American University in Cairo

AUC Knowledge Fountain

2018

Curbing Child Marriage in Egypt

Reem Bassem *The American University in Cairo AUC*, ryme@aucegypt.edu

Rahma Emara *The American University in Cairo AUC*, rahmakamalemara@aucegypt.edu

Sarah El Domy *The American University in Cairo AUC*, Saraeldomy@aucegypt.edu

Yasmine El Hagry *The American University in Cairo AUC*, y.elhagry@wataneya.org

Recommended Citation

THE PUBLIC POLICY HUB

Curbing Child Marriage in Egypt

Prepared by
Reem Bassem
Rahma Emara
Sara El Domy
Yasmine El Hagry

Supervised by
Dr. Hamid Ali
Associate Professor
Department of Public Policy and Administration
The American University in Cairo

2018

Curbing Child Marriage in Egypt

Prepared by*
Reem Bassem
Rahma Emara
Sara El Domy
Yasmine El Hagry

Supervised by
Dr. Hamid Ali
Associate Professor
Department of Public Policy and Administration
The American University in Cairo

2018

* Names listed in alphabetical order

UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GSOs	Grassroots Support Organizations
ACHPR	The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACERWC	The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Child
IHMP	The Institute Health Management Pachod
EWLA	The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association
NCW	The National Council of Women

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary

Child marriage, formal or informal, is a union where at least one of the partners is below the age of 18 years. This human rights violation has complicated consequences on children and society. The damage of child marriage doesn't affect the married child only, but extends to future generations. According to UNICEF, there is an estimate of 650 million child brides worldwide, 40 million of them are in the Middle East and North Africa.

According to the Egypt Census of 2017, child marriage remains an issue. In Egypt, nearly 1 in every 20 girls (4%) between the ages of 15 to 17 years are either currently married or were married before. The same applies for 1 in every 10 (11%) adolescent girls 15-19 years, with large differentials between the rural and urban residence (CAPMAS, 2017. Egypt)

The sequences of child marriage in Egypt are very similar to other countries, such as gender-based violence, dropping out of school, high-risk of contracting diseases, higher fertility rates, contributing to the population increase and an increase in unregistered children.

According to current data and information, poverty, education and social norms influence child marriage in Egypt. Yet, there is lack of evidence and studies analyzing the linkages between these factors and child marriage.

The bright side is that Egypt is among the countries that have made great strides in reducing child marriage. Yet, the reasons behind this progress need to be identified clearly to maintain and fasten the progress.

It is worth mentioning that there is a political will to reduce child marriage. It is among the issues included in the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) Ending Violence Against Children in Egypt National Strategic Framework published in 2018. Also, it is integrated in the National Strategic Framework and Plan for Motherhood and Childhood 2018 -2030. In total, this shows that there is a political will.

The four proposed policy alternatives addressing child marriage in Egypt are legal, economic, social and legal/socioeconomic alternatives.

The legal alternative will enhance the enforcement of the related provision of child marriage, in the child law no. 126 of year 2008. This could be via revisiting its drafting and articulating, or its corresponding mechanism in the relevant executive regulation, and taking the required procedure. For example, the procedure could be to criminalize the actors of the child marriage, as the referred to provision doesn't do so, in addition to promoting and accelerating the pace of issuing the new legislation of "Zawag EL Qasrat", or marriage for the girls under 18 years old.

Focus on the social alternative on changing the social norms in relation to child marriage, especially parents, through raising awareness, is also critical. This also has to do with the role of the religious leaders and institutions.

As for the economic alternative, it seeks improving the economic conditions of the parents to let them be less inclined to get their child married.

Finally, the legal/socio-economic alternative, which is a combination of all other policy alternatives, is highly recommended. It functions with the legal alternative, immediately, to achieve quick results on the short-run. In parallel, it will operationalize the social and economic alternatives to reach a point of relevant achievement in the long-run. In addition, it involves all stakeholders; ranging from governmental officials, legislators, MPs, facilitator of the contract "Maazoun" grassroots organizations, parents, community leaders and children, as well.

High levels of coordination are required to implement this recommended alternative. This role should be taken by a governmental body such as the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.

There are fundamental components considered in the implementation phase, like a high level of coordination, pre-and-post data collection for evaluation and for informed decisions, the role of the media, identifying cases of child marriage to make them advocates among their peers, and synchronization and integration of existing interventions to work against child marriage. Any lack of these elements will greatly influence the implementation and achievement of the desired results.

II. Problem Statement

Worldwide child marriage refers to formal marriage or informal union where at least one of the partners is below the age of 18 years. Despite the fact that the definition includes both genders, it is remarkable that all international reports confines its data to girls. No mention of boys has been done. As a result, the regional and local perspectives towards child marriage is limited to girls only. This in turn doesn't reflect the full picture and the real damage caused by child marriage on both genders.

Child marriage is a violation of human rights that has complicated the burden of consequences on children and society such as:

- Married adolescent girls are exposed to gender-based violence.

- Married adolescent girls are more likely to drop out of school.

- Married adolescent girls are at a higher risk of contracting diseases.

- Child brides experience higher fertility, contributing to the population increase.

- Marriages involving a child under 18 are not officially registered, with legal consequences for children who are born out of these marriages. For example, they cannot obtain birth certificates.

According to UNICEF, there is an estimate of 650 million child brides worldwide, including currently married girls and women who were first married in childhood. Therefore, child marriage is now firmly on the global development agenda, including its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs). Specifically, it is covered in goal no. (5.3), to eliminate the practice by 2030.

The practice of child marriage has continued to decline around the world. Based on the latest data available from some countries, 21 per cent of young women (aged 20 to 24) were married as children. This represents a decrease from 25 per cent 10 years ago, driven predominantly by progress in India (UNICEF, 2018).

An estimated 25 million child marriages have been prevented, due to a related progress, during the past decade (UNICEF, 2018).

According to UNICEF, there are around 40 million child brides in the Middle East and North Africa. These child brides include the currently married girls and women who were first married in childhood. In recent years, there have been 700,000 child brides each year in the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, child brides in the region are more likely to live in rural areas, to come from poor households, and to have received less education (UNICEF, 2018).

The prevalence in the Middle East and North Africa is near the global average, and higher than in some regions. These regions' examples are East Asia and the Pacific or Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Figure 1 shows the correlation between marriage in the Middle East and residence, wealth quintile and education. The percentages are higher in poorer, rural area with poor education.

FIG. 1: Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18, by residence, education and wealth quintile in the Middle East.

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, 'A Profile of Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa', UNICEF, New York, 2018

As shown in figure 2, the prevalence of child marriage varies within the region, from a high of one in three in the Sudan and Yemen, to a low of one in fifty in Tunisia. In the past 25 years, the average regional prevalence has dropped from one in three to one in five. Yet, progress appears to have stalled in the past decade.

FIG. 2 Development of child marriage in the Middle East

A number of countries in the region have made great strides in reducing child marriage in the past generation

FIG. 2 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, in countries with the most progress in the past 25 years

Some countries that began with relatively low prevalence of child marriage have continued to bring levels down, to below 10 per cent

FIG. 3 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, in countries with low prevalence of child marriage and continued progress

● 25 years ago   ● 10 years ago   ● Today

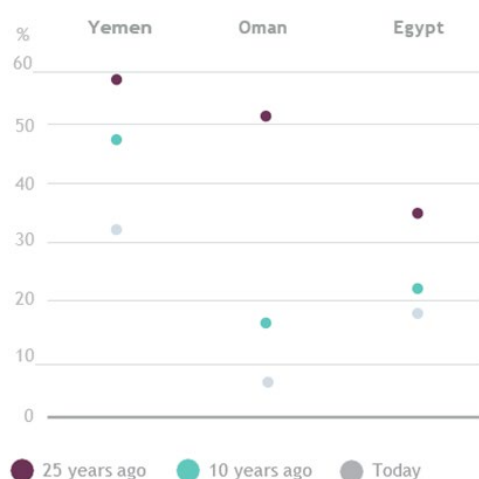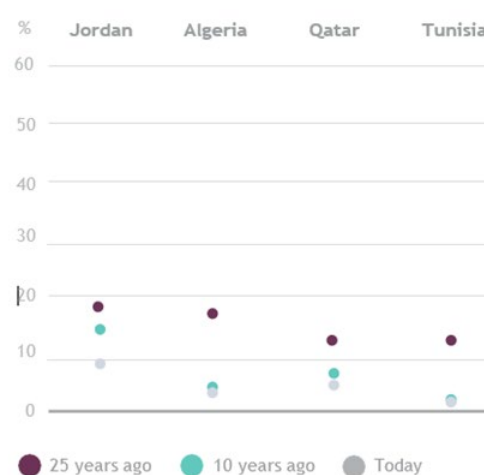*Source:* United Nations Children's Fund, 'A Profile of Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa', UNICEF, New York, 2018

The Egyptian Child Law no. 126 of year 2008 sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both females and males. Yet, it doesn't criminalize the perpetrators. Therefore, girls are still getting married without registering or reporting their marriages, or registering their children born out of these marriages.

While child marriage is illegal, some sheikhs (clergy) that are authorized to issue the marriage certificates, process such marriages. They do so by taking a promissory note from the groom. This note indicates announcing the marriage and waiting for the girl to reach the age of 18. Next, registering the marriage officially and informing the concerned authorities, in order to have the marriage recorded by the government is undertaken (NCCM and UNICEF, 2015).

According to the Egypt Census of 2017, 4% of girls between ages 15 to 17 are either currently married or were married before. Also, this applies to 11% of adolescent girls age 15-19, with a large difference between the rural and urban residences (CAPMAS, 2017).

Similar to FGM/C, child marriage also has its roots in old habits and ancient traditions. Certain beliefs and lack of awareness add to its continued practice, despite its illegality in accordance to the Egyptian law. The main belief that underpins the practice is that child marriage protects a girl's reputation (not getting married may mean she is doing something 'wrong'). In addition, it discerns

that the girl won't work after marriage, so her education is less important. Some families also want to marry off their daughters young, so that they get rid of their care and responsibility (NCCM 2018).

Last summer a child marriage case was reported for a 17 year old girl who was forced to marry a 37 year old Saudi. He paid her father, who is a farmer, 125,000 EGP for this unregistered marriage. A few days after marriage, the girl escaped from her husband, as he was beating her. The husband went to the police station to report his wife's escape, requesting the bride's father to return the 125,000 EGP.

Looking at this story, which is a mix between child marriage and deal marriage, "zawag al safka", it could be realized how the situation is devastating and complex. The husband ignored the fact that his marriage was a crime, and he had the courage to go to the police station to have his money returned. When confronting the father, he justified his act that it was all to secure his daughter's future by making savings. His motive was to treat his poverty. Moreover, he has another daughter who got married twice with men from the Gulf.

According to policy makers and practitioners, the main factors behind child marriage are poverty, social norms and education. Yet, there is no evidence or data analyzing the links and level of influence of each factor on child marriage. The sequences of child marriage in Egypt are very similar to other countries. It is like gender-based violence, dropping out of school, a higher risk of contracting diseases, higher fertility rates contributing to the population increase, and unregistered children.

An anaylsis of four strategy and policy documents has been undertaken. These documents have been issued by the National Council for the Childhood and Motherhood in collaboration with UNICEF. After this anaylsis and thinking critically about two interviews with the NCCM and UNICEF officials, we have some remarks. Mainly speaking, these remarks are on the challenges and opportunities related to early child marriage's previous and current policies, as follows:

Challenges:

Identification of Grassroots Support Organizations (GSOs): It has been noticed that both UNICEF and NCCM were not aware of the GSOs working on child marriage in Egypt. This causes lack of coordination, efficiency, synergy and alignment, and could affect the pace of achieving progress. Especially that both NCCM and UNICEF are focusing only on setting strategies and strengthening the pertinent internal systems.

The balance between short and long term plans: iIn the NCCM strategic framework and plan, the actions are divided by years and they are all mega actions. These actions need to be detailed and categorized into short and long term plans.

Reporting and documentation system: The child helpline 16000 is considered a tool/mechanism for receiving and recording child complaints managed by

NCCM since 2005. It provides protection from violence, abuse, and neglect all over the country. Yet, we couldn't find any old or recent analysis for reported incidents of child marriage. The same applies on the child protection committees, which are another monitoring mechanism implemented, according to the Child Egyptian Law since 2008.

Monitoring and evaluation: There was ground work done to prevent child marriage and there was progress in the national relevant prevalence. Nevertheless, the lack of monitoring and evaluation caused NCCM and UNICEF the inability to identify much about the mentioned progress. For instance, what went wrong and what went right and could be replicated?

Unbalanced attention to different child rights' issues: There are certain child rights' issues consuming the attention, effort, and resources of governmental bodies and civil society for years. Examples are street children, FGM, and child labor. They were the trendy issues, but not necessary the most pressing ones. In addition, there is a lack of a reliable holistic approach when addressing child issues, and not tackling the root causes behind them. Also, there is insufficiency of the associated data and studies. Accordingly, some topics such as child marriage were not included or integrated in these previous trendy issues. However, there is an apparent relevance and correlation.

Opportunities:

Political will: Child marriage started to gain more attention from the governmental bodies since its consideration as a harmful practice against children. It is worth mentioning that child marriage was included in the NCCM document of Ending Violence Against Children in Egypt. This document was integrated in the National Strategic Framework published in 2018 and the Plan for Motherhood and Childhood 2018 -2030.

Global agenda: As mentioned previously, child marriage is now firmly on the global development agenda. Most prominently through its inclusion in goal no. (5.3) of the SDGs, to eliminate the practice by 2030. This relevantly influences the donors and philanthropists' direction and interest.

Progress in solving the problem: There is a slight decrease in the prevalence of child marriage in Egypt. This encourages the stakeholders to continue working, to sustain and fasten this kind of progress and to further identify the key reasons behind it.

III. Policy Options / Alternatives' Analysis

Providing alternatives for dealing with the child marriage issue in Egypt should be led by a number of determinants, as listed beneath:

1- International determinant:

With regards to the international best practices, the section below will outline a few examples derived from the available literature, as well as the related online campaigns and development reports.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Child (ACERWC) joined forces in suggesting a series of measures for implementing the prohibition of child marriage. These measures are co- dependent and include legal reforms, policy development, compliance and promotion. Alongside legislative reforms, implementing the prohibition on child marriage requires that governments undertake institutional measures. These measures are to ensure the enforcement of the relevant criminal provisions (ACHPR, 2017).

An initiative called "Girls Not Brides" that operates on an international level identified a few action points to eradicate child marriage. This initiative emphasized the role of governments and international development agencies, along with grassroots' level organizations. This role is about fighting the issue together with all stakeholders and it used the "theory of change" in order to build platforms where this issue can be treated adequately (Girls Not Brides, 2018). The initiative's various approaches focused on a combination of efforts, such as empowering girls, mobilizing families and communities, providing services, and establishing and implementing laws and policies.

Further, the initiative empowers girls through giving them the opportunities to build skills as well as knowledge, and understanding their rights. This is through the support networks that work as change agents. It also creates a safe space program which covers life skills, health and financial literacy and provides one-to-one mentorship. Such programs boost girls' self-confidence, agency and self-efficacy, as well as highlights the role of formal education. It also includes economic empowerment through conditional cash transfers, as well as small business ideas.

In addition, it facilitates dialogue spaces between girls and community leaders to provide role models, successful examples, and support for the young girls. It outlines three successful examples of interventions. In India, the Institute Health Management Pachod (IHMP) runs a project to protect both married and unmarried girls. This protection is from the consequences of early marriage. In Guatemala, the Population Council runs a project that addresses child marriage. This addressing is mainly through the promotion of education and mentorship programs. It also covers information on sexual and reproductive health to adolescent girls in rural areas (Girls Not Brides, 2018). And finally in Nepal, the Aura Freedom International and Apeiron established female-friendly spaces, particularly

in post-earthquake Nepal. These spaces were to help the displaced women and girls through information services, to protect them against violence.

The commonwealth countries supported by the UK focus their efforts to combat child marriage on the role of education. Their strategy emphasizes how gender-sensitive, rights-based, and quality education is a powerful relevant tool. In addition, their approach transcends the notion of formal education to include global citizenship, life skills and sexual awareness. In their argument, quality education is the key determinant of economic empowerment. Yet, the barriers the mentioned countries are addressing include access, quality, safety and inclusivity of education for girls. Along the same lines, such countries integrate all stakeholders in the education sector to create ties and connections to the larger community. Their successful approach was implemented in Sierra Leone, India and Bangladesh.

Another example that came up robustly in the last few years, is the efforts exerted in Ethiopia to combat child marriage. Their main challenges manifested with regards to this issue were crystalized in the cultural and societal beliefs that are embedded in the community. Therefore, their strategy was comprised of all community members in fighting child marriage on the grassroots level. Pathfinder International/Ethiopia collaborates with local partners to form early marriage cancellation committees. These committees involve all levels of civil society, administration officials, women's associations, religious leaders, health officials, teachers, parents, and the girls themselves. In addition, they initiated girls' clubs, where cases of child marriage or potential child marriage are reported. In these clubs, the network of support act as the main refuge for these girls. The significance of their approach is that they are including already married girls and not only the ones still to get married. In addition, they also emphasize the role of a legal framework that is implemented and enforced on the ground.

By the same token, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), a nonprofit women's advocacy group, educates community leaders, law enforcement and judicial bodies. This education is about Ethiopia's revised Family Law, which raised the legal age for marriage from 15 to 18 and established a penal code. This code criminalizes harmful traditional practices. They believe that community leaders, and particularly the faith leaders, have a great role educating girls and their families and take part in the girls' clubs.

2- National determinant:

A. Child marriage issue is a multi-dimensional one: It has to be tackled through working on many aspects. These aspects are the ones mentioned above in the problem statement section, such as the social, the economic, the political, and the legal aspects. This integral rationale has been already adopted, to a considerable extent, in the current relevant policy directions of UNICEF and NCCM.

B. Child marriage is one of the problems that faces the Egyptian child: It is part and parcel of other child problems, like child labor, those who drop out of

schools, street children, children with disabilities, illegal migration of children, child addiction … etc.

C. Child marriage current status: In light of the related UNICEF & NCCM policy brief mentioned above, there are some ongoing endeavors. These endeavors revolve around empowering the evidence-based studies of the issue so that the stakeholders could improve the existing policy brief, and could design it more appropriately.

Additionally, the last updates discussing child marriage legislation in parliamnet are of much importance while managing this issue. The referred to discussion dates back to September 2018, and the concerned legisaltion has not been issued yet. It is about criminalizing child marriage.

The child marriage problem engages not only a few number of stakeholders. For instance, the NCCM, the Ministry of Health and population, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education, the Ministry of Religious Endowments, and the National Council of Women (NCW), are all involved. These stakeholders could somehow overlap their mandates to work on the issue. Therefore, a degree of cooperation and coordination should be accomplished among them to deal with the issue of child marriage in a feasible way.

D. Issue actors: Parents are playing the fundamental role in the child marriage, as they are the ones who push for its occurrence. Besides, the sheikh and local clergy that are authorized to issue the marriage certificates have an important role. Last but not least, the child him/herself is a main actor as well.

In total, the alternatives suggested below have been driven by the necessity of dealing with the child marriage issue in a holistic way. Based upon the opportunities and challenges mentioned in the problem statement section, the researchers have come up with the underlying alternatives in light of the international experiences. The analysis of the thematic dimension of the issue, within its national context, has decided these proposed alternatives. This analysis is in terms of its dimensions and attributed problems.

Additionally, the last updates of the entities concerned with managing the issue, namely UNICEF and NCCM, have been taken into consideration. Moreover, the updates of the pertinent law have been put into account while weaving the recommended alternatives. Finally, its actors and stakeholders have been paid high attention.

In this context, there are four alternatives, as follows:

1- The legal alternative: This alternative will focus on the legal affairs of the issue through enhancing the enforcement of the related provision of child marriage, in the Child Law no. 126 of year 2008. This could be via revisiting its drafting and articulation, or its corresponding mechanism in the relevant executive regulations. This revisiting may lead to stricter implementation mechanisms.

In addition, accelerating the pace of issuing the new legislation of underage marriage "Zawag EL Qasrat" will be of much significance.

This alternative also has to do with watching how much the pertinent legal provisions are enforced. This could be through the monitoing role of the NGOs. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the alternative's implementation strategy could help in this regard.

Finally, this dimension touches more than one party of the child marriage issue; it could tackle the needed sanction of the one who facilitates the concerned marriages' contracts. Additionally, it addresses the parents who have the say when it comes to their children's marriage.

2- The social alternative: It pinpoints the significance of the social and behavioral dimensions of the issue. Changing the social norms in relation to child marriage, as well as spreading the required awareness, can be undertaken. This also has to do with the role of the religious leaders and institutions.

In addition, the media will play an important role in delivering the negative aspects of child marriage to the parents. This social dimension could reach the parents, the people surrounding the family that has a case of child marriage, the authorized facilitator of the contract, and the children themselves.

3- The economic alternative: This alternative touches the financial status of the family. It seeks to improve the economic conditions of the parents to allow them to be less inclined to get their child married. This improvement could be through providing the mentioned families with financial support in a way or another. It convinces the parents not to resort to early marriage for their child, depending on material means. In-kind assistance could be relevantly provided, also.

4- The legal/socio-economic alternative: It functions as the legal alternative immediately, to achieve a quick result on the short-run. In parallel, it will operationalize the social and economic alternatives to reach a point of relevant achievement in the long-run.

This alternative will also enhance the work on the scientific level to encompass the use of research methodologies. In addition, it will cover the carrying out of the needed evidence-based studies. This is for the sake of coming up, later on, with more responsive policies.

Hereunder a diagnosis will be done in accordance to each alternative, on the levels of its advantages, disadvantages, and consequences. This diagnosis will be determined by a number of aspects, such as acceptance/endorsement of stakeholders, timeframe for results accomplishment, size of the target group, impact level, and need for financial and human resources, and time.

Alternative 1 : Legal alternative

Aspect of comparison	Advantage	Disadvantage
Acceptance/ endorsement of stakeholders	It already has a degree of acceptance, as there is already a related provision in the child law. Also, the focused legislation of underage marriage (Zawag EL Qasrat) is under discussion in the Parliament.	None.
Timeframe for results accomplishment	Expected to be quick, which is the provision there, only needed its enforcement. Political advocacy is needed to speed up the needed steps for issuance.	It has to do somehow with bureaucracy. So, relevant mitigation mechanisms should be created.
Size of the target group	Good, it is about the facilitator of the contract and the parents.	It overlooks the children and the community to a considerable extent.
Impact level	Limited.	Overlooking the motive of this issue's occurrence, which is about the child's parents related driving force. So, it just deals with the symptom of the issue and not its roots.
Need for financial and human resources, and time	It doesn't need many resources as it is already in place.	Activating the legal dimension would require human resources to assign them with law enforcement related responsibilities.
Consequence: Immediate positive impact to decrease the related cases. Creating a situation where the parents and the facilitators are afraid of a sharp procedure by violating the relevant law.		

Alternative 2 : Social alternative		
Aspect of comparison	**Advantage**	**Disadvantage**
Acceptance/ endorsement of stakeholders	It is already there, as there are related social awareness campaigns pertinent women and child issues.	None.
Timeframe for results accomplishment	None.	It would take a lot of time to change the behaviors and actions of the families, in addition to their mindset and culture.
Size of the target group	Large, the parents, the people surrounding the family that has a case of child marriage, the facilitator of the contract, and the children themselves.	None.
Impact level	Pros of this alternative are mainly about targeting the main actors of the phenomenon which are the parents. Trying to change the mindset of these parents is the essence of this alternative's advantage. Thus, it deals with the root cause of the issue and not the symptom.	None.
Need for financial and human resources, and time	None.	It would need financial and human resources, as well as time to devote social efforts and campaigns for tackling the problem.
Consequence: Slow impact will be attained in relation to how families deal and the awareness of the problem. The number of cases wouldn't be decreased in a quick way.		

Alternative 3 : Economic alternative		
Aspect of comparison	**Advantage**	**Disadvantage**
Acceptance/ endorsement of stakeholders	None.	Could be risky, to devote financial resources for suchan issue, especially in the current developing situation of Egypt. However, it could also be treated, as there are already relevant social safety programs in place.
Timeframe for results accomplishment	Could be on moderate sense.	None.
Size of target group	None.	This alternative actually regards the role of the parents, mainly.
Impact level	Could be moderate as it satisfies the families not to resort to child marriage, but also doesn't manage their willingness for saving more financial resources. This means that they might be greedy for more financial resources, continue resorting to child marriage.	In other words, this alternative has nothing to do with the real causes for the concerned issue.
Need for financial and human resources, and time	Moderate on time and human resources.	It needs financial resources mainly.
Consequence: Achieving good result in terms of parents' tendency for child marriage and decrease in attributed cases' number. Nevertheless, it is not the most needed impact.		

Alternative 4: Legal/socio-economic alternative		
Aspect of comparison	**Advantage**	**Disadvantage**
Acceptance/ endorsement of stakeholders	Good, as it has mixture sense.	It needs convincing skills because it is a sophisticated alternative.
Timeframe for results accomplishment	Would satisfy the short and long-terms.	None.
Size of target group	Would address all the actors of the issue.	None.
Impact level	It attains all levels of impact.	None.
Need for financial and human resources, and time	Has an advantage, as listed in the diagnosed aforementioned alternatives.	Has a disadvantage, as previously mentioned in the above alternatives' diagnosis.

A hindrance of the first alternative is the effort it needs to be in touch with the legal institutions to better its performance in enforcing the law. It is attainable politically as it is under the umbrella of the government and at the disposal of the judicial authority. Somehow, it would entail mechanisms to deal with the bureaucratic nature of the judicial governmental institutions.

An impediment of the second alternative are to communicate with the target group addressed. Finding the way to open a channel with them, sustain it, and convince them to act according to what's proposed are examples. Shifting people's traditions and practices is not an easy accomplishment. This alternative has political support as it is backed by the political leaders in Egypt.
It also has a security challenge to get permission and approval to reach the families and the parents.

The constraint to the third alternative is the limited financial resources. It is feasible politically as there are already economic support programs for poor families in Egypt.

The mixed one may have difficulty persuading the decision makers, as per its complex nature. However, it could be softened, as it complies with the global trend of dealing with such issue in an overarching approach.

In total, the fourth alternative would be a kind of compromise and collective effort to solve the problems of child marriage and deal with it. It perfectly matches the nature and the status quo of the problem. It is good as it already makes use of the ongoing efforts in place. These efforts denote the legal, social and economic spheres, such as the economic and social safety programs.

Also, it will capitalize on the legal steps in place. It balances between the

symptoms and root causes of the problem, to be managed. It helps in achieving quick and solid results, in tandem with the legal and socio-economic dimensions, in response to the short and long terms.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

In Egypt, nearly 1 in every 20 girls (4%) between ages 15 to 17 years are either currently married or were married before. The same applies for 1 in every 10 (11%) adolescent girls 15-19 years, with large differentials between the rural and urban residence.

Child marriage in Egypt has comparable effects, as in other countries. Some of these effects are manifested as gender-based violence, dropping out of school, a higher risk of contracting diseases, higher fertility rates contributing to the population increase and unregistered children.

On a positive note, Egypt is among the countries that has been active in recent years with regards to efforts of treating the concerned issue. However, more efforts need to be put at this front, so as to maintain the progress of solving the problem of child marriage.

UNICEF's data shows that child marriage is often predominant in rural areas versus urban ones. This could be analyzed that child marriage is a result of the less educational opportunities and lower socio-economic status.

Recent data shows that lack of quality education and prevalent social norms influence child marriage in Egypt. Yet, there is lack of evidence and studies analyzing the linkages between these factors and child marriage.

As outlined in the alternatives' section above, the available four options for policy makers to adopt are intertwined. Each one portrays various challenges and possible gains.

The first legal alternative has already a high degree of endorsement from political and governmental agencies since a child protection law already exists. In addition, underage marriage (Zawag Al Qasrat) legislation is already being discussed in the parliament. This option needs political advocacy and mechanisms to fight any bureaucracy associated to its implementation.

The second policy alternative addresses the social and behavioral aspects of the issue. This option is already in place since many agencies (both governmental and non-governmental) have worked on it persistently for decades. The positive side about this policy alternative is its addressing the root cause of the problem through raising awareness. It touches upon parents, children, community and religious leaders, as well as the local society at large. However, it takes a much longer time-frame to treat the social and behavioral dimensions of the issue, and help present a healthier option for children.

The third policy alternative is concerned with the economic aspect of the problem. It looks into financial reasons that drive families to marry their children at a

young age. In some cases, it is a solution to the financial burden of sending children to schools, and handing the responsibility to someone else. However, it requires a great deal of resources to solve the economic and financial issues which parents suffer from.

All these arguments lead us to highly recommend policy option number four; legal socio-economic. It is considered a great combination of all other policy alternatives. It also highlights and builds on the efforts being exerted in this matter by various stakeholders. It presents a solution for short term as well as long term results with high impact. In addition, it involves all stakeholders; ranging from governmental officials, legislators, MPs, facilitator of the contract "Maazoun", grassroots organizations, parents, community leaders and children, as well.

Moreover, it will be embraced by the concerned parties, as basically it works with the ongoing efforts in an organized and comprehensive way. It does not require many new steps and efforts.

The only risk, or rather challenge this option entails, is how to establish a coordination plan among all stakeholders in order to assure that everyone is working towards the same goal on a regulated plan.

Considering the needed implementation and monitoring and evaluation plan, there are some steps and recommendations:

- **Actions and steps:** The first element would be establishing a coordinating group for curbing child marriage in Egypt. The group will include all influential stakeholders in Egypt that represent all three dimensions of the policy; legal, social and economic. For example: legislators, international organizations, governmental agencies, ministries with relevant mandate, NGOs and gender experts. It is highly preferable that the coordinating group involves grassroots level organizations and social leaders.

This coordinating group, could be led by the government or NCCM, or even one of the involved international development actors. It is also highly recommended if a governmental agency takes the lead, in general. In particular, this agency will facilitate the design and agreement of the action plan, reaching consensus among all the stakeholders. This would help boost all actors in the same direction, and would assure some guidance and oversight. In addition to media campaigns explained below, the coordinating group shall work as an advocate for ending child marriage.

- **Style of the implementation strategy:** This alternative's implementation will depend on sequential and parallel strategy. The first phase will concentrate on the legal dimension, and the rural areas, while attempting to plan for functioning social and economic dimensions. This functioning will be by fitting the needed effort to the existing relevant efforts, campaigns, and programs. This phase will warm up the pace of conducting the required evidence-based studies and the mapping for all the involved parties. Also, it

will engage intensely the NGOs in watching how the relevant law is enforced.

This phase is expected to last for 6 to 8 months.

The second phase will touch more on the work out of the social and economic dimensions, in parallel to the legal one. It will begin extending the related efforts to the urban areas. For the first place, the social dimension will preferably address or target the children and parents, then it could largely accommodate others.

Across both aforementioned phases, there will be a considerable focus on both girls and boys simultaneously.

Overall, the implementation's strategy is of a holistic nature matching with the essence of the chosen alternative.

- Coordination mecahnisms: There will be a mechanism of periodical meetings. This works for coordination and monitoring of the ongoing pertinent proceedings. In such meetings, all participating actors can send a representative that briefs the others on their progress. S/he should share the accomplished best practices from the field.

As well, there will be a common platform. It is for following up on a speedy pace all the updates of the ongoing implementation, where the coordinating group will participate. The group shall continuously monitor and support the various needed changes on the legal, social and economic fronts.

- Monitoring and Evaluation: Evaluating this alternative will require mid-term evaluation amid its action plan, and impact evaluation. In the mid-term evaluation plan, there could be a kind of review to the results of the already conducted evidence-based studies. This is for the sake of weaving a new policy, if it is needed, or differing any affairs in the adopted mixed one. This latter evaluation will be after three years, roughly from the end of the alternative action plan. This impact evaluation could hire an external expert to have an objective eye reviewing the results of the alternative's implementation.

In this view, collecting data before and after the envisioned interventions will be carried out for measuring their impact. This step of collecting data could be through structured interviews or focus groups, to suit the education and cultural level of the target group.

The monitoring will mainly be across the periodical meetings and the platform proceedings. Relevantly speaking, the media campaigns will feed in the monitoring processes.

- The social dimension and policy communication: The social dimension will be operationalized mainly via activating media campaigns. These media campaigns will be in different communication channels (press releases about the religious view of child marriage, publications, events by the religious leaders

and NGO's experts, Social media, and storytelling outdoors). Also, it's important to create a movement like the "me-too" movement, and measure its impact across the years. This measuring could be through bringing cases of girls who were exposed to early marriage and allow them to explain how they suffered.

In addition, showing cases of women who decided to complete their studies after getting married early and those who said no to early marriage and how their life changed.

The legal affairs of the chosen alternative should be communicated well through different communication channels. Moreover, the media campaigns will help in monitoring the progress in the field. On the other way around, there should be a monitoring technique for the campaigns, in addition to a tracking method in order to gauge how the campaign went viral. India is currently doing a great job using social media channels heavily, such as: Instagram and Facebook. This experience could enrich the planned media campaigns and inspire its implementation.

Finally, the intended media campaigns will try to scan all the related campaigns to child issues and integrate the child marriage issue in it. Then, a devoted campaign can be posted and activated. The rationale for this is to make use of the ongoing effort done by the media, already. Further, this is to spread the awareness that all the issues of the child are connected and supplementary to each other.

Last but not least, the projected limitations to the recommended alternative are, as below:

- Lack of coordination
- Ineffectiveness and inefficiency
- Miscommunication

The abovementioned limitations could lead to either formulating new relevant policy, new associated action plan, or importing new policy. Further, these limitations could be tackled through the above guidelines of the alternative's implementation.

V. References

1. Reports:

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), Joint General Comment of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) on Ending Child Marriage, 2017, African Union Commission, Gambia and Ehiopia. Retrieved from: http://www.achpr.org/files/news/2018/01/d321/joint_gc_acerwc_achpr_ending_child_marriage_eng.pdf

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), 2017, African Union Commission, Gambia and Ehiopia

CAPMAS, 2017. Egypt Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, Egypt, Retrieved from: https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/Publications.aspx?page_id=5104&Year=16574. Visited on: 12 December 2018

Educating Girls, Ending Child Marriage. The World Bank Group, 2018, Retrieved from:
https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2017/08/22/educating-girls-ending-child-marriage.

Girls, Not Brides, 2017, Child marriage, https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/, Visited on: 12 December 2018

National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) and UNICEF (2015), Violence against Children in Egypt. A Quantitative Survey and Qualitative Study in Cairo, Alexandria and Assiut, NCCM and UNICEF Egypt, Cairo, retrieved on: https://www.unicef.org/mena/sites/unicef.org.mena/files/press-releases/mena-media-Violence_Against_Children_in_Egypt_study_Eng-UNICEF_NCCM_1002015.pdf.

United Nations Children's Fund , Policy for Action: Ending Child Marriage, Policy for Action: Issue 1 – A product by NCCM Child rights observatory, June 2018, Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/egypt/sites/unicef.org.egypt/files/2018-06/Child%20Marriage%20Policy%20Brief%20EN%20FINAL.PDF.

United Nations Children's Fund, Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects, UNICEF, New York, 2018, Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Child_Marriage_data_brief_20June(3).pdf.

United Nations Children's Fund, 'A Profile of Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa', UNICEF, New York, 2018, Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/mena/sites/unicef.org.mena/files/2018-07/A%20Profile%20of%20Child%20Marriage%20in%20MENA.pdf.

2. Interviews:

Interview with UNICEF Child Protection Specialist, Dr. Khaled Darwish

Interview with National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) Secretary General Dr. Azza El Ashmawy

The Public Policy HUB

Where Rigour Meets Creativity

The Public Policy HUB is an initiative that was developed at the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) in October 2017. It was designed to fill in the policy research gap. It provides the mechanism by which the good ideas, plausible answers, and meaningful solutions to Egypt's chronic and acute policy dilemmas can be nurtured, discussed, debated, refined, tested and presented to policymakers in a format that is systematic, highly-visible and most likely to have a lasting impact.

The Public Policy HUB provides a processing unit where policy teams are formed on a regular basis, combining experienced policy scholars/mentors with young creative policy analysts, provide them with the needed resources, training, exposure, space, tools, networks, knowledge and contacts, to enable them to come up with sound, rigorous and yet creative policy solutions that have a greater potential to be effectively advocated and communicated to the relevant policy makers and to the general public.

The School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

Jameel Building

policyhub@aucegypt.edu

Tel +20.2615.3323

AUC Venue . P.O. Box 74 . New Cairo 11835 . Egypt