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# Dreams of Pakistani Children

In-depth conversations with 22 girls and 3 boys

Launch Date: 21 February 2019

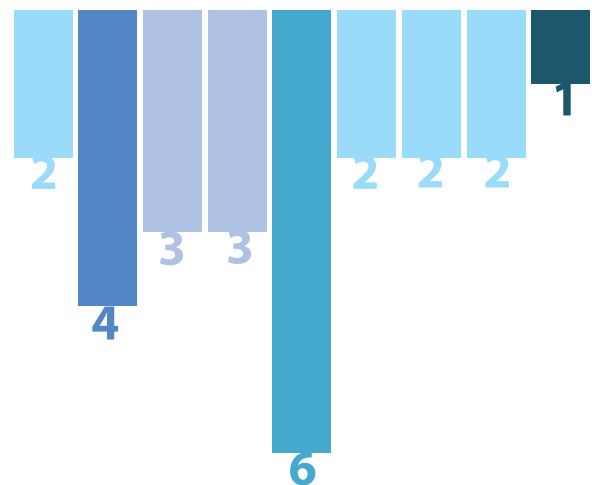
## Profile of Participants

Total Participants: 25

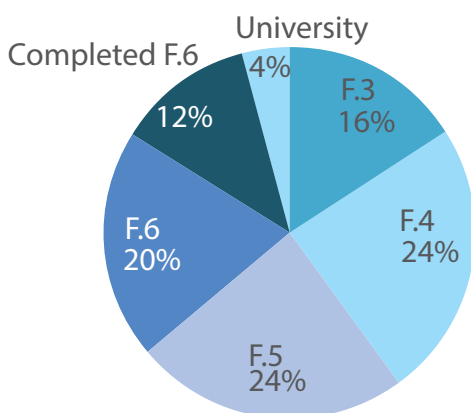
### Gender



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



60%

Hong Kong Born Participants

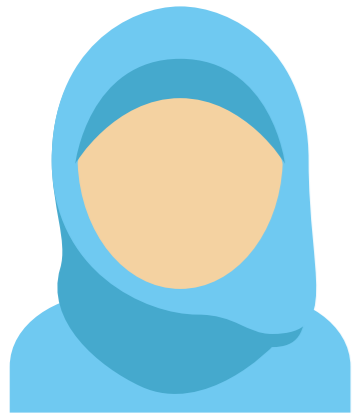


40%

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.

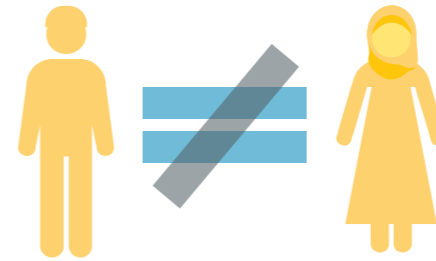


**Pakistani girls in Hong Kong:**  
More modern, go to coed schools, more educated, have a better life, Hong Kong is their home.



**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."*

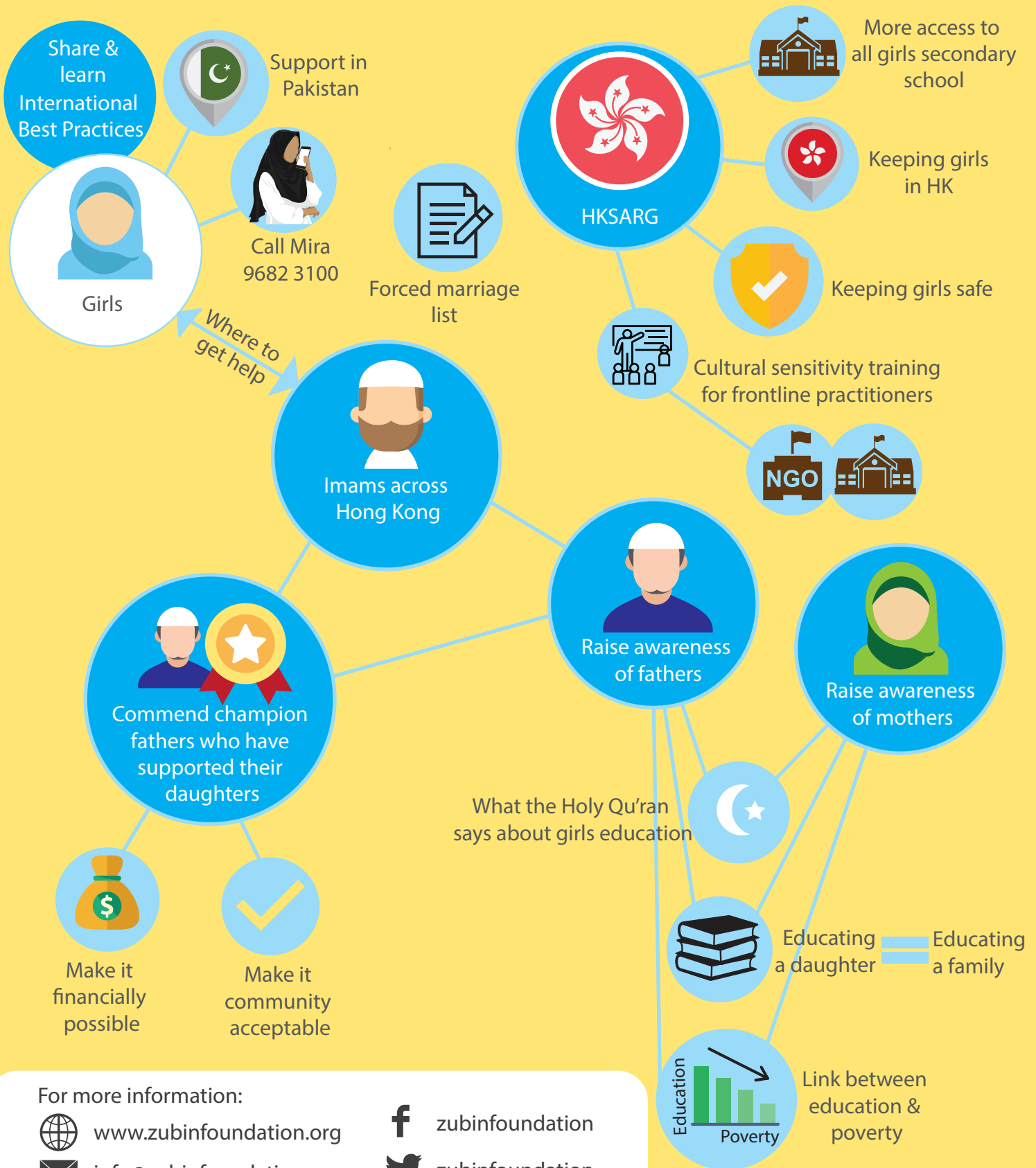
On public transport, Muslim girls and boys experience discrimination:

*"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:



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