

Bangladesh: Gender Equality and Social Transformation

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First round victories and second round challenges

- PRSP as the starting point
- Bangladesh is an outlier in so many respects – notably in health, education and the microcredit revolution
- But there are remaining areas – of political participation and access to the formal sphere more generally

What do we have to add?

- Bangladesh has a been a virtual laboratory in the area of policy research on gender...what could we add?
- The context was a feeling that Bangladesh was veering towards conservatism
- Could we measure change over time?
- Could we address issues of violence, participation and identify new areas of challenge empirically?

The tussle between norms and opportunity

- Norms of seclusion (purdah) and son preference have historically been blamed for poor outcomes for women in South Asia
- Could we measure norms?
- Are norms immutable? Or does opportunity mediate successfully? For instance, what do young garment workers show us?
- Can policy address norms or create incentives that would change norms?
- Classic tussle between whether behavior changes first or norms.

Narrative of social change

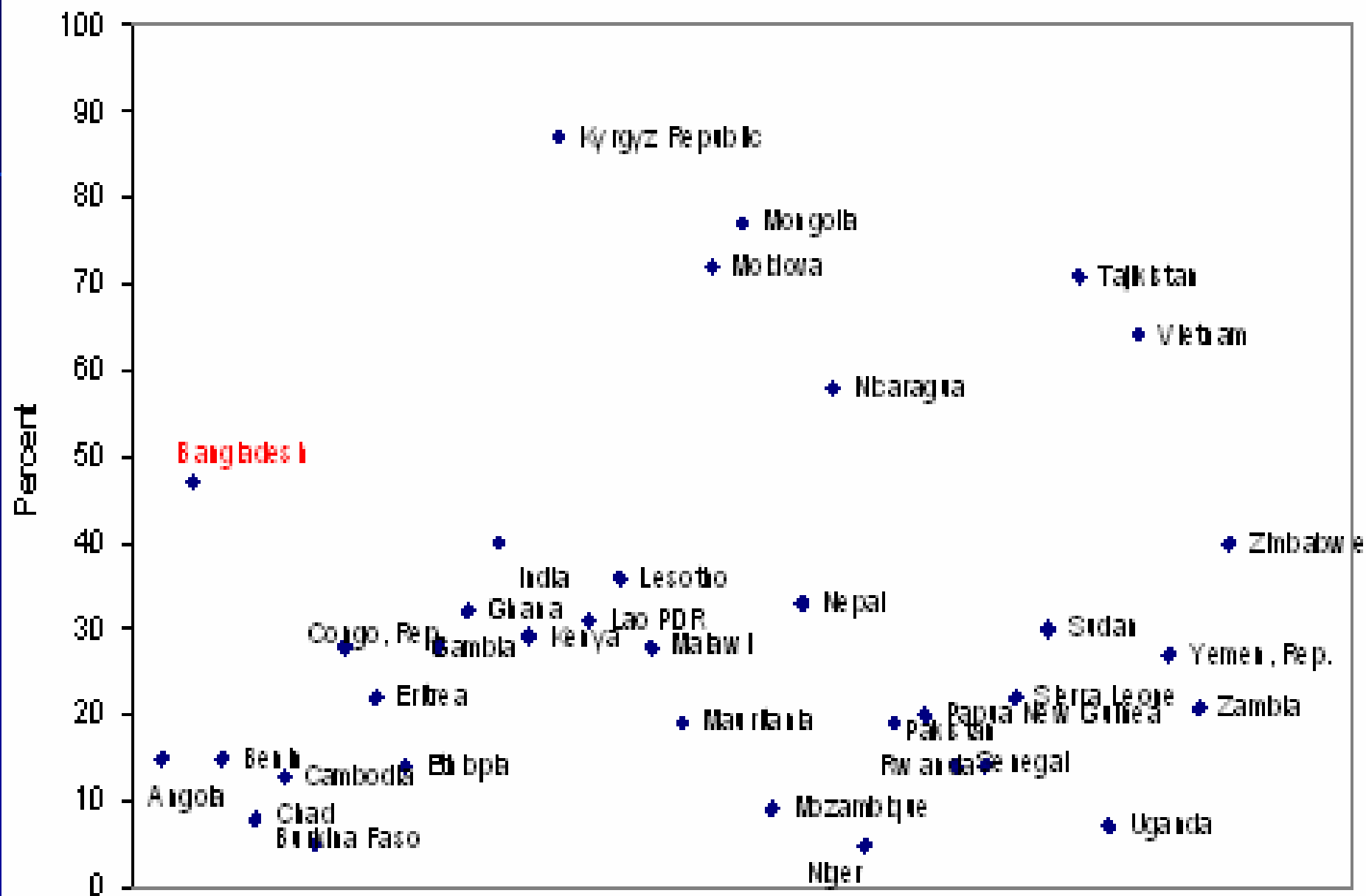
- Tracking change without a baseline is almost impossible
- So we adopted used a mix of innovative survey methods – quantitative national survey and qualitative field work in addition to analyzing large national data sets
- In terms of process we wanted to be relevant to government but also to lobbyists and provide empirical evidence for further change
- So our analysis is grounded in the national discourse

Focus of this presentation

- Health and education have been written about at length – we use the dramatic growth in education as a hook to understand other outcomes
- Focus on change in norms and attitudes
- Identifying key areas of change and emerging challenges, with regional variations

Figure 4.1: Female Gross Secondary Enrollment for Low Income countries

Source: SIMA, 2005

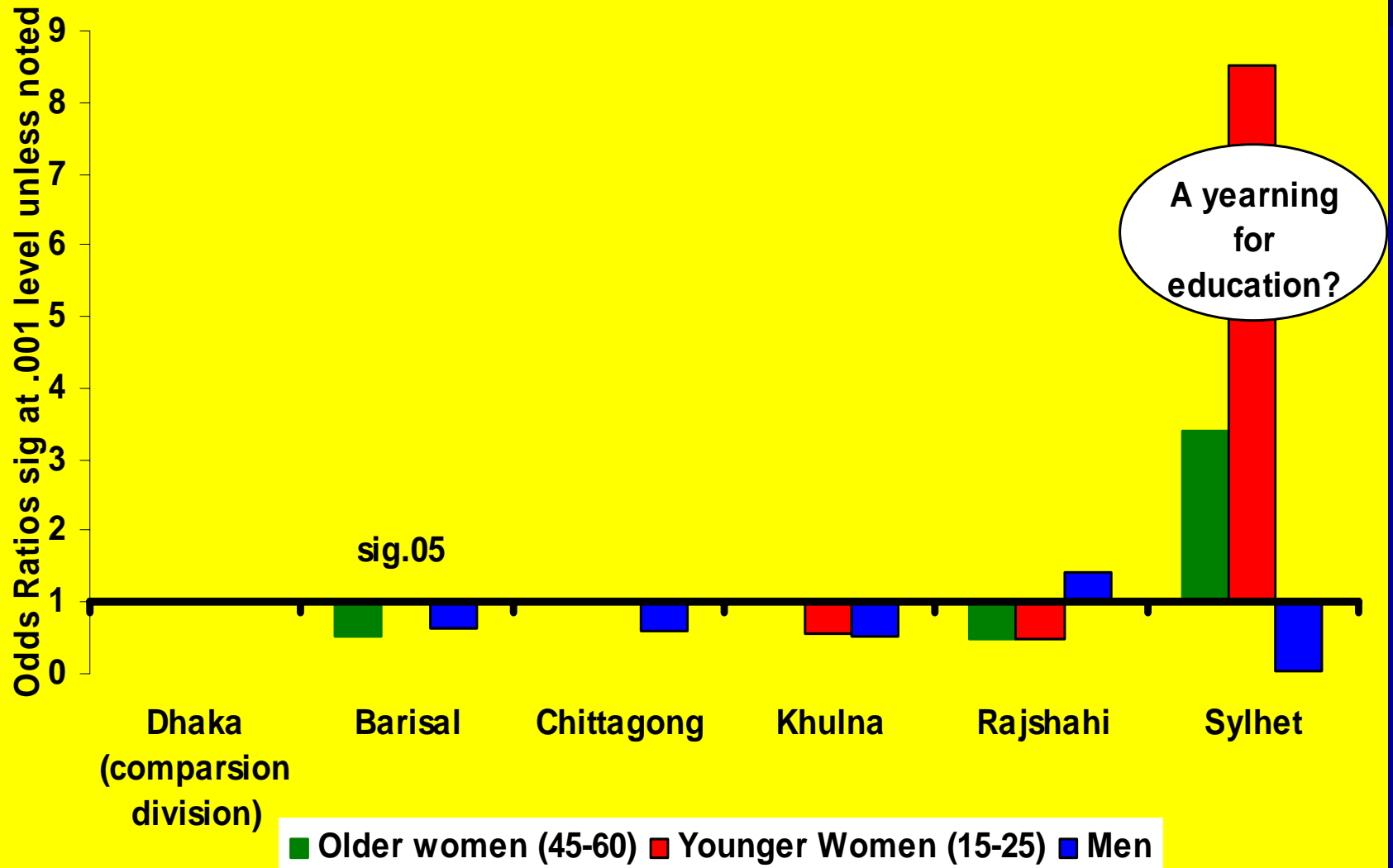


Education

- Enrollment rates doing well - remaining issues of quality, drop-out rates
- Others ask...how can we improve the quality of education, and we ask – what has education done to the social landscape?
- Qualitative evidence – “nijer paaye danrano” and “ability to speak”....but also compromising “lojja” and tradition
- But....also changing norms regarding education of sons and daughters – pointers for future demand and progress

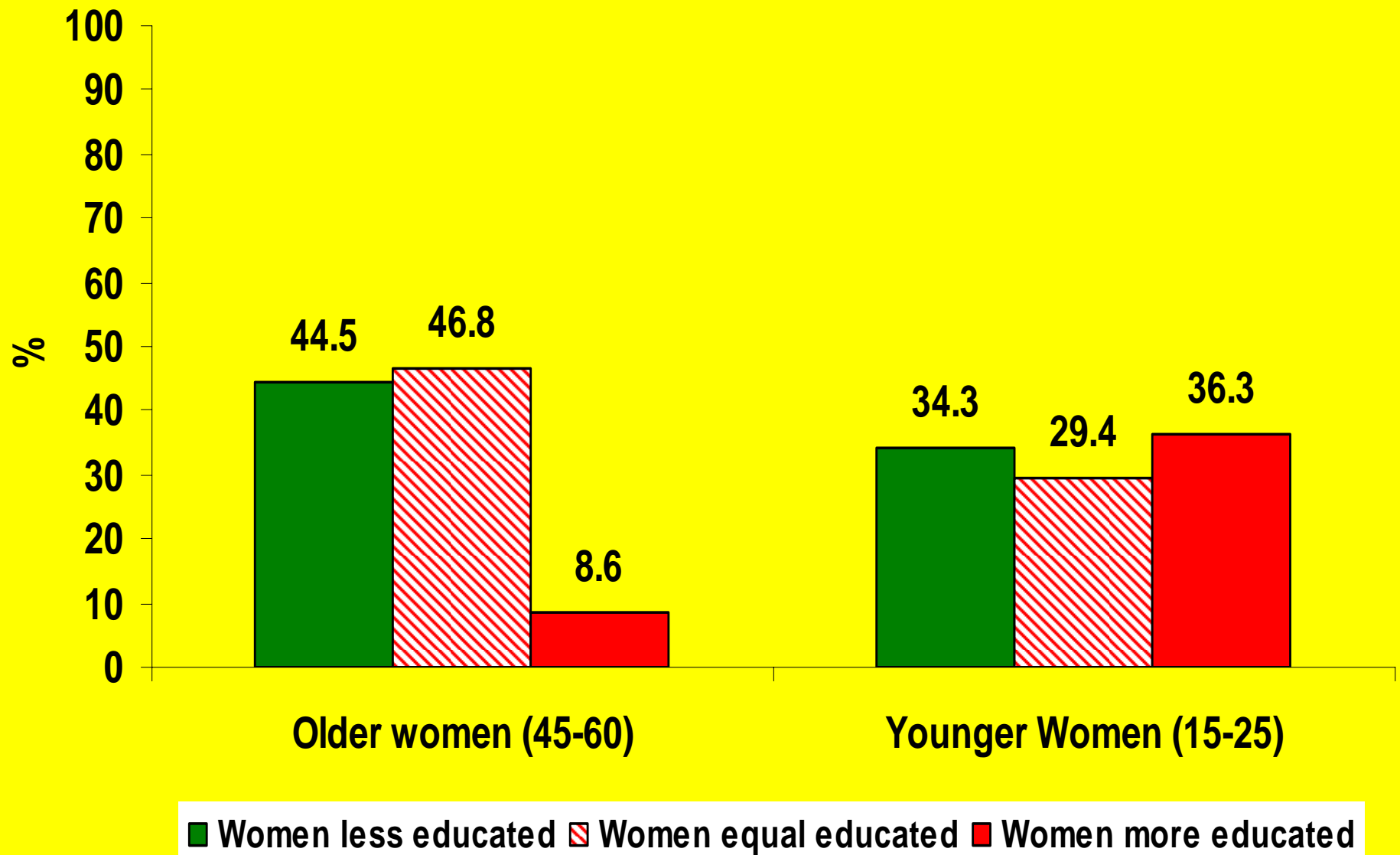
Attitudes to equal education for girls and boys Or Sylheti women's yearning for education?

Source: World Bank staff estimates controlling for background characteristics
(WBSGN 2006)



Bangladesh: More women marrying men less educated than them

Source: World Bank Gender Norms Survey 2006



Bangladesh: Attitudes to gender equality

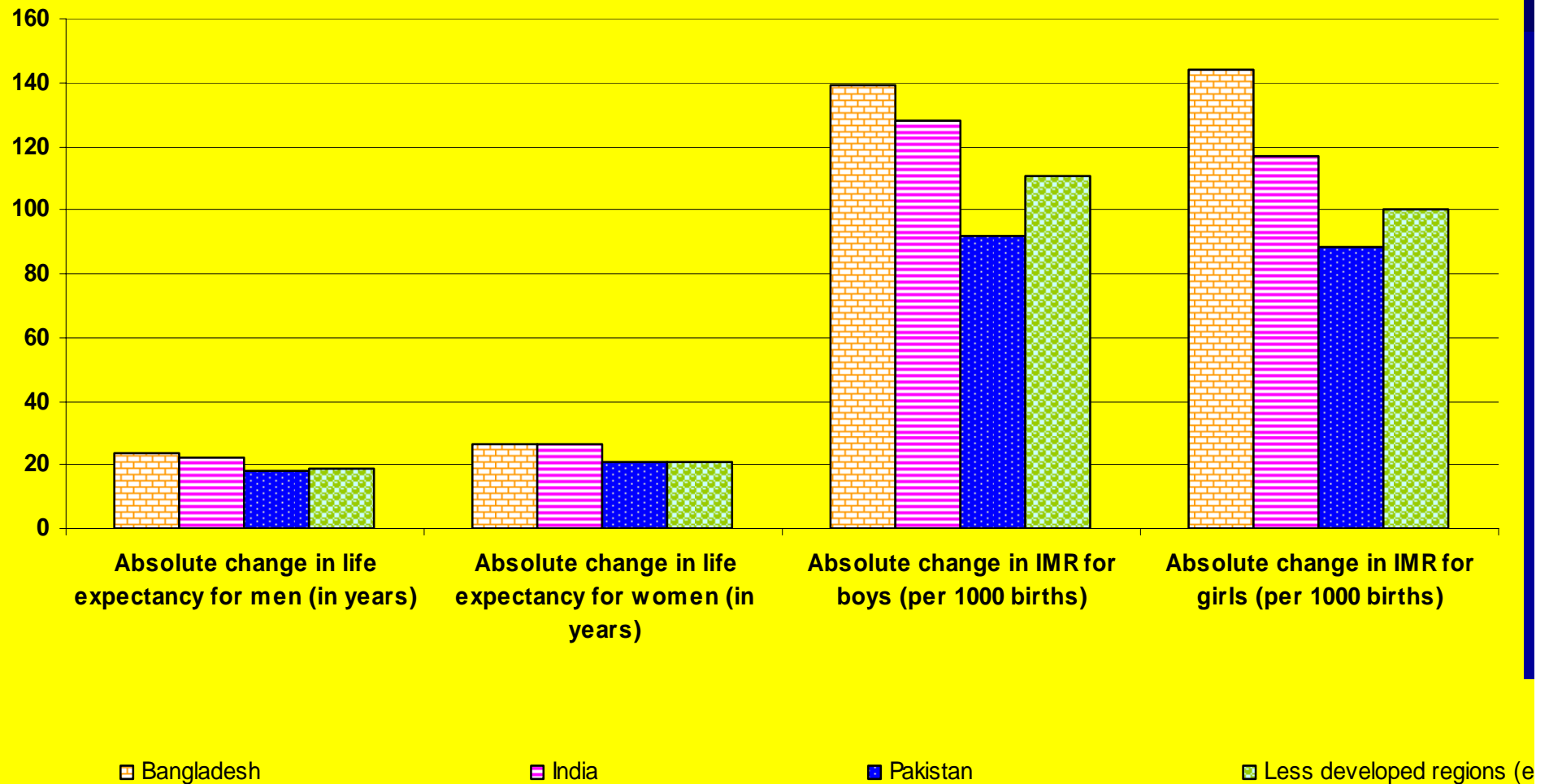
Source: World Bank Gender Norms Survey 2006



Health

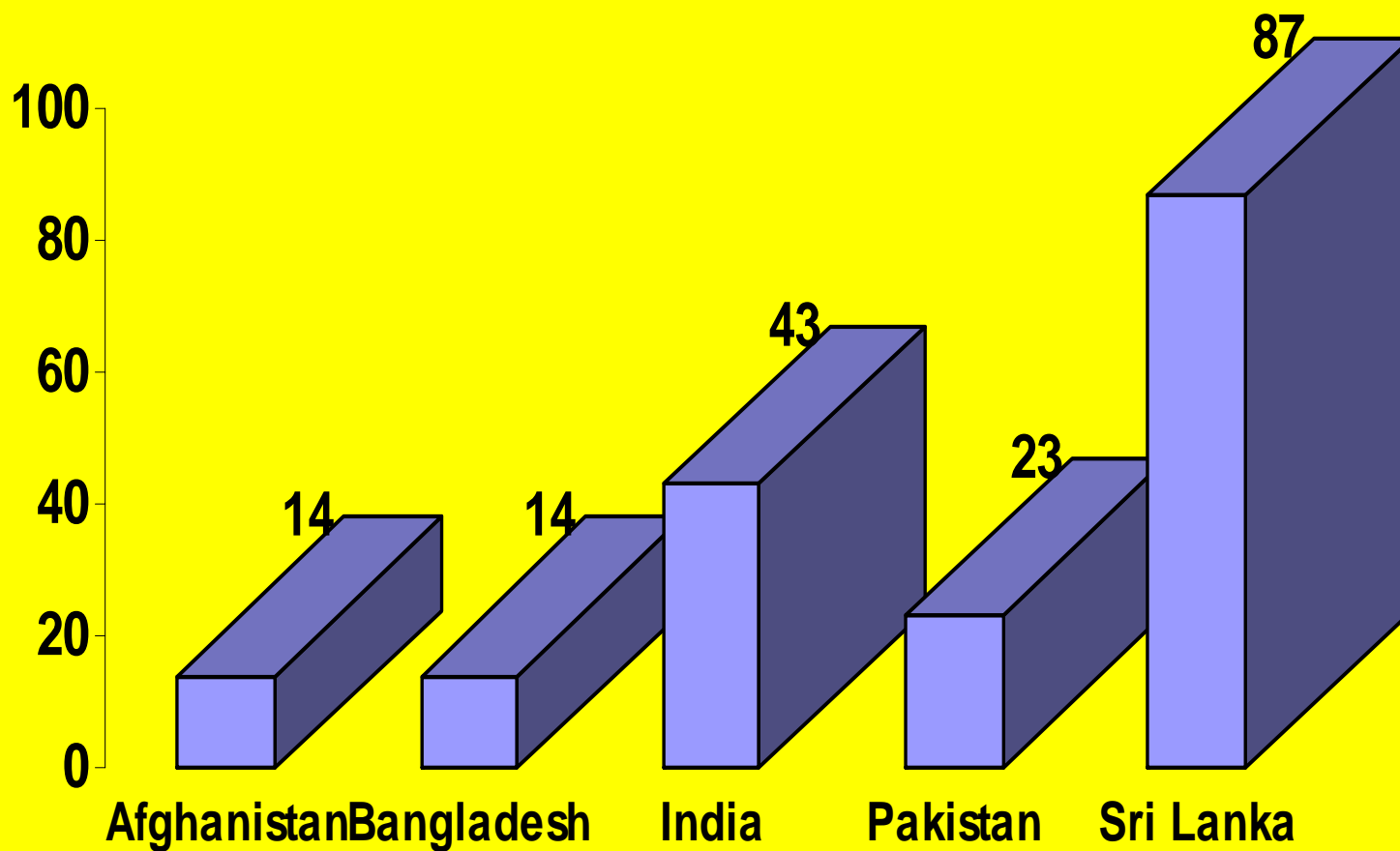
Bangladesh: Progress in mortality faster than any comparator country

Source: Calculated from World Population Prospects 2004



Percent births attended by skilled birth attendant in South Asia

Source: WDI 2005



Labor force participation

Bangladesh: Trends in LFP by age-group 1995-96 to 2002-03

Source: Das, 2006 based on LFS

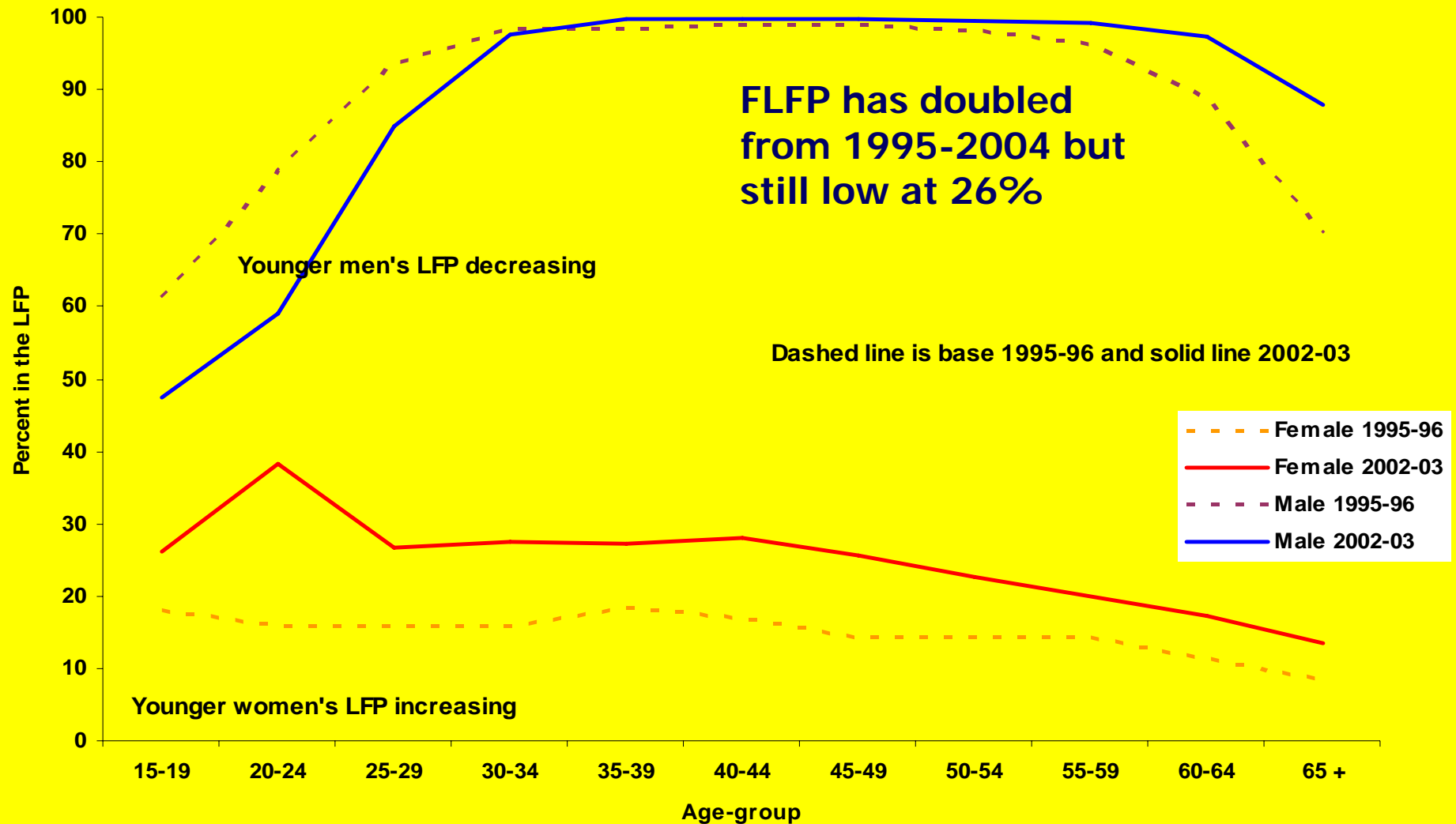
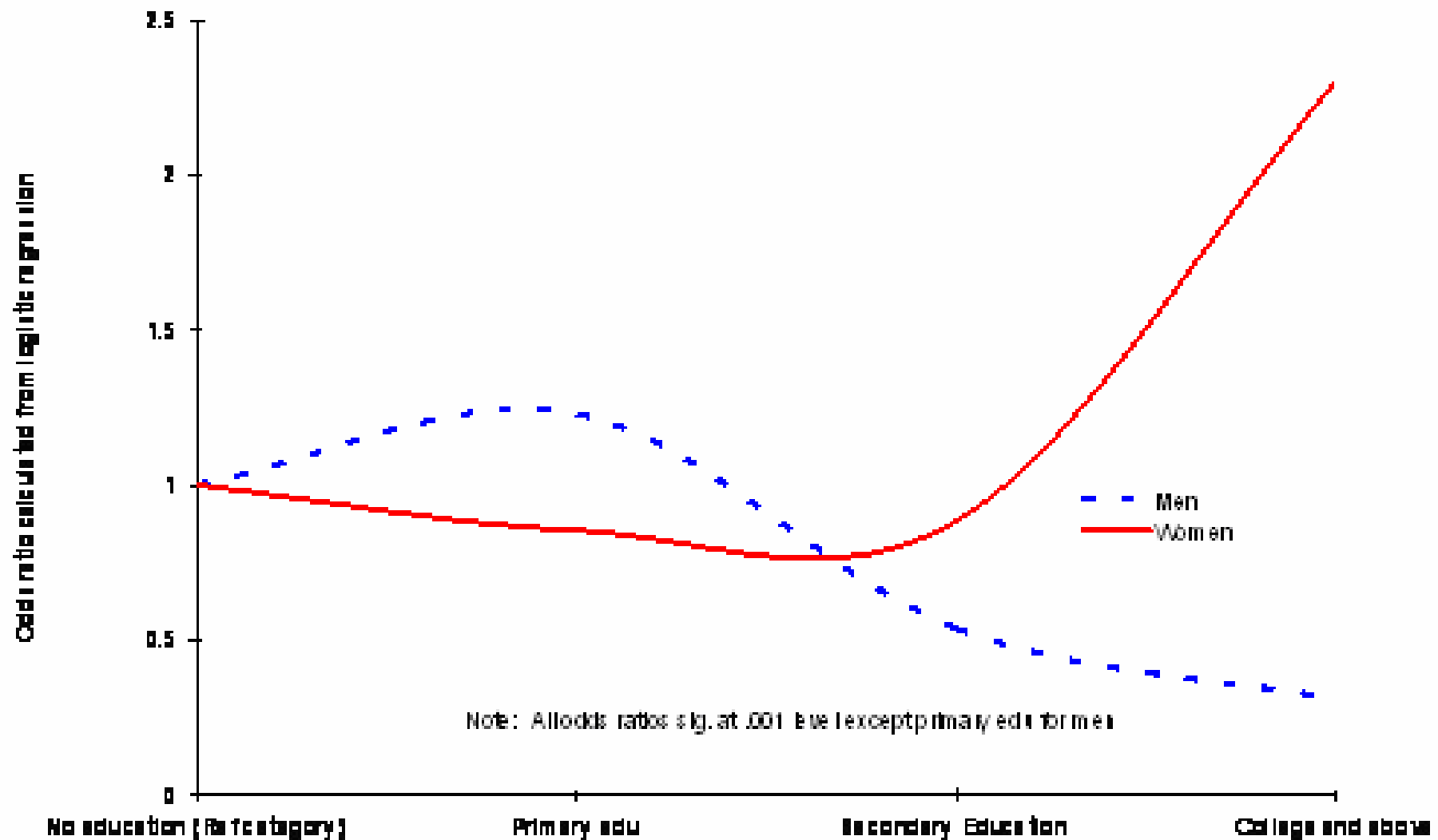


Figure 5.7: Bangladesh - Adjusted Relationship between Education and Labor Force Participation (Individuals 20-55 and not Attending School)



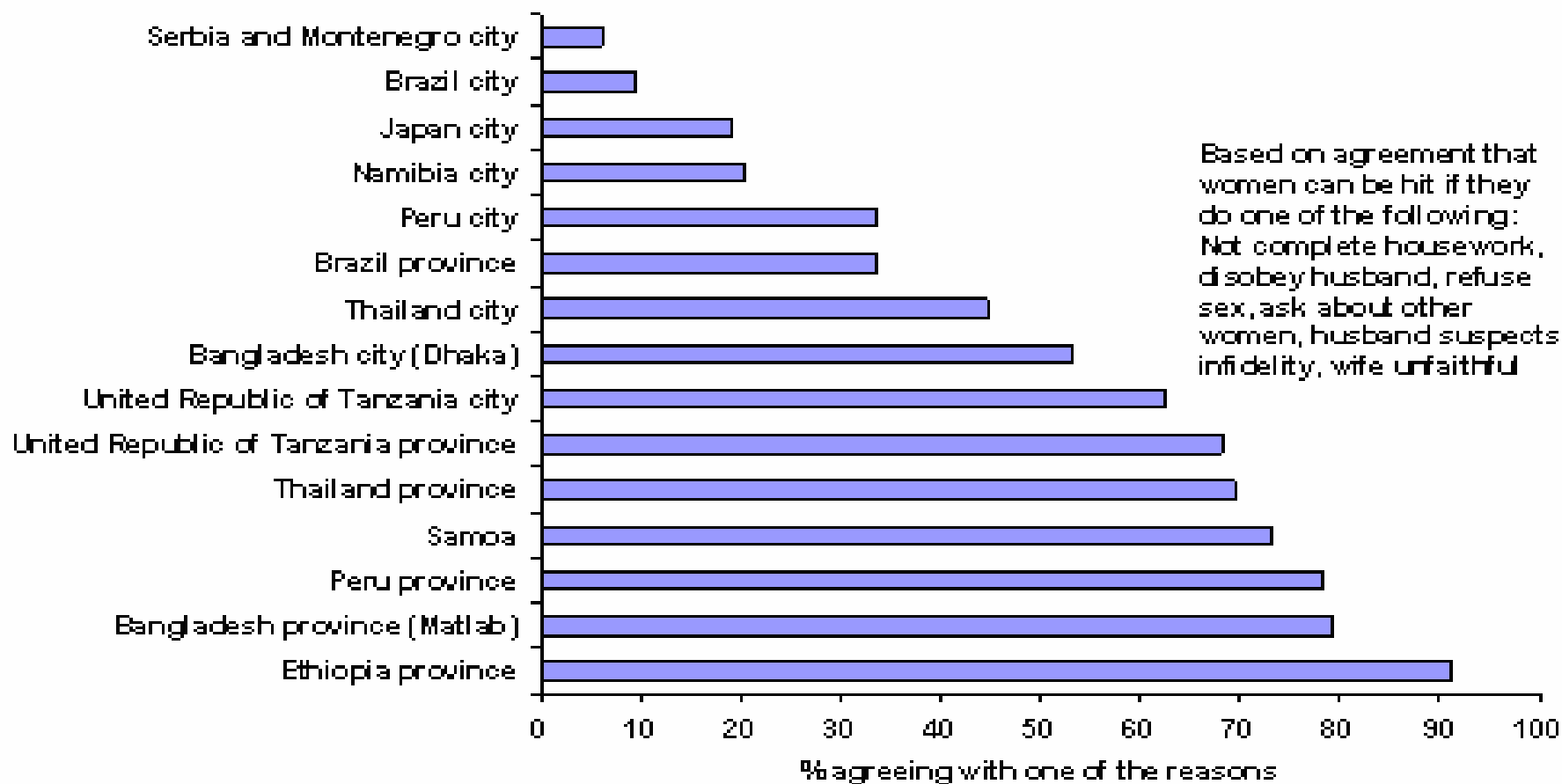
Source: Das, 2006 Based on LFS 2003 Controlling for Background Characteristics and Region

Changing labor market

- Dramatic rise in FLFPR in last decade, but levels are low compared even to SAR standards
- Low access to wage work in general
- Growth driven by community and service sector
- Dynamic story with education leading to greater participation – different from India & West Bengal
- But poor women's access to employment limited - largely explained by low importance of agr. in women's employment
- ...which affects structure of the casual labor market - women have a disadvantage at both entry and wages

Violence: A serious hindrance to development

Figure 7.1: Women's Comparative Attitudes to Violence



Source: WHO Multi Country Study 2005

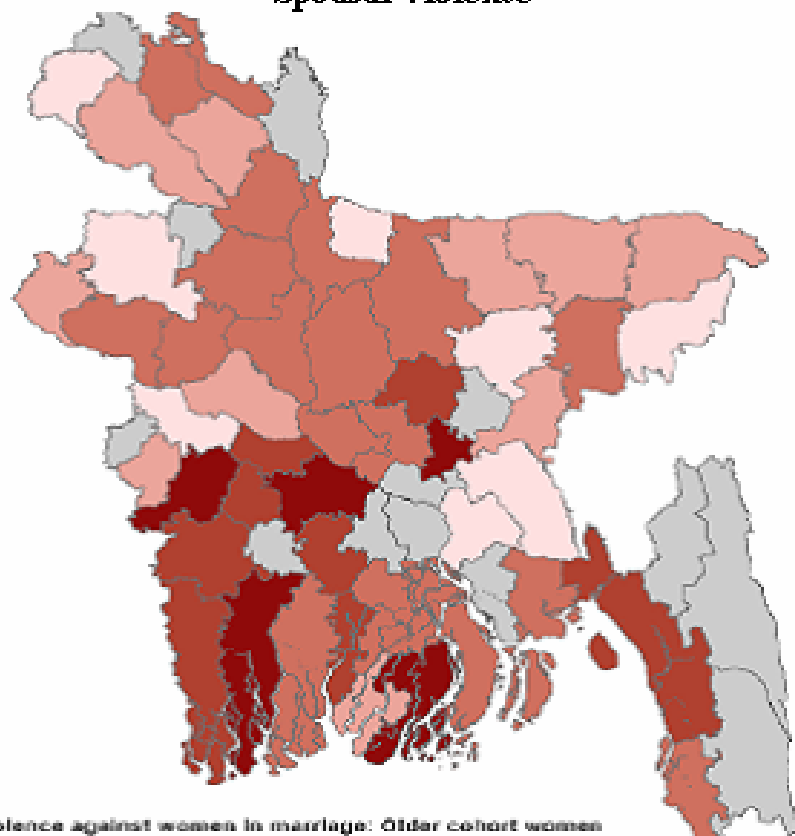
But measuring violence is difficult

- Not only is it difficult to say if violence is on the rise but its even difficult to measure its prevalence
- Violence is associated with a number of negative consequences on health and well-being of women and the family
- Also, its not just women who experience violence....but here we address only violence against women
- By international comparisons, Bangladeshi women tend to condone violence more and do not seek help as often

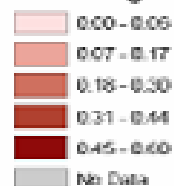
Empirical results

- Women say they have experienced violence less often than men say they have been violent (both in our survey and DHS)
- Qualitative evidence seems to suggest that violence is on the decline
- Women who condone violent behavior also seem much less likely to say they have experienced violence
- At the divisional level too, regions where women's attitudes condone violence also show low perception of insecurity

Figure 7.2: Older Women Ever Experienced Spousal Violence

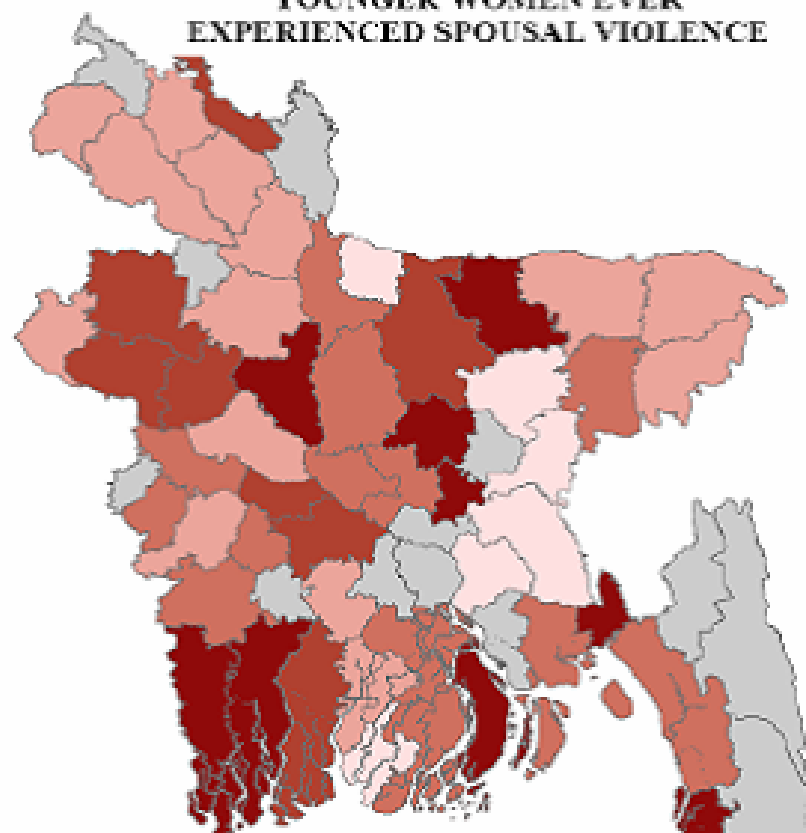


Violence against women in marriage: Older cohort women



Note: a) Women aged 45-60
 b) Darker color denotes worse outcomes
 Source: World Bank Gender Norms Survey 2006

YOUNGER WOMEN EVER EXPERIENCED SPOUSAL VIOLENCE



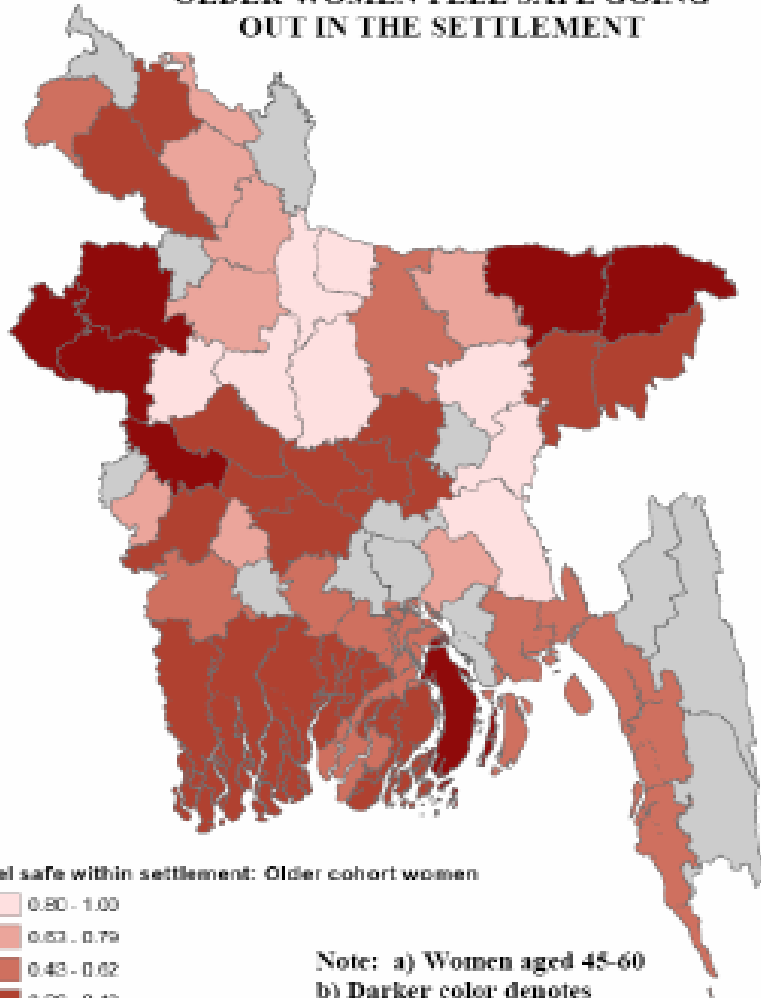
Violence against women in marriage: Younger cohort women



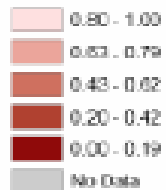
Note: a) Women aged 15-25
 b) Darker color denotes worse outcomes
 Source: World Bank Gender Norms Survey 2006

Perceptions of insecurity

OLDER WOMEN FEEL SAFE GOING OUT IN THE SETTLEMENT



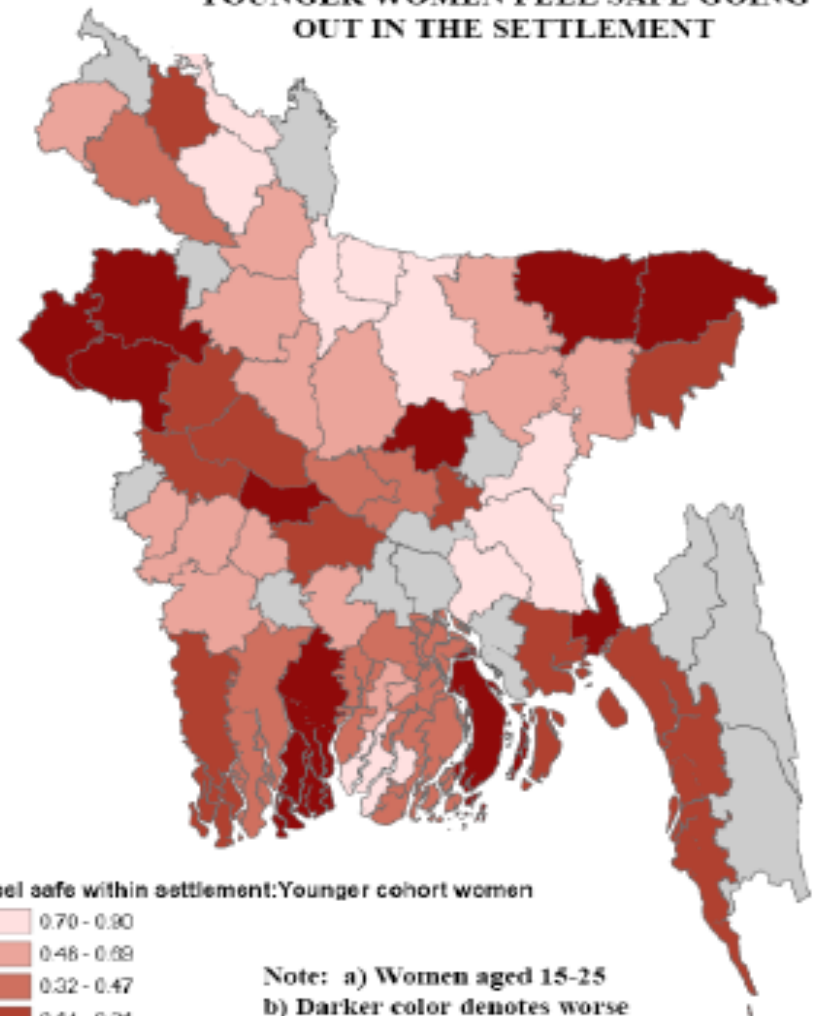
Feel safe within settlement: Older cohort women



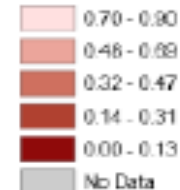
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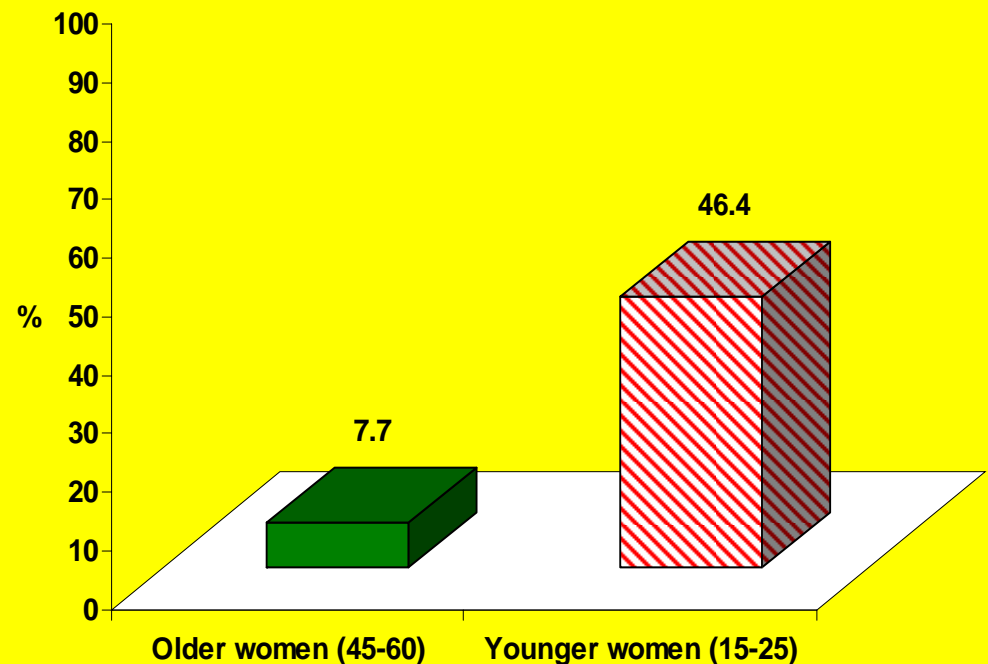
Source: World Bank Gender Norms Survey 2006

Dowry: the new preoccupation

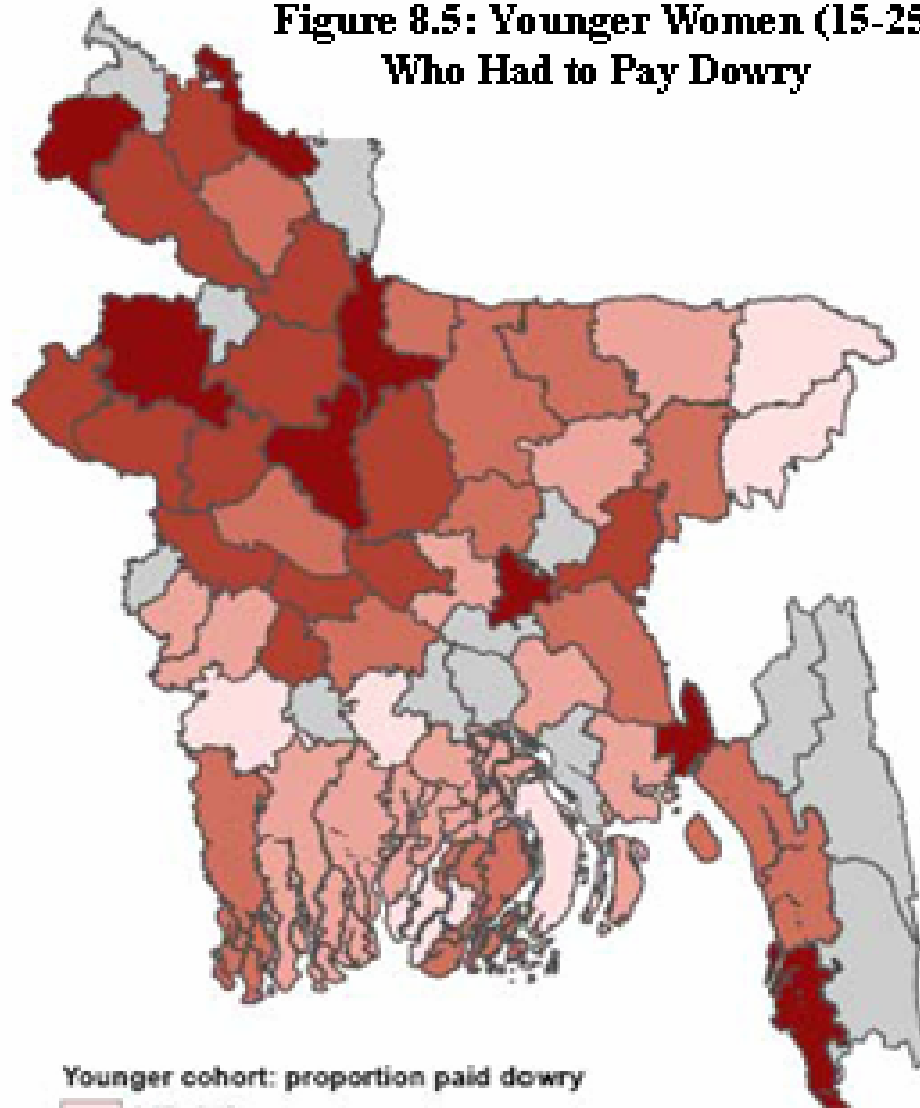
- Marriage is universal and stable
- Age at marriage is changing very slowly
- But it does not seem to have hampered other trends
- The new preoccupation of girls and the their families is dowry

Bangladesh: The practice of dowry has increased over time

Source: World Bank Gender Norms Survey 2006
(based on whether dowry worth Tk500 or above was paid)



**Figure 8.5: Younger Women (15-25)
Who Had to Pay Dowry**



Younger cohort: proportion paid dowry

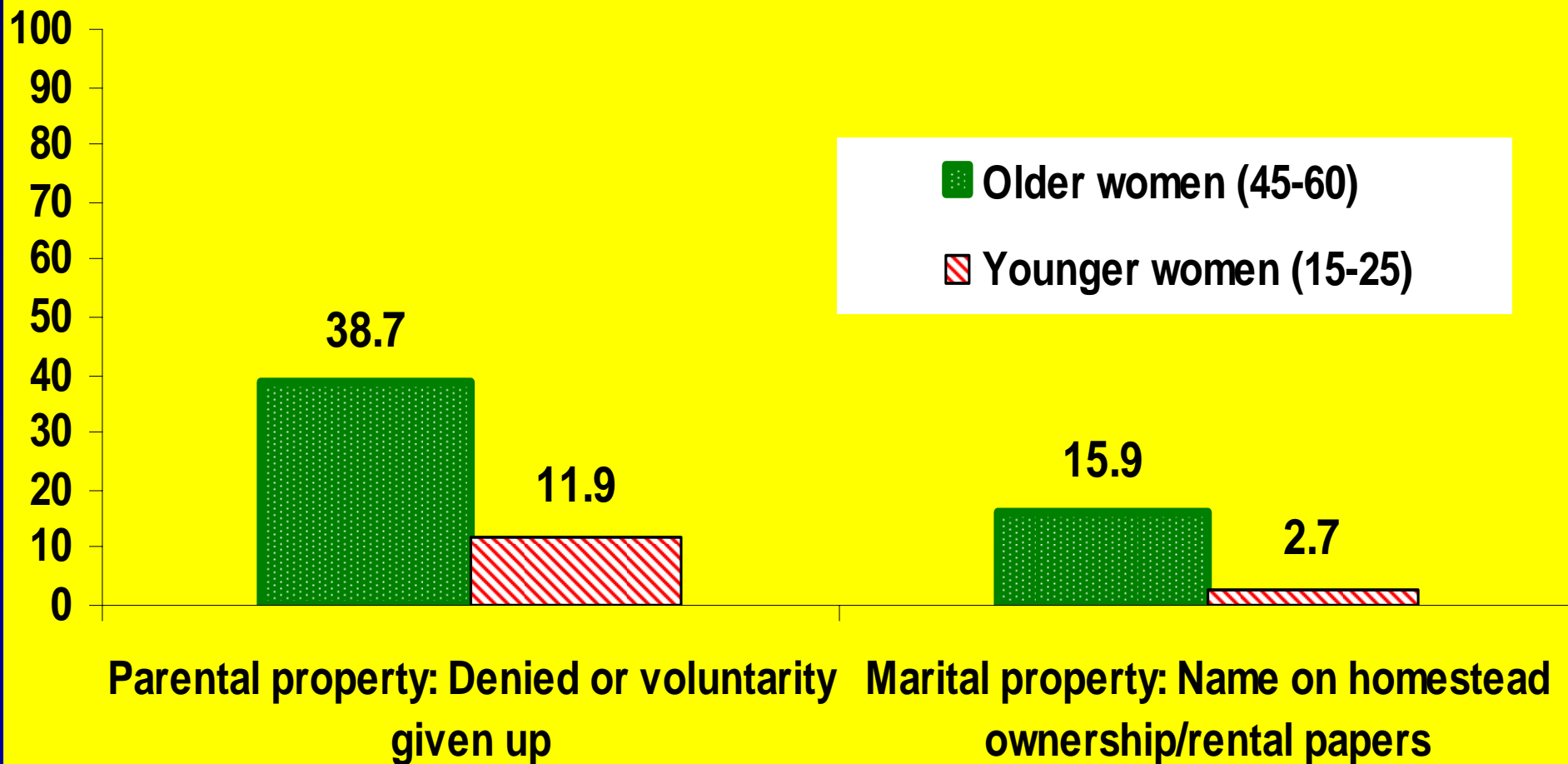
- 0.07 - 0.13
- 0.14 - 0.32
- 0.33 - 0.54
- 0.55 - 0.72
- 0.73 - 0.94
- No data

Source: World Bank Gender
Norms Survey 2006
Note: Darker color denotes
worse outcomes

Assets: Ingrained cultural issues and change

Bangladesh: Women's access to property

Source: World Bank Gender Norms Survey 2006



Political participation

- Reservation of seats in local governments
- Structure of reservations is “flawed” in that it does not give those elected through the quotas the same rights as those elected
- Participation in informal processes like shalish – access to conflict resolution emerges as an important demand

What's the big picture?

- Far reaching changes in Bangladesh - both structural and cultural
- Many cultural practices are being renegotiated or are reinventing themselves
- Some positive changes have perhaps led to "second generation" issues
- Remaining "first generation" issues like maternal and child mortality, access to markets, assets and formal spaces can significantly change outcomes for women
- There is both intrinsic and instrumental value in addressing these as part of the broader development agenda for Bangladesh

Next Steps: Access to markets, better services and "spaces"

- From the informal to formal
- Credit, land, labor markets
- Political participation
- Decision-making
- Access to justice