Child Marriage Study MENA – Jordan

Understanding child marriage amongst Syrian Refugee Communities in Jordan

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE RESEARCH (JORDAN & LEBANON)

Outcome 1: Understanding of the social processes underpinning the increase in child marriage and impact of displacement.

Outcome 2: Current policy and practice responses to child marriage across Jordan and Lebanon mapped to provide greater understanding for partnership working and coordinated responses across sectors and multiple levels.

Outcome 3: Evidenced-based practice tools developed based on the research findings including: ToC + Assessment-Evaluation-Training Tools.

✓ Tdh MENA Child Marriage Model of Action
✓ JHU – Child Marriage Research Toolkit MENA
Understanding the social processes underpinning child marriage:
Impact of protracted displacement in Jordan

✓ The research was carried out in three locations across Jordan: EJC, Irbid and Mafraq.
✓ Partnership Tdh & University of Bedfordshire UK.

Executive summary

This document is one part of a larger study on child marriage amongst Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. This report details the results of assessment data regarding 202 girls aged 12-20 years old, and 23 in-depth narrative interviews with married and unmarried girls, and their families undertaken by case managers working for Terre des hommes (Tdh) with Syrian refugees in 2017 across Jerash, Mafraq and Irbid Governorates, and at Emeiti Jordanian Camp (EJC).

The aim of the interviews was to better understand the social processes underpinning child marriage from the perspective of Syrian refugees, to examine the nature and impact of familial decision-making processes and the effects of protracted displacement on child marriage. The assessment data simply sought to clarify families' intentions in relation to child marriage (i.e. is it something they would consider) and reasons for accepting or rejecting proposals. The report therefore analyses the process of child marriage itself, illuminating how it is understood, explained, considered and justified by girls and their families. It also details the challenges faced by married girls and their reflections on marriage and life in the future.
TARGET GROUPS RESEARCHED

✓ Married Syrian refugee girls and their families.
✓ Unmarried Syrian refugee girls and their families.
✓ Syrian refugees (adolescent girls, adolescent boys and caregivers of adolescent girls and boys).
✓ Religious justice leaders (Personal Status Law) and faith based actors in Jordan and Lebanon.
✓ Policy makers and practitioners responding to child marriage across a range of organizations and sectors.

The resulting data is, however, not nationally representative nor generalizable, nor does it give an indication of prevalence of child marriage. However, the lived experiences and attitudes described give depth to the current quantitative data available and help us hear the voice of the Syrian refugee community more than 8 years following displacement. The research seeks to examine complicated and unstandardized social processes which are difficult to capture using quantitative techniques to inform programming.
CHILD MARRIAGE IN JORDAN (III)- Research

Mixed Method Research


✓ Mapping of policy and practice response to child marriage in Jordan. 17 policymakers and practitioners were interviewed

✓ Qualitative interviews (8 interviews – Sunni)

✓ Semi-structured narrative interviews with married/engaged/unmarried Syrian refugee adolescent girls and their families. 9 girls who were married under 18 years of age and their families were interviewed, along with 2 girls engaged under 18 years and 2 unmarried girls under 18 years of age, and their families.

✓ Focus groups with young Syrian refugees aged 13-21. 2 focus groups were held with girls (in EJC and Mafraq) and 2 groups were held with boys (1 in EJC and 1 in Irbid).

✓ Focus groups with parents of teenage children (separate groups for males and females). 2 focus groups were held with mothers (in EJC and Mafraq) and 2 groups were held with fathers (1 in EJC and 1 in Irbid).

✓ Additional assessment data from Tdh case files in Jordan was collected on age of marriage, desirability of child marriage and reason for marriage. 360 cases.
CHILD MARRIAGE IN JORDAN (IV)- Research

SYSTEMATIC MAPPING LITERATURE

1. What are the rates of child marriage in different communities in Jordan?
2. What is it like to be married under 18 in different communities in Jordan?
3. What is the process of marriage (legal and social) for different communities in Jordan?
4. How is child marriage understood and conceptualised in different communities in Jordan?
5. What are the drivers of child marriage in different communities in Jordan?
6. What are the consequences of child marriage in different communities in Jordan?
7. What do we know about the relationship between child marriage and education in different communities in Jordan?
8. What are the recommendations for preventing child marriage and caring for those affected by child marriage in different communities in Jordan?
9. What are the current interventions in response to child marriage in different communities in Jordan?

RECOMMENDATIONS *(clustered here, fully broken down and detail in the research)*

✓ Expansion of support to prevent Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).
✓ Strengthening laws which prohibit child marriage.
✓ Strengthen the education system to reduce child marriage through a gender-sensitive approach to education that underpins inclusive policies.
✓ Strengthen community-based engagement and activities.
✓ Developing and extending direct services to young women impacted by child marriage.
✓ Specific programs for adolescent young women.

13 BIG GAPS
CHILD MARRIAGE IN JORDAN (V)- Research

**Institutional Level**
- Laws allowing marriage under 18
- Different interpretations of the ‘special circumstances’
- Restrictions on access to services due to refugee status
- Gender inequality

**Community Level**
- Cultural/social norms of marriage and pre-marital relationships
- Concerns about girl’s safety
- Safety nets destroyed
- Lack of livelihoods
- Poor housing

**School Level**
- Poor access to education
- Education not prioritised for girls
- Low educational aspirations

**Family Level**
- Protective strategy in response to concerns about safety & honor
- Livelihood strategy to reduce economic hardship/provide for the girl
- Access to a range of benefits from marriage (entry to Jordan/Dowry/social standing)
- Gender inequality

**Peer Level**
- See others marry in a beautiful dress and great party
- Increases social status amongst peers

**Individual Level**
- Desire for social status and wedding ceremony
- Important transition to adulthood and desire for independence
- Taught to obey head of household
- Low aspirations
- Internalised gender norms

**Figure 1**: Drivers of child marriage mapped onto an ecological framework.

**Figure 2**: Problem tree developed based on the drivers and outcomes of child marriage.
POLICY AND PRACTICE RESPONSE TO CHILD MARRIAGE

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS AS ANALYZED

✓ Advocacy: clearer communication on **why child marriage remains a priority** despite there being many other child protection or SGBV issues.

✓ Policy: child marriage is often included within wider protection policies – **specific national policy**: indicators, boundaries of the intervention, measurement of impacts, contextualization, contribute to join efforts.

✓ Programmes: formally develop the **preventative potential** of PSS activities, life skills training, empowerment programmes, safe spaces, case management and SRH education in relation to child marriage, with clarification of their role in prevention, a tailored theory of change and linked indicators.

**TdH Jordan Delegation**: (1) Case Management Child Marriage Cases Guidelines, (2) Support Group Sessions for girls at EJC, (3) child-led initiatives with community and peer awareness approach and (4) child protection integrated services.

✓ Monitoring and evaluation: which approaches are most **effective**, whether special or targeted programmes on child marriage are needed to complement and support more general programs, specific evidence on if awareness-raising is effective, in what forms, how often and when.

✓ Further action-research ----> **BUT** practice based knowledge: notion of ‘**consent**’ and how to open up conversations about the nature of a girl’s consent to marry with all the stakeholders involved, the impact of the ‘**layers**’ of drivers / intersectionality.
CHILD MARRIAGE IN JORDAN (VII)- Research
INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

INTERVIEWS
➢ Expectations of marriage
➢ Legal and Social process of child marriage
➢ Factors influencing the decision-making processes underpinning child marriage
➢ Marriage preparation
➢ ‘Informed’ consent
➢ Impact of the displacement on child marriage (stages)
➢ Consequences of child marriage

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS
❑ How are concepts of ‘risk’, ‘vulnerability’, ‘protective factors’ and ‘successful outcomes’ understood in Syrian refugees communities in relation to child marriage?
❑ What ‘protective’ actions do family and community members take in response to the challenges associated with child marriage?
❑ How does the refugee context change the process and experience and risks associated with child marriage?
❑ What do young men and women know and expect of marriage, SRH and childbearing? And how are these expectations changed by the refugee context?
CHILD MARRIAGE IN JORDAN (VIII) - Research

Figure 2: Factors impacting decision-making process as identified through qualitative interviews

1. Will we consider any proposal?
   - Broad social context
     - Legal context of marriage
     - Societal value of marriage
     - Displacement (Asylum phase of Hope and Fear)
     - Feelings of safety and security
     - Value of education
     - Provision and access to education
     - Aspirations for girls
   - Social norms and values
   - Family traditions
   - Religious teachings on marriage
   - Economic security
   - Living conditions
   - Attitudes to child marriage
   - Many proposals already received
   - Proposal

2. Will we consider and accept this proposal?
   - Specific context
     - Characteristics of the groom and his family
     - Current aspirations
     - Consent of girl
     - Will of God
     - Advise from others
     - Age of girl and maturity
     - Girl in education?
   - Initial displacement to Jordan
     - Initial Asylum Phase of Hope and Fear
   - Prolonged displacement in Jordan
     - On-going Asylum Phase of Hope and Fear

3. What shape should the marriage arrangements take?
   - Reject
     - Increases likelihood of being ready to accept a proposal in the future
   - Accept
     - Legal registration of marriage and validation in a Shari'a court
   - Family-led
   - Preparation stage of consent
   - Family-led with input from
     - Stage of consent 1
   - Stage of consent 2

Figure 3: Summary of changes in social conditions for child marriage amongst Syrian communities from pre-conflict to prolonged displacement in Jordan

- Pre-conflict (Homeland Phase of Apprehension)
  - Child marriage in Syria was associated with ‘traditional’ families living in rural areas with low educational attainment or poor access to education. However, the value of education for girls was increasing.
  - Child marriage was less common in urban areas, more wealthy and educated families

- During conflict in Syria (Persecution Phase of Terror)
  - Armed conflict in Syria resulted in a widespread concern about the kidnapping and sexual assault of unmarried girls. These occurrences and the rumours of these occurrences led to families quickly arranging marriages for their unmarried daughters (from approximately 13 years of age) before fleeing Syria

- Initial displacement to Jordan
  - Early studies from 2012 indicate that families were less likely to rapidly arrange child marriages immediately after arrival to Jordan due to the initial chaos of displacement.
  - Engaged girls were quickly married on the arrival in Jordan. Early studies from 2012 indicate that families were less likely to rapidly arrange child marriages immediately after arrival to Jordan due to the initial chaos of displacement.
  - However, reports from studies from 2013 indicate a concern about increase rates in child marriage related to lack of knowledge of Jordanian laws, poverty and ‘temporary’ or ‘short-term marriage’ to foreign men.
  - Girls who were not in school following their displacement were at very high risk of marriage

- Prolonged displacement in Jordan
  - Most families have been in Jordan for many years and are familiar with Jordanian marriage laws and social norms.
  - Insecurity and hopelessness remain regarding their future.
  - Limited employment rights and statelessness remain.
  - Economic and housing conditions remain poor.
  - Syrian girls have better access to education, however drop-out and inactivity at home remain significant risk factors for child marriage
CHILD MARRIAGE IN JORDAN (IX)- Research

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

**SOME OF THE MOST HIGHLIGHTED ISSUES - RECOMMENDATIONS**

✓ “Why wait?” national campaign: a set of positive messages on marriage after 18 years of age, BUT focused on nature of marriage (religious teachings, social norms, human right, gender discourses).

✓ Development of specific assessment tool for child marriage for interdisciplinary professionals – (specificities and complex and mixed factors).

✓ Investment in married girls and religious justice/faith-based actors.

✓ Advocacy and awareness-raising message that take into account community perceptions of child marriage and ambivalent attitudes

✓ Peer to peer work with male refugees on child marriage that takes into account changes in traditional masculine identifies

✓ Peer to peer work with mothers, recognising their role in facilitating/allowing child marriage

✓ The lens of gender inequality and sexuality must remain at the heart of prevention activities.
THANK YOU and happy reading!

Q&A