

Adolescent Girls’ Empowerment in Central and South America (Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay)



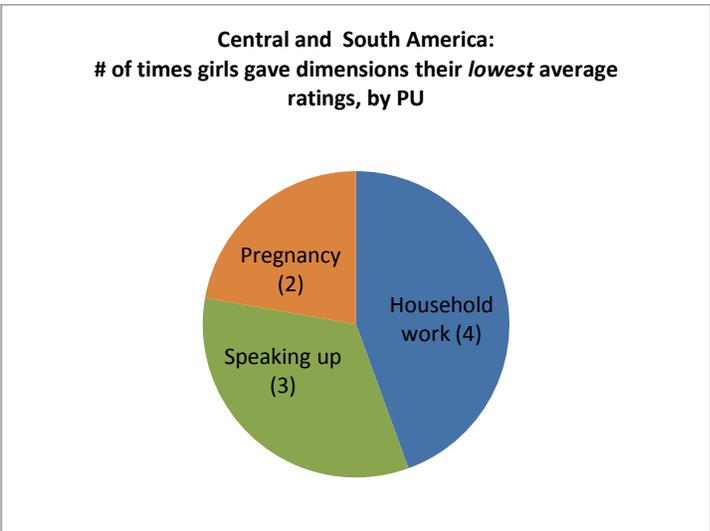
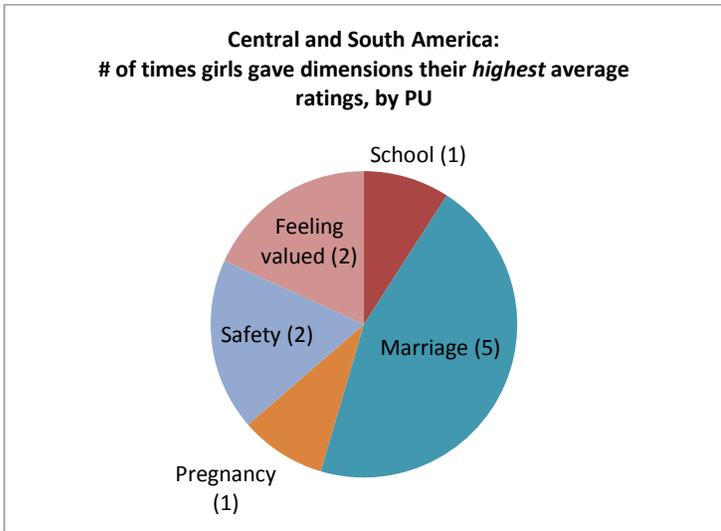
Findings from the [Girls Empowerment Star](#):

In **Ecuador**, Plan spoke with 189 adolescent girls in PU Cotopaxi and PU Ventanas, in six communities. On average, girls in **PU Cotopaxi** felt most empowered in accessing nine-years of **school**, and least empowered in deciding if they get **pregnant**. In Plan Ecuador’s **PU Ventanas**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered around **marriage** and least empowered to **speak up** in front of men and boys.

In **Nicaragua**, Plan spoke with 175 adolescent girls in PU Chontales and PU VEC, in six communities. On average, girls in **PU Chontales** felt most empowered in deciding when to get **married**, and least empowered around aspects of **household work** and **pregnancy**. In **PU VEC**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered around **marriage** and **safety**, and least empowered about **speaking up** and **household work**.

In **Paraguay**, Plan spoke with 162 adolescent girls in PU Caaguazú and PU Guaira, in six communities. On average, girls in **PU Caaguazú** felt most empowered around deciding if and when to get **married**, and least empowered around dimensions of **household work** and **speaking up**. In **PU Guaira**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered around feeling **safe** in their community and least empowered around dimensions of **household work** and **money**.

*Figure 1: Girls Empowerment Star: Frequencies of highest and lowest average rated dimensions of girls’ empowerment by PU in Central and South America: On average, girls involved in the study in Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Paraguay felt most empowered around **marriage**, **feeling valued**, and **safety**, and least empowered around aspects of **household work**, **speaking up**, and **pregnancy**.*



* Frequencies refer to numbers of PUs by region in which girls rated a dimension highest on average across data from selected communities. The maximum number of PUs per region is six, with two PUs per country, and three countries in Central and South America. Frequencies derive from data from three selected communities per PU and may not be representative of all communities in all PUs in Ecuador, Nicaragua or Paraguay.

- **Marriage:** While findings suggest that adolescent girls Plan spoke with in Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Paraguay often feel empowered around decisions pertaining to **marriage**, their responses varied and revealed a complex set of realities. For instance, girls Plan spoke with in Paraguay (PU Guaira) said that 71% of adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ decide if they marry. They explained that they hope to get married only after they have finished school, and some have older sisters who set a good example and finished secondary school first before getting married. On the other hand, girls in Nicaragua (PU VEC) claimed that only 32% of adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ decide if they marry, however marriage was still rated highest by girls as an aspect in their lives they felt most empowered to control. Adolescent girls in this programme area in Nicaragua said that while they did not know of any girl forced into marriage, they have heard of girls’ parents arranging to marry them for land or money.

Similar stories were shared by girls in Ecuador whereby some parents, particularly those of poorer households, force their daughters to marry older men with money and resources.

“The girls do not decide to marry, but the parents oblige them to do so for ambition (men that have land, a car or a job) with older men. For example, if the girls are 14 years old, their parents marry them with someone that is 25-30 years old. In other cases, girls leave their house because they get pregnant,” said one girl from Ecuador.

“... overall, the girls think that they almost never decide if they want to get pregnant or not, ... they do not know how to avoid pregnancy and think that nothing is going to happen to them. This shows that there is a lack of knowledge about pregnancy prevention method,” said one girl from Ecuador.

Early marriage increases girls’ already heavy **household work** burden, and early pregnancy results in early **school** dropout, further adding to girls’ caregiving responsibilities and time burden.

- **Pregnancy:** Girls involved in the study in these three countries on average felt least empowered over decisions about **pregnancy**, and the findings revealed that girls are sometimes forced into marriages because they become pregnant. In Ecuador, 41-51% of girls Plan spoke with claimed that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide if they get pregnant. Reasons given were that adolescent girls do not see themselves as having power to decide over their own bodies or when they become pregnant.

“... overall, the girls think that they almost never decide if they want to get pregnant or not, ... they do not know how to avoid pregnancy and think that nothing is going to happen to them. This shows that there is a lack of knowledge about pregnancy prevention methods,” said one girl from Ecuador.

In Paraguay, between 26-54% of girls in the study said that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide to get pregnant. A majority of girls become pregnant by the age of 16 or 17, and few girls know methods of how to prevent pregnancy.

“We do not know how to avoid pregnancy. Nobody speaks to us of that,” said one adolescent girl in Paraguay.

“Pregnant girls need help and encouragement in order to continue studying,” said one adolescent girl from Paraguay.

“How nice it would be for women to have a child when they are prepared,” said one adolescent boy from Paraguay.

In Nicaragua, 35-42% of girls who participated said that girls 'never' or 'seldom' decide if to become pregnant. Girls claimed that men often leave pregnant girls without helping them. Some girls decide to abort the pregnancy, while others become single mothers. Girls also emphasised that many become pregnant by rape.

"There are girls who are forced to marry because they are pregnant. They get married with the pregnancy, but they do not want it. Many are pregnant by rape. They did not choose to become pregnant," said a girl in Nicaragua.

- **Safety:** On average, many girls Plan spoke with in these three countries claimed that girls feel safe in their communities, however the findings vary considerably. For instance in Paraguay, 75% of girls Plan spoke with in one area (PU Guaira) said that adolescent girls 'always' or 'often' feel safe in their communities, while only 35% of girls in another area (PU Caaguazú) felt that girls 'always' or 'often' feel safe. In Paraguay (PU Guaira), girls said that family members often accompany them when walking in the community and therefore they feel safer, and parents advise girls to only speak with people they know outside of the home and not with strangers. In Caaguazú, adolescent girls feel safer in their homes and at school than in the community or walking in the streets, and they referred to ongoing violence in the community that makes them feel unsafe.

The range of responses also varied in Ecuador – 58% of girls in one area (PU Cotopaxi) said that adolescent girls 'always' or 'often' feel safe, while 80% of girls in another area (PU Ventanas) claimed that girls 'never' or 'seldom' feel safe. Adolescent girls (PU Ventanas) linked safety to feeling valued and speaking up: girls' sense that they cannot speak up about their needs, they seldom feel safe, they feel that their concerns do not matter, and they seldom feel valued in their community.

Girls' perceptions of a lack of **safety** at home and in the community also suggest that violence against girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, presents major barriers to all aspects of girls' empowerment and development in Ecuador, Nicaragua and Paraguay.

"There are neighbourhoods that are dangerous, and there are gangs. Also in the house, girls do not feel safe. [...] There are stepfathers abusing stepdaughters and mothers do not believe them. Girls feel confused," said one girl in Nicaragua.

"I just feel safe with my family, because no one else cares for us. Rape and kidnapping cases are a given," said one girl from Nicaragua.

"We feel safe at school," said one girl from Paraguay.

- **Household work:** Girls in these communities rated household work as being one of the lowest levels of girls' empowerment. Girls participating in the study (from four out of six PUs) felt least empowered about household work and said that girls and boys rarely share household work equally. This was the highest in Nicaragua whereby 42% of girls Plan spoke with said that girls and boys 'never' or 'seldom' share household work equally. In Paraguay, 35-38% of girls said that girls and boys 'never' or 'seldom' share household work. In Ecuador, 47% of girls from one area (PU Ventanas) said that girls and boys 'never' or 'seldom' share household work, while only 4% of girls from another area (PU Cotopaxi) said that they don't share household work with boys.

- **Speaking up:** Adolescent girls in these communities felt that girls had difficulty **speaking up** in front of men and boys, however the responses vary considerably both within and between countries. For instance, in Ecuador, 93% of participants in one programme area (PU Ventanas) said that adolescent girls 'never' or 'seldom' say what they think when a boy is around, while 34% of girls from another programme area (PU Cotopaxi) said that girls 'never' or 'seldom' speak up. In Nicaragua, between 36-71% of girls Plan spoke with said that girls 'never' or 'seldom' speak up in front of males, and in Paraguay between 37-50% of girls said they 'never' or 'seldom' speak up in front of males.

Highest Levels of School Equality in Central and South America (Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay)

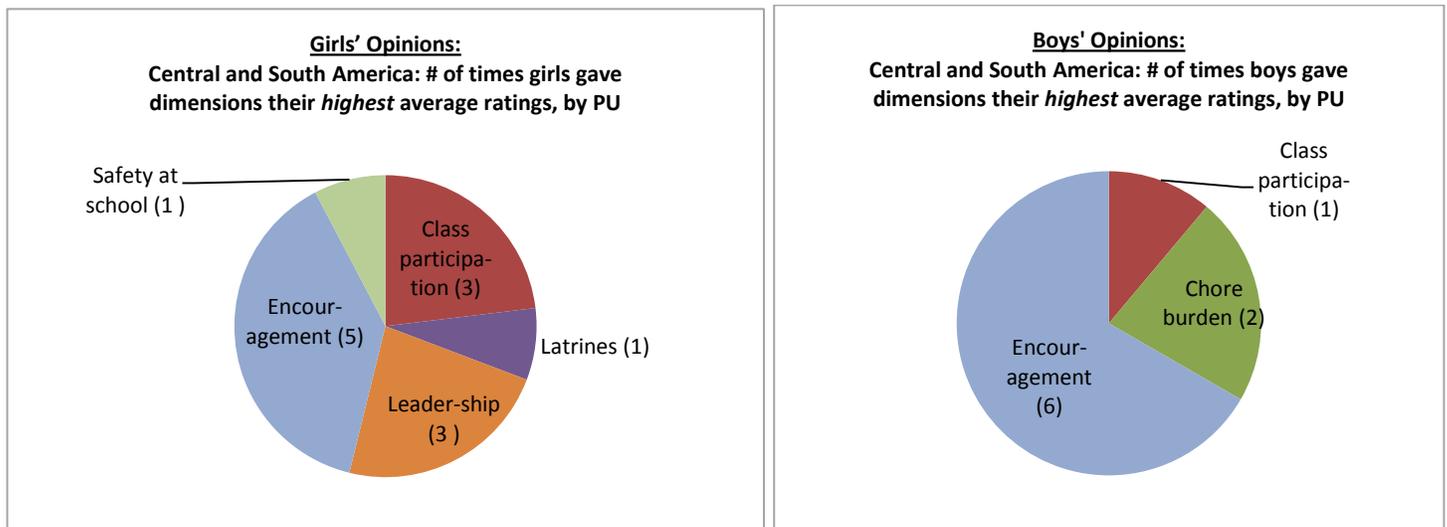
Findings from the [School Equality Scorecard](#): Highest Levels of School Equality

In **Ecuador**, Plan spoke with 313 girls in 10 schools and 325 boys in 10 schools in PU Chimborazo and PU Quito. In **PU Chimborazo**, girls rated **encouragement** as the highest level of school equality by girls, while boys rated **encouragement** and **class participation** as the highest. In **PU Quito**, both girls and boys rated **encouragement** as the highest and girls also felt that **class participation** was a high area of school equality by girls.

In **Nicaragua**, Plan spoke with 270 girls in 10 schools and 284 boys in 10 schools in PU Chontales and PU VEC. In **PU Chontales**, girls rated **encouragement** and **leadership** as the highest levels of school equality by girls, while boys said that **encouragement** and **chore burden** were the highest. In **PU VEC**, girls felt that **class participation** and **leadership** were the highest areas of school equality by girls, while adolescent boys said that **chore burden** and **encouragement** were the highest areas.

In **Paraguay**, Plan spoke with 266 girls in 10 schools and 278 boys in 10 schools in PU Caaguazú and PU Guaira. In **PU Caaguazú**, girls felt that **encouragement**, **class participation**, and **latrines** were the highest areas of school equality, while boys said it was **encouragement**. In **PU Guaira**, both girls and boys felt that **encouragement** was the highest, and girls also felt that **leadership** and **safety at school** were high areas of school equality by girls.

*Figure 2: School Equality Scorecard: Frequencies of dimensions girls and boys rated the highest on average by PU in Central and South America: On average, girls involved in the study in Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Paraguay rated **encouragement**, **class participation**, and **leadership** as the highest levels of school equality, while boys felt that **encouragement**, **class participation**, and **chore burden** were the highest levels of school equality.*



* Frequencies refer to numbers of PUs by region in which girls rated a dimension highest on average across data from selected communities. The maximum number of PUs per region is six, with two PUs per country, and three countries in Central and South America. Frequencies derive from data from selected schools and PUs and may not be representative of all schools in all PUs in Ecuador, Nicaragua or Paraguay.

- **Encouragement:** Adolescent girls and boys who Plan spoke with in Ecuador, Nicaragua and Paraguay felt that adolescent girls are largely **encouraged** to succeed in their schoolwork as much as boys. Between 53-90% of girls Plan spoke with in these countries said that girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ encouraged to succeed in their schoolwork as much as boys (Paraguay had the highest ratings with 83-90% of girls), while 73-88% of boys Plan spoke with in these countries felt that adolescent girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ encouraged to succeed just as much as boys.

“We are encouraged equally as boys,” said one girl from Paraguay.

“Teachers encourage everyone equally to move forward,” said one girl from Paraguay.

“With respect to encouragement [...] girls are encouraged to study; the teachers, fathers, mothers and their classmates encourage the girls to continue their studies so that they can enhance their condition and reach their goals and objectives,” said one boy from Ecuador.

While some participants claimed that they are encouraged, girls revealed that teachers often listen to boys more:

“The same encouragement is given to a girl, but [teachers] do not take them more seriously. They listen to boys because they are more dominant,” said one girl from Nicaragua.

The research findings suggest a link between encouragement and **class participation** (this was evident in Ecuador) and encouragement and **leadership** (as was found in Nicaragua). Girls who feel empowerment to encourage in class also tend to feel empowered to participate in class and take a leadership role in school.

- **Class Participation:** Girls and boys in these communities also felt that on average girls **participate in class** as often as boys. Between 68-87% of girls involved in the study across the three countries claimed that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ participate as regularly as boys, and 66-85% of boys Plan spoke with said that adolescent girls participate in class as often as boys.

“We participate more in class [than boys],” said one adolescent girl from Paraguay.

“When we are asked for a response in class and we speak, the majority of the time we participate more than boys, because we are more applied to studies. If we get low grades, fathers and boys threaten to throw us out of school. Boys are restless and do not pay attention in class. They participate less than the girls,” said a girl from Nicaragua.

However, some girls expressed concern that their participation was sometimes interrupted by boys:

“We all participate in class because it gives us the opportunity to talk and to present in front of class. The boys interrupt us when we participate, pull our hair, bother us, push us, ask to borrow things in a rude manner, and take our things. Girls participate more than boys in the grade. Only three boys participate and the teachers do not say anything. They don’t know the answer when the teachers ask or they make fun of things. The teacher has to tell the girls not to answer so that the boys answer,” said a girl from Ecuador.

Lowest Levels of School Equality in Central and South America (Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay)

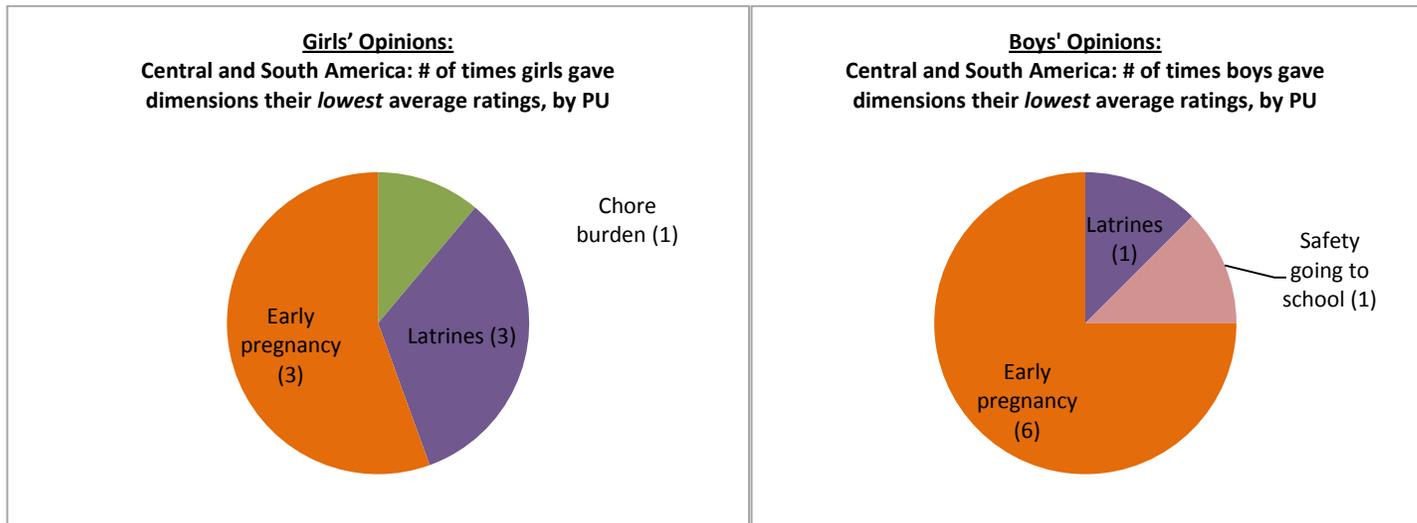
Findings from the [School Equality Scorecard](#): Lowest Levels of School Equality

In **Ecuador**, Plan spoke with 313 girls in 10 schools and 325 boys in 10 schools in PU Chimborazo and PU Quito. In **PU Chimborazo**, girls and boys said that **early pregnancy** was the lowest level of school equality by girls. In **PU Quito**, girls rated **latrines** as the lowest and boys felt that **early pregnancy** was the lowest area of school equality by girls.

In **Nicaragua**, Plan spoke with 270 girls in 10 schools and 284 boys in 10 schools in PU Chontales and PU VEC. In **PU Chontales**, both girls and boys said that **latrines** and **early pregnancy** were the lowest levels of school equality by girls. In **PU VEC**, girls felt that **latrines** and **early pregnancy** were the lowest areas of school equality, while boys claimed **early pregnancy** and **safety going to school** were the lowest areas of school equality by girls.

In **Paraguay**, Plan spoke with 266 girls in 10 schools and 278 boys in 10 schools in PU Caaguazú and PU Guaira. In **PU Caaguazú**, girls and boys felt that **early pregnancy** was the lowest area of school equality, and girls also said **chore burden**. In **PU Guaira**, both girls and boys felt that **early pregnancy** was the lowest level of school equality by girls.

*Figure 3: School Equality Scorecard: Frequencies of dimensions girls and boys rated the lowest on average by PU in Central and South America: On average, girls involved in the study in Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Paraguay rated **early pregnancy**, **latrines** and **chore burden** as the lowest levels of school equality, while boys rated **early pregnancy**, **latrines** and **safety going to school** the lowest.*



* Frequencies refer to numbers of PUs by region in which girls rated a dimension highest on average across data from selected communities. The maximum number of PUs per region is six, with two PUs per country, and three countries in Central and South America. Frequencies derive from data from selected schools and PUs and may not be representative of all schools in all PUs in Ecuador, Nicaragua or Paraguay.

- **Pregnancy:** When discussing the lowest levels of school equality by girls, adolescent girls and boys who Plan spoke with in these communities expressed concern with **early pregnancy** and being unable to continue school. Early pregnancy in many contexts precedes early marriage, and many girls are unaware how to prevent pregnancy.

“We do not know how to avoid pregnancy. Nobody speaks to us of that,” claimed one adolescent girl from Paraguay.

In Ecuador (PU Chimborazo), 65% of girls and 71% of boys involved in the study said that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ continue to attend school after having a baby. On the other hand, in another area in Ecuador (PU Quito), 41% of girls claimed that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ return to school.

In Nicaragua, although many schools in theory allow pregnant adolescent girls and young mothers to attend school, in practice, early pregnancy usually leads to school dropout for girls. A lack of infant care in the home and at school often prevents young mothers from continuing school. Girls whose partner, mother or another family member agrees to provide childcare or support her financially can create opportunities for the adolescent mother to return to school, although sometimes at a cost to household income and economic opportunities for the girls’ mother. Some parents do not allow their adolescent daughters to return to school after having a child. Some girls feel distressed and unwell following the birth and do not want to return to school. Many fear being laughed at, social stigma from peers, and being singled out by teachers as an example. Many young mothers end up not returning to school for reasons both of childcare and the need to earn money to support herself and the child.

“At school, teachers do not accept or allow further study [after a girl becomes pregnant] because it is a bad example for the school,” said one adolescent girl from Nicaragua.

“...the girl would not continue school because: Other girls may make fun of them...the husband, parents and in-laws will no longer support them and they feel ashamed to go back. Additionally, they have to work to support the baby and take care of the husband,” said one adolescent girl from Ecuador.

“Girls who become pregnant in the community are not attending classes after having their babies because they have to work and care for their children,” said one adolescent girl from Paraguay.

The majority of adolescent boys who Plan spoke with in these countries were aware that early pregnancy was a huge issue for adolescent girls. The study revealed that boys do want to support girls’ empowerment through addressing barriers, including early pregnancy and its effects on girls’ school dropout.

“Concerning pregnancy, the boy should also have responsibility/guilt,” said one adolescent boy from Paraguay.
“Young men should be trained in how to avoid pregnancy,” said one adolescent boy from Paraguay.

“How nice it would be for women to have a child when they are prepared,” said one adolescent boy from Paraguay.

Adolescent boys have the opportunity to become champions of change and play an active role in challenging harmful social norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

- **Latrines:** School **latrines** were another concern for girls and boys in these communities, especially in Nicaragua and Ecuador.

In Nicaragua's PU Chontales, nearly two-thirds (65%) of all girls and boys involved in the study said that adolescent girls are 'never' comfortable using toilets at school. Adolescent girls and boys said that there are not separate latrines for them to use. Many adolescent girls voiced issues of latrines being dirty, not having doors, and not functioning. Many girls are afraid of contracting diseases from using a dirty latrine, and some girls feel they "suffocate" from the odor of dirty and poorly functioning latrines. Some latrines have doors, however the doors have holes in them through which others can see inside. Issues of boys spying on girls, locking girls inside latrines, and sexually harassing girls around latrines, all emerged as pressing concerns in Nicaragua.

"We do not go to the bathroom when the boys spy by putting a cell phone in a shoe and take video and see everything. They also lift our skirts when we walk by," said one adolescent girl in Nicaragua.

"Most girls feel that they have no security when they go to the latrines. Boys look at them when they go to urinate. The facilities are dirty and the floor is full of urine with no toilet. The girls have to endure because the latrines are dirty, and find it better to wait until they get home from school," said an adolescent boy from Nicaragua.

In Ecuador (PU Quito), 67% of girls involved in the study said that adolescent girls 'never' or 'seldom' feel comfortable using the school latrines.

"Girls do not like going into the bathrooms because they share them with boys," said one adolescent girl in Ecuador.

"The bathrooms are dirty, the walls are all scratched and girls say that the boys climb on the doors to spy on them," said one adolescent girl in Ecuador.

On the other hand, 66-82% of girls involved in the study in Paraguay said that adolescent girls 'always' or 'often' feel comfortable using the school latrines.

"We feel safe in the bathrooms at school because they are separate [girls versus boys]," said an adolescent girl from Paraguay.

Appendix: Quotes from Girls and Boys in Central and South America

Quotes from Ecuador:

Pregnancy and Marriage

- *“... some girls do not finish tenth grade because they get pregnant and sometimes the parents do not make themselves responsible. They get married and leave school and some parents abandon them, then they don’t have anyone to support them to work and advance in life. On the other hand, for the majority of girls in this community, parents do support girls to finish with basic education.”* – girl, PU Cotopaxi community
- *“The girls do not decide to marry, but the parents oblige them to do so for ambition (men that have land, a car or a job) with older men. For example, if the girls are 14 years old, their parents marry them with someone that is 25-30 years old. In other cases, girls leave their house because they get pregnant.”* – girl, PU Ventanas community
- *“... overall, the girls think that they almost never decide if they want to get pregnant or not, ... they do not know how to avoid pregnancy and think that nothing is going to happen to them. This shows that there is a lack of knowledge about pregnancy prevention methods.”* – girl, PU Cotopaxi community
- *“...the girl would not continue school because: Other girls may make fun of them...the husband, parents and in-laws will no longer support them and they feel ashamed to go back. Additionally, they have to work to support the baby and take care of the husbands.”* – girl, PU Chimborazo school
- *“...they continue to study because they have all the right.”* – girl, PU Quito school
- *“The majority of boys commented that it is complicated for an adolescent to continue studying when they get pregnant; they have to take care of their baby and have to work to be able to support him [or her]. The boys also mention that if the girl wants to continue studying, she needs to have someone else to take care of the baby.”* – boy, PU Quito
- *“Boys say that there are no young girls who have become pregnant, but there have been cases of adolescents who have and also have married. However, they do not continue school because they are embarrassed to go to school with the baby. They do not have the money for food and studies. Their husbands don’t allow them to go to school, are jealous, and make them cook and clean. Further, schools do not allow pregnant girls or girls with babies because they cry.”* – boy, PU Chimborazo school

Encouragement

- *“The same encouragement is given to a girl, but [teachers] do not take them more seriously. They listen to boys because they are more dominant.”* - girl, PU Chontales school, Nicaragua
- *“Girls want to have more self-confidence to not feel afraid or ashamed to express their feeling and needs.”* – girl, PU Ventanas community
- *“The girls and boys are encouraged by their family and teachers, especially by their parents. Their parents and teachers support them in completing their studies and advise them to complete high school, obtain good grades, and study in order to pass their year. When they have good grades, their parents reward them with money and congratulations.”* – Girl, PU Chimborazo school
- *“We all participate in class because it gives us the opportunity to talk and to present in front of class. The boys interrupt us when we participate, pull our hair, bother us, push us, ask to borrow things in a rude manner, and take our things. Girls participate more than boys in the grade. Only three boys participate and the teachers do not say anything. They don’t know the answer when the teachers ask or they make fun of things. The teacher has to tell the girls not to answer so that the boys answer.”* – Girl, PU Quito school
- *“With respect to encouragement [...] girls are encouraged to study; the teachers, fathers, mothers and their classmates encourage the girls to continue their studies so that they can enhance their condition and reach their goals and objectives.”* – boy, PU Chimborazo school, Ecuador
- *“Boys are encouraged as much as girls to excel in their school work. The boys say that both boys and girls need that encouragement.”* – Boy, PU Quito school

Latrines

- *“[Girls] can use the bathroom without a problem and they like them.”* – girl, PU Chimborazo school

- *“Girls do not like going into the bathrooms because they share them with boys.”* – girl, PU Chimborazo school
- *“The bathrooms are dirty, the walls are all scratched and girls say that the boys climb on the doors to spy on them.”* – girl, PU Quito school

Quotes from Nicaragua:

Early Marriage

- *“Some girls marry because their boyfriends have money. There are girls 16 years old that marry adults 22 to 24 years old.”* – girl, PU Chontales community
- *“There are girls who are forced to marry because they are pregnant. They get married with the pregnancy, but they do not want it. Many are pregnant by rape. They did not choose to become pregnant.”* – girl, PU Chontales community

Pregnancy

- *“At school, teachers do not accept or allow further study [after a girl becomes pregnant] because it is a bad example for the school.”* – girl, PU Chontales school
- *“When girls become pregnant, they drop out of school because friends talk about them, criticize them. They leave school to care for their child, more if their mother does not help with the child.”* – boy, PU Chontales school
- *“In early pregnancy, most girls said that after having a baby, they do not continue studying because parents tell them they cannot study because they have to care for the baby.”* – boy, PU Chontales school
- *“Some girls who are pregnant should not have left studying daily for fear of judgment or discrimination. [...] Although the school does support them, they feel bad, sad, unmotivated and regretful for having made bad decisions.”* – girl, PU VEC school
- *“Adolescent girls, after having a child, do not continue their studies because their husbands tell them that they have to take care of the house and the child.”* – girl, PU VEC school
- *“Girls are discriminated against, and have to take care of the baby. They have responsibility for the child and husband. They can continue studying [though] because the school allows this.”* – boy, PU VEC school

Safety

- *“I just feel safe with my family, because no one else cares for us. Rape and kidnapping cases are a given.”* – girl, PU Chontales community
- *“At night, I do not feel safe. I don’t feel safe in school either, as the boys don’t respect us. A girl, my cousin, was raped in daytime in the park. Another cousin was also raped. Girls cannot go out, only in short moments, even in the day, and should go accompanied.”* – girl, PU Chontales community
- *“There are neighbourhoods that are dangerous, and there are gangs. Also in the house, girls do not feel safe. [...] There are stepfathers abusing stepdaughters and mothers do not believe them. Girls feel confused.”* – girl, PU Chontales community
- *“In the community, there is no security. There are aggressive people making big problems out of little problems. Drunk and lazy people can be a hazard. Women tend not to go out late at night. The boys also face danger, but they go out, walking in the streets, and can also be harmed.”* – girl, PU VEC community
- *“Abusers are men who bully and threaten, some coming from distant communities. Some induce students to drink alcohol. The road is a risk. Girls are safe when they are accompanied or driven in a vehicle, or by bus or taxi. Although a driver raped a girl.”* – boy, PU VEC

Leadership

- *“...there are more girls than boys and this gives space for girls to participate more in the classroom. Most girls hold the post of vice president... two boys occupy the post of president.”* – Girl, PU Chontales school
- *“There are ‘always’ those who feel like leaders. [...] Also ‘sometimes’ because most of the time we are dealing with more male than female leaders, with few classrooms that have more girls than boys.”* – girl, PU Chontales school

- *“More than half believe that girls’ leadership is more or equal to that of boys. In this [grade], we are equal in leadership. We take both [boys and girls] into account. Most presidents are women. [...] To make this choice is to choose the most intelligent and voted for.”* – girl, PU VEC school
- *“If there are more girls than boys in an assembly, only the boys will put forth ideas, because they say that only boys have skills [...] they don’t see what we are. But I always give my opinion. If we say something they ask why or for what.”* – girl, PU VEC School

Encouragement

- *“The same encouragement is given to a girl, but [teachers] do not take them more seriously. They listen to boys because they are more dominant.”* - girl, PU Chontales school
- *“[Girls] are treated equally as they congratulate you when you get good grades and study to have a good future.”* - girl, PU Chontales school
- *“[...] teachers always encourage us, girls as much as boys. They save us when we do wrong, not just one, but all of us.”* - girl, PU Chontales school
- *“Most boys thought the teachers help “always” or “almost always” because when someone has low performance, after class the teacher is there to help. Teachers want equally to help and do exercises with boys and girls so that they improve.”* – boy, PU Chontales school
- *“Most teachers congratulate everyone equally and make fun games with applause to give recognition. We are always encouraged alike because they say we all have the same rights.”* – boy, PU Chontales school
- *“The teachers equally encourage boys and girls, ask questions, answer requests for clarification, assess the classroom and encourages learning depending on girls’ and boys’ interests.”* – boy, PU VEC school
- *“Teachers support everyone equally irrespective of gender, and also encourage us to overcome limitations. They do not allow anyone to become depressed or have low self-esteem.”* – boy, PU VEC school
- *“Girls whose partners or parents help them manage to continue studying.”* – girl, PU Chontales school

Class Participation

- *“Most girls ‘always’ think that girls are as involved as boys in class because teachers promote equal participation in order to enable them to pass their subjects.”* – girl, PU VEC school
- *“When we are asked for a response in class and we speak, the majority of the time we participate more than boys, because we are more applied to studies. If we get low grades, fathers and boys threaten to throw us out of school. Boys are restless and do not pay attention in class. They participate less than the girls.”* – girl, PU VEC school

Chore burden

- *“[Girls and boys] participate equally because there is a cleaning role that we do together.”* – boy, PU Chontales school
- *“[Still,] there are some that are lazy and do not participate in cleaning.”* – boy, PU Chontales
- *“Teachers force girls to do the cleaning and so sometimes we do the same.”* – boy, PU Chontales
- *“These are shared responsibilities.”* – boy, PU Chontales
- *“Girls and boys participate equally because there is a role of cleaning the toilets, which we do at the same time.”* – boy, PU Chontales
- *“Girls are more concerned to see the classroom clean.”* – boy, PU Chontales
- *“The husband will not permit [doing] baby care. They are embarrassed to be told that the girl will be a mother while in school. Some girls do not associate with pregnant girls or young mothers.”* – boy, PU VEC school

School Latrines

- *“There is no privacy. Boys are very naughty. One left me a snake in the latrine and after that I did not go again because I was scared. Also a boy was spying on me. I do not go because of animals, messiness, odor, no privacy, and fear there may be diseases.”* – girl, PU Chontales school

- *“Most girls feel that they have no security when they go to the latrines. Boys look at them when they go to urinate. The facilities are dirty and the floor is full of urine with no toilet. The girls have to endure because the latrines are dirty, and find it better to wait until they get home from school.”* – boy, PU Chontales school
- *“...found condoms and sanitary napkins there. We do not sit with confidence, we are always uncomfortable because you can get a vaginal infection.”* – girl, PU VEC school
- *“Although there are latrines for boys and girls, they are not in good condition. Boys leave the girls inside as the locks are on the outside. When girls go to the bathroom alone, they pursue them and ask them for kisses. And as for cleaning these, sometimes the director orders teachers to send girls to clean the male and female latrines. In the afternoon and evening, latrines have limited availability and we have to go to other latrines that are usually dirty.”* – girl, PU VEC school
- *“We do not go to the bathroom when the boys spy by putting a cell phone in a shoe and take video and see everything. They also lift our skirts when we walk by.”* – girl, PU VEC school

Quotes from Paraguay

Money

- *“Women are not good at managing money, my mother said.”* – girl, PU Guaira community

Encouragement

- *“We are encouraged equally as boys.”* – girl, PU Caguazu school
- *“The encouragement of teachers and students towards boys and girls is equal at school.”* – boy, PU Caaguazu school
- *“Boys receive more encouragement than girls for cultural reasons.”* – boy, PU Guaira school

Participation

- *“We participate more in class [than boys].”* – girl, PU Caaguazu

School Latrines

- *“We feel safe in the bathrooms at school because they are separate [girls versus boys].”* – girl, PU Caaguazu

Leadership

- *“Girls are the more often elected because they are more responsible, dedicated and have confidence.”* – girl, PU Guaira school
- *“Girls are almost always elected in their grades for school governance as they are considered more responsible, but boys don’t always want to do what girls tell them to do.”* – girl, PU Guaira school

Safety

- *“We feel safe at school.”* – girl, PU Guaira school

Pregnancy

- *“Girls who become pregnant in the community are not attending classes after having their babies because they have to work and care for their children.”* – girl, PU Caaguazu school
- *“Girls who become pregnant are studying hard.”* – girl, PU Caaguazu school
- *“Pregnant girls need help and encouragement in order to continue studying.”* – girl, PU Guaira school
- *“We do not know how to avoid pregnancy. Nobody speaks to us of that.”* – girl, PU Guaira school
- *“Pregnant girls do not return to school because of embarrassment.”* – boy, PU Caaguazu school
- *“Conduct training for women not to become pregnant more.”* – boy, PU Caaguazu school
- *“Young men should be trained in how to avoid pregnancy.”* – boy, PU Caaguazu school
- *“A girl at age 12 became pregnant and could hardly resume studies after giving birth.”* – boy, PU Guaira

- *“Concerning pregnancy, the boy should also have responsibility/guilt.”* – boy, PU Guaira
- *“How nice it would be for women to have a child when they are prepared.”* – boy, PU Guaira school

Chore Burden

- *“Boys do not perform nearly any cleaning tasks at school.”* – girl, PU Caaguazu school