



# ***'I Carry the Name of my Parents': Young People's Reflections on FGM and Forced Marriage***

## **Results from PEER studies in London, Amsterdam and Lisbon**

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## ACRONYMS

APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PEER	Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research
FSAN	Federation of Somali Associations in the Netherlands
FORWARD	Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development
APF	Family Planning Association Portugal
IKWRO	Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation
CREATE Youth-Net	Youth Campaign for Rights, Education, Access, Transformation and Engagement on Harmful Practices in Europe

## GLOSSARY

<i>Fanado</i>	Ritual involving FGM (Guinea Bissau)
<i>Fanateca</i>	The person who performs the cutting (Guinea Bissau)
<i>Tabanca</i>	Villages in the interior (of Guinea Bissau)
<i>Heropvoeding</i>	'Cultural rehabilitation' (Dutch)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of three Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation Research (PEER) studies, carried out as part of the CREATE Youth-Net project, which aims to safeguard young people in three European countries (the United Kingdom, Portugal and the Netherlands) from harmful practices, in particular Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. The two year project is funded by the European Commission Daphne programme and led by Foundation for Women's Health and Development (FORWARD), in partnership with Federation of Somali Associations in the Netherlands (FSAN), Family Planning Association Portugal (APF) and Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO).

Twenty-eight young men and women, from diverse ethnicities, were recruited by project partners in Lisbon, Amsterdam and London to act as PEER researchers. All were aged between 18-29 years old with an average age of 23 years. They were trained in conducting conversational interviews and ethical practice, and selected three trusted friends with whom to conduct in-depth discussions. A total of 82 respondents took part. Interviews covered a range of themes, including migration experiences, gender and social norms, notions of cultural identity, and harmful practices including FGM and forced marriage.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Social and cultural context:** Respondents came from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, with different personal circumstances and migration histories. In spite of this, a number of themes in the findings cut across ethnic, migratory and national boundaries. These included how migration to Europe affects ideology and values, and how this has an impact on relationships with the older generation and notions of cultural identity and social norms. While young first or second generation migrants valued human rights, choice, and freedom, they also retained respect for their elders. In addition, the concept of the family name or honour – often closely linked to the maintenance of female virginity before marriage – remained an influential value in the day to day lives of young women in particular. Young people were willing to question and critique elements of their culture, maintaining those which they perceived to be beneficial, whilst rejecting those which were not.

**FGM:** Young Guineans in Portugal had high levels of knowledge about FGM and its consequences due to first hand exposure to the practice in Guinea Bissau. By compiling their accounts, a detailed picture of the practice of FGM in Guinea Bissau can be built, which describes how girls undergo FGM as part of a rite of passage called *fanado*. All but two interviewees were opposed to the practice, and several had already tried (albeit unsuccessfully) to influence people in their own family to abandon the practice. Knowledge about FGM in London and the Netherlands was more mixed: some respondents (typically those who came from countries where FGM is not highly prevalent) only knew about the issue as a result of media coverage, whereas others (in particular, those from the Horn of Africa and parts of West Africa) had friends and relatives who had been affected. There was no indication of support for FGM among interviewees in London and the Netherlands. Young people in the Netherlands, all of whom were of Somali descent, felt confident that FGM was no longer an issue affecting them, although they recognised that new migrants might still support the practice.

**Forced Marriage:** In Amsterdam, forced marriage was considered to be of limited relevance to the Somali community (though unspecific examples were given of girls being ‘married off’ when they were sent back to Somalia for ‘cultural rehabilitation’). Respondents in Lisbon reported a number of stories of forced marriage, suggesting that many young Guineans have first-hand experience of forced and early marriage. They explained how forced marriage was a natural extension of the patriarchal social system: young women’s lack of voice, the ‘holy’ status of the father’s word. It was also a result of high levels of poverty: the fact that families received material benefits from their daughters marrying. This meant that young women could be forced into marriages without their consent – usually to much older men. In London, a small number of respondents knew of friends and other contemporaries who had experienced forced marriage. Most said that it was more of a problem overseas or something that affected previous generations. Young people in both London and Lisbon described in detail the potentially catastrophic results of forced marriage, recognising that in such marriages women were often victims of physical and psychological abuse. However, there was more moral ambiguity evident in relation to forced marriage than around FGM. Some young respondents argued that in certain cases, forced marriage was the result of parents acting out of desperation and with their child’s best interests at heart.

**Communications:** For both forced marriage and FGM, there were low levels of awareness among young people about organisations who could offer help, information or support. However, young people had many ideas about how to improve communications on both issues, including working through schools, and promoting visibility online and in the media.

## IMPLICATIONS

These results support the project’s emphasis on empowering young people as agents of change: they are open to the idea of culture being adaptable (keeping certain aspects whilst moving away from harmful practices) and many want to contribute to ending harmful practices. Human dignity, freedom and opportunities for self-development were important values to the majority of respondents. However, the PEER studies also identified some potential challenges that need to be addressed at policy and programme level.

**Helping young people negotiate age/power structures:** Many young people simultaneously value and respect the older generation, whilst not agreeing with some of their values and practices. It is hard for them to question the views of the ‘oldest and wisest’. Subsequently, it may be difficult to expect young people to report their parents. Although some young people say that FGM is no longer a taboo issue, they still feel uncomfortable talking to their parents about it. Young people will require support in the complex task of developing confidence and ways to talk about FGM and forced marriage whilst retaining a respectful relationship with older generations.

**Tackling ambiguity and acceptance regarding forced marriage:** Some young people are either sympathetic towards forced marriage in certain contexts, or are not clear about when an arranged marriage becomes forced. Others did not know how to respond when confronted with a case of forced marriage. Providing training in practical ways to support victims, as well as raising awareness of the absolute nature of human rights, will be important for the project.

**Locating and making a stronger case for the ‘problem’:** The issues of forced marriage and FGM were seen as being located primarily ‘back home’ (rather than in Europe) or in the past for many of the

respondents. Careful thought needs to be given as to how to make a case that the issues remain pertinent within Europe. This means providing case studies and evidence as part of awareness raising work with young people.

**Supporting young advocates:** Many young people, particularly Guineans in Portugal, have been personally affected by harmful practices (e.g. losing friends to forced marriage and being affected by FGM). The project must be sensitive to this fact, and support mechanisms must be in place to respond to their needs. Young people respond well to their peers and as such it is important to ensure access to multiple support channels, including peer to peer support, for those affected at local level.

**Recognising similarities and differences between the issues:** In some communities (such as those described by the young Guineans) FGM and forced marriage are closely linked. Both practices share many of the same underlying determinants (including control of female sexuality). However, some communities are affected by one practice but not the other, and there are important differences in how FGM and forced marriage are understood and talked about by young people, which need to be considered when developing approaches to tackling them.

**Language sensitivities and appropriateness:** The passion and determination expressed by many young people to end FGM and forced marriage is extremely encouraging. However, young advocates may need to be advised on the sensitivities of language around these subjects, and helped to channel their energies in a productive way (e.g. avoiding language that could be seen as judgemental).

**FGM and forced marriage in a rights-based framework:** FGM and forced marriage are extreme manifestations of gender inequality and attempts to control the sexuality of girls and young women. The project will need to consider the extent to which it tackles FGM and forced marriage as *expressions* of gender inequality, or whether and how it will also tackle underlying *determinants* of these practices, many of which are intimately tied up with culture and identity.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 CREATE Youth-Net

CREATE Youth-Net is a two year European Commission (Daphne) funded project that aims to safeguard young people from harmful practices. It will engage with young people in three European countries (the United Kingdom, Portugal and the Netherlands) to build a European network of empowered youth advocates. They will develop the skills and capacity to campaign against harmful practices, in particular FGM and forced marriage, and to provide peer to peer support to those affected and at risk. The project involves five partner and associate organisations across three countries:

- **London (UK):** FORWARD and IKWRO
- **Lisbon (Portugal):** APF
- **Amsterdam (Netherlands):** FSAN

One of the first stages of the project was to work with young people to undertake participatory research in these three cities. This report presents and synthesises findings from each study. The research was essential to ensure that the project is implemented based on recommendations, knowledge and experiences of young people. This ensures effective engagement on the issues as well as active youth participation in the project. The research also generates evidence on young people's understanding of the issues of FGM and forced marriage in each of the three countries, allowing country context to inform the implementation of the project.

### 1.2 PEER Study Objectives

The PEER studies had the following overall objectives:

- To generate an evidence-base on the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of young people on issues affecting them
- To develop young people's capacity to undertake PEER studies in all three countries through active participation to increase their skills to undertake research
- To develop strategies for working and engaging with young women from affected communities on issues they face, focusing on FGM and forced marriage.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1 Introduction to the PEER Methodology

The PEER method is derived from the anthropological approach which views a relationship of trust as essential for researching social life. PEER involves training members of the target community ('PEER researchers') to carry out in-depth conversational interviews with individuals they selected from their own social networks. As PEER researchers already have established, trusted relationships with their interviewees, interviews can take place over a relatively short period of time and can explore highly sensitive issues. PEER uses third person interviewing techniques, enabling discussion of sensitive issues. The approach has a well-established track record of generating rich, narrative data about the social contexts in which people take decisions. This provides crucial insights into how people understand and negotiate behaviour, and the (sometimes hidden) relationships of power.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2 Sampling and Recruitment

Three separate PEER studies took place in Lisbon, London and Amsterdam from July-September 2013. Selection criteria for PEER researchers were:

- PEER researchers self-identify as coming from a community/ethnic group thought to be affected by FGM and/or forced marriage
- Willingness to participate in the study
- Aged 18-30 years of age.

Most of the PEER researchers were educated (or currently studying) at college or undergraduate level. A wide range of ethnicities were represented (see Table 1). PEER researchers in Lisbon were all born in Guinea Bissau, a former Portuguese colony in West Africa. They included a mixture of young women and men, most of whom were in the final year of secondary school or were studying towards a first degree. In Amsterdam, all PEER researchers were female and of Somali descent, and most were students, with two working. PEER researchers came from Amsterdam and a number of surrounding towns and cities. The London group of PEER researchers was all female, and was ethnically diverse, including Kurdish, Somali, other African, and Asian women. This group included a mixture of students and young women working full time.

Twenty-eight PEER researchers were recruited, who completed interviews with three friends on two occasions (covering different themes during the first and second interviews). This gave a total of 82 interviewees. A small number of PEER researchers (2) did not interview three respondents. The majority of respondents were female, however 18 young men were also interviewed (11 of whom were in Lisbon). The majority of interviewees were either young people from Guinea Bissau (25) or of Somali origin (29). However a wide range of other ethnicities were represented, from Asia, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and West Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Price, NL and K Hawkins (2002) "Researching sexual and reproductive behaviour: A peer ethnographic approach", *Social Science & Medicine*, 55:8, 1327-1338.

**Table 1: PEER researcher and interviewee characteristics**

	Peer Researchers	Interviewees
<b>Number of participants</b>		
London	11	33
Lisbon	9	25
Amsterdam	8	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	3	18
Female	25	64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Mean age, years (range)</b>	<b>23 (18-29)</b>	<b>23 (18-30)</b>
<b>Ethnicity/country of origin</b>		
Afghan	1	2
Bangladeshi	1	4
Guinea Bissau	9	25
Iranian	3	4
Kurdish	1	3
Other	0	1
Other Horn of Africa	1	2
Other Middle Eastern	0	4
Pakistani	0	3
Somali	11	29
West African	1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student*	16	34
Working	12	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>58**</b>

\*Several of the students were also working

\*\*Data on occupation of interviewees in Amsterdam was not collected

### 2.3 Training of PEER Researchers

In all three cities, PEER researchers attended a three-day workshop where they developed interview guides, and interviewing and note-taking skills. These workshops were facilitated by a PEER Specialist (in Lisbon and London) and a supervisor from FORWARD supported by an external consultant (in Amsterdam). In each city, training was supported by supervisors from project partner organisations.

Utilising the overall objectives of the PEER study, interview guides were developed in each country. These comprised a series of interview questions, designed to be appropriate for guiding conversational interviews to be conducted by PEER researchers with others in their social circle. The training and workshops were held in the local language in Lisbon and London (Portuguese and English), with translation for the facilitator when needed. In Amsterdam, the workshops were held in English (all peer researchers and supervisors could speak English), although discussions/interview practice took place in Dutch.

Participatory design of the research tool ensured that the study was framed within the conceptual understanding of the PEER researchers. All interview topics and questions were produced in the local language, using words and phrases typically used by PEER researchers when talking to friends. As interview guides were produced by separate groups of PEER researchers in each of the different social contexts, they differ in a number of ways. For example, the majority of the group in Amsterdam did not feel that FGM or forced marriage were of great significance within their everyday lives, and they chose to explore other topics (including cultural identity) in greater depth instead.

PEER training also equipped PEER researchers to follow ethical standards of conduct during the study, including: obtaining informed consent from respondents, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of data, and signposting interviewees to appropriate support services and further information as necessary.

### 2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

PEER researchers conducted two interviews with each friend, on separate occasions. For the first interview, PEER researchers discussed a broad range of background themes with their friend, which allowed them to develop probing and questioning skills, and enabled contextualisation of findings. Once this was completed they moved on to discuss the more sensitive topic of harmful practices in the second interview. The main themes of the interviews were:

- **First Interview:** experiences of being a migrant (identity, gender norms and cultural expectations)
- **Second Interview:** harmful practices (forced marriage and FGM).

Interview guides for each country can be found in Annex 1. PEER researchers were free to conduct interviews in their language of preference (e.g. Somali, Creole).

PEER researchers were advised to take brief notes (using key words) during interviews, and to write up detailed notes as soon as possible afterwards. These interview notes were emailed to supervisors, who met regularly with PEER researchers to de-brief them, and provide guidance on whether interview notes needed additional detail or explanations.

Interview transcripts were analysed thematically by the report's author, with an initial analysis workshop held with supervisors from FORWARD and IKWRO.

Quotes are used extensively throughout the report, to illustrate key themes, unusual cases, or stories which exemplify a particular point. Quotes are attributed to each interviewee using a code to ensure anonymity. Codes are constructed as follows:

Example code: LF3.GB.25		
<b>First character:</b> location (L = Lisbon, U = London, A = Amsterdam)	<b>Middle characters:</b> Country of origin/ethnic group (see below)	<b>Final characters:</b> Age of interviewee
<b>Second character:</b> gender (M/F)		
<b>Third character:</b> number assigned to interviewee in each location		

Codes for ethnicity/country of origin:

<b>AF</b> Afghan	<b>JM</b> Jamaican
<b>AR</b> Arab (Iraqi)	<b>KD</b> Kurdish
<b>BG</b> Bengali	<b>LB</b> Lebanese
<b>CN</b> Congolese	<b>NG</b> Nigerian
<b>EG</b> Egyptian	<b>PK</b> Pakistani
<b>GB</b> Guinea Bissau	<b>SD</b> Sudanese
<b>GE</b> Georgian	<b>SM</b> Somali
<b>IR</b> Iranian	<b>TK</b> Turkish

### 3 FGM AND FORCED MARRIAGE IN NATIONAL CONTEXT

This section provides definitions and an overview of the context of FGM and forced marriage in the UK, the Netherlands and Portugal. It describes the scale of the problem, who is affected, and responses from both government and civil society, from policy to community-based action.

The World Health Organisation's definition of FGM is recognised in all three countries: FGM consists of procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. There are four major types:<sup>2</sup>

**Type 1:** Clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris

**Type 2:** Excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora

**Type 3:** Infibulation: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris.

**Type 4:** Other: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.

#### 3.1 United Kingdom

##### 3.1.1 FGM

In the UK, FGM is defined as comprising “*all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.*”<sup>3</sup> Accurate, up to date figures on the number of women affected and girls at risk are not available. The most recent estimates are derived from the 2001 census and suggest that over 24,000 girls could be at risk of FGM in the UK, and that nearly 66,000 women with FGM were living in England and Wales at that time<sup>4</sup>. The figure is now thought to be much higher, due to recent patterns of immigration from affected countries. A 2011 study estimated that over 3,500 baby girls are born in London each year to women who have undergone FGM<sup>5</sup>. At one London Hospital alone, over 1500 cases have been recorded since 2002. In this hospital, the majority of women affected came from Somalia, Nigeria, Eritrea and Ethiopia, though British-born women accounted for 11 cases<sup>6</sup>.

The UK made FGM a specific criminal offence in 1985 (Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act). However, the legislation did not prohibit taking girls living in the UK abroad for FGM. This ‘loophole’ was closed in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, which outlines that it is an offence to carry

<sup>2</sup> Source: World Health Organisation, Fact Sheet no 241: FGM [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97829/leaflet-for-fgm.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97829/leaflet-for-fgm.pdf) (UK cross-governmental publication: ‘FGM: The Facts’)

<sup>4</sup> October 2007, FORWARD's ‘Statistical Study to Estimate the Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales’ <http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/key-issues/fgm/research>

<sup>5</sup> Evening Standard newspaper article (28 Nov 2011) <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/3500-girls-are-at-risk-of-mutilation-in-the-capital-6372640.html>

<sup>6</sup> Evening Standard newspaper article (18 Sept 2013) <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/hospital-reveals-1500-new-cases-of-cutting-including-ukborn-victims-8823688.html>

out, or aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad on a UK national or permanent UK resident<sup>7</sup>. Despite this legislation, there has never been a prosecution for FGM in the UK. The UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) produced guidance on FGM (2011) and also developed an 'Action Plan on FGM' (2012) to address the lack of prosecutions in the UK.

Responsibility for ending FGM is shared between several government departments: the Home Office, departments of Health and Education, the Ministry of Justice and the CPS. Although there are no statutory guidelines on FGM in the UK, several policies and guidelines relate to protection, prosecution and prevention. Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines on FGM exist to support frontline professionals with responsibilities for safeguarding children against FGM. There is also supplementary guidance for schools and educational establishments in the Department of Education's policy, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to Interagency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children' (2010). The 'Action Plan Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls 2011 – 2015' includes several measures relating to FGM in terms of training, interventions and legal guidelines.

A number of organisations and initiatives exist in the UK to tackle FGM and lobby for an enhanced governmental response to the issue, at both local and national level:

- **FORWARD** is the leading national charity in UK working on FGM. FORWARD's strategic approach involves:
  - o Influencing policy and legislation to ensure better support for women who have undergone FGM, as well as strengthening safeguarding procedures for girls at risk
  - o Shifting public understanding and awareness of FGM through community engagement including training, events and outreach
  - o Using evidence to change behaviour among community members
  - o Building leadership and skills among FGM-affected community members
  - o Working through partnerships with community organisations and statutory agencies and enabling active participation of communities
  - o Engaging young people as advocates to create behavioral change in their community and among their peers
  - o Providing emotional support for women and girls who have undergone FGM
- **Equality Now** is a key campaigning organisation in the UK, lobbying the UK government to strengthen action on FGM. As the secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on FGM (see below) they have played a key role in several initiatives in the UK including the National Helpline on FGM.
- **Daughters of Eve** is a not-for profit organisation that provides emotional support for women and girls who have undergone FGM, awareness raising activities and events on FGM, and signposting to services.
- **The FGM Initiative** is a collective of community organisations in the UK funded<sup>8</sup> to implement grass roots preventative work on FGM with a variety of target groups including women from FGM-affected communities, religious and community leaders, and young

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d\\_to\\_g/female\\_genital\\_mutilation/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/female_genital_mutilation/) (FGM Legal Guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service)

<sup>8</sup> By the Trust for London, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Comic Relief and Rosa (the UK fund for women and girls).

people. It is the largest community-based FGM initiative in the UK. The initiative is now entering its second phase (2013-2015) where it aims to raise awareness, strengthen networks of groups tackling FGM, and promote a rights-based approach to tackling FGM.

- **Project Azure** is the Metropolitan Police’s dedicated unit to FGM, which formally began its work in 2006. Although the project’s initial remit was to develop prevention and awareness campaigns to protect girls in London from FGM, Project Azure has now evolved to be the Metropolitan Police’s lead on all issues related to FGM.
- The **APPG** on FGM was established in 2011 to work with the government and NGOs to raise awareness and strategise to eliminate the practice.
- A **national helpline** for FGM<sup>9</sup> was launched in the summer of 2013. This was an initiative led by the NSPCC with the support of various FGM stakeholders including grass roots organisations, FGM specialist clinics and national bodies (including the Royal College of Midwives). The helpline offers advice, information and support for anyone concerned that a child’s welfare is at risk because of FGM.
- **Local Engagement on FGM:** the past few years have seen growing local engagement on FGM, perhaps most successfully in Bristol, involving various stakeholders working together to tackle FGM, including health, police, education and community organisations. The ‘Bristol model’ includes a safeguarding and delivery group on FGM which coordinates and supports engagement on FGM in Bristol. Engagement methods include training for professionals (including those in health, social care and police or safeguarding), an FGM schools strategy (Bristol is one of the few places in the UK where FGM engagement occurs in primary school), engaging communities (through events and community trainings) and working with young people. This approach has recently been recommended by the UK government’s Home Office as a model of best practice. As a result there has been a slight increase in the number of FGM delivery or steering groups that aim to coordinate FGM interventions locally (e.g. Lambeth FGM Forum, Manchester FGM Forum).

Despite these developments there is a resistance to addressing FGM in educational settings. In particular there are challenges with addressing FGM in primary schools (even though evidence suggests that FGM typically happens at an early age (5-8 years old) when children are still in primary school). In addition, awareness of FGM and appropriate safeguarding and support procedures still remains inadequate among front-line professionals including social workers, teachers<sup>10</sup> and midwives<sup>11</sup>.

### 3.1.2 Forced Marriage

In the UK, a forced marriage is defined as ‘*where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used.*’

<sup>9</sup> Anyone who is worried about a child being or has been a victim of FGM can contact the helpline on **0800 028 3550** for information and support.

<sup>10</sup> Teachers’ efforts to tackle female genital mutilation hampered, NSPCC Press Release 19 Mar 2013 [www.nspcc.org.uk/news-and-views/media-centre/press-releases/2013/female-genital-mutilation/NSPCC-warning-teachers-on-FGM\\_wdn94822.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/news-and-views/media-centre/press-releases/2013/female-genital-mutilation/NSPCC-warning-teachers-on-FGM_wdn94822.html)

<sup>11</sup> The Royal College of Midwives Female Genital Mutilation: Report of a survey on midwives’ views and knowledge (2012). Available to download from [www.rcm.org.uk/college/your-career/information-services/](http://www.rcm.org.uk/college/your-career/information-services/)



<sup>12</sup> The pressure can be physical (including threats, and physical and sexual violence) or emotional and psychological (e.g. making someone feel as though they are bringing shame on the family). Other forms of abuse that may harm victims of forced marriage include financial abuse and neglect. The most recent research on forced marriage suggests that the majority of forced marriage cases take place among South Asian communities (Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian). However, communities from Africa, the Middle East and parts of Eastern Europe are also affected. Researchers estimate that in 2008, between 5,000 and 8,000 cases of either actual forced marriage, or the threat of forced marriage, were reported to authorities<sup>13</sup>.

From November 2008, the *Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007* came into force, which established Forced Marriage Protection Orders as a civil remedy for victims of (or those faced with) forced marriage. However, unlike legislation against FGM, the 2007 act did not treat forced marriage as a specific criminal offence. New clauses in the *Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Bill* now criminalise both forced marriages and breaches of Forced Marriage Protection Orders.<sup>14</sup>

Organisations working on forced marriage include:

- A **Forced Marriage Unit** (located in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office), which aims to raise awareness about forced marriage across the public sector.
- **IKWRO**, who provide:
  - o An advice and advocacy service to women and girls at risk of forced marriage, honour based violence, female genital mutilation and domestic violence
  - o Advice surgeries outside of the office for enhanced accessibility for women
  - o Training to professionals and members of the communities on forced marriage, both to raise awareness of the issues and to train them on how to respond to forced marriage cases
  - o Outreach sessions to raise awareness on the issues facing women and how to prevent and protect women from harmful practices
  - o Campaigns to promote changes in the law, e.g. the criminalisation of forced marriage
  - o Counselling service in English, Kurdish, Farsi and Arabic
- **Other NGOs** who also work with victims of forced marriage include **Karma Nirvana** and **Southall Black Sisters**. These NGOs also work with the Forced Marriage Unit to help return girls who have been subjected to forced marriage to safety.

Unlike FGM, the issue of Forced Marriage has a resource Forced Marriage Unit, which leads a lot of the work. Forced marriage also sees more extensive provision of extraterritoriality support than the issue of FGM (e.g. the UK supports the return of individuals who have undergone forced marriage).

<sup>12</sup> [www.gov.uk/forced-marriage](http://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage) (government website)

<sup>13</sup> Kazimirski, Anne et. al. 'Forced Marriage – Prevalence and Service Response' Research Brief DCSF-RB128. National Centre for Social Research (July 2009)  
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/222193/DCSF-RB128.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/222193/DCSF-RB128.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> House of Commons Library 'Forced marriage' Standard Note: SN/HA/1003 Last updated: 16 September 2013 [www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn01003.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn01003.pdf)

## 3.2 Portugal

### 3.2.1 FGM

No data is available on how many girls and women living in Portugal are affected by FGM. In 2010, 9,263 women originally from countries that practice FGM were living in Portugal (mainly from Guinea-Bissau<sup>15</sup>). A relatively small survey of health professionals (sample size of 52) from around Lisbon found that 27% had come across patients with FGM, and that 13.5% believed that FGM is performed in Portugal.

In Portugal, FGM is considered a crime. Since September 2007, the Criminal Code (Law n.º 59/2007) has included a disposition relating to FGM (although the term FGM is not explicitly mentioned in the text). It considers the abuse of the body or health of another person hindering the person's ability to sexual fulfillment as a criminal offence (Article 144º, Serious offence to physical integrity). Perpetrators may face up to ten years of punishment, and as in the UK, the principle of extraterritoriality is applicable (FGM is punishable even if carried out outside the country).<sup>16</sup>

Portugal has a specific Action Plan on FGM which is now in its second phase: The 'Second Programme of Action for the Elimination of FGM 2011–2013/II Programa de Acção Para a Eliminação da Mutilação Genital Feminina'. This is integrated into the 'Fourth National Action Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-discrimination 2011–2013' issued by the Council of Ministers. The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, in cooperation with the Inter-sectorial Working Group, is responsible for implementation, and the FGM Action Plan comes under the political responsibility of the Secretary of State of Parliamentary Affairs and Equality.

Most of the actors working on FGM are part of the Inter-sectorial Working Group of the Action Plan, including public bodies from different sectors and civil society organisations. APF started working on FGM in 2000, with three main areas of focus: advocating for women and children's rights, sexual and reproductive health, and cooperation and development with the United Nations Fund for Population, other UN agencies, research institutes and European NGOs from several countries.

In 2012, 'Clinical Guidelines for Health Professionals about FGM' were published, providing guidance on the clinical management of women affected by FGM, and outlining preventive measures to protect girls at risk. Health professionals should register the nationality and FGM grade of women affected by FGM in their clinical records, and children at risk of FGM should be referred to the National Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People at Risk (CPCJ).

### 3.2.2 Forced Marriage

No data about forced marriage is available for Portugal. While there is no specific offence of forced marriage in Portuguese law, marriages conducted without the free will of both parties are deemed

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<sup>15</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). 'Current situation of female genital mutilation in Portugal' (2012)

[http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Current%20situation%20and%20trends%20of%20female%20genital%20mutilation%20in%20Portugal\\_EN.pdf](http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Current%20situation%20and%20trends%20of%20female%20genital%20mutilation%20in%20Portugal_EN.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <http://eige.europa.eu/content/portuguese-penal-code-04092007-articles-144-offence-against-the-physical-integrity-and-145-q>

null and void.<sup>17</sup> Child protection services are responsible for protecting a person under 18 from getting married against their will.

### 3.3 The Netherlands

#### 3.2.3 FGM

A recently published report<sup>18</sup> estimates that roughly 28,000 women living in the Netherlands have undergone FGM (mostly from African countries, though over 3,000 women from the Kurdish Autonomous Region in Northern Iraq are included in this figure), The risk is thought largely to be realised during visits to countries of origin. One third of the women who have undergone FGM are thought to originate from Somalia, and 80% of the women affected come from a small number of countries: Somalia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kurdish Iraq. The report estimates that annually, 40 to 50 girls are at risk of FGM, most of whom are from African communities.

The discrepancy between the number of women affected, and the relatively small number of girls at risk each year, is thought to due to the enabling policy environment in the Netherlands, in addition to changes in norms, values and knowledge about the consequences of FGM once living in the Netherlands. For two decades, the Netherlands has adopted a strategic and targeted approach to FGM, creating dialogue, fostering community engagement, and providing training for professionals. There are comprehensive legal, child protection, data collection and risk assessment systems in place at national and local level.

All forms of FGM have been forbidden in the Netherlands since 1993, and since 2003 it has been possible to seek asylum in the Netherlands if there is a threat of FGM in the country of origin<sup>19</sup>. The following extract summarises the legal status of FGM in the Netherlands (Exterkate 2013):

*FGM is treated in the Netherlands as a very serious and damaging form of child abuse. It is prosecutable under general criminal legislation (section 300-304, 307, 308 of the Penal Code), with a maximum imprisonment of 12 years or a fine of maximum € 76.000. In case FGM is done by one of the parents, imprisonment can be increased with one third. In case the parent(s) gave the assignment, pay for it, provide means that will be used for FGM or assist during FGM, they will be punishable as well. This is seen as instigation, aiding and abetting. An adjustment of the law in February 2006 makes FGM performed abroad punishable too, in case the suspected person has a Dutch nationality or lives in the Netherlands. In July 2009 the period of limitation was prolonged. The period of limitation takes effect with the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and amounts to 20 years with serious forms of FGM.*

The government wants to use the following measures to prevent FGM<sup>20</sup>:

<sup>17</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/157829/forced-marriage-response.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/157829/forced-marriage-response.pdf) Home Office. 'Forced Marriage – A Consultation. Summary of Responses' (June 2012)

<sup>18</sup> Exterkate, Marja. 'Female Genital Mutilation in the Netherlands: Prevalence, Incidence and Determinants'. Pharos (2013)

<sup>19</sup>Source: [www.pharos.nl/documents/doc/focal\\_point\\_folder\\_2011.pdf](http://www.pharos.nl/documents/doc/focal_point_folder_2011.pdf)

<sup>20</sup>Source: [www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/eergerelateerd-geweld/meisjesbesnijdenis](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/eergerelateerd-geweld/meisjesbesnijdenis)

- Parents of daughters from risk countries (such as Somalia and Ethiopia) receive a 'Statement against FGM' (Dutch Health Passport) from a paediatrician. This allows them to show their relatives abroad that FGM is punishable in the Netherlands and has health consequences.
- National migrant organizations receive government funding for the 'Say No to FGM' campaign, which aims to get all stakeholders, including (grand)parents and other family members in affected communities, to speak out against FGM.
- GGD Netherlands (The Public Health Service) receives government funding to ensure that parents are informed about the harmful effects of FGM and policy related to FGM.
- The Public Health Service and FSAN train 'key figures' to spread FGM awareness. These key figures are volunteers who originally come from a country where FGM is practiced. They provide information through meetings in community centres or during home visits. In addition to these key figures, the government has appointed four ambassadors, who organize national meetings on FGM (for example, for religious leaders or youth).

The Advice and Reporting Child Abuse (AMK) has 15 experts who can recognize the risks of FGM. Other social workers may consult with these experts. Social workers can find training and protocols in their fight against FGM on Pharos' website (which provides information on health care for migrants and refugees). Other key actors in the Netherlands' response to FGM include:

- Representatives of the Somali, Sudanese, Eritrean and Ethiopian communities, including FSAN
- Home care services
- Youth healthcare services
- Advice and Reporting Centres for Child Abuse and Neglect
- Child Protection Board
- The police
- Obstetric services

### 3.2.4 Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is illegal in the Netherlands. From July 2013 stricter regulations were brought into force, with the following rules applying<sup>21</sup>:

- Perpetrators can get up to two years imprisonment (previously, it was up to nine months).
- If a Dutch citizen has forced someone abroad into marriage, prosecution is possible in the Netherlands, even if forced marriage is not punishable in that country. This also applies to foreigners with a permanent place of residence in the Netherlands.
- If a Dutch citizen or a foreigner with a permanent place of residence in the Netherlands is a victim of forced marriage outside the country, the perpetrator can be prosecuted in the Netherlands.
- The limitation period for forced marriage committed against a minor has been extended. The limitation period of six years begins when the victim becomes 18 years old.
- It is possible to put a suspect for forced marriage into custody, in order to protect the victim.

<sup>21</sup> Source: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/eergerelateerd-geweld/huwelijksdwang>

- The Public Prosecutor has greater powers to track down offenders. The prosecution may, for example, retrieve information about the telephone traffic of the offender.

It is difficult to determine the precise number of forced marriages in the Netherlands, and who is affected. The authorities, including the police, do not currently register instances of forced marriage as a distinct category. However, it is clear from the reports of schools, the police, and rescue and shelter services that forced marriage occurs in the Netherlands, with serious consequences for those involved.

Forced marriage occurs across ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes, but it is thought to affect Turkish, Moroccan, Indian, Somali, Iranian, Iraqi, Afghan, Pakistani, Kurdish, Chinese, Indonesian (Moluccas Island) and Roma communities in particular. Forced marriages also occur in very closed and native Dutch communities in the higher classes (dynasties<sup>22</sup>).

The Ministry of Justice launched a national awareness campaign on forced marriage in June 2009. The telephone numbers of five Support Centres for Domestic Violence (including in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Almelo) have been publicised via various organizations, websites, and through videos on YouTube. An Emergency Plan in case of domestic violence also has been made available. The campaign is in partnership with the City of Rotterdam, umbrella organizations of migrant and refugee organizations, Support Remigrants Foundation and MOVISIE. Part of the campaign addressed young people in schools, asking them to sign a contract if they feared forced marriage. Furthermore, various information campaigns are undertaken in Rotterdam, and School Attendance Officers are notified when girls stay away after the summer. MOVISIE and the Vrije University held a national conference on forced marriage in November 2008. This conference took place in Amsterdam under the framework of the EU Daphne Project, 'Active Against Forced Marriage'<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup>Source: [www.shg-amsterdam.nl/sites/default/files/factsheet over huwelijksdwang voor professionals.pdf](http://www.shg-amsterdam.nl/sites/default/files/factsheet%20over%20huwelijksdwang%20voor%20professionals.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Source: [www.movisie.nl/sites/default/files/alfresco\\_files/Factsheet%20huwelijksdwang%20%5BMOV-221745-0.3%5D.pdf](http://www.movisie.nl/sites/default/files/alfresco_files/Factsheet%20huwelijksdwang%20%5BMOV-221745-0.3%5D.pdf)

## 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Structure of the Report

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 4.2 provides **contextual information**, discussing a broad range of issues that young people felt to be of particular significance to their lives
- Section 4.3 describes levels of **awareness, knowledge, and opinions** of young people around FGM and forced marriage
- Section 4.4 summarises where young people learned about FGM and forced marriage, and their recommendations for **channels of communication and campaigning**
- Section 5 concludes with a **discussion** of the findings, and **implications** for CREATE Youth-Net's strategy.

### 4.2 Context: Complex and Diverse Identities

The results illustrate the huge diversity of personal circumstances, migration histories and cultural backgrounds of respondents. Due to the heterogeneity of study respondents, it is not always possible to generalise about the experiences or opinions of individual ethnic groups. Rather, the data illustrate a broad range of themes that young people described as affecting them, which cut across ethnic, migratory and national categories, namely:

- The impact of migration to Europe in terms of values, and social norms, and in particular how this affects relationships with the older generation and notions of cultural identity
- The pressures and expectations that young people experienced, particularly in relation to educational attainment and marriage
- The particular challenges and opportunities faced by young first or second generation migrants
- Gender roles, and in particular, women's status.

These themes are explored further in the following sections.

#### 4.2.1 Negotiating Different World Views and Social Values

In Lisbon, young Guineans – most of whom were born in Guinea Bissau – describe finding a completely different 'mind-set' in Portugal, in terms of fundamental social values. They characterise social life in Guinea Bissau as being strongly patriarchal, with women having to submit to their parents (and in particular their fathers) and later their husbands. In addition, there is a strong culture of deference towards older people which is reinforced by religious teachings [*religion teaches them that parents' decisions are sacred/religião ensina-lhes que as decisões dos pais são sagradas*' (LM18.GB.20)]. Young Guineans report their shock at seeing children in Portugal shouting at their parents in public, or questioning the authority of older people. They identify freedom, autonomy, and critical/rational thinking (in particular, the ability to question the prescribed way of doing things) as characteristics of Portuguese – and more widely, European – society.

*From birth, we are instilled with knowledge related to our society, religion and culture. In this environment the older people have a crucial role, they are considered examples to the youngest, defenders of morality and good manners, and it is they who teach us to distinguish good from evil. (LF6.GB.23)*

*Quando nascemos são-nos inculcados conhecimentos relacionados com a nossa sociedade, religião e a cultura. Nesse meio os mais velhos têm um papel crucial, são considerados exemplos dos mais novos, os defensores da moral e dos bons costumes e são eles que nos ensinam a distinguir o bem do mal. (LF6.GB.23)*

Advantages and disadvantages of both sets of values were identified by interviewees. On the whole, young Guineans were critical of ‘excessive’ freedom and lack of appreciation amongst young Portuguese for resources that they take for granted, which young Guineans do not, having experienced life in a fragile developing country (for example, access to health care and a functioning education system) (*‘here there is an excess of freedom, there we have limits to everything/Aqui há um excesso de liberdade, já lá temos limites para tudo.’* (LM9.GB.20)). However, they were all<sup>24</sup> highly critical of harmful practices that continue to affect young Guineans, and many believe that one of the reasons for the perpetuation of these practices is because young people are expected to unquestioningly follow the older generation’s wishes [*‘the respect and authority that parents have over their children in our community makes [these children] afraid to disobey them and accept against their wills [...] these practices/o respeito e a autoridade que os pais detêm sobre os filhos na nossa comunidade faz com que estes (filhos/as) tenham medo desobedece-los e aceitem contra as suas vontades as decisões dos mesmos relativos à essas práticas’* (LM16.GB.23)].

Young Guineans thus find themselves in a position of tension: they value their self-sufficiency, discipline and ambition, which they attribute to the respect they have for their parents and elders, and the strict boundaries which they have been brought up with. Simultaneously, since being exposed to ideas of universal human rights (particularly women’s rights), other cultures, and ideals of self-determination, they do not support the harmful practices that many of the older generation continue to support [*‘they realise things that if they were in Guinea, they wouldn’t even notice/conseguem perceber de coisas que se calhar se ainda estivessem lá nem davam conta’* (LF21.GB.26)]. Addressing the issues of FGM and forced marriage could potentially bring young advocates into conflict with the older generations, something they may wish to avoid. As one respondent put it, it takes significant ‘*courage and initiative*’ to face their parents and fight in defence of human rights, but there seems to be considerable desire to move towards these ideals (as is explored further in section 4.4).

Young people in Amsterdam and London, across a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, described very similar views: that the values of their countries of origin were characterised by respect and/or deference to parents and other elders; a collectivist rather than individualistic mentality; and widespread, unquestioning acceptance of ‘traditional’ ways of life (the ‘*follow like sheep*’ attitude, as one young Londoner put it). The following quotation examines the contrasting ideological frameworks of Afghan and UK society in a highly reflective and insightful manner:

*Contrary to popular belief, the Afghan community in the UK has a predominantly secularist value system. Long gone are the days when seemingly ‘talibanistic rituals’ were performed on the streets of London by immigrants of Afghan background. Whilst horrific horror stories such as the Canadian honour killing do emerge occasionally, the ‘iron fist’ of inhumane cultural traditions is losing its grip. Whilst patriarchal norms still carry utmost importance in my community, the social expectations on young women is not too dissimilar to those placed upon men. The ‘Afghan dream’ in the United Kingdom constitutes work and study. The ruling mantra ‘be productive’ empowers both genders to excel academically as well as socially – an ideology which is rare back home in Afghanistan. [Question:*

<sup>24</sup> With two notable exceptions, see section 4.3.1.

*So there is an ideological divide in opinion for Afghans living in different geographical areas? Absolutely, Afghans living in the UK primarily believe in gender equality and therefore have high cultural expectations of both sexes. Back home in Afghanistan, such equality is uncommon. Especially from a feminist perspective, there is little attention given to women's education or their future job prospects. The patriarchal structure of society demands that men occupy the role of sole 'breadwinner', whilst women are classified as childminders. (UF20.AF.18)*

For many groups, the concepts of honour/respect and the family name were also crucially important. If a young woman damaged the honour or reputation of her family through 'improper' behaviour, this could tarnish the value or status of the whole family for many years [*'you do not want to be responsible for your parents' misery'* (UF20.AF.18)]; conversely, a strategic marriage, aligning the family with another, high standing family, could lift their status. As one young respondent in London explained, *'every time I leave the house I carry the name of my parents'* (UF24.BG.22). A central part of family honour is linked to maintaining a daughters' virginity prior to marriage. Across many different ethnic groups and in London and Amsterdam, female virginity is still an important cultural requirement or value. Many of the stories of forced marriage (discussed in section 4.3.3) and honour killings<sup>25</sup> can only be understood in the context of these values.

In all three countries, and among people of different backgrounds, a number of respondents discussed the importance of being able to 'pick and choose' which elements of their cultural identity they wished to hold on to, and which elements should be discarded. Among most young people, the desire to maintain a respectful relationship towards their elders remained important, as did holding on to customs like family gatherings and weddings, traditional food, and in some cases traditional clothing. Young Somalis in Amsterdam also picked out modesty (in dress/behaviour), and the high levels of social support between family and friends, as positive aspects of their culture. The value attached to young women's virginity before marriage, and not having children before marriage, also remains high in the data from London and Amsterdam [*'when it comes to pre-marital sex for women, even the liberals are conservatives'* (UF31.TK.22)]. The aspects of culture that young people talked about rejecting included: early marriage (e.g. under twenty years old), limiting women to being housewives, the 'clan mentality' (for Somalis), and – almost universally – FGM (as discussed later).

Likewise, several respondents (in London and Amsterdam) discussed the growing importance of religious (Islamic) values and practices, which were said to be taking precedence over ethnic or national cultural practices for some second generation young Muslims [*'I will choose my faith above all'* (AF3.SM)].

These discussions suggest that young people are aware of, and open to, the malleable nature of culture and identity. They are willing to question, critique, and maintain those elements which are perceived still to be beneficial, whilst rejecting those that are not. This adaptability and openness to change are characteristics that they claim are lacked by older generations. Their parents are often portrayed as very concerned or threatened by the perception that their children are not upholding their traditions, or are forgetting their culture. The situation was further complicated for young Somalis in Amsterdam, who often also had to negotiate language barriers in their relationships with the older generation (who often did not speak Dutch, while young people were often not fluent in Somali).

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<sup>25</sup> The issue of honour killings was not included in the scope of this research project, but some respondents did talk about them. See, for example, quote 5 in Annex 2.



#### 4.2.2 Family Pressures and Expectations of Young People on Education and Marriage

Young people across all three countries expressed high levels of ambition in terms of educational attainment. In Lisbon, young Guineans also talked more broadly about personal development [*formation*] – the wider process of attaining maturity and developing one’s personality. Compared with the *‘anarchy’* they describe within the educational system in Guinea Bissau (teachers who cannot speak Portuguese, dilapidated infrastructure), they describe the intense struggle, and the large potential rewards, involved in obtaining a good education in Portugal. They see education as critical to not only securing a job and economic means, but for integrating within Portuguese society. Several respondents also described how education was the vehicle that allowed women to assert their rights and economic independence, in stark contrast to the position of women in their country of origin.

Young people in London talked at length about cultural and educational expectations of them, and how these were highly gendered. One young Iranian woman described how the priorities for women were to be confident, presentable and independent, whilst men were expected to be career/money-oriented and to earn a higher salary than their wife. A young Kurdish woman described worrying about always *‘looking over her shoulder’*, as there was a risk of shame and embarrassment to her family if she failed to meet their expectations. While one young woman acknowledged that expectations could be productive, pushing one to higher achievements, she also remarked that it could be hard – especially for girls – as everyone was watching.

Women also experienced high expectations in terms of educational and professional achievement. One respondent cautioned that in her community, this should not be misread as a sign that women are gaining an equal social or professional standing to men: rather, she saw educational attainment as a *‘class statement’* – another accessory that a woman should obtain in order to maximise her chances of marrying well (alongside beauty, and youth).

The expectations placed upon women were discussed in more detail – reflecting the largely female interviewee sample – but there was acknowledgement that men also faced expectations and responsibilities. In almost all groups, men were expected to be the primary breadwinners, and to earn higher salaries than their wives and provide for the family.

In London in particular, a large numbers of stories of families in flux were recounted, in which young women had deviated from expected paths, leading to despair among other family members. Consequences of not meeting family or cultural expectations included being disowned, socially cut off, belittled, or *‘treated like a child’*. Among young Somalis in Amsterdam, a possible consequence of not fulfilling expectations was being sent back to Somalia for *‘cultural rehabilitation’* [*heropvoeding*] – sometimes without their prior knowledge or consent. The majority of respondents disagreed with this consequence, but in certain situations it was considered to have positive end results, as the following story illustrates:

<p><i>My cousin was sent back to Somalia. His mother brought him there, because she felt he was heading in the wrong direction in life. He didn’t know he was being sent back, he thought he was going away for a vacation. He blamed his mother for leaving him behind. He just couldn’t adapt to the Somali way of life at that time. But since he had no other option, he just had to get used to it and make the best of the situation. He learnt a lot from his culture and the</i></p>	<p><i>Mijn neef moest terug naar Somalië. Zijn moeder bracht hem daar omdat hij volgens haar het slechte pad op ging. Hij wist niet dat hij naar Somalië ging voor heropvoeding maar voor een vakantie. Hij nam het zijn moeder echt kwalijk dat ze hem daar achter liet. Hij moest echt wennen aan het leven in Somalië. Maar omdat je er toch bent en je er niks aan kan veranderen ging hij er het beste van maken. Hij heeft</i></p>
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*Somali language. He is now back in Europe with a different mind-set. He really sees the difference now between Europe and Africa. He went back to study and now has his diploma. He is doing good so far. (AF8.SM.19)*

*veel van zijn cultuur leren kennen en de Somalische taal goed geleerd. Hij is nu weer terug in Europa en heeft een hele ander kijk op dingen. Hij ziet echt de verschillen die er zijn in Europa en Afrika. Hij ging weer studeren en heeft zijn diploma. Tot nu toe gaat alles prima met hem.*

After education, the next most significant event or process in young people’s lives in both London and Amsterdam was most commonly said to be marriage. Among these respondents, marriage was not seen simply as a relationship between two individuals, but as a way to bind families in a public statement, the correct institution for raising children, and sometimes, as a way of displaying and/or growing wealth and connections.

Respondents from many different backgrounds said that there was a large amount of internally and externally imposed pressure to be married by a certain age, particularly for women. Although there was recognition that young women would want to finish their education, and most likely establish themselves in a career, before getting married. Arranged marriages were commonplace in many of the communities in London, though less so in Amsterdam and Lisbon. Among the Somali community in Amsterdam, there were family and social expectations around marriage (e.g. the desirability of marrying a fellow Muslim), and many young people said that it was necessary to gain their parents’ consent in their choice of spouse. However, none of the young people in Amsterdam felt that forced marriage was an issue for them.

#### 4.2.3 Challenges and Opportunities

In Lisbon, major challenges faced (particularly by new arrivals) are lack of documentation (obtaining a residence card, which is necessary for access to education and other services), language barriers (although Portuguese is an official language in Guinea Bissau, it is not widely spoken), poorly paid or lack of employment, and racism (or lack of accommodation in the workplace to religious requirements e.g. requirements in Islam to pray throughout the day). Many young people were also struggling with the fact that they are distanced from close family members. While most young Guineans said that integration was desirable and possible, over time and with the support of friends, it was felt that the older the person was when they arrived, the harder it would be for them to adapt to living in Portugal.

In London, the interviewees discussed what they and their families thought about living in the UK. They identified the economic opportunities, social mobility, diversity of cultures, human rights (and women’s rights in particular), political stability, and higher (or more comfortable) living standards as significant advantages of living in the UK. Several added that there was greater scope in the UK than their country of origin to find one’s individual personality and identity. While some young people felt that London was their true home, having lived there all their lives, others felt that ‘*Britain is beautiful, but it’s not home*’ (UF20.AF.18). As this young woman explained, Britain lacked the extended social networks and sense of community that her family had in Afghanistan. A small number of young Muslims also regretted the general lack of consideration of their religious needs in the UK (e.g. in terms of employers and other institutions recognising Ramadan, daily prayers, etc.).

Another common issue to arise among Pakistani, Arab, Somali and other Muslim respondents was the negative media coverage and perceived stereotyping of their communities, particularly in

relation to terrorism, benefit fraud, and criminality. In Amsterdam, a young woman described a commonly voiced sentiment of young first or second generation migrants: *'We are actually raised in two cultures. Somalis consider us too Dutch and from the Dutch point of view we are still Somali'* (AF8.SM.19).

#### 4.2.4 Gender Roles, Social Status and Norms

Young people in all three cities readily saw links between forced marriage, FGM and women's status. Many of the PEER researchers and interviewees were extremely articulate in their responses, providing a high degree of analysis and insight in regards to how men's and women's status is affected by legal rights, education, and social class.

In London, young women from many different backgrounds (including Arab, Kurdish, Bengali, and Somali) described how girls' and young women's freedom, in comparison to men, is curtailed in many ways and to varying degrees (according to the outlook of individual families). This could range from severely restricted movement (outside of attending college), having to gain permission regarding choice of holiday or career (e.g. to avoid contact with men), to requiring parental consent in choice of marriage partner. Several respondents made a link between this lack of choice/independence and the practice of arranged marriage: the same factors that cause families to curtail their daughters' freedom (protectiveness, fear of shame being brought on the family, lack of trust in her decision making) are the factors that logically lead towards arranged, and sometimes forced, marriages. However, this generation of young women believe that they will go on to achieve more equitable status with men in their future marriages.

Young women reacted in a broad variety of ways to these social expectations and gender roles: at one extreme end of the spectrum, respondents reported stories of teenaged girls pursuing 'alternative' and rebellious lifestyles, involving sexual experimentation, drug use, and casual relationships. Some young women described leading a 'double life' – or a very discreet life with *'small acts of rebellion'* – to try and ensure that their families did not find out, for instance, about pre-marital relationships. Other young women simply accepted their situation and did as their parents wished.

Respondents in Lisbon presented a dichotomous picture in terms of the status of Guinean women in Portugal versus Guinea Bissau. Although there was some recognition that even in Guinea Bissau, the status of women (particularly in urban areas) is starting to change, once they arrived in Portugal, there was a radical shift between men's and women's roles. Men were said to be much more likely to contribute to raising children and helping around the home (traditionally the preserve of women), whilst women were often said to be the main breadwinners, and contributed at least equally (if not more than men) to the decision making and resourcing of the household. This was seen to be the result of both the influence of Portuguese society, and improved educational and economic opportunities for women. Although interviewees consistently described women in Guinea Bissau as being without a voice and oppressed by men, the stories recounted in the PEER study of forced marriage and FGM reveal high levels of defiance and desire for self-determination (see section 4.3).

#### 4.3 Levels of Awareness and Knowledge

In London and Amsterdam, the level of detail provided about FGM was lower than that provided by young people in Lisbon. Several factors lie behind this, including the fact that on average, Guinean respondents had arrived in Europe much more recently in comparison with other respondents. For

this reason, the report has a section on FGM from the Lisbon data, followed by a section describing the London and Amsterdam data.

#### 4.3.1 FGM in the Lisbon Data

FGM and forced marriage are not abstract concepts to the young Guineans in this study. Almost every interviewee provided at least one story of FGM or forced marriage from within their family, friendship circle or immediate neighbourhood. Almost all of these stories were located within Guinea Bissau, though several concerned women and girls residing in Portugal at the time they were affected. One interviewee's girlfriend had undergone FGM, and during the interview he described the discomfort that she experienced during sexual intercourse as a result. Another interviewee described how she had undergone FGM herself. Other young women had lost female friends to forced marriage – sent off to the countryside and never seen again.

By analysing the PEER data from young Guineans, a detailed picture of the social and economic context of FGM and forced marriage can be built. Most interviewees had a sound understanding of the basic issues surrounding FGM and forced marriage, and some provided an extremely detailed and nuanced analysis of the issues, including discussing them within a human rights framework [e.g. 'FGM is a violation of the right to physical integrity and human dignity/É uma violação aos direitos à integridade física, à dignidade da pessoa humana' (LF13.GB.24), 'women are treated as a commodity, and human rights are violated/mulher é trata como mercadoria e como os direitos humanos são desrespeitados' (LF20.GB.24)]. Several respondents drew links between forced marriage and FGM, explaining how these practices often go hand in hand, as for some ethnic groups, girls have to be cut before they can be married:

*For now we cannot talk about forced marriage without talking about 'fanado' because they are things that are always together in the Fula community. All women who are forced into these marriages are usually 'fanadas'. Parents that take their daughters to these paths are gripped by those ideas.*

*Para já não podemos falar de casamento forçado sem 'fanado' porque são coisas que andam sempre juntas dentro da comunidade fula. Todas as mulheres obrigadas a esses casamentos geralmente são 'fanadas'. Os pais levam as filhas para esses caminhos são agarradas aquelas ideias' (LM4.GB.21)*

In Guinea Bissau, FGM is practiced by certain ethnic groups, and the reasons underpinning it and precise practices associated with it differ according to the ethnic group. FGM typically takes place as part of a wider rite of passage ritual known as *fanado*<sup>26</sup>. Both girls and boys undergo 'circumcision' to 'purify' them and signify passage to adulthood. Girls are cut by women, and boys are cut by men. Girls, typically teenagers, are taken into sacred tents or huts in groups, where over a period of time they learn about how to be a good woman (their ethnic customs, lifestyle and values) and also undergo FGM. The *Fanatecas* (people who do the cutting) earn money from organising and carrying out these rituals. It is a very public ritual: once the girls have been cut, there is a large and public party to celebrate (see quote 1 in Annex 2 for an example of a girl's experience of *fanado*). One respondent described there being mass cuttings in the same place at the same date each year in a certain part of the country – which was well known, but the government did nothing to intervene.

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<sup>26</sup> This appears to be similar to the *Bondo* secret society initiation which takes place in Sierra Leone.

Even if legislation exists, the social norms around FGM can be so powerful, operating across different levels of society, such that there is limited political will and public appetite to enforce the legislation.

Not all FGM takes place in these special tents/huts: one interviewee said she had been cut in hospital when she was very young (though she thought that hospitals no longer allow this) and another interviewee said his aunt was a ‘mobile’ cutter who visited people’s homes to carry out FGM. She had previously done this in her own home: the interviewee describes seeing queues of people from different neighbouring countries (e.g. Senegal) waiting to have their daughters cut – but following the deaths of several girls she had started to work house-to-house<sup>27</sup>.

Several interviewees knew of young girls who were so keen to go through *fanado* that they defied their parents’ wishes and tried to run away to join in, showing how powerful social norms are in normalising this ritual, and making girls feel like outsiders if they are not part of it.

In Guinea Bissau, once a girl has been through this rite of passage, she is considered to be purified, and girls who have not been cut are considered ‘*blufo*’, or impure, and are subject to name calling. These beliefs and rituals are said to have been passed down by ancestors for many years [*the community sees them as a sacred legacy of their ancestors and a source of inspiration and transmission of the noblest values of their culture to their children/a comunidade vê nelas como um legado sagrado dos seus antepassados e fonte de inspiração e transmissão de valores mais nobres da sua cultura aos filhos*] (LM16.GB.23)]. Religious and sexual purity/marriageability arguments are also used to justify the practice:

*Because they say that religion holds that a Muslim woman must be circumcised in order to be considered pure in their community, and only if she is pure can she get a husband. (LF3.GB.28)*  
*Porque dizem que a religião defende que uma mulher muçulmana tem que ser circuncisada para que possa ser considerada pura na sua comunidade e só assim é que ela pode conseguir um marido. (LF3.GB.28)*

Several Guinean respondents also described the importance of social pressure in perpetuating the practice: *‘even those disagreeing with it are obliged to follow them [to do FGM] without questioning/ mesmo não concordando são obrigadas a segui-las sem questionar’* (LF6.GB.23) and *‘the practice is seen as something normal and naturally accepted by the whole community/a prática é vista como algo normal e aceite naturalmente por toda a comunidade’* (LM16.GB.23). Thus they felt it was important for the whole of society to change their mentality in order to end the practice.

*And when we dare to question it or even put it in question, there’s always a voice of conformity, like my aunt (who raised me) or from the elders who repress us, and eventually smother it [the questions], accusing us of trying to defy tradition and be products and imitations of white (Western) [people]. And if you are a child it is even better for them because they immediately say: you just do not know what you are talking about, you shall understand when you are a grown up. (LM9.GB.20)*

*E quando nos atrevemos a questioná-lo ou mesmo a pô-lo em causa, ou se levantam as vozes dos conformistas como as da minha tia (que me criou) ou dos mais velhos que nos reprimem logo, e acabam por abafá-la, acusam-nos de tentarmos desafiar a tradição e sermos produtos e imitações dos brancos, (ocidentais). E quando se é criança melhor ainda pois é mais fácil, dizem-te logo não sabes do que estás a falar, hás-de compreender quando fores mais crescido. (LM9.GB.20)*

<sup>27</sup> FGM was not outlawed in Guinea Bissau until 2011.

Many respondents also discussed the economic factors underlying the continuation of FGM, in particular, the Fanatecas generating income from cutting:

<p><i>I have an aunt 'fanateca'. Every year when I go to her house to spend holidays it is usual to find the party for the women exiting the tents. It's a beautiful party. They wear Muslim costumes, cover their heads, sing, dance and pass through the 'tabancas'<sup>28</sup> streets singing. This is the business of my aunt. Parents pay for each child they take to be 'fanada' by her, and when they leave she earns more cash. My aunt worked all her life as 'fanateca', that is, she spent many years doing this business so we can hardly convince her that she's wrong. If she stops, the money that she made with the 'fanado' how can she recover that money? These things mess with tradition, with our culture, and with the maintenance of many people. It is impossible to say that my aunt was not informed, she simply ignores the information that was passed by the organizations fighting 'fanado' of women. Anyway, she makes money with the 'fanado'. (LM4.GB.21)</i></p>	<p><i>Tenho uma tia 'fanateca', todos os anos quando vou passar férias a casa dela é natural encontrar a festa da saída de barracas de mulheres. É uma festa bonita. Elas vestem trajes muçulmanos, cobrem a cabeça, cantam, dançam e passam pelas ruas das 'tabancas' a cantar. Este é o negócio da minha tia, os pais pagam por cada criança que levam para ser 'fanada' por ela, na saída ela ainda ganha alguns troquinhos. A minha tia trabalhou a vida toda como 'fanateca', ou seja, passou muitos anos a fazer este negócio dificilmente poderás convencê-la que está errada. Se ela parar o dinheiro que fazia com 'fanado' como é que o recuperaria? Essas coisas mexem com a tradição, com a nossa cultura e com sustento de muita gente. É impossível dizer que a minha tia não foi informada, simplesmente ignora a informação que lhe foi passada, pelas organizações que lutam contra 'fanado' de mulher. Enfim, ela ganha dinheiro com o 'fanado'. (LM4.GB.21)</i></p>
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There was widespread awareness among young Guineans that FGM has no religious basis, and that the Qur'an/Hadiths may be erroneously cited to justify the practice.

According to respondents, the issue of FGM has been on the agenda of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), medical professionals and media outlets (TV and radio) in Guinea Bissau in recent years. They said that levels of knowledge about the risks associated with FGM are high in the general population in Guinea Bissau. However, self-interest, religious and economic factors continue to drive the practice, along with a lack of governmental structures to respond effectively to the issue. Several respondents also described how it was only when they left Guinea Bissau, and were exposed to a new culture and way of seeing the world, that they gained 'a clearer and deeper understanding of how evil these practices are/uma percepção mais clara e profunda do mal que são essas práticas' (LM9.GB.2). In other words, information about the risks alone was not enough to make them question this seemingly normal and widely accepted practice. A fresh perspective, informed by the different cultural norms and values they were exposed to in Portugal, contributed to their rejection of the practice.

Some respondents were also aware of campaigners working to end FGM on the ground in Guinea Bissau. One interviewee described a female Minister of Foreign Affairs, a prominent campaigner against harmful practices, who has received death threats but nonetheless carried on campaigning. In recent years, attempts by anti-FGM activists have been made to alter the rite of passage (*fanado*), to stop the cutting but keep the other components. One respondent made the point that whilst disagreeing with FGM, *fanado* is an important cultural rite: as a method of education, form of

<sup>28</sup> Tabanca is the word used to describe villages in the interior of Guinea Bissau.

discipline and rite of passage to adulthood. However, attempting to remove the FGM component of the ritual has been met with superstition and fear, as people believe it will offend their ancestors. One respondent described the efforts of a local doctor going house to house to persuade families not to cut their daughters: his advice was not well received and people did not want to talk about it. The following story from a young man who could not persuade his mother to ‘put the knife away’ illustrates quite how entrenched the practice can be, and how hard it is for family members to affect change even within their own household:

*My paternal grandfather had two wives. He practiced FGM, and when asked when he would put the knife away, he said that was how he earned his living and would be until he died, never to put down the knife. As tradition dictates the eldest son is the one that has to inherit it, and my mother being the eldest of the children still does it. My mother did it to each of her daughters, and even to her granddaughters. My brother in law always says that he does not want any of that, but my mother decided to do it. She waited until he was out at work, took my niece and did it to her. When he [my brother in law] arrived he was furious, but said that he didn't report her to the police for respect to the children, also because he is married to her daughter, but I encouraged him seriously to do it. Even if it wasn't denouncing her to the authorities he should say something to some NGO. I always ordered her to stop and questioned her, if she is aware of what consequences of what she is doing. I advised her to stop it but she always says 'yes, yes I will', but never stops. When the law that considers it a crime was approved, I told her, I warned her that she could go to jail, any moment. I remember well, in my house there were always a lot of people making queues: mothers, grandmothers and aunts appeared to have their girls mutilated, people from Senegal and Guinea-Conakry [the capital city of Guinea], and even Mauritania. (LM8.GB.20)*

*O meu avó paterno tinha duas mulheres, fazia MGF e quando lhe perguntavam quando é que vai por a faca de lado, ele dizia que era ali que ganhava o seu bocado e foi assim até morrer, nunca chegou a pousar a faca. E como manda a tradição o filho mais velho é que tem que herdar isso, a minha mãe sendo a mais velha dos filhos ainda continua faze-lo. A minha mãe fez isso em cada uma das suas filhas, e até nas suas netas. O meu cunhado sempre diz que não quer nada disso, e uma vez o que a minha mãe, decidiu fazer, esperou que com que o marido da minha irmã sáisse e foi trabalhar, pegou na minha sobrinha e fez-lhe isso. Quando ele chegou ficou furiosíssimo, mas com toda a razão disse que só não denunciou a minha mãe porque nos respeita muito, e também porque esta casado com o ma filha dela, mas eu encorajei o seriamente a faze-lo. Porque mesmo se não fosse denuncia-lo as autoridades, mas devia denuncia-lo a algumas destas ligas. Assim para poder ser questionada, se ela tem noção do que acabou de fazer se tem noção das consequências.eu sempre a aconselhei a parar com isso mas ela diz sempre, sim, sim hei de para-lo, mas nunca chega a parar. Quando foi aprovado a lei que considera isso um crime, eu alertei lhe disse lhe que ela pode ir presa, a qualquer momento.eu lembro me bem, na minha casa havia sempre muita gente fazia se filas ,mães avos e tias apareciam lá para ser mutiladas as suas meninas, mas gente vindo de Guiné-Conacri Senegal e até mesmo Mauritània. (LM8.GB.20)*

Most interviewees were aware of the recently passed law against FGM in Guinea Bissau<sup>29</sup>, and saw it as a hopeful sign, but they were aware that it was controversial and believed it was unlikely to be implemented [*‘the legislation exists, but what reigns is a force of religion/mas o que reina é a força da religião’* (LF6.GB.23)]. However, some respondents believed that there was no law against FGM in Guinea Bissau, or that many other people did not know about the law.

<sup>29</sup> In June 2011, the National Popular Assembly of Guinea-Bissau approved a law prohibiting FGM nationwide.

*My own mother is 'fanateca', although my father does not like it she carries on. When I try to talk to her to stop her being 'fanateca' she gets very upset with me because she thinks that is not fair that she should stop, because it is something she inherited from her mother and grandmother, and that she never saw the evil that fanado caused to a girl, and she is determined to remain 'fanateca'. But when a law was passed prohibiting 'fanado' in women she told me that she prefers to go to jail rather than stop being 'fanateca' and she is in Bissau and continues doing that whenever they asked her. She accepts it because it is a tradition that cannot fail to be complied with. (LM2.GB.28)*

*A minha própria mãe é 'fanateca', apesar de que o meu pai não gosta ela continua a o ser. Quando tento conversar com ela nesse sentido para deixar de ser 'fanateca' ela fica muito chateada comigo porque acha de que não é justo ela deixar de o ser porque é uma coisa que ela herdou da sua mãe e avó e que nunca ela viu o mal que o 'fanado' causou numa rapariga, e ela está determinada a continuar a ser 'fanateca'. Porém quando foi aprovada a lei que proíbe o 'fanado' da mulher ela disse-me que prefere ir presa em vez de deixar de ser 'fanateca' e ela está em Bissau e continua nisso sempre que for solicitado aceita porque para ela isso é uma tradição que não pode deixar de cumprir. (LM2.GB.28)*

In terms of awareness of the law in Portugal, all interviewees were aware that forced marriage and FGM would be punishable under Portuguese law, and many felt that this fact deterred people from continuing the practice. One interviewee knew of a Guinean mother in Portugal who had expressed her desire to have her daughters cut back in Guinea Bissau, but who had decided not to go through with it due to fear of prosecution.

In addition to the human rights arguments against FGM, which many of the respondents could articulate very clearly, the data reveals that young Guineans in Lisbon have high levels of awareness about the health and psychosexual consequences of FGM. They described how FGM can decrease a woman's sexual responsiveness, or lead to pain during sex – resulting in lack of sexual satisfaction which can then lead to problems in a relationship.

They also described risks faced during childbirth as a result of FGM, risk of infection during the act of FGM (especially as *Fanatecas* are said to use the same knife on multiple girls), pain during and after the cutting, loss of blood and even death. The resulting psychological trauma was said to be long term and potentially devastating.

Although the vast majority of examples given of FGM related to Guinea Bissau, there were some indications that support and actual instances of this practice are prevalent among the Guinean community in Portugal. One interviewee went as far as naming particular areas within Lisbon where FGM takes place<sup>30</sup>; several others reported that parents send their daughters back to Guinea Bissau to undergo FGM. Several respondents said that they were not sure if the practice continued in Portugal, but that if it did, it was bound to be hidden and secretive, as people know that it is illegal.

*I know a specific case of a Guinean mother residing here in Portugal, who was on holiday with her six year old daughter and then she was mutilated with the knowledge and consent of the whole family, who organized a great feast commemorating the 'fanado' exit of the girl. And when they returned to Portugal, a few friends and neighbours knew of the incident and asked her why she took the girl to the 'fanado'. She*

*Conheço um caso concreto de uma mãe guineense residente em cá Portugal, que foi de férias com a filha de 6 anos e que depois foi mutilada com conhecimento e consentimento de toda família, que organizou uma grande festa alusiva à saída do 'fanado' da miúda. E quando regressaram a Portugal, algumas amigas e vizinhas souberam do ocorrido e perguntaram-lhe porquê que levou a miúda ao*

<sup>30</sup> These were satellite suburb areas of Lisbon.



<p><i>replied that it was their culture and that there was no other way, to take the girl to fulfil it as her parents also had done to her when she was a kid. (LM17.GB.24)</i></p>	<p><i>'fanado', ela respondeu que era a sua cultura e que não havia outro jeito senão levar a miúda cumpri-la tal como os pais dela também tinham feito com ela quando ela era miúda. (LM17.GB.24)</i></p>
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Virtually all of the young Guineans in this study did not agree with FGM, and many of them were passionately opposed to FGM, expressing strongly worded moral judgements against the practice and those who perpetuate it [e.g. *'I find this a shameful practice, unjust and inhumane [...] it's a barbaric practice, nonsense/Considero essa prática vergonhosa, injusta, e desumana [...] É uma prática bárbara, sem nexo'* (LF15.GB.24)]. There were divided opinions in terms of whether other Guineans in Portugal supported FGM: most said that young people were opposed to the practice, but older people may still be *'very attached'* to this aspect of their culture. One respondent said that while Guineans used to see FGM as a source of pride and motivation, since being in Portugal they were embarrassed by it.

While many of these young Guineans have spoken out about the issue with their friends or even within their family, there were no examples of them speaking out publicly or campaigning in the public sphere: *'Young Guineans [...] have an active role inside our community and inside their families in the fight against forced marriages and woman 'fanados' [...] if my sister wanted to force her daughter to do one of these practices I would be the first one to stop her/Jovens guineenses [...]têm sempre um papel activo dentro da nossa comunidade e dentro das suas famílias na luta contra casamentos forçados e 'fanados' da mulher [...] se a minha irmã quisesse obrigar a filha a uma dessas práticas serei o primeiro a impedi-la'* (LM4.GB.21). One young woman expressed her desire to work together to end these practices thus:

*I think there are many Guineans interested in this subject, starting with me, everything we do is for our sake and of our children. I think joining a group of motivated young Guineans, willing to work, and who know the territory, it is possible, yes, to create a large wave of discussions in order to reach an understanding, and to realize that this is not a problem of a certain ethnicity, but something that affects all people of Guinea. (LF21.GB.26)*

*Eu acho que há muitos guineenses interessados nesse tema, começando por mim, tudo o que fazemos é pelo nosso bem e das nossas crianças. Acho que se juntarem um grupo de jovens guineenses motivas, com vontade de trabalhar e que conheça bem o território onde esta a pisar, é possível sim criar uma grande onda de debates a fim de se chegar ao entendendimente, e de perceber que este nao é só problema de uma certa etnia, mais sim algo que afeta todo povo guineense. (LF21.GB.26)*

Interestingly, this same woman had just recounted the story of how her sister had secretly had FGM undertaken on her one-week old daughter, which had resulted in the baby having to be admitted to hospital in chronic distress. This woman's personal exposure to the consequences of FGM seems to have helped shape her desire to do something about it.

Only two interviewees (both male) – a tiny minority – expressed any form of support for FGM. One male respondent (LM18.GB.20) said that because Muslim scholars agree with it (he cited an Islamic Hadith in which he said Mohammed advises that girls be cut *'a little, not a lot'* and with compassion), the focus for change should be on Fanetecas using clean knives. Another clearly stated his support for FGM, believing it to be a religious practice which is only being rejected by young Guineans in Portugal because they *'think the behaviour of Westerners is better than ours'*. He went on to say that he does not believe that FGM harms women, and that this information has been *'invented by*

*enemies of our religion'* (LM23.GB.20) and spread by religious leaders who have been paid to do so. This exceptional case is not discussed at length here, as it is at odds with the opinions of all other respondents in the study. However, more details from this interview transcript are included in Annex 2 (quote 2), as it may be useful training material for FGM campaigners. By anticipating the arguments that supporters of FGM may expound, young advocates can develop robust and evidence-based counter arguments in advance.

#### 4.3.2 FGM in the London and Amsterdam Data

In London, many respondents came from countries where FGM is not thought to be highly prevalent (e.g. Iran, Turkey, Lebanon), and thus said that it was *'not really an issue'* for them. They did not necessarily know much about it apart from what they had seen or heard in the media. However, other London respondents had in-depth knowledge of the geographic and ethnic spread of the practice. These tended to be people who had a particular professional or personal interest in the issue, and/or who had read around the subject. In Amsterdam, a number of respondents believed many other young Somalis in the Netherlands did not have in-depth knowledge about FGM, because their parents do not talk to them about *'negative'* aspects of their culture.

The prevailing attitude among young Somalis in Amsterdam was that although immediate family members may have been affected by FGM (their mother or grandmother, for example), their view of the current situation in the Netherlands was that nobody of their generation supported it (although their grandmothers might), and that the practice had been abandoned [*'none of my friends have been circumcised'* (AF4.SM.22)]. They said that although the subject might not come up frequently in everyday conversation, it was no longer a taboo to talk about FGM, people discussed FGM without shame, and even if people did not want to talk about it, information was readily available online. The exception to this view was that one respondent said that newcomers to the country might still want to marry a girl who had undergone FGM.

In London, there was acknowledgement that FGM was still be an issue in the UK (particularly as support for it remains among older people), but knowledge of actual examples of women affected by FGM was limited, and it was said to be *'swept under the rug'* and much more common *'back home'* (for those young people who came from countries where it is prevalent). One Nigerian respondent contrasted the situation in the UK with that in Nigeria: in the UK, FGM was considered a *'personal thing'* due to the stigma and controversy surrounding it, while in Nigeria it is *'out in the open and there's parties, it's seen as a normal thing'* (UF16.NG.23). One respondent knew of a close friend who had undergone a procedure back in Somalia, but she was not sure whether this constituted FGM (she reported that the clitoris had been pinched until it was numb, which she said may have resulted in nerve damage). One respondent pointed out that it was very hard to know whether it was going on, as it could take place elsewhere (e.g. the Middle East) and there was no legal requirement for checks/examinations on girls in the UK. An exception to this lack of first-hand knowledge was a young Somali woman who said that many of her friends had undergone FGM, but that it was getting less common.

One particular *'story'* (which gave the impression of being an *'urban myth'* in the non-specific way it was described) was reported on several occasions in London and in Lisbon, in which a young woman who had behaved in a manner deemed to be sexually inappropriate was subjected to FGM as a young adult. The story indicates that as a result, the girl quietened down, her rebellious impulses curbed:

*According to gossip, a young Iraqi girl had her genitals mutilated by family members to curb her libido. She was apparently a highly promiscuous young girl from a fairly successful Iraqi family living in a city in Iraq. She had several boyfriends during her teenage years and engaged in public displays of affection. When she lost her virginity, her parents could no longer tolerate her premarital affairs and mutilated her genitals. She is believed to have been completely transformed into leading a pure and chaste life. (UF22.AR.18)*

It is not possible to determine whether this story is based on truth, or is simply a cautionary tale. Of some significance is the fact that the story ends with the act of FGM having ‘solved’ the perceived problem of the young woman’s behaviour. Whilst the young people recounting these stories clearly do not agree with the *means*, they do not seem to question whether the young woman was traumatised rather than simply now behaving herself as a result of FGM. A similar example was reported in Lisbon, from one of the respondents who was more sympathetic towards FGM:

*‘Fanado’ completely changed the life of my cousin, she was troubled and rebellious, but after having gone to fanado she began to respect her parents and those around her.*

*‘Fanado’ mudou por completo a vida da minha prima, ela que era problemática e rebelde mas depois de ter ido ao ‘fanado’ passou a respeitar mais os pais e os próximos. (LF5.GB.20)*

Linked to this, in Amsterdam, the following quotation illustrates how some of the underlying values traditionally used to justify FGM are still important, even if the means for achieving them have changed: *‘We see that FGM is very unnecessary. Modesty and such, is something you can get with other methods’* (AF2.SM). In London, one of the peer researchers said that *‘there are now different ways of checking whether a girl’s a virgin’* (UFPR.SM.23). Although she disapproved of FGM, the underlying importance of virginity – and controlling young women’s sexuality – remains.

For those young people in London and Amsterdam who knew about FGM, their understanding of the factors driving the practice reflected many of the young Guineans’ analyses, although the ethnic backgrounds of the Dutch and British participants differ from the young Guineans in that they do not come from countries that practice the *fanado* rite of passage. The major determinants of FGM they identified concerned sexual purity, marriageability, wanting to control/correct a girl’s behaviour, and not wanting a girl to be a social outcast. One respondent, whilst acknowledging that women often controlled the practice, argued that nevertheless it was a symbol of patriarchy: *‘It’s based on male’s power. The psychology of it is it breaks a woman down to the point the women become the enforcers of this rather than the men. I believe in some communities the women are more for FGM due to men having pushed it on them. It’s all about mind control’* (UM2.CN.26).

In Amsterdam, there was near universal agreement that everybody in the Netherlands knew that FGM was illegal. In London, the vast majority knew or assumed that FGM was illegal under British law, but many admitted that their knowledge about the law was quite vague. There was also widespread knowledge in London and Amsterdam that FGM is not a religious practice, and several respondents said that it was positively un-Islamic.

Knowledge of the consequences of FGM was fairly high in London and Amsterdam – and mirrors that reported by the young Guineans. Interestingly, several versions of a similar story emerged in the London and Lisbon data, in the form of a story about a woman who had been subjected to FGM, who ended up having multiple partners in a quest to reclaim her sexuality and discover sexual pleasure:

*I knew a Somali girl who had undergone FGM in Egypt by her aunt where she was born. During her teens she began to act out and rebel against her parents. She began having sex with multiple partners and everyone knew. She began smoking and drinking and seemed very depressed. She would speak to me about her experience and how she resented her parents so much, they wanted to dictate her life. Maybe she was attempting to reclaim her sexuality. (UF7.SM.27)*

The telling of these stories suggests that young people perceive it to be illogical and ineffective to try and curb female sexuality through FGM.

In London and Amsterdam, none of the respondents expressed support for FGM, and similarly to the young Guineans, many of them described their opposition to the practice in the strongest terms [*'vile and unnatural'* (UF29.LB.21) and *'extremely tragic as well as unethical'* (UF30.IR.23)]. One respondent in Amsterdam said that it's the *'biggest tradition that youngsters choose to shed'* (AF3.SM). Another respondent in Amsterdam said that young people *'want nothing to do with'* traditions that they do not like – especially FGM. A young Somali respondent in London describes her position thus:

*Attitudes are split amongst older and younger generations. The older generation tend to not talk about it but [believe] it should be done. They try to justify it as 'Sunnah' (religious) and also culturally as a social norm. The younger generation see it in a poor light and disagree with the rationales behind it. The second generation are beginning to challenge older generation's perceptions of it. A couple of years ago it was a topic in Somali studies week and was discussed and condemned openly by many youths. FGM is a practice mostly done to women by other women. It is a private/shameful body part and men tend to stay far away from the practice. (UF7.SM.27)*

In Amsterdam, a young Somali respondent said that while her aunt and grandmother had been cut, and *'are okay with it'*, she described her generation as being *'rebellious'* – posing the question, why shouldn't we have pleasure? Another expressed her opinion that due to Somalia's history, including recent history of war, people in Somalia did not have the same freedom of speech to stand up to these traditions, as they do in the Netherlands.

One finding that emerged clearly from Somali respondents in both Amsterdam and London is that it is believed that men traditionally have no direct role in FGM. They said that in Somalia, the practice is orchestrated by mothers, aunts, grandmothers and even neighbours of girls, rather than fathers. Respondents also felt that men may know less about FGM than young women.

*I think that the women now see it as a bad thing, because it happens to them. The men, on the other hand, don't really think about it that much because they don't know anything about it (FGM) and the consequences. (AF7.SM.18)*

*I think a lot of girls are against FGM. It has a lot of negative effects on a woman's health. I think a lot of young men find it less bad, because they know very little about it. I think when they know more about it and the consequences for a woman, then they would see it as something that can't be practised anymore. (AF9.SM.18)*

*As a young Somali man I think the practice is unnecessary to practice. The attitude is slowly changing and I can't stress enough that men don't have anything to do with it. (UF9.SM.23)*

### 4.3.3 Forced Marriage

This section contains data on forced marriages, primarily from Lisbon and London. In Amsterdam, the issue of forced marriage was considered to be of very limited relevance or importance in the Somali community, and nobody reported any examples of it happening in the Netherlands among the Somali community (though a couple of unspecific examples were given of girls being ‘married off’ when they were sent back to Somalia for ‘cultural rehabilitation’).

Respondents in Lisbon reported that forced marriage occurs amongst all ethnic groups in Guinea Bissau. They related a large number of stories of forced marriage, suggesting that it is a well-known phenomenon that many young Guineans have first-hand experience of (see the example below, and also quote 3 in Annex 2). Many of the stories of forced marriage either described women being forced to marry much older men, or cases of child marriage (in which the girl was aged under 18 years), or both. They also said that forced marriage is decreasing, and is mainly prevalent in rural interior areas of the country where levels of education are lower, poverty is higher, and conservative religious beliefs prevail. A small number of cases of forced marriage occurring in Portugal were also mentioned.

<p><i>I had a neighbour in Guinea, at the time she would have been 17 years old when she was carried to the marriage. Parents were preparing for marriage without her knowledge. The day came when the supposed husband was to meet her. It was then that she knew that she was going to be given for marriage. The man must have been between 40 to 45 years old and he took her to the interior of Guinea. She was the most unhappy I have ever seen in my life, until today. After two months she went back to the neighbourhood, afraid to come home because if her parents found out, she would be taken back to her husband's house. However, she stayed at her neighbour's house, who out of fear told her parents, who in turn took her to the house of her husband. One year later she escaped again, but with a baby in her arms and she was only 19 years old. She spent six months in her father's house, then her husband appeared who took her back. She was no longer the same person. Sad and unhappy and stopped going to school. She once confided to my cousin that her husband forced her to have sex. If she refused, he beat her. She had to go to the field to work with other women in order to sustain the house, so she stopped studying. Over time the freedom struggle bore fruit, she managed effectively to separate from her husband. (LM4.GB.21)</i></p>	<p><i>Tinha uma vizinha na Guiné na altura devia ter 17 anos quando foi levada para o casamento. Os pais estavam a preparar o matrimónio sem o conhecimento dela. Um dia apareceu o suposto marido para a conhecer. Foi nessa altura que ela soube que ia ser dada em casamento. O homem devia ter entre 40 e 45 anos e era do interior da Guiné. Nesse dia ela fugiu de casa, passados dois meses os pais descobriram o seu paradeiro, pegaram-na no mesmo dia e fizeram a festa do casamento e o marido levou-a para o interior da Guiné. Foi a noiva mais infeliz que já vi na minha vida, até hoje. Passados dois meses voltou para o bairro, com medo de chegar a casa porque se os pais descobrissem, seria levada de volta para casa do marido. Entretanto, ficou na vizinha que com o medo contou aos pais, que por sua vez levaram-na para a casa do marido. Passado um ano voltou a fugir, mas com um filho no braço e ela tinha só 19 anos quando voltou, ficou sensivelmente 6 meses, em casa do pai, depois apareceu o marido que a levou de volta. Ela já não era a mesma pessoa. Triste e infeliz e parou de ir a escola. Chegou uma vez a confidenciar a minha prima que o marido obrigava-a a fazer sexo. Se recusar batia-a. Ela tinha que ir ao campo trabalhar com as outras mulheres, a fim de sustentarem a casa, por isso parou de estudar. Com o tempo a luta pela liberdade deu fruto, ela conseguiu, efectivamente, separar-se do marido. (LM4.GB.21)</i></p>
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The level of analytical insight into the dynamics behind forced marriage was very high among the Guinean respondents and those in London. They explained how forced marriage was a natural

extension of the patriarchal social system: due to the lack of voice and power of young women, and the 'holy'/sacred status of the father's word, young women could be forced into marriages without their consent – usually with much older men. This could be done by 'emotionally blackmailing' a young woman to submit and obey. Respondents in London also talked about the manipulation (rather than physical force) that could push a young woman into a forced marriage. The following story describes a range of forms of duress applied to a young woman in London:

*An Afghani girl we went to school with (16 years old) had a boyfriend that her father did not approve of, he was from a different Afghani tribe. Father threatened her to end ties with the boy or she will regret it. He arranged a marriage to happen between her and her cousin back home, she was to return to Afghanistan in a few months. Whilst he was arranging her return, she continued to see her boyfriend and was caught with him by other members of the Afghani community. Her father physically assaulted her and dug a grave in the back garden and told her that that is where she'll end up if she does not cooperate. A month later she had no choice (due to physical abuse) but to run away with her boyfriend, they have since married and have started a family. (UF6.PK.2)*

In both Lisbon and London, economic factors were identified as a driving force behind the practice. In Guinea, this was linked to widespread poverty, as fathers receive bride wealth by marrying off their daughters (marriage was described as 'a business' by one respondent). In one case, a widow was said to have forced her daughter into marriage with a much older man in return for living in one of his properties (i.e. the daughter was used as payment for the rent). In London, economic factors were still at play, but were more likely to be related to families wanting to boost the social or economic standing of the family, for instance by forcing their daughter to marry the son of a strategically important business partner. One respondent in London said that in her community (Bengali), women's heightened educational attainment and financial independence meant that 'love marriages' were becoming more common (and arranged and forced marriages less so), highlighting the importance of economic factors in marital dynamics. Another important driving factor for forced marriages was described by several London respondents: the desire for some families (most often said to be Arabic) to keep marriage 'within the family' (the extended family) – which could result in parents forcing their daughter to marry a particular individual. Both in London and Lisbon, respondents identified another driver of forced marriage as fear of shame or dishonour being brought on the family due to girls having pre-marital sex or getting pregnant. Parents would act quickly – either preventatively if they felt a girl had reached the age where marriage was necessary, or because they suspected she had a boyfriend – to get her married to avoid tarnishing their family name.

In London, a small number of respondents knew first hand of cases of forced marriage. Most said that it was more of an issue overseas or something that affected previous generations. However, there was general consensus that there was more widespread understanding of forced marriage than FGM in the UK, because of its higher media profile. Several examples were recounted of the experiences of forced marriages of the older generation (involving either their own, or a friend's, mother), as in the following case:

*You sit there, look at your husband and force yourself to love him. To have sex with him because you have to, for show. For pride, for family name and for your children you are stuck in this relationship until your daughter gets married. And you end up having lived all your life for other people and not a minute for yourself... that explains my poor mother. (UF19.KD.24)*

In addition, several respondents knew of friends and other contemporaries who had experienced forced marriage (e.g. a young woman said that she knew of cases of British born Pakistanis who had been subjected to forced marriage on trips to Pakistan; another young Indian woman said that she personally knew victims of forced marriage). For example:

*My ex-[girlfriend] was forced into marriage at 16. Her parents took her away to Bangladesh and she came back married. She went to a women's refuge for a few months and got divorced, she tells me now her parents realise it was wrong but there is a black hole in her heart and she feels like there's a scar, but one thing she is powerful and strong and I think it's because she went through a lot as a child and will not let anyone hurt her ever. (UM23.BG.28)*

In another example, a young woman sought help from Pakistan via emails to her friends in the UK:

*A girl was forced to marry her cousin. She was taken to Pakistan on 'holiday'. She could sense something was not right. A one-way ticket was bought by the family. She realized the old man she was compelled to marry was her cousin that would casually come over to UK to visit her family, someone she respected as an 'uncle'. Her family threatened to beat her/kill her if she refused. After marriage she suffered abuse by raping her and beating her. She contacted her friends in the UK by email detailing her situation and saying she needs help and wants to end her life. Her friends contacted women's rights organization. The British Embassy got involved and brought her back to the UK. Her family disowned her but are now in contact again. [What effect did this have on her?] She describes that period of her life as being the worst thing she has ever experienced and is now completely against the idea of remarrying or being in another relationship. She believes she will never remarry because she associates marriage with suffering abuse. She believes marriage is a chore for women and is for a man's pleasure. She now has a problem with alcohol and will drink heavily to block out the traumatic memories. (UF12.JM.28)*

The following case describes how a girl's boyfriend sought the help of the British Embassy to investigate whether she had been pressured into marrying a man in Bangladesh (though it is not clear from the story whether she eventually got married):

*A girl I know completed her GCSEs and went on to do an NVQ short course because she felt she had to continue education or she'll be married off. She didn't really want to continue with education but feared - because her mother kept telling her she should be married - it would happen soon and education might postpone it. However it didn't, the mother eventually found a suitor in Bangladesh and took her daughter abroad and pressured the daughter to marry. She refused and threatened to kill herself. The girl's boyfriend in the UK contacted the British Embassy on the matter and they contacted the family requesting to bring her to their office or the police will take her. The parents pressured the girl to inform the police that she's fine and happy and she did so. For her like many other girls, she felt there was nowhere to hide. Some girls just do what they like and don't feel threatened, others fall for the abuses. (UF13.BG.27)*

Young people in both London and Lisbon described in detail the potentially catastrophic results of forced marriage, recognising that in such marriages women were often victims of physical and psychological abuse, and that at the very least, such marriages tended to end in unhappiness (or even suicide) and divorce, with negative implications for any children. The stories illustrated a range of outcomes, from (among the Guinean respondents) tales of women poisoning their husbands (these stories generally lacked substantive detail and had the nature of a cautionary tale) to very specific stories of what had happened to friends who were victims of forced marriage, which in several cases had deeply affected the respondents:

*I remember my neighbour, she was 13 when her mother got her a groom. The father had always been against it, but because he was the only one, there was nothing he could do. We used to play together in the afternoon after doing our homework; that day, as usual, I called her to play and when she came to me, her mother called her and said she could not leave, she was very sad and asked why [trembling voice] and her mother only told her that she could not leave, so I left. The next day we learnt that that night was the day of her marriage to a 47 year old man and that at the time of the consummation of the marriage, because she refused [sad face and trembling voice], she had four people, two to open the legs and two to hold her arms, to help her husband, in a cruel way, consummate the marriage. (LF21.GB.26)*

*Lembro-me da minha vizinha, tinha 13 anos quando a mãe arranhou-lhe um noivo, o pai sempre foi contra, mais como era o único quase nada pode fazer. Costumávamos ir brincar juntas à tarde depois de fazermos os deveres de casa, naquele dia como era habitual fui chama-la para brincar e quando ela vinha ter comigo a mãe chamou-lhe e disse que não podia sair e ela muito triste perguntou o porquê (voz trémula) e a mãe só lhe disse que não podia sair, com isso eu fui me embora. No dia seguinte ficamos a saber que nessa noite era o dia do seu casamento com um homem de 47 anos e que no momento de consumir o ato como ela recusou (tristeza no rosto e voz trémula), tiveram que quatro pessoas, duas a abrir as pernas e dois a segurar os braços para que o marido pudesse, de forma cruel, consumir a união. (LF21.GB.26)*

Respondents (particularly in Lisbon) also recounted many tales of resistance and escape, in which girls either successfully ran away and avoided getting married (though this involved having to leave the family home, often for many months) or escaped after the event (often assisted by sympathetic family members or friends). Interviewees expressed no confidence in the Guinean legal system to bring justice for such women. The following story describes how a girl in London left her family as she was sure she would have been forced to marry had she stayed:

*I would have been forced to marry cousin had I stayed at home. They wouldn't have given me a choice. [...] the decision making power is all theirs. Three members of my family married within the family, I don't see why it would be different for me had I stayed. You hear people say after marriage you learn to love each other. That's what they say. You'll never hear them refer to it as 'forced'. Most people back home don't even think that's forced when the first time they see their spouse is on the day of marriage. They just accept that it's a part of life and it's the norm. There's more freedom and choice here so more people tend to dispute. My mum used to refer to marriages being awkward initially as you don't know that person and it takes time to adjust. But then you just get used to each other, and the respect and love grows. (UF11.AF.28)*

In both London and Lisbon, interviewees explained that the authorities could not always help, as victims would not want to prosecute their families because this could turn their entire extended family against them:

*I don't think victims are able to talk about it. Even if they did it would probably be to no avail, as it would happen anyway. Talking to relatives would be dangerous if they are a strict family, as word gets around. Maybe talk outside to members outside the family just to get it off their chest, rarely as a preventative measure. If I were just scared I'd just want to talk about it. Some might want options/help because they can't handle/want to come out of the nightmare. Talking directly to the family is useless because they won't be heard. When parents do things like this all they think in about is their tradition, not what their children want. (UF11.AF.28)*

In the Lisbon data, while the majority of stories of forced marriage took place in Guinea Bissau, there was some evidence of such marriages being lived out in Portugal, as the following examples show. In



the first story, it is not clear whether the forced marriage took place in Guinea Bissau or Portugal, but the woman's husband had forced her to remain with him in Portugal through manipulating her relationships with her family back home.

*I know a Mandinga<sup>31</sup> man who lives near my house, in Monte Abraão, he married a young Mandinga girl who was more or less 20 years old, but to keep her with him now, he calls and sends money to her family, so they talk to her whenever she wants to end it all. He buys – he practically buys – the family, sending a good amount of money to the family, jewellery to the mother and clothing for the young brothers and sisters. But the truth is that whenever he goes to travel for work in Spain, or recently he went to Germany, the girl has a lover, which she takes home to stay there when the husband is away, and when he returns he disappears again. I wonder what will be the end of this marriage, this is not a relationship with a future and therefore will not be lasting because it was not built on a solid foundation. (LM8.GB.20)*

*Eu conheço um homem mandinga que vive ao pé da minha casa, em Monte Abraão, casou-se com uma jovem também mandinga de mais ou menos 20 anos, mas para mantê-la com ele até agora ele liga e manda dinheiro a família da jovem para estes falarem com ela, sempre que ela quer acabar tudo, ele compra praticamente compra a família manda boa quantia de dinheiro a família, para a mãe jóias e roupas para irmãos e irmãs da jovem, mas a verdade é que sempre que ele vai viajar para trabalhar em Espanha ou como recentemente que ele foi para Alemanha a moça arranhou um 'amante', leva-o a casa ficam lá até quando o marido tiver a voltar ele desaparece de novo. Eu imagino qual será o final deste casamento, isto não é uma relação com futuro e por isso não será duradouro porque não foi construído sobre uma base sólida. (LM8.GB.20)*

In another story, a young woman was forced to marry an older man:

*I remember the case of a forced marriage that took place here in Portugal, in Monte Abraão, in which parents forced their 20 year old daughter to marry a man of 48 years old due to the economic conditions that the man possessed and of the great friendship that he had for the girl's parents. However, the girl did not want to marry the man and tried to convince the parents that she did not like the husband who they chose for her, but the parents insisted and forced her to accept the man against her will. However, she eventually accepted the decision of the parents to marry the old man and they ended up living together. One day, she confessed directly to her husband that she felt nothing for him and that he did not satisfy her sexually, but yet, her husband told her that he loved her and that he will buy her everything she wanted but only if he continued to have her beside him. Despite being married, she arranged a boyfriend who she cheated on her husband with and she loved him a lot, whom she also gave money and important things of value that the companion gave her as gifts. The husband has always loved to travel, therefore, the girl*

*Lembro-me do caso de um casamento forçado que ocorreu cá em Portugal, em Monte Abraão, em que os pais obrigaram a filha de 20 anos a se casar com um homem de 48 anos devido às condições económicas que o homem possuía e da grande amizade que este nutria pelos pais da rapariga. No entanto, a rapariga não queria casar com o homem e tentou convencer os pais de que não gostava do marido que lhe escolheram, mas os pais insistiram e obrigaram-lhe a aceitar o homem contra a vontade. Entretanto, ela acabou por aceitar a decisão dos pais de se casar com o idoso e passaram a viver juntos. Um dia, ela confessou diretamente ao marido de que não sentia nada por ele e que este não a satisfazia sexualmente, mas contudo, o marido disse que a amava na mesma e que comprava tudo que ela quisesse só para continuar a tê-la ao lado dele. Apesar de estar casada, ela arranhou discretamente um namorado com quem traía sempre o marido e amava muito, ao qual também dava dinheiro e as coisas de valor importantes que o companheiro lhe dava como presentes. O marido adorava sempre viajar, por*

<sup>31</sup> An ethnic group in Guinea Bissau

*took advantage of the absence of the spouse, bringing her lover to their home, which virtually replaced her husband at home. Recently she left her husband and went to join her boyfriend and later they married. (LM17.GB.24)*

*consequente, a rapariga aproveitava a ausência do esposo trazendo para casa o amante, o qual substituíva praticamente o marido em casa. Ultimamente abandonou o marido e foi se juntar com o namorado com quem passou a viver em união de facto e posteriormente casaram. (LM17.GB.24)*

The following describes a case where a young woman consents to marriage, but tries to back out of the marriage once she has arrived in Portugal. Such cases highlight the complexities of the issue: in this case, the forced marriage did not start off as being forced, but became so over time.

*A man who lived in Portugal saw the photo of a girl who lived in Guinea and liked her and explained to the girl's father, who also lived here. And the father contacted his daughter informing her that a man here in Portugal is interested in her and is willing to send her from Guinea to here. The daughter did not know the man, she agreed to the idea, because she will be able to come to Portugal. But when the girl arrived she disliked him and did not want to stay with him but her father insisted that she had to stay with him, even forcibly. The girl was forced to marry with the man. But then when he wanted to 'use' her she began to scream until one day the neighbors called the police. I do not know how they resolved the matter after the police but I know it ended the marriage. There are some stories where girls marry well with ambition to get to Europe, and when they arrive here they try to give up the marriage. (LM25.GB.21)*

*Um senhor que residia cá em Portugal viu a foto de uma menina que vivia na Guiné e gostou dela e explicou isso ao pai da menina, que também vivia cá. E o pai contactou a sua filha informando-lhe de que há um senhor aqui em Portugal estava interessado nela e estava disposto a mandá-la vir da Guiné para cá. A filha que nem conhecia o homem concordou com a ideia, só porque ia poder vir para Portugal. Mas quando a menina chegou cá não gostou do senhor e não queria ficar com ele mas o pai insistiu que tinha de ficar com ele, mesmo forçadamente. A menina foi obrigada a casar-se com o tal senhor. Mas depois quando o senhor queria usá-la ela começava logo a gritar até um dia os vizinhos chamaram a polícia. Não sei como resolveram depois na polícia mas só sei que terminaram o casamento. Há algumas histórias assim em que meninas casam pela ambição de chegar a Europa e quando chegam cá tentam desistir do casamento. (LM25.GB.21)*

In these stories the women are not framed as passive victims, but as expressing their resistance (e.g. by having other lovers, or by managing to leave the marriage) or even as being manipulative and getting what they can out of the relationship (be it material goods or an opportunity to migrate to Portugal). Other respondents who discussed forced marriage in relation to Portugal said that if it did happen, it would be a hidden and secretive phenomenon.

In London, a number of young people wanted to stress the point that men as well as women could be victims of 'soul-destroying' forced marriages, and several stories of men being affected by forced marriage were recounted (see also quote 4 in Annex 2, which describes a young man forced to marry the daughter of his father's manager in Qatar).

*I have a girlfriend of five years and my extended family disapprove of this. My girlfriend is from a Pakistani heritage but with that it's still not good enough because she's not from the same caste as me. I heard a conversation between my dad and uncle that my uncle is trying to get my father to force me into marrying my cousin back in Pakistan but my dad explained that it's a different generation and that we want to bring someone we've fallen in love with and not someone that's within our families and my uncle called this a curse to the family name. (UM8.PK.24)*

The majority of young Guineans expressed their opposition to forced marriage. As a practice that *'removes an important phase of a woman's life for her formation and education'*, it runs counter to the commonly expressed values of freedom and self-development that are so important to young Guineans. Almost all of their stories about forced marriage illustrated the harm and *'misfortune'* it brought not only to the victim, but to her husband and their wider families. It was described as a cruel and psychologically scarring practice. In Amsterdam, respondents were also against the practice, but did not express their opinions in as strong terms – possibly because they had not had the first hand exposure to cases of forced marriage that many of the Guinean respondents had had.

In London, one respondent said that although arranged marriages are *'normal [...], only psychotic parents would force'* (UF18.KD.20). Another said that the younger generation understands the trauma related to forced marriages, and believes in choices. Several young respondents in London described in detail how forced marriage goes against Islamic principles and that it is *'unjustifiable'*.

However, in all three countries, there was considerably more moral ambiguity in relation to forced marriage than around FGM [e.g. *'some will look at her like she's oppressed but it's just her culture and you have to respect that'* (UF16.NG.23) and *'most forced marriages (about 60% of them) are orchestrated with good intentions'* (UF20.AF.18)]. Some young respondents argued that in certain cases, forced marriage was the result of parents acting out of desperation, with their child's best interests at heart, in an attempt to *'save'* their child from a worse fate.

In such cases, interviewees explained, parents would not consider that they were enforcing a marriage – they may be oblivious to the fact that it was forced, thinking that they know best and that they are getting their daughter married to a *'good guy'*. One respondent – a young woman who described herself as a *'liberal secularist'* – said that she did not necessarily disagree with forced marriage if it was done for the right reasons (see quote 6 in Annex 2 for an example this woman gave of a *'successful'* forced marriage).

As one interviewee in London put it, the older generation *'don't get it'* – they may not see the difference between arranged and forced marriages, rather, they might see *'good'* and *'bad'* arranged marriages. Several Kurdish respondents in London said that Kurdish families could not see how the law could apply to family situations such as this.

In Lisbon, a small number of young people took a sympathetic stance towards forced marriage, with one explaining that *'most forced marriages give a good result, at the beginning it is never easy, but they end up liking each other/a maioria do casamento forçado dá um bom resultado, no início nunca é fácil, mas acabam por se gostar um do outro'* (LF5.GB.20). This young man then provided the following example:

<p><i>In relation to the forced marriage is harder to bring to an end. Its existence today continues to make sense. I have a cousin, whose parents arranged a good partner (boy) for her. He is a good guy, with economic possibilities, had a good job, was young, handsome, trained, and able to give her all the best and better. She turned him down, got one of those [men] that makes a living at Bandim's market. He was a drug addict, it seems like he didn't have a family. He mistreats – beating – her. They are starving, have two</i></p>	<p><i>Em relação ao casamento forçado é mais difícil acabar com ele. Continua até hoje a fazer sentido a sua existência. Tenho uma prima, a qual os pais arranjaram lhe um bom partido (rapaz). É um bom rapaz, com possibilidade económica, tinha um bom emprego, era jovem, bonito, formado, capaz de dar a ela tudo de bom e de melhor. Ela recusou-o, arranjou um daqueles que faz a vida na feira de bandim, roubando. Era drogado, parece que não tem família. Ele a maltrata batendo, passam fome, fizeram dois</i></p>
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<p><i>children, I'm sorry about the kids, I don't see any future for them. Her parents suffer to see her suffering, which makes me think sometimes that this [forced] marriage is not bad at all. (LF5.GB.20)</i></p>	<p><i>filhos, tenho pena dos miúdos, não vejo futuro promissor para eles. Os pais dela sofrem em vê-la a sofrer, o que me faz a pensar que por vezes que esse casamento não é mau de todo. (LF5.GB.20)</i></p>
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There was also confusion and blurring of boundaries between arranged and forced marriages [*there's a fine line between arranged and forced marriages*' (UF20.AF.18)]. One respondent explained that the victim herself might not classify a marriage as forced, unless physical violence or threats had been involved [*Often the victims of forced marriages are themselves in denial and convince others, and most importantly, themselves that what they are experiencing is the norm*' (UM21.SD.20)]. In addition, one Indian respondent in London said that a woman might feel ashamed to admit that her marriage had been forced, and would tell anyone who asked that it had been arranged. One interviewee in London (UF16.NG.23) described a situation in which an Indian friend of hers was under a *tremendous amount of pressure to get married, and she's only 21*'. Although her family *'don't say things like "you must marry him or else!"'*, they have placed a number of restrictions on who she can marry (in terms of country of origin, caste, etc.). It is very difficult to draw a line objectively where 'tremendous pressure' becomes 'forced marriage'. See Annex 2 for examples of such stories in the UK (quote 7, although purportedly describing an arranged marriage, has signs to suggest that there may have been elements of force, and quote 8 describes a situation in which a young woman manages to persuade her father not to force her into marriage), which may provide useful starting points for discussions about identifying/defining what constitutes a forced marriage.

In London, one respondent illustrated how hard it was for young people to know what to do if they came across someone at risk/a suspected victim of forced marriage (see quote below). Another had heard about and commended an initiative advising young women afraid of being taken abroad for forced marriage to hide a metal spoon in their underwear, so that they could be detected and make a bid to attract help whilst passing through airport security.

*I met an Afghan girl in the Mosque. She was a 16 year old Afghan national who was married to a 30 year old British national. Marriage helped her come over here. She didn't want to get married to the old guy, she wouldn't say she was forced, I believe, because her mother-in-law was always present when I would come over to visit. Whenever I would look at her she never looked happy, you could tell from the facial expression alone. We never engaged in discussion about it because we were never left alone, so she never got to express her feelings about the marriage ever. I get the feeling that 16 year old girls back home are different to those who grow up here, they seem more grown up and more prepared for marriage at a younger age. He probably abused her too, she wasn't happy. (UF11.AF.28)*

In another case, a woman described how her school friend was forced to marry her cousin during a 'holiday' back in Pakistan. She concluded by saying that *'it was very sad but we accepted it as something that is part of her culture'* (UF28.SM.26).

#### 4.4 Sources of Information

In Portugal, the Guinean civil society sector is relatively informal, with few established community based organisations. Although a small number of respondents could name groups working on FGM

and/or forced marriage<sup>32</sup>, the vast majority of respondents were either not aware of them or did not know that they worked on harmful practices. Rather, they had learned about the issues either through direct experience, or from TV, radio or NGOs operating in Guinea Bissau. The TV channel RTP Africa was mentioned by several respondents as having dedicated programming to these issues.

However, there is a high level of mutual support, unity (in spite of multiple ethnic identities), communication and entrepreneurial initiatives among the Guinean community, which could be built upon in any advocacy or communications campaign. For example, certain individuals or groups within the Guinean community work as social organisers, bringing people together for parties where everyone contributes towards food and drink. One respondent said that it is as simple as providing food, drink and music, and people will appear. Guinean people are described by the interviewees as highly sociable and vivacious, and as enjoying loud music. The Guinean community gets together on festive and religious days (Christmas, Easter, Ramadan etc.), Africa Day, Guinean Independence Day (24<sup>th</sup> September) and for funerals, baptisms and weddings. They may also attend concerts should a popular local musician be playing. Stories of arriving and attempting to integrate in Portugal all highlight the importance of personal connections with established Guineans in Portugal, who can help access friendships, learn the language, and find affordable accommodation and work.

Similarly to Lisbon, in London and Amsterdam there was also very limited awareness of the names or types of organisations offering information or support relating to FGM and forced marriage. Many respondents had only heard of such organisations (e.g. FSAN and FORWARD) after being introduced to this PEER study. Respondents in London said that Somali TV now covered (and condemned) the practice of FGM. Several interviewees had become particularly interested in FGM and had sought further reading material, either novels/memoirs or information online. Amsterdam, more than London or Lisbon, seemed to have the highest level of school and community based initiatives (e.g. theatre performances) to inform young people about FGM. Young Somalis in Amsterdam had also seen FGM on the TV – and were ‘shocked’ by what they saw.

In terms of willingness and openness to discuss these highly sensitive topics within their communities, the young respondents were divided. In Lisbon, some said that there was potential to do so, but the approach had to be very cautious and sensitive, as these are ‘intimate and sacred’ topics, and it must be recognised that *‘they can pretend to want to talk about the subject and accept advice, but deep down they do not want to hear it/é que podem até fingir que querem falar sobre o assunto e aceitar os aconselhamentos mas no fundo não querem ouvir falar nisso’* (LM2.GB.28). Others did not feel confident that the community would be willing to gather and discuss these issues, saying that people could dismiss attempts to address the issue thus: *‘the elders have said that this is how things work, and [...] they do not need to worry too much about it, and especially should not challenge the eldest, you should just fulfil [their wishes] and continue with the practice/os mais velhos já afirmaram que é assim que as coisas têm que funcionar então é assim e eles não precisam de preocupar muito com isso e sobretudo de estar a desafiar os mais velhos é só cumprir e continuar com a prática’* (LF3.GB.28).

<sup>32</sup> The Musqueba Association, Tchintchor (an organisation created in Portugal with the aim of sharing positive aspects of Guinea-Bissau, to tackle negative perceptions of the country), the Guinean Association of Culture and Social Solidarity (AGCSS) (whose President has reportedly written a book on these issues), the Student Association of Guineans in Lisbon (AEGBL), IGC, Union of Women Alternative and Responses (UMAR) and APF were mentioned.

In London, one interviewee said that *'as younger generations, we can't get involved in other people's business'*, reflecting the powerful age hierarchies still operating in their community. In all three cities, an issue that came up repeatedly in relation to ability/willingness to discuss FGM with parents or elders was the fact that discussing sexuality or genitals within this context was taboo, and made people feel awkward and uncomfortable. A Sudanese male respondent felt that it would be hard to broach the subject, particularly with men:

*'Often Sudanese men consider modesty and manners are priority, hence they are unlikely to talk about female genitalia even in formal, professional conversations [...] In the Sudanese community, we are often unwilling to discuss it openly, since it involves the female genitalia. As a young man in his early 20s, it would be crude and socially unacceptable for me to converse about this practice or the victims affected by it. I was even discouraged from considering to specialise in gynaecology after medical school: 'Why you want to look at vaginas all day?' My grandmother was quick to judge.'* (UM21.SD.20)

Some young people, particularly in London, were not particularly interested in discussing forced marriage and FGM, explaining that these issues did not affect them or anyone they knew. However, there were other young people who, in spite of the lack of direct implications for them, were still interested to learn more.

Young Guineans felt that although there was widespread awareness of FGM, people's level of knowledge, particularly of the risks of the practice, could be improved. In London, one respondent remarked that even if people knew about FGM or forced marriage, much more widespread awareness was needed so that anyone – a teacher, healthcare worker, or fellow student – could accurately identify someone at risk. Many respondents gave recommendations for how information and discussions on these topics could be more widely promoted:

- Online information (including signposting to support services) was said to be essential
- In London, the most common recommendation was to work through schools – and to give this information in a context of broader gender and cultural issues
- A helpline, to support affected women
- One respondent said that it was necessary to work with key members of the community, religious scholars and community leaders, and for them to openly condemn FGM – she felt that younger scholars and academics would be more willing to do this
- A far higher media profile for the issues
- One respondent advised working more closely with fathers to show them (e.g. through a video) precisely the physical harm the practice inflicts on girls
- Another recommended encouraging affected women to share their stories of the consequences of FGM
- One interviewee said that conducting sensitisation 'door to door' would have the greatest impact
- Working with governments and policy makers, to ensure that institutions are less *'gender and culture blind'*

A theme that emerged from several interviews was that people must be provided with information and then encouraged to think for themselves and question the reasons behind traditions. In other words, critical analysis and self-awareness are crucial:

*I think it's a case of not making choices for someone else, it's about letting someone make that choice for themselves, and I think that's the difference between someone who is open-minded and someone who is not. People don't like to be told what to do or think, so if that happens people close up, are more negative and less likely to take on new ideas, because they were not given the choice [...] for example, if I told you "what you're doing is wrong" you will immediately get defensive. People want to hold onto what's been passed down to them. (UPR.SM.25)*

The following Guinean respondent raised the point that it may not be effective for young people to try and convince older people to change their minds. Rather, he felt that peer to peer influence (e.g. an elder traditional leader talking to older people) was the only way to 'break the myth' of the necessity of FGM:

*The practice continues due to lack of awareness among people with advanced age. Most of the sensitisation that is done is from young people to the old. In my opinion it is much easier for an old man to convince another old man because they understand each other. If a young man does that, the old man will think it's just one more person who knows nothing of life. But remember that if we convince the old we will convince their children, and thus break the myth that it is a practice that comes from our grandparents. The same can happen if we go to a 'tabanca': first we are trying to convince the 'régulo' (leader of a village) because if he is convinced, he will convince his subjects. (LM23.GB.20)*

*A prática também ainda continua por falta de sensibilização entre pessoas com idade mais avançada. A maioria de sensibilizações que são feitas é de jovens a sensibilizarem os mais velhos. Na minha opinião é muito mais fácil um velho convencer o outro porque eles se entendem. Se for um jovem o velho achará que é só mais uma pessoa que não sabe nada da vida que vem falar comigo. É bom não esquecer de que se convenceremos os velhos eles convencerão os seus filhos e assim quebrará o mito de que é uma prática que vem dos nossos avós. O mesmo também pode acontecer se formos a uma 'tabanca', primeiro temos é de tentar convencer o 'régulo' (chefe de uma povoação) porque se este for convencido certamente que convencerá os seus súbditos. (LM23.GB.20)*

## 5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the findings support the project's emphasis on empowering young people as agents of change: they are open to the idea of culture being adaptable (keeping certain aspects whilst moving away from harmful practices) and many expressed the desire and motivation to contribute to ending harmful practices. In terms of their interest in participating in a network of youth advocates, this study highlights many promising signs. Among a significant proportion of interviewees, there was genuine passion and interest in the issues, high levels of knowledge, and a sense that these are very real and pressing social and human rights issues [*'We are trying to be the driving force in the modernisation of our culture/Estamos a tentar ser o motor na modernização da nossa cultura'* (LF7.GB.24)]. Human dignity, freedom and opportunities for self-development were clearly important values to the majority of respondents. The PEER data contained many stories of women resisting and escaping forced marriage, and defying the sexual control imposed upon them through FGM. The fact that young people are interested in these stories, deem them worthy of reporting, and often frame the female protagonists as admirable heroines, suggests that they actively support this resistance and see their generation as challenging and moving away from these practices. However, the PEER studies also identified some potential challenges. The following section highlights and discusses implications of the PEER results, both in terms of challenges and opportunities at policy and programme level.

**Working with young men:** Although most respondents and PEER researchers were female, some of the male peer researchers and respondents (in particular, in Lisbon) were very knowledgeable and passionate advocates against harmful practices. The project should consider how to integrate meaningfully young men as agents of change. The issue of male victims of forced marriage emerged in interviews in London, and the project should work with young advocates to discuss how they wish to respond to this (e.g. whether they would rather argue why the focus is rightly on female victims, or allow room in the project to discuss men's experiences).

**Helping young people negotiate age/power structures:** Young people frequently described a position in which they simultaneously value and respect the older generation, yet are not in agreement with some of the values and practices that the older generation support. It will be complex and challenging for them to work with/persuade older people to change, due to the power dynamics involved, and because it is hard to question what the oldest and 'wisest' say they should do. This also contributes to making it difficult for young people to report their parents should they be subjected to FGM or forced marriage. Young people will require support in the complex task of developing approaches and arguments against FGM and forced marriage whilst retaining a respectful relationship with older generations. For example, young advocates may need support in terms of clear campaigning messages for the project, and which target audiences they are expected to work with (it may be decided, for example, that it is unrealistic to expect them to work with older generations, and to focus on policy makers or fellow young people).

**Avoiding stigmatisation:** Although several respondents recommended a higher media profile for harmful practices, young people also complained that several of the national/ethnic groupings that are most affected by FGM and forced marriage also have a negative profile in the media. It will be important for the project to frame the young advocates' work in a positive light, focusing on success stories and positive change, to avoid further stigmatisation of these communities, particularly in the media.



**Tackling ambiguity and acceptance regarding forced marriage:** The data showed that some young people are either sympathetic towards forced marriage in certain contexts, or are not clear about when an arranged marriage becomes forced. A focus on promoting understanding of the absolute nature of human rights may be useful (e.g. that the ends cannot justify the means when it compromises human rights), and awareness that ‘force’ is not necessarily physical but any kind of overbearing duress. For other people, forced marriages – in their complex social and cultural contexts – are simply too complicated and difficult to respond to, and young people feel powerless to help victims. Training in practical ways in which young people can respond to support women at risk will be required (e.g. raising awareness of helplines, support organisations).

**Locating and making a stronger case for these problems:** In all three countries, the issues of forced marriage and FGM – and their victims – were seen as being located primarily ‘back home’ (rather than in Europe) for many of the respondents. Careful thought needs to be given as to how to make the European-focused CREATE Youth-Net project relevant to these young people, who see almost all of the impact and need occurring in their country of origin, and/or how to make a case that the issues are also pertinent within Europe. This seems to be particularly the case in the Netherlands, where young people’s attitudes reflect findings from a recent report on the incidence of FGM in the Netherlands, which suggested that the practice is increasingly rare (Exterkate 2013). This means providing case studies and evidence as part of awareness raising work with young people.

**Recognising similarities and differences between the issues:** In some communities (such as those described by the young Guineans) FGM and forced marriage are closely linked. Both practices share many of the same underlying determinants (including control of female sexuality). However, some communities are affected by one practice but not the other, and there are important differences in how FGM and forced marriage are understood and talked about by young people, which need to be considered when developing approaches to tackling them. For example, there was felt to be higher visibility of forced marriage in the media in the UK, and FGM was considered to be more of a sensitive topic to talk about, for men in particular, or in terms of discussing the issue with parents. Forced marriage was more difficult for young people to define, whereas this ambiguity did not arise in the case of FGM.

**FGM and forced marriage within a rights-based framework:** FGM and forced marriage are human rights violations according to international treaties. They are extreme manifestations of violence against women and children, but they lie at one end of a spectrum of potentially harmful and/or violent practices, some of which are not as widely perceived to be ‘wrong’ (arguably, other examples are ‘cultural rehabilitation’, corporal punishment, arranged marriage with elements of social pressure). Many of the participants in this project had experienced or witnessed the range of these practices in their everyday lives. The project needs to anticipate that broader human and children’s rights issues may emerge over its course.

Likewise, FGM and forced marriage are extreme manifestations of the broader issue of gender inequality and control of the sexuality of girls and women. It will be important for the project team to consider where it stands on the following issue: is it purely concerned about the *expressions* of gender inequality/control of female sexuality (FGM and forced marriage)? Or does it also want to make room to challenge the underlying *determinants* – many of which are intimately tied up with culture, religion and identity, and which many young people still value?

**Language sensitivities and appropriateness:** The passion and determination expressed by many young people to end FGM is extremely encouraging for the project. However, young advocates may need to be advised on the sensitivities of language around this subject, and helped to channel their passion in a productive way (e.g. avoiding language that could be seen as judgemental).

**Exploring definitions of FGM:** Although young respondents were clearly against FGM, they did not discuss what they believe constitutes FGM. Some forms of FGM (e.g. nipping, pricking or drawing a drop of blood from the clitoris, often referred to as '*sunnah*') have been found to be considered acceptable in other studies<sup>33</sup>, and are not necessarily known to be against the law. The project may want to explore definitions and perceptions of different forms of FGM further, to identify whether this is a pertinent issue among these groups of young people.

**Recognising complexity and context:** The project's strategy for engaging with different groups will need to be tailored to their different realities:

### Young Guineans in Lisbon

- The issue of harmful practices is very real, immediate, and has often personally affected this population. The project must be sensitive to the fact that many of the young women and men they will be working with have been directly affected by these issues, and psychological support mechanisms must be put in place to respond to their needs, as the project has the potential to bring strong feelings to the surface.
- Personal networks are extensive and effective, whilst formal organisations appear to have limited influence. Activities and messaging could be targeted to existing social gatherings, through informal networks, and musical events.
- APF should also follow up with the existing associations working on FGM/forced marriage mentioned by interviewees, to find out what they have already done, and investigate whether they would like to collaborate in the project (APF have indeed begun to do this).

### Amsterdam and London

- For second generation children of migrants in Amsterdam and London, the issues of FGM and forced marriage do not necessarily immediately concern them, and their knowledge may be restricted to stories they have heard on the news.
- In the case of Somalis in the Netherlands, neither forced marriage nor FGM were seen to be issues that immediately affected young Somalis (with the possible exception of vulnerability faced by girls if they returned to Somalia). They may need persuading or informing of the fact that FGM is still a relevant issue if they are to be motivated to become advocates. The fact that they perceive themselves, as a group, to have so definitively rejected a practice that they find abhorrent, may actually make it harder to engage with them on the subject
- The project may wish to explore the paradox that young people (particularly in Amsterdam) say that FGM is no longer a taboo issue, but that they do not feel comfortable talking about it with their parents.

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<sup>33</sup> Katherine Brown et. al. The Applicability of Behaviour Change in Intervention Programmes Targeted at Ending Female Genital Mutilation in the EU: Integrating Social Cognitive and Community Level Approaches. Obstetrics and Gynecology International Volume 2013 (2013)  
[www.hindawi.com/journals/ogi/2013/324362/](http://www.hindawi.com/journals/ogi/2013/324362/)

## ANNEX 1: PEER Interview Prompts

### Amsterdam

#### Interview One - English

1. Are men and women's roles different in your community? How/Why?
  - How do young people feel about this?
  - Have expectations (for men and women) changed? If so how?
2. How are roles divided between men and women in the family household?
  - How do young people feel about this?
  - What impact does this have on relationships between siblings and parents? (role models/absent fathers?)
3. Is marriage an important issue at this point in young people's lives?
  - What is considered an appropriate age to get marriage by young people/the older generation?
4. What is considered valuable in a future spouse for your generation?
5. Do parents play an important role in young people's choice of a future spouse?
6. Are marriage, love and sexuality something young people can talk about with their parents?
7. How is interracial marriage viewed in your community? (inter-tribal?)
8. What influences young people's choice in career?
9. How important is it for young people to continue their professional development once married?
10. How do young people view mothers working full time?
  - Does this differ amongst your community? (parents/elders?)

#### Interview One - Dutch

1. Zijn de rollen van de man en vrouw in jouw gemeenschap verschillend van elkaar. Hoe verschillen ze en waarom verschillen ze?
  - Wat vinden jonge mensen hiervan.
  - Zijn de verwachtingen die men heeft van vrouwen en mannen verandert. Zo ja, hoe?
2. Hoe zijn de rollen van de man en vrouw verdeelt in het gezin/huishouden?
  - Wat vinden jonge mensen hiervan?
  - Wat voor invloed heeft het op de relatie tussen broers en zussen, en tussen kind en ouder. (rolmodellen/eventueel afwezige vaders)
3. Welke beeld hebben jongeren van moeders die een fulltime baan hebben, denk je?
  - In hoeverre verschilt dat van die van de gemeenschap?
4. Is trouwen/ het huwelijk een belangrijk onderwerp in het leven van jongeren?
  - Wat wordt door jongeren van jouw leeftijd gezien als een goede leeftijd om te trouwen. En welke leeftijd vindt de oudere generatie (ouders) geschikt?
5. Wat zijn volgens jongeren waardevolle eigenschappen die een toekomstige partner moet hebben?
6. Spelen ouders een belangrijke rol in het kiezen van een partner van hun kinderen?
7. Is het huwelijk, liefde, seksualiteit iets waar jonge mensen over kunnen praten met hun ouders?

8. Hoe ziet jouw gemeenschap gemengde huwelijken? En hoe ziet men huwelijken waarbij men uit verschillende clans komt?
9. Wat/wie kan de keuze voor een studie/carrière beïnvloeden van een jongere?
10. Hoe belangrijk wordt carrière voor jongeren wanneer ze eenmaal getrouwd zijn?

### Interview Two – English

1. How important is culture to young people today?
  - How might this differ with new comers (old/young)?
  - What traditions would young people like to keep/throw away?
2. How important is understanding cultural history to young people? Why?
  - What role does this play in relationships with friends/family/community?
  - Would young people like to know more about their cultural history?
  - Where could they learn about their history?
3. How important is language to young people today?
  - What role does it play in relationships with friends/family/community?
  - Would young people like to know more about their language?
  - Where could they learn about their language?
4. What role does religion play in the daily life of young people?
  - Work, family/community, friends, household
5. What influences the way young people practice their religion? How? Why?
6. What might influence young people's choice in clothing? (religion/society/parents/peers?)
7. How do young people think about Heropvoeding (uitleg geven)?
8. How important are clans to your generation? (Role in social interaction/marriage?)
9. Do young people in your community know about FGM?
  - What do young people in your community know about FGM?
  - How do young people feel about FGM?
  - How does this differ to the older generation?
  - How does this differ between males and females?
10. What reasons are given for practising FGM?
11. Has the attitude towards FGM changed? amongst the younger generation/ new comers/ between men/women?
12. Is FGM something young people can talk about amongst friends/family?
13. How might young people get more informed about FGM?

### Interview Two – Dutch

1. In hoeverre is cultuur belangrijk voor de jongeren van nu, denk je?
  - Welke tradities zijn belangrijk voor jongeren om te behouden of zichzelf van te distantiëren?
2. In hoeverre is kennis van de geschiedenis belangrijk voor de jongeren van nu, denk je? En waarom?
  - In hoeverre speelt dit een rol in hun relaties met vrienden/familie/gemeenschap?
  - Wat zouden ze graag willen weten over hun geschiedenis?

- Waar zouden ze die kennis vandaan kunnen halen, denk je?
- 3. In hoeverre is beheersing van de moedertaal belangrijk voor de jongeren van nu, denk je? En waarom?
  - In hoeverre speelt dit een rol in hun relaties met vrienden/familie/gemeenschap?
  - Waar of van wie zouden zij hun moedertaal kunnen leren, denk je?
- 4. In hoeverre speelt religie een belangrijke rol in hun dagelijkse leven?  
Werk/familie/gemeenschap/gezin
- 5. Welke factoren beïnvloeden de manier waarop jongeren hun religie praktiseren? Hoe? Waarom?
- 6. Wie of wat heeft invloed op de kledingkeuze van jongeren?
- 7. Wat vinden jongeren van "heropvoeding"? (Geef uitleg)
- 8. Hoe belangrijk zijn clans voor jouw generatie?
- 9. Weten jongeren in jouw gemeenschap over meisjesbesnijdenis?
  - Wat weten jongeren in jouw omgeving over meisjesbesnijdenis? (bv. NL Wetgeving t.o.v. meisjesbesnijdenis).
  - Wie bepaalt of een meisje wordt besneden?
  - Wat vinden jongeren van meisjesbesnijdenis?
  - Verschilt dit van wat de oude generatie vindt?
  - Is er een verschil tussen mannen en vrouwen hierin?
- 10. Om welke redenen wordt meisjesbesnijdenis gepraktiseerd?
- 11. Is de houding ten opzichte van meisjesbesnijdenis veranderd? (Onder de jonge generatie/ nieuwkomers en tussen vrouwen en mannen)
- 12. Is meisjesbesnijdenis een onderwerp waar je met je vrienden en/of familie over praat?
- 13. Op welke manier kunnen jongeren meer informatie en steun vinden over meisjesbesnijdenis?

## London

### **Interview One**

1. What are your community/society's expectations of young women/men?
  - o Are there cultural expectations?
  - o To what extent is there pressure around these expectations?
  - o Are there differences in mindset/opinions between older and younger generations?
2. Where do young women in our community expect to be in five years' time?
3. How much decision making power/independence do young women/young men have?
4. What do people in your community say about living in the UK?
  - o Feeling settled, belonging, identifying, integration
  - o Concerns/challenges
  - o Positives/benefits
  - o Impacts on people's sense of self?
5. Has living in the UK impacted/changed your community's sense of identity or culture? How so?
  - o Values and important issues
6. How does your community feel about its representation in the UK?

## Interview Two

1. What is young people's understanding and knowledge about FGM/forced marriage in your community?
  - o Do people think it's common/happens in the UK?
2. What's the attitude towards FGM/forced marriage within your community?
  - o How does it differ between the older and younger generation?
  - o Has there been a change in attitudes towards FGM? If so, how?
  - o Do you think there is a difference between men and women's attitudes?  
(reason/justification)
3. What is the influence of culture and/or religion on FGM/forced marriage within your community?
4. What are the effects of FGM/forced marriage?
  - o Men/women
5. Who is the decision maker (for FGM/forced marriage)?
6. Are members of your community able to discuss FGM/forced marriage openly?
7. What do people in your community know about the law relating to FGM/forced marriage?  
What do they think about it?

*If appropriate:*

8. What support is there in the UK for someone affected by FGM/forced marriage? What should there be?
9. What work can be done to prevent FGM/forced marriage?
  - o To help/raise awareness/with young people etc.

*If doesn't know about either:*

10. What do you think would be the best ways for young people find out about/get information about these sorts of issues?

## Lisbon

### Interview One - English

1. What do you think about the process of adaptation/integration of young Guineans in Portuguese society?
2. What is the role of education in the development of young Guineans in Portugal?
  - What do you think young people would identify as the main differences between education in Portugal and in Guinea?
3. Does immigration affect the relationship between generations? How?
4. What are young Guineans' views of the roles of men and women in the Guinean community in Portuguese society?
  - Would these roles be different if they were in Guinea?
5. To what extent does religion or culture influence their decision making, behaviour, way of thinking, etc.?

6. In what occasions does the community get together

### Interview One - Portuguese

1. O que achas acerca do processo da adaptação/integração dos jovens guineenses na sociedade portuguesa?
2. Qual é o papel da Educação na formação dos jovens guineenses em Portugal?
  - O que achas que os jovens poderiam apontar como as principais diferenças entre a educação em Portugal e na Guiné?
3. A imigração afeta as relações entre as gerações? Como?
4. Como os jovens guineenses vêem os papéis do homem e da mulher da comunidade guineense na sociedade portuguesa?
  - Esses papéis seriam diferentes se ainda estivessem na Guiné?
5. Em que medida a religião ou cultura influenciam as suas tomadas de decisão, comportamento, modo de pensar, etc.?
6. Em que ocasiões a comunidade se junta?

### Interview 2 – English

1. *What is the position of young people in the Guinean community in Portugal in relation to forced marriage?*
  - *What are the consequences of this practice?*
  - *And in relation to FGM?*
  - *Why do you think these practices persist in the community?*
2. *What level of knowledge do you think your community has in relation to these issues?*
  - *Where do they learn about these issues?*
  - *Relating to legislation, do you know of any? What does the community think about about this, and what level of knowledge do you think that the community has?*
  - *Is the community prepared to to talk about these issues? Are there organisations who are prepared to talk about these matters?*

*For all questions also ask:*

- Can you share an example or a story that illustrates this situation?
- Why? How? When? Etc.

### Interview 2 - Portuguese

3. Qual a posição dos jovens da comunidade guineense em Portugal acerca dos Casamentos Forçados?
  - Quais as consequências dessa prática?
  - E em relação à MGF?
  - Porque achas que essas práticas ainda persistem dentro da comunidade?
4. Que tipo de conhecimento achas que a tua comunidade tem acerca destas temáticas?
  - De onde vem o conhecimento sobre essas temáticas?

- Relativamente à legislação, sabes da existência de alguma? O que acha a comunidade acerca disso e que conhecimento achas que têm?
- Está a comunidade disponível para falar acerca destas temáticas? Há organizações disponíveis para falarem sobre esse assunto?

*Para todas as questões perguntar adicionalmente:*

- Queres partilhar um exemplo ou uma história que ilustre essa situação?
- Porquê? Como? Quando? Etc.



## ANNEX 2: Selected Stories

N.B. Names and other identifiers have been changed.

### Quote 1 - Example of *Fanado*

*I know a family who decided to carry to 'fanado' about six girls, among them was a six year old, and they were joined with over 100 other girls from different families. The place where they were was a house that was inhabited at the time, and the house stood near a very damp area and as 'fanado' is done in the rainy season the house is even wetter. They slept huddled on mattresses that are laid on the floor and there was no bed. However, they were there for four months, but had mosquito nets, bathing from week to week and the place had no conditions. So when they finished the ritual they went home and the family made a great party, but the youngest girl was very weak and her father noticed that, and then he went to his daughter, he realised what was happening to her and she told her parents that during the time that the ritual had been she was sick for about two weeks and the responsible people were not seeking to consult her to a doctor and they only gave her paracetamol pills that they buy from street vendors and buy some herbs and that the fever subsided but she continued looking sick and she was, and her father thought it was serious because they were not notified of the daughter's illness (unfortunately they do not communicate even when they die, only when they finish the ritual and have returned home do family members know if something happened to their daughters or not), then the father got angry but did nothing he only took his daughter to the doctor and then she became well. (LF3.GB.28)*

*Conheço uma família que decidiu levar ao fanado umas seis raparigas entre os quais havia uma que tinha 6 anos, e elas foram juntadas com mais de 100 outras raparigas vindas de diferentes famílias e o local onde estavam era uma casa que não era habitada na altura e ainda a casa situava-se perto de uma 'bolanha' que é uma zona muito húmida e como o fanado é feito na época da chuva a casa fica mais húmida ainda, dormiam amontoadas nos colchões que se punham no chão e não havia cama. Entretanto, ficaram por lá durante quatro meses, mas tinham redes de mosquiteiros, tomavam banho de semana para semana e o lugar não tinha condições nenhuma. Portanto quando terminaram de cumprir o ritual voltaram para casa e os familiares fizeram grande festa, mas só que a mais nova estava muito debilitada e o pai reparou nisso então foi falar com a filha para perceber o que é que se passava com ela e ela contou ao pai de que durante o tempo que teve a cumprir o ritual ficou doente durante umas duas semanas e os responsáveis não foram buscar médico para consultá-la só deram-na uns comprimidos paracetamol que foram comprar nos vendedores ambulantes e umas ervas e de facto a febre baixou mas ela continuou com ar de quem está doente e estava, e o pai achou isso grave por não terem sido comunicados da doença da filha (infelizmente não comunicam mesmo quando morrem, só quando terminar o ritual e tiverem a voltar para casa que os familiares ficam a saber se aconteceu algo com as filhas ou não), então o pai ficou revoltado mas não fez nada a não ser levar a filha ao médico e depois ela ficou boa. (LF3.GB.28)*

### Quote 2 – A young man describes his opinion of FGM and why he supports it.

*About FGM young people of my community are against it, because they are more moderate, and they think that the behavior of Westerners is better than ours. In Guinea the majority of young people are against too because of the awareness campaigns that are made. Here in Portugal, the people in my community who may be in favor are the elders. Because they still preserve our culture and our religion. It is not practiced here, in Portugal, because it is forbidden. Now in Guinea they are trying to ban but they will not succeed because it is a religious practice. Nobody has the right to interfere in the other's religion. Due to the ban that exists here, parents take their children to Guinea to practice the 'fanado'. There are parents which leave their daughters to*

*vacations in Guinea and they do the 'fanado'.*

Sobre a MGF os jovens da minha comunidade são contra, porque acham-se mais moderados e acham que o comportamento dos ocidentais é melhor que o nosso. Na Guiné a maioria dos jovens também já é contra por causa das frequentes campanhas de sensibilização que agora são feitas. Aqui em Portugal pessoas da minha comunidade que possam estar a favor são pessoas de idade mais avançada. Porque ainda preservam a nossa cultura e a nossa religião. Não é praticado aqui porque é proibido. Agora também na Guiné estão a tentar proibir mas não vão conseguir porque é uma prática religiosa. Ninguém tem direito de interferir na religião do outro. Devido à proibição que aqui existe é que os pais levam os seus filhos para a Guiné a fim de praticar o 'fanado'. Há pais que levam suas filhas para passarem férias na Guiné e aproveitam e lhes fazem o 'fanado'.

*FGM results in purification of the women and causes women to be more respected and women who are subjected to mutilation have good behavior and know how to respect their husbands. Do this is act according to the rules of our religion.*

A MGF tem como consequência a purificação da mulher e ainda faz com que a mulher seja mais respeitada e as mulheres que são submetidas ao fanado têm um bom comportamento e sabem respeitar os seus maridos. Fazer isso é agir de acordo com as normas da nossa religião.

*FGM still continues because it is a religious practice that comes from Islam. We must not allow people end it because it is a religious practice. I know that they are giving money to some Muslim scholars to tell them that this is not in the Koran. I know it is not in the Koran but is a lesson of our prophet and all true Muslim knows that should not be based only on the Koran because we also have 'Sunnah' [teachings] of the Prophet, which must also be fulfilled. But these wise sayings forget that God says in the Koran that every Muslim should follow the lessons of his messenger. If somebody prove that this is not part of the lessons of our Prophet then I can admit that there is abandoned. But that person should be a great expert of the Koran and the lessons of our prophet.*

A MGF ainda continua porque é uma prática religiosa que vem desde início do Islão. Não devemos deixar que acabem com ela porque é uma prática religiosa. Sei que agora estão a dar dinheiro a alguns sábios muçulmanos a fim de estes dizerem que isto não está no Alcorão. Eu também sei que não está no Alcorão mas é um ensinamento do nosso profeta e todo o verdadeiro muçulmano sabe que não se deve basear somente no alcorão porque também temos Sunnah (ensinamentos) do profeta que também deve ser cumprido. Mas estes ditos sábios esquecem-se que Deus diz no alcorão que todo o muçulmano deve seguir os ensinamentos do seu mensageiro. Se alguém me comprovar que isto não faz parte dos ensinamentos do nosso profeta então ali poderei admitir que seja abandonada. Mas essa pessoa deve ser um grande conhecedor do Alcorão e dos ensinamentos do Nosso profeta.

*The knowledge that my community has about forced marriage is that it is a bad practice because it only respects the will of one spouse and in some cases neither. About the 'fanado' most people aware that it is a bad practice because it harms women. This knowledge comes from sensitizations and media. I do not believe that it harms woman, they are all stories invented by the enemies of our religion. If it were not true it would not be recommended by our prophet. They say it makes the woman feel many difficulties during childbirth and that is not true. If we see women with more children are Muslim, because in many Muslim countries with no problems falling birthrate. There are those who say that the woman does not feel as much pleasure in the sexual act. This is not true. If you say to a woman that she does not feel the maximum pleasure in the sexual act and you feel it more because they do not believe you can have as proof. Can anyone get in front of you and tell you that is happier than you, even if you are happier than him, but if you can disguise well what you feel*

*you can believe. If they can ban woman's 'fanado' next step will be to ban the man's 'fanado'. What they should do is to improve the conditions in which they made the 'fanado', this if they are concerned with the rights of the woman.*

O conhecimento que a minha comunidade tem de casamento forçado é de que é uma má prática porque respeita apenas a vontade de um dos cônjuges e nalguns casos de nenhum dos dois. Quanto ao fanado a maioria tem conhecimento de que é uma má prática porque, segundo o que dizem, faz mal a mulher. Esses conhecimentos vêm de sensibilizações e de órgãos de comunicação social. Eu pessoalmente não acredito que faz mal a mulher, tudo isso são histórias inventadas por inimigos da nossa religião. Se não fosse verdade não seria recomendado pelo nosso profeta. Dizem que faz a mulher sentir muitas dificuldades no momento de isso também não é verdade. Se formos ver vamos constatar que as mulheres com maior número de filhos são muçulmanas, porque nos país de predominância muçulmana não há problemas de queda de taxa de natalidade. Há ainda os que dizem que a mulher não sente o máximo de prazer no ato sexual. Isso também não é verdade. Se disseres a uma mulher que ela não sente o máximo de prazer no ato sexual e que tu sentes mais ela poderá acreditar porque não tem como comprovar. Alguém pode chegar a tua frente e te dizer que é mais feliz do que tu mesmo se no fundo tu és mais feliz que ele mas se consegue disfarçar bem o que sente tu podes acreditar. Se conseguirem proibir o fanado de mulher o próximo passo vai ser a proibição do fanado do homem. O que devem fazer é melhorar as condições em são feitas o fanado, isto se na verdade preocupam-se com os direitos de mulher.

*Surely there are laws forbidding these practices. Because here is not practiced because the law prohibits, and you know that even here when the law is violated police is right behind you. I personally think that the law prohibits forced marriage is a good law and has reason to exist but law prohibiting woman's 'fanado' is an unfair law.*

De certeza que há leis que proíbem-nos. Porque se aqui não é praticado é porque há algo que o proíbe, e tu mesmo sabes que aqui quando violas a lei a polícia vem logo atrás de ti. Eu pessoalmente acho que a lei que proíbe o casamento forçado é uma boa lei e tem razão de existir mas lei que proíbe o fanado de mulher é uma lei injusta. (LM23.GB.20)

Quote 3 - an example of forced marriage:

*I know a man in Guinea-Bissau who lived in a 'tabanca' situated in the east of the country that chose a husband for his daughter without consulting her, and then when the daughter found out she did not want her husband, claiming that she did not know the man who she was going to marry, and that the 'tabanca' where she lived and the 'tabanca' of her supposed husband were too far apart. The father remained very determined to perform the marriage saying that he will not annul the marriage and at all costs the daughter has to obey him, incidentally her father did not know the man. But the wedding was held and because she did not want her husband he mistreated her and forbade her to talk with the neighbours of the 'tabanca'. He took her into the woods when he went to work and she went there all day doing nothing, and the husband does not let her*

*Conheço um homem na Guiné-Bissau que vivia numa tabanca situada na zona Leste do país que escolheu marido para a sua filha sem a consultar e depois que a filha soube ela não quis o marido alegando de que não conhecia o homem com quem se ia casar e depois a tabanca onde ela vivia e a do suposto marido era muitíssimo distante. O pai manteve-se muito determinado para a realização do casamento dizendo que não vai anular o casamento e que custe o que custar a filha tem que lhe obedecer, aliás o próprio pai não conhecia o senhor. Porém o casamento foi realizado e como ela não queria o marido ele a maltratava e a proibia de falar com os vizinhos da tabanca, levava-a para a mata quando ia trabalhar e ela passava lá o dia todo mesmo não fazendo nada e depois o marido não a deixava ir visitar os pais e os irmãos e o pai também não foi visitá-la durante anos*

*go to visit her parents and siblings, and her father was not visiting her for years, and he always received news which said that his daughter was not being well treated. Yet he ignored it, it was only after many years that he went to see his daughter when she was very traumatized and very sick because of mistreatment and today she suffers from a mental disorder because she didn't have the help of her parents and felt abandoned and left to her fate, and now she has returned to her parents' house and did not improve, she is worsening more and more. (LF3.GB.28)*

*e ele recebia sempre notícias que diziam de que a filha não estava a ser bem tratada. Mas mesmo assim ele ignorava, só passados muitos anos é que ele foi ver a filha quando ela já estava muito traumatizada e muito doente por causa dos maus tratos e hoje ela sofre de perturbação mental porque não teve a ajuda dos pais e sentia-se abandonada e deixada à própria sorte, e agora ela voltou para a casa dos pais e não melhorou em nada, cada vez está a piorar mais. (LF3.GB.28)*

#### Quote 4 – A man's forced marriage.

*Mahmood was an Iraqi immigrant born in the UK. His father had been forced to flee during Saddam Hussein's regime. He completed his secondary education in the UK at a prestigious private school. The fees were covered by the combined salary of the parents, whilst the eldest sister was asked to leave education at the age of 16 to cover the living expenses of the family. This obvious favouritism of one sibling was the major cause of arguments within the family. Mahmood's father relocated the family to Qatar in 2003 but enrolled his son at a respectable university in the UK. Again, the tuition fees were covered by incomes of the parents and their daughter. Mahmood specialised in finance and business whilst his father hoped to advance in his own career as an employee in a Middle Eastern insurance company. The family's emphasis on Mahmood's education was essentially motivated by their desire to regain their pre-Sadam social standing. They had lost all their financial security by fleeing Iraq, their assets had been confiscated, and in the UK they were forced to work low-paid jobs whilst living in a one bedroom flat. His father hoped to advance his own social status by becoming a partner at the Qatari insurance company. This task proved particularly difficult due to his lack of qualifications and outstanding references. Mahmood's father soon discovered that the 45 year-old daughter of the section manager was unmarried. This was because she lacked serious social skills and had spent a considerable time in the US seeking medical treatment for schizophrenia. With the stigma attached to mental health problems this 45 year-old woman was particularly unmarriageable. He drafted a plan to marry off his son to this 'spinster'. His daughter had three sons already from her marriage so grandchildren were no longer a priority for Mahmood's father. Mahmood resisted all the way but eventually capitulated after several distressing incidents. His son's refusal had a detrimental effect on his father's health – he suffered a stroke and skilfully played this to his advantage. Even his extended family blackmailed Mahmood, an elderly aunt demanded her jewellery back (a wedding present to Mahmood's sister). His mother saw a psychiatrist for clinical depression and then Mahmood's sister threatened to disown him should he refuse to marry the 45 year-old spinster. Mahmood finally consented and married this socially awkward woman. Consequently he missed his chance at fatherhood but was able to regain his family's previous social standing.*

#### Quote 5 – Honour Killing

*Whilst honour-based violence is very rare in my community, there are some cases where honour killings have occurred. I do not know anyone personally affected by this issue but have been told of a story in Birmingham. However, it is important to mention that stories about honour killings are often invented to instil fear in the community. Apparently, a young second generation Afghan from a fairly successful entrepreneurial family was murdered by a group of Pakistani boys over an alleged relationship with their sister. The 22 year-old sister was the unhappy second wife of a 45 year-old widower (who had two spoilt children from his previous marriage). The girl was deeply unhappy in her forced marriage and soon started an affair with the young Afghan guy who promised to marry her. Needless to say, the affair was soon discovered, whilst the girl was able to beg for mercy, her lover was slaughtered in bright daylight. How much of this story is truthful is irrelevant, but it has all the ingredients of an honour killing.*

### Quote 6 – A ‘successful’ forced marriage

*Hanifa was a young 21 year-old Afghan from a fairly liberal background. She was born and bred in the UK, had attend a comprehensive school whilst also studying at an Islamic school during weekends. Upon her completion of full-time education, she decided to take a gap year. Her parents had long pressured her into pursuing a university degree and were delighted when she gained an offer at the local university. Hanifa, nevertheless, was unmotivated and confused. She begged for another gap year – her parents yet again relented. She pursued a number of different professions; mostly as a customer service assistant in retail or caring for pensioners. Despite her best efforts, her gap years were fairly unproductive. Then at the age of 20, she finally started her university degree. She soon became depressed mostly owing to the heavy workload but also because of her inability to bond with fellow students. She was a hijabi, they were liberals. Unable to find people of ‘her own kind’, she pursued friendships with elder women of dubious backgrounds. Her parents were forced to witness Hanifa’s sudden transformation from a ‘quiet, respectful hijabi’ into a ‘slutty, scruffy slut’. Her companions were all much older than her (early 30s) and had behaved decadently throughout their lifetime. Their days were spent clubbing and engaging in casual sexual relationships with strangers. All of Hanifa’s ‘friends’ were divorced or separated from their partners. They had children from extramarital affairs or out of wedlock and were consequently ‘excommunicated’ by the Pakistani community. Substance abuse was particularly prevalent in Hanifa’s group. Her parents were devastated with their daughter’s life decisions. Hanifa soon dropped out of university, citing ‘social anxiety issues’ as a reason. Apparently, her psychiatric report explained clinical depression. Whether she had several suicide attempts is unknown, but close family members witnessed severe self-harming. According to rumours, Hanifa soon began ‘experimenting’ with her sexuality. Lesbianism was the final straw. In an attempt to ‘remove’ their daughter from the situation, they married her off to a nice, young and respectable gentleman. He was a distant relative with a successful job and emotional stability. Hanifa initially contested the decision, several heated arguments after and she had finally consented. She had apparently cried throughout her whole wedding ceremony. However, I met her about a month ago in the community hall and she seems absolutely fine. Her sudden transformation has stunned my community. She has had a nice haircut done and is now back at her old university. After two years of marriage, she has a beautiful baby son and is actively involved in several community building projects. She talks admiringly about her husband, stating his liberal views as an inspiration. Apparently, his politeness and kind demeanour has impressed her deeply. I believe that the general public needs to understand that forced marriages do not occur out of cruelty, but despair. The ‘tough love’ practised is an attempt to benefit the child, not to disadvantage it.*

### Quote 7 – A forced marriage?

*Rita was a third generation Pakistani teenager attending a large comprehensive school in London. She is from a stable, middle-class background with well-educated parents. Her mother was born in the UK and attended secondary school in Bolton, whilst her father had immigrated to the UK from Pakistan. He entered an arranged marriage in order to seek a better life across the ‘pond’. She’s a hijabi, deeply religious, and has predominantly Muslim friends from the same cultural background. She’s outspoken, and argumentative, rather aggressive and often deemed ‘difficult to control’ by the teaching staff. She was on the local authority ‘Youth Board’ for several years and planned to enter a successful career in politics. Whilst she showed admirable talent as a youth advocate for ethnic minority youth in London, yet she entered an arranged marriage at the age of 17 in her first year of sixth form education. Her cousin, who had just completed her GCSEs, also entered an arranged marriage and both relocated to Bolton. The teachers at the secondary comprehensive were told the girls were relocating to Bolton for family reasons. Rita expressed unease about the relocation to her History teacher, stating her lack of qualifications and worries about educational opportunities. She did not mention the arranged marriage or the prospect of leaving full-time education. However, according to rumours she is enjoying married life at the moment. Her younger cousin is believed to be pregnant with her first child. As her school friends we have not yet heard of her – it’s been a year without news.*

### Quote 8 – Negotiating her way out of a forced marriage

*My friend was going to be arranged to get married. Her sister got married when she was quite young, she wasn't really pressured into it, she actually wanted it. She wasn't doing much and was always at home, she was happy to do it. My friend was 17, we were at college talking about starting Uni next year when talks began around getting her married because her sister got married around that age. She refused and said she wanted to go to Uni, but her father continued to plan everything and she was getting emotional and crying a lot saying 'my life is over'. She never really stood up for herself, she thought that he wouldn't listen even if she did. We encouraged her to speak to her family. Her mother passed away when she was quite young and she has a lot of young siblings. She was kind of the mum of the household cooking and cleaning and taking care of the siblings. She was quite upset she would be leaving for that reason too, so we suggested that she should tell her father that if she goes no one will be there to take care of them. This actually convinced him to wait longer, he told her to finish Uni, and when your brothers and sisters are old enough you will get married then. She was lucky enough to speak up for herself and so she went to Uni. Some people feel that they can't do that though, and they let it happen. If you're outspoken you can stick up for yourself, but if you're not it will easily happen to you. Obviously, sometimes you don't have control over it. I think for my friend it was important she had us to help her make plans around how to get out of that difficult situation.*