**A Future She Deserves:**
**Ending Child Marriage in MENA**

The Problem: In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), 1 in 5 girls are married before 18 and early marriage is a negative coping mechanism for those affected by humanitarian crises.

CARE’s Goal: By 2025, child marriage will be averted or mitigated for 6 million girls in MENA, especially in conflict-affected communities.

The rate of child marriage in MENA is increasing in conflict-affected areas. As CARE reported in 2015, this is largely the result of the, ‘fatal confusion between protecting girls and sexual violence’. The need to secure the girls’ honor as a method of securing the family honor is seen across Syrian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon where increasingly also girls from urban communities – areas where child marriage was previously uncommon – are married before they reach 18 years. According to UNHCR (2017), the percentage of married underage Syrian females in Jordan increased from 33.1% in 2010 to 36.2% in 2013 and 43.8% in 2015. The rates of child marriages among Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Turkey are similar or even higher, but have stayed at the same rates among other nationalities. In MENA, child marriage is also practiced in non-emergency settings; while the drivers are complex and contextual, they often evolve around traditional beliefs and socio-economic factors. Yemen for example already had a 32% child marriage rate (including 11.9% before the age of 15) prior to the war (UNICEF 2017).

To impact the lives of 6 million girls, CARE will:

- **Innovate and systematize** child marriage prevention and mitigation programs in conflict-affected contexts.
- **Broker new relationships** among women’s movement actors, research agencies, and regional platforms for increased political will, global attention and shared learning around child marriage.
- **Convene collective action** to introduce new, amend, and strengthen implementation of existing laws and policies around child marriage.

Where we work:
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Turkey, Yemen
“I grew up in a conservative family where girls are only allowed to complete high school and get married. We were forbidden to work. Discussing the idea of opening a shop with my brothers was very hard. Ultimately they agreed on one condition: I would only go to the shop once every two weeks. After a year, I was not able to just sit and wait for two weeks to go to the shop. I had to go and manage it by myself, so I talked with my brothers. They accepted that I would go three days a week, with my brother as a guardian. A year later, I heard about CARE’s Women Economic Empowerment program. My application was accepted, and I received trainings in microfinance, marketing, and life skills. I remember the first day we started the training. Once I stepped into the training room, I saw 24 women and I felt so amazed. I felt that I was not alone anymore.” Salma Al-Furase, Yemen 2017. Salma opened her shop defying not only a conservative society that encouraged her to get married, but also a raging, ongoing war.

“Going through hard times financially my husband wanted to get our daughter Yasmine out of school, simply because we couldn’t afford it. But I said no, and that was probably the first time I said no to my husband. I said no, and my no was firm. I said no again, I said that I would pay for her school, and I did”. Um Ahmad, West Bank. Um Ahmad is one of the founder of Al Jalama Women’s Group that CARE supports through its economic empowerment and livelihoods activities.

“Early marriage is a challenge that Syrian girls are facing. But at such a young age, this is too much responsibility for a girl. Girls who marry young lose their education, they lose their personality. They must stay at home all day, take care of the home, clean, cloth, and feed everyone – but they’re still girls. I want to be successful, but I must work to be successful. We must work hard to pass through the emotionally difficult times – times when I am afraid, like when I’m confronted by a new country, new experiences, or even by war. We can’t allow the fear to paralyze us.” Marah, 17, is a participant in a Syrian and Jordanian teen peer to peer support group at CARE’s community centre in Irbid, Jordan. Part of CARE’s psychosocial programming, teenage girls come together to discuss child marriage, stress management and gender-based violence.
In FY17 and FY18, CARE’s MENA Impact Growth Strategy was focused on a broader Gender-Based Violence prevention program, including early marriage, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. After review of needs and available resources, in August 2018, CARE MENA narrowed the focus of the IGS to concentrate on the issue of child marriage mitigation and prevention, especially in communities affected by humanitarian crises. Therefore, this report highlights achievements thus far, and plans going forward that are specific to addressing child marriage.

To achieve the global Sustainable Development Goal 5.3 to reduce child marriage, current progress must be accelerated, and increases in marriage rates due to conflict must be addressed. CARE, through our own programs and partnerships as well as through regional advocacy initiatives, aims to mitigate or avert child marriage for more than 6 million girls in MENA by 2025.

*In FY20, we expect that Jordan will pass legislation related to prevention of early marriage, and in FY23, we expect that Egypt will pass legislation that will also have a large impact on girls reached. For full assumptions and calculations, please request our detailed M&E Framework and Theory of Change documents.
**IMPACT GOAL:**
By 2025, child marriage is averted or mitigated for 6 million girls in MENA, especially in conflict-affected communities.

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<th>OUTCOMES &amp; Key Indicators</th>
<th>MULTIPLIERS &amp; Key Indicators</th>
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<td><strong>Girls have greater agency</strong> (knowledge, skills, and access to services) to protect themselves against CM and its consequences</td>
<td><strong>Innovate and systematize</strong> child marriage prevention and mitigation in humanitarian and development programs. Key Indicator: # and % of CARE projects in the MENA region that integrate prevention or mitigation of CM</td>
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<td><strong>Key Indicators:</strong> - # of girls between the age of 10-17 participating in child marriage prevention programs - % of girls between the age 10-17 who know their rights and entitlements - % of girls at risk of marriage aged 10-17 and women aged 18-24 reporting high self-efficacy</td>
<td><strong>Broker new relationships</strong> among women’s movement actors, research agencies, and regional platforms for increased political will, global attention, and shared learning around child marriage. Key Indicator: # of projects that worked with strategic alliances and partners to take tested and effective child marriage solutions to scale</td>
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<td><strong>Families and communities build equitable relationships with girls and are able to choose positive coping strategies that reject CM</strong></td>
<td><strong>Convene collective action</strong> to introduce new, amend, and strengthen implementation of existing laws and policies around child marriage. Key Indicator: # of CARE/partner-supported collective actions undertaken by organizations/ movements, to present marginalized people’s demands to power-holders</td>
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<td><strong>Key Indicators:</strong> - # of public activities or events arranged on child marriage - % of key stakeholders (parents, community leaders, young people) who know about the harms of child marriage. - % of women who do not intend to marry their daughters before the age of 18.</td>
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<td><strong>Legal frameworks</strong> enable effective prevention and mitigation of CM, including through displaced girls’ and households’ access to services</td>
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<td><strong>Key Indicators:</strong> - # of new or amended policies, legislation, public programs, and/or budgets responsive to the rights of adolescent girls - # of power holders that have improved their skills to effectively fulfill their roles and mandate related to age of marriage through the support of CARE and partners.</td>
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*Our full Theory of Change and M&E Framework with more details is available upon request.*
2018 Highlights: greater agency & positive coping strategies

Syria: Young Motherhood Clubs

CARE’s partner organization Syria Relief and Development (SRD) operates a Safe Space for Women and Girls, offering information sessions on family planning, GBV case management and social-educational activities. In 2017, 10,500 women and girls visited and were supported through the Safe Spaces which also include Young Motherhood Clubs. In these clubs - 12 in total - midwives and GBV case workers facilitate information and awareness sessions for conflict-affected, married adolescent girls to raise their knowledge on issues such as parenting, antenatal care, family planning and the health consequences of early marriages with the aim to prevent normalization of child marriages and reduce pregnancy before the age of 20. The clubs are also a safe entry point for accessing (GBV) services. CARE/SRD apply UNFPA’s operational guidelines, but involve the girls in the design of the sessions in order to ensure that the information provided is targeted, useful and needs-based. In total, since October 2017, CARE has reached over 400 adolescent girls through these clubs and in the future, it will provide information sessions to non-married adolescent girls as well.

Lebanon: Learning from positive deviants

In Lebanon, CARE works with the American University of Beirut (AUB, supported by the Ford Foundation, to increase the number of girls who complete secondary school education. When girls drop out of school they lose peer support networks, miss out on key skills development at a critical moment in their lives, and are more likely to transition into early marriage. The pilot project uses the Positive Deviance (PD) approach, a problem solving, asset-based method grounded in the belief that individuals and communities have assets and resources that they have not yet tapped into. By using this approach, CARE aims to gain insight into why a small group of girls have advanced into secondary education against all odds. In the first phase of the project CARE and AUB have identified 50 PD girls and, together with them, are designing project activities to help secure pathways to secondary education for at least 50 additional girls. Throughout the lifespan of the project, CARE engages with community and family members, as well as 5 high schools in the areas of the intervention. Data collected during the implementation phase will be analyzed by AUB to extract successful strategies and behaviors used by the PD girls that helped them stay in school. The research will be published and disseminated to national authorities, local and international NGOs, community groups and other stakeholders with the hope that the results will inform future projects tackling child marriage.
Caucasus: Cooperating with local media to raise awareness on child marriage among adolescent girls

In partnership with local community centers, schools and local media, CARE Caucasus raised awareness on early marriage and reproductive health in communities with ethnic minorities in eastern Georgia. The project targeted over 650 adolescent girls and their families and focused mainly on the health risks and legal implications associated with early marriage. The training for the adolescent girls included discussions and information sessions with lawyers, health specialists and women who married early and who were willing to share their stories. Local media were largely involved throughout the project; local radios with a regional reach for example broadcasted a special series of talks with survivors and legal and health experts on early marriage, reaching a broad audience.

Jordan: Conditional Cash for Protection

CARE provides direct community services to Syrian refugees in five community centers across Jordan in addition to four centers inside Azraq refugee camp. The centers offer case management services for survivors of GBV. CARE distributes cash assistance for the most vulnerable and, with the support of donors including the Olivela, operates its conditional cash assistance program which provides financial support to families with children at risk of early marriage and/or child labor. Families receive the cash and in return enroll their children in schools to complete their secondary school education. On average, every additional year of schooling reduces the risk of marriage before age 18 by six percentage points, according to Girls not Brides.

CARE also founded four Women Leadership Councils in Jordanian communities, which provide Syrian refugee women with a platform to advocate for their needs and rights within their communities and municipalities. The 48 council women enjoyed various Trainings of Trainers and thereafter started implementing their own activities, such as first aid trainings, Arabic and English reading classes, and awareness-sessions for mothers and daughters on the health implications of child marriage.
2018 Advocacy Highlights: enabling legal frameworks

In Egypt, CARE has joined the #NotBefore18 coalition with 22 NGOs and worked with the National Council for Women to submit draft legislation to amend five laws in order to criminalize child marriage, with the support of 90 female members of parliament. In Lebanon, CARE is in partnership with Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL) to develop a National Advocacy Strategy to combat child marriage as part of an EU-funded project to strengthen access to protection, participation and services for women refugees, IDPs and host communities. In Jordan, partnerships with UNFPA and the Arab Women Organization are aiming to remove of exceptional clauses used by Sharia judges as legal loopholes allowing for child marriage. CARE and UNFPA will organize two high-level roundtables with government authorities, international organizations and activists to coordinate efforts to limit the scope of Sharia judges and develop strategies to mitigate risks associated with legal changes (such as a potential increase in honor killings).

A fundamental part of CARE’s advocacy work is the sharing and exchanging of knowledge and best practices within CARE and with local partners, governments, international organizations and other interested parties. CARE, in collaboration with UNFPA, designed, published, and widely disseminated a report in May 2018 that highlights best practices of local civil society organizations programming to prevent and respond to GBV in MENA. The report titled ‘Standing Up For Girls’ can be downloaded here.

In May 2018 CARE organized a MENA regional GBV advocacy workshop to review and reflect on past and future advocacy efforts and the changing environments and stakeholders, practice the application of advocacy power tools (including Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning tools), and to revise its strategy and set new advocacy objectives.
2018 Highlights: multiplying impact through innovation, brokering new relationships, & collective action

CARE Joins the Regional Accountability Framework (RAF) of Action to End Child Marriage in the Arab States: Developed jointly with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRWA, UNWOMEN, Girls Not Brides, Oxfam, Plan, Save the Children, Terre des hommes (Td), World Vision, and Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC), the RAF commits organizations to work together to achieve common goals by 2021, sharing resources, expertise, research, learning and momentum to accelerate the end of child marriage in the region, by: Empowering and strengthening girls’ voices and agency through education, health services, life skills and economic opportunities; Engaging with household and communities to change social norms and behaviors; Promoting cross-sectoral engagement to scale; Strengthening legal and policy frameworks; and Strengthening evidence generation. Through the RAF, CARE, in partnership with UNFPA, UNICEF, WRC, Td, University of Bedfordshire, Johns Hopkins University and Lebanese American University, have launched the first regional reference group to develop common tools and methodologies to support regional research on child marriage causes and prevention measures.

CARE Strengthens Engagement with Girls Not Brides Coalition: As co-chair of Girls Not Brides-US, CARE has undertaken advocacy for nearly a decade to urge increased US government action on early marriage globally. In July 2018, Khatuna Madurashvili and Amira Hussein attended GNB conference along with a strong global CARE coalition, presented a poster on the MENA IGS, and participated in key CARE-led side events to raise the visibility of child marriage prevention efforts in MENA.

MENA IGS Team Contributes to CARE’s New Global Capacity Statement on Child, Early, and Forced Marriage, & Establishes Learning Exchange Community of Practice. The global capacity statement can be found here.

CARE Launches RELAY! Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Challenge to surface and scale proven approaches to understand, prevent, and respond to GBV in emergencies, focusing on vulnerable women and girls (including refugees, migrants, and displaced persons) in MENA. Eligible applicants include both non-profit organizations and for-profit social enterprises registered in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, or Egypt. Two winning partner organizations will receive a $20,000 unrestricted grant and an opportunity to partner with CARE to scale their efforts. The guidelines and challenge workbook developed in partnership with CARE’s Innovation Team and MENA country offices can be found here and the challenge website is www.care.org/our-impact/gbv.
What’s Next?

In FY19, the MENA IGS Core Team will focus on activities including:

• Building a stronger network of Girls Not Brides-affiliated organizations in MENA
• Participating in the CARE Global Child Early and Forced Marriage Learning Exchange
• Engaging key Regional Partners including the African Union and #NotBefore18 Movement in Egypt and Lebanon
• Working with winners of the GBV Innovation Challenge in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey to scale up new approaches to addressing GBV
• Raising visibility of CARE’s GBV and early marriage prevention work in MENA through events associated with the #16DaysofActivism, Women's March and International Day of the Girl
• Engaging with major donors in the region and in the US to raise support and awareness of early marriage prevention

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