
Poverty, Gender, and Youth

Social and Behavioral Science Research (SBSR)

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BALIKA fact sheet: Highlight on livelihoods

Population Council

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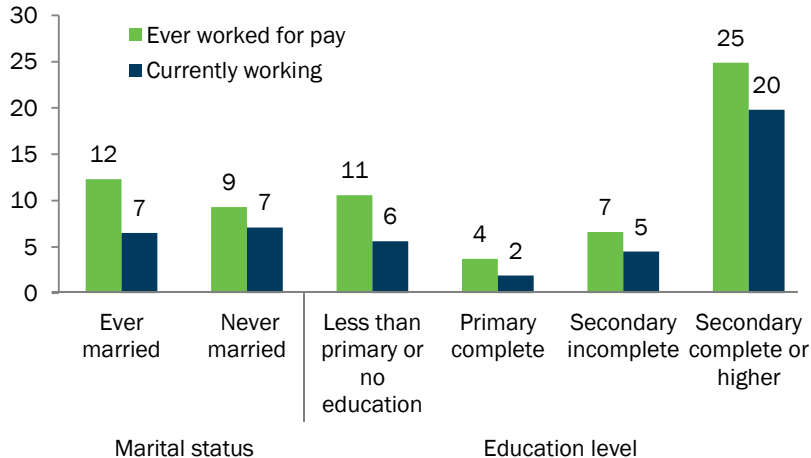
Bangaldeshi Association for Life Skills,
Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents

HIGHLIGHT ON LIVELIHOODS

Although there are few income-earning opportunities in the BALIKA study areas for adolescent girls, livelihoods opportunities vary considerably by economic status and education.

- The ability to acquire livelihood-relevant skills, networks, and work experience during adolescence can be an important predictor of productive capacity later in life. However, across our study districts, the proportion of adolescent girls working is low. Compared to ever-working girls living in Narail, ever-working girls in Satkhira are twice likely to engage in farming, work in a cottage industry, and/or raise poultry. Adolescent girls in Khulna were more likely to be engaged as day laborers than were girls from other districts.

WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION, BY MARITAL AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS



- Although, overall, adolescent girls have fewer opportunities to earn, married girls have more opportunities than never-married girls in the districts we studied. Most girls work as tutors or are engaged in the agricultural and poultry sector.
- Better-educated adolescent girls are more likely to be engaged in paid work in the month preceding the interview. One-fourth of adolescents who completed secondary or higher level education reported that they worked previously.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Girls in the survey area appear to have few livelihood opportunities. Only about 10 percent of all adolescent girls reported ever having worked for pay, while 7 percent were currently working.
- Married adolescent girls work 20 hours a week compared to 15 hours for never-married girls. Hourly income rate is Tk 30 (\$US 0.38) for married girls where never married girls earn Tk 20 (\$US 0.25) an hour.
- One out of ten married adolescent working girls reported saving for the future; this proportion was less than 8 percent among the girls from other working and marital statuses.
- Girls with low education tend to work longer hours and are predominantly in domestic work, the garment industry, or in agriculture. Educated girls work mostly in the education sector as teachers or private tutors and they work half as many hours as the less educated girls. These statistics suggest that education is a sector that offers income-earning opportunities.

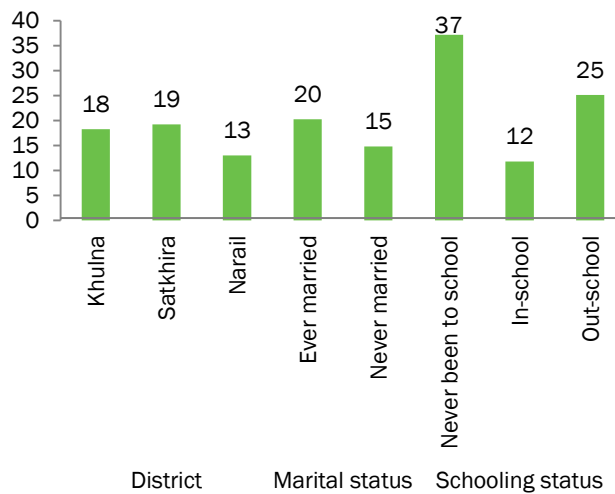
EVER WORKED TO EARN MONEY

10% OF ALL ADOLESCENTS

“If a girl wants to go outside for work, it is not what Islam approves; a woman working outside [like a man] is wrong from an Islamic perspective. If a woman works in the field and it is just a 40-day job, that is different, she is not taking a man’s job. A woman doing a man’s job is wrong; this is regarded as very bad here.”

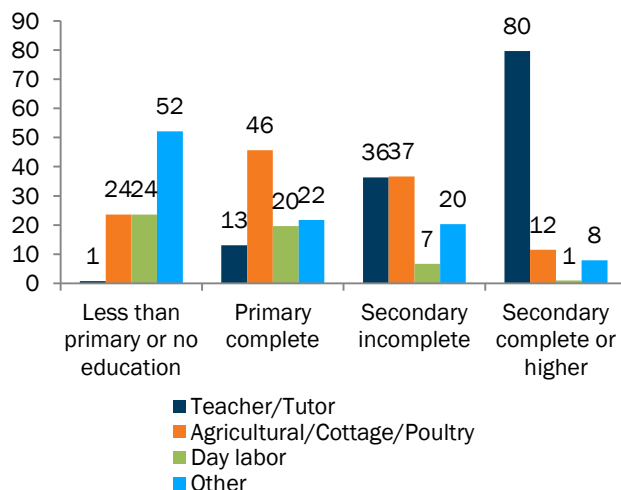
—BOYS FOCUS GROUP

AVERAGE HOURS WORKED IN A WEEK



- Girls who are not in school work longer hours and those who have never been to school work the longest (37 hours per week on average), compared to 12 hours for in-school girls. There is some regional difference with girls in Narail having lower levels of workforce participation compared to girls in Khulna and Satkhira.

EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN OCCUPATION

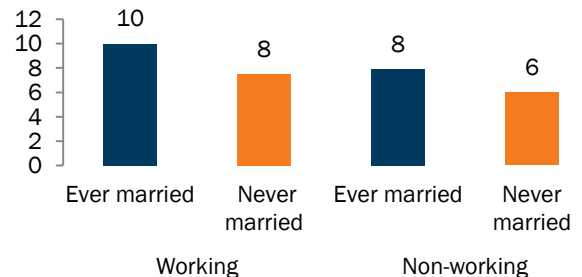


- Occupational distributions of those reporting exposure to work differed widely among adolescent girls at different educational levels. The study showed that less-educated girls are more likely to report their involvement in hard labor such as farming, cottage industry, poultry, day labor, the garment industry etc.

CURRENTLY WORKING AS TUTORS

80%
of adolescents girls with higher education level

SAVINGS PATTERN (IN PERCENTAGE)



- Married adolescent working girls reported saving for the future more than girls from other working and marital statuses.

EARNING/LIVELIHOODS GIVE GIRLS POWER TO CHOOSE AND NEGOTIATE:

“...after I went to Dhaka I started to have independence because I was earning. Parents also thought: ‘now that girl is working and she can handle herself.’ I have done what I have to do, but even then if my parents have sensed anything bad, then they warned me.”

—26-YEAR-OLD UNMARRIED GIRL

CONCLUSION

The survey revealed child labor was not high and the number of hours worked was also low in the southern part of Bangladesh, compared to international standards. Considering weekly engagement in income-related activity, married adolescents were engaged and earned more than unmarried girls. Education level is found to be associated with adolescents’ engagement in the workforce. Girls with higher education were less engaged in work, but their hourly rate was higher as they were more likely engaged in tutoring. Opportunities should be offered to girls to continue their education and to engage in income-generating activities which can be a strategy to delay early marriage in Bangladesh.