

Title of session: Understanding FGM

This episode goes into detail about forcing young girls to undergo FGM, a common practice that is against the law in Sierra Leone.

Length of recording: t.b.c.

Scene 1: Talking about FGM at home

Actors: Kemoh (father), Mami (mother) and Ami (daughter)

Scene 2: Girls talking about FGM

Actors: Ami and Kadi (school girls)

Scene 1

Sfx: Sweeping and singing traditional song

Mami: *A memba we a bin smɔl. Dis na bin di siŋ we wi bin de siŋ wen wi jɔyn sosayti. Wen kemɔ kam a wan tɔk to am. A want le Ami go sosayti so i go rɛdi fɔ mared.*
(calling loudly) Kemɔ, kam o, di it dɔn rɛdi.

I remember when I was a young girl. This is the song we sang during Bondo ceremony. When Kemoh comes I will talk to him. I want Ami to go through Bondo initiation so that she can be ready to get married. (calling loudly) Kemoh, come, the food is ready!

Sfx: steps approaching

Kemoh: *Tɛnki! A dɔn angri so!* thank you! I am so hungry!

Mami: *A wan le wi tɔk bɔt sɔntin.* I want to discuss an issue with you.

Kemoh: *Wetin?* What?

Mami: *Yu no se Ami ɛn dɛn ɔda gyal-pikin dɔn rich di ej naw nɔto so?*

You know Ami and other girls are now of age, not so?

Kemoh: *Wetin dat min?* So what does that mean?

Mami: *A want le dɛn go sosayti.* I want them to go through FGM initiation

Kemoh: *Go wetin?* Go through what?

Mami: *A want le di gyal-pikin dɛn go sosayti.*

I want the girls to be initiated into “bondo” society (FGM)

Kemoh: *Mami yu...* Mami you...

Mami: *Ami dɔn du fɔ mared. Afta i go sosayti, if man kɔmɔt fɔ am wi fɔ mek i mared wantem.*

Ami is due for marriage. After the initiation, if a man comes for her hand in marriage, we should give her out for marriage immediately

Kemoh: *Mami yu ɔndastand wetin yu de se?*

Mami, do you understand what you are saying?

Mami: *Yes, a no wetin a de se.* Of course, I know what I am saying

Kemoh: *Fɔ tru tru yu want le wi gyal-pikin go sosayti en mared?*

Do you really want our daughter to be initiated into Bondo and get married?

Mami: *Bɔt Kemɔ na wi tradishɔn dat.* Kemoh, this is our tradition.

Kemoh: *A respekt wi tradishɔn bɔt a want le Ami dɔn skul fɔs. Aw i go dɔn skul if wi mek i mared naw? A bin min se yu sef want le i dɔn skul fɔs.*

I respect our traditions, but I also want Ami to finish her studies. How can she finish her studies if she gets married now? I thought you wanted her to finish her studies too.

Mami: *Yes a want le i dɔn skul. I kin go sosayti naw so bay di tɛm we i de dɔn skul i go dɔn rɛdi fɔ mared.*

Yes, I want her to finish her studies. She can go through Bondo initiation now so that when she finishes school she is ready to get married.

Kemoh: *A no se yu nɔ min bad fɔ am, bɔt a dɔn yeri wan dɔkta de tɔk na redio se fɔ go sosayti nɔ gud, i kin mek di uman sɔfa bɔku bɔku pen, blid bɔku en get ɔda sik sef. A nɔ want le wi gyal-pikin sɔfa ɔl dat.*

I know you mean well for her, but I have heard a doctor talking on the radio and saying that genital cutting is dangerous and can cause severe pain, excessive bleeding and infections. I don't want our daughter to go through this.

Mami: *Mi go sosayti wen a smɔl pas am, dis na wi kɔlchɔ.*

I went through the initiation when I was younger than her, this is our culture.

Kemoh: *Tin de chenj naw Mami. Le di pikin pe atenshɔn pan in ɛdyukashɔn naw.*

Things change Mami. Let the child focus on her education now.

Sfx: footsteps

Ami: *Mama en Papa una gudaftanun.* Good afternoon mom and dad.

Mami: *Ami yu no wetin a wan tel yu?* Ami do you know what I want to tell you?

Ami: *No ma* No, mom

Mami: *De rēdi o, a de plan fɔ ɛ yu go sosayti i nɔ go te egen.*

Be prepared. My plan is to initiate you into bondo very soon.

Ami: (In shock) *Mi?* Me?

Mami: *Yes, na di rayt tēm dis fɔ yu. Yu go go sosayti naw so dat wen yu dɔn skul yu go mared.*

Yes, this is the right time for you. You will go through Bondo initiation now, so that when you finish school you can get married.

Ami: *Mama mi nɔ wan mared o, en a nɔ wan go sosayti. Mi na pikin stil, na 16 ia nɔmɔ a ol, a wan go skul.*

Mom, I don't want to get married, I don't want to be initiated into bondo, I am a child, I am sixteen, I want to go to school.

Kemoh: *Mami ɛf dis pikin saful.* Mami leave this child alone.

Mami: *A nɔ go ɛf am saful. Na mi gyal-pikin; na mi bɔn am.*

I will not leave her alone. She is my daughter; I gave birth to her.

Kemoh: *Mami, tēm dɔn chenj. Wi nɔ get fɔ tɔk bɔt Ami in sosayti wan naw, na smɔl pikin. Tin nɔ izi bɔt a go tray ad fɔ mek shɔ se mi pikin dɛn get gud edyukashɔn en wen di tēm rich a go kip to ɔl di sosayti ɔ dem.*

Mami, times have changed. We don't need to discuss Ami's initiation now that she is still a child. Things are not easy but I will do my best to ensure that all my children are well educated and I'll also conform to the laws about FGM

Mami: *Us ɔ?* Which law?

Kemoh: *Di ɔ we se nɔ fɔ jɔyn nɔn pikin we nɔ rich 18 ia et na sosayti.*

The law stipulates that no child below age eighteen should be initiated into Bondo

Mami: *Mi nɔ no dat o.* I didn't know that.

Kemoh: *Yes, le wi jes du wetin di lo se. Ami mas don skul fɔs, naw nɔto tem fo go sosayti. Wen i 18, inɛf go tɔk if in wan go sosayti o nɔt.*

Yes, let's do what the law says. Ami must complete her education first, now it's not time for Bondo initiation. When she is eighteen she can decide herself whether she wants to go through Bondo initiation or not.

Ami: *Mami a beg...* Mami, please...

Mami: *Oke, Oke... A yeri wetin una de se. Wi go du wetin di lo se. Tin de chenj... Wi yon famili de kip lo; wi no go get trɔbul bikɔs wi no rɛspekt di lo.*

Ok, ok... I hear what you're saying. We will do what the law says. Things are changing... we are an honest family; we will not get in trouble for not respecting the law...

Kemoh: *Na di tru yu don tɔk so Mami.* You are speaking the truth Mami.

Scene 2

Sfx: Footstep

Ami: *Elo Kadi awyudu?* Hello Kadi, how are you?

Kadi: *A oke, aw yusef?* I am fine, how are you?

Ami: *Oke, bɔt na sɔntin de wɔri mi.* Fine. I am worried about something.

Kadi: *Wetin apin?* What happens?

Ami: *Dis monin mi mama se a fo go sosayti en mared after a don skul. Den mi en mi papa mek i si se wi fo wet fɔs bikɔs di lo se pikin we no 18 et no fo go sosayti. Naw i don gri se a fo don skul fɔs bɔt mi at stil wɔri.*

This morning my mother said I should go through Bondo initiation and get married when I finish school. Then my father and I convinced her that we should wait because the law says that children below eighteen years of age should not go through initiation. So now she has accepted that I finish my studies, but I am still worried about it.

Kadi: *Mmm, a ondestand. Den fos mi mama fo mared we i ol 12 ia. In Papa jes disayd se in want wan yɔŋman fo ep am wok na in fam. In jes fil se di izi we fo get di ep we i want na fo mek wan yɔŋman mared wan pan in gyal-pikin dem. Wansɔftem i bin tel mi se in bin wan don skul en bi ticha, bɔt i get fo lef skul mared en bon pikin. In tek am so bɔt naw i de push ol in pikin dem fo go skul. I want mi en mi sista dem fo don skul en enjoy gud layf.*

Mmm, I understand. My mother was forced to get married when she was 12. Her father decided that he needed a young man's labour to support him on the farm. He thought that an easy way to get this was to marry off one of his daughters and have her husband do the work. Once she told me that she wanted to continue with school and become a teacher, but she had to be a wife and a mother. She accepted it but now she is pushing all her children to go to school. She wants me and my sisters to and finish our studies and have a bright future.

Ami: *Yu get lɔk o Kadi!* You are so lucky, Kadi!

Kadi: *If yu want, a go aks mi Mama fɔ tɔk to yu yon Mama.*

If you want I can ask my mother to talk to yours.

Ami: *Yes, du ya du dat!. A no se den tu kin mit na makit ɔltem.*

Yes, please! I know they meet at the market very often.

Kadi: *Oke, a go du dat. Sɔntem sef i go tɛl am bɔt mi Kɔzin Sia.*

Ok, I will do that. Maybe she can also tell her about my cousin Sia.

Ami: *Sia? A no am?* Sia? Do I know her?

Kadi: *Nɔ, i nɔ tap na dis vilej sef, in en in man bin dɔn muf ya. I nɔ bin gri fɔ go sosayti so den bin de kɔl am Koloko en se i dɔti. In mama try fɔ le i chenj in maynd en jɔyn di sosayti bɔt i nɔ gri. Ivin we den de kɔl am ɔlkayn nem i nɔ gri. I se na in chɔys nɔ fɔ go sosayti.*

No, she doesn't live in our village, she moved with her husband. She refused to go through Bondo initiation so they used to call her a koloko and say she's unhygienic. Her mother tried to convince her to go through Bondo initiation but she always refused, even when people were calling her names. She said it was her choice.

Ami: *Fɔ tru?* Really?

Kadi: *Yes, i tɛl in pipul den se in nɔ wan go sosayti. Na insef disayd dat. I kin tɔk se bɔku ɔda uman den de na ɔda kɔmyuniti en ɔda kɔntri den we nɔ go sosayti.*

Yes, she told her family that she didn't want to go through the Bondo initiation, that this was her choice. She used to say that there are many women in other communities and countries who don't do Bondo.

Ami: *... bɔt den se sosayti de mek uman bi wetin i fɔ bi na di kɔyuniti, mek den respekt am en mek am rɛdi fɔ mared.*

...but they say that Bondo makes girls complete, respected and ready for marriage.

Kadi: *Yes, bɔt na di pɔsin inɛf fɔ disayd fɔ jɔyn. A no gyal-pikin den we go sosayti bɔt stil den nɔ mared. A no ɔda wan dem we go sosayti den den bigin kip bɔku bɔku bɔyfren dem.*

Yes, but this should be your choice. I know girls that went through Bondo initiation and then they did not get married. I also know girls that went through Bondo initiation and then started having many boyfriends!

Ami: *O Kadi!* Oh, Kadi!

Kadi: *Na tru! Mi kɔzin Sia nɔ go Sosayti bɔt i mared en i dɔn get tu trɔŋ trɔŋ, fayn fayn pikin dem.*

It's true! My cousin Sia didn't go through Bondo initiation but she got married and she already has two healthy children.

Ami: *Tɛl- gɔd- tɛnki fɔ am!* Oh! Bless her!

Kadi: *Mɛmba o Ami, di lɔ se yu kant go sosayti bifo yu ol 18 ia. Afta dat na yu de disayd wɛda yu wan jɔyn sosayti ɔ nɔt.*

Remember Ami, the law says that you can't go through Bondo initiation before you turn 18 years old. After that, it should be your choice to go or not.

Ami: *Oke, bɔt wetin go apin if mi fambul den ɔ ɔda pɔsin den tray fɔ fos mi fɔ go sosayti?*

Yes, but what happens if my family or someone else tries to force me to go through it?

Kadi: *Yu fɔ pot dem.* You should report them.

Ami: *Fayn, a gladi we a tɔk to yu bɔt dis. Kadi yu na gud padi.*

Fine, I am happy I talked to you about this. You are a good friend Kadi.

Female Voice to give details on the hotlines.

Radio Discussions, discussants focus on:

- The negative effects on FGM on children
- Forced FGM is an abuse
- FGM and the Child Rights Act

Open Phone Lines – LWL team to document feedback