

NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child
**Database of NGO Reports presented to the UN Committee on
the Rights of the Child.**

Document Title:

SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH 1996

Region:

South Asia, Asia

Country:

Bangladesh

Issued by:

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF)

Date of publication of NGO Report:

11/96

Date of presentation to presessional working group:

01/97

CRC Session

(at which related national state party report was submitted):

15th Session : May - June 97

Language:

English

Document Text

[Link to related state party report at UNHCHR](#)

A REVIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN CRC
ON THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH BY BSAF

OCTOBER 1996

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (**BSAF**) : A network of NGOs working in Protecting and
Promotion The Rights of the Children in Bangladesh

House # 57A, Road # 15/A (New), Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka -1209, Bangladesh

Phone : (88 02) 810857, Fax: (88 02) 816251 (Attn. BSAF).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content Page

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Background
 - 1.2 Methodology
2. Situation of the Children in Bangladesh
 - 2.1 General Principle
 - 2.2 Civil Rights and Freedoms
 - 2.3 Family Environment and Alternative Care
 - 2.4 Basic Health and Welfare
 - 2.5 Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities
 - 2.6 Special Protection Measures
3. Recommendations

Abbreviation Used

- Annexure I
- Annexure II
- Annexure III
- Annexure IV

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) signed and ratified the UN CRC, committing itself to implementation of the Convention. As a follow-up, it prepared an updated report on the situation of children in Bangladesh. This report is a collection of critical reviews by small groups and individual members of BSAF. A small core group of individuals from BSAF's member organizations prepared a draft report, consulting with other BSAF members. Some children were also allowed to present their views on their situation.

This report is designed to supplement the Bangladesh Government's Report as well as present a critical review of the document. Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), a network of 70 NGOs directly working with children, prepared this report. As a result of BSAF's involvement, this alternative view adds a analysis of children and childhood in the Bangladeshi context in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC).

General Principles

The GOB Report concentrates on showing that laws already in place help uphold the UN CRC. However, it does admit that theory and practice are not one and the same. It ascribes Bangladeshi's society's typical disregard to children's opinions to traditional values and lack of education.

Non-Discrimination (Article 2)

The equality of girls and boys is never clearly stated. GOB has failed to relate the unequal capacity of male and female child to inherit the consequences of which is reflected in low value

& discrimination of (against) girl child.

Best Interest of the Child (Article 3)

Though provisions for the enforcement of this clause do indeed exist, their applications are purely subjective.

The Rights to Life, Survival and Development (Article 6)

The GoB does not address or make any attempt to improve on Muslim and Hindu law, in which a female invariably inherits less than her male counterpart.

Respect for the Views of the Child (Article 12)

The issue of children being responsible for decisions pertaining to their well-being is a sensitive one. A line must be drawn between disregard of children's opinions and lack of emotional support from concerned adults. It is imperative that the opinions of children living without family support, financially and emotionally responsible for themselves, are taken seriously. They are competing in an adult world, living by rules set up by adults.

The Right to Name and Nationality (Article 7)

The GOB has recognized the need for birth registration but not yet implemented it. It has made no attempt to educate the public about the importance of birth registration. Efforts to implement the Birth Registration Act are now here near adequate.

Preservation of Identity (Article 8)

A child is officially identified by his/her own name and that of his/her father. However, in the case of the large number of children whose mother's have been abandoned, this is not adequate. Children should be identified both by their father's and mother's names.

Freedom of Expression (Article 13) and Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly (Article 15)

Though the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees these freedoms to all citizens, workers under the age of 18 cannot be members of trade unions. The rights of free expression are sometimes abused by political parties.

Freedoms of Thought, Conscience and Religion (Article 14)

Though these are Constitutional rights, the Bangladesh education system is not conducive to their protection. Religious studies are compulsory in lower secondary schools. The current style of education does not develop analytical skills that would allow children to utilize their right to free thought.

Protection of Privacy (Article 16)

Though this right theoretically belongs to all children, in conditions of poor housing, no family members, child or adult, have privacy.

Access to Appropriate Information (Article 17)

The GoB Report claims that children have access to information, but in reality this access is very limited in urban situations and almost nonexistent in rural areas.

The Right not to be Subjected to Torture or Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading

Treatment or Punishment (Article 37a)

Though these rights are set forth on Bangladesh law, they are very rarely implemented. Child are too often placed in jails instead of special custody related to juvenile offenses.

Parental Guidance (Article 5)

The GOB does not address this article of the UN CRC, which it should, considering the large number of children live being separated from parents. The concept of strong family values in Bangladesh needs to revise as well.

Separation from Parents (Article 9)

Though law states that "no child can be removed from his parents against their will," a large number of parentless children does exist in Bangladesh. State alternative family and institutional care options are limited, not even nearly fulfilling the country's need. This is especially important since Islamic Law does not recognize adoption.

Family Reunification (Article 10)

There is no specific law that provides a promise of an attempt of reunification of a child and his/her family.

Adoption of Children (Article 21)

The GOB had already expressed reservations on this article, and so did not respond to this article. Many NGOs strongly believe that the GOB can follow the example of other Islamic countries which allow legalised adoption within the country. This would reduce the vulnerability of a large number of children who are abandoned by their parents and the society.

Illicit Transfer or Non-Return of Children and Sale, Trafficking and Abduction (Articles 11 and 35)

Though NGOs recognize child trafficking as a problem, the GoB does not acknowledge it.

Abuse and Neglect (Articles 19 and 39)

The GOB does recognize the presence of both abuse and neglect, and has passed several laws to remedy the situation. However, they have yet to enforce these laws. Present institutions are not adequate to meet the country's needs.

Assistance of Parents (Article 18)

Both the GoB and NGOs are running successful training and literacy programmes for poor families.

Child Care (Article 18)

Government-run day-care centres are very poorly managed, both by the administration and the people who take care of the children. Responsibilities of parents and caretakers should be clearly laid out in the law.

Survival and Development, Health and Health services (Articles 6 and 24)

The GOB has set up laudable initiatives and programmes, but it has yet to formulate a national health policy. Many avoidable health hazards are remaining ignored by the GOB. Child marriage, though outlawed, is still relatively common. Early marriages result in early pregnancies which present health risks for both mothers and infants. Child mortality is very high, in great part due to malnutrition and a lack of effective medical support systems.

Disabled Children (Article 23)

The GOB report focused on disabled citizens in general, rather than focusing on the disabled child. Most of the programmes that do exist for disabled children are unable to reach those in remote rural areas.

Aim of Education (Article 29)

Education should focus on preparation for all types jobs, not just white-collar posts. More vocational training centres should be set up, focusing on real-life trade specific needs.

Leisure, Recreation and Cultural Activities (Article 31)

Children's recreation facilities are very limited in Bangladesh. Some children's cultural organizations do exist, notably Shishu Academy. The GOB has made attempts to provide leisure, recreation and cultural activities for children, at least in urban areas.

Children in Situations of Emergency (Article 22)

The GOB referred to the large number of children among refugees from Myanmar. NGOs feel that victims of natural disasters such as cyclones and floods should also be provided for under this article.

Children Belonging to a Minority or Indigenous Group (Article 30)

Generally, minorities have been treated fairly by the government. Quotas are set apart for minorities in educational and employment opportunities. However, non-Bangla speaking minorities should be offered the option of receiving education in their mother-tongues.

Economic Exploitation Including Child Labour (Article 32)

Child labour in the country is very cheap. Children are employed for long hours with little pay in factories, homes, etc. These child labourers are denied basic education, health care and recreation. The GoB only included children working in the formal sector in its report, and thus wrote that children make up 15% of the total Civilian Labour Force.

Drug Abuse (Article 33)

The government needs to strengthen and expand existing legislation on the issue.

Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Article 34)

Laws addressing this issue need to be implemented. Some NGOs are working with commercial sex workers' children to give them an option of a different lifestyle.

Torture, Capital Punishment and Inhuman Treatment (Articles 36, 37)

Children have been reported to be subjected to torture and inhuman treatment at home, in the workplace in law-enforcing agencies.

Children in Conflict with Law (Article 39, 40)

Very little is mentioned about problems of children in conflict with the law in Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The signing and ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) signifies its commitment to implement the UN CRC. GoB has prepared an updated report on the Situation of Children in Bangladesh which has already been submitted to UN CRC.

This review of the GoB report was based on critical reviews of the GoB document to the UN CRC by BSAF. This report also recognizes that sometimes conflicting choices are faced by the GoB and NGOs when addressing child rights issues arising from different childhoods in an ever-increasingly complex socio-economic situation in Bangladesh.

Alternative and sometimes supplementary views are presented in this report, following the UN Committee guidelines, article by article.

1.2 Methodology

A small representative core group was formed from BSAF member organizations. The list of BSAF member is given in Annex I. The core group members prepared a draft report through a series of consultative meetings with all BSAF members, relevant government representatives and other individuals. The list of the sub-committee and other associates appears in Annex II.

A three-member BSAF sub-group facilitated the process of focus group discussion with 126 children, representing the spectrum of childhood in Bangladesh. The children were selected with consideration towards their age, occupation, education level, economic class, and gender. Extremely sensitive measures were taken to encourage the children to express their views. It was agreed that it would be worthwhile to incorporate children's views on their lives, living conditions and aspirations in this critical alternative draft report in terms of CRC. The children's views are documented in Annex III.

The draft report was presented to BSAF members and other concerned agencies for critical review. This final version includes their comments and suggestions. Annex IV presents the list of the representatives.

2. SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH

Views of BSAF on the GoB Report

2.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

BSAF proposes to analyze the implications of the following articles in the UN CRC as they stand in the context of GOB's response in its report on the implementation of the CRC. The analysis will dovetail the UN CRC and the GoB report.

In general terms, the Government report has concentrated on enumerating existing legal provisions and constitutional guarantees that demonstrate Bangladesh's compliance with the UN CRC. The GoB stance is that the laws per se do not interfere with the preservation of UN CRC principles.

The gap between theory and practice is attributed to the socio-economic situation of Bangladesh.

The GoB report acknowledges that the traditional patriarchal nature of Bangladeshi society opposes too much attention being paid to children's views. It ascribes this both to traditional attitudes of a rural society and, by implication, to a lack of education. Thus the report reads, "[In] educated urban middle class and upper class families, the views of elder children are normally taken into consideration."

Non-discrimination (Article 2)

The GoB Report does not make any direct statement about equality of boys and girls. This is quite a major omission. The GoB has failed to relate the unequal capacity of male and female siblings to inherit in both Hindu Law (where a female's right to inherit from her father is very limited) and in Muslim Law (where females usually, but not invariably, receive half the share their male counterparts receive) to the low value society puts on the girl child. Socio-economic factors are certainly mentioned in the Government report as a factor for discriminating against the girl child. It is pointed out that because the economic potential of boys is perceived as being more than that of girls and in addition the marriage of a female child entails a considerable financial outlay, it is not considered a worthwhile investment to spend money on a girl's education.

Best Interest of the Child (Article 3)

A similar clause exists in the Bangladesh Guardian and Wards Act, 1890. It should, however, be borne in mind that however admirable the sentiment, it is completely subjective in its application. Judges have often used the Act creatively to avoid being narrowly bound by religious customs on the custody of a child. Equally, judges can and have used these customs as the criteria of the best interests of the child. For example, the rule in the Hanafi school of law applicable to most Muslims in Bangladesh that the custody of a child should pass from his divorced mother to his father at the age of seven is sometimes followed and sometimes not. So if the father has remarried, one judge may order the child be handed over to the father while another judge may use this as a guide only and rule that remaining with his mother is in the best interest of the child.

But this aspect of inequality is not discussed, nor is the point of Family Planning lobbies: there should exist a rule of inheritance which would enable a daughter or daughters in the absence of a son to inherit the entire residue of the parental property instead of only 1/2 or 2/3 with the remainder going to collateral, as in Hanafi law.

Bangladesh is a country in which men outnumber women. This issue are tied in with the general principles relating to right to life, survival and development. One of the reasons for the greater number of males may be the greater attention and care given to the male child. Though Family Planning programmes appear indirectly to promote equality of sexes with their slogan "Whatever the sex, two children are enough", it is clear that their main objective is a reduction in general population growth.

Sincere efforts of the Government have caused an increase in numbers of females in employment and in schools and colleges. In a country where law and order enforcement agencies and society itself can make a woman who moves out of her home responsible for her own safety from criminal assaults, the opportunities for girls to take advantage of development schemes is very limited. In many cases, the GoB fails to take appropriate steps against the hatred propaganda focusing on females which emanates from the religious right, negating the essence of Article 6 of the UN CRC.

Respect for the Views of the Child (Article-12)

Respect for the views of the child is another thorny issue. The GoB comments on this have already been quoted above when analyzing the overall tenor of the GoB report. As far as Article 12.2 goes, there is provision under the laws in Bangladesh that children's views should be ascertained in legal matters pertaining to their well-being. However, this concept needs analysis first on principle and not just within the Bangladeshi context.

A careful line must always be drawn between a child's allowance of free expression of his/her views and the abdication of all obligations towards providing emotional support. The best interest of the child is often judged more by what her/his parents consider or (where there is a conflict between the parents) what a judge presumes is in the best interest of the child than the child's welfare. The presumption is that the concerned adults know better. This can lead to all sorts of misery and it is here that a child's views should be canvassed.

This article, however, covers more than the above situation. And there is no easy answer to the question of how much freedom one should grant a child in the expression of her/his views. Freedom of conscience should entitle a child to refuse to say her/his prayers at home if she/he does not want to. The liberal view would be that no purpose is served by compelling a child to go through the motions even if the suspicion is that the child may just be wanting an extra hour in bed rather making a statement about belief and observance. The question here is whether social discipline is a value worth instilling for form's sake. And the CRC notwithstanding, most observant parents would insist that a child should conform. A trickier situation arises where the child's views on its education are concerned, especially when they involve an art or music school rather than a conventional school. A wrong decision here, particularly for a dancer, may make all the difference in a talented child's life. The CRC lays down that due weight must be given to a child's age and maturity. Here again there can be no satisfactorily objective test or standard especially when the child is, in fact, very young.

It is really only during this century that children have been recognized as people. It is still an "uneven" recognition. In the United Kingdom in the 1950's an 18 year old could be hanged for murder but could not vote for another three years. Children were and continue to be regarded as economic units, investments, unpaid labour and, if naughty, as wilfully rather than childishly so. The CRC is the beginning of a new way of looking at children and acknowledging their basic rights. We should not, however, lose sight of a child's most basic right: that of being a child. The general principles and other articles should be implemented so that right too is safeguarded and not stripped from them.

2.2 CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

The Right to Name and Nationality (Article 7)

As mentioned in the GoB Report, under the Act of 1886, all births should be registered. However the law, as well as the machinery to implement birth registration, is complicated. Moreover, people are not aware about the need for birth registration. Experiences show that the Bangladesh government did not put sufficient emphasis on activating and implementing the Birth Registration Act. Whenever in need one can obtain a birth certificate. Thus even those birth certificates that do exist are often fictitious.

However, registration on birth may play an important role in preventing child marriage, employment of children, abuse and also polygamous marriages to some extent.

Preservation of Identity (Article - 8)

As mentioned in the GoB Report, in Bangladesh all children are identified only by their fathers' and their own names. But it is very important that a child is identified both by his/her mother and father's name and address, as an alarming number of females with children are abandoned by their husbands. Child or adult, everyone has the right to have a name.

Freedom of Expression (Article - 13) and Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly (Article - 15)

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly to every citizen. But these guarantees are not fully reflected in adequate legislative and administrative measures, particularly when the system is faced with conflicting social and economic issues.

The country's challenging economic condition, combined with certain deep rooted social attitude and practices, has put a large number children in highly exploitative and hazardous situation. For example, working children under eighteen years of age do not enjoy any rights of membership to trade union. In contrast, the views of children including some working children were explored by BSAF, was presented by Bangladesh Government in the SAARC Ministerial meeting on Children in Pakistan during August 20-22, 1996.

Disadvantaged and street children are often misused by the political parties in the name of freedom of expression in their meetings, rallies and even sometimes in violent political demonstrations. This warrants an immediate governmental intervention with a view to stopping such exploitation of innocent children.

Freedom of Thoughts Conscience and Religion (Article 14)

Constitutional provisions of Bangladesh guarantee these rights. The parents should provide an environment where the children can learn of their culture, traditions and religion. At present, in the lower secondary level of education religious studies have been made compulsory for all students. The curriculum used for this needs to be updated to conform with national thrusts and policies. Our educational system is such that it does not provide or encourage freedom of thought or conscience. It concentrates on memorization text book contents. Religious curricula included in the schools also do not provide any opportunity for freedom of thought. The curricula on religion should be designed in such a way that it helps develop analytical skills among the children. It should be made optional.

Protection of Privacy (Article 16)

The Constitution as well as the Bangladesh Children Act 1974 provide for privacy of children. However, in a situation of poor housing condition for most families, it is difficult to protect the privacy of even the adult family members, not to speak of the children. Most media, printed or electronic, violate this right and children, especially victims of crimes or sexual exploitation, are exposed. Awareness raising among the parents and elderly family members as well as professionals engaged in mass media should be made conscientious to promote the protection of children's privacy including stopping the camera trial of child offenders.

Access to Appropriate Information (Article 17)

Though the GoB Report claims that drop-outs or early school leavers have access to information, but in reality these are available only to a limited extent in urban areas, while most children living in rural areas do not have adequate access to such media information nor could they afford to have those information as claimed in the GoB Report. Additionally, children at puberty do not get adequate information concerning their special needs either from their parents (since these are not usually discussed by most families) or from the state media.

The Right Not to be Subjected to Torture or Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Article - 37a)

The Children Act 1974 of Bangladesh, penal codes and other laws and ordinances have adequate provisions to safeguard the interest of tortured children, but these are not properly implemented due to inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of motivation and the non-child welfare-oriented attitudes of those who are at the helm of affairs. Many children are reported to be in jails whereas they are supposed to be in special custody by law, developed for juvenile offenders. Only when such a case is reported in the press that a hue and cry is raised for a few days. But this requires special attention from all sides. Legal authorities, police personnel and others involved are hardly aware of the law and the institutions in existence for protecting the cause of the juveniles. Even the available institutions are not sufficient in many ways.

Moreover, when children are subjected to torture or abuse either at the family level or employer level (both informal and formal) there is a lack of information among the children/family members where a victim could report.

2.3 FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

Parental Guidance (Article 5)

The GoB Report keeps silence on this article. However it is felt that parents or other relatives

and the State are responsible for providing guardianship, guidance and assistance for children. Children spend much of their time in the home and in its immediate vicinity. Consequently, this environment has a great social and emotional impact. Childhood is both the most vulnerable and the most formative period of life. Early experiences leave a life-long imprint and have a vital impact on the child's development. Children need protection, support and encouragement in a safe and peaceful environment.

There is no doubt that housing and neighbourhood play an important role for children's mental development. The smaller the child is, the stronger its dependence on other persons and on the immediate environment.

In Bangladesh culture in which family is the basic unit, there has been a long tradition of family ties. These ties play a very positive role in nurturing children. There is also another side of the coin which is not so glorious. Family ties are constantly breaking up, especially in poor communities due to poverty, exploitation, divorce, widowhood, separation, etc. Female headed families are also increasing.

Parental Responsibilities (Article 18)

The GoB Report seems to address the issue at great length.

The general welfare and proper development of children is the primary responsibility of the parents. Traditionally the father, being the bread-earner, looks after the resources for food, shelter, cloth, education and family welfare, while the mother looks after household management. Although the upbringing of children is a shared responsibility of both parents, the mother has to bear the greater part of the responsibility for the child. Because of broken families, divorce and the high incidence of poverty in recent years both in rural and urban sectors, an increased number of mothers in poorer families are coming out of their traditional homes employment to support/supplement family incomes. Moreover, the numbers of children of families abandoned by their fathers are also on the increase. These children entirely dependent on their female-headed mothers.

In the above situation the GoB Report is silent, as far as parental guidance/responsibilities for abandoned children.

Separation from Parents (Article 9)

The statistical information related to court order for number of children, sent to certified institutions or approved houses or relatives does not reflect the exact status of the implementation of the Children Act, 1974. Nor does this report indicate the trend of an increasing number of such cases.

The state should provide alternative family care and institutional care for children who are separated from family care. The state party law provides that "no child can be removed from his parents against their will". Moreover, a child of tender age is permitted to reside with the mother in jail up to 4-6 years.

In reality, due to acute poverty, separation, divorce, etc., there is a large number of abandoned, neglected street and orphan children in the country. Only a few child care homes have been initiated by NGOs. But compared to the need, it is not only the small number of such institutions, but also the poor maintenance and training in dealing with children. These child care homes are often like a prison.

Another focus is needed to the issue of rehabilitating CEDC, as adoption cannot be recognized under the Muslim Law as an acceptable method of rehabilitation. A mechanism for an alternative to adoption may be needed. This is also linked with the issue of responsibility.

To provide care and protection to abandoned, unclaimed and unwanted babies, besides the Baby Homes runs by the Ministry of Social Welfare, there are some National and International NGOs providing residential care and environment for the survival and development of those

children.

Family Reunification (Article 10)

Traditional family bonds within a functional family are quite strong for the middle and upper classes are stated in the GoB paper, but there are many street children, living on street without family care and shelter. It is estimated that more than 10,000 children live on street in Dhaka city alone.

Mothers play a vital role in upbringing of children. Increasing trend of polygamy, divorce, separation, widowhood, prostitution are also contributing towards carelessness of children. A research study conducted by RDRS "Why Marriages Breaking" reveals that about 65% divorce takes place when the girl is at the age of 8 - 13 years. Several studies and media reports convincingly said that the problem of street and guardian-less children has an alarming growth and calls for urgent attention. But there is no specific law dealing with the right of a child to reunification with his/ her family or parents. This needs attention of the CRC.

Adoption of Children (Article - 21): It is understandable that the GoB Report did not respond to this Article as the Government has expressed its reservation to Article 21.

In country adoption is the best alternative to protect, develop a child physically and emotionally in absence of both parents or either of them or neglect of the guardian concerned or any such situation that expose a child to utter vulnerability. The Socio-cultural prejudice against birth outside wedlock negates the acceptance of such children when abandoned. In the face of acute poverty, natural calamity, disease, family disaster children are dealt with utter indifference and sometimes are forced to be abandoned. These children even if they somehow survive generally add to the number of street urchins, again to be exploited in involving them in various anti-social activities. There are State-run & other orphanages though very insufficient in proportion to the required number. The orphanages are no answer to adoption.

The need for a law was first felt back in 1972 to give home to the War-babies. The Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Law and Parliament Affairs (Law Division) passed President's Order No: 124 of 1972 entitled as the Bangladesh Abandoned Children (Special Provision) Order 1972 to provide for the special guardianship and adoption of abandoned children in Bangladesh to cope with emerging issue of so many war babies. Unfortunately soon after a couple of year this order was suddenly withdrawn and still remains in abeyance against some newspaper criticism on the alleged abuse of some children, without in-depth valid investigation.

Since the withdrawal of the order no 124 of 1972, there has been a continued clamour for adoption law from all quarters working in the area of child right and human rights, without any response from the Government. Well developed adoption system with good follow up measure is positively a relieving factor against many a cruelties and injustice done upon vulnerable children.

Illicit Transfer or Non return of Children (Article - 11):

In GoB Report, they have not recognized that child trafficking is a problem.

Although there is protection in the laws of Bangladesh against child trafficking and kidnapping, but in practice, children particularly from poorest community from Bangladesh are being transferred as commodities to other countries.

There is evidence that the problem is increasing. It reveals from a study by Ishrat Shamim "Child and Women Trafficking" that approximately 200 to 400 young women and children are smuggled every month.

Abuse and Neglect (Article - 19 & 39): Government Report acknowledged the fact that

children are abused and neglected in different ways, and examples of NGO initiatives are also cited.

To protect the abused children, Government enacted several laws but familiarization of these laws with civil society and law enforcing agencies are yet to be seen.

At present Govt. has been running a vagrant home which is not sufficient at all. It is also reported that, the existing vagrant home is more like a prison than a home from the point of management and caring system. GoB also runs Correctional Institutes for juvenile delinquents, destitute children's rehabilitation centre and a number of orphanages and there are plans to set up more such state run institutions.

Periodic Review of Placement (Article - 25): The state is obliged to ensure proper care, protection, mental & physical treatment and regular review of treatment for the child victims of armed conflict, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation. It is stated in the GoB paper that usually review is carried out only in case of detention but not in case of death sentences. Effective follow-up is also necessary for correction and rehabilitation centres, proper medical treatment in case of tortured and maltreated children.

Assistance to Parents (Article - 18): To help poor families and the women-headed households Bangladesh Government and NGOs have been operating various programmes. The programme intervention mainly concentrates on Credit and Skill training. Non-formal literacy programme and legal literacy are also running along with the Credit and Skill training. These initiatives help particularly the single parents to take care of their children.

Child Care (Article - 18): Day-care services for the children of working mothers: At present MWCA has been running 7 day-care centres in Dhaka and 6 more in other Divisional cities. These centres are the bilateral project of GoB and DANIDA. UNICEF has also been helping bilaterally for running programmes for CEDC (Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances).

But the caring and nursing system of govt.-run day-care centres are very poor both from the management point of view and from the professional skills particularly dealing with the children.

Responsibilities of parents and care-givers need to be redefined and reactivated besides moral and religious instructions. Legal framework provides very little guidance for parental or care givers responsibilities. The policy should evolve a standard caring system so that parents, both mother and father and care-givers would be held responsible for desertion, abandonment, neglect, abuse or failure to avail of state provided health and education facilities.

2.4 BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

Survival and Development (Article - 6): BSAF appreciates the GoB's initiatives and programme on Survival and Development. But Government report could be more enriched if more recent data on the status of malnourished children could be provided.

Bangladesh is yet to formulate a national health policy. The present Government has announced that a national health policy will be formulated soon. In the absence of a health policy, facility and services are not clear. In many cases health care facilities for children are absent.

Children in Bangladesh, within hours of birth, suffer from many diseases due to lack of proper delivery, pre and post-natal care.

Safe drinking water is not ensured for children. Children usually to take unsafe water in schools and other places as pure water is not always available. As a result, most of the children develop and live with gastro-intestinal diseases. Most of the school tubewells remain out of order or unrepaired and there is no facility for boiling water in rural schools. In rural areas, children drink water from wells or ponds where tubewell facilities are not available.

Sanitary latrines are used only by 40% of Bangladeshi people. Its percentage in rural area is more acute. Children are not habituated to use sanitary latrines. Open air defecation by the children specially in the rural areas is about 90%. No national programme has yet been taken for the children to use sanitary latrines.

Children are often exposed to unhygienic food in schools and outside homes. Restaurants are equally unsafe for children because of impure water and unhygienic food.

In cities, children are exposed to highly air pollution due to beach smokes from vehicles, open air garbage dumping, industrial waste, open drainage and sewerage system. Children are also exposed to ARI because of the houses of the poor families and the houses in slum lack of proper air supply and sunlight.

Although there is law against early marriage (girl before 18, boy before 21), but in practice this is not properly implemented. As a result, especially in the rural areas due to early marriage, early pregnancy is common which results lives at a risk both for mother and new babies.

Disabled Children (Article - 23): The GoB Report did not focus on the disabled children rather it more or less focused on disabled person in general.

According to the national policy, 10% employment of the govt. will be kept reserved for the disabled only but this quota is for the adult. The GoB allocation of 10% of jobs (in the non-gazetted category) is a clear discrimination in status.

It would be worthwhile if the GoB Report included any intervention in the areas of more disable-friendly attitude society for children. A National Coordinating Platform, National Forum of the Organization Working with Disabilities (NFOWD), comprising 26 NGOs has been initiated to improve the situation of disabled women and men.

Though the constitution of Bangladesh guaranteed the basic rights of the disabled persons through Article 23, the government program does not completely address the rights of the disabled children.

However, there has been a serious concern that whatever facilities are available these do not reach to the disabled rural children.

Health and Health Services (Article - 24): About 4 million children are born every year. It is expected that children will be protected from abuse and neglect by the State law. In reality, it is estimated that about one out of four children is dead due to malnutrition and lack of proper medical care to mother and child. About 90% children has grown up in a very neglected and unhealthy situation.

Health Care System: In the GoB report though it is mentioned that the health care system is spread up to union level but, in fact, it is available up to Thana and in some Union level. Thana and Union health complexes, in most places, are far away and due to lack of road and fast transport, children could not be taken there in time of needs.

Thana/Union health complexes do not have child specialists. All the health care centres usually equipped with only allopathic medicines though WHO approved use of Union, Ayurvedic or other indigenous traditional medicines, which are cheap and easily available.

Regular post-natal care of children is absent in the health care centres. This is due to absence of child specialists or doctors. Mothers don't take them to hospital because it is far away from home. Health services to children at home by the government doctors are completely absent.

EPI: EPI is one of the success programmes in health care system in Bangladesh. Due to combined effort of GOs-NGOs EPI is in progress. Still there are dropouts both in rural and

urban areas. EPI progress rate is still low in the urban area.

ORT: Despite massive campaign on ORT, the success rate is not so high as expected. People are confused about its effectiveness between home made and patent ORS. There is still high rate of child mortality due to diarrhoea. Use of unhygienic molasses or impure water often fails to give desired result of ORT use.

IDD: Iodine deficiency disorder is a major problem for children of Bangladesh. Children in the iodine deficiency areas are yet to get iodized salt as required. So problem due to iodine deficiency still remains in the rural areas.

Nutritional Blindness: Distribution of Vit-A capsule is not functioning well. So the problems due to Vit-A deficiency remain and about 30,000 children are becoming blind every year. Promotion of using green leafy vegetables for children is yet to be seen.

Promotion of Breast Feeding: Breast feeding is a common practice in Bangladesh. Due to lack of awareness and education, mothers still do not give first milk colostrum to their babies. Mothers with malnutrition often run out of breast milk. Along with the promotion of breast milk, promotion of powder milk is also going on in full swing in Bangladesh. Every year millions of dollars are being spent to import powder milk. There is not any strong regulation to reduce import and discourage use of powder milk in substitution of breast milk. Mass media can play a vital role in reduction of imported power milk while promoting development of dairy farms as an alternative measure.

Child Nutrition: Child nutrition is often related with mother's nutrition. Pre-natal care and care of pregnant mothers is insignificant in Bangladesh. Most babies are born below 2.5 kg because mothers are malnourished and due to low birth space. Absence of child nutrition unit in rural areas as well as city slums is a common scenario.

Deworming: Children suffer due to worms. Round worm prevalence rate ranges 65-92% in rural and 40-60% among urban children. Effective national Deworming program needs to be undertaken urgently.

EOC: Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) project has been initiated in late 1994 as a pilot project in 11 districts only. It needs to be spread countrywide. MMR and IMR could be reduced with this project.

STD/ HIV/ AIDS: It is a new problem for Bangladesh. Children are also vulnerable to HIV infection. Mother to child HIV transmission is also a serious threat. Whatever may be the case if the parents infected with HIV are dead, the children would become orphans. Though the cases are not high in our country so far but the forecast says Bangladesh will also not be safe from such pandemic if immediate steps are not taken. Cases are not uncommon in Bangladesh that HIV infected mothers became pregnant and children became fatherless due to HIV/ AIDS. Massive awareness programme is yet to be launched although some sporadic programs are recently initiated by some NGOs.

AFLE: Adolescent Family Life Education programme is absent in Bangladesh. AFLE addresses child education on reproductive health including premarital education, secondary sex characters, sexual health, menstruation and maintenance of health and hygiene during menstruation as well as education on maternal, child health and fertility control, etc.

In Bangladesh there is a high rate of early marriage. Specially girls get married in many cases at the age of 12-13. Many teenage mothers and their babies die of ignorance about bad affect of early marriage. AFLE if launched at the national level would be of immense benefits to our children.

Social Security and Child Care Services and Facilities (Article - 26): Exchange of the appropriate information in the field of social security and child care services including medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children and dissemination of information

concerning methods of rehabilitation have been completely ignored in the government program.

A National Health Policy on this issue needs to be formulated. The policy should outline and guarantee the basic child care services and facilities as rights of the children. It is also important that the children get the basic services in respect of health care, child care facilities and social security as the basic health and welfare services for the children in Bangladesh are still very inadequate.

2.5 EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Bangladesh, being a signatory to the World Declaration on "Education for All" in March 1990, has enacted a law for Universal Compulsory Primary Education (UPE) in order to free the nation from the curse of illiteracy within the shortest possible time. Accordingly, Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has taken some policy decisions and has prepared a National Plan of Action (NPA) to make education available for all by the year 2000. The target population includes children of 6-10 years old and education in literacy, numeracy and life skills for all adolescents (aged 11-14), youths and adults by the terminal years of its 20 years perspective plan (1990-2010). In order to supplement the Government approach, other development partners, specially NGOs, are also encouraged to participate, particularly in Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE).

Alongside the general education which is mostly of general in nature, vocational education (VE) is also needed to acquire employable skills in the job market. The VE is imparted by Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) and Technical Training Centres (TTCs) at different levels under both public and private entrepreneurship. These institutes (VTIs/ TTCs) numbering about 51 are located in the urban areas mostly at the district level towns. As a result primary school dropouts/ completers in the rural areas do not get any access to those institutes for getting vocational training.

Same is true for underprivileged and hard to reach children; children living in the slums, floating and street children who are bypassed by the national programs and interventions. In the GoB report there has not been any specific strategy and guide line to bring those hard to reach children into the existing educational, vocational training, recreational and cultural activities nor provision of creating new facilities for them.

As of date, there are some NGOs in different areas of the country that have non-formal education, vocational training, recreational and cultural activities for those children, but because these interventions are so sporadic that they are unable to make any significant impact on the issue. To improve the overall situation of the hard to reach children, there has been an urgent need of coordinated effort among the Government, NGOs and other external agencies.

It should be noted that compulsory education means that parents have a responsibility to ensure an education for their children. It is not the government's obligation. The GoB should perhaps make itself accountable for ensuring education for all children.

Aim of Education (Article - 29): The traditional notion of education is to achieve employable skills in the white-collar job market. The general impression of the parents and guardians is that their children, after completion of education, will be able to hold a responsible position in the society by finding a bureaucratic type of job without giving any value to the real meaning of education. Bangladesh, being a country of limited resources, can't afford to provide employment opportunities to all of its educated youths. So, education without life-oriented vocational training is meaningless. It produces unemployed educated youths who resort to unsocial activities or odd jobs which are not up to their expectations.

Therefore, the aim of education should focus on the need-based, trade-specific real life situation of a given community to which children belong truly reflecting their hopes and aspirations in the real terms of practicability, feasibility and reality.

Leisure, Recreation and Cultural Activities (Article - 31): Although the GoB is quite aware of the Leisure, Recreation and Cultural (LRC) needs of the children, but these are hardly

available to a greater section of the children of the country. Some limited LRC activities are available under the aegis of both institutional and non-institutional patronage mostly at the urban centres and hardly such facilities are available in the rural areas. Even in the urban sector, only in the limited schools under public school system those facilities are available. While in English medium schools being grown at a mushroom scale in the urban centres as well as in the NGO-run non-formal schools, these facilities are either absolutely non-existing or available at a limited scale.

In the rural sector, some native games, such as Kabadi, Dariabandha, Akka-Dokka, etc. are available as a part of their recreation at leisure times. But now-a-days these are also in the process of decaying or disappearing due to lack of sufficient space at the school premises.

There are some children's organizations of which one leading organization in the public sector is the Bangladesh Shishu Academy (BSA). It organizes cultural activities such as songs, dance, drama, etc. at the district level towns. The BSA also maintains a Children's Library at its Headquarters in Dhaka city only. Apart from BSA, some children's organizations, namely 'Kanchi Kanchar Ashar', 'Shapla Kurir Ashar', Girls Guides, Kumudini Foundation, etc. also organize cultural activities. Such activities are again confined to the urban areas only and denied access to the greater majority of children living in the rural areas.

This is pity to note that those unfortunate bulk of children living in the rural areas have neither any access to such activities nor any other organizations are promoting these LRC activities in the rural areas. Strictly speaking, they are absolutely devoid of any kind of real taste of leisure, recreational and cultural activities except some traditional local games in selected rural areas.

Critical Review of Existing Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities:

The national policies and programs adopted by GoB deserve appreciation for addressing the educational needs of the children including LRC activities at least at the urban centres. A modest success in these aspects so far achieved by the GoB is commendable.

The total package of educational program, particularly the hardware package, seems to be all right if programs and policies relating to development of infrastructures, logistics such as creation of new ministries/ departments, acquisition of resources including buildings, transports, air conditioners, computers, telephones, etc. with provision of different tiers of bureaucratic hierarchy in the capital city/ urban centres are taken into consideration. On the contrary, the software packages such as development/ renovation of dilapidated school buildings, recruitment of adequate teaching staff, design of life-oriented and problem-solving need-based curricula and syllabuses in conformity with the real needs and interests of the target group and dissemination of such issues in the rural areas are not conspicuous as expected. In the national statistics, it has been shown that school capacity expanded, more school-age children enrolled, facilities developed, new teachers recruited, but on physical verification these issues remain questionable and sometimes debatable.

Despite these policies and programs taken by GoB, high dropout rate among the children at primary level is one of its big concern. Record shows that dropout rate was as high as 88% in 1980 which was subsequently reduced to 76% in 1985, 60% in 1991 (BANBEIS, 1993). However, a projection of dropout rate was made for 1995 to 2000 at 52% and 30%, respectively. One of the main reasons of high dropout rate is said to be the school environment, specially in govt.-run schools, which is not child-friendly.

From this projection it shows that 95% of the primary school children enrolled, about 70% of them are expected to complete grade V by the year 2000. The rest 30% dropout would remain absolutely unattended by the Government formal schooling system. To meet the educational needs of those 30% unfortunate children, non-governmental intervention is essential.

Thus the projections made by GoB to cover 70% of the school going children (6-10 years old) under the basic education program at primary level by the year 2000 are, no doubt, an appreciable attempt. But whether it is a realistic approach is a matter of concern and results

are yet to be seen.

Many critics are of the opinion that this projection may not work. Nobody can rule out outright this scepticism. The real situation could be evident if some one looks at the existing dilapidating infrastructure, skeleton teaching staff, poor attendance and high dropout rates in the primary schools throughout the country. Thus the hard reality at country side would ventilate a different story of what has been claimed by the government in its national statistics.

2.6 SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

Children all over the world require special attention, care and protection in order to help build up a society where everyone will be able to live in peace, harmony and cooperation.

But at present almost everywhere children are subject to neglect, deprivation and in many cases inhuman treatment in varying degrees and manners. Bangladesh is not an exception to this situation.

This section of the report primarily deals with the children under distress in the society who should be covered with special protection measures to save and support them for their desired growth and development.

Children in Situation of Emergency (Article - 22): Under this article only refugees & asylum seekers from across the borders have been considered. The Govt. report gives reference to a large number of children with Myanmar refugees taking shelter in Bangladesh and how were they provided with basic needs, such as water, food, shelter etc. until they were sent back home.

The NGOs concerned with CRC felt that children who are victims of disasters (flood, cyclone and tidal bores, etc) should also come under the purview of this article of CRC. There are reports that Children losing their parents become victims of their relative's lust for grasping their properties. This needs attention & action. It is also felt that the children born & living under vulnerable conditions in Repatriation Camps like the Stranded Pakistanis living in Bangladesh should of special mention. These issues should also come under the purview of this article and countries concerned should take appropriate measures immediately to rehabilitate those unfortunate stranded Pakistanis living in Bangladesh under subhuman or inhuman conditions.

Children Belonging to a Minority or Indigenous Group (Article - 30): Bangladesh is largely a homogenous community with 98% speaking in the same language and 85% of them are Muslim. In general, the people live peacefully & respect each other's religion, culture and language. Minorities get special quota for ensuring their participation in educational opportunities, award of scholarships and employment.

The minority groups whose mother tongue is not the same with that of the majority group should have the opportunity of getting primary education in their own language as a matter of right.

CHILDREN IN SITUATION OF EXPLOITATION

a. Economic Exploitation including Child Labour (Article - 32): In Bangladesh child labour is very cheap. Most of them work as daily wage earner, such as labourer in the factories, helper in transport and child domestic, etc. for their own survival as well as their families. Usually, children are employed with a little or almost no pay for longer hours, and sometimes in hazardous conditions. They are deprived of their basic rights such as education, health care and recreation. In their work place, they are the victims of exploitation, abuse and torture. The children and their family members are unable to protest against the exploitation or deprivation of the child workers by their employers.

The Government report does not provide adequate or updated information on the child labour situation. In GoB Report, the percentage of working children has been mentioned 15% of total Civilian Labour Force which did not include the vast informal sectors where many children are employed.

It would be worthwhile to cite the example of Harkin's Bill (1993) and international pressure that have affected the life of the child garments worker in Bangladesh, especially the girl child. BGMEA had terminated about 50,000 child labour from the Garments factories as reported by Bangladesh Manabadhikar Samonnoy Parishad (BMSP)- a coordinating council for human rights in Bangladesh. The plight of most of those retrenched are uncertain.

However BGMEA, ILO, UNICEF, AAFLI, US Embassy and number of concerned NGOs including BSAF made valuable contribution in highlighting the child labour issue and raising public concern. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BGMEA, ILO and UNICEF was signed. The purpose of the MOU is to progressive elimination of child labour from the garments industries. As of September 1996, 2869 child labour have been enrolled in different schools through an education programme provided by the BGMEA, UNICEF and ILO.

BSAF's observations are, Harkin's Bill has failed to understand the complex socio-economic situation of the country as a whole, MOU initiative covers only a part of child labour whereas child labours in the informal sectors of activities are beyond its scope. The Consumers boycott and or trade sanction may not be an effective way of elimination of child labour in Bangladesh.

Child labour is a striking feature in Bangladesh. So it needs to be eliminated, and BSAF thinks that, it may done in phases by providing alternative scope for their education, skills training and rehabilitation. BSAF, its partners and other NGOs need to remain alert and monitor the progress in cooperation with relevant government departments, BGMEA, ILO, UNICEF and the trade unions.

b. Drug Abuse (Article - 33): This poses an alarming situation prevailing in the country. Almost every day newspapers bring out news items on the matter. The children and adolescents are either victims of drug abuse or carrier of drugs. Both Govt. and NGOs are working for preventing this social evil. The children from all sections of the society (both urban and rural) are the victims.

Review of existing laws and their application needs to be seriously thought of identifying inconsistencies and gaps to take further corrective measures. Exchange of ideas, opinions & cooperation at the regional and global levels needs to be strengthened.

c. Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Article - 34): Sexual abuse exists in all societies including Asian societies in different forms. There is an increasing evidences of such abuses. Children especially the girls are more vulnerable. In our society which is rather conservative, such incidents are kept secret, but this leaves a long-lasting adverse effect on the life of the victims. A large number of underage girls are there among the commercial sex workers.

At present different NGOs, welfare agencies and child care activists are becoming vocal and active regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. Recently, NGOs organized a forum entitled 'Breaking the Silence' to educate people how to help children in distress rather than keeping secrecy which is harmful. Recently due to joint efforts of Govt. and Civil Society enactment of the Women and Child Repression (Special provision) Act of 1995 was made possible. It now requires proper implementation and enforcement.

Some NGOs with assistance of donors are now working with the children of the Commercial Sex Workers so that they can come out of the vicious circle. This is commendable.

d. Sale, Trafficking & Abduction (Article - 35): Many children and women are being trafficked out of the country each year and this problem is on increase day by day. State of Human Rights report 1995 published in January 1996 by CCHRB indicated that 135 children were rescued while they were being smuggled out of the country.

The Women and Child Repression (Special Provision) Act of 1995 provides for adequate deterrence on child repression, rape, kidnapping, trafficking and other offenses.

On 31st December 1995 NGOs with the assistance of BSAF organized a meeting to exchange ideas and opinions on the problem of Child Trafficking. The meeting was also attended by Govt. officials, representatives of Police and Border security forces. The meeting made the following recommendations as its outcomes:

- To develop effective coordination and collaboration among the law enforcing agencies, border security forces, foreign ministry, home ministry, establishment ministry, ministry of women and children's affairs, ministry of labour and man power and various non-govt. organizations in order to deal with the problem iron-handedly;
- Proper application of the law regarding child trafficking;
- To arrange proper rehabilitation of the victims of trafficking during and after rescue;
- To mobilize preventive measures against child trafficking in the border areas.

e. Other Forms of Exploitation

Torture, Capital Punishment & Inhuman Treatment (Article - 36 & 37): The Children Act of 1974 though categorically prohibits death sentence, and life imprisonment can be given in very special circumstances. A certified institution has been recommended for detention and children are also protected by law from abusive parents and guardians. However, violating the law sometimes children are reported to be subjected to torture and inhuman treatment at the work place or at home or by the law enforcing agencies during and after arrest or in custody. Under Police custody, children were reported to be beaten up. BSAF and its partners are providing advocacy, legal support and media coverage to safeguard the children from such torture and punishment. Experiences have shown that there has been a greater need of coordination between the Government various departments, NGOs and donor communities for a better stand on the issues.

Children in Conflict with Law (Article-39, 40): Very little has been mentioned about the problems of children in conflict with law in Bangladesh. The rights of the children in conflict with law are mostly guided by the Children Act of 1974.

During 7-8 June 1995 there was a national seminar on 'Bangladesh Laws on Child and the UN-CRC' organized by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs with assistance of UNICEF and attended by govt. officials, lawyers, judges, donor agency representatives, NGOs and human right activities. Finally the seminar adopted the following recommendations:

- Establish a Task force composed of relevant govt. ministries, NGOs, legal academics and lawyers;
- Establish a Task force on Children in conflict with law;
- Establish a Task force on the Girl child.

The correctional facilities for children in conflict with law are not adequate. Two such facilities are available with a capacity of 350 boys only and no such facility available for girls. However, the rights of children in conflict with law are generally guided by the Children Act of 1974 which prohibits the death or life imprisonment of child/ juvenile offenders. The additional facilities for juveniles accused or convicts of an offense for custody, trial and corrections should also be opened.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the FGD, NGOs working directly with the protection and development of the children in Bangladesh, and practical experiences of the report-writing groups, following recommendations suggested :

- * An awareness raising campaign and advocacy be included in the national media in order to sensitize the policy-makers, planners, academicians, educators and the general people at large about the "Rights of the Child";
- * National School Curricula be redesigned for inclusion of a chapter on the basic "Rights of the Child" as well as responsible parenthood in all books upto secondary level;
- * In case of single parents of female-headed families, their children be treated equally like others in the schools with acceptance of mothers as their legal guardians;
- * Adoption law needs to be reviewed and steps should be taken to legalize in country adoption;
- * Under aged children working in the garments factories and other industries should not be thrown out of jobs over night unless an alternative arrangement for their proper education and accommodation is made both at national and international initiatives;
- * Strict and quick action should be taken against people involved in sale, non-return, trafficking of children and women, sexual abuse or any form of exploitation, torture and maltreatment either at any level;
- * Security of girls, specially adolescents, and young women be ensured, so that they can move out of their homes, feel safe at work places and attend schools safely without fear and terrorisms;
- * Disabled-friendly interventions be initiated for proper survival, protection and mental development of children of various disabilities with proper provision for their schooling, vocational training and employment;
- * All basic needs of children like education, vocational training, employment supports, health and shelter be ensured under the convention of the rights of the child with collaborative efforts of GOs, NGOs, and Donor agencies;
- * National Council for Children already formed should be activated immediatly with proper representation; and
- * The conceptualization of CRC in Bangladesh to be encouraged.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

AFLE : Adolesent Family Life Education Programme
ARI : Artificial Respiratory Infection
BANBEIS : Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS : Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BJMS : Bangladesh Jatiya Mohila Samity
BGMEA : Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BMSP : Bangladesh Manabadhikar Samannya Parishad
BSA : Bangladesh Shishu Academy
BSAF : Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum
CCHRB : Coordination Council of Human Rights, Bangladesh
CEDC : Childern in Especially Difficult Circumstances
CRC : Convention on the Rights of the Child
DANIDA : The Royal Danish International Develoment Agency
EOC : Emergency Obstetric Care

EPI : Expanded Programme for Immunization
GEP : General Education Programme
GOB : Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
IDD : Iodine Deficiency Disorder
ILO : International Labour Organization
IMR : Infant Mortality Rate
MMR : Maternal Mortality Rate
MOU : Memorandum of Understanding
MWCA : Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NGO : Non-Government Organization
NFOWD : National Forum of the Organization Working with Disabilities
NFP : Non-Formal Primary Education Programme
NPA : National Plan of Action
ORT : Oral Rehydration Therapy
RDRS : Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services
SCF(A) : Save the Children Fund Australia
SCF(UK) : Save the Children Fund United Kingdom
SC (USA) : Save the Children-United States of America
STD : Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TTI : Technical Training Institutes
UCEP : Underprivileged Children's Educational Programmes
UNICEF : United Nations Children Emergency Funds
USA : United States of America
VE : Vocational Education
VTI : Vocational Training Institutes
WHO : World Health Organization

ANNEX I

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF)

MEMBERSHIP LIST

ACTIONAID Bangladesh
Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)
Aparajeyo Bangladesh
Assistance for Slum Dwellers (ASD)
Association for Integrated Socio-economic Development for Underprivileged People
Association for Realization of Basic Needs (ARBAN)
Bangladesh Inter-religious Council for Peace and Justice (BICPAJ)
Bangladesh Jatio Mohila Ainjibi Samity (BJMAS)
Bangladesh Organization for Development Cooperation (BODC)
Bangladesh Protibondi Foundation (BPF)
Bangladesh Shishu Kallyan Parishad (BSKP)
Bangladesh Shishu Protipalan o Punarbasan Sangstha (BSPPS)
CEDC-CRC, UNICEF - Bangladesh
Center for Alternative Information and Analysis (CAIA)
Center for Development Communication (CDC)
Center for Media Research (CMR)
Center for Rural Child Development (CRCD)
Center for Training and Rehabilitation for Destitute Women (CTRDW)
Chinnamul Shishu Kishore Sangstha (CSKS)
Community Development Association (CDA)
Darial Union Jana Kallyan Sangstha (DUJKS)
Daridra Nibaran Kendra (DNK)
Desh Unnayan Samaj, Bangladesh (DUS)
Development Feature
Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)
Economic and Environmental Development of the Society (EEDS)
Enfant Du Monde (EDM)
Forum for Cultural and Human Development (FCHD)
Gono Sahajjaya Sangstha (GSS)

Human Rights Association for Children (HRAC)
Human Rights First the Child (HRFC)
Human Rights Journalist Forum of Bangladesh (HRJFB)
Human Rights Development Project (HRDP)
Integrated Village Development Center (IVDC)
Jagoroni Chakra (JC)
Karmajibi Kallyan Sangstha (KKS)
Khan Foundation
Manab Kallyan Parishad (MKP)
Manobik Sahajjya Sangstha (MSS)
Moitree Parishad
Nari Moitree (NM)
New Life Foundation (NLF)
PHULKI
Plan International
PRATTYASHA
Prodipan
Radda Barnen
Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS)
Red Barnet
Rural Development Society (RDS)
Sabalambi Unnayan Samity (SUS)
Save the Children (USA)
Save the Children Fund (Australia)
Save the Children Fund (UK)
Shakti Foundation
Shishu Kallyan Trust (SKT)
Shoishab Bangladesh
Social Advancement Through Unity (SATU)
Social and Economic Enhancement Program (SEEP)
Social Change Center (SCC)
Society for Development Initiative (SDI)
Society for Social Service (SSS)
Society for Underprivileged Families (SUF)
Terre Des Hommes (Swis)
Underprivileged Children*s Educational Programs (UCEP)
Unnayan Shahojogi Team (UST)
Village Development Center (VDC)
Village Education Resource Center (VERC)
Voluntary Health Services Society (VHSS)
Work Development Center (WDC)
World Vission of Bangladesh (WVB)

ANNEX II

List of Core Group Members and Other Associates

A. List of Core Group Members:

1. Ms. Taherunnessa Abdullah, ASK
2. Ms. Salma Sobhan, ASK
3. Ms. U.H.H. Sultana Leeza, ASK
4. Ms Rina Sen Gupta, Red Barnet
5. Mr. Shaikh A. Halim, VERC
6. Ms. Fawzia Karim Firoze, BJMAS
7. Md. Ariff, VHSS
8. Dr. M.A. Hannan, UCEP
9. Mr. Amuinul Islam, BSAF
10. Mr. Sultan Mahmud, Chairperson, BSAF and Country Director, SCF (Australia)

B. Other Associates

Facilitators for FGD with Children :

Mr. S. M. Razzak, FCHD
Ms. Delaware Dilu, ASK
Ms. U.H.H. Sultana Leeza, ASK

Coordinators :

Dr. M. A. Hannan
Mr. Bimol Chakraborty

Rapporteurs :

Ms. Monira Sultana, SCF-Australia
Mr. Sahed Ali, BSAF
Ms. Rummana Jannat Taher Elias, BSAF

ANNEX III

Children*s Views & Opinions, and Our Interpretation:

Six groups of children were selected purposely to represent different strata of the Bangladesh society in order to document their perceptions and opinions about CRC. Children were selected from : urban , rural, poor, rich, underprivileged, privileged, working & non-working children from Dhaka Metropolitan City and its suburb.

A total of 126 children (73 boys and 53 girls) of different age groups (8-16 years) were taken from different schools who actively participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The views expressed by the children in their own dialect were translated from Bangla to English) in their exact words as far as possible. Free and frank discussion among the children was facilitated/ elucidated following a participatory approach.

Gender representation was also considered while selecting children from various groups so that the six groups may together represent a good sampling frame. Mental and/ or physically handicapped children could not be organized due to time constraint. One group was isolated from the others to see the differences of their perceptions expressed. A check list was followed for efficient completion of each FGD within the given time frame. In the check list there were a few key words from the Convention on the Rights of the Child duly supplemented by two case studies.

Following are some of the excerpts directly reproduced from the opinions of the children as to what do they perceive about the CRC articles.

What were Actually Wanted to Know from Children	Instant Responses given by Children in their Own Words	Focus Group*s Interpretation of Children*s Perceptions
--	---	---

<p>To what extent do children know about Child Rights as contained in the UN-CRC articles?</p>	<p>a. Don't know anything about Child Rights. b. Just heard it for the first time.</p>	<p>Children in general are quite ignorant about their rights as embodied in the CRC articles. Nothing on this issue is also written on the national curriculum designed for children's education in Bangladesh.</p>
<p>What do they know about basic human rights, specially needed for survival?</p>	<p>Food, clothing, education, health and shelter are the basic rights (needs) one ought to have. But we are poor, who will give those to us?</p>	<p>These are, perhaps, the political slogans they might have learned from the political speeches. But at the some time they are also skeptical about those rosy words since they are quite sure nobody will offer those to them.</p>
<p>Are they aware of their identify and birth registration?</p>	<p>a. Yes, we are called by names as somebody's sons or daughters but we don't know about birth registration nor place of birth either. b. At the time of school admission, only father's name and signature is needed, why not mother's who does more care than father's? c. Mother's name should also be accepted in schools as when a child lives with mother, she is the only legal guardian to bear all the responsibilities.</p>	<p>In Bangladesh culture, a child is identified only by his/ her father, not by mother's even father is dead, he is identified as late 'X'. Birth registration by govt. has not yet been institutionalized in Bangladesh. Some educated families keep birth records as a personal affairs of the family tradition.</p>
<p>Do you express your own opinions or do your parents ask your opinion?</p>	<p>a. Parents sometimes do consult or listen to us, sometimes not but they are the ones who decide on everything they do for us. b. We are more free with mothers who listen to us.</p>	<p>Views expressed by the children truly reflect the norms, cultures and long traditions of Bangladesh society.</p>
<p>What do you feel about the Parental Guidance?</p>	<p>a. Well, both father and mother take care of us but mother, as usual, give more time for us. b. We get our parental love and affection but we feel pity for those children who are orphans and distressed. c. We wish at least our mothers to stay with us for our security. This is more vulnerable to the street children who often become victims to child lifters. d. We, (affluent children) miss our parents when both of them go abroad or away from home in the name of social works/ clubs.</p>	<p>Traditionally, children (both rural and urban) are found happy with their parental guidance. Due to poverty, landlessness, river erosion, separation, diverge, etc. people migrate to city slums which adversely affect on their parental guidance to children and family bondage.</p>
<p>Do you know or have any idea about child labour?</p>	<p>a. Most of the girl children working as labours in the garment factories are paid low wages and they live in insured slum houses. b. We know some of the urban poor children who go to school while working part-time for their survival and also to support their families. c. We heard garment owners stop recruitment of young girl children under USA pressure. Who will provide them food, shelter and social security? d. Though we come from poor families, still we want to go to school.</p>	<p>This is a valid question raised by children who will provide shelter, food and security to girl child labours for being prevented them from gainful employment in the garment factories. The unfortunate children who lost both parents or. single parent have no other options but to work part-time to support them and their families while attending NGOs run NFPE schools at their convenient time.</p>

<p>What do you know about your (social) security?</p>	<p>a. Oh, it*s a terrible problem. We can*t go alone outside home because of deteriorating law and order situation. Any moment we are afraid of being hijacked, kidnapped, abused or sexually harassed (for girls).</p> <p>b. We, (girls) are in constant threat even we are at home in slum houses. We are being teased, abused, rebuked in filthy words if we don*t yield to them. We are really insecured at home, on streets or in market/ gathering places, not for wild animals but for our brothers like "Matin". How long will it continue?</p>	<p>Boys feel more freedom to move than girls who feel most insecured due to obvious reasons cited by the children. The bad boys or present-day*s scoundrels were children of a few years ago but now they are compared with wild animals. Who should be blamed for such moral degradation and decaying values?</p>
<p>What kind of abuses they experienced?</p>	<p>a. We feel bad and shocked when tender-aged maids are tortured by their house mistresses.</p> <p>b. More strikingly, we feel insecured when we are asked by the local musclemen (Pressure groups) to resort to drugs selling/ trafficking or arms carrying from one place to another. If we don*t yield to them, we*ll be beaten up by them.</p> <p>c. We also feel bad when some greedy parents get married off their minor girls who will be victims or mental, psychological and physical abuses.</p> <p>d. It is also sad when girl child workers are taken out of the factory and kept locked on the top floor of the factory when some foreigners visit those garment factories. This is a severe abuse of children.</p>	<p>Children expressed opinions from then practical observation of real situations. Abusing child maids for any trifling matter is a common scenario in urban areas. Early marriage against the Will of a minor girl is considered a cruel abuse. Among the participants, two girls experienced such cruelty about 2 years ago. The owners of garment factories abuse girl child labourers like any thing. The evidence given by FGD children highlights the real causes eloquently.</p>
<p>What do you know about child trafficking?</p>	<p>Yes, we heard children (both boys and girls) and young women are stolen or taken away to other countries by some organized groups or rich people in the hope of providing jobs abroad. Bangladeshi children used as camel boy in middle east is also not uncommon. Govt. should prevent such illegal and inhuman trafficking with iron hands.</p>	<p>Children are quite aware of child/ women trafficking. Views expressed by them indicate a clear picture as to what is happening in Bangladesh on child trafficking.</p>
<p>Can you tell something about divorce and separation between parents?</p>	<p>a. We want our parents live together life-long and wish to get their love and affection as our rights.</p> <p>b. When father leaves or ingrates to urban areas for searching job, he may not go back to his wife, lives with another wife and usually leaves all burdens to his first wife who is to bear all responsibilities.</p>	<p>Children cannot think of nor can comprehend the idea of divorce or separation. They wish their parents live together as their rights.</p>
<p>Do you have any idea about gender discrimination?</p>	<p>a. Discrimination starts right from the birth of a boy or girls child. But we want to see a change of this situation.</p> <p>b. Some unreasonable parents get married off their girls at early age to avoid social burdens. This should not happen.</p> <p>c. Girls cannot find suitable jobs though they are equally trained and to live with male guardians.</p> <p>d. Both sexes should have equal rights to join army.</p>	<p>Children were found well aware of and sensitive to the issue of gender discrimination. Their honest expression deserves appreciation for nurturing the idea of gradual elimination of discriminatory practices in social life. Let*s hope for the best and wish a good sense prevails among the new generation.</p>

Socio-Demographic Profile of Children Participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Sl. No.	Name of address of children group	No. of children in group		Age group (years)		Socio-economic background of children in the group	Date & time of FGD
		Girl	Boy	Total			
01	ASK (NGO) Non-formal School, Purana Paltan, Dhaka	7	8	15		8-13All are irregular working children and live in city slums with parents. They live hand to mouth.11/08/96 from 10:00 - 11:45 AM	
02	Girls Guide Association, Baily Road, Dhaka	12	0	12		12-14They are students of class VIII and IX from different Girls High Schools within Dhaka. They are daughters of lower middle class and middle class parents.14/08/96 from 01:00 - 02:30 PM	
03	Dhananjay Govt. Primary School, Vill-Kuturia, Savar, Dhaka	12	8	20		8-12They are the children of typical villagers in Rural Bangladesh and daughter of small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, petty business man, lower grade service holders.17/08/96 from 10:30 - 12:30 PM	
04.	VERC (NGO) Non-formal Feeder School, Vill-Kuturia, Savar, Dhaka	18	12	30		8-12All of them are students of class III. They are the children of the poorest of the poor in the rural society. Their parents did not send them to Govt. Primary School at the beginning of school age. Later	

					on NGO workers collected them through motivation and provided non-formal schooling facilities.17/08/96 from 01:00 - 02:30 PM
05.	UCEP (NGO) School for Working Children, Rayer Bazar, Dhaka	14	15	29	12-16All of them are part-time wage earners from different jobs or petty business. They live in slums without proper parental guidance, rather they assist their parents.20/08/96 from 12:15 - 02:15 PM
06	Scholastica (High Standard English Medium School), Gulshan, Dhaka	10	10	20	10-14They are children of affluent people from Industry, Business or High Official Community and city elites.22/08/96 from 12:45 - 02:30 PM

Group Class Representation

01. ASK/ NGO Education Centre Urban poor children
02. Girls Guide Association Typical urban non-working children
03. Dhananjoy Govt. Primary School Typical rural children
04. VERC (NGO Non-formal School) Rural poor children
05. UCEP (NGO NFPE School) Urban under privileged working children
06. Scholastica School Children from the rich/ elite class (High Standard English Medium School)

Annexure IV

Representatives of the Different Organizations Participated in the Final Wrap-Up Session held on 13 October 1996 on Draft Report.

No.	Name	Organization
01.	Md. Shahidul Islam	SUF
02.	Dr. M. A. Hannan	BSAF
03.	Rezina Perveen	CTRDW
04.	Sultan Mahmud	SCF Australia
05.	M. A. Hannan	Aparajeyo Bangladesh
06.	Khairuzzaman Kamal	BMSF
07.	Sahed Ali	BSAF
08.	Shaikh A. Halim	VERC
09.	Dan O Donnell	UNICEF
10.	Deepa Grover	UNICEF
11.	Birgithe Lvnd-Henriksen	UNICEF
12.	Gopalan Balagopal	UNICEF
13.	Saleem Samad	Development Feature
14.	Khorshed Alam	UST
15.	Hashim Uddin Ahmed	EDM
16.	Mizanur Rahman	AISEDUP-Jhenaidah
17.	Dewan Sohrab Uddin	Red Barnet
18.	Fawzia Karim Firoze	BJMAS
19.	M. A. Rashid	SC-USA
20.	Md. Asaduzzaman	DUS-Bangladesh
21.	Helen Gallagher	Plan International
22.	Md. Ariff	VHSS
23.	Dr. P. K. Roy	WVB
24.	Ruby Q. Noble	Radda Barnen
25.	Rummana Jannat Taher Elias	BSAF
26.	Adv. Rashida Akhter	CSKS
27.	Lt. Col. (Rtd.) Mohd. Hussain	Shishu Kalyan Trust
28.	Mominul Islam	BNWLA
29.	Md. Aminul Islam	BSAF
30.	Ms. Helen Rahman	Shaishab, Bangladesh
31.	Ms. Dilrose M. Hossain	RDRS

[Home](#)

The NGO Reports Database on Children's Rights includes all existing and public reports submitted to the Committee on the Convention of the Rights of the Child by NGOs and NGO Coalitions. The copyright of the reports are retained by the authors and use thereof must be duly acknowledged.

The database is the property of the Liaison Unit of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is managed by that unit. For further information or other enquiries please contact the Liaison Unit at dcj-ngo.group@pingnet.ch.
