



Tadhafur Program for Safe Age of Marriage: Child Marriage Survey

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Acknowledgment

Youth Leaderships Development Foundation (YLDF)¹ is grateful for UNICEF-Yemen for entrusting YLDF to undertake this important survey on Child Marriage in thirty targeted communities in six governorates. We especially would like to thank Ms. Soraya Abu Monassar (Child Protection Officer at the UNICEF) for her guidance, feedback and support throughout the survey.

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¹The YLDF is youth and women led NGO. It is a non-profit NGO based in Sana'a, Yemen founded in 1998 to contribute to the efforts of economic empowerment for the most vulnerable of low-income young men and women, who consist about 50% of the population of Yemen. The YLDF provide all type of its assistance without any type of discrimination toward beneficiaries. It promote youth and women rights to be protected and to participate in and to express their views, meet their needs and be part of the decision-making process either in circumstances of development and or emergencies. Part of the YLDF aims is to increase participation of males and females in responding to the development and emergencies needs at their communities thru equipping while mobilizing them simultaneously with the right knowledge and skills to reach their rights. In addition, the YLDF build the capacities and also work to encourage the new emerging local NGOs and initiatives that work in the fields of responding to development and humanitarian most priorities needs for men, women, boys and girls.

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Executive Summary

This survey has come at an exceptional and difficult conditions experienced by Yemen. Because of the current war and intense armed clashes that swept vast areas and deteriorated the living, economic, security and health conditions in many governorates. "Tadhafur Program for Safe Age of Marriage" has been implemented while large segments of population in the local communities experience worsening conditions given the unprecedented lack of food, income and health care. Undeniably, women and children had endured the most of it due to loss of income sources for various reasons including the loss of income and the loss of the breadwinners for many families due to the conflict. It should be noted that Yemen is characterized by its remarkable gender disparity, occupying the last rank according to Gender Gap Index for many years, and high level of the underage marriage of children.

This survey intends to measure the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of child marriage among members of 30 communities targeted by this survey in six governorates. That governorates are; Sana'a Capital Secretariat, Hodeidah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Ibb and Aden. The survey seeks to measure the impact the war left on child marriage phenomenon among the target communities. Throughout the course of the survey, a database of young women victims of child marriage in several targeted districts living in unhuman conditions was created. The obtained database has been meant to help in targeting victims of child marriage and build their capacities through cognitive and skills building activities in order to empower them to access services and economic supports.

The field survey took place in September 2016 and encountered some difficulties mainly the fluid security and frequent airstrikes as well as restriction on movement due to fuel prices that made transportation prices high and their means scarce. Most of such difficulties were experienced in bordering areas of Hajjah and the coastal side of Hodeidah governorate. The survey has followed a quantitative and qualitative KAP based methodology designed to collect the following data:

- **Quantitative data**: A questionnaire was designed for married women at the reproductive age (15-49 years) and men at the age group 18-60 years to measure their knowledge, attitudes, and practices about early marriage.
- **Qualitative data**: collected through:
 - Focus Group Discussion (FGDs).
It was conducted with women and men in the target communities. FGDs topics revolved around the same themes surveyed for to measure the knowledge, attitudes and practices of communities members targeted by the survey. Additional questions, aiming to explore the situation during the war and its impact on the phenomenon of child marriage as well as women-oriented services, were discussed.
 - Individual interviews with influential men and women and social figures in the target communities.
 - Case study were also conducted involving some cases of child marriage victims who agreed to tell their stories to the researchers managing this survey.

Field visits were done to 30 targeted communities by this survey in the six governorates as previously mentioned. The total completed questionnaires are 1054 while FGDs involved 227 women and 229 men.

The results show widespread prevalence of child marriage practices in the targeted communities where 72,5% of female respondents got married before they reached 18 years, while the percentage of those who got married at the age of fifteen or less accounted for 44,5%. There are even cases of women who got married at a very young age, including one case married at the age of nine, 7 cases at the age of 11 and 19 cases at the age of 12 in addition to 42 women who got married when they were 13 out of the total 530 women surveyed. The majority of women in the surveyed communities (86%) confirmed that girls get married at younger age vs. 55% of men. The majority of women in the surveyed communities, (86%), confirmed that girls get married at younger age compared to 55% of men. Child marriage is more prevalent in Hodeidah, Ibb, Dhamar and Hajjah governorates.

Overall results revealed that a higher number of girls gets married early during the current war whereas 66% of women respondents cited dramatic increase of child marriage as opposed to men who denied such change. The big difference in knowledge level between men and women could be attributed to the fact that sharing such information is limited to women in their private space that is characterized by active social interaction and attending social events including recently newcomers such as IDPs, a perfectly closed field for men. However, it should be noted that according to social norms, when a girl reaches puberty, her community as a grown up woman perceives her even if she is still under the age of 18. Respondents indicated that the high rate of child marriages among IDP girls is driven by the need of their families for money after the loss of their property and homes, and the worsening living conditions they face where a lot of them cannot access adequate housing and food. Economic conditions contribute too in reducing dowries paid to IDP girls, which encourages members in the host communities step in and marry young IDP girls paying little in return. There are cases where IDP parents marry off their daughters to host community members to break isolation imposed by the socially constructed roles and create links with the host community, yet, ensure stability while staying in that community.

Economic reasons such as deteriorating living conditions and widespread poverty cited as the main factors contributing to early marriage. Exchange marriage and family size are also among economic factors that contribute widely to early marriage. Social factors, meanwhile, include lacking awareness among fathers and greed for dowry money compounded with social norms that undervalue women, where girls and their reputation remains an obsession and burden that push families to marry off girls early so to be under the custody of another man and, thus, alleviate that perceived burden. Concerning boys' early marriage, an emerging factor has to do with the war as some families are urged to marry off their sons early, and in some cases, at the age of sixteen, to prevent the joining armed groups or to be involved in the war as reported in many areas in Hajjah, Sana'a and Ibb.

Introduction

The phenomenon of child marriage in Yemen is a social norm that is practiced widely in rural and urban areas and is supported by local members for several cultural and ethical reasons, including maintaining chastity of young people from both sexes. Development indicators for Yemen showed, even before the war in 2015, high levels of child marriage reached 13% among under-18, according to Yemen National Social Protection Monitoring Survey (NSPMS) of 2013². Besides, about 50% of women at the age group (20-49 years) got married before the age of eighteen. However, indicators concluded by this survey have shown a relative drop and put it at 10% of girls under the age of fifteen³ until 2014. The 2016 Human Development Report showed even worse indicators with Yemen and Sudan ranked as countries with the highest rates of child marriage compared to other Arab States, where 14% of girls get married before they reach fifteen⁴.

This survey comes amid extraordinary and harsh conditions experienced by Yemen because of the war and expanded armed clashes that swept vast areas with the ensuing deterioration in the living, economic, security and health conditions in many governorates. "Tadhafur Program for Safe Age of Marriage" takes place whilst local communities experience harsh situation that affected large segments of the population given the unprecedented lack of food, income and health care. Some people may think it is better to delay such development projects until the war ceases and stability in the security and living conditions to be feasible to address negative social phenomena. However, indicators stated by humanitarian actors in Yemen show severe living conditions in conflict-affected areas, rapid deterioration in the economic and social conditions, and inability by government institutions and civil society organizations to meet the growing needs in light of the humanitarian crisis that has been worsening day by day. Moreover, huge waves of displacement triggered by the war coupled with the loss of property, businesses and sources of income have had strong impact on the living and health conditions in particular. The estimated number of IDPs during 22 months of war reached nearly 2.7 million people⁵. As the war continues and economic business activities disrupted, the cycle of poverty widened in an unprecedented way affecting even middle-income class and entrepreneurs. As for groups that were already vulnerable even before the current war, the war has contributed to their situation worsening it dramatically. The most affected by that were women and children among many households who lost their sources of income and supporters. In such conditions, child marriage may prevail among families affected by the conflict. Any marriage opportunity is considered an acceptable social solution for protecting girls, regardless of their age, especially among displaced or those who lack safe housing.

Status quo of child marriage in Yemen

Studies and even laws vary when it comes to the threshold of safe age for marriage. This survey adopts UNICEF's definition of child marriage as any marriage below the age of eighteen⁶. The phenomenon of child marriage in Yemen, along with high illiteracy rate, poor education among

²ROY & UNICEF (2013). Yemen National Social Protection. Monitoring Survey (NSPMS): 2012-2013

³UNICEF, (2014). Situation Analysis of Children in Yemen 2014.

⁴UNDP (2016). Arab Human Development Report 2016

⁵Protection Cluster Report in Yemen— April 2016.

⁶https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html

women, the lack of appropriate skills and job opportunities are all development challenges hampering true woman development in Yemen. In a study that covered many countries including Yemen, indicators showed that pregnancy and childbirth complications were the main cause of mortality among young mothers (15-19 years) in developing countries. Meanwhile, the study did not show any change in the prevalence of child marriage among under-18 girls in Yemen during the period 2000-2010, where it stood at 32%⁷. Given the volatile political, economic and social conditions experienced by Yemen since 2011 until the present war, it was necessary to investigate the status of child marriage under the premise that child marriage indicators may rise because of the extraordinary circumstances unfolding in Yemen.

Significant efforts to legalize a safe age of marriage have been continuously paid during the past few years with no success to get the parliament approval regardless of the advocacy mobilized by local NGOs and women's activists at different levels. Therefore, child marriage issue was part of the discussion in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and one of the NDC's recommendation was to set the age of marriage for boys and girls at eighteen. Child marriage is rooted in the social norms in Yemen as illustrated by previous studies that discussed child marriage. Below, is a brief review of main indicators concluded by previous studies about child marriage in Yemen:

In 2005, the Gender-Development Research and Studies Center (GDRSC) at Sana'a University, *in collaboration with Oxfam*, carried out a study in Hadhramout and Hodeidah to investigate the phenomenon of early marriage. Results showed variation in age thresholds set by communities to marry off their daughters by geographical area. The study showed that girls in the rural and remote areas of Hodeidah get married earlier (8-10) while the phenomenon decreases in urban areas (2.2%). The mean age of marriage in rural areas is 12-13 years. The study showed a direct correlation between poverty and child marriage citing poverty as the main reason⁸.

In 2006, the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MoPHP) of Yemen has implemented a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in the Republic of Yemen, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The survey focused primarily on monitoring progress made towards Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as selected results for key themes covered by the surveys, including a set of sub-indices such as child marriage and child labor. The results showed that 22.1% of women got married before the age of 15 with minor difference in the ratio between urban and rural areas. The ratio has also to do with wealth as an indicator, where the percentage reached approximately 25% among the poorest women compared to approximately 21% among the richest women. This may suggest that child marriage is more attributed to social norms rather than to economic factors. The study indicated that nearly 52% of girls marry off before the age of 18, and that 14% of them get married before reaching 15. In some rural areas, it happens that girls aged 8 to 9 are married off. They often get married to men much elder than them, causing pernicious health and psychological consequences for girls⁹.

⁷UNFPA, 2010. Too Young to be Wed

⁸Development and Gender Research and Studies Center & Oxfam (2005), Child marriage

⁹MoPHP (2008), Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey 2009, Final Report,

In addition, the Yemeni Women Union (YWU) in cooperation with UNICEF and the United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA) activities conducted a study in 2013 to highlight the nature and forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in a number of Yemeni governorates. The results showed that up to 44% of women respondents in Ibb and Hadhramout got married before the age of sixteen and that about one in three women aged (25-29 years) got married before reaching 16 years¹⁰.

Findings of the previous studies show that child marriage is still a widely practiced social norm in rural areas, across all geographic regions surveyed. Meanwhile, rural-urban difference was small indicating that entrenched social norms and traditions are in favor of child marriage, in addition to the link between poverty and poor economic situation in the prevalence of early marriage. Further, none of the previous studies managed to reveal the impact of programs and activities allocated to address this phenomenon in the past years. Perhaps these studies did not investigate the phenomenon independently to assess the impact of such programs, or were conducted at the beginning of projects intended to reducing the phenomenon of child marriage.

Survey objective

This survey marked the kickoff activity under "Tadhafur for Safe Age of Marriage" Program implemented by YLDF and funded by UNICEF for the period July 2016- June 2017.

The KAP survey objectives

- To identify the prevailing range of early marriage practices in the selected communities (30 districts).
- To establish knowledge of child marriage practices, the legal position, the health associated problems, the impact of child marriage on boys and girls, with a focus on adolescent.
- To identify attitudes of local communities towards child marriage.
- To record observations of any changes in child marriage practices due to the ongoing conflict since March 2015.
- To understand the attitudes of the communities towards child marriage.
- To understand key compelling/contributing factors towards the practice of child marriages including, norms, values and beliefs (with clear disaggregation according to the governorate)
- To identify/review the appropriate communication content and messages for behaviour change.

Other objectives

- Identify and assess the quality available services and if any response mechanisms are available prior to the intended intervention in the targeted areas
- Identify the married girls that will be targeted with multi-sectorial response (at least 2,850 girls) throughout the project implementation phase.

¹⁰Yemeni Woman Union, UNICEF, UNFPA and Oxfam (2013), KAP Study of GBV and RH Issues in Ibb, Hadhramout, Hodeidah, Abyan and Lahj.

- Provide key recommendations for action (in line with project proposal identified interventions)

Survey time span

The field survey took place in September 2016 after selecting and training the research team who were composed of experienced researchers. Training was conducted in two phases starting with the field team leaders and then the field researchers. The team members were carefully selected from the target communities to make it easier for them to work under the current security situation exacerbated by the war. The study tools had been tested during a one-day piloting in the field in the Capital Secretariat. Accordingly, tools were modified and finalized based on discussion and field team's feedback. The security situation was also considered during the preparation of field visits to heavily bombarded border and coastal districts in Hodeidah and Hajjah, which poses a challenge and makes movement further difficult.

Field teams had the same male-female ratio, yet, facilitate equal access for women and men in the target communities. Coordination with the local authorities in these districts was ensured to allow the survey take place in their districts, including necessary permits to execute the mission smoothly.

A number of difficulties faced mainly by the fluid security and the frequent airstrikes as well as movement hardships due to fuel price hikes and scarce transportation means, especially border areas in Hajjah and coastal parts of Hodeidah. In certain occasions, it was difficult for field teams to enter some communities in Hodeidah because the *de facto* security supervisors keep on changing despite prior coordination. The adequate capacity of YLDF team deployed proper communication and coordination with stakeholders building good ties enabling the research team to facilitate their access to targeted communities and making many obstacles possibly to be removed.

Methodology

This survey adopted KAP methodology, a descriptive study designed to understand behaviors and attitudes dominating in certain communities. This methodology measures the extent to which individuals are aware of certain behaviors and their attitudes towards such behaviors and whether a gap exists between attitudes and practice in order to devise appropriate treatments, especially if these behaviors are harmful and pose risk to individuals or the society.

Tools

The field survey was designed to collect the amount of evidence and how at the same time as follows:

- **Quantitative data:** A questionnaire was designed for married women respondents at the reproductive age (15-49 years) asking about the age at which they got married for the first time if she got married again to measure the prevalence of the phenomenon. This was followed by questions about their perceptions and experiences with relation to early marriage. Other questions meant to measure KAPs towards child marriage and men from the age group 18-60 years involved as well given the fact that fathers and brothers have the ultimate say when it comes to marriage.

- **Qualitative data:** collected through:
 - FGDs with women and men from the target communities. Discussions revolved around the same themes surveyed to measure knowledge, attitudes and practices plus additional questions to explore the situation during the war and its impact on the phenomenon of child marriage as well as women-oriented services such as health productive services, women's economic activities or women NGOs..
 - Individual interviews involving influential men and women and social figures in the target communities.
 - Case study where some cases of child marriage picked up to tell their stories.
- **Information form:** designed to identify the program's targeted women (young married women) as per selection criteria on top of which to be victims of early marriage, be young (14-18 years), and suffer difficult living conditions. Influential figures in the community, teachers and health workers helped in identifying the initial lists of girls, their conditions and contact details.

Sample selection

According to the TORs, 30 communities in six governorates were surveyed: Capital Sana'a, Hodeidah, Dhamar, Hajjah, Ibb and Aden have been visited. YLDF will intervene in certain communities while the rest assigned to other NGOs active in these communities. Selection of target local communities built on the 2004 population census data as no census carried out since then. Selection criteria of target communities include:

- High population density as the first determinant.
- Communities comprising people from different socio-economic backgrounds including marginalized people and IDP settlements spent several months in the target community.
- Rural-urban variations, for example, several communities were identified in Maeen district in the Capital Sana'a, yet, A'lail neighborhood was selected because of population density, non-urbanized constructions and lack of basic services. It has also significant demographic diversity including inhabitants from the Capital Sana'a and other governorates.
- The security situation and safety criteria for research teams to move inside some communities. Communities experiencing heavy bombardment have been excluded, particularly Abs and Aslam districts in Hajjah.
- Revising the criteria of the selected communities with the field research team who were selected from these communities. Therefore, they were consulted during the final selection and planning process for security considerations and to see whether some communities are actually accessible.

Having reviewed the completed questionnaires, forms with several unanswered questions or not matching the sample selection criteria were excluded. The final sample reached 1,054 questionnaires. Questionnaires designed for sampled women put marriage as a prerequisite. As for men, different age groups were involved in order to cover all those who may have their say regarding girls' marriage such as father, brother, grandfather, uncle and others.

Focused group interviews involved 227 women and 229 men. Two FGDs interviews were redone because the sample fall short of meeting the below criteria:

- 1.To include people with diverse educational backgrounds and ages as well as living conditions (income source and type of work, especially wage women laborers, housewives, etc.).
- 2.To include male and female IDPs in the community.
- 3.To include diverse social backgrounds, including marginalized people in the community.
- 4.To ensure the selected people are not restricted to certain families or houses in a particular street to obtain diverse opinions.

The following table shows sample distribution by governorate:

Governorate	District-community/village	# of questionnaires		# of FGD participants		Interviews with community leaders	Case study
		F	M	F	M		
1) Capital Sana'a	1. Bani Al Hareth district- Wadi Ahmed 2. Maeen district- Al Lail neighborhood 3. Saba'een district- Muhajerinneighbourhood 4. Safia district – ArRawdh neighborhood	78	76	31	36	3	4
2) Hodiedah	1. Luhaia district- Khoba village 2. AzZuhra district- Mahal Al Sayed village 3. Al Kanawes district- Mahal Al Sadr 4. AzZaideya district – Deer al Bahri 5. Al Marawe'a district – Deer Al Sofa 6. Bahel district- Deer Al Wafi 7. Zabi district – Harat Al Jame'a&Mojanbath 8. Al Katea'a district – Harat Al Ja'aleia and Al Janoubia 9. Bait Al Faqih district- Al Salilikia village	161	152	78	76	18	5
3) Hajja	1. BaniQais district- al Medhaya and Bani Mahdi 2. Kafl Shamar district- Refa'a 3. Aslam district- Shawkaba and its camp 4. Hairan district- Al Deer village 5. Muftah district- Al Sha'areia 6. Al Shahel district- Janeb Al Sham 7. Sharis district- upper Sharis 8. Abs district- Matwala	156	146	81	88	19	9

Governorate	District-community/village	# of questionnaires		# of FGD participants		Interviews with community leaders	Case study
		F	M	F	M		
	9. Kua'idena district- Al Hajara						
4) Dhamar	1. Jahran district- Al Hala village 2. Dhamar district- Hajrat Makatha village 3. Ans district- Za'aghab & Sawal villages	54	43	29	27	9	3
5) Ibb	1. Al Odain district- district center – Souk and Madrasat A'isha neighborhoods 2. Al Makhader district- Jabal O'kad- Al Hawsh village	31	58	9	10	5	2
6) Aden	1. Dar Sa'ad district- Saisaban and Maharik 2. Sheikh Othman district – Al Emad and Madinat As Salam 3. Buraika district – Al Kalua'a	50	49	29	27	3	3
Total	30 communities	530	524	257	264	57	26
Grand Total		1054 questionnaires		521		57	26

The respondents for the survey were randomly selected. When these field researchers arrived at the middle of a village or neighborhood, they turned an empty plastic bottle until it stopped. Then they went to the indicated direction and start knocking doors. At this stage, they checked if the criterion is applicable to the house they knocked.

The survey sampled 30 communities in total covering 1,054 questionnaire respondents and 521 participants in the FGDs to assess their knowledge on child marriage and attitudes towards it, as well as the extent to which the phenomenon is practiced and spread in their communities. These tools attempted also to investigate whether the ongoing war, deteriorated socio-economic conditions among large segments of the population that led to huge waves of displacement to target governorates in particular, how possible is it to target girl victims of child marriage with a package of activities under this program and potential opportunities in these communities.

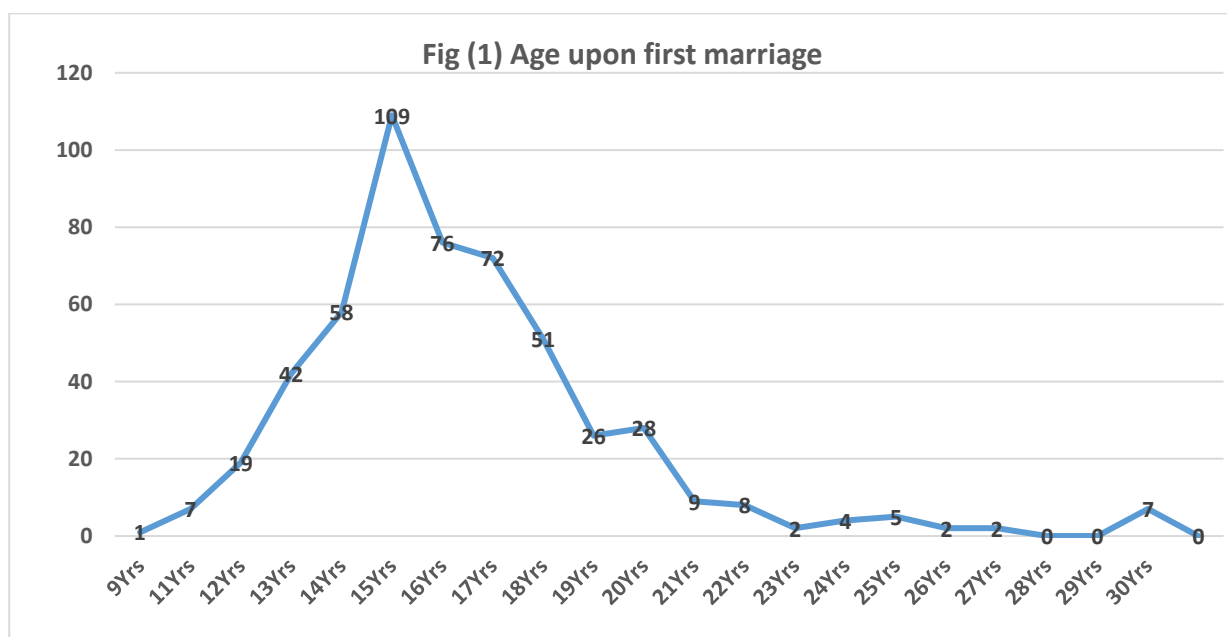
Survey results

Part I: Overall Results

Overall results will be presented indicating differences between men and women inter-governorate variations based on questionnaires, FGDs and interviews. Results for each governorate will be detailed individually.

Prevalence of early marriage

Results have shown dramatic spread of child marriage phenomenon, especially in the rural areas in Dhamar, Hajjah, Hodeidah and Aden (indicators for each governorate will be reviewed later and you can refer to field reports attached to this paper). The results show that 72.5 % of respondents got married before 18 years while 44.5% got married at the age of fifteen or even before as shown in Figure 1. This means that 50% of women respondents got married at an early age. There are even cases of women who got married at a very early age, including one case married at 9, 7 cases at the age of 11 and 19 cases at the age of 12 in addition to 42 women got married when they were 13 out of the total 530 women surveyed.



The largest proportion of child marriage cases found in Hodeidah, Hajjah, Dhamar, respectively. For example, 45.9% of surveyed women in Hodeidah (161) were married at the age of 15 or before compared to 43.6% in Dhamar (out of 156 women surveyed). In addition, six cases confirmed to have got married at the age of ten and eleven.

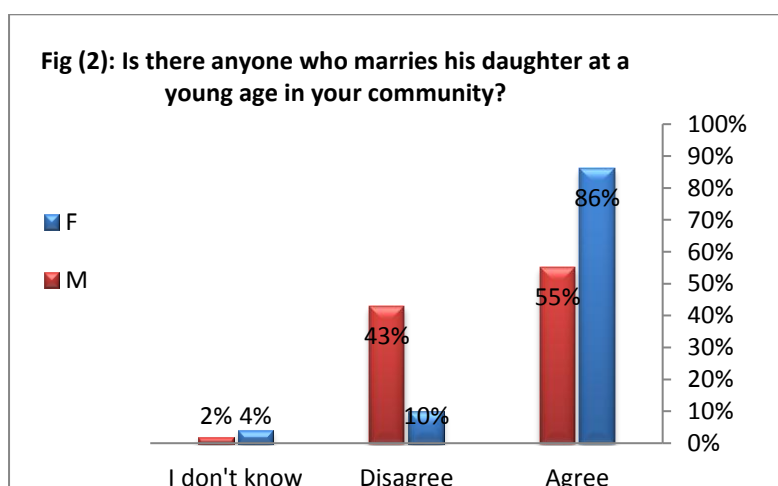
To verify to what extent the cases of those who reported to be married very young (10-12 years old) are recent cases, the data indicates that they are still in their early 20s indicating that child marriage is still the norm in these communities. .

Measuring knowledge level about child marriage phenomenon

As mentioned previously in this survey, UNICEF's definition of child marriage as any marriage before the age of eighteen" was adopted¹¹. To measure knowledge among community members with regard to the presence and the prevalence of child marriage, respondents were asked several questions to this end and the main results were as follows:

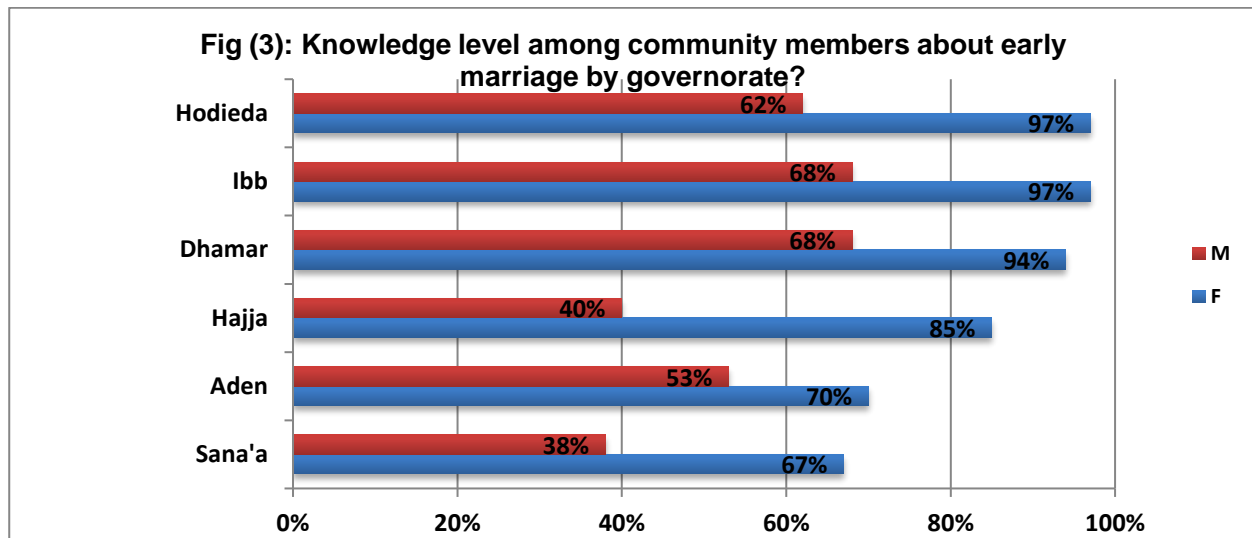
The majority of women in the surveyed communities (86%) agreed that girls are married off at a younger age compared to 55% of men as shown in Figure 2. At the same time, 43% of men denied the presence of this phenomenon, either because they did not like to regard their communities as negative or due to lack of knowledge about the reality of child marriage given the fact that many of these communities are closed and marriage issues are not public issues. Familiarity with and knowledge of social events and phenomena is less in urban areas because this is the nature of urban life with diverse population. Another explanation sheds light on the understanding of a 'young' or 'child' concept as it is recognized by the Yemeni society. A girl is called a child or young if she has not reached the puberty that is marked by her menstrual cycle. Thus, if a girl reaches her puberty at the age of 10 she is perceived by conventional social norms as a woman and is not regarded a child anymore. Men who are the main decision makers in what matter in a girl's life take this conventional understanding as a base of their judgment. This stress the importance of identifying a minimum safe age of marriage instead of leaving it to the community or the family to decide if a girl is ready to marriage or not.

As for women, results show that women are more familiar with this issue because they are more connected within their own private space, attend weddings and social events and able to obtain more information about families in their social surroundings. Therefore, they are better able to see and report the extent of this phenomenon. It was easy for woman in all surveyed communities to name several cases. On the other hand, results showed that the majority of respondents got married early and before 18 as in figure (2). Since 86% of women confirmed the issue, it is evident that their peers might have also got married early.



¹¹https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.html

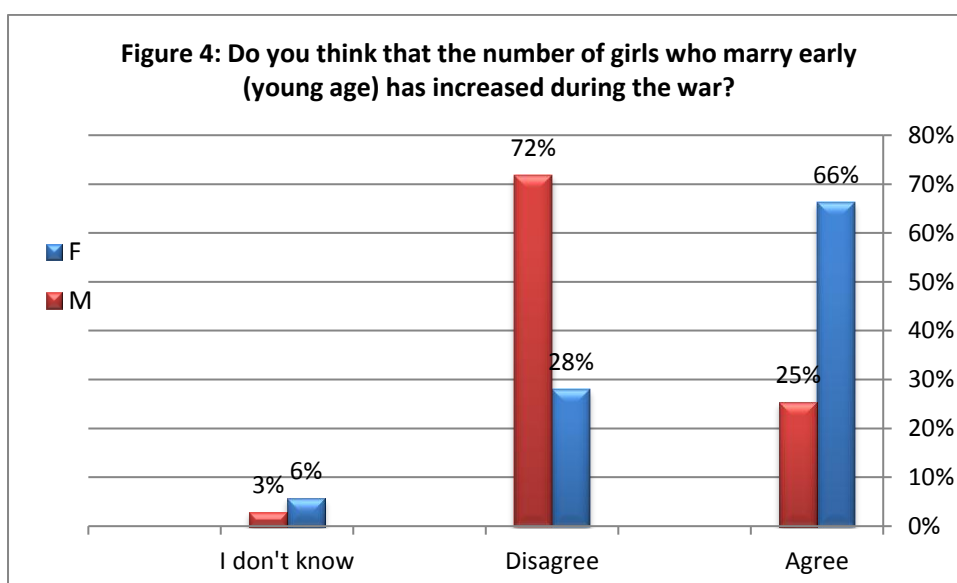
By comparing data from the six surveyed governorates, it appeared that the majority of respondents who confirmed to be familiar with child marriage were women in Hodeidah, Ibb, Dhamar and Hajjah, the same governorates where the phenomenon is quiet common (Fig 3).



Knowledge level among women and men varies which makes it imperative that the evidence generated by this survey or any other data and stories will positively contribute to raising awareness among men if used as facts while designing awareness campaigns or other programs for these communities.

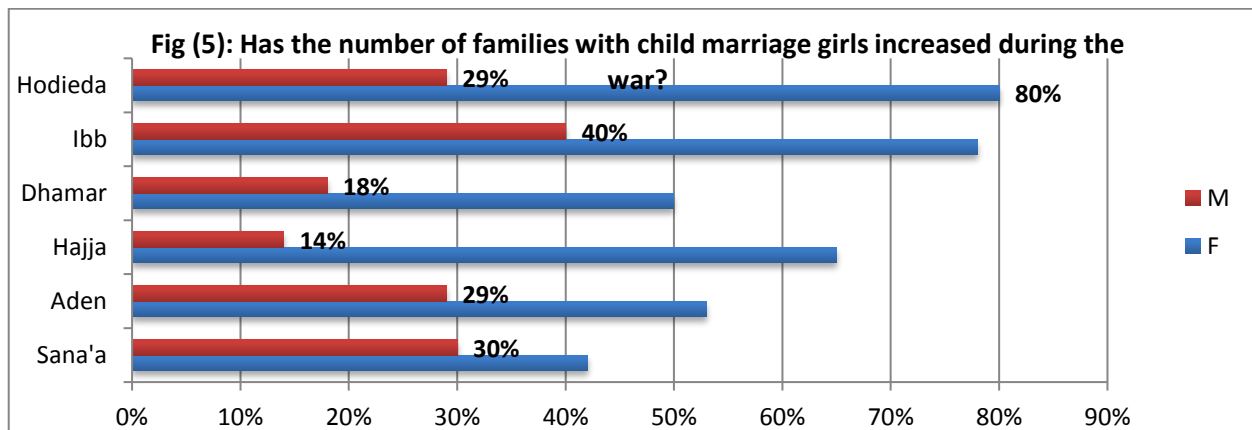
Child marriage Indicators during the War

This survey intended also to collect indicators about child marriage during the ongoing war using both qualitative and quantitative questions. Overall results showed an upturn in the number of girls who have got married early as result of the war. Sixty six percent of women cited dramatic increase compared to seventy two percent of men who denied any such change.



The big difference in knowledge level between men and women may explain that sharing this information is limited to young married women and their own private space strengthened by active social interaction and social events including recently newcomers such as IDPs, a perfectly closed field for men. So this information gap should be considered upon designing activities. However, as mentioned earlier, men may not desire to admit the prevalence of child marriage in their community as this may signify their community as being pro-child marriage or because this may affect their power to determine when and to whom a girl should be married. Further, girls who reached puberty are not perceived as girls but as grown up women who are appropriate to get married.

Figure (5) shows high rate of child marriage during the war in certain governorates such as Hodeidah, Ibb and Hajjah, which hosted large numbers of IDPs throughout the war. This increase was observed by the interviewed people to be more noticeable among the IDPs. Once again, women were more likely to observe the phenomenon; yet, the significant difference between men and women in Hodeidah, Hajjah and Ibb is worth considering. This, partly, may be due to the fact that some marriages took place among IDPs themselves and away from members of the host community or outsiders, as shown by case studies. In addition, setting IDP camps and centers far from host communities reduced contact between IDP men and members of the host community. Women are more socially interactive and mix easily with IDPs in their own communities. Women reported most of case studies included in this study

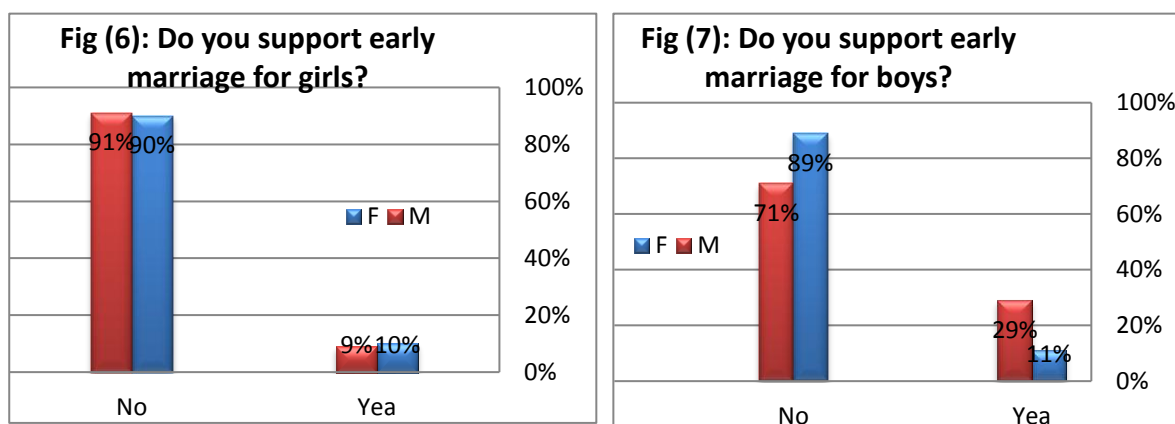


Respondents in some communities in Hajjah- particularly Abs district- which has seen large influx of IDPs confirmed that child marriages among IDP girls was mainly driven by the need for money among IDP families who have lost their property and homes coupled with difficult conditions. Respondents in Ibb said that many IDP families lack adequate housing and food "IDPs prefer to marry off their daughters to ensure decent living for them" adding "Some roam streets along with their daughters which cause them to marry off their daughters instead of begging". "Harsh economic conditions contributed to reducing dowries paid to IDP girls thereby encouraging host community members to step out and marry young girls with only little to pay". In other cases, IDPs marry off their daughters in order to better integrate and create links with the host community to feel stable while staying there.

Measuring trends towards early marriage

To measure trends and attitudes among respondents towards child marriage, questions involved girls and boys alike because exchange marriage was obvious in rural areas, as evidenced by previous studies, to reduce costs and wedding expenses. The possibility of child marriage is high when it comes to exchange marriage. Sometimes, families put a condition that if one couple decides to divorce, the other couple should be divorced too, regardless of family breakup consequences.

The survey results showed immediacy in attitudes by women and men in relation to girls' child marriage and decreased support for child marriage as in Figure (6). Surprisingly, 29% of male respondents displayed strong support for boys to get married at an early age as shown in Figure (7).

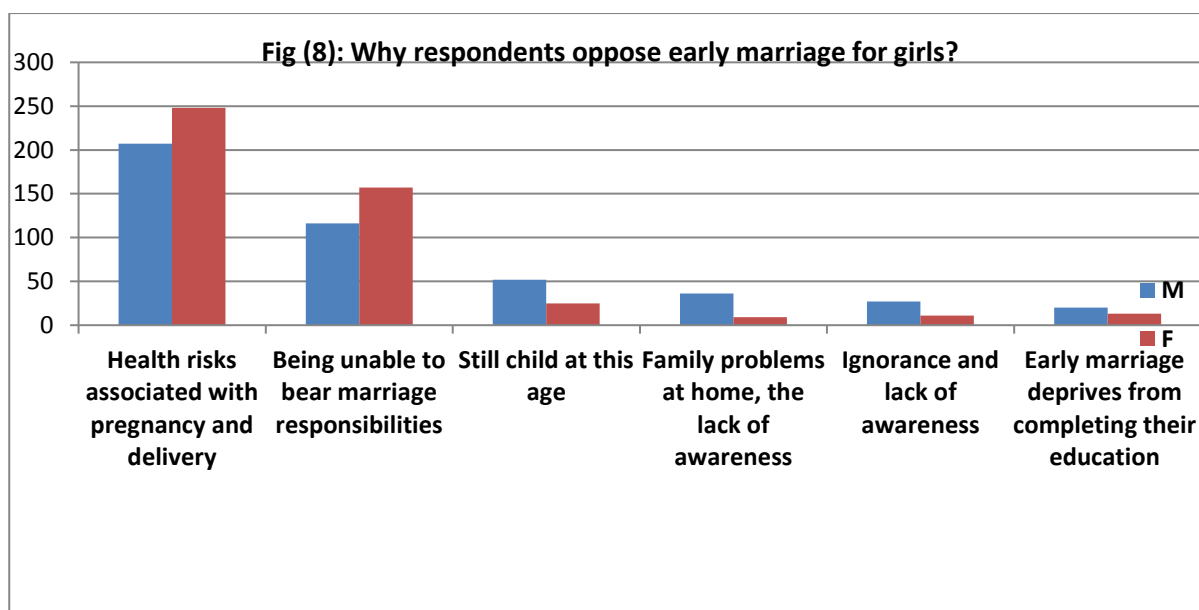


A proportion of respondents cited other reasons why they support child marriage including:

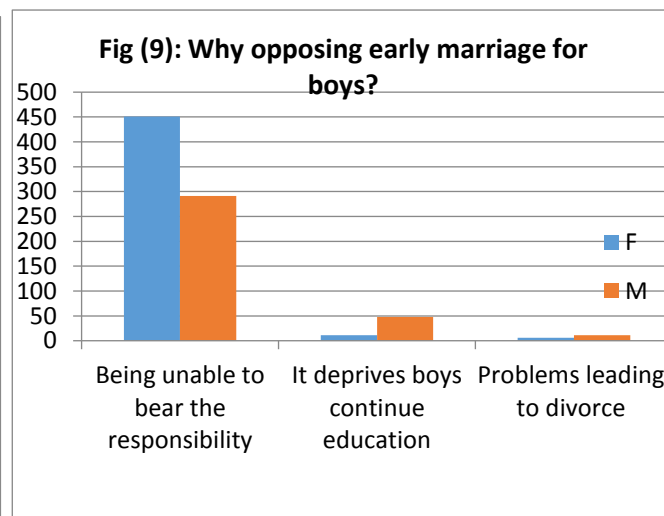
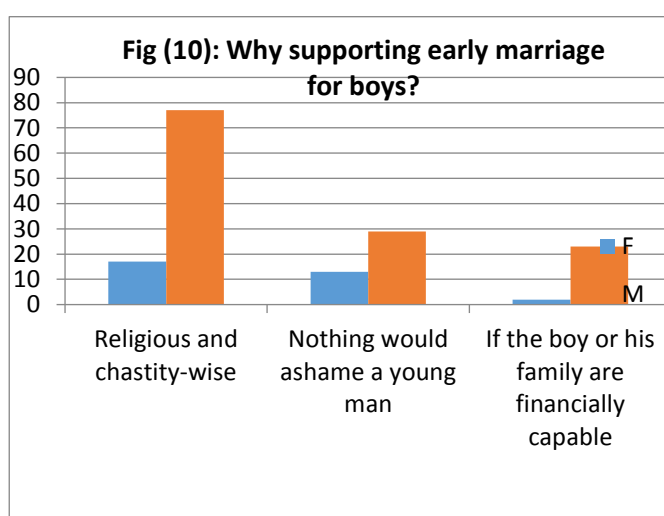
- Puberty is best age to get the girl married.
- It is better to marry young girls, so a man's wife would remain young and strong for a long time.
- To give births at early age and grow elder together.
- If the girl is an orphan, it is better for her to get married and depends on another supporter.
- Child marriage is better than spinsterhood.

The main justifications cited by women in favor of child marriage include; 1) "This is our destiny if a chance arises we should not miss", 2) if uneducated, the girl would have nothing to do and in this case, getting married is the best option to go for. These answers indicate that education has a potential to contribute in delaying child marriage among girls. The repeated mention of the term "destiny" during FGDs seen as if it is God's will for the girl to accept regardless of her age and who is the suitor. Family members keep pressing the girl until she gives up unwillingly.

Figure (8) below shows reasons behind the rejection of girl child marriage as cited by the majority of surveyed men and women including: a) health risk, b) inability by girls to assume responsibility, c) young age and d) family problems given the lack of awareness at this age that may lead to family breakup.

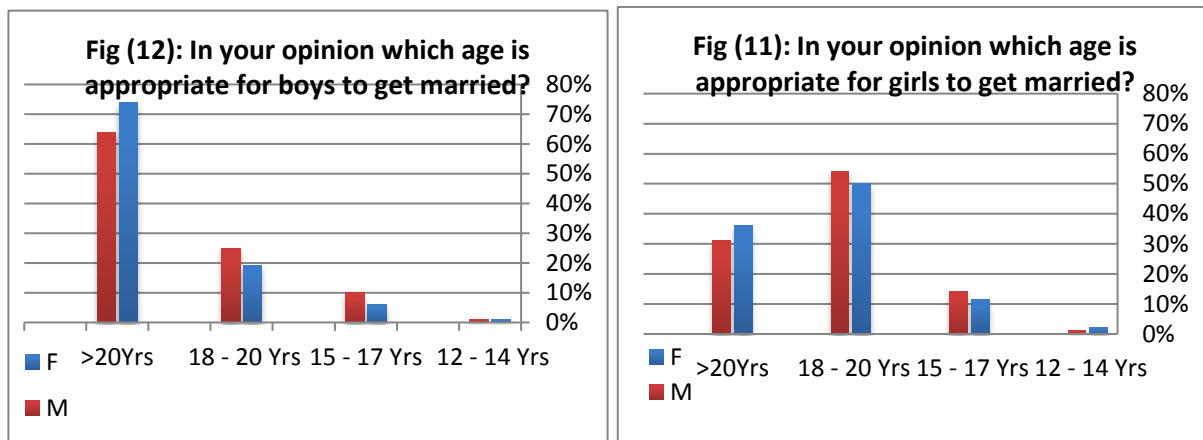


With regard to boys, respondents cited chastity as a religious teaching in addition to physical capability because as a man there is nothing to be ashamed of. Meanwhile, anti-child marriage voices cited inability by young husbands to bear the responsibility of post-marriage life and being still dependent on their families.

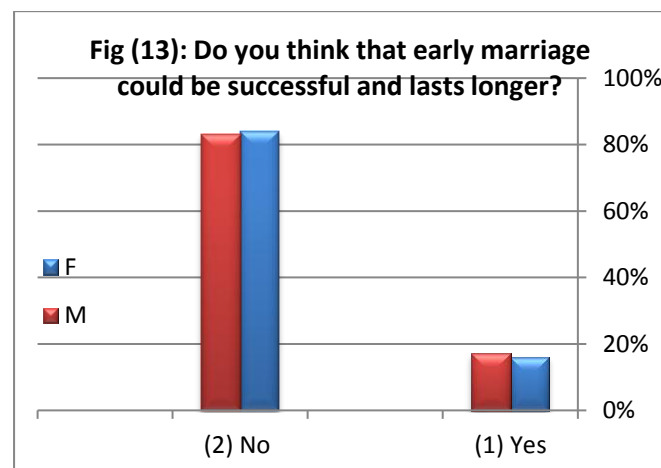


It is worth to mention that some men and many women in six communities in Hajja, Sana'a, Dhamar, Aden and Al-Hodeida governorates, highlighted an important reason triggered by the ongoing war as to why they prefer to get boys married early even at the age of sixteen i.e. to prevent them joining armed groups or get involved in the war. One of them said, "being busy in a man and a wife life is better than going fighting". Some women sighed that their sons start bargaining between getting married early or go fighting. These cases were mentioned by eight questionnaire respondents (as additional comments by the respondents), and in the focus group discussions in four communities (mainly women who mentioned it). In addition, if the elder son died or killed in the war, his younger brother, no matter how young he might be, is asked to marry his descent brother wife in order to keep the children in the family.

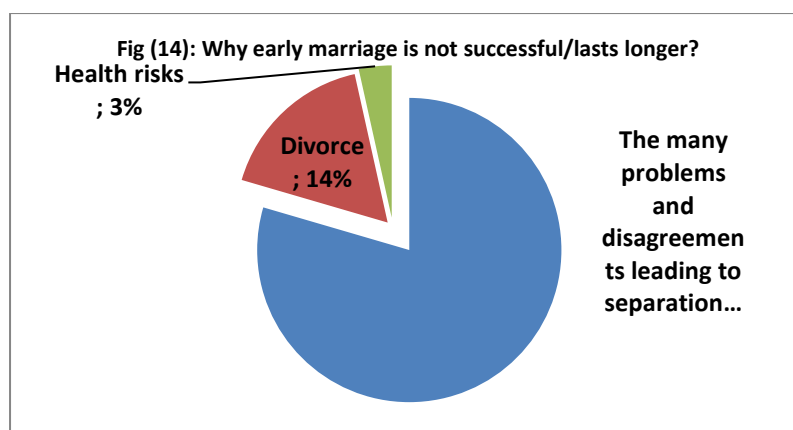
When the respondents were asked about the appropriate age for marriage and to measure attitudes that would contribute to successful and continued matrimonial life, respondents introduced ideal insights. Over 50% of men and women put is at 18-20 years as shown in Figures (11,12) below.



The majority of respondents favored to raise the age for marriage among young males until after 20 years as they can secure a source of income at that age. Due to the deteriorated economic situation and the shortage of job opportunities, families are not able to support their married sons, as it was the case in the past especially in rural areas. Therefore, parents want their sons to get a job or an income before marriage to enable that son support his new family. 11% of men cited 15-17 years for girls while nearly 10% deemed it even if appropriate for boys. Although this opinion represent small proportion, yet, it reflects a real trend on child marriage as revealed by questions to measure the extent of child marriage practice further illustrated in the next section.



Regarding whether child marriage is not necessarily successful and may not last long because of the social and mental problems it creates, answers by men and women were close as shown in Figure (14).



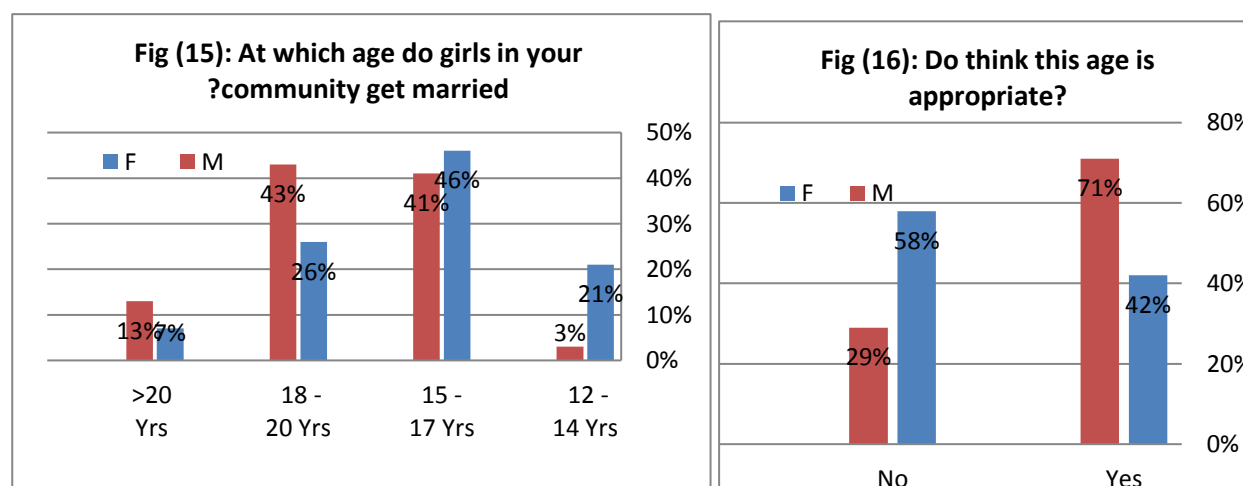
The key reason causing child marriage to fail as perceived by surveyed men and women is the frequent quarrels and problems given the wife who is still young (or both), the lack of awareness about what does marriage mean, divorce is mainly due to lack of harmony or getting married to another woman. Only 3% of the respondents highlighted health risks young girls may sustain during conception and delivery, yet, undermine the continuity of their matrimonial life.

Women reported that having children is an important factor for child marriage to continue, even though it is not successful or happy. Other reasons include disharmony between the wife and the husband and financial solvency, which nourish longer couple life. In addition, 2% of female respondents emphasized that prudence and patience on the part of the wife may be positive for child marriage continuity, though it is unhappy.

Measuring practices and the prevalence of child marriage

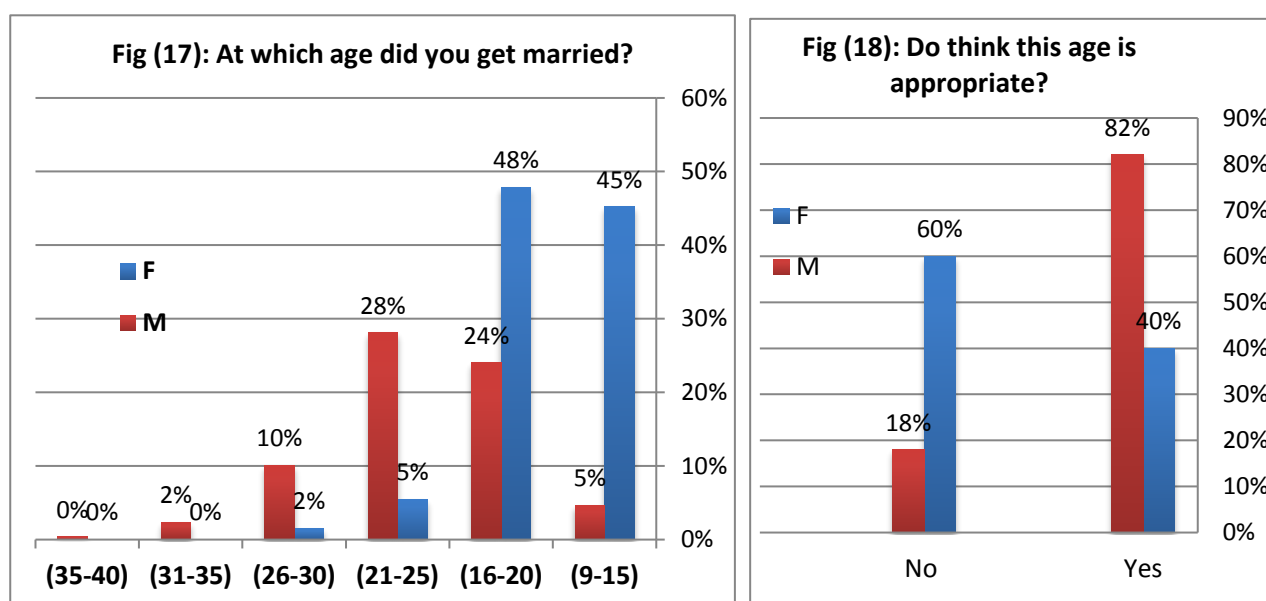
Understanding the scale of practices on the ground is not easy task while conducting field surveys, especially with regard to social phenomena that respondents may feel undesirable or have a negative effect. Therefore, we started with indirect questions such as "When do girls usually get married in your community" and then moving to ask directly about prevalent age at which girls get married and their personal experiences.

Figure 15 below shows that women provided unblemished answers about the actual age of marriage in their communities compared to men. Women acknowledged that some girls get married at the age of 14 or even before and the vast majority of girls marry at 15-17.



As much as 71% of men believe that girls get married at an appropriate age compared to 58% of women who just oppose that. This question is important in that it completely contravenes earlier attitudes and trends mentioned by male respondents as 91% of them were against child marriage (See Figure 8 above). This apparent contradiction indicates that the majority of men welcomes getting girls married at an early age. Again, what constitute ‘early age’ for men. As discussed earlier, puberty is a crucial factor that determines if a bride is still young or if she is still perceived as a woman by her community. Women who experienced what it means being married at young age, or being victims of child marriage themselves, considered their marriage as young was not appropriate.

A direct question was addressed asking about the age at which the respondents got married. Forty five percent of female respondents said they married at the age of fifteen or younger. The majority of them confirmed that they were not satisfied with that as shown in Figure (17). About 48% of men reported that they got married at the age 16 to 20, an age seen appropriate by 82% of them as illustrated in Figure (18).



Married adolescent girls

Fifty-two married adolescent girl, under 17 years old, responded to the questionnaires and talked about their experiences. Regarding their geographical distribution, the data shows that 11 are in Dhamar and 19 in Hodeida. Table 3 illustrates the age of these girls compared to their age when they got married and their geographical distribution.

Table 3: Age upon marriage -married adolescent girls		
How many	Current age	Age when married
1	15	10
1	16	12

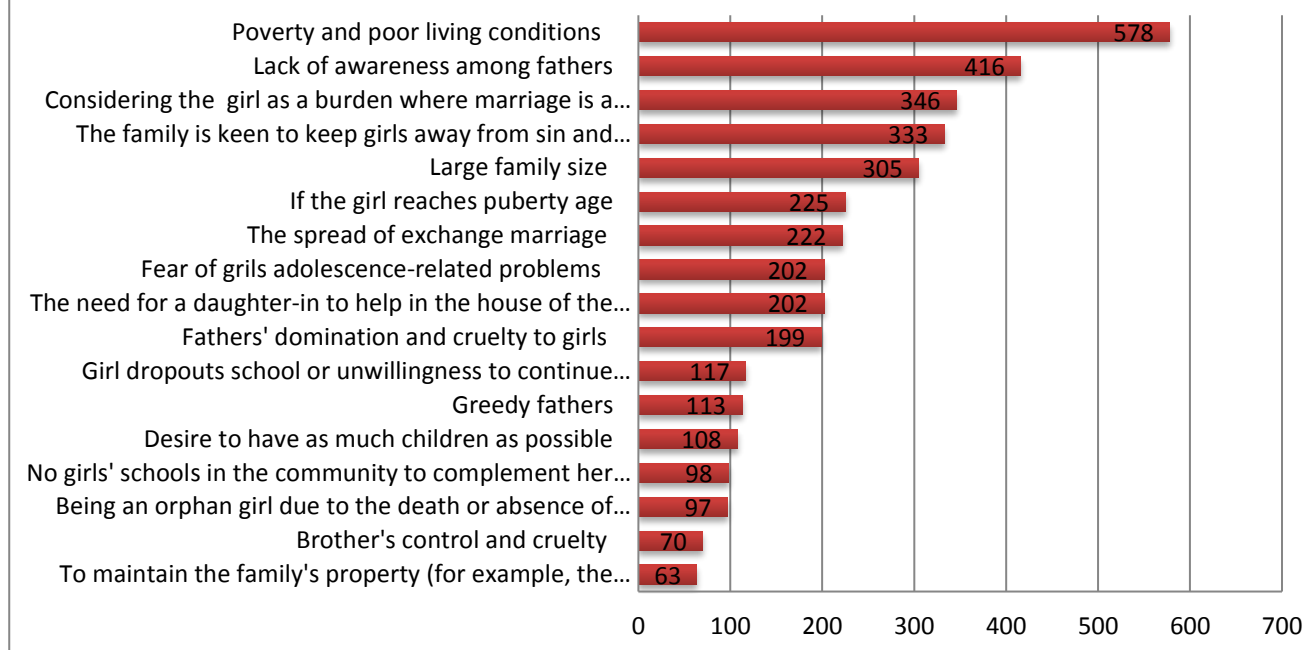
Table 3: Age upon marriage -married adolescent girls		
How many	Current age	Age when married
1	17	12
1	13	13
2	14	13
1	15	13
5	16	13
1	17	13
3	15	14
6	16	14
4	17	14
5	15	15
8	16	15
2	17	15
4	16	16
5	17	16
2	17	17
52	Total	

About 90% of these married adolescents girls confirmed the prevalence of child marriage and there has been an increase during the war among the IDPs and those who suffer economic hardship. Only 12% of these girls support early marriage as they achieve more comfort and stability after marriage. This result is related to ill-treatment these girls received before marriage from their fathers or brother as 40% of them highlighted the ignorance and lack of awareness of fathers as the main driver of child marriage. Twenty seven percent attributed the cruelty of some fathers (and brothers,12%) who used to beat their daughters as the main cause for child marriage. In such case, girls see an escape in marriage and a hope that their life would be different.

Drivers of early marriage

To explore the underlying reasons behind the prevalence of child marriage, respondents were asked why some families decide to marry off their daughters while still young. Data indicated to a host of reasons detailed in Figure (19).

Fig (19): Early marriage key reasons



Economic reasons such as living conditions and widespread poverty come on top of factors contributing to early marriage. Exchange marriage and family size are also among economic factors that play significant role in early marriage. However, social norms around women value in the society, their role and the fear that girls may disgrace the family constitute a group of factors that equally important as economic factors. As shown in fig. 19 above, social factors include lack of awareness among fathers, greed for dowry money compounded with concepts of social stigma and undervaluing of women, where girls and their reputation remains an obsession and burden on pushing families to marry off girls early so to be under the custody of another man and, thus, alleviate that burden. The pace of child marriage among orphan girls is faster as families manage to shift responsibility. Women have also reported that cruel fathers and brothers push many girls to accept to marry as soon the first suitor turns up, according to one of child marriage victims.

Some attempts to reduce marriage and dowry costs made by some villages resulted in signing tribal rules to ban any increase in dowry. This has been perceived as a positive measure as it alleviates the financial burden shouldered by young people and limit greed among fathers. Yet, it pushed up child marriage in some villages of Dhamar as indicated during FGDs, namely in Al Hilla and Zaghba villages in Jahran district where dowry is determined at 30,000 YR and 100,000 YR, respectively. Women believes that the move debases them and their rights and even embolden men to marry not only young girls but also seek for polygamy. This case confirms that economic factors such as poverty or greed drive some parents to marry off their daughters early may conceal a more important factor i.e. the community looks at woman from the angel of reproductive age whilst undervaluing her role within the family.

Being a wife and a mother is what the community value about women. Therefore, according to the entrenched social norms, marriage is the right choice for a girl even if she is still a child, instead of staying at her father's house. Asked during the FGDs about jobs handled by girls in their

communities, many men, mainly those in rural communities, refrained to mention. Women were able to elaborate the works assumed by girls, or young women, including home chores and farming (Qat and grain farms), as well as some small productive activities such as making and selling confectionaries, some food products, incense, brides adornment, patterns and henna, and teaching the holy Quran. Answers by men, especially in rural and tribal communities in Dhamar, Ibb and Hajjah, revolved mostly around "home chores" which comes at the heart of girls duties to their indifference underestimation of other productive roles by girls. Formal jobs assumed by women in urban centers where job opportunities are available.

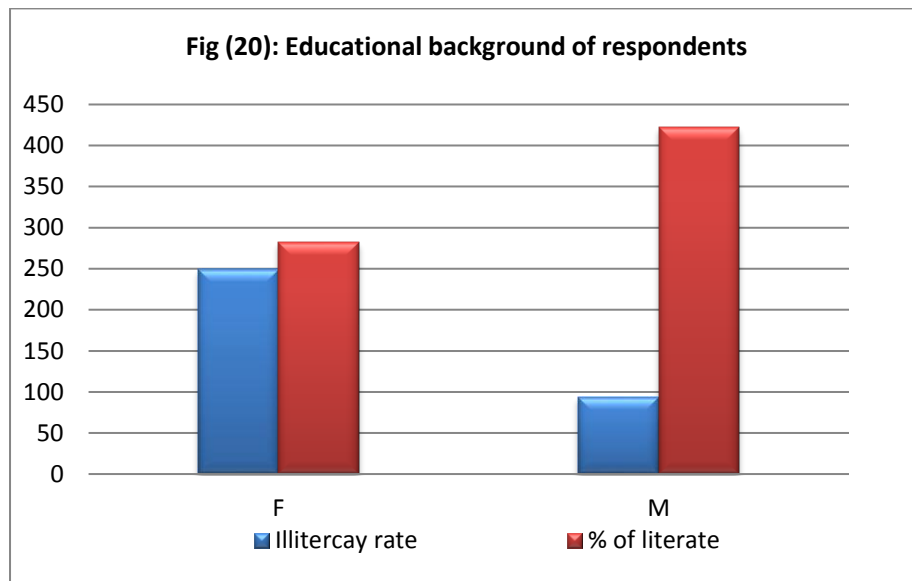
Fear of morality deviation and adolescence-related problems constitute an obsession for parents in particular, as indicated by men during the FGDs sessions. Men in Al Odain, Ibb governorate, said that "Life is full of vices and misconduct" and this in his opinion is due to the openness of TV shows that promote behaviors that are "outlandish in our society and religion". Meanwhile, the spread of mobile phones and social media platforms, especially Facebook, promotes "vice" and encourages morality deviation. Therefore, child marriage for both boys and girls would ward off wrongdoing. "The idea of Western countries that child marriage has negative effects is meaningless in our society" and that "Delaying marriage poses risks on our daughters. Marriage is a human instinct in Islam" (excerpts from the statements made by men during FGDs in Al Odain district). Such attitudes need to be considered upon designing interventions for conservative communities as such to avoid possible clashes with service providers.

Education and its influence on attitudes and behaviors of community members

Trends to reduce child marriage among girls was quite evident in cities and provincial centers where many girls educational institutions which encourages others to follow suit. The more years girls spend in education, the more child marriage is pushed further. Community members tend usually to follow pattern followed in their socio-cultural environment. In rural areas, for example, educational opportunities and institutions for girls are limited where they can study until they reach grade fourth or fifth and assist in home chores. Therefore, families see no other option but to marry them off early in line with the social and cultural context prevailing. This context was best illustrated in the proverbs frequently mentioned during FGDs such as "A woman has nothing to do but to get married and take care of her home", "Even if she received some education, eventually she has to get married". A female teacher in Jahran district, Dhamar governorate, confirmed the prevalence of child marriage in her community, "Here, girls get married at 10 or 12 years old because if she did not, community members start thinking bad of her and no one asks for her hand, saying she has grown old". Meanwhile, a local council member of Al Qatiea District, Hodeida Governorate said, "If not married, the girl becomes a time bomb" referring to the importance of marrying girls early before girls start thinking of wrongdoing. Unmarried girl becomes a source of discontent threatening the moral reputation of her family.

The survey results revealed that 47% of women respondents are illiterate while 26% completed their 6th grade and only 6% have had secondary or university education. Figure (20) shows that the educational level among sampled men is much better than women (approximately 81% of men are literate compared to 53% women) since educational opportunities and ability to move outside the

rural communities is better among boys than girls. Indeed, the lack of educational opportunities is one of the reasons pushing some communities to consider child marriage.



Results of FGDs showed that girls usually leave school as soon as they get married, both in rural or urban areas with very few who insist to complete their education by setting it as a condition before concluding a marriage contract. "After getting married, forget about education. All girls stop going to school", stated by a medical center director in the Capital Sana'a and echoed by a female teacher in Dahmer.

The educational level of parents influence girl's education and delay early marriage. Meanwhile, availability of job opportunities for women in the public sector of society constitutes a motivating factor for girls' transition from education to work, a fact that enhances a girl's position within her family by sharing the decision of marriage. Educated girls and women tend to delay marriage amid acceptance by the society and her family as evidenced during FGDs in the Capital Sana'a. The deteriorated economic situation has made it socially acceptable for girls to work either at home or through small productive activities outside home. These activities include embroidery, knitting, patterns and henna brides adornment or to work in all women job places such as in the teaching and health fields, "women and girls make up for 90% of the workforce in health centers in our center", (a director of health center in Azal district, Capital Sana'a noted). Economic opportunities as well strengthen the status of girls within their families as it ensures some degree of economic independence enabling them to participate in decisions about their own future.

Societal and cultural attitudes towards Child Marriage

Although responses by men during the FGDs tended to be more ideals in terms of rejecting child marriage, or by raising the proper age of marriage, dominating cultural perspectives still enhance a set of negative beliefs and attitudes towards women and their perceived roles in society. Among these trends comes the need to get girls married upon reaching puberty age or even earlier to avoid spinsterhood or the probability of discrediting her family's reputation.

Box (1): excerpted statements/proverbs that used by parent who encourage child marriage, mentioned by FGD participants

- The more she is young, the better deal you strike”.
“Some parents have no objection to get their daughters married even 5 times driven by greed for money (Capital Sana’a).
- “Many women lost their husbands either in the war or for other reasons and they returned to their fathers’ homes accompanied by children. Many parents would like to get rid of their daughters through a second marriage. They trade their daughters as if they are commodities (AlOdain- Ibb).
- “A maid at her father’s home and princess at her husband’s”, “Sell before it is too late”, “young wives are easier to deal with” (Al Zaidia- Luhaia – Al Qanawis, Hodeidah governorate).
- “The younger the better”, “Get her married early before she loses her freshness”, “For us, reaching puberty means time to get married” (Abs- Al Shahel – Kuaidyna, Hajja governorate”

The greed of some fathers with the dowry paid by the suitor is also another driver given the difficult economic conditions and impact of the war. This situation has caused some families to believe that marrying off their daughters early would save costs and provides better protection for the girl. At the same time, parents can benefit from the dowry money to meet their needs as said by one of them "Hitting two birds with one stone".

Part II: Child marriage by governorate

Surveyed communities and the ongoing war

After nearly 20 months of war, the economic, health and living conditions of most of Yemen's population worsened. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 18,8 million people are in need of assistance, of whom 10,3 million are in an acute need for help to survive. As much as two million people in the Capital Sana'a are in need, 1,6 million in Hajjah, 1,9 million in Hodeida province and 1,6 million in Ibb, all of them are covered by this survey and host the largest number of IDPs whose situation keep on deteriorating day by day¹².

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator warned that the catastrophic fighting in Yemen left more than 21 million people in need of some form of humanitarian assistance and that the situation in Yemen is heading towards famine¹³. Meanwhile, the recent survey conducted by WHO and published in November 2016 indicated that over 50% of health facilities in Yemen are either closed or partially functional amid severe shortage of physicians in several regions (40%)¹⁴.

Box (2): excerpted statements by FGDs in favor of child marriage

- The water source is far away (Women and children usually fetch water), we fled Sa'ada leaving behind all our belongings. Here, we buy even firewood... no hospitals... There is no place to go except the NGO who keep telling us to do tests outside... Nowhere to go!"
- "The situation is really bad, we are in totally different setting... we live in tents under the rain and frost... our flour get flooded during rainfall. Some infections were reported among IDPs including scabies, rashes, heart diseases and blood pressure caused by the state of non-ending stress. We can afford buying medicines which are sketchy".
- "We abandoned our homes, farms and income sources. No jobs here so unemployment increased dramatically... we cannot even move from one place to another".
- "Many women experienced miscarriage... some suffer mental diseases coupled with lack of income... what we shall do".

The war has had significant impact, though uneven, on all communities covered by the survey. The communities that are close to the northern and western borders as well as across Hajjah and Hodeidah were most affected coastal governorates due to heavy airstrikes and widespread demolition of homes, property, agricultural and grasslands. This triggered huge exodus of IDPs to neighboring areas, thus, causing additional pressure on the already scarce resources in the host communities, economic slowdown as well severe deterioration in the living conditions. The actual number of IDPs living with their relatives or in rented houses is unknown due to difficulties to access them by the survey teams and relief organizations.

¹²Yemen Humanitarian Needs at a Glance, 28 November 2016

¹³Statement by the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, November 2016
<http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/yemen-%E2%80%99Cone-step-away-famine%E2%80%9D>

¹⁴<http://sanaa.sites.uniconnetwork.org>

Generally, women and children in the areas, which witnessed huge damage, borne the brunt of the war given the subsequent displacement and destroyed infrastructure and homes. Hajjah governorate affected most because it borders Sa'ada, and open military target since May 2015¹⁵. Additionally, widows and divorced women or elderly women in Hajjah border districts such as Mastaba and Midi experienced extreme conditions particularly due to lack of income and government/family subventions. Respondents indicated also the suffering of child orphans who lost their parents in this war and previous wars.

Below is a review of results from the six governorates covered by this survey including quantitative data (questionnaires) and qualitative data (FGDs and interviews):

I: Hajjah Governorate

Hajjah Governorate is located in the northwestern part of Yemen, 127 kilometers northwest of the Capital Sana'a. The population of Hajjah accounts for 7.5% of the total population of Yemen with (31) districts. Hajjah town is the provincial Capital while Haradh and Abs are the main towns. Farming is the key activity in the governorate.

Social studies show that Hajjah often tops other governorates when it comes to child marriage. Shocking images of young girls got married to elder men in Hajjah topped headings of National Geographic Journal in 2011¹⁶. Hajjah governorate correspond in the economic, poverty and population density aspects as well as high prevalence of child marriage with Hodeidah.

The war has had dramatic impact on the living conditions and available resources residents of host communities have to share with a large number IDPs, especially Hajjah border districts of Haradh and Midi, which became almost empty. In Abs district, meanwhile, IDPs overflowing from neighboring Sa'ada as reported by respondents. Before the war, the Border district of Haradh has been a vital and key source of jobs for the surrounding districts. Many men confirmed to have lost their jobs, either permanent or temporary as well as assets and property such as farms and livestock.

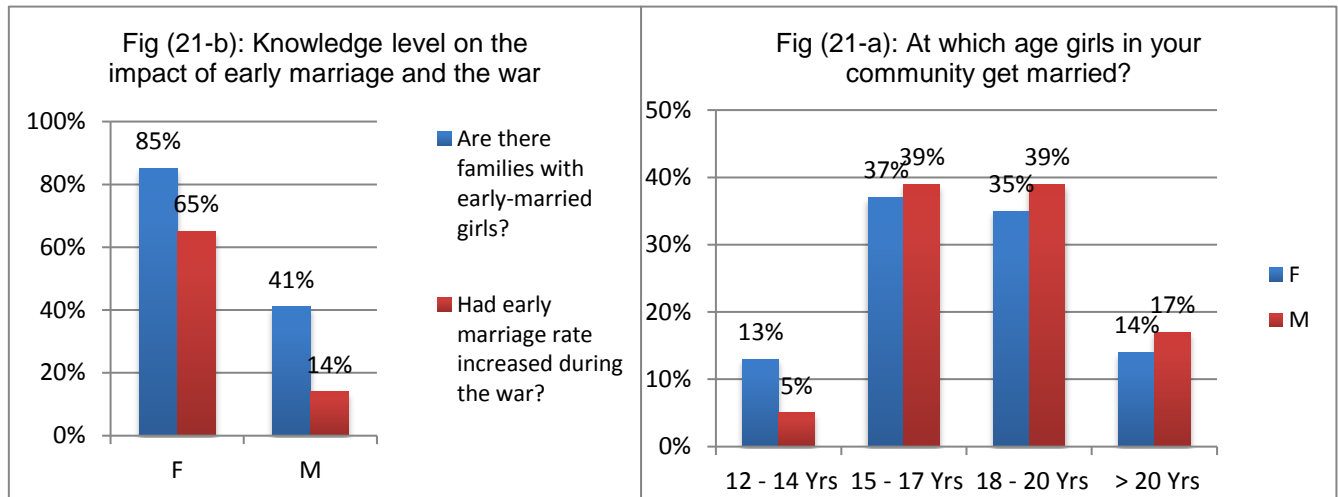
The study sample covered the following nine communities in Hajja:

- 1) BaniQais district – Al Midhayah and Bani Mahdi (IDPs + marginalized)
- 2) Kafl Shamar- Refa'ah
- 3) Aslam district – Shakkaba and its camp (large number of IDPs)
- 4) Hairan district- Al Deer village (Densely populated and hosts the largest number of IDPs)
- 5) Muftah district – Matwala
- 6) Al Shahel district- Janeb Al Sham
- 7) Sharis district- upper Sharis (Hosts people displaced by the war and torrential floods)
- 8) Abs district - Matwala
- 9) Kua'ydinah district- Al Hajara (population density + IDPs)

¹⁵<https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/30/targeting-saada/unlawful-coalition-airstrikes-saada-city-yemen>

¹⁶<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/06/child-brides/gorney-text>

Answers by respondents from these communities have revealed their familiarity and recognition of the widespread child marriage mainly women (85% women compared to 41% men). Child marriage before 15 appeared remarkable too as reported by women. Estimates by men and women with respect to age groups (15-17) and (18-20) were close as shown in Figure (21-a).



The majority of men see no change in child marriage rates during the war as opposed to women who stated a remarkable increase of marriage cases among minors during the war (65%) and as shown in Figure (21-b). This explains that women socialize more even inside IDP settlements making it possible for them to get to know about marriages taking places, partners involved and background of each partner, etc.

During FGDs, respondents confirmed that child marriage becomes more evident in their communities than ever before and that the age involved has dropped further due to the war. For districts witnessing a large exodus of IDPs, child marriage was remarkable too and attributed by respondents to the poor living conditions sustained by IDPs and difficulties to meet their subsistence needs. This situation pushes families to marry off their daughters while still young to secure their needs or repair their straw-made homes called (shacks) because they get damaged easily during rainfall and strong winds, according to residents of Abasiya village in Abs district, Hajja governorate.

Box (3): Cases of child marriage during the war in Hajjah

- A man from Al Khadarish village married off his 16-year-old daughter because he needs money to treat his wife suffering breast cancer. Receiving the 600 thousand YR dowry, he managed to build a shack residence and pay for his wife's medication.
- An IDP girl from Sa'ada aged 15 was married off to a villager with two wives because of financial problems.
- An IDP girl from Sa'ada was married off at the age of 14 because she was sharing her cousins the same narrow residence. She got married to her cousin to ward off embarrassment caused by staying with marriageable persons.
- In the Mashar village, Al Dhabri area, a girl got married at the age of 12 and suffered serious health problems during pregnancy. She underwent a Caesarean section but her

condition worsened more and more because she is still young. That girl was orphan and her family lives in a poor conditions. Her brother was under pressure to marry her off early.

- Two girls had to get married at the age of 14, because the father of one of them was in need for money to treat the broken leg and the other to build a house, as reported by respondents in Al Khadarish.

Health problems associated with child marriage were stated quite many times including by simple rural people: "Being young, her uterus cannot hold babies, yet, causing miscarriage". This confirms their Knowledge of the underlying risks of child marriage and that awareness activities should as well touch on other social, psychological religious issues to develop stronger and more effective messages.

Exchange marriage was obvious in Hajjah and among reasons cited utilizing the girl's dowry in getting the boy married without the need to spend additional money and to protect adolescents from deviation. The least common reason is that wealthy households desire to celebrate their son early and see their grandchildren as early as possible plus sharing home chores and may be farming to be the new wife.

Displacement caused major problems for families. Many families share narrow temporary spaces where young girls and boys from the same displaced extended families stay together forcing some families to marry off their daughters to relatives (cousins) though they are young to avoid wrongdoings ward off embarrassment. This was evident particularly in Hajjah where IDPs live in rented houses because local authorities there disallowed IDP camps to be established in fear possible airstrikes. Very child marriage cannot be ruled out in these cases as well.

Box (4): Cases of child marriage in Hajja

- "It happened that two IDP families agreed to go about Exchange marriage but then one of the husbands (Manour's son) decided to break up. Her father approached his brother (Mansour's father) and offered him money to get the latter's daughter divorced too. Manour's father refused at the beginning but it happened at the end (An IDP man from Al Khadarish village, Aslam Al Sham district, Hajjah).
- "The 11- year old girl Warda got married to a young man aged 18 in exchange for debt when Warda's father used to get stuff from the grocery owned by that young man. (A case of child marriage victim in Al Medhaia village, BaniQais)

The governorate of Hajjah suffers from widespread poverty as poverty rates reached 47.53% in urban areas and 50% in rural areas according to the most recent statistics collected as part of the HBS in 2007. In addition, Hajjah comes four in terms of the number of people under food poverty level¹⁷. Rugged topography, difficult movement and years of drought had declined agricultural activities being the main business for rural people with the subsequent impact on the living conditions. The top two reasons behind girls' child marriage as stated frequently by respondents

¹⁷Yemen Republic, World Bank and UNDP (2007).Poverty Assessment.

include: 1) poverty and the need for money since dowries represent an important source for some parents and 2) exchange marriage as well as the following:

- Poverty and need for money
- Exchange marriage
- Inter-family marriage (priority for cousins)
- Dowry greediness
- Being girl orphan
- Lack of awareness among parents
- Reaching puberty
- To resolve family issues or keep retaining the family's property (lands)

II: Hodeidah Governorate

Hodeidah is the second largest governorate in Yemen in terms of population density. It is characterized by its fertile lands and valleys as well as its long coastline on the west side of the governorate. Several factories, commercial activities, export and import through the port of Hodeidah and Salif provide diverse living and working opportunities. However, the governorate suffers high poverty and unemployment rates as well as sharp decline in basic services such as education, health and water.

The war and communities in Hodeidah

Economic activities in Hodeidah have been suffering since 2011 when the country experienced political turmoil and stability and continued until escalation of the armed conflict in 2015. Meanwhile, fuel shortage and price hikes affected farmers and their farming activities as farmers depend only on rainfall. Many farms have also been ruined by airstrikes that destroyed crops and livestock. Fishermen have, meanwhile, stopped fishing activities due to fuel price hikes and a number of them were killed during bombing of ports anchors. Other fishermen prevented by warships stationed close to the beaches. This is only part of the suffering voiced by residents of surveyed communities. IDPs from border areas to the north of Hajjah as well as Haradh and Midi were most affected by the war whose homes, income sources and property were destroyed. These IDPs moved to already poor areas, which suffer hardships and deteriorated living conditions.

Data about the economic situation of male respondents illustrate how fragile is the economic situation during the war as public servants were only 25 out of the total sample (151) in addition to 27 unemployed. The rest include daily laborers, fishermen, farmers, motorcyclists and vendors. Few of them said they work for the private sector including ice factories, cement factories, guards as so on. Private sector institutions were extensively damaged during the war causing many of them to either suspend or stop their operations because of heavy shelling or bankruptcy.

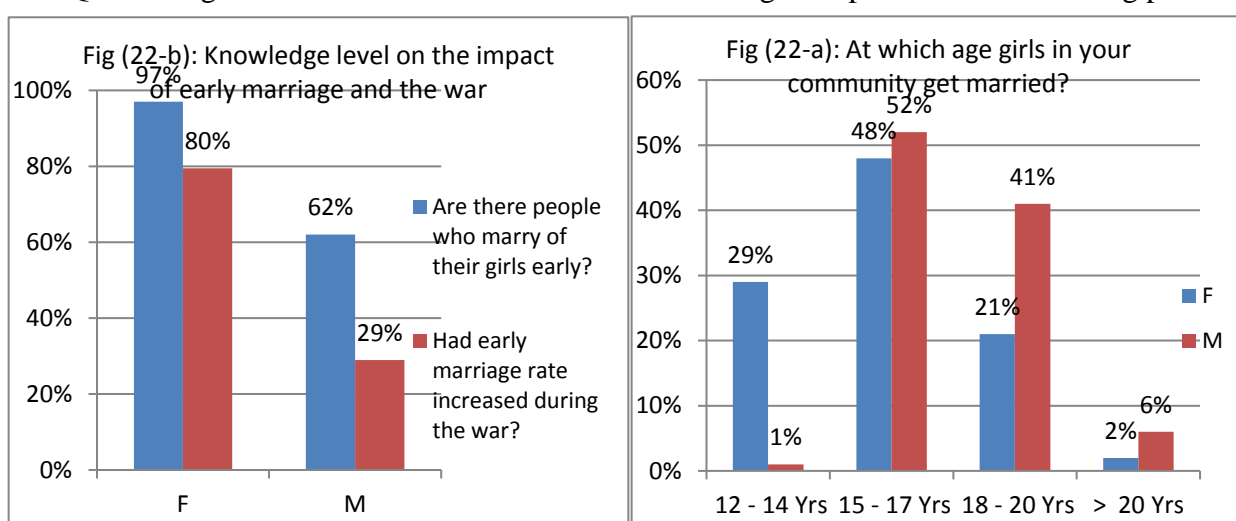
The sample included the following nine geographically distributed communities from north to the south of Hodeidah:

1. Luhaia district- Khoba village
2. AzZuhra district- Mahal Al Sayed village

3. Al Kanawes district- Mahal Al Sadr
4. AzZaideya district – Deer al Bahri
5. Al Marawe'a district – Deer Al Sofa
6. Bahel district- Deer Al Wafi
7. Zabi district – Harat Al Jame'a&Mojanbath
8. Al Katea'a district – Harat Al Ja'aleia and Al Janoubia
9. Bait Al Faqih district- Al Salilikia village

Questionnaires reflected notable appropriated knowledge about child marriage in Hodeidah communities, especially women. 80% of women confirmed an increase in child marriage during the war compared to only 29% of men as seen in Figure (22-b).

Quite a large number of men insisted that child marriage has positive side including protecting



girls from deviation "Marriage is a protection and the other half part of the religion," marriage is everyone's' destiny" just like death. A member of the local council even said, "Girls are like time bombs" in a crude support of child marriage of girls to avoid vice as if it is inevitable and indisputable.

Results show that 29% of women confirmed that girls get married at the age of 12-14, and the majority at 15 to 17. Meanwhile, FGDs confirmed that girls in the surveyed communities get married usually between 13-16 years. "By the age of 15, they are all married and even have kids" The threshold increases slightly to 15 and 16 in Al Salikia community (Bait Al-Faqih) being an urban society which have many schools, female teachers and female health workers availing wider options for girls apart from child marriage. The age for marriage is higher in Deer Al Sofa community (Al Marwea'a District) due to marriage costs as mentioned by respondents. In urban communities where higher number of girls get their education compared to rural areas, the social norms and culturally accepted traditions pose a pressure on girls as expressed by a female college graduate in Al Qate'a district "If a girl reaches grade 12 and not married yet, they tell her you missed the train. No one would marry you". Even if the family did not put pressure on their daughters to get married early, the social pressure itself poses a burden on girls to accept the first suitor regardless of his age to avoid rumors of having grown old, unwanted or maybe she has illegitimate relationships.

Box 5: Cases of child marriage from Hodeidah

- ◆ A midwife from Al Qate'a mentioned that a young girl got married to Sana'a during the war. Her Mom never saw her until after she gave birth. As the health condition of the girl was bad, the mother asked to let her daughter stay with her to take care of her but the husband's family refused, they took the newborn and kicked out the wife and her mother. All attempts by the husband to come to a compromise end in vain and he committed suicide, leaving behind a widow and a little orphan.
- ◆ An 18-year old divorced girl with two kids. She got married early and there was no harmony between the wife and the husband and/or family. As disagreements heated up with the husband, her brothers intervened and brokered her divorce.
- ◆ A mother from Al Kanawis district said that she got married at the age of 12 and married off her daughter while she was 13. Her daughter has suffered a lot during pregnancy given her age and skinny body. It suffered obstructed labor and the fetus died. To date, the girl is unable to overcome the shock of losing her baby and she lives in a bad psychological state.
- ◆ Fatima is a nineteen years old girl got married while 16 and has now two children. Her husband was killed when airstrikes hit a Qat market in Zabid. Fatima experienced miscarriage when she received news about the death of her husband coupled with the burden how to support her children. A little time later, her brother who used to support her died. Now she has no one to support her and her children.

Below are the key factors contributing to the phenomenon of child marriage ordered by importance:-

- Poverty and poor living conditions
- Fear of deviation
- Having many girls "parents fear if they reject the suitor of the younger girl she might grow old without being married just like other sisters"
- Death of the breadwinner
- Fear of spinsterhood
- Greedy fathers
- Exchange marriage
- Pressures by the community: "The practice is to marry off girls early... If you object, they will wonder why and may think bad of her" which is culturally unacceptable.
- Reaching puberty: What else you wait for... get married.

In a strange phenomenon was observed recently which is elopement to compel parents to allow the girl to get married to the man she likes. This phenomenon is limited to some districts in Hodeidah such as AzZuhra district. This was observed by the field team, and further confirmed by men and women interviewees. This could be one of the reasons forcing families to opt for child marriage to either ward off scandal and prevent elopement. FGD results showed many situations where families were forced to accept child marriage in the form of inter-family marriage or exchange marriage to reduce wedding costs.

III: Ibb Governorate

"After the Eid, we have a wedding of two girls who marry two expatriate brothers... you are invited" (a group of men in Al Makhader District, Ibb governorate)

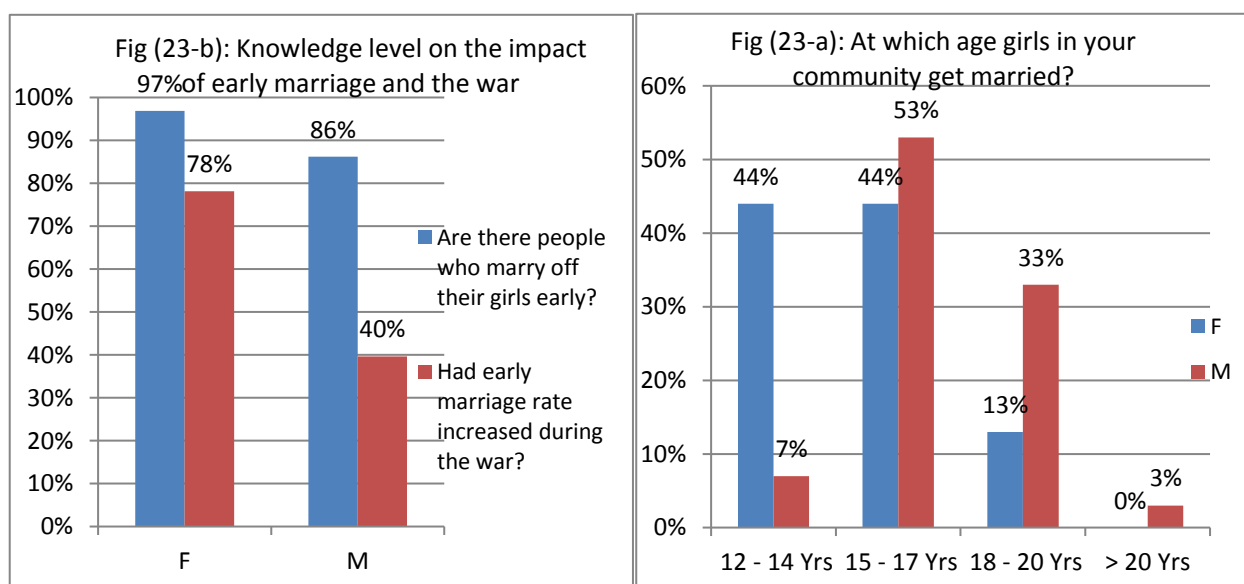
These girls aged 12 and 13 as their parents told the research team. The invitation came after the FGDs finished during which men have strongly denied prevalence of child marriage in their community, affirming that it does amount to the level of a phenomenon, an outright contradiction between attitudes/behaviors and practices emphasized in the study. Child marriage is prevalent in Ibb. Moreover, the phenomenon of tourist marriage used to be in the period before 2011 had to do with child marriage because the security situation back then was favorable for tourists from neighboring countries to come to Yemen.

Ibb is the third largest governorate in the Republic in terms of population and it has 20 districts. Agriculture is the main activity for the people. The governorate has received large numbers of IDPs fleeing war in Taiz, Dhalea'a, Abyan and Aden and it hosts sizable IDPs camps.

Two communities in Al Odain and Al Makhader were surveyed:

1. Al Odain district- district center – Souk and MadrasatA'isha neighborhoods
2. Al Makhader district- JabalO'kad- Al Hawsh village

Results show a drop in the threshold age used to be, according to the sample, where 97% of women and 86% of men confirmed the prevalence of early marriages in their communities (Figure 23-b). The survey data obtained through questionnaires clash with confirmations by men during FGDs in Al Makhader, which indicates that participants in FGDs managed to display apparent consensus to appease sticklers, as we will see later.



Child marriage is evident as 44% of women noted that girls get married at 12 or 14, while more than half of men respondents put it at 16 to 17. The surveys shows increased child marriage cases during the war as perceived by women (78%) and to some extent men.

According to the FGDs results, both communities underscored child marriage among girls and boys. For example, women in Al Odain indicated that young men marry at the age of 15 or 17 compared to 13 to 15 for girls. It was astonishing answer when women in Al Odain district asked "Till when girls remain in school in your community" and they unanimously replied "Till the groom turns up" as if education is just to kill time. As soon as they get married they dropout from school entirely. The field team received hardline answers by men in Al Odain with respect to getting the girl married early saying that delaying marriage is a corrupt idea imported from the West as if child marriage is the spirit of Islam we must follow. The influence of some religious individuals/groups in this community has been reflected in repeating similar statements that indicate early marriage is important for both boys and girls claiming this is what Islam urges people to do. In such particular situation, relying on health discourse and what risks child marriage may cause in the content of awareness message would be more convincing and acceptable for people.

Key reasons forcing families to marry off their daughters early by prevalence are:

- Poverty and lack of resources
- Customs and traditions that nourish the idea saying "Nothing to be done by women other than getting married"
- Rich husband and beauty of the girl both accelerate the process
- Ward off deviation following the era of Internet and satellite TV channels, which were classified as drivers of temptation.

The overarching factor cited by respondents is the poor economic situation, poverty and the deteriorating living conditions as war continues in addition to the loss of jobs and incomes. Although the economic situation contributes to the phenomenon, yet, child marriage practices are approached based on convictions deeply rooted in the social customs and traditions. Getting the girl married is often the decision of the father who has the authority and no attempts can dissuade him. The idea of the elderly emerged too as a factor influencing the marriage decision since their opinions should be respected and appreciated.

Child marriage was not limited to females in these communities but also males. Here are some reasons tabled during FGDs as contributors to early marriage:

- Prevalence of exchange marriage in rural areas to reduce costs.
- Fathers seize the dowry and use it to get the boy married no matter how old is he.
- Wealthy fathers attempt to get their young sons married early to show off.
- An attempt to protect the boy against wrongdoings.
- Desire by the family to share home chores with their son's wife.

The majority of answers obtained in Al Odain and Al Makhader districts referred to chastity citing that Prophet Mohammed PBUH got married to Ms. A'isha when she was nine. Therefore, we should not blind follow calls to delay marriage pointing that calls by the West intend only to spread vice and immorality among the young. "Just leave us alone". Opinions by the participants in this FGD went in favor of child marriage because, in their view, it protects young people from going astray.

Box (6): cases of child marriage in Ibb governorate

- A woman from Al Makhader district in Ibb says: "I've had a really painful experience because I got married and divorced while I was ten. I would have liked to be crazy rather than getting married. I was divorced before I reached puberty".
- One father from Al Makhader district got daughter married at the age of eleven, took the dowry and brought a second wife to punish his daughter's Mom".
- One interviewee mentioned, "I've been involved in the marriage of 13 years old girl. She could not get along with her husband and she often flees to her father's house but he sends her back every time. Now, she has three kids but her situation is still the same...she keeps fleeing angrily to her father or grandfather's house... I feel remorseful".
- The daughter of our neighbor got married at the age of 14, she is good for nothing, and she was so afraid of her husband. Because she is not well built, she always miscarriages causing permanent psychological problems for her. Her husband was killed when he fell off the roof of the house and her psychological state worsened. Being orphan and no one to take care of her, the girls endures a very difficult financial and psychological state.

IV: Capital Sana'a

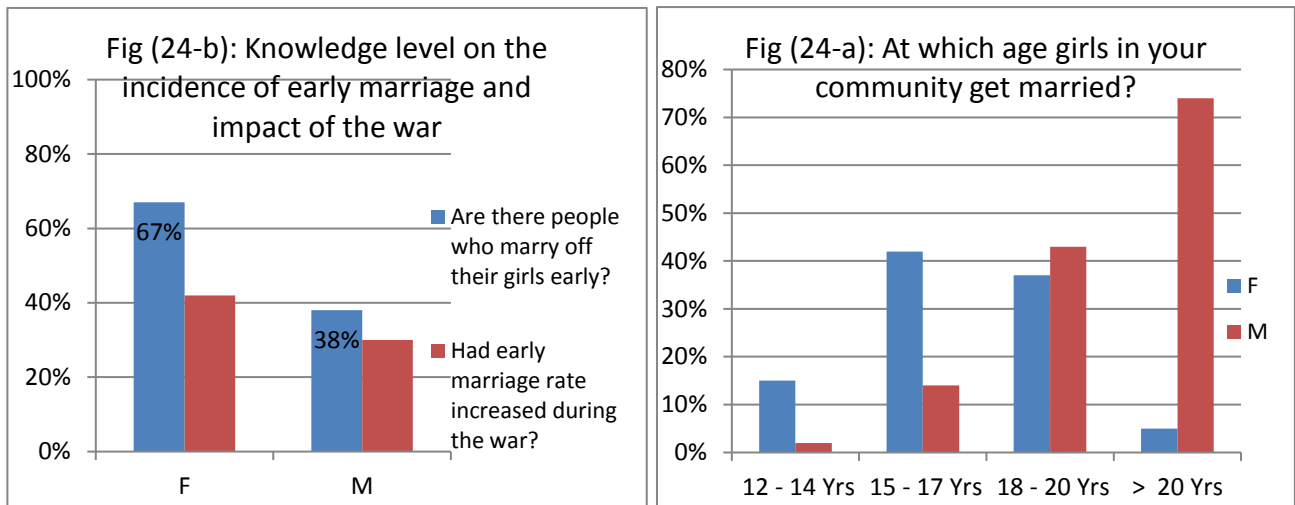
The effect of the war was most felt at the suburbs of the Capital as they received large numbers of IDPs, especially Bani Al Harith district, causing additional pressure to community resources such as schools, water sources, jobs and its ability to absorb this much of IDP families. Besides, these suburbs witness frequent airstrikes making living conditions further difficult. Three surveyed communities have been suffering from continuous intensive air rides; by the coalition forces; due to their proximity to military zones. Another community, Al Lail neighborhood, has suffered since the armed clashes and political tension back in 2014.

Interviews showed that children and the elderly were most affected by the war due to severe shortage in basic health needs. Meanwhile, jobs for young men and women have diminished greatly while many lost them altogether as a result of the damage sustained by the private sector. For example, the bombing of a soft drinks factory in Azal district caused 400 young people to lose their jobs. Daily waged workers were also affected due to the lack of jobs and economic stagnation. The same is applicable to women working in sewing and handicrafts or those who lost their supporters, also widows whose financial subsidies used to be offered by the Social Welfare Fund stopped.

The survey was implemented in four districts in the Capital Sana'a based on population density as well as population, social and economic diversification as follows:

1. Wadi Ahmed- Bani Al Hareth district
2. Al Lail neighborhood - Maeen district
3. Muhajerin neighbourhood - Saba'een district
4. ArRawdh neighborhood-Safia district

Communities in the Capital City are characterized by the availability of diverse educational services, which provide girls and women with better access to education and work opportunities as well as with a higher awareness with parents who push their girls to be educated. Therefore,



child marriage rates are noticeably lower than other governorates. However, there are indications of child marriage cases in certain surveyed communities that are featured of being poor and have diversified population from several governorates. The survey results show that 67% of women confirmed the prevalence of child marriage. On the other hand, 42% of women and 38% of men believed that there is an increase in the phenomenon during the war.

Questionnaires data showed conflicting results regarding child marriage during the war. While women see a remarkable increase of marriage cases in their community as well as among IDPs, men think no significant change.

Women participants in the FGDs believe that child marriage is more common among IDPs. A female teacher noted that IDP girls spent years in school and now they stop education given over crowdedness inside schools in the host communities forcing many girls to stay home. Therefore, families become more susceptible to get their daughters married regardless of their ages. Sometimes, IDPs manage to get their daughters married to members in the host community to create bonds with these communities and feel more safe and stable while staying there.

Box (7): Child marriage cases- Capital Sana'a

- Suad got married to her cousin when she was 14 while her and her husband's families refused to continue her education. Once the symptoms of pregnancy appeared, she began suffering health problems and had to stay in bed throughout pregnancy period as agreed with her husband's family. She suffered obstructed labor given her age and body. In the hospital, one health worker managed to pull off the fetus violently resulting in grave damage to the mother and baby. The baby was put in a nursery but died two days later. Suad gave birth to only one child and is no longer able to conceive again. She still feels severe pain in her back and could not access to health care services because they are poor.

- Muhsana was engaged to her paralyzed cousin who lives with his family and his uncle's family in the same house. She feels pity for him because he cannot work rather he depends on the yield of his family lands. Her father demanded to extend the engagement period for two years and asked for expensive dowry given her small age and beauty. When they got married, her paralyzed found it difficult to manage the sexual intercourse with her given his physical disability. She was taken to a doctor to undergo defloration and asked her husband not approach her for at least a week but he did not adhere to her request causing her to suffer pain and infection. Pregnancy was also full of suffering given her young age. After she gave birth and due to disagreements, her husband ditched her and now neighbors support her to buy milk for her daughter. As her father-in-law got paralyzed as well, the burden has become so heavy burden for her to take care of the husband, paralyzed father-in-law as well as her children.

FGDs showed that some families marry off their daughters at young age (14-16 years), especially in Bani Al Harith district located in the outskirts of the Capital Sana'a while the rate is less in Maeen district. Both communities share poor economic conditions and declined girls' education. Child marriage was also obvious among people who belong to the Ismaili Sect as reported by the respondents.

Key factors influencing child marriage among young males include warding off deviation and bring someone to do home chores. For girls, the reasons are:

- Fear of wrongdoing, especially after the spread of social media and the Internet.
- Poor financial condition forces fathers to agree, especially if the suitor is rich.
- Poor awareness on the risks of child marriage on the girl and her family.
- Exchange marriage regardless of age.

What is unique about Bani Al Harith according to community members is that:

- Elopement or illegal relationships, which cause parents not to trust their daughters anymore.
- IF not married, the sons threaten to either commit suicide or go to the battlefield.

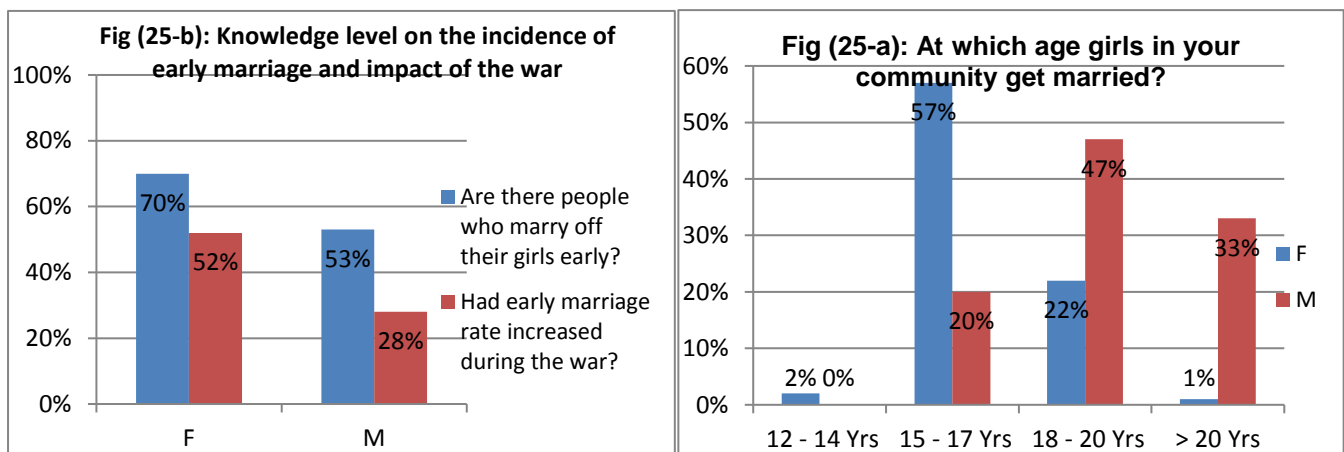
It was evident that the widespread use of the Internet and social media platforms have had negative impact on communication in the Capital Sana'a forcing parents to tighten up control over their daughters and sons. Nevertheless, social media platforms could be useful in raising awareness among adolescents in urban areas where Internet access is available.

V: Aden Governorate

Aden has suffered much during the armed clashes in 2015 that triggered huge waves of displacement, loss of jobs and economic activities to plunge including the private sector, which sustained massive destruction. The field research team has reported that deteriorating economic conditions have had a negative impact on young men at the working age who lost job opportunities. They also pointed to increased violations domestic against children and women in particular with

parents become unable to earn their living. The result was getting girls married at early age as indicated in Kalua'a and Wadi Ahmad communities in Buraika District as well as Saisaban and Makareeq in Sheikh Othman district. Moreover, crimes took an uptrend in Dar Sa'ad district where slums and extreme poverty are the norm coupled with poor education, especially women and marginalized groups. FGDs showed an increased pace of child marriage upon exodus of IDPs to schools during violent armed clashes early last year.

As for Buraika District, the largest and most important district in Aden, home of the Oil Refinery with its economic importance, has been receiving IDPs from nearby governorates since 2011 and until 2015. IDPs who settled in the district brought with them their customs and traditions, including child marriage as confirmed during the interviews and FGDs. However, health and education services as well as job opportunities were adequate to accommodate IDPs who live in scattered centers lacking basic services. The key activity in these communities is grazing and woodcutting. Armed clashes have meanwhile affected people in Wadi Ahmed, Emran and Fukum extremely poor areas, destroying their homes and forcing them to flee leaving behind all their



property such as fishing boats and livestock.

Results proved high rates of child marriage as confirmed by 70% of women respondents and over 50% of men. Early marriages is quite common within the age group (15-17). Almost 50% of women respondents and nearly one third of men cited increase in child marriage rates during the war, as shown in Figure (25-b).

In the meantime, male participating in the FGDs said that child marriage among girls in their communities does not live up to a phenomenon, rather individual cases. Women, on the other hand, were more courageous by reporting many cases of young married girls and they even mentioned certain names in Dar Sa'ad district. Because of the huge displacement triggered by the war, different groups of people have to live amid increasing numbers of marginalized people in Sheikh Othman district. Therefore, these communities have seen a jump in secret child marriage cases as explained by interviewed social figure in the district. Sheikh Othman district is now in dire need for adequate basic services as well as income-generating training and educational opportunities for women and girls because the majority of alms seekers are girls and women from the marginalized groups, thus, subject to various forms of violence.

During interviews, the field team observed cases of false birth certificates and personal IDs where the age of the girl increased to facilitate their marriage. Besides, marriage contracts do not refer to birth dates. Focus group discussions have showed that some girls prefer to get married early to escape family problems including verbal and physical abuse at home or in the street, especially female beggars from the marginalized groups.

The key socio-economic factors blamed for being drivers of child marriage include:

- Girls are considered a burden alleviated when they get married (protection)
- Absence or death of the father
- Poverty and difficult living situation, especially during war and displacement
- Multiplicity of children and sizable families
- Reaching puberty for girls (15 years).

VI: Dhamar Governorate

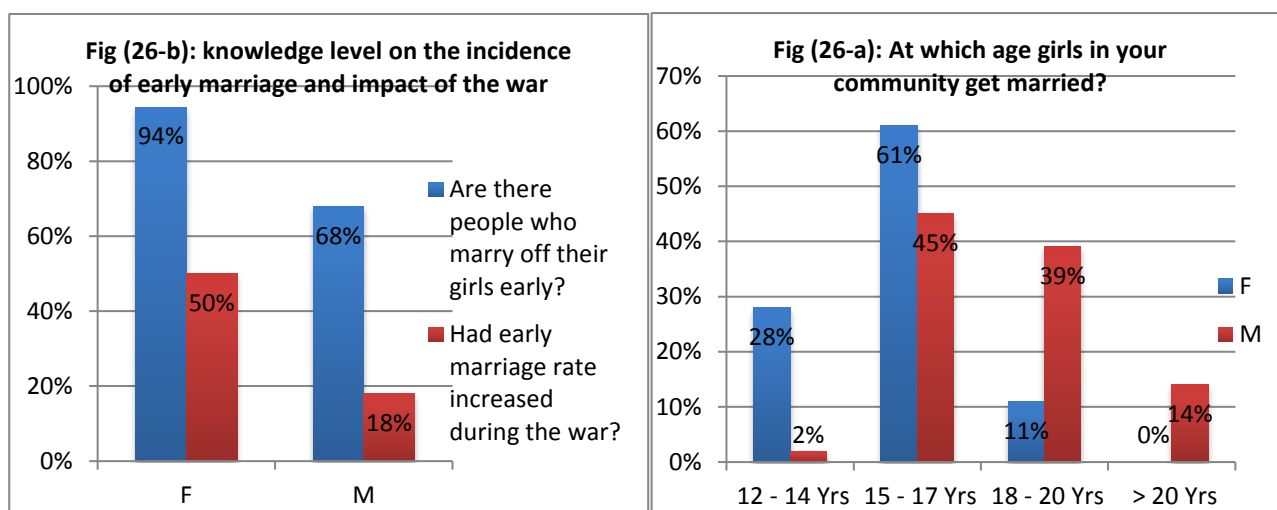
Dhamar is the largest agricultural governorate in Yemen where different crops are cultivated. Therefore, fuel shortage and price hike has severely affected farming and irrigation activities. This has caused many people to abandon their lands and move to cities in search of jobs have been on the decrease, especially non-skilled people daily wage laborers.

Three districts were targeted in Dhamar:

1. Jahran district- Al Hilla village
2. Dhamar district- HajratMankatha village
3. Ans district- Zaghba&Sawal villages

Hillah village is a plain area while Zaghba village is mountainous. On the contrary, HajratMankatha village in Dhamar city is more of urban than rural. These villages have not been affected directly by the war except some parts which are bombed every now and then. However, the poor and fragile economic situation overshadowed living conditions of the people forcing most men to abandon their lands and move to cities in search of jobs. Given the lack of integrated health services, residents of these areas need to travel to Dhamar city with additional costs to bear. With regard to the educational situation, it is also poor especially among girls. There are no secondary girls' schools in the surveyed villages except HajratMankatha, which follows administratively Dhamar district. Therefore, it is difficult for girls to complete their schooling.

Figure (26-b) shows that majority of sampled women (94%) confirmed increased child marriage cases during the war. Figure (26-a) meanwhile shows that most girls get married between 15 to 17 while 285 women confirmed cases aged 12 to 14.



Men respondents reported during the FGDs that girls get married usually at the age of 14-17 except in HajratMankatha village where no girl gets married before 17 the area is now semi-urban where girl education and girl secondary schools exist. During FGDs, women from Zaghba and Sawal villages in Ans district as well as Hilla village in Jahran reported that girls get married at 14 or 16. While women in HajratMankatha village, Dhamar district confirm that girls usually get married at the age of 16 to 18. As for Jahran district, women said girls usually get married at 12 or 14 with some cases aged 10 or 11. A female literacy class teacher emphasized that stressed that girls get married very early, "Many get married at the age of 10 or 12 because if the girl grew up and still not married, they start to gossip".

Case of A'isha, Zaghab village- Ans district

- A'isha had lived with her heartless and stingy father and when she reached fifteen her cousin proposed her. Her father agreed to the request as a sort of payoff to his brother who used to send him money from Saudi Arabia. However, when A'isha rejected, she was severely beaten by her father who accused her of fiddling around and that he would kill her if she disagrees and saves honor of the family. There was no harmony given the husband's age. A'isha spent some time in her father's house and used to be beaten by her father and husband alike. Now, she is pregnant and in a very bad psychological state.

Elderly people have also displayed strong attitudes in support of child marriage citing Hadiths like "He who feels potent can get married" in addition to other well-established traditions and practices. The field research team had been able to document 200 cases of child marriage in Dhamar communities. One of the female researchers quoted the majority of women respondents as saying they got married more than once because blaming early marriage; "we get married and divorced and then make a second go". Key reasons include "destiny, customs and traditions" except in Al Hilla village where women expressed their anger at reducing dowries saying it emboldened men to have more than one wife including young girls.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Answers by respondents and FGD participants about child marriage and associated risks indicate that community members are directly or indirectly aware of the scale of the phenomenon/problem. Therefore, when asked about the appropriate age for marriage, their estimates were ideal though at odds with practice on the ground. The majority of respondents agreed that the appropriate age for marriage is 20 to 24 for boys and 19 to 20 girls.

As for practices, results from all the 30 communities surveyed show that child marriage (below 18) is still wildly spread, especially in rural area. Some cases were observed in urban areas such as Aden and the Capital Sana'a due to population movement from rural areas, widespread poverty and lack of awareness. Child marriage is more common in rural areas where men prefer young and uneducated women or those who received a little bit of education. Educated women are perceived by some to pose a threat or as someone said, "An open wife would undermine stability of the family". While younger wives are easier to manage and control.

Lack of quality education for girls combined with the lack of jobs as well as training and qualification opportunities that polish women skills and raise their productive and economic capacities and subsequently their status within their families, deepen the already entrenched community traditions in favor of child marriage for economic ends. Such practices stem from unwavering social norms and beliefs by community members who applaud and support marrying girls early, claiming that unless married they would continue to pose a burden on their families and may put their families' reputation on the stake. Male respondents, especially in Al Makhader district in Ibb as well as Zabid and AzZuhra districts in Hodeidah confirmed this stance "Wean and marry" in support of girls' early marriage. Another man went to say, "Get your daughter married as early as possible" meaning before she becomes grown up and no longer wanted. Some rural communities label unmarried women in their twenties as spinsters "Being unmarried means spinster!"

When asked why some families marry off their daughters early, they cited poverty and need for money, greed by fathers or exchange marriage as main reasons beside other social factors such as lack of awareness, reach puberty and chastity. Actually, these justifications hide negative social norms, negative attitudes and debasement of women within their families who value women for their reproductive roles only. Further, openness promoted by TV channels and social media platforms has triggered unprecedented concern among Yemeni families and strengthened well-established social norms and convictions that marrying girls and boys as early as possible is the solution. A man from Zabid commented that child marriage is the solution to prevent deviation or notoriety "I think the best is to get girls married as early as possible to combat the openness brought in by TV serials".

Often, girls are not consulted before marriage and all they can do is to obey orders by their male relatives, such as fathers or brothers, cousins, uncles or grandfathers who decide for them. Criticizing the idea of consulting girls and giving them the opportunity to accept or refuse a marriage proposal, one father said, "I married my three daughters without consulting them or their mother".

Child marriage is more prevalent in Hodeidah, Ibb, Dhamar and Hajjah governorates. During the current war, there has been an increase in child marriage as 66% of women reported a dramatic increase especially in Hodeidah, Hajjah and Ibb governorates that host large number of displaced people. Women were more able to identify the prevalence of child marriage in their communities compared to men due to the gender-segregated spaces in Yemeni communities. Women have more knowledge regarding marriage issues and easily can identify the age of new brides and all circumstances of such marriage.

The survey also attempted to investigate pro-woman services and institutions inside the surveyed communities. Key basic services provided by health centers (if available) are limited to primary health care and perhaps reproductive health. Quality and availability of such services have been severely disrupted by the war while many HFs being fully destroyed. Bearing in mind the worsening humanitarian crisis, local and INGOs stepped in providing humanitarian and relief assistance as a mainstream activity. All respondents said that such assistance is not permanent and unlikely to meet the actual need.

Recommendation and the way forward

The direct and easy solutions to address the high prevalence of child marriage in Yemen would be in enacting a law to establish a minimum age of marriage and enforce legislation to punish violators. Still, none of the efforts made over the past years to set a legal minimum age for marriage in Yemen have succeeded in getting an official governmental or parliamentary approval. Given the current war situation and the absence of legislative authorities, it would be more practical to work closely with local communities and de facto local authorities to establish community-based rules and regulation according to the societal and cultural specificities of local communities.

At the community level

- Build community coalitions by engaging influential figures as well as heads of education, health and endowment and guidance offices as well as school principals and local authority officials in addition to any other legal persons with the potential to rally support and contribute to implementing activities and programs designed to curb the phenomenon of early marriage. Program activities that are women-centered and focus on empowerment elements should be given a priority in targeting these communities.
- Building on some positive cultural and tribal norms that set community rules to address certain social phenomenon. For example, in this survey, a community rule in a village in Dhamar Governorate limits the bride dowry at 30 thousand Yemeni in order to reduce the cost of marriage and for youth. In the same manner, advocacy with the community leaders (sheiks, religious scholars, educated people and social figures) can result in determining minimum age for marrying off boys and girls.
- Advocate with community leaders and local authorities to regulate child marriage by making marriage registration compulsory, and a proof of a bride's actual age such as an identification card or birth certificate is obligatory to finalize marriage registration and contract.

- Advocate with the community leaders and religious scholars and mosques Imams to allocate some Friday's speeches to talk about child marriage and its diverse destructive consequences on girls.
- Interventions should have components on monitoring child marriage including cooperation with legal arrest power and medical services (reproductive health centers), agencies and specialists involved in child protection such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, civil society organizations and rights activists.

Messages and educational packages

- Women are already well aware of the risks associated with child marriage based on their own experiences (see figure 1). Therefore, awareness programs should focus more on targeting and engaging fathers, mosque preachers, religious scholars, legal persons, teachers and young men.
- The content of messages should emphasize health consequences as well as social consequences of child marriage. According to the survey, most of the respondents emphasized their knowledge of health consequences (difficulties of pregnancy and delivery) and the inability of married girls and boys to bear the marriage responsibilities. However, these consequences were mentioned according to some cases experienced in their own communities. There is a need to involve specialized medical staff in awareness raising activities to detail adverse health consequences of child marriage as well as services needed and how to access these services.
- According to the survey results, many respondents do not consider marriage at the age of 15 or below 18 as early. Therefore, concepts related to 'child marriage', 'safe age' and consequences of child marriage need to be appropriately integrated in the content of the awareness messages and advocacy activities.
- Ensuring the availability of birth certificates forms at local authority's level (i.e. local governmental offices). With the electricity shortage and lack of resources to print forms and make them available for free for people.
- Take advantage of mobile phones technology, social media and the Internet to raise awareness among young males and females including adolescents' training venues and programs in urban areas where Internet access is available.

Empowering adolescents

Adolescent girls and boys need to be empowered with more focus on girls, to be able to have a say regarding their reproductive health and other life choices such as education and work, etc. With the widespread of poverty and the deterioration of economic and living conditions, provision of capacity building and income generation opportunities is a necessity to ease the acceptance of awareness and education activities. Therefore, linking advocacy and outreach activities about the safe age for marriage with meaningful activities that would contribute to service provision including health and training services as well loans and economic empowerment projects to ensure better community engagement during the implementation process. Empowerment can take different forms as follows:

- Equipping both adolescent girls and boys with adequate knowledge of sexual and reproductive issues
- Investing in training some girls and boys to be agents of changes in their community through peer education; an area that both the UNICEF and Youth Leadership Development Foundation (YLDF) have an excellent and long experience in conducting similar activities.
- Other empowerment skills should focus on life-skills
- Introduce adolescent-friendly consulting health services in health facilities or in girls-friendly or youth friendly space (schools can be mobilized serve to provide such spaces).
- Economic empowerment opportunities for adolescent married girls through skills training that are appropriate for the community culture and needs and then through providing funding seed money to start small income- generation projects
- Uneducated girls or those who received little education are more likely to marry younger than their educated peers. Therefore, more focus on re-enrolling girls who stop schooling or drop out of schools would contribute to delaying child marriage. Networking with teachers and social workers in schools can assist in reintegrating girls in schools.
- Targeting women and girls away from their families may create problems between the girl and her family. It is important to mainstream awareness activities as part of training and empowerment interventions to sensitize attendance by families and hence create common ground for understanding between girls and their families.

Coordination at various levels

Lastly, it is important to intensively coordinate and consult with people and institutions at different levels. In rural areas, coordinating and work directly with local communities including OzLas and neighborhoods where the traditional informal power (tribal power) is still dominant as well as security authorities established during the war. The same is true for urban areas, where sheikhs and neighborhood chiefs enjoy strong powers strengthened further with the advent of war given the deteriorated security situation and absence of formal security authorities. It is imperative to coordinate in advance with several levels to facilitate your work in the neighborhoods of the Capital Sana'a and cities like Hodeidah, Dhamar, Ibb and Hajjah given the current circumstances. Therefore, the survey team managed to gather sufficient information about influential bodies and persons in all communities visited to ensure better coordination and effective implementation.