, Al-Mahweet 36.3%-Aldhalae 35.7-Abyan 33% Sanaa 32%)
- UNICEF MICS data shows a decline in child marriage in Yemen, with rates before age 15 dropping from 14% in 2006 to 8.8% in 2023. Similarly, marriage before age 18 fell from 52% to 31.2% over the same period.

Community Mobilization Around Child Marriage Prevention

Community Engagement & Awareness

Empowering Adolescent Girls

Influencer & Community Mobilization

Partnerships & Advocacy

Strengthening Protection Systems



Challenges

1

Deep-rooted cultural & religious norms – child marriage is seen as socially acceptable and difficult to challenge.

2

Economic hardship & poverty – families use early marriage as a coping mechanism to reduce financial burden.

3

Lack of legal & policy frameworks – limited laws and ineffective enforcement hinder prevention efforts.

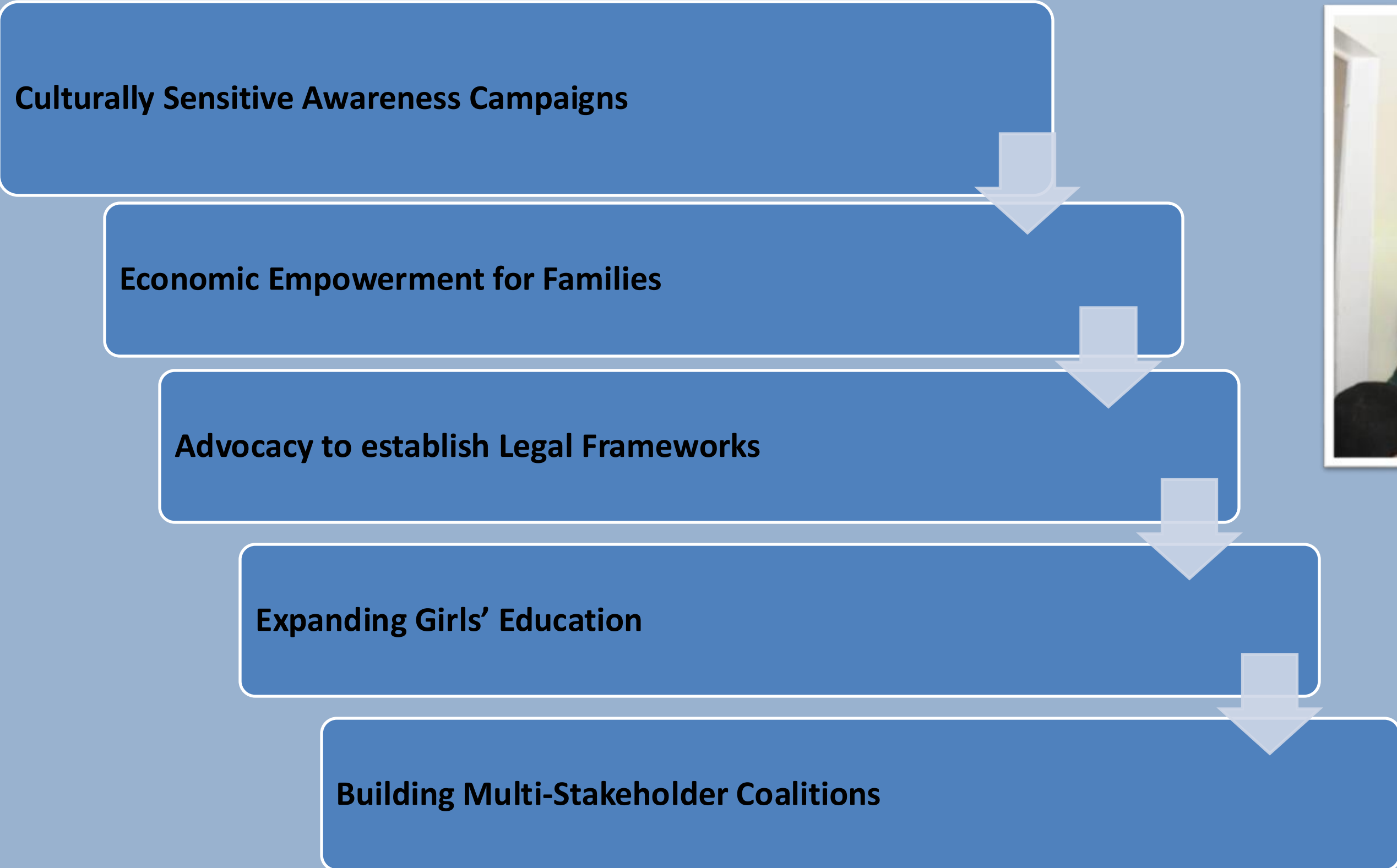
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Limited access to education & protection services – especially in rural/marginalized areas, increasing girls' vulnerability.

5

Resistance from conservative groups – prevention efforts often perceived as intrusive or against cultural values.

What is working!



أنت قادرة على أن تكوني
طبيبة، مهندسة، أو معلمة



التعليم يُمكنك
من بناء حياة أفضل



مستقبلك لا يُبنى
بالزواج المبكر





Regional Outcomes & Calls to Action

BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO PROGRAMMING

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REGIONAL OUTCOMES & CALLS TO ACTION:

(1) Create a shared regional child marriage data and monitoring system:

Build a standardized platform across countries to collect and share accurate, timely data on child marriage. This should include both quantitative and qualitative insights to help shape smarter, contextually relevant and responsive policies and programmes.

(2) Unify around a clear legal standard with the minimum age for marriage being set at 18 in the region with no judicial exceptions:

Advocate regionally for setting and enforcing a minimum legal age of marriage at 18, without the possibility of judicial exceptions. Legal reform efforts should be led in partnership with women, girls, civil society, youth advocates, local partners, legal experts, community and religious leaders, fostering trust and ownership.

(3) Strengthen the Link Between Legal Frameworks and Social Norm Transformation:

Complement legal reforms with strategic social norm interventions that make laws meaningful in practice. Invest in awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and educational initiatives that increase understanding of legal protections, reduce tolerance for child marriage, and create a supportive environment for enforcement.

REGIONAL OUTCOMES & CALLS TO ACTION:

(4) Embed child marriage prevention across all sectors of the regional humanitarian response:

Make child marriage prevention a key component of education, health, protection, and livelihoods programmes among others, especially in humanitarian settings where cross-sectoral coordination is essential to address the multiple drivers and consequences of early marriage. Invest in the development of regional platforms that could foster learning exchanges.

(5) Support community-led and culturally rooted change on child marriage:

Equip local communities – especially women, girls, families, health care workers, educators and religious leaders – to take the lead in shifting harmful norms. Invest in regional girl-led advocacy, peer to peer education, and cross-cultural community dialogues that make the case for change in ways that resonate at the grassroots level, while also opening the doors for further exchanges and reflection at the national and regional levels.

(6) Secure long-term, flexible regional funding for child marriage prevention, while stressing that it is often a “lifesaving issue” particularly in humanitarian contexts:

Treat child marriage prevention as “lifesaving” and requiring long term investment to reach positive and lasting change. Advocate for a pooled regional funding mechanism that supports innovation, scale-up of proven approaches for child marriage prevention, while furthering sustainability for such programmes.

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Q&A #2



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Closing Remarks





**THANK YOU FOR
JOINING US!**

**TOGETHER WE CAN
#ENDCHILD MARRIAGE**