Lubna’s Story; A Glimpse into Child Marriage

DALIA AL-ERYANI, MS
BHS/ESD YEMEN PROJECT COORDINATOR
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Girls’ Schools</th>
<th>girls’ Enrolment</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Female Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Sawd</td>
<td>25,892</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>58% in primary; 9% in secondary</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Soodah</td>
<td>32,169</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>61% in primary; 7% in secondary</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1 female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health; Consequences</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education; Barrier</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social; Problems</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion; Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Endline</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide girls more opportunities for education</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowers girls to make decisions</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthier pregnancy</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthier children</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
ESD addresses unmet need for family planning, increasing use of RH/FP services, especially among underserved populations.

For further information contact: LFREIJ@ESDPROJ.ORG