RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT:

WOMEN AND FORCED MARRIAGE IN SCOTLAND

Funded by the Souter Charitable Trust, and completed in August 2012 by Angela Voulgari
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Shakti Women’s Aid

Amina – the Muslim Women’s Resource Centre for the participation of both their centres in Glasgow and Dundee

Lothian and Borders Police

Dundee International Women’s Centre

Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid

Karma Nirvana

Ishbel White, involved both with Darnley Street Family Centre and Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid in Glasgow
Introduction:

This project sheds light on Forced Marriage, its nature and incidence in Scotland. In November 2011 Scotland became the first country in Europe to criminalize the breach of a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO). Saheliya, as a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women’s holistic mental health support organization is highly aware of forced marriage and its effects, as are many minority women’s organizations across Scotland. However, the general public, statutory organizations, the authorities, healthcare and social services remain largely unaware of the issue. Through the dissemination of the information gathered in this project, we raise awareness of forced marriage not only for professionals involved in BME community life, but also for community members who are most at risk or who may be directly affected.

What is Forced Marriage?

Forced Marriage is a violation of human rights as defined by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16, parts 1 and 2:

Article 16:

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

In its Statutory Guidance document, the Scottish Government defines Forced Marriage in the following way:

‘A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of children and some adults at risk, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.’ (p.37)

It is also important, at this point, to define the crucial difference between a Forced Marriage and an Arranged Marriage:

‘An arranged marriage is one in which the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.’ P.37

Ultimately, the Scottish Government’s definition of Forced Marriage lies in the capacity and freedom of the two parties involved to exercise their rights to decline the arrangement that has been made for them. For the purposes of this report, as well as due to the in-depth knowledge and understanding of Forced Marriage within our organization, we will also consider the extra dimension of marriage as cited in the UN declaration of human rights: the spouses’ equal rights to the entry, throughout the course and the dissolution of the
marriage. The reason for this will become evident in our discussion of the dynamics within a forced marriage, especially the grey area between coercion and consent.

**Background to the Project**

In the winter of 2010 Saheliya was invited to present anecdotal evidence to the Scottish Government in support of the forced marriage bill consultation. This involved a concentrated effort by staff to collate qualitative and quantitative information on the incidence and nature of Forced Marriage. This report was then presented to the Scottish Parliament.

During this work, it became evident that there was a huge gap in awareness of forced marriage between BME women’s organizations and relevant mainstream agencies. Saheliya therefore decided there was a need for an up-to-date, all-inclusive report that would shed more light on the current situation of forced marriage in Scotland, as well as for further resource development that will raise awareness within communities. Funding for this project was granted by the Souter Charitable Trust. We would like to extend our warmest thanks to the trustees for the opportunity to run this project, the first of its kind in Scotland.

**Aims and Objectives:**

This project was designed in order to improve understanding and raise awareness of Forced Marriage in Scotland. There are three ways in which we are intending to do this:

1. Through direct communication and research with partner organizations and the authorities;
2. Through the collation and publication of the data and knowledge that is available within Saheliya; and
3. Through the creation of a leaflet that clarifies what Forced Marriage is and offers advice and information to women at risk and survivors.

Numerous Scotland-based organizations that work directly with BME women were contacted and interviewed on the subject of Forced Marriage, and the results of this part of the research were then used to compile the leaflet.

**Planning, design, implementation**

Due to time limitations, six Scotland-based organizations were contacted and agreed to be interviewed on their work on Forced Marriage, covering three of the largest and most densely populated areas of Scotland. These were the following:

- Mridul Wadhwa, Information and Education Officer for Shakti Women’s Aid, Edinburgh.
- Rajni Pandher, Outreach and Development Worker and Elaine McLaughlin from Hemat Gryffe, Glasgow
- Ghizala Avan, the Violence Against Women Development Officer for Amina, the Muslim Women’s Resource Centre in Glasgow

- Aisha Zaveri, the Violence Against Women Development Officer for Amina, the Muslim Women’s Resource Centre in Dundee

- Susan A’Brook, Development Worker for Dundee International Women’s Centre

- Ishbel White, board member of Darnley Street Family Centre (Glasgow)

- Detective Sergeant Pauline Nairn of Lothian and Borders Police and Sergeant Catherine Duguid of Lothian and Borders Police Diversity Unit.

Of all the above research participants, only three were not themselves women from minority ethnic backgrounds (Elaine McLaughlin, Susan A’Brook and Ishbel White). Unfortunately, no relevant organizations were found in Grampian or Inverness-shire, which reflects both the smaller number of BME populations in those areas but also the lack of resources available to the few BME women who reside in those areas.

Similarly, there was no response by the NHS (The Royal Edinburgh Hospital, St. John’s Hospital), Nari Kallyan Sango (better known as NKS in Edinburgh) or Sikh Sanjog in Edinburgh. Our warmest thanks also goes to England-based organization Karma Nirvana who receive calls related to honour violence and forced marriage on a daily basis from across the UK. Their willingness to help by sharing their experience and their annual statistics has been invaluable to this project.

**Saheliya’s understanding of Forced Marriage**

Saheliya, as well as most women’s organizations in Scotland stresses that **Forced Marriage is a form of Violence Against Women**, not an issue affecting women from a particular culture, religion or ethnic background. In fact, our numbers suggest that:

- Forced Marriage affects women from all ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, including women who identify as Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian and non-religious.
- The nature of ‘force’ in a Forced Marriage can take many different forms, ranging from the most dramatic and acute (for ex. physical abuse, starvation, death threats) to the most subtle (e.g. A surprise engagement arranged as part of a celebration marking a woman’s transition from childhood into womanhood.)
- A Forced Marriage can be defined as much by force used to coerce the woman to *enter* the marriage, as much as the force to persuade her to stay in or *return* to the marriage.
- Force can be exercised both by the woman’s immediate family, her extended family and her in-laws as well as those of her husband.
- Women over the age of 30 are much more likely to identify Forced Marriage and to name it as an issue much earlier during their contact with our organization. This finding
is consistent with existing research by G. Gangoli and K. Chantler (2009) who suggest that age might act as a protective factor for women at risk of forced marriage.

**Defining Areas of Focus**

- **Work with Black and Minority Ethnic women**

Saheliya’s clients are women of visible minority backgrounds over the age of 12 years. Their immigration status can vary greatly, as can their fluency in English, their knowledge of systems, their cultural, religious, and ethnic background. Being a visible minority member unites all our service users along the axis of experiences of racism and internal cultural conflict, as well as oppressive patriarchal community structures. The BME women occupy the lowest rungs of community hierarchy. They are often treated as the property of their male relatives, and husbands. According to the Forced Marriage Unit’s publication ‘What is a Forced Marriage?’ around 85% of Forced Marriage cases involve women as opposed to only 15% that involve men.

Existing research agrees that the media only portray Forced Marriage when sensational details have made certain story particularly dramatic, (usually involving murder or subjection of a woman to horrific honour based violence), in actual fact, the way pressure is exerted can be considerably more subtle. For example, Kalwant Bhopal carried out interviews in East London and young women described marriages where their parents chose the partners as arranged rather than forced. However, they made comments like ‘if a girls says no, it’s really considered a bad thing’ ‘you just have to go along with it…if you didn’t there would be just hell to pay from your parents and all your relatives’. Such comments are indicative of BME women’s minimal power to refuse pressures when around marriage (Bhopal, 1999).

This media focus on forced marriage being viewed as a criminal act if and only when it has resulted in violence and/or death, draws the attention away from the undercurrent of psychological violence that always precedes forced marriage in BME women’s daily lives. Anitha and Gill (2009) state that ‘media discourse portrays […] women as passive victims rather than unpacking the context of gendered inequalities within which women in any community cannot meaningfully exercise consent’ (p.178).

Finally, Phillips and Dustin (2004) were the only researchers to link pressure to the concept of ‘honour’. Their research participants felt that it was much easier for a young man than a young woman to resist parental pressure. There is an unspoken understanding that ‘a daughter who refused too many prospective partners would seriously undermine her parents’ standing in the local community’ (p.540). This was one of very few references to ‘honour’, one of the biggest factors in BME women’s lives which we will explore later in this report.

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1 ‘What is a Forced Marriage?’- this leaflet was accessed on the 1st of June 2012 and is located at: http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/prf/2855621/what-is-forced-marriage.pdf
- Why Scotland?

Scotland is unique both in terms of the minority communities present but also in the legislative context. The establishment of minority communities in Scotland came after the end of the Second World War, much later than England and Wales. The newness and visibility of Scottish BME communities increases the risk of racism and isolation.

The location of services available in different parts of Scotland have also had an impact in the size and dispersal of BME populations. For example, Edinburgh has a significantly larger Sikh Bhattra population than any other city in Scotland as Sikh settlement began much earlier in the capital than in other places. Similarly, dispersal to Glasgow since April 2000 has increased the number of Asylum Seekers and Refugees from a few hundred to over 11,000 in 2011 according to Positive Action in Housing and the Scottish Refugee Council. According to a range of agencies including Saheliya, specific communities such as Sudanese and English-speaking Sub-Saharan refugees tend to settle in Edinburgh while Somali, Eritrean and French-speaking Sub-Saharan refugees tend to remain in Glasgow. It is telling that in 2006 only 1% of Saheliya’s service users were from refugee communities, by 2012, 38% of our service users came from refugee communities.

In many of those new communities, the victimization of women through honour-based violence and harmful traditional practices such as forced marriage is just as prevalent as in established communities. Regardless of the age of any BME community, the religious and cultural obligation to ‘honour thy father and thy mother’ is taken so literally that adult children sacrifice their own rights, freedom and happiness as they are either terrified of the consequences of disobeying their parents or because they find it impossible to believe that their parents could make a wrong/misinformed choice. It will become obvious later that in cases of Forced Marriage both of these are possibilities can be present, as well as more sinister parental motivations in forcing a daughter or son to marry a particular person.

In addition, established Scottish BME populations are very small compared to those in the rest of the UK. Scotland is considerably smaller and less populated than England, with the largest numbers of BME people present in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, comprising less than 4% of the entire population. Community members cannot enjoy the same freedom as their English counterparts as there is much more risk of being seen by community or family members, which often has dire consequences. The newness of those communities also means that mainstream services are rarely able to respond to their needs appropriately as there is a lack of awareness of their issues and the cultural pressures that they face. Additionally, this has a significant impact on women’s capacity to seek legal help as, when interpreters are required, they are most commonly male and almost always known to the woman who is seeking help.

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2 Please note that this figure is based on the Scottish Census of 2001. As the latest census results have not been released at the time of writing, this figure might be significantly different in 2012.
From a legal perspective, Scotland is a pioneer as the first country in Europe with legislation specifically criminalizing the breach of a Forced Marriage Protection Order. This emphasizes the awareness that Forced Marriage happens and that vulnerable people need to be protected. However, since the introduction of forced marriage legislation, there have been no prosecutions on the basis of Forced Marriage in Scotland.

It has always been debated whether an Act of Parliament was actually required or whether existing laws would have been adequate to deal with the issues women face with regards to marriage (for example, see ‘A Choice by Right’, 2000). The lack of prosecutions is used as an argument for this position. However, what this research demonstrates is that forced marriage very much does happen in Scotland and that there are multiple reasons as to why women do not come forward to report it.

- Why Forced Marriage?

‘The freely given consent of both parties is a prerequisite of Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh Marriages.’

‘A Choice by Right’, 2000; p.6

Forced Marriage is a violation of human rights that affects women from a vast range of backgrounds. The pressure to enter an unwanted marriage, often requiring a financial/property exchange (dowry) is equivalent to slavery, whereas subjection to unwanted sexual advances is tantamount to rape. Women surviving forced marriages find themselves completely isolated. They are forced to endure continuous abuse, often throughout their lifetime, and this has detrimental results.

Women who access Saheliya services with regards to forced marriage display clear signs of trauma. If they have not yet been subjected to the marriage, they are living with the fear of abduction and physical and psychological violence; they are often wondering what their options are and looking for ways to express the huge dilemma of doing ‘what a daughter ought to do’ even if this means a life full of pain and abuse. If they have been through a forced marriage, they carry the aftermath of possible abduction; extreme isolation; psychological and physical violence from their husbands and/or in-laws; repeated rape and abuse; unwanted pregnancy; self-harm; and many have gone as far as to attempt suicide, often more than once.

However, direct work with BME communities has made it clear that forced marriage is very much still an issue concerning women from these backgrounds. Recent research suggests that one of the reasons for this is a very obvious breakdown in intergenerational communication: ‘In a 1983 survey, 81% of South Asian parents but only 58% of their children agreed that arranged marriages still work well within the Asian community and should be continued’ (Anwar, 1998; cited in Phillips & Dustin, 2004). This, together with the patriarchal structures and male dominance in BME communities, as well as women’s lack of power and autonomy provide fertile ground for their rights to continue to be abused.
- **Why women’s organizations?**

  ‘South Asian women have been able to foster social capital through female only networks to challenge aspects of their culture that are intolerable’. Takhar, 2006; p. 295

There are three main reasons for which BME women’s organizations were selected for this research:

1. **Type of Services Provided**

   Women’s organizations in Scotland have one major advantage in comparison to other mainstream services: they are only for women and this is a fact well known to both men and women. Therefore, if their movements are heavily controlled, an organization for women only might be the only place where BME women can venture on their own (any contact with men is strictly prohibited in a number of religions and strongly disapproved of in many cultures). Therefore, once a woman starts accessing services and her confidence increases, she starts building relationships with staff and feeling more comfortable about disclosing issues.

   Women’s organizations offer a wide range of services, support for forced marriage being only one of many. Therefore, women who access services may not identify forced marriage as an issue at all in the first instance. However, being aware of that possibility, BME organizations emphasize the importance of providing women with long-term holistic support which also includes cross-referring when appropriate and necessary.

   There is a general consensus amongst researchers and Scottish organizations that Forced Marriage is a highly contentious area of community life, which involves a complex interplay of expected gender roles; financial circumstances; educational status; community expectations; and family dynamics among others. The complexity of all the above factors as well as the woman’s individual psychosocial development; emotional maturity; age; social/financial/educational status; social awareness and resilience render marriage a topic that can be easier or harder to discuss openly at an early point of contact.

   By providing our service users with a safe space and the freedom to access services based on their needs, together with continuing support, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation systems, women’s organizations build strong, trusting relationships with each individual service user. The possibility to re-refer and cross-refer also allows women to build their confidence and self-awareness and to open up about difficult issues, such as forced marriage.

   This phased approach is crucial. Many women are not aware of their rights with regards to marriage or that they can in fact reject an arranged prospective partner; others may not necessarily attribute high level of distress and trauma to being forced into an unwanted marriage; many due to cultural expectations consider it their responsibility to make a marriage work, regardless of how they entered it or whether they are experiencing abuse. These issues,
together with staff members’ awareness of cultural issues, make women’s organizations particularly suitable for women to discuss forced marriage.

2. **Length of services provided**

   The structure of BME women’s organizations in Scotland make it possible for a woman who discloses forced marriage issues to have long-term ongoing support. This allows her to think about her options over time, and to build her confidence to make the decision that is right for her. The wide range of services offered by women’s organizations reassures that she will be supported throughout the difficult process of escaping or avoiding a forced marriage.

   This is a particularly important point, as this long-term support that is available in community BME women’s organizations is not available elsewhere. It becomes all the more important when one of the most prominent reasons for which BME women do not disclose forced marriage issues is the fear of what will happen to them if they are suddenly made homeless and lose the financial support that may have previously been available to them through marriage. This point will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

3. **Inter-agency work and the availability of information**

   A final and yet crucial point that was highlighted through this research is the fact that most of the time local authorities, statutory bodies, policy makers and local councils heavily rely on community BME women’s organizations for support, advice and information on forced marriage. This is particularly highlighted by training requests made to women’s organizations, as well as the high level of attendance at existing training events. More specifically, this was highlighted by the Scottish Government’s request for anecdotal evidence to be provided by Saheliya, Shakti Women’s Aid, Amina the Muslim Women’s Resource Centre and Hemat Gryffe in the forced marriage bill consultation phase in the fall of 2010.

   According to the Scottish Government’s statutory guidance for dealing with cases of Forced Marriage, the percentage of cases dealt with by the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) has steadily dropped. However, they add that ‘it should be clarified that neither the FMU nor Scottish Stakeholders supporting victims of forced marriage believe that this decrease in reporting reflects a real reduction in forced marriage cases in Scotland. A more likely reason is that Scottish victims are seeking advice and support from organizations closer to home, rather than the London-based FMU’


When Saheliya was invited to present evidence in support of the Forced Marriage Bill in 2010, a report was compiled from case by case information provided by our counseling service (for the full report, please see Appendix I). We chose to use information from our counseling service as due to the long-term and confidential nature of counseling allows clients to build trusting, therapeutic relationships with staff. They are therefore more likely to open up about experience of trauma such as forced marriage.

The statistics presented by our organization were compiled in three levels: one involved women who identify Forced Marriage as an issue; a second level included a ‘grey area’, for women who did not explicitly name ‘Forced Marriage’ as an issue, but indicators strongly suggest issues that are affecting this client’s life and that coercion/abuse/pressure has been strongly present before and/or during marriage. The third category includes women for whom Forced Marriage is not an issue.

These indicators include domestic abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, verbal, financial); Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); poor relations with her family, her partner/husband, her in-laws and/or community; child abuse/neglect; self-harm; often repeated suicide attempts; eating disorders; phobias; substance misuse or abuse; unusually high levels of anxiety or depression; unexplained physical symptoms; and extreme isolation.

Figure 1: Trends in Saheliya Counseling referrals: Clients who identify forced marriage as an issue in the first instance (blue), clients with strong force marriage indicators (red) and clients with no forced marriage indicator issues (green). Please note that numbers for 2012 were calculated from January to June 2012 - By extrapolation based on average trends, we could reasonably expect this number to double in the later half of the year.

Data Analysis:

• Although Forced Marriage represents a small number of the issues presented by our clients, the number of women who refer themselves for counselling due to Forced Marriage or issues around it has been steadily rising.

• The sudden rise in cases in 2009 followed by a dip in 2010 probably represents a trend idiosyncratic to Saheliya. In September of 2009 we changed premises. As a result of the
upheaval of moving, it is suspected that referrals of clients who may have issues around Forced Marriage might not have been picked up. Similarly, women who walk into Saheliya without an appointment, might not have been aware of this change of address and therefore been unable to refer themselves in person.

- The steady rise in women identifying forced marriage indicators in the first instance is attributable both to the recent media attention on the topic but also to Saheliya’s strong presence in schools, community centres and places of worship, our support of the Forced Marriage Bill and encouraging BME women to report their experience. In fact, outreach work is vital in facilitating women to come forward: since April 2012 we have a dedicated Forced Marriage and Honour Abuse worker, funded by the Scottish Government’s Violence Against Women Fund. This has significantly increased the number of younger women (aged 12-18 years) who report being pressured into marriage (this is not represented in our statistics as the numbers above only come from our counseling service). We firmly believe that increasing the number of outreach workers available would dramatically increase the number of BME women reaching out for help with regards to Forced Marriage.

- Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the number of clients reporting forced marriage in 2012 is calculated for months January to June (for all previous years, numbers are totaled from January to December). If we extrapolate linearly we can expect that this number will double by the end of 2012, reaching a peak in the number of cases seen in the last 5 years.

Further Particulars of Saheliya clients:

![Ethnic origin x Forced Marriage issues 2011-2012](image)

Figure 2: Forced marriage issues feature more prominently from middle Eastern and South Asia Women, while there are also strong indicators present for African and South American women who access Saheliya services.
Although our numbers indicate that the highest incidence of Forced Marriage appears among Muslim Women, this reflects a representational bias, i.e., that most of our service users are Muslim. What is crucial is the fact that Forced Marriage is just as prevalent for Sikh as well as for Christian women, whereas strong indicators are present regardless of religious background, and significantly more prevalent in the local Sikh Bhattra Community.

Statistics from our partner organizations:

Perhaps some of the most shocking and worrying data that we received comes from England-based Karma Nirvana, an organization specifically focused on Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence. Personal communication with the organization informed us that phone calls from Scotland are continuously on the rise, as the following breakdown indicates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>City/Town</th>
<th>Number of Calls</th>
<th>Rank in Scotland</th>
<th>Rank in the UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motherwell</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motherwell</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jan.-March 2012</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilmarnock</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not mentioned in the table above, in 2011 there was one call each from Dundee, Kilmarnock, Kirkcaldy, Langholm and Ullapool, and in the first 3 months of 2012 there was also one call from Inverness. In 2010 there were 1,663 calls from unknown areas, in 2011 there were 2,009 such calls while there were 487 unknown calls in the first quarter of 2012 alone. It is safe to assume that at least some of those calls are likely to have come from Scotland.

What is perhaps the most concerning trend in the table above is the massive increase in calls over the last three years; the number of calls from Edinburgh specifically has tripled from 2010 to the first three months of 2012. Similarly, areas of Scotland from where no calls were received previously are now starting to make their appearance; this does not only include large cities such as Aberdeen and Inverness, but also smaller rural areas with BME populations.

Further information comes from Hemat Gryffe women’s aid in Glasgow. Hemat Gryffe ran a three-month telephone and web survey asking individuals to participate who had either a. Been forced into a marriage, b. Knew a friend or relative being forced into a marriage and c. who were currently being threatened with forced marriage. The results are as follows:

![Gender breakdown of forced marriage survivors x geographical location](image1)

**Figure 4:** Responses from individuals who had been forced into a marriage. Not only are the overwhelming majority of participants female, over 60% of marriages were conducted outside the UK, suggesting that deception and abduction was a likely factor. Furthermore, while the majority of men and women were in their 20s and 30s when forced into a marriage, a significant percentage were under 20, and many under 16 (Survey based on 43 responses: 30 female, 13 male)

![Age x Gender breakdown of individuals forced into a marriage](image2)

**Figure 5:** When participants were asked about the location of the marriage of a friend or relative, the overwhelming majority responded that the marriages were carried out abroad. As mentioned above, this overseas dimension of Forced Marriage crucially implicates deception and abduction as a factor.

![Location of the forced marriage of a friend or relative](image3)
A number of very important conclusions can be drawn from the above numbers: reporting of forced marriage has increased over the last two years. It is impossible to conclude whether this represents a rise in the incidence of forced marriage or in its reporting. The number of marriages taking place overseas and concerning mostly younger women is also alarming as it narrows the window of time when intervention is possible. Finally, the fact that more people are coming forward and seeking help from more rural and less populated areas of Scotland also clarifies that forced marriage on the one hand is not an issue that only concerns established, urban BME communities, while on the other it highlights that women are victimized in isolated areas where seeking help would be considerably more difficult.
The dynamics of Forced Marriage

‘Control is exercised in ways that are far more subtle than the dramas imagined in current definitions of forced marriage’ (Anitha & Gill, 2009; p172)

The following diagramme summarizes the way in which we understand how women become trapped in a Forced Marriage:

![Diagram depicting the dynamics of Forced Marriage](image)

Figure 7: A summary interpretation of Saheliya’s understanding of how women can become trapped in Forced Marriage situations. Please note that this is by no means an exclusive or fully comprehensive diagramme, rather an empirical depiction of Forced Marriage that is derived from Saheliya’s direct work with BME women, as well as interviews with partner organizations carried out during this research project.

Taking the pink female symbol on the page to mean our client, we first consider her age, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, education, religion, cultural background, her personal history, her psychological/emotional maturity etc. In BME communities that we work with, women occupy the lowest status in the family. Above her in power and authority are her male siblings (if any) and above them are the mother and father. Similar power to her mother and father is enjoyed by her extended male relatives (uncles, male cousins, grandfather(s), below whom are the extended female relatives (female cousins, aunts, grandmother(s)).

The woman’s family and extended family occupy a certain status within their religious/cultural community which depends on their property, status and education, as well as how ‘honourable’ they perceive themselves/are perceived to be in their community. In fact, honour is one of the most crucial perceived variables affecting women’s and their families’ decisions around marriage and it will be discussed further later. These factors will be intimately
tied in to the decisions made about her life and they will determine the nature of her marriage and the amount of pressure she will be faced with in making a decision.

While we consider the above factors either unique to the woman and her family, further up lie the extraneous factors that will affect marriage decisions. These form the basis of the woman’s and her family’s attachment to their wider community: Language, Religion, Culture, Ethnicity, Tradition and Migration. Some of these factors, such as language and religion fairly straightforwardly determine inclusion or exclusion from specific communities.

On the other hand, culture, ethnicity and tradition are far less tangible and considerably more loosely defined. This is because they depend both on facts (for ex. country of origin) and social/community constructed codes of behavior that warrant membership in that specific community. In fact, these are the aspects of community life where misinterpretations most frequently occur. As a result, due to both internally and externally imposed perceptions, a woman is allocated a particular ‘place’ within a community which then dictates the practices they will feel compelled to follow in order to remain members of this community.

Finally, ‘Migration’, is both the factor that is most unique, private and experiential for a particular family, and yet the one that is most prevalently interacting with community life. Each family, individual or population, when migrating to different parts of the world, bring with them an array of experiences and understandings of their own identities. These comprise a complex interplay of different dimensions, including all of the factors mentioned above, uniquely experienced, interpreted, understood and embodied by each individual.

When referring to migration and migratory history, we generally refer to the collective of factors that will facilitate or inhibit individuals’ belonging to or exclusion from a community in the country of arrival. Crucial dimensions within this factor include the age of the individuals at the time of leaving one country to arrive to the UK; the reasons behind the choice to migrate (for ex. They may already have family or friends in Scotland; they may have decided to migrate due to perceived financial or employment advantages; they may have migrated to fulfill a promise of arranged marriage, etc.); how long they have been in the UK; and the individual’s or family’s perceived status in their country of origin among others.

One level up lie the notions of status, caste and honour. Although the actual term ‘caste’ is only applicable to certain communities from particular parts of the world (usually south and south east Asia), the concepts of status and honour are intimately related. Status, caste and perceived status in a community will play a crucial role on the woman’s life when marriage enters the picture. This will be discussed in more detail further on in this report.

Finally, at the top of the hierarchy is the country of residence. This comprises the culture in which the community is found, the language spoken, the laws, rules, regulations and codes of conduct that apply to all by virtue of the fact that we live in the same country. This final layer is there to indicate the complexity and multitude of interconnected factors in the
discussion of Forced Marriage. In fact, an item in the diagramme which was not discussed further is found right beside the woman’s symbol, and it is the husband and the in-laws. Considering that all the factors discussed above such as honour, culture, religion, language, migration etc. impact on all minority ethnic community members, after marriage an added complication becomes the negotiation of those factors between the woman and her husband. One fundamental distinction has to be made however: that while women occupy a lower status in the community, men enjoy considerably more freedom and are thus able to resist pressures in every area of life, including marriage.

Immigration and dislocation

Throughout the course of this research, the general consensus was that, as with numerous harmful traditional practices, Forced Marriage has very powerful links to migration. As mentioned above, migrant populations bring with them their individual and group identities. Upon settling in a new, foreign geographical area where all these factors (usually) differ dramatically, individuals and communities become acutely aware of their dislocation and ‘foreign-ness’. The pressure therefore rises to maintain their cultural, religious and ethnic identity, in the sense that, in the face of difference, the imperative to maintain what makes one who they are becomes all the more powerful. This tendency also appears to be stronger the more hostile the host environment is. In the face of adversity, it is the natural response of ethnic/religious/cultural groups to unite and emphasize their individuality and cohesion of their communities.

However, adding a temporal dimension to dislocation, what separates a visible minority community stops being just about difference and diversity as defined by comparison to other visibly different groups, including mainstream society. The pressure then turns inwards, towards smaller units of a community to maintain identity. From the community, the pressure enters the religious establishment, the kinship system, the close family, the home and finally the self. As further generations are born into an existing community, visible differences that are already present become compounded by pressures within the family and the religious community to maintain an identity an individual born into a community has not experienced first-hand for not having experienced their home culture in their home country.

Girls and women, occupying the lowest rungs of the hierarchical ladder in BME communities, tend to bear the heaviest burdens of dislocation. Seen as existing in the sphere of the domestic and the maternal, as well as being responsible for the rearing of children and their cultural and religious education, the emphasis on girls’ and women’s ‘appropriate’ code of conduct is paramount. Measures of worth and value become vastly unjust between the sexes, and women become the canvas on which male power is exerted. They become the conduits through which male property and patriarchal structures of inequality and submission are to be passed and to be controlled and used for that purpose. ‘Women and children are thus
dehumanized, making it easier to justify violent behavior towards them if they attempt to resist or undermine this patriarchal structure through their actions’ (Reddy, 2008).

‘Culture’ and ‘Honour’

‘Culture is a system that perpetuates itself, is both conditioning and conditional, an independent and dependent variable which through its institutions, rituals, socialization practices and patterned interactions provides the guidance and rewards that systematically shape social cognition’ (Singelis, 2000; p.81)

‘Honour’ is a concept that is very little explored in the existing literature and yet one of the most prominent and pervasive forces in the lives of BME community members in Scotland today. This comes both from direct work experience with Saheliya clients, and from the experience of partner organizations. The fact that the vast majority of interviewees are BME women themselves also draws from their own lived experience of minority culture and lifestyles, therefore adding further gravity to their understanding of honour and culture.

Aisha Zaveri, of Dundee Amina MWRC stated that honour is indeed a very big issue that they encounter repeatedly with clients who access their services. Similarly, Elaine McLaughlin of Hemat Gryffe in Glasgow explained how ‘honour’ affects their clients’ lives in a more historical tangent: ‘A lot of our clients will talk about honour because they come from these kinship systems in their communities...when they were established they were all based on mutual obligations or reciprocal obligations of each individual within the system’. She suggests that viewed in this light, fulfilling one’s obligation towards another member of the community was the ‘honourable’ thing to do. She continues ‘if there is one individual who comes along who does not want to conform and says no, I don’t want to be within this system, then it’s a breach of their honour. They see it as the community honour and the family honour and we see that on a daily basis with the majority of the women that we support.’

‘Honour’ is often described as an ‘unwritten book of rules’ to live by, with its emphasis mostly on women’s conduct and behavior. Men’s ‘honour’ and ‘status’ is largely dependent on the actions of the women directly related to them. More and more incidents of Honour Based Violence reach the media monthly, often culminating in ‘honour killings’. The overwhelming majority of victims of honour based violence are women, with men only ever being subject to such crimes if they have associated with a woman who acted ‘dishonourably’.

‘Honour adheres differentially and unequally to men and women. Women are responsible not only for their own ‘honour’, but for that of their male family members, and women who transgress ‘honour’ codes are treated far more harshly than their male counterparts.’ (Reddy, 2008; p.307)

This was certainly highlighted in the interviews carried out for this project. Mridul Wadhwa of Shakti Women’s Aid puts it very clearly: ‘Daughters are easier to control because they carry the burden of “shame”.[...]Shame and honour are interlinked with each other
within BME communities [...] that we work with, where maintenance of ‘honour’ and doing ‘honourable’ things, the sole responsibility sometimes lies with the woman and her behavior and how...she is presenting socially; that is a reflection of the honour of the family. This of course can only be gained by the man but it can only be lost by the woman.’

Ghizala Avan, of Glasgow’s Amina MWRC adds to that by explaining the different pressures imposed on BME men and women: ‘Honour is obviously to do with women being responsible for the ‘family image’, so a boy in the family could be off doing things and it would be perfectly ok. Parents would obviously say ‘son, don’t do that kind of thing’ but it’s not the same because if a girl was to behave in the same way, particularly if she had a relationship with someone who was outwith the accepted norm of what the parents would want then that, as far as the parents are concerned, is a big dishonor.’ This attitude by BME families can also explain the discrepancy described above in the statistics provided by Hemat Gryffe, indicating that women who were threatened by forced marriage were considerably younger than men in the same predicament: the younger the woman gets married, the less likely she is to ‘dishonour’ her family by picking an inappropriate partner, whereas this pressure is not present for men and boys of the same age. Mridul Wadhwa’s quote on this is particularly telling: ‘At least if you’re a man you can still live to tell the tale. A man can just say [to his wife] “see, it’s not working, I told you”. What is anybody going to do? Are they going to use physical violence? I don’t see how any of the cultures we work with would disown their sons for failing a marriage. I would love to see that, actually!’

Existing research suggests that ‘there is a culture of silence that surrounds sex that dictates that ‘good’ women are expected to be ignorant about sex and passive in sexual relations’ (Gupta, 2000; cited in Otoo-Oyortey and Pobi, 2003). Therefore, there are huge expectations in BME communities that a young bride must be sexually inexperienced before her marriage, otherwise she is ‘dishonourable’. However, this is further traumatizing for women, especially younger women who may be completely unaware of the specifics of marital intimacy and the mechanics of sexual relations, while the expectation that they are to remain passive in this department further suppresses their freedom even within the domestic sphere.

Mridul Wadhwa of Shakti Women’s Aid continues to explain in more detail how this links in with pressures to marry a particular person: ‘I think [forced marriage] is all about honour. There is no escaping it because what is honour really? It’s about social prestige and how the world views you or how you think the world should view you. And forced marriage, if you look at all the cases we’ve had, it is to achieve a certain aim which is to present to the outside world that you’ve done the right thing for your children. You’ve done the prestigious thing. You’ve raised your profile in the community.’

By perceiving marriage to a specific person and no other, parents, especially male relatives will go to extreme lengths to ‘provide’ for their children in this way. Some of the most disturbing case histories involve young men or young women with physical or learning
disabilities who were forced into a marriage simply for the provision of a carer for their children’s future. This kind of marriage is forced by definition as, depending on the victims’ circumstances, they were overwhelmingly unable to consent fully to the marriage.

**The net women slip through:**

Through communication with professionals who work directly with BME women, we were able to highlight areas of particular vulnerability. These focus around immigration restrictions, confusion over cultural versus religious justifications, obligations to parents and the community, and the binary terms in which current discourse around forced marriage defines the problem and its solution.

First of all, immigration was highlighted by many interviewees. Women who enter the UK in order to marry have to obtain permission to cross the border, and depending on their circumstances, different visas will be allocated. Often, it is a spousal visa that permits them limited leave to remain in the UK with no recourse to public funds. Women’s leave to remain in the UK has to be reviewed regularly and evidence must be provided that supports their marital and employment status (provided their immigration status permits them to work).

This can easily become a weapon used against the woman in a forced marriage: often her passport is taken away from her upon arrival or immediately after the ceremony. She is therefore left without any form of identification or any way to renew her leave to remain in the country. Furthermore, if she does not speak English, she may well not be aware of the legal requirements to allow her to stay in the country; or she may trust that her husband and/or in-laws are taking responsibility to renew her immigration status when this is not happening.

Similarly, the condition of ‘no recourse to public funds’ is often used as a trap. If women leave their husbands they will not be able to work or claim any benefits so they fear homelessness, exposure and starvation both for themselves and their children. Worse still, if they seek help from the police or social services, they fear deportation: if they come from areas of the world where honour based violence is widespread (particularly areas such as the Punjab and Central Africa) being sent back could mean serious retribution from their families in the form of mutilation or death, as they are considered ‘shameful’. Often, the only option for women is to remain in the marriage for a minimum of two years which will allow them to obtain a different immigration status and only then try to escape.

Ghizala Avan (Amina MWRC, Glasgow) stated: *What options do [women] really have? Stay in this marriage for two years for visa reasons and before they can even do something about it-cause there’s other issues within that as well, there’s rape and if the woman gets pregnant then there’s other pressures and what does she do then, does she stay?’* This excerpt outlines the huge dilemmas that women face—it’s not simply about waiting. The two years of being trapped in a forced marriage are fraught with abuse and often violence, leaving women so desperate that suicide often feels like the only option.
Another factor contributing to women becoming trapped in a forced marriage goes in line with the grooming that might have taken place previously and the confusion between what is a cultural versus a religious expectation. In addition to what was described above in terms of family and community ‘honour’ and how it adheres to women detrimentally, what is often instilled in them is an obligation to a value higher than honour: the obligation to God.

Very often, as part of the grooming process or as an argument to keep a woman in a marriage, family and community members will argue that it is the woman’s religious duty to make a marriage work. It therefore follows that if the marriage fails it is the woman’s fault in the eyes of both her community and her faith. This is a misunderstanding: all world religions require the informed consent of both prospective spouses, while most of them also permit divorce, albeit sometimes on very specific grounds only. However, the largest ethnic minorities in Scotland happen to adhere to religious beliefs which permit both annulment of a marriage and divorce. This is the case for Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh marriages.

For example, Aisha Zaveri, of Dundee Amina MWRC states that ‘forced Marriage is completely unacceptable in Islam’. However, she also goes on to add that ‘some women stick to a marriage or go along with it because they think that part of Islam is to stick with your husband, to deal with it, but women have a lot of rights in Islam and being a wife does not give their husbands any right to abuse them.’ She concludes that although religiously, marriage and divorce are accepted in Islam, ‘if a woman is divorced she can still go ahead and marry somebody else, Islam completely respects that but when it comes to...cultural aspects of that we find that men don’t want to be associated with a woman who has been divorced’. Therefore, the issue transforms from a question around religion to a question about community tolerance.

Similarly, whereas legally a Christian couple can divorce, Christian faith considers divorce a sin. Again, this is only the case in certain denominations of the Christian faith; for example Catholicism forbids divorce as a marriage can only be broken by God and not by human law, but Greek Orthodox Christianity states that an individual can divorce up to three times. Buddhism sees divorce as a civil, as opposed to a religious issue. Sikh religion disapproves of divorce as it is strongly tied to relations between community members and to strengthening ties between families; however, it recognizes that sometimes divorce is inevitable. Finally Hinduism (according to the Hindu Marriage (India) Act, 1955) allows divorce, but under very specific circumstances. It is this lack of clarity and appropriate religious education within communities, families and women themselves that adds an extra dimension of moral, physical and emotional force to enter and stay in a marriage.

As far as family/community obligations are concerned, these are tightly knit with the structure of communities themselves, the idea of ‘honour’ that permeates community life, and the link between ‘honour’ and the perceived ‘obligation’ by parents to ‘do right’ by their children. This can take a variety of forms: on the one hand, as women are seen as bearing the burden of ‘honour’, parents often insist on their daughters’ choice of spouse to ensure that she
maintains that honour for herself and her family. In some ways, this anxiety to ensure the provision of what is best for their children overrides the obligation to listen to what the children have to say. In the words of Phillips and Dustin (2004) ‘as long as families remain convinced that the marriage they have arranged is in the best interests of their children and children remain (understandably) unwilling to break off their family ties, many young people will continue to succumb to moral pressure and ‘consent’ (p.542)

This was highlighted repeatedly in interviews carried out for this project. Almost all interviewees highlighted the internal pressure within the woman as a factor interwoven with familial and community expectations of her as well as the consequences of escaping or declining a marriage: isolation, disownment and/or retribution by her family and/or her in-laws. Ghizala Avan starts by exploring some of the internal emotional pressures in women: ‘it’s my duty, I better just go along with it and just do it…and in some situations they end up marrying people they don’t want to be with because they feel they have to do the right thing for the family’. This often comes from women’s disbelief that parents would choose a spouse for their daughters for any motives other than their best interest.

This is not always true since, as will be discussed later, immigration, poverty and mutual obligation can often be the true reason behind a specific marital arrangement. These factors further complicate issues around marriage. Particularly common when only certain members of one family have relocated, leaving others back home where living conditions might be harsher or opportunities for education and employment scarcer, marriage is seen as the only way for family left behind in the country of origin to be brought over to Scotland. Ghizala Avan (Glasgow Amina MWRC) describes it as ‘where there is poverty [parents] feel a sense of duty to try and help their extended family...so they think what we’ll do is we’ll get our daughter married to that person, and that will be a ticket out of poverty for him’. This sense of obligation is particularly aggravated when the family left behind has provided financial or material support to allow the migrant family members to relocate.

Finally, another crucial dimension that further aggravates women who need help with regards to forced marriage is the way that it is defined in mainstream cultural discourses. According to Research by S. Anitha and A. Gill, ‘Although we are starting to also consider emotional pressure in a Forced Marriage, the difference between arranged marriage and forced marriage continues to be framed in binary terms and hinges on the concept of consent: the context in which consent is constructed largely remains unexplored’ (2009; p.165).

This project has highlighted ways in which this can translate in practice. For many mainstream organizations, the fact that women do not explicitly approach professionals using the term ‘Forced Marriage’ means that the agencies do not recognize the risk or the full situation. This is particularly dangerous: as in-house Saheliya statistics indicate, it is very seldom that women will be this explicit about their concerns, and might instead talk about marriage related issues, or present with very different problems, therefore leaving the
responsibility of establishing the issue with the professional working with them. Staff with expertise in work with BME women would therefore be considerably more aware about linking such problems to forced marriage, while this may not be the case for mainstream professionals.

Poonam Ladwa, Young Women’s Worker at Saheliya has observed this phenomenon in her work. Whereas young BME women will openly talk about issues such as body image, peer relations and family problems, many of them ‘clam up’ when the discussion of marriage arises, before the question of forced marriage has even been suggested. She admits that it is often very difficult to get young women to talk about marriage whether alone or in a group, indicating that for them, as well as their families and communities, it can be a very contentious, possibly dangerous topic of conversation. For example she offers the case study of one young woman who talked at length about being afraid to move away from Scotland when she married and not seeing her parents or siblings again if her future mother-in-law would not allow it. However, it took her a long time to say that she did not want to marry the man intended for her, that she did not want to marry a man she didn’t know, and that she did not want to get married altogether as she wished to further her education. As with numerous women that we see at Saheliya, this is the pattern most women follow when discussing forced marriage: a strong, trusting relationship has to be established before the real concerns and fears are disclosed.

Similarly, Mridul Wadhwa of Shakti Women’s Aid emphasizes this difference between BME women approaching mainstream versus specialized organizations: ‘Things like, ‘he’ll keep you happy’, ‘you’re the right age’, I got married at 15 so why can’t you?’ These sorts of things are less difficult to hear but more difficult for [mainstream] professionals to identify because those who don’t deal with it on a daily basis will not look at this conversation as being particularly abusive…somebody who’s listening to that conversation they will just accept it as something cultural, as ‘it’s really not for us, it’s how they do things’.

It is therefore clear to see how such definitions and discourses allow for misunderstandings with dire consequences for the women concerned. For this reason, the next stage of this report is concerned with the different dimensions of ‘force’ in the discussion of forced marriage.
Why does Forced Marriage continue to happen?

The nature of force

‘The preoccupation with ‘free will’ that informs the legal discourse ignores the fact that consent itself is constructed in the context of power imbalances and gendered norms and-crucially-often in the absence of explicit threats: simply put, many coercive forces often go undetected.’

Anitha & Gill. 2009; p.171.

Through the findings of this research we recommend that ‘Force’ in the term ‘Forced Marriage’ is best understood as a continuum which extends along the woman’s lifespan, the boundaries between herself, her family and her community, her emotional and psychological well-being as well as her physical integrity and her safety. This continuum ranges from free and full consent at one end to physical punishment culminating in death at the other. We see this continuum consisting of 12 stages, which are not as clearly defined in real life and which can be present simultaneously. This continuum is summarized and analyzed below:

I. Free and Full Consent: the woman is asked whether she is happy to enter the marriage and nothing hinders/pressurises/infringes upon her capacity to make a decision, which will be accepted regardless of whether it is positive or negative.
II. Healthy talk about life, love marriage.
III. Intentional grooming, dowry purchase or bribery.
IV. Talk of marriage, looking for and/or having found a prospective husband for the girl/woman.
V. Mild Psychological Coercion
VI. Moderate Psychological Coercion/Blackmail
VII. Severe Psychological Coercion, Psychological Violence and Trauma
VIII. Deception and/or Abduction
IX. Physical Violence
X. Sexual Violence
XI. Mutilation and/or Disfigurement
XII. Murder - Honour Killing

Figure 8: The continuum of ‘Force’ in a Forced Marriage.

Analysis:

I. Free and full Consent: At the top end of the spectrum is the complete freedom of a woman to choose her husband and/or to consent or decline a marriage arrangement. No pressure is exerted on her and whatever her decision, it will be accepted. By ‘no pressure’ we also expect that the woman is of sufficient age, emotional and intellectual maturity to be able to make this decision. This includes any mental health issue or learning difficulty that might prevent her from making a free and informed choice.
II. Healthy talk about life, love, marriage: Talking about marriage and love is part of human development from a very early age. Questions such as ‘why mummy and daddy live together’ for example, form part of all children’s early psychosocial development. Similarly, asking female relatives for advice and information when choosing a spouse or asking for example an older sister/cousin who is already married ‘what is it like’ is a basic curiosity that spans all ages, cultures and religions.

III. Grooming, Dowry and Bribery: Again, not an uncommon feature across many cultures is the grooming of a young girl towards traditional gender roles, namely marriage and motherhood in most communities. Often, this becomes such an integral part in the woman’s life that when a spouse has been presented to her she may be completely unaware of the fact that she has options around marrying him. Both Mridul Wahdhwa of Shakti Women’s Aid and Rajni Pander of Hemat Gryffe agreed that this is a very common occurrence, with young girls especially vulnerable to the influence of her ‘dream wedding’ being presented to her, without specific details of what happens after, in terms of how she will be expected to perform within the marriage.

A dowry specifically can be used to lure a woman into a marriage through the acquisition of household goods, clothes, jewellery, property etc. that will all become hers on the promise that she marries a specific person. A dowry can also be used in the opposite manner: a daughter who is considered unattractive or less eligible for marriage is more likely to become attractive if she brings with her material wealth. It is important to note that a dowry may predate any marriage arrangement, or it may be agreed upon between the woman’s and the man’s family as part of finalizing the arrangement.

Finally, bribing a woman into marriage is not uncommon. Building a man’s image to her through statements such as ‘he’s going to keep you like a queen’, ‘you won’t need to work’, ‘he’s a great match for you’, ‘he’s really handsome’; or presenting her with outcomes that will be particularly attractive to her such as ‘he’ll buy you a car’, or ‘you can help get a Visa for your favourite cousins to visit you in the country’ are often used as arguments.

IV. Talk of marriage/looking for/finding a husband: This step is one that overlaps between arranged and forced marriage with one crucial difference: Whereas in both cases the prospective spouses’ families look for a suitable partner, in an arranged marriage the ultimate decision to go ahead or not lies with the young woman and man. More simply put, an arranged marriage is NOT a Forced Marriage. A Forced Marriage however, has always been arranged. Very often, the process has started unbeknownst to the woman and possibly a considerable number of years before she is ready or old enough to be legally able to consent. There have been known cases where engagements were arranged between male and female children well under 10 years of age. However, it is not uncommon for a woman to simply be told that a spouse has been found for her and that she is expected to agree to the arrangement (if she is asked at all). In the most dramatic
situations, cases have been referred to Saheliya whereby a woman was dragged to her own wedding ceremony where she met her future husband for the first time on location.

V. **Mild Psychological Coercion:** This stage includes all arguments that can be used to convince a woman that this is the right choice for her. Statements such as ‘you won’t find a better match’, ‘you’re not pretty enough’ and ‘you’re too old’ can be used repeatedly to convince the woman to say ‘yes’. Similarly, arguments can be brought forward invoking the obligation of the daughter to go along with an arrangement her family made long ago: ‘we’ve already promised and we can’t go back on our word’.

VI. **Moderate Psychological Coercion/Blackmail:** This stage can often be difficult to distinguish from the previous one. For the purposes of this research, we had to separate it as it symbolizes the point at which coercion stops being about ‘what’s best for you’ and starts becoming motivated by fear of what her ultimate rejection of a particular suitor will mean for the rest of her family, particularly the loss of their status in the community. This includes statements intended to demean the woman’s self esteem and confidence such as ‘nobody else will take you, you should be grateful he wants to marry you’, ‘you’re useless and no good to do anything else, at least if you get married you can be useful to someone’ and ‘if you don’t marry him you can leave my house because I don’t want a disrespectful daughter, I raised you better than this’.

VII. **Severe Psychological Coercion/Psychological Violence/Trauma:** At this end of the psychological coercion spectrum severe threats both to the woman and to her loved ones. These are aimed to magnify the consequences of rejection of the arrangement beyond proportion, for example ‘you’re giving your mother cancer’ or ‘if you say ‘no’ your father will kill himself’. Along the same lines are threats to the horrible alternatives that will transpire such as ‘I will send you back to (country of origin) to marry an old man’ or ‘if you don’t marry this man you will die alone a horrible death’. As Mridul Whadhwa puts it, ‘in most of our cases we see a lot of emotional abuse...that is more subtle. But in many cases the force is very clear: you do this or the consequences will be horrible.’

VIII. **Deception and/or Abduction:** Deception and abduction become more prominent in late adolescence and early adulthood, when a young woman is coming of age and is beginning to attract the attention of potential spouses. One of the most common scenarios that concerns many young women in the UK every year, is the possibility of never returning from a holiday to the home country. Very often a genuine holiday has been planned, but the arrangement is made there and then and the woman is made to accept it. There are also occasions where a wedding has been planned secretly in another part of the world and the young woman is completely unaware of it, thus finding herself trapped upon arrival. This becomes particularly difficult if she is taken to remote parts of
the country where she might struggle to communicate or where she might not be able to speak to the authorities.

In some of the most dramatic cases, women have been drugged or sedated and only woke up when they were taken through the airport on their way out of the country. This situation can be particularly difficult as they then find themselves being vigilantly followed by their family members who are traveling with them. If a woman had absolutely no suspicion that this might happen, she may be completely unaware of what she can do to escape during those crucial moments before she is taken away.

IX. Physical Violence: This can include any form of physical abuse as well as neglect towards a woman to convince her to accept a husband. Often women are subjected to beatings and starvation; not allowed contact with other members of the family and/or friends; not allowed to use the bathroom or to get medical attention; often she can be locked in a room or confined to a basement until she ‘comes to her senses’.

X. Sexual Violence: Perhaps one of the most traumatic stages, especially when used against girls under 16. A great number of BME communities place huge emphasis on the importance of a girl’s virginity and purity and the promise that she will remain a faithful and devoted wife. So important is sexual purity that very often a family’s perceived status within a community depends on it. This can lead to a number of outcomes:

In an attempt to ‘guarantee’ their daughter’s ‘fidelity’ and ‘purity', a family might subject her to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Despite its illegal status in the UK, FGM is still very much carried out underground in specific communities. Due to being illegal, it is not reported by traumatized survivors who have just experienced a severe violation of their bodies and their human rights but who struggle to believe that their parents are criminals, or who are not able to testify against them in a court of law because of previous threats or because they have been led to believe that this is ‘the norm’. A telling example is a Young Saheliya client whose family insists that she marry a specific man who refuses to marry her unless she has been mutilated.

If a young woman is known or reputed to have sexual or other intimate relations, even seen making conversation with a boy/man alone, she can be subjected to severe punishment, the extreme end of which is an honour killing. A girl with prior sexual experience is no longer considered ‘worthy’ as the ‘dishonour’ that she has brought upon herself will ‘contaminate’ her own and her husband’s families. However, sexual assault and rape are being used against women to push them towards a specific partner. Even in cases where young women have had no prior intimate relations, rape can be used as a weapon to drive home to them that now they are unworthy of marriage and that they would be lucky to even get a proposal. The most recent incident was well reported in the news recently, concerning Amina El-Filali, a 16 year old Moroccan girl forced to marry her rapist because if he didn’t propose to her he faced criminal charges. On the other
hand, from the perpetrator’s standpoint, the detrimental effect prior sexual experience has on the ‘honour’ of the bride invalidates the bride price (Otoo-Oyortey & Pobi, 2003).

The implication is that often a prospective husband has been found and sexual violence is used to emphasize that this is the only future husband the young woman could hope for. Perhaps most traumatizing of all is the fact that often the perpetrator can be a member of the woman’s family or the suitor himself. The guilt and shame that are associated with rape together with the emotional attachment to the perpetrator make this a very under-reported incident.

XI. Mutilation and/or disfigurement: At this stage, actions against the woman’s freedom to choose a spouse take on the sinister significance of revenge against her. There have been known cases of women who have had acid thrown at them or who have had their faces cut up either by their own families (‘this is what you get for dishonouring us’) or by the men they were being pushed to marry and/or their families (‘who do you think you are rejecting our son?’ or ‘if I can’t have you then nobody else will want to’).

XII. Murder-Honour Killing: As Reddy (2008) aptly defines it, an ‘honour killing’ ‘envisages a scenario where...a woman is killed to either prevent or repair perceived violations of male or familial ‘honour’. The latter include not only perceived sexual impropriety, but also any behavior not approved of by family members and seen as challenging to patriarchal authority’ (p.306). In extreme cases, but unfortunately enough cases to reach the news numerous time each year in the UK, a woman’s refusal of a specific partner is seen as the ultimate disrespect. This can lead them as far as to kill her with the justification of ‘restoring’ the family’s insulted ‘honour’.

When asked about honour based violence specifically, Aisha Zaveri of Dundee Amina MWRC explained that ‘honour only becomes part of the game when you are part of a community that thinks that honour is such a huge thing that it’s about...wanting people to look up to you, you know, as the person that’s got this power and control. But if you can’t get your daughter to marry somebody of your choice then that undermines your power and your control. And that’s why some people think that it’s sometimes ok to kill that person to get rid of the possibility of them bringing shame on the family in front of the whole community...I mean, I can’t really imagine anybody really wanting to hurt their daughter or son intentionally but it can become the case for some people where ‘honour’ just matters more.’
Access to justice

‘Isolation is the first and biggest obstacle. For many of these women the contact they have with women’s groups and other support structures are a critical part of their surviving the experience’ (p.15, ‘A choice by right’).

This research has revealed many reasons for which women are reluctant to come forward and seek help with Forced Marriage issues. These can be separated into three levels: First are problems that concern the woman alone which can be individual, but many women have them in common. Second are issues that arise from the community, and these could be based on factors of tradition or migration. Finally, the third level of obstacles women face when seeking justice for a Forced Marriage situation relates to factors external to the woman and her community and/or unique to mainstream services:

I. Barriers internal to the woman:

a. No awareness of Forced Marriage: According to our research, when women approach an organization for support, they do so, most often, because they are unhappy. Very often they do not name what is happening to them as ‘Forced Marriage’ either because they do not know the term or because they consider their experience in their family or community to be the ‘norm’. This is a point of contention between BME women’s services and mainstream providers- whereas the former take an intuitive approach informed by cultural know-how, often mainstream services expect the woman herself to describe her issue as ‘Forced Marriage’.

This can be particularly difficult when statutory guidelines and government reports take this approach, such as for example ‘A Choice by Right’, whereby ‘...the working group states that the starting point should always be the perception of the individual. They know when they are being forced to do something against their will and a person’s cry for help should be the trigger for a range of appropriate responses’ (p.18). Our argument, and a finding of this research remains that women often do not identify the issue as clearly as this report expects. In the words of Mridul Wadhwa (Shakti Women’s Aid): ‘There are a lot of people out there who don’t realize that what they’re going through is forced marriage and even if they do realize then they don’t know how to ask for help.’

b. Where to go/whom to trust: Very often the case for the youngest or least integrated survivors (for example those who migrated to the UK in order to marry). There are practical issues of not knowing whom a woman can talk to, in what organization, and whether she can trust them.
c. *Little or no English*: very often the women who most desperately need help and support are unable to communicate due to language barriers; if interpreters are available they are not necessarily to be trusted to convey what she is saying or to maintain her confidentiality – they will frequently share the view of the family rather than supporting her.

d. *Immigration Status*: Often in a forced marriage with an overseas dimension, the woman’s immigration status is used as a weapon against her. This is especially difficult if the woman has a limited visa which needs to be renewed based on specific requirements, or if she has no recourse to public funds, in which case she would be unable to support herself and/or her children without her husband.

e. *No geographical awareness*: This often reflects a very real problem when women have moved to a specific place in order to get married and their life has been limited to only essential travel (e.g. from home to the corner shop). Even if a woman knew which organization she needed help from, if she does not know how to get there, how to use public transport or she has no money for a taxi then she remains trapped.

f. *Fear of racism*: Due to being visible minorities, most of our clients are terrified of being treated by hostility or by ignorance so that their needs are not met – including having mainstream professionals contact the parents, rather than seeing them as ‘perpetrators’. This could be reinforced by ‘horror stories’ shared within families or between friends or it could reflect the woman’s past negative experiences.

g. *Fear of the consequences*: Many women who want to seek help are prevented from doing so because of the terror of the reactions that they will be provoking in their families and communities. According to Susan A’Brooke from Dundee International Women’s Centre, ‘going to the authorities is an awful big step...because you are effectively severing ties with your family if you stand up to them in this way. Although this is the case for women who seek help from the police, often, as Mridul Wadhwa from Shakti Women’s Aid puts it ‘there’s this fear that if they ask for help then they also have to leave home. But they don’t have to do that. They can still talk about it, they can do something.’

h. *Reluctance to criminalize*: Many BME women, even if they are familiar with the concept of Forced Marriage, might not be at all familiar with the law. Similarly, even if they are, they may be extremely reluctant to report being forced into a marriage as they fear criminalizing their parents.

This is an issue that affects women in general when it comes to problems in the domestic sphere. As Sergeant Catherine Duguid with the Lothian and Borders Police Diversity Unit frames it, ‘often...women want the help but they don’t necessarily want...’
it to be a police matter. Even with domestic violence, a lot of women do not report it to the police...they do want out of the situation but they don’t want to go through a courtroom, they don’t want to drag their family through that, for all that they might be miserable and unhappy...there’s a lot of reasons [for that] and most of them are emotional...there’s trust issues, there’s fear, I can definitely see that and I can understand...it just makes it very difficult for us to help.

In line with the overwhelming emotions that underline the process of seeking police support in a forced marriage case, both Sergeant Duguid and Detective Sergeant Pauline Nairn added that very often BME women don’t necessarily understand what the first step is of going to the authorities. The first step, taking out a Forced Marriage Protection Order, is a Civil Order, which acts as a very clear warning against perpetrators of pressure to marriage. If and only if this warning is not heeded does it criminalise the perpetrator. The discrepancy that BME women often perceive is the understanding that a Forced Marriage Protection Order in itself would serve to criminalise their family, and this adds to their reluctance to come forward.

i. Self-doubt/brainwashing: For women who have had overprotected, policed upbringings, very often, tradition and culture becomes internalized to the extent that it becomes a core belief, pushing aside the woman’s resistance to go along with what is happening to her. As Ghizala Avan, of Glasgow’s Amina MWRC states: ‘women feel that pressure to marry...’it’s ok, it’s my mum, she loves me’ or ‘it’s my dad and I love him, I don’t want to let him down, so I’ll marry that person...the pressure feels somehow dislocated, it’s not real until it hits you in the face...’

j. Guilt and Shame: Perceived ‘Honour’ and ‘Status’ plays a very important role in the community life of BME women. By going against her family or community, a woman is considered to be bringing ‘shame’ upon them, which will have long-lasting repercussions on her family, but mostly and most frighteningly on her.

k. Lack of life skills, education or money: Due to many BME women growing up in an overprotective environment where their movements were strictly controlled, essential life skills are rarely cultivated. For many girls who are not allowed contact with boys, it will always remain a mystery how to relate to a man appropriately without putting themselves at risk. Similarly, as many forced marriages occur very early in a woman’s life, her education is often cut short; subsequently, so are her employment opportunities and her capacity to be financially independent.

Unfortunately, our interview material suggests that this heavy policing of a girl’s movements or freedom of choice can become a factor considerably earlier and consequently have detrimental effects: According to Mridul Wadhwa of Shakti Women’s Aid: ‘Our young women have very creative emotional intelligence in that they know how to negotiate very complex family relationships and ask these very
profound questions but you ask them to go shopping for something...and they’re not able to. Not always, but life skills are zero. They are particularly vulnerable to the attentions of men because they have not been allowed to have any healthy contact with men and boys so any contact that is there is always romantic and makes them feel quite vulnerable.’

II. Barriers inherent in the community

‘All cultures officially condemn forced marriage and don’t recognize it as a problem’. (Phillips & Dustin, 2004; p 534)

a. Control of Movements: Poonam Ladwa, young women’s worker at Saheliya expanded on the above point by Mridul. In her experience she has very frequently encountered young BME women who are, on the one hand, very spirited and strong willed, but who on the other hand come across very naïve and vulnerable. She attributes this to the expectation that by completely segregating girls and boys and by heavily policing any interactions that might occur between them, parents are instilling ‘honourable’ values in them. However, this leaves them unaware of healthy, appropriate relationship boundaries, rendering them vulnerable to potential transgressions for which they will be later on punished by their families and/or communities.

b. No trust in the Authorities: Many BME women come from countries or cultures where approaching the authorities is not an option. According to Sergeant Catherine Duguid (Lothian and Borders Police, Diversity Unit) ‘in some communities, the countries where they’ve come from, the police are not respected, they’re not trusted. In some countries there’s even a fear of the police.

c. Extended Kinship Relations: The fact that BME communities are based on extended family relationships and systems of mutual obligation means that many members are strongly connected to each other. This can be particularly problematic in smaller geographical areas as women’s movements can be severely restricted. Aisha Zaveri of Dundee Amina MWRC says that ‘with Dundee being so small everybody knows each other - even the staff that we work with in the office...we all know each other...and because of the nature and the tightness of the Muslim community it’s very difficult to get clients in relation to Forced Marriage.’

d. Too much familiarity with community members: The longer a community has lived in a particular area, it becomes considerably more established but also much more self-sufficient. Leadership and inter-community affairs are dealt with mostly by male
leaders, trapping women in these patriarchal structures. According to Ishbel White, board member to Darnley Street Family Centre, this is particularly problematic in Glasgow, where BME communities are considerably older and larger than other areas of Scotland: ‘[BME GPs] are all single practice Asian doctors. Men. [...] This is bad practice. After the Harold Shipman killings in England that is bad practice. You’ve got one person there doing everything with no checks and balances.’ She continued to explain that due to the closeness of the communities, very often doctor-patient confidentiality is breeched. Similarly, the familiarity between a young woman and/or her family will often prevent her from seeing a GP from the same community if she is concerned about sexual health or other intimate issues, which will further impact on both her physical and mental health.

e. Male community leadership: The fact that most communities (religious, ethnic and cultural) are run by men makes it impossible on the one hand to access the correct information about women’s experience, and on the other to liaise with the community in a way that represents all community members’ opinions equally. Similarly, this patriarchal structure adds further pressure on women not to interact with men aside from selected men who are deemed ‘appropriate’ (for example male relatives or family friends). This often leaves women with only the resource of women-only organizations to resort to.

f. Misconceptions about culture/religion/tradition: Although no religion in the world condones forced marriage, there is a general belief that some religions do. Aisha Zaveri and Ghizala Avan of Amina MWRC in Dundee and Glasgow respectively expressed that there is a misconception that Islam supports Forced Marriage, and that unfortunately seems to be a belief held both by the mainstream community as well as Muslim women themselves. According to Aisha Zaveri, parents will often use religion as an argument for forced marriage but in actual fact, she sees that as a miscommunication between religion and culture: ‘Forced Marriage is completely unacceptable in Islam, Islam does not accept any form of violence [against women]...arranged marriages are accepted, they are a part of Islam...but divorce is accepted...if a woman is unhappy in her marriage she can get a divorce...Islam completely respects that.’

g. Inventiveness of Perpetrators: A. Phillips and M. Dustin (2004) raised concerns that legislating against a particular practice can push it underground. It is conceivable to argue that the limited reporting of Forced Marriage could be in part due to this: apart from threats of Forced Marriage or actual ceremonies being carried out overseas, coercion is practiced with such subtlety that it is often undetectable.
h. ‘ Honour ‘: As described above in more detail, ‘ honour ‘ plays a major role in the life of BME communities in Scotland. In fact, it can be so strongly instilled in community members that the young women themselves who are at risk, being threatened or who are surviving forced marriages might be deterred from seeking help because they recognize the perceived impact this is going to have on their families’ and communities’ honour.

i. The best organizations often have the worst reputations: At Saheliya, we very often find that knowledge about the existence and scope of our services is transmitted through word of mouth within communities. This also tends to be the case for other women’s only organizations, particularly such as Shakti Women’s Aid who help women, children and young people escape domestic abuse, going against the traditional values the community lives by. There is therefore a fear and dislike of such organizations ‘meddling’ or ‘corrupting’ the women who access them. Although Saheliya provides a wide range of holistic services specializing in supporting women who are surviving escaping or surviving forced marriage as well as any other form of honour based violence including female genital mutilation, we do not publicize this information. We uphold a strict code of confidentiality: most of the women using our services often do not tell their families they are doing so- if they do, they explain that they come for English classes, support with homework and correspondence, sewing classes, etc.

j. Funding a Forced Marriage Protection Order: One of the biggest hurdles, even if a woman has had the courage to seek support regarding forced marriage, is the cost of a protection order. With regards to younger women under sixteen, Child Protection Legislation gives organizations and the authorities considerably more power to act. However, as Elaine McLaughlin (Hemat Gryffe, Glasgow) puts it ‘to get the papers lodged into court there’s a fee. At the moment...it’s £105 to do that. And then the sheriff can launch an interim order that day but he’ll fix a hearing later on so to employ the services of a solicitor, who pays for that?...Solicitors can charge up to £250 an hour...’ This therefore indicates that even if the emotional and psychological barriers are excluded, there is a very realistic hurdle of actually funding a protection order, which adds to women’s vulnerability.
III. External/Mainstream Obstacles to Justice

a. Racism and Islamophobia: One of Saheliya’s reasons for existence was the fact that BME women’s access to mainstream mental health services was severely restricted. One of the main reasons the women themselves identified for this was institutional racism as well as feeling misunderstood or not understood at all. This continues to be the reason for which women avoid or fear accessing mainstream services. Sadly, following the events of September 11th, 2001, and the gross misrepresentation of Islam in the media globally, a new dimension has been added to racism: Islamophobia. Racist attacks continue to affect women in Scotland, and Muslim women in particular. Furthermore, the Western media’s representation of Muslim women as oppressed victims, has shaped the views and expectations of the general public and therefore of service providers. As Aisha Zaveri of Dundee Amina MWRC states: ‘Women have a lot of rights in Islam but unfortunately not many people know that’.

b. Consultation with male community leaders: According to Takhar (2006; p.296): ‘Multicultural policies have often meant internal affairs of the community being managed by (male) community leaders’ (Takhar, 2006; p.296). In Scotland, we continue to see that this is still very much the case. Just as the heads of household are usually male, the religious and community leaders are overwhelmingly male. This is something that needs to be addressed as, while on the surface a consultation appears to represent community members, in reality it only represents the top layer only, leaving the most vulnerable (usually women and children) at the bottom rungs of the ladder.

c. Availability/Appropriateness of interpreting services: Often, women who traveled to the UK to be married, have little or no English language. When it comes to accessing mainstream services, they need the help of an interpreter. As this is very time consuming and expensive to arrange, and as they are often escorted to appointments by their husbands, brothers, children or in-laws, these family members are then invited to act as interpreters. This is not only inappropriate, as is the case with children, but also unprofessional: in the presence of male relatives, husbands or in-laws, women will not be able to speak freely about their situations as this could endanger their lives. Ishbel White of Darnley Street Family Centre recounts another example of this when BME women accessing family planning services at the centre escorted by their husbands: ‘men would come along and give their [wives’] history, their menstrual history and the staff would be astonished that the women were too embarrassed!...but more recently they asked ‘how come you’re comfortable with the men coming in and talking about your periods?’...and [the women] said ‘We’re not comfortable but what can we do?’ and then staff realized – [the women] couldn’t understand what [the men] were saying! The men would ask ‘what would you recommend is the best contraception...I want to enjoy sex and so does my wife’ and their wives are sitting
This unfortunately common occurrence is indicative of the differential power dynamics between BME men and women in marriage. It also highlights the lack of awareness of mainstream health service providers regarding what is acted out in the consulting room and how to interpret and work with it productively.

d. No awareness of Culture/Tradition/Religion: Despite the long history of Christian influence on politics and society. Historically Scotland has not experienced as much cultural, traditional or religious influence until more recently (ie. Within the last century). Communities are only becoming more included and inclusive now that their populations are growing and further generations are integrating with the mainstream. Ishbel White of Darnley Street Family Centre, says that this can be both a blessing and a curse: in her experience, those BME women who were born and raised here will have the advantage of more awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Very often they will dress in Western fashions and approach white professionals for help. However, that professional will often not be aware of their background, their religion or their communities’ structure and thus they are often unable to help. These BME girls and women can appear considerably better integrated than they might actually be, therefore not communicating the level of risk they are facing adequately or appearing more independent and self-sufficient than they actually are. The responsibility therefore lies with the mainstream professional to be aware of factors affecting these women’s lives and to take further steps to establish their safety and appropriate responses to the issues they are facing.

e. No awareness of the legal context: Pauline Nairn, Detective Sergeant with Lothian and Borders Police, framed this as not only a problem for mainstream organizations, but for the general public as well: ‘The Scottish Government commendably brought in this legislation as a deterrent. But what we’re saying is that it’s very hard when you don’t have any facts or figures. And we do have partner agencies telling us that this is an issue and we are aware of this but it’s not filtering down to us and being reported so there’s an obvious invisible hurdle somewhere.’ Catherine Duguid, Sergeant within Lothian and Borders Police Diversity Unit expanded on this as a reciprocal issue of raising awareness in the mainstream and building BME women’s confidence to come forward: ‘A lot of it is getting the right information and trying to build the confidence in people because I don’t know how many women would think we could help them.’ The approach therefore becomes circular and involves sharing information between statutory bodies who put the law into practice, as well as the sharing of training and expertise by BME women’s organizations.

f. Lack of training: The need for mainstream organizations and professionals to receive further specialized training in forced marriage was highlighted by all interviewees.
Repeatedly we have come across examples where mainstream professionals dismissed concerns due to lack of awareness or through resorting to ‘culture’. However, forced marriage will continue to happen unless professionals become fully aware of the dynamics that perpetuate it as well as appropriate ways to respond to individuals at risk. A Mridul Wadhwa (Shakti Women’s Aid) explicitly put it: ‘I think we have to work with mainstream organizations, those who will act in either a protective role like social services, and those who can take on a preventative responsibility. Discussing forced marriage has to be inculcated with any mandatory training that they have but I don’t think it should be delivered by mainstream white trainers or by men.’

g. Fear of Intervention: Very often, mainstream staff are reluctant to intervene in Forced Marriage or other forms of honour crimes and harmful cultural practices for fear of appearing racist and ‘meddling’ in cultural or religious issues. This was also recorded in research by Siddiqui (2000; 2005); it was reported in ‘A choice by right’: The report of the working group on Forced Marriage’ (2000); and is also the reality for many Saheliya clients who have disclosed to us that when they approached mainstream professionals for help they were faced with the response of ‘this is how things are done in your culture so I can’t help’. This is detrimental on two levels: not only does it perpetuate the disempowerment of BME women and children - it is also psychologically and emotionally detrimental to those who might have gone as far as to place their own and/or their children’s safety at risk by asking for help only to be turned away by the same rhetoric that got them in a forced marriage in the first place.

h. Lack of cultural sensitivity and/or cultural oversensitivity: Mainstream organizations’ and professionals’ lack of awareness of or familiarity with multi-cultural work leads to misunderstandings in work with BME women. For example, silence is interpreted as respect when it could indicate communication difficulties; lack of eye-contact has been mistaken for modesty when it was communicating fear; mentioning faith or religion has had Saheliya clients referred to mental health services instead of it being considered an important part of their lives, moral values, and codes of conduct.

i. Inappropriateness of solutions offered: Lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity frequently results in completely inappropriate solutions to BME women’s issues being suggested. Ishbel White of Darnley Street Family Centre offered the following case history: ‘There was this Sikh woman once whose husband hadn’t left her—he was still there having an affair with a white woman and [the Sikh woman] loved him very much, she had four children to him and he was thinking of leaving her. Went to the GP, the GP says ‘och, you’re an attractive woman…you can go out there and get any husband you like’. She told me that story herself. She said ‘what use is that to me?…that’s nothing about my culture, I don’t have that choice’…That’s not helpful to her! In her terms, being Sikh, all the values that go with that, it’s no help to her…but if
the white professional they go to for help doesn’t recognize that they have different value systems, different cultures and different perspectives on certain things, they’re never going to be helpful!’

From the other perspective, it can be argued that a GP could not possibly have been much help in this situation anyway. However, what he/she could have done is made a referral to an appropriate organization that could have supported and advised this woman as to how she could resolve the issue through the options available to her.

j. ‘One chance rule’: Often, considering the difficulties BME women face in accessing health services, if they do access a service, it could be the only time that they are able to reach out for support. It is therefore vital not only that mainstream professionals are aware of this, but also that if any concern is raised whatsoever, it has to be addressed immediately. As Sergeant Duguid (Lothian and Borders Police, Diversity Unit) puts it, ‘If somebody comes to us then we have to do something there and then.’

Regulation, Dialogue and Exit.

When examining the reasons why there haven’t been more reports of forced marriage to the authorities, very interesting information came up suggesting that the reason behind this could be the different ways in which women’s organizations work compared to the police. Research by A. Phillips and M. Dustin (2004) suggested that when it comes to issues as sensitive as forced marriage, they are generally dealt with through one of three options: regulation, dialogue or exit:

- **Regulation** involves employing legal frameworks that define codes of conduct as legal or illegal. This approach provides an overarching umbrella that dictates what can or cannot be done by everyone across the board, without taking into account specific aggravating circumstances or, in the case of Forced Marriage, the large grey area between coercion and consent. The ‘one chance rule’ described above would come under this category.

- **Dialogue** offers a more flexible approach which takes into consideration that grey area; however, it can become too liberal in its approach and not reactive (fast) enough therefore allowing individuals at risk to slip through the net.

- **Exit**, the most liberal of three approaches, supports that in a Western social context, individuals who find elements of their culture, religion or tradition oppressive are free to leave. Although this may be possible, again, it fails to consider –
  i. the complex patriarchal community structures in which BME women find themselves,
  ii. the consequences of their need to ‘exit’ potentially at a very young age and
  iii. the repercussions this will have on their mental health and physical safety.
One of the important outcomes of this research is that it highlights the difference in approach between the authorities and other mainstream organizations, and the way in which BME women’s organizations work in Scotland. Whereas mainstream organizations that have the awareness and the power to intervene would directly employ the ‘one chance rule’ with an emphasis on regulation and exit, specialist women’s organizations employ work methods much more geared towards the dialogue approach. When asked ‘why do you think BME women would approach your organization rather than the authorities regarding forced marriage’, a very interesting array of responses was generated:

‘We look at [Forced Marriage] as a marriage where duress of where the road that leads to the marriage where force or physical violence was used...what we say is that to be able to assist someone who’s experiencing [forced marriage] we can’t define it for them. The victim, that’s the word we use, is the one who has to define what they’re experiencing as forced marriage’. (Mridul Wadhwa, Shakti Women’s Aid)

‘When women come to us they come for many different reasons. We don’t tell women ‘you’re being forced into a marriage’, it’s not like that...’ (Elaine McLaughlin, Hemat Gryffe)

‘Every case is different. Some will not recognize that they’re being forced into a marriage...and that’s where we come in, we let them know that they have options, that they will be better off emotionally, and the children will be better off too when there’s no constant abuse...it’s intensive support. It’s really intensive support that they will not receive outwith this organization. It’s not just the language barrier, it’s also the cultural know-how. We understand what they’re going through, and any other organization won’t be able to provide that kind of intensive support to them. We don’t leave them alone. They won’t have to feel isolated, they have support, they can turn to someone... ’ (Rajni Pandher, Hemat Gryffe)

‘We have to go with what the woman wants. It’s a very individual case by case scenario...’ (Ghizala Avan, Amina MWRC, Glasgow)

‘We wouldn’t try to push any sort of legal action on somebody. We would let them know that this is a possibility but they need to think and make up their own minds...unless there’s children involved obviously in which case it’s a whole different ball game...’(Susan A’Brook, Dundee International Women’s Centre)

The response from BME women’s organizations overwhelmingly emphasizes that they have in-depth awareness of cultural issues and the legal context; however, before intervening, they take time to establish a trusting working relationship with the women and to educate, advise, consult and support them throughout the decision-making process. This works on many levels:

- to break down the language barrier, as most Scottish BME women’s organizations are overwhelmingly staffed by BME women themselves who speak a multitude of languages (for example, Saheliya staff alone can provide 34 different languages);
- to break down isolation through intensive support and involvement in women only groups and networks;
- to build trust with girls and women who may have experienced emotional and/or physical abuse so severe that they feel unable to turn to anyone for support;
- to provide reassurance that unlike their families and/or community members, they are being listened to, understood and respected;
- to give them what they were not given by their loved ones: freedom to choose, the respect to make an informed decision and to proceed as they wish;
- to offer them a network of services they can turn to for support for not only forced marriage but also its aftermath;
- to provide an environment where they are aware that there will be no fear of racism, cultural or other discrimination;
- the difference in approaches employed by different services can therefore be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation (Police, Social Services)</th>
<th>Dialogue (BME Women’s Organizations)</th>
<th>Exit (the woman)</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Although the dialogue approach may initially appear to be at odds with the ‘one chance rule’ emphasized above, this is an area where the difference in methods employed by BME women’s organizations becomes extremely valuable. Whereas help from the police and social services needs to be requested, BME women’s organizations make their presence known to girls and women much earlier, where they are located: in schools, community centres, places of worship and religious and cultural celebrations. Therefore, whereas the authorities and social services have a preventative responsibility, BME women’s organization provide intensive individual and social support over long periods of time which can be educational in nature as well as protective and preventative.

This is crucial for BME women as they are offered the space to feel listened to and understood, it reduces isolation and builds their confidence and capacity for self-determination. The support offered is also holistic, therefore assisting the woman across different areas of her life, promoting her overall well-being. This is particularly important as in many of the cultures that we work with, it is not culturally acceptable to complain of poor mental health, and therefore somatisation is very common: women might come to Saheliya for example seeking complementary therapies for physical symptoms but only start talking about other issues when trust has been built with staff. The provision of services to cater for physical as well as mental health therefore supports women more holistically, supports them where they are, rather than where mainstream agencies often appear to think they should be.
There is one other fundamental reason for the existence of BME women-only organizations: the fact that the authorities, social services and statutory bodies often rely on them for information and for the reporting of forced marriage, and on other issues. As argued by Catherine Duguid, Sergeant with Lothian and Borders Police Diversity Unit, ‘we rely on the workers within those organizations to bring us in or not bring us in, depending on the circumstances...generally, whether it’s domestic violence, hate crime, verbal abuse, most people are victims ten or fifteen times before they come to the police. And then if you add on factors such as the culture, the community, the family, the friends, the social circle, I think women’s organizations will hear a lot more [about forced marriage] and that’s probably why we’re the last to find out.’

Therefore, apart from building trust and holistically supporting survivors of forced marriage and those at risk, the crucial role of BME women’s organization is the fact that they hold much more privileged and sensitive information on forced marriage. This gives them the important role of working collaboratively with the authorities to raise awareness and to work together to protect and support girls and women most at risk of such human rights abuses. Perhaps the most important reason for which Saheliya and other BME women’s organizations exist is because we recognize that our clients’ bravery in accessing our services, we can support their empowerment, boost their confidence and their ability to make life-changing decisions.

The impact of Forced Marriage.

Everyone interviewed for the project from organizations across Scotland was very aware of the effects on BME women of Forced Marriage and they all emphasized how devastating and detrimental these are. Ishbel White of Darnley Street Family Centre provided a specific case study which highlights the impact of forced marriage as well as the obstacles to help faced by a young woman living in Glasgow:

‘Quite a while back [I was working with] a young girl whose husband was very much older than her; she was very articulate, I have to say, and she came in one day and I met her and she was very distressed. Her husband was there too. She was only 22 but she looked a lot younger... She had three young children, married at seventeen to please her mother, didn’t know whom she was marrying, didn’t want to marry at all but her mother was ill and that’s why she married. She had no interest in marrying that man. She just couldn’t bear it any longer with him. She wanted to leave him. She was refusing to have any sex with him at all. And she herself - I thought she was bulimic - she was so thin, really so, so thin. And she came up a couple of times and I said to her well there’s a place you can go, a refuge out of this area, you can go get help and the kids can go, you can get help to get settled and all that in a house, so she went away and thought about it...but she came back again, it all takes time...and I said to her, what have you been doing? Self harm. Her arms
were all scarred with cutting you know...and she couldn’t go to her GP for help.
Why? Asian male doctor. Quite high status. Talks a lot.’

As highlighted above, the most detrimental impact on women is the abuse on multiple levels. The young woman discussed above had already been subjected to rape repeatedly and even borne children as a result. Having come from abroad she would have also suffered extreme isolation. The lack of any support in her life as well as the repeated incidents of abuse led this particular young woman to self harm and potentially suspected eating disorders. However, these psychological and physical effects came to light numerous times during the research:

Ghizala Avan of Glasgow’s Amina (MWRC) states that ‘[Forced Marriage] can lead to suicide, attempted suicide, mental health problems, social exclusion, which is obviously going to have an effect on your mental health [...] physical health as well, people develop eating disorders or they might try to impose control on their lives in some other way[...] it impacts on every area of your whole life.’

This was also highlighted by Elaine McLaughlin and Rajni Pandher of Hemat Gryffe in Glasgow: (Rajni):...there are huge psychological impacts; [the women] are depressed, they can have mental health issues-

(Elaine): The fear of not having any friends, worrying about being in a strange place, worrying about being outwith that network, outwith their community, the psychological impact on women is huge’

(Rajni)... They have no confidence left at all, no self esteem. They’ve been really let down by their family so that has an effect on them psychologically-where they expected they would get support they’re not getting any support and they’re feeling really down-trodden. It’s such an isolating experience…’

Mridul Wadhwa of Shakti Women’s Aid in Edinburgh also repeated that [Forced Marriage] is such an isolating experience...it can lead to depression, self harm, lack of confidence, so many things...certainly to [women’s] mental health it’s detrimental...the emotional impact on you and your mental health is devastating.

Isolation, as a word by itself may not convey the full impact of the experience and needs further explanation. The psychological effects of social isolation have been studied since the early seventies and its detrimental effects have repeatedly come to light. J.S. House (2001) states that ‘The magnitude of [health] risk associated with social isolation is comparable with that of cigarette smoking and other major biomedical and psychosocial risk factors’ (p.273). He goes on to add that just having social relationships is not enough to reduce the morbidity predicted unless the social relationships formed are supportive and dependable. This is what makes women in forced marriages particularly vulnerable to the detrimental effects of isolation: women who came to the UK in order to marry and may have no English language skills or who do not know where they can find help and support or meet other women who can
help them are completely shut off from any possibility for social connections. As Ishbel White relates the story of another young woman in a forced marriage:

‘What was most horrendous for me was to see was very young brides married to very elderly men. ...and I just say gosh, is that her husband? She’s got hardly any English and she’s eighteen and her husband is what, sixty something? I’ve seen a few of them... and I mean, who’s going to consent to that?...but the community somehow condone this. And they’ll not necessarily befriend her either. Which I suppose in psychological terms you could describe that as “if you’re unhappy with your own lot, why should other people be happy?”...she came into a well-established [BME women’s] group but the women didn’t say anything to her, didn’t offer any kindness to her.’

Furthermore, even women who have managed to resist and/or escape a forced marriage often find themselves in equally toxic situations: ‘Men also have pressures to marry- but they can escape much more quickly. And we often see the wives of such men at Shakti...because the abuser then is the entire family, her in-laws, her own family, because she wasn’t able to keep her husband.’ (Mridul Wadhwa, Shakti Women’s Aid)

For many forced marriage survivors therefore the situation becomes one of “damned if you do and damned if you don’t”. Not seeking help means a lifetime of abuse and unhappiness, while often, seeking support equals ostracism, complete isolation and in some cases, honour-based violence to repair the perceived ‘shame’ brought upon the woman’s and/or the man’s family. Even where no violence has occurred, very often women live with the fear of being seen by other members of their communities if they do escape – as they are too frightened to go beyond the area they know (frequently very small). On occasions where women who escaped a forced marriage have relocated away from their husbands and in-laws, they are still struggling with isolation, poverty, lack of education and employment, childcare and housing difficulties completely on their own. Even when relocation has been successful and women are reaching out in an attempt to rebuild their lives, they still have to live with the knowledge that they have left their husbands, regardless of the circumstances of their marriage. Being a divorced woman for any reason is associated with the stigma that a woman has failed her marriage by not trying hard enough to make her relationship with her husband work. This then becomes what defines a forced marriage survivor’s existence which leads to ostracism, bullying and exclusion from community life.
Limitations of the research

This research has been the first of its kind in Scotland and has been as exhaustive as possible. However, it has not been without certain practical limitations which, no doubt, raise further questions as well as highlight the need for further research and activity to be carried out regarding forced marriage.

Firstly, although all the women interviewed have long-standing experience in direct work with forced marriage survivors, it was not possible to interview any survivors themselves. This is telling not only of the traumatizing nature of forced marriage but also of the women’s desperate need for anonymity for fear of retribution or further impacts this may have on their mental health.

Secondly, as mentioned above, although a great number of organizations were contacted and asked to participate in the research, many did not respond to the call. It would be of particular interest to involve the NHS and as many other BME women’s organizations as possible in further research on forced marriage in an attempt to get as complete a picture for Scotland as possible.

Thirdly, due to time limitation, this research was unable to explore the impacts on BME women’s organization’s staff of working with Forced Marriage survivors. This is an issue that Ishbel White of Darnely Street Family Centre touched on...it was so draining working with these women, after you saw 8 or 9 of them every day you just wanted to crawl out the door...each client’s story was worse than the next! And we had to help them to move on. And some of them moved on, or some of them went back but we felt terribly worn out after every session.' It is therefore very important to look into not only the effects of forced marriage on survivors, but also on the needs of staff dealing with forced marriage for intensive support and supervision.

Finally, a last point raised by Ishbel White of Darnley Street Family Centre, is research into the needs of BME women in Scotland in terms of key issues affecting them, as well as the appropriateness and adequacy of services available to them. Ishbel talked about the lack of interest in BME women’s issues in Scotland: ‘...we’ve had communities that have been here 20-30 years who have not had their needs addressed, who are still suffering, who are now second, third generation still being affected by the issues of the first generation...the stagnancy I think of the BME issues, I think they have become boring for [mainstream professionals]...It’s always helpful to have research by BME women on BME women’s issues...there’s just very little out there and that in itself tells a story.’ It is therefore crucial for BME women’s issues to be raised and acknowledged that community action research continues and it becomes implemented in policy and in campaigning for human rights.
Implementation of this research and recommendations for further work

One point on which all interviewees agreed on when asked about what they would like to see done in the future that would help to prevent forced marriage is awareness raising and training across the board both on how to recognize and prevent forced marriage, but also on understanding and working proactively and productively with cultural, ethnic and religious issues. In the words of Aisha Zaveri of Dundee’s Amina MWRC, ‘I believe mainstream organizations have knowledge of forced marriage to an extent…but in terms of language barriers, cultural barriers, religious barriers certainly they could be slightly more educated.’

This was particularly emphasized for organizations and bodies that can take on a preventative and protective responsibility. This includes not only the police and social services, but also teachers, GPs, and any front line staff who are involved in direct work with BME girls and women. It is important to also mention that not only is it important that professionals become aware of how to recognize forced marriage but also that if they are not certain of how to deal with the situation then it is crucial that they reach out and request the support of organizations that can provide them with that knowledge. As Mridul Wadhwa of Shakti Women’s Aid states, ‘what I would really like is for everyone to fully understand that if there are any concerns, act on your instinct and ask for guidance and support and clarity. There are so many of us, whether it’s Saheliya or Shakti or whoever else, they will be able to offer you that clarity. So they need to look outside and ask for help, preferably from women’s organizations.’

Ghizala Avan of Glasgow’s Amina MWRC expands on that and urges particularly mainstream professionals to prioritize the safety of BME girls and women, without becoming overly concerned about being accused of racism. She similarly urges them not to dismiss any concerns on the basis of ‘culture’ or ‘religion’ as they might be the only resort a BME girl or woman has in order to avoid or escape a forced marriage.

Furthermore, the need was also emphasized for BME women’s organizations specifically to do more direct work not only with young women, making them aware of their rights, but also with the older generation of women who might be forcing their daughters into unwanted marriages. All interviewees emphasized that forced marriages ultimately occur because the parents or any relatives who organized a woman’s marriage ultimately disregarded her wishes or used force, blackmail and/or other forms of abuse to coerce her into accepting the arrangement.

It therefore becomes essential to raise this issue with BME girls and young women in an educational and supportive manner. Poonam Ladwa, young women’s worker within Saheliya admitted that she has found it very challenging to openly talk to this particular client group about marriage in general, and considerably harder to talk about forced marriage in particular. She adds that she considers the creation of the leaflet which is part of this project as a great way to start the conversation within a group on one-to-one setting so that young women
are informed of their rights to marriage as well as to offer them the space and preparatory work to discuss any concerns or further issues that might have come up for them.

Finally, a hopeful message also came from Lothian and Borders Police Diversity Unit Sergeant Catherine Duguid who emphasized that just as the authorities rely on BME women’s organizations for information and referrals of cases of forced marriage, it is just as important for BME women’s organizations to utilize the Police resources for information, support and help when dealing with such situations: ‘For everyone in this line of work, it’s important to know that we are here and you can phone us and we will do everything we can to help and there probably always are options…it’s just important that you know that we are here and that we do keep working together.’

Creation of the leaflet resource

The final part of this project was the creation of a leaflet addressing forced marriage that could be used in direct work with BME women. The leaflet has to be accessible:

1. To women who are both married or approaching marriage age
2. In a variety of languages and particularly languages of the communities most affected by forced marriage (namely Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic)
3. To women of varying age groups, starting in the early teen years (12-19) up to older women who can take the role of perpetrators of forced marriage.

After creating and piloting different versions of the leaflet within Saheliya, it was decided that the most appropriate approach would be to create a leaflet in the form of a ‘Marriage Quiz’ to make it accessible to younger and older women who may be both married or single. After liaising with workers directly involved with Saheliya clients who speak a variety of languages, it was proposed that two leaflets be created, one for younger BME women who are more likely to be unmarried, and one for slightly older women.

The leaflet leads the reader through a variety of different questions to determine the nature of a woman’s marriage as well as to raise her awareness of her rights to marriage. On the same leaflet can be found information on where to seek help for specific issues and who to contact for further support and advice based on answers given during the quiz.

The leaflets (one for younger and one for older BME women) can be found at the end of the report (Appendix II).
REFERENCES


APPENDIX I

Saheliya’s report to the Scottish Government as part of the consultation phase for the Forced Marriage Bill on 21st December 2010. The original document can also be accessed through the Scottish Parliament’s Archives at:


(publication last accessed on September 20th, 2012)
REPORT OF STATISTICAL EVIDENCE AND INDICATORS OF FORCED MARRIAGE –

Saheliya supports and promotes the positive mental health and well-being of black, minority ethnic, asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women and girls (12+) in the Edinburgh area. We aim to develop our clients’ self-esteem and confidence and reduce barriers such as isolation and depression, by using a holistic range of services including counselling, practical support and advocacy, befriending, complementary therapies, outreach, group work and Young Saheliya. Our services are free and confidential.

The statistics in this report come from Saheliya’s counseling intake forms from the start of 2007 until the end of November 2010. This is a report detailing numbers of clients who have presented forced marriage as an issue at intake point together with a breakdown of age, religion and ethnicity characteristics of those clients.

In defining Forced Marriage there are clear distinctions between ‘arranged’ and forced’ marriage. We recognise as an organisation that arranged marriage is a legal and acceptable practice in a number of minority communities so long as both parties enter the marriage contract offering their full consent freely. Forced Marriage however is not acceptable nor should be tolerated and coercion, pressurising, threat of physical and sexual violence, emotional and psychological abuse or blackmail is a violation of human rights.

When working with women who have disclosed that they are in a forced marriage or who we suspect might have been forced into marriage, we take into account the circumstances surrounding the woman’s entry into marriage, the relationship dynamics between the people in or surrounding her marriage and also the possibility of her leaving the marriage. In other words, we consider a woman’s marriage both at entry and exit points.

Factors and indicators that we consider when assessing clients:

- Pressure from the woman’s own family to stay in the marriage: concepts of ‘honour’ and ‘tradition’; emotional/psychological abuse or blackmail, physical, or
sexual abuse; threats of retribution towards the woman or another member of her family, going as far as death threats.

- Pressure from the woman’s ethnic/cultural/religious community to stay in the marriage; otherwise she is at risk of exclusion from her community or of honour based violence which again could go as far as her life being at risk.
- Pressure from her husband: he may be using physical or sexual violence or threats; or he may be controlling all of the finances available to the couple. Alone or with members of his family, meaning the woman’s in-laws, they may confine the woman to the home, severely restricting, controlling or policing her movements or having her followed. Often, other members of the husband’s family can be very active in abusing a woman into staying in the marriage through physical/emotional threats or violence.
- Extraneous factors: the woman could be underage; her passport or other legal documents may have been removed from her; she may not speak English or she may not be aware of where she could go to seek help; depending on the type of visa that allowed her to enter the UK she may not have recourse to public funds;
- In a number of cases, a woman has consented to an arranged marriage that is a charade. Her husband could already be in a relationship with another woman with whom he may already have children, or that he has absolutely no interest in her because of his sexuality. Also there are several cases where physically or mentally disabled people are forced into marriage without either consent or understanding of what marriage is.
- In a mental health context, clients often present symptoms of moderate to severe trauma, depression, anxiety, and other psychosomatic symptoms. What our service users have endured before accessing counselling can vary from verbal and emotional abuse to psychological and physical torture. Often this involves repeated beatings from her husband and/or both their families, humiliation, confinement, death threats, threats against the life or well being of another person close to her, often her mother, siblings or her children, and repeated rape until the woman falls pregnant - the physical and emotional abuse might continue well into the pregnancy and after the birth of children.

By considering the above factors we have included in our statistics not only women who readily named their marriages as ‘forced’, but also women who identify themselves as ‘married’ but also present other indicators of mental ill-health that are generally symptomatic of a forced marriage, for example, isolation, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem/confidence, self-harm, eating disorders, etc. These women form the ‘maybe’ or ‘potential’ forced marriage numbers in our statistics.
Graph 1: numbers indicating client numbers in forced marriages, potential forced marriages or other marital situations over the span of 4 years (2007-2010)

Graph 1 indicates that our overall referrals for counseling have increased over the past 4 years, as have the referrals from women who are in potential forced marriages. There was a steady increase of women reporting forced marriage at entry point between 2007 and 2009, however there is a decline in 2010. This decline is not due to a reduction in Forced Marriage but rather a combination of fewer external referrals and an organisational move of premises. A breakdown in the ages of clients who sought counseling who were or might have been in a forced marriage, shows a clear increase of forced marriage reporting increasing with age:

Graph 2: Bar chart indicating the marriage status of clients based on age.

This second graph strongly indicates that older women are more likely to report a forced marriage at intake point. Research carried out in Northern England suggests
that age acts as a protective variable for women in forced marriages; older women are more likely to recognize, report and/or try to escape a forced marriage (Gangoli & Chantler 2009). Our numbers clearly indicate this trend.

Another issue is the construction and understanding of what a forced marriage is in existing literature. A marriage can be forced at entry point, exit point, or both. Women who are older may conceivably have been in the marriage longer and when wishing to leave, found that this was not an option for them. A different scenario could include women who may have been born, raised and married abroad, where they may have had no access to support services to help them escape their marriage; upon arrival in the UK they realised there is support available to them to help them deal with/escape a marriage and as such sought the help of Saheliya.

The third graph indicates that forced marriage or potential forced marriage is considerably more prevalent for women from Asian backgrounds; however, it also indicates that women from African and South American origins are also affected.
In particular, when these numbers were broken down to separate between women with and without a British nationality, there were a number of different trends evident:

Graph 5: The fourth graph indicates that for women with a British nationality, there was a considerably higher number of women under 35 who were definitely forced into a marriage and a very large number of women over 35 in potential forced marriages.

Taking into account the variation in marital status according to British women’s ethnic origin and age, the numbers strongly indicate that a lot of younger women from an Asian background are more ready to come forward and define their marriages as forced. This could indicate that forced marriage is a highly prominent issue for young women who may form the second or third generation of Asian communities residing in Scotland. The large number of women over 35 characterizing their marriages as ‘forced’ could point in the direction of women who were potentially forced into a marriage in different countries but who, only when they moved to Scotland and may have obtained a British nationality were able to come forward to seek help for marital difficulties that could indicate a forced marriage. Alternatively, the high number of British BME women in forced/potentially forced marriages could include the women who consented to an arranged marriage at an earlier age but who, when wishing to escape or dissolve the marriage, found that this was not possible due to cultural/religious reasons.

When juxtaposed to women without a British nationality, Graph 5 offers an interesting contradiction. Although it is indicated above that British BME women in forced/potentially forced marriages seem to be mostly under 30, Graph 5 indicates that the percentage of women reporting forced/potentially forced marriage is towards women over 26 and well into their 30s.
Graph 6: Non-British women’s marital status vs. ethnic origin. As opposed to British-identifying women, non-British women who readily identify their marriages as forced tend to be considerably older (by 5 years or more).

These numbers again provide evidence for the finding by Gangoli and Chantler (2009) that older BME women are more likely to report/try to escape a forced marriage. However, empirically speaking, this trend could indicate a number of possibilities, such as Women who arrived in the UK from abroad specifically to marry, and who remained married for a considerable amount of time before they could escape/seek help, women who decided to escape after being trapped in an incompatible marriage but who found that this was not possible, or women who have been prevented from seeking help due to no recourse to public funds/language difficulties/physically being unable to access services for a number of years, etc.

Graph 7: the prevalence of forced marriage and potential forced marriage in different religious communities.

A particularly interesting trend in our statistics, indicated by graph 6, is that forced marriage is not an issue strictly associated with particular religious minorities. Although the majority of our clients in forced or potentially forced marriages came from Muslim communities, it is important to note that there were a significant number of women from the Sikh community who sought the help of Saheliya. Additionally, there were
half as many women in potentially forced marriages from Christian communities as there were Sikh women, and almost as many non-religious or non-religiously-identifying women in potentially forced marriages as there were Sikh women.

In a further analysis of the numbers of women identifying with different religions as a function of age, Graph 8, together with Graph 4, indicates that forced marriage/potential forced marriage is an issue affecting women across the board, regardless of age, religion or ethnic origin:

The statistical analyses presented to you in this report and our case studies and organisational experience all clearly highlight to us the detrimental and devastating effects of Forced Marriage on our clients, their children and families. Saheliya supports the Forced Marriage etc. (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Bill and recognise it as a tool as a tool that will come to the aid of women in forced marriages irrespective of their age, religion, culture, racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Aside from the numbers available to Saheliya from our own clients over the last 4 years, numbers from numerous women’s aid organisations in Scotland (ex. Amina, Shakti, Hermat Gryffe) and Karma Nirvana, a Forced-Marriage-Aid specific organisation in England with a national telephone helpline, indicate that the numbers of women seeking help with regards to forced marriage are increasing (Between April and Oct 2019 Karma Nirvana received 33 calls from Scotland). We recognise that forced marriage is largely more common than is expected in Scotland and, even in the absence of formal research; numbers indicate that this is an issue warranting the attention of the law.

The fact that this is not a practice closely tied with a particular ethnic, cultural or religious group indicates the need for relevant legislation to support the victims who find themselves trapped in these situations often risking their lives to seek help or to escape.
Our motivation and drive as an organization to take action in supporting the Forced Marriage Bill comes from our years of experience and expertise in working with vulnerable women from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, supporting their mental health and promoting their confidence and their psychological and emotional well-being. Having witnessed the effects of forced marriage on our clients and service users, we have come to see forced marriage as an abuse of fundamental human rights: The rights of women to chose whom they love, their rights to their own bodies, and their rights to dignity, respect and safety.

Angela Voulgari

Saheliya

21 December 2010
APPENDIX II

Leaflets created as part of this project. The first is addressed to women who are married to assist them to determine whether they are in a Forced Marriage and where they can access help. The second is addressed to women who are at risk of forced marriage and offers them the same information.
Questions and Answers about Marriage

This leaflet is aimed at women from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Its purpose is to answer questions that you might have about marriage. It also tells you where you can get confidential advice and support to help you make decisions that are right for you if you face any problems around marriage. Please begin by opening this leaflet and taking the ‘Marriage Quiz’.

Saheliya is a voluntary organization in Edinburgh that supports the well-being of women from Black and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds through a range of holistic support services.

Saheliya, 125 McDonald Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4NW
Tel: 0131 556 9302
E-mail: info@saheliya.co.uk

THE BLACK BOX

If you are reading the Black Box, this means that you are interested in finding out more about support and advice that is available to you if you are dealing with problems around your marriage, or if you are in a forced marriage situation.

You are not alone. The organizations outlined below will be able to offer you the support and advice that you need to make the decisions that are right for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
<th>Operating Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saheliya</td>
<td>0131 556 9302</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakti Women’s Aid</td>
<td>0131 475 2399</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid</td>
<td>0141 353 0859</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma Nirvana</td>
<td>0800 5999 247</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Women’s Aid</td>
<td>0800 027 1234</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Domestic Violence Helpline</td>
<td>0808 200 0247</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amina- Muslim Women’s Resources</td>
<td>0808 801 0301</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Minority Law Centre</td>
<td>0131 229 2038</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)</td>
<td>0207 008 0151</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Duty Officer</td>
<td>0207 008 1500</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These organizations will be able to give you the advice, information and support that you need to make the decisions that are right for you. You don’t have to suffer in silence. Help is only one phone call away.

RED BOX

You are reading the Red Box because:

- you may feel unable to say ‘no’ to a man that your family or your community chose for you or
- perhaps you never met him before the wedding
- maybe you were told to marry him during a family holiday abroad and you did not know about the arrangement beforehand
- perhaps you experienced pressure to marry him, for example you were told that you would bring shame to your family, community, religion or culture; or you were physically forced to say ‘yes’ to marrying the man.
- your family or community is threatening you or putting pressure on you to make sure you don’t leave your husband even if you are being abused.

If this is the case, then you need to know that you don’t have to suffer alone. You are in a Forced Marriage situation. It is illegal in Scotland for anyone to pressure you to marry or to keep you married to someone you don’t want as your husband.

There is free and confidential support and advice available to you. You don’t have to leave your husband or your family, and it doesn’t necessarily mean that anyone will be arrested or go to prison. It just means that you will be able to speak to a professional about what is making you unhappy and they will help you make a decision that is right for you.

If you need this help and support, please read the black box.
The Marriage Quiz

**Q1:** If you are married, did your family or community choose your husband for you?
- **a.** Yes (go to Q4)
- **b.** No, I chose my husband (go to Q2)

**Q2:** Did your family or community accept your decision to marry the man you chose?
- **a.** Yes (go to Q3)
- **b.** No, they used threats or abuse against me (go to Q7)
- **c.** No, they did not accept my decision and they are not talking to me or supporting me anymore (go to Q9)

**Q3:** Were you pressured by your husband to get married?
- **a.** Yes (go to Q7)
- **b.** No (go to Q8)

**Q4:** Did you meet your husband before the wedding?
- **a.** Yes (go to Q5)
- **b.** I did not meet him in person but we got to know each other in other ways like on the phone or on the internet (go to Q5)
- **c.** No, I knew nothing about him (please read the red box)

**Q5:** Did your family or community ask you if you agree to marry your husband?
- **a.** Yes (go to Q6)
- **b.** No (go to Q9)

**Q6:** Did you say ‘yes’ that you agree to marry your husband?
- **a.** Yes (go to Q7)
- **b.** No, I said I did not want to marry him (please read the red box)

**Q7:** Did you marry your husband because you were pressured or threatened or were you told that you are shaming your family, your community, your religion or your culture?
- **a.** Yes (please read the red box)
- **b.** No, there was no pressure. I said ‘yes’ because I wanted to marry my husband (go to Q8)

**Q8:** Could you have said ‘no’ if you did not want to marry your husband?
- **a.** Yes, I could have said ‘no’ if I wanted. I did not say ‘no’ because I wanted to marry him (go to Q9)
- **b.** No, I could not say ‘no’ (please read the red box); or
- **c.** No, because I did not think I could say ‘no’ (go to Q9)

**Q9:** Are you happy in your marriage?
- **a.** Yes (go to Q10)
- **b.** No, I am not feeling happy with my marriage (go to Q10)

**Q10:** Can you leave your marriage if you are unhappy and/or if you or your children are dealing with physical, emotional, financial, verbal or any other kind of abuse? This abuse can come from your husband or any other member of your family or his family.
- **a.** Yes (please read the green box)
- **b.** No, I am afraid for my safety or the safety of my children; or I will have nowhere to go, or I will bring shame on myself and my family (please read the orange box)

**Q11:** If you choose to leave your marriage, how will things be with your family or your community?
- **a.** Things will go back to normal and they will support me (please read the green box)
- **b.** They will not support me but they won’t punish me for leaving my husband (please read the orange box)
- **c.** I worry they will do everything they can to make sure I stay with my husband (please read the red box)

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**GREEN BOX**

If your answers led you to the Green Box, this means that you gave your free and full consent to marrying your husband, whether you chose him yourself or he was chosen for you by your family or community (arranged marriage).

Many women are happily married in this way. They have positive relationships with their husbands, families, in-laws and communities. It also means that they are free to leave the marriage if they are being abused.

If, for whatever reason, this does not sound like your experience, please continue and read the orange box.

**ORANGE BOX**

If you were led to this box, it means that you are experiencing some issues with your marriage, your family or your community that are making you feel unhappy or upset.

If this is the case, you can get confidential and free support and information to help you decide how you want to deal with those issues. If you want to learn more about the options available to you, please go ahead and read the black box.
Questions and Answers about Marriage

This leaflet is aimed at women from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Its purpose is to answer questions that you might have about marriage. It also tells you where you can get confidential advice and support to help you make decisions that are right for you if you face any problems around marriage. Please begin by opening this leaflet and taking the ‘Marriage Quiz’.

Saheliya is a voluntary organization in Edinburgh that supports the well-being of women from Black and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds through a range of holistic support services.

Saheliya, 125 McDonald Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4NW
Tel: 0131 556 9302
E-mail: info@saheliya.co.uk

THE BLACK BOX

If you are reading the Black Box, this means that you are interested in finding out more about support and advice that is available to you if you are dealing with problems around your marriage, or if you are in a forced marriage situation.

You are not alone. The organizations outlined below will be able to offer you the support and advice that you need to make the decisions that are right for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Telephone Number</th>
<th>Open Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saheliya</td>
<td>0131 556 9302</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakti Women’s Aid</td>
<td>0131 475 2399</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid</td>
<td>0141 353 0859</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma Nirvana</td>
<td>0800 5999 247</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Women’s Aid</td>
<td>0800 027 1234</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Domestic Violence Helpline</td>
<td>0808 200 0247</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amina- Muslim Women’s Resource Centre</td>
<td>0808 801 0301</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Minority Law Centre</td>
<td>0131 229 2038</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)</td>
<td>0207 008 0151</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Duty Officer</td>
<td>0207 008 1500</td>
<td>Mon-Fri 9am-5pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These organizations will be able to give you the advice, information and support that you need to make the decisions that are right for you. You don’t have to suffer in silence. Help is only one phone call away.

RED BOX

You are reading the Red Box because:

- you may feel unable to say ‘no’ to a man that your family or your community chose for you or
- perhaps you never met him before the wedding
- maybe you were told to marry him during a family holiday abroad and you did not know about the arrangement beforehand
- perhaps you experienced pressure to marry him, for example you were told that you would bring shame to your family, community, religion or culture; or you were physically forced to say ‘yes’ to marrying the man.
- your family or community is threatening you or putting pressure on you to make sure you don’t leave your husband even if you are being abused.

If this is the case, then you need to know that you don’t have to suffer alone. You are in a Forced Marriage situation. It is illegal in Scotland for anyone to pressure you to marry or to keep you married to someone you don’t want as your husband.

There is free and confidential support and advice available to you. You don’t have to leave your husband or your family, and it doesn’t necessarily mean that anyone will be arrested or go to prison. It just means that you will be able to speak to a professional about what is making you unhappy and they will help you make a decision that is right for you.

If you need this help and support, please read the black box.
The Marriage Quiz

Q1: Are you or your family thinking about you getting married?
   a. Yes (go to Q2)
   b. No (go to Q3)

Q2: Will your community or your family choose your husband?
   c. Yes (go to Q3)
   d. No, I will choose him (go to Q4)

Q3: Is it alright with you for your family or your community look for a husband for you?
   a. Yes (go to Q5)
   b. No (go to Q4)

Q4: Is your family or your community happy with you choosing the man you want to marry?
   a. Yes (go to Q12)
   b. No, they might not speak to me again or they might punish me by telling me that I am a bad person or that I am shaming my family, my religion or my community (go to Q7)

Q5: If your family or community chooses a man for you this is called arranged marriage. Did you know that you are allowed to say ‘no’ to a man for an arranged marriage?
   a. Yes (go to Q6)
   b. No (go to Q7)

Q6: Do you feel that if you do not agree to a man who was chosen for you then you can say ‘no’ to your family?
   a. Yes (go to Q8)
   b. No, if I say ‘no’ they will never speak to me again or they will do everything they can to make sure that I agree in the end (go to Q7)

Q7: Did you know that it is illegal in Scotland for anyone in your family or your community to put pressure on you to marry someone? This means they cannot insist, tell you that your religion says you must do it, that you will bring shame if you don’t, or anything else to convince you to marry against your wishes.
   a. Yes (please read the orange box)
   b. No (please read the red box)

Q8: Did you know that if your family or other people keep putting pressure on you this is called Forced Marriage?
   a. Yes (go to Q9)
   b. No (go to Q9)

Q9: Did you know that if your family takes you abroad on a holiday and tell you that you will get married abroad even if you don’t want to, this is also called a Forced Marriage?
   a. Yes (go to Q10)
   b. No (go to Q10)

Q10: Did you know that you can get support to protect you from a Forced Marriage and that there are people who can help you without your parents knowing? This is not against your religion or your culture and it does not mean that you must leave home or that you are being shameful.
   a. Yes (please read the orange box)
   b. No (please read the red box)

Q11: Do you know which organizations you can approach for advice and support?
   c. Yes (please read the orange box)
   d. No (please read the black box)

Q12: Did you know that if you are not happy in your marriage or if you are being abused then you can leave?
   a. Yes (please read the green box)
   b. No (please read the red box)

GREEN BOX
If your answers led you to the Green Box, this means that you are free to give your free and full consent to marrying your husband, whether you choose him yourself or your family or community choose him for you (this is called arranged marriage).

Many women are happily married in this way. They have positive relationships with their husbands, families, in-laws and communities. It also means that they are free to leave the marriage if they are being abused.

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