

## Child Brides Discussion Sheet

### Facts about Child Brides

- In most parts of the world, the practice of girls marrying before the age of 14 (the technical definition of 'child marriage') has been outlawed. But it still occurs in many countries.
- Each day, 3,500 girls will marry before reaching their fifteenth birthdays. Another 21,000 girls under the age of 18 marry each day.
- The total number of child brides is expected to reach up to 100 million within the next decade. Already 51 million girls in the developing world have been married before legal adulthood (18).
- Being forced to marry too young can hurt girls in many ways. Child brides are forced to leave school and lose the chance of an education. Becoming sexually active at such young ages exposes the girls to potential injury and infection. Bearing children before the girls are mentally, emotionally and physically ready exposes them and their children to serious health problems. In fact, Babies born to adolescent mothers are twice as likely to die before their first birthday compared to infants of older women.
- In Afghanistan, the setting of this documentary, the Ministry of Women's Affairs reports that almost 60 percent of girls are married before the age of 16. In rural areas, the average age is 11 or 12.
- "I wish we had a developed country. One that was peaceful and green. Where people were free," Parigul, an 11 year old girl in Afghanistan, recently engaged to a man in his late 20s in exchange for \$6700.

### Scripture

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1

"I wanted patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand." Psalm 40:1-2

### Discussion Questions

1. There are several striking photographs in this presentation. One of the most powerful is of Roshan Kasem, who is 8, seated beside Said Mohammed, 55, the man she has to marry. Roshan is playing peek-a-boo with the camera. What did you think and feel when you saw this photograph?

2. “What am I supposed to feel? I don’t even know this man.” That is the response Ghulam, 11, gives the photographer when asked how she feels on her engagement day. Does her response surprise you? Why or why not?
3. It is clear from the presentation that not every family is happy to force their daughter into early marriage. What are some of the conditions that make those families feel they have no choice?
4. The Scriptures tell us that God created us for freedom and that God hears our cries when we are in bondage. What do you think the “God-perspective” on the issue of child brides would be? What is Scripture calling us to do? To be?
5. Poverty is one of the leading contributing factors of child marriage. Parents, like those in the presentation, who cannot provide the basic needs of their children may give a young daughter in marriage so they have one less mouth to feed and to ensure she is supported. What is your response to that?
6. How do you think the work that World Vision and other like-minded organizations do in communities around the world can help to decrease the need parents feel to engage their children in early marriage?
7. How could your church or group work together to make an impact on this issue?

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear God,

We know that children are precious to you and that you care deeply about the poor. We pray for the thousands of young girls around the world caught in the bondage of being child brides. We pray for the families whose circumstances make them feel they have no choice but to sell their daughters into an early marriage. We pray for World Vision and other organizations who are working in communities around the world to alleviate the conditions of poverty that leave families feeling so desperate and trapped. God, move your Church into action. Ignite a passion in your people to help these families and communities. Show us how we can help. We ask you also to shine a light in our own lives and society where there may still be places of gender inequality. Remove the planks from our own eyes in how we treat young girls and women. Heal your people.

Amen

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For more information on this topic see [Before She's Ready](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/early-marriage.pdf/$file/early-marriage.pdf), World Vision’s study on Child Brides. ([http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/early-marriage.pdf/\\$file/early-marriage.pdf](http://www.worldvision.org/resources.nsf/main/early-marriage.pdf/$file/early-marriage.pdf))