

Delaying Early Marriage in Egypt

The case of *Ishraq*



Patrick Crump,
Save the Children

Wilson Center,
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Program
implemented by
Save the Children,
Population Council,
National Council of
Youth; 2001-
present



Situation of Girls in Egypt

- ❖ Unemployment rate among young females is 32% compared to 12% for males.
- ❖ Egypt ranked 126 out of 132 on the Gender Gap Index.
- ❖ 50% of adolescent girls in Upper Egypt are illiterate.
- ❖ It is estimated that 9% of adolescents 15-19 years and one fifth aged 19 have begun child bearing.
- ❖ It is estimated that 30% of girls marry earlier than the legal age to men 5-10 years older.
- ❖ 91% of females age 10-19 have been subjected to female genital mutilation.

Sources: Population Council, Survey of Young People in Egypt, 2010; EDHS 2008



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***Ishraq* hypothesis: A new life trajectory**

Empowerment
package
(literacy, life
skills, sports in
safe space) +

Community
engagement =

Chance to
enroll in school



Om Kalsoum's New Life

- ❖ At 13, was an illiterate girl from Daqouf village, in Upper Egypt
- ❖ Joined Ishraq in 2001
- ❖ Passed adult ed exam, entered middle school
- ❖ Started a sweet shop to help with family income
- ❖ Graduated from high school at 18
- ❖ Married at age 20, and now has 2 children



“I found a big difference in my life... dealing with my children, managing money, solving problems, taking decisions and dealing with my husband”



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Empowerment Package

- ❖ **Safe spaces:** classes (25 girls, 12 hours/week over 18 months) in youth centers
- ❖ **Local facilitators:** trained female high school grads
- ❖ **Literacy:** Caritas' *Learning is Light* curriculum; 18 months
- ❖ **Life Skills:** CEDPA's *New Horizons*, SC's *Ambitions* livelihoods curriculum
- ❖ **Sports:** team sports, calisthenics



Community Engagement

- ❖ **Youth Centers** as community partner
- ❖ **Religious leaders** endorse program in community meetings
- ❖ **House-to-house** outreach for enrollment
- ❖ **Boys** engaged in activities
- ❖ School re-entry facilitated by local **Education Department**



Program Results

Baseline-Endline Results* (01-04)

- ❖ 65% felt “strong and able to face any problem”
- ❖ More influence over marriage timing, partner selection (73 and 87% strong influence, vs 25 and 66% for control group)
- ❖ Better than literacy-alone programs (47% enrolled in school at endline vs 6% for literacy control group)

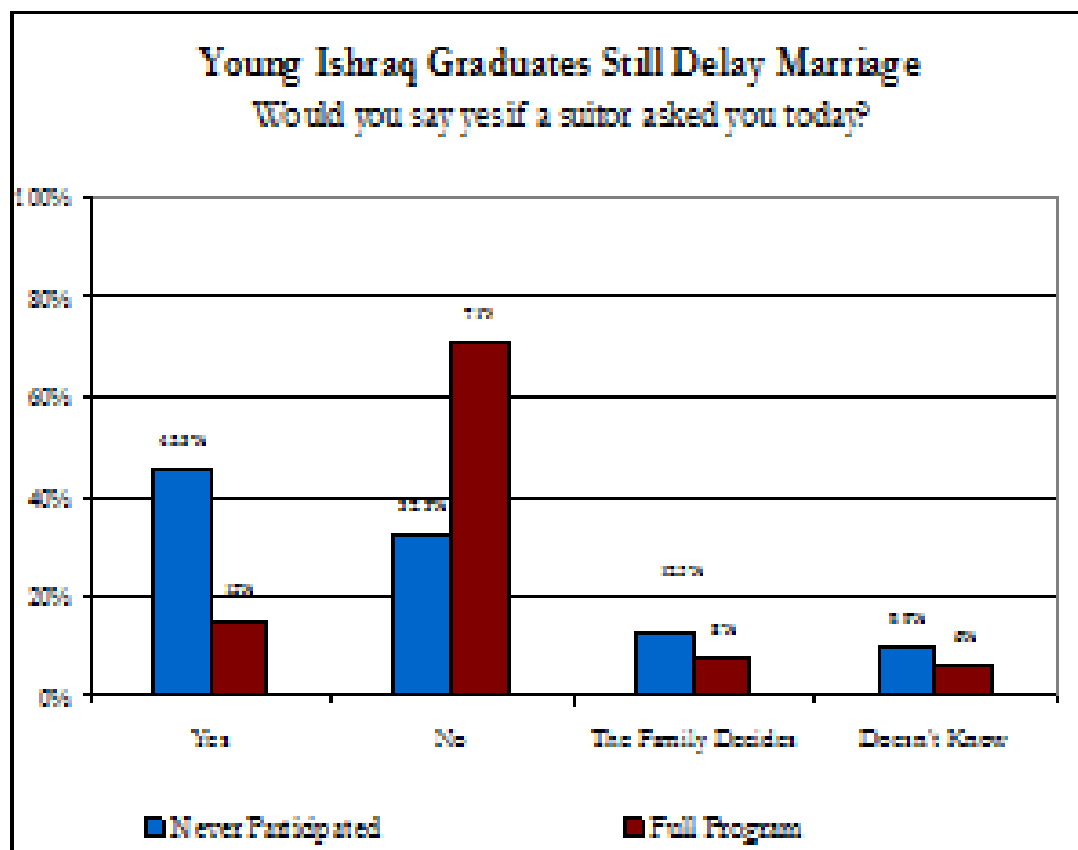
* Population Council surveys

Program Results

- ❖ 92% of *Ishraq* participants passed gvmt literacy exam
- ❖ 62% enrolled in school
- ❖ Cumulative results: 25 villages in 5 governorates; approx 2,000 girls

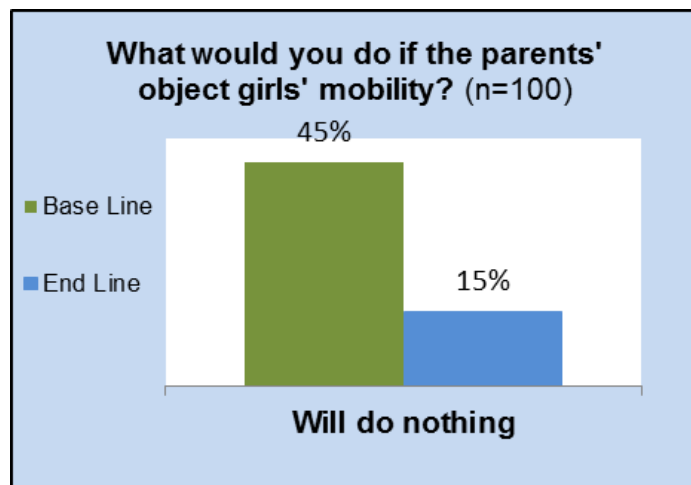


Girls' Attitudes Towards Marriage



Source: Population Council, *Ishraq* Endline, 2004

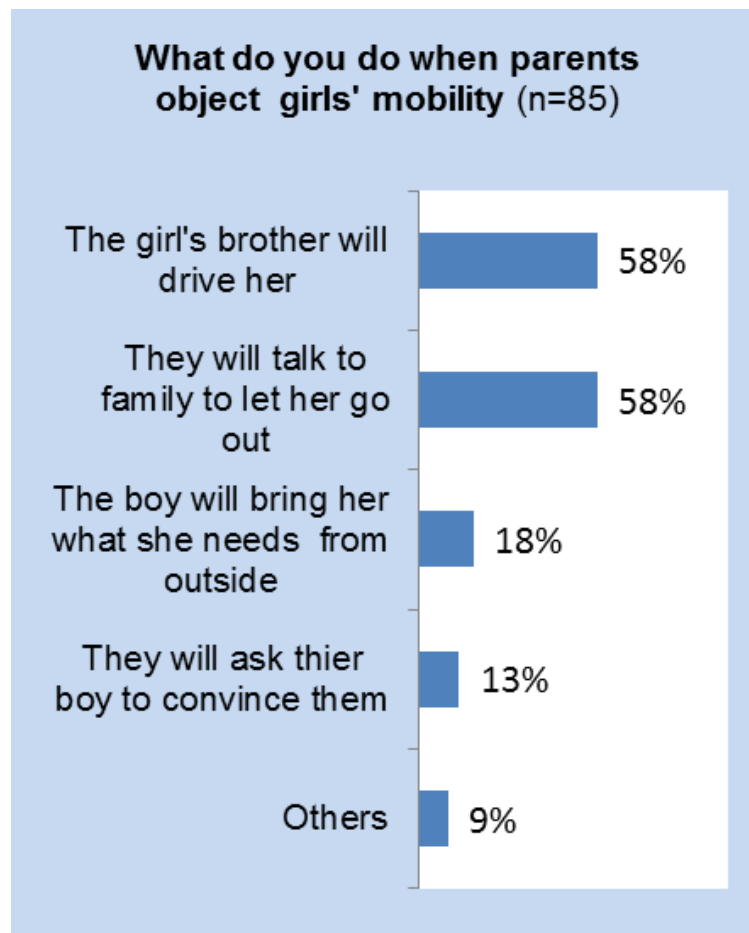
Promising Direction: Boys' Attitudes



Adapted *Choices* curriculum to Upper Egypt to learn about how changing the gender attitudes and behaviors of boys can help to empower girls participating in the Ishraq

Project.

Source: Marketeers, *Choices* Endline Report,



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Lessons Learned

- ❖ Reaching girls earlier is better
- ❖ Mentors are key role models
- ❖ Girls need some support even after entering school
- ❖ Engaging boys as girls' allies offers promise
- ❖ Scale-up is still problematic: who should own the program?