



Dear Faith Leader,

Thank you for picking up this toolkit. It takes a lot of courage to begin open, honest conversations about harmful practices that are deeply entrenched in a community's culture and tradition. We commend you for taking this first step to eradicating child or early marriage (shortened to EM throughout this toolkit) and promote the health and well-being of girls and women in your community.

No matter what your stance has been in the past, you can make a big difference in helping your congregation and community think more deeply about these practices. Whether you have never spoken to your community about EM, or whether you have been speaking out against this practice for a long time, we offer you ways of starting or re-energizing the conversations around such issues. Your congregation looks to you for guidance and support; this means that you are uniquely positioned to make real and lasting change in the lives of girls today, and for generations to come.

We understand that the traditions surrounding EM are complex, and it will likely be a difficult topic to discuss. This toolkit is designed to educate and make it easier for you to talk about this harmful practice. In it, you will find resources that will arm you with medical facts and theological references that speak out against EM, and ways to answer the tough questions you may face along the way.

We have worked with local and international partners and with faith leaders from diverse faith backgrounds across Africa to develop this toolkit. We recognize that eradicating EM is a vital step to promote the health and well-being of girls and women, which will greatly improve the health and success of communities and nations as a whole.

We urge you to read this toolkit, and understand the value of comprehensive knowledge about the realities of EM. Please feel free to share this approach with peers of your own faith or across faiths in your community. Our hope is that, by equipping you with information and useful tools, you can become a part of the movement to change the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of communities – and the lives of girls who need your support the most.

Thank you for joining us in our mission to empower girls by eliminating EM.

National Faith Leader	Ministry of Health Official	Secretary General
Title	Title	National Inter-Religious Council
Denomination	Ministry of Health	Country
Country	Country	



### EARLY MARRIAGE (EM)

#### Addressing Harmful Traditional Practices in Your Community: A Faith Leader Toolkit

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

##### **Get Started:** How to Use This

##### **Module 1**

Picking up this toolkit for the first time? We suggest you start here.

- 1) Let's Get Started
- 2) Some Common Questions

##### **Teach Yourself:** Facts about Early Marriage (EM)

##### **Module 2**

Key facts & information to help you inform your community about EM

- 1) Key Facts about EM, A Basic Information Sheet with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- 2) Scriptural and theological guides related to EM and its impact
  - [EM: A Guide for Christian Faith Leaders](#)
  - [EM: A Guide for Muslim Faith Leaders](#)

##### **Begin the Conversation:**

##### **5 Conversations That Healthy Communities Should Have**

##### **Module 3**

Faith leaders touch the lives of their communities in many ways: at weekly prayers, during major life events, during individual counseling, or out in the community. Each of these interactions can be a *teachable moment* – an opportunity to discuss health and well-being with your community and share important messages that revolve around one common theme: “Honor the Institution of Marriage.” Here are 5 key conversations that all faith leaders – regardless of faith – can have with their community:

##### **Eliminating Early Marriage: “Honor the Institution of Marriage”**

- **Conversation 1:** What are the religious requirements of marriage in the context of our faith? Does that include marrying a child?
- **Conversation 2:** Is marriage a gift from God/Allah? Are we treating it as such when we marry children?

- **Conversation 3:** How does preparing adequately for marriage help uphold its sanctity?
- **Conversation 4:** How can we make marriage a mutual partnership based on love and respect?
- **Conversation 5:** What is the proper time for marriage?

### Engage Women:

#### Honor the Institution of Marriage

#### Module 4

This interactive workshop provides an opportunity for women to learn about the negative effects of early marriage (below the full legal age of 18) as well as the benefits of waiting until one is physically, mentally, financially, emotionally, and spiritually prepared to marry. Furthermore, this module can also serve as an inspiration for future workshops and open discussions.

### Engage Youth:

#### Girls, Boys, &/or Mixed groups

#### – Honor the Institution of Marriage

#### Module 5

This interactive workshop is tailored specifically for youth groups within your faith institution – whether girls alone, boys, or mixed groups– providing them with thoughtful opportunities to understand EM and its consequences. How to engage different subgroups of youth will depend on local circumstances, but the key messages remain constant.

### Activity Kit:

#### Everything You Need to Engage Your Community

The activity kit contains an early marriage flipchart activity and lesson instructions to be used as part of modules 4 and 5.