



# Trapped in the spiderweb 50 min

UNDERSTANDING FORB IN CONTEXT

GAME

PLENARY EXERCISE

## About the exercise

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Best suited to grassroots-level groups/faith communities, civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

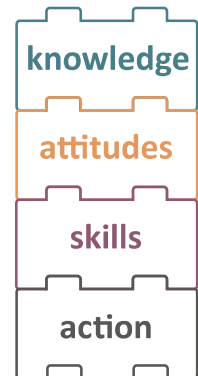
### PURPOSE

- To help participants explore a range of causes of early/forced marriage.
- To enable participants to identify preventive actions, including changes to religious, societal and legal norms related to freedom of religion or belief (FORB) and gender and personal status/family law.

### DESCRIPTION

Participants stand in a ring and throw a ball of wool or string to each other as they answer questions on the causes of early/forced marriage. A volunteer representing a teenage girl stands in the middle and gradually becomes trapped in a tangled web. Participants then work to free the volunteer by naming immediate actions and long-term preventive measures that can be taken to change the situation, cutting a strand of the web for each idea.

The exercise can be easily adapted to focus on other crosscutting FORB issues, by placing a different rights-holder/victim of violations at the centre of the ring.



## Instructions

### RESOURCES

- A ball of wool or string.
- A pair of scissors.

### ADVANCE PREPARATION

Ensure there is enough space in the training room for participants to form a ring. Ask participants to move tables and chairs if necessary.

### HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 3 MIN

Ask participants to stand in a ring. Ask a co-facilitator (or a volunteer) to stand in the centre of the ring. Explain to everyone that the person in the middle is playing the role of a teenage girl under the age of 18 whose marriage is being planned by her parents without her being involved. Explain that the group is going to play a game to explore the reasons the girl might be in this situation.

### HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 45 MIN

- **EXPLORING THE CAUSES (20 MIN)**  
Give the ball of wool or string to one of the participants. Instruct him/her to hold onto the end of the wool. Ask the participant: why is she in this situation? After the participant gives an answer, he/she keeps hold of the end of the wool, says the name of another participant, and throws the ball of wool to him or her. That person names another cause, and, holding on to the wool, throws the ball to a new participant.

As the group gives causes, prompt the participants to be more specific by asking them follow-up questions, such as:

- What is the role of the father?
- What does the law say about early marriage and women’s rights?
- Are religious leaders involved?

It is important that the causes become really concrete and specific. Statements should also be questioned sometimes if, for example, participants give reasons such as the parents thinking that the girl is not paying enough attention to her studies. Ask:

- Is that really a cause or just an excuse?

These follow-up questions help the participants to explore a range of immediate and more long-term causes, as well as different actors involved. They encourage participants to reflect more deeply on the issue and uncover structural causes, including religious and/or societal norms and family/personal status laws or laws relating to FORB.

The activity continues in the same way until all participants have given at least one cause. As the ball is thrown and causes are named, a web is formed, trapping the girl. Pause the exercise at this point.

• **QUICK PLENARY DISCUSSION** (5 MIN)

Invite two or three participants to share their reflections. Ask:

- How does it feel to see the girl trapped in this situation?

• **EXPLORING PREVENTIVE ACTIONS** (20 MIN)

Hand the scissors to the last participant who gave a cause. Ask:

- What could we do, to prevent this girl from being married or to prevent this from happening again to other girls?

Once the participant has named a preventive action, h/she cuts the string that they are holding on to and hands the scissors to the next person in the ring.

Remind participants that actions need to be taken immediately and over the long term. Ask follow-up questions to make sure that the actions are specific and concrete, and to broaden the range of preventive actions to include work with religious leaders and changing societal norms, as well as legal remedies and advocacy with duty-bearers. Ask:

- Who has a responsibility to do that?
- How can we convince them to fulfil that responsibility?
- Who is influential and could help to bring about that change?

Continue until all participants have named a specific preventive action and cut up the net, freeing the person in the middle. If the person in the middle is a participant who volunteered to take on the role, invite them to share their reflections:

- How was this experience for you?
- Which of the preventive actions did you favour?
- Was there anything you would have liked the participants to do differently?

**HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE** 2 MIN

Congratulate the participants on all their ideas and thank them for their active participation. Remind them that just as they hold knowledge about the causes of early/forced marriage, they are also developing the skills to strategize ways to prevent this from happening to other girls.

**Source**

Adapted from the activity “Why doesn’t she leave?” in [Church and Gender Equality: Resource and Tool Box, PMU Interlife](#).