
Adolescent Livelihood Programs in South Asia

Sajeda Amin

Population Council

Youth Microenterprise Conference,

Washington DC

September 10, 2007

Rationale

- **Adolescents have long been neglected in development programming**
- **Largest ever cohort of young people coming of age**
- **In South Asia early marriage and childbearing contribute to rapid population growth**
- **Safe and appropriate livelihoods for young women important for women's empowerment**

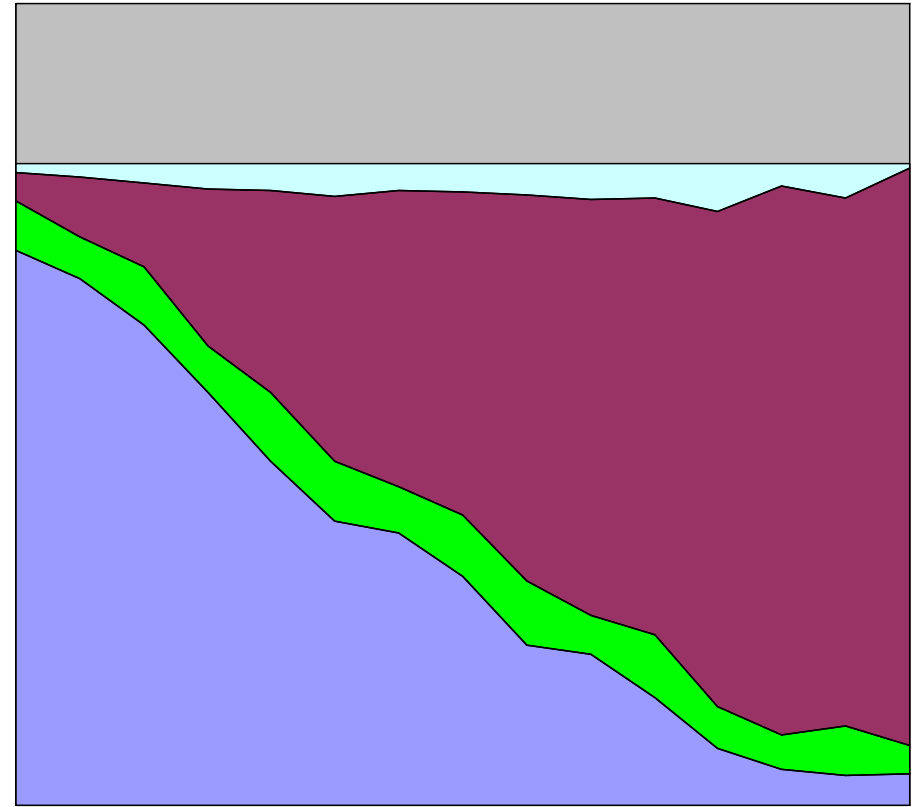
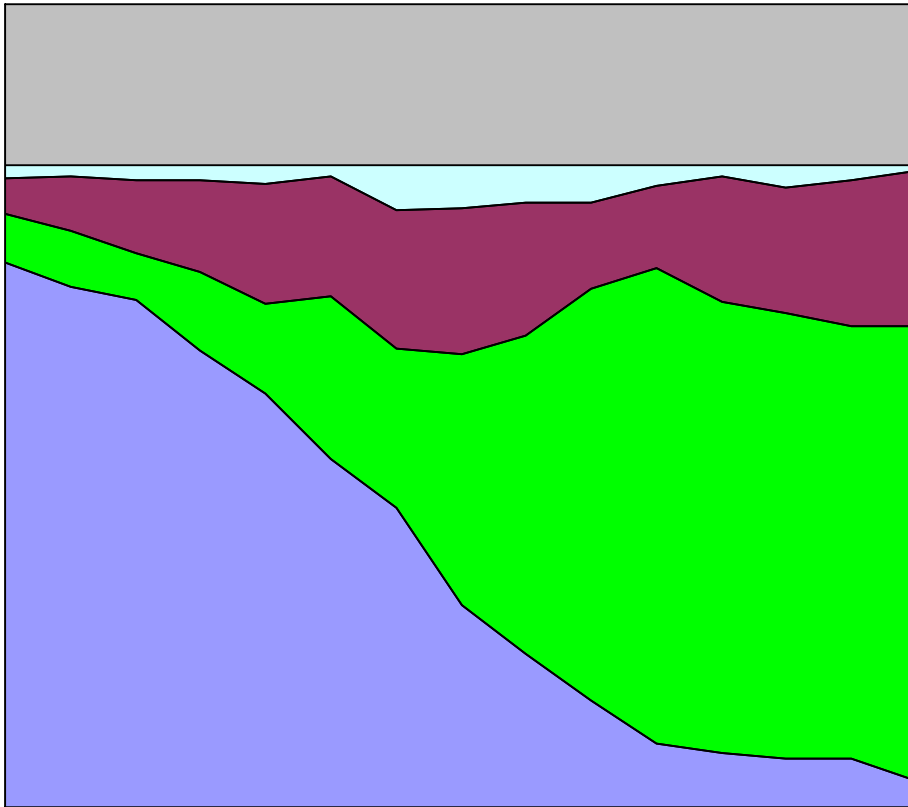
State of the Field

- **Programs for adolescents are expanding rapidly**
- **Belief systems at work:**
 - **Economic interventions alone are not enough**
 - **Adolescents need especially tailored economic programs**
 - **Social interventions are needed**
 - **Importance of safe spaces for girls**

School to Work Transitions

Rural Girls

Rural Boys



■ Only school ■ None ■ Only employed ■ Both

Adolescent Economic Activity: Bangladesh

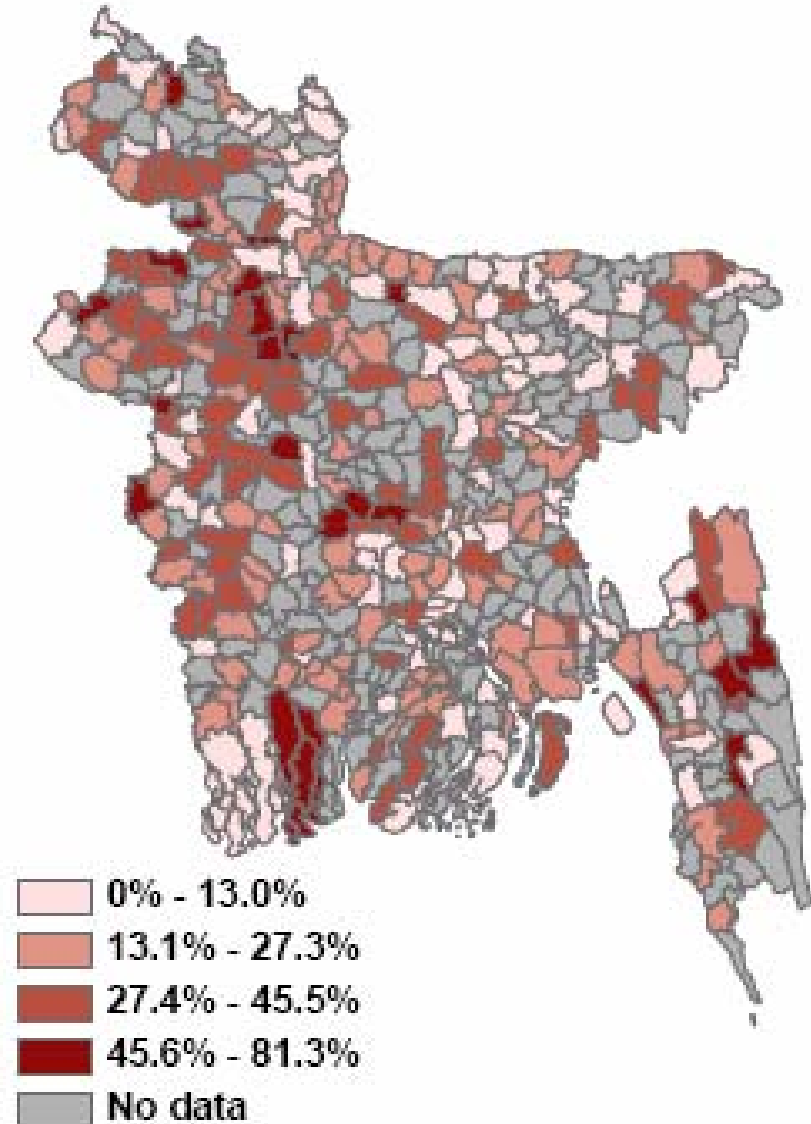
Adolescent Survey 2005

	% Working for Cash	% Saves	% Borrows	% Received Training
Rural Male	63	22	10	12
Urban male	53	28	15	29
Rural Female	17	28	11	13
Urban Female	24	34	14	25

Bangladesh Adolescent Survey 2005:

•Unmarried Girls under 18 Who Save

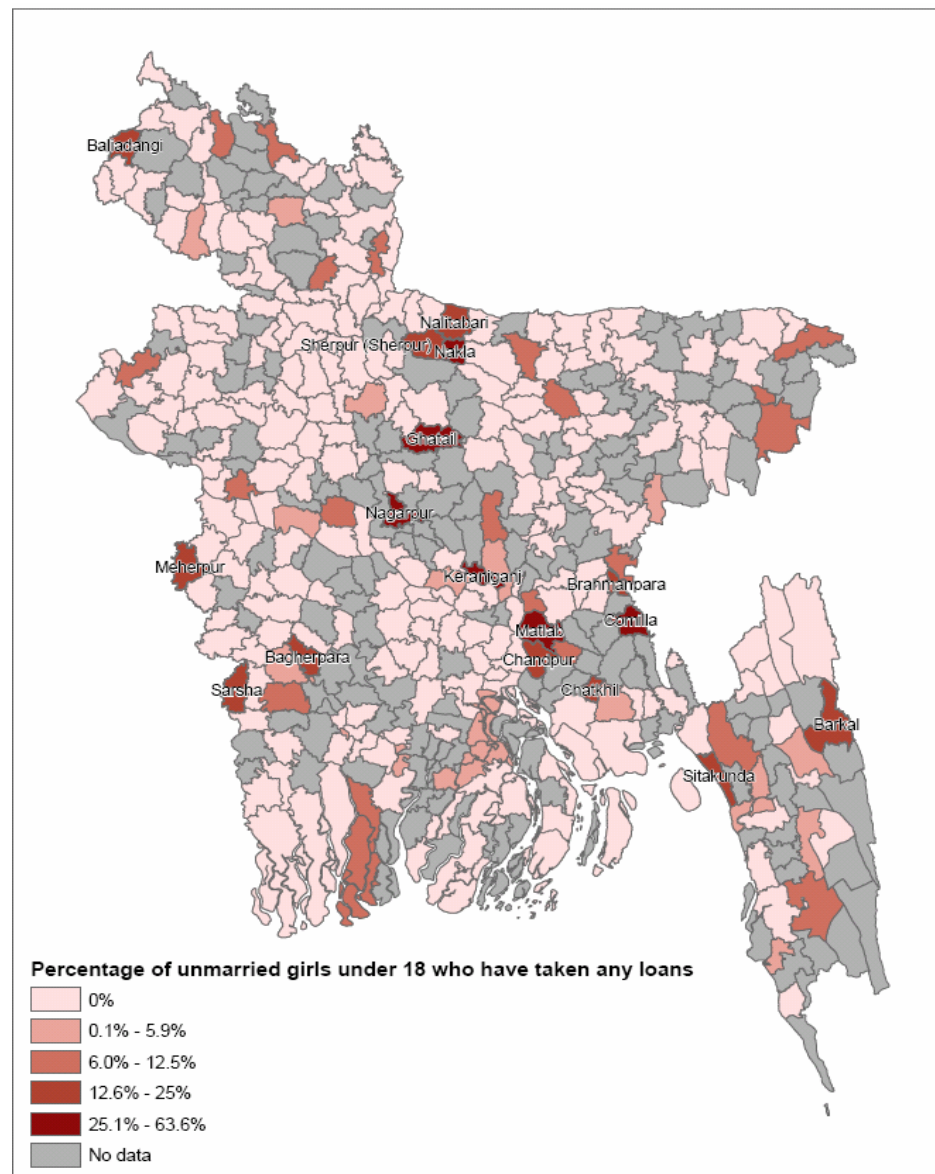
- *There is considerable variation in savings propensities within the country*
- *Regional pattern suggests positive and negative factors may be at work. Ngo activities as well as prevalence of dowry coincide with savings patterns*



Bangladesh Adolescent Survey 2005:

• Unmarried Girls Under 18 who borrow

- *Borrowing is considerably less common*
- *Areas of high prevalence and reports of borrowing source strongly indicate that NGOs play a role*



Kishori Abhijan:
“Adolescent Girls’ Adventure”

**A prospective, pilot intervention research study using
quantitative and qualitative methods**

A peer educator bikes to work in Sherpur



Kishori Abhijan Reading Center



The Intervention

- **Adolescent girls organized into peer organized groups of app. 30 girls in group**
- **Groups met weekly for 1 hour and took life-skills lessons**
- **Select group received livelihood training**
- **More select group received credit to support income generating projects**
- **All members saved small amounts weekly**

Research Design: A Quantitative and Qualitative quasi-experimental study

- **Quantitative surveys at baseline (2001) and 2 years later in intervention and control villages**
- **2,214 girls age 15 to 24 years in 2003**
- **Location: 90 villages in 3 districts: Chapai, Chittagong and Sherpur**
- **Qualitative Study: three year prospective study of 47 adolescent girls and program personnel**

Selective Membership: a core analytical problem

- **Members were younger, more educated, more likely to be unmarried, and more likely to live in Sherpur compared to non-members.**
- **These differences can bias results unless they are accounted for.**
- **Selection addressed through propensity-score matched analysis. Program effects measured by comparing members to their matched and unmatched counterparts. A small group of members did not have appropriate matches.**

Main results

- **Positive and significant outcomes (e.g. delayed marriage, school retention) most often found only among unmatched members. These girls are younger, more educated, and more likely to live in the poorest district, Sherpur**
- **Positive outcomes among all members include:**
 - ✓ **Greater knowledge of STDs**
 - ✓ **somewhat greater knowledge of contraceptive methods**
 - ✓ **Increased sense of well-being**
 - ✓ **Increased work for pay among all members**

Recommendations from 2001-2004 evaluation

- **Programs should consider targeting the following group for maximum and positive impact: young adolescents (13-15), in school and living in the poorest districts**
- **Future programs need to directly address the dowry implications of delayed marriage. Without specific efforts to change dowry practices delaying marriage comes at a cost of higher dowry**
- **Efforts to delay marriage needs to involve families of adolescents. Tangible benefits needed for families to delay marriage**

Some Current Adolescent Programs

- **Bangladesh**
 - **BRAC Adolescent Development Program**
 - **BRAC Employment and Livelihoods for Adolescents**
- **India**
 - **SEWA Kishori Mandal in Ahmadabad and Vadodara districts, Gujarat**

BRAC Adolescent Program (ADP): 2005 to present

- **Over 300, 000 members**
- **Meet twice weekly in BRAC schools**
- **BRAC provides logistic support such as books games**
- **Organizes lifeskills (APON) classes**
- **Strong social emphasis, little economic activity**
- **Some girls receive livelihood training**
- **New community program to motivate mothers**

BRAC Employment and Livelihoods for Adolescents (2003 to present)

- **Over 350,000 members**
- **Organized Village Organizations meet once a week in the early morning (no club house)**
- **Offers loan minimum Tk 4000**
- **Mandatory Savings**
- **Social component: issue based meetings**
- **No safe space and infrequent social interventions**

The Promise

Impressions from the field: Members in economic programs are more astute than adult members because they are educated and have long exposure to micro-finance through their family members.

A large-scale randomized control trial is in the field

SEWA INDIA: Kishori Mandals

- **Group Formation**
- **Basic Training for Adulthood**
- **Exposure Program**
- **Vocational Skill Training**

SEWA Evaluation

- **Pre-post intervention design after 18 month program**
 - established livelihood programs are feasible
 - Simply meeting regularly forms empowering networks
 - Regular rather than infrequent participation important for measurable impact of self-esteem and agency, mobility, increased reproductive health knowledge
 - (http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/India_InfluencingGirlsLives.pdf)

Future Direction: Integrated Social and Economic Program

- **Safe space (club house or club in box)**
- **Offer Credit and savings opportunities**
- **Field workers to be role models and mentors**
- **Training components:**
 - **project a positive self-image (successful, confident, caring, innovative, well groomed)**
 - **Exposure programs (invite speakers, help to build networks, apprenticeship connections)**

2007-2009 Randomized Control Trial

- **12000 girls in 600 villages**
- **5 intervention arms:**
 - **Social component alone**
 - **Economic component alone**
 - **Existing social and economic program simultaneously**
 - **Integrated social and economic program**
 - **control**

Programs Implications of Assessments to Date

- **Most existing programs are complex and costly and hence may not be sustainable**
- **Programs with credit programs most likely to last because self sustaining**
- **Adolescent girls' programs are not yet fully accepted by communities**
- **Sustained with considerable external support only**
- **Rising dowry and social insecurity pose important challenges**

Potential for Research

- **Gold Standard Research needed to design sustainable programs**
- **Large scale pilots can help to identify program components that can be taken to scale**
- **Important to identify the relative contributions of safe spaces, group organization, social skills and economic empowerment**

Limitations of Research

- **Gold standard research studies require**
 - **Elaboration coordination with programs from start**
 - **Can be expensive**
 - **Research results need to be timely to influence program (may be achieved through close collaboration with programs)**