

# IMPACT OF SIDE EFFECTS ON WOMEN’S LIVES: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

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## BACKGROUND

- Side effects is one of the leading causes of contraceptive discontinuation worldwide.
- Research on side effects has focused on the physical manifestations like headaches, moodiness, abdominal pain and menstrual irregularities.
- Less well known is how side effects influence women in terms of their daily lives.

## WHY BANGLADESH?

- Discontinuation rates are high:<sup>1</sup>
  - Condoms – 47%
  - Pill – 39%
  - Injectables – 36%
- Method switching is low – 14%<sup>1</sup>
- 74% of women with an unmet need were past users<sup>2</sup>
- 61% of recent unintended births were by women who used contraception but discontinued prior to pregnancy<sup>3</sup>

## STUDY PURPOSE

To understand the ways that side effects limit a woman’s participation in her daily responsibilities and the ways that they affect or alter her relationships with social networks and family members.

## METHODOLOGY

- Two Bangladesh divisions: Khulna & Sylhet
- Married women, 15-39 years old
  - 35 IDIs were purposively sampled based on specific contraceptive behaviors

User Type	Method discontinued	Method switched	# of interviews completed	
			Khulna	Sylhet
Discontinuers	Pill	-	3	2
	Injectable	-	2	2
	Implant	-	2	2
	IUD	-	0	2
Switchers	Pill	Pill	2	0
	Pill	Injectable	1	2
	Pill	Implant	1	1
	Pill	Vasectomy	0	1
	Pill	Tubal ligation	0	2
	Injectable	Pill	1	2
	Injectable	Implant	1	0
	Injectable	IUD	1	1
	Implant	Pill	1	1
	IUD	Injectable	1	0
	IUD	Implant	1	0
	<b>Total</b>			<b>17</b>

- IDIs tape recorded, transcribed in Bangla verbatim, and translated into English
- Codebook developed by two researchers using an iterative process
- High levels of agreement were observed in codebook development and coding processes
- Inductive process was used to identify themes that emerged from the data

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

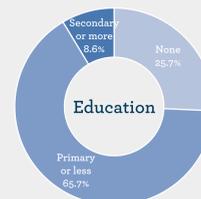
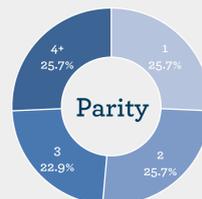
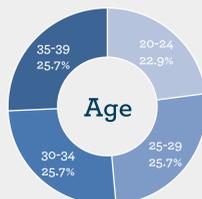
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## RESULTS

### RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (n=35)



### RELIGIOUS LIFE

Many respondents reported that side effects limited religious participation.

*“Suppose, I had taken a bath. I took bath for being clean and pure, didn’t I? But I saw again discharge after taking bath! Could I say my prayer in this situation? Could I read the Quran with this? No, I could not. I could not say my prayer and read the Quran. To perform my prayer I had to be pure.”*

-28 year old, IUD discontinuer, Sylhet

They reported that prolonged menstrual bleeding that continued beyond the “normal” number of days prevented them from performing their regular prayers:

*“By taking pills I faced severe headaches. I had menstruation problems too. It didn’t stop! Once it started, it continued for two weeks long which disturbed me so much! I was unable to perform my regular prayer!”*

-30 year old, switcher (pill to injectable), Sylhet

### DAILY LIFE & FAMILY SUPPORT

Side effects affected many respondents’ abilities to complete household chores. Many reported having support but others did not as described by a mother of two children:

*“Side effects affected my daily activities a lot. I have two little children and I alone take care them. Except me, there is no other woman in my house. Rearing two children and at the same time as managing other household work is very laborious tasks....My father-in-law and my husband work in the paddy field every day..... I have to prepare food for them before they return from the field. Sometimes when I fail to cook food on time then they scolded me for being late!”*

-22 year old, injectable discontinuer, Khulna

### SEXUAL LIFE

About one-third of respondents said they had feelings of pain in their abdomen or vagina during sex. One described it as “fire” in the vagina. Pain ranged in severity. In ability to perform sexually was also a concern

*“I feel weak when I am experiencing prolonged menstruation. It is affecting my sex drive. Because of weakness I cannot perform well in the bed and I know it is frustrating for my husband.”*

-31 year old, switcher (pill to implant), Sylhet

Refusal of sex for fear of abuse

*“When I didn’t give him space for sex (silence for a moment), sometimes he beat me....”*

Same respondent said she was compelled to have sex for self-preservation

*“If I don’t fulfill his wish of sex, he will go to the outside. Then he will become an addict of bad things. That will be harmful for me. I was afraid if he went to the other women and has any kind of diseases, then that will harm me. That’s why I didn’t refuse him and gave him what he wanted.”*

-29 year old, switcher (injectable to implant), khulna



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Learning about the broader context in which family planning decision-making is done vis-à-vis side effects, is critical in designing programs and interventions that meet all the needs of women beyond just their fertility intentions. Interventions that promote contraceptive continuation (and not continuation of the same method), consider the role that these additional unwanted contraceptive use consequences may factor into women’s decision making.