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Save the Children



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CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH

Progress towards Commitments in 2015

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Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh
September, 2016

This report has been prepared by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), on behalf of Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh.

First Published: September, 2016

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Printed by: ARKA

Contents

Acknowledgement	1
Part I	
Background	2
Executive Summary	3
Methodology	5
Part II	
General Measures of Implementation	8
Basic Health and Welfare	12
Education Leisure and Cultural Activities	15
Civil Rights and Freedoms	19
Special Protection Measures	22

Acknowledgement

The Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh believes that civil society organizations have a significant role to play in assisting the Government to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the child focused Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council (the UPR) recommendations at the national level. As a part of that process, the Coalition has prepared this report as an instrument to assess the progress of the Government's initiatives to implement their commitments and identify the gaps and challenges. The Coalition has also put forward some specific policy recommendations for the Government's consideration, to overcome existing challenges for children in Bangladesh.

We sincerely acknowledge the contribution of the technical team of the Coalition responsible for Child Rights monitoring. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank different ministries, divisions and agencies of the Government dealing with children's affairs for providing relevant information for this report. As the Secretariat of Child Rights Monitoring, Ain o Salish Kendra, has prepared the report based on the findings of Coalition members, and also coordinated the whole process of publication on behalf of the Coalition. Save the Children has provided technical assistance and support during the report preparation period. We appreciate their efforts and thank them all.

We acknowledge that this is a very small effort to present the overall situation of the children living in this country. But we think that this mechanism will portray a glimpse of their situation that provides an insight to understand the overall scenario of children's enjoyment of their rights. The report will also assist to identify the issues that require advocacy by the civil society organizations working on child rights and help these organizations engage with the Government on these issues. We also believe that this mechanism of reporting will be strengthened in the upcoming years and thus, will build a systematic process of follow up with the Government.

On behalf of Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh,

Md. Nur Khan (Acting Executive Director)
Ain o Salish Kendra



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Background

The United Nations has many human rights mechanisms, among which the periodic review of the Committee on United Nations Child Rights Convention (CRC) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council, are the two of the most important processes that focus on the rights of the children. These two mechanisms require States Parties to report on human rights in their country. The CRC requires reporting solely focused on the political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. And although the UPR is broader, it also explicitly covers child rights. As a part of the CRC and UPR procedures, organizations working on child rights produce alternative reports independently to shadow States Parties periodic review reports. The common practice in Bangladesh is to provide multiple alternative reports to these mechanisms. Multiple alternative reports demonstrate inconsistency in data, duplication of information and analysis, by prioritizing each organization's focus areas. Whereas one alternative report to the CRC committee from civil society in Bangladesh would add value to the cause of promotion of rights of the child in terms of validation of data, effectiveness of initiatives in changing lives of children and identifying emerging issues.

With this background, the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh has been formed. The Coalition coordinates monitoring and reporting on child rights and has developed a standard alternative monitoring and reporting framework to which all members of the

Coalition, as well as other civil society organizations, contribute data and analysis. Thus, the alternative child rights monitoring and reporting has now shifted from an ad hoc to a regular systemic process not only with respect to human rights reporting, but also with respect to National advocacy. To this end, the Coalition undertakes follow up advocacy to create awareness at a national level of the contents of alternative and Government reports on child rights, and to put pressure for the legal and administrative steps towards implementation of recommendations and concluding observations of the relevant human rights bodies.

In addition to the work described above, the Coalition aims to produce a stand-alone annual report based on the data and analysis its members collect on child rights, the effectiveness of services and efficient use of funds. This report will supplement the alternative reports to human rights bodies, and will be targeted at a national audience. The annual report aims to assess the progress of Government's initiatives to implement commitments under the CRC and UPR, identify existing challenges and provide some recommendations as a way forward.

Thus, the key objective of the 'Children in Bangladesh: Progress towards Commitments in 2015 Report' is to measure the progress of government's initiatives and thus to improve the accountability of the State and other key actors for their commitments and obligations towards children and the international community for the promotion and protection of child rights.

Executive Summary

This report is produced by the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh to portray a brief overview of the situation of children living in the country. The report is based on the principle that the State has the major responsibility to take necessary initiatives to ensure promotion and protection of child rights in Bangladesh through policy and legal reforms and other initiatives. Thus this report carefully assesses various government initiatives over the past year aligned with its obligations towards national and international child rights instruments i.e. the CRC process and the UPR. This '**Children in Bangladesh: Progress towards Commitments in 2015**' report has five main thematic sections which are divided into sub-categories. This report is produced on the basis of findings collected through quantitative and qualitative methods from in-depth research conducted by coalition member organizations. The data collected is from a sample of districts in Bangladesh, and is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather the Coalition intends it as a snapshot of the lives of children in the year 2015, measured against the Commitments of Bangladesh under the CRC and other human rights treaties monitored by the UN CRC committee and the UN Human Rights Council.

The primary thematic section of Children in Bangladesh: Progress towards Commitments in 2015 Report describes Child Rights' Governance, assessing the effectiveness of various measures taken by the government for the protection of child rights. Next, Basic Health and Welfare is based on the premise that the right to health and welfare are fundamental to children's ability to enjoy all other rights. The section Education and Cultural Activities is based on the principle that education is a right for every child and the government has obligations to ensure education and cultural activities for all children. The fourth thematic segment focusing on Civil Rights and Freedom is based on the importance of ensuring a child's civil-political and socio-economic and cultural rights. Lastly, Social Protection Measures narrates the alarming trend in violence against children and factors surrounding this issue.

Current challenges include: a rapid rise in violence against children, gaps in implementing CRC obligations in Bangladesh, lack of coordination among the different governmental Ministries/Organizations, lack of accountability in the health care system, inadequate budget for the education sector among others.

Based on the results of the studies, the coalition presents the following key recommendations required to overcome existing challenges:

- The government should ensure that the development of the national budget takes a child rights approach, including the use of indicators, and a tracking system that makes spending on children visible throughout the budgetary process.
- The government should take necessary measures immediately to establish a "Separate Directorate for Children" under MoWCA and an independent institutional structure for children that can be an "Ombudsman" or a "Commission" with adequate resources and power to specifically deal with promotion as well as protection of children.
- The government should take steps to roll-out a national awareness campaign prohibiting corporal punishment. It should also include the high court petition for prohibiting corporal punishment in the teachers' training manual.
- 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. Ensure availability of specialized physicians, nurses, modern treatment equipment and medicines in community health care centres and union health care centers for health care services.
- The government should ensure required infrastructure i.e. new school, classrooms, number of teachers and facilities such as a separate toilet for boy and girl children, tube well, common room, playground, recreational materials and proper maintenance.

- Schools should ideally have disabled friendly infrastructure and teaching materials. There should be at least one specialized teacher in every school to teach children with disabilities.
- The government should emphasize creating a fear-free and friendly environment in schools so that children can bring forward the issue of sexual harassment or other abuse without any hesitation. Girls' groups in every school, led by a female teacher to deal with such abuse cases, may be helpful.
- Awareness campaign should be launched widely to sensitize general people about children's rights. All the cases of child torture and rape should be brought under special speedy trial process.

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Methodology

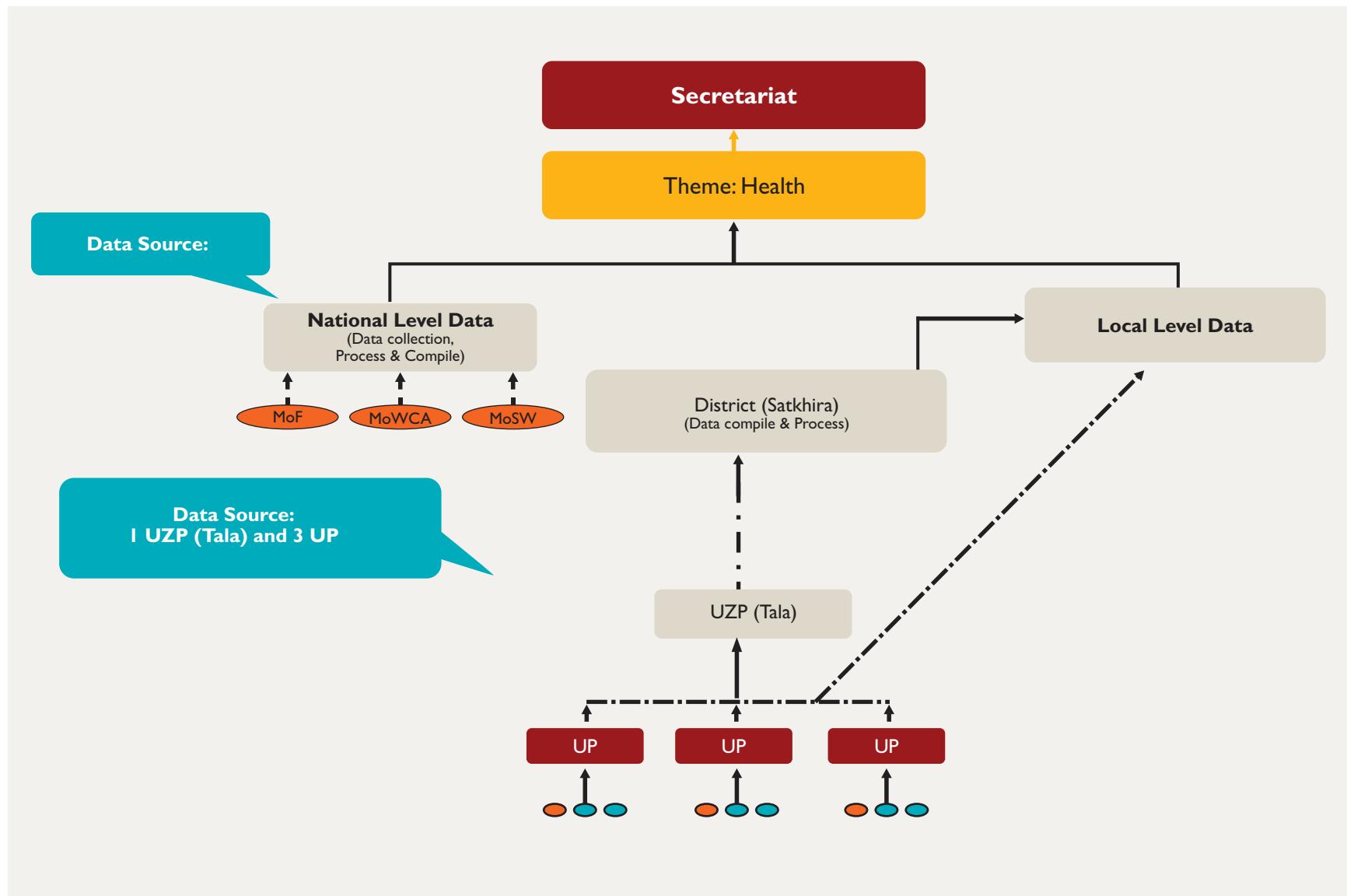
This report has been prepared based on data collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected using survey, focus group discussion, and key informant interviews. Data was collected

from some selected locations where Coalition members are operating. Secondary data was collected through a literature review, newspapers review, review of web/online contents, budget/policy review and institutional reports' review. The table below gives a summary of the methodology used.

Table 1: Data Collection Methodology

Thematic Area	Source of Data	Data Collection Method/Tools	Respondents	Data Collection Area
General measures of implementation, definition of the child, general principles	Secondary	Literature review- Newspapers, review of online / web contents and related institutional reports' review		National Level
	Primary	Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focused Group Discussions (FGD)	Child forum member, School teachers, Parents, Chairman and Mayor	Satkhira Sadar, Satkhira
Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities	Primary	Survey FGD KII	Students, Teachers, Upazila Education Officer, Officials of Primary Education Department	Bhaluka, Mymensingh Patnitala Upazila, Naogaon, Banskhali, Chittagong Mohammadpur, Shahjahanpur, Khilgoan, Kotoali, Sobujbag and Mirpur, Dhaka
Basic Health and Welfare	Primary	FGD KII	Mothers, Children, Pregnant and lactating mothers, Children with disability and their parents, adolescent boys and girls, Officials of Health Care Centers, Community Clinic. Upazila Health Complex (UHC).	Tala, Tetulia, Islamkahiti Union, Satkhira Dakatia, Dhalia, Kachina, Bhaluka Upazila, Mymensingh
Civil Rights and Freedoms	Secondary	Literature Review, review of web/online contents	Union Parishad officials, Students, teachers and street children	National Level
	Primary	KII and FGDs		6 Union in Barguna Sadar at Barguna and 6 Thana (Mohammadpur, Shahjahanpur, Khilgoan, Kotwali, Sobujbag and and Mirpur) under Dhaka District.
Special Protection Measures	Secondary	Documents review- Newspapers, review of web/online contents and related institutional reports' review		National Level

Data flow: The following chart is an example of data management flow of one particular theme i.e. Basic Health and Welfare. Similar data flow management mechanism was used for other themes covered in this report.



Data Collection Areas





General Measures of Implementation

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Plan International Bangladesh

While human rights are inherent to any human being, their actual realization requires collaboration of the government and civil society stakeholders. This section focuses on the initiatives and actions taken by the government across some 'General Measures of Implementation', particularly on resource allocation for ensuring children's rights at local and national level, establishment of institutional structures, policy and legal reforms at the national level which have significant impacts on overall children's rights.

Key Findings

The lack of coordination among different government Ministries/Organisations creates a crucial barrier in implementing progressive initiatives that adhere to the CRC. There exists no separate Children Affairs Division under the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MoWCA), or an effective watchdog like a national commission for children rights to oversee advocacy for children.

MoWCA coordinates 23 ministries/divisions which directly or indirectly manage the government's affairs related to children. It is difficult for MoWCA to coordinate the aggregated administrative arrangement, budgetary allocation issues and implementation mechanisms with its present capacity. Although MoWCA has established Children's Wing this is hardly adequate considering the diversity of challenges faced by children in Bangladesh. Currently the proposal for establishing a "Separate Directorate for Children" within MoWCA is pending for approval, and the expectation is that this Directorate will effectively oversee activities of these ministries in implementation of children-centered projects, development initiatives, policy recommendations and maintain field level presence up to the Upazilas (sub-districts). The government has not taken any initiative to establish an independent institutional mechanism i.e. National Commission for the Rights of the Children" or "Ombudsman for Children" despite their longstanding commitments under UPR and CRC.

At present children face multidimensional forms of deprivation, violence and abuse at all levels of society - within the family, community, and in the workplace, schools, and public places. A large proportion of children are also deprived of health care, education, an acceptable level of nutrition, hygienic sanitation system, safety and security. A suitable environment for psychological growth is missing in many cases.

Review of Child Rights Situation by UNCRC Committee

The UN Child Rights Committee examined the fifth periodic report of Bangladesh on its implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 2015.

In their Concluding Observations, the committee recommended to the Bangladesh government the following:

- Increase budget allocation substantially to all social sectors, primarily in education, health and child protection, including earmarked resources for children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations who may require affirmative social measures.
- Expedite the establishment of a Children's Ombudsperson. Establish an effective inter-ministerial body with the necessary human, technical and financial resources for its effective operation and with a clear mandate and sufficient authority to coordinate all activities related to the implementation of the Convention.
- Refrain from undertaking any legislative measure likely to reduce the age of 18 as the minimum age of marriage.
- Investigate and prosecute reported cases of abuse and neglect of children effectively and issue appropriate sentences.

Child rights based organizations have been demanding an independent institutional mechanism to be established, which can address these issues and conduct necessary actions for the promotion and protection of children. The activities include - monitoring government's initiatives, ensuring accountability and transparency of those projects, providing necessary directions/guidance, conducting investigation or fact finding of violation cases, etc. On behalf of the Coalition, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) with the technical support of Save the Children, has drafted a law on "National Commission for the Rights of Children". The Coalition has also collaborated with the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to work further on this issue. The draft has been submitted to MoWCA in June 2016.

Allocation of necessary financial resources is crucial to implement the CRC in a country. Introduction of a Child Budget in the Fiscal Year 2015-

Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, UN member states adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDGs have 17 Goals with 169 associated Targets which will guide the international development agenda over the next 15 years. SDGs articulate a universal agenda that protect the rights of all children everywhere to get the best start in life, to survive and thrive, to receive quality education and to live a life free from violence and abuse. It also recognizes children as subjects of human rights that must be protected and gives emphasis on their participation in the realization of the new goals and targets. As a member state of UN, Bangladesh will be guided by these goals in the upcoming years and is expected to bring positive changes in the lives of all children living in the country.

16 catalysed noteworthy progress on this front. The Finance Minister in the budget speech of 2015 promised an allocation that would secure children's rights and ensure their development. He presented a report titled, "Budget Thoughts for Children", taking into account the budgetary allocations of five ministries directly related to the socio-economic progress of children. The report also highlighted the ongoing programs taken by the government for child welfare and the quantity of resources designated for children in these programs. The five ministries in question were: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Issues related to children are dealt by at least 18 Ministries but five were given priority during this period for Child Budget. However, there was no guideline or framework prepared to define or track direct or indirect expenditure on children.

In addition, the draft Domestic Help Protection and Welfare Policy 2015 was approved by the cabinet on 21 December 2015, which was a noteworthy legal and policy change. This was highly significant towards ensuring the rights of almost 1 lac and 20 thousand child domestic workers in the country. The policy recognized the efforts of the domestic help- both male and female, as 'labor', thus obligating the State to ensure their protection, welfare, rest, entertainment, leave, and a decent work environment. Children Act 2013, a significant step to protect children, was adopted in 2013 but the regulations of the law are not enacted yet. As the rules will determine the implementation modalities, without the rules in place, it is not possible to apply the act in a full-fledged manner.

There were some positive developments at the local government level too brought to the attention of the Coalition during the data collection phase. An example of this was the 'budget for children' allocated through consultative meetings with children in Satkhira Sadar, Satkhira. This was done through NGO and civil society programs that developed several tools for incorporating the voice of children in the process. Participation of children in the ward shova (dialogue session), child led monitoring, complaint and response mechanisms were methods which ensured

children's necessary participation. The impact of this participation was tangible:

- During 2015, 14 Union Parishads and 1 Municipality of Satkhira Sadar allocated Tk 6,273,036/- in the 'budget for children' for education facilities, nutrition and health and safety nets for the welfare of disadvantaged groups.
- 135 wardshova were organized in which children's needs were raised and considered, and Children presented their issues and demands in a total of 15 budget preparation meetings organized by Union Parishads.
- 135 child forums involving 6750 children- including excluded, disabled and indigenous children-were created under 14 UPs and 1 UZP of Satkhira district. These are now a permanent platform for children to meet, work through issues, and interact with local authorities.

Anecdotally, the data collected at this sub-national level confirms that this intervention created value for children by enabling them to better understand their rights, potential to influence decision makers, and ability to create a child-friendly space in which to monitor services and advocate for fiscal allocations for education, health and social protection. Yet, at a macro, i.e. national level such initiatives to incorporate children's voice in the budget making process was absent.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the development of the national budget takes a child rights approach, including the use of indicators, and a tracking system that makes spending on children visible throughout the budgetary process.
- Incorporate the learning from local participatory budget making and ensure children's involvement in national budgeting
- The regulations of the Children Act, 2013 should be enacted at the earliest.

- The government should take necessary measures immediately to establish a “Separate Division for Children” under MoWCA and an independent institutional structure for children that can be an “Ombudsman” or a “Commission” with adequate resources and power to specifically deal with promotion as well as protection of the rights of children.

Photo Credit:Ain o Salish Kendra





Basic Health and Welfare

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Provision of the right to health and welfare enables children to enjoy an enhanced standard of living and to grow, develop, learn and fulfill their potential in a safe environment. According to Article 24 of CRC –

“The child has a right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable. States shall place special emphasis on the provision of primary and preventative health care, public health education and the reduction of infant mortality”.

Under this theme, the Coalition has collected and analyzed data with respect to mothers' access to free primary health care services (emergency and non-emergency), availability of doctors, nurses, medicines and other medical equipment, specialized support program for Children With Disabilities (CWDs), minority and indigenous children's access to health care services.

Key Findings

Information used in this section of the report covers around 6% health care centres of two Upazilas (Bhaluka and Tala Upazila). Around 5% of service recipients during the study were interviewed to know their satisfaction level in getting the services, 43% of whom were mothers. Results from these interviews portray the fact that, about 63% of these mothers were satisfied of the health care services received.

Access to pre-natal and post-natal health care is critical for mothers' wellbeing and children's health foundation. Information from the 6% health care centres of Bhaluka Upazila shows that maternal health services sought in those centres are predominantly Pre-natal health care services – about 72%, against 28% of lactating mothers receiving post-natal health care services. With only around 5% highly satisfied service

recipients¹, these service centres portray the general standard of local level health care facilities in the country. However, delivery efficiency of these service centres apparently is responsive to higher demands - while 54% of pre-natal health service recipients expressed moderate satisfaction of the services received, only about 29% post-natal service recipients were of the same impression. About one-fourth of both the recipient groups expressed their dissatisfaction of the services received, indicating the need for improved quality in service delivery by the local health facilities in general.

Findings also reveal the limited availability of health professional/specialists. Taking the example of the health complex in Tetulia union, only two professional specialists were available to deal with emergency cases, along with eleven persons for non-emergency cases. In some cases service providing staffs (nurses) were available but doctors were not. For example, nurses were available in three centers in Bhaluka but doctors were not available at two Family Planning Welfare Centers, Kachina and Sub health center, Dhalia (Dhitpur). In absence of health professional/specialists, patients were unable to avail essential and quality health care services.

Though health service providing equipment existed, they were not functional, as in the case of a blood pressure machine, Sphygmomanometer and Stethoscope at the Sub health center, Dhalia (Dhitpur). Supply of medicine was less than sufficient. For treatment of non-emergency issues patients had free access to prescription and few common medicines (paracetamol, histacine, antacid etc) but not for the full course. Patients had to purchase the remaining prescribed course, incurring great inconvenience. They are compelled to buy expensive drugs and do pathological tests from private pharmacies and clinics, despite the availability of functioning X-ray machine and Pathological test equipment in health care centers.

For disabled children, special arrangement/support in delivering services at the local level is lacking. No doctor or skilled specialized personnel/human resource provided special attention and treatment to CWDs, rather attention was provided by health assistants and family welfare assistants. Psychosocial care was nonexistent in these institutions. It is alarming to notice that the government did not allocate funds to provide supportive or assistive devices for this group of vulnerable patients.

The study also explores the access of minority and indigenous children to basic and specialized health services. Available information from Tala Upazila, Satkhira shows that a total of 10,208 out of 15,175 minority and indigenous people had access to health centers for both normal and emergency services, among them 23% boys, 24% girls and 53% mothers.

In addition, the Coalition member investigated whether legislation to prohibit early and forced marriages is being implemented at the local level. Findings show that in some areas, Union Parishads were actively working on the issue. For example, a particular Union Parishad of Satkhira organized 22 consultations with community people. Findings reflect one of the root causes of child marriages – lack of social awareness; only 40% of those consulted were aware of the negative impacts of early marriage. At the same time, most do not have knowledge of relevant legislation. The Union Parishads however took some initiatives to raise awareness of the legislation in the community and positive impacts of those initiatives are already evident. No marriage during the research period was registered to girls and boys under the age of 18 and 21 respectively. It was also known that some incidents of early marriages were stopped with the collaborative support of UP, Mohila Bisayak Kormokarta (Women Affairs Officer), local police station and different NGOs.

¹ Around 5% of service recipients during monitoring visits were interviewed to know their satisfaction level about received health care services (pre-natal and post-natal), reflecting on the treatment process, behavior of concerned physician, environment, availability of medicine, etc.

Recommendations

- 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.
- Ensure availability of specialized physicians, nurses, modern treatment equipment and medicines in community health care centers and Union Health Care Centers.

- Strengthen accountability in all Health Care Centers and ensure intensive monitoring and supervision for the levels of service providing staff.
- Build up the technical capacity of staff of health care centers.
- Create an approachable and friendly environment for service recipients to avail services without harassment.

Photo Credit:Ain o Salish Kendra





Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

Every child has a right to education and the right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities. The government is responsible to ensure these rights for children living in the country; this is crucial for development of personality, talents and mental and physical capacities to enable children to reach their potential.

To assess the situation of children's education and cultural activities under this theme, the government's budget allocation and other initiatives for ensuring quality education, enrollment and dropout rate in primary education, reasons of drop out, availability of quality recreational materials have been examined at the national and local levels.

Key Findings

Provision of sufficient financial resources can result in adequate infrastructure for quality education. Thus, the coalition tries to analyze the trend of national budget allocation to children's education.

In the 2015-16 Fiscal Year, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education collectively got an allocation of Tk 31,618 crores, or 10.7 per cent of the total national budget. The former ministry was allotted Tk 17,103 crores while the latter received a provision of Tk 14,502 crores; an insufficient allocation considering the number of students, teachers and institutions. Moreover, a large portion of education budget is spent on non-developmental purposes such as teachers' salaries. UNESCO stipulates that the budgetary allocation for education should constitute at least six percent of the GDP and 20 percent of the total budget. Bangladesh spends only around two percent of the GDP for education, a constant trend for the last 14 years.

Parallel to this, in a study titled "Budget for Education in Bangladesh An Analysis of Trends, Gaps and Priorities"² conducted by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD), it is shown that current level of budgetary allocation for education is significantly

Photo Credit: Save the Children

lower than what is required, both as percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) and as a share of total budget. With the size of the national budget expanding every year, the budgetary allocation to the education sector also rises, but the sector's share in the national budget shows consistent decline.

The study claims that the budgetary allocation for education-related social safety net programs (SSNPs) remains inadequate. The share of the education-related SSNP budget, as percentage of the total SSNP budget, has reduced since Fiscal Year 2013 and stands at 6.4 per cent currently. Allowances (e.g. stipend per pupil) for education-related SSNPs were unchanged in terms of nominal value which has resulted in considerable erosion of real purchasing power. The coverage of major education related SSNP has remained stagnant and in cases suffered some erosion over the last six years, exception being the school feeding program.

It is imperative to explore initiatives taken by the government for the expansion and improvements in quality of education. According to the available information from the relevant ministries and departments, 33 crores of free books were distributed for expanding education resource coverage in 2015. The government has planned to nationalize all the registered primary schools. As a part of infrastructure development, the government also established 22,000 extra classrooms last year. For ensuring safe drinking water, the government established 2,500 tube wells in 2015 and will set up 39,300 more, by June 2017. Besides, the government built 12,500 washing blocks, separated for boys and girls. For ensuring education access for disabled children, the government established new schools with ramp facilities. Specialized teachers are yet to be recruited.

Child rights issues i.e. rights of the autistic children, human rights violations of children have been included in the curriculum to raise awareness amongst students and teachers of children's rights which is a very significant step. Awareness should also be raised among the teachers

about the harmful consequences of corporal punishment but this issue is not included in the teachers' training manual yet. However, it is discussed as a cross cutting issue in their training sessions.

There is a management team in every government primary school consisting of 11 members, known as the 'Teachers Parents Committee' and in addition to a 13 member 'School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) committee'. SLIP committee is supported by the Government for supervising the school's progress.

The Department of Primary Education maintains a data base for tracking every school and for identifying its needs. The government executes their planning based on the database.

Nevertheless, data from field level reveals that the government did not provide any logistic support to the schools under the data collection areas during 2015. 10 primary schools were established only in one Upazila- Patnitala, Naogaon, in the Fiscal Year 2015-2016. None were established in other areas. At the same time, recruitment of teachers as per the requirements was not initiated. Lack of adequate number of teachers is a major hindrance for providing proper education to children in these schools. According to available information, 32 teachers were recruited in Banskhali Upazila, Chittagong, in other places there was no recruitment in 2015. In Birganj Upazila, Dinajpur, there were 127 vacant positions in 2015.

Data was also collected from the local level (as mentioned in methodology) to examine the enrolment and dropout rates in primary education. As per the findings, 97% students were enrolled in schools in 2015 and among them 52% were girls and 48% were boys. Enrollment increased from previous years. For example, 84,133 students were enrolled in the existing schools under Bhaluka Upazila, Mymensingh during 2015 and this number was 61,500 a year before. 37% new students were enrolled in 2015 compared to 2014 which indicate that more children in Bhaluka Upazila are going to school to get primary education. While a fraction of this increase may have been the result of the population

² Available at <http://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Executive-Summary-Budget-for-Education-in-Bangladesh.pdf>, accessed on 30 June 2016



Photo Credit: Save the Children

There were 652 disabled and indigenous children studying in the surveyed schools. Although every school has disabled students but they do not have disabled friendly structures. There are no ramp facilities in any school. No specialized teacher was also recruited for them. There were no special learning materials in schools to teach these students. It is also found that these schools had not received any disabled friendly materials for their students during the reporting period.

growth, the size of the increase reflects a higher level of social awareness regarding the importance of education generally visible in the country in recent years.

In addition, a smaller percentage of children in Bhaluka dropped out in 2015 - three percent in 2015 compared to 10 percent in 2014. In 2015, of the children who dropped out, 56% were boys and 44% were girls. Children with Disability were 4% of the dropouts. In 2014, 35% were girls and 65% boys. Among the dropped-out students, 2% were indigenous, 1% had some form of disability. The key reasons of discontinuation were – getting involved in income generating work, supporting father in work, migration, parents' unwillingness to continue their education, lack of disabled friendly education facilities, admission to Madrasha, etc. Analyzing the school attendance rate, it was found that 96.3% students attended school regularly and girls' attendance was higher than boys.

In the surveyed schools, there were no separate toilets for girls. No water supply systems were seen inside the toilets. Children collect water from tube well and hand washing materials were missing.

For ensuring their right to rest, leisure and play, children need quality recreational materials. Findings show that availability of recreational

materials varies from place to place. Usually schools have materials such as football, chess games, tennis items, ludu, skipping rope for children to use in their leisure time.

This report also attempts to examine the initiatives taken for public awareness campaigns to prevent bullying and sexual harassment of girls in school and on the way to school. Most of the children considered that they are relatively safe at school but they are not safe in public places outside school. Stalking, drugs, ill treatment, abusive language, physical punishment and other threats by outsiders constantly affect them. In this situation, the children usually inform their mother, elder sister, friend and their school teacher for some relief measures. They also mentioned that most of the time they did not get any solution from them, at times being blamed for the situation. School teachers rarely took actions. There had been no awareness program to prevent this type of bullying and sexual abuse. Schools also do not have any established mechanisms to prevent bullying and sexual harassment. The school authorities claimed to be alert about sexual harassment and thereby collect complaints from students verbally yet could not mention any strategy to deal with them. They further informed of conducting dialogue with offenders and victims, as well as teachers, parents, and submitting complaint to School Management Committee (SMC).

Recommendations

- Ensure required infrastructures i.e. new schools, classrooms, number of teachers and facilities such as separate toilets for boys and girls, tube wells, common room, playground, recreational materials and proper maintenance.
- Increase intensive monitoring and supervision in each of the schools to strengthen accountability and to ensure quality education. There should be a complaint mechanism in every school to be informed of problems students are facing.
- Each of the existing schools should have disabled friendly infrastructure and disabled friendly teaching materials. There should be at least one specialized Teacher in every school to teach the CWD.
- Emphasize the need for a friendly environment in the school so that children can bring the issue of sexual harassment or other abuse without hesitation. Formation of a girls' group in every school led by a female teacher to deal with such abuse cases can be a helpful step.



Photo Credit: Save the Children

Civil Rights and Freedoms

Children's civil rights and freedoms include the right to be heard, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association, protection of privacy and access to information. These are the preconditions for ensuring a child friendly society where children receive the highest priority based on their best interest and they are protected from all forms of violence and exploitation³.

Pertaining to this theme, the Coalition has chosen to highlight the status of birth registration of children as a means to have access to the basic services, facilities available at the community level to nurture and exercise children's civil rights and freedoms and the scenario of corporal punishment based on available information.

Key Findings

Birth registration is a key to ensuring the right of a child. It gives a girl or a boy an identity as a citizen of the country. It is also a proof of age to secure their rights and get access to services like health care, education, financial services and social protection.

The government initiated Online Birth Registration System (BRIS) from October 2010 to gradually discard the manual system. Online birth and death registration is now conducted by a total of 5029 register offices in 4571 union councils, 319 municipalities, 15 cantonment boards and 124 zonal offices of 11 city corporations within Bangladesh, and in 53 registrar offices of Bangladesh missions in 42 countries.⁴ Current Birth

³ CRC Article 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

⁴ <http://br.lgd.gov.bd/english.html>

Registration rate is estimated to be 83.7% which is derived by dividing the total number of records in BRIS by the total population of Bangladesh⁵.

For the purposes of this report, a study was conducted to explore the status of birth registration by local authorities and it was found that a total 39,013 children (49% girls and 51% boys) under 18 years were counted in 6 Union Parishads (including one pourashava) of Barguna Sadar under the Barguna district in the National Census of 2011. Data revealed that a total of 45,365 children have been registered up to December 2015 which is 116% children of total under 18 populations. The additional 16% registration is the result of fact that birth registration continued after the census period. Data also revealed that 3,508 children were registered within 45 days of birth up to December 2015. Findings show that, all of the Union Parishads have taken initiatives to aware people on birth registration, using loudspeaker campaigns, ward meetings and discussing this issue in Union Parishad meetings. UP members engaged their representatives to visit households to raise awareness among parents and other stakeholders on the importance of birth registration. These initiatives accompanying the significant rate of birth registration reiterates the importance and effectiveness of community level awareness building efforts through GO-NGO collaborations in ensuring child rights.

Community-level child-friendly spaces and mechanisms are also very important to ensure child participation and their development as active citizens. There are 7 child friendly platforms in 6 Union Parishads supported by the government in Barguna. 352 children (171 boys and 181 girls) are members of these child friendly spaces but there is only one child organization or forum in these areas. On the other hand, there

⁵ Data from Birth Registration Information System, BRIS system, DIGITAL BIRTH REGISTRATION IN BANGLADESH, Technical Analysis Study: strengthening CRVS in Bangladesh through the appropriate use of digital technologies, conducted by Plan Bangladesh and EATL ,On behalf of CRVS Secretariat, Cabinet Division, July 2016)

are 89 child friendly spaces supported by NGOs and 61 child rights based organizations or forums supported by NGOs at district and Upazila levels. Approximately 2640 children (1330 boys and 1310 girls) are the members of these organizations. Available information shows an important role of NGOs to ensure children's participation at the community level which is evidently effective at complementing government's initiatives. At the same time, it also demonstrates that the government needs to allocate adequate resources for establishing more child friendly spaces and other facilities at the community level to facilitate children interaction among each other.

For ensuring children's civil rights and freedoms, a child friendly environment is also needed in educational institutions. In our country, corporal punishment is a common phenomenon which greatly hampers the physical and mental growth of children as it instills fear and creates low self esteem. The coalition examined the situation of corporal punishment in awareness among teachers and children and mechanisms available to combat different forms of corporal punishment in selected educational institutions. During interviews with the students from 6 Thana (Mohammadpur, Shahjahanpur, Khilgoan, Kotoali, Sobujbag and Mirpur) under Dhaka District, most of the children shared that they experienced physical punishment both at home and school. Most of the

Types of corporal punishments-

- Hitting by cane, bamboo stick, ruler etc.
- Confined at Home
- Slapping
- Insulting by using abusive language
- Made to Stand by holding ears
- Standing on one leg
- Moving up and down by holding ears
- Standing on the bench
- Keeping head down under the high benches etc.

time school authorities did not take any action against complaints of corporal punishment. Exceptions were cases where students from two schools out of seven schools revealed that their teachers refrained from any physical punishments. The teachers opt for discussion on indiscipline. There was also a close circuit camera system in one of these two schools to monitor the situation.

One student committed suicide after being insulted by teacher (18th September 2015, Daily Samakal). Another incident occurred when a student fell down from a 7 storied building being scared of teacher's punishment and died (08 October 2015, Daily Sangbad).

From statistics collected by ASK from 9 national newspapers⁶, it was found that, 203 students were physically and mentally punished by their teachers at different schools and madrashas between March to December 2015. A number of students of these institutions sought treatment at hospitals as a consequence of such punishment.

Recommendations

- Union Parishad should develop linkages with primary school teachers and local health workers for ensuring early birth registration of children.
- The government should take measures to monitor corporal punishment at schools, family and all settings and ensure speedy trial for the offensive action – the CCTV option may be useful for this purpose
- The government should take steps for awareness campaign prohibiting corporal punishment
- Government should give importance to include high court petition for prohibiting corporal punishment in teachers training manual.

⁶ Daily Prothom Alo, Sangbad, Ittefaq, Janakantha, Daily Star, New Age, Samakal, Dhaka Tribune, Noya Diganto



Photo Credit: Save the Children

Special Protection Measures

Convection enshrined that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them. Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and re-integrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child. Even children who are accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects their rights.

Key Findings

The year 2015 was characterized by incidents of extreme forms of violence against children. Children were killed, tortured, raped by people from different walks of life -uneducated and highly educated persons, locally elected representatives, government officials, judge, well-known

cricketer – and both men and women inflicted violence on children. The merciless, public, video-taped beating death of 13-year-old Rajon in July 2015 shocked the nation. In August 2015 in Khulna, Rakib was murdered by his ex-employer by having air pumped through his rectum till his organs burst. These two horrific deaths were followed by a prolonged period during which multiple instances of child killings took place. More shockingly, children were being killed for incredibly trivial reasons, such as alleged theft of cell phones, pigeon, going to work for an ex-employer's competitor and they were increasingly being used as pawns in adult conflict over resources and opportunities.

According to Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), a total of 1,095 children were killed in the last four years (2012-2015) across the country. 292 were killed in 2015, 366 in 2014, 218 in 2013 and 209 in 2012. 2931 children fell victim to unnatural death alone in 2015 and shockingly, 292 children were

murdered. There is also the distressing reality in the alarming rise of rape incidences; total 976 children were reported to be raped during the last four years in Bangladesh. Among them, 521 children were raped in 2015, 199 in 2014, 170 in 2013 and 86 in 2012. Abduction of children is also increasing, as at least 572 children were kidnapped in the last four years. Among them, 243 young people were reportedly abducted during 2015. Public outrage sparked over these incidents and it is believed that the lack of effective implementation of existing protection mechanisms exposes children to violence in their daily life. The culture of impunity and the long delay in trial of such cases are prime reasons for recurrence of this brutality.

At the beginning of the year, arson attacks on transport, crude bomb attacks and other kinds of political violence killed and injured children. Moreover, the use of children in such violent political demonstrations put their lives and safety at risk.⁷ In total 101 children were affected by political violence, among them 25 were killed and 76 were injured in 2015.

The trial process of Rajon and Rakib murder cases were completed and quick verdicts were given, instigated by the crucial role of the Media, the

mass population and child rights based organizations. The charge sheets of these cases were submitted within forty days of the crimes. Most of the accused were arrested and one of the major accused of Rajon murder case was tracked in Saudi Arabia and brought back through Interpol. These are examples, where concerned authorities expressed willingness and could effectively punish perpetrators.

Recommendations

- Ensure preventive measures as per laws and policies to end VAC.
- All the cases of child torture and rape should be brought under special speedy trial process.
- Ensure legal aid, health support, rehabilitation, and psychosocial help for victims.
- Capacity building and adequate human and financial resources should be provided to the institutions working to combat violence and to ensure justice.
- Awareness campaign should be launched widely to sensitize general people about children's rights.
- The Election Commission (EC) should give specific directions to the political parties for including child protection issues in their election manifestos.

⁷ <https://bangladesh.savethechildren.net/news/child-protection/t-49>





Photo Credit: Plan International Bangladesh

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Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh

The Child Rights Advocacy Coalition, Bangladesh is a coalition of ten national and international organizations working to uphold children's rights in Bangladesh. The ten member organizations of the coalition are – ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB), Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), Child Rights Governance Assembly (CRGA), Education and Development Foundation- educo, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF), Plan International Bangladesh, Save the Children in Bangladesh (SCiB), Terre des Hommes-Netherlands (TdH-NL) and World Vision Bangladesh (WVB). The coalition started its journey with the realization that joint advocacy on child rights can bring greater value and influence than individual and isolated initiatives. It now carries out coordinated and concerted advocacy with the Government of Bangladesh and relevant stakeholders for legislative and policy reforms for the promotion and protection of child rights.

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