BALIKI fact sheet: Highlight on girls' social lives

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In addition to schooling, work opportunities and family-building patterns, social networks, mobility, and civic participation are important dimensions of the lives of young people.

- Previous studies have suggested many ways in which the seclusion of Bangladeshi women by the practice of purdah exerts a strong influence on the lives of girls, starting from an early age.
- School enrollment plays a positive role by affording girls greater mobility and access to clubs and institutions, and by promoting social interactions.
- Adolescent girls in rural Bangladesh are usually socially isolated, have restricted mobility, few friends, and are vulnerable to physical, economic, and sexual abuse both inside and outside the home.
- The high prevalence of gender-based violence and the fear of experiencing GBV permeate all aspects of social life for girls.

RURAL ADOLESCENT GIRLS’ ACCESS TO FACILITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

- In general the mobility of out-of-school girls is markedly more restricted than mobility of in-school girls. Girls reported mostly visiting a friend’s house or going to a market, playground, or library. Only a few went to an adolescent center, club, or an NGO office.
**Association with and Attitudes Toward People of the Opposite Gender and of Other Religions**

- Overall very few girls supported having friends of the opposite sex or of a different religion.
- Girls in school are more likely to be open to having friends and social interactions between boys and girls and across religious groups.
- In-school girls were considerably more likely than out-of-school girls to support having friends of the opposite sex and friends of a different religion.
- In general, ideas about social interactions were most rigid about interfaith marriage—only 11 percent of in-school girls and 7 percent of out-of-school girls support interfaith marriages.

**Adolescent Girls’ Opinions Regarding Observance of Purdah**

- Attitudes toward observance of purdah were measured by asking how women and girls should observe purdah outside the home. About 90% of adolescent girls believe that women should observe purdah. Religious observance and personal security were the two most common reasons given.

**Exposure to Harassment**

- In-school girls are more likely to experience harassment because their mobility is high relative to girls who do not go to school. The classroom is also a place of harassment for school girls.

**Public Sexual Harassment May Lead to Early Marriage:**

- …to tell you the truth… there was a boy who was after me and disturbed me. My parents were afraid that the boy might do something harmful to me so they married me off.”

**Conclusion**

School enrollment creates important contrasts in the social lives of adolescent girls. Compared to in-school adolescent girls, the lives of out-of-school girls are more restricted. Most of these girls are not associated with clubs/associations and do not participate in children’s groups. In-school girls are more liberal in choosing friends from other religions and are more positive about interfaith marriage. More access to social/cultural associations and institutions likely increases the decision-making skills of adolescent girls regarding early marriage and other development issues.