

Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AdSEARCH) by icddr,b

# AdSEARCHBITES

Monthly Newsletter

Volume 2 | Issue 7

## AdSEARCH Newlywed Couples Cohort Dissemination: Evidence on Early Marriage, Violence, and Marital Satisfaction

17 December 2025



Panel discussion on Understanding the context and needs related to SRHR among newlywed couples in Bangladesh at the icddr,b Sasakawa Auditorium.

Among the four cohort studies under AdSEARCH, the newlywed couple cohort study in Bangladesh has revealed evidence on early marriage, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and high rates of mistimed pregnancies in selected rural areas and urban

informal settlements of Bangladesh. Supported by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the study titled "Understanding the context and needs related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) among newlywed couples in selected rural and urban

areas of Bangladesh," was the first longitudinal study in the country to follow newlywed couples from both rural areas and urban informal settlements through their early years of marriage.

According to the key findings, among

the participating women, 43% in rural areas and 65% in urban informal settlements were married before the age of eighteen. Within the first year of marriage, nearly three-quarters (73%) of women became pregnant, despite many women, particularly those living in urban informal settlements, expressing a clear desire to delay childbearing. The study recorded a high rate of mistimed pregnancies at 47%. Urban participants were more than three times higher while report mistimed pregnancies than rural participants.

On intimate partner violence, the study revealed, within the first six months of marriage, four in five women reported experiencing controlling behaviours from their husbands. Over the two years study period, more than half of the women experienced economic violence, while a substantial proportion reported

emotional, physical, and sexual violence.

Contraceptive use showed an initial rural-urban difference, higher among urban couples and lower among rural ones, but stabilised across both groups after roughly eighteen months of marriage. This pattern reflected a strong tendency among newlyweds to conceive early. Marital satisfaction also shifted over time. At the beginning of the study, men reported higher satisfaction levels than women. Satisfaction declined steadily for both and eventually plateaued, although the decline among men was steeper. This study was conducted from December 2022 to December 2024 at four Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) sites of icddr,b: Chakaria and Matlab in rural areas, and Mirpur and Korail slums in urban informal settlements. A total of 666 newlywed couples were enrolled,

all in their first marriage, married for less than six months, and with no history of pregnancy. Couples were followed every four months, resulting in six rounds of data collection over two years.

The dissemination event was opened by **Anisuddin Ahmed**.

**Dr Shams El Arifeen** delivered the vote of thanks. The event concluded with a panel discussion moderated by **Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman**, featuring **Dr Md Rafiqul Islam** **Talukder**, **Dr Shah Ali Akbar Ashrafi**, **Professor Sameena Chowdhury**, and **Dr Rokhsana Yasmin**.

**Edward Cabrera**, the First Secretary (Development – Health) at the High Commission of Canada, Global Affairs Canada, gave his remarks at the event. The study was led by **Dr Fauzia**

**Akhter Huda**, one of the theme leads of AdSEARCH, and Scientist, MCHD, icddr,b.



From left to right, Dr Fauzia Akhter Huda, Tarana-E-Ferdous, and Syed Hassan Imtiaz presenting the study findings.

#### **Major Attendees (chronology as appeared in the news):**

**Anisuddin Ahmed**, Project Coordinator, AdSEARCH and Associate Scientist, icddr,b

**Dr Shams El Arifeen**, Project Director of AdSEARCH and Senior Scientist (emeritus), icddr,b

**Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman**, Technical Coordinator, AdSEARCH and Scientist, icddr,b

**Dr Md Rafiqul Islam Talukder**, Line Director, CCSDP, DGFP

**Dr Shah Ali Akbar Ashrafi**, Health Sector Improvement Advisor, Bloomberg Data for Health Initiative

**Professor Sameena Chowdhury**, Former President, OGSB

**Dr Rokhsana Yasmin**, Technical Officer, HIV, STI and HGBV, UNFPA Bangladesh

**Tarana-E-Ferdous**, Assistant Scientist, MCHD, icddr,b

**Syed Hassan Imtiaz**, Research Investigator, MCHD, icddr,b

AdSEARCH Celebrates 16 Days of Activism 2025

# The Daily Star Roundtable Discussion on Ending Digital Violence

8 December 2025



Online abuse has emerged as a growing public health concern for women in Bangladesh. Many victims of cyberbullying and online harassment report experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress. These emotional challenges often disrupt daily life, interpersonal relationships, and physical well-being. Common symptoms include persistent sadness, loss of interest in routine activities, sleep disturbances, and reduced self-confidence.

In line with the global theme of this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, and as part of its annual standing agenda, AdSEARCH participated in a roundtable discussion to commemorate the campaign. The event was organised in collaboration with The Daily Star and the CSO Forum under the banner "Ending Digital Violence: Policy Priorities for

Advancing Health and Justice for Women and Girls." AdSEARCH and Ipas Bangladesh jointly supported the event.

**Dr Ruchira Tabassum Naved**, one of the AdSEARCH thematic lead and Emeritus Scientist participated as a discussant, while **Dr Ahmed Ehsanur**

**Rahman**, Technical Coordinator, AdSEARCH and Scientist, delivered the keynote presentation.

In his presentation titled "Health Impact: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls," Dr Ahmed highlighted both global and national perspectives, drawing on existing evidence to underscore the critical physical and mental health consequences of technology-facilitated and technology-based violence against women and girls. He presented findings from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Violence Against Women

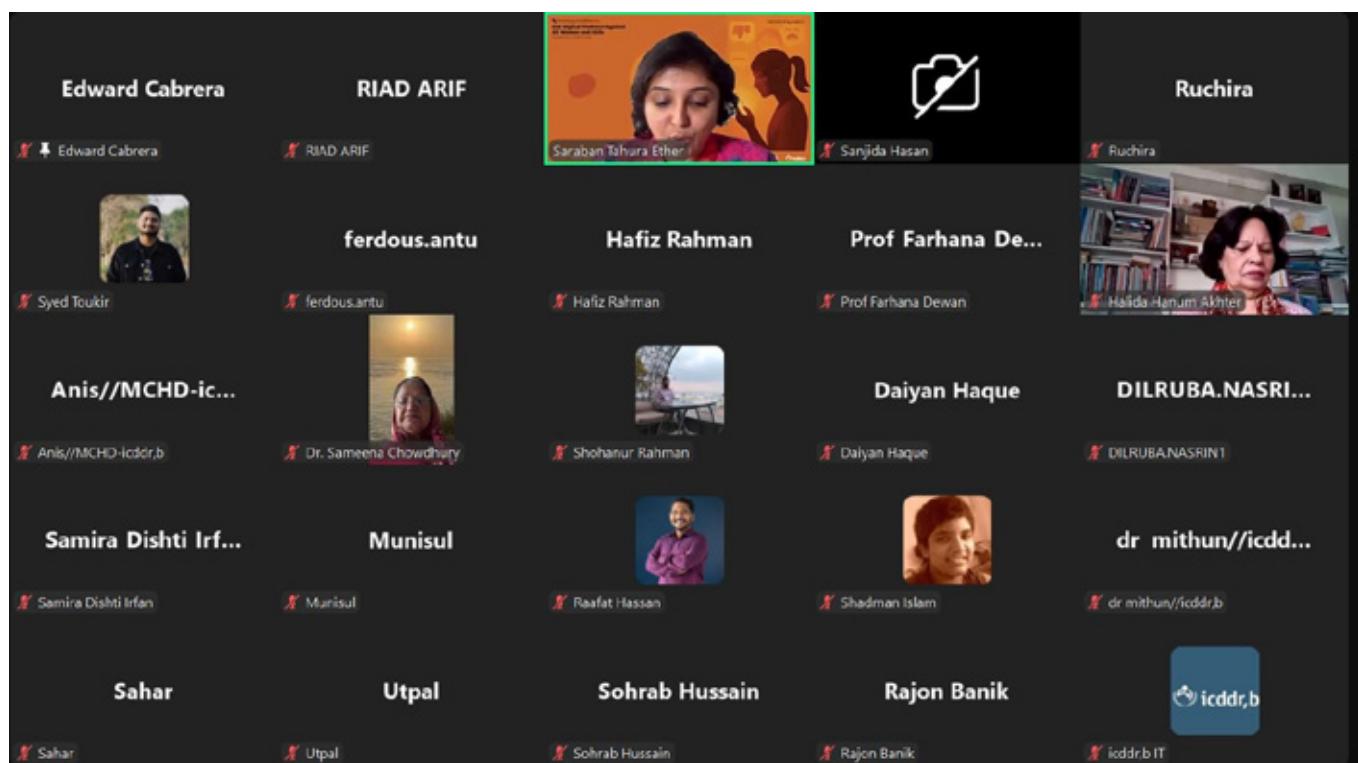
Survey 2024, which revealed that eight percent of women with access to technology had experienced technology-facilitated gender-based violence at least once.

The survey indicated that prevalence was highest among young and urban women, with sixteen percent of women aged 20–24 reporting such experiences. Exposure was also influenced by education and wealth status. Nearly one in five women with a bachelor's degree or higher reported experiencing online violence, compared to only 2.8 percent among women with no formal education. Almost half of the perpetrators were strangers, highlighting how digital platforms can create vulnerability even within private space. The Daily Star will publish a full supplement soon.

AdSEARCH Celebrates 16 Days of Activism 2025

# Webinar on Investing in Evidence to End Digital Violence Against Women and Girls

30 November 2025



As part of its ongoing “Know Better, Act Better” campaign, AdSEARCH organised a webinar titled “Investing in Evidence to End Digital Violence Against All Women and Girls.” In 2023, AdSEARCH launched an open call for research proposals on preventing VAWG. The webinar provided a platform for the grant awardees to share the evidence they have generated. A key feature of the webinar was three scientific presentations by young researchers, each on critical dimensions of cyberbullying, digital violence, and their long-term impacts:

**Hafizur Rahman** presented, Digital Guardians and Effective Strategies: A Review of Mobile Apps and Primary & Secondary Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls; **Jannatul Ferdous Antu**’s presentation highlighted the Pathways through which maternal experience of domestic violence impacts the mental health of male and female adolescents, and **Syed Toukir Ahmed Noor** presented, the association of cyberbullying with major depressive disorders among Bangladeshi female adolescents, drawing on data from the Bangladesh

Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Survey 2019–20. Following the presentations, **Dr Ruchira Tabassum Naved**, Emeritus Scientist, MCHD,

icddr,b, shared the way forward in strengthening evidence and interventions to combat digital violence.

**Dr Sameena Chowdhury** and **Dr Halida Hanum Akhter** gave their reflections and **Edward Cabrera**, the First Secretary (Development – Health) at the High Commission of Canada, Global Affairs Canada, gave the vote of thanks.

# AdSEARCH participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> SRHR Knowledge Fair

14 December 2025



AdSEARCH by icddr,b participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Knowledge Fair 2025, hosted by Share-Net-Bangladesh at Hotel Sheraton, Dhaka.

In a session "Where Knowledge Meets Business: Sustainable Social Enterprises for Economic Empowerment", **Anubhab Chakraborty**, Communications Specialist from AdSEARCH, made a presentation titled "Evidence Meets

Knowledge: Advancing SRHR Innovations through AdSEARCH by icddr,b" highlighting how research and evidence can be connected to help innovators turn insights into market-ready, impactful solutions. The presentation focused on selective innovations from the AdSEARCH Evidence and Innovation hub, contributions to reducing maternal mortality in Bangladesh through interventions addressing Postpartum

Haemorrhage (PPH) and reducing the burden of cervical cancer, demonstrating how research-driven solutions can directly improve women's health outcomes.

The annual SRHR Knowledge Fair brought together more than 300 participants, including SRHR experts, entrepreneurs, policymakers, investors, youth leaders, researchers, and development partners.

## Media Coverage:

**The Daily Star**

Online abuse taking toll on women's mental health:  
Speakers tell roundtable

8 December 2025

Know more: <https://tinyurl.com/3fj5h6f9>

**The Daily Star**

47% newlyweds face mistimed pregnancies

17 December 2025

Know more: <https://tinyurl.com/469arbsm>

**অর্থন্য আলো**

বিয়ের পর অনিচ্ছাকৃত গর্ভধারণে নারীর হার ৪৭ শতাংশ

18 December 2025

Know more: <https://tinyurl.com/36vm7bet>

**NEWAGE**

Child marriage higher in urban slums than  
rural areas: icddr,b

17 December 2025

Know more: <https://tinyurl.com/y3mfpvrf>

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শহরের বাস্তির ৬৫ শতাংশ কিশোরীর বিয়ে হয় ১৮ বছরের পূর্বে:  
আইসিডিডিআরবির গবেষণা

17 December 2025

Know more: <https://tinyurl.com/5avbmmtv>

AdSEARCH Bites **Previous Issues:**



<https://adsearch.icddrb.org/NewsDetail/newslist>



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