The Extending Service Delivery (ESD) Project

The “Safe Age of Marriage” Project: Uniting Against Child Marriage in Yemen

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www.esdproj.org
ESD addresses unmet need for family planning and increases use of RH/FP services, especially among underserved populations.
Child Marriage (CM) in Yemen

- Yemen is one of 20 “hot spot” countries
- Of women who are 20-24 years of age:
  - 48% married before 18
  - 14% before 15
- CM prevalent in 57% of poor families and in 35% of wealthy
Predisposing Factors

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

Socio-cultural
- Shield (Sitr)
- Poverty
- Religious belief
- Fear of spinsterhood

Legally sanctioned
- No minimum age
Safe Age of Marriage (SAM)

- Community-based
- Foster change in social norms
- 40 community educators
- Implementing partners:
  - Yemeni Women’s Union
  - Basic Health Services Project
## Discrepancy between Words and Deeds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Local Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best age of marriage for girls</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• 70% responded 18-24 years</td>
<td>• 59% of daughters married before 18</td>
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<td>• Most daughters married between 14-15; 14% married ≤13</td>
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<td>• Husbands older: between 20-24</td>
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<td>• 60% of families reported that their sons married girls below the age of 18</td>
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Six-Day Workshop

- Institutionalize participatory training methodology

- Training content
  - Health
  - Religion
  - Education

- Model new gender norms: Co-education
Awareness Sessions and School-Based Activities

Awareness sessions

School plays
Health Fairs

Quiz Shows

Movie & Discussions

Health & Religious Lectures

Mobile Clinics
IEC and Selection of Model Families

Radio spots
- Aired three times/week

IEC materials

Characteristics of a model family:
- Delay daughters’ marriage until age 18
- Ensure daughters’ education, regardless of financial and social hardships
Stated Benefits to Delaying Girls’ Marriage

- **Increased opportunities for education**
- **Empowers girls to make decisions**
- **Healthier pregnancy**
- **Healthier children**
- **Work opportunities**

Bar chart showing comparisons between endline and baseline for each benefit.
Trends in Marriage Patterns

Comparison of % of girls and young women married by age at baseline/endline
Outcomes

- Al-Soud District pledged to ban child marriage
- 53 girl child and 26 boy child marriages cancelled
- 101 girls and 56 boys returned to school

- Decree by Ministry of Religious Affairs (Amran Governorate)
- First ever female principal hired
Lessons Learned

- Link prevention of child marriage to health and social benefits
- Obtain buy-in and engagement from influential community leaders
- Recruit project coordinators with leadership skills
Thank You

Community Educators