



GIRLS' EDUCATION AND NUTRITION IN BANGLADESH

NATIONAL NUTRITION OVERVIEW

- Despite great progress over the last **20** years, poor nutrition is still hurting Bangladesh, its children and its future
- Poor nutrition impacts on economic outcomes, on health, on education; improving nutrition can bring about positive change in the short and long term and is essential to Bangladesh's Vision **21**
- There are smart nutrition interventions, packages and policies, and the **7** research papers provide Bangladeshi contextualized analyses
- Bangladesh can own the problem and its solutions. Bangladesh can exercise control over its own budgets and policy priorities, and draw on international agendas
- Existing nutrition strategies need to spend the budget allocated, and more needs to be spent across all of government
- Substantive progress on nutrition policy can be made with strong leadership and coordination across government departments

GIRLS EDUCATION AND NUTRITION OVERVIEW

- A low level of education, especially among mothers, is strongly associated with nutritional deficiency among their children
- Adolescent-aged motherhood is a main determinant of a child's nutritional status
- The average age at which women have their first child in Bangladesh is approximately **18**

While Bangladesh has made significant progress in attaining near full enrolment at the primary school level in recent years (**90** percent), enrolment at lower secondary level is only about two-thirds, dropping to one-third at upper secondary level. The low participation in secondary schooling among girls can be attributed to early marriage, which results in a high rate of secondary school drop-out and the limited benefits from girls' education in the labor market. A great number of job opportunities for

women are available in Bangladesh's ready-made-garment sector but these jobs offer little remuneration and low returns to schooling.

The two research papers on girls' education and nutrition presented in this brief pay primary attention to different aspects of girls' education and nutrition. Ahsanuzzaman's paper entitled Girls' Secondary Schooling: Costs and Benefits of Education as a Solution to Child Malnutrition offers analysis from a nutrition perspective whereas Rabbani contribution has entitled Girls Secondary Schooling Costs and Benefits of Providing Girls with Greater Educational Opportunities – Child Nutrition and Labor Market Outcomes provides an educational perspective.

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON GIRLS EDUCATION AND NUTRITION

GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOLING: COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PROVIDING GIRLS WITH GREATER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES – CHILD NUTRITION AND LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES

- A strong correlation exists in Bangladesh between early marriage among girls and dropping out of school
- Girls who attain a secondary education increase their earning potential and improve their nutrition
- Every Taka spent would generate a return to society of **12.6** Taka

Research by Rabbani focuses on how to encourage girls to receive secondary education. The intervention is to provide stipends to encourage girls to enroll and stay in school. The research suggests that girls who stay in school, have the potential to reduce the age of starting a family and will help to educate future mothers. Better educated girls should result in an increase in the potential earnings of women and mothers. This, in turn, leads to improved nutrition and reduced stunting of children, with greater earning potential passed on to their children in the long term



OBSTACLES

There is limited information on the impact of the female stipend in the context of Bangladesh. However, given the low secondary school participation by girls, the female stipend program has the potential to reach a large segment of the population and contribute to overall human capital development. .

GIRLS' SECONDARY SCHOOLING: COSTS AND BENEFITS OF EDUCATION AS A SOLUTION TO CHILD MALNUTRITION

- Children whose mothers have completed secondary school are less likely to be stunted and underweight than those children whose mothers are illiterate
- A child's nutritional status is improved through a mother's education and subsequent knowledge on nutrition and health
- Every Taka spent would generate a return to society of **6.4** Taka

Research by Ahsanuzzaman on the costs and benefits of girls' secondary schooling as a solution to child malnutrition shows that the level of education among Bangladeshi girls impacts the nutritional status of children. A high level of education results in better knowledge and awareness of health and nutrition. As a result, the focus of the study is to determine the returns to education as well as the impact of maternal education on child nutrition status. The benefits of the paper show that promoting girls' secondary education are two fold – increased wages for the girls who receives the schooling and increased wages for the children of the girl who are no longer stunted.

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