

## 2. Objective of the study

In the Arab region, research has mainly focused on examining the prevalence of child marriage, identifying the social, economic and political factors that drive this practice, and investigating its harmful effects on girls and women. While the Phase I report established a link between child marriage and various outcomes related to demographics, health, education and the labour market, it did not quantify the economic losses that result from this practice for the State. To gain a better understanding of the actual short- and long-term economic costs that women, their families and the Government will bear, it is crucial to evaluate the impact of child marriage on the GDP of all Arab countries.

Therefore, the goal of this study is to conduct a cost analysis that measures the impact of child marriage on the GDP of countries, with the aim of strengthening the case for eradicating this practice in the region. The study advances recommendations to reduce the economic

burden of child marriage by taking proactive steps to address the intermediate channels that contribute to economic implications.

The present study employs the spectrum-based simulation model and incorporates a wide range of input indicators to provide a detailed analysis of the demographic, social and macroeconomic costs associated with child marriage. Unlike Mitra and others (2020), the present study does not rely solely on a macro-regression model approach. Instead, its hierarchical and component simulation approach enables the inclusion of more input parameters and the estimation of a larger number of outcome indicators. Moreover, the model used in the study not only projects the cost of inaction on child marriage as a percentage of GDP loss but also includes other key demographic and health indicators up to 2050, covering the entire productive lifespan of a girl who was married at age 15 around the year 2000.

### ► Conceptual framework: Mechanisms of the economic costs of child marriage

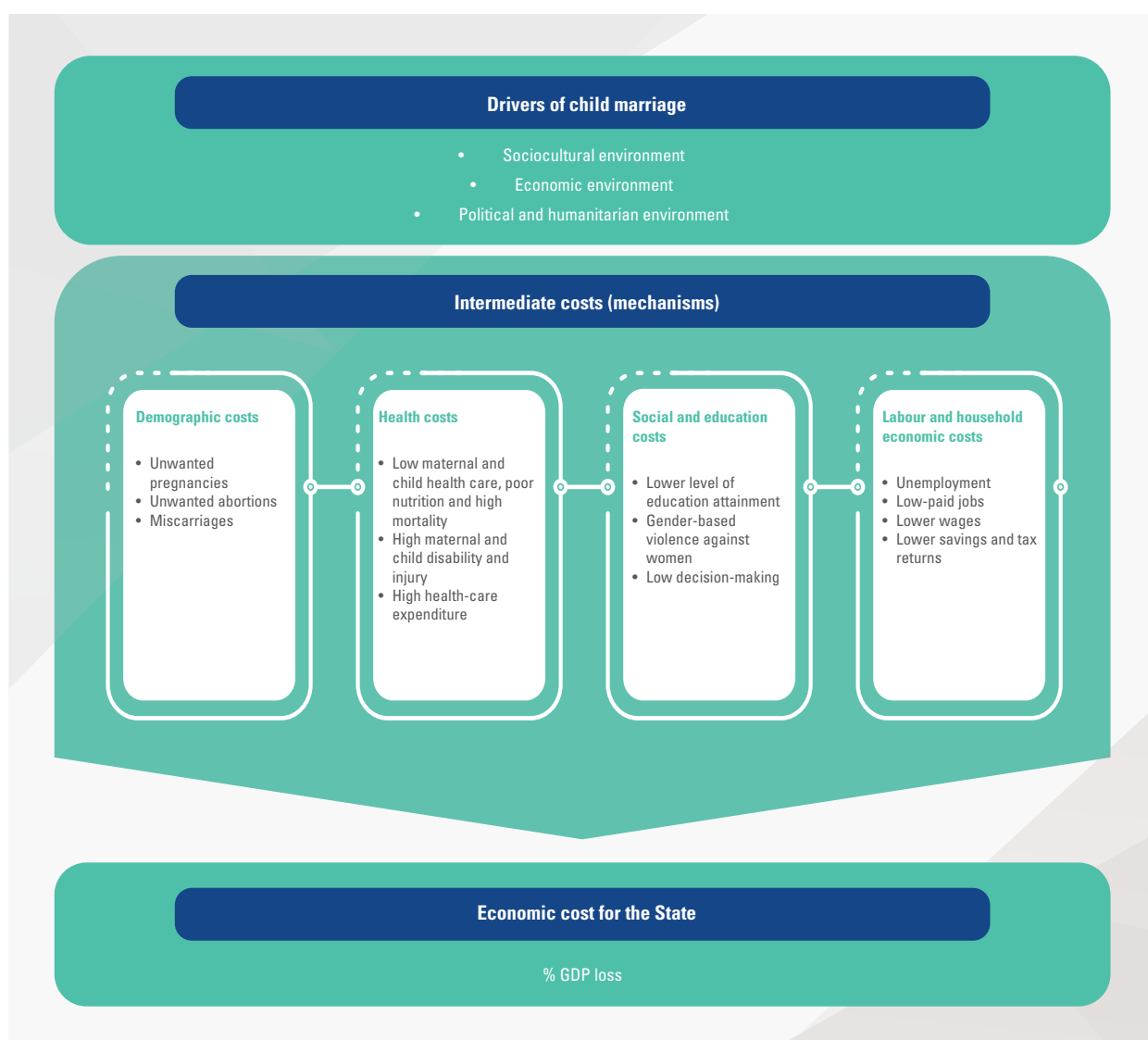
Child marriage incurs economic costs through multiple channels, as depicted in figure 1.

This practice has demographic implications such as high fertility levels, early childbirth

and population growth, which directly impact economic outcomes.<sup>23</sup> Child marriage also disrupts educational attainment, leading to limited decision-making ability, particularly in terms of reproductive choices, instances of gender-based violence against women and low labour force participation,<sup>24</sup> resulting in poor health status and low earnings. Poor health conditions and higher disability and mortality risks further exacerbate household

financial conditions.<sup>25</sup> The effects of child marriage are also intergenerational, as they hinder the creation of human capital in future generations.<sup>26</sup> Poor wage earnings and household savings result in lower tax returns for the State, while poor health conditions lead to greater State spending on health care. Thus, the State economy is affected from both the savings and expenditure ends.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework: Mechanisms of the economic costs of child marriage



**Sources:** Authors, adapted from Goli (2016); Wodon and others (2017); Mitra and others (2020); and Psaki and others (2021).