

Adolescent Girls’ Empowerment in Asia (Bangladesh and Pakistan)

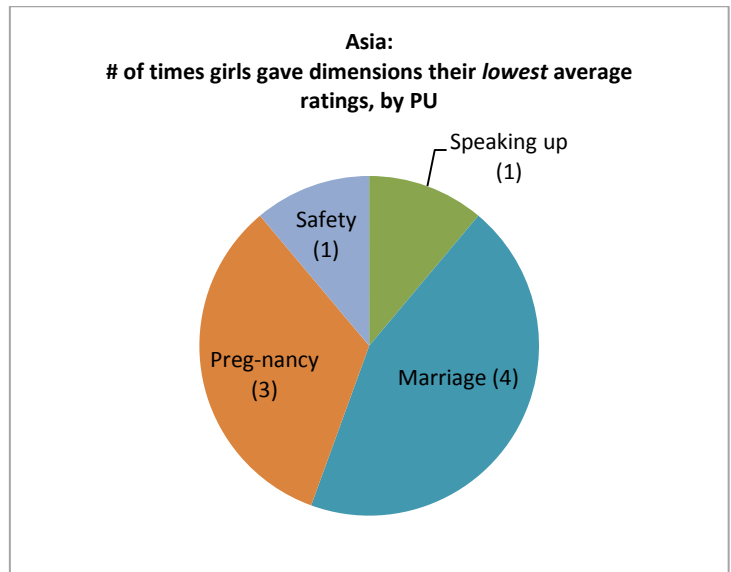
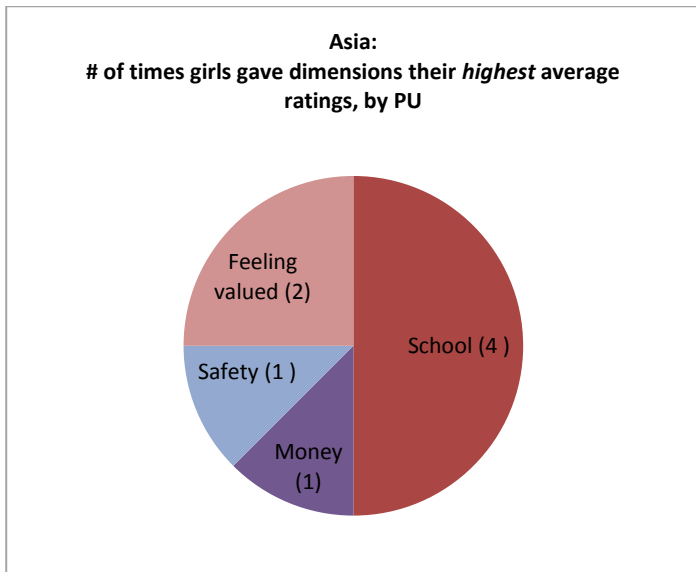


Findings from the [Girls Empowerment Star](#):

In **Bangladesh**, Plan spoke with 165 adolescent girls in PU Barguna and PU Nilphamari, in six communities. On average, girls in **PU Barguna** felt most empowered in accessing nine-years of **school**, and least empowered in feeling **safe** in their community. In **PU Nilphamari**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered around **school** and **feeling valued**, and least empowered around **household work** and deciding when to **marry**.

In **Pakistan**, Plan spoke with 176 adolescent girls in PU Thatta and PU Vehari, in six communities. On average, girls in **PU Thatta** felt most empowered around the dimensions of **school**, **safety**, and **feeling valued**, and least empowered around aspects of **marriage**, **pregnancy**, and **speaking up**. In **PU Vehari**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered completing **school**, and least empowered deciding if and when to **marry**.

Figure 1: Figure 8: Girls Empowerment Star: Frequencies of highest and lowest average rated dimensions of girls’ empowerment by PU in Asia: On average, girls involved in the study in Bangladesh and Pakistan felt most empowered around **school** and **feeling valued**, and least empowered around aspects of **marriage** 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 in the study is six, with two PUs per country, and two countries in Asia. Frequencies derive therefore from data from three selected communities in two each of two PUs in Asia and may not be representative of all communities in PUs in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

- **School:** Half of all girls that Plan spoke with in Bangladesh and Pakistan said that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ complete at least nine years of **school**. In Bangladesh, adolescent girls explained that many more girls are now going to school because of scholarships and free books from the government, and that there are now more girls than boys in school. Adolescent girls said that more parents are aware of the value of girl’s education as a result of these government programmes.

“The government is now giving free books and scholarships, so girls want to be educated. No girls want to be unemployed and stay at home,” said one adolescent girl in Bangladesh.

Adolescent girls involved in the study in these communities revealed that parents are supportive of girls’ education and see education as a path to respect and status within society. Girls in Pakistan shared the view that literacy and education for girls are expected to make an entire family more literate.

“Parents want to educate their child and establish them in society. If girls are educated, society people respect them,” said one adolescent girl from Bangladesh.

“My father loves me a lot, so he encourages me. Teachers don’t do this,” said one adolescent girl from Pakistan.

“Education is important as it empowers a girl to become economically independent and break the cycle of poverty. It also improves women’s status in the community as they will be having control over economic resources,” said one adolescent girl from Bangladesh.

Still, girls’ education is less valued in poorer households and some girls are forced to drop out of school due to **poverty** or **early marriage**. Girls from poorer households are sometimes married off by their parents at early ages and unable to continue their schooling.

“Not all girls go to school. What is the benefit of high education for poor people? Parents marry them off at an early age,” said one girl from Bangladesh.

The findings from Bangladesh and Pakistan also reveal that weak state education systems, security issues, poverty, sexual harassment, early pregnancy, and early marriage prevent many girls from going to secondary school within these communities.

- **Marriage:** Adolescent girls involved in the study in Asia claimed that adolescent girls did not feel empowered around deciding if they marry. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, girls from all PU communities said that marriage is the lowest aspect of adolescent girls’ empowerment. In Pakistan, 71-86% of all girls involved in the study said that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide if they marry. In Bangladesh, 54-61% of girls who Plan spoke with said that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide if they marry. Parents arrange girls’ marriages and adolescent girls rarely have a say in the matter. Some parents believe that girls are not able to make the right decisions regarding marriage. Many girls’ mothers and sisters have also experienced early and forced marriage making it more commonplace to arrange marriages for their daughters. Girls said parents see themselves as more experienced and better decision-makers, especially fathers who girls said see themselves as knowing better than women and girls. Some parents think that if a girl does not want to marry, then she must be having an affair.

“Our marriages are arranged with the choice of our parents,” stated one adolescent girl from Pakistan.

“Parents think it is a very important decision of life. Girls can’t make right decisions regarding marriage,” said one adolescent girl from Pakistan.

“Girls cannot talk to their parents about their liking or disliking regarding marriage. Otherwise, the parents get angry and say, ‘you have to accept our decision; we are not going to listen to whatever you say’,” said one adolescent girl from Bangladesh.

Some adolescent girls referred to laws or policies in their country that can protect them from being forced into marriage. In Bangladesh’s PU Nilphamari, adolescent girls referred to a law against marriage before the age of 18 and they hope that early marriage will end as a practice. Other girls in Bangladesh’s PU Barguna said that there is a law against child marriage in their community, however it is not being implemented properly. Some girls in Pakistan said that early marriage is being practiced less often since NGO activities have been raising awareness on the issue in the area (PU Thatta).

Early marriage is also linked to school dropout. In some cases, husbands, parents, or in-laws refuse to allow married adolescent girls to continue school, and in other cases schools do not permit married or pregnant girls to attend class.

“The in-laws do not allow them to come to school as they mean there is no use of education after getting married,” said one adolescent girl from Bangladesh

“They never have a single example for married girls who come to school after having a baby,” said one adolescent girl from Pakistan.

- **Pregnancy:** Adolescent girls involved in the study in Asia felt that girls were least empowered around **pregnancy**. Pregnancy is linked with early marriage, and both pregnancy and marriage directly affects girls’ ability to continue school and to be safe and healthy. In Pakistan, 50-74% of girls Plan spoke with said that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide if they get pregnant.

“Girls do not have decision-making power over pregnancy. The male says to them ‘you are machines to birth children’,” said one adolescent girl from Pakistan.

The findings from Bangladesh were very different within and between programme areas. For instance, in one programme area (PU Barguna), 65% of girls Plan spoke with said that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide if they get pregnant.

“Husbands oppress females into compulsory conception, and sometimes mother and father-in-laws also. Girls do not know which age is perfect for conception. Mainly, males take decisions about pregnancy,” said one adolescent girl in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, 29% of girls involved in another programme area in Bangladesh (PU Nilphamari) said that adolescent girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide if they get pregnant, while 41% said that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ decide if to get pregnant. In PU Nilphamari, there might be a correlation between early pregnancy, **feeling valued**, and **speaking up**. For example, 41% of girls Plan spoke with in this programme area said that adolescent girls’ concerns were ‘always’

or 'often' valued in the community, and 38% of girls said adolescent girls 'always' or 'often' speak up and say what they think in front of men and boys.

- **Feeling valued:** Girls Plan spoke with in these communities of Bangladesh and Pakistan felt that adolescent girls are often valued by their community, although the data reveals complexities and large variability between and within countries. For instance, in Bangladesh, 26-59% of girls involved in the study said that adolescent girls 'never' or 'seldom' felt valued, and 23-41% said that adolescent girls are 'always' or 'often' valued in their community. In Pakistan, 38-39% of girls Plan spoke with said adolescent girls' concerns 'never' or 'seldom' matter, while 35-45% said adolescent girls' concerns 'always' or 'often' matter.

"Our parents give respect to us, they honor us, because in our communities, girls are signs of honor," said one adolescent girl in Pakistan.

"Do women have intelligence? What is the use of showing them respect; they are good for nothing," said an adolescent girl from Bangladesh.

Though some girls reported feeling valued for their conformity to traditional gender roles and responsibilities, and fulfilling the expectations of husbands, in-laws and parents around bearing children.

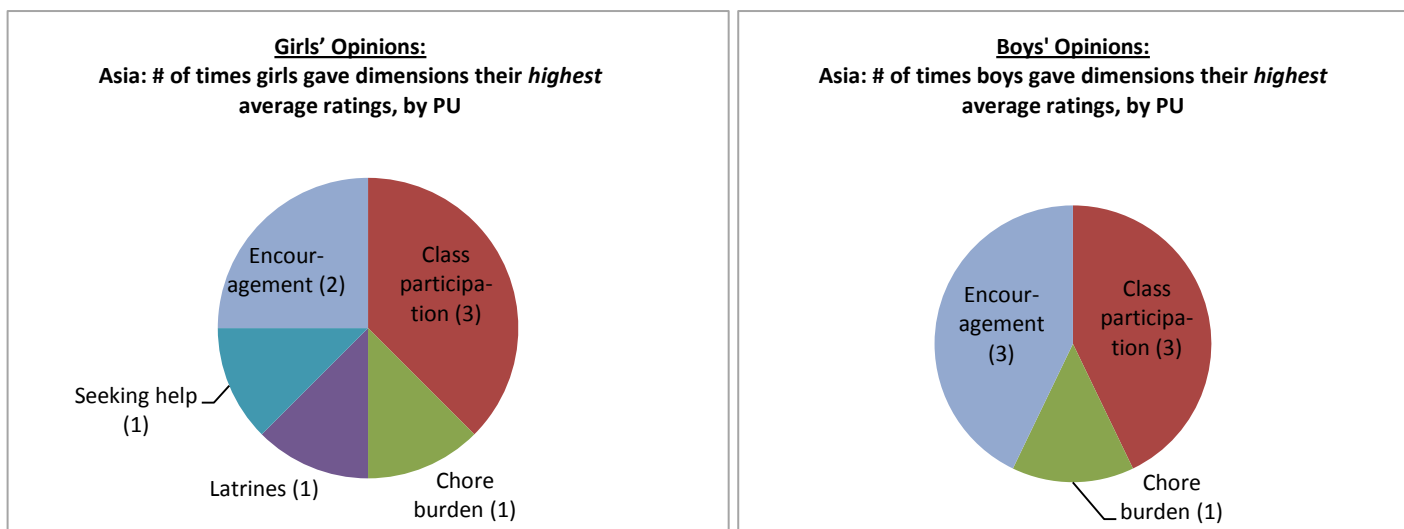
Highest Levels of School Equality in Asia (Bangladesh and Pakistan)

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

In **Bangladesh**, Plan spoke with 271 girls in 10 schools and 266 boys in 10 schools in PU Barguna and PU Nilphamari. In **PU Barguna**, both girls and boys rated **class participation** and **encouragement** the highest levels of school equality by girls. In **PU Nilphamari**, girls rated **class participation** and **seeking help** as the highest, and boys rated **class participation** as the highest level of school equality

In **Pakistan**, Plan spoke with 263 girls in 9 schools and 252 boys in 9 schools in PU Thatta and PU Vehari. In **PU Thatta**, both girls and boys rated **class participation** and **encouragement** as the highest levels of school equality. In **PU Vehari**, girls rated **chore burden** and **latrines** as the highest, while boys rated **chore burden** and **encouragement** as the highest levels of school equality by girls.

Figure 2: School Equality Scorecard: Frequencies of dimensions girls and boys rated the highest on average by PU in Asia: On average, both girls and boys involved in the study in Bangladesh and Pakistan rated **class participation**, **encouragement**, and **chore burden** as the highest levels of school equality by girls.



* 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 in the study is six, with two PUs per country, and two countries in Asia. Frequencies derive from data from selected schools and PUs and may not be representative of all schools in all PUs in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

- **Class Participation** and **Encouragement**: Girls and boys Plan spoke with in Bangladesh and Pakistan claimed that **class participation** and **encouragement** were the highest levels of school equality by adolescent girls. In many schools in the study, girls are often encouraged to succeed academically as much as boys. High levels of encouragement also influence girls' class participation in class. For instance, in Bangladesh, 85-87% of girls involved in the study claimed that adolescent girls 'always' or 'often' participate in class as often as boys, and 78-94% stated that adolescent girls are 'always' or 'often' encouraged to succeed in their schoolwork as much as boys. In Pakistan, 51-53% of girls involved in the study claimed that girls participate in class as often as boys, and 62-75% stated that adolescent girls are encouraged to succeed in their schoolwork as much as boys.

"We are all equal in the classroom," said one adolescent girl from Pakistan.

“Girls can participate in class freely like boys, because the teacher has treated boys and girls equally in the class. Girls also can share their problems with their female teachers,” said an adolescent girl from Bangladesh.

Boys involved in the study reported higher levels of **class participation** for adolescent girls than girls did themselves: 90-91% of boys in Bangladesh and 74-75% of boys in Pakistan said that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ participate in class as often as boys.

“Girls usually do best, so they receive encouragement,” said one adolescent boy from Pakistan.

“There is no discrimination between boys and girls in classroom. Teacher’s give equal importance to both boys and girls,” said one adolescent boy from Bangladesh.

“Girls are as intelligent as boys,” said one adolescent boy in Bangladesh.

Girls and boys involved in the study also revealed that adolescent girls are often supported and treated equally by **teachers**:

“Girls can participate in class freely like boys, because the teacher has treated boys and girls equally in class. Girls also can share their problem with their female teacher,” said one girl from Bangladesh.

“There is no discrimination between boys and girls in [the] classroom. Teachers give equal importance to both boys and girls,” said one boy from Bangladesh.

“Teachers create opportunity equally for all. Teachers mostly do not prefer to ask questions from intelligent girls, but give preference to girls who appeared slow learners,” said one girl in Pakistan.

On the other hand, some girls in Pakistan expressed concern that they were encouraged and valued less than boys in the classroom.

“Mostly students said as a girl they are not encouraged by teachers or parents to take leadership responsibilities, because they think only boys can be leaders,” said one adolescent girl in Pakistan.

“My father loves me a lot, so he encourages me. Teacher’s don’t do this,” said one adolescent girl in Pakistan.

- **Chore burden:** In Asia, girls and boys who Plan spoke with revealed that **chore burden** at school was another high level of school equality by adolescent girls. In one programme area in Pakistan (PU Vehari), 84% of girls and 81% of boys claimed that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ spend the same amount of time doing chores at school as boys. The findings were considerably lower in another programme area in Pakistan (PU Thatta): only 35% of girls and 42% of boys said that adolescent girls spend an equal amount of time doing chores at school. The findings were also lower in Bangladesh whereby 45-55% of girls and 53-67% of boys claimed that adolescent girls and boys ‘always’ or ‘often’ equally share chore burden at school.

One explanation for the higher levels of school equality by girls around chore burden in Pakistan (PU Vehari) includes having a rotating schedule of chores involving boys equally as girls helping to promote gender equality in chore burden

in the classroom. This is a unique example across the 11 countries in the study and it could be considered as a model practice to replicate in other schools and countries.

“Children do participate in the cleanliness of the room regularly. There is a turn for every two students per day and almost all the students take their turn. Those who have the turn to clean the classroom environment would come earlier than the school time and would do their task,” said one adolescent boy from Pakistan (PU Vehari).

Although this system is in place, girls and boys said that adolescent girls are still seen as being largely responsible for chores in the classroom.

“The girls participate in cleanliness and tidiness more than boys,” said one adolescent boy from Pakistan.

“Mostly girls do chores because they are interested in this activity,” said one adolescent girl from Pakistan.

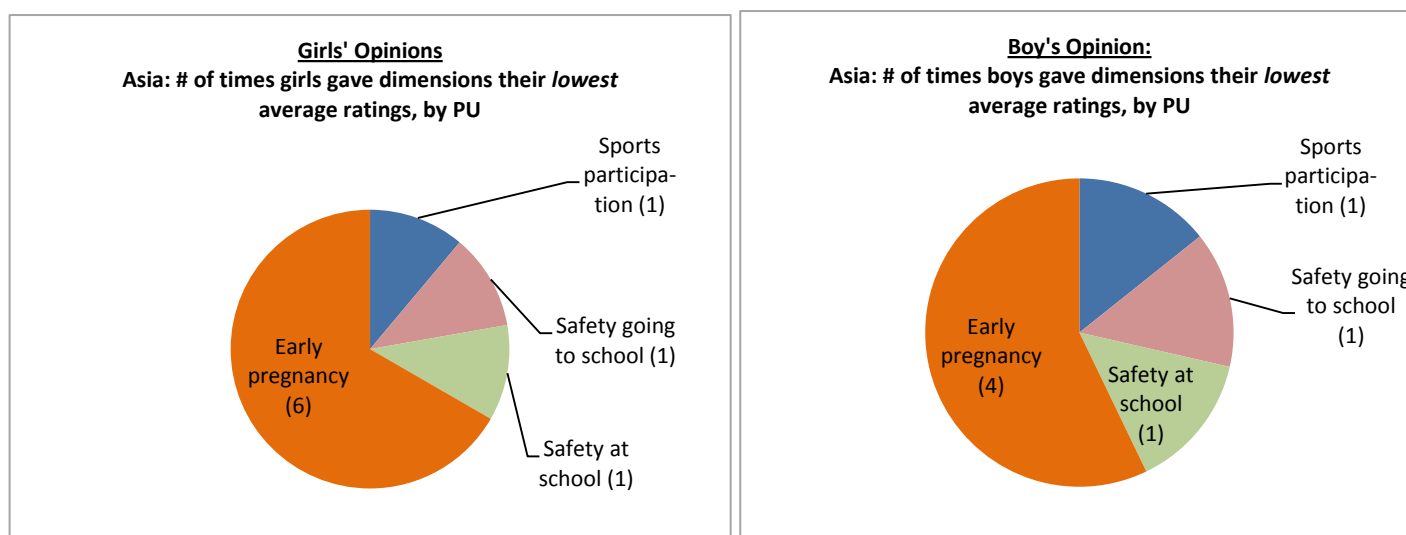
Lowest Levels of School Equality in Asia (Bangladesh and Pakistan)

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

In **Bangladesh**, Plan spoke with 271 girls in 10 schools and 266 boys in 10 schools in PU Barguna and PU Nilphamari. In **PU Barguna**, both girls and boys rated **safety going to school** and **early pregnancy** as the lowest levels of school equality by girls. In **PU Nilphamari**, girls and boys rated **early pregnancy** as the lowest level of school equality, and boys also rated **sports participation** as low.

In **Pakistan**, Plan spoke with 263 girls in 9 schools and 252 boys in 9 schools in PU Thatta and PU Vehari. In **PU Thatta**, both girls and boys rated **safety at school** and **early pregnancy** as the lowest levels. In **PU Vehari**, girls rated **sports participation** and **early pregnancy** as the lowest, while boys rated **early pregnancy** as the lowest area of school equality by girls.

*Figure 3: School Equality Scorecard: Frequencies of dimensions girls and boys rated the lowest on average by PU in Asia: On average, both girls and boys involved in the study in Bangladesh and Pakistan rated **early pregnancy** as the lowest level of school equality by girls, followed by **safety at school**, **safety going to school**, and **sports participation**.*



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- **Early pregnancy:** Girls and boys who participated in the study in these communities largely said that the lowest level of school equality by girls relates to **early pregnancy** and girls not being able to return to school after having a baby. In Pakistan, over three-quarters of all girls (76-95%) and boys (74-84%) said that adolescent girls 'never' or 'seldom' continue school after having a baby.

"Girls do not have decision-making power over pregnancy. The male says to them 'you are machines to birth children'," said one adolescent girl in Pakistan.

"Some of the pregnant girls are not allowed to appear even in the exam," said one adolescent girl in Pakistan.

Some of the girls noted that their schools will not allow a pregnant or married girl to attend school and they did not have an example of an adolescent mother returning to school. These girls also mentioned that child marriage is

common in their community. In contrast, adolescent girls from educated families tend more often to return to their studies after childbirth or early marriage, particularly when their fathers or husbands value girls' education and support them in doing so. One participant suggested creating all-girls' schools as a way of increasing opportunities for pregnant girls, young mothers and married girls to continue their education.

Girls and boys in Bangladesh also expressed concerns about early pregnancy – over three-quarters of all girls (79-88%) and boys (74-84%) involved in the study said that adolescent girls 'never' or 'seldom' return to school after having a baby.

“Due to illness during pregnancy, they stop coming to school” and “They also stop coming to school as they meet their death while giving birth,” said one adolescent girl in Bangladesh.

“The husband does not permit his wife to come to school,” said one girl from Bangladesh.

“The in-laws do not allow them to come to school as they mean there is no use of education after getting married,” said one adolescent girl from Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, pregnant adolescent girls and new young mothers fear bullying and stigma if they try to continue their studies. Adolescent mothers' increased caregiving and household work responsibilities also reduce their time, energy and resources for returning to school. Married girls are considered “adults” and it becomes no longer socially appropriate for them to attend school and interact with students. Husbands, in-laws, and parents often expect an adolescent mother to focus on traditional gender roles and tasks of being a wife and mother. Some young mothers do not return to school because of health problems from early pregnancy and childbirth, or because of maternal mortality. In contrast, some girls who come from educated families in these communities in Bangladesh tend to have more support for returning to their studies after having a child. Also, girls who have healthy pregnancies and safe childbirth experiences sometimes continue their studies, however this is rarer than girls leaving school, and rarer still the younger the girl may be given early pregnancy health risks.

- **Safety going to school:** Safety going to and from school was another low aspect of school equality, although the findings varied considerably. For instance, in one programme area in Pakistan (PU Vehari), 78% of girls and 63% of boys Plan spoke with said that adolescent girls are 'always' or 'often' as safe as boys on their way to and from school. In another area (PU Thatta) however, only 33% of girls and 30% of boys said that adolescent girls are 'always' or 'often' as safe as boys when travelling to and from school. Participants in Pakistan revealed that adolescent girls rarely walk to school alone because of safety risks, and that girls are often accompanied by a male family member or walk in groups with other girls to make them feel safer.

“Rarely a girl came to school alone. Abnormal persons and hooting of bad boys restrict us from coming alone,” said one adolescent girl in Pakistan.

“Once when I was on the way to school, a boy [tried to bother] me, but I did not feel fear. We walk in a group of girls so we don't feel fear,” said one adolescent girl in Pakistan.

In Bangladesh, more boys (50-75%) than girls (34-42%) said that adolescent girls are 'always' or 'often' as safe as boys when travelling to and from school. Girls and boys cited similar reasons for adolescent girls being less safe than boys.

These included: bullying, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment by boys and men on the streets; unsafe transportation due to abuse and attack by drivers or other passengers; being blackmailed with photos taken forcibly with mobile phones and posted on the internet; early and forced marriage as a result of blackmailing and threat; acid attacks; and rape. Girls raised examples of some girls committing suicide following an attack. It was also revealed that poorer girls are targeted more for attacks than girls from wealthier families, and girls who live closer to the school report being safer on the way to and from school than girls who live farther away and must walk long distances.

“Three years back a guy took photo of a girl without her consent on the way to school. Then he attached his photo to hers and started threatening her by saying that, if she didn’t agree to have an affair with him then he would show that photo to her family and tell false story of their relationship. Although not willing, still she had to get involved with him. Some days after [the start of] their love affair he got physically close to her and then left her. Out of shame the girl committed suicide,” said one adolescent girl in Bangladesh.

Girls are not safe as boys because they are often harassed by the eve teasers. In transports, helpers try to hold their hand and stay closely,” said one adolescent boy in Bangladesh.

Appendix: Quotes from Girls and Boys in Asia

Quotes from Bangladesh:

School:

- *“Not all girls go to school. What is the benefit of high education for poor people? Parents marry them off at an early age.”
“Education is important as it empowers a girl to become economically independent and break the circle of poverty. It also improves women’s status in the community as they will be having control over economic resources.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“Parents want to educate their child and establish them in society. If girls are educated, society people respect them.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“The government is now giving free books and scholarships, so girls want to be educated. No girls want to be unemployed and stay at home.”* – girl, PU Barguna community

Feeling valued:

- *“Girls who study and will earn money do receive respect. Girls who are working for less money, it will be [necessary] to marry them off and they [will] receive respect.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari community
- *“Do women have intelligence? What is the use of showing them respect; they are good for nothing.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari community
- *“Girls are treated equally by the teachers and the teachers are very open hearted. They encourage the girls like clapping hands mentioning their name. Girls are also interested to know any matter. They don’t feel shy.”* – girl, PU Barguna school
- *“Those who are brilliant and have enough money from their father don’t fear anything, and so they participate in the class.”* – girl, PU Barguna school

Class participation:

- *“Girls can participate in class freely like boys, because the teacher has treated boys and girls equally in the class. Girls also can share their problem with their female teacher.”* – girl, PU Barguna school
- *“Sir even asks the girls, sitting in the rear, whether they have understood or not.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“When girls are asked to participate about their classes they said no. One girl argued that they could not because they feel ashamed. They are also laughed at and sometimes they cannot get advantage. Teachers do not emphasize the female education.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“There is no discrimination between boys and girls in classroom. Teacher’s give equal importance to both boys and girls.”* – boy, PU Barguna school
- *“Girls are quite frank with teachers.”* – boy, PU Barguna school
- *“Everyone was of the opinion that girls and boys can equally participate in class as it is their right and freedom. The teachers are open-minded and treat girls and boys equally. Girls and boys in the class behave like brothers and sisters.”* – boy, PU Nilphamari school
- *“Girls are as intelligent as boys.”* – boy, PU Nilphamari school
- *“Always teachers praise the girls who do well in class.”* – girl, PU Barguna school
- *“If girls cut good figures in exams, teachers inspire them to continue it. Even if they cut a sorry figure in exams, still they get encouragement to do better in the future.”* – boy, PU Barguna school
- *“A girl showed the best result in the final examination and she got a book as a prize from the school.”* – boy, PU Barguna school
- *“Our sir is very kind. He helps us in every work.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“Sir remains very amiable with the girls. That’s why we share a lot of things with him.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“Most of the participants made their opinion that they can seek help as like boys because if someone fails to pay her tuition fees then they made an application to headmaster. Headmaster co-operates with them. If poor students fail to buy their books then teachers co-operate them. If we organize study tour then teachers guide and help us. If girls find any difficulties in studies then made an approach to teacher to make it solve. Teacher helps them.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school

Marriage:

- *“Girls cannot talk to their parents about their liking or disliking regarding marriage. Otherwise, the parents get angry and say, ‘you have to accept our decision; we are not going to listen to whatever you say’.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“Some families value a girl’s choice or opinion thinking that girls also have rights to take decisions. Some families give their girls to early marriage. Because of early marriage, the girls can’t understand when [or at what age is best] to marry and what problems can arise from early marriage. Some people are aware of bad effects of early marriage. Some are not aware or they do not have any concept about this.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“Most of the girls said girls can take decisions on their own marriage because, ‘now they are aware from different TV programs on negative impact of early marriage.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“Girls need to marry off early otherwise more money will be needed (as young girls are preferred by men as bride; if girls get older then more money will have to be paid as dowry).”* – girl, PU Nilphamari community
- *“When a girl gets married at an early age, she may be in ill health and may suffer from malnutrition.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari community
- *“Married girls think they are now married. They do not need to be more educated. They will not earn in the future. They have to look after their children.”* – girl, PU Barguna school
- *“The in-laws do not allow them to come to school as they mean there is no use of education after getting married.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“Because of religious reasons, many girls are not allowed to come school after their marriage.”* – boy, PU Barguna school
- *“Because after marriage, the husband and mother in law don’t like the girl to continue school. Sometimes classmates laugh at the girl and make jokes. It is very difficult to take care of a baby properly with school.”* – boy, PU Barguna school
- *“Girls think that, she has got married so what is the necessity of continuing education.”* – boy, PU Nilphamari school
- *“The husband does not permit his wife to come to school.”* – boy, PU Nilphamari school
- *“After marriage, girls go to their in-laws’ house, so they can’t come to school from there anymore.”* – boy, PU Nilphamari school

Pregnancy:

- *“In our society, girls have not the position to decide on her pregnancy. It is her husband, mother-in-law and other relatives who decide on her pregnancy.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“Husbands oppress females into compulsory conception, and sometimes mother and father-in-laws also. Girls do not know which age is perfect for conception. Mainly, males take decisions about pregnancy.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“...by the grace of different trainings of NGOs, people have become more aware now. So, they understand that [young] mothers can have different complications resulting from early pregnancy, for example, premature death, or anemia.”* – girl, PU Barguna community
- *“[Girls do not continue school after childbearing because they are] doing household chores, looking after husbands and grandparents, and nourishing children. If they go to school after marriage, men in the community scold them.”* – girl, PU Barguna school
- *“Girls who come from an educated family are not same in this case. They come to school and don’t stop their studies when they are pregnant. They continue to study to help their husband and secure the future of their children.”* – girl, PU Barguna school
- *“If the girls are healthy while they are pregnant, they often come to attend classes.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“The ones who are aware about education always attend school no matter what happens.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“Due to illness during pregnancy, they stop coming to school.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“They also stop coming to school as they meet their death while giving birth.”* – girl, PU Nilphamari school
- *“After giving birth, still girls have wished to go to school. So, if their family supports them, then they can come to the school.”* – boy, PU Barguna school
- *“She is teased by friends due to pregnancy.”* – boy, PU Nilphamari school

Household work/chore burden at school:

- *“Girls engage in household work. They are busy caring for the baby.”* – boy, PU Nilphamari school

Safety and violence:

- *“Teachers of our school still punish us using their hands.” – girl, PU Barguna community*
- *“Teachers sometime keep hand on the back of girls and it seems they have forgotten to remove their hands.” – girl, PU Barguna community*
- *“They are also disturbed at their home by the relatives in different ways.” – girl, PU Barguna community*

Safety going to school:

- *“The street to school goes through local bazaar (market). People in the bazaar say pass bad comments to the girls, so many lose interest to come to school.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *“Three years back a guy took photo of a girl without her consent on the way to school. Then he attached his photo to hers and started threatening her by saying that, if she didn’t agree to have an affair with him then he would show that photo to her family and tell false story of their relationship. Although not willing, still she had to get involved with him. Some days after [the start of] their love affair he got physically close to her and then left her. Out of shame the girl committed suicide.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *“One morning a guy forcefully hugged a girl of class six and took a photo while she was coming to school. He started blackmailing her and said that, if she doesn’t marry him he would publicize the photo. The girl had no other choice than to run away with the guy. The girl’s family rescued her later and has stopped her schooling and education.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *“Nowadays what happens more frequently is, the guys take photo of the girls on the way to and from the school with their mobile phone. Then they threaten the girls that they will edit those to vulgar forms and spread those through the Internet, so that the girls agree to get romantically involved with the guys. If the girl refuses, then her edited photos are made available on the Internet.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *“Girls are not safe like boys, because of eve teasing. For this reason, they become a victim of early marriage.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *“Many of them said they faced many kind of problem when they are coming to school. For example, people [males] offer love to them, threaten to throw acid, and rape...a few students committed suicide because of those problems. Many of the guardians stopped [girls from] going to school because of those problems. Some of the girls are married off early because of those problems.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *“Those are rich people; they ensure safety for their girls. And those who live near to school, they are also safe when going to school.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *“Girls cannot come to school safely like boys, because some roadside boys intimidate girls on the way to school. Girls have to endure bad language.” – boy, PU Barguna school*
- *“Girls face various problems at the time of coming to school. Quite often boys give them love proposals. If girls avoid them, then the boys pull their dresses. If girls try to raise their voice, boys scare them saying, ‘I will see you’. For these reasons they stop coming school. Few members said that those girls whose home is near the school is safe from that.” – girl, PU Barguna school*
- *Girls are not safe as boys because they are often harassed by the eve teasers. In transports, helpers try to hold their hand and stay closely.” – boy, PU Barguna school*
- *“When girls come to school, some impudent boys blow whistles at them and take their photos without their permission. Quite often they grab their hand. For these unwanted incidents, girls feel hesitate coming to school.” – boy, PU Barguna school*

Sports participation:

- *“Presently in every school, government ordered to run Bongobondho gold cup football match where girls are participating.” – boy, PU Nilphamari school*
- *“Girls are busy in household work so they can’t participate in sports activities equally as boys.” – boy, PU Nilphamari school*
- *“Girls are not conscious about their rights.” – boy, PU Nilphamari school*
- *“Cricket, football, long jump, etc., are not sports for girls so they can’t play them.” – boy, PU Nilphamari school*
- *“Girls feel shy playing cricket.” – boy, PU Nilphamari school*
- *“There is no playing field in our school.” – boy, PU Nilphamari school*

Quotes from Pakistan

School:

- *“In some cases, where parents are educated, then their children easily get educated.”* – girl, PU Thatta community
- *“The middle schools are situated far from the village for the most part and can never accommodate more than 100-200 students at a time. So, according to girls, this is not that their parents prohibit them, but the state education provision system is very weak.”* – girl, PU Vehari community
- *“Although Darushina (non-Muslim) was so active but overall biased behaviors of society, she had fears regarding protection of her or other girls from her religion, so she gave low marks on protection-related questions.”* – girl, PU Thatta

Marriage:

- *“After completing studies, we have to marry.”* – girl, PU Thatta community
- *“They confirm it by us about our life partners and one never asks the husband when you want a baby. It is natural, fixed.”* – girl, PU Thatta community
- *“Our marriages are arranged with the choice of our parents.”* – girl, PU Thatta community
- *“Parents think it is a very important decision of life. Girls can’t make right decisions regarding marriage.”* – girl, PU Vehari community
- *“Most of them are from the Baloch tribe (Brohi) so they are not allowed to attend classes after marriage. Child marriages are common. Due to marriage, girls leave their education.”* – girl, PU Thatta school
- *“In one case ... when she married, she discontinued her study. But unfortunately, she took divorce due to some reasons and then she again continued her study and completed 10 grades from this school.”* – girl, PU Thatta school
- *“...there is no culture to attend classes or go to school after marriage, but there are few cases where girls are attending their schools. But all students agreed on this that girls should attend classes after pregnancy.”* – girl, PU Thatta school
- *“They never have a single example for married girls who come to school after having a baby.”* – girl, PU Vehari school
- *“The married and pregnant girls come only during the exams.”* – boy, PU Thatta school
- *“Girls come to school regularly only if they are engaged. But after marriage or getting pregnant, no girl comes regularly.”* – boy, PU Thatta school
- *“The girls stop education after marriage and [boys] never saw any pregnant girl going to school.”* – boy, PU Vehari school

Pregnancy:

- *“Some of the girls said that a few girls have the choice of time of pregnancy in their village, otherwise it usually depends on the choice of the husband.”* – girl, PU Thatta community
- *“Girls do not have decision-making power over pregnancy. The male says to them ‘you are machines to birth children’.”* – girl, PU Thatta community
- *“After pregnancy due to shyness, girls do not attend the classes, because this is a mixed school. If it was a girls’ school, then they might come.”* – girl, PU Thatta school
- *“Pregnant girls hardly come to school. It happens rarely, at the time of exams. There are some who came once in a month to ask about the course or subject, but there is no one who came regularly after being pregnant.”* – girl, PU Thatta school
- *“Some of the pregnant girls are not allowed to appear even in the exam.”* – girl, PU Thatta school
- *“For pregnancy, they said mostly girls are being stopped to attend classes after marriage, but they are allowed to go for only exams. But there were a few examples in few families who are attending their schools in Sijawal city because they are either from educated families or their husbands are aware about importance of education.”* – girl, PU Thatta school
- *“All girls feel hesitant to discuss this topic.”* – girl, PU Vehari school
- *“They never saw any pregnant girl coming to school after marriage. The reason they said was that in-laws don’t allow girls to continue their education, and also that some girls shift villages after marriage.”* – girl, PU Vehari school
- *“Parents and husband would not allow her to sit in the class being pregnant.”* – boy, PU Thatta school

- *“Sometimes husbands allow their wives to continue school [when pregnant], but when they are six months pregnant, then they are to stop as they fear they may be teased by classmates.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“Interestingly, one of the boys said that after being pregnant his sister goes to an army public college regularly to attend classes.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“Never happened in the village.” – boy, PU Vehari school*

Feeling valued:

- *“Our parents give respect to us, they honor us, because in our communities, girls are signs of honor.” – girl, PU Thatta community*

Speaking up:

- *“...we do not talk or share in front of males, but sometimes if we are alone at home with our fathers or brothers we share our views with them.” – girl, PU Thatta community*

Class Participation and Encouragement:

- *“We are all equal in the classroom.” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“Opportunities of participation are mostly given to the selected active girls who could lead and manage the things. Most of the girls are always being rejected for all the activities.” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“There are a few girls who are not interested in class participation, but the teacher prefers to ask questions from back sitters.” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“Teachers prefer male students to organize or lead any activity because girls feel shy in front of boys.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“We always lead the program with our teachers. When there is something to organize, sometimes we have to sit or meet each other till late hours. Girls can’t do this. So teachers prefer male students.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“... if any girl shows improvement, [she] is appreciated equally.” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“Teachers appreciate intelligent girls and those girls who came neat and clean, and regularly attend the school ...” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“Teachers create opportunity equally for all. Teachers mostly do not prefer to ask questions from intelligent girls, but give preference to girls who appeared slow learners.” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“Mostly students said as a girl they are not encouraged by teachers or parents to take leadership responsibilities, because they think only boys can be leaders.” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“My father loves me a lot, so he encourages me. Teachers don’t do this.” – girl, PU Thatta school*
- *“Appreciation is equal for both, even if good marks are achieved by any girl, the teacher appreciates her a lot.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“When a boy is insulted by a teacher, it is a normal matter for him, but when a girl is insulted, she starts weeping and becomes absent for the next few days. Teachers prefer not to ask so many questions from girls for this reason.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“... when a boy makes some mistakes and has a political background, then the teacher doesn’t say anything to him, but if another boy or girl makes mistakes then the teacher talks in very abusive language to those students.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“Girls usually do best, so they receive encouragement.” – boy, PU Vehari school*
- *“Teachers do not encourage girls who belong to poor families of the village.” – boy, PU Vehari school*

Chore burden at school:

- *“The girls said that they clean the classroom, do dusting and clean the toilets upon their turn, which the teacher decides are per their roll numbers.” – girl, PU Vehari school*
- *“Children do participate in the cleanliness of the room regularly. There is a turn for every two students per day and almost all the students take their turn. Those who have the turn to clean the classroom environment would come earlier than the school time and would do their task.” – boy, PU Vehari school*
- *“Mostly girls do chores because they are interested in this activity.” – girl, PU Vehari school*

- *“The girls participate in cleanliness and tidiness more than boys.” - boy, PU Vehari school*

Safety and Violence:

- *“We never hear about any incident of protection happen in [this] village. We are too much safe in the village.” – girl, PU Thatta community*

Safety in school:

- *“Sometimes [girls] feel fear in school due to non-completion of homework given by teachers and it happens because of domestic work.” – girl, PU Thatta*
- *“Girl shared that in the school my friend saw a ghost behind my classroom gallery she felt that ghost is coming to catch her so we feel fear to go in the gallery of school.” – girl, PU Thatta*
- *“In school, I don’t like to go drink water, because where the hand pump is fixed, I saw a shadow in white dress.” – girl, PU Thatta*
- *“One student who was so afraid of invisible spirits (Jinat) who said due to this fear, she always felt fear inside school, and ‘if I am not keen for getting education, I do not wish to come here’. Other students also agreed that they sometimes are afraid due to this.” – girl, PU Thatta*
- *“Mostly, girls are afraid of lizards and punishment from teachers, and boys are afraid of the head master and teachers who use abusive language.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“Male teachers are a threat to girls.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“Earthquake, floods and teachers, because when any of the students makes a mistake, the teacher verbally abuses them in front of everyone, including insulting girls in front of all boys.” – boy, PU Thatta school*
- *“We are afraid of snakes in school.” – boy, PU Thatta school*

Safety going to school:

- *“Once when I was on the way to school, a boy [tried to bother] me, but I did not feel fear. We walk in a group of girls so we don’t feel fear.” – girl, PU Thatta community*
- *“If the parent/caretaker is not coming to pick [her up], if there is no one to accompany, if there are boys present on the street, the girls feel uncomfortable, hesitant and afraid. If the house of any girl is far and there is no parent/caretaker or classmate to accompany, the girl becomes very afraid and starts to weep. Fear is also felt in the school especially when any girl comes too early or goes back too late. “– girl, PU Thatta*
- *“Rarely a girl came to school alone. Abnormal persons and hooting of bad boys restrict us from coming alone.” – girl, PU Thatta*

School latrines:

- *“[Girls] feel comfortable using them when they need to.” – girl, PU Vehari school*
- *“[Girls] can easily use them during school hours.” – girl, PU Vehari school*
- *“Girls do not prefer to use the school toilet because they have fear to see any shadow, if anyone can enter, if the door could be locked from outside. Sometimes the washrooms are constructed at the back side of the classes, where it is felt very dangerous to go alone.” – girl, PU Thatta*
- *“Washroom door lock is out of order. When the door is locked, it’s very difficult to open. The lower side of the door has a big hole. One mad man is always standing behind the washroom.” – girl, PU Thatta*