



Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)



Save the Children

25 YEARS OF THE CRC
IN BANGLADESH

**SNAPSHOT
OF SUCCESS**



Background

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the primary human rights treaty setting out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20th November 1989, and has been ratified by every UN member country with the exception of the United States of America and Somalia. This makes it the most widely ratified international human rights treaty and which, for the first time, recognized all children as universal citizens with an innate, unique and inalienable set of human rights by virtue of being under 18 years old. The CRC is also a landmark document because it requires that signatory states take all available measures, including providing adequate public resources, to ensure that children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. Thus, governments have a range of duties and responsibilities under the CRC, from formulating, implementing and monitoring necessary policies and laws to allocating sufficient funds for programmes that advance children's wellbeing and development.

Bangladesh was one of the first two states in the region to ratify the CRC in August 1990, demonstrating the country's early commitment to children's rights. Even before that, however, it was enshrined in Article 28(4) of the Constitution in 1971 that "Nothing shall prevent the State from making special provision for women and children..." which shows how the founders of the newly independent country recognized that children deserved affirmative action to reach their full potential. Article 15 of the Constitution also makes it a fundamental responsibility of the State to secure for its citizens, including children, basic necessities such as food; clothing; shelter; education; medical care; and the right to work, reasonable rest, recreation and leisure. Since then, Bangladesh has maintained an impressive track record of enacting various policies and laws, and implementing programmes, to realize the rights of its children including the National Children Policy 2011 and Children Law 2013.

This year, on 20 November 2014, the world celebrates the 25th anniversary of the CRC. The Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh, is a civil society network working to promote child rights. Coalition members are Save the Children, Action Aid Bangladesh, Ain O Shalish Kendra, Child Rights

The Convention on the Rights of the Child [is] that luminous, living document that enshrines the rights of every child, without exception, to a life of dignity and self-fulfillment.

— Nelson Mandela (emphasis added)

Governance Assembly, Education and Development Foundation, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Plan International Bangladesh, Terre Des Hommes – Netherlands, and World Vision Bangladesh. It works together to advocate jointly for the rights of children in Bangladesh. The Coalition has developed this short report to contribute towards these celebrations. In order to avoid overlap with other well-researched and data-rich publications, this report does not aim to comprehensively cover the child rights situation past and present in Bangladesh. Rather, it aims to provide a 'snapshot of success' by focusing on progress in selected child rights and related issues, while also considering some of the persistent challenges that continue to threaten children's wellbeing and development in this country and providing some high-level recommendations for going forward. It also draws on consultations with key child rights advocates, such as the child representatives of the National Children's Task Force and members of the Coalition. This report has thus been crafted in the spirit of showcasing the key achievements in Bangladesh on child rights as a form of paying tribute to this unique human rights treaty, the CRC.

The CRC in Bangladesh: 25 Years On, and the Journey Ahead

The 54 articles set out in the CRC, and their inherent rights and objectives, address almost every aspect of a child's life and circumstances from birth through childhood to adolescence. This holistic, multi-dimensional approach is reflected in the 8 thematic clusters into which the individual rights in the CRC are often categorized, as follows:

- (i) General Measures of Implementation
- (ii) Definition of the Child
- (iii) General Principles
- (iv) Civil Rights and Freedoms
- (v) Family Environment and Alternative Care
- (vi) Basic Health and Welfare
- (vii) Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities
- (viii) Special Protection Measures.

Bangladesh has dedicated considerable efforts to fulfilling these rights for its children over the past two and half decades, particularly in the areas of health and education. It has made remarkable progress in reducing child mortality, immunizing more children, and increasing the numbers of children enrolled in school, thereby showing a real willingness to invest 'to the maximum extent of the resources available', which is a measure of how well the CRC is being implemented in this country. These achievements have been complemented in recent years by the development of a child-sensitive framework, based on the CRC, under the Children Policy 2011 and the Children Act 2013, as well as sector-specific legislation in education, health, and protection. In addition, consecutive Five Year Plans have placed children at the centre of the nation's development agenda. In the Sixth Five Year Plan 2011-2015, for example, it was planned that *'existing programs will be reviewed and reformed to establish better targeting with a view to ensuring that all under-privileged groups, ... including children, are given priority in the distribution of benefits.'*

Looking forward, the Coalition supports the Government's ongoing commitment to realizing children's rights and meeting their needs in its frameworks, especially as it moves towards middle-income status in line with the 'Vision 2021'. The country has a strong economy, which has grown at around 6% every year; such robust economic growth is critical for providing the resources and opportunities for all children to thrive. The Coalition recognizes that economic growth and a focus on a number of children's rights under the CRC has led to delivery on outcomes that unlock the potential of children and young people. Yet economic growth



Photo: EDUCO

alone is not enough for children to continue to survive and prosper. Rather, inclusive growth is the key to providing opportunities and benefits for all. This will be especially important during and after Bangladesh's transformation into a middle-income country, which typically tends to entrench and exacerbate existing inequalities and disparities. The challenge ahead therefore will be to ensure that no child is left behind through national programmes aimed at advancing children's rights and well being, and ensure particularly that especially children from poor, marginalized and remote communities, are fully included in all efforts to better implement the CRC in this country over the next 25 years.

General Measures of Implementation: The Best Benefactor of Children is the Government

Article 4 of the CRC, which is one of three classified under the 'General Measures of Implementation', calls on the Government of Bangladesh to take all appropriate measures, and to the maximum extent of its resources available, to fulfill the rights of Bangladeshi children as set out in the CRC. This is a foundational right because the Government is

June 2014, that a 'child budget will be implemented on a pilot basis from FY 2015/16' and BDT 50 crore will be allocated for projects that enhance children's welfare. A child sensitive budget is critical for monitoring inter- and intra-sectoral allocations of the national budget over time to assess their impact and allocative efficiency. The Coalition considers that a 'child budget' will substantially improve the general implementation of the CRC in this country.

Although not classified as such, another general measure that the Government can take to implement the CRC is through **social protection**

programmes for children. Social security is provided for under Article 26, and is commonly understood among stakeholders as 'a set of public actions and initiatives that help address risk, vulnerability and chronic poverty'. Despite impressive reductions in the rate of poverty – in 2000, it was 49%, which declined to 31.5% in 2010 – poverty rates in households with children remain particularly high. Much higher than the national average, in fact; around 42% in households with children aged 0-7 years, and around 37% for households with children aged 8-12 years (Save the Children, 2014).

Key Challenge: Lack of Social Protection for Adolescent Girls
In the draft National Social Security Strategy, the Government of Bangladesh envisions a more streamlined national safety net programme which will be based on a life-cycle approach. The Coalition welcomes the proposed new initiative of a Child Grant, available to families with children from 0-4 years. However, it also wishes to underscore the very limited inclusion of youth in the safety net, especially adolescent girls, going forward. More investment in their training, capacity building and empowerment would help promote the intrinsic value of adolescent girls and raise public awareness that they are just as worthy and as capable as their male counterparts.

the primary duty bearer under the CRC; if it doesn't allocate adequate public financial and human resources nor effectively and efficiently utilize these, it cannot meaningfully protect and promote other child rights.

Investment in Children in Bangladesh is difficult to measure at present because there is currently no 'child budget', which would show how well the government's policy and programme commitments are supported by financial outlay. However, the Coalition and other child rights advocates were pleased to hear the Honourable Finance Minister commit, in his budget speech in

The greatest opportunity for ensuring access to social protection for Bangladesh's poorest children is to increase the total investment in the safety net framework. Currently, the Government invests around 11.87% of the total national budget, or around 2.8% of GDP on its safety net programmes. The Coalition commends the commitment of the Government to providing social protection for its people, including children. By virtue of their age and status in society, lacking social and political capital, children are practically and legally less able to claim the rights under the CRC without the strong support that social protection strategies can offer.

General Principles: Non-Discrimination, Best Interests and Child Participation are Paramount

Few would argue that a child's life chances should be determined before they are even born. But across the world, in high and low income countries alike, children's prospects in life are largely determined by factors outside of their control – their birthplace, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic group, and whether or not they have a disability. Shared prosperity hinges on shifting the trajectory of economic growth onto a more equitable pathway, ensuring that all children have equal chances to survive and thrive in life. This is important not only because high levels of inequality and severe poverty can undermine social cohesion, but also because it is guaranteed in the CRC under the foundational principle of **non-discrimination**.

Article 2 requires that all children should have their rights respected without discrimination of any kind irrespective of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability,

birth or other status. While a most persistent and pervasive form of discrimination in Bangladesh is based on gender, there is at least one key aspect in which progress in advancing the principle of non-discrimination can be seen in this regard.

This is the 'child sex ratio', which refers to the number of boy children under five years vis-à-vis their female counterparts. In some parts of the world, notably India, the child sex ratio reveals greater numbers of boy children, indicating sex-selection practices such as abortions, infanticide and discriminatory health care and medical services against girls. According to the UNICEF "Child Equity Atlas: Pockets of Social Deprivation in Bangladesh", 2013, the predictable sex ratio for the under-five population is 103 for Bangladesh, matching the census estimates and confirming the absence of the sex-selection practices. Indeed, as the aforementioned Child Equity Atlas notes:

“Child sex ratio throughout Bangladesh is within or better than the international standard benchmark.”



Photo: ichchey media

The primacy of the **best interests** of the child is another key general principle, expressed in Article 3: in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. As the CRC/C/GC/14 Committee on the Rights of the Children General Comment No. 14 (2013) remarked, this is 'aimed at ensuring both the full and effective enjoyment of all the rights recognized in the Convention and the holistic development of the child'. Thus, 'best interests' decisions cannot override an adult's responsibility to respect children's rights under the CRC, and the principle lies at the very heart of the concept that children are rights holders with distinct needs which require adult protection, but are not subsumed into adult's interests.



Photo: Suralini Fernando, Save the Children

In Bangladesh the 'best interests' concept has been incorporated into the Children Policy 2011 and the Children Act 2013. However, recognition and acceptance of the fact that an adult's determination of 'best interests' cannot override the rights of children under the CRC is not always clear. A distinct example of this is the prevalence of child marriage in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has one of the highest child marriage prevalence rates in the world. According to the UNICEF "State of the World Children 2011" report, 2011, one-third of women aged 20-24 in Bangladesh were married by the age of 15, and about two-thirds were married by the age of 18. Put another way,

"I don't know what is called an 'early marriage' but in our area boys and girls are usually being married at the age of 8-14 years."

— NCTF Child Researcher, 2012

and according to findings from a more recent national survey conducted in 2013 by the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Bangladesh and Plan, 64 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 were married before reaching 18 years of age. While these figures are still unacceptably high, they do show some progress. According to the Bangladesh DHS in 2004, 2007 and 2011, 77 per cent of women currently aged between 45 to 49 years old were married by the time they were 18. However, in the words of the UNICEF Child Equity Atlas 2013, such progress has taken place at "a snail's pace compared to other demographic parameters in Bangladesh".

While the reasons behind the practice of child marriage are complex and multi-dimensional, **parents often justify the decision to marry their daughter as being in her 'best interests'** to protect her from sexual harassment ('eve teasing'), and protect her chastity, reputation and respectability, all of which are perceived to be linked to her family's 'honour'. However, child marriage is widely recognized as a harmful practice, a violation of fundamental human rights, and a direct contravention of the Government's commitment under CRC Article 24 to "take all effective and appropriate measures to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children". Child marriage results in devastating social, psychological, and health consequences for girls, plus loss of education and life opportunities. Child brides in Bangladesh also remain extremely vulnerable to all forms of violence – physical, sexual or emotional – at the hands of their often much-older husbands and/or in-laws, with whom they live after marriage.

Children of adolescent mothers are also inevitably worse off, thus perpetuating inter-generational poverty and recurrent child rights violations. According to the UNICEF “State of the World’s Children” 2009, adolescent mothers between the ages of 15 and 19 are twice as likely to die of pregnancy and childbirth complications as women between the ages of 20 and 24; the situation is even graver for girls under the age of 15, who are five times more likely to die in childbirth. The health consequences for children of adolescent mothers are also serious, with the risk of an infant born to a mother under the age of 18 dying in its first year of life 60 per cent greater than that of an infant born to a mother older than 19. When they survive, these babies have higher rates of low birth weight, premature birth and infant mortality than those born to older mothers. In light of the above, the Coalition supports efforts to challenge and change negative social norms, including the widely-held perception that child marriage is in the ‘best interests’ of the child.

“Local government officials often talk to us about the development of the area that we live in. They consulted us regarding the roads and health care that should be made available.”

~ Ashiq, Grade 8, Kulaura

Another key general principle is child **participation**, as articulated in Article 12: every child who is capable of forming a view has the right to express that view freely when adults are making decisions that affect that child. In Bangladesh, traditional views that children are sufficiently mature nor capable of being involved in decision making processes at the family and political levels tend to persist, even where those decisions impact directly on children’s lives. This suggests a popular belief that “children do not know much even for their own betterment”. During the consultation, representatives of the National Children’s Task Force confirmed that many



Photo: Titu, BTS

parents often impose their preferences on their children’s choice of subjects to study at the matriculation level. On a more serious note, many children are not consulted when their parents make decisions about sending them to the labour market.

Nevertheless, there are some promising signs that children’s views are being taken into account at the higher level, when laws and policies concerning children are formulated at the national and sub-national levels in Bangladesh. For example, through the National Children Task Force the active participation of children was obtained when developing the national Children Policy 201, as well as when revising the Children Act 2013. The Coalition welcomes efforts by policy- and lawmakers to invite the views of children at the national decision making levels, and considers that the way to make the principle of participation even more meaningful in Bangladesh would be to ensure that such views and opinions are thoughtfully considered and reflected in resulting policy and legislative outputs.

Civil Rights and Freedoms: Democracy for Children

There are a number of civil rights and freedoms to which children are entitled; key among these is Article 15, which provides children with the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. This is an important tool for promoting the rights of children to express their views and to pursue their rights. Children acting collectively and raising their voices jointly have greater power to defend and negotiate their rights as well as draw attention to their needs and concerns. Children's associations can also provide a structure through which girls and boys can interact and engage with local and national governance structures and better influence decision-making on issues affecting them.

The mock **Child Parliament** is a good example of children in Bangladesh exercising their right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. First begun in 2003, a Child Parliament session has now taken place almost on annual basis, with the most recent being in May 2014. In 2014, there were 154 child parliamentarians, with one child representing each district, and 20 children from marginalized groups. There were also a number of notable MPs present, including the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

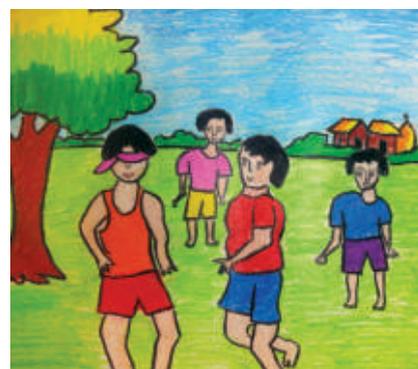
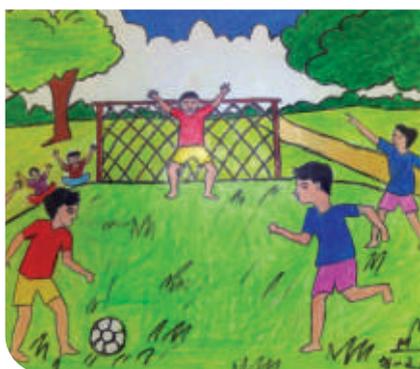
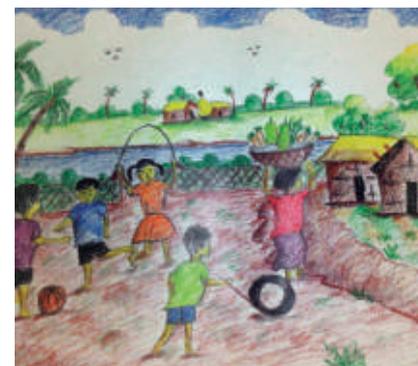


Key Challenge: Lack of Laws and Enforcement to Abolish Widespread Practice of Corporal Punishment

Article 37(a) provides every child with the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In Bangladesh, Physical and Humiliating Punishment is a common and socially accepted form of violence against children. The existing practices of disciplining children involve physical, verbal and emotional punishment. In 2011, the High Court of Bangladesh issued a judgment and the Ministry of Education issued a Circular and Guidelines prohibiting all types of corporal punishment in schools. However, these measures are yet to be translated into enforceable legislation. As such, there is only very limited progress in this area. The Save the Children Mapping & Situation Analysis Report 2013 showed that 90% of children are verbally abused and threatened regularly by their parents, while 31% of school-going children reported that they were subjected to physical punishment.

The 'laws' resulting from the session were to do with banning corporal punishment and establishing a child rights commissioner. The Coalition supports these proposed laws, which are not only the result of children exercising their democratic right, but also reflect their concerns and needs. The Coalition recommends that strong advocacy efforts continue even after Child Parliament sessions conclude in order to turn their proposed laws into enforceable legislation.

Article 15: Every child has the right to freedom of expression, either orally, in writing or in print, and in the form of art



Drawings from: National Children's Task Force

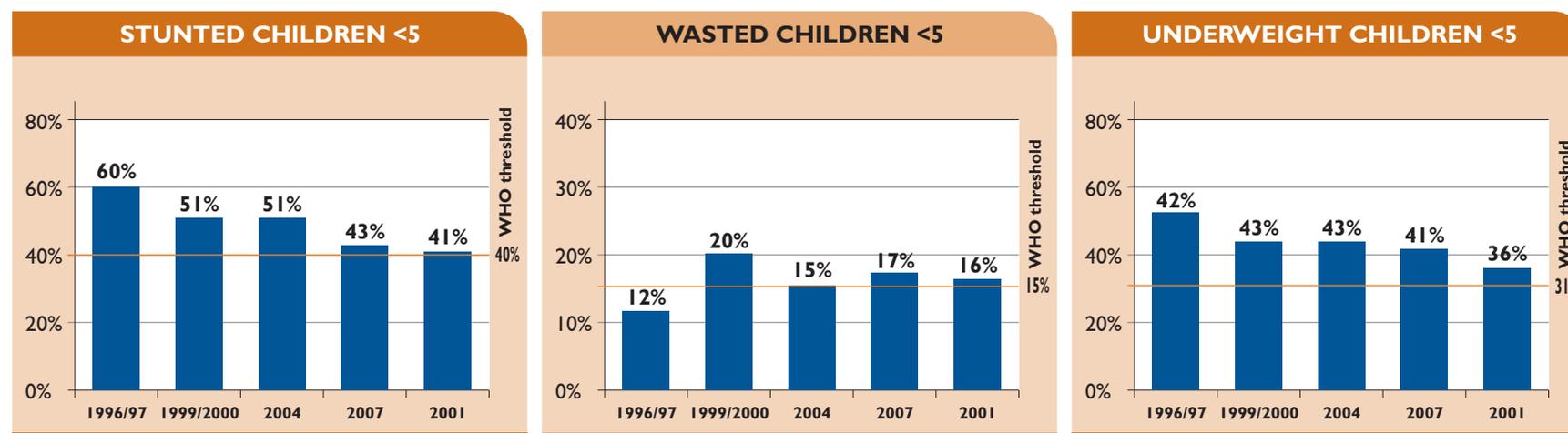
Basic Health and Welfare: Strong Children are Fitter for Life

Health is considered a basic human right; it is enshrined in Article 6, which provides every child with the right to live, and requires Governments to ensure that they survive and develop healthily. The Millennium Development Goals reinforces this right through MDG 4, which requires states to reduce **child mortality** by two thirds by 2015. Since 1992, Bangladesh has worked hard on this front and has now exceeded this MDG, by reducing its child mortality rate for children under-five years by 60%. This is a remarkable achievement, and means that there are now only 53 deaths of under-fives per every 1,000 live births (BDHS, 2011).

However, better child mortality and survival rates are only half the story. Article 24 provides children with the right to the highest attainable standard of health and health care facilities, and requires the Government to ensure that every child has access to such facilities. A minimum standard of health care is fundamental not only in order for children to survive and develop during childhood, but also because health and wellbeing in this early stage of the life-course acts as the foundation for the next phase, adolescence, which in turn impacts the child's health and opportunities as an adult.

Research conducted by Save the Children and its partners shows, for example, that chronic **malnutrition** in childhood may lead to delayed enrolment in school, affecting the duration of education and the eventual economic potential of adults. Similarly, **stunted** children are predicted to earn 20% less when they become adults. The effects of these health deprivations reach beyond the individual child, family and community; they impact the potential of Bangladesh to continue to develop into a healthy, thriving nation. The cost of malnutrition, for example, is US \$1 billion a year – or around 2-3% of loss in national income – due to lost economic productivity.

However, as the graphs below show, there is some progress being made on these fronts in Bangladesh. These achievements are attributable to the sustained efforts of diverse actors through research to generate sound evidence, pursuing effective and efficient programme interventions, and policy advocacy. It is important to underscore the role of the Government in this regard; Bangladesh has translated its commitment to investment in children most effectively in the resources it has allocated to reducing child mortality.



Source: State of World Food Insecurity, World Development Indicators, 2012, BDHS, 2011, UN REACH

Education, Leisure and Culture: Quality Education Should be a Right Made Available for All

The CRC reflects the principle in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that **primary education** is a basic human right, to which everyone is entitled to free of charge. Article 28 of the CRC provides every child with the right to an education that is freely accessible, and equally available to all children, and it requires the Government to take steps to encourage regular attendance and reduce drop-outs.

Education is the chief means for children to learn about the world around them and develop the knowledge needed for success later in life. On an individual level, educated people are more likely to lead healthier lives, to be able to make informed choices as adults on a range of issues, and contribute to their communities and countries as responsible citizens. For girls, in particular, the transformative effects of receiving a good quality education cannot be underestimated: there is a direct correlation between education and child marriage, for example, as educated girls are less likely to be forced into child marriage, or push their own children into child marriage. Educated women are more likely to be able to contribute to key household decisions, raise healthy children, and have a more wholesome sense of dignity.

The 2014 UNICEF report 'Improving Children's Lives, Transforming the Future – 25 Years of Child Rights in South Asia' notes the remarkable progress made in increasing net enrolment in primary education across the region. Bangladesh can be proud of itself in this regard. In 1990, the Net Enrolment Rate at primary school was 60%, and for girls it was less, at 50%. Today, the same rates are 95% and 98% for girls, which means that Bangladesh has achieved gender parity, and near universal access to primary education. (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 2012)

Despite this remarkable achievement, the 'right to basic education' is still missing from the policy and legislative framework in Bangladesh. While the Government has a constitutional obligation to provide education, which is strengthened by the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990, the Coalition

“I like going to school and mathematics is my favourite subject. I have never worked as a domestic help.”

— Asbraf, Grade 9, Kulaura

considers that reflecting the language Article 28 in domestic laws will better secure the progress to date, and will help all parents to understand the importance of sending their children to primary school.

Equally, the Coalition urges the Government to improve the quality of **secondary education** in Bangladesh, especially for girls. The national female secondary school stipend has contributed significantly to increasing the enrolment levels of young girls in secondary school; of all enrolled students in 1990, only 33% were girls (BANBEIS, 2012). The enrolment rate of girls today is much higher, at 80.2% against 72.2% for boys. However, girls experience much higher rates of drop-out for a range of reasons, primarily poverty and child marriage. Evidence also suggests that girls suffer the negative consequences of an under-resourced and under-capacitated secondary school system more than boys. In general, girls are less likely to receive the attention of teachers, less likely to have their experiences reflected in the national textbooks and curricular, and less likely to receive family resources towards their education needs than their male counterparts. This undermines their potential to perform well in exams in competition with boys, and enter university and secure paid employment. Drawing all the above together, and looking forward to the next 25 years of the CRC, the Coalition hopes that increasing public awareness about the value of educating girls will lead to better retention rates and eradicating child marriage.

Special Protection Measures: Child Labourers need More Support

The fact that this cluster of rights under the CRC contains the most Articles reflects the importance of, and the diverse ways in which children need special protection measures. South Asia has the largest population of children in the world, so it can thus be said it also has the highest number of children in need of protection. Likewise, South Asia has a correspondingly high number of children engaged in **child labour**; according to the 2014 UNICEF report 'Improving Children's Lives, Transforming the Future – 25 Years of Child

“Few human rights abuses are so widely condemned, yet so widely practiced. Let us make (child labour) a priority. Because a child in danger is a child that cannot wait.”

— Kofi Annan

Rights in South Asia', some 12% of children aged 5 to 14 years old are engaged in child labour. Bangladesh, with a population of 160 million, reportedly has around 7.9 million working children aged between 5 to 17 years old (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002-3; Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2013).

Under Article 32, children have the right to be protected from economic exploitation, and not to perform any hazardous or harmful work. The Coalition commends the Government's commitment to eliminating the incidence of child labour in this country, which issue has been incorporated in all major development plans, including the Sixth Five Year Plan 2011-2015. The Coalition also commends the Government for adopting the National Child Labour Elimination Policy in 2010, which sets the minimum age for



Photo: ichchey media

employment at 14 years, and prohibits children's engagement in hazardous work below the age of 18, which complements other policy and legislative safeguards that aim to eliminate the widespread and persistent practice of child labour. This includes the Labour Act 2006, which prohibits the employment of children in the formal sector.

Despite these high-level documents seeking to fulfill Article 32, the Coalition considers that the limited progress in this area, where children continue to work in roughly 40 types of hazardous activities (MoLE, 2013), is due to a number of factors, including structural causes, such as poverty, inequality, inadequate education opportunities and lack of an effective child protection system. It is also driven by strong demand from employers who can pay child workers lower wages than adults and can also easily exploit them in a variety



Photo: ichey media

of ways, including through physical violence and sexual abuse. Weak law enforcement also plays a role in perpetuating the prevalence of child labour.

A multi-pronged approach is needed to improve the conditions of child labourers, with a view to eliminating the practice all together in the long term. This includes conducting awareness raising campaigns to address parents' arguments about difficult financial circumstances pushing their children into the labour market early, and pursuing evidence-based advocacy with employers and governments about the benefits for everyone of enhancing children's formal education. It also requires unconditionally enforcing existing laws relating to compulsory education and the prohibition against employing children in hazardous environments. Civil society organizations can also play a role by working to support and empower

working children, such as sensitizing employers on child protection requirements, as well as occupational health and safety requirements. A notable existing example of positive non-government organization engagement in this area is the street and working children banking initiative. Early in 2014, the central bank of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Bank, issued a circular to schedule banks for the first time to allow street and working children to open a bank account anywhere in the country, with administrative and logistical support from NGOs participating in the initiative. To date, over 1000 street and working children have opened a bank account in ten commercial banks. The Coalition considers this progressive measure will help them better secure their earning and try to save for the future.



Photo: Victoria Clancy, Volunteer, Save the Children

Recommendations

- The Government should provide more information about the share of public resources available for programmes for children, and how effectively such resources are utilised
- The Government should fully commit to introducing a 'child budget', and improve the quantity and quality of spending on children
- The Government should keep the minimum age for marriage as 18 for girls and strengthen efforts to eradicate child marriage, such as through stricter penalties, law enforcement and public awareness raising campaigns
- The Government should define 'best interests of the child' in national legislation and outline a specific plan and framework to measure how far government initiatives have impacted on achieving those 'best interests'
- The Government should revisit its policy to bring children working in the informal sector within the ambit of the law, and take effective steps to withdraw and rehabilitate all children in hazardous work
- The Government should facilitate and ensure the implementation of the child's right to be heard and promote meaningful participation at all levels of state, family, school and community, and within formal as well as informal spaces and governance arrangements
- The Government should put in place a monitoring mechanism to better ensure that all cases of corporal punishment are investigated and perpetrators are brought to justice
- The Government should develop effective promotional materials and campaigns outlining the negative effects of physical and humiliating punishment on children. The information needs to be circulated and disseminated to all citizens on an accessible manner and which provides clear details of illegality of physical abuse of children
- The Government should take all necessary measures to increase access to free primary health services with particular attention to pre-natal and post-natal care for children and their mothers
- The Government should adopt a more coordinated strategy to accelerate the reduction of under-nutrition, in particular stunting, wasting and under-nourishment, in children



Photo: Ashraf, BTS



Photo: Tltu, BTS

- The Government should develop a separate policy on the critical issues affecting the rights of adolescents, especially girls, children from poor households, and ethnic minorities, addressing among other things mental health and reproductive rights and services
- The Government should conduct a comprehensive and nation-wide gender-sensitive awareness-raising program involving community leaders, religious leaders, parents and the general public, including media, to prevent and end harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and 'eve teasing' (sexual harassment of girls and women by men and boys)
- As girls are the main victims of child marriage, the Government should enhance the stipend program for their benefit, and should re-design it to be allocated on the basis of poverty, rather than merit, in order to include the most disadvantaged and at-risk girls
- The Government should strengthen its efforts to improve the education system, prevent dropout rates from school, reduce the teacher student ratio by ensuring more qualified teachers are available, and provide more vocational education and training to improve the functional utility of secondary education
- The Government should establish Child Protection Clusters in all districts and sub districts with the capacity to track down victims of child abuse and exploitation, and meet the protection needs of all such children in need, including those affected by natural disasters and emergencies

The **Child Rights Advocacy Coalition** in Bangladesh is a coalition made up of NGOs, INGOs and a civil society network working to promote child rights in Bangladesh. The Coalition's members are Save the Children, Action Aid Bangladesh, Ain o Salish Kendra, Child Rights Governance Assembly, Education and Development Foundation, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Plan International Bangladesh, Terre Des Hommes – Netherlands, and World Vision Bangladesh. It works together to advocate jointly for the rights of children in Bangladesh.

Save the Children International in Bangladesh commissioned and produced this report on behalf of the Coalition. Save the Children has been working in Bangladesh since 1970 and today reaches over 15 million people each year. With a staff of around 700 and a network of more than 100 partners, Save the Children is one of the largest child-rights organisations in Bangladesh working in Health, Education, Child Protection, Child Rights Governance, HIV/AIDS, Humanitarian and Food Security and Livelihoods.



Photo: Ichchey media

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Save the Children in Bangladesh

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