



BREAKING THE CULTURE OF SILENCE

NORMS THAT PERPETUATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NORTH AND SOUTH NIGERIA

Saskia van Veen, Ph.D., Lead researcher, Impact Measurement and Knowledge Team,
Oxfam Novib

Annelin Verkade, Intern, Impact Measurement and Knowledge Team, Oxfam Novib

Chioma Ukwuagu, Researcher, Gender Mainstreaming Coordinator, Oxfam in Nigeria

Muthoni Muriithi, Enough Campaigner, Africa, Oxfam International

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence against women and girls is often perpetuated by practices defended by some community members on the basis of tradition, culture, religion or superstition. These include female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and early marriage. Such harmful traditional practices are underpinned by social norms, the rules of behaviour that people in a group adhere to because they believe that they are expected to do so and that others do so. In Nigeria, one in four women aged 15-49 has undergone FGM/C, and 48 percent of women aged 20-49 were married before the age of 18.

Enough, a worldwide Oxfam campaign, aims to replace harmful social norms with positive ones that promote gender equality and non-violence. To better understand which social norms perpetuate traditional practices in Nigeria and how they influence behaviour, Oxfam in Nigeria conducted formative research by interviewing 20 men and 20 women and analysing the results in a campaign design workshop with partner organizations and experts working on violence against women and girls. The findings will inform the development of the Enough campaign in Nigeria.

From the research and subsequent analysis in the workshop, four social norms were identified as drivers of the harmful traditional practices FGM/C and early marriage:

- A respectable woman marries early
- A respectable woman is submissive to male authority
- A suitable woman is not promiscuous
- A woman is worth more as a wife than as a daughter

Women and girls who transgress these norms face four main kinds of sanction: peer pressure, condemnation, exclusion and force. Encouragingly, although the research found that respondents believe others still think it is appropriate to follow traditional practices, many of the respondents' own individual attitudes have already shifted – a first signifier of social norms change.

1 INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and girls is a serious worldwide human rights crisis (Garcia-Morena et al. 2015; Gennari et al. 2014). It is perpetuated in Nigeria, amongst other factors, by harmful traditional practices (Odimegwu & Okemgbo 2003). The Nigeria Demographic Health Survey of 2013 showed high prevalence of violence against women and girls related to traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) (25%) and child marriage (43%) (National Population Commission & ICF International 2014). Although the Nigerian government has made some efforts to create a legal framework that is more protective of women and girls – for example, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act 2015 prohibits FGM/C – laws alone will not change the complex social reality in which violence against women and girls has existed for many years. Social norms underlying violence against women and girls are based on gender roles which are deeply rooted in society and defined by the custodians of cultures, perpetuating the idea that power relationships and inequalities are natural and innate, and hampering the implementation of any new legislation (Haylock et al. 2016).

Enough is Oxfam's first worldwide campaign which aims to challenge and change social norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls by replacing harmful norms with positive norms that promote gender equality and non-violence. The campaign was launched in seven countries in November 2016; at the time of writing 13 countries have launched and over time it is anticipated that over 30 countries will launch campaigns aimed at ensuring more women and girls enjoy their right to live free from all forms of violence. To inform the campaign strategy in Nigeria, Oxfam conducted formative research by identifying which social norms surround the harmful traditional practices of early marriage and FGM/C. We chose to focus our research on early marriage in the North of Nigeria, where its prevalence is encouraged by segments of religious Islamic teachings, and on FGM/C in the South of Nigeria, where the population is predominantly Christian.

This paper presents the findings of the formative research and the campaign priorities for Nigeria that were determined in a campaign design workshop based on the research and (experiential) knowledge of partner organizations and experts.

1.1 DEFINING SOCIAL NORMS IN RELATION TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Social norms are relevant in many areas, including youth employment, gender equality, disability inclusion, and active citizenship when civic space is restricted. Recent work in relation to violence against women and girls discusses social norms as rules of behaviour (Cialdini, 1990; Cislighi & Heise 2016; Mackie 2015; Haylock et al. 2016; Alexander-Scott et al. 2016; Boyle et al. 2009; Paluck et al. 2010); more specifically, Alexander-Scott, Bell and Holden (2016) define social norms as rules of behaviour that people in a group adhere to because they believe the majority in the group act according to the rule, and that most other people in the group believe they ought to behave accordingly. We focus this research on both elements of this definition: empirical beliefs about what others in a group do (i.e. what is considered to be typical behaviour), and normative beliefs about what others think others ought

to do (i.e. what is considered to be appropriate behaviour) (Paluck et al. 2010). Social norms can relate to both types of belief on gender roles and the acceptability of violence against women and girls (Boyle et al. 2009; Haylock et al. 2016; Cislighi and Heise 2016).

In research on social norms, the term ‘reference group’ or ‘reference persons’ is used to refer to the people whose opinions matter for a person and influence his or her attitudes, beliefs and behaviour (Alexander-Scott, Bell and Holden 2016: 8). A person’s reference group can be people in their ordinary lives or public figures. A reference group may intend its rules of behaviour to be protective for women, in that women who comply with social norms can gain status by being seen as respectable, admirable and honourable. But when an individual transgresses a social norm, they risk sanctions from their reference group – and the use of violence as a sanction can be socially acceptable (Alexander-Scott, Bell and Holden 2016). Individuals can also internalize potential social sanctions, affecting their self-esteem and feeling of acceptability. Social norms, and the rules of behaviour that correspond to them, are not static: they are constantly negotiated in society. Scholars write about dynamic ‘tipping points’, beyond which norms start to shift (Mackie et al. 2012).

Social norms are just one element of the system keeping in place gender inequality and violence against women and girls. Cislighi and Heise (under review) stress the importance of addressing social norms as part of the institutional, material, individual and societal factors that interplay in sustaining harmful practices. Kelleher and Rao (2001) describe how systems are formed by formal and informal rules that steer the behaviour of people in a society and locates social norms as part of a framework of system change, pictured in Figure 1. System change occurs when change is happening in all four quadrants. The top-left quadrant is the informal individual realm (consciousness, such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes to change); in the top-right quadrant are formally measurable conditions to do with individuals (such as access to resources and freedom from violence) that enable behaviour embracing change. Social norms are found in the bottom-left quadrant, the informal collective; in the bottom-right quadrant are formal collective rules (laws and policies). The arrows indicate how change in one quadrant can bring about changes in others. Social norms, for example, can either facilitate or prevent individual changes in attitude and behaviour, including preventing a change in attitudes from resulting in a change of actions. However, changes in individual attitudes can also affect social norms. Change in social norms can influence legal and policy implementation, positively or negatively.

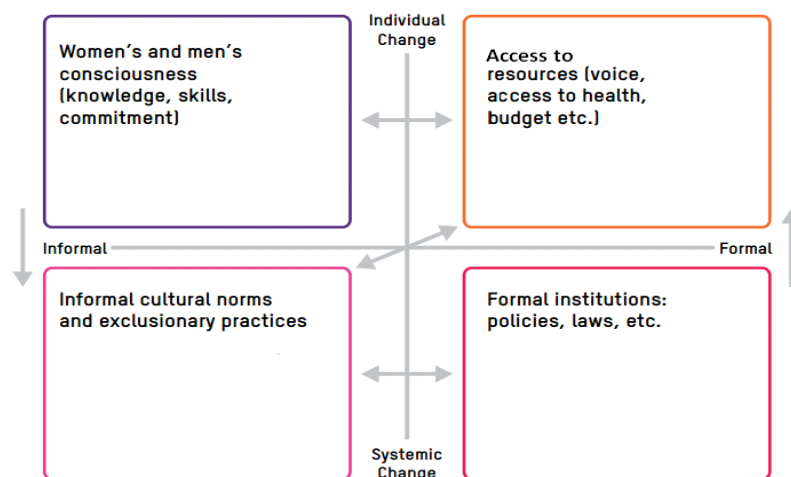


Figure 1 - Gender at Work framework (Kelleher & Rao 2001)

2 METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on qualitative research involving in-depth interviews with a total of 20 men and 20 women in Bayelsa state in the South and Adamawa state in the North of Nigeria. The respondents were asked to comment on a vignette – a story describing a moment related to research concepts, with a series of twists in the narrative – about FGM/C (in Bayelsa) or early marriage (in Adamawa). This method allows sensitive issues to be explored in a less personal or threatening way (Barter & Renold 1999). Rather than focusing on the respondents' own attitudes and beliefs, enumerators asked about social norms and related sanctions: what respondents thought would be a typical behavioural response to the situation described in the story (empirical belief) and what respondents thought others would find appropriate behaviour (normative belief). The vignettes (see Boxes 1 and 2) were structured according to CARE's SNAP tool, as described by Cislighi and Heise (2016), with content based on literature about the context of Nigeria and experiential knowledge of Oxfam and partners.

Vignette on early marriage

Amina, Fatima's cousin, comes to visit Fatima's family. Both are about 11 years old. Amina announces she will get married soon and suggests Fatima does the same.

Twists:

- Fatima does not comply with (potential) norm
- Influence of financial burden
- Family composition (i.e. Fatima is the third daughter in the family)
- Religious argument of the early marriage of prophet Mohammed

Box 1 – Vignette on early marriage

Vignette on FGM/C

Boma's mother Idara is visited by Boma's grandmother, who tells her it is time for Boma to be cut.

Twists:

- Idara does not comply with (potential) norm
- Idara does not want Boma to be cut due to health risks

Box 1 – Vignette on female genital mutilation/cutting

2.1 A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH FROM DESIGN TO ANALYSIS

The research is the product of collaboration (and co-funding) between the Oxfam country office in Nigeria, the Enough worldwide team of Oxfam International, the Gender Justice team of Oxfam Great Britain, and the Gender Justice team and Impact Measurement and Knowledge (IMK) team of Oxfam Novib. Dissemination efforts were funded by Share-Net Netherlands Network on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV. The research was designed and executed by the IMK team at Oxfam Novib, the gender mainstreaming coordinator of Oxfam in Nigeria and partner organizations the Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN) and Fostering Achievement of Community Empowerment (FACE) Initiative. Staff of partner organizations were trained as enumerators. The research proceeded in four steps over four months (September-December 2017).

2.1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers conducted a literature review on social norms research, within academia and Oxfam, and studied FGM/C and early marriage survivors' stories extensively to develop the research design, including the vignettes. This literature review also provided an understanding of social norms in Nigeria, and enabled the team to make the first choices regarding the focus of the research.

2.1.2 RESEARCH DESIGN WORKSHOP AND ENUMERATOR TRAINING IN NIGERIA

The research was further designed during workshops in Nigeria organized by Oxfam with the participation of CRUDAN and FACE Initiative. To prepare this workshop, the IMK team trained Oxfam in Nigeria staff, who subsequently facilitated two design workshops with enumerators (two men and two women) from CRUDAN and FACE Initiative, one in the North and one in the South, in October 2017. During the workshops, participants reflected on possible social norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls in Nigeria through discussions and exercises, and fine-tuned the vignettes that formed the basis for the interview guide. To ensure smooth implementation in the field, participants were trained on interview techniques, sampling approaches, and ethical guidelines of the World Health Organization for research on violence against women and girls (Ellsberg and Heise 2005).

2.1.3 COLLECTING THE DATA

Forty individual interviews were conducted with men (20) and women (20) aged 18 to 45 from Bayelsa state in the South of Nigeria and Adamawa state in the North, locations selected to give insight into FGM/C and early marriage practices respectively. As well as equal gender representation, respondents were chosen to reflect a balance of education levels and marital statuses (see Table 1). Respondents were asked to respond to open-ended questions and discuss the traditional practices and social norms. Activists against violence against women and girls were excluded from the research to prevent bias.

Respondents' consent was requested at the beginning and end of the interview, and they were not asked primarily about their personal experiences. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, saved anonymously, and accompanied by monitoring of the context. These measures were taken to a) ensure the enumerators respected the respondents at all stages of the research, and b) ensure minimal harm to respondents and research staff, following guidance from Ellsberg et al. (2001).

When researching sensitive issues such as violence against women and girls, there is a risk that respondents may give answers they consider to be socially desirable rather than reflecting their true beliefs. The authors took all possible precautions to limit this possible source of bias: enumerators were originally from the same area as the respondents, and conducted the interviews in the local language; and interviews focused mainly on the perceptions of others, which is less sensitive to comment on. The findings give no indication that social desirability bias has been a problem in this research.

	# of interviews	Mean age	Age range	Marital status	Religion	Education
Early marriage women	10	28	18-39	8 married 2 single	7 Christian 3 Islam	Varied
Early marriage men	10	31	20-40	7 married 3 single	6 Christian 4 Islam	Varied
FGM/C women	10	35	29-45	9 married 1 single	Christian	Varied
FGM/C men	10	32	26-38	8 married 2 single	Christian	Varied

Table 1 – Characteristics of the respondents

2.1.4 ANALYSING THE DATA

Data analysis was done jointly by Oxfam in Nigeria and the IMK team in the Netherlands. The research findings were shared during a campaign design workshop in Abuja from 27 November to 1 December. They were presented as descriptive findings, without drawing conclusions on their importance in the local context, to ensure that workshop participants could include their own (experiential) knowledge in interpreting them – this is necessary in the campaign design process, as the campaign aims to reach a wider Nigerian context than only the two areas where the research was conducted.

The workshop brought together 29 participants, including survivors of violence against women and girls, partner organizations, parliamentarians, a celebrity, and the enumerators who conducted the interviews. The knowledge brought by participants, and interpretations from their varied perspectives, validated and broadened the findings of the research. The workshop was facilitated by an Oxfam multidisciplinary team comprising a gender specialist, researcher, Enough campaigner for Africa, digital specialist, programme manager, and staff specialized in monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning and programme quality. Participants decided on the key focus and objectives for the Enough campaign in Nigeria through a participatory process. This paper reflects that process by presenting the research results and placing them in the framework developed during the workshop.

3 FINDINGS

This chapter first gives an overview of the context of the respondents, including their reference persons, the place of traditional practices such as early marriage and FGM/C in their communities, and experiences with and attitudes towards those practices. Next it presents the social norms prioritized in the campaign design workshop, accompanied by findings from the research and testimonies from workshop participants. Finally, it discusses possible sanctions for refusing these norms, and the first step towards challenging the norms: breaking the culture of silence.

3.1 THE CONTEXT OF THE RESPONDENTS

3.1.1 REFERENCE PERSONS INDICATED BY THE RESPONDENTS

At the beginning of the interview, respondents were asked to think about a moment in their life when they had to make a decision about compliance with a traditional practice such as early marriage or FGM/C and list the five people whose opinion they valued most. Figure 2 shows they mostly mentioned family members and peers, while different types of leaders also have influence on decision making. These results suggest that social norms on traditional practices may best be influenced in the family sphere, but the support of traditional leaders will also be crucial for the campaign.

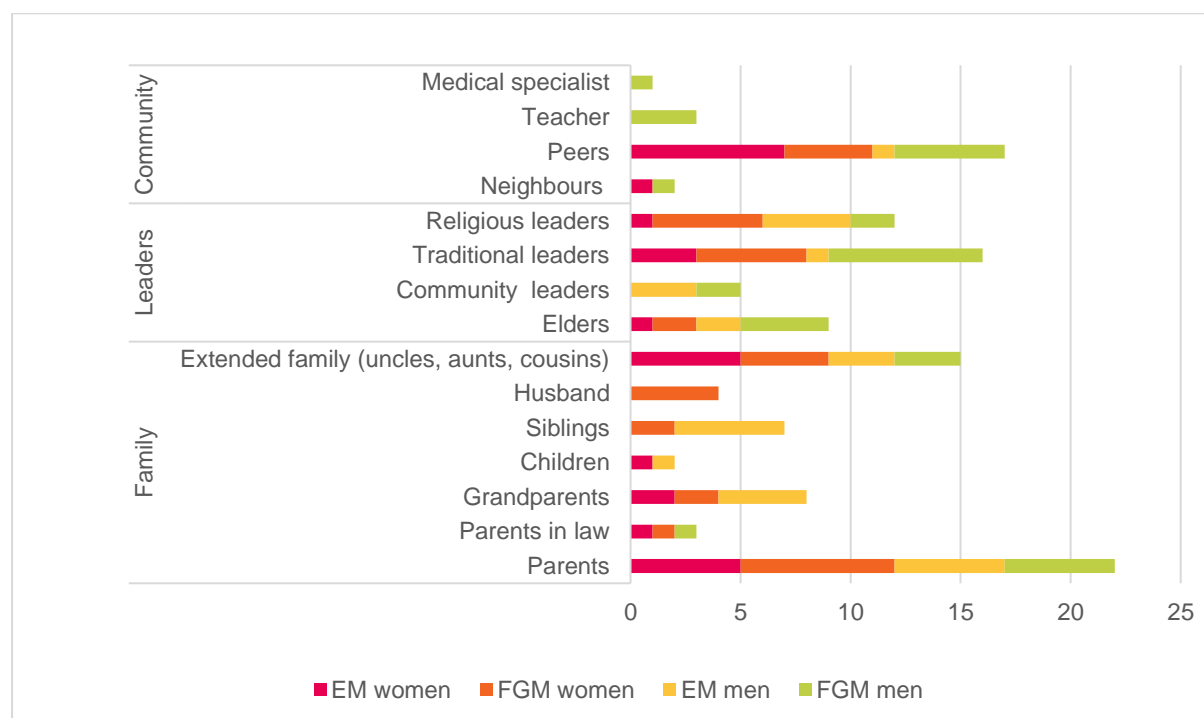


Figure 2 - Reference network of the respondents with regard to choices on traditional practices

3.1.2 THE PLACE OF TRADITIONAL PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Throughout the interviews we found out a lot about how respondents perceive the importance of traditional practices in their communities. Traditions – that is, beliefs or behaviour passed down within a group or society, with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past – are very

important in the lives of Nigerians. The interviews made clear that they form the basis of strong social norms which it is believed are not to be questioned or broken, and this was validated by workshop participants. Respondents explained that traditions need to be followed to maintain community bonding, and that families should adhere to local traditions to uphold their image and protect their place in the community. We found that respondents expected others to practice early marriage or FGM/C for the sake of following tradition.

“It’s the tradition [...] Boma is not the first to be cut and she won’t be the last” (female respondent).

“She should get married [early] because our culture demands it” (male respondent).

Refusing to follow the traditional norms may bring about sanctions, and will be perceived as “spoiling our culture”. Because these practices are rooted in tradition, some see opposing them as futile:

“Sometimes [people] are thinking [that FGM/C is] something that is happening since our fore, fore father, so [there is] nothing to do about [stopping] it. Let them continue what they are doing” (female respondent).

Religion can either fuel or decrease the prevalence of traditional practices like FGM/C and early marriage. For some in the North of Nigeria, the early marriage of the prophet Mohammed, as described in the Quran, is a reason to practice early marriage. Respondents in the South of Nigeria, however, noted that Christianity can be seen as a valid reason not to undergo FGM/C.

“When I was young I didn’t see anything wrong about it, but when I was growing up they started saying that it is not right as a child of God to be circumcised” (female respondent).

3.1.3 THE PRACTICE OF FGM/C AND EARLY MARRIAGE

Many respondents were aware of FGM/C or early marriage being practiced in their own village or neighbouring villages, and some respondents had experienced these practices themselves. For example, a respondent shared a vivid memory of her circumcision:

“The worst part is when they hold you, without any injection [sedative]. How many women will sit on you? They will sit on you then they will now [cut you]” (female respondent).

Our respondents shared different perspectives on the ‘right’ way of practicing FGM/C and early marriage. For example, responses on the ‘right’ age of marriage ranged from 10 to over 18 years old. FGM/C was most often said to be practiced at birth, at the onset of puberty (sometimes together with all other girls of similar age in the village), or before or during the delivery of the first child. Some thought the ‘right way’ to practice FGM/C is making a small mark, accompanied by a celebration, while for others it is removing the clitoris entirely. These answers seemed to be village-specific, showing that the practices vary per community.

3.1.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS FGM/C AND EARLY MARRIAGE

The majority of respondents reported negative personal attitudes towards FGM/C and early marriage. In the case of FGM/C, reasons included the health risks associated with cutting, depriving women of sexual pleasure, believing that it is wrong as a Christian, and finding it old-fashioned.

“It [FGM/C] is oppression, humiliation, just like I said deprivation” (male respondent).

In the case of early marriage, reasons included thinking that young girls are not mature enough, they do not have the necessary skills (such as cooking) to be married, they need to go to school, early marriage will lead to divorce, or because of health risks during pregnancy: half of the respondents were aware of problems arising for young girls during pregnancy and child birth.

Respondents who had positive attitudes towards FGM/C mostly cited reasons related to tradition and identity, believing circumcision to be a feature of being a woman. Those who had positive attitudes towards early marriage cited reasons related to protecting the girl and the family, identity and morality.

“It’s better if she marries early, before she starts exhibiting immoral behaviour” (male respondent).

While the above responses on community bonding show the strength of social norms – and the importance of a public campaign approach to challenge them – these findings also point towards opportunities for the Enough campaign in Nigeria: in particular, discordance between personal attitudes and norms can be the first step in shifting harmful social norms. The role of religion, and the importance of community leaders in defining and compliance with social norms, emphasizes the importance of getting the involvement and support of leaders in these spheres.

3.2 SOCIAL NORMS THAT FUEL FGM/C AND EARLY MARRIAGE

From the analysis of the interview findings, participants in the campaign design workshop identified a number of social norms related to positive attitudes towards FGM/C and early marriage, and prioritized four as being at the root of the problem and suitable for public campaigning.

3.2.1 A RESPECTABLE WOMAN MARRIES EARLY

Norms reinforce socially constructed gender roles. According to this research, a woman’s role is relegated to the household: the social norm is to get married, be a ‘good wife’ and have children. The interviews made clear that marriage and motherhood are considered the most important achievements for women in both Bayelsa and Adamawa states, more so than achievements in education or the workplace. This was confirmed by workshop participants. It logically follows that girls should marry as soon as they mature, and this norm was found clearly in the research.

As one male respondent stated, *“early marriage is beneficial for a girl’s position in the community.”* It is seen as ensuring her safety, since she should be taken care of by her family-in-law; girls are seen as having a place in their father’s house only until they are deemed ‘mature’ enough for marriage. Most of the respondents’ reference groups believe that the onset of puberty is the right time for a girl to get married, if the right man makes a proposal. The status of the whole family is at stake, as one male respondent stressed: *“It is shameful for a father if he allows his daughter to stay unmarried up to 15-16 years”*. After marriage, a girl contributes to her family’s status if she is a good wife for her family-in-law. If not, problems may occur: *“Girls [...] like Fatima, if they don’t know how to cook, do laundry, or any other household work, [...] it will result in challenges and may likely end the marriage”* (male respondent).

While girls are groomed for marriage and motherhood from an early age, boys are seen as maturing later, when they can carry the responsibility of supporting their family. *“It is a mistake to marry boys at*

young age, as if you ask them to destroy the household” (male respondent). Workshop participants agreed that a girl’s role in the family is perceived as less important and explained that in some areas of Nigeria girls are sent to school or to the market only to be visible to potential suitors. As a girl will not be responsible for supporting her biological family, the focus is on maintaining the good name of the family by being well-mannered and securing a good marriage before getting too old.

3.2.2 A RESPECTABLE WOMAN IS SUBMISSIVE TO MALE AUTHORITY

Odimegwu and Okemgbo write that in Nigeria: *“Gender role ideology stresses that the man is the head of the woman, not only because he paid a dowry to own her, but because God has made him superior to the woman”* (2003: 225). According to workshop participants, similar thoughts are prevalent in Islamic as well as Christian traditions in the country. Respondents said boys are expected to marry obedient and respectable girls, and parents are supposed to raise their daughters to be obedient and respectable. In communities that practice FGM/C, undergoing the rite is seen as a way of ensuring that girls are ready for marriage and remain obedient and respectable. *“Circumcision is like a bride price being paid in a woman’s head; being recognized by God and recognized by society. Your family too will recognize you”* (female respondent). Interview findings showed that high value is placed on good manners, submissiveness and obedience, and these are demonstrated by submitting to FGM/C.

In all instances, women and girls have little say in decisions around FGM/C and early marriage. Although women often decide to practice FGM/C on their daughters and/or state they want to undergo FGM/C, they do so since it is seen as an act of submissiveness to their husband. As a female respondent stated: *“A man that does not get his wife circumcised is not a complete man.”* Furthermore, in relation to early marriage, daughters are seen as property of their father. As a male respondent stated, in relation to a father’s opinion on early marriage: *“He in the end decides about his daughter”*. Experiences of workshop participants confirmed that men may see women as a liability, for example to their own or their family’s honour. Sometimes women are seen as property of the men in their lives: although norms here did not become fully clear from the research, workshop participants felt this was important to address in the campaign.

3.2.3 A SUITABLE WOMAN IS NOT PROMISCUOUS

Literature about gender norms often refers to a belief that women are naturally promiscuous and therefore need to be altered (e.g. through FGM/C) and secured (e.g. through early marriage) (Mackie and Lejeune, 2009; Freymeyer et al 2007). Respondents explained that FGM/C was understood in their communities as a way to control women’s sexuality and ensure that wives remain faithful; ensuring appropriate behaviour. *“They say that if the clitoris is not cut that the woman will be easily seduced... that she will always want to satisfy herself, so even in the absence of her husband she will not be bothered and will easily fall [to other men]”* (male respondent). Reference groups saw early marriage as a way to prevent girls from having sexual relations and possible pregnancies before marriage, to preserve the family honour. Girls who refuse marriage are thought of as promiscuous: *“If you refuse to get married when it is your time, they will say ‘what will you like to become if not a prostitute?’”* (female respondent).

The analysis made clear that this control of women’s sexuality is closely linked to the norm on women being submissive to men and having no decision-making power over their own bodies or life choices. While male status is strongly linked to early marriage and FGM/C, however, there is a high level of

ignorance among men. Many male respondents stated not to know if people still practiced FGM/C, saw it as a woman’s affair, and related it to community expectations, not individual choice. Few respondents linked FGM/C to women’s enjoyment of sex, though a workshop participant stressed that circumcised women being unable to satisfy their husbands leads to many divorces and polygamy.

3.2.4 A WOMAN IS WORTH MORE AS A WIFE THAN AS A DAUGHTER

The above three norms reflect women and girls having low worth in society, which reinforces unequal power relations in marriage. The use of dowry to determine the ‘value’ of women is itself an indication that a society sees women as a liability. Complicated traditional practices related to dowry calculations enforce the monetary value of girls, and some respondents argued that families see girls only as a monetary value. Half the respondents on early marriage mentioned that families regard girls as a financial burden, since they often do not contribute financially but still need to be fed. The attitude is summed up in the phrase: *“You are worth more as a wife than as a daughter”*.

Still, respondents did not agree about the importance of financial arguments in early marriage. Some see the prospect of dowry as a reason for early marriage in poor families, while others say tradition is a much stronger driver. Some respondents said that even when there is no direct family pressure, girls sometimes feel forced into marriage as a way to escape poverty or a bad home situation. Table 2 summarizes the arguments.

Finance has a role in early marriage	Finance does not have a role in early marriage
Girls who own money will stay home longer	It is a tradition, so not financially inclined
Girls with brothers who earn money will stay home longer	Girls who own money will still be married off
Girls with older sisters married off will stay home longer	It is not about money, more about relationships with a good family-in-law
Girls who earn money will not earn enough to diminish the dowry prospect	

Table 2 – Financial arguments around early marriage

3.3 BREAKING THE CULTURE OF SILENCE AROUND VIOLENCE

Workshop participants felt that while the social norms identified above are accepted by many people, they are difficult to challenge because they are hardly discussed. The first step towards challenging these norms is therefore to break the culture of silence that usually exists around FGM/C and early marriage. Workshop participants suggested that the campaign should support women who break norms and face sanctions as a result.

While national laws, international treaties and declarations signed by Nigeria consider FGM/C and early marriage as violence against women and girls (e.g. African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women 2005, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990, UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 1993, UN Human Rights Council resolution on child, early, and forced marriage 2017), most respondents do not think that their reference group sees FGM/C or early marriage as forms of violence. In any case, speaking out against violence is discouraged as violence in the domestic sphere is viewed as a family matter. Workshop participants who had survived domestic violence and sexual violence explained that if a woman tries to break the silence around her violations she will be told to go home and sort it out in the family.

Some say that religious arguments and arguments from the mother based on her own experience may break the silence around FGM/C. On early marriage, however, most respondents say that speaking out is impossible or useless. One young man states: *“Girls can speak out, but it doesn’t work.”* Girls fear speaking out because they may get a bad reputation and reduce their future marriage prospects. A female respondent said: *“If she does not do it [accept marriage proposal], maybe other men from that community will not marry her, because they will see her as a flirt.”* Even respondents who acknowledge harmful health effects see strong norms against speaking out: *“As far as it is a tradition [community members] will count it like a taboo that this woman wants to spoil our culture”* (male respondent).

3.3.1 SANCTIONS FOR BREAKING THE SILENCE

When we asked respondents and workshop participants what would happen if a girl or her mother broke the tradition of FGM/C or early marriage, four sanctions became clear. Understandably, respondents thought that these sanctions would be enough to break the resistance of many girls and women.

Peer pressure was mentioned by many respondents. They cited mainly female family members (mothers, sisters, cousins, aunts) as pressuring girls into early marriage. Often FGM/C survivors will become advocates for the practice: *“We did it, we didn’t die, at least we went through the same thing, we didn’t die, we still lived like normal – so do it”* (female respondent). Mothers will be pressured by peers, elders, family members and her husband to make sure her daughter is cut. Peer pressure can be extreme, as a female respondent explains: *“It is the tradition, so people will not be pleased with her [mother]... They will want to go against her wish, so that is what they will do... they will not give her peace of mind, they will want to force her until she gives in”*. The reference in this quote to tradition is very powerful, showing the strength of this norm and peer pressure as a sanction. Tradition is related to the family honour which cannot be bend for individual preferences. Peer pressure when breaking tradition can be very severe and therefore may result in girls running away or being moved away by supportive parents (for example, to boarding schools or to cities) to evade the practice. In this way peer pressure actually results in condemnation, the next sanction we will discuss in the following paragraph.

Condemnation is the most common sanction found in the research; all respondents refer to it. In FGM/C it affects the girl and the mother: the girl is seen as improper and promiscuous, and the mother is seen as promiscuous, stubborn and a bad woman. For early marriage, people will condemn the girl first, while later also family honour may be damaged. The girl will be demoralized, insulted, rejected and laughed at by her peers and the wider community if her rejection becomes known. *“When people in the community hear that she refuses to get married at this age, they will regard her as a disobeyed child and insult her and make so many allegations against her [to] demoralize her and make her change her mind to get married”* (female respondent). Her own family will call her stubborn and disobedient and insult her to save their family honour.

Exclusion of girls and mothers refusing FGM/C or early marriage can result from condemnation. Respondents thought that community members would isolate girls who break a social norm: peers do not want to be friends with them any more, and others will ignore them. Some respondents stated that a mother and girl refusing FGM/C will be threatened with banishment from the village: *“They will say they will banish you from the community, and your mother and father are from there, you have nowhere to go, all these things can make you say, ‘after all it will not kill me’”* (female respondent).

Force is pronounced in FGM/C: *“Even if you refuse they might cut you during childbirth”* (female respondent). Midwives who perform the cut during or after the birth of a woman’s first child may not even inform the woman or her family about it. Legal force may be brought to bear on a mother who refuses to practice FGM/C on her child: *“If the community has law, and she will not do it, she must pay a fine over it”* (male respondent). For early marriage, respondents could not imagine what would happen in a case of continued refusal: *“She cannot go contrary to what they [parents] want”* (female respondent). Although this did not come up during the interviews, there have been isolated cases in Nigeria of killings or suicides over refusing early marriage (Morineke 2010).

3.3.2 SUPPORTING WOMEN WHO BREAK THE SILENCE

Some respondents noted that supportive families, peers and community members can lessen the sanctions faced by women and girls who break the silence around violence, or make them easier to bear. In the workshop, partner organizations stressed the importance of encouraging communities to support women who speak out against early marriage and FGM/C.

Respondents noted that in their communities, traditional leaders, religious leaders, peers and professionals are of great importance in setting social norms that reinforce traditional practices such as FGM/C and early marriage. Leaders can have a negative role in keeping harmful traditions alive or a positive role in supporting women who speak out, depending on their personal beliefs:

“Like the King, if you go to him if such thing [breaking norms] happens, he can reason. Sometimes he can reason [in support of women who break the silence] and say let us leave all these [harmful traditional practices]” (female respondent).

“The Amananowie [king] and Amananaara [queen] can come to you to say, this way and this way is how we do it here [...] so do not spoil our tradition” (female respondent).

Institutions can be norm-changing in their implementation of policies: if they support women, it will lower the threshold for women to speak out. Workshop participants shared stories of institutions sending women back to their family after domestic violence. Respondents mentioned that CSOs are important

in changing negative social norms, especially in the implementation of legislation against FGM/C and early marriage. Health institutions sometimes give information that helps to break traditional practices, but may also reinforce FGM/C by providing 'safer' methods of circumcision or when birth attendants combine their health function as midwives with the traditional practice of FGM/C. Holding institutions accountable for ignoring violence against women and girls will help to break the silence.

4 CONCLUSION: THE NIGERIAN CAMPAIGN TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Participants at the campaign design workshop identified broad goals for the Enough campaign in Nigeria: challenge the low worth of women and girls, dismantle the misconception that women are property, challenge inequality in marriage and family life and break the culture of silence around violence against women and girls. They agreed the campaign should challenge the following four negative social norms:

- A respectable woman marries early
- A respectable woman is submissive to male authority
- A suitable woman is not promiscuous
- A woman is worth more as a wife than as a daughter

The campaign will work to replace them with positive social norms that support survivors of violence to break the culture of silence, reinforce women's and girls' control and autonomy over their own body and life choices and promote gender equality. It is important to start changing social norms at the family level, since violence against women and girls is regarded as a family issue. It is also important that the campaign is supported by traditional leaders, religious leaders and professionals, to encourage communities to change gender norms.

The campaign design workshop was inspiring for most participants and reinforced for Oxfam in Nigeria the importance of continuing to work with partners and other stakeholders in a participatory way. At a second design workshop in 2018, partners will together with Oxfam in Nigeria develop the campaign's strategy and refine its objectives.

The research outcomes raised hope that there is fertile ground for the campaign: although social norms are still supportive of FGM/C and early marriage, most respondents' personal attitudes have already shifted to see them as negative. Also promising is that many respondents have some knowledge about the health consequences of early marriage and FGM/C, and half are aware of legislation. Though, social norms around traditional practices are not easy to grasp, in the course of campaign development and implementation we hope to increase our understanding of cultural, traditional, and religious interactions that form social norms. The campaign has an opportunity to capitalize on social space being created by celebrities and the implementation of the VAPP Act. The launch of the campaign is provisionally planned to coincide with International Women's Day on 8th March 2018.

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Oxfam Novib
P.O. Box 30919
2500 GX The Hague
The Netherlands

T +31 (0) 70 3421621
info@oxfamnovib.nl
www.oxfamnovib.nl