

# Social norms around forced and early child marriage in Pakistan



Zahra Jabeen & Karen van Zaal  
Oxfam – 23rd of Oct, 2019

# “Marriage no child’s play”

- More Than Brides Alliance
- MNCP being implemented in 5 countries: India, Malawi, Mali, Niger and **Pakistan**

SRHR & empowerment

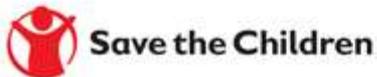
Education

Economic opportunities

Social norms on child marriage

Policy on child marriage

## MORE THAN BRIDES ALLIANCE

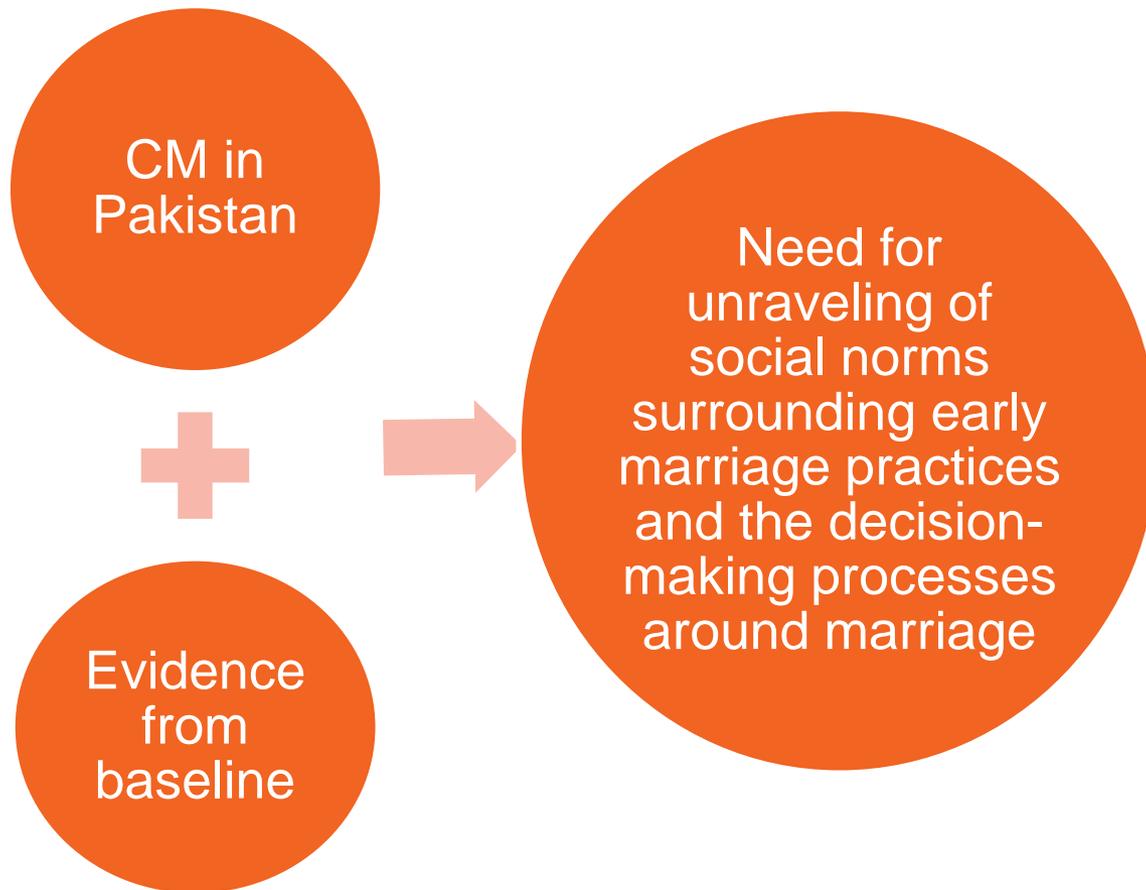


# Child Marriages in Pakistan

- Pakistan ranks 6th in the world, with 1.9 million child brides
- 21% Pakistani girls are married before 18; 3% before 15
- Complexity of issue and Multiple Drivers:
  - Social Norms, Cultural traditions/family practices, Family Honour, Land Dispute Settlement, Economic Issues, Religious Reasons and Peer/Family Pressure
- Marriage in Pakistan is a union of the families of the groom and bride, rather than of two individuals
- Evidence from baseline; discrepancies in answers of household heads and girls on consultation of marriage



# Research objective





# Aspects around social norms



How I think  
other men  
resolve conflict

Empirical  
expectation



Attitudes and  
behaviour

Possible sanctions



What will other  
men think of me  
I don't use force?

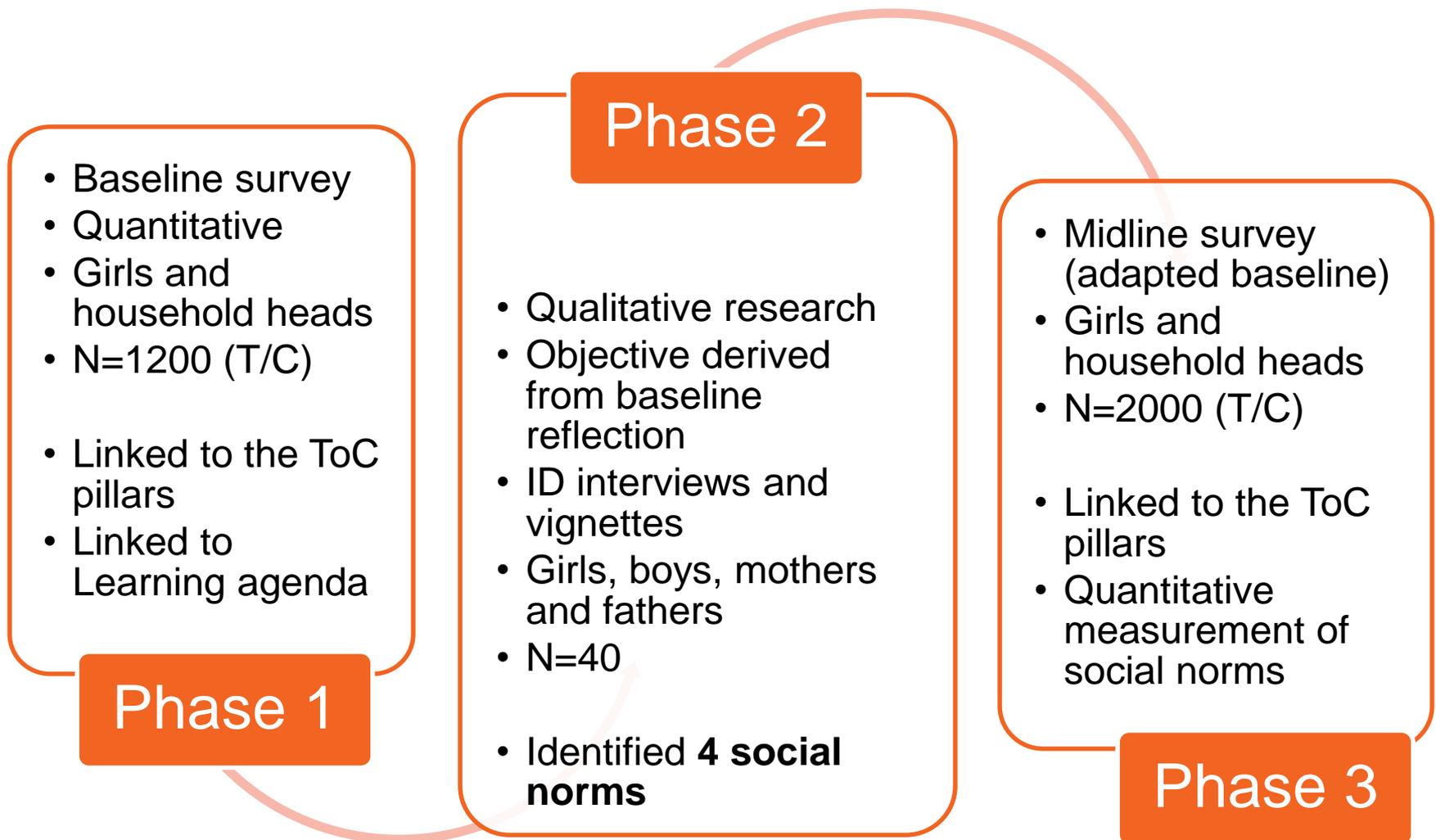
Normative  
expectation

# Research and social norms

Figure 1: The 'funnel' of norms exploration and measurement



# Methodology



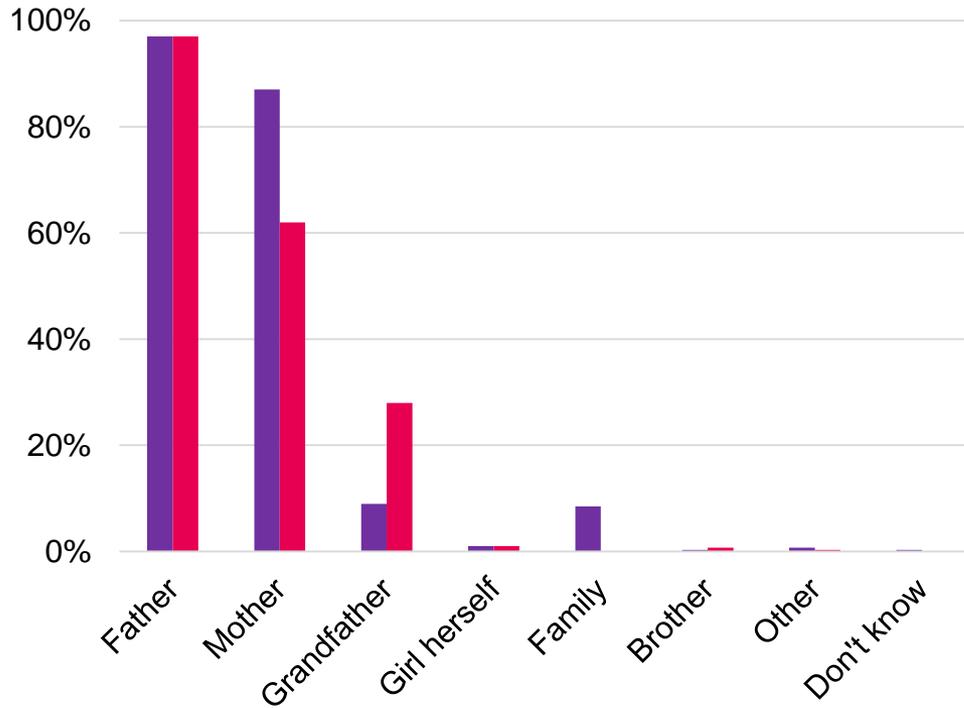
# Results – Phase 1

- Child Marriage was common in project areas
  - Most married girls (63%) got married before their 18th birthday
  - Majority of the girls do not know the legal age to marry
- Knowledge on SRHR was low
  - Around 80% of girls did not know about menstruation before they experienced their first cycle
- Lower support for girls' education than boys' education
- Discrepancies between answers of girls and answers of household heads regarding decision making process of marriage
  - This triggered to conduct the phase 2 research on decision making process of marriage

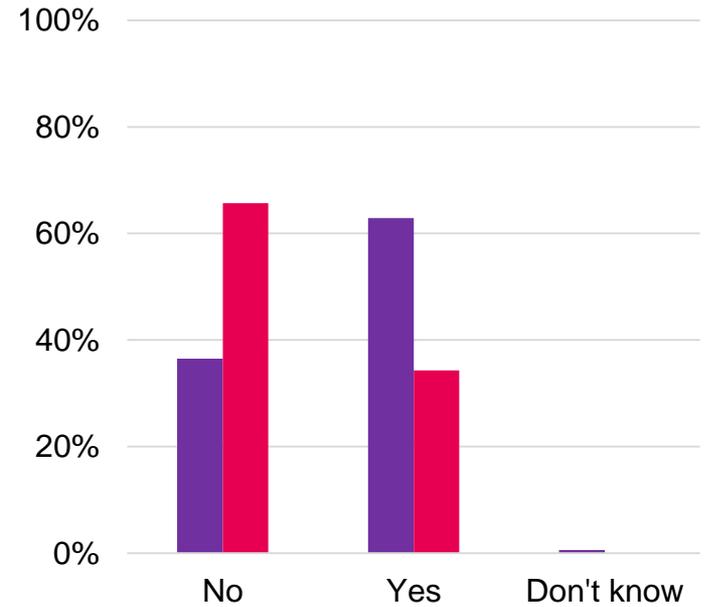


■ Punjab ■ Sindh

Household: Who normally decides on when and with whom a girl marries?



Girl: When discussions about your marriage began between the parties, were you asked whether you wanted to marry him or not?



# Results – Phase 2

- Norm 1: Respectable mothers leave the formal marriage decision-making to men but take responsibility for ensuring that a suitable proposal is accepted;
- Norm 2: Respectable girls agree to the marriage decisions taken by their parents;
- Norm 3: Marriageable girls need to be able to contribute to their husband's household in moral, intellectual and practical ways, including household chores and satisfying her husband's urges;
- Norm 4: Respectable girls are married as soon as they are mature, to protect the family honour



# Results – Phase 3

## Norm 4:

- Family honour and a girl's maturity are the two key factors that influence marriage decision making process
  - Maturity and responsibilities influence decision on marriage more than age
  - Social norms on family honour play out differently in Punjab and Sindh

## Norm 3:

- Girls should contribute to their husband's household mostly in practical ways, i.e. according to the traditional gender roles
- Space is found for a shift towards a more equally divided household



# Programmatic update & conclusions

- Using results and learning for adaptive programming
  - Create social action against early child marriage practice
  - Create a supportive environment
  - Engage people of all age groups in the conversations especially men and boys through community sessions
  - Improving communication and negotiation skills of young girls and boys
- Role of mothers in decision making
  - Engaging mothers as influencers
  - Educating through mobile cinema and generating debates between husband and wife
- The notion of family honor trumps all other norms around early child marriage and influences social action
  - Phase 4 – Qualitative research on social norms around family honor





***THANK YOU!***

***ZAHRA JABEEN & KAREN VAN ZAAL  
OXFAM NOVIB***