



# COUNTING THE INVISIBLE GIRLS' RIGHTS & REALITIES

Technical Report – Pakistan



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# ACRONYMS

NEET	A young person who is “not in education, employment or training”
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RAs	Research advisers
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RTT	Research task team
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SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
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SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
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Cover photo: Plan International. Adolescent girls participating in focus group for “Counting the Invisible”, Pakistan

# GLOSSARY

**Adolescent girl** – A girl in the transitional phase between childhood and legally defined adulthood (i.e. 13 to 18 years of age). The legal definition of an adult varies from country to country but is usually between 17 and 21 years. For the purposes of this report, reference to adolescent girls includes the age range 15 to 19 year olds included in this research sample.

**Agency** – The ability to make meaningful choices and act upon them.

**Basic services** – Services delivered by the government, including water, sanitation, electricity, housing and health services.

**Civil society** – Citizens or groups participating outside formal government institutions. This can be non-governmental organisations (NGOs), organisations in local and community life, union organisations, and business associations.

**Condition and position** – Condition refers to our material state and daily life. This usually includes access to basic resources such as shelter, food and protection. Position refers to our social status and to the value that society places on us. This includes our ability to control resources and to make the decisions that affect our lives.

**Decision-making** – The capacity of a person to participate in the process of making decisions that affect their lives.

**Empowerment** – Power is the ability to shape one's life and one's environment. The lack of power is one of the main barriers that prevent girls and women from realising their rights and escaping cycles of poverty. This can be overcome by a strategy of empowerment. Gender-based empowerment involves building girls' assets (social, economic, political and personal), strengthening girls' ability to make choices about their future, and developing girls' sense of self-worth and their belief in their own ability to control their lives.

**Exclusion** – Defined as the process through which individuals or groups are partially or fully excluded from the rights, opportunities and resources that are available to others in the society they live in. The term exclusion is used as an umbrella term that covers related terms of marginalisation, being at risk of exclusion, discrimination, inequity and others.

**Exclusion and discrimination** – Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of people on the grounds of their identity. People's identity is shaped by their social surroundings, the multiple facets of exclusion and the vulnerability they experience.

**Exclusion and vulnerability** – Exclusion can increase a person's vulnerability by reducing her/his ability to overcome shock and adversity. Vulnerability, in turn, can create and reinforce exclusion. Both diminish life opportunities and can result in poverty.

**Gender discrimination** – Whereby people are treated differently simply because they are male or female, rather than on the basis of their individual skills or capabilities.

**Inclusion** – A sense of belonging, the feeling as though one is welcomed in an area without feeling threatened or uncomfortable.

**Intersectionality and experiences of exclusion** – Unpacking intersecting identities is key to understanding discrimination and exclusion. While it can be useful to understand the specific issues that are caused by gender inequality or by each form of exclusion, people do not fall neatly into social groups. Each individual can self-identify with, or be identified by others as, a range of social categories that overlap and intersect such as ethnicity, class and gender. For

example, an indigenous adolescent girl with a visual impairment may simultaneously be dealing with issues of discrimination on account of her age, ethnicity and disability.

**Marginalisation** – Refers to a process that situates rights holders in a state between “exclusion” and “inclusion”. For example, the marginalised may be those who have partial access to a service or facility, but are unable to make full use of it; or who may be able to speak at a meeting and express an opinion but are unlikely to be listened to or influence any decisions. However Plan International uses the term exclusion as an umbrella term that covers related terms of marginalisation, being at risk of exclusion, discrimination, inequity and others.

**Masculinities** – Conveys that there are many socially constructed definitions for being a man and that these can change over time and from place to place. The term relates to perceived notions and ideals about how men should or are expected to behave in a given setting.

**Partnership/alliances** – The coming together of different people, groups and institutions for cooperation, coordination, resource exchange and the joint solving of problems. They bring together institutional capabilities and human resources in the form of skills, experiences and ideas to tackle common problems that are often beyond the capacity of a single organisation or group.

**Public space** – Spaces that are open for public use. This includes streets, recreation areas, parks, community squares, etc.

**Principal duty bearers** – Governments and institutions, responsible for changing laws, policies and services.

**Safety** – Freedom from the occurrence or risk of injury, danger, or loss.

**Social environment** – Community use of the space, joint social practices in the area, different groups of people using the space.

**Social norms** – Informal rules, gender role divisions and the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that regulate behaviour in society, prescribe what behaviour is expected and what is not allowed in specific circumstances; they influence beliefs of what to expect of girls’ behaviours, for example.

**Sexual assault** – Any form of sexual contact (up to and including rape) between two or more people without voluntary consent. Consent obtained through pressure, coercion, force or threats of force is not voluntary consent.

**Sexual harassment** – Unwelcome sexually determined behaviour, both physical and non-physical, whether by words or actions. Such conduct can be humiliating and may constitute a health and safety problem. Some examples of physical contact include sexual demand by action, such as touching a person’s clothing, hair or body, hugging, kissing, groping, pushing or pulling, patting or stroking, standing close or brushing up against a person. Some examples of non-physical sexual harassment include sexual demand by words, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, staring (“eve teasing”), “cat calling”, following, chasing, stalking and exposing oneself.

**Social groups** – Two or more people who interact with each other, share similar characteristics and have a sense of unity. Social groups can come in multiple forms and sizes; individuals can belong to multiple social groups at the same time. Belonging to specific social groups often determines the level of exclusion and inequity that individuals experience.

**Violence** – The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as: “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.

**Violence against women and girls** – Any act of gender-based violence, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

**This glossary is meant to serve as a guide for reading the report, however please note that the definitions presented are dynamic and subject to change.**

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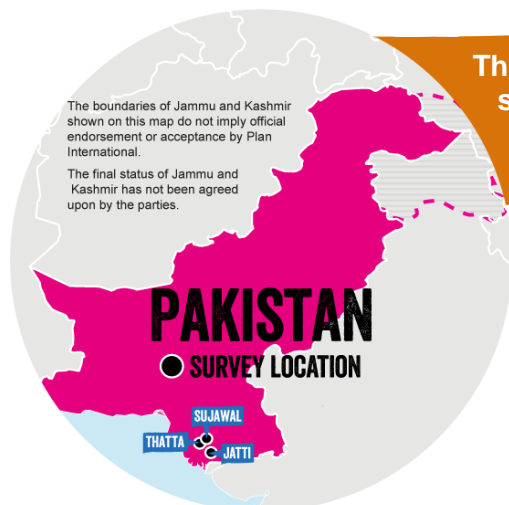
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## SECTION 1

# INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE



This research seeks to examine how intersecting vulnerabilities shape and determine the opportunities available to adolescent girls and how this, in turn, influences whether they can or cannot realise their rights.

Within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which commit to focusing on the poorest, the most vulnerable and furthest behind, the research aims to uncover the perceptions and experiences of a group of people at risk of being left behind unless their unique voices can be heard.

### 1.1 Introduction

In 2016, in an effort to further the global understanding of adolescent girls' rights, Plan International commissioned and undertook a three-country study (in Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Pakistan) on a set of themes related to the SDGs.

These themes, which can offer insight into advancing the rights of adolescent girls, included: girls' enabling environment, care and domestic work in the home, education quality and value, early pregnancy, child and early marriage, violence against girls, safety in public places, social relations, and interpersonal communications.

The aim of this research is to understand not only the day-to-day reality for the girls interviewed, but also to gain insight into their thoughts on how things *should* be. Asked whether they thought they *should* have more opportunities to get on in life and achieve their life goals, the girls surveyed in all three countries overwhelmingly answered: "yes".

This technical research report presents the analysis and findings from Pakistan, the first country where data collection was conducted. Additional reports present the analyses and findings from Zimbabwe and Nicaragua.

### 1.2 Background and rationale

From 2007 to 2015, Plan International published a yearly flagship report called *The State of the World's Girls* (SOTWG). These reports explored the experiences of adolescent girls by looking at varying yearly themes, including education, disasters, the economy, and girls' position and condition in society.

The rationale behind the reports was that little data was available on the experiences of adolescent girls. Their experiences were instead commonly collapsed into those of women, which resulted in their voices being unheard and their life experiences being out of sight.

Because of this, in the era of the Millennium Development Goals,<sup>1</sup> it was often difficult to understand how adolescent girls were faring across the goals and which girls were being left behind in the effort to reach the goals.

The SOTWG reports – as well as other research commissioned by Plan International such as *Hear Our Voices*,<sup>2</sup> *Adolescent Girls' Views on Safe Cities*,<sup>3</sup> and *Girls Speak Out*<sup>4</sup> – shone a spotlight on the experiences of adolescent girls. The reports and research aimed to bring new evidence to the fore to influence national and international policies as well as local and global development programmes. They also aimed to raise awareness more broadly on the urgent need for disaggregation of data, not only on the basis of sex but also age, including a focus on adolescence as a distinct phase in a girl's life.

The final SOTWG report in 2015, *Girls' Rights: An unfinished business*,<sup>5</sup> paved the way for a new series of reporting on girls' rights in the SDG era. Plan International's 2016 report, *Counting the Invisible: Using data to transform the lives of girls and women by 2030*,<sup>6</sup> explores the current state of global gender data, identifying some critical approaches to data collection that will be needed in order to reach the SDGs by 2030.

To contribute to the development of meaningful approaches to collecting data about adolescent girls, primary research for *Counting the Invisible* was commissioned to show how rich qualitative research can reveal valuable insights that complement quantitative data. Key research findings from this research were published in *Counting the Invisible*, in October 2016. Technical research reports were also developed for each of the three countries where the research was conducted: Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Pakistan.<sup>7</sup>

This report presents the full technical research findings from Pakistan.

### 1.3 Research objectives

In 2015, Plan International published *Girls Speak Out*, a primary research report focusing on the perceptions and experiences of girls regarding rights issues such as safety in school and public places, decisions and control over their own lives and bodies, and gender-based violence. A total of 4,218 interviews were conducted with girls aged 15 to 19 across Ecuador (1,000), Nicaragua (1,000), Pakistan (1,018) and Zimbabwe (1,200).

*Girls Speak Out* provided evidence on a large scale regarding the perceptions and attitudes of girls relative to core rights-based issues. In particular, the research showcased how adolescent girls are not a homogenous population. In fact, their daily realities are shaped by a set of intersecting vulnerabilities, including the economic wellbeing of the household in which they live, their marital status, and their parental status.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Millennium Development Goals ([www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals))

<sup>2</sup> Plan International (2014). *Hear Our Voices: Do adolescent girls' issues really matter?* Woking, UK: Plan International

<sup>3</sup> Travers, K., Ranganath, M. and Livesey, A. (2013). *Adolescent Girls' Views on Safety in Cities: Findings from the Because I am a Girl: Urban Programme study in Cairo, Delhi, Hanoi, Kampala and Lima*. Women in Cities International (WICI), Plan International, and UN-HABITAT

<sup>4</sup> Plan International (2015). *'Girls Speak Out': A four-country survey of young women's attitudes and recommendations for action*. Woking, UK: Plan International and Ipsos MORI

<sup>5</sup> Plan International (2015). *The State of the World's Girls 2015: The unfinished business of girls' rights*. Woking, UK: Plan International

<sup>6</sup> Plan International (2016). *Counting the Invisible: Using data to transform the lives of girls and women by 2030*. Woking, UK: Plan International

<sup>7</sup> Technical research reports for Zimbabwe available at: [planinternational.org/publication/girls-rights-and-realities-zimbabwe](http://planinternational.org/publication/girls-rights-and-realities-zimbabwe), and Nicaragua, available at [planinternational.org/publication/girls-rights-and-realities-nicaragua](http://planinternational.org/publication/girls-rights-and-realities-nicaragua)

Their identities are further defined by factors such as ethnicity, class, race and sexuality. Therefore, it is important to understand their experiences from a perspective of intersectionality, allowing the distinct and specific experiences of a diverse range of girls to be voiced.

The findings of the research in *Girls Speak Out* set the scene for a more in-depth exploration of the diverse experiences and distinct lived realities of adolescent girls, and led to a further set of questions. Of particular interest, for example, was an examination of how intersecting vulnerabilities shape and determine the opportunities available to adolescent girls and how this, in turn, influences whether they can or cannot realise their rights.

This is particularly relevant in the era of the SDGs, which promise to “leave no one behind”. Such research can help uncover the perceptions and experiences of adolescent girls who are marginalised or excluded and, therefore, most vulnerable to being left behind because they are not as visible in their communities, or because they are difficult to access due to social and gender norms that restrict their movement and visibility.

The conceptualisation of Plan International’s 2016 report, *Counting the Invisible: Using data to transform the lives of girls and women by 2030*, offered a timely opportunity for the organisation to explore how qualitative research can reveal valuable insights that complement quantitative data. The purpose of this research was, therefore, to produce meaningful qualitative and quantitative research that captures the experiences and perceptions of adolescent girls on a set of themes aligned to the SDGs, from a perspective of intersectionality.

To support the development of this research, Plan International commissioned a consultant to review SDG targets and indicators and to determine available data to track the progress of adolescent girls as well as identify where data gaps exist. Recommendations from that review informed the development of this research through outlining goals, targets and indicators key to advancing the progress of adolescent girls to meet the SDGs.

The overarching research objective was to contribute to an understanding of the diverse perceptions and experiences of adolescent girls related to specific rights-based themes, aligned with SDG goals and targets. We aimed to generate evidence on the following:

- **Dimensions of girls’ empowerment and an enabling environment:** exploring experiences, perceptions and social norms. This theme is related to SDG 5: ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’.<sup>8</sup> The analysis will contribute to knowledge of how this goal relates specifically to adolescent girls. The findings are especially pertinent to target 5.5.<sup>9</sup>
- **Social and gender norms:** exploring positive and discriminatory social norms and care and domestic work in the home. This theme is also related to SDG 5, contributing to knowledge on targets 5.3, 5.4 and indicator 5.4.1.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>).

<sup>9</sup> Target 5.5: Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

<sup>10</sup> Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations; SDG Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social

- **Quality and value of education, including access and completion of education:** exploring experiences, perceptions and social norms. This theme is related to SDG 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.<sup>11</sup> The analysis will contribute to knowledge on targets 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, indicator 4.5.1 and indicator 5.6.2.<sup>12</sup>
- **Early pregnancy:** exploring experiences, perceptions and social norms. This theme is related to SDG 3: 'Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages',<sup>13</sup> contributing to knowledge on target 3.7 and on indicator 5.6.1.<sup>14</sup>
- **Child and early marriage:** exploring experiences, perceptions and social norms. This theme is related to SDG 5, contributing to knowledge regarding indicator 5.3.1.<sup>15</sup>
- **Violence against girls and safety:** exploring experiences, perceptions and social norms. This theme is related to SDG 5 as well as SDG 11: 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable',<sup>16</sup> contributing to knowledge of targets 5.2, 11.2 and 11.7.<sup>17</sup>

The research also included a series of additional and inter-related objectives:

- To uncover situations where adolescent girls report experiences of exclusion.
- To contribute to knowledge gaps in the area of adolescent girls' rights and gender equality, to inform Plan International's programming and advocacy.
- To demonstrate how qualitative data can be reputable and add value to measuring the strategic interests and practical needs of adolescent girls.
- To provide opportunities to young female researchers in each country by building capacity in research methods and application, ethics, gender and protection issues and offer a chance to learn more about the challenges that girls in their country face.
- To provide opportunities for Plan International in-country staff to participate in the research process including design, methodology, capacity-building, data collection

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protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate; Indicator 5.4.1: Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>).

<sup>12</sup> Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; Target 4.3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university; Target 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations; Indicator 4.5.1: Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated; Indicator 5.6.2: Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>).

<sup>14</sup> Target 3.7: By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes; Indicator 5.6.1: Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care.

<sup>15</sup> Indicator 5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg11>).

<sup>17</sup> Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation; Target 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons; Target 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

and analysis, and offer a chance to learn more about the specific challenges that girls in their country face.

## 1.4 Methodology

The research methodology had two clear intents: generate meaningful data and analysis on the situation of girls from a perspective of intersectionality, exploring the challenges that girls face and the quality and equality of opportunities available to them across a set of rights issues; and, by applying principles of participatory action research, to include young female research assistants and Plan International advisers in the research process, in order to build collective and critical knowledge of the areas of research.

In order to generate meaningful data that responded to the research objective, a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were applied to the research, focusing more heavily on qualitative methods, as the sample was relatively small compared to many quantitative studies.

The mixed methods approach was designed to measure the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of adolescent girls through quantitative measures but also to capture the complexity and changing realities of their lives through applying qualitative methods in the form of open questions and creative and reflective workshops.

Parallel to the quantitative analysis, the insights derived from the qualitative methods allow us to go beyond the statistical data and provide insights into social norms within households, community dynamics and social relations.

### 1.4.1 Research sample

The target sample size was set at 120 adolescent girls in each country, allowing for a divergence of plus or minus 2 per cent on the target sample to allow for logistical issues<sup>18</sup> that could arise in the research process. Given the small scale and stronger qualitative nature of the research, a purposive sampling approach was applied.<sup>19</sup> Guidelines were sent to the Plan International country offices in order to frame a selection of girls that aligned with the intersectionality focus of the research. The selection criteria was as follows:

- girls between the ages of 15 and 19
- three diverse groups of identities of girls reflecting intersectional characteristics and/or intersecting vulnerabilities
- three differing locations across the country, including both rural and urban settings.

### 1.4.2 Characteristics and identities of girls

Gender and programme staff from Plan International Pakistan collaborated with the lead researcher to identify specific groups of adolescent girls in Pakistan facing intersecting vulnerabilities and risks, such as being marginalised, excluded or discriminated against. The

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<sup>18</sup> That is, situations where fewer girls were available than was anticipated in the communities where data was collected.

<sup>19</sup> Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling, applied when research targets specific characteristics of people or contexts. It differs from random sampling, as participants are selected on the basis of criteria most relevant to the research questions. Purposive sampling does not allow researchers to generalise findings to a population.



selection of the particular identities and groups of adolescent girls was based on Plan International Pakistan's current programme evidence and practice. Three ethnic minority groups were selected, capturing intersecting vulnerabilities and experiences of adolescent girls, married girls, mothers and girls both in and out of education:

- 42 girls (35 per cent) identified as Jats or Jaths and came from rural Sindh province
- 35 (30 per cent) identified as Bheel/Kohli and came from the Sujawal<sup>20</sup> in Sindh province
- 42 (35 per cent) identified themselves as Makrani or Sheedi and came from Thatta in Sindh province.

### Ethnic group description and context<sup>21</sup>

**Background:** one of the central objectives of the research was to attempt to reach girls who are considered hidden, marginalised or excluded from the general population. Plan International Pakistan's monitoring, evaluation and research team and the gender specialist worked with the local programme units in the province of Sindh to identify ethnic groups for the research. The following ethnic groups were selected: Jats, Makrani and Bheel/Kohli. A description of each group and their cultural context is provided below.

#### GROUP IDENTITY: JATS OR JATHS

**LOCATION:** Jatti

**RELIGION:** Islam

#### CONTEXT DESCRIPTION:

The Jats or Jaths are a Muslim community in the province of Sindh in Pakistan and the Kutch region of India. They are also known as Jamote. Jats are one of the ancient tribes of Sindh and ruled the region for centuries. Although tribe members in lower Sindh raise buffalo, most Jats are known to be camel breeders. Local custom has it that anybody holding the bridle of a camel is Jat or anybody who tends and breeds camels is called Jat. Some people consider Jats to be their own caste, others believe that they owe their name to their profession.

Data was collected from two villages. In both, the men worked as farmers, manual workers and fishermen while the women were mostly housewives doing embroidery and household chores.

#### RESEARCH TASK TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS ON CULTURE AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Although both villages were of same tribe, they were different in terms of social norms and values. The first village was led by a well aware clan head, convinced by modern development and active in promoting children's education especially for girls, and in seeking different grants to redesign and construct the village. People were very welcoming and opened their houses to external visitors. This village is of pure Sindhi culture – that is not so rigid, even secular, and less male dominant.

In the second village there was strict purdah and clear demarcations for 'outsider' men who were not allowed to enter the main village. There was no concept of girls' education among them and even boys were not particularly literate.

<sup>20</sup> Sujawal is also sometimes known as Sajawal.

<sup>21</sup> Descriptions provided by the research task team, Plan Pakistan.

Some communities, as was the example in the first village, allow the women and girls to go outside the home to work with male family members or alone in agricultural fields, or to sell things like toys, handmade articles, clothes, bangles and so on. Other communities, reflective of the second village, do not allow girls/women to work or go outside their homes regularly; even in cases of need, it is compulsory to get permission from male family members. The communities where the data was collected adhere to their local cultural norms and values and are all largely marginalised.

**GROUP IDENTITY: MAKRANI**

**LOCATION:** Thatta City

**RELIGION:** Islam

**CONTEXT DESCRIPTION:**

Makranis are believed to be the descendants of slaves, sailors, servants and merchants from East Africa who arrived between 1200 and 1900 AD where they were distributed to different parts of the country, such as Las Bela, Kharan, Kalat and Karachi.<sup>22</sup> They are largely settled along the Makran Coast in Baluchistan and in lower Sindh. Linguistically, they speak variations of Baluchi and Sindhi, while in Karachi they are also known to have created a distinct dialect of Urdu referred to as 'Makrani' in which Urdu words are mixed with Baluchi and Sindhi expressions. Mostly Makranis' caste is associated with fishing. They also constitute the largest labour force employed at the Karachi port and harbour.<sup>23, 24</sup>

Data was collected from Thatta City. Men typically earned a daily wage by selling and as mechanics. Women's income is mainly generated through sewing.

**RESEARCH TASK TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS ON CULTURE AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT**

Makrani women and girls have their own culture; as a community they are very traditional and represent the typical features of their culture in different aspects of daily life. The women and girls mostly have intermarried with the people of their own community.

In general the community environment was not supportive and encouraging towards women and girls, and reflections about poverty and under-development was prominent in discussions. Girls in focus groups shared that in their community most girls do household chores and are not interested in school. They live on the outskirts of Thatta City, in a hamlet (*mohalla*), with most of the basic facilities like water, electricity, gas, a health centre, school for boys and girls, and cemented houses and proper roads. Despite this, many children do not attend school due to a lack of employment opportunities.

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<sup>22</sup> Edlefsen, J.B., Shah, K. and Farooq, M. (1960) "Makranis, the Negroes of West Pakistan", *Phylon* 21.2: 124–130.

<sup>23</sup> Farooq Paracha, N. (2012) 'The Good, the Bad and the Lyari', Dawn.com, 29 Mar, dawn.com/2012/03/29/the-good-the-bad-the-lyari

<sup>24</sup> [www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Negroes%20of%20Pakistan](http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Negroes%20of%20Pakistan) (accessed 1 Dec 2016)

**GROUP IDENTITY: BHEEL / KOHLI****LOCATION:** Sujawal City**RELIGION:** Hindu**CONTEXT DESCRIPTION:**

The Bheel/Kohli belong to the Hindu religion. Data was collected from three communities. In one, men were engaged in collecting and selling chickens while women sold small items like bangles, hair pins and jewellery. They live in an illegal squatter settlement near the main road in Sujawal. The other two communities were also living as illegal settlers on government-owned land. Their main livelihoods are snake-catching and as labourers. Most of the Kohli and Bheel children from these communities do not attend school.

In these communities there is only one hut to shelter four or five married couples. The majority of married girls don't have their own home or hut to live in. Women were observing strict purdah and their mobility was limited to within the community.

**RESEARCH TASK TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS ON CULTURE AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT**

Child marriages were very common with parents fixing marriages for their children just after their birth. There were no education facilities like community schools and children in all the communities spent time just wandering around. People are mostly illiterate and unemployed. There are cases of depression and alcoholism among men, leading to violence in the community. People however wanted proper education and livelihood options for their children's future.

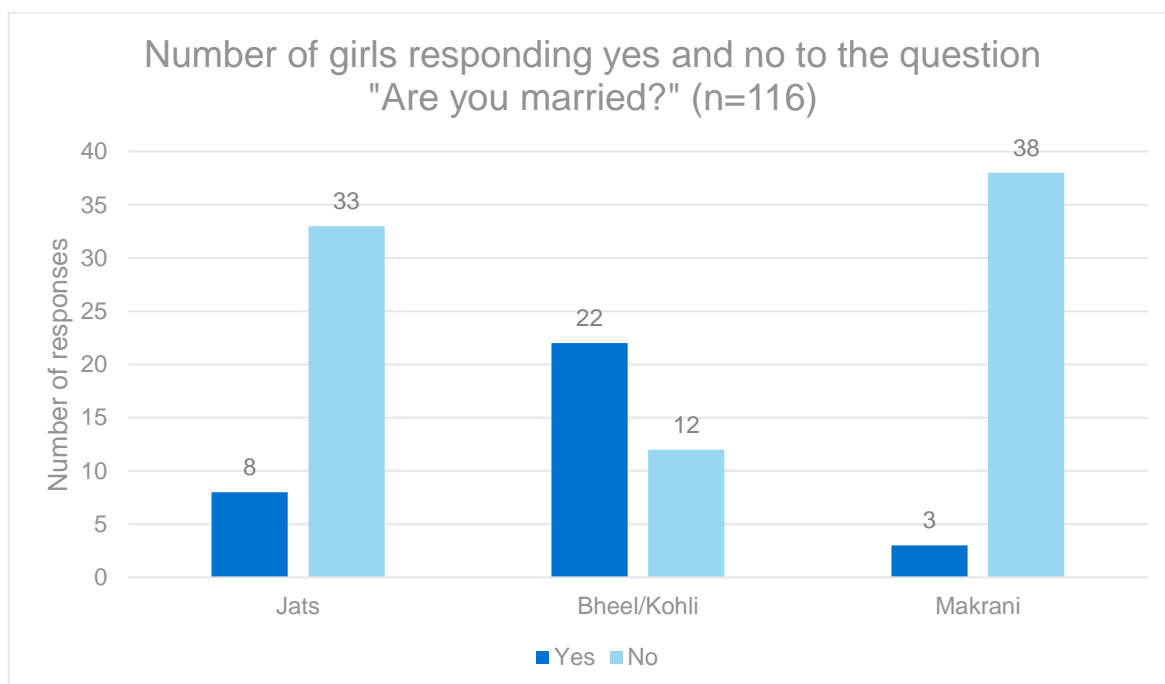
**Age of respondents**

In the sample of 119 girls, the age categories were as follows: 29 girls (24 per cent of the sample) were 15 years old; 21 girls (18 per cent) were 16 years old; 15 girls (13 per cent) were 17 years old; 32 girls (27 per cent) were 18 years old; and 22 girls (18 per cent) were 19 years old. The average age was 17 years.

**Married girls**

Among the sample, 33 girls (28 per cent) stated that they were currently married: 30 of these 33 responders stated that they were currently living with their husband or a partner. The majority of that sub-set, 23 girls, stated that their husband or partner contributed to daily household costs such as food and housing costs. According to ethnicity, the married girls were split as follows:

- 22 Bheel/Kohli girls (65 per cent) stated they were married, and 12 (35 per cent) were not;
- eight Jats girls (20 per cent) were married, 33 (80 per cent) were not;
- three Makrani girls (7 per cent) were married, and 38 were not (93 per cent).



### Young mothers

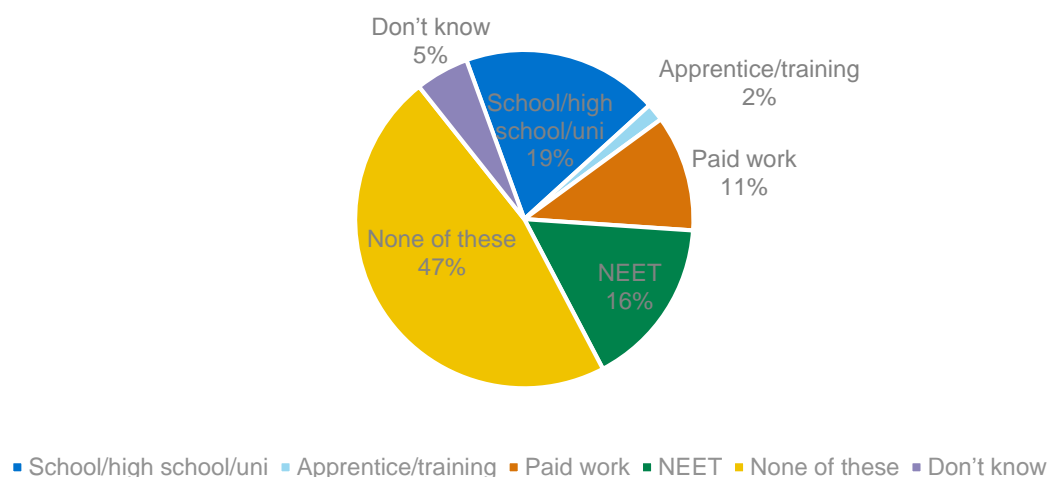
The 33 married girls were asked further questions regarding whether they had children and what age they were when giving birth. Fifteen of the married girls stated that they currently had children: eight girls (26 per cent) had one child; five girls (16 per cent) had two children; and two girls (6 per cent) had three or more children. A further three married girls stated that they had given birth to a child at some point (but did not say what had happened to the baby). A total of 18 married girls had therefore given birth, among whom:

- two stated that they had been 12 years old or under when they gave birth;
- three stated that they had been 13 to 14 years old;
- five stated that they had been 15 to 16 years old; and
- eight stated that they were 17 to 19 years old.

### Education, work, training or other categories

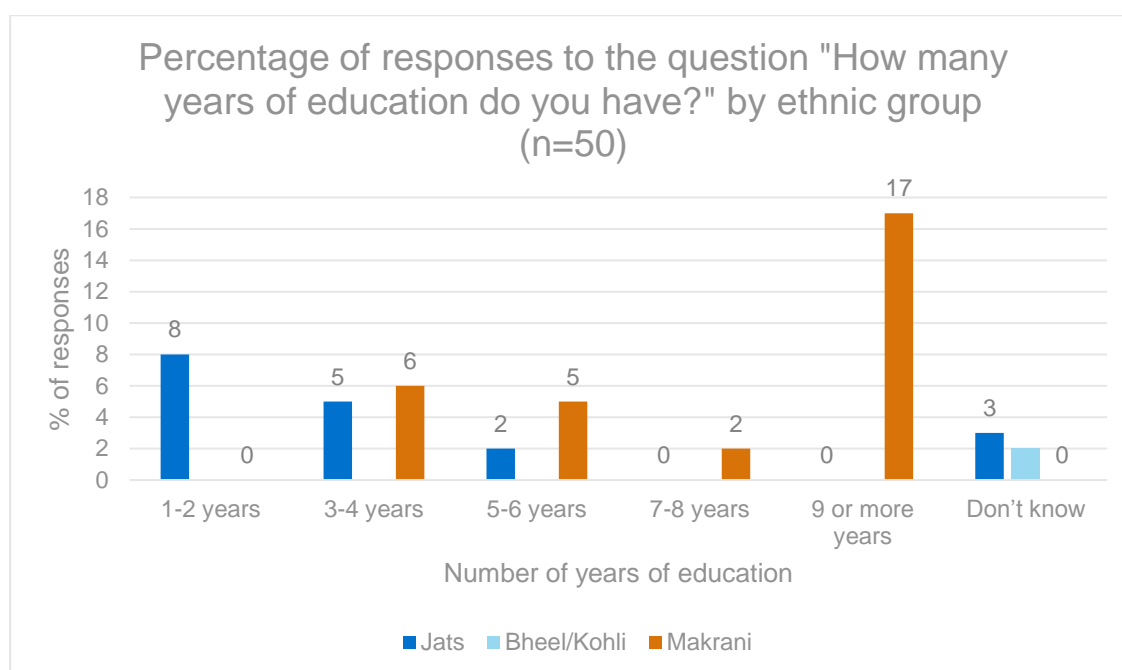
Of the 119 girls surveyed, 22 girls (19 per cent) reported that they were currently in education; two girls (2 per cent) were in an apprenticeship or training; 13 (11 per cent) were in paid work; and 19 girls (16 per cent) stated that they were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Another 55 girls (47 per cent) stated that they were not in any of the previous categories. Six girls stated that they did not know how to answer the question (5 per cent).

### Percentage of girls in education, training or work, or unemployment status of girls (n=117)



### Level of education

In the sample, 19 per cent of the girls (22 girls) were currently in education and a total of 55 girls (47 per cent) had previously been to school (including the 22 currently in education). The graph below illustrates the number of years in education according to ethnicity for the 55 girls reporting they had previously been to school for some period.

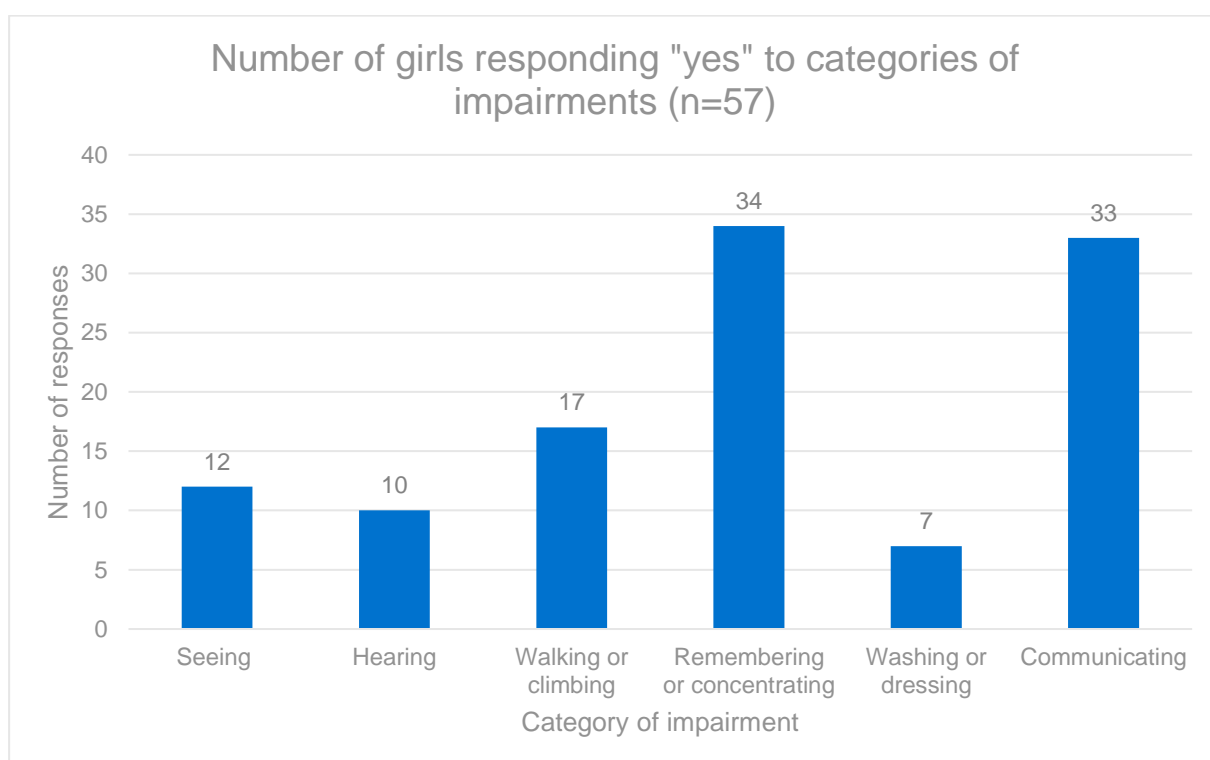


### Girls' self-identifying as having an impairment

Girls were asked if they were with living with an impairment, either physical or mental. There were 57 girls who identified as having one or more category of impairment: eight of these girls identified as having a disability, and another 49 girls stated that they lived with an impairment that could lead to disability. Of these 57 girls, 21 were Jats, 13 were Bheel/Kohli, and 23 were Makrani. Overall:



- 12 girls (10 per cent) stated that they had some difficulty with seeing;
- ten girls stated that they had difficulty with hearing: eight girls (7 per cent) had some difficulty with hearing and two (2 per cent) had a lot of difficulty with hearing;
- 17 girls stated that they had difficulty with walking or climbing: 12 girls (10 per cent) had some difficulty, and five (4 per cent) had a lot of difficulty;
- 34 girls stated that they had difficulty with remembering or concentrating: 12 girls (10 per cent) stated that they had some difficulty, nine girls (8 per cent) had a lot of difficulty and one girl (1 per cent) stated that she could not remember or concentrate at all;
- seven girls stated that they had difficulty with washing or dressing: four (3.36 per cent) had some difficulty and three (2.52 per cent) had a lot of difficulty;
- 33 girls stated that they had difficulty in communicating: 23 girls (19 per cent) had some difficulty in communicating and ten girls (8 per cent) stated that they had a lot of difficulty in communicating.



#### 1.4.3 Field data collection

Once programme advisers from Plan International Pakistan had identified the characteristics and locations of target respondents, the country office contacted local offices from these areas and asked to collaborate with local partners in the communities to mobilise adolescent girls who fit the criteria.<sup>25</sup> With consent from parents and from the girls themselves, they were invited to participate in the research survey.

<sup>25</sup> This is similar to the 'snowball' sampling technique, where the researcher is interested in a set group of people who can be hard to identify and access by usual methods, therefore the researcher cannot rely on a sampling frame and needs to rely on local networks of people in order to sample hard-to-reach populations.

Adolescent girls who wished to participate in the research were given the date, location and time when the data collection would begin and they presented themselves to the research team at the appointed time. After screening to ensure the adolescent girls matched the criteria, they were invited to partake in survey interviews.

A total of 119 adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were surveyed: 42 were Jats from the Sindh province, 35 were Bheel / Kohli from Sujawal and 42 were Makrani from Thatta.

In addition to the surveys, 31 adolescent girls participated in three separate reflective workshops and group discussions held at each of the survey locations. Eighteen adolescent boys between the ages of 15 and 19 also participated in reflective workshops. These adolescent girls and boys were identified and invited by local Plan International community staff, based on criteria provided by the research team.

#### 1.4.4 Quantitative survey questions

A perceptions-based survey was conducted with 119 adolescent girls. A Likert-type scale<sup>26</sup> was applied to quantify and measure the perceptions and attitudes of adolescent girls through degrees of agreement and disagreement to statements related to the core themes for inquiry. Additional statements were added to gauge the differentiation between how the situation *actually is* for girls and how they perceive situations *should be*. For example, one might say “I have some opportunities available but I *should* have more.” It is important to highlight that the results of this research are not representative of the entire adolescent girl population from each country and should be framed as an insight into a diverse set of experiences and lived realities.

Descriptive analysis of quantitative data is presented in percentages of agreement and disagreement; perceptions of neither disagree nor agree, or don’t know, are not specifically presented and the reader should understand the missing percentage as allocated to this category.

It is important to note that reporting on the number of respondents can differ depending on the question asked. Some respondents prefer not to answer a question, therefore a “no response” was noted and the participant was not included in data analysis of that question. Only the actual number of respondents who answered the questions was used for data analysis purposes.

#### 1.4.5 Qualitative survey questions

The qualitative aspect of the research included open questions in the survey to complement the quantitative inquiry. This allowed the research assistants to dig deeper into the perceptions and experiences of the respondents, to identify influential factors and relationships, and to capture their ideas and personal reflections.

Open questions provided rich data for the research and facilitated the understanding of topics from the point of view of the adolescent girls. Each country’s research task team and the research assistants, with support from the research lead, designed three country- and context-specific open questions to be included in the survey. The purpose of these

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<sup>26</sup> A widely used approach to scaling responses in survey research in which respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement for a series of statements.

questions was to allow the Plan International advisers and research assistants to tailor questions responding to a specific area of inquiry. This allowed for generating data on important issues relevant to adolescent girls in the context, and building knowledge where there were known knowledge gaps.

#### **1.4.6 Creative and reflective workshops**

To allow for a deeper understanding of root causes, five creative and reflective workshops were conducted, three with adolescent girls and two with adolescent boys. These workshops were guided by participatory action research principles, which centre around inclusive strategies for gathering information that involve the people directly affected by an issue in learning about or addressing that issue, and then linking that learning with identifying potential opportunities for addressing the issue or taking action.

Activities included drawings to elicit how adolescent girls understand their position and condition in their communities, critical and reflective focus group discursive sessions on the distinct challenges they face as girls comparatively to boys, and constructing poems or songs where girls voice, in their own words, the changes they would like to see to support the advancement of girls' rights.

The design of these workshops allowed the research team to investigate in detail some sensitive and difficult topics that are hard to explore in a survey – such as violence against girls. The same methods were used to undertake creative and reflective workshops with adolescent boys. Two workshops were undertaken in order to explore the perspectives of adolescent boys who live in similar conditions and environments to the adolescent girls surveyed, placing a particular focus on exploring adolescent boys' attitudes and behaviours in relation to violence against girls.

All workshop sessions were recorded and a note-taker transcribed the sessions into handwritten reports. All drawings were photographed and kept in the country office.

#### **1.4.7 Research task teams**

Research task teams (RTT) were set up in each country to strengthen the participatory action approach of the research. These comprised of Plan International gender and protection advisers, and programme and research advisers from each country where the field research took place. The RTT advised on survey content, co-designed and facilitated the creative and reflective workshops. Their experience was invaluable to the research process, helping to strengthen the research project and generate more powerful and meaningful results.

Guided by a commitment to improve opportunities for young women in each country, the lead researcher and country research task team worked with local universities to identify young women from sociology departments who displayed a strong interest in community development and/or gender issues. In Pakistan, a partnership with the University of Sindh in Jamshoro was established. No field research experience was required, but some exposure to social research methods and a sociological background was needed. The research assistants (RAs) were supported by the Plan RTT and by Dr. Ameer Ali Abro from the Sociology department of the University of Sindh.

The RAs were given two days of training on research methods, gender and protection issues, the research project and applying the tools. The RAs were responsible for conducting 120 survey interviews per country with hands-on support from the lead researcher and the RTT. They participated in a collective analysis workshop where initial

findings and observations were discussed and annotated. As part of their training they were required to write up a short research report, outlining their analysis of central findings. On completion of the research process they were presented with research certificates acknowledging their participation and contribution to the research.

#### 1.4.8 Data collection and analysis

Fieldwork was conducted over two weeks in November 2016. Data was collected in three locations, each location selected in order to capture experiences of the specific ethnic groups.

Face-to-face pen and paper interviewing was undertaken for 119 surveys. After quality-checking the surveys, the quantitative data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet formatted for exportation into STATA, a data and statistics software package.

The lead researchers in Pakistan trained the RAs on quality control and data inputting. This process was closely supervised to support the RAs to execute the data entry process to a high standard. The data was then transferred to London and subject to further quality control by a qualified data analyst. The data analyst constructed a code list to mirror the data, and descriptive analysis of data was conducted through STATA.

The RAs processed the qualitative data from the open-ended survey questions into Word documents. The content from the reflective workshops was also collated in a Word-formatted memo document. All qualitative data was translated from the local dialect into English. Quality control of all documents was undertaken and qualitative data was analysed in London using the Nvivo software. The data analyst and lead researcher co-designed the code list for Nvivo, and data was inputted, coded and analysed.

Sub-analysis was applied to the quantitative and qualitative data. Typical sub-group differences that were analysed included:

- age
- location
- ethnicity
- education (i.e. in school/out of school)
- marital status
- girls with or without children.

In line with the participatory nature of the research, a collective analysis workshop session was held in each country with the RAs and the RTT. This was an important process to gain an in-depth understanding of the findings from the perspective of those two groups. It also served as a learning space for the RAs and the RTTs. During the workshop, each person presented their subjective analysis and justified their understanding of what they captured during the data collection phase.

The lead researcher facilitated these sessions and compiled the results into a report. The detail of these results, although subjective, provided an excellent form of cross-checking anticipated versus actual revelations of the findings. The first-level analysis of the data (objective analysis of raw data) was conducted in the UK.

The draft country reports were sent to the RTT and Plan International country director for review and input, with specific responsibility to craft country recommendations. This was an important final stage of the process, ensuring inclusive and participatory approaches were guaranteed throughout the research.

The technical reports were then made available online for dissemination internally (Plan International) and externally with peers and stakeholders.

## **1.5 Ethics**

The design of this study adhered to Plan International's Research Policy and Standards and was subjected to an ethics review by senior management in the research department. Key ethical considerations included:

### **1.5.1 Child protection**

One of the guiding ethical principles of this research is that no participant comes to harm as a result of the study. To this end, the protection adviser in each country trained all RAs on Plan International's key child protection issues and child protection policies. All RAs also signed Plan International's Child Protection Policy as a pre-condition of engaging in the research process. The RAs were informed of procedures to follow if concerns arose regarding the protection or safety of an adolescent girl while conducting the research. During the training, the RAs were presented with examples of child protection scenarios that have arisen in past research projects and were given guidance on how to respond.

Child protection advisers in each country reviewed all research tools, including the survey and tools for the creative and reflective workshops, as a form of protection quality control to reduce the risk of including any upsetting or disturbing questions that might impact the participants.

### **1.5.2 Anonymity and confidentiality**

The anonymity and privacy of the research participants was respected. Any personal information regarding the participants was kept confidential. All data was stored in Nvivo and STATA with a unique ID and no corresponding information of participants.

### **1.5.3 Informed consent**

Informed consent processes were undertaken for all participants engaged in the study in order to secure the approval of community leaders and school officials, along with primary caregiver informed consent and permission where necessary, as well as the consent of the participants themselves. The consent forms for parents and participants were adapted from Plan International's Girls Speak Out research and from international guidelines prepared by the World Health Organization.

The informed consent processes included information on the intended purposes of the research, how Plan International would maintain confidentiality of the focus group discussions and data, the anonymity of participants, potential risks and benefits of participating, participants' rights of silence and disclosure, and plans to utilise the research findings. Participants were assured that they had the right to stop or end the interview at any point if they so wished.

## **1.6 Layout of the report**

Section two of the report focuses on the perceptions and experiences of adolescent girls regarding the opportunities they have to get on in life. By asking them about their own individual aspirations and goals in life, the challenges they face, their sources of support,



and the type of support they receive, the report gains a good insight into adolescent girls' own agency. This helps to highlight some aspects of SDG 5, uncovering the experiences and perceptions of adolescent girls in relation to varying dimensions of empowerment, including: effective participation in decision-making in the home and the community; access to and control of resources; autonomy over their own lives; interpersonal communications and supportive relations; and perspectives of equal opportunities.

Section three focuses on the conditions and environments where girls live, exploring the gender and social norms, and the positive or discriminatory practices and traditions within their communities. This gives particular insight into how some cultures and practices inform and influence decision-making of parents and adolescent girls in relation to child and early marriage.

The section also explores the gender roles and responsibilities that shape adolescent girls' lives through the lens of care and domestic work, asking what types of tasks and care they carry out, how long they spend on chores and care, and whether they believe this is shared equally within the household. This also provides valuable insights into Goal 5 from the perspective of adolescent girls.

Sections four through six examine the biggest challenges that girls feel they face in their daily lives. These sections explore the perceptions and experiences that girls report in relation to education, child and early marriage and early pregnancy, and violence and safety.

More specifically, section four explores perceptions of access, retention and quality of education, including sex education in the classroom and adolescent girls' own perceptions of the value of their education. In addition, it examines drop-out rates of adolescent girls and the reasons behind them, providing valuable insights into SDGs 4 and 5 from the perspective of adolescent girls.

Section five explores the drivers behind child and early marriage, adolescent girls' perceptions and experiences of child and early marriages, control and decision-making in the household once married, experiences of child and early marriages, and the impact of these situations from the perspective of adolescent girls, including early pregnancy.

Section six looks at the perceptions and experiences of adolescent girls with relation to violence against women and girls in both public and private spaces and within their familial and interpersonal relations. It also explores perceptions of reporting violence and what can be done to address it. The perceptions of adolescent boys regarding the drivers of violence against women and girls are also investigated. Finally this section looks at the perceptions of adolescent girls regarding what opportunities exist to improve the situation of their lives.

In section seven there is a summary of these findings highlighting the central points of analysis. Finally, the report concludes with some recommendations for policy and programme work that could serve to improve the condition and position of adolescent girls with diverse identities.

## SECTION 2

# GIRLS' ASPIRATIONS –

## LIFE GOALS, BARRIERS AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

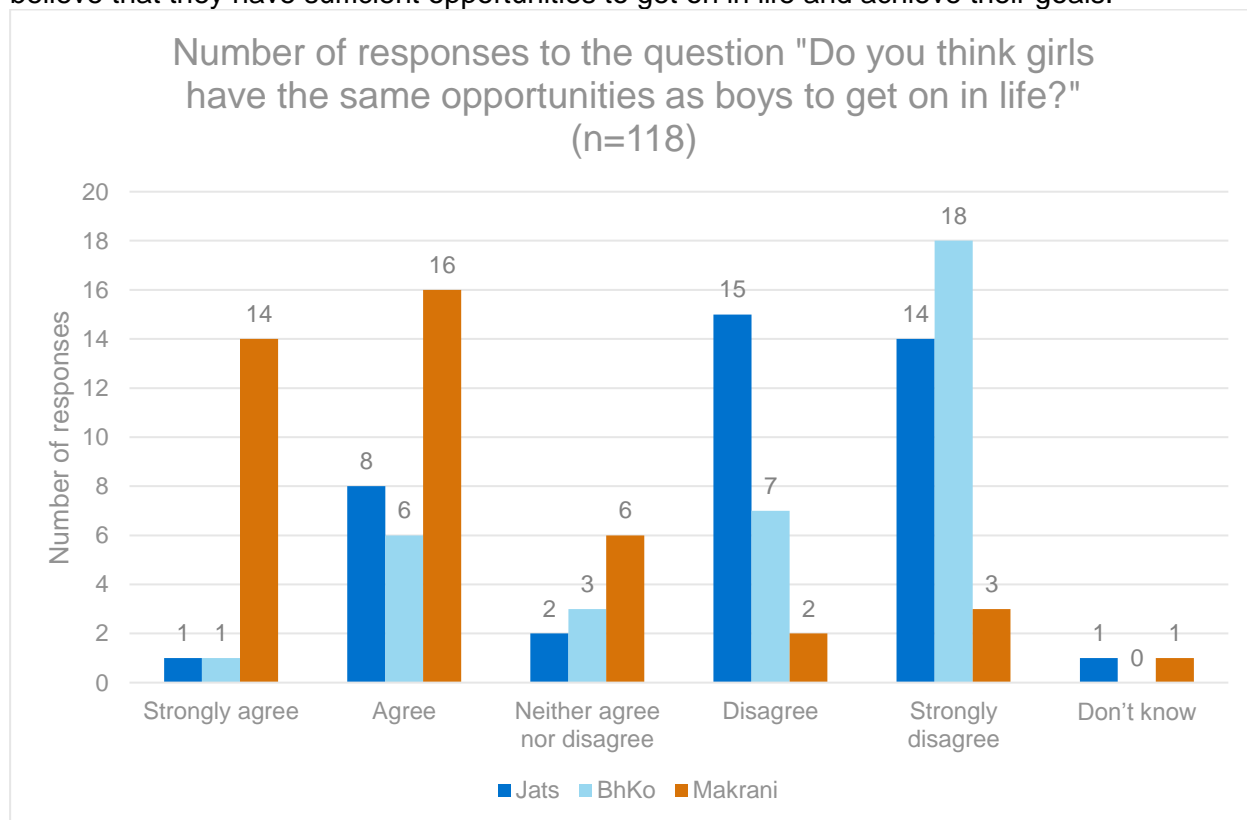
This section explores girls' individual aspirations, identifying their goals in life, the barriers they face in attempting to reach those goals, and the mechanisms and support systems that enable or prevent them from progressing towards achieving their goals.

The Sustainable Development Goals set an ambition of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030. To better understand how adolescent girls can be empowered, it is important to explore dimensions such as their access and control of resources and perceptions of their own agency, which affect their ability to make choices about their future.

Understanding these dimensions of empowerment from the perspective of adolescent girls can help to highlight the areas of their lives that they feel they can and cannot influence. Furthermore, through exploring the social relations that girls find important, it is possible to identify where support can best be leveraged. The combination of these two components provides valuable insight into the barriers and supports that either prevent girls from, or enable them to, realise their rights.

### 2.1 Opportunities to get on in life and girls' aspirations

Girls' opportunities and actions are often determined by the conditions of their communities as well as by the social norms that surround them. Consequently, girls were asked whether they believe that they have sufficient opportunities to get on in life and achieve their goals.



The majority of girls – 53 per cent – reported that they did not have sufficient opportunities to get on in life and achieve their goals, while 36 per cent strongly disagreed. Only 33 per cent of all girls agreed that they had sufficient opportunities to achieve their life goals. The number of girls who agreed with the statement differentiated by ethnicity is illustrated above. Agreement levels are highest among the Makrani girls and lowest among the Bheel/Kohli girls. Disagreement levels are highest among the Jats and Bheel/Kohli girls with only two Makrani girls disagreeing. This suggests that a greater proportion of Makrani girls than Jats or Bheel/Kohli girls agreed that they had sufficient opportunities to achieve their life goals.<sup>27</sup>

More than half of the girls who stated that they had attended school agreed that they had sufficient opportunities to get on in life: 31 of 55 girls who had been to school agreed that girls had sufficient opportunities, 14 out of 55 disagreed, with the remaining ten reporting neither agree nor disagree. Out of the 61 girls who had never attended school, only nine agreed that they had sufficient opportunities to get on in life, whereas 47 out of 61 disagreed, 36 of whom strongly disagreed. The remaining five neither agreed nor disagreed. This indicates that girls who had been to school perceived that they had sufficient opportunities to get on in life comparatively to girls who had never attended school.

“Girls do not go to school. Small girls were going, but master do not take class, that’s why no one goes now.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“Earlier I left education after grade 10, now I have permission to continue and my brother also wishes that I become a doctor.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

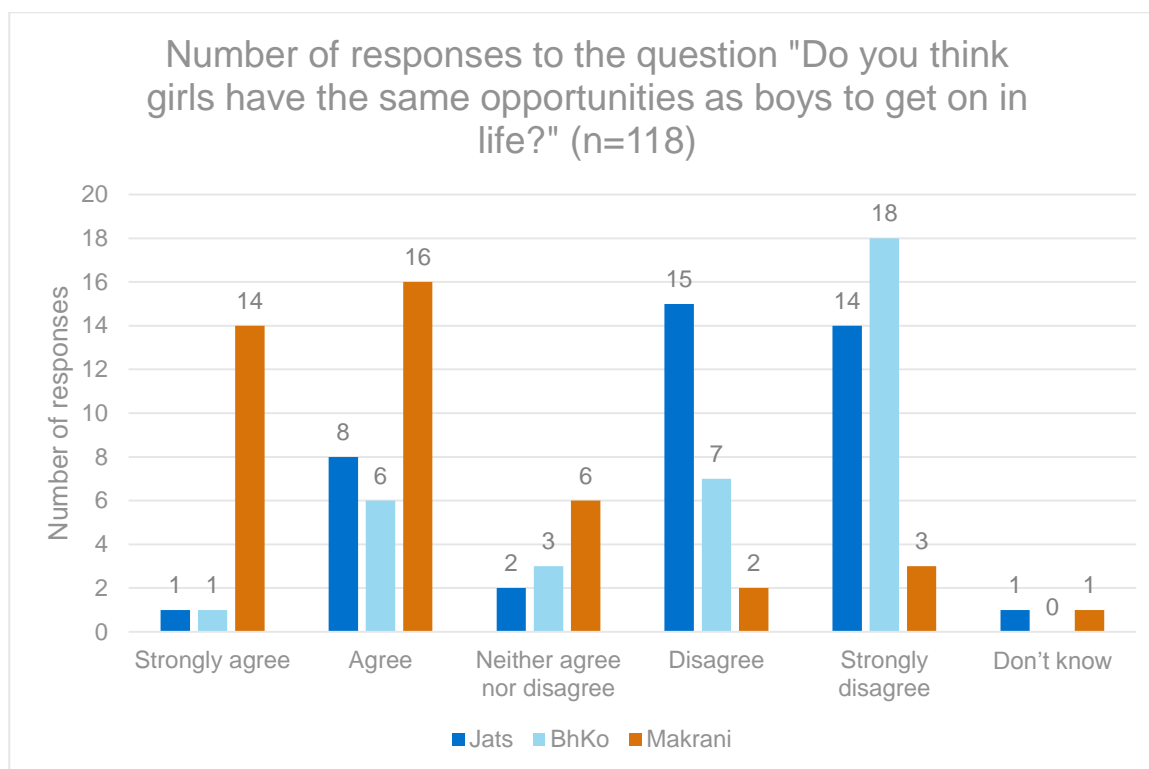
“Cultural bonds do not allow girls to go for education as their role is to do domestic chores only.” (Jats adolescent boys, focus group discussion)

When asked whether they had the same opportunities as boys to get on in life, 50 per cent of all girls surveyed disagreed, whereas 39 per cent agreed that they had the same opportunities as boys. Only nine out of 42 Jats girls stated that they had the same opportunities to get on in life as boys, as did seven out of 35 Bheel/Kohli girls. However, the Makrani girls reported a much higher agreement level with 30 out of 42 girls agreeing that they have the same opportunities as boys to get on in life.

“I want to be like a man, I want to work like them.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

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<sup>27</sup> Location is one of the factors influencing the agreement levels across ethnic groups according to the local knowledge of research task team. For example, Makrani girls live in an urban district and the Bheel / Kohli girls live in illegal settlement villages outside of town areas making transportation and access to services difficult. See page 14 for further detail on this.



Boys agreed that they have more access to opportunities such as education and free movement compared to girls, as the below discussions highlight:

“Boys are free to their will to move anywhere.”

“Girls are not allowed for education.”

“Boys are allowed for education.” (Jats adolescent boys, focus group discussion)

When asked what their goals and aspirations were for their lives, the girls’ answers revolved around four main themes: education, household and family, standard of living (poverty alleviation) and freedom. Girls discussed education in three distinct ways: firstly, as a pathway to wisdom and understanding. Education meant that they could consider themselves as educated – girls stated that education brought independence – and boys stated that education made girls feel ‘wise’. Education was also linked to the possibility of reading the Qur’an and therefore enabling them to undertake their religious duties.

“I want to become independent by getting education.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I want to get education... I don’t like household work and just want to study.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Complete Qur’an.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Girls think that education makes them wise.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent boys, focus group discussion)

Girls furthermore discussed education as the key to obtaining more satisfying, and better paid, employment. Girls were not, however, encouraged to seek employment as their role was firmly placed within the home: the majority of the girls (67 per cent) agreed that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than a woman – 45 per cent strongly agreed with this statement, 22 per cent agreed. Half of the girls interviewed agreed that mothers should stay home and look after children, not taking on any paid work: 32 per cent disagreed with this

statement. When asked if men should stay at home and look after the children, the majority disagreed (56 per cent) and roughly a third (32 per cent) agreed.

Given the cultural and social norms that positions the roles and responsibilities of girls inside the home, it is unsurprising that girls discussed many life goals in relation to the household and to family. Girls focused upon the needs of the household, such as the health of their children, their desire to please their family and keep their family members close to them, as well as their desire to marry and have children.

“I have goals of my household, I just think about my husband and for my son.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“I never think about anything. Just house chores and [my] future husband are in my mind, what is [a life] goal, I don’t know.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“I need a child; my husband may become happy with me.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

“Good nourishment of my children.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“I want to keep my mother and father happy.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“My goal is to get married with a boy from a respectable family. I want good husband.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I want to marry. I will make a happy family.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“I want dowry like, utensils, cupboard, clothes, jewellery and everything... Nothing else I want... Now I will marry... I cannot study now... now I am grown up.” (Jats adolescent girl)

Once a girl reaches puberty, she is considered to be ‘mature’, or ‘grown up’ and therefore should support the household and family rather than focus on her education. Given the context of extreme poverty in which the majority of the girls lived, their discussions also focused upon raising their standard of living as a life goal. This again underlined the necessity of employment in order to be able to afford basic necessities for the household.

“I want to have electricity in my home.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Want a nice house, a sewing machine and a cupboard.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

“Water facility for the community.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

“I just want money, nothing else.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“I want to do a job and [have] facilities at home.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

Possible careers mentioned (particularly by Makrani girls) included teacher, police officer, air hostess, joining the army, NGO worker, teacher and doctor. Becoming a doctor appeared to be the ultimate career, with at least one girl from each ethnic group mentioning that they wanted to become a doctor. Girls acknowledged that these careers, however, required a lot of studying which was beyond their reach. Income generation projects and practical skills training were therefore also mentioned by girls from each ethnic group, such as sewing and stitching clothes to sell in the community.



“I also want to make a centre for stitching for the girls.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“I want to become tailor master.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“[Girls want] to work and earn money.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent boys, focus group discussion)

The dichotomy of being both restricted to the home and wanting to work and be educated meant that discussions around life goals also evoked the concept of freedom, as girls underlined their lack of agency. Girls stated that they would like to be able to leave the house, visit other cities and go on outings.

“Having clothes and freedom to go out of the house.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“I want to do something for myself.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I want freedom in my life.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I want to bring equality between girls and boys and women and men.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I want to go to Karachi city and visit the seaside to see how fish live in water, and I want to see fish.” (Jats adolescent girl)

There were, however, also a number of girls who stated that they did not have any life goals, or were not able to articulate them. Bheel girls in particular – who had very little education – replied that they either had no life goals at all, or any other goals beyond the household and marriage. These responses could be attributed to three reasons: first, a lack of agency means they have never, even in their imagination, formed desires and wishes for themselves that were not enforced by others. Second, there is always the possibility that the manner in which the question was asked was confusing, or that the girls did not fully understand the question. Third, they felt unable to talk openly in their home environment where they were interviewed, as family members could overhear<sup>28</sup>.

“Yes I have some... no... I don't know.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“No, I don't have any goal of my life.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

## 2.2 Barriers girls face when trying to realise their life goals

Girls identified significant obstacles to achieving their life goals. Discussions around girls' standard of living and education pivoted around poverty and the inability to obtain work or to pay for healthcare or education. Girls additionally linked discrimination on account of their caste to the problem of obtaining employment and furthermore stated that the government should play a key role in poverty alleviation through the provision of state facilities.

“I cannot sell outside the village due to longer distances and difficult journey to reach city.” (Jats adolescent girl)

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<sup>28</sup> As part of the research ethics and consent procedures, all respondents were asked if they could suggest somewhere where the interview could take place where they felt comfortable – interviewers suggested that they should be out of earshot of family members but within sight.

“My husband is paralysed. I always remain in tension, there is only me, who has to earn and feed my child.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Wherever I go for job, after looking at my features, different language and accent, people don’t give me job.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Cannot get job because they don’t give us job due to our caste.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“We are poor – that’s the reason we don’t have facilities.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“Problem of money is a big challenge to achieve goal.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Poverty is big challenge for me. We are hand-to-mouth, we eat what we earn, even sometimes we have nothing to eat. How can we can build our house?” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Poverty is big challenge for us, that why I could not get good education – without education how can I achieve my goal...” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I am not educated. I don’t have any skill – if I had then I can earn money.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Government is not giving us electricity and school; to us they are problem.” (Jats adolescent girl)

Girls furthermore discussed their education being hampered by the necessity of spending a lot of time sewing to complete the items necessary for their dowries, as well as acquiring permission from the family: this was linked to the idea of being too ‘mature’ for education once girls had reached puberty.

“My parents did not allow me as I reached to puberty... I am adult... Here when girls reach puberty, they are not allowed to continue education... Here every girl has same problem.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Now I don’t want to study because I am grown up and my mind/thinking is also mature... I cannot go to school. If I will go with small/young girls, others will laugh at me... I cannot go because in our village girls of my age do not go to school.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“My parent did not educate me, and [therefore arranged] set my marriage.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“My parents don’t allow me to go to school to continue my education because I am grown up. I have responsibilities of 20 dresses, which [I] have to complete before I get married. If I don’t have to prepare my dowry [the 20 dresses] then I must be in school.” (Jats adolescent girl)

Girls’ lack of autonomy and mobility leaves makes it significantly difficult for them to achieve their life goals – family and community censorship of girls’ education often renders education, employment, and even moving outside the home, impossible.

“Family and community don’t allow.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Our family members/husband don’t allow us to go outside.” (Jats adolescent girls, married)

“Men don’t allow us to go anywhere.” (Jats adolescent girls)

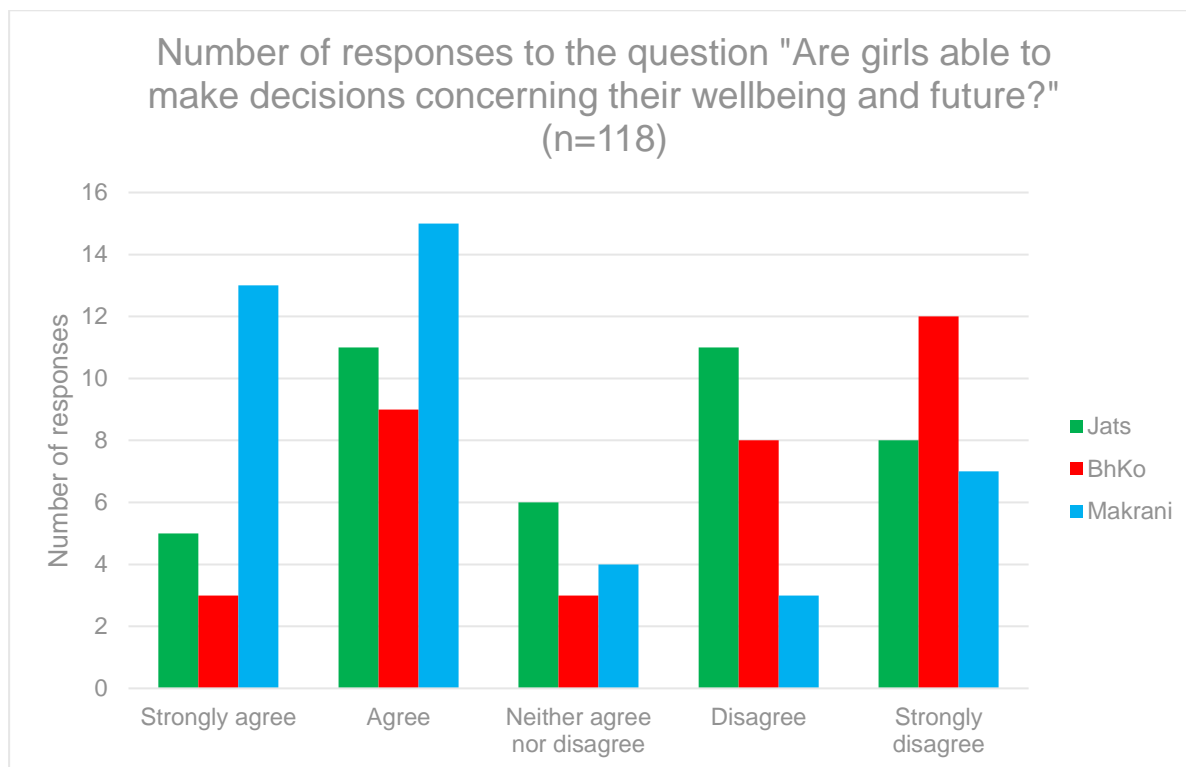
When asked if the girls should have more opportunities available to them so they can achieve their goals in life, a combined total of 69 per cent agreed; interestingly, 16 per cent disagreed with this statement and the remaining 15 per cent were neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

### 2.3 Overcoming barriers to achieving life goals

A significant challenge and recurring theme discussed by the girls interviewed was the lack of agency they have over their own future. Almost half of the girls felt that they were able to take decisions concerning their wellbeing and future: 47 per cent agreed that they could. However, 42 per cent of girls disagreed with this statement, representing a significant proportion of all the girls surveyed who feel that they do not have control over their wellbeing and future. This is in contrast to girls’ desire for greater autonomy: the large majority (70 per cent) of all girls felt that they *should* be able to make their own decisions regarding their wellbeing and future: 43 per cent strongly agreed and 27 per cent agreed.

“I cannot do anything, only males of my house can do, I can only talk to them. If we get work opportunities, we can get any good job or start small business, it will help us to reduce our poverty.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

The majority of Bheel/Kohli girls disagreed that they were able to take decisions concerning their wellbeing and future, and only 12 per cent agreed. Jats girls were more evenly split: 39 per cent agreed and 47 per cent disagreed. The majority of Makrani girls agreed that they were able to take decisions concerning their wellbeing and future: 67 per cent agreed, while 24 per cent disagreed. Again, these findings indicate that Makrani girls feel that they have more autonomy over their lives comparatively to Jats and Bheel/Kohli girls.



Given the lack of autonomy that many girls express in relation to decisions regarding their futures it is therefore unsurprising that when asked about how obstacles to achieving their life goals could be overcome they focused on getting external support. Girls' discussions focused overwhelmingly on asking for help from others, gathering support, hoping for someone to intervene, and praying to God.

"Yes, someone will do for us [said with hope]. We tell our problems to everyone coming in our village." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

"NGO can give us, God will build our house." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

"When relatives support me, I'll become doctor." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"I can tell only to my father. If I take proper treatment of illness, then I can re-join school and achieve my goal. For betterment of environment, education is necessary, good and equal; education for girls and boys can bring equality." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"I speak to my mother if she will make 20 dresses on my behalf, and then I can go to school and continue my education. This way I can fulfill my requirements and also achieve my goal." (Jats adolescent girl)

"I shared my wish of having a child with my husband, he says it will happen. Good thing is now I am pregnant." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

Girls' discussions additionally focused on eliminating poverty through working hard and earning money.

"I make embroidery. I will collect some money and buy domestic animals and also collect my dowry." (Jats adolescent girl)

“If my father allow, I work, do labour, earn money for my dowry and further education.”  
(Makrani adolescent girl)

Some discussion, however, focused on the fact that girls felt that it may not be possible to overcome the obstacles they face as they had no one they were able to talk to, or to support them.

“No, we keep everything in our hearts, we don’t tell anyone. Because we know nothing will happen. Why should we tell when no one listens to us?” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“No it is not possible.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“We the women of this village, we will not say anything, we will not speak out, whatever is told to us we do and we have to [do] that.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

Many girls are determined through their own hard work, sacrifices, support of relatives and their faith to succeed in advancing their life goals. This is despite their lack of access to resources such as education, or to financial resources, and compounded by the restrictions that are placed on their own decision-making over their wellbeing and futures. However, for some girls these challenges appear insurmountable.

“We try our best, but when our family don’t allow us to go to school, [we] can’t do anything.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Never... I cannot do anything.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“No, there is no solution.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Yes, girls should be asked about their opinions.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“If we sit to gather and talk to each other problems can be resolved.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

The importance of the family and the community was equally apparent in determining girls’ wellbeing: a large proportion of girls felt that their opinions were not heard in their homes or communities: and a significant proportion felt they had no one to talk to when they were worried.

When asked if their opinions were asked for and considered in their homes, 46 per cent of girls disagreed, while 42 per cent of girls agreed with this statement. A far greater proportion – 75 per cent – agreed that girls’ opinions *should* be asked for and considered in the home.

A particular example of girls’ sense of agency and lack of autonomy in the home is their use of resources: 71 per cent of the girls stated that when they have money they can decide what they spend it on: 24 per cent disagreed with this statement. This proportion changed, however, when girls living with husbands or partners were asked if they could decide what they spend money on: the number of girls agreeing diminished to 35 per cent, while 31 per cent of girls disagreed and the remaining 31 per cent were neutral (neither agree nor disagree).

Girls were additionally asked about access to the internet and to social media, and whether they had as many opportunities as boys to use them. The majority (62 per cent) disagreed, with 53 per cent strongly disagreeing, that they had the same opportunities as boys to use these resources. Only 28 per cent agreed that they did.

When the girls were questioned about whether they had anyone to talk to when they were worried about anything, 17 per cent of girls stated that they had no one to talk to, and 9 per cent stated they only sometimes had someone to talk to.

“Some friends guide me, however some avoid to give me any suggestion.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Of the 20 girls who had no one to talk to, 12 were Bheel/Kohli, six were Makrani and two were Jats. Eleven additional girls reported that they only sometimes had someone to talk to, seven were Makrani, three were Bheel/Kohli and one was Jats. Education status did not affect the instances of girls reporting that they had no one or only sometimes someone to talk to, as a mixed number of girls reported that they were attending or not attending school. Out of the 20 girls who reported they had no one to talk to, 12 self-identified as living with an impairment that could lead to disability, highlighting the social isolation of girls living with impairments. “No one will marry with a disabled girl.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

Overall, 74 per cent of the girls stated that they had someone to talk to. The majority of Jats (38 out of 42, 93 per cent) and Makrani girls (29 out of 42, 69 per cent) stated that they had someone to talk to when they were worried about something. However a lower majority of Bheel/Kohli girls, (20 out of 35, 57 per cent) reported they had someone to talk to.

“They guide me on any issue that how and when it can be resolved... I feel they are both my own to whom I can share.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Girls focused on female relatives when asked whom they turned to for help: sisters, mothers, cousins, aunties, and even mothers-in-law were cited as sources of support and strength. Male relatives were also discussed with much affection and appreciation: fathers, brothers, husbands, uncles and fiancés were cited, most often in relation to financial and practical help. Girls also mentioned friends and God as sources of support. The girls interviewed detailed a range of support they received from their families: advice and support on matters such as problems and marriages, as well as practical help such as money, taking them to the doctors, or purchasing items from the market. Girls furthermore stated that the people in their lives who were important to them offered them protection: from teasing or physical violence, from both the women and men in their lives.

“Even sometimes my sister fights with others for myself, she is too brave, she can do whatever she wants.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“My sister says ... don't be upset, forget about problems, don't think about bad things. We are sisters, we are friends and share all things with each other and provide moral support.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“[Mother] gives her opinion to me and if my husband scolds me she elucidates him.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“In case of any problem, I share with my father. He listens to me and guides me. If I become ill, he takes me to the doctor.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I always ask for help from my brother. Sometimes he helps me, sometimes he does not. For example, sometimes I ask him to purchase something [clothes] from the market... He is very important for me especially when he bring something which is necessary or helpful for me then I feel happy and say that my brother brought this for me.” (Jats adolescent girl)

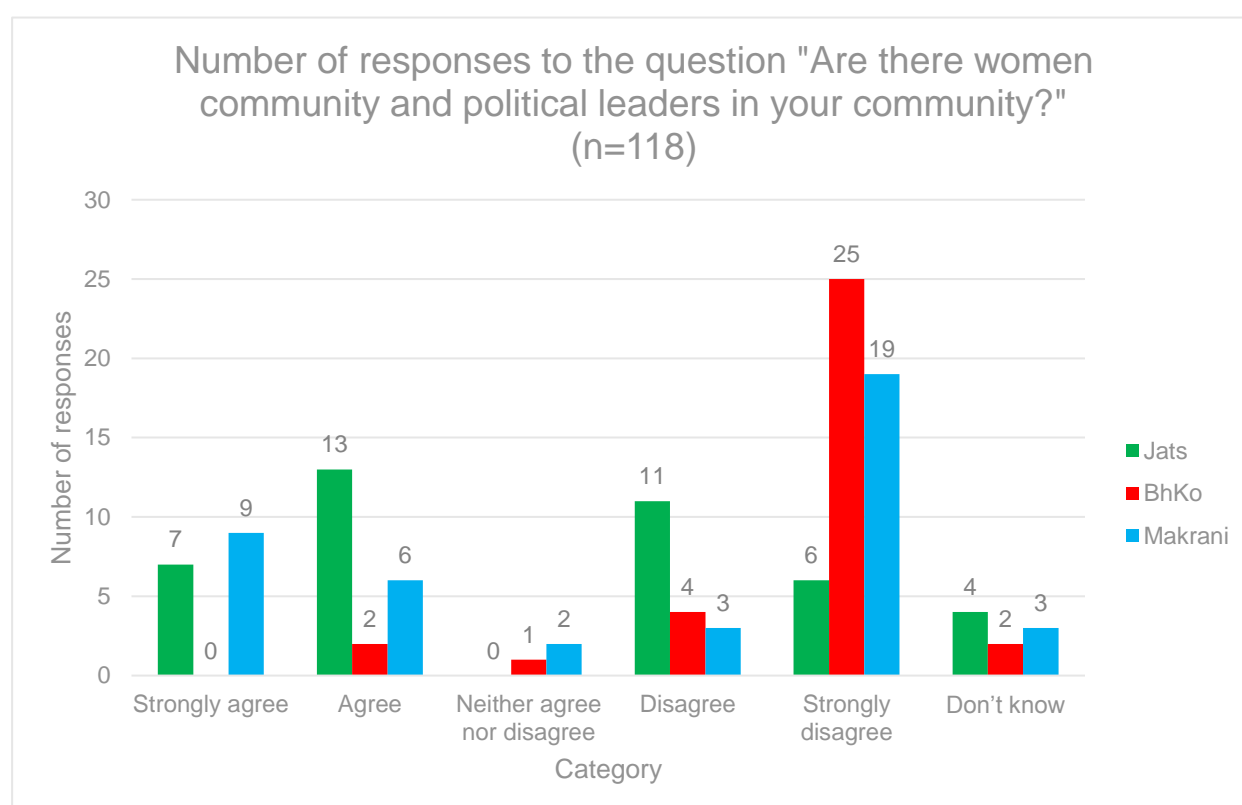


“He [husband] always solves my problems, he always fulfils my wishes, and sometimes he starts begging for my sake.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“When I get hurt I remember my God.” (Makrani adolescent mother, married)

Girls did not readily identify the community as a supportive mechanism for addressing the challenges they face, with 50 per cent disagreeing that girls’ opinions and concerns are heard and addressed in their community and only 29 per cent agreeing. This was in contrast to the girls’ desire to be heard by their communities: girls were asked if they believed that girls’ opinions and concerns *should* be heard and addressed in their community: the overwhelming majority of girls, 75 per cent, agreed, with 10 per cent disagreeing.

Additionally, the girls were also asked questions concerning the role of women in community and political life. Almost a third of those interviewed stated that there were female community and political leaders in their communities: 32 per cent agreed. The graph below outlines the agreement and disagreement responses to this statement by ethnic group: disagreement levels are highest among Bheel/Kohli girls and agreement levels highest in the Jats group.



When asked whether women were as capable as men as community and political leaders, a majority of 64 per cent of all girls agreed with this statement and only 17 per cent disagreed. Out of those who disagreed: 12 were Jats girls, eight were Bheel/Kohli girls and one was a Makrani girl. However, when asked if men make better community and political leaders than women, the majority of girls (63 per cent) agreed, suggesting that while girls perceive women to be capable leaders, it is men who are the preferred leaders in the community.

“Women cannot become a leader while men are leaders.” (Jats adolescent girl)

The families and communities who surround these girls therefore play a large role in the realisation and negation of these girls’ rights, goals and aspirations.

## SECTION 3

# THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT OF GIRLS – LOCAL CULTURE AND GENDER NORMS

The Sustainable Development Goals have recognised social norms as an important means of advancing gender equality and tackling the discriminatory norms and practices that restrict girls' access to rights and resources. In light of this, the report explores gender, social and cultural norms in order to reflect adolescent girls' perspectives on whether their environment is enabling or restricting in terms of reaching their desired life goals.

Social norms and gender roles impact the opportunities that girls have, the actions they are able to take and their own beliefs about their capabilities. Norms and roles are, in turn, shaped by the conditions and environment of the community in which they live. For example, the autonomy to choose whom to marry can, in some ways, depend on what is deemed acceptable and appropriate for girls in their community. Equally, a girl's agency with regard to how and where she spends her time can be determined by the gender roles and responsibilities within her household.

The next section considers the three different ethnicities of the girls interviewed: Jats, Bheel/Kohli and Makrani, exploring their perceptions and experiences of their identity and culture. Following this, perceptions and experiences of girls in relation to household chores and care are explored in order to better understand how these social and gender norms impact agency.

### 3.1 Cultural norms and traditions

Girls were asked which aspects of their culture they most valued and why: discussions focused joyfully on marriage ceremonies, traditions and rituals, as well as the religious festivals that add rhythm to their lives throughout the year. The girls stated that they enjoyed these aspects of their culture as they gave them a chance to talk with other girls, to take a break from the routine of their daily existence; they gave them a chance to dress up, to go shopping, to enjoy music and dancing. Girls also mentioned that they loved their traditional dress.

"I like marriages because we go for shopping." (Jats adolescent girl)

"I value marriage ceremonies... because we all dance." (Jats adolescent mother, married)

"Like all things marriage ceremonies are good because there is culture in our marriages." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

"I like marriages due to special dress [including ornaments and makeup]." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

"I like marriages because we sing songs and girls sit together and talk with each other." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"I like all the rituals around marriage, taking the groom to his house and then people come to the bride's house, if we don't make noise singing songs at weddings, people say you are not Baloch." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"I like that in my culture when girls remember by heart [the] holy Qur'an, they get dressed up like brides and I like that." (Makrani adolescent girl)

Other aspects that girls mentioned included the closeness of the family unit, the sense of identity that the community and their language gave them, as well as the positive aspects of community life such as conflict resolution.

"In our culture we do not fight and consider it bad act, and if some conflict happens then community leaders resolve the issue." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

"I like jewellery, like my language." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

"We all relatives sit together and talk about something. I like it and I enjoy it." (Jats adolescent girl)

"All our relatives live together. That is why I like my tradition and local culture." (Jats adolescent girl)

"I like my language, the way we speak." (Jats adolescent girl)

"We like our boldness and our identity as Baloch." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"I like local language." (Makrani adolescent girl)

However, some girls specified that there was nothing they liked in their culture, and most girls cited a variety of factors in their cultures that posed challenges for them as girls: for example, their culture's attitude towards girls' education.

"I didn't get educated, I wish I wasn't born in the Baloch tribe, and at least get educated." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"Girls are not getting education in schools, otherwise there is no challenge." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

"Because for girls, books, pen and copies are not available in our community, therefore girls are not able to learn reading." (Jats adolescent girl)

One Jats girl furthermore stated that this lack of education meant that they didn't "have much understanding of things". This lament over education was connected to a general cry for greater freedom. Girls stated that they felt constricted and were prevented from leaving their communities, and that this was linked to a lower value being placed on girls than boys. In focus group discussions, Makrani girls stated that they were not allowed to think and act beyond their traditions and values. Bheel/Kohli girls and boys reported that in addition to the low value parents place on their children's education, there are no proper school facilities in their community and when they do get the opportunity to attend school they are discriminated against by the teachers on account of their caste.

"Girls face restrictions/constraints in community." (Makrani adolescent girl)

“People in our society don’t like girls going out of the house, and when girls go out [of] the house, they don’t like that which affects their mobility and affects education.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“They don’t allow us to go alone outside.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“No there is no value of young girls in our Hindu culture. Community accept only elder family members.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Girls are not allowed to go out of the house alone as I can’t go alone anywhere.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“We parents do not send our children both girls and boys in near schools because teacher do not teach them, do not allow them to sit in front, and send them back to home which is a discriminatory towards our scheduled caste of Hindu community. Here in our community – we have no separate school available for Hindu community girls and boys. That is why we and our children are becoming illiterate but we as parents want to educate our children.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

Discussions on the subject of marriage revealed that girls’ choice of when, who and where to marry is restricted. Girls in Makrani and Jats focus group discussions identified getting married early on as a particular risk they face and many expressed that they would like this to change, or to have a choice over whom they marry. Bheel/Kohli girls discussed the pressure to marry young, saying the elders would say they had a “bad character” if they are unmarried. Jats girls also discussed the problem of child and early marriage and of having to prepare the obligatory dowry dresses for marriage. This is discussed in further detail in section 5.

“We are not allowed to get married by our own wish and like, I don’t like that.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“It is important to get marry with our own choice and the girls who marry with their parents’ choice is also important.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I did not get married where I wanted.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“In our village, [the] biggest problem for us [is] to make our dowry and prepare 21 suits [traditional dresses, with heavy embroidery].” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Our elders blaming unmarried girls regarding our bad characters” (Bheel/Kohli focus group discussion)

Girls stated that being kept at home all day meant that they had little to do other than household chores. Makrani girls stated that the lack of freedom impacted on their mental health, causing ‘tension’, or making them feel angry and frustrated.

“When they don’t allow me to go out, after doing household chores, I watch TV whole day.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“Girls become fed up because of their restricted life and do not live happily.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Jats girls clearly articulated that their lack of freedom and acceptance in the community was due to the actions of the men and elders of the community. Violence was also mentioned as another challenge faced by girls as a result of their culture: Makrani girls stated in focus group

discussions that men didn't consider gender-based violence to be a bad thing as it was sanctioned by their culture.

"Girls' acceptance in community is not respectable here, and our males never allow us even of thinking about it." (Jats adolescent girl, married)

"Males of our community never allow female to be accepted by the community, that's why we don't think about it." (Jats adolescent mother, married)

"We should also be treated like boys are treated in our village." (Jats adolescent girl)

"They can face two types of challenges, one is not being respected by males, and the other is violence." (Makrani adolescent girl)

In contrast, other girls (both married and unmarried) stated that their culture posed no issues for girls.

"I don't want to change my culture. How can we feel excluded, we don't feel like this." (Jats adolescent girl)

"With Goddess will, everything can happen, days pass away, nothing else I know." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

"Girls never face any big challenges regarding this; if she wants and works hard, no one can stop her to be accepted by community." (Makrani adolescent girl)

When asked how challenges posed by culture and community could be overcome, the girls gave a variety of responses. They stated that society's thinking should be changed, that child and early marriage and the practice of dowries should end, but that girls would need to be brave and make sacrifices to do so. Makrani girls' language tended to revolve more around what they could actively do, rather than what 'should be done' in general. There was a lack of reference to women community leaders as allies who could advocate on behalf of girls in the community. This is perhaps not so surprising given the perceptions of most girls that men dominate community leadership. Discussion with boys from the Jats community also revealed that the community expects boys to act as leaders and dominate over girls

"I will change the thinking of society and will set the example." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"Politeness and moralities are necessary for our culture change. Avoid harsh languages and adopt positive attitude – it can be possible. Also bring equal rights for boys and girls." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"I will establish a centre so that girls can get education and excel in their lives." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"Education and family support [are] main aspects of inclusion of girls in our community." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"The only way of inclusion of girls in society is equal education of girl and boy." (Jats adolescent mother, married,)

"In our culture girls are not allowed for secondary education – this should be changed." (Jats adolescent girl)

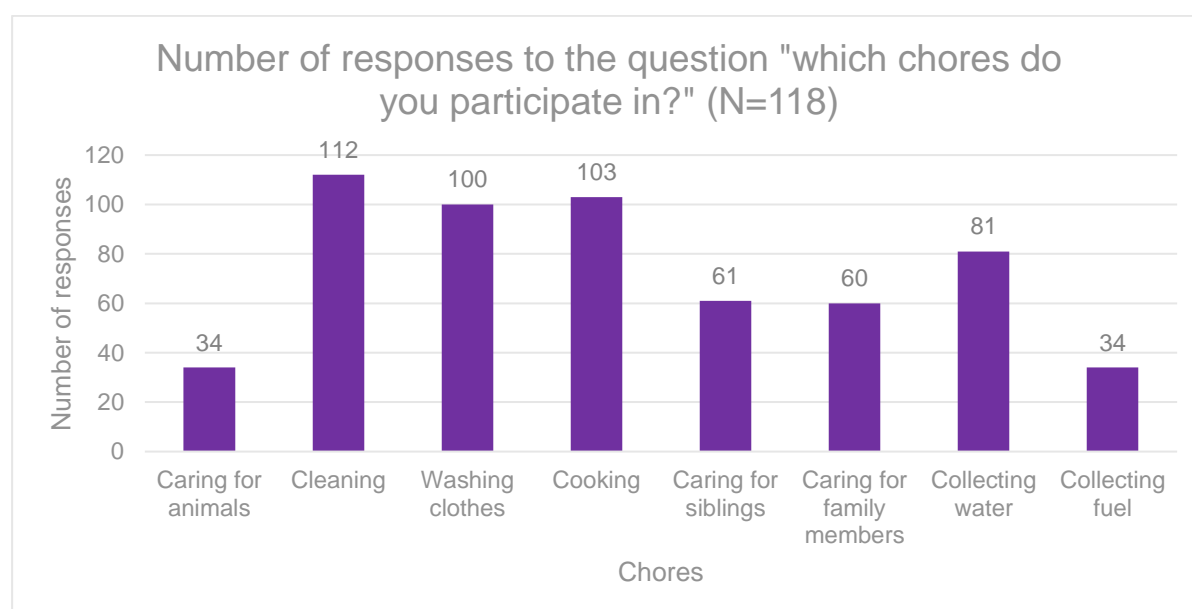
“Boys should act as the leader of the family.” (Jats adolescent boys, focus group discussion)

There were voices that stated that there was no hope of changing anything – that they could not even imagine such change being brought about.

“There is no concept of it, even not any girl can think about it.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

### 3.2 Gender roles and responsibilities in the household: Care and domestic work in the household

Exploring girls’ attitudes and perceptions around household chores offers a good lens to gain insights into gender norms in a given context. Household chores are part of the girls’ realities in Pakistan and the gendered division of labour and attitudes that surround it are illustrative of how the dominant gender and social norms operate within a household. The girls surveyed were therefore asked about the distribution of household chores in their homes and their perceptions of how domestic work was shared within their households.



The most common tasks undertaken by girls were cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and collecting water:

- 112 girls (95 per cent) stated they cleaned the home
- 100 (85 per cent) stated they washed clothes
- 103 (87 per cent) stated they cooked for the household
- 35 (30 per cent) of girls stated they went shopping for the household
- 34 (29 per cent) stated they cared for animals
- 61 girls (52 per cent) stated they cared for siblings
- 60 (51 per cent) cared for family members



- 81 (69 per cent) collected water
- 34 (29 per cent) collected fuel.

Almost a third of the girls interviewed stated that they did chores that they felt put them in danger: 20 girls (17 per cent) strongly agreed and 14 girls (12 per cent) agreed. Fear of being bitten by snakes while carrying out their outdoor tasks was frequently mentioned; this fear was compounded by the lack of local health and hospital facilities available to girls in their community. Additionally girls frequently mentioned fearing verbal, physical and sexual abuse by boys while carrying out their chores outside the home.

“Collecting water, it’s [a] time-taking activity. We get late for school due to chores because of the care for animals like cows, camels, donkeys, and to feed them it’s risky and can cause physical injury. Carrying bundles of grass for animals is very difficult for us.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

“We feel afraid when we see boys on the way to do our chores.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

### 3.2.1 Time spent on chores and care

The minimum amount of time spent undertaking household tasks in the previous week was 90 minutes, whereas the maximum amount of time was 24 hours (1,440 minutes). Girls spent an average of 6.5 hours (392 minutes) per week on household tasks.

When asked who in the household distributed chores to them, discussions with girls focused principally on female relatives: mothers, sisters, mothers-in-law, and aunties. The girls interviewed additionally cited male relatives, such as husbands, fathers, brothers and uncles, although – for this group of girls – male relatives were cited less frequently than female relatives. Other girls stated that no one asked them to complete chores as they perceived the chores to be their responsibilities as girls.

#### Average times spent on chores and care in the previous week:

Shopping: average 36 minutes, maximum 4 hours (240 minutes)

Caring for animals: average 19 minutes, maximum 4 hours (240 minutes)

Cleaning: average 55 minutes, maximum 5 hours (300 minutes)

Washing clothes: average 100 minutes, maximum 8 hours (480 minutes)

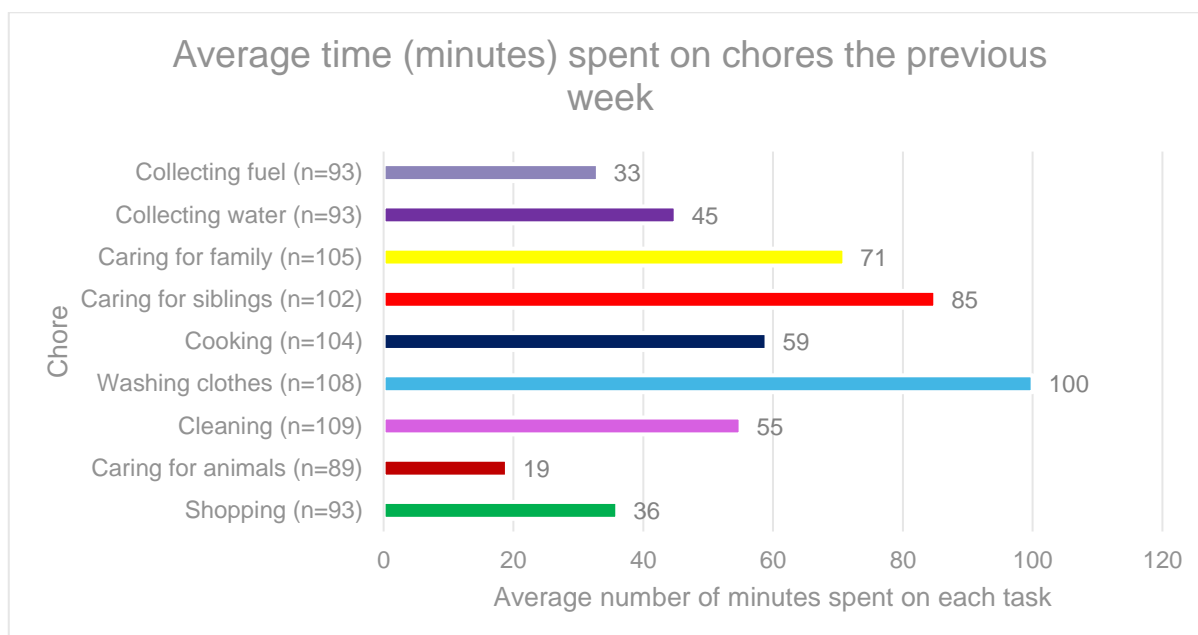
Cooking: average 59 minutes, maximum 6 hours (360 minutes)

Caring for siblings: average 85 minutes, maximum 12 hours (720 minutes)

Caring for family: average 71 minutes, maximum 24 hours (1,440 minutes)

Collecting water: average 45 minutes, maximum 5 hours (300 minutes)

Collecting fuel: average 33 minutes, maximum 6 hours (360 minutes)



### 3.2.2 Attitudes towards gender roles and responsibilities in the household

The majority of the girls interviewed strongly stated that household tasks were not equally shared between girls/boys and men/women in their families: 41 per cent of girls strongly disagreed and 27 per cent disagreed, a combined 68 per cent. Only 27 per cent agreed that household tasks were shared equally.

“Whosoever is responsible will do the work. Man will do his work and woman will do hers.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“Because too many girls are available at home and they have time to do domestic chores.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

When asked if it was important to change how household chores and childcare were distributed between girls and boys, however, 76 per cent said no. The perception from girls across all groups was that it was not necessary to change this distribution. Even girls who stated that they did not like doing chores agreed that the distribution should not be changed.

“I dislike to carry out household chores, but I do when my mother asks me and if I do not work then who will do household work? I like to do work. If I do them now, I will do them in my own house after marriage, otherwise my husband will say that she doesn’t know how to do household chores.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“Men do the outside work and we girls do the work inside the house and that’s our custom and we don’t want to change it.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

“I like because household chores are better than outside chores.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“We are happy with our current responsibilities; we don’t want to change anything regarding household chores.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Boys should not do domestic chores because when [a] girl is available at home, then why should boys do them?” (Makrani adolescent girl)

The girls cited a variety of reasons why they felt that the distribution of chores and labour should not be changed: discussions focused on the fact that girls felt that household tasks were ‘women’s work’ and outdoor work was ‘men’s work’ – and that men would not be competent at household tasks. The girls qualified this argument by stating that they had no great desire to undertake outdoor work given the danger it posed them when walking outside, and added that chores are not too arduous, whereas working in the fields was physically harder, so they felt ‘ok’ about working in the home. They additionally stated that women have time to undertake chores and that they needed to let the men have time for work or for education. Girls also argued that undertaking chores would mean that they were prepared for future marriage, and stated that doing household chores gave them a sense of pride in their clean and tidy homes – which demonstrates the value that their culture places on them as home makers.

“We don’t want to change the distribution of chores as they are already distributed.”  
(Makrani adolescent girl)

“I like it because my house looks neat and clean. And if someone comes to my house, they praised me.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Because men do chores outside the house and women do household chores, and the chores are divided equally. So these should not be changed.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Because he is [a] boy how he can make the *rottee* [bread], how he can do the household work?” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Yes I think there should be division of labour, but I think boys get good education so that they can perform their responsibilities: if I perform house chores, boys should not help me, they perform their outside jobs and try to get an education. If he gets an education then he can develop.” (Jats adolescent girl)

Interestingly, the discussions illuminated the girls’ understanding of ‘distribution of work’ as being already evenly divided in terms of indoor work being done by women, and outdoor work undertaken by men. What girls stated was *not* evenly divided, however, was the time spent in undertaking the tasks assigned to men and women. Revealingly, when asked if they had as much time as boys/brothers for leisure or recreation (free time), the majority of the girls interviewed (53 per cent) strongly disagreed and 23 per cent disagreed: only 15 per cent agreed with this statement. A greater proportion believed that they *should* have as much free time as boys/brothers for leisure and recreation: 27 per cent strongly agreed and 40 per cent agreed. Girls furthermore stated that the time spent on chores impacted on their time for school and studying.

“Because I have no time to spare for study if I do household chores, that is why I cannot study properly.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Works are already distributed equally.” (Makrani adolescent mother, married)

“These are distributed equally. Half to the girls and half to boys.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Why we women have to do the household chores? Why not the husbands? They also have to do the chores. If we all work equally then the chores will be distributed.”  
(Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“I cook food, clean the house, do the dusting. Boys only beat us and say ‘do your work properly’.” (Jats adolescent girl)

In discussions on creating a fairer distribution of the time spent working, girls stated that boys should take responsibility for doing their fair share, especially since undertaking certain chores affected girls' safety and exposed them to the risk of violence from boys on the roadside.

"The amount of work girls do, boys should be doing that much. They must not sit aloof and not do anything." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"Because girls have to do a lot of domestic chores, that is why they are unable to give time to their study." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"Yes, because I cannot do everything if my husband will not reduce some of my burden." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

In focus group discussions, Jats girls stated that they continually felt 'fear' when going outside to complete chores: "fear from boys, fear from animals... fear from dogs, fear from snakes biting." Additionally, girls stated that they were subject to violence in the home if they did not complete chores. Overall girls' perceptions and experience of carrying out household chores brings with it an associated risk of violence.

"Family members abuse us when we denied from house chores." (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

"Many men and boys are usually standing on the way, when we go outside home to collect water or fuel wood. They use to call us with different names loudly, sometime they run after us to catch us and to do something bad with us physically. We feel threatened for going outside alone." (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

Boys also agreed that girls risk experiences of violence while carrying out their household chores.

"There is violence in the community – for instance, girls are beaten by family males if they do delay in cooking, cleaning, clothes washing and other domestic chores." (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

"We do not beat our sisters or wife ... but ... sometime it happens if she not obeys." (Jats boys, focus group discussion)

Interestingly, one girl linked changing the distribution of work to a fundamental change in attitudes and culture.

"Through changing of household chore duties, the environment will be also changed." (Makrani adolescent girl)

Some girls meanwhile told of times when the men in their households pitched in and shared chores evenly – but only if they were not working themselves, or if their wife was ill or pregnant.

"My husband used to be in house, then we work together." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

"At times if I am not well, he also washes clothes himself, and at times irons clothes as well." (Makrani adolescent girl)

“My husband does household chores because I am pregnant.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married, pregnant)

Focus group discussions with boys and young men, however, revealed the full extent to which women were expected to work. The boys made a list of the tasks women were expected to undertake – chores, childcare, education (although primarily for and of her children), working for money, and religious duties all came under the tasks assigned to women and girls. Boys expected girls and women to work because “when females are not earning, men have to work more to fulfil family needs” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion). While girls were expected to help men, boys expressed no recognition of reciprocity in terms of chores and childcare: boys expected themselves to work for money, to save money and to observe their religious duties – and occasionally to drop the children at school.

“Mostly girls care for kids in their homes but boys have no concern with child care.  
Mostly girls do domestic chores but boys do not spend time on domestic chores.  
Girls awake early in the morning to do domestic work.  
Girls tending to animals (cows, camels and goats) at home.  
Girls to get ready their boys for sending them to schools.  
Feed their kids and give them food but boys/men do not spend time for this activity.  
Girls wash clothes of family members but boys/men do not involve themselves in this activity.  
Girls mostly spend their time on cooking but boys/men do not.  
Girls go to collect water but boys/men do not go and spend time on this.”  
(Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“She thinks to do domestic chores.  
She feels that my clothes should be cleaned.  
She does domestic work.  
She cleans her home.  
She cooks food.  
She wash food dishes.  
She would do all domestic chores.”  
(Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“She...  
Cuts grass for animals.  
Collect water from canal [from 2 km – this happens in early morning and evening].  
Bring water from canal (nearby village).  
Wash clothes of family members.  
Dish-washing.  
Take care of animals (cows, goats, camels).  
Cleaning of the house.  
Taking care of her siblings.  
Cook food for family.  
Work at farm for support with family elder women.”  
(Jats boys, focus group discussion)

The imbalance in the time spent undertaking work was clear then to the boys:

“Girls do domestic chores – for instance, they feed milk to their kids and cook food for them, wash clothes of her family members, clean the home as well as go to fetch the water for all family members even in night time as per availability of water, whereas boys/men spend whole day outside from the home to earn money. Therefore, girls do

twice as much housework as men even when they have done a full day of work.”  
(Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

However, when asked how they could improve the situation for girls, boys suggested allowing girls more freedom – but not taking their share of household labour.

“[What boys can do to help girls...]  
They will allow the girls if they want to go outside of the village/community.  
Make available clothes to girls.  
Arrange for electricity in the locality.  
Provide girls with skills and send products to the city mall for sale.  
Try to allow them for their marriages as per their will.  
Share their income with girls.”  
(Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

### **3.3 Girls’ and boys’ reflections on their position and condition in their communities**

These are summaries of thoughts expressed by the adolescent girls and boys from each of the three ethnic groups who took part in focus group discussions. Sometimes, they use a fictitious character as an emblem of how they perceive their own lives.

#### **Jats girls’ focus group reflections**

Kanwal<sup>29</sup> feels that most of the girls in her community do not feel happy but they have no other choice. Kanwal misses her school time, and wishes to continue studying, otherwise she feels life for her will remain the same in the same village with no change in her future except when she gets married. Then she will be busy as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Kanwal asks why her village has no facilities like those in Thatta City. She wants to live in the city in her own cemented house, with good furniture, water and light.

The facilitator of the focus group notes: the girls’ life is presented as simple and routine, they all have the same work and the same status in the family. Their community has no basic facilities like drinking water, light, basic health facilities or a woman health worker. There is no working school for girls, and no exposure to radio or television. Girls spend most of their time at home doing chores, going to work at the farm with family members, collecting water for the family and animals. A girl spends her free time with the other girls of her age, waiting for her marriage.

#### **Jats boys’ focus group reflections**

Boys discussed how their community puts more importance on boys than girls, allowing boys to dominate the girls. Parents decide who the boys will marry and boys cannot express their preference about this. Boys are brought up to feed the family while girls’ role is only to do the household chores. Boys can act as the leader of the family. The community thinks that boys are stronger mentally and physically than girls and that boys are better decision makers. Parents in the community are keen to educate their boys but not their girls. Boys can go outside the community for schooling, but girls cannot.

#### **Makrani girls’ focus group reflections**

Girls shared that as they are not educated they must work at home – cleaning the house, washing dishes and clothes, cooking and child care for siblings. Girls expressed desires to get an education, to become teachers and doctors, and to work for a salary. But due to their family

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<sup>29</sup> Hypothetical name given to represent a fictitious girl from their community.



traditions they cannot leave home for work. Their elder brothers often physically abuse them and at home physical violence is very common as a means to control them.

The facilitator of the focus group notes: Makrani girls were very vocal, and full of hope for change and improvement of their situation. At the same time the girls communicated that they feel depressed and weak, unsure if anything will be different for them in future. They believe they will be married according to their family and parents' choice, and they will have the same routine life.

**Note: there was no focus group conducted with boys from this community due to time and resource limitations.**

#### **Bheel/Kohli girls' focus group reflections**

For Jobera,<sup>30</sup> life is simple. Her community has no basic facilities like drinking water, light, basic health facilities, a school for girls, no radio or television. She spends her life doing home chores. The community is very strict regarding their customs. There is little work for men and boys, mostly as labourers. Mothers go begging and work as maids to support the family. Elders do not allow young girls to go out of their homes.

Girls shared that there is no tradition of girls' education in their community, which explains why no one there wants to marry an educated girl. They explained that they are traditionally *jogies* (snake catchers) – they keep pet snakes to show in public gatherings for money. They said they are not allowed to think and act beyond their traditions and values as snake catchers. The girls said they don't like this way of living whereby they have to accept their parents' orders and have no will and wish of their own.

#### **Bheel/Kohli boys' focus group reflections**

Boys shared that the community thinks they should get an education, take care of their family, get reliable employment, be responsible and clean their environment. Boys however explained that they spend all their time working, selling chickens and toys, and praying. When asked what challenges they face as Bheel/Kohli boys, they mentioned: lack of proper education, lack of employment, early marriages and health issues. Boys overall felt that they cannot get educated because they are considered responsible for earning income for the family – studying would take them away from that duty.

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<sup>30</sup> Hypothetical name given to represent a fictitious girl from their community.

## GREATEST OVERALL CHALLENGES THAT GIRLS FACE: EDUCATION, CHILD AND EARLY MARRIAGE, VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

[illegible]

The next sections of the report will explore each of these themes in detail. It is worth noting some of these issues – such as education, decreased risk of violence, employment and access to health centres – are also considered to be some of the most important pathways for women to gain agency.<sup>31</sup> These issues will be discussed in turn beginning with education, child and early marriages, and violence and safety. Throughout all these sections, girls' perceptions and experiences will be explored, focusing on distinct experiences of the groupings of girls where they differ from the wider experience. Finally, the report looks at some of the perceived potential opportunities for change for improving the condition and position of girls in their communities and societies.

<sup>31</sup> World Bank (2012) "On Norms and Agency: Conversations about Gender Equality with Women and Men in 20 Countries", <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/On-Norms-Agency-Book.pdf>

## SECTION 4

# PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATION

This section explores adolescent girls' access to secondary school and opportunities to complete their education, their perceptions of the value of the education they received and reasons behind girls having to drop out of school.

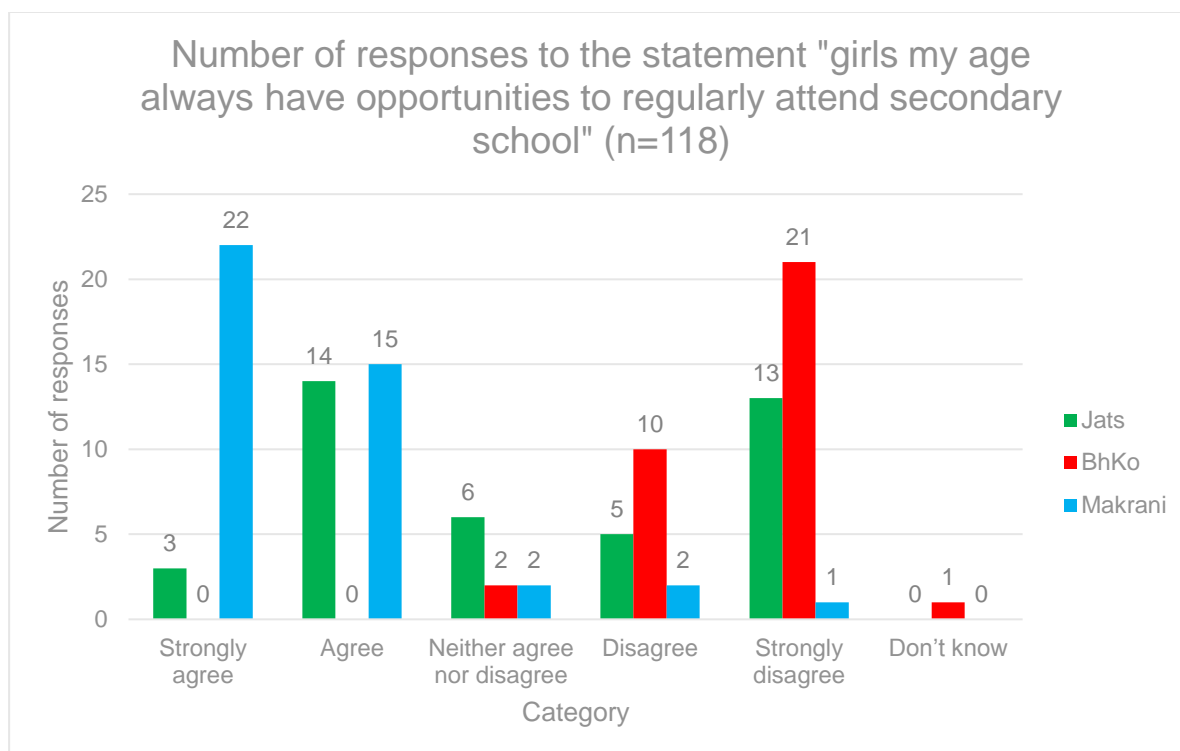
SDG 4 corresponds to the importance of inclusive and quality education for all. Access to quality and free primary and secondary education is integral to advancing girls' future life opportunities and securing girls' rights. Overall many girls surveyed report significant barriers to accessing and finishing their education, in contrast to their desire to have an education. This is particularly the case for the Bheel/Kohli girls: none of these girls surveyed agreed that they could regularly attend secondary school.

Education was an enthusiastically and frequently discussed topic among the girls, who stated it was one of the biggest challenges they faced. This is not surprising given that out of 119 girls surveyed only 22 (19 per cent) reported that they were currently attending school.

"I want to have a school in my village." (Jats adolescent girl)

"Education is big issue for me. I don't know about others. I want my children [to] get education... I am illiterate, I can't read and write." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

### 4.1 Access to education



Among the sample, 45 per cent of all girls disagreed with the statement that "girls my age always have opportunities to regularly attend secondary school", with 31 per cent of these

strongly disagreeing. A fraction more girls – 46 per cent – agreed that they could regularly attend school. Disagreement levels increased when asked if “girls my age always have opportunities to finish secondary school”: 60 per cent disagreed and only 31 per cent agreed. This indicates the extent to which girls struggle to access education opportunities in the first place and face an even greater struggle to stay in school to finish their education. The lack of education in the girls’ lives reduces their opportunities to access knowledge and information, restricting their career aspirations and earning potential.

Considering the divergence of responses according to ethnicity: the majority of Makrani girls interviewed (34, or 83 per cent of Makrani respondents) stated that they had attended school at some point, or were still attending school. The Makrani girls interviewed had also spent the longest time in school: 17 girls had spent nine or more years in school. None of the Bheel/Kohli girls stated that they had gone to school – although later some of these girls discussed time in education, indicating that although they had spent a little time at school, it was not enough to constitute a significant experience for them. Among the Jats girls, 21 (53 per cent) had gone to school, but had not spent as long in education as had the Makrani girls: only two had spent a maximum of five or six years in school. One girl outlined the positive value that her educated mother places on her daughters’ education, indicating how a mother’s exposure to education can influence and increase girls’ chances of attending school.

“Other girls don’t have the same opportunities as I have, because my mother is educated and she is aware about the importance of education. Other girls of my age don’t have enough money for continuing their education.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“School is on the main road of city, therefore we didn’t get permission to go, also our families can’t afford education.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Getting education is a problem, if they let us – and if we get educated we may get on the right path. Girls don’t have thinking ability. If they get education, they get wiser ... girls are uneducated. If [girls] get education they may be able to do things better in life and also get job... Our relatives don’t want that.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

“Education is the problem. We were not allowed to get more [after grade 5] education. It’s because people of village don’t let the girls get education and they reach [the] age of puberty. Our parents don’t let us study, they are farmer and say girls are grown up [by puberty] therefore shouldn’t be going to school.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

## 4.2 Attitudes and value of education



*A word cloud depicting the most frequently mentioned words when discussing the value of education: the prominence of education for girls, the importance of teachers and of whether they 'get' an education is at the forefront of their discussions as well as positive associations towards school such as 'good' and 'like'.*

Girls' attitudes towards education were predicated on whether and how long they had attended education: for example, Makrani girls (most of whom spent between seven and nine years in education) and Jats girls (most of whom who spent between one and four years in school), enthusiastically discussed what they valued in education as well as the challenges they faced. Bheel/Kohli girls, however, participated very little in these discussions given that so few of them had even attended school. Principally, Bheel/Kohli girls participated in discussions around what they did not value in education and the challenges they faced in obtaining an education: only one girl mentioned an aspect of education that she had enjoyed and valued.

“I don’t have any experience.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

“Whatever teachers taught us was good, the games we were playing I also liked.”  
(Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“All the girls want to go school... [Interviewer: Do you think anything can be done to overcome this challenge?] ...Don't know. My parents say we don't have money, other schools take money from where we give money.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

Girls linked education to wisdom, understanding and the ability to obtain employment. Their satisfaction with education, teachers and the school environment were therefore recurrent themes in interviews. When asked about their satisfaction with the quality of education they had received, 38 per cent of girls stated that they simply did not know. This indicates the extent to which girls are excluded from education. Of the remaining responses, 31 per cent agreed that they were satisfied, whereas 4 per cent disagreed and 22 per cent strongly disagreed, and 5 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed.

In discussions, girls both expressed their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching and the school environment.

“Teachers are good, they respect us and listen to us.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“At that time teachers were not good in attendance and teaching skills.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Master was not good, and was not taking class. Now that school is closed, other schools are far.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“Teachers are very supportive.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Teacher nurtures us as he is hard worker. We have learnt a lot. Teacher is very supportive because he is teaching us from very basic things.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“In our school teacher just give us work and go away. They don’t help us in understanding the concepts and even don’t care about us.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Similarly, only 68 (57 per cent) of the girls interviewed were able to state whether finishing their education had led to decent employment opportunities: 50 girls (43 per cent) stated that they simply didn’t know. While the girls interviewed strongly linked education to better employment for other people, only 25 (21 per cent) agreed that their education had meant better employment opportunities for themselves, while seven (6 per cent) disagreed and 31 (26 per cent) strongly disagreed. Girls stated that this was due to dropping out of school and not attending higher education.

“Education is necessary, see, you are educated and you are asking the questions from me.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“My children get education. My children get good livelihood opportunities. I wish my children get education and get good opportunities in their future – build a good cemented house with TV and furniture.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

“I get education, I’ll get a job. If I get a job I earn money for my home.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Education make me able to give tuition to young children and make some money.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Education has many benefits.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Education was, nevertheless, perceived to be an intrinsic ‘good’: during focus group discussions, Jats girls stated that “education is a wealth and an uneducated person is a burden on others.” Girls stated that they would be able to read the instructions on the medicines for their future children thanks to education, as well as write their names. Discussions also focused on the fact that girls wanted to study for the inherent benefit that studying brings – wisdom and understanding. One girl also stated that education was a necessary precondition for bringing equality between the sexes.

“I know without education – no happy life.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

“I never went to school but going to school is good.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“I like education in the school and knowledge.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Education is good – at least we learn something.” (Jats adolescent girl)



“Went to school and learned new things.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“For betterment of environment, education is necessary. Good and equal education for girls and boys can bring equality.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Boys also agreed upon the necessity of education for girls to be able to realise their rights. In focus group discussions, they stated that a lack of education meant that girls were unaware of their rights and were ‘weak’ and ignored in their homes.

“Girls are not educated and that is why they are not aware of their rights. Even boys are also unaware about their rights, for instance, girls are being ignored in family decisions, girls’ personalities become weak as compared to boys, and they are not allowed to take decisions concerning their own lives. Girls will be ignored if girls cannot realise their rights and boys will become more dominant over girls.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

[Boys discussing how girls feel]

“She feels illiterate and cannot take any decision. She feels if she is educated then she can spread message about the importance of education. She feels if she gets education, then she knows how to spend money and save it.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

Boys also reported that the low value that families place on girls’ education, the restrictions that families and communities place on girls travelling outside the community and girls’ biological weakness were factors that result in girls having to leave or not finish their education.

“Transportation is not available for schools and girls are so weak and cannot do walk but boys are strong and can go to school by foot.” (Jats boys, focus group discussion)

Boys stated that they wished they could build schools for girls to enable them to have an education – as this would “empower the girls so that they can get aware about their rights and live their life independently” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion).

Considering the experience of the 15 married girls who stated that they currently had children: of these young mothers, only four stated that they had been to school, and 11 had not.

The four young mothers cited the following aspects of education that they valued: the ability to read and write, the support and quality of the teachers, and the enjoyment of studying.

“I can write my name.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“Study is most useful aspect of my education.” (Makrani adolescent mother, married)

“Whatever teachers taught us was good, the games we were playing I also liked.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

None of the young mothers related challenges they faced in education or their inability to continue education with the fact that they were mothers. Young mothers cited the following challenges they perceived in education: finance, the dirty school environment and not being able to continue their education. This indicates that the problem with school drop-out occurs before girls become mothers, either as girls face financial issues, at the time of marriage or puberty when they are considered too ‘old’ for school, or due to security issues and the risk of violence on the way to school.

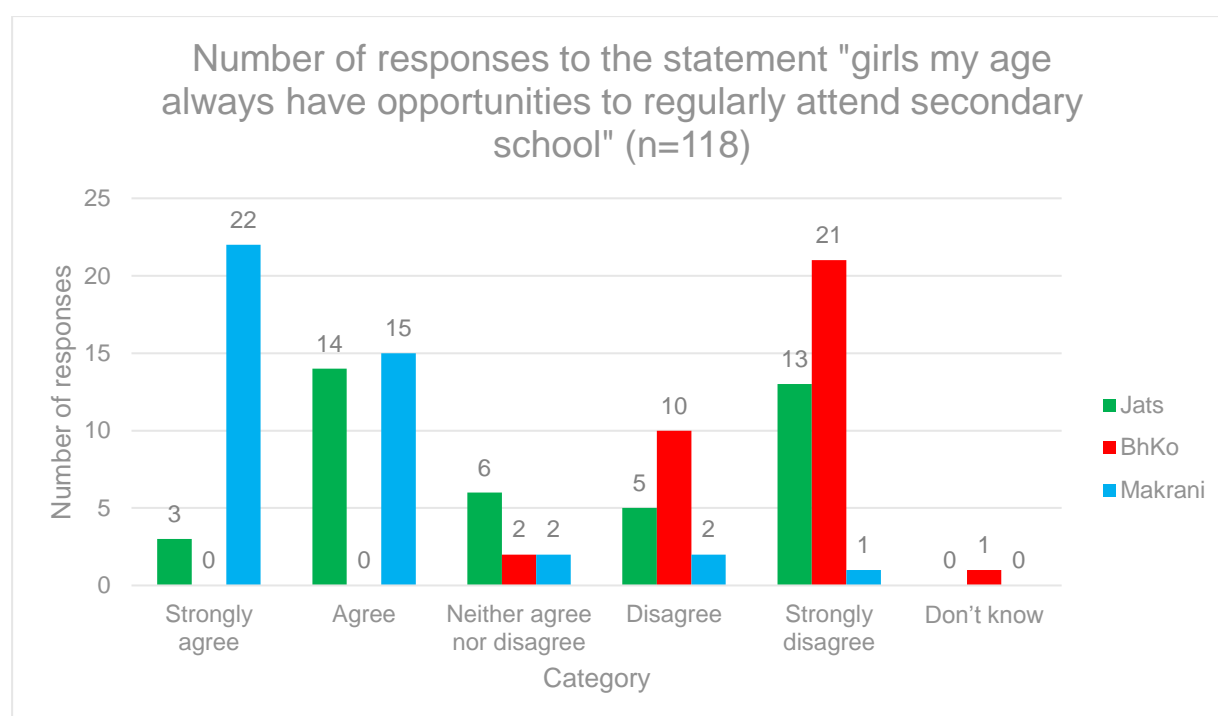
“I just left my education because of financial issues.” (Makrani adolescent mother, married)

“During break time, girls [walked] through garbage which I did not like.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

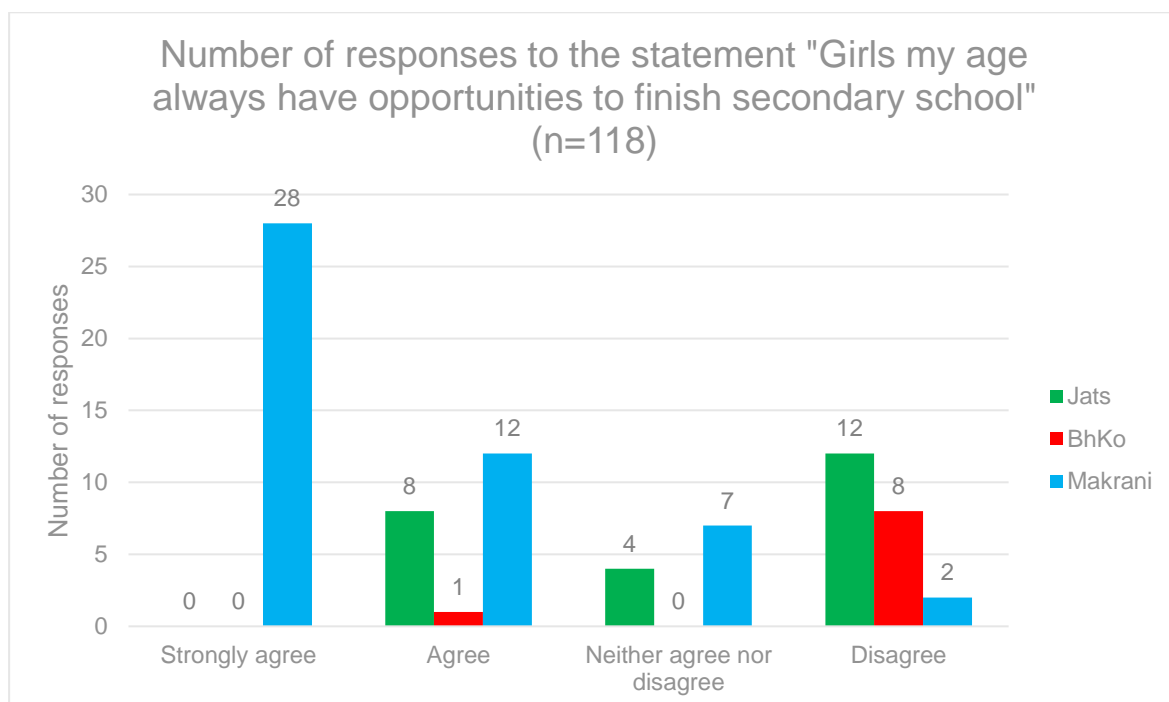
### I dropped out of school because...

The girls interviewed were almost evenly split over whether they agreed that girls their age always had opportunities to regularly attend secondary school: a combined 46 per cent agreed whereas a combined 45 per cent disagreed. The majority of girls (60 per cent) however, stated that they do not always have the opportunity to finish school. This indicates the extent to which girls are not managing to transition from their secondary education.

In terms of tertiary education, 60 per cent disagreed that girls their age always had opportunities to regularly attend university or some level of tertiary or technical education.



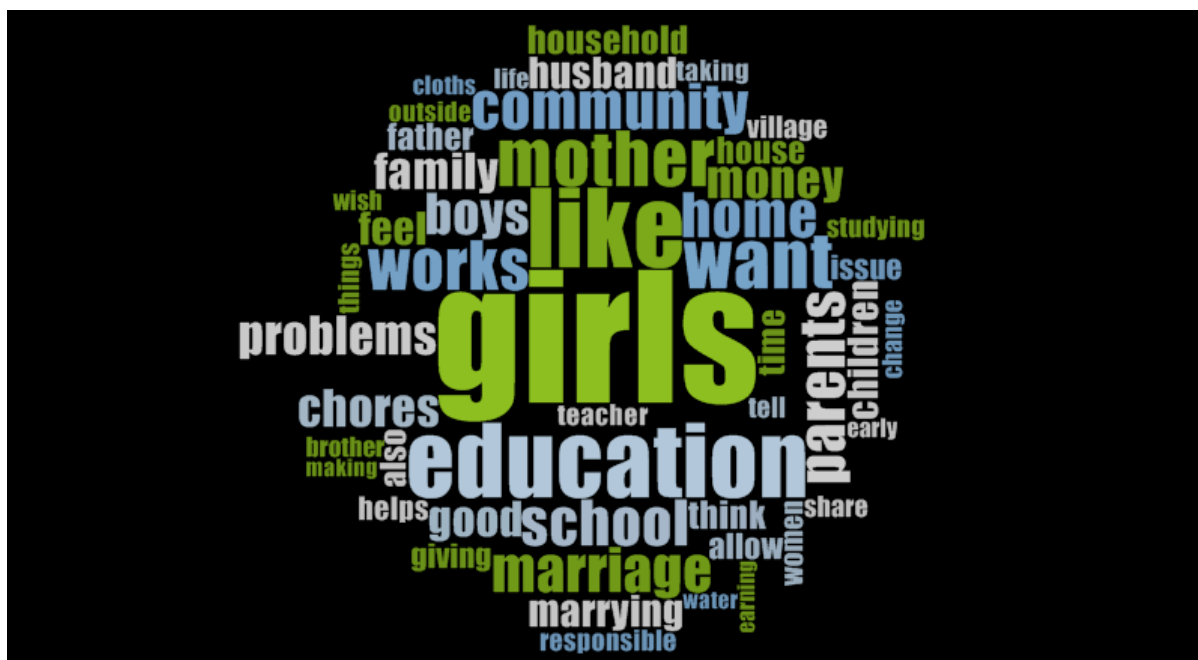
Opinions on attending and finishing school differed by ethnic group. A majority of Makrani girls stated that they always had opportunities to regularly attend secondary school: 22 girls (52 per cent) strongly agreed and 15 girls (36 per cent) agreed. A smaller proportion of Jats girls agreed: only three girls (7 per cent) strongly agreed and 14 (34 per cent) agreed. No Bheel/Kohli girls agreed with the statement. This is perhaps not surprising since at the time of interview there were no education facilities reported in their community.



Opinions diverged more strongly when it came to the issue of finishing school. Forty (96 per cent) of the Makrani girls agreed that they had opportunities to finish secondary school. Only eight Jats girls (20 per cent) and one Bheel/Kohli girl agreed that girls always have the opportunity to finish school (none of them strongly agreed).

Regarding tertiary education, only two Jats girls (4 per cent) and one Bheel/Kohli girl (3 per cent) agreed that girls their age always had opportunities to regularly attend university or tertiary education. However, 33 Makrani girls (79 per cent) agreed that they had opportunities to attend tertiary education.

When the whole sample of girls were asked about the challenges they faced in education, responses focused on culture, family and marriage – these were the most frequently named reasons for dropping out of education. There were 26 girls who gave reasons as to why they had to stop their education either temporarily or permanently: nine for cultural reasons, five because of marriage, one through fear for her safety or wellbeing at school or on the way to school, and one for economic reasons. Four of the six Bheel/Kohli girls offering reasons stated that their education stopped because of marriage, as did one of 17 Jats girls. Another ten girls cited a variety of other reasons for leaving education that included: time pressures because they were preparing their dowry dresses, family pressure, health, and having to spend their time undertaking household chores. General discussions with all the girls emphasised the fact that they face the possibility of violence and harassment on the way to school (see section 7 on violence and safety).



*A word cloud demonstrating the 50 most frequently mentioned words when discussing the challenges girls faced in education: family, parents, chores, permission, married, children and money all feature prominently in these discussions.*

“I would like to have continued my education but had to stop... As I am grown up and have to do household chores.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Due to being grown up, and the responsibility of preparing 20 dresses for my dowry.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“If I get education, no one will marry with me... they don’t want their daughter-in-law to be educated, they think girls’ education is bad for girls. If they have an education, they will not obey their elders.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

“We girls want to study... but not everybody can get an education... few have problems with money which is a lame excuse by parents, but in fact it is due to local culture to not educate girls.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Even being educated, after marriage girls will have to do the same home chores, so no need to waste money on girls’ education... My parents are happy as they are not paying for my school and books.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

Focus group discussions with boys revealed that boys were just as desperate to get an education as the girls were: they stated “**me and my wife should be educated so that we do not face difficulties**”, and that they wanted to “**marry with educated girl**”. However, they recognised that girls faced greater challenges in obtaining an education because of the gendered division of labour in the home and social norms that dictate the roles of girls and boys – with boys as breadwinners and girls as home makers.

“A big challenge for girls is that parents do not allow them to get an education, but the family allows and is interested in boys’ education. There is no separate school available for girls... There is no female teacher in the community, which is a big challenge for girls, but sometimes a male teacher comes to the school to teach boys and girls as well (if parents allow them). The community does not allow girls to go outside the village alone

for education – but boys can go outside the community to get education.” (Jats boys, focus group discussion)

In order to overcome the challenges faced in relation to education, the girls suggested that community action, such as talking to village elders, parents and men, was necessary to improve the situation of women and girls.

“If all the girls get together and talk to village head, he may listen to us.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

“Parents should be made aware about the value of education, and opportunities for employment must be enhanced so the financial problems get resolved.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

## SECTION 5

# PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF CHILD AND EARLY MARRIAGE

This section explores perceptions of child and early marriage, factors and conditions that contribute to these marriages, agency and decision-making while in partnerships, and the impact of gender and social norms on the lives of married girls. All of these are important dimensions captured in SDG 5.



*The causes of child marriage in Pakistan: the most frequently mentioned words capture parents, tradition, elders, puberty and burden as central causes.*

### 5.1 Reasons for child and early marriage

Child and early marriage was frequently discussed as one of the biggest challenges that adolescent girls face. Discussions focused on reasons for marriage that lay beyond the control or choice of the girl (and sometimes the boy). Mostly girls felt that they had little power to exercise choice over when and whom they marry, that the prevailing social and cultural norms shared by families and communities had a strong influence in determining when a girl should marry. Girls reported feeling pressured by parents to marry and that this pressure was compounded by the fact that their cultural tradition valued child and early marriage. Community elders also had influence over deciding when or whom a girl would marry. These factors are discussed in further detail in section 5.4. Only four girls reported that girls their age marry because they themselves want to.

“Young age marriage is biggest issue, at times girls died during their first [childbirth].”  
(Makrani adolescent girl)

“Marriage against their will is challenge for all girls and boys of this community, whatever their ages, it does not matter, we both are helpless in marriage system of this community.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“Marriage against the will of girl is a biggest issue.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)



“Sometimes a girl and a boy feel desperate to get married.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“It’s because of poverty and parents want to get rid of their responsibilities.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Girls want to get married in young age. If their family does not do as they want then they run away from home or they blackmail their parents – who then undertake their [child’s] marriage unwillingly before the age of 18 years.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Because of girl’s wish.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

A commonly recurring theme was that of the ‘old’ girl: parents feared that once past the age of puberty girls would rapidly age and pass the ideal age for marriage and childbearing.

“Due to reaching puberty and decision of elders in girl’s childhood about whom the girl will marry.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl)

“Girls are married early because they can give birth to children and if they grow old they will not be able to give birth.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Because parents think girls should be married at the moment they get the age of puberty. Sometime girls get married with the person to whom they like, so parents are afraid of it and try marrying their daughter as early as possible.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Girls explained that from the onset of puberty, a fertile and viable girl in the parental household is often considered to be a burden: 42 per cent of the girls interviewed stated that getting married at a young age can help reduce a family’s financial burden and 33 per cent disagreed. Additionally, girls reported that if a girl is subject to sexual violence, then she (and not the boy) bears the shame: she is therefore considered to be unsuitable for marriage thereafter, creating an everlasting financial burden for her parents. Parental control over the timing and choice of husband was therefore key in ensuring that girls married at a good age, and to a partner who would cement or create advantageous social relationships for the parents.

“Sometimes and in some places it happens. Reasons for child and early marriages are e.g. traditions, parents’ insecurity, when parents of the girl feel insecure that their daughter may be exploited by someone, that’s why they marry their daughter at a young age.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“The burden of parents is finished.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“A mature girl should not stay at her father’s home. The burden of the parents reduces – they become free after her marriage.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

## 5.2 Decision-making in marriages – perceptions and experiences

All girls surveyed were asked to consider how married life impacts on girls’ capacity to take decisions, on their access to resources such as health and education, and experiences of violence. The large majority of girls (84 per cent) stated that once married, girls had to ask their husband’s or in-laws’ permission if they wanted to leave the house: 49 per cent of girls strongly agreed and 35 per cent agreed. The majority of girls (72 per cent) also agreed that girls their age who were married had to ask their husbands or in-laws if they wanted to take public transport. Similarly the majority of girls (79 per cent) agreed that married girls their age needed

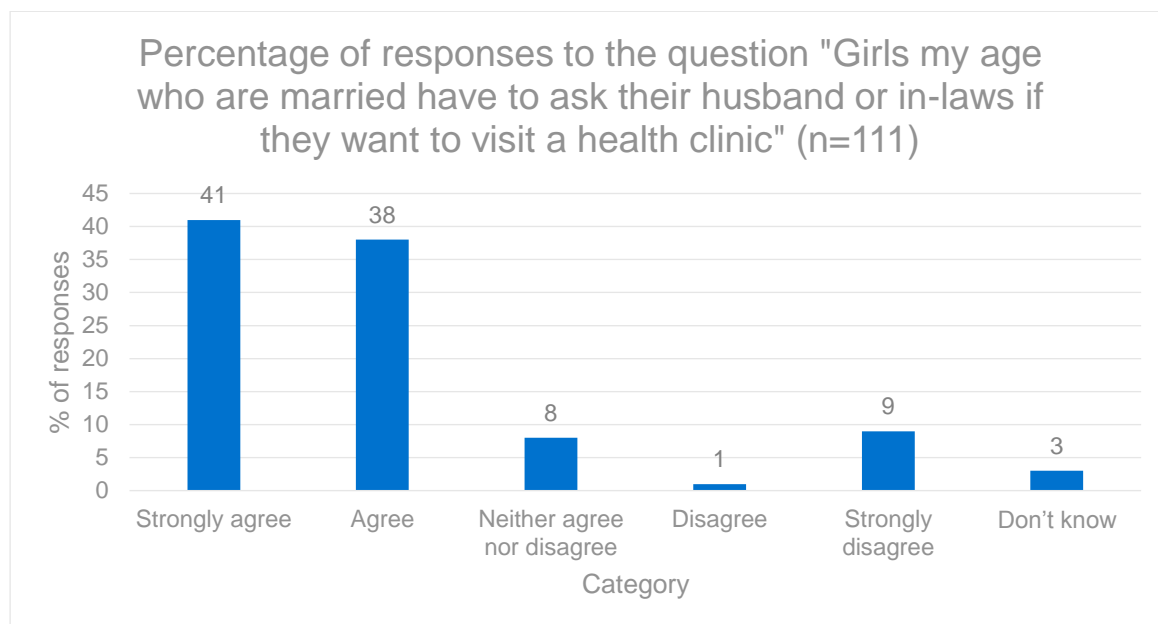
permission to visit a friend or relative. This highlights the extent to which girls perceive married life as a continuum of the restrictions that are put on them when living in their own family home. Married girls continue to be restricted to the household space and their freedom of mobility in public spaces is curtailed.

“We don’t have right to say or do anything.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

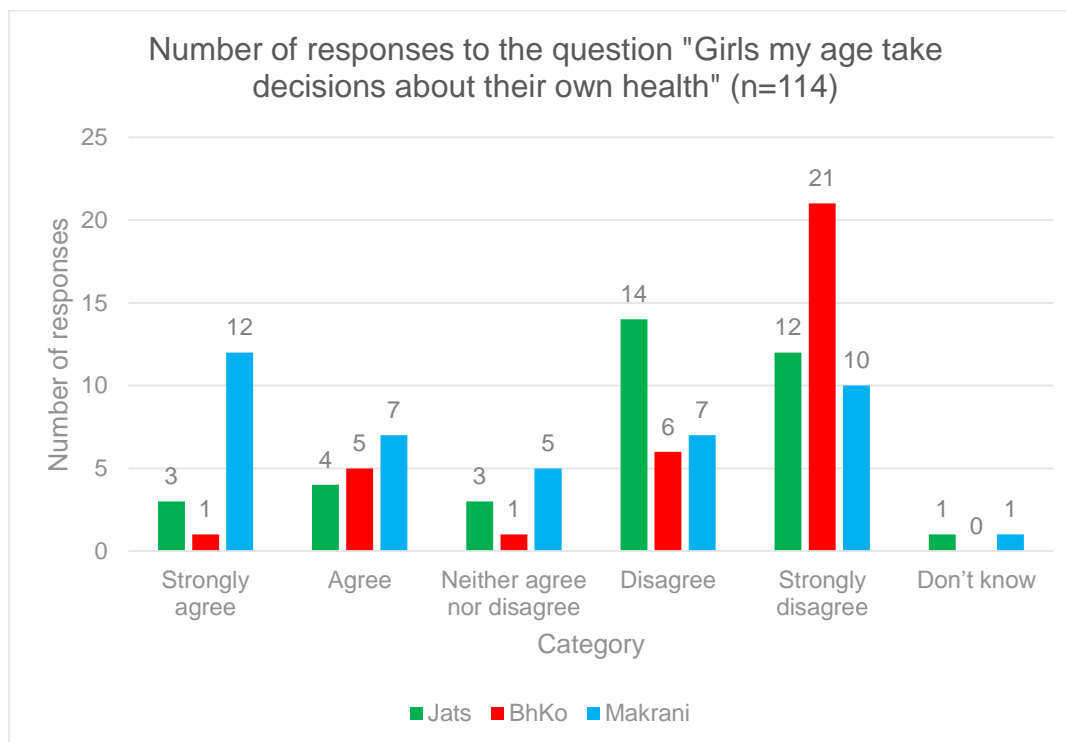
“We are not allowed to go anywhere.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

“Sometimes husband locked their wives, don’t let them go anywhere. If girls don’t obey their husbands, they destroy them.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

The majority of girls (79 per cent) interviewed also stated that married girls need to ask permission from their husbands or in-laws to visit a health clinic. Only 28 per cent of all girls stated that they could take decisions about their own health, whereas 61 per cent disagreed.



The majority of the girls interviewed disagreed that the healthcare centres provide information and services that are suitable for girls their age: 18 per cent disagreed and 47 per cent strongly disagreed. A greater proportion of Makrani girls than Jats and Bheel/Kohli girls agreed that the health centres provided suitable information and services for girls their age, as the graph below demonstrates. Of 52 girls with impairments who answered the question about being able to take decisions about their own health, a combined 30 disagreed that they could.



### 5.3 Reflections from married girls about decision-making

*"We are not asked about our will." (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)*

Fifty girls who were married were asked a series of additional questions to understand further their experiences of child and early marriage. Discussions with married girls around the challenges they faced included the problem of child and early marriages and the lack of freedom they faced after marriage. These challenges are reflected in the responses of the married girls, with 27 out of the 50 girls reporting that they were not able to take decisions in their own household. Among these same 27 girls: 22 agreed that they had to ask their husband's permission to leave the house and 20 disagreed that they can take decisions about their own health. The majority, 19 of these 27 girls, had not been to school. Out of this 27: 14 were Bheel/Kohli, eight were Jats and five were Makrani.

Of those 27 girls, the majority agreed that women put up with violence from their husband in order to keep the family together: 25 agreed and only two strongly disagreed.

The majority of married girls interviewed (29 out of 50) stated that girls who marry young are more likely to experience violence in the home. One example offered was that girls face violence at home when they resist sex with their husbands.

*"Because at times after marriage girls resist sex with their husbands and then face violence." (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)*

*"If my mother-in-law or my husband are not happy with me, due to my argument with them or not performing my daily duties at home – they are used to do physical violence on me – they slapped me frequently, kicked me with feet and often used stick for beating me." (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)*

This highlights the extent to which girls' perceptions of married life as outlined in section 5.2 aligns with the actual experience of those girls who are married: married girls confirming that their decision-making capabilities are restricted in married life, that they are likely to experience

violence from their husband and also to put up with violence in order to keep the family together.

#### 5.4 Culture and child and early marriage

“There is tradition of child and early marriages; our family member fixed our marriage according to their will.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

‘Tradition’ was a theme that ran throughout discussions with girls on child and early marriage. Tradition dictated that girls should marry once they reach puberty – with the added benefit of relieving families of the burden of caring for a female child who would not earn for them later. The majority of all girls (63 per cent) interviewed agreed that girls married before the age of 18 because of tradition and their local culture: 38 per cent strongly agreed and 25 per cent agreed. The large majority (72 per cent) also agreed that girls who marry before the age of 18 are more valued in their local communities than those who are not married: 38 per cent strongly agreed and 24 per cent agreed. Regarding family views, 70 per cent of girls agreed that girls who marry young are more valued by their families. Poverty and the prevailing social and cultural norms are two intertwining factors underlying parental decisions to marry their daughters at a young age.

“Due to our tradition young girls get married in their early age.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

“It’s because of our prevailing environment in the society.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

#### 5.5 How child and early marriage impacts the lives of girls

When asked about the impact of child and early marriages, girls gave a variety of responses, including: leaving education early, mental health issues and having no voice and no choice in their marriages or homes. Girls also discussed the onset of pregnancy and experiences of violence as outcomes of marriage (these are discussed in detail in the preceding sections).

“I will [be] mentally disturbed if I will have the same life like my mother and sisters.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

“If they get married in their early age they can be disturbed.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“We think a lot but we keep in our hearts because no one hears us.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

More than half of all the girls interviewed (56 per cent) stated that getting married before the age of 18 years meant that they were less likely to complete their education.

“I could not complete my education due to it.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“My family stops my education in grade 2 and my dream to go to school for further education was unfinished... change will not come if I got married in early age.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

### 5.5.1 Early pregnancy

One impact of child and early marriage that girls discussed in detail was early pregnancy. Child and early marriage and early pregnancy were both linked to the onset of puberty – girls are then considered to be ‘adult’, or ‘mature’.

“Because they are adult.” (Jats adolescent girl)

“Because they become mature.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“If they reach puberty then they can get pregnant.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

Girls then explained that child and early marriage naturally led to early pregnancy: girls have no access to information on sexual health information and services available in their areas and do not know how babies are created, and so after marriage they become pregnant quickly.

“If she gets married in early age she will definitely get pregnant.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“Girls get pregnant in early age due to their child and early marriage.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Because of their child and early marriages. Before 13 they are very innocent and not aware of anything even they don’t know about reason of pregnancy.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“I will not understand completely my new responsibilities as mother.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

Lack of awareness, both among girls and family members, was a topic that ran through discussions around early pregnancy with both girls and boys, and was linked to a fundamental lack of control that the girls had over their own lives and sexual relationships. There was a fundamental difference, however, between the girls and the boys in the forms that these discussions took. Girls ascribed their lack of knowledge and control to the family, men and the culture of the community, including stating that early pregnancy was sometimes due to rape. They also stated that early pregnancy was God’s will. The only form of free will mentioned by the girls was their wish to have a child – once married, they are expected to have children in order to fulfil their role as wives and mothers.

“They don’t have enough knowledge about it. This is fault of their family members and girls should not marry before 19 or 20 years.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Young girls get pregnant because of their parents’ interest.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Because of child and early marriages, lack of awareness, also their early wish for having child.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Due to the community’s trend” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

“Due to environment.” (Makrani adolescent mother, married)

“At this age, if girls get pregnant it is because of the will of the male, because girls don’t know about anything.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“It happens as God wishes.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Abuse (language) and rape of girls, they can be pregnant.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

While girls themselves ascribe child and early marriage and pregnancy to factors outside their control, boys also recognise to some extent that girls have very little control in these matters. During focus group discussions with boys, they ascribed early pregnancy to girls’ free will and having pre-marital sexual relationships – but they simultaneously acknowledged that girls had no control over decisions or birth control, that this is controlled by husbands and the men in their lives.

“Girls do friendship with their community boys and get pregnant with their own free will without doing marriage because of their sexual relations.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“Girls have no rights to take family decisions. Childbirth planning is under the control of men. They cannot take decisions to whom they can get married.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

“There is frequent friendship and sexual understanding between girls and boys. Mostly girls become pregnant before marriage and parents allow them for marriages with their friends but marriages occur in early age... Sometimes if any parents of girls or boys do not agree for marriages then father or boy himself have to pay about Rs. 5000 [US\$ 477.12] to parents of girl.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

Girls’ discussions around the impact of early pregnancy revolved principally around the damage done to the mother’s health. Girls also discussed the potential danger to the baby’s health, as well as the fact that such young girls may not know how to take care of a baby properly. They also discussed the demands that a new baby makes, impacting on the girls’ ability to complete chores and take care of the household.

“At the time of delivery of baby blood reduce too much from body.” (Jats adolescent mother, married)

“Many children born, like in our village there is a young girl whose two children died after delivery... it’s God’s will.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

“Yes there are many health problems with girls. My friend was very young when she became pregnant, she died at the time of delivery and could not survive.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“Yes a lot of impacts, due to early age pregnancy baby can be born immature, and it destroys her health.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

“When girls get pregnant in early age, they don’t take proper care of their children, also not able to do household chores properly.” (Makrani adolescent girl)

Both girls and boys stated that one of the biggest challenges that girls faced was the lack of a hospital or any health centre nearby or proper health facilities, especially during pregnancy.

“Hospital is so far from the village.  
Death of pregnant women due to unavailability of hospital.  
Stomach diseases.  
No health worker available in the village for immediate response.  
Due to unavailability of transportation, infants die and are paralysed by the time they reach the hospitals.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

Both girls and boys stated that to overcome this challenge, facilities needed to be built: a responsibility they laid at the foot of the government.

“Our government should do something for our children especially for their health and education.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

“Yes... elimination of poverty and availability of good treatment can overcome the challenges.” (Makrani adolescent girl)



## PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

The findings in this section look at issues of safety and violence against women and girls in public and private spaces, including the risks that adolescent girls face compared to boys, their perceptions and experiences of reporting violence, and their reflections on who is responsible for addressing it. Ending violence against women and girls is an important component of SDGs 5 and 11 and integral to the advancement of the rights of girls and women.

Violence and safety were recurring themes throughout the interviews and group discussions with the adolescent girls. The type of violence that girls reported included verbal abuse, physical abuse (hitting and beating), sexual abuse and rape, and economic violence. When discussing violence in focus groups, girls talked of the restrictions on their mobility as violence. Girls reported not feeling safe in their homes, in public places nor in their relationships with husbands, brothers or fathers. The extent to which violence against girls is normalised is a constant and recurring theme throughout discussions of girls from all ethnic groups: violence is to be expected and therefore it is best to be ready for it.

“Physical violence is common here and everyone has to face [it]. It’s the biggest issue over here... Sometimes he [husband] gets angry and he beats me.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)



A word cloud showing the 50 most commonly used words when describing causes of violence: husbands, boys, community and home are all prominent, highlighting the extent to which relationships and both private and public spaces are sources of violence for girls.

## 6.1 Public places were not perceived as safe

Girls stated that public spaces were not safe for them – either when undertaking chores such as collecting water, or on the way to school. The overwhelming majority of girls, 79 per cent, stated that they did not feel safe walking on their own in public places: only 28 per cent said that they did feel safe. The proportion of girls who felt unsafe in public increased slightly (83 per cent) when girls were asked if they felt safe in public places after dark: 33 girls (28 per cent) disagreed and 65 girls (55 per cent) strongly disagreed.

Safety on public transport was also an issue, with 62 per cent of girls saying that they do not feel safe when taking public transport. Furthermore, 55 per cent of girls interviewed stated that they had to ask permission if they want to use public transport or go to public spaces. Perception of safety and autonomy of mobility were similar across all ethnic groupings.

Girls explained that outside the home, they principally feared sexual violence, either on their way to school or to collect wood and water. Sexual violence also constantly threatened to spill over from the public domain into the private. For example, Bheel/Kohli girls in a focus group discussion explained to the facilitator that a local wine-making factory was there at the entrance of their community. This meant that drunken influential people and landlords usually broke inside the houses: “...they rape the women or take them away. In case they resist; drunken men beat women and men without any discrimination”. This they explained was the reason for wishing they had a boundary wall around their community to protect them from the intruders (frequently drunk) who would trespass into their homes at night and rape them. Bheel/Kohli boys in a focus group discussion also acknowledged that due to the lack of security in girls’ homes, men are entering girls’ houses and as a result girls are getting pregnant.

“Unknown persons and drunk persons come inside their homes in night because they are not having boundary walls and girls get pregnant.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“No wall around the home. Any man can come to our homes and could do anything bad physically.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

Jats girls explained in focus group discussions that they are forced to bear the consequences of the violence they endure, including shame. They also endure further violence from husbands who punish them for having been forced to have sex with another man.

“We will be in big trouble when someone abuses us. Our family then feeling shame and then our husbands doesn’t trust their wives. More violence on girls in a situation of doubt.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

This fear of girls being abused by men meant that husbands and families restrict girls’ movements outside the house in an attempt to keep them safe from exposure to violence. In a focus group with Jats girls, they saw this restriction of their movements as one of the outcomes of violence; boys meanwhile interpreted the restriction of girls’ movements as a way to safeguard them from violence:

[Interviewer:] What types of violence are girls more exposed to?

[Girls:] Restriction on girls’ mobility.  
(Jats girls, focus group discussion)

“Girls must not talk with persons who are not their relatives and girls should not go outside the home.” (Jats boys, focus group discussion)

Girls furthermore described forced marriages and being unable to make decisions for themselves when discussing violence.

“Young girls are forced by their parents to get married with old age men. Girls are forced to do marriage with disabled persons. Educated girls get married with uneducated boys...

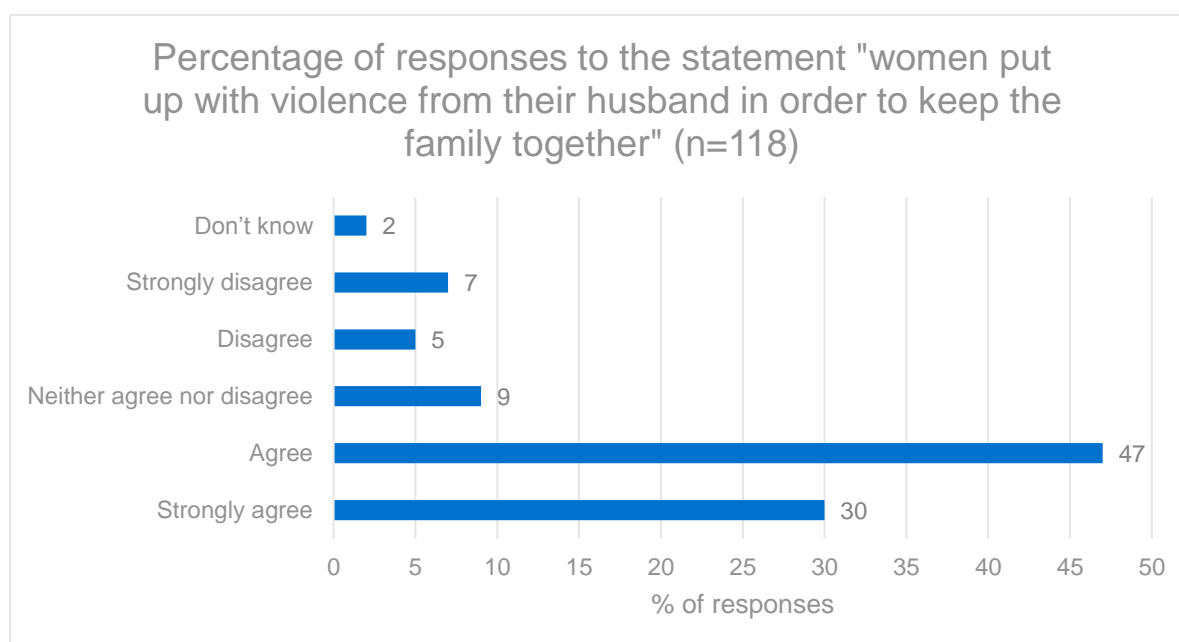
Girls are not allowed to take decisions on any matter of their lives.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“Girls should be asked about their opinions.” (Makrani adolescent mother, married)

## 6.2 Violence and the fear of violence in relationships, homes, schools and communities

The prevalence of violence in the home, as expressed by the girls interviewed, was high. Girls stated that in the home, they were exposed to economic violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, verbal abuse and physical violence.

During interviews, girls frequently discussed physical violence. Forty per cent of the girls agreed that it was acceptable for a boy to hit or use violence against his girlfriend or wife: 16 per cent strongly agreed and 24 per cent agreed. Among all the girls, 77 per cent agreed that women put up with violence from their husbands in order to keep the family together: 30 per cent of girls strongly agreed and 47 per cent agreed. There was a greater acceptance of violence from mothers than from fathers among the girls interviewed: when asked if it was acceptable for fathers to hit their daughters, 19 per cent agreed. When asked if it was acceptable for mothers to hit their daughters, 30 per cent agreed.



Boys and girls explained that the physical and verbal violence that girls were exposed to in the home were principally in connection to the completion of chores and domestic duties. Girls from all ethnic groups linked the necessity of carrying out domestic chores to experiences of violence.

“Boys, father, brother, even mothers beat girls/women, for example if girls use/talk more on the mobile phone, or sit outside of the home for long time...” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“Girls are beaten by family males if they delay in cooking, cleaning, cloth washing and other domestic chores.” (Jats boys, focus group discussion)

“When she got married her husband also beat her when she didn’t understand and fulfil his orders.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

Additionally, girls revealed that they face a general barrage of verbal abuse at home and physical violence from family members. Brothers hitting and beating their sisters in the home was frequently mentioned in all focus group discussions.

“Girls face oral abusive language and physical violence (girls beaten by sticks, slap, kicks, stone, and rod).” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

“Brother fight with sisters and brother physically abuses sisters. Between the fights I may be injured seriously.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

“Father and husband say, if I do not obey they will beat me.” (Jats adolescent girl, married)

“Verbal abuse – express anger through using bad language.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

“My brother physically abuses me and if I will argue with my parents they consider me not a good daughter.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

“[Boys] use abusive language in different domestic matters.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“The girls are beaten in their community ...if their husband or brothers hear that girl... [has] interest in any boy or having contact with that boy.” (Makrani adolescent girl, no other details supplied)

In focus group discussions, girls stated that religious teachings contributed to violence towards girls, and that men were following cultural practices. Girls furthermore stated that the low importance ascribed to them by their culture meant that they were ideal targets for violence when men vented their frustrations: for example, they cited men beating them because they were living in poverty, talking on mobile phones or suspected of talking to boys from other villages. For example, Jats girls stated that their tribe follow social norms strictly, and that women and girls should ‘be ready’ for any type of violence and mistreatment – because men and boys considered them to be their property, like the goats.

“They [girls] should be ready for all kind of violence and mistreatment. Men and boys of this community think and behave with their girls and women as they are their property like their camels, cows and goats.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

“Poor living conditions and economic issues provoke violence among boys and men.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

“Yes girls experience more violence as compared to boys because they have low importance in the family.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

“Girls who talk on mobile phones with boys of other communities should be beaten.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“Should not talk on phone for a long time.” (Jats adolescent boy, focus group discussion)

“Men do physical violence on women when they don’t have money.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

Cultural and social norms contribute towards the final form of violence mentioned by girls and boys during interviews: economic violence and exploitation. Jats girls discussed how they are often perceived to be the property of fathers, brothers or husbands, therefore if girls are asked to, they must give all their earnings from paid and informal labour to their husbands or fathers. These examples reinforce the low position attributed to girls and women in the family and community.

“Economic exploitation – girls don’t get the money from embroidery work<sup>32</sup> or Ralli [quilt] making.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

“Men do not give them their financial rights... Females have no right over their own income.” (Bheel/Kohli boys, focus group discussion)

“... in our normal routine our girls and women in free time do embroidery work and get money after sale of their goods, so they [girls] have some savings with them which they usually spent on their daily home expenses. But if their brothers, fathers or husband ask and they refuse in that case husbands and brothers treat them badly and do physical violence.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

The evidence indicates that girls are therefore exposed to a wide range of violent and unsafe behaviour, from physical and sexual violence to economic exploitation, and that their vulnerability is created and compounded by discriminatory social and gender norms.

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<sup>32</sup> Regarding embroidery work, girls and women traditionally do this and earn money from the sale of their [embroidered] cloths, yet [they] have no right to spend that money on them[selves] or by their own wishes, and this is a form of their economic exploitation by their family men. (Contextual explanation given from the facilitator of the Jats adolescent girl focus group)

### 6.3 Impact of violence on girls



*The 50 most commonly used words by girls when describing the impact of violence on their lives: mental health, physical abuse, humiliation, divorce, suicide, being made an example of and fearful are all prominent.*

Girls named a range of consequences of continually suffering domestic violence, including incurring a disability as a result of physical violence (and subsequently worrying that no one would marry them), feeling trapped and contemplating suicide, feeling shamed and degraded, and suffering mental health issues. These situations are compounded even further for girls as they are conditioned by their communities and families to be submissive and not to speak up – this is discussed in more detail in the following section.

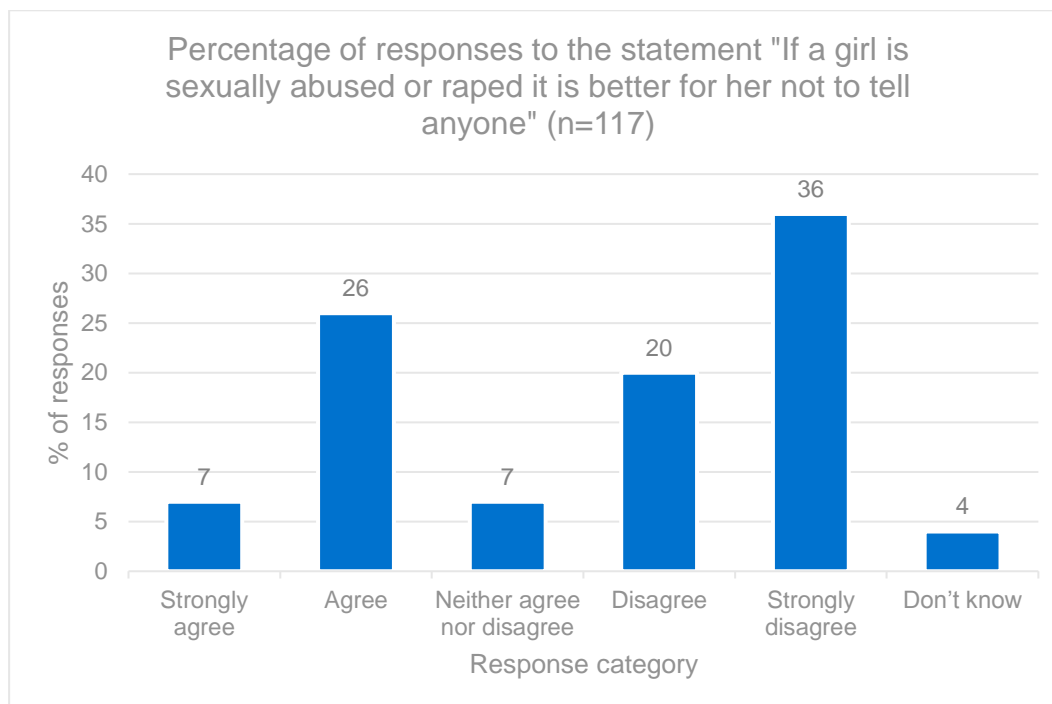
“Girls lost their life, mentally ill, drink any pesticides, acids, try to do suicide... Girls and women mentally disturbed due to violence, becomes disabled, always fearful. Girls don’t think beyond their given life pattern, and are more worried about their children’s future.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

“We have no life like other girls and women. We are just subjects and [have] no escape or reason for refusal.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

“No one wants to marry with the girls who were physically hurt or raped by any outsider or unknown.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

### 6.4 Attitudes and perceptions of girls about addressing violence against women and girls

Reporting and revealing violence was a complex matter for the girls interviewed. When asked whether it would be better to tell no one if a girl was sexually abused or raped, a combined 56 per cent of the girls interviewed stated that they disagreed: 20 per cent disagreed and 36 per cent strongly disagreed. Only 33 per cent agreed. Only 45 per cent of girls agreed that girls their age knew where to go in their community to report violence, and 27 per cent of girls disagreed with this statement.



Girls reported that they are not encouraged to speak out about issues or cases of violence. During the survey girls were asked a set of questions around their social support, asking if they had someone to talk to when they are worried and how this person could help. While the majority said they had someone to talk to, some girls responded that they prefer not to tell anyone about their problems, that it is better to stay quiet. Girls' preference for staying quiet in the face of their problems was also articulated by a respondent outlined below, highlighting that it is not advisable to talk about sensitive matters. On this point, as part of the research ethics and consent procedures, all respondents were asked if they could suggest somewhere where the interview could take place where they felt comfortable – interviewers suggested that they should be out of earshot of family members but within sight. However, despite precautions taken, one girl responded that it was better not to talk about these issues at all:

Interviewer: Which is the biggest issue that you think girls your age face?

Respondent: Men and boys beat us.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why you think this is?

Respondent: They beat us when we don't work and they are men.

Interviewer: Do you think anything can be done to overcome these challenges?

Respondent: If we do our work on time then they [men] will not beat us.

Interviewer: Who do you think is responsible for addressing these problems and why?

Respondent: Leave it – we should not talk about these issues. (Jats adolescent girl)

Girls in focus group discussions also told the facilitators that generally they are encouraged not to tell family members, elders or even their mothers about experiences of violence, stating:

"We are not allowed to share with anyone and if [we] told or complained about the bad behaviour or actions of [our] brothers, husbands and elders, with their parents, especially mothers, then no one support [us]. This is the life and we have to live the same as our mothers and grandmothers spent." (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

Another girl continued:

"If girls be doing [reporting violence] so then first that will be very shameful for their parents and elders of the family and as a result they will have to bear more physical



violence, so normally we don't react unless there are issues related to our children and even then we have to be ready for any kind of mistreatment from our family elders and husbands." (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

Just over half (53 per cent) of the girls felt confident reporting violence to a family member: 20 per cent strongly agreed and 33 per cent agreed. However, 21 per cent disagreed that they feel confident reporting violence to their families (12 per cent disagreed and 9 per cent strongly disagreed). Only 30 per cent of girls felt that they could report violence to the authorities (4 per cent strongly agreed and 26 per cent agreed), while 28 per cent disagreed that they feel confident to report violence to authorities (13 per cent disagreed, 15 per cent strongly disagreed).

“We are living in this culture since our birth and we cannot do anything about it.”  
(Bheel/Kohli adolescent girl, married)

“No, there is no solution.” (Bheel/Kohli adolescent mother, married)

## 6.5 Solutions to overcome the challenges girls face



*Words most frequently used by girls discussing ways to overcome the challenges that girls face: education, responsibility, community, traditions, culture, household, chores, boys and family are all prominent.*

Girls proposed that in order to overcome violence, girls need to stand up for themselves; awareness campaigns could help raise social consciousness and educate community leaders and elders; and parents should educate their children to treat each other fairly.

“Educate our community leaders and family elders and [make] aware those regarding the violence that how much it is harmful for girls and women... Involve the government, or any local influential [person] or landlord of the area.” (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

“Girls need to strengthen themselves and slap the boy if he is bullying the girls... Parents should educate their boys that they don’t fight with their sisters.” (Makrani girls, focus group discussion)

"If their parents can understand then it's possible that girls can be protected from violence." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"Males of this community are responsible for addressing and solving the problems." (Makrani adolescent girl)

Given that girls are conditioned to be submissive and not talk about their experiences of violence, it is perhaps not surprising that some girls stated that it was not possible to overcome the violence they faced, as they were trapped by a cycle of poverty and dependence. They must therefore be obedient and try not to anger their husbands or families. One Jats girl, during a focus group discussion, stated that although her husband beat her, "he is my master and I have to obey his demands otherwise he will send me back to my parents' home and then how will I bear the expenses of my children's food, clothes, medicine and other essentials." The discussion elaborated on the fact that poverty traps women into violent marriages that are condoned by social and cultural norms – they therefore suggested that in order to overcome violence, poverty must also be alleviated.

"Firstly it is impossible to change the custom of our community. If we want to change it, improve the poverty/unemployment issue." (Bheel/Kohli girls, focus group discussion)

Makrani and Jats girls also suggested that vocational skills training and employment opportunities were their path out of poverty – and therefore to greater control over their own lives.

"Training of vocational skills should be given." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"By getting employment we can reduce our poverty." (Jats adolescent girl)

"Employment is the basic solution to overcome the problems." (Makrani adolescent girl)

"Employment is the basic solution to eliminate the poverty." (Makrani adolescent girl)

Makrani girls suggested that child and early marriage could only end through education and by convincing their parents and elders to allow girls greater freedom in their choice of partners and in the timing of their marriages. This once again epitomises how little control girls have over their own futures – for a solution, they must appeal to their communities for help.

"It will good and safe education to girls so that [they] can't be married at a young age, because after marriage they discontinue education. Due to education young girls' lives are at stake. If I could, I wouldn't allow young girls to be married... We should talk with the elders, and then the elders of the community need to discuss that child and early marriage is not the only solution of the problem. Elders need to work together." (Makrani adolescent girl)

Elders and community leaders were also considered to be important for challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards girls, highlighting that this is of particular importance for the future generations:

"It the core responsibilities of our elders and grandparents they should teach their children how to deal with the new generation, otherwise this issue remain in our communities." (Makrani adolescent girl, focus group discussion)

Girls also suggested that the government should do something to improve the situation of girls' access to education and health, and by providing other services such as electricity for their homes.

“Our government should do something for our children especially for their health and education.” (Jats girls, focus group discussion)

## **6.6 Concluding with good wishes for girls**

To conclude the focus group discussions boys and girls were asked to express their good wishes for girls in their community; this was followed with the option to compose a song or poem to illustrate these sentiments for girls. In the case where groups completed this they chose to write a prayer expressing their wishes. The following are some of the excerpts from girls’ and boys’ discussion groups. Wishes from Jats and Makrani girls focus primarily on getting an education, a hospital, having facilities such as water and electricity at home and improving their income and living standards. These wishes are shared for the most part by the Bheel/Kohli girls; a noted difference is the emphasis put on having a home with cemented walls and living free from a husband’s violence, highlighting how these girls in particular prioritise security and protection.

### **We (Jats girls) wish for girls that ...**

“...she can successfully complete her education and live her happy life  
...can live happy life at her home having all the facilities at her home  
...that her family have a good happy life.”

### **Prayer composed by Jats girls**

“We are thankful to God, We thankful to God  
In all our life, in all our good and bad times.  
We are thankful to God, We thankful to God  
Only God can fulfill the wishes of all people.”

### **We (Bheel/Kohli girls) wish for girls that ...**

“She will always be happy. She will build a new home with cemented blocks, electricity, water available at her home. Jobera will get education”.

“We are praying for her children and her good life, we wish her husband should get a good job and end her disturbance”.

“She will be happy with her husband and get love from him, no violence on her and she will have a beautiful baby and be visiting different places with husband.”

### **Makrani girls responded to the question: if they had the power to change the situation for girls what would they do?**

“Build a hospital and school for girls in the village, helping the poor girls and their families and start tuition centre for girls’ studies.”

“To start girls’ education and make water facilities available at the doorstep, that girls can get married with a good man with her own choice.”

“She will buy a rickshaw for her husband, she will drive it and start to earn good money for food and clothes for the children and end their poverty.”

## **A song presented by the Makrani girls. This is a song for the birth of new baby.**

“Your parents always praying for you,  
You always be happy in your future,  
You are important part of our life,  
We will miss you day and night,  
We will miss you all the time,  
You stay happy, wealthy and peaceful,  
Your parents always praying for you!!”

Boys were also asked to conclude their focus group sessions with good wishes for girls and reflecting on the question: if they could improve the situation for girls what would they do? Responses from both groups emphasise the need to provide essential services such as health and education for girls to improve the situation for girls. In boys' wishes, both groups reflect on the importance of girls marrying a boy with a good character who treats their wife well.

### **Boys' response to the question: if they had the power to change the situation for girls what would they do?**

- Construct a school for girls and allow them education: “I used to go to city to work on shop where I see girls while going to school, this looks good.”
  - Construct a hospital in the area so that in case of any emergency: “that pregnant young girl can go to hospital on time.”
  - Provide books to the girls in schools.
  - Buy motorbike and other vehicles to send girls to school.
  - They will allow the girls if they want to go outside the village/community.
  - Make available clothes to girls.
  - Arrange for electricity in the locality.
  - Provide girls with skills and send products to city malls for sale.
  - Try to allow them to marry according to their will and wish.
  - Share income with girls. (Responses from Jats boys)
- 
- “If they had the power to change the situation of girls they will construct a school for girls so that they get education, become aware about their rights, can do decisions about their lives, can differentiate between right and wrong.” (Response from Bheel/Kohli boys)

### **Boys' wishes for girls**

“To get married with a boy having good character.  
To study Holy Qur'an.  
Husbands that care their wives.” (Jats boys)

“He wishes that she gets married with a boy having good character.  
He wishes girls can get education.  
He wishes for better future after her marriage.  
He desires for a better environment for girls.” (Responses from Bheel/Kohli boys)

## SECTION 7

# SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research – covering the themes of enabling environment, household chores, education, child and early marriage, and violence in the public and private sphere – provide insight into the lived realities of a diverse set of adolescent girls in Pakistan. By examining these themes, exploring both the experiences and perceptions of adolescent girls, a clear sense emerges of the specific challenges they face, and how this impacts on their progress, relationships, life opportunities and their wellbeing. This section presents the key discussion points for each section, along with recommendations.

### 7.1 Individual aspirations and opportunities to advance in life

While the majority of adolescent girls interviewed had the courage and ability to express their hopes for their futures, a smaller but significant number of girls struggled to communicate with the researchers their aspirations and life goals.

A number of potential factors possibly contribute to this as discussed in the report; however it does signal that for some girls it was difficult for them to think about their own individual aspirations. This is perhaps not surprising given that only a third of all girls interviewed felt that they had sufficient opportunities to get on in life. In addition, girls' autonomy was also reported as restricted, with a significant proportion of girls stating that they cannot take decisions over their wellbeing and future. Among the ethnic groups, Makrani and Jats girls perceived that they have more autonomy over their lives comparatively to the Bheel/Kohli groups.

Girls' discussions about their life goals revealed that the most cited goal was to get an education: it was a pathway to wisdom and a better chance of well-paid employment. The ultimate career achievement was to become a doctor. The importance of family came through clearly in girls' goals, and in girls' wishes to marry well, to have healthy families and provide children. Raising income for the household was equally important to improve basic conditions and facilities. Makrani and Jats girls also reported freedom as a goal: freedom to leave the house and see different places. Many of the Bheel/Kohli girls, who had little or no education, reported either that they had no life goals or no goals beyond improving the conditions of their household and marriage. However, for girls, achieving their life goals posed difficulties as they have significant challenges to overcome.

Girls reported that their access to education and their opportunities to finish school were largely restricted by the family and by cultural expectations that ascribe girls a lower value comparatively to boys. Once girls reach puberty, parents encourage them to devote their interests to the prospect of marriage, the home and the family environment. This is further compounded by social and gender norms that reinforce the notion that girls should marry young and that they should stay in the home. Girls and boys in focus group discussions repeatedly reported that girls are expected to stay within the confines of the home, that their freedom of movement outside the home is restricted. Girls surveyed indicated that girls' gender roles and responsibilities mean that their productive area is principally related to the home and not work; the large majority of girls stated that men have more right to work than girls. Girls face significant difficulties when attempting to advance their life goals when this goes against the ingrained gender norms and what is expected of them as daughters, wives and mothers.

Girls' opportunities to succeed in life are further restricted by poverty, lack of basic necessities, lack of knowledge, education and healthcare, as well as discrimination arising from being from a lower caste. Freedom of movement was something else that girls aspired to; they understood that their lack of mobility and movement was a significant barrier faced in their daily lives. Compared to boys, the majority of girls in all ethnic groups agreed that boys had more opportunities available to them to succeed in life. As one Makrani girl shared in a focus group discussion: "we are not like boys of their age who are free as birds – our boys have no restriction from their parents, so they move freely outside home, make friends by their choice, and are not responsible like them."

Despite girls' lack of access to resources and the restrictions on both their mobility and decision-making, many girls are determined to succeed in advancing their life goals through their own hard work, sacrifices, support of their relatives and their faith. However for some girls these challenges appear insurmountable.

## 7.2 The importance of the family as an enabling environment

Adolescent girls frequently communicated their desire to support and help their families when discussing their life goals. The centrality and importance of family to girls is clearly evident. While girls wish for good home conditions, basic necessities, food, running water, electricity and good relations with their family members or husbands, the reality they report is one in which their families treat them as inferior compared to their brothers and other male members of the family. Girls frequently also spoke of the violence they are subjected to in the home by family members or husbands. Girls and married girls reported being physically beaten for not completing chores or if not completed to a satisfactory level. On the one hand girls treasure their families and homes; on the other, this environment and the relationships within it exposes them to experiences of violence and abusive behaviour.

There was a mixed response regarding whether girls felt that their voices and opinions were heard and considered in the home, with a similar proportion agreeing and disagreeing. However, girls strongly felt that they should be included more in matters of the home and family, with three out of four girls stating that their opinion *should* be considered in the home. Girls placed a high value on having someone to talk to when they were worried or concerned. The majority of girls stated that they did have someone with whom to discuss their problems, mostly mothers and other female relatives who gave them valuable advice and support. Girls also mentioned male relatives as supportive in relation to gaining financial help and practical help, which they appreciated.

However, 20 girls said that they had no one to talk to. Across all three ethnic groups girls reported having no one to talk to or preferring not to talk to anyone about their problems. Out of the 20 girls, 12 self-identified as having an impairment, indicating the level of social isolation that can be connected to having an impairment.

The culture promoted in the home and the community is that girls should behave well: they should not argue with family members, they should complete their chores, not waste groceries, not talk on the mobile phone or leave their houses unnecessarily. This atmosphere and culture encourages girls to be submissive and not to voice their dissatisfaction.

Respondents clearly outlined the positive impact of supportive relationships within families, however, this positive perception is tarnished by the physical abuse they expect and experience at the hands of their families.



### 7.3 The importance of the community as an enabling environment

Overall, adolescent girls did not feel that their communities considered their concerns and interests. Girls did not readily identify the community as a supportive mechanism for addressing the challenges they face, with half of all girls disagreeing that their opinions and concerns are heard and addressed in their community. This was in contrast to the girls' desire to be heard by their communities: girls were asked if they believed that girls' opinions and concerns *should* be heard and addressed in their community: the overwhelming majority of girls – 75 per cent – agreed with 10 per cent disagreeing.

Despite this, respondents strongly felt their community *should* value girls equally as they do boys. Girls discussed in group discussions that the community and the elders could and should do more to support girls getting an education and also advocate on behalf of girls regarding the negative impacts that violence has on girls. Girls reported that community elders with parents often had a hand in deciding whom girls and boys should marry, and girls themselves wished that they had more control over choosing whom they marry.

Girls also reported that the community observed their behaviour and movements. Boys in focus group sessions listed inappropriate behaviours of girls as follows: speaking on the mobile phone, not staying at home, leaving their immediate community or talking to boys from other communities. Girls also listed these behaviours as unacceptable for girls. If girls are seen to engage in these behaviours they are reported to their families and punished: [“the girls are beaten in their community if their husband or brothers hear that a girl is interested in any boy or having contact with that boy”](#) (Makrani adolescent girl). However, girls felt that boys did not come under the same degree of scrutiny, criticism or punishment from the community.

When considering what could be done to improve the situation, girls frequently mentioned the role of the community and the elders. They felt that the elders, for example, could influence the attitudes and behaviours of the community and their families, raise awareness and educate on the importance of girls having an education, and about the negative impact that violence has on girls.

### 7.4 Women community leaders as role models

Only a third of girls reported that there were female leaders in their community. While the majority of girls felt that female community and political leaders were as capable as men, the majority felt that men make better community or political leaders. When girls were asked to consider who could help or support girls to overcome the challenges they face, girls did not suggest female community leaders as a source of support or as advocates for the issues that girls in the community face. While there is a small number of female leaders in the community, the girls surveyed are not associating their presence and their leadership roles with being potential allies to support and advocate for their interests and concerns, nor was there reference to female community leaders as role models.

### 7.5 Gender norms

Ingrained gender roles and responsibilities are apparent in the responses of the girls surveyed, particularly when exploring the realm of domestic chores and care in the household. Girls reported that carrying out their chores gives them a sense of pride for maintaining a tidy home and helps prepare them for marriage. Girls spend an average of 6.5 hours on their household chores and caring responsibilities. The large majority of girls disagreed that these duties are equally shared between girls and boys in their family.



Despite the amount of time that girls are spending on chores and caring tasks, girls disagreed that the distribution of chores and care within the household needed to change. Overall the girls surveyed accept their gender roles in relation to domestic responsibilities in which girls and women attend to women's work inside the home, while men carried out their work and responsibilities outside the home. This attitude was widely shared among all ethnic groups.

A diverging small group of girls reported that the distribution of chores should be more equally shared, and that doing so could serve to improve the burden of time placed on girls carrying out chores. Even though girls acknowledged that men and boys in their family do contribute to the work of the household by carrying out tasks outside the house, the time that boys spent on these chores was not equal to the time girls spent on their chores. Three out of four girls surveyed stated that they do not have as much free time for leisure or studying compared to boys, and they felt that they should have more free time available to them. Some girls reported that this negatively affects their time to study and keep up with school work. Discussions with boys on the topic of household chores revealed that boys agree that they spend less time on chores comparatively to girls. But boys framed this around the notion that this disparity is what is expected of girls, revealing their perceptions of a clear and fixed gender division of roles and responsibilities within the household.

Many girls discussed how their brothers, other males in the family, or their husbands subjected the girls to violence if household chores were not carried out to an expected standard or if they were unfinished. A third of girls stated that the chores they carry out put them at risk: collecting water and firewood, tending to animals expose them to physical and verbal abuse by boys in the community. Boys in their group discussions acknowledged that girls get beaten or hit if they do not carry out their chores on time and to standard; however they did not reflect on challenging or changing these violent attitudes and behaviours of boys – instead they accepted it as a normal occurrence in family life.

## **7.6 Education and pathways to empowerment**

Education was a much discussed topic among the girls surveyed. Girls identified their lack of education, and their restricted opportunities to attend school and finish their education as one of the biggest challenges they face. Opportunities to regularly attend school were confirmed by the majority of the Makrani girls; just over half of the Jats girls had attended school; and none of the Bheel/Kohli girls reported having the opportunity to attend school regularly. Increased access to education by the Makrani girls is partly explained by their urban location. The more rural Jats community girls faced additional barriers such as distance, location of schools outside their communities, the need to gain permission to leave the community and lack of transport. Bheel/Kohli girls, coming from an informal settlement, reported having no education facilities in their community.

The central reasons given for girls dropping out of school were the low value that their community and culture places on girls' education, entering marriage and motherhood which halt girls' education, time pressures placed on girls in relation to carrying out chores and preparing dowry dresses, and the physical and verbal harassment girls face on the way to school. Young married mothers also discussed being "too old" as a reason that they are no longer in school, highlighting the attitudes of families, communities and teachers that perceive girls who have reached puberty as no longer suitable for school.

The value of education was enthusiastically discussed by Makrani and Jats girls; they linked education to gaining wisdom, knowledge and increasing their chances for future employment. Of the girls who responded to the question whether they were satisfied with their level of

education, the responses were mixed, with slightly more girls agreeing that they were satisfied than not. However when asked if finishing their education had or will lead to improved employment opportunities, more girls disagreed than agreed, outlining challenges to stay in school and finish their education as a reason. Among the overall sample, 43 per cent of girls stated that they did not know if their education will lead to future employment opportunities, suggesting that for a significant portion of girls interviewed there was uncertainty whether education had value in preparing them for employment. This reflects both the challenges girls face to stay in school to finish their education and the lack of employment opportunities available to girls. Despite this, girls overall understood education as a “good thing” and a way to improve the situation of girls. Boys in focus group discussions also highlighted the importance of girls getting an education, outlining that a way to improve the situation for girls is to build more schools and make safe transport available for them.

Girls acknowledged that their chances of returning to or finishing education were not high particularly once they hit puberty, got married or had children. Girls also reported that attitudes existed in families and communities that if girls get educated, they will not obey their families and elders. Furthermore, they reported that girls’ contribution to family life is related to their chores; once girls get married they will continue with their curriculum of chores therefore investing in girls’ education was wasteful for families. However, many girls expressed that while this is the way for their generation, they wished that this would change for their own daughters, hoping that their daughters could get an education.

## 7.7 Child and early marriage

Child and early marriage was a recurring theme in discussions with girls. It was for some identified as one of the challenges girls face when trying to achieve their goals, yet for others marriage was defined as their life goal. Girls reported that they feel pressured by parents, families and communities to marry young – it is what is expected of them once they reach puberty. Furthermore, their parents and sometimes the elders of their communities control the choice over whom the girls marry.

Financial pressures were reported as a factor that leads to girls being married off young by their parents. The majority of girls agreed that getting married at a young age can help reduce a family’s burden, however a significant proportion of girls disagreed with this statement. Girls discussed the notion that they are often conceived of as a burden to the family once they reach puberty, and that parental desire to marry their daughters early was connected with alleviating the financial burden of the household and the burden of finding a match for their daughter which proved more difficult the older she became. The importance of a girl’s virginity was also reported as a factor that accelerates a parent’s decision to marry their daughters early: parents fear their daughters may be raped or sexually abused and then will not be suitable for a marriage match.

Girls highlighted the degree to which their mobility and choices are restricted once married. The large majority of all girls reported that they need to ask their husband for permission to leave their house, to use public transport, to visit a friend or relative or to visit a health clinic. Only a quarter of girls reported that they can take decisions about their own health and three quarters reported that their local health centres do not provide suitable health information or services for girls their age.

Married life is perceived and experienced by girls as yet another stage of life where their choice and agency is restricted – both in terms of freedom of movement outside the house and in public places, and in terms of accessing and cultivating their social relations and accessing the health services that they need. Makrani girls reported a higher incidence of being able to take decisions about their health comparatively to Jats and Bheel/Kohli girls. More than half the girls

who reported having an impairment disagreed that they could take decisions about their own health. Equally more than half of the married girls disagreed that they could take decisions about their own health or leave their house without asking their husband's permission. The majority of married girls also reported that girls who marry young are more likely to experience violence in the home, indicating their perceptions of being likely to experience violence once married.

Culture and traditions was a frequently discussed factor that contributed to child and early marriage. The majority of girls surveyed stated that girls marry before the age of 18 because of local culture and traditions, and that married girls are more valued by the community than girls who are not married. The expectations that family and community place on girls to marry young is evident in the survey responses and in the discussion group responses.

The impact of girls marrying young meant that girls' education was cut short. The majority of girls agreed that girls who marry young are less likely to finish their education. Other impacts mentioned by girls were feeling unprepared for married life and motherhood, stress and how this affected their mental health, and the lack of agency and autonomy that they felt they had over their lives.

Married girls also reported that once they are married they are expected to bear children. This is compounded by the fact that girls have very little knowledge in general about reproductive health or access to information on sexual and reproductive health and services. The social pressures and expectations of husbands, families and communities to reproduce and fulfil their roles as wives and mothers was also discussed. Girls describe these factors as being out of their reach and control. Boys' perception is that early pregnancy is down to girls' own free will on the one hand, but on the other they acknowledge that girls have little control when it comes to birth control.

Early pregnancy was described by married mothers in terms of stress, the impact it has on a mother's mental health, their lack of knowledge about how to take care of babies and their health, as well as the time spent caring for babies which affects their time and ability to carry out and complete their chores. One of the biggest concerns articulated by married mothers was the lack of hospitals and healthcare available to them when pregnant and as mothers. Health facilities were too far away for many of the girls to feel that they could be cared for adequately when pregnant and this posed serious challenges for their maternal health. Boys also agreed with this, outlining that the lack of hospitals in their communities was a serious concern for the wellbeing and safety of young pregnant girls, mothers and babies.

## **7.8 Experience and perceptions of violence**

Repeatedly, girls reported experiences and fear of violence as a challenge faced in their daily lives. Girls reported feeling unsafe in public places and on public transport. Girls shared that they are at risk of being sexually, physically or verbally abused, particularly when they are carrying out their outdoor chores or when they are on their way to school. Boys also confirmed that boys and men harass girls when they are outside in public spaces.

The prevalence of violence in the home, as expressed by the girls interviewed, was high. Girls stated that in the home, they were exposed to verbal abuse and physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and economic violence. Girls from all ethnic groups frequently discussed carrying out household chores in conjunction with experiencing violence. Girls reported being hit or physically beaten by their brothers and husbands in particular for not carrying out their chores on time or to a high enough standard. Boys also confirmed that girls are experiencing violence on account of family members being dissatisfied by girls' work and

presented this as accepted behaviour towards these girls. Boys in focus group discussions did not challenge or question the violent behaviour directed towards girls.

Relationships were another dimension of girls' lives where violence occurs. Acceptance of violent behaviour from a boyfriend was high: four out of ten girls felt this was acceptable. This acceptance level increased to three out of four girls when asked if women and girls should put up with violence from their husband in order to keep the family together.

The perceptions of these girls should also be considered in relation to the culture within which girls operate: girls are encouraged to be submissive, and not to speak up, argue or air their grievances within families or communities. Girls discussed that it is better for them to stay quiet and keep their problems to themselves. If a girl is raped and news spreads of the rape, for example, this will bring shame on their family/husband which can produce more violence directed at the girl.

When girls reflected in discussion groups as to why they are more exposed to violence than boys, girls felt that it was partly due to their biological make-up, being weaker than boys. Boys also share this view. Girls also connected it to the fact that their families and communities consider them of lower value compared to men and boys. Some girls outlined that they are considered to be the property of the men in their families and of their husbands, similar to cattle. This low status and value is a contributing factor that explains why girls are subjected to such levels of violence in all areas of their lives.

### **7.9 What adolescent boys think of violence against women and girls – who is responsible?**

While boys acknowledged that girls are exposed to and experience violence in the home and in public spaces, they discussed violence towards girls as an accepted phenomenon in their community life. They described men as strong and dominant and women as weak and submissive. During discussions, Jats boys reported that they do not beat their sisters or wives but sometimes it happens if she does not obey. However, they had clearer views of when violence was necessary – for example, they said that girls who talk on mobile phones with boys from other communities should be beaten. Bheel boys discussed that sometimes drunk men come into girls' huts and rape them, and that the reason this occurs is the lack of protective walls around the huts; therefore to address these instances of rape protective walls should be built around the community. Other causal factors of violence against girls discussed by boys were poverty, girls being confined to their homes, girls being unaware of their rights, and men using drugs and alcohol. The notion that men's violent behaviour should be challenged and condemned, and that men who rape should be punished by law was not discussed as an option for addressing these instances of violence. Nor did boys during group discussions consider addressing violence towards girls as a strategy for improving girls' situations. There was a stark lack of reflection on behalf of boys over what they personally could do to address their own violent attitudes and behaviours towards their sisters and wives.

Boys' own attitudes are informed by ingrained social and cultural norms regarding how boys and men should behave. The fact that these ingrained attitudes and behaviours remain unchallenged limits the capacity of adolescent boys to understand their role in contributing to the violent attitudes and behaviours in their homes and communities.

### **7.10 The value of exploring intersectionality and intersecting vulnerabilities**

Although adolescent girls share similar characteristics of gender and age, they are in fact a diverse group with differing experiences, needs and interests based on their identity and life experience. Poverty, ethnic group, geographical location, caste, disability and sexual

orientation are just some of the realities that shape each girl's experiences in life. These determine a girl's position in her community and society. Exploring the specific experiences of girls with diverse identities and intersecting vulnerabilities in this research contributed to understanding the specific challenges and barriers these groups face when attempting to achieve their life goals and improve their condition and position in society.

Girls attributed many positive associations when discussing their local cultures and traditions, outlining the closeness of the family unit, a sense of identity that their community and language gave them and other positive aspects of their culture such as the community's ability to resolve conflicts. Girls also mentioned the value they placed on their traditional customs such as marriage ceremonies, rituals and religious festivals that meant that girls had a chance to get dressed up and dance, providing them with a break from their routine.

On the other hand girls mentioned less positive aspects of their culture such as the low value placed on girls' education, thus limiting girls' knowledge and future opportunities. All three ethnic groups discussed marriage as something that their community and culture both values and expects of them. For many girls, this was not a valuable attribute of their culture, with girls outlining that they prefer to have more autonomy over whom they marry and when. Violence was discussed by all ethnic groups as something to be expected in their culture and was therefore normalised by their communities. Jats girls in particular discussed how the acceptance of violence in their culture restricted their mobility and freedom because the violent behaviour, attitudes and actions of men and elders towards women and girls go unchallenged. Married girls reported strict curbs on their freedom to leave the house and access health services. They also perceived being more exposed to violence once married and their experiences bore this out. Girls who identified as living with an impairment represented 12 of 20 girls who reported having no one to talk to, highlighting the social isolation that these girls live with.

The intention of this research was not to directly compare the experiences of the three ethnic groups of girls, but to understand better the experiences of each diverse group. However, the data illustrated some notable differences in relation to the environments they lived in. Girls from the Makrani group reported increased incidences of access to education compared to the Jats group of girls. The Bheel/Kohli ethnic group of girls appeared to be living in conditions that provide for a considerably weaker enabling environment. Of the three groups, they had little or no access to education, the lowest levels of reporting in relation to opportunities available to succeed in life and the lowest levels of reporting in relation to autonomy to decide over their own wellbeing and future. Bheel/Kohli girls' primary discussed life goals were in relation to improving their standard of living, or were related to family life; some responded that they did not have life goals. Makrani girls were the group who most mentioned education, who generally had higher aspirations for their futures and reported higher instances of autonomy compared to the other two groups.

## SECTION 8

# CONCLUSION

### 8.1 Girls' pathways to empowerment are restricted.

The research findings illustrate that girls' pathways to empowerment are restricted. Girls' opportunities to succeed in life are limited by poverty, a lack of knowledge, and a lack of resources, including restricted access to education and health centres. Discriminatory social and gender norms promote the needs and interests of boys over those of girls. For example, the education of boys has a greater priority than that of girls. Girls are also expected to spend long hours completing household chores, and their mobility outside of the household is restricted. Combined, these factors limit girls' opportunities to advance in life and achieve their goals.

### 8.2 Families' economic problems affect girls' opportunities in particular.

Economic instability is a fundamental barrier to girls reaching their life goals. Because families perceive that girls will soon be married, they often feel it is not worth investing in their education. Girls are also pressured to marry young in order to alleviate the financial burden of providing for one more household member. Girls are not encouraged to work outside the home on account of the social and gender norms that ascribe girls' place as in the home. This in turn means that they have limited opportunities to earn income. Girls living in poverty are more vulnerable to school drop-out and child marriage and have fewer opportunities to escape the cycle of poverty they find themselves in.

### 8.3 Education is critical for the development of adolescent girls.

Education is crucial for increasing and strengthening girls' capacities, resources and opportunities to secure a better future for themselves and their families. Yet girls are not being educated, despite the fact that girls themselves are clearly articulating education as both an aspiration and a life goal. Girls' opportunities to access and finish education are severely restricted, particularly for the Jats ethnic group and overwhelmingly for the Bheel/Kohli ethnic groups.

### 8.4 Support of communities in addressing the challenges girls face.

Girls expressed that they want their community to help support them to have a bright and healthy future, where they have some autonomy over their own decisions and lives. This highlights the importance of working with communities and families to address the social and cultural norms that place a lower value on girls' education comparatively to boys'. In addition the social and gender norms that result in girls spending excessive amounts of time on household chores comparatively to boys, affecting the time girls have available to attend school and study, need to be addressed.

Child and early marriage is presented as the dominant pathway in girls' futures. Alternative pathways for girls to develop their capacities and access resources are not easily accessible or available. Girls' autonomy to choose whom and when to marry is restricted by their parents and communities. Girls in this research describe child and early marriage, and early pregnancy, as having a negative effect on the adolescent stage of their life.



### **8.5 Violent environments impact girls' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.**

Repeatedly, girls reported experiences and fear of violence as a challenge faced in their daily lives. Girls reported feeling unsafe in public places and on public transport. The prevalence of violence in the home was high, particularly regarding household duties. Relationships were another dimension of girls' lives where violence occurs.

These experiences of girls reporting violence should also be considered in relation to the cultural and social norms within which girls operate: girls are encouraged to be submissive, and not to speak up, argue or air their grievances within families or communities.

### **8.6 Boys do not identify their own responsibilities in relation to violence.**

While boys acknowledged that girls are exposed to and experience violence in the home and in public spaces, for them violence against girls and women was an accepted phenomenon in community life. While boys acknowledged that it was preferable not to hit or beat their sisters or wives, they felt that it was however sometimes necessary. When boys were discussing what could be done to improve the situation of girls in their communities, they suggested building schools, hospitals and having transport available for girls. Boys did not outline addressing violence towards girls as a strategy for improving girls' situation. There was a stark lack of reflection on behalf of boys as to what they personally could do to address their own violent attitudes and behaviours towards their sisters and wives.

Boys' own attitudes are informed by ingrained social and cultural norms regarding how boys and men should behave. Because these remain unchallenged in their communities, adolescent boys' capacity to understand their own roles in contributing to violent attitudes and behaviours in their homes and communities is limited.



## SECTION 9

# RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9.1 Strengthen access to education for excluded and marginalised groups of girls

The conditions, factors and social norms that prevent excluded and marginalised girls from attaining an education need to be addressed urgently. Specific measures need to be put in place to access and support those girls most excluded on account of ethnicity, location and caste in order to increase their opportunities to attend and finish school.

As this report has shown, there is urgent need to invest in formal and non-formal education for children, especially girls. Some of the study populations were non-static (Bheel/Kohli) and isolated (Jats), factors which prevent girls from going out of their locality.

There is a need to work closely with the Provincial and District education department to allocate appropriate resources to ensure access to quality education for girls belonging to excluded communities.

### 9.2 Strengthen the resources and potential of the girls themselves

Adolescent girls from rural and non-static communities who are particularly marginalised need increased attention. Special programmes are needed to promote life skills education, promoting girls' self-confidence and wellbeing, including raising awareness on important rights issues such as violence and sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Excluded and marginalised girls need increased focus as a group in relation to strengthening their social support: their reported inability to share their worries and concerns with someone close compounds feelings of isolation and exclusion, increasing their risk of being exposed to violence.

There is a need to introduce alternative and safe livelihood strategies for both girls and boys, in particular to support the continuation of their education – particularly girls' primary and post-primary education. Increasing earning potential for girls can also serve to delay child and early marriage.

### 9.3 Strengthen programmatic and policy efforts to end child marriage in Pakistan

Plan International Pakistan should continue its programming under Because I Am A Girl (BIAAG 2.0) movement. It should address the causes and consequences of child marriage through policy advocacy to raise the age of girls for marriage from 16 to 18 + and adopting a multi-pronged strategy including poverty alleviation, education, child rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, early pregnancies, sexual and gender-based violence, and generating awareness on harmful social and cultural norms which affect girls and women and their rights.

### 9.4 Work with families to address violence against women and girls

Focus should be placed on working with parents to recognise the importance of supporting their daughters and to improve the low value that is currently attributed to girls within families.

Particular attention should be paid in relation to addressing the attitudes and behaviours of brothers, husbands and fathers that normalise the use of violence over girls and women to punish them in the household sphere.

Adolescent boys should be taught to take responsibility for their sexuality and to recognise their role in early pregnancy and violence against girls, as well as their ability to take an active role in generating positive changes.

### **9.5 Strengthen community support for girls' rights**

Increased awareness-raising campaigns are needed with communities, families and influential figures on the negative impact that child and early marriage and early pregnancy has on girls' social, emotional, physical and psychological wellbeing. This could serve to improve the level of support that girls receive from their communities and families.

Focus should be placed on working with men and boys to challenge the ingrained social norms that value boys over girls, challenging attitudes that normalise violence against women and girls.

### **9.6 Strengthen alliances with research and academic institutions**







Plan must collaborate with and support technically and financially research and academic institutions at national and provincial levels to conduct studies that generate more and better evidence to understand the gravity of the situation in which excluded and marginalised groups are living.



## ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL

We strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 75 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 70 countries.

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