



Early Marriage Flipchart





Illustration #1

Illustration description: “This is the Menkir family. Hussein and his wife Fatuma have four children. Merima, their youngest daughter, is 8 years old. Awel, their son, is 11 years old. Their second-oldest daughter, Kedija, is 15 years old. Finally, their oldest, Zeyneba, is 19 years old, and she has finished school. They are devoted Muslims and attend salaah [as appropriate]. They have a small farm, and while they are not poor, money is tight. It is often hard for them to find money to keep their children in school – however, both Mr. and Mrs. Menkir know that keeping all of their children in school is very important, for they want them to have bright futures, healthy marriages, and be able to support themselves and help the rest of the family when they are too old.

Discussion questions:

- 1) Is this family similar to many that you know?
- 2) What similarities/dissimilarities are there between the Menkir family and your own family?
- 3) Which of the Menkir daughters would commonly be requested for marriage?



Illustration #2

Illustration description: “This is Merima, the youngest daughter in the Menkir family. She is 8 years old, and is in [appropriate local grade level] in school. She laughs and giggles a lot, and enjoys playing [local game] with her two best friends. While she is very helpful around the house and on the farm, she is not physically strong enough to do the work that her older brother and sisters do. She loves her parents and her brothers and sisters. She is not yet old enough to work outside the house for money. She does not know what “sex” means, only that there are boys and there are girls, and they are built differently.”

Discussion questions:

- 1) Does this sound like many of the girls in your community/your daughter, if you have one?
- 2) Is Merima ready to be married? Why or why not?
- 3) Would Merima commonly be requested for marriage in your community? Why or why not?
- 4) What do you think of that?



Illustration #3

Illustration description: “This is Awel, the Menkir’s son. He is 11 years old, and is in [appropriate local grade level] in school. He is very active, and sometimes causes a bit of trouble for his parents. He enjoys playing football (soccer) with his friends. He often helps his father with the cattle, and around the house – his mother will not let him get out of helping with the cooking! He would like a job, so that he can have extra money and help his parents, but his parents want him to stay in school. He thinks Adina next door is “very pretty,” but when asked if he would marry her, says, “no way, I don’t need a wife!” He understands the very basics of sex, but does not know yet about how to stay safe, or the responsibilities that come with it.

Discussion questions:

- 1) Does this sound like many of the boys in your community/your son, if you have one?
- 2) Is Awel ready to be married? Why or why not?
- 3) Do you think he needs more schooling before he finds work? Why or why not?



Illustration #4

Illustration description: “This is Kedija, the Menkir’s second-oldest daughter. She is 15 years old, and is in [appropriate local grade level] in school. She enjoys talking and laughing with her friends. She is very shy, and sometimes does not like going to school, because many of her friends have dropped out, and the boys tease the remaining girls on the way there and in the classroom. She has more responsibility around the house and on the farm than her younger brother and sister, because she is older. She would also like a job, and her parents believe that it would be good for her to earn money, but her parents want her to stay in school, because the payoff for waiting will be better. She has received some sex education, and knows how the physical act works. However, she is unsure if she is ready to love someone unconditionally and bear children – even though some of her friends have had their first child already!”

Discussion questions:

- 1) Does Kedija sound like many of the girls her age in your community/your daughter, if you have one?
- 2) Some of Kedija’s friends have had their first child by 15 – is this common in your community?
- 3) Is Kedija ready for marriage? Why or why not?
- 4) Would Kedija commonly be requested for marriage in your community? Why or why not?
- 5) What do you think of that?



Illustration #5

Illustration description: “This is Zeyneba, the oldest daughter in the Menkir family. She is 19 years old, and has finished school. She enjoys talking and laughing with her friends, cooking [complicated local dish], and listening to music, especially [artist popular with young adult population in the area]. Her favorite subject in school was math, and she uses this to help her parents with the family finances, balancing their accounts. She is very friendly, confident, and self-assured. She bears the most responsibility of all the children around the house and on the farm – she often holds things together when her mother and father have to go away. She has a job, earning money through [either selling crafts or some other attainable job for a girl out of high school in a rural setting that is still slightly more accomplished than the average girl her age]. She knows she has a young man, Nesru Mohammed, who is 24 years old, interested in her, and she believes that he is a good, upstanding Muslim man. She received sex education in school, and then went with some of her friends to talk to the nurse at the local health clinic when she had any other questions that her school teacher could not answer. She loves her brother and sisters, and her parents, and is glad they chose to keep her in school.”

Discussion questions:

- 1) Does Zeyneba remind you of any girls in your community/your daughter, if you have one?
- 2) If you have a younger daughter (under age 18), would you like your daughter to be like Zeyneba at 19? Why or why not?
- 3) Is Zeyneba ready to be married? Why or why not?
- 4) Would Zeyneba be requested for marriage in your community? Why or why not?
- 5) What do you think of that?

Before you flip to Illustration #6, ask the group the following question: “Who, of the Menkir children, do you believe is prepared for marriage?” Flip to Illustration #6 only after the group has answered.



Illustration #6

Illustration narrative: This is Zeyneba, the oldest daughter of the Menkir family, with her parents, on the third day after her wedding to Nesru Mohammed. They are involved in the traditional coffee ceremony – you can see Nesru and his parents seated next to Zeyneba and her parents. The two families get along very well. The Menkir family thinks Nesru is an upstanding young man – even though he is not rich, he supports himself as a [steady local job], and knows he can support a wife and children. Zeyneba was happy to marry Nesru: she especially appreciated that both of their families asked her for her opinion, and did not force her into a decision. The Mohammeds think Zeyneba is a wonderful match for their son Nesru, especially since she is mature, educated, and well-prepared for marriage. Nesru thinks Zeyneba is very beautiful, and admires how smart and level-headed she is – he could use some help balancing his accounts, and she is very good at that!

Both Zeyneba and Nesru have agreed that they will consult with each other throughout their marriage, and especially communicate on things like division of work, finances, and family planning – they want their children to be happy, healthy, and well-educated! Both Zeyneba and Nesru chose to be married to each other, and their families couldn't be happier.

Discussion questions:

- 1) What do you think of Zeyneba and Nesru's marriage?
- 2) Is this the type of marriage you would want for your daughter or son?
- 3) How does this compare to a typical marriage in your community?



