

# CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH

Progress towards Commitments in 2017





# **CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH**

A light blue background featuring several white silhouettes of children of various ages, some sitting and some standing, scattered across the upper and middle portions of the page.

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## Progress towards Commitments in 2017

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

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Arka

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## ACRONYMS

ASK	- Ain o Salish Kendra
BANBEIS	- Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BSAF	- Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum
CRAC, B	- Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh
CRC	- Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRG	- Child Rights Governance
CSO	- Civil Society Organization
CwD	- Children with Disabilities
ELCD	- Early Learning for Childhood Development
FGD	- Focus Group Discussion
GoB	- Government of Bangladesh
KII	- Key Informant Interview
LEB	- Local Elected Body
LGI	- Local Government Institution
MoFA	- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoWCA	- Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MSPVAW	- Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women
NCLEP	- National Child Labour Elimination Policy
NCP	- National Child Policy
NCRC	- National Commission for the Rights of Children
NGO	- Non-government Organization
NHRC	- National Human Rights Commission
OP3	- Optional Protocol 3
PCCR	- Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights
SMC	- School Management Committee
SoP	- Standard of Procedure
SRH	- Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	- Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
UNCRC	- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UP	- Union Parishad
UPR	- Universal Periodic Review
VAC	- Violence against Children

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh (CRAC,B) considers that civil society organisations have a significant responsibility to monitor the child rights situation in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the child-focused Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United Nations Human Rights Council at the national level. As a part of the responsibility, the Coalition has prepared this report to assess the progress of the government initiatives and identify the gaps and challenges of implementation and put forward some specific policy recommendations for the government's consideration to address to ensure child rights in Bangladesh since 2015.

The technical team of the Coalition is extending its support continuously to the task of child rights monitoring. We sincerely acknowledge their contribution. Since 2016 a number of new NGOs have been contributing to the reporting framework from their network. We sincerely acknowledge their contribution.

We also thank the relevant ministries, divisions and agencies of the government for providing information for this report. As Secretariat to Child Rights Monitoring, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) has compiled the information and coordinated the process of preparing the report on behalf of the Coalition. Save the Children has provided

technical assistance and other support throughout the process. We appreciate its engagement and assistance.

We believe this small effort made to depict the child rights situation provides an insight into the overall scenario of children's enjoyment of their rights. The Coalition hopes the mechanism will help identify the issues that require more systematic advocacy efforts and also support to engage with the government on the issues.

We also believe the reporting mechanism will be enhanced further in the upcoming years to contribute more to a systematic process of follow-up with the Government of Bangladesh on child rights issue.

On behalf of Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh,

**Sheepa Hafiza**  
Executive Director  
Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)



# BACKGROUND

The United Nations has many human rights mechanisms. The periodic review of the Committee on United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council are two of the most important mechanisms that focus on the rights of children. In these two mechanisms, the state parties are required to report the human rights situation in their countries. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) report focuses attention on the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the children. The Universal Periodic Review covers the broader area of the human rights and also the child rights explicitly.

As a part of the UNCRC and UPR procedures, organisations working on child rights produce alternative reports independently to shadow the states parties' periodic review reports. The Child Rights Advocacy Coalition, however, realizes that instead of providing multiple alternative reports to these mechanisms, an alternative report from the civil society in Bangladesh to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) would add value to the cause of promoting the rights of children in terms of the validation of data, and the effectiveness of initiatives for changing the lives of children and identifying the emerging issues. The Coalition coordinates monitoring and reporting on the child rights and has developed a standard alternative monitoring and reporting framework. All the members of the Coalition, along with other civil society organisations, contribute to the process in terms of data and analysis support. And thus it becomes a systematic process of human rights reporting and national advocacy.

To this end, the coalition continues its advocacy through creating national awareness of alternative and government reports on child rights, and influencing public actions for implementing the recommendations and observations of relevant human rights bodies.

In addition to the work described above, the Coalition aims to produce a separate annual report based on the analysis of the data collected from its members, effectiveness of services for children, and efficient use of funds allocated to them. This report will supplement the alternative reports of human rights bodies, and target the national level stakeholders. The annual report aims to assess the progress of government initiatives to implement commitments under the UNCRC and the UPR, identify the existing challenges, and provide recommendations. The Child Monitoring Report 2017 is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of its kind by the Coalition.



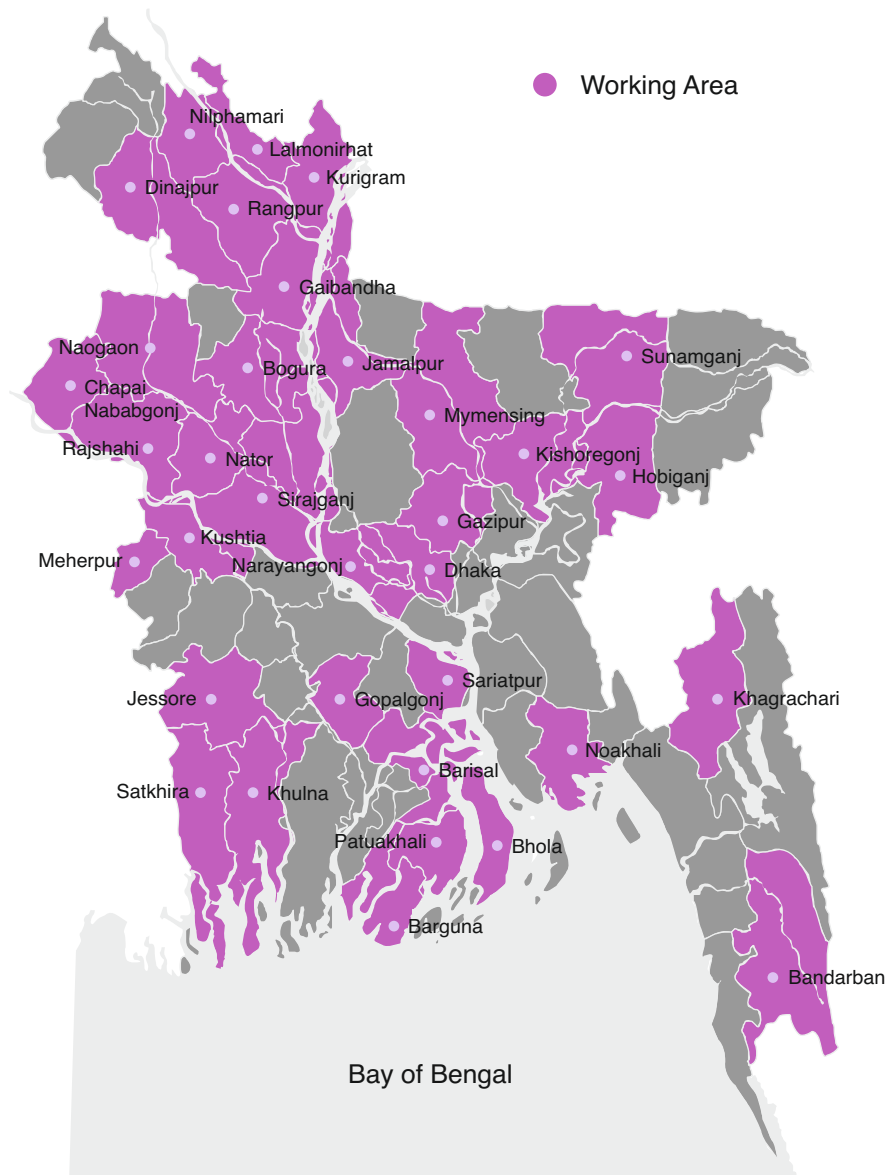
## METHODOLOGY

This report has been prepared using the data collected through the qualitative and quantitative methods. Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from the working areas of the coalition members and other civil society organisations by using survey, focus group discussion, and key informant interviews. Secondary data was collected through literature review of various reading materials, web/online contents, budget/policies and institutional reports. Table 1 presents a summary of the methodology used.

**Table 1** Data Collection Methodology

Thematic Area	Source of Data	Data Collection Method/Tool	Respondents	Data Collection Area
Child Marriage	Primary	Case study	Survivors of child marriage and their parents	Nogoan, Satkhira, Jessore, Barguna, Patukhali, Kushtia, Bandarban, Dhaka, Shariatpur, Sunamganj, Gopalganj, Jamalpur, Khulna, Sirajganj, Hobiganj, Kurigram, Rajshahi, Chapai Nawabganj, Meherpur, Natore, Bogra, Dinajpur, Noakhali, Barisal, Mymensingh, and Narayanganj
		Survey	Survivors of child marriage	72 villages of Gaibandha, Kurigram and Nilphamari
	Secondary	Review of newspapers and online/web contents		National level
Child Rights Governance (CRG)	Primary	Key Informant Interview (KII), focus group discussion (FGD)	Child forum member, Union Parishad (UP) Chairman, member of the CSO, children	Satkhira Sadar Upazila and Debhata Upazila, Satkhira
	Secondary	Literature review: Review of newspapers, online/web contents, and related institutional reports		National level
Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities	Primary and secondary	Survey, FGD, KII, and Literature Review of newspapers, online/web contents, and related institutional reports	Students, teachers, parents, upazila education officers, Dalit children, UP chairmen, children with disabilities (CwD), children and adolescents (boys and girls), community clinic representatives	Bhaluka, Mymensingh, Patnitala, Mohadevpur, Naogaon, Kaliganj, Satkhira Sadar, Tala Upazila, Satkhira Keshabpur Upazila, Jessore, Birganj Upazila, Dinajpur
Basic Health and Welfare	Primary	KII, FGD	Community clinic representative and school authority (Head teacher), students, children, parents or caregivers	Bhaluka Upazila, Mymensingh and Tala Upazila, Satkhira
Civil Rights and Freedom	Secondary	Literature review, review of web/online contents		National level
	Primary	KII, FGD, Questionnaire survey	Household heads/ Parents of children, UP officials, students, teachers	Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Kurigram, Barguna, Bhola, Patuakhali, Khagrachhari, Bandarban, Kishoreganj, Gazipur, Dhaka, Satkhira, Jessore
Violence against children (VAC)	Secondary	Literature review of newspapers, web/online contents, and related institutional reports		National level

Figure 1 Data Collection Areas



## Part I

# CHILD MARRIAGE

Ending child marriage is one of the long-standing challenges facing Bangladesh. It continues to be a crucial constraint on the fulfilment of girls' rights. Child marriage has a negative impact on physical growth, health, mental and emotional development, and educational opportunities. It also affects the society as a whole since child marriage reinforces the cycle of poverty and perpetuates gender discrimination, illiteracy and malnutrition as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates. **The National Parliament of Bangladesh passed the Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA)2017 bill on 27 February 2017 with a special provision that allows a boy or a girl to get married before reaching the statutory age limit in some exceptional cases. The Act increased the maximum penalty from one month with fine to two years of imprisonment with fine (financial penalties) for violation of the law.** As the rules of procedure has not confirmed yet there is huge possibility of the misuse of the Act.

This section focuses on the causes and impact of the child marriage and suggests a way forward to combating the problem.

### 1.1 More than half of Bangladeshi girls are married by their 18th birthdays.

Though the overall child marriage rate in Bangladesh has declined and though the structure of child marriage in Bangladesh has changed in the recent decades, the child marriage rate in Bangladesh continues to be one

In 2016, the number of child marriages reported across Bangladesh was 177, according to the VAW (Violence against Women) chart made by Mahila Parishad. However, from January to November, 2017 the number had risen to 194, averaging some 18 marriages each month. According to the VAW chart, 17 child marriages took place in January and February. However, between March and September, 168 child marriages were reported -- about 24 marriages each month. The number fell to six and four respectively in October and November. Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) sources said the number of unreported marriages could be as much as 10 times higher than what is being published in newspapers.

Source:  
<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2017/12/30/2017-review-13-children-killed-every-week-january-november-2017/>

of the highest in the world. More than half of Bangladeshi girls<sup>1</sup> are married by their 18th birthdays. On a global scale, Bangladesh records the highest rate of marriage of the girls under the age of 15, and occupies the second place (only behind Niger) by the number of married girls under the age of 18 years.<sup>2</sup> According to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the rate of child marriage under the age of 15 declined from 62.8% in 2015 to 10.7% in 2017. Marriage under the age of 18 years had gone down from 62.8% in 2015 to 59.7% in 2016.

However, according to Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), the number of child marriages in Bangladesh has risen to 197 in 2017 from 94 in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

In the Girl Summit in July 2014, Bangladesh committed to take steps to end child marriage by: (1) creating a National Plan of Action by the end of 2014;(2) ending marriages of girls and boys under the age of 15; and (3) reducing the number of girls marrying between the ages of 15 and 18 by one third by 2021. The government also committed to end all child marriages by 2041 as evident in the National Seventh Five Year Plan which has set a target of reducing the proportion of child marriage to 30 percent by the year 2020.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) developed the Draft National Plan of Action (NPA) to End Child Marriage by addressing all the relevant issues associated with this phenomenon. However, the progress stalled after the 2014 proposal to lower the age of marriage to 16 years old had been announced.

The special provision of Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA)-2017, therefore, creates a loophole and opens up the possibility of misuse of the law as no minimum age has been specified for marriages of girls under 18 (and boys under 21). Once the girls are married at an early age, typically they are forced to leave behind their families, friends and communities and move to their husbands' homes. Their ability to attend school is disrupted eliminating the source of social support and interrupting their education. With limited freedom to leave the home and converse with others, girls are left in isolation. Evidence shows that child marriage limits girls' access to education, quality health services, livelihood opportunities, community participation, and mobility.

Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh has collected 85 cases to assess the impact of Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017. The Coalition members have analysed 85 case studies in 19 districts<sup>4</sup> of Bangladesh. All the cases of child marriage had taken place in 2016 and 2017. The findings from the case studies and analysis are presented below.

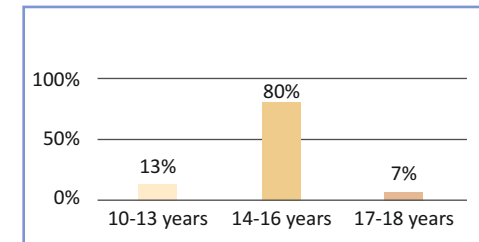
1. There were two separate surveys, the demographic health survey and MICS. As mentioned in the Child marriage prevalence presently in the country is 52 percent (According to MICS) or 59 per cent (According to Demographic health survey).
2. UNICEF, Ending Child Marriage - Progress and prospects, June 2017
3. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/05/18/govt-launches-mobile-app-project-to-curb-child-marriage>

## 1.2 Findings from 85 Case Studies

### Age Analysis of Child Marriage

The analysis of the 85 case studies reveals that out of 85 brides 13% got married between 10 and 13 years of age. During their marriage, 80% of the brides were 14-16 years old and only 7% were 17—18 years old.

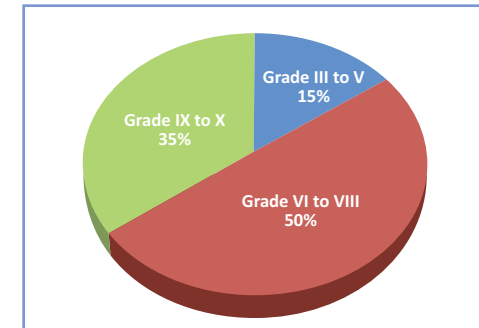
Figure 2 Distribution of brides by age (in %)



### Education of Married Girl Children

Among the 85 brides in 19 districts, 13 (15% of the total) were students of grades between III and V, and 50% (42 brides) were the students of Grade VIII. Rest 35% (30 brides) were the students of grades between IX and X.

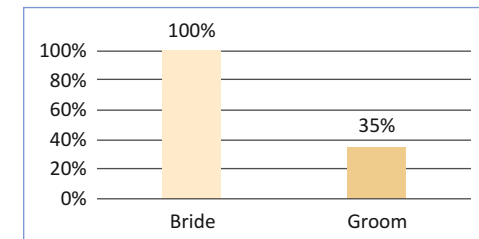
Figure 3 Education of Married Girls (in %)



### Age During Marriage

Data shows that out of 85 cases 35% grooms got married before the legal age of marriage while in case of brides it was 100%. The analysis of the case studies reveals that the factors of child marriage are superstition about girls' child marriage, dowry, insecurity, societal pressure, so-called good groom, poverty, orphan, love affair, sexual harassment, and big family burden.

Figure 4 Married before the Legal Age (in %)



### Reasons for Child Marriage

Child marriage is a complex issue. Poverty, lack of education, cultural practices and insecurity fuel and sustain the practice. By analyzing the reasons, we have found that the

4. Meherpur, Naogoan, Patukhali, Bogra, Barguna, Bandarban, Jessore, Rajshahi, Chapai Nawabganj, Shariatpur, Kurigram, Khulna, Satkhira, Sunamganj, Hobiganj, Jamalpur, Dinajpur, Sirajganj and Dhaka

traditional thinking of society is mainly responsible for child marriage. In the society, there is no aspiration for a girl child.

The parents and guardians consider that marriage is the ultimate solution to overcoming poverty, insecurity as well as the family burden. It has been found that among the total 85 cases most brides belong to the poor families. All of their fathers are from the poorest communities. They live by farming, small trading and selling labour

### Status of Marriage Registration

While trying to assess the marriage registration situation among the cases, we have found information much scattered. However, we have found that around 50% of the marriages have not been registered and that even the registered marriages do not have any proof of age certificates.

### Impact of Child Marriage

The practice of child marriage can potentially create several negative consequences: it pushes girls out of school, leaves them in poverty, increases the risk of domestic violence and carries a health risk for girls and their babies.

The children who had got married before they turned 18 actually had no idea how

Figure 5 Reasons for Child Marriage

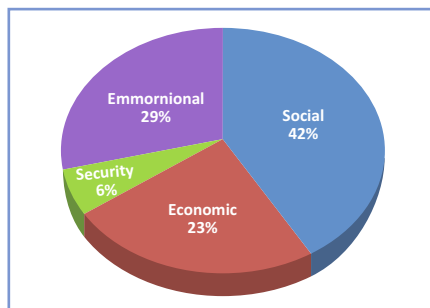
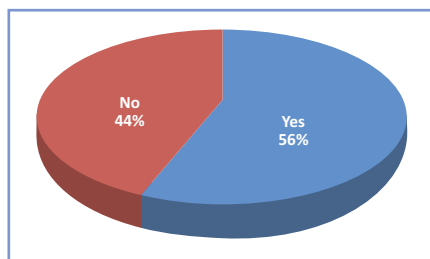


Figure 6 Status of Marriage Registration (in %)



to protest against child marriage. After their marriage, however, they realized that their physical condition was getting weak day by day. Consequently, they had to stop education, and had no freedom of choice to make any decision. Life seemed very hard. "Nobody should get married at the early age of their lives." said those married girls.

### 1.3 A Snapshot of 72 Villages in Three Northern Districts of Bangladesh

In 2017, a study was conducted in 72 villages of six Upazilas under three districts (Gaibandha, Kurigram and Nilphamari) of Rangpur division by TdH Netherlands. In these districts, there are high rates of child marriage. They are vulnerable to flood and riverbank erosion, extreme poverty, and a lack of sufficient livelihood opportunities.

A major problem experienced by early married girls is health hazard related to early pregnancy. Early married girls invariably experience intense pressure to get pregnant right after marriage and have no alternative to avoid or prevent it. 90% of early married girls between the age of 15 and 19 are either mothers or pregnant and 70% of early married girls have at least one living child.

Early married girls do not consume a balanced diet, indicating that nutrition is an issue even though 94% take meal three times a day. Early marriage denies and limits early married girls' educational possibilities, obliging them to drop out of school. As reported 95% of early married girls have attended school at some point, though at present only 6% of those girls are still attending school, thereby indicating that 94% of early married girls had already dropped out of school. Dropping out of school means that early married girls are lagging behind in terms of education.

Additionally, early marriage has impact on the psychological and emotional development. Early married girls become disconnected from their parents and relatives. Poor health status of early married girls often leads to deterioration of relationships with their husbands, domestic violence and divorce.

#### Case study<sup>5</sup>

Monju (pseudonym) says, "I came to Dhaka with my husband when I was 15 years old. I was forced by my parents to marry him. When he brought me to Dhaka I did not have my family members with me. I got pregnant after few months but there was none to take care of me. I experienced a miscarriage and fell very sick. My husband now asks me to work outside but I am too weak to go out and work. He beats me every now and then because of this"

<sup>5</sup> Child marriage: A terrible concern for Bangladesh, Published : Saturday, 31 December, 2016 at 12:00 AM Count : 333, <https://observerbd.com/details.php?id=50853>

### 1.4 Age Verification and Marriage Registration through Mobile Apps

On 19 April 2017, at the initiative of Access to Information (a2i) Programme of Prime Minister's Office, the project called 'Age Verification and Marriage Registration through Mobile Apps' was inaugurated. Using this apps, the marriage registrar must verify the age of the bridegroom by dialling a USSD code (\*16100 #) with her mobile phone or by sending SMS to 16100. The registration of marriage

will be completed if the age is appropriate. After registering the marriage, the system will receive a 12-digit ID number as the registration number of the corresponding marriage register (Balaam book). In this process, the information regarding the marriage registration through mobile phone SMS is sent to one of both bride and groom members. If the efforts taken locally to prevent child marriage fail, its remedies and irregularities in registering marriage on mobile are required for calling the National Helpline (109) free from any mobile.

The initial project funded under Service Innovation Fund was piloted in Kurigram district for more than a year.

An innovative new app developed by the government of Bangladesh and Plan International is being rolled out across the country after stopping over 3,700 child marriages in only 6 months.

The government has begun drafting the rules for the Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA)-2017 with youth and NGOs sharing their suggestions with the government regarding how the rules can be formulated in ways which prevent the use of the special provision as a loophole.

### Recommendations

- Formulate rules immediately for CMRA 2017, clarify the existing gaps to prevent misuse of the “special circumstances” clause, and ensure exemplary punishment for invoking the special provision as a loophole for child marriage.
- Establish a monitoring cell to check for underage marriages.
- Finalize the Draft National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Marriage (2015-2021) to end child marriage by 2041.
- Adopt measures in the National Plan of Action from Early Child Marriage to build the aspirations among girls and increase SRHR programs.
- Introduce 'Age verification and marriage registration through mobile' all over Bangladesh and digitize the entire marriage registration system besides verifying age.
- Improve local knowledge of the social and health consequences of child marriage and encourage positive attitudes of parents, teachers, local government representative, healthcare providers and favour marriage at a later age.
- Increase endorsements for delayed marriage by religious leaders and other community stakeholders.
- Increase the educational incentives to keep girls in school till 18 years of age and ensure that girls in economically vulnerable households have access to safety nets.

## Part II

# CHILD RIGHTS GOVERNANCE

Child Rights Governance (CRG) examines the initiatives taken by the government to ensure accountable, responsive, inclusive and transparent governance for the realisation of the rights of every child.

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 the local and national levels, establishment of institutional structures, and policy and legal reforms at the national level which have a significant impact.

## Key Findings

### 2.1 Ratification of Optional Protocol 3 (OP3) is so far yet

Bangladesh has received repeated recommendations both from Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) but the government has not taken any concrete steps to do so in the last few years. The Optional Protocol allows a child with the opportunity to access international communications procedures.

The key features of the OP3 as communication procedure are<sup>6</sup> laid down in brief:

- A victim, a group of victims or their representative who claims that the victims’ rights have been violated by a state, to bring a complaint directly before the Child Rights Committee.
- Any communication submitted to the Child Rights Committee must be in writing; and is not being examined by the CRC Committee or by any other “procedure of international investigation or settlement”.

6 <https://bangladesh.savethechildren.net/news/call-government-ratify-crc-optional-protocol-3>

- There are two “opt-out” procedures that include the inquiry procedure and the inter-state communications.
- State will be communicated first before any steps taken by the committee.
- UNCRC committee will ensure the protection of safety of the victim and any submission from country will only consider after the end of own process of judgement.

Since the Protocol came out for signature and ratification, Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh has organized discussions at the divisional level to orient people and created public demand to ratify the Optional Protocol 3.

#### Opinions from people at divisional level

- “Optional Protocol 3 can be another opportunity for children to raise their voice directly”.
- “The Constitution of Bangladesh considers that we take any initiative to protect and promote children’s rights in Bangladesh, so we can sign Optional Protocol 3.”

The Coalition shared the people’s opinions with the Government in a consultation meeting at the national level. In that consultation, representatives from The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh (MoFA) were present.

## 2.2 Allocation of Financial Resources for the Children

Adequate financial allocation is a pre-condition for ensuring the delivery of necessary services and building child-friendly infrastructures for the development of all children as citizens. Article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) requires all countries to use their resources to the 'maximum extent' for the implementation of the child rights. As a means towards its achievement, the General Measures of Implementation (GMI) of the CRC recommends making children visible in the countries' budgets. In the light of the growing demand for a separate allocation for children in the national budget, the GoB introduced child-focused reporting on the national budget in FY 2015-16. This reporting format is commonly known as the 'Child Budget' that aims to track investments in children. The first child budget report was prepared in FY 2015-16 for five ministries having important activities pertaining to child rights. The number of ministries has been gradually increased to 7 and 13 respectively in FY 2016-17 and FY 2017-18.

**Table 2** Aggregate Child-Focused Budget, 2017-18

Ministries/Divisions	Ministry Budget	Budget of Child focused Activities	Child-focused budget as % of Ministry Budget
	Budget (Billion Taka)	Budget (Billion Taka)	Budget (Billion Taka)
	2017-18	2017-18	2017-18
Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	220.23	218.71	99.31
Technical and Madrasa Education Division	52.71	38.43	72.91
Secondary and Higher Education division	231.48	154.55	66.77
Medical Education and Family Welfare Division	44.76	17.49	39.08
Health Services Division	162.03	63.02	38.89
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs	25.76	9.24	35.87
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	88.53	24.72	27.92
Ministry of Social Welfare	48.34	10.42	21.56
Local Government Division	246.74	16.43	6.66
Ministry of Labor and Employment	2.63	0.17	6.46
Public Security Division	182.88	5.21	2.85
Ministry of Information	11.46	0.10	0.87
Ministry of Cultural Affairs	4.17	0.21	5.04
Ministry of Youth and Sports	13.87	0.23	1.66
Law and Justice Division	14.24	0.10	0.70
<b>Total (Selected 15 Ministry /Divisions)</b>	<b>1349.8</b>	<b>559.0</b>	<b>41.41</b>
Child focused budget of selected 15 Ministry/Division as % of national budget		<b>13.97</b>	
Child focused budget of selected 15 Ministry /Division's s as % of GDP		<b>2.50</b>	

source:  
[https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/6333d00d\\_b8ae\\_45fd\\_b0d5\\_d07e98760bde/Child%20Budget%202018-19\\_English.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/6333d00d_b8ae_45fd_b0d5_d07e98760bde/Child%20Budget%202018-19_English.pdf)

**Table 3** Child-Focused Budget (2016-2017)<sup>7</sup>

Ministries/Divisions	Total Ministry Budget (In Core Taka)					Child-Focused Budget of the Ministry/ Division (In Core Taka)					
	Total Budget	Revenue Budget	Development Budget	Budget as % of Total Budget	Budget as % of GDP	Total Budget	Revenue Budget	Development Budget	Budget as % of Ministry/ Division Budget	Budget as % of Total Budget	Budget as % of GDP
Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	22023	13271	8752	5.5	0.99	21872	13260	8612	99.31	5.46	0.98
Secondary and Higher Education Division	23148	16983	6165	5.78	1.04	15455	11704	3751	66.77	3.86	0.7
Technical and Madrassa Education Division	5271	4432	839	1.32	0.24	3843	3175	668	72.91	0.96	0.17
Health Service Division	16204	8362	7842	4.05	0.73	6302	2651	3651	38.89	1.57	0.28
Medical Education and Family Welfare Division	4476	2806	1670	1.12	0.2	1748	1094	654	39.05	0.44	0.08
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	2576	2318	258	0.64	0.12	924	863	61	35.87	0.23	0.04
The Ministry of Social Welfare	4834	4626	208	1.21	0.22	1042	928	114	21.56	0.26	0.05
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	8853	5867	2986	2.21	0.4	2471	1631	840	27.91	0.62	0.11
Local Government Division	24675	3150	21525	6.16	1.11	1643	143	1500	6.66	0.41	0.07
Ministry of Labor and Employment	263	95	168	0.07	0.01	18	2	16	6.84	0	0
Public Security Division	18288	17243	1045	4.57	0.82	521	513	8	2.85	0.13	0.02
Ministry of Information	1146	622	524	0.29	0.05	9	8	1	0.79	0	0
Law and Justice Division	1424	919	505	0.36	0.06	10	10	0	0.7	0	0

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.mof.gov.bd/en/budget/16\\_17/child\\_budget/en/Final\\_English\\_CFB%20Report\\_2016-17\\_May\\_26.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.bd/en/budget/16_17/child_budget/en/Final_English_CFB%20Report_2016-17_May_26.pdf)

According to the Child Budget Report, the child-focused expenditure as percentage of total budget of the government has shown a moderate decline from 14.51% in FY 2016-17 to 13.96% in FY 2017-18. However, the most promising finding is that the allocation of child focused interventions as percentage of GDP has moderately increased from 2.35% in FY 2016-17 to 2.51% in FY 2017-18. Educational allocations constituted about 74% of the child budget, and health allocations (including Medical Education and Family Welfare Division) 14.4% of the child budget. The Ministry of Social Welfare and the MoWCA together spent only 3.5% of the child budget while the rest six ministries account for 8.4% of the child budget. In 2017-2018, the proposed budgets allocated BDT 8,277 for each child, which is slightly higher than that spent for every child (BDT 7,857) 2016-17.

### Establishing Oversight System on Government Spending at Local Level

The Coalition observed the continuation of government initiatives in 2017 for ensuring children's meaningful participation in formulating law, policy and programs. It observed that the Local Government Institutions (LGIs) in Satkhira Sadar and Debhata of Satkhira prepared budget in consultation with children through meetings, incorporating child participation in ward meetings, budget planning meeting and open budget session that discussed children's needs and problems, and the tracking of budget expenditure to ensure quality services for the children and child rights protection. An account of child participation in the process is presented below.

- **10508 children (4974 girls and 5534 boys)** participated in ward shova (meeting), budget planning meeting and open budget session for budget preparation of fiscal year 2017-2018 to raise demand and influence local government decision making process of budgeting. **Two children from Satkhira district participated in national level meeting with Ministry of Finance** regarding allocation and spending on children in national budget.
- **All the union parishads (87), upazilla parishads and pourashovas of Satkhira district allocated separate budgets for the children.** From the data it is found that in 2017-2018, separate budgets of total BDT 1,17,16,000 have been allocated to 19 union parishads, two upazilla parishads and one Pourashova for the children.
- **A System is in place at local level to track government spending on children in the LGIs in Satkhira Sadar Upazila and Debhata Upazila.** As a result, all LGIs have separate budgets for the children and displayed in their premises. The children, youths, Local Elected Bodies (LEBs), CSOs and community people discussed the children's needs and problems, the tracking of budget expenditure to ensure quality services for the children and child rights protection. In 2017, 32 dialogue

sessions have been held making 162 decisions, and of them 119 (74%) decisions have been executed for betterment of child life.

- 6930 children from 140 ward and union child forums led the process of child rights and service monitoring, raising demand and influence local government decision making process of budgeting and service delivery. **1352 decisions have been made through 225 ward shovas and 618 (45.4%) decisions have been included through LGIs budgeting process to implement** with the effective participation of the members of Ward Child Forum.
- **In Satkhira, Complaint and Response Mechanism Committees (CRMs) have been adopted by the LGIs and merged with Women and Children Standing Committees.** A number of 253 children (131 boys and 122 girls) are members of 20 committees in 19 union parishads and one pourashava of Satkhira and Debhata Upazilla, Satkhira. Children from the child forums participated in 125 meetings of Complaint and Response Mechanism Committees (CRMs) to address the complaint of children received by the local government under Women and Children Standing Committee
- In the coordination meetings, the issues are presented by the stakeholders including children and then decisions are made in a participatory way. Finally, the decisions of the meeting has been documented in the LGIs resolutions. In 2017, a total of 99 children's representatives participated in 56 coordination meetings where **79 decisions have been made according to children's opinions, and among them 56 (71%) decisions have been implemented.** The decisions of the coordination meetings are now followed by the LEBs, children and civil society through monitoring and dialogue sessions regularly. Child welfare boards exist at upazila, district and national levels. But at the upazila and district levels, it is found that the child welfare boards are not functioning properly due to less coordination.

### 2.3 Establishment of Separate Directorate for Children

There is a lack of coordination among different government ministries/ organizations. This creates a crucial barrier to the implementation of many progressive government policies and initiatives. However, the establishment of a separate directorate for Children's Affairs Division under the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MoWCA) can play significant roles in coordinating the ministries/divisions directly or indirectly related to children. Considering the situation, Child Rights Advocacy Coalition has been advocating the need for establishing a separate directorate for children since 2016. The government has agreed in principle to establish the directorate but no progress has been sighted yet.

## 2.4 Establishment of an Independent Institution for Children

Child Rights Advocacy Coalition is also advocating the need for establishing a national commission for children, an independent institution that will monitor the regular child rights violation and ensure the proper implementation of relevant policies to overcome the situation, ensure institutional accountability of those responsible for the promotion and protection of overall child rights situation. Considering the situation of children in the country, the MoWCA has agreed in principle and accepted CRAC,B's proposal for establishing a national commission for the rights of the children. To date, the progress has been slow.

### Recommendations

- Ratify Optional Protocol 3 (OP3) and develop a national communication procedure in the best interest of children.
- Ensure consultation with children and organizations working on children's rights before allocating the Child Budget.
- Accelerate the process of establishing a separate directorate for children for ensuring effective coordination among the ministries concerned.
- Establish an independent national children's rights commission immediately and assign the commission adequate power and resources to oversee children-related initiatives.

## Part III

# CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM

Children's civil rights and freedom 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 interests and are protected from all forms of violence and exploitation.<sup>8</sup>

Pertaining to this theme, the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition, Bangladesh (CRAC,B) has chosen to highlight the status of: (i) birth registration of children as a means of access to the basic services and facilities available at the community level to nurture and exercise children's civil rights and freedom; and (ii) the scenario of corporal punishment based on available information.

## Key Findings

### 3.1 Birth Registration

Birth registration is a key to ensuring the rights of the child. A birth certificate serves as a legal age verification document acknowledging the individual's existence and status before the law. If there is not a formal birth certificate, children's rights are denied in various ways. It is urgent for boys and girls to be identified as the citizens of the country. Birth registration is now compulsory for every citizen to receive 16 basic services<sup>9</sup>. A systematic birth certificate can protect the girls from early marriage as the government enacted Child marriage Restraint Act 2017 retaining the legal marriage age at 18 for girls and 21 for boys. Nevertheless, it has been found that birth certificates are often issued increasing the age of girls. To prevent this tendency of overstating the certificates, the UNCRC committee and UPR have recommended that the government take all measures necessary to increase the

<sup>8</sup> CRC Article 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Passport, marriage registration, admission to school and colleges, applying for jobs, driving license, over ID, land registration, opening a bank account, import and export license, getting water, gas and electric connections, Tax Identification Number (TIN), Contractor license, approval of the home design, vehicle registration, trade license and getting on the voter list

birth registration rate by establishing mobile registration offices, particularly in rural areas, and undertaking a campaign aimed at registering all children who have not yet been registered and who do not have birth certificates<sup>10</sup>.

## Birth Registration Status of Children under 5

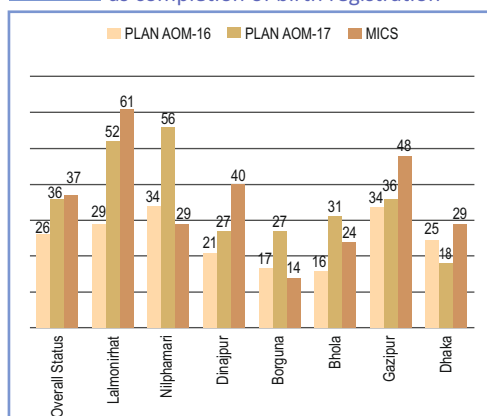
The right to protection and participation programme focuses on the strategy to ensure birth registration of children as means of child protection. As part of Annual Outcome Monitoring (AOM) 2017 conducted by Plan International Bangladesh, parents were asked about birth registration status of their under 5 children in seven districts (Dhaka, Gazipur, Barguna, Bhola, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Dinajpur). The team collected data on birth registration from 1,473 under 5 children (718 girls and 755 boys).

The findings from the Annual Outcome Monitoring (AOM) 2017 data show that over one-third (36%) children under age five in the survey area have registered and possess birth certificates which, however, is below the national status (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2012-13 Data (37%). The lowest rate of birth registration is in Dhaka (18%), followed by Dinajpur and Borgnua (27% for both districts) and the highest in Nilphamary (56%) and Lalmonirhat (52%). **No significant difference has been found in sex-disaggregated data of under-five children's birth registration status.** The findings from AOM 2016 show that only 22% parents completed their children's birth registration within 45 days of the births of their children, indicating an increase to 32% in 2017.

### A Snapshot of Birth Registration from Jessore District

In 2018, Paritran, an NGO, collected data from Biddanandokati Union Parishad of Keshobpur Upazila in Joshore District on birth registration. There are 5,998 children below 18 years of age in Biddanandokati Union. The data reveals that, of the total number of children, 91.58% (88.3% of girls and 96.2% of boys) have received birth registration certificates from the respective Union Parishad. Birth registration within 45 days was only 9.09%.

Figure 7 % of Children Under age 5 are reported as completion of birth registration



The Union Parishad mentions:

- Birth registration before 45 days is free of cost but the parents have to pay different amounts of money for birth registration of their children after 45 days. The charges range from BDT 25 to BDT 50. For any correction, children of 0-18 age-group are charged BDT 100.
- The major challenges in Biddanandokati Union are:(a) the people of the Union are not aware of the child birth registration; (b) most of the parents do not know the place of birth registration and online registration facility; (c) there is no budget in the Union Parishad for awareness raising and information sharing regarding birth registration; and (d) the parents tend to give the wrong information about the birth dates of their own children.

## 3.2 Corporal Punishment

A report (2014) to the UN Committee on Child Rights Bangladesh says: “The issue of corporal punishment was taken by the Bangladesh government very seriously, and to prevent corporal punishment in all settings, especially in schools, several measures were taken, including issuing special instructions to all schools, bringing the perpetrators to justice, and providing training in alternative forms of disciplining.” The National Children Policy 2011 stipulates that “all forms of physical and mental punishment in educational institutions shall be prohibited, and a child-friendly system of imparting lessons be introduced so that the children and the adolescents do not have any physical and mental injury.” The Children Act 2013 too, expressly provides legal protection to children against physical violence. Section 70 of the said act states that persons assaulting, ill-treating, neglecting or forsaking any child under their custody, charge or care leading to an injury of health was a

### The Ministry for Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) issued a circular specifying the following:

- a) Circulars (2010 Government Circular and 2011 Government Guidelines) are to be displayed visibly in the headmasters’ rooms of all schools.
- b) Appointment letters of teachers must specify their roles in preventing corporal punishment.
- c) Corporal punishment should be included in the DEPUTY COMMISSIONER (DC) and UPAZILA NIRBAHI OFFICER (UNO) quarterly coordination meeting agenda.
- d) Ending corporal punishment should be included as criteria for the annual best school award.
- e) Corporal punishment should be verified during inspections by Upazila Education Officer and Assistant Upazila Education Officer.

10 Concluding Observations, UN Child Rights Committee, 2015.

punishable offence. The government issued two circulars in 2010 and 2011 that acted as guidelines in prohibiting physical and psychological punishment in all educational institutions. The circulars also set out the duties of those concerned, including education officers and school management committee (SMC) members. The High Court issued rules in 2011 banning corporal punishment in educational institutions.

However, despite the high court's directives and the government's repeated circulars, children are still facing corporal punishment in their educational institutions.

### 3.3 Scenario of Corporal Punishment in 2017

ASK documented from nine national daily newspapers that a total of 105 students had to face such punishment in schools in 2017 and among those only 11 cases had been filed before court. Students were physically and mentally punished by their teachers in different schools and Madrasas. Five children were killed after physically tortured by their teachers and two children committed suicide after being punished by their teachers.

#### Case study<sup>11</sup>

Mashraful-Al-Karib, 14, a student of BEPZA School and College in the port city was beaten by his teacher for failing to draw a geometrical shape. The lens of his left eye had been damaged badly, and he needed a surgery immediately.

A survey report titled “**Corporal Punishment on Children in Schools: Present Scenario and Preventive Responsibilities**”<sup>12</sup> by Save the Children and BLAST says that in Bangladesh there is strong tolerance in favor of physical punishment. The survey has found 67% of parents in Bangladesh support physical punishment in school to discipline their children, and 79% have admitted to hitting them at home. Only 1% of guardians surveyed thought that hitting a child without a very specific reason is a violation of their rights.

It is also found from the above survey report that “Of the parents who were surveyed, 69% thought that using corporal punishment on children is a useful tool to bring discipline to the classroom, 55% considered it to be an effective way of ensuring their children’s proper development, and 27% thought that children will be indiscipline if parents do not physically punish their children.”

11. <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/teacher-damages-students-eye-1446388>

12. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2017/12/11/corporal-punishment-bangladesh->

This kind of acceptance of children’s corporal punishment made the situation more vulnerable for children. Madrasa teachers are much crueler as we have found from various news reports. The report says many brutal incidents have taken places in madras have during this reporting period. Brutality in madrasas is a very common phenomenon. In practice, there is rarely any system to monitor or control these brutalities.

#### Case study<sup>13</sup>

A six grader student Manna from Amtali Ideal School was beaten up badly by the school’s Principal Md Abu Hanif with a stick during the year. His fault was that he had been absent from the school for two days. After that, the cruel teacher locked him in a classroom until he was rescued till 8 pm on that day. The boy had to be hospitalized after his rescue, as his body was seriously hurt with several bruises, especially on the back, and on hands and thighs.

### 3.4 Awareness Session on Corporal Punishment in Satkhira

Data collected by Agrogoti Sangstha (a local NGO of Satkhira) shows that out of 52 schools in the Satkhiraupazilla of Satkhira district that received training on positive discipline there were 777 teachers and 225 school management committee’s members. Of the 52 schools, 50 schools organized awareness rising sessions on corporal punishment in their communities, institutions and workplaces. During the reporting period, 2,250 participants participated in the sessions. No complaint has been found in the schools due to the corporal punishment in that time.

#### Recommendations

- Ensure cost-free birth registration for all children and employ effective measures to stop fake registrations.
- Accelerate the introduction of the mobile apps for a birth registration service for socially excluded, marginalized and hard-to-reach children.
- Undertake more campaign measures at local level to awaken parental awareness of the importance of birth registration.
- Issue the ‘Ban on Corporal Punishment Policy and Guideline 2015’ as outlined in the 2015 State Report to the CRC Committee.
- Enact a new law banning corporal punishment in all settings and repeal the current laws allowing corporal punishment of children.
- Adopt a guideline to ensure children’s participation in decision-making processes related to their wellbeing and create child-friendly spaces in each upazila.

13. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2017/04/28/principal-faces-lawsuit-beating-confining-schoolboy/>

# DISABILITY, BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

Provision of the right to health and welfare enables children to enjoy an enhanced standard of living and to grow, develop, learn and fulfil their potential in a safe environment. According to Article 24 of UNCRC, “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 healthcare, public health education and the reduction of infant mortality.”

Under this theme, the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh (CRAC,B) has collected and analysed data with respect to access to free primary healthcare services (emergency and non-emergency), availability of doctors, nurses, medicines and other medical equipment for adolescents, and specialised support programmes for the Children with Disabilities (CWDs).

## Key Findings

### 4.1 Ensuring Inclusive Education for Children with Disability

Bangladesh has achieved tremendous success in primary school enrolment. The net enrolment rate, of children at the official primary school age (6-10 years of Bangladesh) is 97.93% (96.59% for boys and 99.33% for girls)<sup>14</sup>. But still the majority of the children with disability remain out of primary school. At the national level, less than 20% of children with disabilities (CWDs) have access to education. One of the recent study conducted by Plan International Bangladesh revealed that among the children who are out of school, 53% have functionally visible disabilities<sup>15</sup>. In 2017, a total of 75,021 Children with Special Need were enrolled in Grade 1 to 5 (where as a total of 17,251,350 students were enrolled in Grade 1 to 5)<sup>16</sup>. This is a clear violation of the constitutional pledge of ensuring education for every child. The UN committee recommends the government set up comprehensive measures to develop inclusive

education and ensure that such education has given priority over the placement of children in specialised institutions and classes. It also asked the government to train specialised teachers and professionals for inclusive education and assign them to integrated classes providing individual support and all due attention to children with learning difficulties. The committee also asked to take immediate measures to ensure that schools are accessible and that educational services are tailored to children’s needs.

“Ensuring inclusive and quality education for all” is 17th Sustainable Development Goal adopted by UN member states in 2015 as part of an ambitious agenda to end global poverty by 2030. But the scope of education for children with disabilities in Bangladesh is still much limited.

From the KIIs with school teachers in two schools in two unions of Tala upazilla under Satkhira district, it has been found that the infrastructure of the school is not at all friendly for children with disability. For example, the entrance of the school, toilet and setting arrangement are not accessible for them. Even, there is no Braille arrangement in the class for the visual impairment. The children with disabilities are seated on the ground of the classrooms. There is not enough space in the classrooms for children with disabilities to move. Out of two schools, only one has got wheel chair support facility for children with disabilities. During the rainy season, it becomes very difficult for them to move on the school premises and they face a lot of challenges. Alongside, one school building is at very risk. Real material, Braille book, talking book, stylus, black/writing board, colourful book, picture, language learning material, abacus, and cue card which are known as inclusive teaching materials for these children were not developed and distributed in this year in those two schools. There is no trained teacher on Child with Disabilities issue to teach them.

### 4.2 Implementing Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Strategy and Practice in School Curriculum

The adolescents in Bangladesh represent nearly one-fifth of the country’s total population. Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) related topics have largely remained a taboo, especially for adolescents and young unmarried people. There are also many strong traditional norms and beliefs relating to sex and sexuality in the society, and these issues are rarely discussed within the family environment. Adolescents in Bangladesh are poorly informed about their reproductive health; even they do not have adequate access to information about sexual and reproductive health services. The UNCRC has recommended that the government adopt a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) policy for adolescents and ensure that SRH be part of the mandatory school curriculum targeted at adolescent girls and boys, with special attention to the prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

14. Annual Primary School Census 2017

15. <https://bangladesh.savethechildren.net/sites/bangladesh.savethechildren.net/files/library/End%20of%20Childhood%20Report-2018-Bangladesh%20final.pdf>

16 Ibid

In 2012, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) introduced contents on Adolescence and Reproductive Health to the curricula standards for classes 6 to 10. According to a report (Published in January 2017) titled Adolescents in Bangladesh: A Situation Analysis of Programmatic Approaches to Sexual and Reproductive Health Education and Services, “Although not covered in great detail (see below table), the inclusion of key ASRH topics could have been an opening for teachers, parents and adolescents to talk about this issue and use to anchor many non-government initiatives and inter-ventions. No specific research has been done on the implementation or effectiveness of the national SRH curriculum, but reports indicate that, unfortunately, this curriculum is not being implemented due to teachers’ reluctance to teach these topics in the classroom. A repeated theme in informal communication with teachers and program managers is that students are asked to read these chapters on their own, as teachers are not comfortable discussing topics that are perceived as sensitive. For a school curriculum intervention to be effective, more sensitization, training, and support for teachers will be required.”

**Table 4** Sexual and Reproductive Health Topics Introduced by National Curriculum and Textbook Board

Class 6	Class 7	Class 8	Class 9-10
Physical, psychological changes during puberty Role of parents during puberty Dos and don'ts during menstruation Nutritious and balanced diet Peer pressure in adolescents – smoking and alcohol	Physical, psychological and sexual abuse Physical and psychological wellbeing – ways to protect and reach out for help Addiction: Consequences and prevention Early marriages and dowry	AIDS Awareness: Symptoms and prevention Early pregnancy: Risks and consequences Reproductive health	Physical, behavioral and psychological changes Coping with mental pressure during puberty Reproductive disease (Cancer, HIV) Preventing early pregnancy Safe motherhood

### 4.3 Status of implementation and Practice of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Strategy at Local Schools

- The survey has found that in Bhaluka upazila (Mymensingh district) and Tala upazila (Satkhira district) teachers were taking class on SRHR issue as instructed.

According to survey result, there was no trained teacher on SRHR issue in the surveyed schools in Tala.

- In Bhaluka, the majority school authorities said that as the school children were not adolescents they did not feel the need for making them aware of the SRHR issue.
- According to the children, mostly they learn about SRHR from their friends, elder sisters/brothers while they play or gossip together.
- In both areas, the SRHR issues were discussed in the parents’ meetings. The message was disseminated through the mothers’ forums and school management committees once a week to make the students aware and sensitize them on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Parents discussed openly with children the physical changes during adolescence period and asked their children not to get afraid during this period.

### 4.4 Government Initiatives Children and Adolescents to Access Accurate Information about Drug Abuse:

According to government instruction, all schools are obliged to conduct sessions with children to create their awareness about the negative impact of drug use. Children also know about drugs from different awareness raising TV commercials, posters, festoons and banners, and stay away from the abuse of drugs.

The survey has found that in Bhaluka, the Upazila Education Office has taken the initiative through awareness meetings with School Management Committees on abuse of drug at Upazila Resource Centre. None of the parents and children have said that school authorities take any initiative to raise awareness among children and community people. However, one school has informed that they have taken necessary initiatives to make the children and community people aware of drug abuse. One of their awareness initiatives was to form a human chain with slogan, “Madokkenabolun” (Say no to drugs) to raise awareness among children and community people.

The survey has also found in Tala Upazilla of Satkhira district, as per Govt. instruction, the schools have undertaken special measures to build awareness among children and adolescents on drug abuse by discussing the issue with SMCs and parents’ forums every week. The Union Parishad chairmen and Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) have taken the initiative to create awareness of drug abuse in the secondary schools. But there is no monitoring system to follow up on the initiatives. School teachers made their students aware of the impacts of drug abuse using the textbooks of secondary schools. Students have said that they are aware of the impacts of drug abuse on children and the community people.

## 4.5 Government Initiatives for Adolescent-friendly Health Services at Different Settings

Many adolescents, especially adolescent girls in Bangladesh, are not provided with optimal support to realize their full potentials and ensure development of their overall health. The challenges adolescents face, during this transition phase, are due to a variety of factors including structural poverty, lack of access to information and services, negative social norms, inadequate education, social discrimination, child marriage and early child-bearing for adolescent girls. The UNCRC has recommended that access to adolescent-friendly health services be improved. The study has found:

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) along with other ministries are responsible for addressing the health needs of adolescents and providing them with quality services. A recent systematic analysis of the effectiveness and gaps of existing adolescent SRH interventions and programs conducted by Population Council reveals that health services are not tailored to meet the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and needs of unmarried adolescents. The report has highlighted the need to do so and ensure the special needs of the most vulnerable adolescents are taken into account. Considering the situation, a new “National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2017-2030” has been formulated with a vision stating: “By 2030, all adolescent boys and girls of Bangladesh, especially those who are most vulnerable, will be able to enjoy a healthy life”.
- In both upazilas (Bhaluka and Tala), the community clinics provide general health services including advice and medicines for adolescents. In some extent, the clinics provide awareness and counselling support for the adolescents on different issues like how they can improve health by keeping a balanced diet, how to they can stay neat and clean at puberty stage, and outcome of sexually transmitted diseases, importance of vaccination etc.
- In Bhaluka, at a community clinic, there is no specialist or professional personnel to provide health services. The Community Health Care Provider (CHCP) has basic knowledge about common diseases, but they have very little idea about taking care of sexual health. In Tala, there is a specialized personnel in one community clinic but the person attends the clinic only in a special event.
- In Bhaluka, only girls receive services and support from clinic about their physical changes during adolescence period and also get advice on food, iron tablet and folic acid. The clinic provides regular services for adolescent boys, such as prescription of general medicines for some common illness like cold, fever, cough, and also de-worming tablet, vitamin capsule, etc. In the Community Clinic of Tala, there are some general health services, such as T. T. Vaccine, iron

tablet, vitamin tablet, suggestions of SRHR are available. Among the service recipients, only 94 adolescent boys and girls (G-90, B-04) received those services in 2017. The supply of medicine is not enough.

- In the both areas, parents have suggested that the campaign on adolescent-related health services should spread out from individual to a local community or in cluster system so that more people can be covered under this service. The supply of medicines as per requirement is not enough. So, the supply of medicine should increase in these clinics, they added. Children with disabilities have opined that they do not get friendly services from the clinic and they are not satisfied with the services. No initiatives have been taken from a community clinic for them.
- In the community clinic, there is a lack of privacy, which creates problems for an adolescent to seek proper support.

### Recommendations

- Ensure -friendly structures accessible to the CWD and specialized teachers. Additional funding has to be provided for the schools to ensure infrastructure is appropriate for children with disabilities, the classrooms are easily accessible, the books are appropriate, and there are accessible toilet facilities.
- Develop/procure and distribute teaching-learning materials for the Children with Disabilities.
- Expand the interventions that specifically target underserved groups such as boys and adolescents with disabilities.
- Develop a guideline for service providers on this to ensure adolescents receive confidential services.
- Advocate incorporating Adolescent Friendly Health Services (AFHS) in Urban Health Strategy to ensure AFHS for urban adolescents.
- Allocate resources for community clinics to increase quality of service and supply of medicine for the adolescents.
- Incorporate adolescent health in educational/training curriculum of different health professionals e.g. nurses, paramedics, midwives, field-level health workers.
- Strengthen in-service training and mentoring for teachers on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of adolescents to enable them to teach Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) issues in the classrooms.

# EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Every child has the right to education, 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, aptitudes, 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 budgetary allocation and other initiatives taken at the national and local levels to ensure quality education; increase enrolment and lower dropout rate in primary education have been examined.

## Key Findings

### 5.1 Education scenario 2017

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in the education sector over the past two decades. According to the latest data of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the current literacy rate is 72.3%<sup>17</sup>. In 2017, the statistics from the Directorate of Primary Education<sup>18</sup> shows great developments in gross enrolment with 111.7% of children listed in primary education. Between 2010 and 2017, Cycle Dropout Rate (Grade I-V) has been continuously decreased from 39.8% to 18.8% and Cycle Completion Rate (Grade I-V) has been continuously increased from 60.2% to 81.2%. In 2017, a total of 26,96,216 students appeared for the PECE examinations. Of them, 25,66,271 (95.18%) came out successful with 262,609 obtaining GPA-5<sup>19</sup>. The gross enrolment ratio in secondary education in 2016 reached 74.23% while net enrolment rate was 67.84%. Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in terms of access to both primary and secondary education.

17. <http://www.newagebd.net/article/23446/literacy-rate-rises-to-723pc-in-country>

18. Annual Primary School Census (APSC)-2017

19. <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/psc-examination-results-2017-bangladesh-bd-pass-rate-falls-by-3.33-percent-1512397>

The government continued the initiatives to implement the Education Policy 2010. An initiative has been taken for increasing primary education period from 5 years to 8 years in order to improve the quality of primary education, and in 609 schools primary education has already been upgraded to class 8<sup>20</sup>.

In providing primary education for all children in the country, a huge challenge is reaching out to the disadvantaged and marginalized children including ethnic minority children living in the remote areas of Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Chittagong Hill Tracts as well the children living and working in the slums of large urban areas. Basic education for many of these children also raises the issues of learner-friendly flexible hours and multi-lingual provision as well as opportunity for progression to secondary schools<sup>21</sup>. Primary education curriculum has been developed in eleven tribal languages to ensure education for the ethnic, tribal and indigenous groups in their mother tongue.<sup>22</sup> Despite those progresses, challenges continue to keep Bangladesh from advancing further.

### Literacy of 15-year old or older Population

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) shows the literacy rate in Bangladesh needs to improve further. Approximately 27% of the 15-year old or older population still struggle to successfully read and write. The report shows women lagged behind men in terms of attaining literacy, as 69.5% women were literate compared to 75.2% men. The rural-urban gap in literacy was big. The adult literacy rate in rural areas stood at 65.4% against 80.7% in urban areas. While the overall primary enrollment rates have increased, there are more than 4 million out-of-school children aged 6-10 in Bangladesh.<sup>23</sup> The government's EFA National Review 2015 estimates the proportion of out-of-school children of primary age (6-10 years) to be 26.8%.<sup>24</sup>

### Grade-relevant Competency

Another big challenge relates to low and uneven levels of learning. According to the third national student assessment conducted in 2015, out of 22,954 Grade 3 students, 35%/59% did not master the grade-relevant competencies in Bangla/mathematics. Out of 19,383 Grade 5 students, 77% for Bangla and 90% for mathematics did not master the grade-relevant competencies in Grade 5. Only 10%-30% of students are performing at grade level in both subject areas. The rest of

20. [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/6333d00d\\_b8ae\\_45fd\\_b0d5\\_d07e98760bde/Child%20Budget%202018-19\\_English.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/6333d00d_b8ae_45fd_b0d5_d07e98760bde/Child%20Budget%202018-19_English.pdf)

21. Annual Report 2016, SHARE Education Programme

22. <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2015/jun/05/slimmer-budget-education#sthash.2RcECV40.dpuf>

23. [https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Out-of-School\\_children\\_in\\_Bangladesh.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Out-of-School_children_in_Bangladesh.pdf)

24. <http://share-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/02-Annual-Report-2015.pdf>

the students completed primary education with low competency in the reading, writing and maths. At Grade 8 level, competencies in English and Mathematics are 44% and 35% respectively<sup>25</sup>.

### Dropout Rates

Though the average dropout rate shows a decrease by more than half during 2010-2017, 18.8% students still did not complete primary education<sup>26</sup>. Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) in its report 'Bangladesh Education Statistics 2017' shows the dropout rate of girl students compared to that of boys in the secondary level is still alarming though various initiatives like doling out of stipends and free books are being offered by the government. The total combined dropout rate of boys and girls in the year 2017 was 37.81% while the individual rate of girls dropping out was 41.52% and boys 33.43%<sup>27</sup>.

## 5.2 Financing Education

Inadequate investment in the education sector is also a major issue of concern. Annual public spending for a primary school student in Bangladesh is US\$100, which is around one-third in comparison to other South Asian countries. The Education 2030 Framework for Action set two benchmarks on domestic financing for education: 4-6% of GDP and 15-20% of total budgets on education, although the 7th Five-year Plan set the target for expenditure on education to be 3% of GDP. Allocation for education as a share of GDP has remained static between 2.25% and 1.68% over the last decade. The education sector funding allocation accounts for

**Table 5** The share of Education Budget in National Budget 2011-12 to 2016-17 (in %)

	Primary	Post-Primary	Total
2011-12	5.47	6.63	12.11
2012-13	5.12	6.04	11.17
2013-14	5.36	5.92	11.28
2014-15	5.46	6.2	11.66
2015-16	4.91	5.8	10.71
2016-17	6.51	7.88	14.39

[http://data.banbeis.gov.bd/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1844:table-91-the-share-of-education-budget-in-national-budget-2011-12-to-2016-17taka-in-crore&catid=243:education-finance-and-stipend-2017&Itemid=277](http://data.banbeis.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1844:table-91-the-share-of-education-budget-in-national-budget-2011-12-to-2016-17taka-in-crore&catid=243:education-finance-and-stipend-2017&Itemid=277)

25. Fostering Quality Education and Skills for Employment, Bangladesh Development Forum 2018

26. Annual Primary School Census (APSC)-2017

27. <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/139261>

around 12.60% in the 2017-2018 and 14.39% in the 2016-17 national budgets, whereas the major share of spending goes for recurrent expenditure.

### Hidden Cost of Education

Although the government's stipend program has been identified as a major success in promoting education for children of the marginalized families, the inability of the households to sponsor child education still appears as a strong barrier.<sup>28</sup> A study estimates that annually the students spend BDT 3,505 and BDT 11,426 respectively in public and private schools to meet the hidden educational expenses in the form of fees and subscriptions.<sup>29</sup>

### Other Challenges

An education law was drafted in light of the education policy in 2013 but has not yet been approved. Relevant stakeholders were consulted while drafting the law, but it has also been reported that a compromised version of the law is in the line of approval. According to a leading national daily newspaper,<sup>30</sup> in the latest edition of the policy, coaching and private tuition are considered 'shadow education' and the policy also permits the publication of practice books (guidebooks). These two things were not permitted and were punishable under the previous draft formulated considering the opinions of educationists and other relevant experts. Further, the policy prohibits physical and humiliating punishment in educational institutions and mentions that the perpetrators will be punished as per the service rule for professional misconduct. But in the previous version there was specific punishment for such an act.

Children in chars, haors, tea gardens and slums remain far behind other kids in terms of education. Vocational education is mostly neglected by the authorities and needs to be promoted.

## 5.3 Access to Quality Education

### Bhaluka, Mymensingh

- In the sampled schools, the combined primary school enrolment rate in 2017 has increased by about 1% in comparison with that in 2016 while the girl's enrolment has increased 4.82% in 2017. Indigenous children enrolment rate in 2017 remains same as 2016 (0.34%). Dropout rate in the sampled schools increased from 1.6% to 3.6% between 2016 and 2017. In 2017, the dropout rate of girls is higher than that of the boys (dropout rate for boys is 2.94% and for girls 3.85%).

28. Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), and UNICEF Bangladesh, November 2013; Bangladesh Primary Education Stipends; A Qualitative Assessment

29. SHARE Education Monograph No. 7, Hidden Causes and Costs that Hinder the Access of Working Children to Primary Education in Bangladesh

30. 07 December 2016, ProthomAlo.

- In the surveyed schools, total number of stipend received by students has decreased from 451 students to 388 students between 2016 to 2017. In 2017, the percentage of stipend-receiving girls is more than boys (57.21% girls and 42.78% boys getting stipends).
- There was no allocation from the government fund for schools to ensure the right to leisure and play of the students. The school management committees manage to mobilize the fund to ensure the rights. Teachers were not aware about the government policy on the child right to rest, leisure and play.

#### 5.4 Mohadevpur and Patnitala Upazilas, Naogaon

In 2017, 98.7% primary-school-aged children (boys 48.3% and girls 51.7%) enrolled in primary school at Mohadevpur Upazila. In Patnitala Upazila enrolment rate is 98.9%. According to School teacher and Upazila Education Officer of Mohadevpur Upazila, the enrolment rate is 100%. Dropout rate for both Upazilas (in Mohadevpur Upazila is 0.50% and in Patnitala Upazila is 0.53%) is lower than compared to national rate (18.8%). Child marriage, lack of awareness, poverty, and lack of aspiration of regarding education are main reasons of drop out. In Mohadevpur upazila 97.73% and Patnitala Upzila 98.40% students got stipend. Indigenous, disable and ultra-poor children were priority for stipend. The indigenous, minority and disable children enrolment remarkable progress in this areas.

#### Recreational facilities for Children in School

In Mohadevpur and Patnitala upazilas, most of the schools have distributed the government-provided recreational materials and playing instruments like rhymes & story books, table, and drum sets for ensuring the quality leisure time for children. Few schools found slipper. But there was no specialized recreational material or playing instrument provided for indigenous children and children with disabilities.

#### Safe School Environment for Students

In Patnitala Upazila of Nogaon district, most girls have said that they are safe at school, but sometimes outside the schools they feel insecure. Then they share the problem with friends, parents and teachers. They are happy that the female teachers and senior students as well as mothers make them aware about health and hygiene practices and participation of extra curriculum activities. In Mohadevpur upazila of the district, 13% students of the survey schools have said that the teachers beat them in classrooms. The teachers, however, denied it.

#### Recommendations

- Finalize and enact the education law immediately incorporating the concerns of relevant stakeholders, experts, etc.
- Strengthen efforts to ensure quality education to reduce the student-teacher ratio by recruiting more qualified teachers, provide more vocational education and training to improve the functional utility of secondary education, including for children who have dropped out, and establish formal and non-formal facilities for combining work and education.
- Review the existing education system and take necessary measures to ensure quality education to achieve the SDG 4.
- Ensure additional resource allocations to implement SDG 4 and achieve all of its targets.
- Ensure more allocation of Public Spending in Primary Education.
- Remove controversial contents from textbooks at the primary and secondary levels, shift heavy syllabus, and change the culture of memorization.
- Ensure sufficient infrastructures like classrooms, separate toilets for boys and girls, recreational materials for students with disabilities, hygiene materials for menstruation, first aid kits, safe boundary walls, complaint boxes, indoor and outdoor games materials, and tube wells for safe drinking water.
- Take effective steps to facilitate learning in the mother languages of the indigenous people and small ethnic groups at the primary level of education.

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

It is enshrined in the UNCRC that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. The government has the responsibility to ensure that children are properly cared for and to protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else that looks after them. In the current context of our country, the situation of children's wellbeing continues to be threatened by the many human rights violations perpetrated against them. The number of VAC cases is on the rise and the disturbing, cruel nature of the violence perpetrated against children has caused outrage among the general public leading to protests across the country.

## 6.1 Nationwide Extension of Child Helpline

A National Helpline Centre for Violence against Women and Children has been established under the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women to provide appropriate guideline, advice, service and support to women and children victims, their families and other stakeholders. The helpline number is 109. It is a toll-free number available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is accessible from all parts of Bangladesh and all victims can make calls from both fixed phone and mobile phone. It's a confidential service that offers legal advice, police assistance, telephone counseling, referrals to other organizations service, and information regarding violence issues.

The main purpose of this website is to inform the people, stakeholders and organizations about the helpline center and give the women and children a message saying, "You are not alone. You can get help."

The following is a tally of the services provided through the helpline in 2017 as per the information found in MoWCA website.

The extension of the Child Help Line (CHL) is operationalized with three components based on centralised and decentralised level outreach interventions and the components are telephone-based interventions from decentralised call centres in the

head office of DSS, mobile team and outreach service for emergency response through rescue and utilising existing services through referral and temporary shelter and need-based protection support

Though The CHL is very useful for children and their parents much publicity is needed to raise awareness among the people to use the help line.

## 6.2 Child Repression and Murder

The incidents of children repression and murder were very frustrating in 2017. The report titled "Human Rights Situation of Bangladesh in 2017" by ASK has found that 1675 children were killed and subjected of cruel tortures. Of them 339 were murdered. Moreover, Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) has found 50 children who were killed by their parents in 2017. The situation was obviously shocking. It is also observed children became subject to tortures for very trivial reasons. Parents who killed their children were often found depressed. The government should offer proper treatment and counselling to those found in such condition.

### Case study<sup>31</sup>

A 11 years old domestic helper endured physical torture by her employer in Dhaka. She received injuries in the eyes and her right chest and left wrists were burnt with hot utensils as she failed to fry an egg. She was also struck in the head and back and treated at the One-stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

**Table 6** Number of children and women having received services through the helpline in 2017

Type of Service	2017
Medical Facilities	398
Counselling	1476
Police Assistance	4730
Legal Help	12307
Information	370613
Others	3734
Total	393258

31. <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/tortured-domestic-help-moved-dhaka-cmh-1428118>

## Child Rape

Another distressing reality is child rape. The BSAF recorded 593 child rapes in 2017. Among the victims 70 were gang-raped. Shockingly, 44 children with disabilities were raped during this period. The incidents of gang-rape, rape of children with disabilities, attack by stalkers and making obscene videos of children and uploading them on social media increased in 2017<sup>32</sup>.

Data from ASK on Child Rape shows that, out of 470 children 13% or 60 children are below the 7 years, 144 children are in the 7-10 age group, and 173 children are in the 13-18 age group. From the data it is also found that cases of 67% incidents were filed.

Human rights organizations have found that the situation has been even worse than earlier as children are more vulnerable and less protected. Perpetrators are finding it easy to commit any crime. Additionally, cultural impunity is a very common phenomenon in the judicial process, thus creating more tension among the victims. Due to the social norms, it is kind a taboo not to report the child abuse case as per legal system. Sometimes, victims fear further abuse, threat and torture, and remain quiet instead of taking necessary steps. It is pivotal that all the perpetrators no matter how small or big the incidents are, should be punished under the laws. It is very important to educate the parents and children through awareness campaign about these perpetrators.

## Recommendations

- Ensure speedy trial processes for all cases of child torture and rape and take preventive measures to end Violence against Children(VAC)
- Ensure preventive measures as per laws and policies to end VAC.
- Ensure legal aid, health support, rehabilitation, and psychosocial help for victims.
- Provide capacity building and adequate human and financial resources for the institutions working to combat violence and to ensure justice.
- Launch an awareness campaign widely to sensitise general people about children's rights.
- Ensure the Election Commission give specific directions to the political parties for including child protection issues in their election manifestos.

Figure 8 Children rape in 2017

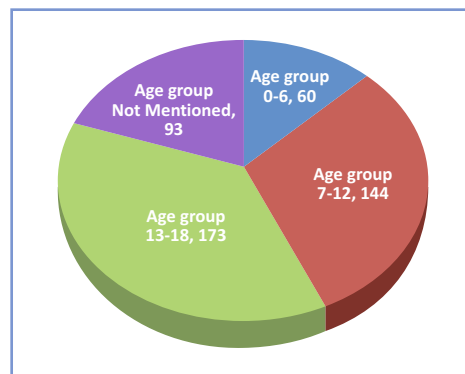


Table 7 Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) Child Rights Violation Data- 2017 (Jan-Dec)

Type of Incident	Total	Type of Incident	Total
Total Rape	593	Death by Lightning Strikes	49
Gang Rape	70	Injured by Lightning Strikes	4
Disable Child Rape	44	Killed by cocktail bomb blast	1
Attempt to Rape	72	Injured by cocktail bomb blast	2
Eve teasing	51	Killed in political violence	4
Beaten by Perverts	62	Injured in political violence	3
Sexual Harassment	90	Injured by terrorist attack	13
Murder after Rape	22	CDW Raped	7
Suicide after Rape	7	CDW suicide/suspicious death	13
Victim of Pornography	26	CDW killed	5
Total Murder	339	Physical torture on CDW	14
Attempt to Murder	22	Injured by Physical Tortured at educational institutions	118
Committing Suicide	213	Killed by brutal parents	50
Attempt to Suicide	11	Tortured by brutal parent	6
Kidnapped	177	Torture/Beaten	66
Attempt to Kidnap and Prevented	14	Beaten to Death	13
Rescued after Kidnapping	98	Died in ill treatment	22
Murder after Kidnapping	26	Injured by ill treatment	3
Missing	188	Killed by medical negligence	13
Rescued After Missing	20	Killed by water vessel accidents/boat capsized	31
Found murdered after Missing	75	Injured by water vessel accidents	17
Rescued while/After trafficking	25	Died in different accidents	167
Found dead body of unknown newborn baby	24	Injured in different accidents	91
Newborn baby theft	12	Stabbed by hijackers/robbers/miscreants'	12
Newborn baby rescued after theft	5	Died in food poisoning	4
Found unknown baby	17	Sick in food poisoning	13
Victim of acid violence	9	Rescued from child marriage	186
Death by Road accident	357	Victim of Child marriage	66
Injured by Road accident	58	Child selling	7
Death by fire	21	Tortured by police	1
Injured by fire	34	Verdict of child killing	44
Electrocuted	64	Verdict of child rape	32
Death by drowning	391	Verdict of Child kidnapping	6

32. <http://www.newagebd.net/article/32121/violence-against-children-alarming-in-2017-report>



## 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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### Supporting Organizations

