



Supporting Adolescent Girls in the Time of COVID-19: Evidence and Policy for Bangladesh

Thursday, April 8, 2021
8:00 - 9:30AM EDT / 6:00 - 7:30 PM BST

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls globally, widening existing inequalities in livelihoods, burden of care, schooling, and violence. Designing social policies to mitigate these impacts and support educational opportunities for girls—including to help them return to school and strengthen the skills they need to succeed in the workforce—is critical to post-pandemic economic recovery and gender equality.

To understand the extent of these issues, and to shed light on the pandemic's particularly hidden impacts on vulnerable girls, policymakers have needed data and evidence. Recent research conducted during and before the pandemic can help the policy and practitioner communities in Bangladesh better understand how adolescent girls have been impacted by the public health crisis and by the measures put in place to contain the virus, helping to shape responses.

This event will convene researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to share research findings and discuss policy solutions to explore the following questions: How have girls' education and livelihoods been impacted? Is early marriage increasing? How can data and evidence be used to support policies that help adolescent girls? A facilitated Q&A session among invitees from government, international and local organizations, and academia will follow the presentations.

This private event is part of **IPA's RECOVR Roundtable Series: Bringing Evidence to COVID-19 Policy Responses in the Global South** and the **Women's Work, Entrepreneurship, and Skilling (WWES) Initiative**. Together with our partners, we are using this series to exchange learnings between the policy, practice, and research communities to support evidence-informed response efforts. More information about RECOVR is available [here](#) and WWES [here](#).

Presenters (in alphabetical order)

- » [Sarah Baird](#), Associate Professor of Global Health and Economics, George Washington University
- » [Momoe Makino](#), Research Fellow, Institute of Developing Economies, and Visiting Research Fellow, GIRL Center, Population Council
- » [Shahana Nazneen](#), Qualitative Researcher, Girls' Empowerment Project, Southern Bangladesh, Innovations for Poverty Action
- » [Kate Vyborny](#), Research Associate, Duke University
- » [Zaki Wahhaj](#), Reader in Economics, University of Kent

Host

- » [Mohammad Ashraf Haque](#), Country Director, Innovations for Poverty Action Bangladesh

Moderator

- » [Maheen Sultan](#), GAGE Bangladesh Qualitative Research Co-Lead at BRAC University

Policy Discussants

- » [Tahsinah Ahmed](#), Executive Director, Underprivileged Children's Educational Programmes (UCEP) Bangladesh
- » [Sajeda Amin](#), Senior Associate, Population Council

Policy Reflections

- » [MD Afzal Hossain Sarwar](#), Policy Specialist (Educational Innovation), Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Program, ICT Division, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology
- » [Rayhana Taslim](#), Project Director, 9 Government Secondary Schools Project, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Education

Agenda

Time (EDT)	Time (BST)	Who	What
8:00 - 8:05	18:00 - 18:05	Mohammad Ashraful Haque	Welcome and Purpose
<i>Back to school, and from school to work</i>			
8:05 - 8:15	18:05 - 18:15	Sarah Baird	Adolescence in the Time of COVID-19: Evidence from Bangladesh
8:15 - 8:20	18:15 - 18:20	Policy Discussant: Tahsinah Ahmed	Reflections on the Research
<i>Is COVID-19 bringing about more child marriage in Bangladesh?</i>			
8:20 - 8:35	18:20 - 18:35	Zaki Wahhaj & Momoe Makino	The Threat to Female Adolescent Development from COVID-19 & Early Effects of the COVID-19 Lockdown on Children
8:35 - 8:40	18:35 - 18:40	Policy Discussant: Sajeda Amin	Reflections on the Research
<i>The role of incentives: insights from before COVID-19</i>			
8:40 - 8:50	18:40 - 18:50	Shahana Nazneen & Kate Vyborny	Empowering Girls in Rural Bangladesh
8:50 - 9:00	18:50 - 19:00	MD Afzal Hossain Sarwar & Rayhana Taslim	Policy Reflections: a2i and Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Education
9:00 - 9:25	19:00 - 19:25	Moderator: Maheen Sultan	Q&A (participant questions)
9:25 - 9:30	19:25 - 19:30	IPA	Closing Remarks

About the Speakers

Presenters



Sarah Baird is an Associate Professor of Global Health and Economics in the Department of Global Health at George Washington University. She is also the quantitative lead for the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) study. Her research focuses on the microeconomics of health and education in low- and middle-income countries with an emphasis on gender and youth. Her work has been published in leading academic journals including the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* and *The Lancet*, and has been featured in media outlets such as *The New York Times* and *The Economist*. She received her Ph.D. in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of California, Berkeley.



Momoe Makino is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Developing Economies and a Visiting Research Fellow at the GIRL Center, Population Council. As a Population and Household Economist, she has conducted empirical analyses on gender issues mainly in South Asian countries. She has empirically investigated the nature of seemingly gender discriminatory practices such as dowry, bride price, and sex-selective abortion. Her research has generated policy implications about how to effectively discourage these practices. She received her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Washington.



Shahana Nazneen is a Qualitative Researcher for the Girls' Empowerment Project in Southern Bangladesh for Innovations for Poverty Action. She has been involved in the girls' empowerment study since 2006. She has longtime experience in adolescent development programming including child marriage, reproductive health, and nutrition. During her professional tenure, she has worked with BRAC, Save the Children, Innovations for Poverty Action, and UNICEF. She completed her medical graduation in Bangladesh and obtained her Master's degree in Public Health in Sweden.



Kate Vyborny is a Research Associate at Duke University. Her research focuses on public service delivery, urban development and public transportation, and gender. She is a visiting faculty member at the Lahore School of Economics and the Lahore University of Management Sciences. She previously worked on development assistance effectiveness at the Center for Global Development, and on trade and development at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She holds a D.Phil. (Ph.D.) in Economics from the University of Oxford, England, where she held the Rhodes Scholarship.



Zaki Wahhaj is a Reader in Economics at the University of Kent. His fields of interest are Economic Development and Economic Theory. His current research deals, broadly, with the themes of social norms and household decision-making, including work on the extended family, risk-sharing and formal insurance, microfinance, and the impact of formal law on customary practices and issues relating to early marriage and female education. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).



Mohammad Ashraful ("Ashraf") Haque has been with IPA since 2004 and has been the Country Director of IPA Bangladesh since 2018. Ashraf is a researcher, teacher, and public policy professional with 13 years of experience supporting the generation and application of rigorous evidence to inform policy. Before IPA, he worked as an Assistant Professor and Lecturer of Public Administration at Jahangirnagar University. He holds a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Dhaka and a Master's in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University.

About the Speakers (continued)

Policy Discussants



Tahsinah Ahmed is the Executive Director of Underprivileged Children's Educational Programmes (UCEP) Bangladesh and the President of the Management Committee of the UCEP Institute of Science and Technology, Dhaka. She has 28 years of professional experience and has contributed significantly in national-level institution building, policy formulation, and reforms in the development sector, especially in the areas of technical & vocational education and training, skills development, education, poverty reduction, labor migration, and social inclusion. She holds a Master's in Social Sciences (Public Administration) from the University of Dhaka.



Sajeda Amin is a Senior Associate at the Population Council, leading the Population Council's work on livelihoods for adolescent girls. She is a senior sociologist and demographer with decades of experience generating evidence on empowerment programs for girls and women. She is an expert on microfinance, financial literacy, prevention of child marriage, girls' and women's factory work and time-use patterns, and the provision of incentives in the education sector. She has served in advisory capacities to PLAN-International, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank. She holds a Master's in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School and a Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography from Princeton University.

Policy Reflections



MD Afzal Hossain Sarwar is a Policy Specialist (Educational Innovation) for the Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Program, ICT Division, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology in Bangladesh. He is responsible for developing an innovative ecosystem for education using ICTs, policy formulation and nationwide upscaling of innovative ideas in the field of education. He earned his graduate and postgraduate degrees in Education at the Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka. He obtained his MBA from the East West University.



Rayhana Taslim is the Project Director of the Establishment of 9 Government Secondary Schools Project, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh. She was previously Deputy Director of the Teacher's Quality Improvement project. In the early period of her career, she was a prominent teacher's educator and a faculty member of the Mathematics Department in the Government Teacher's Training Colleges. She holds a Master's in Mathematics from the University of Dhaka.

Moderator



Maheen Sultan is the GAGE Bangladesh Qualitative Research Co-Lead at BRAC University. She is Senior Fellow of Practice and the Head of the Gender and Social Transformation Cluster at the BRAC Institute for Governance and Development (BIGD). She is a development practitioner, activist and researcher with over 30 years' experience working for NGOs, donors, the UN, Grameen Bank, and the Bangladeshi government in a range of capacities. She holds a License in Sociology from the University of Geneva and several postgraduate diplomas in development studies and gender and development.