

## **Adolescent Marriage, Fertility and Reproductive Health in Bangladesh**

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### **Abstract**

Female adolescents of age 10-19 constitutes one-fourth of the total female population and 40 percent of the total female population of age 10-49 in Bangladesh. Due to high prevalence of teenage marriage and low contraceptive use among married teenagers, Bangladesh has the highest rate of adolescent childbearing among the developing countries. This study is concerned with the fertility behaviour of married adolescent (age 15-19) girls in Bangladesh. The study utilizes data from the 1999-2000 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS). The BDHS covered a nationally representative sample of 10,544 ever-married women of which 1,514 were aged 15-19 that constitutes our study population. Discrete-time hazard model is used to estimate the probability of woman having a first birth during adolescence. The data shows a very high incidence of early childbearing in Bangladesh as 35 percent of all adolescents and 72 percent of ever-married adolescents became mother or pregnant within age 15-19. More than sixty percent (61.3 percent) of the young women aged 20-24, who have just completed adolescent period, had a child by age 20. Teenage parenthood is higher among rural and illiterate women as well as women from Rajshahi region and poor economic status. The annual age-specific fertility rate for adolescents of age 15-19 is 144 births per 1,000 women, which constitutes about 22 percent of the overall TFR. However, there is a declining trend in adolescent fertility in Bangladesh and adolescents have lower level of family size norms than adults women. Education, economic status and exposure to television appeared as important determinants of adolescent childbearing. The study suggests the need for a concerted effort to increase the age at marriage, use of family planning methods, opportunity for education and employment for young females. Adolescents, their parents and community should be made more aware of the negative health, social and economic consequences of early marriage and childbearing.