



Story from the Field

Tipping Point: Digging Up the Roots of Child Marriage to Replant the Future

TASLIMA'S STORY

It Was Not My Fault

"It's all your fault. You should stay home!" was what I heard repeatedly. Eventually, I began to believe that I deserved the poor treatment I was receiving from my family and neighbors. I had dropped out of school six months ago because the thirty minute walk to school was made unbearable by the constant teasing I experienced from young boys.

Finally, one day, my friend Shirin came to my house to ask my mother if I could join her at the Fun Center. Finances were tight because my father had stopped sending money home from Oman, so my mother was hesitant to let me join my friend. When my mother heard that the Fun Center would not bring about more teasing – but would instead be a place for me to spend time with other girls who had dropped out of school unwillingly, she agreed to let me join.

The Fun Center was such an enjoyable place to spend time! We could read and tell stories, play games such as badminton and carom, and participate in plays. We also learned about activism and how to avoid harassment. I even heard a story from another girl in the Fun Center that was so similar to my own: she was teased by boys, too. Shahida Apa, a Community Volunteer, told us that boys should learn to respect women and girls, we should always report harassment, and insisted that being teased was not this girl's fault. I kept thinking, "If it is not that girl's fault, then how can it be mine!" I finally felt I should no longer be punished for the harassment I had experienced on my way to school, but I still had a lot of questions.

With a new sense of confidence and thanks to the comradery of my Fun Center peers, I decided to speak with my mother about going back to school. Eventually, she and my father agreed. Unfortunately, I re-enrolled in school right before the exam period. I had to work and study very hard to catch up on all of the work I had missed, but I knew it was worth it. Eventually, I want to finish school and serve as an army officer! I know it is not common for a girl to serve as an army officer, but I also know that girls can do anything boys can do, thanks to the Fun Center.

The Tipping Point project facilitates Fun Centers for adolescent girls in 90 villages throughout Bangladesh. Taslima's story highlights how these community spaces offer girls a supportive social network and an environment in which reflective discussions on important issues related to their health and well-being is encouraged. Fun Centers can help to empower girls' voices and encourage them to engage in actions that further their own needs and desires.



This story was originally shared by Taslima with Suniti Neogy, Deputy Project Director, Tipping Point.