

# RISK 4

## CHILD, EARLY OR FORCED MARRIAGE



### WHAT ACTS OR SITUATIONS CONSTITUTE THE PRESENCE OF THE RISK?

**Child marriage** is any formal or informal union between a child under the age of 18 with an adult or another child. It is considered as a form of forced marriage because of the impossibility for a child to give full, free and informed consent. Child marriage is a harmful practice that might be socially accepted and practiced, or used as a coping mechanism. Girls are disproportionately affected, but boys might also be concerned. In humanitarian emergencies caused by conflict, natural hazards and climate change impacts, the rates of child marriage, as with other forms of gender-based violence, are likely to increase due to safety concerns, situational factors, and poor living conditions that result in the adoption of negative coping mechanisms. Child marriage may result due to parents believing that their child will be safer in another household, or because they can no longer meet the basic needs of the family due to food insecurity. Forced marriage is a marriage in which one or more of the parties is married without their consent or against their will. In conflict-affected areas, girls may be kidnapped and forced to marry members of armed forces or armed groups.



### WHAT FACTORS MUST BE IDENTIFIED FOR MONITORING?

Child marriage is a form of gender based violence. It robs girls of their childhood and threatens their lives and health, as they are more likely to experience domestic violence, early pregnancy and drop out of school, and experience health complications during childbirth. As a result, girls that marry before 18 may experience worse economic and health outcomes than their unmarried peers, which are eventually passed down to their own children, impacting their resilience to future shocks, and further straining a country's capacity to provide quality health and education services. In identifying and reporting on this protection risk, it is fundamental not only to identify the drivers but also the responsibility of States and non-state actors controlling territories in ensuring the proper prevention, mitigation and redress of the conditions that lead to the risk.



### WHAT INFORMATION & DATA CAN ILLUSTRATE THE PRESENCE OF THE RISK?

Identifying drivers of child marriage is a first fundamental core step. Once the drivers of child marriage are identified (safety, food insecurity, common social practice, etc), data on those drivers per location can be used to interpret where the risks of child marriage are higher. Data on child marriage may be obtained from the following sources: GBV IMS, in countries in which the Security Council has activated the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children, reports will include information on armed forces or armed groups kidnapping and forcing children to marry members; national census, although conducted once every 5-10 years, will provide prevalence data for child marriage pre-emergency; UNICEF Country Webpage is likely to include information on laws regarding child marriage and prevalence of child marriage; household surveys can provide prevalence data for a target group when collected from a representative sample of households, and when collected through a household profiling exercise (in which a standard set of questions on age, education, and marital status is asked about every family member); key informants may provide information on whether they believe that child marriage is increasing or decreasing in their locations; specialized FGDs or expert interviews can provide valuable information on the underlying drivers of child marriage. In all cases, HHs, KIIs and FGDs percentages should never be used as representative percentage of the population, but as percentage of respondents that are reporting on something.