

CGS PEACE REPORT

an initiative of BPO



Volume 4, Issue 1

January- February 2020*

**Published on 14 August 2020.
Delayed because of Covid-19 pandemic.*



**Crime and Violence in
Bangladesh:**
An analysis from BPO

**Sexual Violence against
Children in Bangladesh:**
Setting the Scene

**Child Trafficking in
Bangladesh**

**Commentary on Violence
against Children:**
Ms. Shaheen Anam

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From the Editor's Desk

Let me take recourse to a poem in flagging the pain one has to bear with every violent act against children. This is a poem by Adele Maritz titled the "Angels Cry":

Why must mothers say goodbye?
Every time children die -
The angels cry.

Stop the hurt and stop the pain.
Never any gain, just a nation's shame,
a laughable blame game.
Only headstones remain.

Sisters and brothers ripped from
fathers and mothers.
Empty chairs and empty beds,
fill empty homes - hung by threads.

Let our children play and shine.
Just a day without that headline.
Safe in the streets and safe in their beds,
no bruises and bullets - we beg!

Why must mothers say goodbye?
Every time children die -
The angels cry.

Adele Maritz lost her 8 years old daughter when she was shot and killed during a house robbery in South Africa in 2011. Her pain is the pain of all human beings irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, race or religion, and anyone reading the poem will feel the pain.

Many probably would argue that a poem will not stop the perpetrators, but then a poem can certainly create anguish within us and make us detest the perpetrators. There can be only one solution for stopping those who commit violence against children and that is "zero tolerance" towards them. Let the perpetrators know that no methods, no means, no mediums will be left out to put an end to their heinous crime!

Date: 10 August 2020

Imtiaz Ahmed

Professor of International Relations &
Director, Centre for Genocide Studies,
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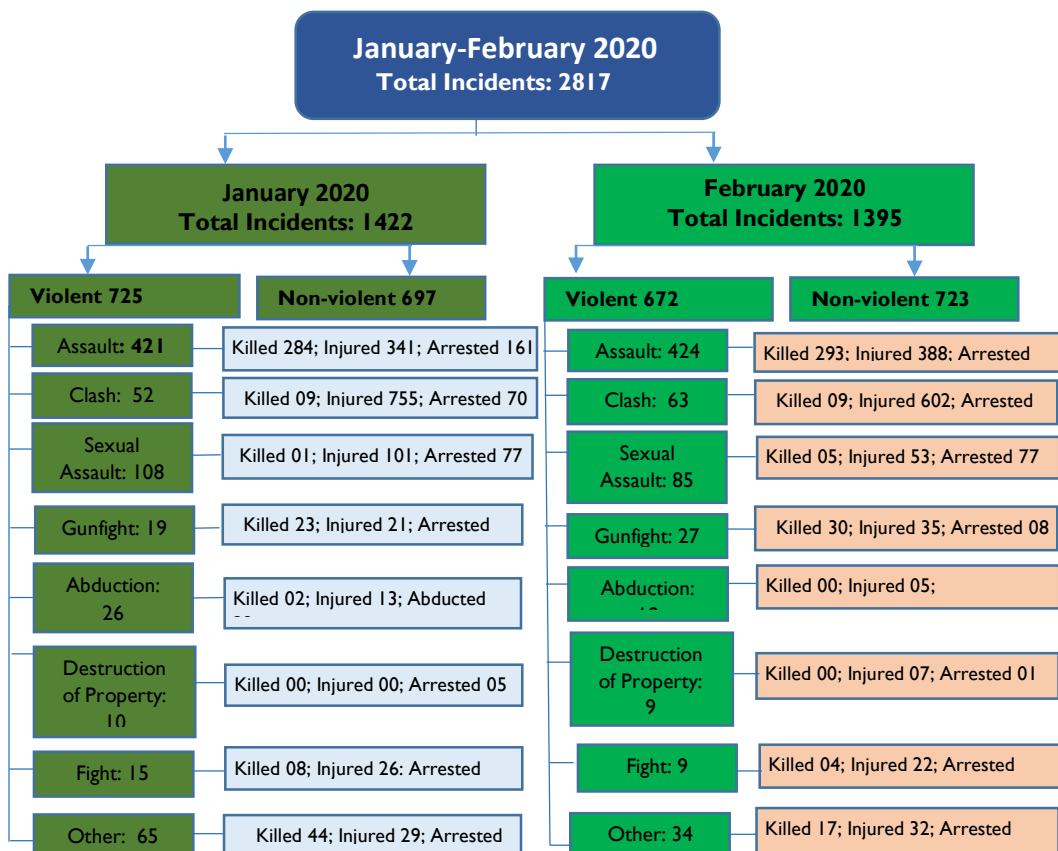
Crime and Violence in Bangladesh: An Analysis from BPO

Violence Update (January-February 2020)

The Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) brings together different streams of publicly available data on violence using news reports from prominent national dailies. From January to February 2020, BPO recorded 2817 violent¹ and non-

violent² incidents all over the country. Figure I segregates these incidents into some general categories by type of violence. A brief description of each category is available in the Annex.

Figure I: An Overview of Incidents (January-February 2020)



¹ **Violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident involved the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property.

² **Non-violent Incident:** According to BPO Codebook: The reported incident did not involve the intentional use of physical force by an individual or group against another individual or group, in a manner that resulted or could have resulted in death, injury or any other form of physical harm to persons or property, e.g. Arrest, Peaceful Protest, Rescue and Recovery.

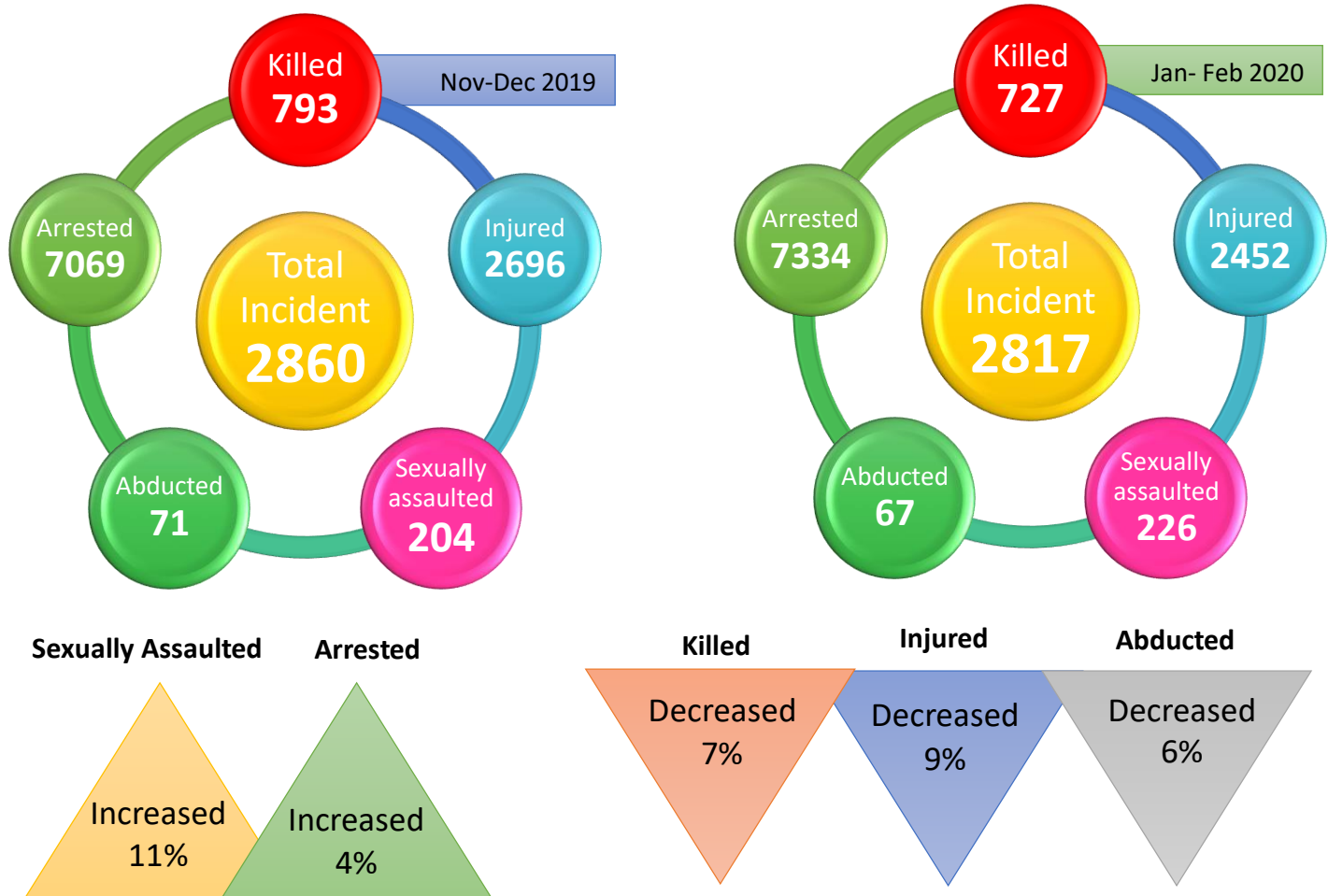
According to BPO data, the number of total incidents has decreased by 1.5% in January-February 2020 than November-December 2019, i.e., from 2860 to 2817. In these two months, the number of violence in different categories has shown different trends in the analysis. Table I shows how the number has changed for

violent and non-violent categories for January-February 2020 compared to November-December 2019. The number of victims of sexually assaulted and arrested people has increased, while the number of the total killed, injured, and abducted people has decreased (Figure 2).

Table I: Violent and Non-violent incidents update in January-February 2020

Incidents of Violent and Non-Violent Category	Nov-Dec 2019	Jan-Feb 2020	Increase /Decrease (percentage)
Abduction/hostage	38	44	16
Assault	886	845	-5
Clash	116	115	-1
Destruction of property	21	19	-10
Fight	42	24	-43
Gunfight	42	46	10
Mob violence (large group assault)	11	12	9
Sexual assault	187	193	3
Others	75	99	32
Non-Violent incidents	1442	1420	-2

Figure 2: Changes in Consequences Analysis



The number of sexual assault-related incidents has increased by 3%, and the number of victims of sexual assault has also increased by 11%. In 74% of the reported incidents, the victims are below 18 years, and 67.36% of the victims are girls. Six minor boys were victims of sexual assault. The perpetrators of these offenses are mostly male of different ages, such as teachers of educational institutions, family members and relatives, neighbors, local

delinquents, and stalkers. Little girls were threatened for life or lured with snacks and sweets, or the attackers took advantage of the child staying home alone without parental supervision. The promise of marriage, good job, revenge or personal anger were used as weapons to make the older victims fall into the trap. A total of 183 persons were arrested in these reported sexual assault cases.

* A Dhaka University female student was raped by a serial rapist and drug addict, on January 5 at Kurmitola area; Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) arrested the rapist along with the belongings of the victim from Shewra rail crossing area of Dhaka capital city.³

*In Dharmapasha, Sunamganj, a nine-year-old girl accompanied by her younger sister, went to catch fish in a nearby pond. A man who was also catching fish there threatened the girl and raped her in front of her sister. The girl's mother told the incident to the perpetrator's mother shortly after, but the woman tried to bribe her with 50 taka and a big fish to hide the incident. Refusing the proposal, the victim's mother went to the police, and the perpetrator was arrested afterward.⁴

Figure 3 shows the monthly breakdown of violent incidents. From the bar chart, one can see that most of the violent incidents fall under the category of assault, clash, sexual assault, and gunfight. There were 46 gunfights in total in these two months and more gunfights took place in February. A specific connection cannot be traced as to why more gunfights took place in February. Of the 46

gunfights, 12 of them took place in Cox's Bazar district, a coastal district that has marine borders. Police and RAB were involved in 23 and 12 cases respectively. Robbers and drug peddlers were major criminal parties to be involved in gunfights. February has also seen more clashes than January. Of the total 115 clashes, 39 took place in the Dhaka division and 16 of them in the Dhaka district. Most of the clashes

³ 'Culprit a serial rapist' 9 January 2020, Cited in The Daily Star, 9 January 2020, pg-1,2. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁴ 'Girl raped in front of younger sister' 11 February 2020, Cited in- The Daily Prothom Alo. Accessed on 11 February 2020, p. 20.

in the Dhaka district had political motives that were related to the election of the two City Corporations in Dhaka on 1 February 2020.

The number of assault is slightly different in these two months. Personal, social, land-related enmity, intimate partner and domestic violence, suicide attempts due to many reasons, were the main motives behind these incidents. Also, there were

reports of a large number of cases about the recovery of unidentified dead bodies. BPO enlists these types of recoveries as assault cases with unclear motives. Also, in January, twelve people were reportedly killed in the border areas mostly by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF). Among the deceased people, cattle traders, smugglers, and other illegal passers were generally targeted. In December 2019, eight Bangladeshi people were reportedly killed.

Figure 3: Number of violent incidents (January- February 2020)

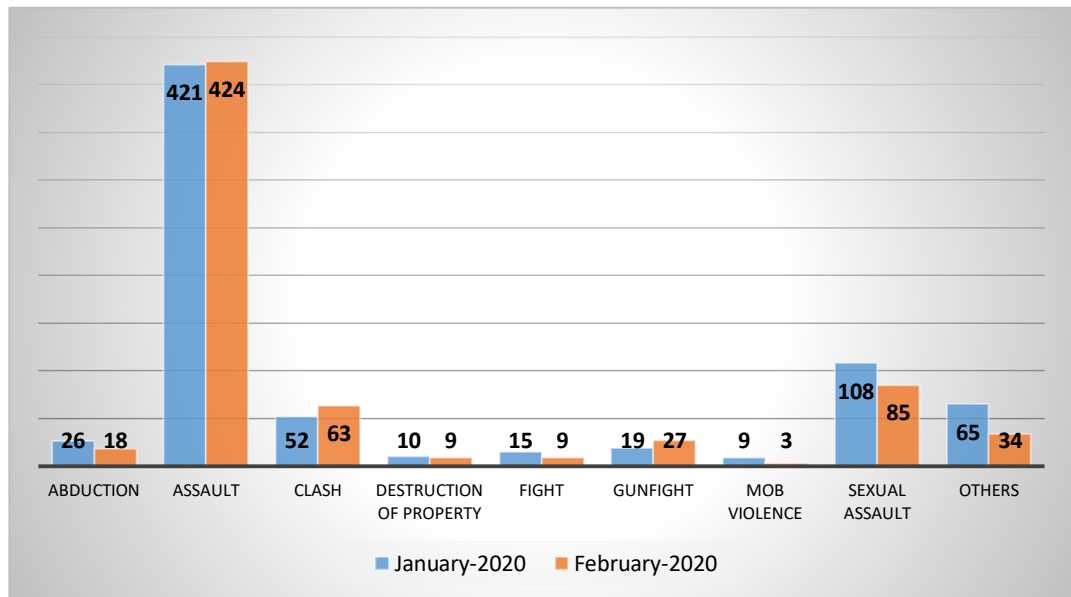


Figure 4 depicts the monthly distribution of incidents and the consequences of the incidents. Although Figure 3 shows that the number of incidents in different

categories has varied in two months, according to Figure 4, the number of incidents and the consequences are higher in January than in February.

Figure 4: Comparative analysis of Incidents (January-February 2020)

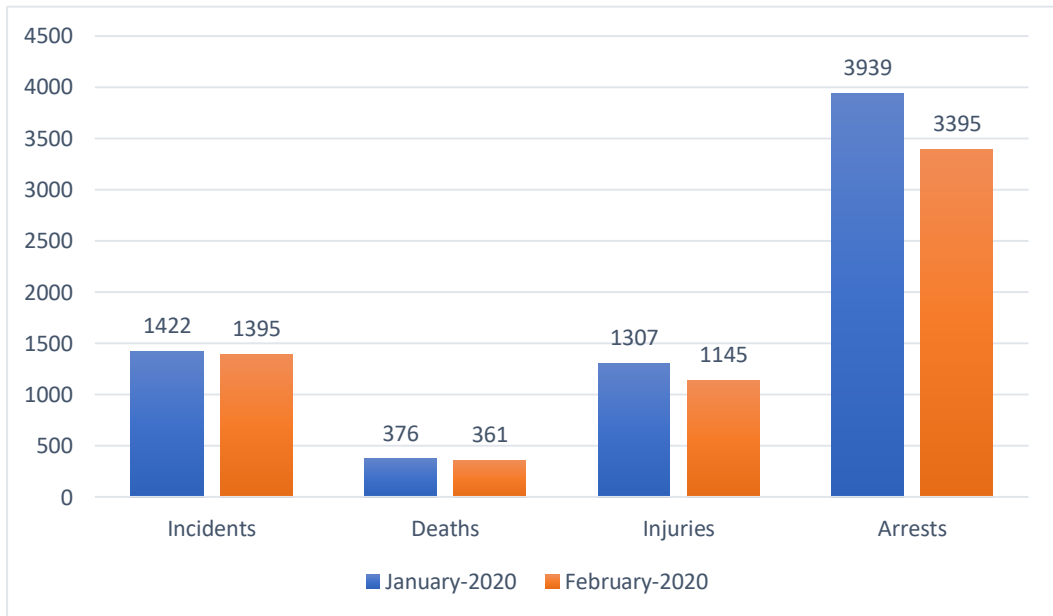
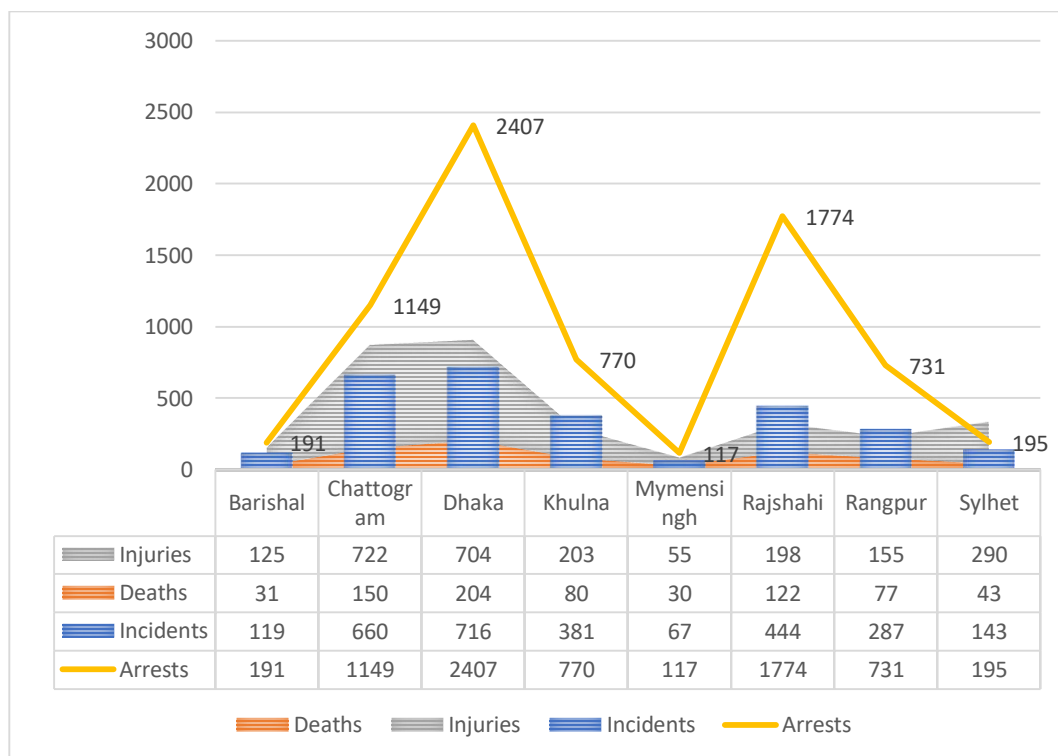


Figure 5 provides a spatial glimpse through the divisional distribution of the recorded incidents and its consequences. From this graph, Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi are the first, second, and third respectively in terms of incidents and death count. These three divisions are the most populous in Bangladesh.

The Sylhet division, although usually had higher number of injuries than the number of arrest due to massive

clashes, witnessed considerably low injury count in these two months (from 717 in November-December to 290 in January-February 2020). Out of 116 clashes in November-December 2019, 22 clashes took place in the Sylhet division, injuring 634 people. But in January-February 2020, 16 clashes took place in the Sylhet division, injuring 243 people. Land-related rivalry, social tension, political encounter, and establishing supremacy in the area are the main motives of these clashes.

Figure 5: Divisional Distribution of incidents (January-February 2020)



Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi, the three big cities in Bangladesh, occupied the top three positions in incident frequency (Figure 5). But if the population ratio⁵ is applied to understand the incident prevalence and its consequences then a different picture comes out. Indeed, if the population ratio is considered then Khulna

occupies the first position. The Rajshahi division is first in death rate, including female death rate, while the Sylhet division is first in injury. The Barishal division, however, has the worst sexual assault rate from the standpoint of population ratio, according to BPO data.

⁵ The population data is based on the Population & Housing Census 2011, Bangladesh by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Cited in:

<http://www.bbs.gov.bd/site/page/47856ad0-7e1c-4aab-bd78-892733bc06eb/Population-and-Housing-Census>, Accessed on 1 April 2020.

Table 2: Bi-Monthly Divisional Distribution of Incidents (January- February 2020)

Division	Incident	Rate by pop*	Death	Rate by pop*	Female Death	Rate by pop*	Injury	Rate by pop*	Sexual Assault	Rate by pop*
Barishal	119	1.43	31	0.37	14	0.17 (3 rd)	125	1.50 (3 rd)	24	0.29 (1 st)
Chattogram	660	2.26 (3rd)	150	0.51 (2 nd)	48	0.16	722	2.48 (2 nd)	33	0.11
Dhaka	716	1.44	204	0.41	81	0.16	704	1.42	81	0.16 (3 rd)
Khulna	381	2.43 (1st)	80	0.51 (2 nd)	32	0.20 (2 nd)	203	1.29	17	0.11
Mymensingh	67	0.59	30	0.26	10	0.09	55	0.48	4	0.04
Rajshahi	444	2.40 (2nd)	122	0.66 (1 st)	44	0.24 (1 st)	198	1.07	39	0.21 (2 nd)
Rangpur	287	1.82	77	0.49 (3 rd)	24	0.15	155	0.98	13	0.08
Sylhet	143	1.46	43	0.44	8	0.08	290	2.96 (1 st)	15	0.15

Violence against Children during Pre- and post-COVID-19 Lockdown

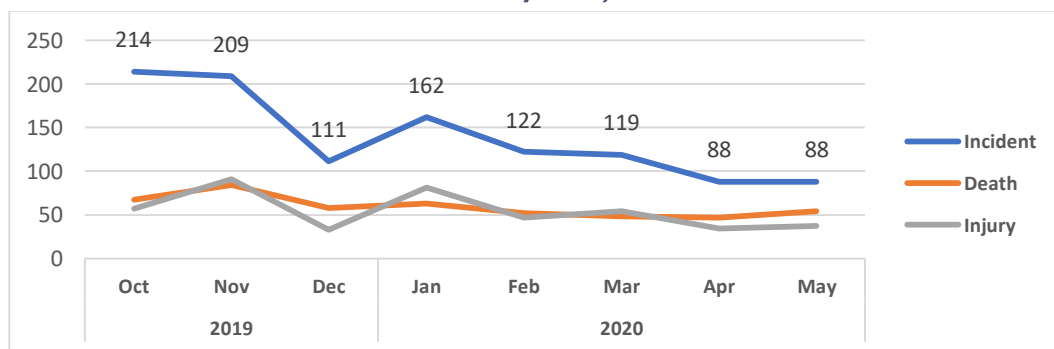
The BPO Team

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global health crisis with catastrophic impact on children. Due to the lockdown measures or quarantine curfews enforced because of the pandemic, children are forced to stay home. Many of them are becoming increasingly susceptible to various types of violence such as maltreatment/physical abuse, bullying, sexual assault, domestic violence, and psychological/emotional violence. The far-reaching implications of the pandemic such as school closures for an indefinite period, isolation, family confinement, family's economic vulnerability, and paranoia related to health risk, etc. is in all likelihood going to leave a deep psychological scar on many children's

mind. Numerous news reports from Germany, France, and Italy warned that various types of violence against children ranging from casual physical abuse to deadly assaults has seen a sharp uptick during the quarantine period.⁶

The Bangladesh government imposed a nation-wide lockdown on 26th March to restrict community transmission of COVID-19 virus, which continued until 30th May.⁷ The reported incidents of violence against children in Bangladesh in between pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID lockdown do not indicate a significant rise or decline as per the estimate of Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) data. (see, Figure 6)

Figure 6: Monthly Trend of the Incidents of Violence against Children (October 2019 to May 2020)



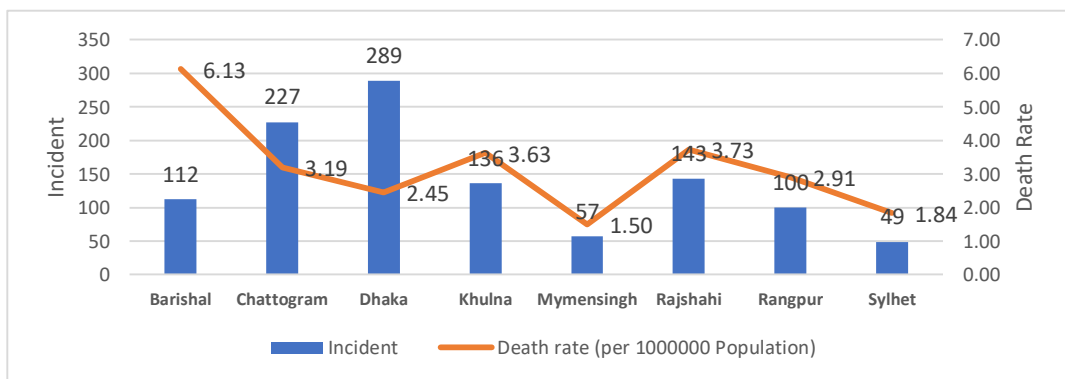
⁶ Juliane Kippenberg, "Millions of Children Threatened by Violence Risk Being Forgotten Amid Coronavirus Lockdowns" *Human Rights Watch* 24 April 2020. Cited in <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/24/millions-children-threatened-violence-risk-being-forgotten-amid-coronavirus>. Accessed 25 June 2020

⁷ "Bangladesh imposes total lockdown over COVID-19" 25 March 2020. Cited in <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-imposes-total-lockdown-over-covid-19/1778272>. Accessed 20 June 2020.

In fact, the number of incidents of violence against children declined from March (119) to April (88) and remained steady in May (88). Since the lockdown, the BPO data shows the reported incidents of violence against children dropped by 14 percent.⁸ As Figure 6 shows, the number of incidents in which children were subjected to violence was declining in the Pre-COVID-19 period from a peak in October 2019 (214) to a relatively low in December 2019 (111). During the lockdown period, as the children are staying with their family, they are more exposed to abuse by parents or family members. In most instances, these cases remain unreported or under-reported; especially in cases of casual physical abuse or maltreatment. A recent survey found that 93 % of the child victims were abused by their parents and relatives during April lockdown.⁹

As per the overall scenario of violence against children in Bangladesh is concerned from October 2019 to May 2020, the BPO data show that the number of incidents of violence against children was the highest in Dhaka division (289); followed by Chattogram division (227) and the lowest in Sylhet division (49). (see, Figure 7) Conversely, as Figure 7 shows when compared with the demographics of the divisions, the child death rate due to violence was the highest in the Barishal division (6.13) but the division was fifth in terms of the number of deaths (112). Rajshahi division has the second-highest child death rate due to violence (3.73); closely followed by Khulna (3.63). BPO data also demonstrates that there were 257 incidents in which girl children and boy children in Bangladesh from January 2020 to May 2020 were sexually assaulted.¹⁰

Figure 7: Division-wise Child Deaths and Death Rate due to Violence (October 2019 to May 2020)



⁸ "Peacegraphics- a BPO eNewsletter" *Bangladesh Peace Observatory* 14 June 2020. Cited in <http://peaceobservatory-cgs.org/uploads/cgsPDF/14-06-20-16-20-321-Peacegraphics-a%20BPO%20eNewsletter,%20June%202020.pdf>. Accessed 20 June 2020.

⁹ "4700 women, children abused in families during April lockdown" *The Business Standard* 6 May 2020. Cited in <https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/4700-women-children-abused-families-during-april-lockdown-78076>. Accessed 20 June 2020.

¹⁰ *op.cit.* "Peacegraphics- a BPO eNewsletter" *Bangladesh Peace Observatory*

Ending Violence against Children: The Call for Zero Tolerance

The BPO Team

Violence against children is a common scenario in almost every area and sector of the society in Bangladesh, both within the family and at school. Children face verbal abuse, sexual assault or harassment at school or home. In addition, girls facing the threat of child marriage is a common phenomenon in the country. The nature and extent of violence against children irrespective of age, sex and class have been on the rise.¹¹ On many occasions, children are victims of rape, torture, homicide and sometimes heinous acid attacks.¹² Besides, children are also victim of child labour and trafficking, both of which are considered as the extreme level of child exploitation and child abuse in the world today.¹³

The trend of violence against children is alarmingly high in Bangladesh. It is estimated that Bangladesh is home to 57.2 million children, and almost 82% of them are the victims of various forms of violence before they turn 14 years old.¹⁴ Such violence can deeply impact the mental health of children in the long run. Children who face abuse or violence in their early life may experience post-

traumatic disorder such as insomnia, anxiety, poor problem-solving capacity, anger management; high level of aggression and a tendency to join anti-social activities.¹⁵ Moreover, it has been observed at different point of time that children who are the regular victims of abuse may soon get addicted to drugs. In addition, such abuse may affect their ability to choose between the right and wrong in adulthood. In other words, they often carry the scars of their childhood into their adulthood.

In order to stop child abuse in schools, the Ministry of Education issued “Guidelines for the prohibition of corporal and mental punishment of students in educational institutions 2011” which came into effect in April 2011.¹⁶ The culture of impunity is one of the major reasons behind the rising of violence against children. More often than not, incidents of abuse catch attention when they result in the child’s death or when they come to the mainstream media reports. The accused are often set free on bail and then threatens or pressurize the victims’ family to withdraw the case against them.¹⁷ This

¹¹ Farzana Islam and Gulshan Ara Akhter, “Child abuse in Bangladesh” *Ibrahim Medical College Journal*, May 2016.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ “Violence against children in Bangladesh,” 17 July 2018. Cited in

<http://www.theindependentbd.com/printversion/details/158161>. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ “Prohibiting corporal punishment in educational institutions” 13 May 2014. Cited in <https://www.thedailystar.net/prohibiting-corporal-punishment-in-educational-institutions-23825>. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

¹⁷ “Violence against children continues” 12 October 2017. Cited in

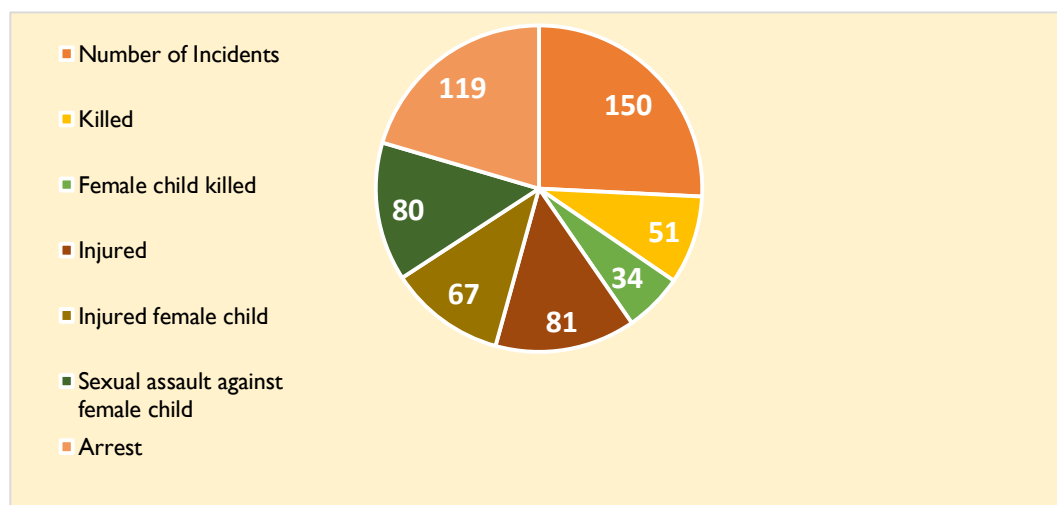
is a common scenario, especially when the perpetrators wield power and influence, which makes things worse. Be this at school or home; children learn the best where they feel free and supported, whereas corporal punishment may create a sense of humiliation, anxiety and worthlessness among the young minds.

To end the violence stunting the potential of the next generation, it is high time that the government adopt a zero-tolerance policy for all kind of violence against children. At the same time, it is equally important to ensure robust investigations of crimes of violence against children so that perpetrators do not get the opportunity to take advantage of the loopholes of the existing legal system.

Figure 8 shows that in January 2020, reportedly, a total of 150 incidents related

to violence against children took place in Bangladesh. In addition, 51 children lost their lives in different incidents while 81 got injured. Moreover, at least 34 female children were killed, 67 got injured in separate incidents. Also, 80 sexual assault-related incidents against female children took place in the first month of the current year. At least 119 persons were arrested for their alleged engagement in these incidents. Bar charts in figure 9 illustrate divisional distribution of violence against children related reported incidents in 2019. According to the data provided in this figure, Dhaka observed the highest number of incidents in 2019. A total of 508 incidents took place in the division while Chattogram ranks second with 294 incidents. Besides, at least on 234 occasions, children were tortured in different incidents in Rajshahi division.

Figure 8: Violence against children in January 2020, Source: BPO



<https://www.thedailystar.net/editorial/violence-against-children-continues-1475026>. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

Figure 9: Violence against children incidents in 2019, Source: BPO

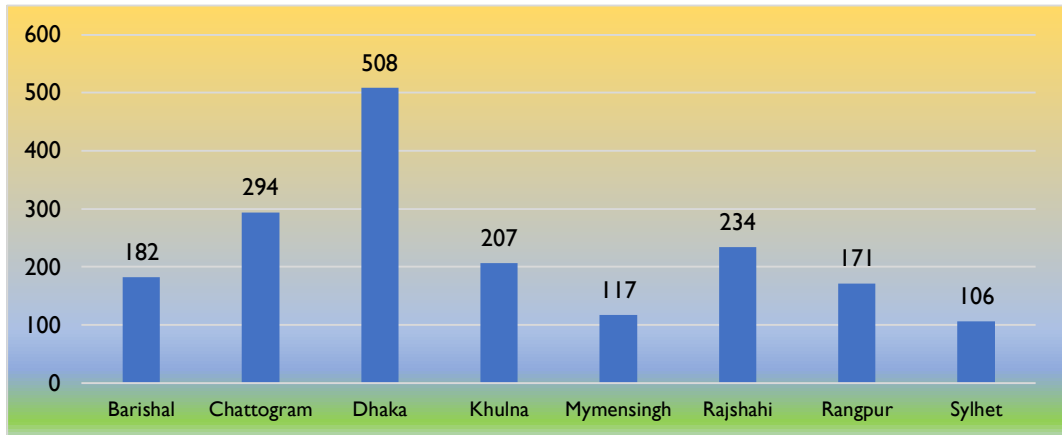


Figure 10 compares the number of violence against children related incidents in Bangladesh for two years-2018 and 2019. Overall, it is clear that in 2019 events related to violence against children

were higher than the numbers of 2018. The number of incidents rose alarmingly in 2019 compared to 2018. While almost 1819 incidents took place in 2019; in 2018 the number stood around 862 in total.

Figure 10: Year-wise incident list, Source: BPO

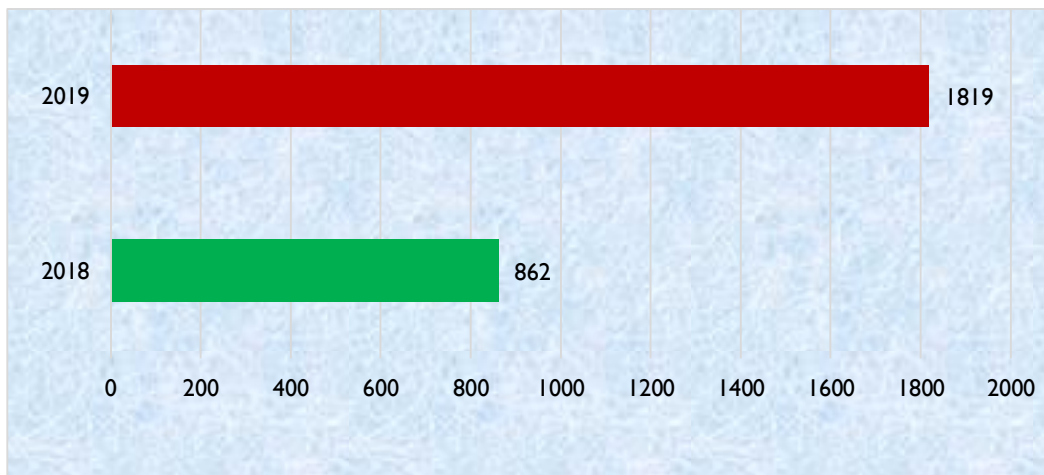


Figure 11 illustrates that a total of 572 children died an unnatural death in 2019, and the number is higher than the numbers of 2018, which is 341 in total. Also, 2019 saw the highest number of female child death compared to 2018. In 2019, while 271 female children were killed in different incidents; in 2018 the number was around 125 in total.

The recently-concluded year marks a rise in number of injured children. According to figure 11, in 2018, while 345 children and 258 female children were injured, the numbers almost doubled in 2019. In 2019, at least 668 children and 574 female children were injured in different incidents.

Figure 11: Children injured and killed in last two years, Source: BPO

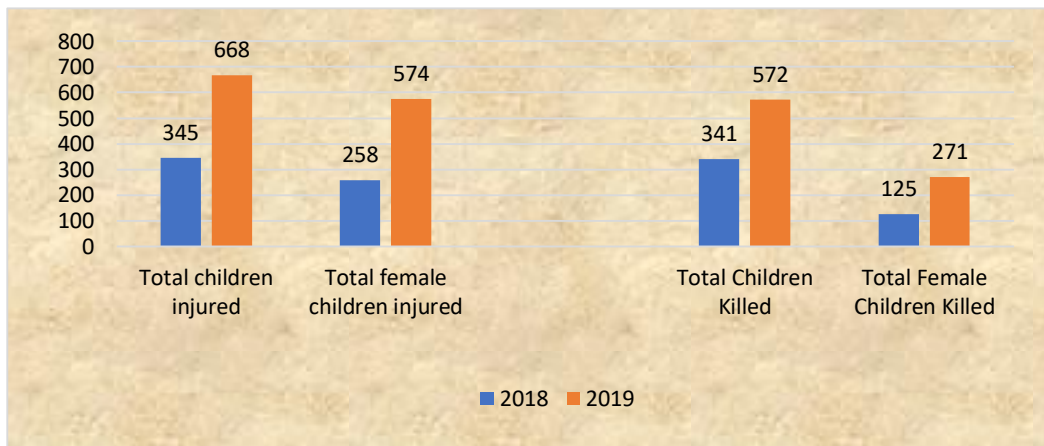
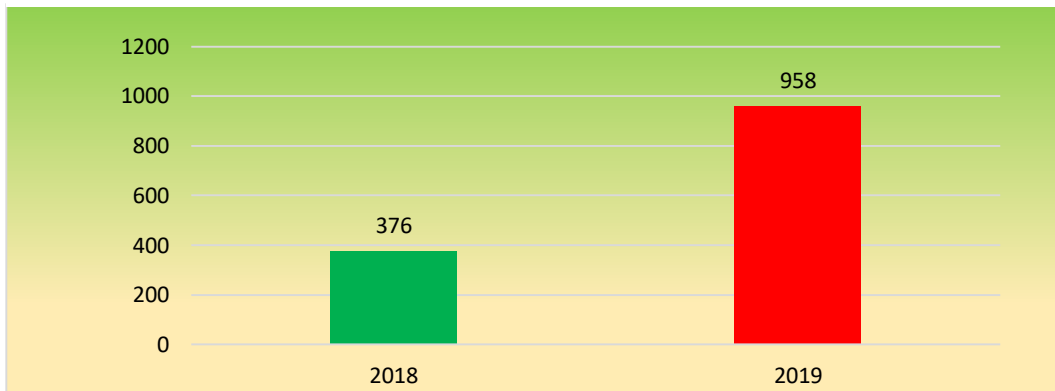


Figure 12 suggests that as many as 958 children were molested in 2019, which is the highest number reported in the last two years. While 376 female children

became the victims of sexual assault in 2018; the number rose to 958 in 2019, making it almost three times higher than the previous year.

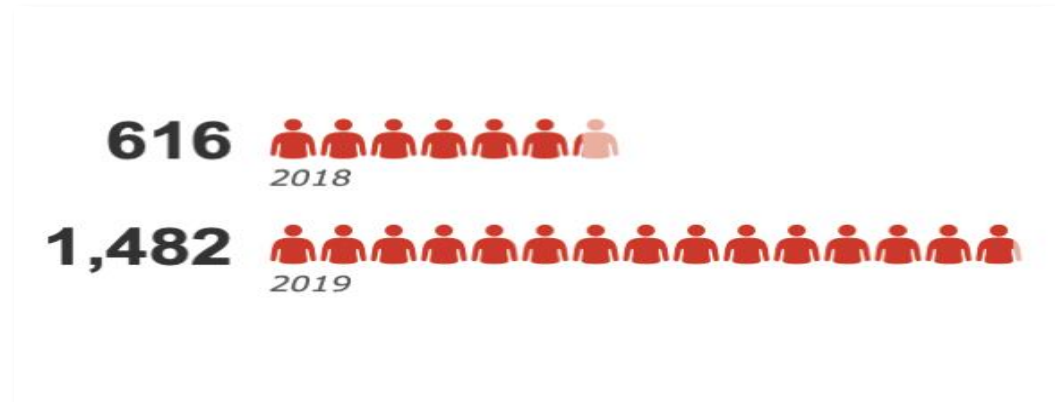
Figure 12: Total number of sexual assaults in last two years, Source: BPO



Finally figure 13 depicts the number of persons arrested in violence against children related incidents. The pie chart shows that in 2018 at least 616 persons

were arrested for their alleged involvement in violence against children related incidents while in 2019 the numbers doubled to 1482.

Figure 13: Total number of persons arrested in last two years related to violence against children, Source: BPO



Sexual Violence against Children in Bangladesh: Setting the Scene

Nadia Nur*

In Bangladesh, child abuse has widely been identified as one of the major societal concerns. Varying in terms of degrees among different communities, children have been exposed to and have experienced different forms of abuse. Some of these have not always been recognized and perhaps have intentionally been overlooked due to the societal and structural factors, particularly when it comes to sexual violence committed against children. Sexual violence affects girls and boys. The inter-agency working group on sexual exploitation of children states that “sexual violence against children encompasses both sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and can be used as an umbrella term to refer jointly to these phenomena, both with regard to acts of commission and omission and associated to physical and psychological violence.”¹⁸ Regrettably, Bangladesh is not immune from this gross violation of children’s rights.

World Health Organization (WHO) states that violence against children includes all forms of violence committed against people under 18 years old. For infant and young children, violence mainly

involves physical, sexual and emotional negligence and abuse.¹⁹ The dynamics of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is often different than that of adult sexual abuse. Understanding the different dimensions of sexual violence against children is important to acquire knowledge about the context, settings and perpetrators of child sexual abuse. In some instances, the victims are unaware of their own victimization. Children are often exploited sexually irrespective of their age, social class, family structure, ethnic identity or religious belief that takes place in the form of sexual harassment, rape/gang rape, forced prostitution, sexual abuse of boys, and pornography. Studies suggest that children become victims of sexual violence under different settings, usually at homes or place of residence, hostels, daycare centers, workplaces, educational institutions, during travel and recreation—admittedly both in emergency and non-emergency situations. Children belonging to marginalized group or living below the poverty line are most vulnerable to become victims of sexual violence.

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¹⁸ Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. ECPAT International and ECPAT Luxembourg, Ratchathewi,

Bangkok, June 2016, p. 16. Cited in www.unicef.org/protection/files/Terminology_guidelines_396922-E.pdf. Accessed 30 March 2020.

¹⁹ World Health Organization (WHO). Cited in https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-children#tab=tab_1. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

Most often the perpetrators are known to the children, including caregivers, parents or other family members, folks, peers, teachers, administrators, romantic partners, friends, class mates and strangers. Statistics suggest that over the last couple of years, sexual violence against children has increased alarmingly in Bangladesh. Such abuses have serious impacts on children both physically and psychologically, and endanger their long-term physical and mental wellness. It impairs their ability to learn and socialize, ensuing the loss of self-esteem and adversely impacts the child's transition to adulthood. Children with special needs, and who are abandoned, uncared or less cared, orphan or stranded often go through sexual abuse and violence due to their incapacity to protect themselves. The influence of underlying factors arising from socio-cultural and religious rituals, family structure and relationship roles are linked to the disclosures and non-disclosures of child sexual abuse. As described in the Annual Report of Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), a total of 1383 children experienced sexual abuse in 2019, an alarming rise of 72.32% compared to 2018.²⁰

²⁰ Bangladesh: Child sexual abuse reportedly on rise. Cited in <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-child-sexual-abuse-reportedly-on-rise/1696828>. Accessed 28 April 2020.

²¹ Country meters, Bangladesh Population Clock, Cited in https://countrymeters.info/en/Bangladesh#population_2020. Accessed on 29 April, 2020

Contemporary scholarly studies, academic journals, newspapers, annual reports of different child rights organizations and data sheets of Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) have been consulted to conduct this research.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with 160 million people where children comprise of 56.1%.²¹ Despite notable progress in poverty alleviation, health and nutrition facilities, still 37.6 million of the total population lives below the poverty line.²² Rapid urbanization, poverty, unplanned slums, hunger and unemployment along with socio-economic factors are contributory factors towards the commission of child abuse. Child sexual abuse takes place in different contexts-peace time, armed conflict, existence of rule of law, migration and also by child trafficking for sexual purposes. The key drivers of sexual violence against children are wider structural disparities based on gender age, ethnicity and poverty. The notion of masculinity has strong influence towards having sex with under-age/adolescent girls in the name of marriage.²³ Not only girls but also boys lack proper protection across the range of settings in which they grow up. Children

²² The Independent. Cited in <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/64309>. Accessed on 18 April 2020

²³ Social norms, gender norms and adolescent girls: a brief guide. Cited in <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9818.pdf>. Accessed on 27 April 2020.

experience sexual violence at individual, family, community and societal level. At the Individual level, mostly child's gender, age, disability, helplessness, homelessness, child labor and misuse of alcohol have strong influence on vulnerabilities. Children with low level command and support of parents are always at the risk of abuse and exploitation. Children living apart from their parents, orphanage or in the street experience higher rates of sexual violence.

Children living in the street go through physical, verbal and sexual abuse from gangster, police and public.²⁵ In recent years, sexual victimization of children at educational institutions has shown an upward trend in Bangladesh. It is difficult to provide an accurate picture as majority of incidents go unreported due to degradation of ethical values, political influence, socio-economic status and culture of impunity. Sexual harassment is another kind of violence often children face at an early age, which starts with vulgar comments/remarks, dirty jokes, abrasive laughter, sly whistles and even with belligerent exposure. Being victim of sexual harassment, many girls commit suicide while others have to stop going to schools. If this continues the ratio of female students attending educational institutions will go down further. BSAF

²⁴ Guidelines for medico-legal care for victims of sexual violence. Cited in https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/resources/publications/en/guidelines_chap7.pdf. Accessed on 27 April 2020.

BOX I: Features that Characterize Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) include:²⁴

- Individuals who prefer sexual contact with children are known as pedophiles. Physical force is very rarely used in CSA by pedophiles rather the perpetrator tries to deploy the child's trust and hide the abuse.
- Most often the perpetrator is a familiar person or a trusted caregiver.
- Child sexual abuse often takes place over many weeks or even years
- CSA frequently occurs as repeated incidents and becomes more offensive with time.
- Perpetrators usually engage the child in a gradual process of sexualizing the relationship over time
- Incest/intrafamilial abuse accounts for about one third of all child sexual abuse cases

states that 1383 children were subjected to sexual violence in 2019.²⁶ BSAF also claimed that 496 children were raped in between January-June 2019. The multiple indicator cluster survey 2019 reported that 51% marriage were child marriage in

²⁵ New Age. Cited in <https://www.newagebd.net/article/95987/sexual-violence-against-children-increased-by-70pc-in-2019>. Accessed on 22 March 2020.

²⁶ *ibid.*

Bangladesh.²⁷ National Girlchild Advocacy Research Forum claims that approximately 60% of young girls face sexual harassment in public places (street, bus, shopping centers), whereas adolescent girls are increasingly becoming victims of online abuse and harassment.

In Bangladesh, child prostitution is mainly brothel centric while few children are sexually exploited in guesthouses, parks, train stations and rented apartments.²⁸ There are no reliable existing data sheets on the extent of child prostitution in Bangladesh. According to the Global Monitoring Report (GMR), it is estimated that approximately 10,000 to 29,000 children are victims of commercial sexual

exploitation in Bangladesh. Girl child born in a brothel are forced to come into the same profession as that of their mothers. The existing legal framework on child trafficking for sexual purposes is not as broad as international standards because the penal code does not specify or define trafficking but includes provision on kidnapping and abduction. Therefore, an absence of repatriation law is another impediment behind the return of trafficked children to Bangladesh.²⁹ Furthermore, issues like child pornography should clearly be addressed in the Penal Code provisions to stop child sexual abuse. In Bangladesh, sexual violence against children is identified as unlawful.³⁰

²⁷ Status Report: Violence Against Children in Bangladesh, Conference paper on VNR 2020 Of Bangladesh: Positioning Non-state Actors. Cited in <https://bdplatform4sdgs.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Presentation-on-violence-against-children-by-Save-the-Children-in-Bangladesh.pdf>. Accessed on March 10 2020

²⁸ Ullah, AKM Ahsan (2005), Prostitution in Bangladesh: An Empirical Profile of Sex Workers. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 7 (2), Cited in <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&https>

<redir=1&article=1437&context=jiws> Accessed on 12 April 2020

²⁹ Trafficking of women and Children in Bangladesh: An overview. Cited in <http://dspace.icddrb.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/4046/1/ICDDRBSpecialPub-111-GaziR.pdf>. Accessed on 12 April 2020

³⁰ United Nations Study on Violence Against Children. Cited in <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRC/StudyViolenceChildren/Responses/Bangladesh.pdf>. Accessed on March 10 2020

BOX 2: Sexual violence against children: Policy progress³¹

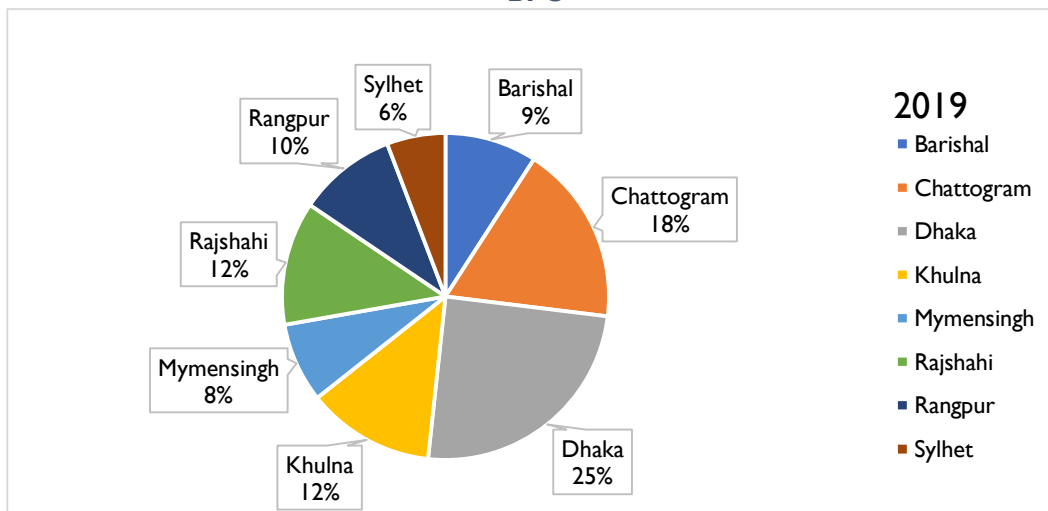
- **The Child Act 1974 and Children Rules 1976** intends to protect the child's interests at its best.
- The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh provides for fundamental rights in Part III. Protection of child rights are enshrined in: **Article 27**, guaranteeing equality before the law and equal protection of law for all citizens, **Article 28(1)**, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex, race, religion, caste or place of birth, **Article 28(4)**, enabling the State to make special provision in favor of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens, and **Article 31, Article 32**, protecting the right to life and personal liberty of a person, **Article 35**, providing for protections in respect of speedy trial and punishment, and expressly prohibiting torture and cruel, degrading, inhuman treatment or punishment.
- **Bangladesh Penal Code (section 375) and the prevention of Women and Children Repression Act 2000** (amended in 2003) stipulates measures against sexual abuse and violence.
- Ministry of education prohibits corporal punishment in all educational institutions. In 2011 the High Court issued a judgement declaring corporal punishment in educational institutions, schools, and madrasas, to be unconstitutional.
- **The national Plan of Action for Children of Bangladesh (2004-2009)**
- **National Children Policy 2011** mentions the responsibility to prevent all forms of physical and mental punishment in educational institutions.
- **Article 4.2, 4.3 and 6.7 of National Children Policy 2011** is designed to protect children from all sorts of violence, abuse and discrimination.
- **The Children Act 2013**
- **Child marriage Restraint Act, 2017** forbids early marriage under the age of 18 for women. (However, it has been criticized for section 19 which allows child marriage under specific circumstances)
- **National Action Plan to prevent violence against women and Children 2013-2025** has prioritized ending any kind of physical violence, sexual violence and exploitation, trafficking and child marriage.

³¹ United Nations Study on Violence Against Children. Cited in <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRC/StudyViolenceChildren/Responses/Bangladesh.pdf>. Accessed on March 10 2020

Although Bangladesh ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the realization of child rights is a challenge for all children from socio-cultural perspective. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) has set several targets: Target 16.2 states to “end abuse, exploitation, Trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”, target 16.2.1 states that “eliminating any punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers”, 16.2.3 stands to eliminate sexual violence.³² Protecting children against all forms of violence and torture is critical to the achievement of SDGs. Bangladesh has come forward to apply and implement the provisions of SDG in its national action plans to prevent child marriage and sexual abuses.

According to BPO codebook, sexual assault related incidents combine both violent and non-violent incidents. Violent incidents refer to sexual assault including one-sided sexual violence, such as rape or attempted rape, by an individual or small group against another individual or small group. It also covers any kind of sexual harassment, rape, gangrape, sexual abuse of boys or forceful prostitution. The non-violent incidents include arrest related to any kind of sexual and gender-based violence, although having age segregated data on violence against children is a challenging task. The BPO data presented here depicts sexual assault related incidents and covers victims in three categories: boys, girls and newborn/child.

Figure 14: Rape and sexual assault related incidents in 8 divisions in 2019, Source: BPO



³² SDG Goals and Targets. Cited in https://populationmatters.org/urge-un-secretary-general-act-population?gclid=CjwKCAjwqj_I BRBZEiwAv73uwNDwF9molQozcfObVrsZwKZitb5MavjciEtW58IQ6HdgbrRxBpFbGBoCcFwQAvD_BwE. Accessed 16 April 2020.

Figure 14 illustrates the percentage of both violent and non-violent incidents related to sexual violence against children, boys and girls in eight divisions during 2019. Around 239 incidents of such nature took place in Dhaka, Chattogram stood second with 172 incidents in 2019. Consequently, Khulna and Rajshahi jointly held the third position with 12% of total incidents. It is notable that, Dhaka, Chattogram and Rajshahi, three big divisions of Bangladesh, experienced most

of the incidents of violence against children.

Figure 15 represents top 10 districts ratio of violence incidents. In 2019, a sharp rise was noticeable in the number of sexual assault related incidents compared to 2018. No single factor can explain the underlying reasons rather multiple factors were interconnected in the perpetuation of such violence. In 2019, all ten districts experienced high volume of sexual assault.

Figure 15: Sexual assault ratio in top 10 districts from 2018-2019, Source: BPO

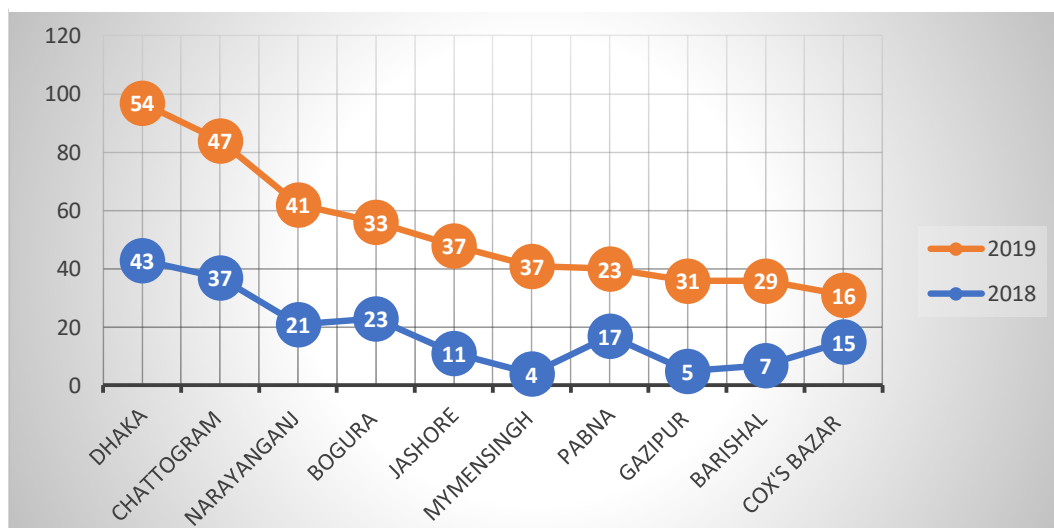


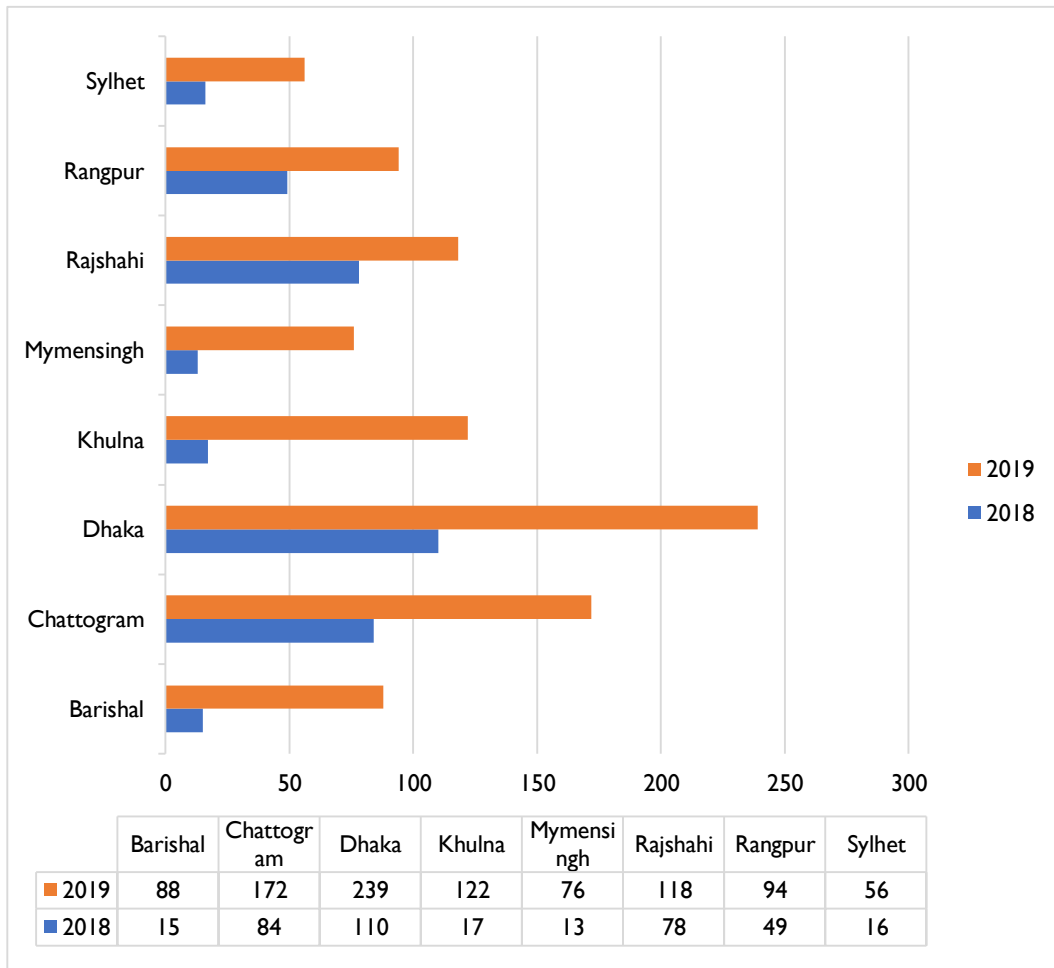
Figure 16 represents the ratio of increase and decrease of sexual assault related incidents in 8 divisions of Bangladesh. According to the BPO data, Dhaka and Chattogram have held the first and second positions, successively both in 2018 and 2019. In 2019, sexual assault related incidents increased alarmingly by 117.27%

in Dhaka compared to 2018. Chattogram showed a gradual rise from 2018 to 2019. Being in the third position, Khulna also showed an alarming increase by 617.64% in 2019 compared to 2018. The overall ratio in the pictogram shows that sexual assault related incidents have increased in all eight divisions in 2019 than 2018.

The discussion above suggest that violence against children in the country is rising significantly. To end violence against children legislation should be enforced in

all settings; culture of impunity must be abolished at any cost; and relevant laws should be implemented with utmost priority.

Figure 16: Content Analysis of 17 national newspapers on sexual assault (Children and girls), Source: BPO



Child Trafficking in Bangladesh

Farhana Razzak*

According to the United Nations (UN), human trafficking or Trafficking in Persons (TIP) mean,

“... the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”³³

This Protocol also defines any person below eighteen years of age as a child. But in most cases, women and children (both male and female child) are considered as a single unit of study or associated together which makes it difficult to comprehend the gendered segregation of both male and female children falling into TIP rackets. However, this definition clearly indicates that TIP can be categorized as one of the most pervasive types of Transnational

Organized Crime (TOC) and also a form of illegal migration, violation of human rights, and slave trade. Back in 2006, a report by UNICEF stated that in the last 30 years, over one million women and children were trafficked outside Bangladesh and most of them were forced in prostitution, domestic help, camel jockeying, and begging.³⁴ They are generally recruited from rural areas or small towns.³⁵ Specific data on child

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³³ “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”, 15 November 2000. Cited in <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

³⁴ “Women And Children Trafficking in Bangladesh and Its Prevention by Government”, n.d. Cited in <https://www.lawyersnjurists.com/article/women-and-children-trafficking-in-bangladesh-and-its-prevention-by-government/>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

³⁵ “Human Trafficking in Bangladesh”, 24 September 2019. Cited in <https://www.adrabangladesh.org/single-post/2019/09/24/Human-Trafficking-in-Bangladesh>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

trafficking of the early 1990s available by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) in 1997 indicates:³⁶

- 300,000 Bangladeshi children work in the brothels of India;
- 4,700 children were rescued from traffickers in the first few years of the 1990's;
- 4,500 women and children are trafficked to Pakistan yearly;³⁷
- 1,000 child trafficking cases were documented in the Bangladeshi media press during the year 1990 to 1992; and
- 69 children were reported being rescued at the border during a 3-month study in 1995.

According to a UNODC 2018 report, 31% (27% female and 4% male) of the total trafficking victims of South Asia are children.³⁸ The available data of Bangladesh suggests that by the end of 2018, every month 100 children are trafficked to India, Pakistan, and the Middle East. Also, from 2008 to October 2018, 300,000 women and children age ranging from 12-30 have been trafficked to India. This racket is based in Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Mumbai (cities of India) and involved in trafficking and organ (kidney) harvesting.³⁹ 18-28 routes in Bangladesh are identified as hotspots for these trafficking.⁴⁰ Trafficking of children in Bangladesh occurs both internally and internationally. According to UNICEF, many of them are trafficked by luring of well-paid jobs and marriages with parent's consent.⁴¹ Shockingly, families often sell children mostly at the age of 12 for prostitution for a nominal 200 USD.⁴² This phenomenon indicates that extreme poverty is a key catalyst of consensual child trafficking. The **image 1** depicts

³⁶ Conducted by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) "Survey in the Area of Child and Women Trafficking." Funded by Red Barnet, Danish Save the Children, Dhaka, April 2003. Cited in <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30364/combating-trafficking-south-asia-paper.pdf> page 23. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

³⁷ *ibid.*, (SAARC and United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]).

³⁸ Based on the limited information available for Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan. "UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Person 2018 (Page 64)", December 2018. Cited in https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2019/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

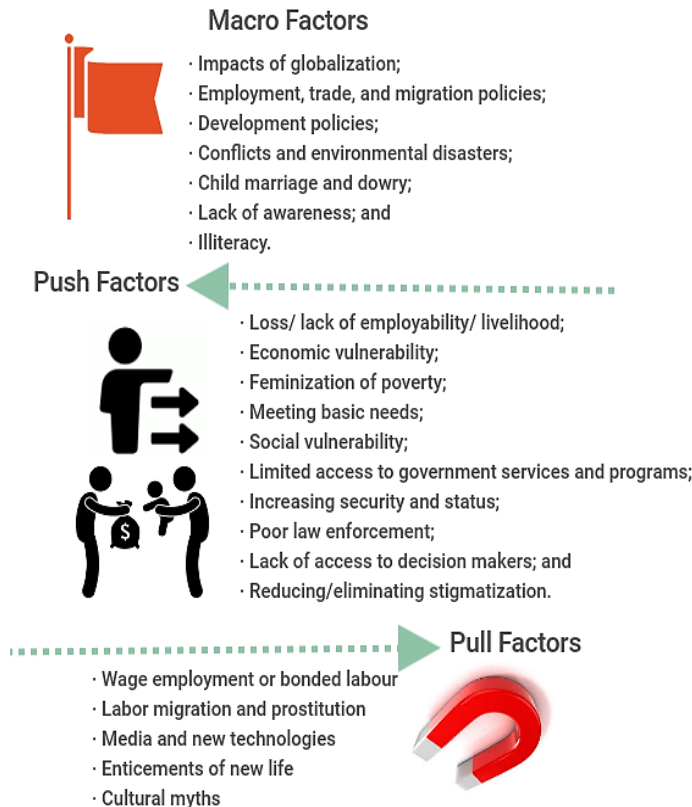
³⁹ "বাংলাদেশ থেকে মাসে ৫শ' নারী ও শিশু পাচার হয় (500 women and children are trafficked from Bangladesh every month)", 21 November 2018. Cited in <https://www.banglatribune.com/others/news/388851>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁴⁰ "Women and children trafficking", 22 October 2017. Cited in <http://deshkalbd.com/news/694>. Accessed 20 April 2020.

⁴¹ ECPAT global monitoring status of action against commercial and sexual exploitation of children: Bangladesh (page 9)", 2011. Cited in https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/A4A_V2_SA_BANGLADESH.pdf. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁴² *ibid.*

some of the critical factors of child trafficking⁴³ in Bangladesh:^{44,45,46}



Of the globally identified victims of trafficking, 51% are women, 21% men, 20% girls, and 8% boys. Of them, 45% have been trafficked for sexual exploitation and 38% for forced labor. Yearly around 800,000 women and children are reportedly victims of trafficking across international borders worldwide. Among them, 80% ended up in forced prostitution.⁴⁷

⁴³ Some of the factors can indirectly play its role in which parents/family/guardian are the key person/decision-maker/influenced.

⁴⁴ ICDDR,B: Centre for Health and Population Research, Trafficking of Women and Children in Bangladesh: An Overview”, 2001. Cited in https://childhub.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/trafficking_of_women_oct07.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=17948. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁴⁵ “Combating Trafficking Of Women And Children In South Asia”, April 2003. Cited in <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30364/combating-trafficking-south-asia-paper.pdf>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁴⁶ “নারী ও শিশু পাচার প্রতিরোধে আইনি পদক্ষেপ কি পর্যাপ্ত? (Are legal measures sufficient to prevent trafficking in women and children?),” 7 December 2019. Cited in <http://www.mzamin.com/article.php?mzamin=202710>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁴⁷ “Human trafficking cases: No tribunal in six years, conviction rate less than half percent”, 21 April 2019. Cited in <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2019/04/21/human-trafficking-cases-no-tribunal-in-six-years-conviction-rate-less-than-half-percent>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

Image 1: Critical factors of child trafficking in Bangladesh



Image 2 Source: Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in South Asia, Page 58, available at: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30364/combating-trafficking-south-asia-paper.pdf>

Key Government Initiatives (Legal and Institutional) Relevant in Preventing Children Trafficking in Bangladesh

- Penal Code 1860 (Sections 359 to 363, 364A, 366, 372, 373, 292, 293).
- The Extradition Act 1974.
 - Designates some offences against children as extraditable, but only to and from a state with which Bangladesh has a treaty agreement.
- Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act (SITA) 1993.
- Women and Children Repression Prevention (Special Provision) Act 1995.
 - Contains specific penalties for trafficking in women and children with a provision for life imprisonment.
- The Prevention of Cruelty against Women and Children Act 2000 (Amended 2003).
 - Contains specific punishment for trafficking in women and children with a provision for death sentence or life imprisonment.
 - The Amendment defined child as a person of the age of 16.
- Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (PSHTA) 2012.
- ❖ *Children Act 2013.*

- ❖ National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking (NPA-SEACT) 2002.
- ❖ National Plan of Action for Children 2005 – 2010.
- ❖ National Anti Trafficking Strategic Plan of Action 2006.
- ❖ National Plan of Action 2018-2022.
- ❖ National Plan of Action for Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking 2018-2022.
- ❖ Mobile Courts (may contain elements of human trafficking in adjudicating smuggling cases).

- Office of the Ombudsman for Children 2004.
- National Council for Women and Child Development (NCWCD) 2009.
- Department of Children Affairs.
- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
- One-Stop Crisis Centres (OCC) under Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW).
- Inter-Ministerial Committee to Prevent Trafficking in Women and Children under Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA).
- Taskforce for Rescue, Recovery, Repatriation and Integration (RRRI) of Trafficked Women and Children.

Besides the national initiatives, regionally and internationally Bangladesh is also active in preventing trafficking of children. For example, Bangladesh is a party of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. Also, Bangladesh has adopted standard Operating Procedure for Repatriation of Trafficked Child Victims between Bangladesh and India and Vigilant Task Force at the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE). Besides these the national NGOs like Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) and many others are actively involved in preventing the trafficking of children. Internationally, according to the UN treaty collection portal, Bangladesh accessioned to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children 2000 on 12 September 2020 subject to a Reservation to paragraph 2 of Article 15 of the Protocol.^{48, 49, 50}

Along with the impact of a child's social, economic, and health well-being, the criminal justice aspects of trafficking of children are critical areas to look at. Unfortunately, this area lacks proper attention. For example, according to police headquarters data, 6,106 people were arrested in connection with human trafficking since 2013, but only

25 (0.4%) of them have been convicted.⁵¹ Also in the context of the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh, Rohingya women and girls are among the most vulnerable to sexual harassment and human trafficking.⁵² This alarming singularity makes it more complicated to assess the condition of children as the victim of trafficking.

⁴⁸ "Status of Treaties, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime", 15 November 2000. Cited in https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18&lang=en#EndDec. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁴⁹ "Certified true copy, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime", 15 November 2000. Cited in https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/2000/11/20001115%2011-38%20AM/Ch_XVIII_12_ap.pdf. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁵⁰ Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of this Protocol that cannot be settled through negotiation within a reasonable time shall, at the request of one of those States Parties, be submitted to arbitration. If, six months after the date of the request for arbitration, those States Parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, anyone of those States Parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in accordance with the Statute of the Court.

⁵¹ "Human trafficking cases: No tribunal in six years, conviction rate less than half percent", 21 April 2019. Cited in <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2019/04/21/human-trafficking-cases-no-tribunal-in-six-years-conviction-rate-less-than-half-percent>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁵² "বাংলাদেশের নারী এবং শিশুরা মানব পাচারের ক্ষেত্রে সবচেয়ে বিপজ্জনক অবস্থার মধ্যে রয়েছেন (Women and children in Bangladesh are among the most vulnerable in terms of human trafficking)", 21 June 2019. Cited in <https://www.voabangla.com/a/bd-ak--6-21-19/4968688.html>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

Violence against Children: A Global Overview

Nasrin Jabin*
Fatima Jurat*

Violence against children is a global reality affecting all countries and social groups. It takes place in varied forms like sexual assault, verbal abuse, sexual exploitation in prostitution or pornography. Children can be victims of violence at home and outside home. This write-up gives a brief global overview of violence against children.

Children as Soldiers in Africa



Map 1: Location of Child Soldiers around the World.

Children have been used as soldiers in military campaign for centuries, and recently, thousands of children under the age of 16 were seen fighting in the

battlefields.⁵³ In many countries, children who are old enough to carry a gun are considered as old enough to be a soldier.⁵⁴ They serve various violent armed groups as soldiers, sex slaves and laborers.⁵⁵ This is a very common scenario in many African and Asian countries. The UN found a large number of child soldiers performing highly risky activities particularly in Africa.⁵⁶ UNICEF estimated that growth rate of

children is comparatively slower and rough in Africa than other regions of the world.⁵⁷ This is largely the impact of the protracted civil and ethnic conflicts that have engulfed

large parts of Africa.⁵⁸ Though an accurate estimate of the child soldiers is unavailable as they are recruited by the rebel groups, not by the government; however it is estimated that the total number of child

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⁵³“The State of the World’s Children 1996”, 11 December 1996. Cited in <https://www.unicef.org/sowc96/2csoldrs.htm>. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

⁵⁴ “Modern-day Slavery in Focus”, 24 July 2017. Cited in <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jul/24/south-sudan-child-soldiers>. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

⁵⁵ “The Plight of Child Soldiers in Africa”, 18 February 2020. Cited in <https://www.dw.com/en/the-77-percent-the-plight-of-child-soldiers-in-africa/av-52421493>. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

⁵⁶ *op.cit.* The Guardian.

⁵⁷ *op.cit.* Unicef.

⁵⁸ “Child Soldiers in Africa: History and Facts”, 7 December 2016. Cited in <https://study.com/academy/lesson/child-soldiers-in-africa-history-facts.html>. Accessed on 21 April 2020.

soldiers is over 1.2 million in various countries of Africa such as, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Liberia, Mozambique, Algeria, Burundi, Nigeria, and Niger.⁵⁹ Moreover, the girl children are also received as wives of the members of the rebel groups.⁶⁰

Children are recruited as soldiers in three different ways. Children are abducted and held by militia and later are treated as soldiers or sex slaves but in-between they are forced to consume weed, alcohol or drugs so that they cannot think about their distressing and miserable conditions.⁶¹ They are kept confined in places where any escape is barely possible. Again, the surroundings sometimes turn them into warriors when the society is torn apart, the families are fragmented, schools are destroyed and social structure is ruined, children see violence as a permanent feature of life. It has been seen that in the Philippines, lonely, orphaned, frightened, frustrated, bored children often choose to fight and majority of them become soldiers as soon as they embrace their teen hood.⁶² Further, military unit provide children with refuge and paves the way of orphan children to the warrior's life. In Uganda, more than 3000 children, most of whom were orphaned, were recruited in the National Army as a replacement for their parents.⁶³ Sometimes, it is also seen mostly in South Africa that children

deliberately join as soldiers to fight in order to take revenge for the death of their parents or siblings.

In African countries, child recruitment in the militia is a very common sight. There are many reasons behind recruiting child-soldiers: they are able to use lethal weapons and carry out orders diligently; are less likely to run away and demand salary; are excited to take revenge; are able to do whole range of military activities including cooking and carrying water, and so on.⁶⁴ In some countries of Africa such as Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Ethiopia, Guatemala children are also seen in taking part in opposition movements.

Sex Trafficking in Syria

Sex trafficking as an abhorrent part of human trafficking has been on the rise in Syria since the civil war started for the past few years.⁶⁵ With thousands reported cases of abduction, refugee and migrant smuggling, forced prostitution, and trafficking, Syria is leading towards the top country of human trade in the world.⁶⁶ However, one of the major reasons behind this increasing rate of sex trafficking in Syria is the growing refugee rate. Due to the outbreak of civil war, the number of internally displaced people

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ "Child Soldiers of South Sudan", 30 October 2018. Cited in <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/child-soldiers-south-sudan-181024095844282.html>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *op.cit.* Unicef.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ "Human Trafficking in Syria: Policy Recommendations", 10 May 2019. Cited in

<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/criminology/human-trafficking-in-syria-9238.php>. Accessed on 18 April 2020.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

(IDP) and refugees has increased. Among them women and children are the worst victims. They are particularly the victims of sex trafficking. Nearly 20,000 children of Syria most of whom are under 12 were compelled to flee beyond the national boundary witnessing unimaginable atrocities.⁶⁷ But the brutality did not stop there rather they found themselves as the victims of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery, in other words, sex trafficking.

Plight of Syrian Children in ISIS-Occupied Territories

Syria has become both the source and the terminus realm of sex trafficking among whom majority is children.⁶⁸ It increased and the victims remained trapped when the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) took control around 2013 of some of the regions in Syria showing how to hold and abuse female and children sexually.⁶⁹ Girl children in ISIS-controlled areas were routinely forced for temporary marriage with their soldiers, systematic gang rape, domestic servitude, and other forms of sexual violence.

Evidence suggests that Syrian girls were forced by the ISIS to undergo virginity tests before being traded in 'Slave Bazaars'. The Syrian girls are widely sold as sex slaves to various Syrian provinces and other countries.⁷⁰

Syrian Refugee Children as the Victim of Sex Trafficking

The refugees in Syria constitute another extreme vulnerable group to sex trafficking and forced labor in neighboring countries particularly Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey.⁷¹ Since their vulnerability is on the rise, the number of trafficking is also increasing. When there is demand, the supply is somehow managed. Women and children are most vulnerable in this situation. The children in Syria who are the future of that country have experienced unbearable torture and grave violations of human rights as well as child rights. The Syrian government has not taken any noticeable initiative to address the situation. On the contrary, the government officials routinely recruit and use child soldiers in the militias that make them more vulnerable.⁷²

⁶⁷ "Unwanted, exploited and abused: tens of thousands of children in Al-Hol camp and several parts of Syria in limbo amid dire humanitarian needs", 17 July 2019. Cited in <https://www.unicef.org/syria/press-releases/unwanted-exploited-and-abused-tens-thousands-children-al-hol-camp-and-several-parts>. Accessed on 20 April 2020.

⁶⁸ "2018 Trafficking in Persons Report: Syria", 28 June 2018. Cited in

<https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b3e0a68a.html>. Accessed on 18 April 2020.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² "2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Syria", 20 June 2019. Cited in

<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2010916.html>. Accessed on 18 April 2020.

Feticide in India and China

“A daughter is a burden on her father’s head”
- a common Hindi saying.⁷³

“You are only a girl; you are spilt water”
- a common Chinese saying.⁷⁴

Sex-selective feticide is a new form of gender discrimination, which has been noticed worldwide for the last three decades.⁷⁵ The action is carried out by deliberate miscarriage backed with the pre-natal gender determination technology.⁷⁶ Foeticide or feticide is an act of killing a fetus.⁷⁷ The worldwide feticide is mainly a selective sex feticide and that is the female feticide.

Female feticide is particularly widespread in India and China. There are social and cultural factors behind it. Historically both India and China are profoundly patriarchal in culture. They believe that sons bring strength, blessings and wealth to the family, while daughters do not serve the same purpose,⁷⁸ The female child is seen as a commodity and investing in the female child is considered as costly and a waste.⁷⁹ In case of India daughter’s family is expected to give expensive dowry of property and money to the husband’s

family. The families of sons get both the wealth and daughter, while the daughter’s family lose both. In many cases mothers do not feel bad about willingly killing their girl fetus because of poverty and life struggles.

The practice of pre-natal sex-determination of fetus is prevalent in India and China. Many families have the practice of pressurizing and forcing the mother to do a sex-determination and then go for abortion if it is a girl. Even before birth, the girl children are objects of assault.⁸⁰ Most of the time, the mother gives in to save her marriage. Female feticide refuses the most basic right of a woman, which is “the right to life” and it is probably the worst among all other kinds of violence against women.⁸¹ The scenario would have been the opposite if it was a male fetus.⁸² China’s One-Child Policy escalated the practice of sex-selective abortions to a large extent.⁸³ In 1979, China promulgated this policy as a compulsory and at times coercive population-control program. Families having more than one child were subject to forced abortion or forced sterilization by the family planning community police even if the family wanted to keep the child. This policy was initiated to curtail China’s rapid population

⁷³ “It’s a Girl (FULL DOCUMENTARY),” 19 February 2018. Cited in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azdUcyCkpYI>. Accessed on 19 April 2020.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Nicholas Eberstadt, “The Global War Against Baby Girls,” *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2011.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Samsunnessa Khatun and Aznarul Islam, “Death Before Birth’- A Study On Female Foeticide in India,” *MS ACADEMIA*, January 2011.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Bhandari PM and Mishra SR, “Female Feticide: A Mass Murder,” *Health Prospect*, November 2012.

⁸⁰ Sharqua Ansari, “Born to Die”. Female Infanticide and Feticide: An Analysis of India,” *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, April 2018.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *op.cit.* Bhandari PM and Mishra SR.

⁸³ *ibid.*

growth, had resulted in fundamental human rights abuses.⁸⁴

Female feticide has immediate impacts of imbalanced sex ratio both in India and China. The Chinese government estimated that the government successfully prevented 400 million babies from being born.⁸⁵ But the 2010 census of China figured out that there are 118 boys for every 100 girls and on the other hand, the 2011 census of India showed a low sex ratio that only 914 girls for every 1,000 boys under the age of 6.⁸⁶ Millions of unmarried men mainly in the countryside were unable to find their brides due to this imbalanced sex ratio.⁸⁷ This has the potential to lead to a substantial increase in organized crime like molestations, rape, abduction, trafficking and forced polyandry, child marriage and so on. In addition, researchers claimed that gender discrimination against women is also fostered by an imbalanced sex ratio.⁸⁸

However, measures have been taken to prevent feticide. In 2015, China introduced Two Children Policy replacing the One Child Policy.⁸⁹ In order to ban and punish pre-natal sex screening and female feticide the Indian government has passed the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT) in 1994.⁹⁰ Even though the law is a powerful instrument of social change, this social problem cannot be eradicated only with legal measures.⁹¹

Violence against children remains un or under reported most of the time. Children do not have the capacity to defend themselves. Responsible authorities should play a more proactive role in this regard. Moreover, children need to be sensitized to make them understand that they must report to the authority whenever they face any form of violence. This is expected to lead towards a safer world for the children to grow up in.

⁸⁴ Winter Wall, "China's Infanticide Epidemic," *Topical Research Digest*.

⁸⁵ "'One Child Nation' Exposes the Tragic Consequences of Chinese Population Control," 16 August 2019. Cited in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdkHA_-xryk. Accessed on 19 April 2020.

⁸⁶ "Rise of 'missing girls' in India and China," 27 May 2011. Cited <https://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2011/0527/Rise-of-missing-girls-in-India-and-China>. Accessed on 26 April 2020.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ *op.cit.* Bhandari PM and Mishra SR.

⁸⁹ "China's One Child only policy's effect on the death care industry," 21 October 2019. Cited in <https://deathcareindustry.com/chinas-one-child-only-policys-effect-on-the-death-care-industry/>. Accessed on 26 April 2020.

⁹⁰ *op.cit.* Sharqua Ansari.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

Commentary on Violence against Children



Ms. Shaheen Anam

Executive Director
Manusher Jonno Foundation

For many years Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has been working for child protection focusing on the elimination of hazardous child labor. While working in this area, we have discovered various patterns of child abuse that cannot be ignored as a part of social protection. These include physical assault, sexual assault, exploitation, neglect, child trafficking, etc.

Children are the most vulnerable group in society. In most cases, children, belonging to low-income families and those who are orphans or are not protected by any family, become victims of violence. But cases of sexual abuse from well off families, is also high, but we have little data on this. It is the vulnerability of the children that motivates perpetrators to abuse children. As children often are unable to describe properly or tell anyone about their ordeal to others perpetrators continue to survive under a shadow of secrecy. The problem of child abuse has to be addressed from different angles. Child marriage is another form of child abuse. Early marriage is a gross human rights violation which is faced by 50 % of adolescent girls in Bangladesh. The negative impact of early marriage

continues till adulthood and is termed violence against women.

Every year MJF compiles the reported situation of children through six leading Daily newspapers. The survey titled “The Situation of Children in Bangladesh 2019” revealed that the maximum number of children died of drowning last year. After that is death due to rape and sexual assault. Then comes issues like beating, kidnapping, trafficking and others. The group of unattended children are the victims in most of the cases. Usually, perpetrators are aged between 14 to 50 years. Sometimes there are cases of sexual assault of male children, but we do not have much data about this.

In the context of our country, poverty is the main reason behind the failure to protect our children. Due to poverty, children are forced to work and contribute to family income. Lack of daycare facilities compels working mothers from low-income families to leave their children unprotected at home. Another reason is the lack of knowledge and information about men and boys who commit these heinous crimes. We have no knowledge why they get attracted to

children for sexual acts even though the child cannot give sexual pleasure. There should be a study to analyze the psychology of this group of people. Some reports suggest that drug addiction, pornography, frustration, unemployment triggers this kind of behavior.

It is very difficult to answer why violence against children is getting higher in number in recent years. But I can assume one reason could be more people are willing to seek justice and are aware of the laws that protect them. In earlier times, even parents used to hide these incidents fearing social stigma. But now due to consciousness, these incidents are getting more media coverage than the past. But we cannot ignore the possibility that these cases are increasing due to various factors which is a sign of social degradation.

The legal framework to protect children from abuse is very strong. However, there are loopholes in the implementation due to lack of accountability. Very often, influential local people connected to power force families of victims to withdraw cases against them. Sometimes, law enforcement agents are bribed, even the doctors at times change the reports in favor of the perpetrator under political powerplay. We have noticed cases that are pushed by the general public through long term movements and continuously focused on by media results in punishment of perpetrators and justice for the victim.

Child labor cannot be justified on the ground of the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh. We can take Sri-Lanka as an example where, despite

poverty, there is no scope of child labor. In our country, we also have a strong example of abolishing child labor from the RMG industry. If it can be implemented in one sector, then why it can't be implemented in other sectors? In this regard, we will have to work with parents who are sending their children to work. We will have to give counseling to them and make them realize their responsibility towards their children. We found a large number of successful cases where the parents stopped sending their children to work after getting counselling services from MJF partner organizations. We also work with employers to make sure that they allow their child labors to go to school at least for half-day, ensure proper nutrition and pure drinking water. However, MJF is against all forms of child labor.

The government of Bangladesh ratified the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. National legislation on hazardous child labor was subsequently revised in 2006, and a list of hazardous forms of child labor was adopted in 2013. Bangladesh's government has committed to eliminating child labor from 38 sectors categorized as hazardous by 2022, and from all sectors by 2024. MJF is working with the government to realize this commitment

To remove all kinds of violence against children from society several things have to work in parallel. Law enforcement agencies should be guided towards how to act ethically and sensitively; the health sector should be aware on how to deal with child violence cases, the education sector should work

on building overall good values in the society and families will need to learn how to protect their children. From an early age, children, both male and female, should get the training on how to respect each other and how to protect themselves from violence. No isolated work can bring

change in the situation, but most importantly, accountability has to be ensured at all levels of institutions that are meant to protect children only then we will be able to build a safe and healthy world for our children.

Some Selected Micronarratives on Violence against Children*

“Children are probably the most mistreated members of the society who hardly have any voice, both at home and outside. As a result, they consistently become victims of all sorts of violence, such as physical torture, rape, homicide, acid attack, child labor, and trafficking. Violence against children remains often underreported due to the reluctance of the victim’s family members and societal stigma attached to it.”

Rubiat Afrose Raka, Research Officer, Bangladesh Institute of Strategic Studies

“I have two of my nieces living in Barishal aged six and eight years. A few days back, while TV news channels were telecasting the follow-up news of a Dhaka University student being raped, they got scared and asked their grandmother and parents about what had happened and why the perpetrator was sent to jail. Their parents and grandmother did not give any satisfactory answers. Then they asked what does rape mean and why the man was punished. I explained to them carefully and then they shared with me that one of their neighboring uncles whom they did not like because he used to hug them very closely. They usually run away when they see the man. This means that for a long time they could not understand what the man was actually doing with them.”

Anonymous, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

“Children are usually physically tortured, verbally abused, and even sexually harassed in their working places. Often, they have to work from a very early age due to their family’s economic hardships. Unfortunately, educated people also torture child workers who work in their houses or offices and even those who are working in our University’s hall canteen are not generally treated well. Have we ever thought that we, some friends together, could teach them to read? We did not. As we do not think about their future, how can we blame their poor parents and expect better treatment from others?”

Abu Sufian Shamrat, Lecturer, Political science, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology

* Collected by Sharin Fatema, Tasnuba Tazrin Shaon, Afnan Nur Bhuiyan, Hazera Khanam from March 15th to March 30th, 2020.

“When I was in fourth grade, I went to visit one of my maternal uncle’s house after my first term exam. A distant uncle of mine was in that house. I remember one afternoon, I felt sleepy and went to my aunt’s room to sleep. At the same time, that uncle went to that room and hugged me tightly. He deliberately touched the sensitive parts of my body that made me very uncomfortable. I did not make any sound because he told me it was some kind of affection. Same thing happened to me on the following day. Then I told my aunt and grandmother about it. They laughed and did not believe me. Later I did not share the incident with anyone else because I was not taught to share this kind of things.”

Anonymous, Former student, University of Dhaka

“One of my aunt’s employees used to come to our house regularly. One day when I was about 5/6 years old, he invited me to join him to buy ice-cream. As I knew him, so I went with him, but he didn’t buy Ice-cream. Instead, he took me to our home garden... there he sexually abused me. After the incident, I became silent, but as a kid, I felt anger inside me. I was asking myself "why did I go with him?" From then onwards, I started to keep my distance with that person, my family members, and everyone. Still, I often blame my family’s carelessness for this incident. If my parents were a little more careful, this would not have happened with me.”

Anonymous, Satkhira

“I am a social worker. I usually work with children from a low-income background. I have seen many forms of child abuse. Child abuse in the workplace is prevalent. One of our girls here was sexually abused by a garment supervisor while working in a garment factory. Later we rescued her from there. Again, many boy children work in garages or workshops, where the owners often beat them and verbally abuse them. After working for 6 to 7 hours, they often only get something like 10 Taka without any meal. Earlier, they didn’t even pay them for their work. Now if we talk about their families, they also oppress them. We found one of our boys with a deep cut on his hand. His father and brother are drug addicts. They beat him and his mother over money for purchasing drugs. During one incident, they cut his hand with a broken liquor bottle.”

Sujan, Social worker, Dhaka

“Students often come to me and ask ‘Madam, my grade was not satisfactory. Therefore, my mother beat me, because of this I won’t come to school from tomorrow, can you suggest me any place where I can live without any physical torture?’ Some come and ask about a hiding place so that their parents could not find them and compare them to other children’; ‘some come to complain against relatives regarding their abusing behavior’. One student complained that he was beaten by his father while protesting against torture of his mother.”

Anonymous, Principal of a reputed College, Dhaka

Annex:

Some definitional clarification according to BPO Codebook.

Gunfight. Shootout opposing the police or security forces to criminals, militants or other irregular forces that do not match the definition of a non-state armed group.

Clash. Two-sided violence between groups, outside of the context of war or insurgency. *Example: supporters of rival political parties fight each other.*

Assault. One-sided violence by an individual or small group against another individual or small group. *Example: stabbing, shooting of someone by a perpetrator*

Fight. Two-sided violence between individuals or small groups. *Example: brawl between 3-4 people.*

Sexual assault. One-sided sexual violence, such as rape or attempted rape, by an individual or small group against another individual or small group.

Destruction of property. One-sided violence perpetrated with the intent of damaging property. *Examples: vandalism, arson.*

Mob violence (large group assault). One-sided violence by a mob or large group against an individual or a comparatively small and/or defenseless group. *Examples: lynching of a thief, looting of shops and houses owned by a religious minority.*



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