
Poverty, Gender, and Youth

Social and Behavioral Science Research (SBSR)

2014

BALIKA fact sheet: Highlight on schooling

Population Council

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Recommended Citation

"BALIKA fact sheet: Highlight on schooling." New York: Population Council, 2014.

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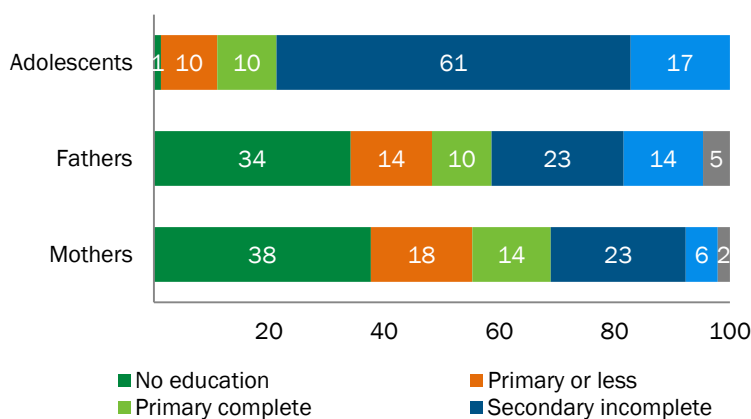
Bangaldeshi Association for Life Skills,
Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents

HIGHLIGHT ON SCHOOLING

School attendance is universal in the BALIKA study area but the persistence of early and child marriage leads to high dropout rates among girls.

- Compulsory primary education is free for children in Bangladesh, and a series of related policies to improve access to schooling is generally credited with universal schooling at young ages. Only 1 percent of 12-15 year olds have never attended school compared to 9 percent among 15-18 year olds in the study area.
- The recent expansion of educational opportunity presents a new set of challenges. Bangladesh is unusual by global comparison in the high proportion of girls who are married in early adolescence, leading to school discontinuation and early childbearing. Fifty-two percent of adolescent girls in the study areas who were no longer in school left school to be married.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND PARENTS



- More than one-third of adolescent girls reported that their parents have no education, while only 1 percent of adolescent girls have never enrolled in school. Girls whose parents are more educated are twice as likely to be enrolled in higher education compared with girls whose parents have no education. However only 6 percent of mothers and 14 percent of fathers had more than a secondary education.

HIGHLIGHTS

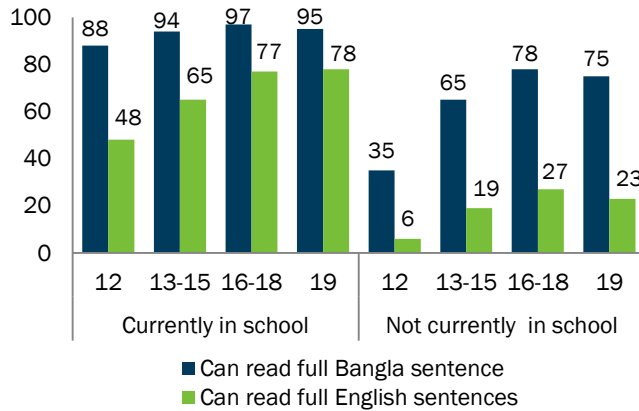
- Adolescent girls who are currently in school are usually in grades appropriate for age.
- Among girls who are no longer in school more than half say they discontinued their education before completing secondary (equivalent to 10 years) education.
- Four out of every five students receive private tutoring after school hours.
- Despite high levels of attendance, tests of competence in English and mathematics conducted among respondents suggest that school enrollment and attendance have not translated to good learning outcomes. Learning retention is poor in general and particularly in English grammar, unit conversion, fraction manipulation and in profit/loss calculation.

PARENT'S EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH GIRLS' EARLY MARRIAGE

“...girls of educated parents tend to be married off late. Girls are also married later if they are good students.”

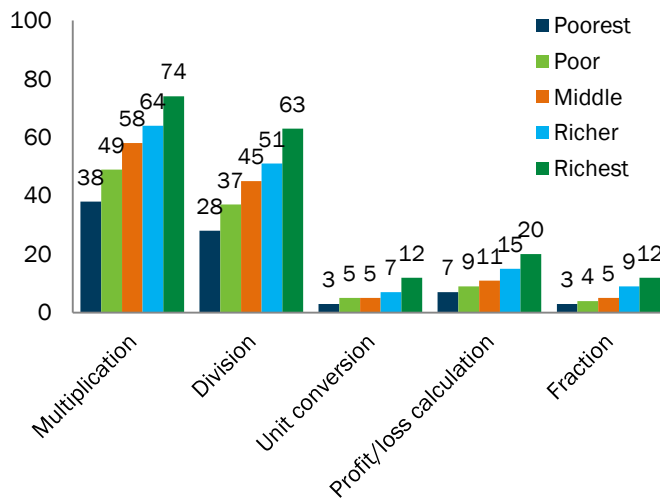
—BOY FROM A GROUP DISCUSSION

LANGUAGE COMPETENCY OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS



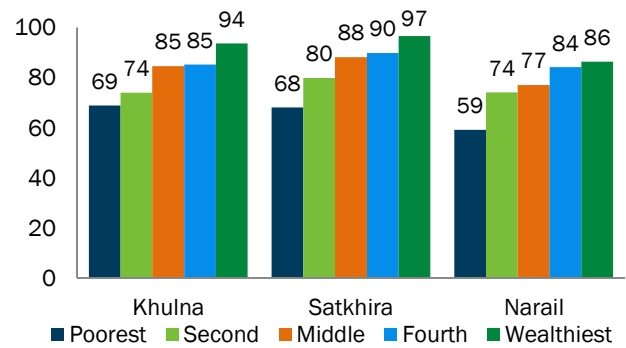
- Students currently attending school generally perform better than those who are not currently in school. Language competency improves with age among the girls whether they are currently enrolled in school or not.

MATH COMPETENCY OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS



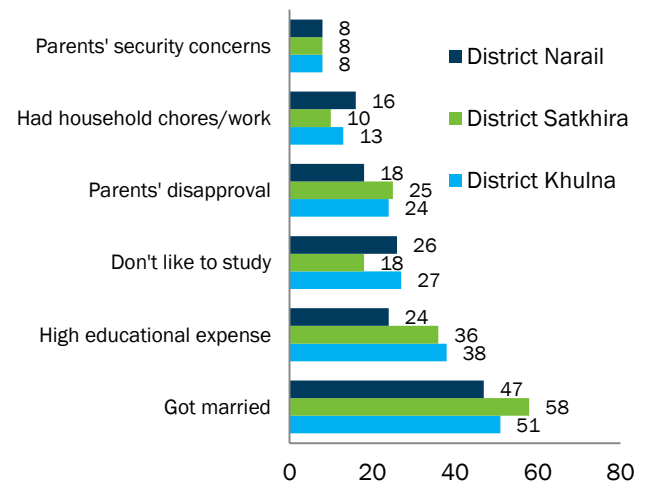
- In general, in-school girls have a higher level of math competency than out-of-school girls with one important exception: Girls who are not in school are more likely than those who attend school to correctly answer a question on unit conversion.
- Adolescent girls who are from highest wealth quintile are more competent in mathematics than those who are from lowest quintile. The percentage of competent adolescent girls increases from the lowest wealth quintile to the highest wealth quintile.

PRIVATE TUTORING



- A large percentage of girls in the study area (**81% on average**) received paid private tutoring after school. In these three districts, girls who are tutored are more likely to be from the higher wealth quintiles than poorest wealth quintiles.

REASONS FOR SCHOOL DISCONTINUATION



- Adolescent girls drop out of school for many reasons. Among the surveyed adolescent girls in rural Bangladesh, more than half mentioned that they left school to be married at a very early age.

“.....I stopped going to school after I became pregnant. Village people are generally not used to seeing a girl continue her schooling while pregnant. I think I could continue my education if I lived in a town.”

—16-YEAR-OLD GIRL, MARRIED AT AGE 6, WHO BECAME PREGNANT AT AGE 13

CONCLUSION

The educational situation for adolescent girls is improving in rural Bangladesh. Incentives and financial supports are creating opportunities for girls to attend school and to continue their schooling even though early marriage remains one of the main reasons for discontinuation of schooling.