

Lubna's Story; A Glimpse into Child Marriage

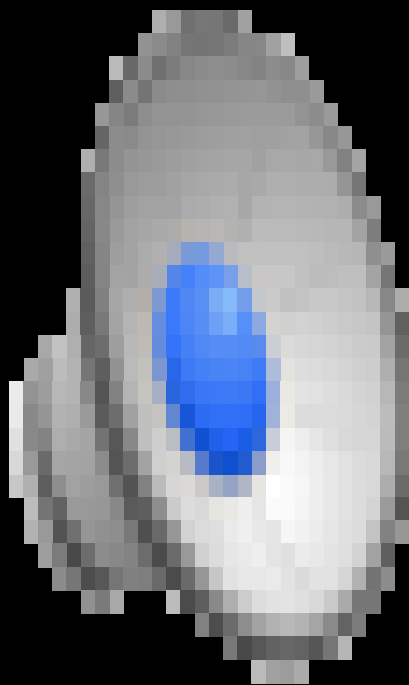


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Policy on Child Marriage



- **1990** - minimum age of marriage 16 in South; 15 in North
- **1992** - law was set at 15
- **1999** - minimum age abolished
- **2009** – Parliament attempted to pass new law



Proposed Law Polarizes Yemen



Opponents

- Contradicts Islamic law
- Children mature when they reach puberty
- Sanctions Western traditions
- Prevents immoral behavior



Proponents

- Children mentally & physically unready
- Increases health risks
- Robs girls of their right to education and a normal childhood



Socio-Cultural Factors



- ✦ Family Honor and ties
- ✦ Shield (Sitr)
- ✦ Poverty
- ✦ Trade marriage
- ✦ Lack of alternatives
- ✦ Condoned by Islam



Trust me, everyone is better off when you marry your daughter off at age 8.

The Safe Age of Marriage Project



- **Community-based intervention**
- **Foster change in social norms in 2 rural districts**
- **Implementing Partners:**
 - **Yemeni Women's Union**
 - **Basic Health Services**
 - **Extending Service Delivery**



Amran Districts

Al Sawd

- Population 25,892
- 44 schools, 1 girls'
- 58% of girls enrolled in primary; 9% in secondary
- 374 teachers; 12 females

Al Soodah

- Population 32,169
- 45 schools, 2 girls'
- 61% of girls enrolled in primary; 7% in secondary
- 240 teachers; 1 female

Baseline Survey Results

- Most adult population is illiterate
- 71% mothers < 18
- 38% mothers had first child < 18
- 59% daughters married <18



What do girls want?



- **Focus Group Discussion – Al Sawd**
 - 12 girls ages 9-15
 - Career VS Marriage
 - Teacher or health worker
 - Role models



Community Educators- Training

Topics

- Health; Consequences
- Education; Barrier
- Social; Problems
- Religion; Culture

Skills

- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Reporting



Key Interventions: Increasing Age at Marriage



Awareness Sessions



SAoM Open Day



School Play

Challenges



- Political Opposition
- Religious Resistance
- Cultural Conflict

Aha Moments....



Ali Saves the Day



Stated Benefits to Delaying Girls' Marriage



| Benefits | Baseline | Endline | Increase |
|--|----------|---------|----------|
| | % | % | % |
| Provide girls more opportunities for education | 45% | 79% | 34% |
| Empowers girls to make decisions | 17% | 48% | 31% |
| Healthier pregnancy | 36% | 67% | 31% |
| Healthier children | 46% | 69% | 23% |

Lessons Learned



- **Balance political party involvement**
- **Involve more religious leaders in project activities**
- **Pair community educators**
- **Buy-in from local council member pushes activities to new heights**

Achievements

- Child marriage banned in Al-Sawd
- First ever female principal
- 53 girl-child and 26 boy-child marriages cancelled



- 101 girls & 56 boys returned to school

About ESD



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ESD addresses unmet need for family planning, increasing use of RH/FP services, especially among underserved populations.

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