

**CHILD BRIDES ARE SCREAMING:
ARE WE LISTENING?**

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BACKGROUND

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifies that individuals must enter marriage freely with full consent and must be at full age. Child marriage, defined as marriage before age 18, is considered to be a violation of basic human rights of girls by putting them into a life of isolation, service, lack of education, health problems, and abuse in addition to violating their rights including the right to education, leisure and good health (UNICEF 2001).

BACKGROUND *(CONT.)*

Although the legal age of marriage for girls is 18 years, anecdotal evidence revealed that early marriage for girls below 18 years remains a reality particularly in rural Upper Egypt mostly due to socio-cultural reasons. To bypass the law, parents resort to Urfi marriage, which involves an agreement signed by the father of the bride and the groom but not registered in official documents until the girl turns 18.

METHODS

Provide a quick insight of the challenges faced by child brides and suggestions for the way out from the perspective of service providers

The study included:

- desk review of published and unpublished reports
- ten in-depth interviews with key informants

METHODS *(CONT.)*

Interviews focused on motivating factors for child marriage, potential consequences with special focus on reproductive health and suggestions to tackle child marriage through culturally adapted alternatives.

Informed consent was obtained from each interviewee to ensure voluntary participation and permission for recording interviews.

MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR EARLY MARRIAGE

“A married girl is safer from harm because she has a husband to watch over her. Parents also wish to see their daughters married and to see grandchildren before they die.” Peer educator

“My mother was married and pregnant at age 13. Today, we hear about girls that age having unprotected sex and getting pregnant with no husband. Which is more troubling?” Public Health Expert

CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILD BRIDES

“These girls are deprived of their right to develop and mature normally. This will deprive the society later from an educated mother and an active member.” Peer Educator

“I examined a girl that does not wish to see her husband again but she added that she does not want him to die because she doesn't want to lose her marital status.” A Gynecologist

CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILD BRIDES *(CONT.)*

“The younger they are, the less power they have in their new families in relation to their reproductive rights such as timing and spacing their children, and their access to care.” Public Health Expert

“When an adolescent girl sleeps with a man at least 10 years older and sexually experienced he may infect her with a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Husbands to be should be tested for STI and HIV.” A Gynecologist

SUGGESTIONS TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM

“A lot of people won't agree with interventions imposed upon them and not tailored to our culture.” Public Health Expert

SUGGESTIONS TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM

- Education is the key preventative measure
- “Safe spaces” to be created at schools or youth centers for those out of schools
- Teaching young girls life skills
- Education of the and communities to support an enabling environment

SUGGESTIONS TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM

- Vocational training of girls so that they can work from home after school and during summer vacation thus contributing to income generation rather than being “an additional mouth to feed”.

SUGGESTIONS TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM

Care should also be directed to adolescent mothers who have a higher risk of pregnancy related problems.

- Facilitating their access to antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care
- Raising their awareness concerning the risks they and their children face during and after early pregnancy



THANK YOU