

YEMEN

COUNTRY PROFILE

UNFPA-UNICEF
Global Programme to
End Child Marriage

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ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL
EMPOWERING WOMEN
THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

end
child
marriage
A vision. A chance. A future.



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for every child

YEMEN

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Yemen is home to 4 million child brides. Of these, 1.4 million married before age 15.

Source: UNICEF global databases, 2020. Demographic data are from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019), World Population Prospects 2019, Online Edition, Rev. 1.

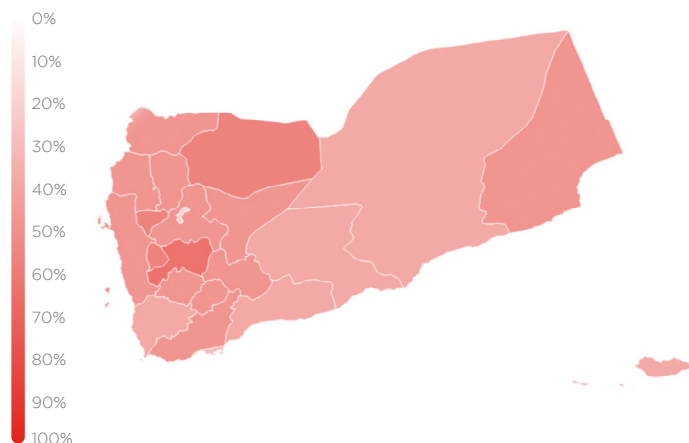
Notes: For details on the calculation of girls and women married in childhood, see: United Nations Children's Fund, Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects, UNICEF, New York, 2018. Estimates refer to population year 2019. Values below 2 million are rounded to the nearest hundred thousand; those above 2 million are rounded to the nearest million.



4 million
Married before age 18



1.4 million
Married before age 15



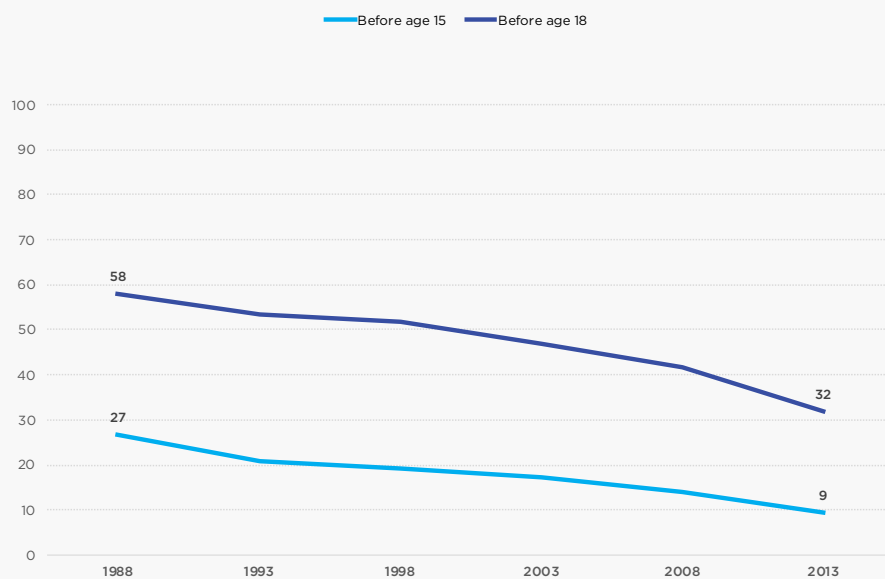
Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18

Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNFPA or UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers. Source for child marriage prevalence data is the Yemen Demographic and Health Survey from 2013.

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 15 and before age 18

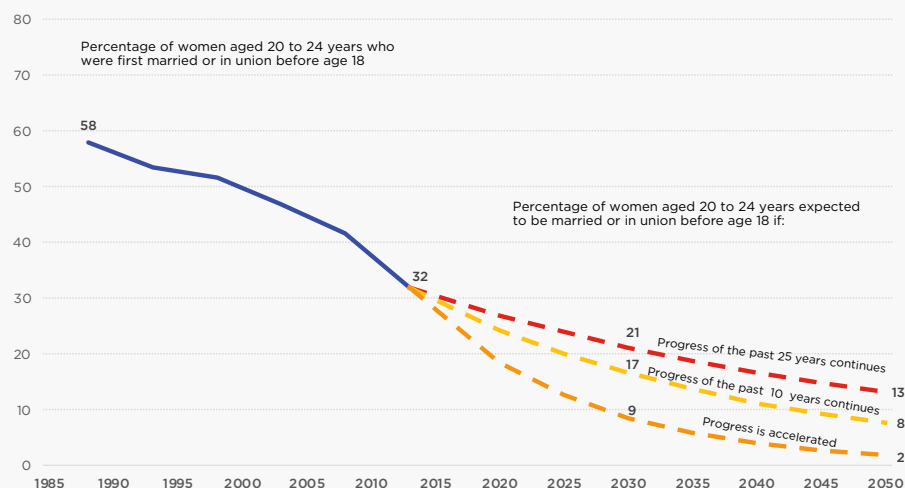
Source: Yemen Demographic and Health Survey 2013

Note: This trend analysis is based on the prevalence of child marriage across age cohorts, as measured in the latest available survey.



Projections of the prevalence of child marriage

Source: UNICEF analysis based on the Yemen Demographic and Health Survey 2013



Message from UNFPA and UNICEF Yemen country representative



Nestor Owomuhangi

UNFPA Yemen country representative

The escalation of the conflict and the ensuing humanitarian repercussions has weakened the position of adolescent girls in Yemeni society, leading to a near erosion of their protection mechanisms and increasing their vulnerabilities. In the absence of adequate empowerment and support, many adolescent girls have become vulnerable to negative coping strategies, one of which has been child marriage that has been on the increase over the past five years.

Through the Global Programme to End Child Marriage in Yemen, UNFPA in partnership with UNICEF has been able to make significant achievements during Phase I of the programme in improving access to education and health-care services for adolescent girls, in educating parents and communities on the consequences of child marriage, and generating data on what works to address child marriage and related issues such as gender-based violence.

UNFPA is grateful to its donors for their vital contributions in helping to address child marriage in Yemen. We are committed to embarking on Phase II of the programme and thereby ensure that no girl is deprived of her childhood, her education and health, and her aspirations.



Dr. Sherin Varkey

UNICEF Yemen country representative

Child marriage has been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict. Since the inception of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage in Yemen, UNICEF has been working with partners to empower thousands of adolescent girls with life-skills to increase their capacity to express and exercise their choice. Despite the challenges, UNICEF is appreciative for the work that has been accomplished during Phase I in collaboration with UNFPA and remains committed to continue its work in Phase II.

Our donors have been vital partners in supporting this important programme. UNICEF continues to call on all humanitarian actors, the Yemeni authorities and the vast network of community-based organizations to commit to ending child marriage and other harmful practices against women and children in Yemen.

Country movement to accelerate action to end child marriage: Key moments and achievements of Phase I

In Phase I, the Global Programme in Yemen deepened partnerships with the government to accelerate action to end child marriage and provided data and evidence with advocacy to promote policy change and legal reform at various levels.

Significant achievements in Yemen since the inception of the Global Programme include:

19,750
adolescent girls
aged 10-19

have participated

in at least one programme intervention aimed at empowering them with skills and information to delay child marriage.

The programme integrated life-skills education

in schools by developing a life-skills package aligned to the life-skills and citizenship education framework for the region, developed by **UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office**.

A total of

61,293
parents

were engaged and equipped

with positive parenting skills and knowledge on adolescent development to address child marriage.

In 2019,

273
adolescent girls
aged 10-19

were supported

by the programme to enrol and continue with their education in order to delay child marriage.

Among these girls,

21 girls

were able to be integrated into the formal educational system after gaining the necessary knowledge through the UNFPA supported informal literacy classes.

61,509
individuals in
the community

were engaged and regularly participated

in dialogues promoting gender-equitable norms including delaying child marriage.

In addition, over

392,000 people

in programme areas were reached with media campaigns focused on ending child marriage.

355
service delivery
points in targeted
programmes areas

were supported to implement

guidelines for adolescent girl-friendly health and protection services.

As a result,

10,102
adolescent girls

utilized health or protection services

from these service delivery points.

Phase I Country Programme Strategies

Reflecting upon how to strengthen the implementation of the Global Programme in a humanitarian context and in the many ways in which the ongoing conflict and economic decline is affecting households in Yemen, UNFPA and UNICEF decided in September 2017, following a consultation in Cairo between country and regional offices, to select four key sets of interlinked activities which are best placed to achieve the programme goals in the current context, within existing resources. Consequently, the child marriage programme in Yemen encompasses a holistic integrated approach focused on empowering adolescent girls to have a voice on issues that matter to them and act as agents of change in their communities. UNFPA and UNICEF opted to strengthen efforts to tap into different resources and leverage work with other sectors to address the different pressing needs of the affected populations. More focus will be put on increasing outreach through best use of limited resources and through amplifying collaboration and complementarity between UNFPA and UNICEF. The programme aims to promote positive and measurable behaviour and social change, and at the same time provide multisectoral services to child marriage survivors and girls at risk, as well as strengthen the referral pathways with other sectors, such as education and health to improve access to services in programme areas.

The Global Programme in Yemen made the decision to use life-skills as an entry point for girls' empowerment, given the sensitivity of the child marriage issue. In 2018, a harmonized life-skills package aligned to the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) framework of the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office was developed in consultation with a range of

actors, including the Ministry of Education. The LSCE framework was designed to address the need of a holistic, lifelong and rights-based vision of education that maximizes the potential of all children and youth in the region and better equips them to create meaning out of knowledge and to face the transitions from childhood to adulthood, from education to work, and from unreflective development to responsible and active citizenship. The framework supports improved learning through investments in individual, social and economic development, and focuses on a set of 12 core life skills using the 4-dimensional learning model: 'Learning to Know' (Cognitive Dimension), 'Learning to Do' (Instrumental Dimension), 'Learning to Be' (Individual Dimension) and 'Learning to Live Together' (Social Dimension). The adapted harmonized life-skills package developed in Yemen has mainly been implemented in schools and surrounding communities by UNICEF for adolescent girls and boys. Out-of-schools adolescents were also reached through UNFPA-led interventions in safe spaces at community level. In addition to life-skills, livelihood skills and sexual and reproductive health information were provided to girls in locations with child marriage prevalence. The programme also invests in a peer-to-peer education approach, whereby adolescent girls who received life-skills in schools are encouraged and supported to transfer the received skills to their peers within their community. Informal literacy training was provided by UNFPA to help build the capacity of girls at risk of child marriage to encourage them to return to school; the process is done through a participatory approach using the REFLECT methodology, which is (an informal) structured participatory learning process for girls.

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EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS WITH SKILLS AND INFORMATION

In 2019:



5,324

adolescent girls
aged 10-19

in programme areas
actively participated in
at least one targeted
intervention

Since 2016:



19,750

adolescent girls
aged 10-19

in programme areas actively
participated in at least one
targeted intervention



Over 50,000 boys aged
10-19 in programme areas
also actively participated
in at least one targeted
intervention

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

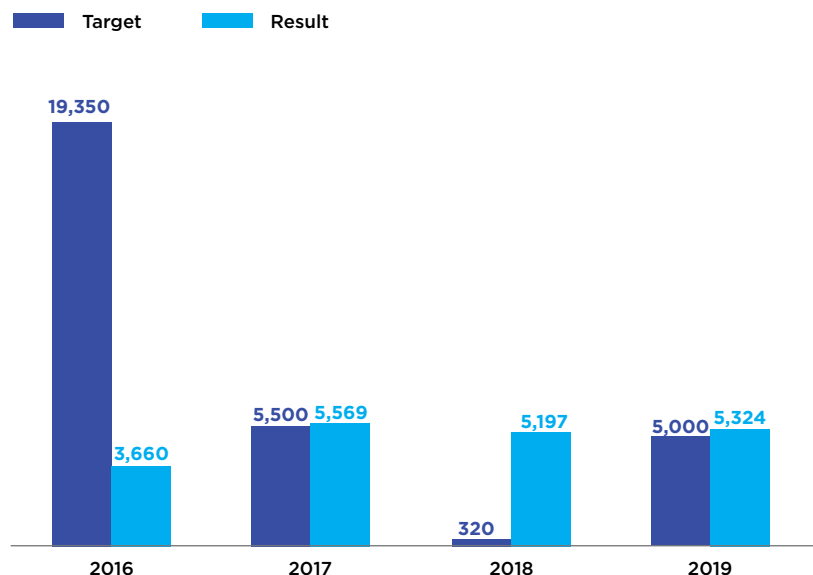
Despite the security concerns and challenges faced to humanitarian action, the programme was able to develop an integrated life-skills package in partnership with a range of actors for supporting life-skills education in schools. The package is aligned to the Life Skills and Citizenship Education framework developed by the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office of UNICEF.

During Phase I, the programme has been able to reach 19,750 adolescent girls with life-skills training, information and services for psychosocial support. In addition to the training, the girls were also provided with medical and legal services, safe shelter and cash support, including dignity kits.

In addition to referring adolescent girls to access education support through linkages with other partners established by the programme, it directly provided some of the adolescent girls with business start-up packages as an alternative to resorting to child marriage, which is a negative coping mechanism when out-of-school.

Although it has been challenging for the programme to measure the proportion of girls who are able to express and exercise their choice in the programme areas, the programme has been able to document stories of girls who have benefitted from the programme and who were able to testify to the changes it brought to their lives.

Number of adolescent girls (aged 10–19) in programme areas actively participating in at least one targeted intervention





Mithaq M. is 18 and lives in Qalou'ah Bir Ahmad, Al-Brega district. She left school in fourth grade because the school was far from her home but also because of her family's difficult living conditions.

She got married to a man who was twice her age. During nine months of marriage, she suffered violence and isolation from her family and friends.

She was unhappy and so sad that she had a seizure, which compelled her husband to send her back to her family. After three months of sickness, her husband agreed to give her a divorce as he felt that she was not "ready" to be married. Mithaq said: "Following the separation, I felt very sad and very depressed as I saw how girls of my age were happy, but also because I had become a burden for my poor family and for the way I was perceived by the community as a divorced girl".

Mithaq was identified through the programme and was offered the opportunity to receive training for a project of her interest and to be supported to start a project for her own.

"I was attending the training every day, despite the distance and the checkpoints: I wanted to complete the training. I was trained on small business management skills and was granted support to start my sale business.

Today, I am independent financially and I am also able to help my family. I would like to thank the programme for giving me the possibility to dream of a bright and beautiful future."

Challenges

- At the onset of introducing life-skills in schools, the intervention has been perceived by authorities as a 'Western idea aiming at changing the culture of the country with regard to the relationship between children and elders'. 'Empowerment' for girls and boys was perceived as if they were to be provided with 'weapons' to challenge their families and therefore become disrespectful. This incorrect perception has caused delay to approval of the life-skills interventions by the Ministry of Education. Several engagements have been made at central and governorate levels to obtain the buy-in of authorities.
- During the implementation of the socioeconomic component, the project was constantly interrupted by authorities at the labour market assessment phase. In the North, the labour market assessment has been ultimately suspended by the authorities. Clear explanation has not been provided. Interference of authorities in selection of beneficiaries for socioeconomic activities has also been challenging.
- It has been challenging for partners to reach some remote locations with high prevalence of child marriage.
- The coordination of the referral system between case workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour has delayed provision of services to some identified cases of child marriage.



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Lessons learned

The main lesson learned from Phase I is that child marriage is deeply embedded in the culture in Yemen, therefore efforts to address it should be holistic and integrated. While empowering adolescent girls, boys should not be left aside. At the same time, families' empowerment should be ascribed greater importance given the economic motives driving the practice. Therefore, opportunities for socioeconomic empowerment should be offered to families in which girls and boys are at risk of child marriage. Finally, the referral system should be strengthened for better identification and referral of out-of-school adolescent boys and girls.

Shifts in Phase II

No major shift is planned in Phase II; however, there is a plan to improve the life-skills manual. The plan, if the context allows, is to scale up the life-skills programme in schools and surrounding communities and to better coordinate intervention in that regard between UNFPA and UNICEF. Other priority activities planned include:

- Reviewing the life-skills manual, with better coordination from the Ministry of Education (work-in-progress).
- Embedding child marriage interventions into gender-based violence in emergencies interventions of UNICEF for a more coordinated cross-sectoral response.
- Building on the country momentum focusing on adolescent empowerment to place child marriage at the core of work of the various clusters and other United Nations agencies.



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EMPOWERING GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION SUPPORT

In 2019:



273

adolescent girls

in programme areas supported to enroll and/or remain in primary, lower secondary or non-formal education

Since 2016:



273

adolescent girls

in programme areas supported to access and remain in primary or lower secondary school or non-formal education

(support only provided in 2019)

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

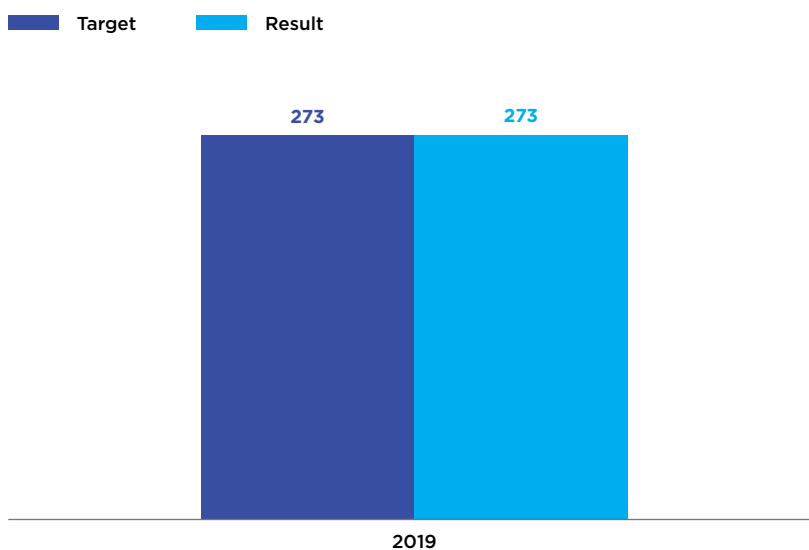
The programme leveraged with other programmes to provide education support to adolescent girls. The global Basic Education and Gender Equality programme has maintained a focus on ensuring access to learning opportunities for children and youth, especially in those regions most affected by the conflict, as determined by the Humanitarian Needs Assessment for the sector. Despite the substantial challenges presented by the level of insecurity and the coexistence of two opposing authorities, the Global Partnership for Education supported the re-integration or enrolment of 1,220 vulnerable, out-of-school girls aged 10–14 into formal education.

In 2019, 273 girls were supported by UNICEF through the Global Programme to return and enrol in school. Of these, 21 girls were able to integrate into the formal educational system after gaining the necessary knowledge through UNFPA-supported informal literacy classes.

Challenges

The programme ensured that links between education and child protection are streamlined through system strengthening. However, the Global Programme faces many challenges in connection with the de-facto government in the north of Yemen, where child protection and gender-based violence projects are not welcome. This is frustrating the efforts of fighting gender-based violence in schools.

Number of adolescent girls in programme areas supported to access and remain in primary or lower secondary school or non-formal education



Lessons learned

Working with communities to strengthen the case management system has enabled adolescents to return to school in areas where the referral system was effective.

Shifts in Phase II

For Phase II, a target of 500 married girls or those at risk of child marriage or school dropout will be supported to access education.

Other priority areas include:

- Linking interventions with the UNICEF-led 'Back to learning' campaign, by providing girls in programme areas who dropped out of schools, or are at risk of dropout, with school kits as well as the payment of conditional cash transfers through the Emergency Cash Transfer system.
- Strengthening collaboration with the water, sanitation and hygiene cluster and the UNICEF Education Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in School component, to ensure that schools in which life-skills are implemented are equipped with gender-sensitive water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, to attract and retain girls at these schools.



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SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION TO INFLUENCE SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

In 2019:



38,564

individuals

(11,628 males) in programme areas regularly participated in dialogues promoting gender-equitable norms including delaying child marriage



392,282

individuals

in programmes were reached with midi-media campaigns in communities (such as interactive theatres)

Since 2016:



61,509

individuals

in programme areas have regularly participated in dialogues promoting gender-equitable norms including delaying child marriage

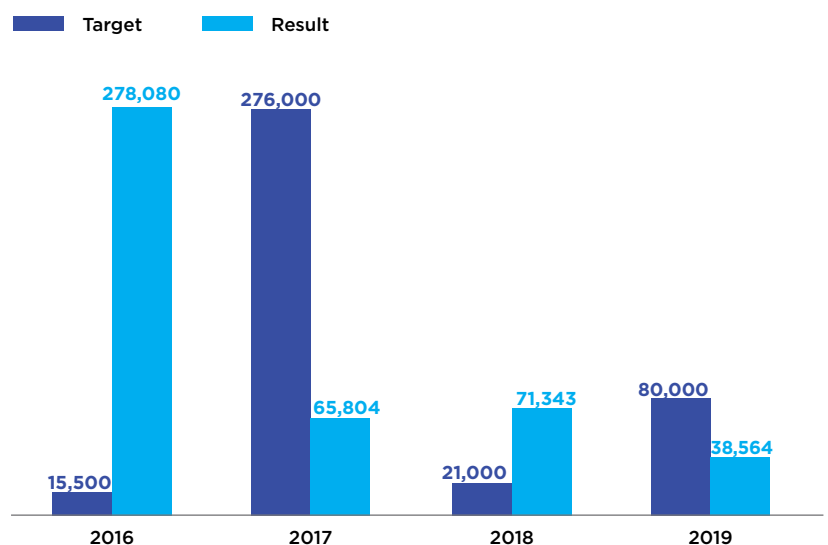
This includes 13,418 boys and men

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

Adolescent girls and boys and community leaders were involved in developing and leading community initiatives and dialogues on child marriage and other child protection issues to promote gender equality and equity and the abandonment of gender discriminatory social norms. Awareness-raising on child marriage focused on the negative impact of child marriage and teenage pregnancy on girls, and the importance and added value of education for girls. The messages have reached communities, including community and religious leaders, and have been successful in programme areas. For instance, a religious leader in the Dar Saad District, who is the Imam of the Al-Khair Mosque, has started including speeches on child marriage reduction and its consequences on girls' health and development at the Friday sermon. In addition, in December 2019, the population of Qalou'ah Bir Ahmad, a village where child marriage is prevalent, came together under the leadership of their sheikhs and religious and community leaders to sign an agreement to limit the marriage of children and to return them to schools. The Imam leading the initiative encouraged parents to commit to delay marriages until girls reach age 18, pending a legally binding law.

Throughout Phase I, the programme has reached a total of 453,791 girls and boys, women and men in the 16 districts in which it has been implemented. It should be noted, however, that progress has not been steady in reaching communities given the unpredictable emergency context and because of the reluctance of communities to attend gatherings because of the risk of airstrikes.

Number of individuals in programme areas who regularly participate in dialogues and/or were reached by mass media campaigns promoting gender-equitable norms including delaying child marriage



Challenges

- It was difficult to introduce the social and behaviour change communication messages and have these accepted by communities; thus, the implementation was suspended, mainly in the North, at various stages by both authorities and some religious leaders.
- Community leaders in several occasions asked for incentives to implement initiatives.
- Some religious leaders refused to promote awareness on ending child marriage because of their religious convictions.
- It was hard to find community champions at the beginning of the programme.
- At times, the huge demand of the economic empowerment projects for adolescents to support themselves and their families have overshadowed and delayed community-awareness activities.

Lessons learned

- Targeting religious and community leaders because they have a major impact on families by changing their perception has proven to have tangible positive impact in communities.
- Linking youth initiatives with peer educators and community leaders has had a positive impact and made acceptance of the programme messages by communities much easier.

Shifts in Phase II

- The main shifts will be informed by the Phase I 'lessons learned' exercise, to be undertaken in 2020, as well as findings from other qualitative studies which will be completed during the year.
- Community dialogues on child marriage are to be integrated into broader adolescent engagement, as well as gender-based violence in emergencies prevention and risk mitigation interventions with other sectors.



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STRENGTHENING PREVENTION AND PROTECTION SYSTEMS

In 2019:



83

service delivery
points

in programme areas
implement guidelines
for adolescent girl-
friendly health and
protection services



10,102

adolescent girls

in programme areas
have utilized health or
protection services



2,743

girls

were provided with
medical support, 805 with
psychosocial support and 94
with legal support and shelter

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

The programme has provided a multisectoral response to survivors of child marriage, including medical, legal and psychosocial support, as well as providing shelter to survivors whenever required. In Phase I, a total of 10,102 girls was provided with comprehensive protection and health services.

A girl who has been provided with medical and psychological support and provided with livelihood opportunities said:

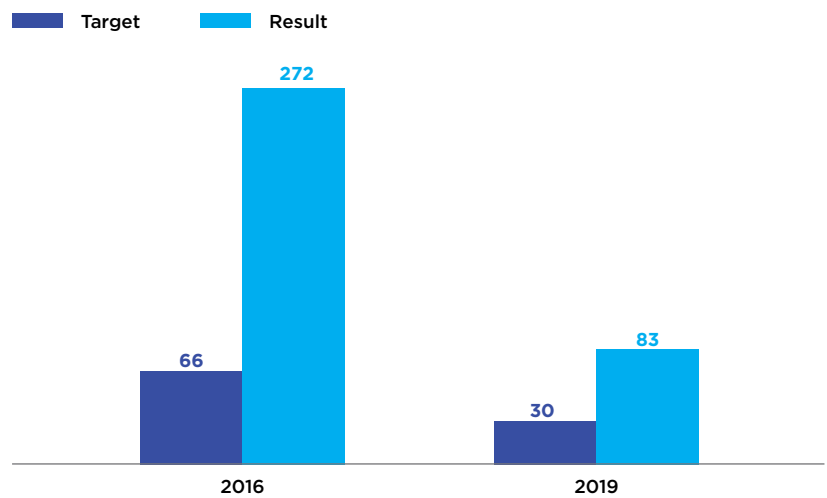
”

Today my married life is stable, and I am in the fifth month of pregnancy and my health, thank God, is great. My mental state is improving after what I suffered due to being married too young and the tough living conditions we were going through. I was too young and not prepared to handle all this pressure and responsibilities. I received psychological and moral support and learned through the programme how to manage a small business; and I now help my husband provide basic needs through my work making and selling clothes.

Since 2016:



355

service delivery
pointsin programme areas
implement guidelines
for adolescent girl-
friendly health and
protection servicesNumber of service delivery points in programme areas
implementing guidelines for adolescent girl-friendly health and
protection services

As part of the system strengthening approach, UNICEF supported the development and roll-out of a case management training manual to guide the response to the needs of adolescents in and out of school, including for psychosocial support for cases of violence against children and child marriage. The roll-out within schools was facilitated in collaboration with a technical working group of 10 representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

Through the case management system support provided to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, a total of 160 social workers and other education personnel from the 71 schools where the programme has been effectively implemented has been trained on the standard operating procedures related to the referral pathways between schools, and the health and justice systems.



Aisha, another girl, was forced into marriage at age 12 because she was from a very large family who suffered from a lot of problems. She went through a painful divorce and has become depressive as a consequence. Through the programme, she was provided with a series of psychosocial support sessions and was enrolled in a literacy programme. Her mother testified:

"Aisha, my daughter, came out of the depression and the negative psychological state through writing and reading. Before the training whenever I talked to her I could feel her sadness and pain. But now she is smiling and having fun and enjoys attending the literacy classes. She has started networking with other girls of her age, she is no longer isolated, she has transformed to a different person."

Challenges

It has been mostly challenging to coordinate the referrals between the different sectors involved in the pathways. Also, the lack of availability of services in some areas has either delayed the provision of services to survivors or prevented survivors from receiving the appropriate services.

Lessons learned

- Better and timely coordination between the different sectors is needed to improve the quality of services provided to beneficiaries.
- Community based organizations have been instrumental in relaying child protection awareness-raising messages and creating safe spaces for adolescent boys and girls to seek information on issues of concern.

Shifts in Phase II

The following approaches will be prioritized for Phase II:

- Enhanced coordination between different sectors.
- Enhanced case management database to better capture services provided to referred cases and to generate accurate and timely evidence.
- Better coordination with the United Nations protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) focal point to integrate a complaint and investigation mechanism on PSEA and ensure safe and easy access, especially for adolescent girls.
- Enhanced role of social workers by building their capacity on psychosocial first aid and focused non-specialized psychosocial support.



STRENGTHENING DATA AND EVIDENCE

Results from 2016–2019 programme implementation

During Phase I, the programme had several challenges in generation of data to inform programming. In general, since the eruption of the conflict in 2015, there has been a lack of data overall for the country. The findings of the 2013–2014 Demographic and Health Survey on the prevalence of child marriage were used to contextualize the Global Programme theory of change and select programme intervention areas.

Between July and September of 2016, UNFPA and UNICEF, respectively, carried out with support of their partners a thematic assessment on gender-based violence and child marriage and a knowledge, attitudes and practices study on child marriage in a total of 13 governorates. The purpose for both surveys was to have initial qualitative and quantitative data on child marriage to better design interventions based on the comparative programmatic advantage.

In 2019, UNFPA conducted, as part of a regional initiative, a quantitative and qualitative study in three governorates in Yemen targeting both host communities and internally displaced populations. The survey report is being finalized and findings will inform Phase II programming.

Through the UNICEF regional office, a documentation of the programme adaption to humanitarian settings has been made using an international consultant. The findings are being finalized and are intended to draw from lessons on what worked or not and which changes should be brought or enhanced to the programme interventions, given the particular context of Yemen.

Finally, UNICEF is also working with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour on a qualitative survey in the programme areas on the main drivers of child marriage to identify key influencers in the community as well as the impact of the conflict on the practice. The findings will be used to refine the social norms and behaviour change strategy drafted in 2018. A quantitative survey is also being conducted as part of regional and global research on harmful practices. This will be used as a baseline for the programme and will help measure changes throughout the programme implementation.

Challenges

Evidence generation is one of the major challenges faced by the programme in Yemen. Since 2018, following the establishment of the National Authority for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Recovery (NAMCHA) in North, humanitarian workers have been prevented from carrying out any protection-related data collection. In most instances, authorization was denied to national researchers and international researchers were not given an entry visa to the country. In instances where authorization to conduct assessment was granted, workers faced major interference from authorities, raising the issues of independence and ethics in the findings. In 2018, UNICEF was constrained to stop the qualitative survey on child marriage led by a national consultant for a number of reasons, including those mentioned above.

Lessons learned

Better coordination and jointness in planning and implementing of research between UNFPA and UNICEF is required for child marriage evidence generation, especially in a context where restrictions are imposed on protection interventions.

Shifts in Phase II

Once finalized, the UNFPA-led quantitative and qualitative studies and work with UNICEF and the regional offices will be disseminated to finalize the report on the documentation of the child marriage programme implementation in humanitarian settings; both studies will support required tweaks to the programme in Yemen.



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COMMUNICATIONS TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

■ [Yemen video 2020](#)

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

NAME OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	TYPE OF PARTNER	PARTNER FOCUS AREA	MAIN PARTNER
Youth Leadership Development Foundation (YLDF)	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights	UNICEF
SOS Center For Youth Capabilities Development	Local NGO	Children's rights, youth rights	UNICEF
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour	Government body		UNICEF

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AREAS

GEOGRAPHIC AREA	Output 1.1: Life-skills and economic support	Output 1.2: Education support	Output 2.1: Social and behavioural change	Output 3.1: Quality health and protection services	Output 3.2: Quality education
Al Hodeidah	■	■	■	■	■
Hajjah	■	■	■		
Ibb	■	■	■	■	■
Aden	■	■	■	■	■
Sana'a	■	■	■	■	■
Taiz				■	■
Amran	■	■	■	■	■
Al Baydah				■	■
Al Jawf				■	■
Amanat Alasima	■	■	■		
Dhamar				■	■
Hadramout				■	■



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