

## Fertility Decline and Gender Inequality in Bangladesh

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The paper explores the influence of fertility decline from a high of 7 in the 1960s to 2.4 births in 2007 on a range of gender equity indicators. The Bangladesh fertility decline was rapid in the early years, accompanied by uptake of modern contraception, widely attributed to a strong family planning program, and occurred in the absence of significant social or economic change in the initial years. Mortality decline occurred with some lag and was followed closely by an increase in education among young children.

Interviews with women who represent the first generation of birth controllers who were asked to reflect on their own lives relative to the lives of their mothers and daughters suggest that status change emanating from reduced childbearing occurred in generational waves beginning with change in time use patterns, proceeding to a gradual increase in productive activities which then flowed into more transformative change in terms of change in self-worth and esteem. These changes have led to more radical change in aspirations and expectations for daughters for whom women envision lives that are radically different from their own and that hinges fundamentally on girls getting educated.

We plan to explore these trends in quantitative analysis of a series of comparable demographic and health survey data. Surveys were conducted at three to four year intervals between 1990 and 2007. The empirical strategy will be to explore change in spatial patterns in our outcomes of interest (survival, education, women's work and marriage) contrasting districts characterized by early and late fertility decline. We propose to begin with a simple analysis with districts as the unit of analysis. We will also explore these associations in multilevel models where district level effects will be assessed while controlling for individual level factors affecting gender outcomes such as age, education, household poverty, husband's education.