Share-Net International

Report on Expert Meeting
Child Marriage & Teenage Pregnancy
25-02-2014

Morning sessions:

1. Jolijn van Haaren, UNICEF

After the welcome and introduction by Colin Dixon (Share-Net International Coordinator), Jolijn van Haaren (UNICEF) told a story about a young girl called Sunita, in two parts, using dolls to set the scene and context for the meeting. The purpose of the story was to show what the root causes and consequences of child marriage are. Sunita, a 12 year old Nepali girl tells her story, how she was married at the age of 12 and lost her first child one year later. In the second part of the story, Sunita took us into a world, where girls and women's rights are being respected and law enforcement, programmes and social mobilization are in place to protect her and millions of other girls.

2. Annabel Erulkar, Population Council

Annabel Erulkar is the Country Director and Senior Associate of the Population Council, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She gave a presentation on: "Child marriage: From defining the program to devising solutions". The presentation focused on the need for evidence-based, effective, scalable and cost-efficient interventions to prevent child marriage. The presenter drew examples from the evolution of the Berhane Hewan program in Ethiopia, a program which has developed lessons on child marriage over the past 15 years.

Us girls were put under family pressure and so we did not attend school. We were forced to marry. If we get educational material like exercise books and pens, our family does not have this expense. In my family, there are a lot of children so my parents faced a problem providing school supplies. But now the project bought me exercise books... Once a girl is enrolled in school, her parents cannot force her to marry. – Ethiopian girl, Educational support

Recommendations: The moment to end child marriage[1]

- No more boutique projects; time to implement programs at scale

- Program design based on evidence and on local pathways, patterns of child marriage

- Design of efficient, scalable, cost effective interventions

- This is a unique moment where is it our responsibility to reach a significant number of girls at risk of child marriage and support those who are already married as children

3. Marcel de Kort, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Marcel de Kort is Senior Health Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DSO/GA. His presentation gave an overview of the efforts to put/keep child marriages on the international/multilateral agenda and more in particular the role of the Netherlands. The second part of the presentation dealt with the current programmes and projects MinBuZa fund and plans for the future, including a new call which will go out in March or April 2014.

The Netherlands is committed to preventing both forced marriage (child brides) and sexual

violence, which is why – for example – it is participating in the international campaign 'Girls not Brides'.

Conclusions[2]:

- Huge diversity in interventions;

- But not primarily focused on the prevention of child marriages;

- No interventions that focus on girls that are already married;

- Lots of experience and expertise but only few interventions with a robust evaluation.

4. Korrie de Koning, KIT

Korrie de Koning, Senior Health Advisor, KIT, provided feedback on the meeting she attended, organised by WHO in Geneva, on December 12-13, 2013, about the development of research priorities on ending child marriage and supporting married girls. The presentation summarised evidence on trends causes and consequences, structural drivers and prevention of child marriage. Regional diversity and the need to address early marriage, sexual debut and teenage pregnancy were highlighted as issues for discussion.

---

[1] **From the presentation:** (See the full presentation as annex II to this report and on our website: www.share-net.nl)

[2] **From the presentation:** (See the full presentation as annex III to this report and on our website: www.share-net.nl)

Prevention: what works[3]?

From ICRWs systematic review, 23 studies included and five main strategies were identified:

1. Empowering girls with information, skills and support networks.
2. Educating and mobilising parents and community members
3. Enhancing the accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls
4. Offering economic support and incentives for girls and their families
5. Fostering and enabling legal and policy framework

Child marriage affects as many as
14 million girls every year.
34% of girls are married by the age of 18
11% marry before the age of 15

Most affected regions are:
South Asia, 46% of young women were married before 18 years.
Sub-Saharan Africa, nearly 37% were married before turning 18.

Q&A

Annabel Erulkar:

Q: How can you up-scale this program?

A: During the program we have closely involved local/regional authorities. This is an advantage because you can up-scale quite quickly.

Q: What about the safety issues? Around norms and values. For example, a girl should marry the man who raped her. This is one of the drivers for CM.

A: Yes, marriage by abduction. But this is declining. In the Amhara region this doesn't take place that much so we didn't have to deal with that.

Jet Bastiani: "Plan Ethiopia has a similar approach. We also make use of community conversations. However, it is difficult, because women remain less valued. Therefore, we should focus our work more on gender equality".

Annabel Erulkar: "School attendance also raises the status of girls, her value. Education will drive up the age of marriage."

Ute Seela: "What is the strategy to change norms and values? It can be rational behavior to send girls into marriage, for example to protect them."

We have to define the problems in the specific context where we work. Each context has its own problems and solutions. Therefore, we should use a community driven approach. This varies per community.

---

[3] **From the presentation:** (See the full presentation as annex IV to this report and on our website: www.share-net.nl)

Afternoon sessions:

1. SRHR Alliance

The SRHR Alliance consisting of Rutgers WPF, AMREF Flying Doctors, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Simavi, dance4life, IPPF and STOP AIDS NOW is active, with it's ASK programme, in ten countries across Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Across these countries there are very different contexts meaning programmes require adaptation in tackling the problem of early marriages and teenage pregnancies. This approach in relation to different local contexts was further explained by:

Kenneth Danuo

(ASK National Programme Coordinator in Ghana) went deeper into the context of Ghana, where most teenage pregnancies occur outside the context of marriage.

ASK Programme as an Opportunity[4]:

- Focus on young people
- Holistic in approach
- Working in an Alliance
- Covering areas where the two issues are alarming

Anneloes Dijkman

(Program Officer at CHOICE) went deeper into the context of Malawi, where local advocacy for bylaws and involvement of religious leaders contributed to local rejection of the practice of early marriage.

"The most interesting part of the project is that parents and traditional leaders are involved, as a result they have become more serious about their children's health and education hence they are now encouraging girls who dropped out of school due to unwanted and early pregnancies to go back to school."

17-year-old Elina Kabatani, member of YECE youth club

Dorine Thomissen

(Program Officer at Simavi) presented a case about India where in the program area 70% of the marriages were with girls under the age of 18, and how this was dealt with in the broader SRHR program.

---

[4] **From the presentation:** (See the full presentation as annex V to this report and on our website: www.share-net.nl)

Conclusions[5]:
- Child marriage and teenage pregnancies can relate to very different contexts
    - Best practices but adaptation to context required
- Important success factors:
    - Don't tackle Child Marriage in isolation but as part of broader SRHR
    - (sexuality) education and girls empowerment!
    - Involve *both* parents
    - Change and accountability within the community – including (religious) leaders, government, teachers, health staff

2. Emmily Kanwendo-Naphhambo, Plan International

Emmily manages a sub-regional programme on ending child marriages in the Southern African countries of Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It is a new programme, and during the presentation Emmily shared the theory of change that has been developed to eradicate child marriages. Plan has been implementing different programmes on child marriages in these countries for a while, but this is the first time that they have tried to consolidate the gains and learn from outside experiences on the effective ways of tackling child marriages in a sub-regional programme.

Lessons learnt from other projects within Plan[6]

- Focus of ending CM interventions should be at addressing key drivers.

- Urgency of approaching child marriages with combined and comprehensive approaches.

- Education is indeed a delaying factor to early marriages especially in rural areas.

- The role of custodians of culture cannot be downplayed.

- We can only play a catalytic role, change can't be forced on communities.

- Efforts should concentrate on preventive strategies rather than responsive strategies.

Small group discussions

The group is divided into 3 smaller groups in order to discuss several questions (see below).
Afterwards, one spokesperson feeds back the discussion to the larger group.

1. What is the added value in the Dutch involvement in tackling Early Marriage?

    - *Different voice, more liberal and progressive approach.*
    - *Strong network for lobby and advocacy*
    - *Important role in agenda setting*
    - *Attention to youth*
    - *Money available*
    - *SRHR is a priority of the Netherlands*
    - *A lot of work is already done on gender equality by CSOs and the Ministry, e.g. the involvement in CSW.*

2. Is it more effective to focus specifically on CM or broadly with CM as part of a wider focus on girls empowerment or teenage pregnancy?

    - *When the focus is too wide, the danger exists that it will disappear.*
    - *Ideally, CM should be one program in a broader program/umbrella.*
    - *It needs to be part of a broader perspective. For example, you see that you come across CM within the field of SRHR but there is a lack of information and services.*

    - *It is not an isolated issue, and therefore cannot be treated that way either.*
    - *Be careful though that you do not focus too much on CM, you might lose ground on teenage pregnancy.*
    - *Important to have a holistic approach and to involve the whole community (not only girls!)*
    - *Important to keep focused on specific targets*

3. What are the consequences for boys of Early Marriage and should we do more work with boys on the issue?

    - *We should definitely involve them, but it also differs from country to country, how and to what extent. E.g. in every context different power balances play a role with different consequences for boys and different expectations.*

- *We should distinguish situations when parents are arranging the marriage. This obviously has effect on the role that boys play.*

4. Which countries should we focus on? For example, those with the highest prevalence of EM of under 15's or those where there is a more sympathetic environment and therefore a greater possibility of success?

   - *This depends on how much time you have. If your program runs for multiple years, you could focus on more 'difficult' countries. When you have only one year however, you might want a 'quick showcase' for success.*
   - *We can also think of a regional approach to target more countries at the same time.*
   - *We can look first for the highest prevalence and the most friendly environment for programming. But we have to take into consideration that prevalence can vary within countries.*
   - *To have an impact and to really change norms and values takes a long time. The mothers we reach now with education, will benefit their children with what they have learnt. This will therefore take at least 15 years to show.*

5. How can we better share information and ensure more effective scaling up of activities?

   - *A lot is happening. Therefore we need a picture of all the activities that are taking place and are planned. Harmonisation and coordination.*
   - *In addition, we should have knowledge on interesting research. We should focus on existing work.*
   - *We have to share more lessons learnt and make information available.*
   - *We should take into account new technologies on sharing data. Databases can be established and made accessible – drawback is that this is very expensive.*
   - *MinBuZa had a meeting in London where it was decided that certain donor countries will do a mapping on this topic and who is doing what.*

6. What role can Share-Net International play in supporting those working in this area?

   - *Get a picture on initiative, activities, research and build on that.*
   - *Share more: lessons learnt and make information available.*
   - *Ensure learning happens South to North and vice versa.*
   - *If there is demand, could organise working/planning/coordination group*