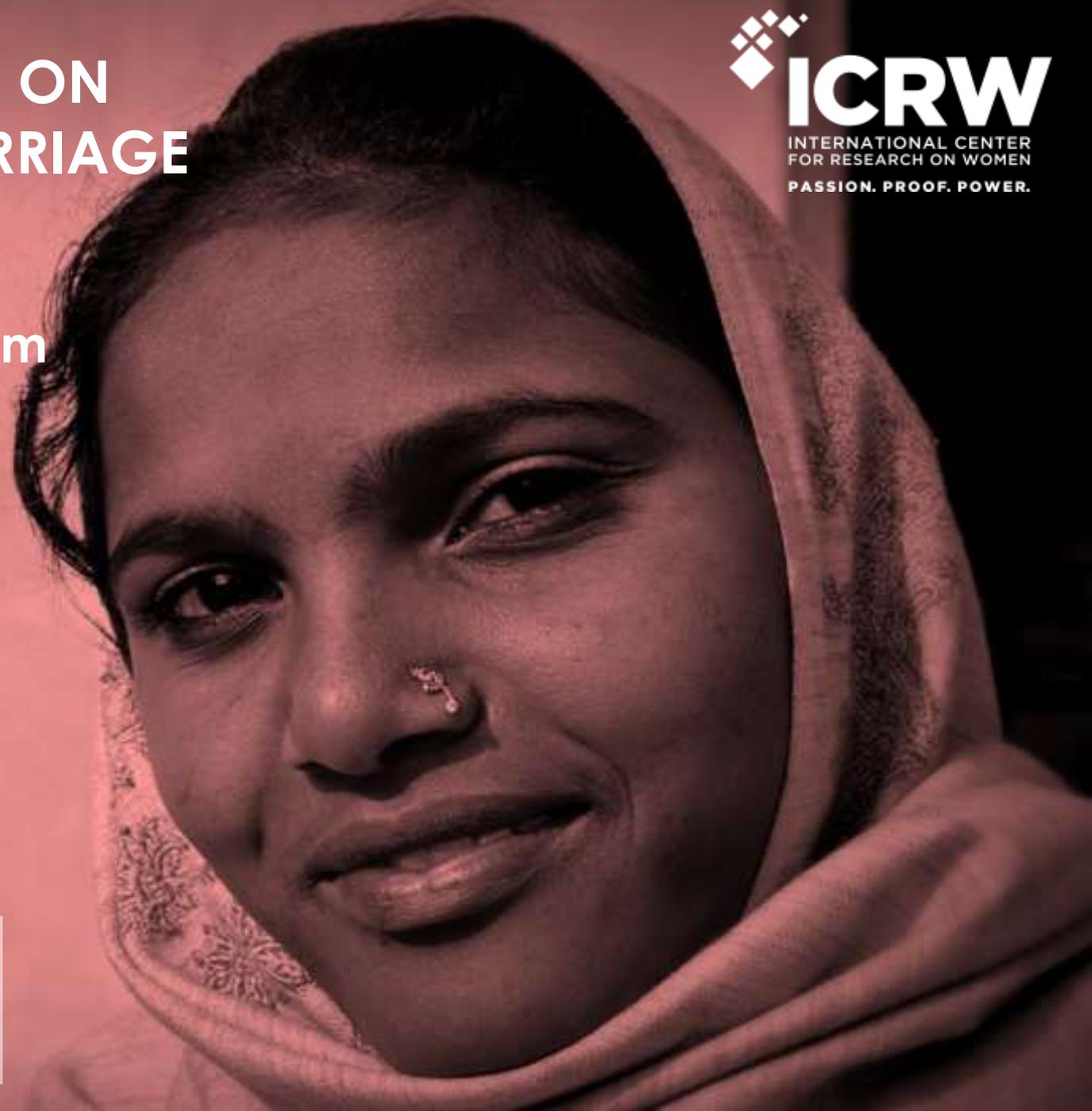


BUILDING A FEMINIST NARRATIVE ON CHILD, EARLY, AND FORCED MARRIAGE (CEFM):

Emerging evidence and discourse from
South Asia

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ICRW's Mission

To advance gender equity, inclusion, and the alleviation of poverty

What Do We Do?

We work with NGOs, government, and private sector partners to conduct research, develop and guide strategy, and build capacity to promote evidence-based policies and programs

Who Are We?

ICRW has sociologists, public health specialists, behavioral experts, and economist, who combine **academic rigor with practical field** experience to drive sustainable impact

PASSION
PROOF
POWER



THE STUDY



- ▶ This study is located within our portfolio on **Gender and Youth**: includes a range of studies on adolescent issues including CEFM, Gender Responsive Life Skills, SRHR to name a few
- ▶ This presentation is part of an ongoing study at ICRW-Asia, looking at multiple programming experiences to understand the structural drivers of CEFM and what works to address them.

METHODS



A QUALITATIVE
EXPLORATORY STUDY
DESIGN



ORGANIZATIONS BEING
REVIEWED HELPED CO-
DESIGNING THE
RESEARCH THROUGH
THE VARIOUS PHASES.



PHASE 1: REVIEW OF
PROJECT
PUBLICATIONS AND
DESK REVIEW OF
RELEVANT LITERATURE



PHASE 2: FORMATIVE
CONVERSATIONS WITH
KEY POINT PERSONS TO
UNDERSTAND THE
PROJECT VISION,
ORGANIZATIONAL
IDEOLOGY, NETWORKS
AND CONTEXT OF
IMPLEMENTATION



PHASE 3: TECHNICAL
ADVISORY
CONVENING WITH
EXPERTS AND INTERNAL
REFLECTIONS ON THE
DECADE OF SEMINAL
WORK BY ICRW ON
CEFM



PHASE 4: USING ALL OF
THE ABOVE, DESIGNED
A PRIMARY STUDY: 80
DATA POINTS (IDIS,
FGDS AND KIIS) WITHIN
THE PROGRAMS

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY



Organizations are based in varied geographical locations and resource poor settings, addressing adolescent girls from marginalized communities



These locations are often characterized by low reach of government services, lack of law enforcement mechanisms and poor development indicators



Rigid gender norms pose significant barriers for girls to reach a life of full potential.



Restriction on mobility, lack of opportunities for education and employment, constant fear of violence create disadvantages for the girls .



Perceptions that marriage will provide “protection” to girls from sexual violence and preserve family honor and sustain community status

KEY QUESTIONS

- ◆ In the current context of young people in South Asia, what programming strategies are needed to address CEFM?
- ◆ How can we use these learnings to drive the agenda for future work?

FEMINIST APPROACHES TO PROGRAMMING

EXAMPLE 1

Rural Gujrat, India: focus on building collective agency for girls as well as women and intergenerational programming, building critical linkages with VAW and VAC approaches.

- highlight the challenges with a protectionist framework where age becomes the parameter for legal consent for sexual partnership.
- Address the centrality of sexuality and choice in child marriage discourse
- Building support through long term engagement with mothers and community leaders
- Sustained feminist trainings to break down concepts of gender, violence and rights for both women and girls
- Adolescents' aspirations for work, marriage and mobility are changing. Young girls have clear aspirations for their future spouses which signal changing gender norms.



FEMINIST APPROACHES TO PROGRAMMING

EXAMPLE 2

Urban slums in Dhaka and Chittagong, Bangladesh: In urban slums, early marriage is more acute when compared with data for a similar age group from urban non-slum areas.

- Pervasive violence, extreme poverty and absence of basic services in urban slums contribute to early child marriage as a means of social security for girls.
- However, increased urban exposure, social media access, changing aspirations and desires play a strong role in pushing girls for marriage
- Both girls and boys have access to phones and computers, even in rural areas, which is allowing them to bypass traditional gatekeepers and interact with the opposite sex.
- Girls are “socially and culturally ready” for marriage upon start of menstruation at 11-12 and often elope or arrange marriages for “love” by the time they are 15/16
- The study provides insights on understanding contexts of “choice” for unmarried young girls, often working and supporting their families but highly stigmatized if not married

CURRENT GAPS

- Excessive focus on the age of marriage in program design and measurement frameworks
- Building life skills, agency and opportunities often remain in “vision” statements
- Engaging with boys and men has remained challenging and has not shifted much in the last 10 years in the context of South Asia
- Choice and consent in marriage, working with married adolescents and young mothers has not been informed and “by design”
- Need for “comprehensive programming” is poorly understood, leading to fragmented approaches



KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMING



One of the most crucial markers of success is girls being able to assert choice and influence decisions



Understanding the inter linkages between lack of sexual autonomy and norms around gender-based violence needs more focus in these contexts.



Comprehensive sexuality education in child marriage programming with young girls as well as boys



Building buy in from structural actors and engaging on shifting beliefs and perceived trade offs to early marriage, in the girls' ecosystem



Primary prevention of violence approaches have critical learnings to offer for CEFM programming and policy



Programming discourse to “life beyond marriage” is missing; bringing the focus back into the centrality of marriage



Inter-generational, long term programming offers great value in this context



Start young and engage with GILS education with boys



“If a girl is doing nothing, just household work, then she can be always “in sight” and to continue to keep her in someone’s sight, it is best to get her married”

ADOLESCENT GIRL, BIHAR

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