

## **Work Package 2 (Activity 2.3)**

### **Education and Training Material**

#### **Session 3**

#### **Causes & Consequences of early marriages & early motherhood (myths & realities)**

“The material of the project reflects only the author’s views. The European Commission’s support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission, the Hellenic National Agency or the National Agencies of other countries participating in the project cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein”.

## Activities

- national researches
- training courses
- Roma Influencers Network
- awareness raising campaigns
- Roma Influencers festivals
- good practices guide
- policy recommendations
- national & transnational workshops
- documentary films



## Objective

The project "Roma Influencers breaking the circle of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities" under the title acronym "Roma Influencers Network" derives from the gravity of the extremely harmful practice of **early marriages and early motherhood** in Roma communities. It is focused on **empowering, supporting, protecting and awareness raising of the Roma community**, especially women & girls affected by the specific concern by suggesting ways to change behaviors and attitudes in order to **overcome, reduce or eliminate** it.

## Session 3

### Part 1 (5 hours)

Welcome (10 minutes)

Causes and consequences of early marriages & early motherhood (myths & realities)

Impacts - Slides, videos, participatory discussion (2 hours)

Break (15 mins)

Exercise 6 – School as an ally (80 minutes) – visitor and questions (tbc)

Feedback on what we have learned (10 mins)

Attendance (5 mins)

### Part 2 (5 hours)

Welcome (10 minutes)

Causes and consequences of early marriages & early motherhood (myths & realities)

Health and Cultural Myths - Slides, videos, interactive, brainstorm, expository (3 hours)

Information on Anatomy (35 mins)

Feedback on what we have learned (10 mins)

Attendance (5 mins)

**If we don't #endchildmarriage, eight of the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be met.**



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Leave no one behind  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vE00cqxfy8>



## CHILD MARRIAGE A Violation of Human Rights

Child marriage is a violation of human rights. It is a global problem that affects millions of girls and boys. It is a violation of their right to health, education, and life free from violence.

Child marriage denies a girl's right to:

- HEALTH**: Child marriage has a negative impact on a girl's health. It can lead to complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and it can increase the risk of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.
- CHOICE**: Child marriage denies a girl's right to choose her partner and her future. It is a forced marriage that is often arranged by her family or community.
- LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE**: Child marriage is often a violent act. Girls are often forced into marriage and may experience physical and sexual violence.
- EDUCATION**: Child marriage denies a girl's right to education. She is often forced to leave school and may never return.

Child marriage violates treaties and conventions that governments around the world are bound by, including:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008)

**WE ALL HAVE A ROLE IN PROTECTING GIRLS' RIGHTS**

- Parents and guardians should protect their children from child marriage.
- Communities should work together to prevent child marriage.
- Government should take action to end child marriage.
- Everyone should speak up against child marriage.

## CHILD MARRIAGE A global problem too long ignored

Child marriage is a global problem that affects millions of girls and boys. It is a violation of their right to health, education, and life free from violence.

15,000,000 girls and boys are married every year.

18 million girls are married before they turn 18.

1 in 10 girls are married before they turn 15.

1 in 5 girls are married before they turn 12.

### What does child marriage mean for girls?

- POVERTY**: Child marriage is often a result of poverty. Families may see marriage as a way to secure a future for their daughter.
- EDUCATION**: Child marriage often means a girl has to leave school. This can limit her opportunities for a better future.
- INEQUALITY**: Child marriage is often a result of inequality. Girls from poor families are more likely to be married than girls from rich families.
- HEALTH**: Child marriage can lead to health problems. Girls who are married young are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth.
- HIV/AIDS**: Child marriage can increase the risk of HIV/AIDS. Girls who are married young are more likely to have sex with their husbands.
- VIOLENCE**: Child marriage can lead to violence. Girls who are married young are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence.

## CHILD MARRIAGE REDUCES OPPORTUNITIES



Child marriage is likely the cause of 3 in 4 girls having children before the age of 18



Child marriage greatly reduces the likelihood of girls completing secondary school



Child marriage reduces the future earnings of child brides by 3%



Child brides may have less decision-making ability in the household and face higher risks of violence

Girls not brides. Child Marriage and Education <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-and-education/>

## Charting future action on the mental health consequences of child marriage

Summary report

July 2024



PICTURED: Girl participants creating a collaborative artwork called a "Daisies" in Goma, Colliers of Connection & TES Project, Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2022. Photo: Pamela Tobin

### Why focus on child marriage & mental health?

#### We know:

- Mental health conditions – like anxiety and depressive disorders – are among the top causes of burden of disease among adolescents.
- Millions of adolescent girls and boys are married before age 18 each year.

#### But:

- The evidence base on the mental health consequences of child marriage is thin.
- What evidence does exist suggests that few programmes focus specifically on the mental health needs of those who marry before age 18.

### What this report is

This brief summarises **insights** shared during a **symposium** on child marriage and mental health,<sup>1</sup> which brought together over 200 researchers, practitioners, policymakers and donors to explore the **evidence** on the mental health consequences of child marriage, **what works**, **priorities** and **practical tools** to support girls who are – or have been – married (over-married girls). It begins with the key takeaways and then provides more detail from each of the three sessions.

The symposium was hosted by the University College London Global Network on Mental Health and Child Marriage, in collaboration with the Child Marriage Research to Action Network (**the CRANK**). All the symposium resources – presentations, recordings and brief – are available on the Girls Not Brides **website**.

### New research shows:

Almost **1 in 4** women who experienced childhood marriage & sexual violence experienced mental distress in the last month.  
Sexual violence increases mental distress by **2.5 x**.  
Unwanted pregnancy increases mental health disorders by **5 x**.

[https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-research-action-network/crank-research-meetings/symposium-action-mental-health-child-marriage/University College London \(UCL\), Global Network on Mental Health and Child Marriage, CRANK. Symposium: What's known and what's next – Charting future action on the mental health consequences of child marriage](https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-research-action-network/crank-research-meetings/symposium-action-mental-health-child-marriage/University College London (UCL), Global Network on Mental Health and Child Marriage, CRANK. Symposium: What's known and what's next – Charting future action on the mental health consequences of child marriage)



## Key takeaways



### What's known: The evidence on child marriage & mental health

- Existing evidence shows a range of **poor mental health outcomes** for girls and women who experience child marriage – including low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation, but that **support services are limited and poorly resourced**.
- Control over married girls' **mobility** – particularly with **migrants** around mental health – blocks their access to services and support.
- The threat to **gender** the younger a girl is married, and to **compounded** by experiences of sexual violence, unwanted pregnancy, violence/sexual abuse, learning a trade, and conflict or crisis.
- Unfettered outreach** and additional support are needed for **sex-married girls**.
- Long-term, participatory, trauma-informed** studies and programming – including arts-based approaches – can act as mental health interventions in themselves, by offering sex-married girls an opportunity to share their stories and concerns, with additional support for the women.





## **Group Participatory Exercise**

Discussion on the mental health effects of Early Marriage and early motherhood

## Negative Impacts of early Marriage

### -Physical and Emotional:

Explaining the risks to girls' health, such as complications in childbirth, sexually transmitted diseases and psychological problems (such as anxiety, depression and trauma).

### -Economic and Social:

Address the impact on education and life opportunities.  
Contextualizing the early marriage as a possible factor in perpetuating cycles of poverty, inequality between men and women and social vulnerability.

### -Consequences for the children of these marriages:

Negative effects on the development of children born of early marriages, in which mothers will often not be capable of the emotional maturity to accompany, 'support' the needs of a newborn/child

## Exercise 6

School as an ally

Theme

Valuing education

Objective

To promote staying in school and access to Opportunities

Dynamics | Inspiring meeting

Material: Guest from the community (a woman who has studied and overcome barriers)

Conversation round with questions from the girls

Support material: Preparation sheet with questions, mini-biography of the guest on poster

# Session 3

## Part 2



### -Health:

Consequence of early pregnancy;  
Misinformation about pregnancy and contraceptive methods;  
Families with other cases of early pregnancy;  
Conflicts and unfavorable family environment;  
Women's health literacy.

### -Educational:

Low academic expectations or lack of life plans.



HEALTH AND CULTURAL MYTHS TRAINING AND PROMOTION OF HEALTH LITERACY AMONG ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT WOMEN FROM ROM COMMUNITIES		
<b>MENSTRUATION</b>	<b>MYTHS</b>	<b>REALITIES</b>
	Menstruation is a curse and should be kept secret and not discussed with others.	Menstruation is a natural biological process and should be discussed openly and properly, allowing to deal with any problems or issues.
	Menstruation is a sign of pregnancy and should be avoided.	Menstruation is a normal part of the reproductive cycle and should not be confused with pregnancy.
	Menstruation is a sign of sexual activity and should be avoided.	Menstruation is a natural biological process and should not be confused with sexual activity.
	Menstruation is a sign of pregnancy and should be avoided.	Menstruation is a normal part of the reproductive cycle and should not be confused with pregnancy.
	Menstruation is a sign of pregnancy and should be avoided.	Menstruation is a normal part of the reproductive cycle and should not be confused with pregnancy.

## Health and Cultural Myths

Promoting Health Literacy  
and Informed Decision-Making

# Menstruation Myths

## **Myths:**

Women cannot work or socialise while they are menstruating.

Menstruation is considered impure.

Women should not bathe during their period.

## **Realities:**

Women can continue with all their daily activities during menstruation.

Menstruation is a natural biological process, not an unclean one.

Bathing is important for hygiene and can relieve cramps.



## **Methodology:**

Brainstorming and group discussion

## Pregnancy and Contraception Myths

### Myths:

- To honour the family, women should get pregnant young.
- Pregnancy between cousins is risk-free.
- If there is no vaginal sex, there is no risk of pregnancy.
- Contraceptives can cause permanent infertility.

### Realities:

- Pregnancy should be an informed and personal choice.
- Cousin marriages increase the risk of genetic diseases.
- Pregnancy is possible if semen comes into contact with the vulva
- Most contraceptives do not cause permanent infertility.

### Methodology: Interactive approach



# Anatomy

Information about the reproductive system  
and genital area

## Body and Sexuality Myths

### Myths:

- Talking about sex is shameful.
- A person's virginity should be preserved until marriage.

### Realities:

- Sexual health education promotes health and prevention.
- Whether or not to be a virgin is a personal choice; protection is key.



**Methodology: Interactive approach**

## Health and Access to Care Myths

### Myths:

- Genital pain is normal and does not require a doctor's attention.
- Diseases don't affect Roma people.
- Traditional remedies are enough to keep you healthy.

### Realities:

- Any discomfort should be assessed by a healthcare professional.
- Anyone can be affected by disease.
- While traditional remedies can help, they should not replace medical care.

### Methodology: Expository method



# Violence and Abuse Myths

## Myths:

Arranged marriages are a traditional practice.

In some situations, violence is acceptable.

## Realities:

Forced marriage is a violation of human rights.

Violence must never be tolerated.

Roma women have always had the power and opportunity to refuse a marriage they do not want (as expressed in the Portuguese saying, 'dar cabaças').



**Methodology: Interactive approach**





# Mental Health Myths

## Myths:

- Emotional issues should not be discussed with outsiders.
- Roma women shouldn't express their emotions

## Realities:

- Talking to professionals is an important part of the healing process.
- Expressing your emotions can improve your mental health



**Methodology: Brainstorming and group discussion**



# Motherhood Myths

## Myths:

Roma women are naturally good mothers, and motherhood is their sole purpose in life.

They believe that children should stay at home rather than attend preschool.

## Realities:

Motherhood is a learning process and one of many roles.

Preschool helps children to develop essential life skills.



**Methodology: Brainstorming, discussion, and expository**