A perspective on gender equality in Bangladesh

From young girl to adolescent: What is lost in Transition?

Analysis based on selected results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009

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UNICEF Bangladesh

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Contents

Executive Summary

This report aims to bring a perspective on the situation of young girl children in Bangladesh and how it changes as they transition into adolescence. The report focuses on the analysis of results of three main social development indicators in the 2009 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) that center on children and population numbers: Under five mortality rate, sex ratios and net attendance ratio in primary and secondary schools. Overall, these indicators show a positive trend and steady progress in the situation of the young female child in Bangladesh.

Three important findings are made from this closer analysis of the 2009 MICS data from a gender perspective:

1. *Up to their fifth birthday, young girls **do not appear** to experience discrimination within their own households.* This finding is a recent phenomenon as until the year 2000 there was clear evidence of discrimination and neglect of young girls 0-5 years old in Bangladesh. Discrimination and neglect lead to higher girl-child mortality due to unequal provision of health care and less attention and feeding practices for girls. In Bangladesh the female under-five mortality rate (U5MR) is 20 per cent lower than that of boys. From this point of view, one interpretation of the data is that, at this early stage in life, there no sign of a non-natural gender bias in under-five mortality.

2. *Secondly, the overall sex ratio data does **not conclusively** support the presence of "female foeticide".* While normally more boys are born than girls in nature to compensate for the higher mortality of males, the expected 'natural order' ratio is 105 boys for every 100 females born. In Bangladesh, the sex ratio for the under one population is 107.5 males for every 100 females. This is cause for concern. The sex ratio for under-fives is also high, at 106. Also alarming is data showing that 13 out of the 64 districts in Bangladesh have "biologically impossible ratios"[1] for both the sex ratios of under-ones and under-fives. These skewed sex ratios might indicate some level of human intervention. However, further research and sufficiently powered studies at the lower levels are required to substantiate the existence of female foeticide.

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[1] As a 'rule of nature', the number of baby boys born for every hundred baby girls is constant and falls along the order of 103,104, or 105. This is what is considered biologically possible.However in several countries, the reported sex ratio at birth is sometimes as high as 120 or 130 boys for every 100 girls. These are "biologically impossible sex ratios".

The combined effect of these two findings (no higher girl-child mortality and no conclusive evidence of female foeticide), would point to absence of "gendercide".

3. *The third indicator presents positive trends for young and adolescent girls. In education, the gender parity is strongly tilted in favor of girls.* Girls are participating more, and better, in primary education; for instance, more of them are reaching grade 5.

Thus, the first analysis points to the absence of systematic discrimination <u>against the young female child</u> in Bangladesh as viewed from the lens of the positive trend in under-five mortality rate. This is an encouraging sign. However, a closer analysis of the sex ratios reveals a disturbing picture given that the Bangladesh sex ratio is worryingly higher than the normal human sex ratio. Anecdotic evidence strongly suggests a cultural preference for boys over girls in a male-dominated society which might exacerbate this imbalance.

The analysis thus goes beyond population rates. As young girls grow up, reach puberty (which in Bangladesh can be as early as 10 years old) and become adolescents, the biological advantage with which they were born succumbs to the weight of cultural and societal norms which shape gender differences that limit the full enjoyment of their rights.

By the same token, the positive gender parity index in education refers to the situation of young girls. In adolescence, the generally-defined transition period between puberty and legal adulthood (ages 10-19), female school dropout rates soar. These rates are strongly related to the prevalence of social conduct norms such as not allowing girls leave their home unaccompanied, being subject to sexual harassment (eve-teasing) and physical and psychological violence (e.g. stalking). School drop-out rates are also strongly related to child marriage, a pervasive practice in Bangladesh despite existing legislation banning it.

The analysis thus brings out the need for continued attention to the consequences of gender inequalities and the required responses at the political, social, normative-cultural and economic levels, for instance:

● While the positive gender parity index in primary education is evidence of successful efforts in this area, starting from age ten, the opportunity cost of sending girls (and boys) to school increases with their age.

- It is not only poverty that plays a hand in gender inequalities but also the intricate connections of cultural and social influences and practices. Gender inequalities not only affect young girls and women, but also boys and men. An imbalanced society impoverishes the lives and deprives opportunities to girls and women, boys and men as these prevailing values permeate all society.

- Violence against adolescent girls (and women and children) is epitomized by the barbaric practice of acid-throwing, but also physical punishment, stalking and sexual harassment (eve-teasing) which drive many to (highly unreported) suicide.

- Greater efforts in education, change in social norms and conditions, a conducive political and legal environment, and girls and women's empowerment will help break this vicious cycle.

The study concludes with a series of recommendations to address these broader issues of concern derived from the analysis of three social development indicators. These recommendations include concerted efforts to raise awareness and educate on gender equality at all levels of society from grassroots initiatives to governmental policies and action. It is also imperative to invest in research gain more in-depth insights to better understand the different forms of gender discrimination that lead to inequalities throughout females' life cycle for evidence based policy and more effective action. There is need to assess the effectiveness of current education stipends and put in place more targeted schemes that take into consideration the household, socioeconomic and geographical factors. A key aspect is empowerment of adolescents through education on rights, reproductive health and elimination of violence against females. Fundamental changes will not happen if the social status of girls and women in Bangladeshi society is not radically improved. Hence, more specific strategies are needed to eliminate child marriage by ensuring full enforcement of the laws relating to early marriage and dowry, and devising social support schemes to help prevent child marriage, dowry and other forms of abuse and exploitation of young and adolescent girls. All these necessary actions require the collaboration and partnership of government with civil society organizations, the private sector, the media, development partners and all other key stakeholders to promote gender equality goals. Key roles and responsibilities must be clearly laid out.

Scope of the Report

This report is based on additional analysis of the 2009 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) / Progotir Pathey results. The 2009 MICS was conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and was designed to provide estimates on a few indicators on the situation of children and women for urban and rural areas at the national, district and upazila levels. The MICS was a large survey of 300,000 households. In the interviewed households, over 333,000 women aged 15-49 years old were interviewed. In order to place the MICS 2009 data into perspective, comparisons were made with MICS 2006 and DHS 2007 data.

The analysis starts by examining theoretical frameworks regarding female foeticide, gendercide and "missing women" drawing from various sources. This report uses Amartya Sen's concept of "missing women" and used the method he developed to calculate the estimated number of "missing women" in Bangladesh. This original concept of "missing women" is broadened in this report to discuss the concept of unaccounted for or statistically invisible girls.

The analysis seeks to substantiate, through the under-five mortality ratio and sex ratios, the absence of female discrimination in mortality and this is confirmed by the absence of discrimination in care of illness, nutrition and other health indicators like vaccination. The analysis of the net attendance ratios seeks to establish whether this apparent non-discrimination of the young girl (0-9 years old), carries through into adolescence. Bangladesh does not follow the Indian and Chinese patterns regarding the sex ratios. However, there is increasing evidence that this situation might change.

While the MICS survey results used to develop this report on the Gender perspective in Bangladesh are based on a very large national sample survey, caution is exercised when analyzing sex ratios. At the district level, but especially at the upazila level, statistical variance is expected resulting from relatively smaller sample sizes at these lower levels compared to national and divisional estimates.

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I. Key concepts and theoretical framework relating to sex ratios and gendercide

Female Foeticide (sex selective abortion)

The general focus of attention regarding abnormal sex ratios is *female foeticide*. In India for instance, despite the ban on gender determination via ultra-sound, the practice continues and is even exacerbated as declining birth rates only reinforce the pressure exerted by the cultural preference for boys.

In March 2010, *The Economist* reported that China had three regions with a sex ratio at birth above 130. It also finds that in India, where no data exists on sex ratios at birth, the rate for children up to six years rose from the biological norm of 104 in 1981 to 105.8 males per 100 females in 1991 to a *biologically impossible ratio* of 108 in 2001 with several districts presenting a sex ratio of over 125. The results from

the 2011 census in India showed 914 girls aged six and under for every 1,000 boys. This trend is still persistently imbalanced since without intervention more boys would be born than girls. If compared to a normal sex ratio, then 600,000 girls in India go missing each year (The Economist, 2011). A recent analysis on China indicates that the sex ratio imbalance in that country has reached such an alarming level that, by 2020, men of marriageable age are estimated to outnumber women by 24 million (Lee, 2011).

Survival disparity

The second aspect, female disadvantage in mortality of children, is given less attention in world literature but has the same consequences. In some parts, once born, the girl child has traditionally been neglected relative to the boy as she is considered both socially inferior and a liability as a bride's dowry can cripple a poor family financially[2]. This results in higher girl child mortality.

Analysis of sex disparities in health and education showed that these are higher in South Asia than anywhere else in the world. Researchers estimate that child mortality would drop by 20 per cent if girls had the same mortality rate as boys between the ages of one month and five years. The reasons for this inequity in sex are socio-economic and behavioral. Girls are often brought to health facilities in more advanced states of illness than boys, and taken to less qualified doctors when ill. Less money is spent on medicines for girls compared with boys. Girls are less likely to receive treatment than boys (Victora, 2003). For instance in Uttar Pradesh, India, parents discriminate against baby girls, as they receive less food, less attention when ill and consequently deaths in this group are higher than normally would be the case.

Infanticide

The practice of *neglect/discrimination* that results in higher girl mortality is not to be confused with *infanticide*. *Infanticide* is the practice of intentionally killing an infant. This issue is not addressed in this report.

Still births and perinatal mortality

As noted in other surveys such as DHS, the distinction between stillbirth (occurring after seven completed months of gestation) and an early neonatal death (deaths within seven days of life) is very delicate because the causes of these two overlap (Cousens, 2011).

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[2] This liability is exacerbated with age and education.

The tendency is then to combine these two events together when presenting survey results. The 2007 results show that perinatal mortality is higher among teenage mothers than women age 20 or above and higher in rural areas than in urban areas. This issue is relevant to the analysis of this report because in many countries, and Bangladesh cannot be an exception, stillbirth and early neonatal deaths are not included in the national systems for vital registration. Given that the causes of still births and perinatal deaths are poorly understood and also the absence of statistics by sex of the foetus or baby, this issue is not given full consideration in this report but a study focusing on this very critical issue is needed as it clearly reflects socioeconomic disparities and women's reproductive rights issues. The stillbirth burden is grossly underestimated. Such under estimation is due to under-reporting, inconsistent definitions, and the fact that stillbirths do not feature in major global or national health targets and commitments (Darmstadt, 2011).

Gendercide

According to Amartya Sen, gender inequality in many parts of the world takes the form of unusually high mortality rates among women at all ages. As a consequence, there is a preponderance of men in the total population. This is the combined effect of gendercide.

Sen observes that both phenomena (sex selective abortions and female disadvantage in mortality of children) reflect anti-female bias and can occur in conjunction with each other. In India, an observed trend is also that in richer areas the focus is on *foeticide* while in poorer areas the focus is on higher girl-child mortality (neglect). These two facets of *gendercide* result in a skewed sex ratio at birth and an even more skewed under-five sex ratio. India's sex ratio shows that gendercide is a feature not just of poverty or political system. Unlike China, India is a democracy and there is no one-child policy to blame. Although parts of the country are poor, poverty alone does not explain India's preference for sons. The states with the worst sex ratios— Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat—are among the richest.

Bangladesh sex ratios cannot be explained by poverty alone either. Anecdotic evidence strongly suggests a cultural preference for boys; women see it as a failure when they deliver a girl. The Bangladesh 2009 MICS data offers evidence in this respect. Mothers recalled better issues related to their sons than to their daughters, as reflected in the "Children Ever Born" overall 'sex ratio' of 131. The question is how much longer Bangladesh can resist the South-Asia pressure for gendercide, especially given the continuing drop in birth rates that heightens the desire of couples to give birth to a boy.

"Missing Women"

Given similar health care and nutrition, women tend typically to have lower age-specific mortality rates than men do (Osmani & Sen, 2003). Throughout their respective lives the proportion of males goes on falling as we move to higher and higher age groups, due to typically greater male mortality rates. The excess of females over males in the population of Europe and North America results from this greater survival chance of females in different age groups.

Amartya Sen wrote already in 1990: "It has been widely observed that, given similar health care and nutrition, women tend typically to have lower age specific mortality rates than men. Even though everywhere in the world more male babies are born than female babies, in those places with equity, the overabundance of men is gradually reduced and then reversed. So the populations of for example Europe have about 105 or more females per 100 males in the total population. However in many regions of the world there is a gender bias in health care and social attention and mortality rates of females are unusually high compared with what may be expected from the local male mortality rates. Indeed, quite often female mortality rates actually exceed the male rates, in total contrast with what is biologically expected".

Amartya Sen introduced the concept of "missing women", devised to give some idea of the enormity of this phenomenon by focusing on the women who are simply not there. His rather rough methodology involves estimating the quantitative difference between the actual number of women in these countries and the number we could expect to see had the gender ratio in survival been similar (Sen, 1990). As a benchmark the sex ratio in sub-Saharan Africa was taken, 102 (and not the 105 from Europe) female to male ratio (Anderson & Ray, 2010).

Even the use of 102 results in a large number of "missing women". The overall (total population) sex ratio in Bangladesh according to the Sample Vital Registration System and MICS 2009 is 95 females to males (or 105 males to females). Thus, there is a relative deficit of women of 7% of the Bangladesh male population. This already yields a figure of 5 million "missing" or unaccounted for women in Bangladesh. (Male population in 2009 is 72 million according to the SVRS, 7 per cent of 72 million is 5 million).

Seeking to identify where these unaccounted for, "missing" females are, an analysis in the MICS shows a low number of girls aged 15-19 years old; another clue is the sex ratio of people aged above 65 years, which is 70 females per 100 males. This is contrary to the norm. Because women live longer than men, that segment of the

population is normally tilted heavily towards women. For instance, in a society where no bias exists against females such as the Netherlands, the above 100 year-old population has a sex ratio of 700 females per 100 males.

Measuring Gendercide

Studies have found that male infants have higher mortality from most causes of death, and the sex differential varies by cause. For example, females have more vigorous immune responses and greater resistance to infection, they also have lower mortality from infections and respiratory ailments; on the other hand, males are more likely to be born prematurely and to suffer from respiratory conditions in the perinatal period (Drevenstedt, 2008). To compensate, nature responds with a mechanism where more boys are born than girls so that there will be an equal number of males and females at puberty. In all societies that record births, between 103 and 106 boys are normally born for every 100 girls. The world average is 105 males per 100 females (or 51.2% of all births are boys).

The sex ratio of under-ones is already influenced by the infant mortality rate (IMR). In general the IMR is at least 20 per cent higher for males. Thus the normal sex ratio for under-ones is 104 while for under-fives it is 103-104 depending on the child mortality level. Usually at age 18 the sex ratio is almost even and at higher ages there are normally many more women than men.

To test the hypothesis of female foeticide, in the absence of data on sex ratios at birth in the MICS 2009, the next best option was to analyze the under one sex ratio, as the group closest to birth, and thus less influenced by other events. However, it should be noted that in this analysis, the ratio is influenced by statistical variance because of the smaller size of this population group and for that reason the use of the under-five population sex ratio is deemed best suited for this analysis.

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II. Benchmarks and Comparison

While the human sex ratio is commonly assumed to be 105, caution is required when analyzing sex ratio data as in countries like the United States the white population has a sex ratio at birth of 106 and the black population's sex ratio at birth is 104. Thus a small deviation from the 105 ratio can be considered 'natural'. In surveys, the risk of significant statistical variation increases with smaller samples, hence it is best to base the analysis on data from large enough samples or multiple year averages, when available.

However, a larger deviation from the 105 norm, if reliably measured, would be considered a "biologically impossible ratio", and this would only be the result of sex selective abortion and/or neglect towards the child. We will use the under-five ratio of 108 (males to 100 females) as the benchmark for biologically impossible sex ratios in this study as used in other studies as well. The ratio to be used for the under-one sex ratio is 109.

A perspective on gender equality in Bangladesh

# Analysis of under-five mortality rates (U5MR)

The MICS 2009 U5MR data, based on the indirect (Brass) method[3], presents reliable results at both national and divisional levels.

The generally accepted differential between male and female mortality is a twenty percent variance between the two, in favor of the girls. This is consistent with existing theories positing that boys are more likely to die shortly after birth than girls because baby girls have more vigorous immune responses and greater resistance to infection than baby boys (Drevenstedt, 2008). Per the table below, Bangladesh is performing even better than the norm in some geographic areas.

Male and female U5MR in the divisions of Bangladesh (Per 1,000 live births)			
	Male U5MR	**Female U5MR**	**Female lower by %**
Barisal	67	51	24%
Chittagong	63	49	22%
Dhaka	74	60	19%
Khulna	68	45	34%
Rajshahi	75	57	24%
Sylhet	81	66	19%
National	72	55	24%

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[3] The indirect Brass method converts the proportion of dead children ever born reported by women in age groups 15-19, 20- 24,□ 45-49 into estimates of probability of dying before attaining certain exact childhood ages. The method assumes that the age of the mother can serve as a proxy for the age of her children and thus for how long they have been exposed to the risk of dying. For more information on this method please check http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx?IndicatorId=0&SeriesId=561.

U5MR Over Time

(Per 1000 live births)

Year	1994	1997	2000	2003	2004	2005	2007
Male U5MR	93	91	81	74	70	66	65
Female U5MR	99	89	75	59	55	50	50
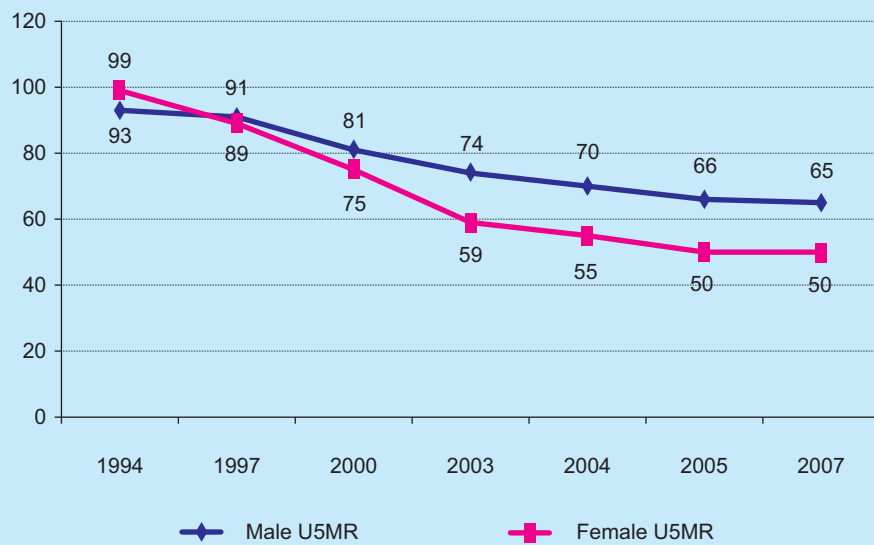
U5MR trend over time

Before the year 2000 male and female U5MR were almost the same. This would suggest possible discrimination against girls. In recent years, the U5MR has come down steeply for girls, which has resulted in a ratio that would be considered normal.

From discrimination to non-discrimination

This same trend was signaled in the 2007 DHS report where data suggested that male children experience higher neonatal mortality than female children. In contrast, rates that do not include the first month of life are similar for male and female children. The DHS 2007 confirms the findings from the DHS 2004 that there is no longer a notable difference in the post neonatal and under five mortality rates of male and female children.

DHS 2007 Male and Female Mortality Results

(Per 1000 live births)
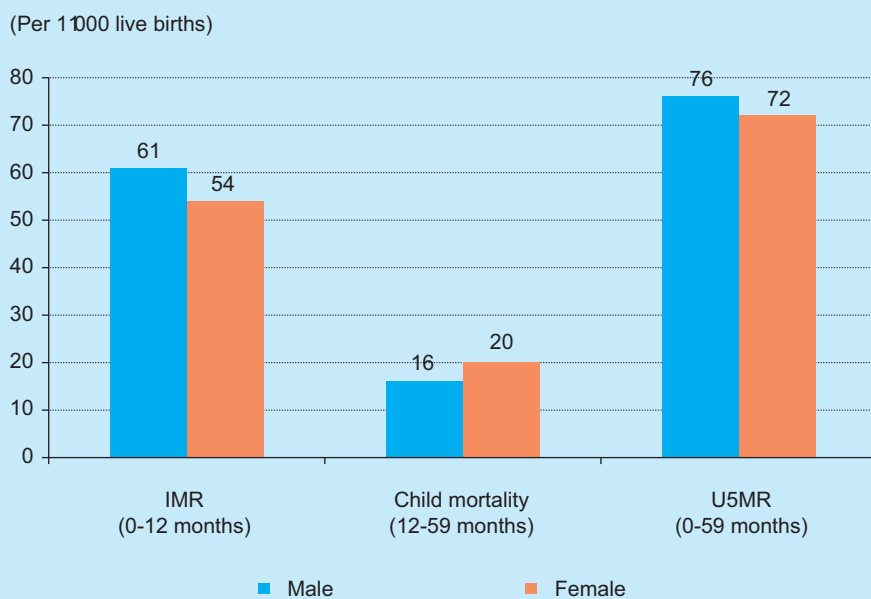
However despite the observations in the DHS 2007 report, which are largely validated by the MICS 2009 results, the fact is that female child mortality is higher.

Health data from other sources

The above presented mortality results are further substantiated by the intermediate health variables. No discrimination is observed when analyzing health data as presented in MICS 2006 and the DHS 2007.

As we see, DHS nutrition data shows no bias. The same pattern is observed in the MICS 2006:

MICS 2006, Results for boys and girls under-five

Per cent

	100.0	
Coverage with all basic vaccinations	85.0 / 83.0	
Antibiotic treatment of pneumonia	21.8 / 21.2	
ORT Use Rate	70.7 / 69.3	
Exclusively breastfed (0-5 months)	36.0 / 39.0	

■ Male   ■ Female
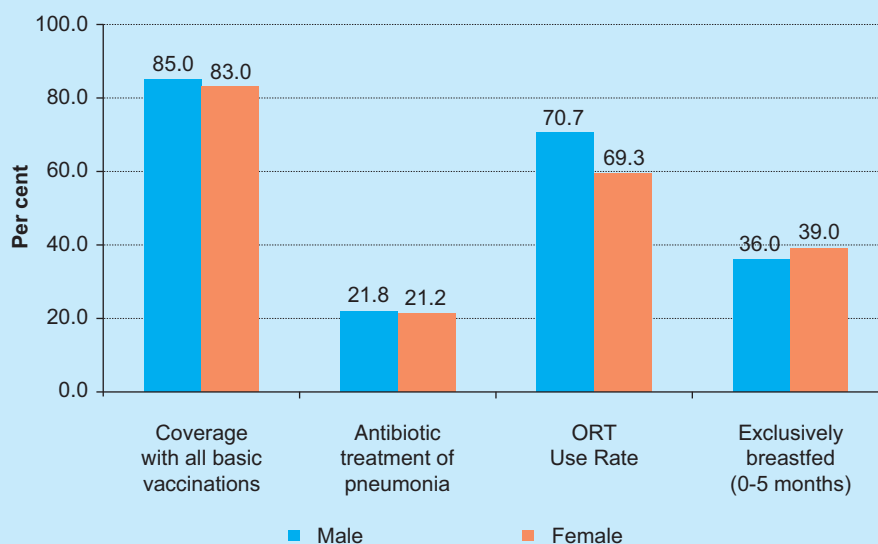
DHS 2007, Nutrition results for boys and girls under-five

Per cent

stunting	43.7 / 42.7
Wasting	18.4 / 16.5
Malnutrition	40.0 / 42.0

■ Male   ■ Female
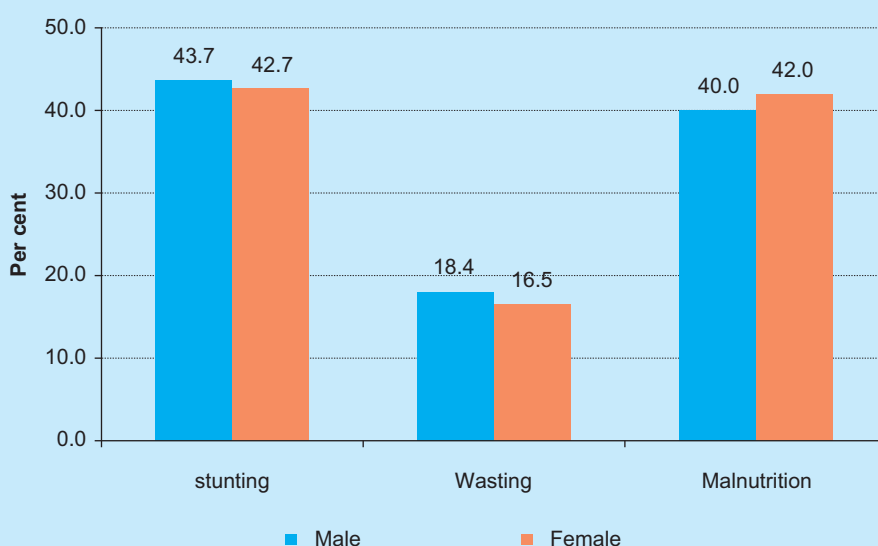
The data for the above selected health indicators leads to conclude that there is no perceivable sex bias in use of health services, although generally more attention is paid to boys' health than to girls'

health. From this perspective, there appears to be an absence of above-normal differences in mortality.

Analysis of sex ratios – a closer look

As pointed out earlier, gender discrimination has three key population outcomes:

a)   Female foeticide, as expressed in the sex ratio at birth

b)   Higher girl child mortality

      (The combined effect of these two is gendercide)

c)   "Missing women", Amartya Sen's indicator since 1990, based upon the sex ratio in the total population. This is the cumulative effect of past discrimination.

The MICS 2009 does not provide the information needed to calculate the sex ratio at birth, but it provides the under-one population (which has also suffered the normal infant mortality), and the under-five population. Given that the under-five population has no abnormal gender bias, it is reasonable to expect the sex ratio at birth to be at least one point higher than the under-five population sex ratio due to the higher male mortality.

The MICS 2009, for the first time, collected national data from the upazila level. Despite the survey's large size (520 households surveyed in each of the 481 upazilas), we cannot analyse the sex ratios at the upazila level[4]. For instance at the upazila level, the under-five sex ratio of boys per 100 girls ranges from 0.63 to 1.7, showing statistical variance in both directions. In those districts that have only four upazilas, even at district level there is significant statistical variation. To overcome these methodological challenges, the focus of this analysis is on those districts with high or extremely high (biologically impossible) sex ratios (males to 100 females) for both indicators (under one an under five).

Comparison with previous survey

The MICS 2006 results showed a sex ratio of 106 males per 100 females both for under-ones and for under-fives. At birth we expect to find 105 boys for 100 girls, and that should give 104 per 100 (not 106) because of higher mortality in boys.

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[4] For instance, with 520 households, 2500 people and a crude birth rate (CBR) of 20, we detected on average 50 births per upazila and 235 children under the age of five. This is because with 520 interviews at the upazila level, under-one sex ratios and even under-five sex ratios pose a statistical risk.

According to the MICS 2009, the sex ratio of the under-one population (males per 100 females) of Bangladesh is 107.5 (rounded it is a very high 108). The corresponding national sex ratio for the under-five population (males per 100 females) is a consistent 105.8 (rounded it is a high 106).

In a study about India based on the under-six population (comparable with the under-five population), the sex ratio (males per 100 females) rose from the biological norm of 104 in 1981 to a biologically impossible ratio of 108 in 2001 (The Economist, 2011). It should be noted that the 1991 value in India was 105.8 – the same value now found in Bangladesh. The country currently stands at the threshold of the "biologically impossible" sex ratio. As the fertility rate declines, the social pressure favoring male children might further exacerbate this trend.
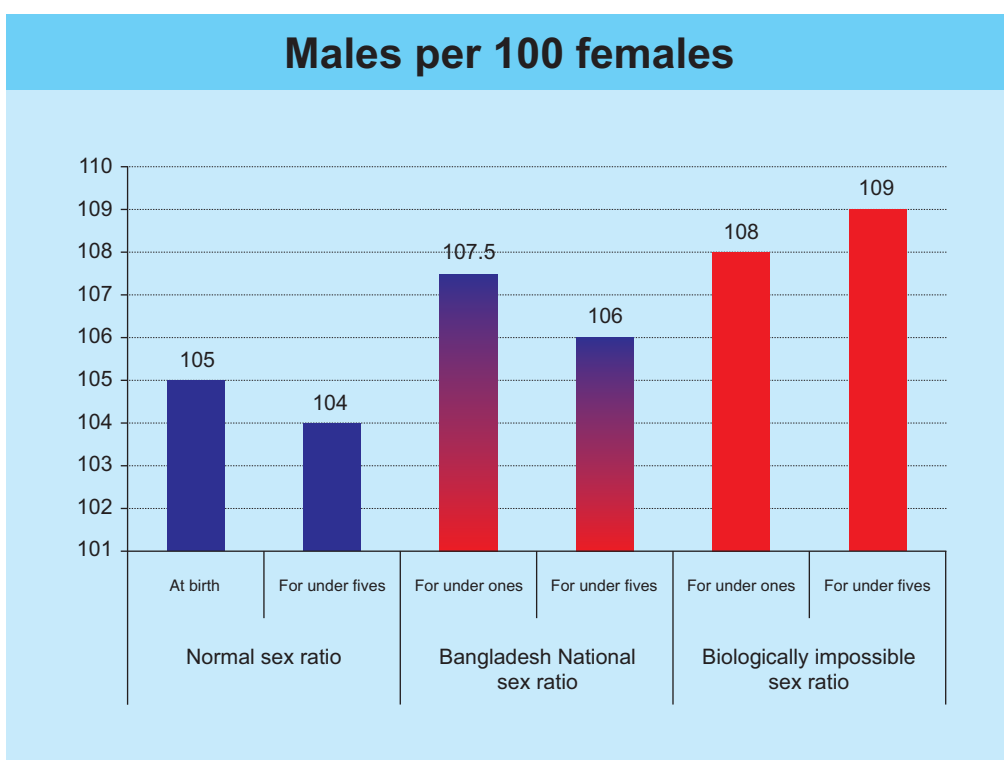
It is important to stress that due to the size of the sample, upazila level data shows wide statistical variation. As indicated earlier, the range of the under-five sex ratio at the upazila level varies from 63 to 173 (average is 106), with a normal distribution. 154 upazilas (out of 481) have a sex ratio below 100 and 164 have a sex ratio above 112. District level data will present less variation, as shown in the table below.

MICS 2009 Sex Ratios (males per 100 females) at the District Level

	Sex ratio Range	Average	Standard Deviation	Out of 64 districts
Under five sex ratio	95 to 117	105.8	5.8	10 districts, sex ratio < 100 12 districts, sex ratio > 111
Under one sex ratio	92 to 128	107.5	7.6	9 districts, sex ratio < 100 13 districts, sex ratio > 115 31 districts, sex ratio 108 or higher

Only one district, Meherpur, has an under-five sex ratio of 117, outside the 95% interval. This is also the district with an under-one sex ratio of 98. On the flip side, one of the most extreme districts for the under-one population is Chandipur (including Matlab) with an under-one sex ratio of 120, but the under-five sex ratio is just 99.

| Division	Proportion of districts with biologically impossible values for both sex ratios	Districts
Sylhet	2 out of 4 districts	Habiganj and Maulvibazar
Rajshahi	1 out of 16 districts	Sirajaganj
Khulna	1 out of 10 districts	Chuadanga
Dhaka	3 out of 17 districts	Kishorganj, Madaripur and Manikganj
Chittagong	3 out of 11 districts	Bandarban, Comilla and Rangamati
Barisal	3 out of 6 districts	Barguna, Jhalokati and Pirojpur

As it can be observed, 13 of the 64 districts have biologically impossible sex ratios for both sex ratios. Extremely high sex ratios, above what is considered "biologically impossible" are 108 for the under- fives and 109 at birth.

Chittagong Division has many districts with non-normal data for both ratios but few districts have biologically impossible data for both ratios combined. Barisal and Sylhet Divisions are clearly over represented in the above data.

The six districts with the highest under-five sex ratios are located in six different divisions so any potential case of gendercide is not geographically confined as is the case in other countries. Indeed, no less than 10 districts have a sex ratio below 100, a seemingly normal distribution.

In the under-one group all extreme high sex ratios are in the divisions of Chittagong, Rajshahi and Sylhet. On the other hand, Dhaka and Khulna account for all 10 districts with very low sex ratios.

Because of statistical variations the best solution is to look at those districts with a real strong gender bias for **both** under-one and under-five. Bandarban in Chittagong and Habiganj in Sylhet are both highly deprived areas (as identified with the composite deprivation index)[5] with low-level health statistics (Skilled Birth Attendance is around 10 per cent).

Five Districts with the Highest Sex Ratio
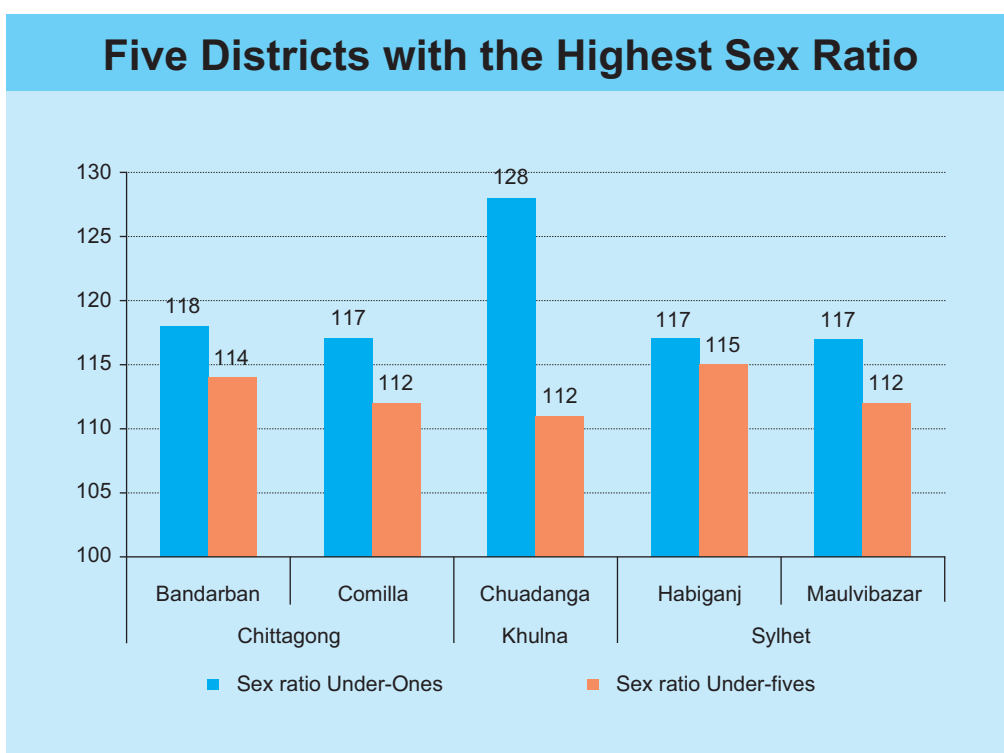
The fact that these districts with the most extreme statistical values are among the most deprived makes access to ultra sound equipment -which would potentially enable the determination of children's sex before birth- quite unlikely. One explanation for high male/female sex ratio observed could be "statistical variation".

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[5] The composite deprivation index includes four MICS indicators with a strong relation to poverty/deprivation, namely the Under Five Mortality Mortality (U5MR), Maternal Mortality, Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) in secondary education and the Proportion of the population using an improved sanitation facility. The lower the value of the index is, the worse the situation. This composite index allows for multi-sector social targeting of the most deprived upazilas.

With the data available, there is no real proof to suggest large scale *female foeticide.* We conclude that the observed statistical variation is likely related to the small sample size per district. This is confirmed by data at the division level, where there are no cases of simultaneous unacceptable sex ratios for both under-ones and under-fives.

Regardless of any statistical explanation, there is cause for concern. Even those districts with sex ratios higher than the accepted norm (105 m/f) but do not go beyond what would be a biologically impossible threshold, merit further analysis. Both national sex ratios are quite high and might indicate some gender preferences for boys especially now that birth rates are falling and ultra sounds are becoming increasingly available. This may very well be the sign of a bigger problem of female discrimination.

Given the South Asian context, especially China and India where the practice is well documented, in Bangladesh baby girls are being born and seemingly being counted (without taking into consideration unrecorded still births and early neonatal mortality due to lack of reliable estimates). With the current sex ratio young men would still be able to find a bride, unlike what is happening in neighboring countries. But the question is for how long. Thus a practice that is related to marriage (via the dowry related social pressure) may eventually lead to the ultimate consequence that in many areas the surviving boys will become men that cannot find brides.

This is more so if we approach the analysis looking at the unaccounted for, or "missing" females. As earlier pointed out, the Sample Vital Registration System and MICS 2009 show that the overall sex ratio in Bangladesh is 105 men for every 100 women (instead of 95 men for every 100 women). Thus there is a relative deficit of women corresponding to 7 per cent of the Bangladeshi male population. This represents more than 5 million unaccounted for or "missing" females who simply are not there, who are invisible to the statistics and hence with no claims. From the current data it is not possible to estimate how many of these 5 million unaccounted for: females are not alive and how many of them are alive but invisible, hidden in the population. But clearly this phenomenon is not the consequence of what happens in the first years of a female's life but it is a measurement of cumulative experiences throughout her life cycle.

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Education and Gender

The sex ratios in education, also called gender parity index or ratio of girls to boys in education, have yielded peculiar results. In Bangladesh the gender parity index in primary education is already 103 and in secondary education a very high 117.

Many countries focus on getting girls into school and Bangladesh is doing the same with seemingly good results. But the question arises: where are the boys? This is relevant because a strongly biased gender parity index, such as 117, is not a positive indicator for balanced human development.

Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) in primary education

A positive gender parity index in primary education of above one (1.03) does not mean that more girls than boys attend primary school, as that depends on the total number of boys and girls. It means that the NAR for girls as divided by the NAR for boys is above one; hence

A perspective on gender equality in Bangladesh

the ratio for girls is better than the one for boys. Just two out of 64 districts have a gender parity index for primary school below 1. At the extremes, the lowest is 0.97 in Laksmipur (Chittagong) and the highest is 1.10 in Panchagarh.

Another interesting result is obtained when calculating the NAR by the ratio of girls to boys in primary education at the upazila level. Here the result is that the more normal the gender parity the higher the NAR. For instance, the average NAR is 81%, but the NAR for a sex ratio below 0.95 is just 72%; and the NAR for sex ratios above 1.10 is also low, 75% on average. Perfect gender parity (99-101) in Bangladesh corresponds with a NAR of 85%, and a gender parity index of 103 still gives 84% NAR.

Other education indicators

Pre-school attendance has no difference between boys and girls, however girls do better in "timely attending", 68.4% versus 65.3% for boys.

There is a small but decisive advantage of girls (81%) over boys (78.7%) in reaching grade 5 of primary education. Girls participate more and have better results; this should translate into a higher gender parity index at the secondary school level as is the case.

NAR in secondary school

The gender parity index in secondary school is 1.17 on average. Bangladesh follows the Western European/Northern African growing trend where maintaining boys enrollment is actually the challenge, especially at secondary education level. The country's gender parity index of 1.17 reflects this negative bias in education tilted towards boys[6].

At the district level it ranges from 0.98 in Rangamati to 1.39 in Narsingdi. Besides Rangamati, just one other district has a value below 1, Dhaka at 0.99. The lowest value is registered in City Corporations, 0.96 (where girls work in the garment industry and in child domestic work).

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[6] It would be interesting to verify whether the secondary school stipend of Taka 100 per girl student per month plays a role in this.

The gender issue in secondary education, seen from the urban-rural perspective

The small difference for girls' attendance between urban and rural, and the larger difference observed for boys, result in a large gender parity difference of 118 in rural areas and 108 in urban areas.

NAR in Secondary Schools and Sex Ratio

	NAR-S Boys	NAR-S Girls	NAR-S total	Sex ratio
Rural	44	53	48	118
Urban	51	55	53	108
City Corporations	54	52	53	96
Slums	16	20	18	126
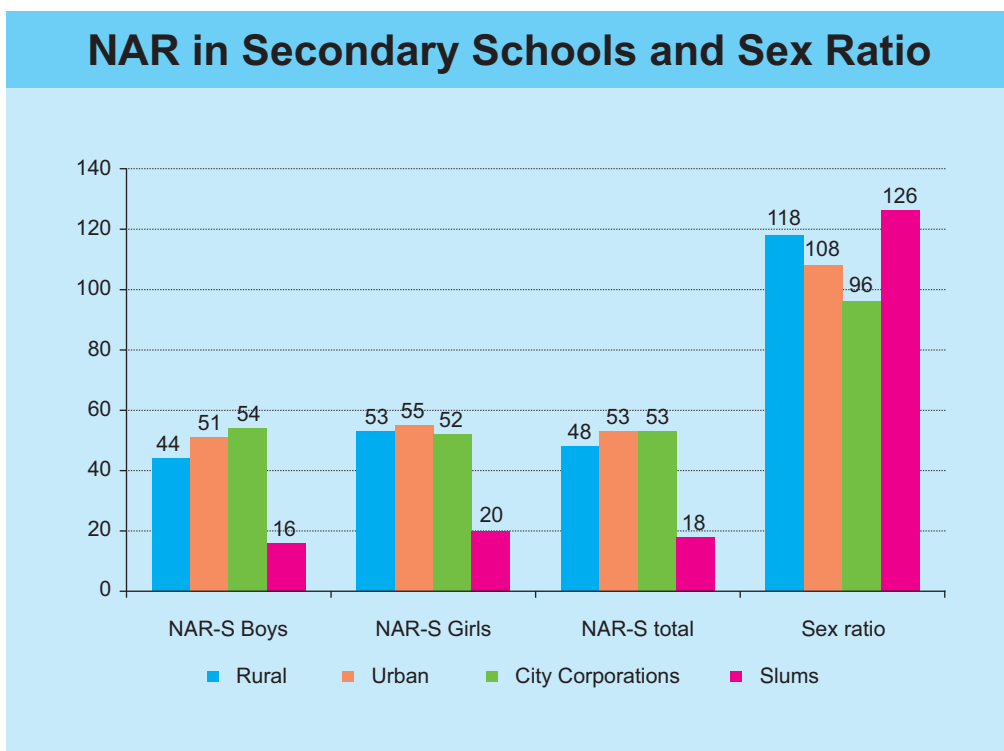
The gender parity index in the slums is the most extreme, on average 126, but in Dhaka it is 150. Thus while overall school attendance is already low (18), male attendance in the specific case of **Dhaka** slums is only 11 per cent while female attendance is 17 per cent, lower than the average for slums (18 per cent).

These marked differences raise several questions. For some reason, the gender parity in secondary education (between 0.96-1.04) is only achieved in a couple of districts and in the group "city corporations". This is likely due to Dhaka, where many more boys attend secondary education. But in all other places, especially the slums, there are many more girls attending. This was also found in the 2006 MICS, where the gender parity in city corporations was below 1. How can these differences within one city be explained?

Relationship between wealth and gender parity

A very interesting observation, hidden in the 2006 MICS data, is the relation between the wealth quintile and gender parity which shows a much larger disparity among the poor.

In fact, data by wealth quintiles substantiates the findings when comparing city corporations and slums. This finding leads to some questions:

a)   Why are boys not going to school in the slums and among the poor?

b)   Why are relatively fewer girls attending school in city corporations[7]?

Relationship between wealth and gender Parity in Secondary Education (MICS 2006)
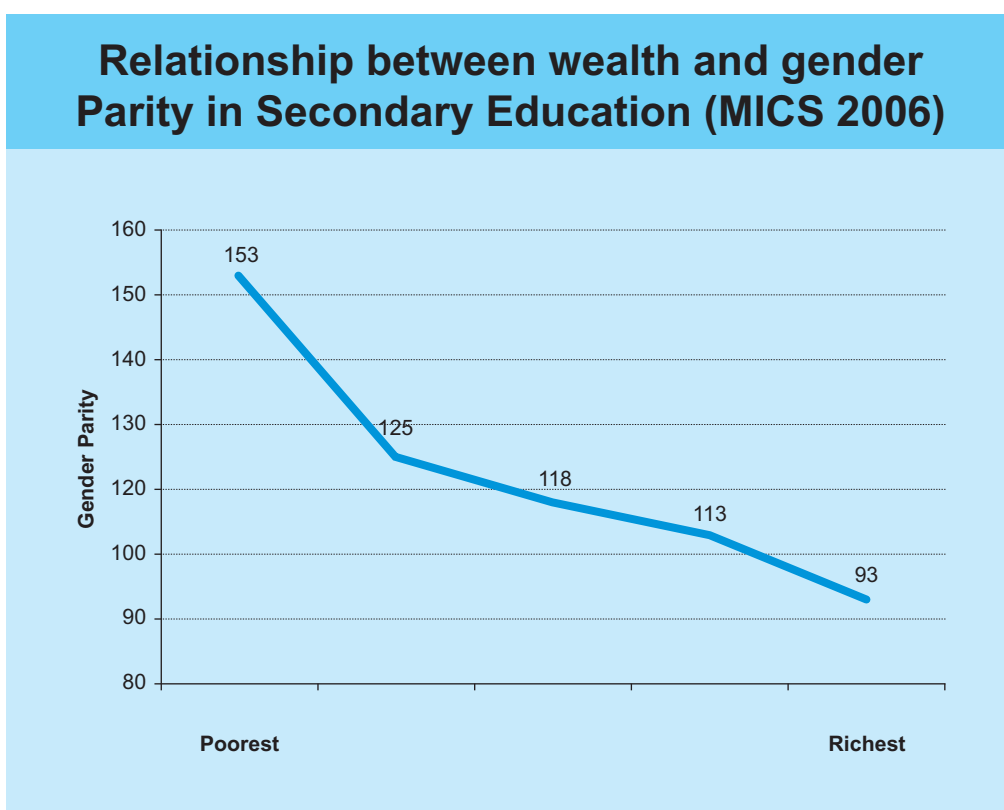
A plausible explanation for the former might be the high opportunity cost for older boys from poor families to invest time in education. Another explanation could be the small government stipend that only girls receive (100 Taka per month) for going to school. While this is a very small amount, for the poor and slum dwellers it could still be an incentive to go to school. On the other hand in city corporations,

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[7]   City Corporations are the urban areas.

A perspective on gender equality in Bangladesh

despite the stipend, the opportunity cost of going to school is higher than the stipend families receive for girls as they can provide better income for the family from employment in the garment industry or as domestic workers. More in-depth studies are required to understand the dynamic interplay of several contributing factors to be able to establish the point at which a certain level of school stipend, along with other social protection measures, will be sufficient to keep girls in school, especially those from the most disadvantaged groups.

This pattern is confirmed by data on school attendance by age in the MICS 2009. After age 15 we see a substantial drop for boys but a much steeper drop for girls. This is probably linked to early marriage of girls which is still very prevalent in Bangladesh.

Secondary School Net Attendance Rate by Age
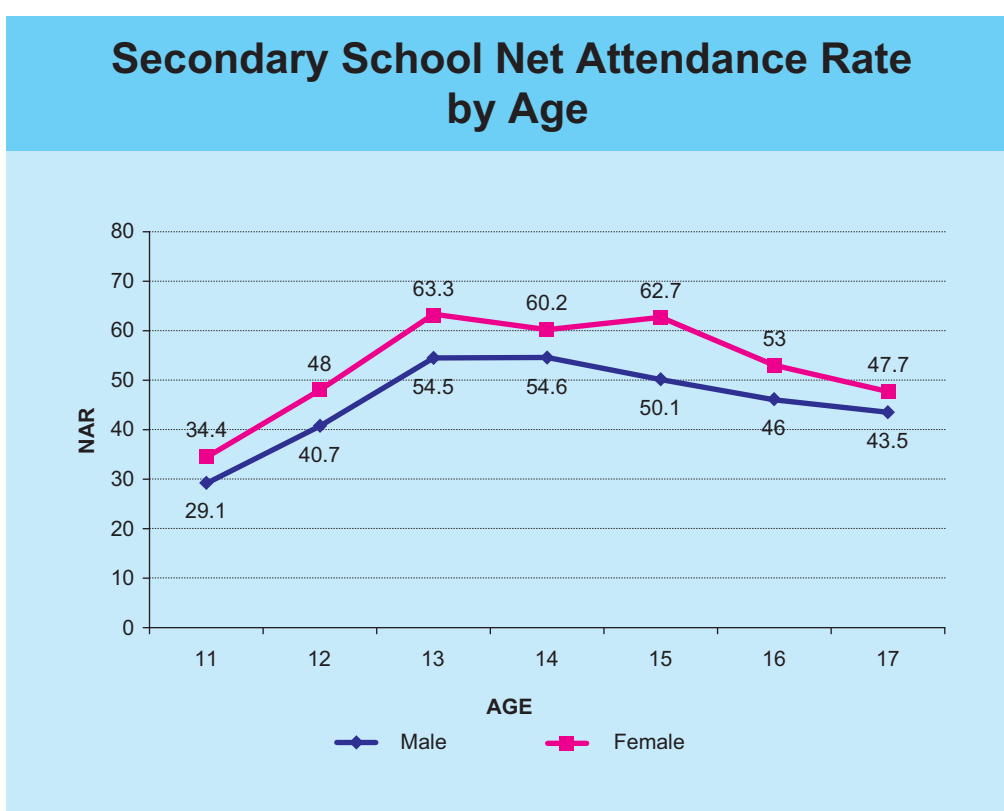
Drop-out rates by age and grade attended

The MICS data shows that in the lower grades, the drop-out rate is relatively low and quite similar for both boys and girls. This is probably linked to the lower opportunity cost of labor for very young children. As these children grow up and transition into higher school grades, drop-out rates increase. From grade 8 onwards, the drop-out rate for girls is much higher than that of boys. This too, as in the analysis of dropout rates by age, is probably linked to early marriage. Early marriage limits girls' opportunities for social interaction and self-assertion. They start their life as new brides who are expected to work in their

husband's household and can be exposed to hazards similar to those of the young female domestic worker".

Secondary school drop-out Attending in 2008 but dropped out in 2009
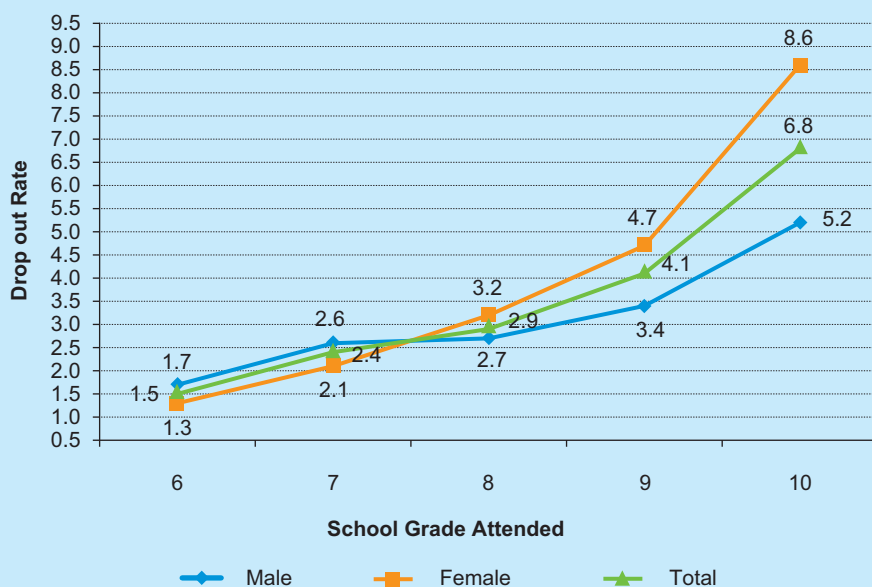
In the slums, the drop-out rate for males is 10 per cent while that of females is 16 per cent. Early marriage again is a most likely cause. According to the MICS 2006, 42 per cent of women aged 15-19 were currently married; while in the DHS 2007 it was 47 per cent, and approximately a third of women aged 20 to 24 were married by the age of 15. By age group, we see that over 74 per cent of women had been married before their 18th birthday.

Percentage of underage girls in Marriage
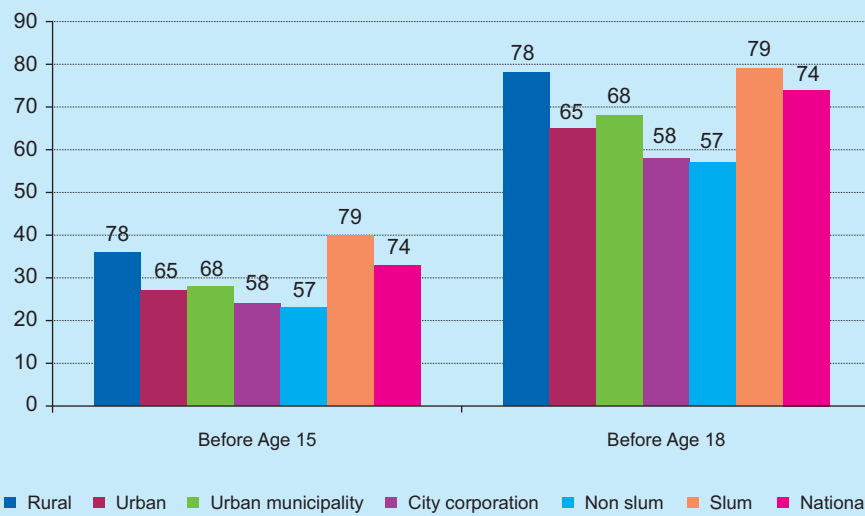
Early marriage leads to early pregnancy. One third of teenage girls aged 15 to 19 are mothers or are already pregnant. Adolescent mothers are more likely to suffer from birthing complications than adult women. The Supreme Court has issued a ruling requiring birth certificate to register marriages. However, full compliance with legislation, in addition to changes in social norms, might eventually mitigate this practice.

The above graph substantiates the notion that once girls achieve adolescence social norms step in and start reducing their opportunities to reach their full potential as citizens.

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III. Manifestations of Discrimination: The unaccounted for adolescent girls

In a previous chapter we have applied Amartya Sen's method to calculate the unaccounted for women from the total population. The result is an estimate of the number of women that according to the natural order would exist and yet are unaccounted for. Broadening the concept to search for an explanation of where these women are, especially the adolescent age group, the analysis of the selected indicators offers some, albeit tenuous, clues. The worrying sex ratios in Bangladesh cannot conclusively establish that purposive action has led to the deficit of women. Nonetheless the unaccounted for girls -- and not necessarily dead-- are simply 'not there', they are unaccounted for and invisible. Thus they are denied the opportunity to assert their full rights. The analysis then needs to bring out other societal factors that explain the invisibility of these adolescent girls, who may be alive but are hidden in the population. Cultural and

traditional factors heavily influence how women are regarded in Bangladesh. Once married, especially the young adolescent girls, become a sort of property of the husband's family, generally have no inheritance rights, and no opportunities to continue their schooling, thus perpetuating dependence and disempowerment.

The MICS 2009 reveals a low number of girls in the age group 15-19 years (7.1% of the total female population) as compared to the women in age group 20-24 years and girls in age group 10-14 years. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this could be due to the known problem related to age preferences for girls, which cannot be substantiated. It could also be related to domestic work, which in many cases, when related to payment of a debt, takes the form of exploitative domestic child labour, and in the worst cases even lead to what could be considered child 'bonded labour'. Domestic work would appear to have some basis for hypothesizing where the unaccounted adolescent girls might be. In a study on the living conditions of the urban poor in Bangladesh, the World Bank finds that a large share of girls are not paid and a significant part that are working are not counted neither as a member of their own household nor as a member of their employer's household where they live as live-in maids (The World Bank, 2007).

% of the total female population
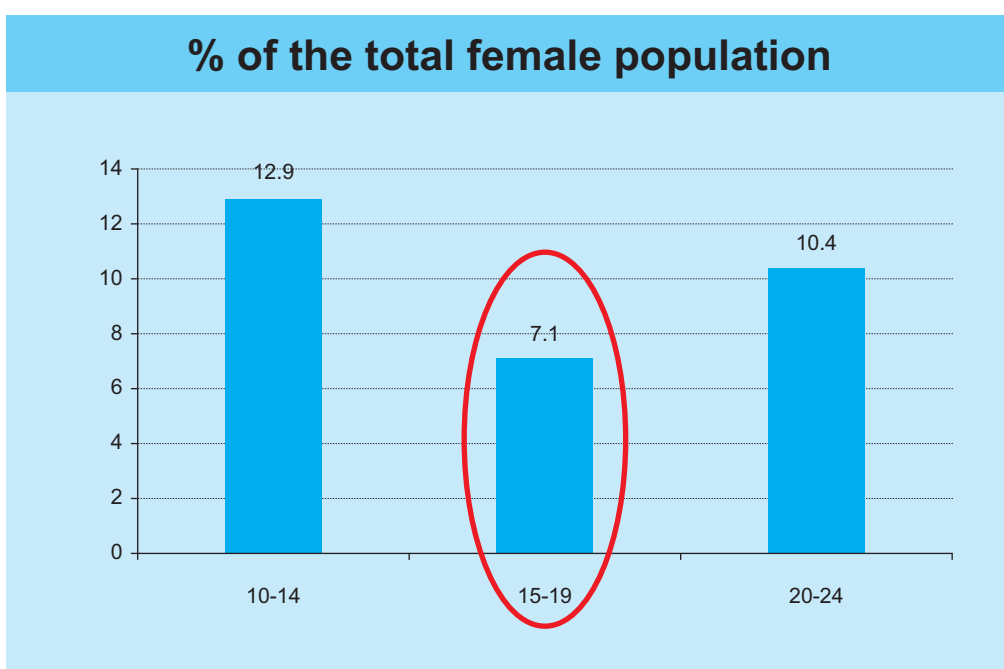
The unaccounted for 15-19 year old female population is a problem with serious repercussions. Not being counted means that these adolescents (most of whom are likely to be "alive but hidden in the population" as noted above) are being deprived of their basic rights. The implication for the 'alive but not counted', invisible girls is a direct impact on their status in society and within their family, their right to

fair employment, to ownership of property, to education and to participation in shaping their own future and that of their country. If they do not appear in the statistics, they are not taken into account in the public and social policies. It is therefore important that decisive action is taken to find these girls, and take concrete measures to ensure that they are no longer unaccounted for. One first step is to accurately measure the extent of the problem. In future surveys and studies more attention should be given to collect data, gain deeper insights, investigate and analyse this critical subject in order to provide robust evidence for appropriate action at all levels.

Discrimination, being invisible or unaccounted for, and violence against girls, adolescents and young adult women are intrinsically linked. They are the manifestation of deep-rooted social and cultural norms that consider females as second rate humans. Marrying off young girls, especially to much older men, puts them at a disadvantage, subject to unequal power relations within the household. They are children made to perform an adult role but without the possibility to assert their rights on equal, fair grounds.

■ % of 15-19 year old women whose husband is 5-9 years older

■ % of 15-19 year old women whose husband is 10+ years older

source: MICS 2006
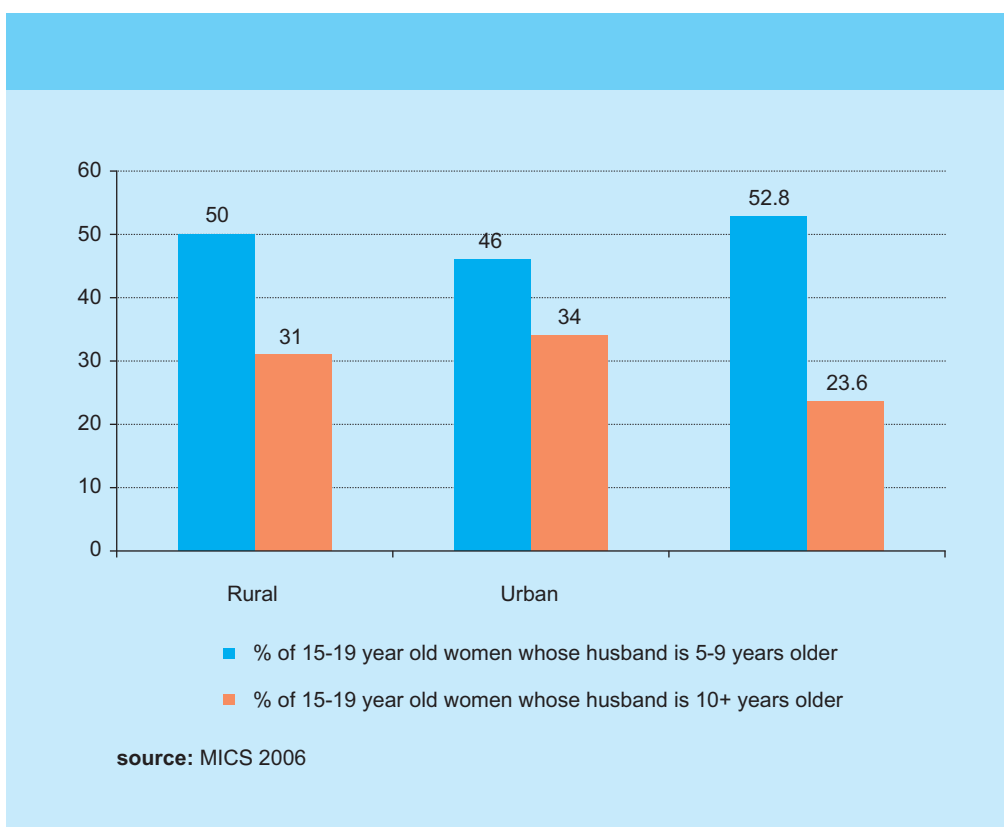
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IV. Discrimination and Violence against girls and adolescents

The different manifestations of violence against women have the same premise, the same deep rooted set of attitudes, beliefs and practices. They are defined by a male-dominated society and a patriarchal system that lead to women's disempowerment and to social injustice. Despite the increasing number of laws and court decisions, crimes perpetrated against women continue unabated and, to some rights advocates, they are on the rise. Earlier this year, a Division Bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court ordered every incident of eve-teasing to be considered 'sexual harassment'. It also ordered an amendment to the Prevention of Repression on Women and Children Act of 2000 in order to include the crime of stalking in its provisions. Other laws to protect Bangladeshi women from various forms of violence include the Acid Crime Control Act 2002 and the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980. The existence of laws is an important first step towards social justice for girls and women's rights. Without full enforcement, however, the law is meaningless. Several factors

contribute to the status quo, including a weak judiciary, corruption, influence peddling and societal tolerance. The latter is a fundamental determinant which is based on cultural and social norms that condone and perpetuate violence against women. This violence is not generally perceived as a major human rights issue that should be tackled now.

Gender-based violence ranges from eve teasing, to stalking, rape, disfiguration, torture and killing. These are the manifestation of underlying, structural determinants. A review of news reports for the period December 2010 to June 2011 reveals the appalling situation endured by countless women in Bangladesh. Violence against women means they are not safe in the street or at home. Girls, adolescents and underage married women suffer extreme forms of violence that result in physical, sexual, psychological and emotional harm. Those who manage to survive suffer stigma, exclusion and are impeded from taking control of their own lives and contribute to their communities.

The statistics on reported violence only capture some dimensions of this violence. Among the facilitating factors to violence against women are their lack of empowerment due to their low socioeconomic status and education. The most recent DHS data show that women in the poorest quintile and those with no education are most vulnerable to violence. Nonetheless, the level of violence to women of all ages and all walks of life is unacceptably high.

Physical or sexual violence experienced by ever-married women aged 15-49 years by background characteristics

Per cent

Wealth quintile					Education				
Lowest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Highest	No education	Primary incomplete	Primary complete	Secondary incomplete	Secondary complete or higher
61.8	58.9	58.5	49.3	39	61.9	59.5	52.8	43.9	36.4
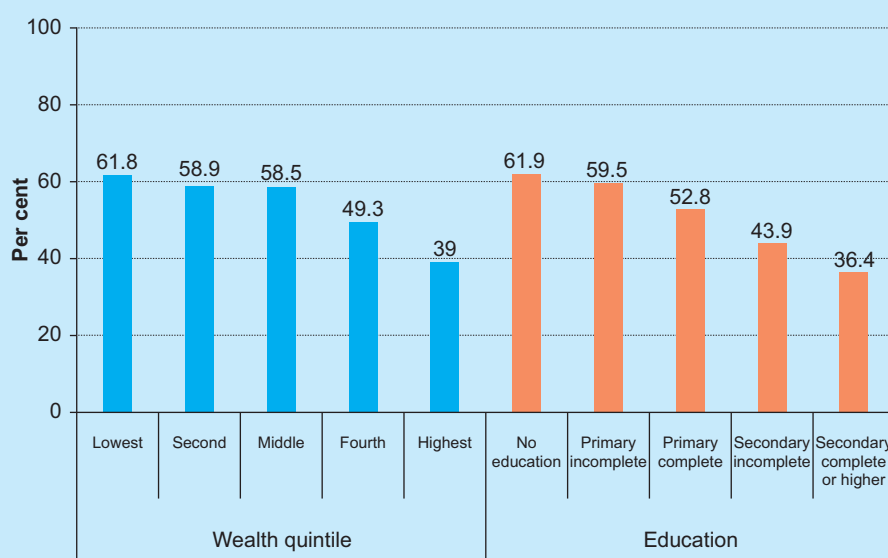
source: BDHS 2007

Frequency of physical or sexual violence of currently married women aged 15-19
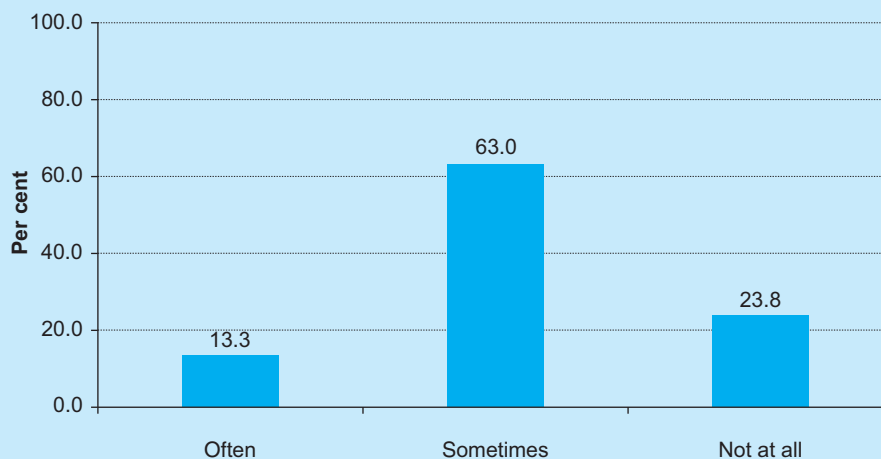
source: BDHS 2007

Eve teasing and stalking of school girls have many negative outcomes, from increased school drop-out rate to many instances of suicide as the only way out, or being murdered by their stalker. One of the justifications for thrusting girls into early marriage is arguably to protect them from predators. Yet this harmful traditional, culturally accepted practice violates children's rights. This is a form of sexual violence since young girls are forced into the marriage and into sexual relations which jeopardize their health and curtail their chances to education and opportunities for a better future. Child marriage of madrassa and school students is reportedly on the rise in many parts of the country, which is a potential setback for the substantial education gains made thus far. While there have been some instances where these illegal marriages have been stopped by the local upazila administration officials and police intervention, some mobile courts have sentenced people involved in arranging these early marriages and some villages are declaring themselves "child marriage-free village", much more needs to be done. A key step forward in changing community attitudes and social acceptance toward child marriage will start within the family but reinforced by an enabling social and cultural environment, in addition to an effective judicial system and all necessary institutions effectively protecting human rights.

The earlier mentioned news items reviewed reveal the atrocious disregard for females. Girls as young as two years old are raped and adolescents and young women are gang raped without spurring a generalized outcry for justice. Girls are victimized several times over,

as when an edict (fatwa) results in an adolescent rape victim being whipped to death. A particular group of young girls are victimized behind closed doors. Young domestic workers endure mistreatment, non-payment of wages, torture, even rape and killing by their employers. In the 2006 BBS-UNICEF survey, 80 per cent of domestic workers were girl children.

Despite a new law to control acid import and sale, acid is still available in the market. Since May 1999, there have been over 3000 reported cases of acid throwing, the vast majority against girls and women, however many cases remain unreported and perpetrators are not brought to justice. The statistics do not fully capture the devastating effects on acid attack survivors. From young schoolgirls to college students, the plight of acid victims is far beyond the physical scars, as their daily life is forever marked by stigma, harassment and destitution. Acid violence against girls, adolescents and young women in many cases are dowry related. The limited law enforcement to bring perpetrators to justice encourages dowry-related crimes. The government's Violence against Women Prevention Cell set up within MOWCA does not have judiciary authority to stem the tide of violence. Sadly, suicide is also common among girls aged between 14 and 17. The Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey reported that more than 2200 children, including about 1500 girls, committed suicide in 2004.

In 2010, Bangladesh was witness to the "Campaign against harassment and stalking". Women rights leaders voiced their stand against the alarming 4,186 incidents of violence on women which took place between January and September 2010 and the 22 women who committed suicide out of 434 who were stalked during the period demanding separate laws with punitive and correctional provisions for the perpetrators of sexual harassment and stalking.

One can only conclude based upon the high frequency of brutal attacks (substantiated by anecdotal evidence of women in health centres recovering from physical assault) that gender equality for women has still a long way to go despite the promising start girls make into life and some relevant steps taken by past and the present government in this regard. A sea change in the mind-set and practices of society, both men and women, is needed to stop violence against women. Change requires comprehensive efforts at the different levels: at the structural level that defines the political, economic and legal tenets of the existent social order; at the systems, institutional and cultural level that reflect and preserve the status quo; and at the community, family and individual level. A prerequisite for advancement in creating a general resistance to violence against women is a steadfast and sustained political will to change social attitudes by ensuring accountability among law enforcement and administration officials.

V.   Conclusion - The Future at Stake

This paper aims to bring a perspective on the situation of the young girl child and how it deteriorates as she reaches adolescence. The analysis of the 2009 MICS focused on children and on population numbers (sex ratios). In terms of health and male-female mortality rates, the analysis of the under-one and under five mortality rates show a positive trend for girls and would point to absence of systematic discrimination against girls at this early stage.

However, a closer analysis at the sex ratios reveals a disturbing picture given that the Bangladesh sex ratio is worryingly higher than the normal human sex ratio. Anecdotic evidence strongly suggests a cultural preference for boys.

In education girls do better than boys. Results from the MICS survey show a positive gender bias for girls. The positive gender parity index in primary education is evidence of successful efforts in this area. Starting from age ten, the opportunity cost of sending girls (and boys)

to school increases with their age. In terms of gender in secondary education, boys pose a challenge in Bangladesh.

Drop-out rates for adolescent girls are strongly related to the increased prevalence of cultural and social norms that disempower adolescent girls and make them vulnerable. One of these causes is child marriage, a practice which is unfortunately very prevalent in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, violence against adolescent girls (and women and children) is epitomized by the barbaric practice of acid-throwing, but also stalking and sexual harassment (eve-teasing) which drive many, in extreme but not uncommon (highly unreported) cases, to suicide.

This paper argues that, it is not only poverty that plays a hand in gender inequalities, in this case viewed from the lens of three social indicators: mortality, sex ratio and access to education. The situation cannot only be explained by the country's availability and distribution of economic resources, the pace of economic growth and stage of human development, but also by the intricate connections of cultural and social influences and practices, including the distorted interpretation of religious texts. It is also argued that gender inequalities not only affect young girls and women, but also boys and men. An imbalanced society impoverishes the lives and deprives opportunities to both men and women as these prevailing values permeate society as a whole. In addition, while anti-female bias reflects male perceptions, this is perpetuated by women's inability to question these strictures. Education, change in social norms and conditions, a conducive political and legal environment, and girls and women's empowerment will help break this vicious circle.

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VI. Recommendations for future action

The following recommendations deal with ways in which awareness and effective action can be taken to address gender inequalities.

1. Concerted efforts are required to raise awareness and educate on gender equality at all levels of society from grassroots initiatives to governmental policies and challenge social norms that are detrimental to the human rights of women.

2. Invest in research to better understand the triggers and traps of the different forms of gender discrimination that lead to inequalities throughout females' life cycle for evidence-based policy and more effective action.

3. Strengthen and enforce relevant laws, policies and institutional and home based practices to reflect the principles of gender equality to advance the social status of girls and women in the

Bangladeshi society and ensure enforcement of these laws through adequate mechanisms.

4. Ensure gender equality in education by revising education stipends, and adapt these to age and sex of children as well as their geographic location (urban rural, low performing upazilas/unions, slum areas etc.). Stipends should ultimately be better targeted and adapted to the opportunity cost of schooling which varies according to key determinants including household, socioeconomic and geographic location of the child population. This will also require expanding existing innovative approaches to reach marginalized, out of school children, including adolescent girls, with non-formal basic education and relevant vocational training.

5. Adolescent empowerment through education on rights, reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases and violence across all rural, urban and slum communities in Bangladesh to help prevent child marriage, dowry and other forms of abuse and exploitation of adolescent girls.

6. Specific strategies to eliminate child marriage by ensuring full enforcement of the laws relating to early marriage, banning of forced child marriage, dowry and other forms of abuse and exploitation of young and adolescent females. Schemes such as the female stipend program delaying marriage and motherhood and specific programs to increase females' opportunities to gain required competencies and skills and access the labour market under fair conditions should be enhanced and effectively targeted.

7. Collaboration and partnership of government with civil society organizations, the private sector, development partners, the media and all other key stakeholders establishing clear roles and responsibilities in the promotion of gender equality goals in all areas.

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ANNEX

ANNEX

The following Three tables present the MICS 2009 sex ratios (under one and under five, males per 100 females) by Division and Districts.

Table 1: 13 Districts with twice a biologically unacceptable value.

Table 2: Sex ratios (Males per 100 Females) for under one and under five population, Bangladesh, MICS 2009 (ranked by Division/District)

Table 3: Sex ratios (Males per 100 Females) for under one and under five population, Bangladesh, MICS 2009 (ranked by sex ratio values, highest to lowest)

The colors used represent the following:

Yellow: value equal or higher biologically acceptable value

Orange: district with value equal or higher biologically acceptable value for both ratios

Red: district with extreme biologically unacceptable values for both ratios

The under-one sex ratio has 27 districts with biologically unacceptable values (> 108)

The under-five sex ratio has 25 districts with biologically unacceptable values (> 107)

Table 1: 13 Districts with twice a biologically unacceptable value.

			Limit 109 < 1 Sex				Limit 108 < 5 Sex
	DIVISION	DISTRICT	Ratio	rank	DIVISION	DISTRICT	Ratio
7	**Chittagong**	Bandarban	118	2	**Chittagong**	Bandarban	114
11	Chittagong	Comilla	117	2	Chittagong	Comilla	112
36	Khulna	Chuadanga	128	2	Khulna	Chuadanga	112
61	**Sylhet**	Habiganj	117	2	**Sylhet**	Habiganj	115
62	Sylhet	Maulvibazar	117	2	Sylhet	Maulvibazar	112
1	**Barisal**	Barguna	111	1	**Barisal**	Barguna	112
4	Barisal	Jhalokati	116	1	Barisal	Jhalokati	109
6	Barisal	Pirojpur	113	1	Barisal	Pirojpur	115
17	**Chittagong**	Rangamati	115	1	**Chittagong**	Rangamati	111
23	**Dhaka**	Kishorganj	109	1	**Dhaka**	Kishorganj	108
24	Dhaka	Madaripur	110	1	Dhaka	Madaripur	111
25	Dhaka	Manikganj	114	1	Dhaka	Manikganj	108
59	**Rajshahi**	Sirajganj	125	1	**Rajshahi**	Sirajganj	108

Table 2: Sex ratios (Males per 100 Females) for under one and under five population, Bangladesh, MICS 2009 (ranked by Division/District)

		Youth age distribution by sex (age <1)				Youth age distribution by sex (age <5)	
		Males per 100 Females				Males per 100 Females	
Area	Rural		107	Area	Rural		106
	Urban		110		Urban		105
	Urban municipality		110		Urban municipality		104
	City corporation		110		City corporation		106
	Slum		96		Slum		97
Division	Barisal		106	Division	Barisal		107
	Chittagong		111		Chittagong		107
	Dhaka		105		Dhaka		106
	Khulna		106		Khulna		103
	Rajshahi		108		Rajshahi		105
	Sylhet		110		Sylhet		106
			5.8				
			Limit 109				Limit 108

	DIVISION	DISTRICT	< 1 Sex Ratio		DIVISION	DISTRICT	< 5 Sex Ratio
1	**Barisal**	Barguna	111		Barisal	Barguna	112
2	Barisal	Barisal	105		Barisal	Barisal	109
3	Barisal	Bhola	104		Barisal	Bhola	104
4	Barisal	Jhalokati	116		Barisal	Jhalokati	109
5	Barisal	Patuakhali	100		Barisal	Patuakhali	99
6	Barisal	Pirojpur	113		Barisal	Pirojpur	115
7	**Chittagong**	Bandarban	118		Chittagong	Bandarban	114
8	Chittagong	Brahmanbaria	120		Chittagong	Brahmanbaria	107
9	Chittagong	Chandpur	120		Chittagong	Chandpur	99
10	Chittagong	Chittagong	105		Chittagong	Chittagong	111
11	Chittagong	Comilla	117		Chittagong	Comilla	112
12	Chittagong	Cox's Bazar	105		Chittagong	Cox's Bazar	109
13	Chittagong	Feni	110		Chittagong	Feni	99
14	Chittagong	Khagrachhari	106		Chittagong	Khagrachhari	112
15	Chittagong	Lakshmipur	105		Chittagong	Lakshmipur	95
16	Chittagong	Noakhali	116		Chittagong	Noakhali	105
17	Chittagong	Rangamati	115		Chittagong	Rangamati	111
18	**Dhaka**	Dhaka	108		Dhaka	Dhaka	105
19	Dhaka	Faridpur	96		Dhaka	Faridpur	97
20	Dhaka	Gazipur	108		Dhaka	Gazipur	98
21	Dhaka	Gopalganj	102		Dhaka	Gopalganj	101
22	Dhaka	Jamalpur	113		Dhaka	Jamalpur	107
23	Dhaka	Kishorganj	109		Dhaka	Kishorganj	108
24	Dhaka	Madaripur	110		Dhaka	Madaripur	111
25	Dhaka	Manikganj	114		Dhaka	Manikganj	108
26	Dhaka	Munshiganj	97		Dhaka	Munshiganj	105
27	Dhaka	Mymensingh	108		Dhaka	Mymensingh	105
28	Dhaka	Narayanganj	97		Dhaka	Narayanganj	115
29	Dhaka	Narsingdi	97		Dhaka	Narsingdi	111
30	Dhaka	Netrakona	102		Dhaka	Netrakona	110
31	Dhaka	Rajbari	93		Dhaka	Rajbari	103
32	Dhaka	Shariatpur	98		Dhaka	Shariatpur	104
33	Dhaka	Sherpur	107		Dhaka	Sherpur	101
34	Dhaka	Tangail	107		Dhaka	Tangail	105
35	**Khulna**	Bagerhat	102		Khulna	Bagerhat	111
36	Khulna	Chuadanga	128		Khulna	Chuadanga	112
37	Khulna	Jessore	111		Khulna	Jessore	99
38	Khulna	Jhenaidah	94		Khulna	Jhenaidah	106
39	Khulna	Khulna	102		Khulna	Khulna	98
40	Khulna	Kushtia	113		Khulna	Kushtia	99
41	Khulna	Magura	108		Khulna	Magura	107
42	Khulna	Meherpur	98		Khulna	Meherpur	117
43	Khulna	Narail	106		Khulna	Narail	100
44	Khulna	Satkhira	100		Khulna	Satkhira	103
45	**Rajshahi**	Bogra	109		Rajshahi	Bogra	106
46	Rajshahi	Dinajpur	92		Rajshah	Dinajpur	115
47	Rajshahi	Gaibandha	106		Rajshahi	Gaibandha	102
48	Rajshahi	Joypurhat	116		Rajshahi	Joypurhat	104
49	Rajshahi	Kurigram	100		Rajshahi	Kurigram	102
50	Rajshahi	Lalmonirhat	112		Rajshahi	Lalmonirhat	106
51	Rajshahi	Naogaon	106		Rajshahi	Naogaon	104
52	Rajshahi	Natore	105		Rajshahi	Natore	112
53	Rajshahi	Nawabganj	105		Rajshahi	Nawabganj	106
54	Rajshahi	Nilphamari	107		Rajshahi	Nilphamari	107
55	Rajshahi	Pabna	109		Rajshahi	Pabna	100
56	Rajshahi	Panchagarh	116		Rajshahi	Panchagarh	102
57	Rajshahi	Rajshahi	118		Rajshahi	Rajshahi	100
58	Rajshahi	Rangpur	105		Rajshahi	Rangpur	104
59	Rajshahi	Sirajganj	125		Rajshahi	Sirajganj	108
60	Rajshahi	Thakurgaon	108		Rajshahi	Thakurgaon	108
61	**Sylhet**	Habiganj	117		Sylhet	Habiganj	115
62	Sylhet	Maulubazar	117		Sylhet	Maulubazar	112
63	Sylhet	Sunamganj	111		Sylhet	Sunamganj	97
64	Sylhet	Sylhet	103		Sylhet	Sylhet	106
National			108				106

Table 3: Sex ratios (Males per 100 Females) for under one and under five population, Bangladesh, MICS 2009 (ranked by sex ratio values, highest to lowest)

Ranked	DIVISION	DISTRICT	Limit 109 < 1 Sex Ratio	Ranked	DIVISION	DISTRICT	Limit 108 < 5 Sex Ratio
1	Khulna	Chuadanga	128	1	Khulna	Meherpur	117
2	Rajshahi	Sirajganj	125	2	Barisal	Pirojpur	115
3	Chittagong	Chandpur	120	3	Sylhet	Habiganj	115
4	Chittagong	Brahmanbaria	120	4	Rajshahi	Dinajpur	115
5	Rajshahi	Rajshahi	118	5	Dhaka	Narayanganj	115
6	Chittagong	Bandarban	118	6	Chittagong	Bandarban	114
7	Chittagong	Comilla	117	7	Barisal	Barguna	112
8	Sylhet	Habiganj	117	8	Chittagong	Comilla	112
9	Sylhet	Maulmbazar	117	9	Rajshahi	Natore	112
10	Chittagong	Noakhali	116	10	Khulna	Chuadanga	112
11	Rajshahi	Joypurhat	116	11	Chittagong	Khagrachhari	112
12	Rajshahi	Panchagarh	116	12	Sylhet	Maulhibazar	112
13	Barisal	Jhalokati	116	13	Khulna	Bagerhat	111
14	Chittagong	Rangamati	115	14	Chittagong	Rangamati	111
15	Dhaka	Manikganj	114	15	Dhaka	Narsingdi	111
16	Dhaka	Jamalpur	113	16	Chittagong	Chittagong	111
17	Khulna	Kushtia	113	17	Dhaka	Madaripur	111
18	Barisal	Pirojpur	113	18	Dhaka	Netrakona	110
19	Rajshahi	Lalmonirhat	112	19	Barisal	Barisal	109
20	Khulna	Jessore	111	20	Chittagong	Cox's Bazar	109
21	Barisal	Barguna	111	21	Barisal	Jhalokati	109
22	Sylhet	Sunamganj	111	22	Dhaka	kishorganj	108
23	Dhaka	Madaripur	110	23	Rajshahi	Sirajganj	108
24	Chittagong	Feni	110	24	Dhaka	Manikganj	108
25	Rajshahi	Bogra	109	25	Rajshahi	Thakurgaon	108
26	Dhaka	Kishorganj	109	26	Khulna	Magura	107
27	Rajshahi	Pabna	109	27	Dhaka	Jamalpur	107
28	Rajshahi	Thakurgaon	108		Chittagong	Brahmanbaria	107
29	Khulna	Magura	108		Rajshahi	Nilphamari	107
30	Dhaka	Gazipur	108		Rajshahi	Nawabganj	106
31	Dhaka	Dhaka	108		Sylhet	Sylhet	106
32	Dhaka	Mymensingh	108		Khulna	Jhenaidah	106
33	Dhaka	Sherpur	107		Rajshahi	Bogra	106
34	Rajshahi	Nilphamari	107		Rajshahi	Lalmonirhat	106
35	Dhaka	Tangail	107		Dhaka	Dhaka	105
36	Rajshahi	Gaibandha	106		Dhaka	Tangail	105
37	Khulna	Narail	106		Chittagong	Noakhali	105
38	Rajshahi	Naogaon	106		Dhaka	Munshiganj	105
39	Chittagong	Khagrachhari	106		Dhaka	Mymensingh	105
40	Rajshahi	Nawabganj	105		Rajshahi	Rangpur	104
41	Barisal	Barisal	105		Barisal	Bhola	104
42	Rajshahi	Rangpur	105		Dhaka	Shariatpur	104
43	Chittagong	Cox's Bazar	105		Rajshahi	Joypurhat	104
44	Chittagong	Lakshmipur	105		Rajshahi	Naogaon	104
45	Chittagong	Chittagong	105		Khulna	Satkhira	103
46	Rajshahi	Natore	105		Dhaka	Rajbari	103
47	Barisal	Bhola	104		Rajshahi	Kurigram	102
48	Sylhet	Sylhet	103		Rajshahi	Panchagarh	102
49	Dhaka	Netrakona	102		Rajshahi	Gaibandha	102
50	Khulna	Khulna	102		Dhaka	Sherpur	101
51	Khulna	Bagerhat	102		Dhaka	Gopalganj	101
52	Dhaka	Gopalganj	102		Rajshahi	Pabna	100
53	Rajshahi	Kurigram	100		Khulna	Narail	100
54	Barisal	Patuakhali	100		Rajshahi	Rajshahi	100
55	Khulna	Satkhira	100		Chittagong	Feni	99
56	Khulna	Meherpur	98		Barisal	Patuakhali	99
57	Dhaka	Shanatpur	98		Khulna	Jessore	99
58	Dhaka	Munshiganj	97		Khulna	Kushtia	99
59	Dhaka	Narayanganj	97		Chittagong	Chandpur	99
60	Dhaka	Narsingdi	97		Khulna	Khulna	98
61	Dhaka	Faridpur	96		Dhaka	Gazipur	98
62	Khulna	Jhenaidah	94		Dhaka	Faridpur	97
63	Dhaka	Rajbari	93		Sylhet	Sunamganj	97
64	Rajshahi	Dinajpur	92		Chittagong	Lakshmipur	95
National			108				106