

Strategy for addressing child/early marriage in Palestine – special focus on girls

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**Strategy for addressing Child / Early / Forced Marriage in the West Bank and Gaza
(Special focus on girls)**

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Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster and Child Protection Working Group

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Acronyms

GBV	Gender Based Violence
GBVSC	Gender Based Violence Sub-Cluster
GBVIMS	Gender Based Violence Information Management System
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
CRC	Convention on the Rights of The Child
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ARA	Access Restricted Areas
IMS	Information Management System
IDP	Internally Displaced persons
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
I/NGO	International / Non-Government Organization
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
RC	Refugee Camp

1. Background

The strategy for combating child/early/forced marriage has been developed as a joint effort of the Gender Based Violence Sub-Cluster (GBVSC) and Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) to guide stakeholders in addressing increased rates of child/early/forced marriage in conflict-affected areas in the West Bank and Gaza and among identified communities in humanitarian and development contexts. It is informed by the HRP priority protection interventions and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5.3) that urges countries to eliminate all harmful practices particularly child/early/forced and forced marriage. It responds to the basic rights stipulated in CEDAW and CRC to protect children and girls from child/early/forced marriage and its adverse consequences on their ability to survive, thrive and fulfil their potential.

The strategy shows features of vulnerability in areas affected by the conflict and among high risk groups of girls in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza and proposes ways to address them. It addresses underlying causes associated with knowledge, attitudes and skills of adolescent girls and social relations with family, friends, peers and social network. In addition, it tackles causes related to community and broader societal components associated with **policy, legal framework, cultural norms and essential prevention and response services while emphasizing issues of limited data, knowledge management and accountability**. It takes into consideration **enabling factors, risks and opportunities that** influence endorsement and implementation of the strategy by stakeholders in affected areas.

The conceptual framework of the strategy is informed by both the socioecological model (*Please see Annex 1*) and theory of change of child marriage, which coincides with the Protection Cluster (GBVSC and CPWG) **responsive, remedial and environment-building** priority interventions espoused in the HRP. The strategy takes into consideration factors beyond direct causes of the problem and addresses the complex interrelated levels associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of child marriage. It highlights increased risks that result from ad hoc and protracted crisis and proposes ways for bringing gradual transformative change. The strategy also capitalizes on existing activities in the HRP in combating child/early/forced marriage.

The strategy observes the following guiding principles:

- Emphasizing both **prevention** of child/early/forced marriage and **response** services to mitigate impact on married girls
- **Focusing on girls** for they are primarily the most affected by child/early/forced marriage, which in no way to be interpreted as neglecting boys, rather highlighting inequality and discrimination against girls
- Requiring coordinated **multi-sectoral action** by multiple actors at different levels to implement the strategic objectives and interventions in humanitarian and development settings
- Suggesting actions to **create opportunities** for girls **beyond traditional roles** socially anticipated for them (Predominantly becoming wives and mothers, unpaid family workers, financial burdens on others etc.)

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Although recognised as an issue of concern, reportedly child/early/forced marriage is not high on the list of humanitarian or development priorities. Perceptions of key stakeholders of the issue of child/early/forced marriage and required interventions vary tremendously. Therefore, to ensure endorsement of all involved, the strategy adopts two mutually reinforcing approaches (Humanitarian - development) to formulate strategic objectives and activities:

- Strengthening transformative factors that provide alternatives to girls and protect them from child/early/forced marriage while mitigating impact of humanitarian conditions. For instance, reinforcing access to education and health, tangible life skills and power of making decisions, economic enablement, participation and positive coping mechanism, safety ...etc.
- Addressing broader policy/legislation, data collection and monitoring, advocacy and behavioral change elements

Ending Child/early/forced marriage is an intricate and long-term multisectoral task that requires adequate resources to implement strategies effectively, thus it is not possible to show impact over a short timeframe as required in this strategy. The strategy timeframe extends over a minimum of two years **2020 – 2021**; nonetheless, the strategic objectives and interventions mainly in humanitarian context in the first six months are prioritised and elaborated to enable GBVSC and CPWG stakeholders to show some tangible **outputs** in conflict-affected communities. The scope and duration of this strategy will enable GBVSC and CPWG to contribute effectively to decreasing child/early/forced marriage in most affected areas and among most vulnerable groups.

Strategy Development Approach

The development of the strategy is evidence based hence informed by:

- Extensive review of available literature at national, regional and global levels as relevant; including studies, assessments, surveys, reports, Sharia Court routine data, policies, strategies and action plans etc.
- key informant interviews including 15 key stakeholders from line ministries, NGOs, INGOs, Sharia Judicial system/council and UN organizations (*Please see Annex 2*)
- Round table meeting with stakeholders to inform the strategic directions and ensure future tangible actions in addressing this harmful practice (*Please see annex 3*)

2. Overview of Child/Early/Forced Marriage

Child marriage is a global reality for children, particularly girls, where the world is home to more than half of a billion child brides including nearly 40 million in the Arab region with rates as high as one in three in Sudan and Yemen.¹ In the State of Palestine, **child marriage is at 24 percent**, which is relatively within the average incidence in the Arab region that is **one in five women married before the age of 18²**.

¹ UNICEF, A profile of Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa, 2018

² State of the World Population report, UNFPA, 2019

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However, in certain parts of Palestine, prevalence notably exceeds this average, for instance **in Gaza three out of ten women aged 20-49 were married before the age of 18** compared to **two out of ten women in the West Bank**.³ Furthermore, in nearly **10 percent** of marriages both spouses are under the age of 18 years old.⁴

Although a decline in child/early/forced marriage has been noticed in recent years among women aged 20-24 (**15 percent indicated in 2014⁵ and approximately 11 percent in 2017⁶**), child marriage remains a key GBV issue and a child protection concern within the Palestinian society, particularly in certain parts of Gaza and the West Bank, where **an increase** has been indicated. In the West Bank, the pockets that experienced an increase include isolated parts mostly in **Area C** and **East Jerusalem**. A recent household survey in **Area C** shows the highest prevalence of child marriage is in **the Jordan Valley (38 percent)** followed by the **southern part of the West Bank (35 percent)**. A higher prevalence rate was identified in **hamlets and encampments (40 percent)** compared to other localities.⁷ A similar rate of child/early/forced marriage is also indicated in **East Jerusalem at 3 in ten girls in communities where traditional marriage is predominant**.⁸

These most deprived communities in Area C have fallen behind the socioeconomic transition in the West Bank on multiple levels. Families are larger with an average of six household members and some show **higher prevalence of polygamy** most likely linked to greater levels of violence and insecurity. More than half of the population and **one third of girls** in these areas have less than 5 years of education, which augments vulnerability of girls to child/early/forced marriage. Evidently, the **highest rates of child/early/forced marriage** were found in contexts where overall **educational access** is most **constrained** by acute Israeli obstacles.⁹ Besides, more than one third of Area C communities **lack primary schools**, which renders commuting to a nearby school through Israeli checkpoints and settler harassment and violence not an option, particularly for girls; hence, families opt to take them out of school.¹⁰ Furthermore, the **highest rates of human insecurity** have been present in households in hamlets/encampments followed by Jordan valley and South West Bank, harshly affected by the protracted crisis, home demolition, eviction and other forms of displacement, ISF and settler violence, poverty, economic hardship, and lack of development. In fact, the households in hamlets/encampments and Jordan valley experience **least stability in primary source of income** and half of them **rely on social protection from MOSD and UNRWA**.¹¹

³ PCBS, (UNICEF & UNFPA), Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2014 (Among women age 20-49 years married before 18 years of age)

⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, on her mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory/State of Palestine, P.8, 2017

⁵ Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), PCBS, UNICEF and UNFPA, 2014

⁶ PCBS, database of The Population, Housing and Establishment Census, 2017

⁷ OXFAM-BZU, Addressing the Needs of Palestinian Households in Area C of the **West Bank** – Findings of the First Household Comprehensive Survey, Jan 2019

⁸ Juzoor, Empowering Women in Marginalized East Jerusalem Communities, September 2017

⁹ OXFAM-BZU, Addressing the Needs of Palestinian Households in Area C of the **West Bank** – Findings of the First Household Comprehensive Survey, Jan 2019

¹⁰ UNWOMEN, Gender Alert: Needs of Women, Girls, Boys and Men in Humanitarian Action in Palestine, September 2019

¹¹ OXFAM-BZU, Addressing the Needs of Palestinian Households in Area C of the **West Bank** – Findings of the First Household Comprehensive Survey, Jan 2019

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Depleted resilience of families and lack of sense of security in these areas are closely associated with parents' perception of child/early/forced marriage as a measure of “protecting” girls' **bodily integrity and “family honour”**, besides **reducing financial burden of families** already facing tremendous **challenges in their livelihoods**. It is less likely to be associated with traditional values or social norms as is the case in other parts of Palestine. **Women and girls** in these communities **have little decision making power** where fathers and husbands have the final decision on working outside the home and daughter's education. Women and girls age 15 and beyond are more likely to be in **predominantly unpaid labour force** engaged in handcrafts, herding, agriculture, food processing and other related jobs.¹²

Similar conflict-aggravated vulnerabilities of girls to child/early/forced marriage unfold among populations of **East Jerusalem and the southern part of the West Bank**, where physical obstacles separate Palestinian residents of H2 area from the rest of Hebron, and **East Jerusalem** neighbourhoods from the city and all of the West Bank. This has led to a near-total **cessation of economic activity** and **severely constrained health, education, social, and other services**. Poverty is widespread and deep in H2 area and in East Jerusalem, where school dropout rates are higher among those from poorer households. On their way to school, girls are frequently exposed to all sorts of harassment and intimidation by settlers and Israeli soldiers at checkpoints, which deepens fear of parents for their physical security. In addition, girls in both areas face constraints stemming from predominant patriarchal social norms and conservative families who perceive child/early/forced marriage as a way of protecting girls from becoming older unmarried childless women (Referred to in colloquial language “sutra” and avoiding becoming “A'nis”) (^{13,14,15}).

In **Gaza**, poor families in Access Restricted Areas (ARA), refugees and internally displaced people are identified as communities, where high rates of child/early/forced marriage have been recorded.¹⁶ Families in the ARA are large, approximately nine members¹⁷, living in extreme poverty and lack access to their farmland and source of livelihoods in the “no-go zone”. They are living in a context of marked food insecurity, low levels of education among women and limited access to basic services. Khan Younis and Rafah ARA households are most affected by these conditions.¹⁸ GBV against women and girls including child/early/forced marriage remain a great concern in the context of deteriorated security and increased humanitarian needs in ARA, following the start of the “Great March of Return”. In a recent PCDCR study, it is indicated that extended families in Gaza also show higher rates of child/early/forced marriage, most likely within the family/clan (Endogamy) to safeguard family inheritance as early as possible in girls' lives, whom their parents take marriage decisions on their behalf.¹⁹

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Juzoor, Empowering Women in Marginalized East Jerusalem Communities, September 2017

¹⁴ UNWOMEN, Gender Alert: Needs of Women, Girls, Boys and Men in Humanitarian Action in Palestine, September 2019

¹⁵ Key informant interviews from Juzoor and ADWAR NGOs

¹⁶ OCHA, HNO, P.19, 2019

¹⁷ PCBS, The Population, Housing and Establishment Census, 2017

¹⁸ UNWOMEN, Gender Alert: Needs of Women, Girls, Boys and Men in Humanitarian Action in Palestine, September 2019

¹⁹ The impact of early marriage on the rights of adolescent girls in Gaza (Arabic), December 2018

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Data from the 2010 Palestinian Family Survey and the 2014 MICS indicates that child marriage in **refugee camps** in Palestine has jumped from being consistently lower than urban and rural areas in 2010 to approximately the same level as urban areas and in some cases more than twice the prevalence of rural areas, in 2014. The findings of the 2019 Domestic violence survey did not include updated figures on early marriage although raw data exist, which necessitates deriving statistical figures as soon as possible. However, the MICS6 findings will further inform the implementation of child/early/forced marriage strategy in 2020.

3. Policy and legislative framework

Until very recently, the minimum age of marriage for girls in the West Bank was **14 years and six months** in the Personal Status Law and **16 years and seven months** in Gaza Strip as stipulated in the Law of Family Rights²⁰. The recent amendment of the Personal Status Law²¹ raised the age of marriage to 18 years for both girls and boys, which is a step forward for combating child and early marriage. Nonetheless, the amendment gives authority to a Sharia Judge to make exceptions in contexts that in his judgment are justified, but does not stipulate in the law what are these contexts, which again leave the decision to marry off girls in the hands of either a family male member or Sharia Judge. The Child Law sets a person's legal age at 18 years at which s/he is legally responsible and can sign legally binding documents such as a marriage contract. Besides, the Law has a specific provision against forced marriage using any form of physical or psychological coercion or by alluring a child. In addition, forcing girls out of school is penalised by the Child Law. However, the law **lacks enforcement mechanisms to prevent early/child marriages** (Based on best interest of the child who yet cannot enjoy the right to “free and full” consent to a marriage); and ensure **chastising parents or guardians for violating the law and marrying off girls**. In fact, the law is systematically ignored in the case of child marriages where Sharia Law is followed instead. The Sharia Law sets the age of maturity at the discretion of Sharia judges, which is essentially based on puberty physical maturity in adolescent age. Besides, Sharia judges have the power to marry younger girls on exceptional basis informed by their own judgement, for instance in cases of rape or unwanted out of wedlock pregnancies. The power of making exceptions and similar justifications in cases of child/early/forced marriage is maintained for Sharia judges, which defeats the purpose from the amendment undertaken on the Personal Status law, for the exception may become the rule in many child/early/forced marriage cases. Paradoxically, maturity in other dimensions of a child's life in the Sharia Law is measured by reaching 18 years of age. For instance, an orphan child/girl receive their inheritance and have full control on their money and properties without a guardian at the age of 18 years defined as the age of majority in Sharia law.

Ratification of CEDAW and CRC in 2014 provides solid basis for the State of Palestine to address child marriage as a human rights violation and a threat to girls' lives, health and education. In addition, child marriage is on the global development agenda (Sustainable Development Goal target - SDG 5.3) that calls upon countries to eliminate the practice by 2030 on which Palestine is required to regularly report.

²⁰ The minimum age of marriage for boys in the West Bank is 15 years and seven months in the Personal Status Law and 17 years and six months in Gaza Strip as stipulated in the Law of Family Rights Of the year 1956.

²¹ Amendments of relevant articles of the Personal Status Law were endorsed by a presidential decree in October 2019 raising the age of marriage to 18 years but with wide authority for the Sharia Judge to make exceptions.

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Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government, human and child rights actors to undertake tangible measures to address the underlying causes of child/early/forced marriage. However, the geopolitical split between West Bank and Gaza and the dire humanitarian situation in the latter render implementation of these treaties rather difficult in Gaza, where the authority does not recognise these treaties as binding to them. Similarly, the government does not have control on Area C and East Jerusalem, which render implementation of such human rights and development tools rather difficult.

Child marriage violates a range of girls and women's interconnected rights such as equality on grounds of sex and age, to receive the highest attainable standard of **health, access to education, freedom of movement, protection from violence, reproductive rights**, and the right to **consensual marriage**. The consequence of these violations not only affects women and girls, but their children and broader society. They represent a breach of the CEDAW and CRC, which the State of Palestine has ratified. Therefore, there is a clear discrepancy between human rights' obligations and the domestic legal framework, besides there is a challenge to bring civil and sharia judicial systems within the West Bank and Gaza and between the two regions closer and more compliant with CEDAW obligations.

4. Vulnerable groups and drivers of child/early/forced marriage

In view of the above and informed by the key informant interviews with stakeholders from the West Bank and Gaza, vulnerable geographical areas, groups and drivers of child marriage are identified as follows:

Areas that show high rates of child/early/forced marriage

- West Bank seam zone: Area C including Jordan Valley, East Jerusalem, southern of West Bank, H2 area in Hebron
- Gaza: ARA particularly Khan Younis (Eastern region, including Bedouin communities) and Rafah, refugee camps (Bureij and Nusairat)

Vulnerable groups

Adolescent girls mainly in the age group 15 – 17 years of age in Urban and refugee population who are:

- living in conflict affected areas
- from Internally displaced population (IDP)
- from poor communities
- school dropouts
- living in patriarchal conservative communities (Gaza, Hebron and East Jerusalem)
- from extended families (Families prone to endogamy)
- from communities with high rates of polygamy

Drivers of child/early/forced marriage

Some drivers are common to all vulnerable groups but some are predominant in certain geographical areas and among some groups more than others. Therefore, suggested strategies in the following sections are to be considered in this framework:

- “Protecting” girls’ bodily integrity and physical security from being injured or violated, mainly girls’ virginity associated with family honour, augmented in humanitarian settings that are characterised by human insecurity, closure and displacement imposed by Israeli occupation
- Traditional social norms of marrying girls early to start their reproductive role and avoiding becoming childless “spinsters”
- Alleviating financial burden of poor large families
- Lack of access to education without viable alternatives / limited educational level of girls
- Lack / limited power of adolescent girls in decision making and owning their rights
- Keeping family inheritance within the extended families
- Polygamy, rape or unwanted out of wed lock pregnancy (Relative to specific communities and events)

5. Factors affecting strategy implementation

Enabling factors and opportunities	Risk factors
There is a political will to address C/E marriage, particularly in the West Bank	Child/early/forced marriage is seen as a potential concern but not on the top of national or regional priority list
Acceding and reporting on CEDAW and CRC	Geopolitical split between West Bank and Gaza and the dire humanitarian situation – Gaza does not recognise these treaties as binding to them. PA does not have jurisdiction in Area C and East Jerusalem. Acceding CEDAW without reservations raised concerns of faith based groups and Sharia legal system on a number of issues including child/early/forced marriage. Sporadic antagonistic discussions at society level continue to emerge.
Legal reform - increasing age of marriage in the Personal status Law to age 18 years	The reform sustained a wide authority for Sharia Judges to make exceptions based on their own judgment – Exception may become the rule. Reform by a presidential decree is not necessarily endorsed or implemented in Gaza
Commitment of Palestine to ICPD and the SDG agenda and relevant country reporting requirements	Economic crisis and inability of government to fulfil its commitments
Strong CSOs addressing gender inequality issues including child/early/forced marriage	Child/early/forced marriage is not necessarily prioritised in CSOs’ programmes and fund allocation

	CSOs working on gender, protection of women and girls’ from violence including child marriage are intermittently targeted and slandered
Existence of national coordination forums and humanitarian GBVSC and CPWG ensuring coordinated efforts against child/early/forced marriage, particularly in conflict affected areas where prevalence is high	Scarcity of funds for development and humanitarian actors
Others	

6. Vision

Girls in Palestine, particularly in areas of high risk of child/early/forced marriage are protected from being married before their childhood is fulfilled, their capacity is enhanced and their options in life are increased.

7. Strategic Objectives

1. To enable adolescent girls at risk of Child/early/forced marriage to make informed decisions related to their lives including marriage and enhance their future socioeconomic condition and independence
2. To create a shift in views, attitudes and behaviours of parents, men and communities including religious leaders against Child/early/forced marriage
3. To increase access of adolescent girls at risk of marriage and married girls to customized safe and quality multisectoral services and mitigate impact of humanitarian and structural hindrances
4. To reinforce the endorsement and implementation of legal and policy frameworks that protect adolescent girls from child/early/forced marriage and support married girls who wish to leave marriage

8. Strategies and outcomes

1. **Empowering adolescent girls to enable them to say “No” to marriage before the age of 18 years** - through educating them on their rights and enable them to develop necessary skills (*Training and building their skills for different life styles*), providing them information, safe venues and peer support networks as well as social and economic alternatives acceptable to girls and their families.

Outcome # 1: By 2021, vulnerable groups of adolescent girls are increasingly aware of their rights including protection from child marriage and have the skills to access alternative educational and future economic opportunities and support networks.

Results for adolescent girls at risk of child marriage, particularly in conflict affected areas and pockets that show high level of child/early/forced marriage in the West Bank and Gaza:

- 1.1 Adolescent girls participate more in decisions that affect them, particularly marriage
- 1.2 Adolescent girls benefit from increased opportunities for viable educational and economic alternatives

- 2. Mobilizing families and communities against child/early/forced marriage;** creating a shift in social norms through engaging families, influential community and religious leaders, young people (Men and boys) and media to change attitudes and behaviours related to child/early/forced marriage.

Outcome # 2: By 2021, Families and communities including young people are increasingly aware of the harmful impact of child/early/forced marriage, appreciate and prefer available alternative options.

Results for families, community leaders and young people, particularly in conflict affected areas and pockets that show high level of child/early/forced marriage in the West Bank and Gaza:

- 2.1 Community influential and religious leaders assume a greater role in ending child/early/forced marriage realizing adolescent girls' rights and supporting alternative roles for girls
- 2.2 Men and boys increasingly take action to end child/early/forced marriage

- 3. Providing coordinated multisectoral services** tailored to specific needs of adolescent girls at risk of marriage and married girls and ensuring access of married and unmarried adolescents to safe and quality education, health, justice and child protection services; removing structural barriers and mitigating impact of hindering humanitarian conditions.

Outcome # 3: By 2021, access of adolescent girls at risk of child/early/forced marriage and married girls to safe and quality education, health and legal services has increased. Prevention and response services for protection from child/early/forced marriage including economic enablement are improved.

Results for adolescent girls at risk of child marriage and married girls, particularly in conflict affected areas and pockets that show high level of child/early/forced marriage in the West Bank and Gaza:

- 3.1 Risk of child/early/forced marriage is mitigated among vulnerable groups of adolescents
- 3.2 Married girls are better protected from GBV and have increased access and use of services including legal support

3.3 Service providers take better action to prevent child/early/forced marriage and effectively respond to the needs of married adolescents

4. **Developing and implementing Laws and policies** that protect adolescent girls’ rights including protection from child/early/forced marriage. (*i.e. recent raise of the minimum age of marriage to 18 years, endorsing Family Protection Law, education inclusive policy, relevant SRH policies*), and ensure transparent and accountable monitoring mechanisms.

Outcome # 4: By 2021, Ministries enforce laws and policies across sectors to increase educational, economic and social opportunities for married and unmarried adolescent girls and increase accountability and monitoring at all levels.

Results for adolescent girls at risk of child marriage, particularly in conflict affected areas and pockets that show high level of child/early/forced marriage in the West Bank and Gaza:

- 4.1 Law enforcement officials and service providers reinforce implementation of policies and legislations to prevent child/early/forced marriage and protect married girls

9. Strategic Work Plan

Two-year strategic Work Plan (2020 – 2021)

Strategic Objective 1: To enable adolescent girls at risk of Child /early marriage to make informed decisions related to their lives and enhance their financial independence

Outcome # 1: By 2021, vulnerable groups of adolescent girls in Area C and East Jerusalem in the West Bank and ARA in Gaza are increasingly aware of their rights and have the information and skills to access alternative educational and future opportunities and support networks.

Indicators:

- # of adolescent girls participating in life skills programmes, formal and informal forums at different levels (i.e. community groups, school committees, relevant community based initiatives, child municipal councils, adolescent clubs and safe spaces) in areas showing high rate of child marriage
- Existence of income generating startup projects led by adolescent girls

Expected Outputs	Timeframe		Activities	Partners
	2020	2021		
1.1 Vulnerable groups of Adolescent girls, particularly in WB seam zone and Gaza ARA are aware of their rights, engaged in life skills programmes and peer groups and capable of earning money	X Q4	X Q1-Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance collective knowledge of adolescent girls of their rights, including protection from child/early/forced marriage adverse consequences, through targeted activities including awareness raising and BC activities in school and adolescent programmes and forums, counselling, social media portals and through relevant young influencers and role models, peer education, IEC materials, media, etc. - Review and reinforce multisectoral life skills²² training programmes, particularly economic enablement and entrepreneurial skills in and out of school settings; within existing adolescent forums, girls’ clubs and peer groups boys included. Create peer “flag holders” educators (<i>Consider moral and in-kind incentives</i>) 	MOE, MOH, MOSD, MOWA, Adolescent and youth CSOs, relevant coalitions for adolescent health, Imams, Sharia judges, UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF, UN agencies,

²² Together, girls learn basic skills including communication, negotiation, critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, earning and managing money to be able to resist early marriage, stay in school and promote gender equality in their communities and households.

	Q2-Q3	Q1-Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build the capacity of families of girls coming from poor households in income-generating skills to increase household income and provide incentives for keeping girls in school (i.e. Social protection and conditional cash transfer, loans, scholarships etc.) to relief economic stress - Create viable alternatives for at risk groups of adolescent girls and their families through engaging them in vocational and livelihood programs, to improve livelihoods for poor households. - Raise awareness of adolescent girls, married and unmarried, to available health, education, protection and legal services. 	INGOs, GBVSC, CPWG, media
Strategic Objective 2: To create a shift in views, attitudes and behaviours of parents, men and communities including religious leaders against Child/early/forced marriage				
<p>Outcome # 2: By 2021, Families and communities including young people are increasingly aware of the harmful impact of child/early/forced marriage, appreciate and prefer existing alternative options, particularly in areas that show high percentages of child/early/forced marriage</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of parents, fathers/men, taking part in life skills programmes and support alternatives of child/early/forced marriage • Advocacy and awareness raising interventions undertaken in partnership with religious leaders and media portals against child/early/forced marriage • Existence of active men and boys champions / flag holders for “marriage after 18 is better” or “Marriage can wait until adulthood” 				
Outputs	Timeframe		Activities	Partners
	2020	2021		
2.1 Families, communities, young people benefit from life skills programs, dialogue platforms,	Q2-Q3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop / reinforce multisectoral life skills modules for parents with focus on fathers/ men to take part in such programmes through available platforms in schools, mosques, Sharia counselling department, MOSD Child Protection Networks and youth vocational programmes, Safe spaces, Family Centers etc. The programmes raise their awareness on 	GBVSC and CPWG, UNFPA, UNICEF, MOE, MOH, MOSD, NGOs,

<p>develop male led leagues and support adolescent girls’ led projects and initiatives</p>	Q2-Q3		<p>the harmful impact of child marriage versus advantages of available alternatives for girls (<i>Preparing parents to accept and support empowered adolescents and the new roles they take</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustain community dialogue on child/early/forced marriage (Perceived pros and cons) and create platforms (including all sorts of media) for free interaction and expression of views for all stakeholders, community representatives, men and boys (Focus on value of girls) (<i>This will help identify community leaders and influencing figures as advocates against child/early/forced marriage</i>) 	<p>religious leaders MORA and Sharia judiciary - family counselling Department, female religious leaders and preachers, parents, men and adolescent boys, Media, National forums including National GBV Committee, MOWA, media</p>
	Q4	Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up a league of men and adolescent boys “flag holders” as spokesmen, advocates for marriage after 18 and monitors of media content vis a vis child/early/forced marriage and GBV in general; and equip them with necessary skills, knowledge and acknowledgment to effectively fulfil their role 	
	Q2-Q3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitize / train Imams and Sharia Judges, Sharia Family Counselling personnel and other faith based influencers, including female preachers, on adverse impact of child marriage and regularly engage them as advocates for the right of adolescent girls to reach the age of 18 before they enter a marriage (Through Friday Sermons and Sunday masses, religious teachings and programmes, school activities and media portals etc.) 	
	Q4	Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop joint guidelines with religious leaders for adolescent girls, parents and families on benefits of marriage of girls after 18 years - Sensitize and build capacity of media and young social media influencers, particularly young men as advocates against child/early/forced marriage or pro marriage after 18 years. 	

Strategic Objective 3: To increase **access** of adolescent girls at risk of marriage and married girls to customized safe and quality multisectoral services and mitigate impact of structural hindrances.

Outcome # 3: By 2021, access of adolescent girls at risk of child/early/forced marriage and married girls to safe and quality education, health and legal services has increased, particularly in conflict affected areas. Prevention and response services for protection from child/early/forced marriage including economic enablement are improved.

Indicators: (Access-- Structural: availability, organization, transportation/

- Availability of secondary schools and non-formal learning programmes that meet the needs of vulnerable groups of adolescent girls
- Existence of a package of health services for adolescent girls including at risk of marriage and married girls
- Free of charge protection, psychological and legal counselling for married girls

Outputs	Timeframe		Activities	Partners
	2020	2021		
3.1 Essential education, health protection and legal support services for adolescent girls at risk of marriage and married girls are available across sectors within safe reach and affordable	Q2-Q4	Q1-Q4	- Increase safe access of vulnerable adolescent girls to formal and non-formal education opportunities through approaches that include but not exclusive to: mobile schools, remedial education programmes, community based vocational / entrepreneurial training, protective mechanisms, and or ensuring free / subsidized transportation to nearby schools	CPWG, GBVSC Education Cluster, Health Cluster, MOE, MOH, MOSD, I/NGOs, livelihood and microfinancing programmes, Police-FJPU
	Q4	Q1-Q4	- Support MOE and community based initiatives to set up schools, classrooms and or learning venues necessary for sustaining secondary education of adolescent girls within safe reach in vulnerable areas, (i.e. hamlets and encampments around Hebron, East Jerusalem – Shuafat Refugee Camps etc.)	
	Q2-Q4		- Enhance in school health and counselling services to detect warning signs and risks of child/early/forced marriage and become more responsive to needs of adolescents, particularly married girls (i.e. <i>child support, segregated or Co-education etc.</i>) ²³	
	Q4	Q1	- Review /develop a package of services in the health sector for adolescents with focus on prevention and early intervention services to	

²³ *Women from poor families or volunteering mothers can be trained on child development and care, and financial management to run child support services, hence gain financial literacy and potentially make money while supporting married girls' education.*

	Q2-Q4	Q1-Q4	<p>protect girls from child/early/forced marriage and mitigate impact on married girls; finalize and rollout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure access of married girls to psychosocial and legal counselling if they wish to leave marriage and multisectoral protection and referral services to those who are victims/survivors of GBV (<i>CPNs and FPCs, Family Centers etc.</i>) 	
	Q2-Q3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and rollout mechanisms (i.e. protocols) for identifying warning signs and addressing the risks of child/early/forced marriage particularly in the education and health sectors 	
<p>Strategic Objective 4: To reinforce the endorsement and implementation of legal and policy frameworks that protect adolescent girls from child/early/forced marriage and support married girls who wish to leave marriage</p> <p>Outcome # 4: By 2021, Laws and policies that protect women and girls’ rights are enforced across sectors increasing educational, economic and social opportunities for married and unmarried adolescent girls and enhance monitoring and accountability at all levels.</p> <p>indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of legislations and policies in place that protect adolescent girls from child/early/forced marriage and safeguard the rights of married girls • Existence of enforcement mechanisms and regulatory tools to implement relevant laws and polices (i.e. by-laws, SOPs, strategies, protocols, sector policies, action plans ...etc.) • Existence of monitoring and accountability mechanisms at different levels 				
Outputs	Timeframe		Activities	Partners
	2020	2021		
4.1 Adolescent girls, parents, communities, GBV and child protection service providers are	Q2-Q3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise awareness of adolescent girls, parents, communities, GBV and child protection service providers to the recent amendment of the personal Status Law raising the minimum legal age of marriage to 18 years 	MOE, MOH, MOSD, MOWA, Adolescent and youth CSOs, relevant coalitions

<p>aware of implications of the amended legal age of marriage and “exception” is waived or at minimum regulated</p> <p>4.2 Education and health policies and protocols are reviewed in the light of the new legal age of marriage and tailored to best prevent child/early/forced marriage and respond to needs of adolescent girls at risk of marriage and married girls</p> <p>4.3 Monitoring and complaint mechanisms are in place across sectors, particularly in the Sharia legal system</p>	<p>Q2- Q3</p> <p>Q2</p> <p>Q2- Q3</p> <p>Q3 - Q4</p> <p>Q2-Q4</p>	<p>Q1- Q2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue policy dialogue with government and Sharia Law enforcement officials on waiving the authority of making exceptions and or, as an interim minimum measure, set clear criteria for these “exceptions” based on the CRC best interest of the child (girls) - Support Health, Education, Social Development sectors to determine required actions to reflect this amendment in their policies, regulatory tools and services - Reinforce implementation of MOE inclusive Education Policy for married girls in the West Bank and support rollout of the policy in Gaza - Advocate for increasing years of compulsory education until end of secondary education to reinforce adherence to the newly minimum age of marriage - Review relevant health strategies and protocols (i.e. SRH strategy, Preconception Care, Antenatal Care, Family medicine approach, etc.) to make them responsive to specific needs of adolescent girls at risk of marriage and married girls - Advocate for development of a national health policy for adolescents and endorsement of the Family Protection Law - Develop monitoring of implementation of policies and laws, particularly in the Sharia legal system to ensure that exception does not become the rule 	<p>for adolescent wellbeing, Sharia judges, UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF, UN agencies, INGOs, GBVSC, CPWG, media</p>
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10. Recommendations

Implementation of the strategy

- The GBVSC and CPWG jointly present the strategy in a workshop with stakeholders and **agree on roles and responsibilities in implementing the strategic activities** relevant to their thematic focus and implementation capacity. A matrix for activities linked to implementing partners should be developed and agreed.
- The GBVSC / CPWG **set up a joint child/early/forced marriage technical team / task force** or focal points with clear TORs **to coordinate and oversee implementation** of the strategy throughout its timeframe.
- The GBVSC / CPWG support stakeholders in **developing detailed and costed action plans** and ensure that they are **reflected in their institutional annual plans, HRP, coordination plans and any other planning processes as relevant**
- The GBVSC / CPWG guide the development of a **fundraising strategy (Targeting donor funds and national budgets and other available sources)** for both development and humanitarian contexts
- UNFPA and UNICEF as leaders of GBVSC and CPWG **advocate with government for allocation of resources** to enable line ministries to implement strategic activities and relevant sector action plans. Advocacy should be extended to all donor related processes and forums
- **Sensitize and build the capacity of GBVSC and CPWG members in implementing a theory of change for GBV in general and Child/early/forced marriage in particular**
- The GBVSC and CPWG **develop a coordinated advocacy plan** for both sub clusters **addressing prioritized C/E marriage issues** at different policy levels and among various influential entities / groups including legislators and sharia judges. Show and share success stories and impact of innovations on girls and families

Information and data Collection

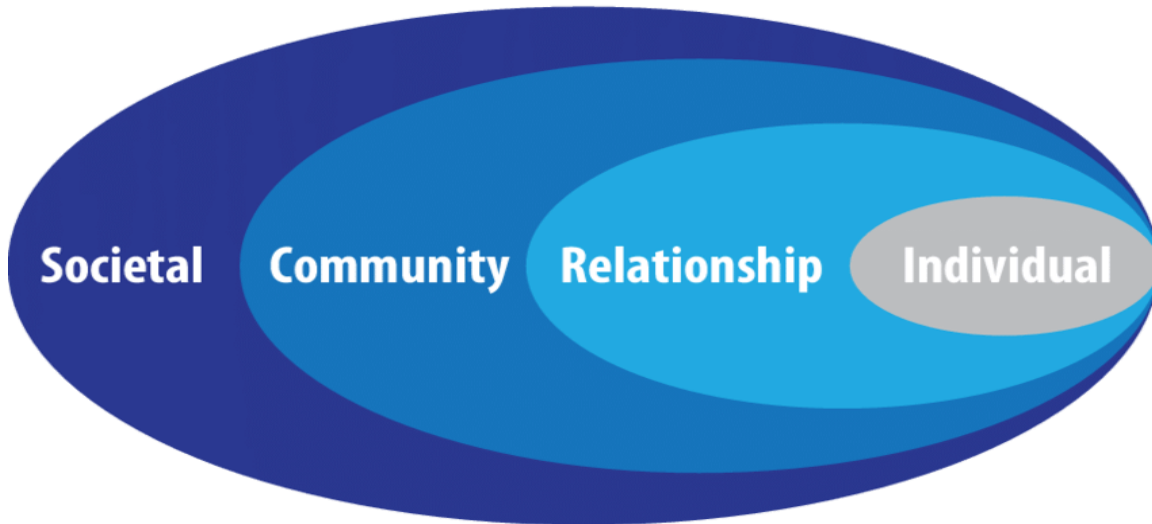
- Ensure that PCBS derive **statistical figures from raw data available from the 2019 National Violence Survey** on child/early/forced marriage for further analysis to inform implementation of the strategy. Similarly, ensure **wide distribution and use of MICS6** relevant results
- **Assess the current marriage registration mechanism in Sharia Judicial system** and ensure that information required for deriving trends on child/early/forced marriage are included
- **Reinforce information and data collection** on child /early marriage through **sector routine data** in the education, health and social development sectors, GBVIMS, and **support relevant research**

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Monitoring and evaluation

- Facilitate the development of a consolidated log frame for strategic activities, indicators with clear baselines and time-bound targets – informed by partners action plans
- Reinforce coordination efforts and ensure regular meetings, periodical reviews and reporting (i.e. quarterly) to monitor progress and take corrective action. Reinforce collective activities and consolidated budgets
- Evaluate the strategy implementation against set targets at midterm and by end of timeframe. Evaluation could be internal and or external.

ANNEX (1)**The Socio-ecological Model**

The socioecological model addresses risk factors that affect child/early/forced marriage at four interactive levels as seen in the figure:

- Individual level (i.e. personal history factors including age, education, income, ...etc)
- Relationship (i.e. effect of peers, family members, influential individuals on behavior and experience of children/girls and parents).
- Community (i.e. Settings including school, traditional and or religious organizations and neighborhoods where social relations occur)
- Societal broader factors (Social norms and policies that shape the overall environment in which girls' marriage is encouraged or inhibited)

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Annex (2)

List of participants in Key Informant Interviews

No	Key Informant	Title	Organization
1.	Sulafa Sawalhi	Director of Family Conciliation Department	Sharia Judicial Council - WB
2.	Rihab Sandouka	Director- Community Development Department	Juzoor
3.	Sahar Alkawasmeh	Director General	ADWAR
4.	Kholoud Nasser	Director General and adviser to the minister – Gender	MOE
5.	Maha Awaad	Director General – Women’s Health Department	MOH
6.	Asem Khalil	Director General – Family Affairs	MOSD
7.	Salma Hantouli	Director	MOSD
8.	Belal Barghouti	Law expert and academic	Birzeit University
9.	Dr. Hasan Eljojo	Chairman	The High Judicial Council – Gaza
10.	Amira Haroon	Head of Women’s Sector – Former Deputy Minister of MOSD	MOSD - Gaza
11.	Khaled Fadda	Director General – Counselling Department	MOE - Gaza
12.	Sima Alami	Youth Officer	UNFPA
13.	Abed al Rahman Al assouli	Program manger	UN women - Gaza
14.	Kanar Qadi	Health Specialist	UNICEF

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Annex (3)

List of participants in the round table meeting

Date	18/02/2020
Location	OHCHR, Ramallah
Participants	Arami Aquino (World Vision), Salma Hantouli (MoSDLan Shioh Tsai (OHCHR), Anna Cesano (OHCHR), Ann Cuypers (OHCHR), Suheir Sawalha (UNRWA), Hanan Abu Gosh (HWC), Asmahan Wadi (UNFPA consultant), Rihab Sandouka (Juzoor), Eva Moreno Anadón (APS), Maria Helbich (APS), Sara Garcia (APS), Hanan Said (Miftah), Jalal Khader (SAWA), Raida Ameena (PSCCW), Leyan Al-Azza (PSCCW), Faten Nabhan (WCLAC), Ziad Yaish, Sana Asi, Reem Miqdadi, Sahar Natsheh, Sima Alami, François Sarramagnan (UNFPA)