Social norms around forced and early child marriage in Pakistan

Zahra Jabeen & Karen van Zaal
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“Marriage no child’s play”

- More Than Brides Alliance
- MNCP being implemented in 5 countries: India, Malawi, Mali, Niger and Pakistan

- SRHR & empowerment
- Education
- Economic opportunities
- Social norms on child marriage
- Policy on child marriage
Child Marriages in Pakistan

- Pakistan ranks 6th in the world, with 1.9 million child brides
- 21% Pakistani girls are married before 18; 3% before 15
- Complexity of issue and Multiple Drivers:
  - Social Norms, Cultural traditions/family practices, Family Honour, Land Dispute Settlement, Economic Issues, Religious Reasons and Peer/Family Pressure
- Marriage in Pakistan is a union of the families of the groom and bride, rather than of two individuals
- **Evidence from baseline; discrepancies in answers of household heads and girls on consultation of marriage**
Research objective

CM in Pakistan

Evidence from baseline

Need for unraveling of social norms surrounding early marriage practices and the decision-making processes around marriage
Social norms

What are **Social Norms**?

Don't pick your nose

Greet someone upon meeting them

Wear clothes in public

Rules of behavior that are considered acceptable in a group or society

Waiting for your turn

We wait our turn because others do

...and because it is expected; others would disapprove of cutting in line
Aspects around social norms

Empirical expectation

Attitudes and behaviour

Possible sanctions

Normative expectation
Research and social norms

Figure 1: The ‘funnel’ of norms exploration and measurement

1. Explore
   - When: you don’t have any evidence or insights to conclude that sustaining a given behaviour X
   - What: exploratory open-ended qualitative questions such as advantages or disadvantages of X

2. Investigate
   - When: you have some evidence suggesting that norms sustain X
   - What: vignettes that investigate the specific norm but some room for diversion OR direct questions that help understand the dynamics of the norm (e.g. sanctions)

3. Measure
   - When: you have good qualitative evidence of what norms sustain X
   - What: survey questions or survey vignettes to measure prevalence of beliefs

4. Understand, plan, act
   - When: you have good data on prevalence of norm
   - What: understand strength of norm and other factors and plan/implement intervention

- Literature review & baseline survey
- Qual research on SN in decision making of marriage
- Midline survey
- Reflection and adaptive programming
Methodology

**Phase 1**
- Baseline survey
- Quantitative
- Girls and household heads
- N=1200 (T/C)
- Linked to the ToC pillars
- Linked to Learning agenda

**Phase 2**
- Qualitative research
- Objective derived from baseline reflection
- ID interviews and vignettes
- Girls, boys, mothers and fathers
- N=40
- Identified 4 social norms
- Midline survey (adapted baseline)
- Girls and household heads
- N=2000 (T/C)
- Linked to the ToC pillars
- Quantitative measurement of social norms

**Phase 3**
Results – Phase 1

- Child Marriage was common in project areas
  - Most married girls (63%) got married before their 18th birthday
  - Majority of the girls do not know the legal age to marry

- Knowledge on SRHR was low
  - Around 80% of girls did not know about menstruation before they experienced their first cycle

- Lower support for girls’ education than boys’ education

- Discrepancies between answers of girls and answers of household heads regarding decision making process of marriage
  - This triggered to conduct the phase 2 research on decision making process of marriage
Household: Who normally decides on when and with whom a girl marries?

Girl: When discussions about your marriage began between the parties, were you asked whether you wanted to marry him or not?
Results – Phase 2

• Norm 1: Respectable mothers leave the formal marriage decision-making to men but take responsibility for ensuring that a suitable proposal is accepted;

• Norm 2: Respectable girls agree to the marriage decisions taken by their parents;

• Norm 3: Marriageable girls need to be able to contribute to their husband’s household in moral, intellectual and practical ways, including household chores and satisfying her husband’s urges;

• Norm 4: Respectable girls are married as soon as they are mature, to protect the family honour
Results – Phase 3

Norm 4:

- Family honour and a girl’s maturity are the two key factors that influence marriage decision making process
  - Maturity and responsibilities influence decision on marriage more than age
  - Social norms on family honour play out differently in Punjab and Sindh

Norm 3:

- Girls should contribute to their husband’s household mostly in practical ways, i.e. according to the traditional gender roles
- Space is found for a shift towards a more equally divided household
Programmatic update & conclusions

- Using results and learning for adaptive programming
  - Create social action against early child marriage practice
  - Create a supportive environment
  - Engage people of all age groups in the conversations especially men and boys through community sessions
  - Improving communication and negotiation skills of young girls and boys

- Role of mothers in decision making
  - Engaging mothers as influencers
  - Educating through mobile cinema and generating debates between husband and wife

- The notion of family honor trumps all other norms around early child marriage and influences social action
  - Phase 4 – Qualitative research on social norms around family honor
THANK YOU!

ZAHRA JABEEN & KAREN VAN ZAAL
OXFAM NOVIB