

# Pregnancy termination in Matlab, Bangladesh: Knowledge, attitudes, and decision-making processes

Abdur Razzaque<sup>1</sup>, Julie DaVanzo<sup>2</sup>, Mizanur Rahman<sup>3</sup>; Shahabuddin Ahmed<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> icddr,b, Dhaka, Bangladesh; <sup>2</sup>RAND Corporation, USA; <sup>3</sup>Measure Evaluation, USA

## **Abstract:**

### **Background:**

Bangladesh has made a remarkable success in reducing its fertility rate, considering its socioeconomic disadvantages. At 2.0 children per woman, desired fertility is around replacement level. However, the total fertility rate is a half child higher (2.5) and should go far below replacement level for some time in order to keep population size about 200 million by mid-2000. Current contraceptive prevalence is 58%, but the method mix is dominated by the use of short-term methods that are prone to use-failure and thus unintended pregnancy. Under these circumstances, it is likely that the incidence of abortion is increasing in the country.

### **Objective:**

The objective of this study to examine factors associated with unintended pregnancies, the decision-making processes by which women decide whether to terminate or continue an unintended pregnancy, and their knowledge, sources and cost of pregnancy termination.

### **Design:**

The study uses data from the Matlab Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) and associated cross-sectional socioeconomic data from censuses and data from a special survey fielded for this project. The special survey collected data in 2010 from 600 women who reported in the HDSS that they terminated a pregnancy in 2007 or 2008 and from 1,200 women, randomly selected as controls, who had other pregnancy outcomes (live birth, stillbirth, or miscarriage) during the same period.

### **Findings:**

Thirty percent non-abortion pregnancy outcomes were unintended, but the women chose not to terminate their pregnancies mainly because of disagreement with family members; three-fourth of them reported that they would face social consequences. By contrast, among those who had abortion, over 90% cases the couple received support from the family members. Those who had abortion were more knowledgeable about abortion procedures, less likely think that there was a risk of complications and also said less monetary cost of obtaining services for complication. Among women those who had abortion, 35% were using contraception before the conception, and 93% of them became pregnant during method use. By contrast, among women who had a non-abortion pregnancy outcome, only 9.7% were using contraception before the conception, and 88% of them became pregnant during method use; both groups were mainly using temporary contraceptive methods.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of those who had abortion and those who had non-abortion pregnancy outcome

Variables	Who had abortion (n=600)	Who had non- abortion pregnancy outcome (n=1200)	Abortion vs. non- abortion pregnancy outcome
Mother's age			
Under 20	5.2	12.7	
20-24	10.2	29.6	
25-29	17.7	26.0	
30+	65.0	30.6	P<0.05
Pregnancy order			
Under 2	15.7	57.4	
3-4	37.2	33.5	
5+	47.2	9.2	P<0.05
Women's education			
None	35.2	18.1	
1-5	31.8	28.1	
6+	31.5	53.3	P<0.05
Household space			
Under 170	49.2	71.0	
170-249	17.7	10.4	
250+	33.2	18.6	P<0.05
Religion			
Muslim	91.7	89.8	
Non-Muslim	8.3	10.2	ns
Study area			
icddr,b served	50.2	56.6	
Government served	49.8	43.4	P<0.05

Table 2: Women's desire for children, contraceptive use prior to conception and reason for non-use of contraception- those who had abortion and those who had non-abortion pregnancy outcome

Variables	Who had abortion (%)	Who had non-abortion pregnancy outcome (%)	Abortion vs. non-abortion pregnancy outcome
Desire for children			
Wanted no more <sup>1</sup> /Wanted more children <sup>2</sup>	91.2	70.3	P<0.01
Wanted later <sup>3</sup> /Wanted no more or later <sup>4</sup>	8.8	29.7	P<0.01
Contraceptive use			
Prior to conception	35.0	9.7	P<0.01
Method used			
Pill	72.9	71.8	ns
Condom	16.2	14.5	ns
Injectables	3.3	5.1	ns
Other	7.6	8.6	ns
Contraceptive failure (user)	93.3	88.0	ns
Reason for non-use of contraception			
Side effect	30.0	6.9	P<0.01
Could not get suitable method	17.9	3.3	P<0.01
Postpartum amenorrhoea/no need method	17.0	4.0	P<0.01
Desire for more children	-	76.6	
Others	35.1	9.2	P<0.01

Note: <sup>1</sup>Those who had abortion; <sup>2</sup>Those who had non-abortion pregnancy outcome; <sup>3</sup>Wanted later;

<sup>4</sup>Wanted no more or later

Table 3: Knowledge of abortion, its cost and consequences- those who had abortion and those who had non-abortion pregnancy outcome

Variables	MVA/MR	D&C /wash	Medicine	Virginal insertion of medicine	Virginal insertion of some staff	Others
Aware about procedure	73.67	20.50	41.33	7.00	1.67	2.00
Who had abortion	30.56	19.13	52.29	3.41	0.83	3.66
Who had non-abortion pregnancy						
Was procedure safe (yes)	24.43	28.46	23.39	2.38	0.0	8.33
Who had abortion	11.72	17.72	14.17	2.44	0.0	11.36
Who had non-abortion pregnancy						
Cost of abortion (taka)	480	1140	120	249	140	342
Who had abortion	550	1161	156	214	330	239
Who had non-abortion pregnancy						

Table 4: Abortion complication and its cost, social consequences and decision making process- those who had abortion and those who had non-abortion pregnancy outcome

Variables	Who had abortion	Who had non-abortion pregnancy outcome	Abortion vs. non-abortion pregnancy outcome
Abortion complication			
Complication (actual/perceived)			
Major	18.8	88.9	P<0.01
Minor	9.7	9.5	ns
No/DK	71.5	1.6	P<0.01
Average cost of abortion in taka (actual/perceived)	2,137	3,554	P<0.01
Face social consequences (yes)	9.9	72.0	P<0.01
Would recommend a woman for abortion (yes)	21.0	1.7	P<0.01
Decision making process			
Consulted family member to abort			
Who decide to terminate/continue pregnancy			
Self	82.8	20.6	P<0.01
Husband	24.2	13.8	P<0.01
Both	10.0	23.4	P<0.01
Family support received for abortion	60.7	47.7	P<0.01
	97.0	20.5	