



TAHIRIH  
JUSTICE  
CENTER®

*Protecting Immigrant Women and Girls Fleeing Violence*

## Forced Marriage in Immigrant Communities in the United States

### 2011 National Survey Results

Forced marriage is a pernicious global problem threatening the freedom, safety, health, and education of women and girls. UNICEF estimates that in developing countries, over 60 million women now aged 20-24 were married as girls.<sup>i</sup>

The reasons for forced marriage are complex and varied—parents may use a forced marriage to ensure a young woman will adhere to conservative morals and gender roles, or to otherwise protect family honor. Forced marriages may also be used to enhance a family’s status, or to gain economic security. Whatever the rationale, the result may subject a young woman to severe and sustained abuse, including domestic violence, marital rape, and other forms of violence, decreased levels of education, health complications, and a life of submission and dependence.

Western countries with large populations coming from regions of the world where forced marriage is common are beginning to realize that immigrant families may persist in such traditions and beliefs for years—and even generations—after they resettle. The United Kingdom (UK), for example, in 2009 estimated that 5000-8000 forced marriage cases were reported across the country.<sup>ii</sup>

The UK and a few other countries have begun to address forced marriage through new laws and policies. Since the early 1990s, non-governmental agencies in the UK have organized, coordinated, and advocated, making great strides.<sup>iii</sup> The UK government has established a “Forced Marriage Unit” and national helpline, and has even conducted overseas “rescue” operations; passed a law creating a special “forced marriage protective

order” in family court; made changes to the visa sponsorship process; promoted extensive community education, outreach and training; and supported thousands of individuals trying to avoid or escape forced marriages.

***The United States, however, lags far behind – and until now, has done little to recognize or address the problem of forced marriage. Domestically, there are very few laws and policies specifically to help forced marriage victims, leaving young women (and some men) in crisis with few resources and options.<sup>iv</sup>***

#### **THE TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER’S REASONS FOR CONDUCTING A NATIONAL SURVEY ON FORCED MARRIAGE**

The Tahirih Justice Center (Tahirih) is one of the nation’s foremost legal defense organizations protecting women and girls fleeing human rights abuses. Through direct legal services, public policy advocacy, and public education and outreach, since 1997, Tahirih has assisted over 12,000 immigrant women and children from all over the world fleeing such abuses as domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, torture, female genital mutilation, “honor” crimes, and forced marriage. Tahirih also leads national advocacy campaigns on a range of issues, building on our direct services experiences, to press for systemic changes in laws, policies, and practices to better protect women and girls from violence.

About three years ago, Tahirih and some of our colleague organizations began to notice an

increasing number of forced marriage cases involving young women and girls—some as young as 13—from traditional immigrant communities in the United States. By force, fraud, or coercion, they were being compelled to marry men from their families’ countries or regions of origin, and—if the young woman was a US citizen—she might then be forced to sponsor a fiancé or spouse visa to enable the groom to come to the United States.

When Tahirih began to work on these cases, we were struck by how few resources and legal options exist in the United States to assist individuals facing forced marriages, as well as how little awareness or understanding there is nationwide about the unique dynamics and challenges in forced marriage situations.

Tahirih developed and fielded a national survey to see if other service-providers were likewise encountering forced marriage cases, to learn about their experiences, and to call attention to what we believed to be a serious but hidden problem. While Tahirih recognizes that forced marriages can occur in any community, this survey focused on forced marriage in immigrant communities.

## FORCED MARRIAGE IS A PROBLEM IN THE UNITED STATES

*Tahirih’s survey confirms that forced marriage is a problem in the United States today, with as many as 3,000 known and suspected cases identified by survey respondents in just the last two years.* The fact that potentially thousands of young women and girls from immigrant communities may face forced marriages each year in the United States is alarming and demands attention.

*Just as alarming: community-based service providers working on the frontlines are struggling with how to recognize and handle forced marriage cases, and how to offer a lifeline to an individual who may have only one chance to reach out for help.*

Other key findings from Tahirih’s survey include:

- Forced marriage is being seen in immigrant communities from 56 different countries, and affects people of many different faiths. While many respondents reported encountering

## Defining “Forced Marriage”

**A forced marriage is one that takes place without the full and free consent of one or both parties.** It can happen to either gender, at any age. It may be a marriage that is threatened, or one that has already taken place, either in the United States or abroad.

- An individual’s lack of consent or lack of ability to give informed consent may be caused by a variety of factors, including but not limited to the individual being:
  - Younger than the legal age to marry
  - Subject to some other incapacity or disability
  - Subject to force, fraud, or coercion
- Force, fraud, or coercion can take many forms, including psychological manipulation, emotional blackmail, deception, and physical threats or violence, and—in some cases—even kidnapping or death threats.

**An arranged marriage is not the same as a forced marriage.** A forced marriage, in which an individual feels she has no ultimate right to choose her partner and/or no meaningful way to say no to the marriage, is distinguishable from an arranged marriage, in which the families of both parties (or religious leaders or others) take the lead, but ultimately, the choice remains with the individual.

*(This definition was used in Tahirih’s Forced Marriage Survey, and is used in Tahirih’s work.)*

*One morning, Tahirih received a call from a family attorney who was struggling to help a girl in crisis. This teenage girl—a US citizen whose South Asian-born parents threatened to beat her into submitting to a forced marriage—had taken the courageous step of running away to a domestic violence shelter.*

*The shelter gave her temporary refuge, but was unsure how long they could keep her there—particularly as her parents were threatening to sue the shelter, her attorney, and anyone else who tried to help her. In the end, the girl was returned to her parents after Child Protective Services declined to get involved in such “cultural issues.”*

victims of Muslim family backgrounds, victims of Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and other backgrounds were also reported.

- Respondents who provided details on the age and gender of victims they encountered identified the majority as female, many of whom were girls under age 18. A small minority were identified as male.
- Two out of three respondents (67%) felt that there were cases of forced marriage not being identified in the populations with which they work—this finding suggests a significant population of “hidden victims” beyond the potentially 3000 cases identified through Tahirih’s survey.
- Less than 10% of respondents said they had a working definition of forced marriage at their agency, and less than a quarter of respondents (22%) said their agency’s screening and referral process enabled them to identify cases where forced marriage may be of concern.

- Less than one in five respondents (16%) said that their agency was properly equipped to help individuals facing forced marriage.
- Almost half of respondents (46%) who provided information on particular tactics used against victims reported that victims had been subjected to actual physical violence.
- 13 respondents also reported murder attempts among the forced marriage cases they encountered, and 1 respondent reported an actual murder.
- 42 respondents reported that they had encountered forced marriage victims who had contemplated or attempted suicide.

These and other survey findings suggest that we are seeing just the tip of the iceberg on this problem—that thousands of individuals in the United States may be threatened with forced marriage each year, and yet at present, victims have little hope of finding the protection and assistance they need.

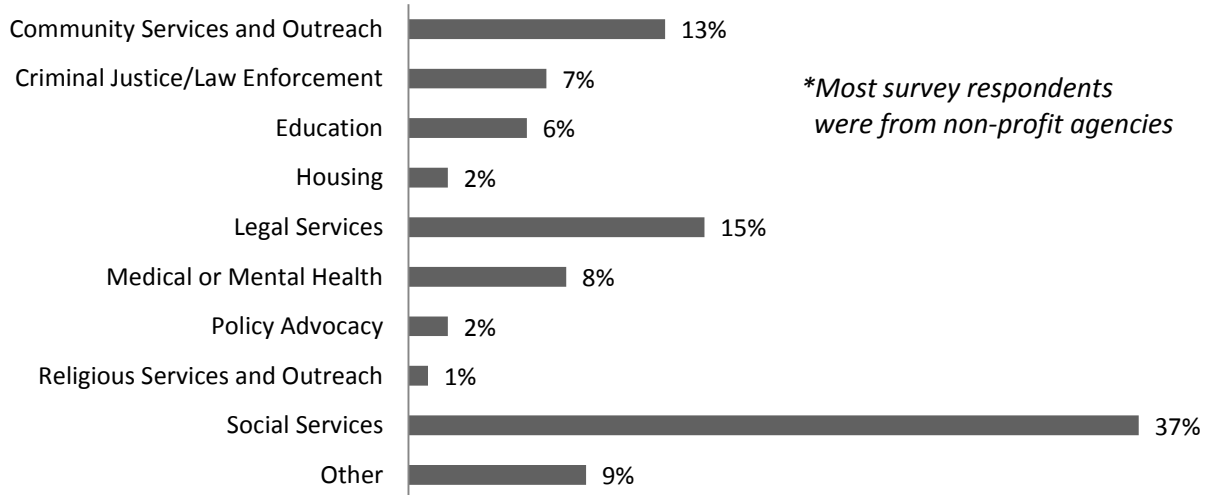
#### **METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING AND DISTRIBUTING TAHIRIH’S SURVEY**

Tahirih developed the Survey on Forced Marriage in Immigrant Communities in the United States (“Forced Marriage Survey”) in consultation with research experts Colleen Owens and Meredith Dank from the Urban Institute’s Justice Policy Center, as well as Tahirih’s pro bono research

*“I think it is really hard for most of the young women I have talked to as they do not want to do anything against their parents or want their parents to get into trouble. They often sacrifice themselves to the parent's needs and also to protect their younger sisters.”*

-Survey Respondent

### Primary Services Provided by Agencies



advisor, Laudan Y. Aron of the National Academy of Sciences. Feedback was also solicited from other researchers in the US and UK with expertise in forced marriage or violence against immigrant women (Dr. Nazia Khanum, Professor Nawal Ammar, and Professor Anita Raj); and from a number of community-based organizations and other advocates with relevant expertise, including the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence; the Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center; Manavi, Inc.; Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc.; FAIR Fund; Free the Slaves; Peaceful Families Project; and Sauti Yetu Center for African Women.

The web-based survey, which ran from May 11 to August 5, 2011, was distributed electronically to thousands of organizations and agencies around the United States that may have encountered forced marriage cases, including legal and social services providers, advocates, community and religious leaders, educators, law enforcement officers, and other professionals. Recipients were identified through a combination of Tahirih’s existing national networks, internet research to identify recipients with potentially relevant experiences, and “snowballing” (asking recipients to forward the survey to their colleagues and through their networks).

The survey is part of a larger, long-term Tahirih initiative to raise awareness about forced marriage in the United States, encourage and empower women and girls to seek help, build a national network of service providers and government agencies with the tools and expertise necessary to help forced marriage victims, and advocate for laws and policies to protect women and girls who courageously seek help.

### TAHIRIH’S SURVEY RECEIVED A WIDE RESPONSE

Over 500 agencies in 47 states<sup>v</sup> (and Guam) responded to Tahirih’s Forced Marriage Survey. The majority of respondents (75%) were from non-profits, with others from the government (17%) and for-profit (6%) sectors. Most respondents said that their agencies focused on providing services to clients (see table above for a breakdown of agencies’ primary focus). In addition to their primary focus, the majority of respondents said that their agencies also provided “community services and outreach.”

A large number of respondents said that their agencies work on issues of family violence and sexual assault. Many others focused on immigrant (including refugee and asylee) populations, or worked with a particular ethnic or religious community (South Asian, Muslim, Latino, etc.).

**AGENCIES ARE OFTEN UNABLE TO RECOGNIZE FORCED MARRIAGE SITUATIONS AND OFFER ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS**

A major finding of Tahirih’s Forced Marriage Survey is that people working on the frontlines, both community-based service providers and government agencies, are struggling with how to recognize forced marriage situations, and how to offer a lifeline to young women (and men) who may have only one chance to reach out for help.

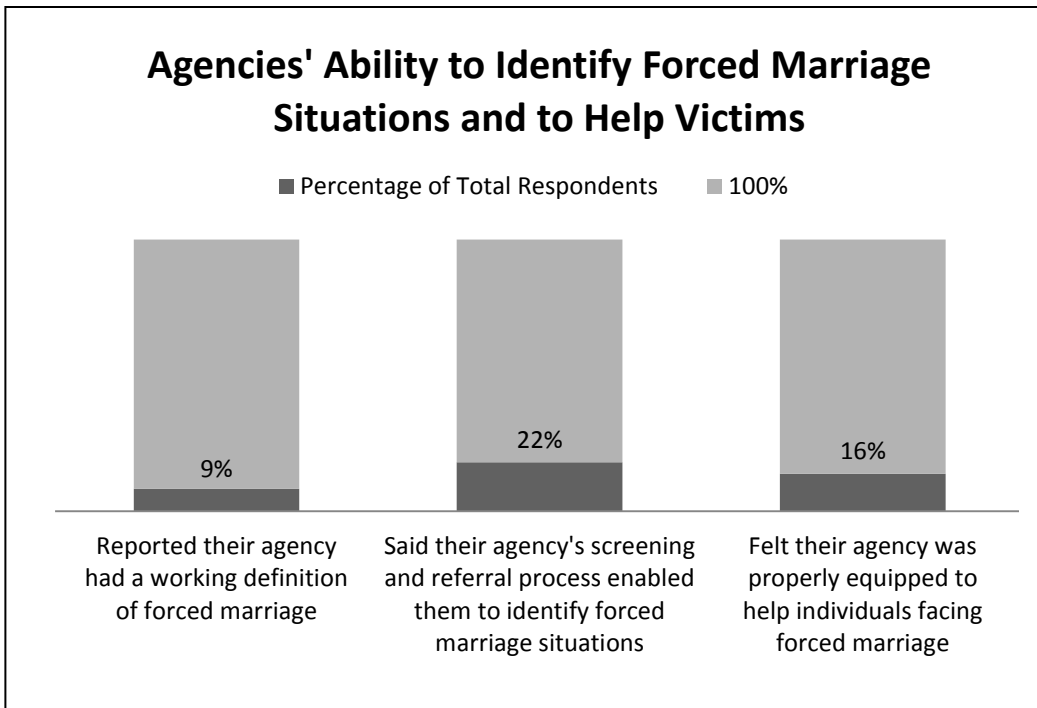
Less than a quarter (22%) of respondents said that their agency’s screening and referral process enabled them to identify situations where forced marriage may be of concern. Of these, respondents from legal services agencies reported being able to identify situations of forced marriage more often than respondents from other types of agencies. Respondents from government agencies felt least able to identify situations of forced marriage.

An agency’s inability to identify forced marriage cases may be attributable, at least in part, to their lack of awareness of and attention to this issue. While most respondents (94%) were familiar with the concept of forced marriage, less than 10% worked for agencies that had a working definition

*67% of survey respondents felt that there are cases of forced marriage that are not being identified in the populations with which they work.*

of forced marriage, hindering their ability to clearly identify forced marriage cases before them. The pervasive lack of a working definition indicates that there is little consensus in the field about where an arranged marriage may cross the line into a forced marriage, and urges the need for further outreach, education, and dialogue within communities and among service-providers. Non-profit agencies were most likely to have a working definition of forced marriage compared with other types of agencies.

Many respondents noted that their agency has no formal screening process for forced marriage situations, and that they do not specifically ask questions about the problem—instead relying on victims to self-disclose situations of forced marriage. Other respondents noted that forced marriage is not “on our radar as something to look for,” and that they “would not think to ask unless the client said something to tip [them] off.”



These barriers to identification may be preventing hundreds (or even thousands) of victims from receiving the help they so desperately need. Two out of three respondents (67%) felt that there are cases of forced marriage that are not being identified in the communities in which they work, indicating there is a potentially large hidden population of individuals at risk. Unidentified cases can represent lost

*29 respondents reported that individuals they encountered had been married off without their participation or knowledge (in countries where the law permits families to conclude the marriage themselves).*

opportunities, among other things, to spare a young woman from repeatedly being raped by a husband she did not choose.

Respondents cited numerous barriers to identifying forced marriage situations, largely attributable either to agency shortcomings and/or victims' reticence to reveal what they are facing and seek help. One respondent stated that agencies "may not know what questions to ask, may not feel entitled to ask, or know how to help even if they did identify forced marriage as a concern," a theme echoed by many survey respondents. Another respondent said that within the populations served by his/her agency, "it is widely accepted that the male is allowed to speak for the patient if it is a female... mostly we are told not to rock the boat by asking her questions directly or asking to speak with her alone." Another noted that "...we were told that high school teachers and counselors in our area did not report girls who left school before age 16 to marry . . . because they wanted to be respectful of [that] culture."

Individuals threatened by, or already trapped in, a forced marriage also face many other hurdles to help-seeking. Survey respondents said that, in their experience, victims are often dealing with feelings of fear, shame, and isolation; may be facing threats of violence or retribution for seeking help; and are unsure to whom they could safely turn for help or where to go for assistance.

Less commonly, respondents said that language barriers and fear of police and/or immigration-related consequences (such as possible deportation) prevented individuals from coming forward. One respondent noted that some young immigrant women "do not want to get their parents in trouble, ...[and] are afraid of what will

happen to their younger sister if they take a step (like running away or telling someone at school), they feel like they have no choice but to obey their parents."<sup>vi</sup>

In addition, respondents noted that individuals may be reluctant to disclose forced marriage situations due to their community's cultural norms – they may view such marriages as commonplace, and be socialized or pressured not to discuss marital issues outside the family. One respondent said that "young women do not even realize that they have the right to say no under US laws, so they just accept it [forced marriage] as their fate."

Even when a situation of forced marriage is identified, agencies are often unable to assist forced marriage victims who seek help. Less than one in five (16%) of survey respondents said that their agency was properly equipped to help individuals facing forced marriage, with many respondents reporting that while they could try to provide referrals to other resources, they would be unable to directly serve potential victims of forced marriage at their own agency (particularly if the potential victim is a minor).<sup>vii</sup> Most respondents said that their agencies do not have policies and procedures (or resources) in place to assist victims, and that staff often lacked training and/or "appropriate cultural competence" on the issue of forced marriage, impacting their ability to help.

*The United States has "no real laws or agencies that work on this issue [of forced marriage]... we often look to what the UK has, there is nothing similar in the US."*

*-Survey Respondent*

Respondents from agencies that focused on criminal justice/law enforcement, education, medical and mental health services, or that did not have a working definition of forced marriage, felt the least equipped to help potential victims.

A large number of respondents who encountered forced marriage cases said their agencies used multiple tools and strategies to try to help individuals at risk. Many respondents directly provided or referred the victim to counseling, legal, and/or shelter services. Others obtained some form of protective order and/or contacted the US State Department or embassies abroad in an effort to prevent marriages. Some agencies gave individuals emergency phones/calling cards or assisted with safety planning. Certain respondents also said their agencies notified local law enforcement and child protective services.

Despite all the efforts described above, a significant number of respondents said that the forced marriage victims with whom they were working “disappeared” or lost contact with the agency – preventing the agency from following up to help and, ultimately, from knowing what happened to the victim .

The overwhelming majority (65%) of respondents expressed an interest in practical tools and resources to address the issue – including protocols and policies for identifying forced marriages, a coordinated referral network, outreach and educational materials, and trainings for agency staff to enable them to better help forced marriage victims.

### **TAHIRIH’S SURVEY REVEALED IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCOPE OF FORCED MARRIAGE IN THE UNITED STATES**

Close to half (41%) of all survey respondents reported encountering at least one forced marriage case over the last two years – as many as 3,000 cases in total.<sup>viii</sup>

The survey asked respondents to identify both “known” and “suspected” cases of forced marriage that they had encountered over the two year period of April 2009 to April 2011.

- “Known” cases were defined as situations where the respondent had worked directly or indirectly (e.g., as part of a multi-agency effort) with an individual facing forced marriage.

- “Suspected” cases included instances where the respondent suspected, but was unable to confirm, that they were encountering or learning about forced marriages (e.g., an individual the respondent was helping may never have overtly disclosed they were facing a forced marriage, or the respondent may have been told of forced marriages happening in a particular community, but did not investigate further).

Many respondents who encountered known or suspected cases of forced marriage reported learning of the situation directly from the individual affected. Respondents also frequently learned of forced marriage situations from family members or friends/peers of the individual facing forced marriage, and—less commonly—from social service providers; teachers, counselors, or other education officials; or other members of the community. Half of respondents said that in most or all of the situations they encountered, the marriage had already occurred by the time the victim came to the attention of their agency.

Respondents from legal, social, and community service providers were most likely to report encountering situations of forced marriages (both known and suspected) in the populations they served. In contrast, respondents from government agencies were least likely to be able to answer definitively whether they had encountered cases of forced marriage over the last two years (with well over 50% of government respondents answering “I do not know” when first asked about forced marriage cases).

### **FORCED MARRIAGE VICTIMS COME FROM A WIDE RANGE OF IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES**

The survey found that individuals facing forced marriage in the United States are from very diverse national, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Respondents who provided information about the background of forced marriage victims that they had encountered reported that victims’ families originated from 56 different countries around the world.

Respondents frequently identified not only India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (which are also the countries of origin for immigrant communities with high reported rates of forced marriage in the United Kingdom), but also Mexico, the Philippines, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Somalia as countries of origin for immigrant communities engaging in forced marriage. In addition, respondents identified over a dozen countries in Africa, numerous countries in Asia and the Middle East, and select countries in Europe and the Americas.<sup>ix</sup> Although it was not the focus of this survey, a number of respondents said that they were assisting individuals who were “American” or “from the United States”—presumably victims of forced marriage who were not from immigrant communities.

Forced marriage also affects people of many different faiths. The majority of respondents who provided information on religious background said they encountered forced marriage victims from Muslim religious backgrounds, but also encountered victims from Christian (particularly Catholic), Hindu, and Buddhist religious backgrounds, among others.<sup>x</sup>

While forced marriage affects individuals of all ages and both genders, in this survey, respondents who provided details on the age and gender of victims they encountered identified the majority as female, many of whom were girls under age 18. A small minority were identified as male.

It is not always the case that an individual facing forced marriage is taken abroad for the wedding, or that the individual has recently immigrated to the United States. The survey revealed that forced marriages can involve US citizens and occur within the United States. Over half of respondents (52%) who provided information on the citizenship status of forced marriage victims said they had encountered at least one individual who was a US citizen at the time the forced marriage was threatened or took place. In addition, although many respondents knew of situations where a forced marriage took place abroad, the majority of respondents (64%) who provided information on the wedding location had also encountered at least one situation where the ceremony had taken place in the United States.

## **COMMON FACTORS IN FORCED MARRIAGES AND ABUSES FREQUENTLY SUFFERED BY FORCED MARRIAGE VICTIMS**

A majority of respondents who encountered at least one known case of forced marriage in the last two years said that a belief that the marriage was required in order to comply with custom or tradition was a factor. Respondents also said that in many cases, there was a belief that the marriage was in the individual’s best interests; required to honor a contract or arrangement between families; or necessary to protect family honor against a perceived threat (e.g. an individual being LGBTQ or becoming pregnant outside of marriage), among other reasons.

The survey also revealed very troubling and complex dynamics at play in many forced marriage situations. Individuals may be subjected to multiple, and sometimes severe, forms of force, fraud, or coercion to make them enter or stay in a forced marriage. Respondents reported a wide range of tactics involved in the forced marriage cases they encountered, and identified the following as very commonly used or threatened against victims (numbers of respondents identifying each type of tactic are given in parentheses):

- **emotional blackmail** (for example, a parent threatens self-harm, or asserts that the family’s or individual’s reputation will be ruined if they resist the marriage) (120);
- **isolation tactics** (for example, the family severely limits the individual’s social contacts or ability to leave the home, or the individual is not allowed to go to school) (106);
- **social ostracization** (for example, threatening that the individual will be an outcast in their community) (87);
- **economic threats** (for example, family threatens to kick the individual out of the house or withdraw support) (84);
- **threats of physical violence** (against the individual facing forced marriage, or others they care about or try to help them) (78).



*Almost half of respondents (46%), who provided information on tactics used, reported that forced marriage victims they encountered had been subjected to actual physical violence.*

*Over a quarter of these respondents (27%) said that forced marriage victims they encountered had been subject to death threats.*

Survey respondents also provided information on additional, less common (but certainly not rare) tactics used or threatened against forced marriage victims, including:

- **immigration-related threats** (for example, threatening to get the individual deported) (72);
- **physical violence** (69);
- **deception/tricking** (for example, telling an individual that they are being taken abroad to visit a relative when really they are being taken abroad to get married) (61);
- **death threats against the victim** (40);
- **stalking the victim** (for example, a family member follows the individual when they leave their home) (38);
- **kidnapping/forcing the individual to travel abroad** (33);
- **holding the individual captive/physically restrained** (30);

- **marrying off an individual without that individual's participation or knowledge** (e.g., where laws or customs of a country allow families to conclude a marriage) (29).

Respondents also reported cases involving serious bodily injury to the victim (25 respondents), situations where food or medical care was withheld (23 and 22 respondents, respectively), instances where a marriage certificate was forged (13 respondents), or where the individual facing forced marriage was falsely accused of a crime or reported as a runaway/ missing child to enlist law enforcement help in returning the individual home (10 respondents). In addition, a few respondents reported encountering cases where the victim was drugged/incapacitated or threatened with having their children taken away (8 and 2 respondents, respectively).

In addition, 42 respondents reported that they had encountered forced marriage victims who had contemplated or attempted suicide. 13 respondents also reported murder attempts among the forced marriage cases they encountered, and 1 respondent reported an actual murder.

## Next Steps: Further Research and Advocacy

Although the findings of Tahirih’s Forced Marriage Survey provided new information about the experiences of service providers and others who are assisting victims of forced marriage, there is still a great need for further research into this problem, including policy-oriented research to look to and learn from what other countries have done to address the problem – **the more we learn about dynamics, challenges, and strategies, the better equipped and more alert agencies can be to help victims.**

### MORE RESEARCH IS URGENTLY NEEDED:

- **Into specific cases:** The survey asked for the respondent’s experiences in the aggregate, and so does not enable a particular forced marriage case to be presented and analyzed from first intervention to eventual outcome. With adequate resources, Tahirih intends to follow up with telephone and in-person interviews of particular respondents who have extensive experience dealing with cases involving forced marriages, and conduct further research into how victims are identified and cases are currently handled.
- **Among specific target groups:** Tahirih would like to conduct interviews and focus groups among secondary school and college teachers, counselors, health clinic staff, and other personnel at educational institutions in districts with high percentages of foreign-born students.<sup>xi</sup>
- **With survivors of forced marriage:** Tahirih intends to conduct interviews and focus groups among survivors, to hear directly from them what sorts of actions or interventions they think would have helped them, or instead put them at greater risk.

Tahirih is also committed to galvanizing a nation-wide, multi-sector response to the problem of forced marriage in the United States through:

- **Raising awareness, conducting outreach and training on “best practices,” and engaging in collaborative policy recommendations.** Tahirih hopes to conduct outreach to prosecutors, police officers, and child welfare agency personnel (among others) to learn from their experiences and explore how current institutions and laws (for example, the existing child protection and domestic violence protection frameworks) can be better used to protect forced marriage victims. We also need to develop and advocate for new laws, policies, and resources to address the unique needs of this acutely vulnerable population.
- **Establishing a National Network focused on the issue of forced marriage.** Tahirih is establishing partnerships with key stakeholders around the United States, and forming working groups to facilitate cooperation among agencies (including among government agencies, and between government agencies and private non-profits) and to coordinate public education and outreach on this issue.

For further information Tahirih’s Forced Marriage Initiative, please visit:

<http://www.tahirih.org/advocacy/policy-areas/forced-marriage-initiative/>

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*This report was authored by Heather Heiman (Senior Public Policy Attorney) and Jeanne Smoot (Director of Public Policy), and edited by Layli Miller-Muro (Executive Director). Tahirih is especially grateful to Laudan Y. Aron of the National Academy of Sciences for generously contributing her time, insights and expertise as a pro bono advisor on Tahirih’s survey project.*

<sup>i</sup> See [www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_earlymarriage.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_earlymarriage.html) (last visited on September 17, 2011).

<sup>ii</sup> This figure does not even include a potentially large number of “hidden” victims who have not yet come to the attention of the authorities or service providers. See *Forced Marriage - Prevalence and Service Response*, Research Report No. DCSF-RR128 (July 2009), available at <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR128.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> One of the first organizations to take a lead on the issue of forced marriage and honor-based violence in the UK was Karma Nirvana (<http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk/>), founded by Jasvinder Sanghera. Sanghera escaped a forced marriage her parents had planned for her, just as they had for each of her sisters. Sanghera felt compelled to take action after one of her sisters, in her despair at being forced to remain in an abusive marriage to protect family honor, died after setting herself on fire.

<sup>iv</sup> There are a handful of state laws that criminalize forcing someone into marriage in certain circumstances, but these seem designed for other purposes than to prevent parents from forcing their children into marriage (the forced marriage provisions generally arise in the context of laws against prostitution and “defilement”). Moreover, to Tahirih’s knowledge, no forced marriage prosecutions have ever been brought under these laws (against a parent or anyone else). See Cal. Penal § 265 (2011); DC Code Ann. § 22-2705 (2011); Md. Code Ann., Crim. Code § 11-303 (2011); Minn. Stat. Ann. § 609.265 (2011); Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-1 (2011); Nev. Rev. Stat. 201.300 (2010); Okla. Stat. tit. 21, § 1117 (2011); Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-355 (2011); and V.I. Code Ann. § 1301 (2011). Also, the US Department of State has some guidance for foreign service officers (see e.g. 7 FAM 1743) as well as short advisories for individuals fearing they will be taken abroad and forced into marriage in one of 11 foreign countries (see [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_5475.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_5475.html)).

<sup>v</sup> California, Minnesota, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia each had 15 or more agencies respond to the survey.

<sup>vi</sup> In Tahirih’s experience, a young woman may fear that if she says no to the groom chosen for her, a younger sister will be matched with him instead; or that if she resists, her parents may try to pre-empt a younger sister’s resistance by marrying her off even younger. She may also be concerned that her own refusal will affect her family’s reputation and thus negatively impact her sisters’ marriage prospects. In some cases, too, to coerce compliance, sisters (and/or mothers) will be threatened with harm if the young woman does not submit to the marriage.

<sup>vii</sup> Agencies face many challenges when trying to identify and assist minors who are threatened by, or already in, forced marriages. Respondents noted that minor victims may be particularly reluctant to come forward, concerned about getting their parents in trouble, and dealing with extreme pressure from both their family and community to go through with the marriage. In addition, minor victims often face a very real threat of retaliation if they are returned to the home after reaching out for help.

In Tahirih’s experience, service-providers trying to assist minors are also handicapped by other challenges, including: many shelters will not take in minors (in fact, some states expressly prohibit the “harboring” of runaway youth by any individual or

organization without legal custody); parents may threaten to charge agencies with state crimes like “contributing to the delinquency of a minor,” or “interference with custodial rights”; and Child Protective Services (CPS) may not investigate/intervene, or may close an investigation, if CPS does not understand the real threat to the minor or if, scared and under pressure, the victim rescinds her request for help.

<sup>viii</sup> The survey platform protocols as well as the instructions to respondents and Tahirih’s approach to analyzing results were designed to try to eliminate duplicate responses from agencies. However, some potential for duplicate responses remains (for example, where two agencies may have worked on the same case as part of a multi-agency team, and both separately reported on that case in Tahirih’s survey). In addition, survey respondents were not asked to write-in an exact number of cases encountered, but instead to check off a range (e.g., 1-5, 6-10). “3000 cases” thus represents the cumulative upper limit of the ranges respondents reported (2905 cases, rounded up because one range checked by a number of respondents was “over 30”); the lower limit of the ranges that respondents reported is 1497 cases. In any event, given the other key findings of the survey—including that two-thirds (67%) of respondents felt there are forced marriage cases in the communities they serve that are not currently being identified—it is entirely likely that the actual total number of forced marriage cases in those communities over the last two years is far greater than 3000.

<sup>ix</sup> Countries of family origin specifically identified by respondents are listed below, with the numbers of respondents identifying them given in parentheses: India (39), Pakistan (39), Mexico (28), Bangladesh (14), the Philippines (12), Afghanistan (9), Somalia (9), Yemen (9), Burma (8), Guinea (6), Sudan (6), Bhutan (5), China (5), Iraq (5), Nepal (5), Russia (5), Thailand (5), Ethiopia (4), Iran (4), Jordan (4), Vietnam (4), Burkina Faso (3), Cambodia (3), Ivory Coast (3), Laos (3), Mali (3), Morocco (3), Palestine (3), Romania (3), Saudi Arabia (3), Bosnia (2), Chad (2), Congo (2), Dominican Republic (2), Egypt (2), El Salvador (2), Gambia (2), Guatemala (2), Sierra Leone (2), Syria (2), Uzbekistan (2), Cameroon (1), Colombia (1), Eritrea (1), France (1), Honduras (1), Kenya (1), Korea (1), Poland (1), Senegal (1), South Africa (1), Sri Lanka (1), Togo (1), Tunisia (1), Turkey (1), and United Kingdom (1).

<sup>x</sup> Religious backgrounds specifically identified by respondents are listed below, with the numbers of respondents identifying them given in parentheses: Muslim (85); Christian (29) (which includes Catholic (15), Baptist (1), Evangelical (1), and Jehovah’s Witness (1)), Hindu (16), Buddhist (8), Sikh (3), Jewish (2), Indigenous Faith (1), and Shamanism (1). Respondents also answered Hmong (2) to this question.

<sup>xi</sup> UK research has found that “potential victims are often severely restricted in their movement, with educational settings the only places where they are free from the surveillance of family.” See *supra* note ii, at 8. Alarming, too, a UK government study found that in one year, 2,089 students were unaccounted for in 14 districts across England and Wales, a proportion of whom were “believed to have been children removed from education and forced into marriages overseas.” See David Barrett, *Nine-Year-Old Midlands Girl Rescued from Forced Marriage*, *The Telegraph* (September 27, 2008), available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/3089375/Nine-year-old-Midlands-girl-rescued-from-forced-marriage.html>.