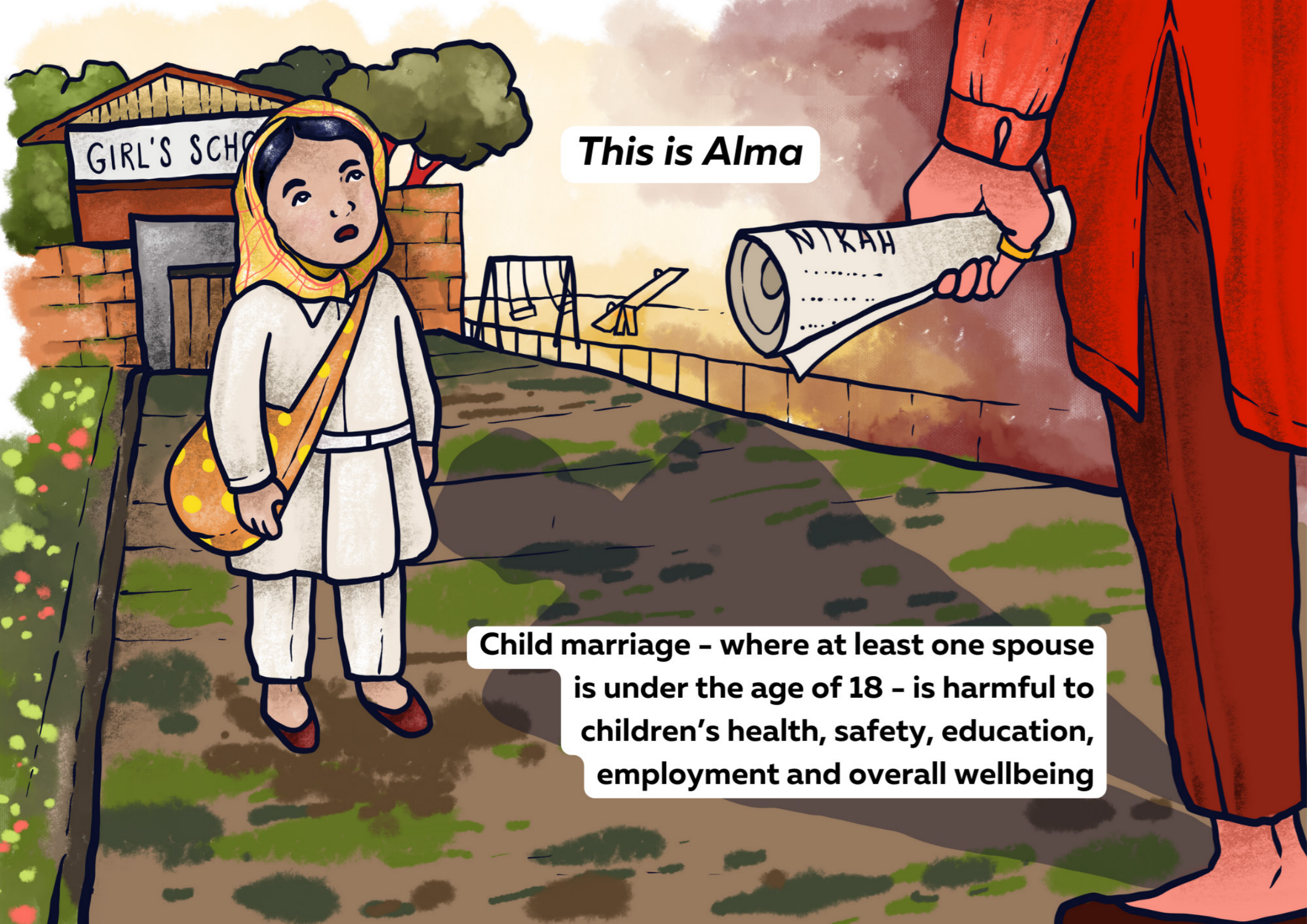


# CHILD MARRIAGE

ABOLISHING THE STRUCTURE OF CHILD & FORCED MARRIAGE







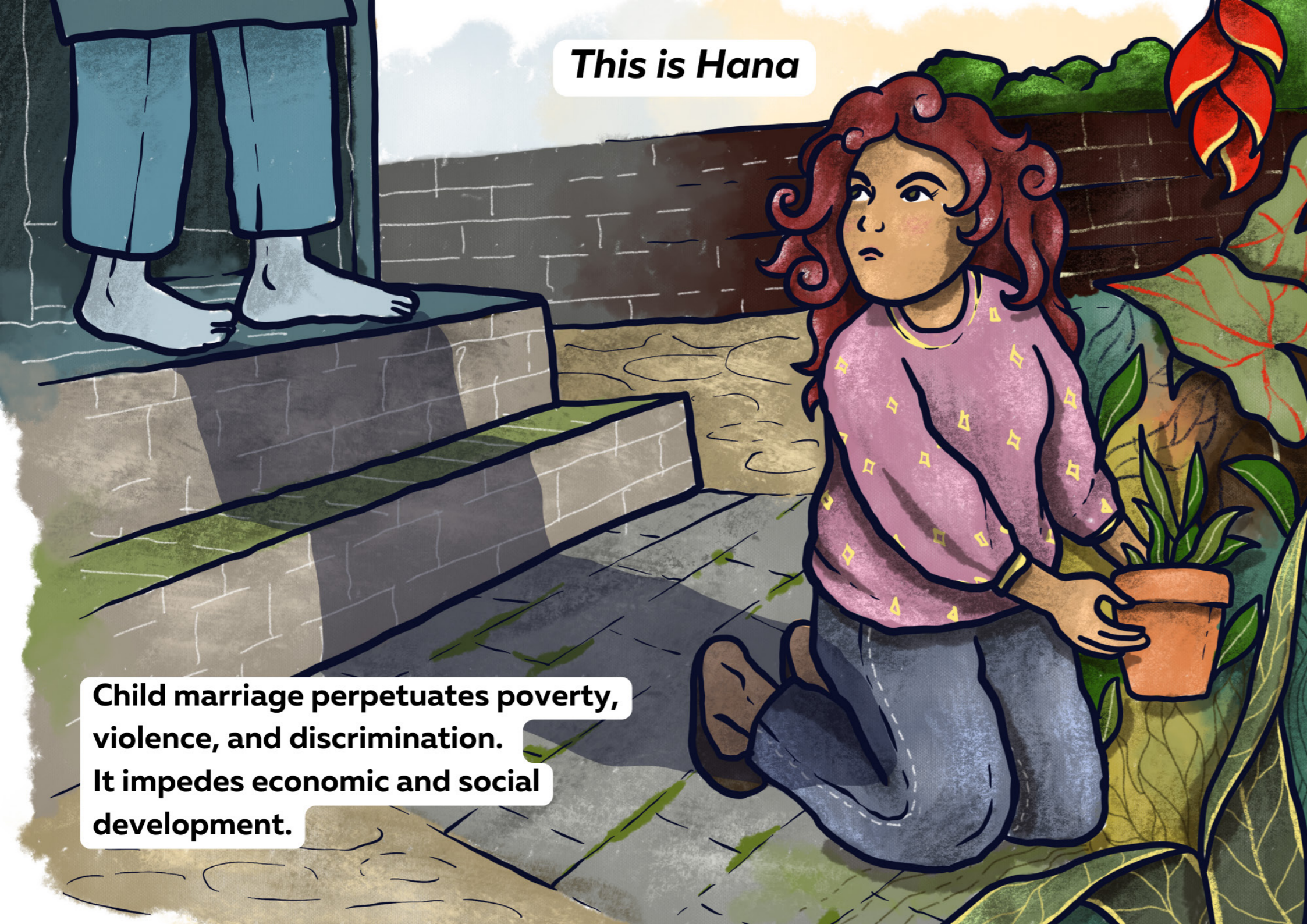
***This is Alma***

**Child marriage - where at least one spouse is under the age of 18 - is harmful to children's health, safety, education, employment and overall wellbeing**

This is Alma. The artwork shows her coming home from school, while a long shadow of a strange older man clutching a marriage certificate surrounds her.



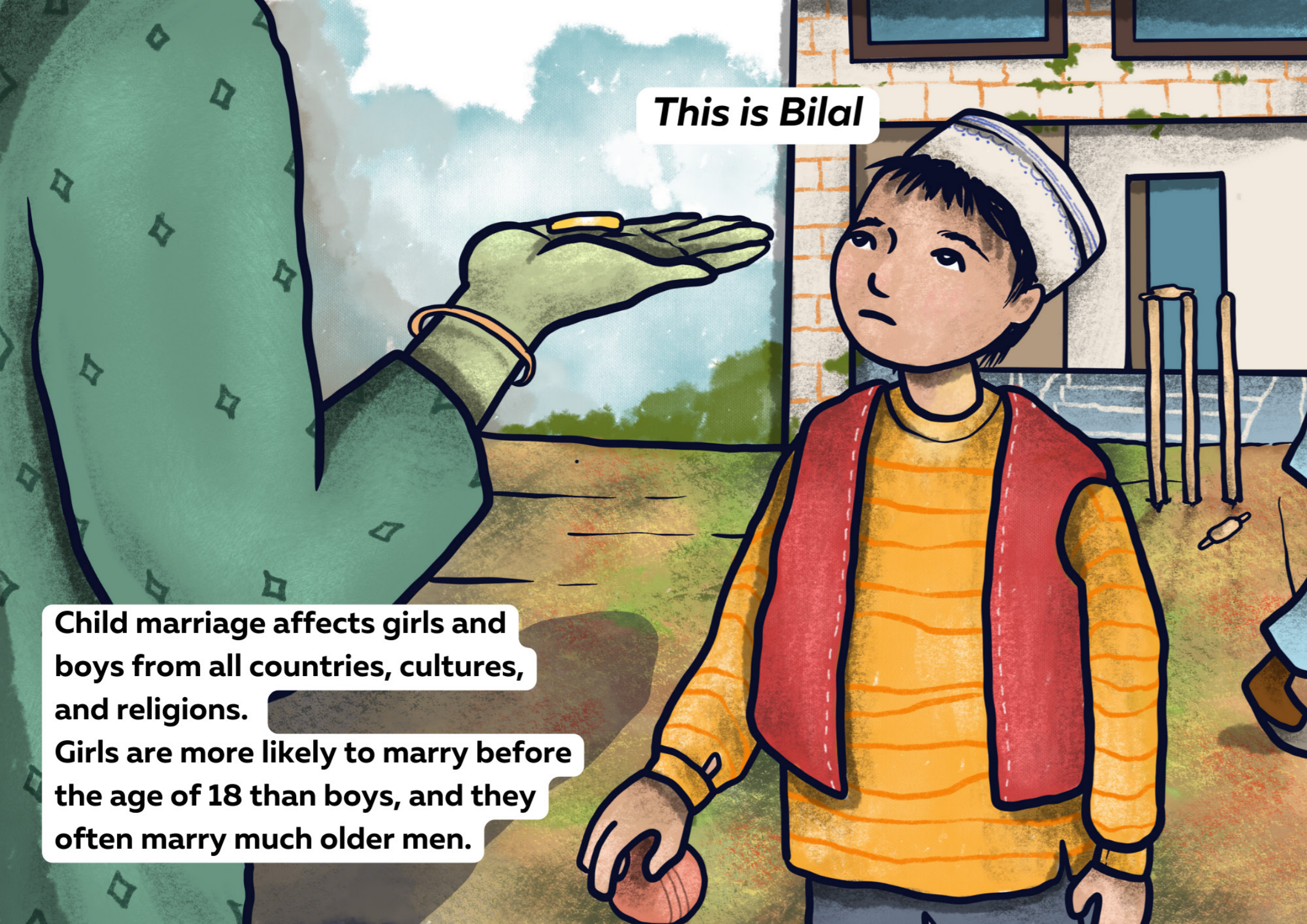
**This is Hana**



**Child marriage perpetuates poverty, violence, and discrimination. It impedes economic and social development.**

This is Hana. The artwork depicts a slightly older girl tending to an agricultural land, and a long shadow of a man standing atop some steps appears in the background.





***This is Bilal***

**Child marriage affects girls and boys from all countries, cultures, and religions.**

**Girls are more likely to marry before the age of 18 than boys, and they often marry much older men.**

This is Bilal. The artwork depicts a young boy under 18 being approached by an adult holding a ring, while a cricket playground is seen in the background—implying they are dragging him away from play and childhood into a world of obligation he is not yet ready for.



**Child marriage must be eliminated.**


**Although some governments and religious authorities say their laws cannot be changed for religious reasons, Islamic teachings support raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 for both boys and girls.**

**In fact, several countries have reformed their laws to end the practice.**



**Artwork shows all three children in a little boat navigating through the high waves of uncharted waters. One of them holds a little lantern. The children's faces look hopeful. The surrounding darkness and waters show shadowy monsters.**



An illustration of a child's face, likely a girl, floating in dark blue water. The child has their eyes closed and is crying, with two tears visible on their cheeks. They are wearing a yellow headscarf with a red and white checkered pattern. The background is a dark, starry space with purple and blue nebulae. A large, dark shadow of a hand is visible in the upper left corner, reaching towards the child. A white speech bubble with a black border is positioned above the child's head, containing text.

**Children, especially girls, are impacted by child marriage in multiple ways. These impacts have been extensively documented. These include health risks, abuse, lack of power, employment, loss of rights, fertility issues, education and national and global impacts.**

**Artwork depicts one of the children overboard, her tears mixing into the ocean water, while the shadows around her get closer.**



## ABUSE

Children who marry early are more vulnerable to domestic violence, sexual abuse, and marital rape by their spouses or in-laws, and often cannot speak out against this violence.

## LOSS OF RIGHTS

Children can lose their status and rights as children, since married persons are considered adults in some countries.

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Child brides may suffer physical, mental, and emotional health difficulties because of the strains placed on them before they have fully matured. Such strains include physical labour, trauma from sexual relations and bearing children at a young age, and higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases. Young mothers face higher maternal mortality rates, and infants born to young mothers have a significantly higher chance of dying at an early age.



## EDUCATION

Children who marry often do not complete their education and lose the skills, independence, and subsequent benefits an education provides.

## HEALTH RISKS

High fertility rates and population growth caused by child marriage can strain national resources, including health, welfare, and education systems.

The artwork depicts the lower half of the girl's body submerged in the water as shadowy tentacles wrap around her. Each tentacle is labeled with the impacts of child marriage.



Older children and youth - although physically developed and mature - are most often forced into marriage under the following misconceptions and societal pressure, under the risk of lacking economic and financial security.

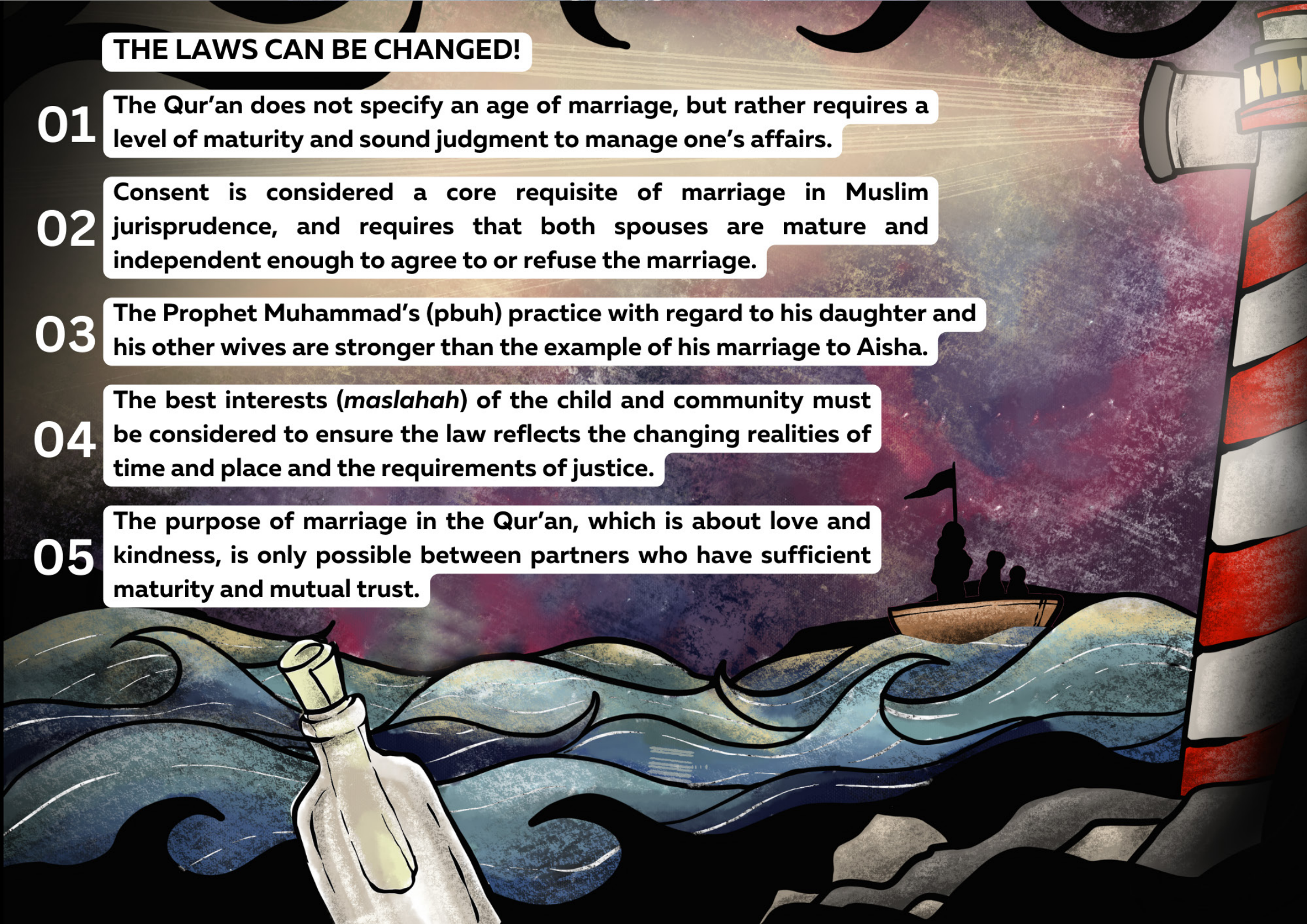


Artwork depicts the older child, Hana submerged in the water. She is crying - while phrases "You're ready", "You'll enjoy marriage", "Not too young for it" and "This is your next step" float across her long hair. Her face depicts a shadow of her inner thought - "No".



## THE LAWS CAN BE CHANGED!

- 01 The Qur'an does not specify an age of marriage, but rather requires a level of maturity and sound judgment to manage one's affairs.
- 02 Consent is considered a core requisite of marriage in Muslim jurisprudence, and requires that both spouses are mature and independent enough to agree to or refuse the marriage.
- 03 The Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) practice with regard to his daughter and his other wives are stronger than the example of his marriage to Aisha.
- 04 The best interests (*maslahah*) of the child and community must be considered to ensure the law reflects the changing realities of time and place and the requirements of justice.
- 05 The purpose of marriage in the Qur'an, which is about love and kindness, is only possible between partners who have sufficient maturity and mutual trust.



Artwork depicts the rough waves and the little boat with the children being tossed around but they are approaching a lighthouse providing a guiding light. The light shines and shows the text.



Muslim family laws can be reformed to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 and set the same minimum age for both girls and boys.

Dear Mama,  
I miss home and  
my friends and  
school. Why did  
I have to go  
away? ☹️  
I want to come back  
home..  
Love, Alma



This has already happened in a number of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries.

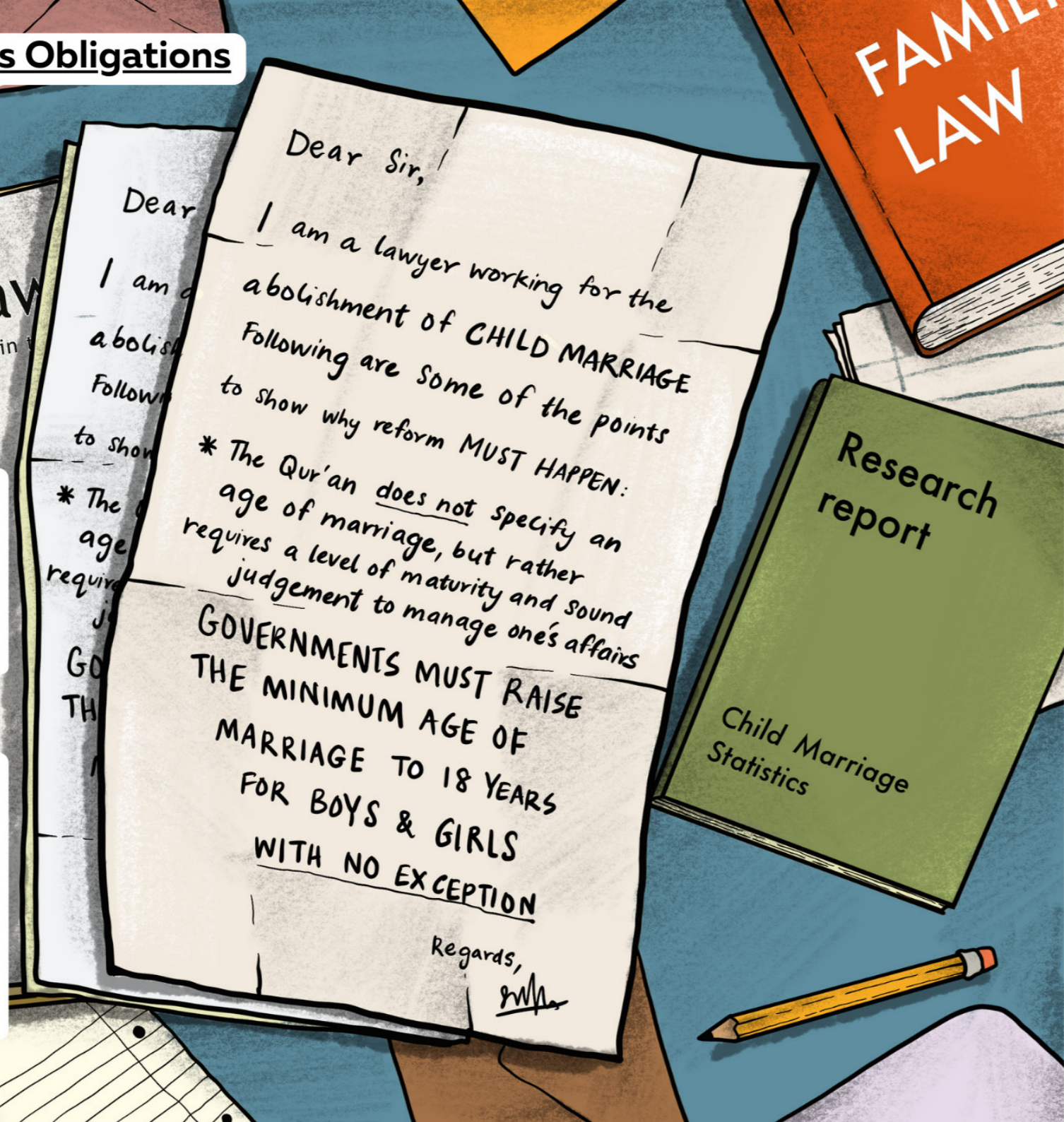
The artwork shows a shower of letters and envelopes. One letter is from a child writing to her mother, asking why she has to be away from her family as a result of child marriage, and when she can go back home. The second letter is a formal and professional one depicting a lawyer writing to the government.



## International Human Rights Obligations relating to Child Marriage

Given the harmful consequences of child marriage, States must take responsibility to protect children and prevent marriages before spouses are physically, mentally, and emotionally ready.

Religious leaders, faith-based and community organisations, schools, and parents must work with States to deal effectively with socio-economic and cultural factors that drive child marriage. Allowing children under 18 to marry is not the solution.



The artwork shows a shower of letters and envelopes. One letter is from a child writing to her mother, asking why this happened and when she can go back home. The second letter is a formal and professional one depicting a lawyer writing to the government.



The international consensus that the procedural definition of childhood should apply to humans up to the age of 18 years - is perfectly compatible with what Islam enjoins. Islam has nothing to do with the custom of child marriage; reference to early marriages can be found nowhere in the Qur'an.

- Al-Azhar University and UNICEF



**#Campaign for Justice**  
**#FreeOurFamilyLaws**



**musawah**  
For Equality in the Family

Illustrations by Shahdia Jamaldeen

The final page shows the children reaching a calmer waters and reaching out for a red and white ring buoy that has been thrown out by the helping hands of organizations and advocates who will not end the fight until the laws are reformed and a safe environment is created for children.



# HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

## 01. PREPARE

- **First:** Do research on the reasons children are forced to get married under 18 in your community. Start asking: Is it a cultural or religious phenomenon? Is it economical for the parents? Is it something entirely different?
- **Second:** Based on your research, think of the message that you want to spread. For example, if parents marry off their daughters for economic reasons, you can construct targeted messaging about how child marriages trap young girls in poverty.
- **Third:** Now that you have the information and messaging, you can come up with tactics to raise awareness in your circles and community. You can do this by organizing multiple activities. You can choose drama/theatre, music/songs, or reaching out to your community to spread the message.

Most importantly is to remember to always set a goal: who and how many parents and/or girls do you want to reach with your message?

# HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

## 02. CAMPAIGN TIME:

You don't have to work on the campaign by yourself. Look for people around you that can help you or join an existing organization that is already fighting for the same cause. Keep in mind that this is a very personal issue and it can be hard for others to hear you.

Keep going but stay safe and sensitive to your context. For every person you reach with confidence and respect, you can literally change a life!

(Source: KidsRights Changemakers)

## 03. DEMAND

Write to your Member of Parliament/Assemblyperson and demand they effectively address child and forced marriage. Inform them to set the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for boys and girls without any exceptions; or if the minimum age is set at 18 years with exception – demand for the exception to be abolished.



## HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

### 04. FIND OUT MORE:

Read Musawah's Policy Brief at  
<https://bit.ly/policy-brief-child-marriage>



### 05. SPREAD AWARENESS:

Please translate these in your language for wider circulation as permission has been given for such sharing to be made.

The Campaign for Justice for Muslim Family Laws (CFJ) is one of Musawah's programme to accelerate equality in Muslim family laws, promote diverse family forms and equitable justice. <https://campaignforjustice.musawah.org/>