

EAST AMMAN AND  
AL KARAK, JORDAN

# CHILD MARRIAGE IN CRISES

## IMPACTS OF COVID-19

In 2020, Plan International, Save the Children, the Human Rights Center, and the Information and Research Center at the King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) came together to try to understand why some Syrian girls in Jordan marry before the age of 18 and what can be done to support girls to wait to marry until they are older. But while we were planning the study, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic hit Jordan. Because of this, we decided to add some new questions to our study:

- How have COVID-19 and the related restrictions impacted adolescent girls?
- How have COVID-19 and the related restrictions impacted the way girls and their parents think about marriage of girls?
- What services and support do adolescent girls and their parents need during the COVID-19 pandemic?

In total, we talked to more than 100 girls ages 10-17 in East Amman and Al Karak. In Karak, we did fun activities together, like drawing, making paper flowers, and dancing. We also talked to 31 parents of adolescent girls. Here's what we learned together!

## HOW HAVE COVID-19 AND THE RESTRICTIONS IMPACTED GIRLS?

### ECONOMIC

- Many families were struggling financially because parents and girls could no longer go to work or find new jobs.
- Families struggle to buy clothes or other basic needs and worry about being evicted from their homes.

### ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- Most girls continued to attend school using technology, like TV programs or online via mobile phone platforms.
- Most girls found distance learning very hard. They felt distracted and bored and had difficulty learning without their teachers' help. Some were falling behind.
- Some girls had trouble with attending classes because of poor internet signal or because there were not enough devices for all the children in their home.
- Girls missed their friends at school.

### ACCESS TO OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Most community centers and organizations helping adolescent girls with services were closed during lockdown periods.
- Most places did not offer programs in other formats.
- Some people continued to hold

programming for girls on mobile phone or online platforms. Many girls felt these weren't as good or as fun as in-person, but still wanted more of these opportunities to connect with their peers online.

- Most remote programs were about how to protect yourself from COVID-19 and not about child marriage.

### MOBILITY, HEALTH, AND WELL-BEING

- COVID-19 restrictions were often harder for girls than others.
- Many girls couldn't leave their homes at all during lockdowns, though their mothers and brothers were still able to go to the market.
- Girls had to do more housework than their brothers, who were often not required to do household chores.
- Girls felt sad, stressed, and anxious. Many, especially married girls, felt alone since they couldn't see their friends, family, or teachers.
- Some girls and parents enjoyed the extra time they got together with their family. But others felt that being together all the time led to more fighting, violence, or arguments at home.
- The crisis was hard for pregnant women and girls because it made it difficult for them to get healthcare or go to the hospital if they needed it.

## HOW HAS COVID-19 CHANGED THE WAY GIRLS AND PARENTS THINK ABOUT MARRIAGE?

Many girls got engaged or married during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Girls and parents told us there were five reasons for this:

1. Some girls were jealous of their married sisters or friends whose husbands treated them well.
2. Marrying quickly meant families didn't have to pay for an expensive wedding.
3. Girls wanted to marry to leave home because their parents gave them too much work at home and didn't let them leave the house.
4. Girls felt marrying early would help their parents financially.
5. Girls were more likely to view marriage as their best option when schools were closed.

Some girls' marriages were delayed because of COVID-19 restrictions and related financial stress, but this was more rare. Girls and parents told us there were two reasons for this:

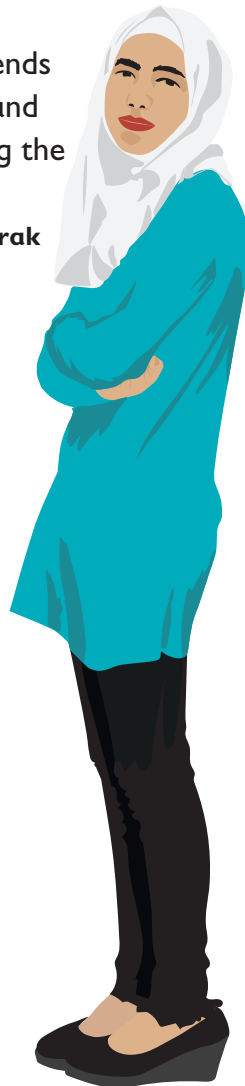
1. Large gatherings were not allowed.
2. They could not afford to pay for a wedding.

“Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, we hear of marriages happening every day.”

**Girl, age 16, Karak**

“Half of my friends got engaged and married during the lockdown.”

**Girl, age 16, Karak**



## WHAT SERVICES AND SUPPORT DO GIRLS NEED DURING COVID-19?



### COUNSELING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Someone to talk to about their problems and receive help. Also, more opportunities to connect with and have support from their friends through phone or online programs.



### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Money to help buy basic things like food, clothes, children's needs, and school expenses, especially for married girls.



### EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Support to help with distance learning and school assignments. Also, tablets, mobile phones, sim cards, and internet credit for online learning.



### BASIC HYGIENE ITEMS

Things like hand sanitizer and masks to protect them from getting sick.



### ONLINE AWARENESS-RAISING PROGRAMS AND WORKSHOPS

These would teach girls and parents about the harms of child marriage, general health and hygiene, and how to protect themselves from COVID-19.

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