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Dreams of Pakistani Children

In-depth conversations with 22 girls and 3 boys

Launch Date: 21 February 2019

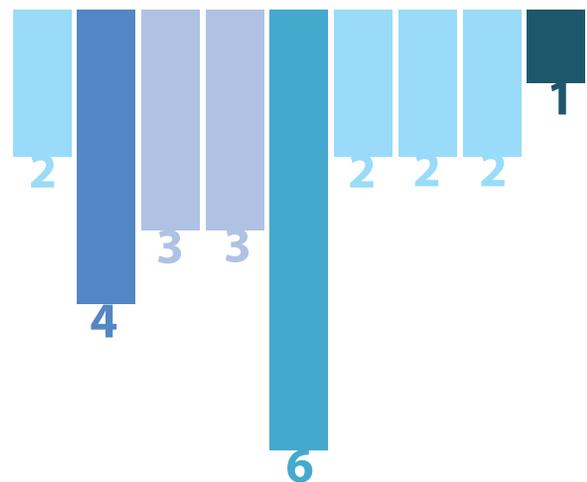
Profile of Participants

Total Participants: 25

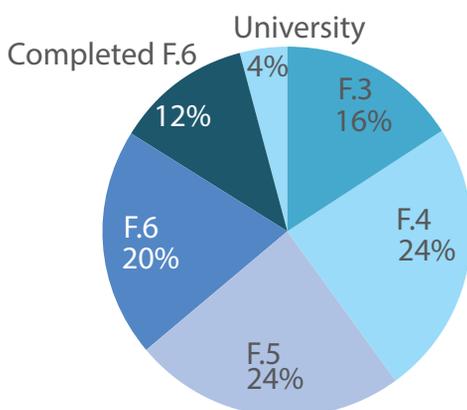
Gender



Age 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22



Current Educational Status



Place of Birth

Participants are all ethnically Pakistanis, born in either Hong Kong or Pakistan



Hong Kong Born Participants



Pakistan Born Participants

Dreams of Pakistani Children

Key Findings

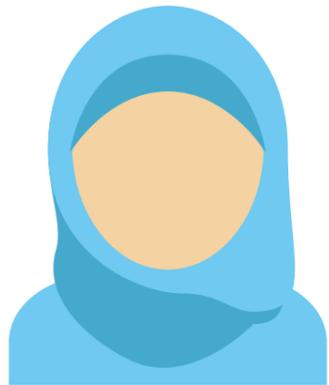
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1 Culture is embedded into all aspects of life

Culture differs per family and it constrains Pakistani girls. Birthplace impacts culture.

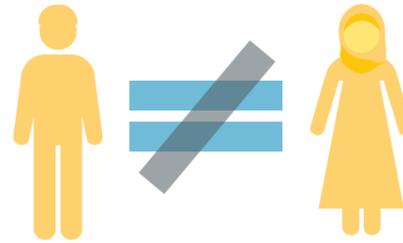


Pakistani girls in Hong Kong:
More modern, go to coed schools, more educated, have a better life, Hong Kong is their home.



Pakistani girls in Pakistan:
More strict upbringing, go to single sex schools, less educated, less well off, girls must wear a hijab.

2 Parents treat boys and girls differently



- Girls are discouraged from studying after age 14.
- Girls have to persuade parents to allow them to study.
- Girls have restrictions - socialising, job, gym, dress, etc.
- Education beyond Form 4 or 5 is typically constrained.
- Prospects for university education are virtually non-existent for most girls.
- Girls are not allowed to have non-Pakistani and male friends.

3 Islam is supportive of girls education

Girls study the Holy Qu'ran



*"Islam supports gender equality, protects women."
"[the hijab is a] protective piece of clothing and that, when worn, is associated with a sense of belonging and freedom."*

The girls said that the Holy Qu'ran supports their education as girls.

BUT

Their parents don't know that the Holy Qu'ran is supportive of girls education

AND

The girls are SCARED to tell their parents.

4 Girls have dreams to work but face barriers

The dream:

→ All want to work

air hostesses
policewomen
engineers
fashion designers
doctors

Barriers:

→ 1. Parents and Extended Family



→ 2. Chinese language:
(to be a doctor/ nurse)



5 Girls are engaged at a young age

Typical age for engagement: **14 to 15**
Most marry between 20 to 22, but it depends on the family

Typical age for marriage: **18 to 22**



Engagement comes with the responsibility to uphold the **"honour"** and expectations of two families -- not just one.

6 Is it FORCED or Arranged Marriage?

Girls are not opposed to **ARRANGED** marriages **BUT** Feel trapped.

Arranged Marriage:

Parents make an introduction to a potential husband and the girl has a choice.

Forced Marriage:

The girl has no choice.

- Spouse is often first cousin in Pakistan and much older sometimes.
- Marriage may be for convenience – to obtain a HK visa.
- Marriage may also be to strengthen family bonds.
- The girl may be invited to "approve" a husband but actually the girl has little say.

7 It is difficult to say no to marriage

She thinks she is going **"on holiday"** to Pakistan

→ She comes back married, sometimes pregnant, has to discontinue education.

If she says **"NO"**

- Family disgrace
- Family feud
- Verbal and physical abuse
- Education stopped for her and her siblings
- Threaten to disown her
- Threaten to move all siblings to Pakistan

8 Forced marriage diminishes a girl

Girls feel diminished by forced marriage:

"I rather be called a brown girl, than be asked do you marry at a young age? It makes me think differently about my own culture."

"At first, they had chosen someone for me, were pushing me to say yes and then scaring me if I said no. I felt useless after my engagement, that I couldn't stop it or stand up for myself – felt so demotivated, loss focus after my engagement."



9 If a girl could choose...

She would choose a husband who

- supports her having a career
- is financially stable
- is respectful
- is educated



She would complete education and marry after the age of 24.

She live a life free of poverty.

10 If her dream does not come true...

In 10 years time...

"Just being a housewife"

"Poverty"

"I would be home, crying, cooking food, doing house-work or arguing."

"Bad life. If I have to marry before I want to, it's fine"

"Having to return to Pakistan."

11 All Pakistani children face discrimination

The Hijab poses problems for Muslim girls:

"[I have] to hide the Hijab for fear of discrimination."

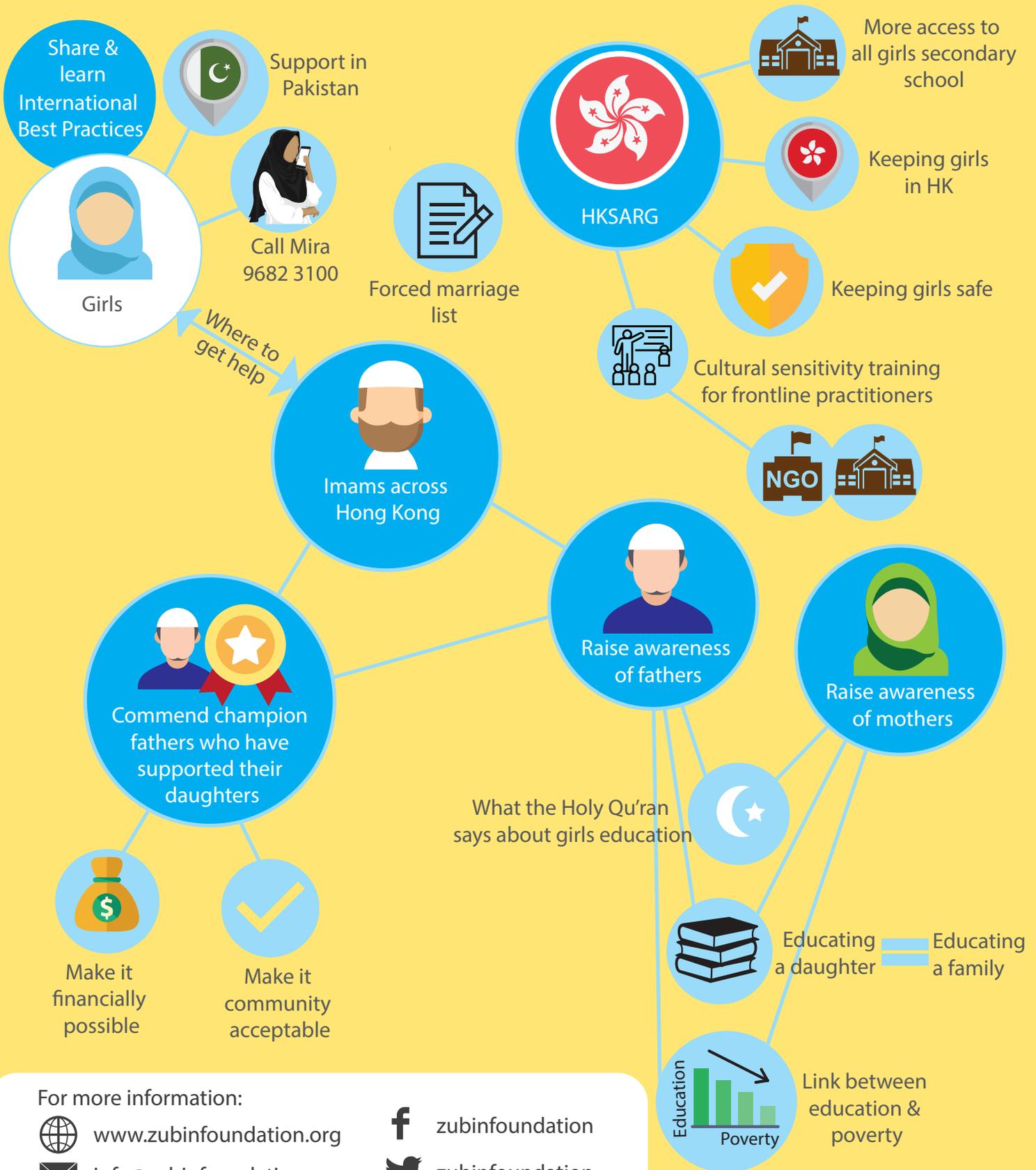
On public transport, Muslim girls and boys experience discrimination:

*"My mother and I have experienced discrimination publicly on public transport. My mother accidentally pushed a local girl. She responded, retarded."
"On public transport, people cover their noses."*

The "smell" of Pakistanis, remains a point of discrimination:

"[We have] been in Hong Kong all my life. People still discriminate, and disrespect by saying things such as, you smell bad, go away from here."

Recommendations



For more information:



www.zubinfoundation.org



info@zubinfoundation.org



+852 2540 9588



zubinfoundation



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