

Girls’ Empowerment in East and Southern Africa (Uganda, Zimbabwe, Egypt)



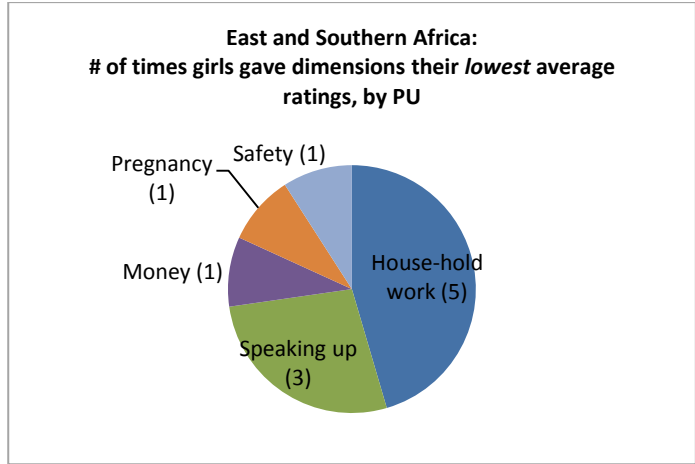
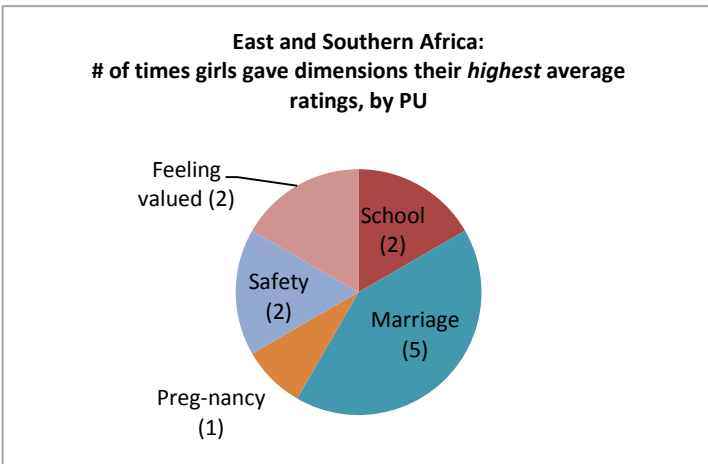
Findings from the [Girls Empowerment Star](#)

In **Egypt**, Plan spoke with 167 adolescent girls in PU Qalubia and PU Assiut, in three communities. On average, girls in **PU Qalubia** felt most empowered around dimensions of **marriage** and **pregnancy**, and least empowered about **household work** and **speaking up** in front of men and boys. In **PU Assiut**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered to access at least nine years of **school** and to decide when they **marry**, and least empowered around aspects of **household work**.

In **Uganda**, Plan spoke with 192 adolescent girls in PU Kamuli and PU Tororo North, in six communities. On average, girls in **PU Kamuli** felt most empowered around **marriage**, and least empowered around aspects of **money**. In **PU Tororo North**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered around dimensions of **marriage, safety**, and **feeling valued**, and least empowered about **household work**.

In **Zimbabwe**, Plan spoke with 192 adolescent girls in PU Chiredzi and PU Chipinge, in six communities. On average, girls in **PU Chiredzi** felt most empowered about their **safety** in the community, and least empowered around **pregnancy**. In **PU Chipinge**, girls claimed that they felt most empowered deciding when to **marry**, and least empowered around deciding if and when to get **pregnant**.

Figure 1: Girls Empowerment Star: Frequencies of highest and lowest average rated dimensions of girls’ empowerment by PU in East and Southern Africa\*: On average, adolescent girls involved in the study in Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Egypt felt most empowered around **marriage, feeling valued, school, and safety**, and least empowered around aspects of **household work and speaking up**.



\* 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 East and Southern Africa. Frequencies derive from data from three selected communities per PU and may not be representative of all communities in PUs in Egypt, Uganda or Zimbabwe.

- **Marriage:** Many adolescent girls Plan spoke with in Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Egypt said that girls felt empowered to decide when to **marry**. This was most prevalent in Egypt (PU Qalubia) where 87% of adolescent girls involved in the study claimed girls ‘always’ decide when to marry.

Although some girls in Uganda and Zimbabwe expressed higher levels of empowerment around marriage, there was a considerable variability between responses. For instance, in Uganda between 29-42% of girls claimed that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ decided if they marry, however in one programme area (PU Tororo North) 48% of girls claimed that girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide about marriage. In Zimbabwe, between 32-48% of girls said that adolescent girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ decide if they marry, however in one programme area (PU Chiredzi) half of the girls involved said that girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ decide if they marriage.

Some girls felt supported by their families to control if and when to marry, and mothers who were forced into early marriage often did not want the same fate for their daughters:

*“Parents don’t want what happened to them to happen with their girls,” said one adolescent girl from Egypt.*

Other girls, however, revealed they have challenges deciding over marriage and parents more often have a say in who their daughters marry:

*“A lot of girls here are marrying at their tender age, some as early as 13,” said one adolescent girl from Zimbabwe.*

*“Apart from the capacity to decide, girls are often victims of sexual assaults, rapes and early marriage in their communities. Girls are raped and are forced to marry at a very young age and get pregnant,” said a girl from Zimbabwe.*

- **Household work:** In East and Southern Africa, 56% of girls involved in the study reported ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ sharing household equally with boys.

*“We are burdened with all household tasks. After marriage, we work even more,” said one adolescent girl from Egypt.*

In these communities, girls from five out of six participating PUs reported **household work** as one of the lowest dimensions of empowerment for adolescent girls. In one community in Uganda, 97% of girls Plan spoke with claimed that girls ‘never’, ‘seldom’, or ‘sometimes’ share household work equally with boys.

*“We are only safe when at school because we are abused and overburdened with chores whilst at home,” said one adolescent girl from Zimbabwe.*

Heavy household work and sexual harassment often keeps adolescent girls from going to school.

*“I work at home first to please my mother and then I do my homework. The boy in our house does his homework and I do the household chores,” said one adolescent girl in Egypt.*

- **Safety:** Some girls involved in the study felt more empowered around safety while others felt less empowered. For instance, over half of all girls Plan spoke with in some programme areas in Zimbabwe and Egypt claimed that girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel safe in their community: 59% of girls said that girls always or often feel safe in one programme

area in Egypt (PU Qalubia), and 54% of girls in one area in Zimbabwe (PU Chiredzi) said that girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel safe.

On the other hand, some girls in these communities expressed concerns about feeling unsafe in their communities; some reported levels of sexual harassment, abuse, and violence. In one programme area in Egypt (PU Assiut), only 28% said that girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel safe, and only 35% of girls in Uganda (PU Tororo North) said that girls ‘always’ or ‘often’ felt safe.

*“At home, we are sometimes sexually harassed by our relatives whom we can never report as they will be our guardians,” admitted one adolescent girl from Zimbabwe.*

*“I am scared to go outside home after sunset because there is no security now to protect the girl,” said one adolescent girl in Egypt.*

In Zimbabwe, the focus group discussions with adolescent girls revealed opposing views and results. For instance, some girls claimed that adolescent girls are not safe in the community as there are kidnappings, sexual assaults, rapes, and physical and emotional abuse. Girls’ perceptions of safety also differ between school and home. Adolescent girls reported feeling safe at school but not at home due to kidnappers, boys who bully, and parents who force them to marry when they are still young. Adolescent girls reported feeling safer at school where they are protected from sexual abuse and have fewer chores. Girls are also free from guardians’ verbal and physical abuses.

- **Speaking up:** Adolescent girls also revealed limitations in being able to **speaking up** and express their concerns. Over half (57%) of girls involved in the study in East and Southern Africa said they ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ say what they think when a boy is around. In Uganda, nearly three-quarters of the girls Plan spoke with said that girls ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ say what they think when a man or boy is around.

*“I can’t talk in front of men or in front of anyone, even in front of my siblings. I feel that I will be embarrassed by anything I say, so I don’t speak at all,” said one adolescent girl from Egypt.*

While some girls said that their fathers support their education, others reported not being able to ask their fathers for money for school fees due to social constraining girls have in speaking up in front of adult men.

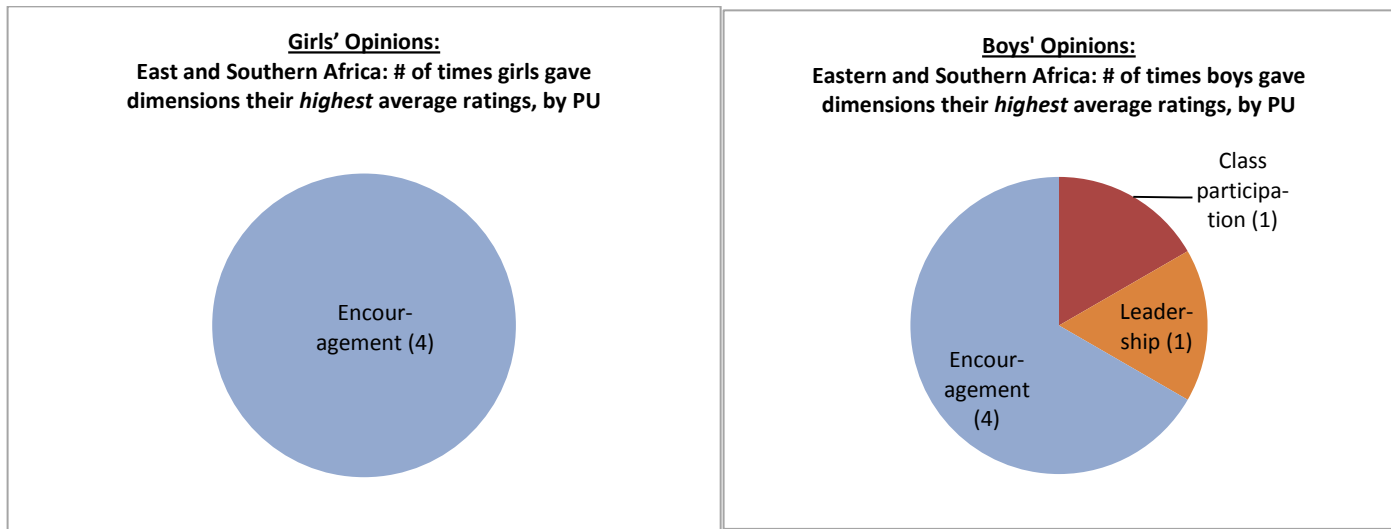
## Highest Levels of School Equality in East and Southern Africa (Uganda and Zimbabwe)

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

In **Uganda**, Plan spoke with 320 girls in 10 schools and 310 boys in 10 schools in PU Kamuli and PU Tororo North. In **PU Kamuli** and **PU Tororo North**, both girls and boys rated **encouragement** as the highest levels of school equality by girls.

In **Zimbabwe**, Plan spoke with 303 girls in 10 schools and 302 boys in 10 schools in PU Chipinge and PU Chiredzi. In **PU Chipinge**, both girls and boys rated **encouragement** as the highest levels of school equality. In **PU Chiredzi**, girls rated **encouragement** as the highest, while boys rated **encouragement**, **class participation**, and **leadership** 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 East and Southern Africa: On average, adolescent girls involved in the study in Uganda and Zimbabwe rated **encouragement** as the highest level of school equality by girls, while adolescent boys felt that **encouragement**, **class participation**, and **leadership** were 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 is six, with two PUs per country, and two countries in East and Southern Africa. Frequencies derive from data from selected schools and PUs and may not be representative of all schools in all PUs in Uganda and Zimbabwe. Note: Egypte did not implement the School Equality Scorecard.

- **Encouragement:** The highest levels of school equality reported by adolescent girls and boys Plan spoke with in Uganda and Zimbabwe was **encouragement** and being encouraged to succeed in their schoolwork as much as boys. In Uganda, between 75-87% of girls involved in the study claimed adolescent girls are 'always' or 'often' encouraged as much as boys, while only 63-69% of boys felt that girls are 'always' encouraged equally. Boys in Uganda referred to Plan's programmes and policies that promote girls' education as being a contributing factor:

*"Girls are sometimes encouraged to succeed in school because Plan has preached about equality and motivated them to go to school since Plan had spread the gospel. The teachers at times use key figures of successful women to motivate the students to work and become like them,"* said one adolescent boy in Uganda.

*“... due to Plan policies like equality ... girls are encouraged to succeed academically for future equality,”* said one adolescent boy in Uganda.

In Zimbabwe, 78-81% of girls said that girls are ‘always’ or ‘often’ encouraged to succeed in their schoolwork as much as boys, and even more boys (85-95%) felt that girls were encouraged equally.

*“Girls are even encouraged more than boys and the teachers highlight the risks they are bound to face if they are not educated,”* said one adolescent girl in Zimbabwe.

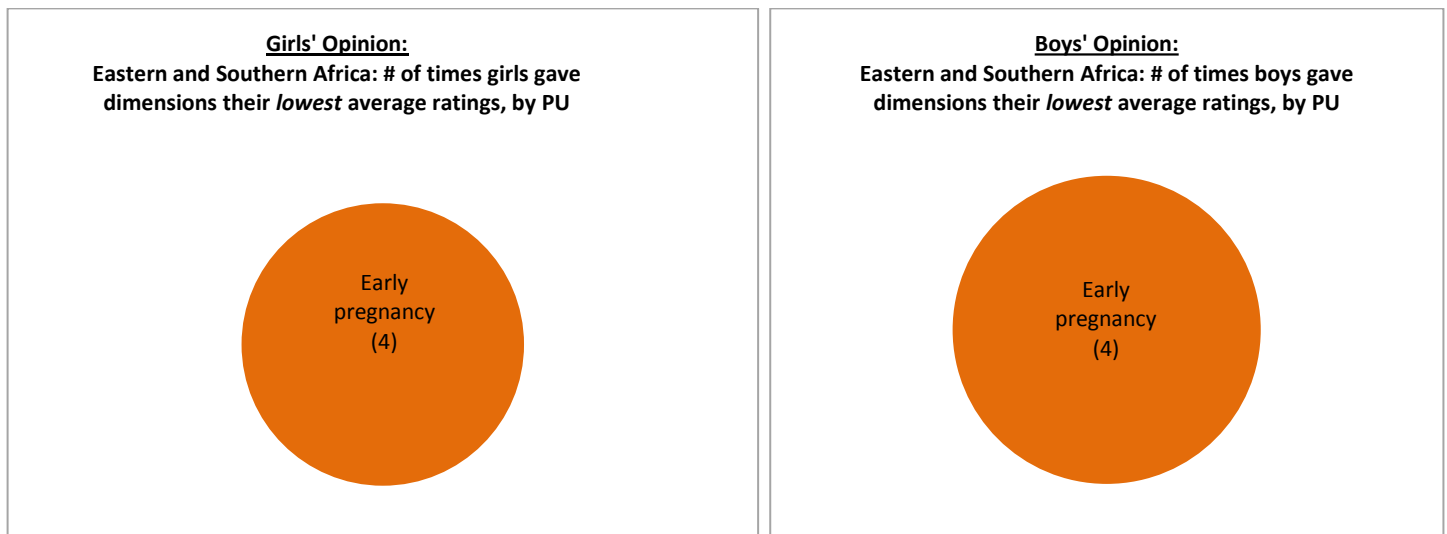
## Lowest Levels of School Equality in East and Southern Africa (Uganda and Zimbabwe)

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

In **Uganda**, Plan spoke with 320 girls in 10 schools and 310 boys in 10 schools in PU Kamuli and PU Tororo North. In **PU Kamuli** and **PU Tororo North**, both girls and boys rated **early pregnancy** as the lowest level of school equality by girls.

In **Zimbabwe**, Plan spoke with 303 girls in 10 schools and 302 boys in 10 schools in PU Chipinge and PU Chiredzi. In **PU Chipinge** and **PU Chiredzi**, both girls and boys rated **early pregnancy** as 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 East and Southern Africa: On average, adolescent girls and boys involved in the study in Uganda and Zimbabwe rated **early pregnancy** as the lowest level 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 is six, with two PUs per country, and two countries in East and Southern Africa. Frequencies derive from data from selected schools and PUs and may not be representative of all schools in all PUs in Uganda and Zimbabwe. Note: Egypte did not implement the School Equality Scorecard.

- **Pregnancy:** Girls and boys involved in the study in Uganda and Zimbabwe said that **early pregnancy** was the lowest level of school equality by girls. In Uganda, 38-44% of girls and 60-71% of boys involved in the study said that girls 'never' or 'seldom' continue to attend school after having a baby. In Zimbabwe, 44-57% of girls and 48-53% of boys who participated claimed that girls 'never' or 'seldom' stay in school after they have a baby. Early pregnancy is also linked with early and forced marriage:

*"My sister was forced to get married because she got pregnant at school," said one adolescent boy in Uganda.*

Girls and boys also shared concerns about early pregnancy being directly linked to school dropout.

*"If the school authority discovers that one is pregnant, she is expelled from school," said one adolescent girl in Zimbabwe.*

*“I do not think a girl can come to this school when she is pregnant. Girls never come to school when pregnant because they are regarded as adults,” said one adolescent boy from Zimbabwe.*

## Appendix: Quotes from Girls and Boys in East and Southern Africa

### Quotes from Uganda:

#### Encouragement

- *"...both girls and boys attend debate sessions, do class work given by the teachers, compete for positions in class, and are encouraged to participate. Both receive the same amount of time for activities, and both put up their hands and answer when a teacher asks questions."* – girl, PU Tororo North, Uganda
- *"Girls are sometimes encouraged to succeed in school because Plan has preached about equality and motivated them to go to school since plan had spread the gospel. The teachers at times use key figures of successful women to motivate the students to work and become like them."* – boy, PU Kamuli school
- *"Girls always are encouraged to succeed in academics due to the availability of textbooks, which motivates students to succeed. Some students fear taking bad reports back home so they read hard to take back good reports irrespective of [gender]."* – boy, PU Kamuli school
- *"... due to Plan policies like equality ... girls are encouraged to succeed academically for future equality."* – boy, PU Kamuli school
- *"Girls are always praised by teachers like at the end of every term the best girls are awarded prizes."* – boy, PU Tororo North school
- *"Girls are encouraged so that they do not go for short cuts like sugar daddies."* – boy, PU Tororo North school

#### Pregnancy

- *"My sister was forced to get married because she got pregnant at school."* – boy, PU Tororo North school, Uganda
- *"Girls seldom continue with school after having a baby because they are not interested in returning to school. Some fear insults they get by names like "off layer." Some parents withdraw their financial support from the girl after she gives birth. Mothers naturally will think about their children even when in class, which limits returning to school. Some children return to school though because some parents emphasize the value of education to the children."* – boy, PU Kamuli school
- *"Some parents take their daughters back to school because they see a brighter future and wish a bright future for their children."* – boy, PU Kamuli school

#### Education

- *"Education is a tool for women's empowerment."* – girl, PU Tororo North Uganda
- *"If you hold onto your education tight you will have love, peace and unity."* – girl, PU Tororo North school Uganda
- *"Educated girls bring in more dowry."* – boy, PU Tororo North school

### Quotes from Zimbabwe:

#### Encouragement

- *"Boys and girls are regarded the same at this school. Teachers make sure that boys and girls raise their hands in class, write notes and have all a chance to work out math problems on the board."* – boy, PU Chiredzi, Zimbabwe
- *"Always. Our teachers tell us both boys and girls to be serious with our school work."* – girl, PU Chipinge school
- *"Girls are even encouraged more than boys and the teachers highlight the risks they are bound to face if they are not educated."* – girl, PU Chiredzi school
- *"The boys indicated that girls are encouraged to succeed in their school work as boys by the teachers. They are always told to work hard in their school work so that they increase their life chances."* – boy, PU Chipinge school

#### Pregnancy

- *"I do not think a girl can come to this school when she is pregnant. Girls never come to school when pregnant because they are regarded as adults."* – boy, PU Chipinge school, Zimbabwe



- “If the school authority discovers that one is pregnant, she is expelled from school.” - girl, PU Chiredzi school, Zimbabwe
- “Most of the girls do not decide when and if to get pregnant as sex is always initiated by boys and as boys refuse to use condoms when having sex.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “Girls do not plan to be pregnant, the pregnancy just comes as a result of unprotected sex, therefore we cannot say that they decide when to get pregnant.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “... girls do not continue with school after having a baby due to lack of money and unwillingness by the husband or parents-in-law.” – girl, PU Chipinge school
- “Girls are usually chased away from home to go to the home of the person that impregnated the, and the parents of the boy do not allow them to go back to school. The girl will have no resources to take care of her baby as well as have money to pay school fees; hence they never come back to school. ” – girl, PU Chiredzi school
- “At this school I have never heard of anyone who has been chased away because of pregnancy, but girls dropout on their own because they are shy”. – boy, PU Chiredzi school
- “At home, we are sometimes sexually harassed by our relatives whom we can never report as they will be our guardians.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community

#### Early Marriage

- “A lot of girls here are marrying at their tender age, some as early as 13, hence the issues of reproductive health are key for the protection of the girls. Also, issues of family planning are key as the girls just engage in unprotected and unsafe sex without even knowing they may get pregnant.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “Apart from the capacity to decide, girls are often victims of sexual assaults, rapes and early marriage in their communities. Girls are raped and are forced to marry at a very young age and get pregnant.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “At home we are forced to marry and our step-parents apply all forms of abuse on us. We see that we are only safe at school where we will be protected by our teachers.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community

#### Education

- “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 Chipinge community
- “It is culturally unacceptable for me as a girl child to discuss school fees directly with my father. I have to tell my mother who will in turn tell him.” – girl, PU Chipinge community

#### Household Chores

- “We are only safe when at school because we are abused and overburdened with chores whilst at home.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “Boys do not do some of their work and they say it’s girls’ work.” – girl, PU Chipinge community
- “As girls, we do not have time to read during the day as our mothers tell us that we should finish all the household work before reading. Sometimes we will be too tired to read. As girls we always sleep very late and wake up very early. We have very little time to read.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “It is not a rule, but a cultural belief that girls should do household chores.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “Household chores like bathing children, washing plates, cooking, sweeping the house, and childcare, are done by girls while boys look after domestic animals like goats, donkeys, sheep and cattle.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community
- “We are not given time to play, even if we sneak out to play parents beat us up when we return.” – girl, PU Chiredzi community

## Quotes from Egypt

### Marriage

- *“It used to be like this. My mother was forced to get married, but now she says, ‘don’t do what was done to me’.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community, Egypt
- *“The education level is high and that’s why parents are open minded. Girls always have an opinion [about marriage].”* – girl, PU Qalubia community
- *“Most participants said that the suitable age of marriage is 18 to ensure that the girl’s body and mind are suitable for marriage. Most girls have also stated that they have the right to choose their husband.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community
- *“My sister is 25 years old and she is beautiful. She doesn’t want to get married and she always says that education and work are more important. My father is never angry with her.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community
- *“Parents don’t want what happened to them to happen with their girls.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community
- *“The decision is concerning us. If an educated girl gets married, she should decide to postpone pregnancy until she completes her education.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community
- *“It used to be like this. My mother was forced to get married, but now she says, ‘don’t do what was done to me’.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community
- *“We are burdened with all household tasks. After marriage, we work even more.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community

### Household Chores

- *“We are burdened with all household tasks. After marriage, we work even more.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community, Egypt
- *“We do everything at home.”* – girl, PU Assiut community
- *“I work at home first to please my mother and then I do my homework. The boy in our house does his homework and I do the household chores.”* – girl, PU Assiut community

### Speaking up

- *“I can’t talk in front of men or in front of anyone, even in front of my siblings. I feel that I will be embarrassed by anything I say, so I don’t speak at all.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community, Egypt
- *“We are embarrassed to speak in the presence of men.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community
- *“My father always asks me my opinion and he is not embarrassed to do so because my opinion may be correct.”* – girl, PU Qalubia community

### Safety

- *“I am scared to go outside home after sunset because there is no security now to protect the girl.”* – girl, PU Assiut community, Egypt
- *“We don’t feel safe at all. Boys go by on motorcycles and hit girls and steal their bags. My parents don’t let me go out of home alone at all except with my father or brother.”* – girl, PU Assiut community

### School

- *“My parents like education because they are both uneducated and they want us to be the best and to be highly educated.”* – girl, PU Assiut community
- *“My sister is in the third year of university. My father is very proud of her and he wants me to succeed in third preparatory and go to secondary and then join university like my sister.”* – girl, PU Assiut community
- *“I like education, but my father wants to pull me from school because of the expenses.”* – girl, PU Assiut community