

CGS PEACE REPORT

an initiative of BPO

CGS
CENTRE FOR
GENOCIDE
STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA



Volume 6, Issue 1
January-February 2022



**Bangladesh's Campaign against
Drug Trafficking: BPO Data**

**Synthetic Contraband Drug Trafficking
in the Chattogram Region**

**Drug Abuse and Women's
Involvement in Drug-related
Crimes in Bangladesh**

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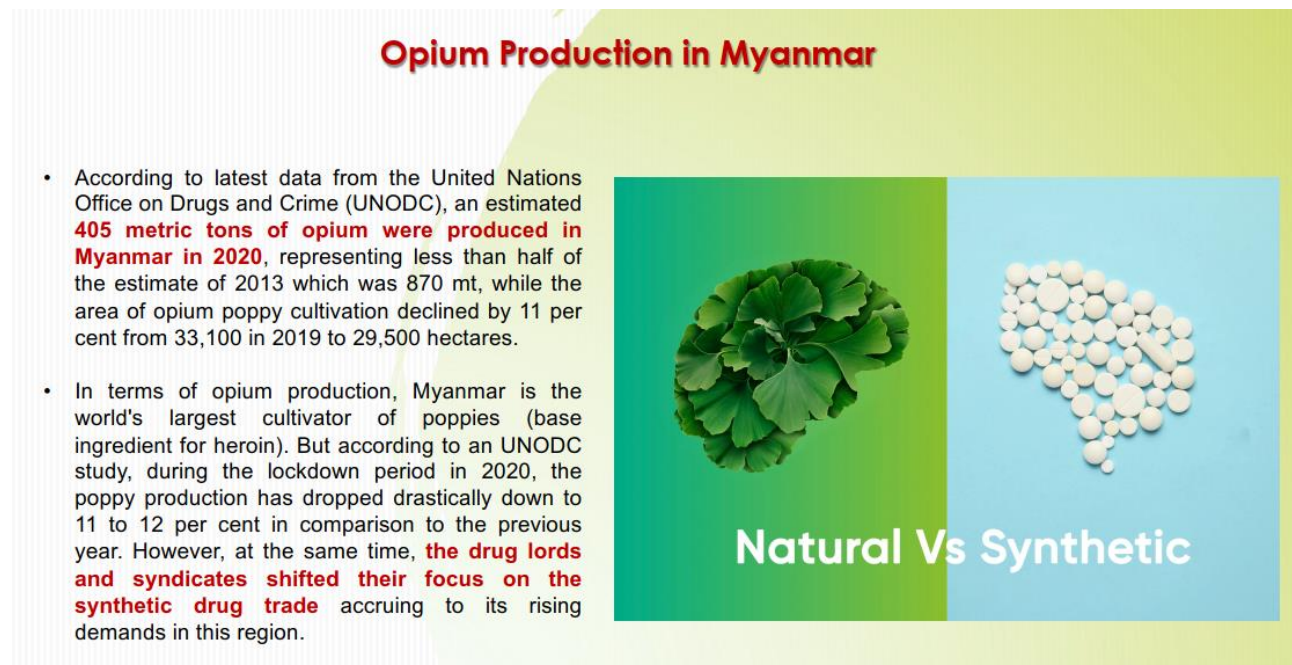
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From the Editor's Desk¹

The consumption of illicit synthetic drugs, particularly Yaba, in Bangladesh has lately become a menace and a worrying factor. But Bangladesh is not a producer of such drugs. Instead, it is Myanmar that produces and profits from the sale of illicit drugs or what could be referred to as narco-terrorism, and this needs global attention. Historically, Myanmar has always been a significant producer of opium. In June 2019, UNODC provided data on opium cultivation in Myanmar, which saw a declining trend. This is because there has been constant pressure over the years on Myanmar to cut down on opium cultivation. However, the decline in opium cultivation in Myanmar resulted in a situation where the drug lords, albeit with the connivance of the Myanmar military, shifted their illicit narco-production from natural to synthetic drugs (Image 1). This is how Yaba, the synthetic drug, became prominent and captured the lucrative illegal business!

Image 1



Opium Production in Myanmar

- According to latest data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), an estimated **405 metric tons of opium were produced in Myanmar in 2020**, representing less than half of the estimate of 2013 which was 870 mt, while the area of opium poppy cultivation declined by 11 per cent from 33,100 in 2019 to 29,500 hectares.
- In terms of opium production, Myanmar is the world's largest cultivator of poppies (base ingredient for heroin). But according to an UNODC study, during the lockdown period in 2020, the poppy production has dropped drastically down to 11 to 12 per cent in comparison to the previous year. However, at the same time, **the drug lords and syndicates shifted their focus on the synthetic drug trade** accruing to its rising demands in this region.

Natural Vs Synthetic

¹ This draws from my presentation on *Myanmar, Narco-terrorism, Rohingya and the World* at the seminar organised by the Diplomats World Publication at Hotel Radisson, Dhaka, on 20 July 2022.

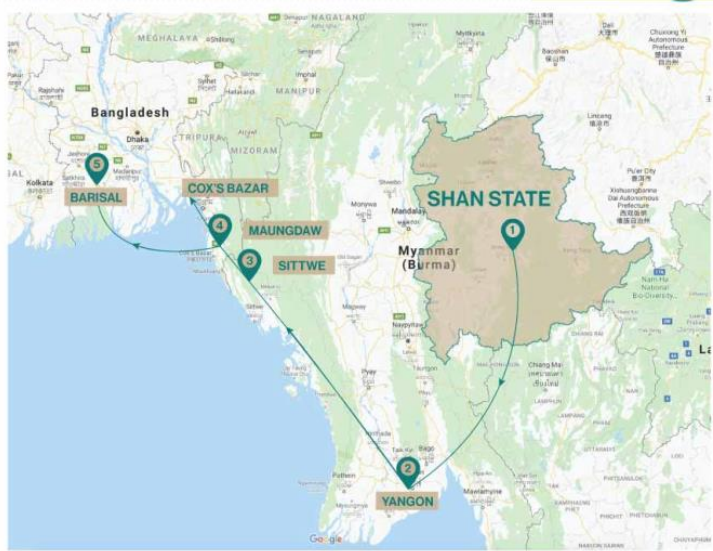
Yaba is a Thai word for 'crazy medicine.' People also use different names, like 'crazy pill,' 'madness medicine,' and some in Bangladesh call it 'Baba.' The manufacturing and use of the synthetic drug go back to the Nazis. Yaba is a mix of methamphetamine and caffeine found in the form of colourful candy-like tablets. It has attracted a lot of young people. But if you look at the production data, the bulk of the Yaba laboratories are located in Myanmar.

As a producer and distributor of illicit drugs, it is not difficult to see the complicity of the state of Myanmar. The bulk of the production takes place in Myanmar's Shan state. Looking at the output, one can easily see its enormity. A few months back, Reuters published a report where it revealed that the authorities in Laos, Thailand and Myanmar seized 90 million methamphetamine tablets and 4.4 tons of crystal methamphetamine in January 2022 alone, which gives us a sense of the size of the trade. More than 70 per cent of seizures of Yaba occurred in the Cox's Bazar district, mainly because of its geographical location as it shares a critical border with Myanmar. Not surprisingly, there are indications that the Myanmar military profits from Yaba production and its distribution around the world, including in Bangladesh.

Myanmar is one of the largest producers of synthetic drugs in the world. From the Shan state, the manufactured drug gets transported to Yangon, and from there, through Sittwe, Maungdaw, it reaches Cox's Bazar and the rest of Bangladesh. Earlier, the drug lords transported most of it through the land. But now, with the land border sealed, the illicit drugs get transported through the Bay of Bengal into Bangladesh (Image 2). The complex route also tells us how the Myanmar military profits from it. One may point out here that the emergence of the maritime drug route made Bangladesh shift some of the Rohingya refugees to the Bhasan Char. This is because the coastal lines had to be protected as coastal guards could not secure them because of refugee settlements. There were some leakages where narco trade could easily continue from those areas.

Image 2

Transit Route for YABA



- 1 About 37 yaba manufacturing factories operate in Myanmar's Shan state and most pills are manufactured here.
- 2 On the long journey to Bangladesh, the yaba pills are first transported to Yangon.
- 3 From Yangon, the pills are brought to Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state, in brick sized packets. They are stored in different places in the capital before being transported to Maungdaw.
- 4 After reaching Maungdaw, the yaba is transported to Cox's Bazar and other places in Bangladesh.
- 5 As border security is high near Teknaf in Chittagong and the Naf River, a new route has formed where the suppliers use the Bay of Bengal and enter Bangladesh through Barisal.

Source: The ASEAN Post

Source: The ASEAN Post

Image 3 highlights the confiscation of Yaba from 2008 to 2022. One can see that the seizure of Yaba went up sharply following the Rohingya exodus in 2017 and peaked in 2020. However, since 2021, mainly due to the efforts of Bangladesh Border Guards and other security agencies, there has been a steady decline in the seizure of Yaba. This gives the impression that the flow of Yaba is on the decline. This, however, is very deceptive because, as Image 4 shows, there has been a steep rise in the seizure of crystal meth ice, which is nothing but concentrated Yaba and is undoubtedly more profitable when the drug dealers make successful transportation of it. According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Bangladeshis consume 70 lakh pieces of Yaba per day. In Dhaka alone, 15 lakh pieces of Yaba are sold per day. The retail price of Yaba per piece is Taka 300, which makes everyday spending on Yaba in Bangladesh as high

as Taka 210 crore. The manufacturing and smuggling of crystal meth ice or concentrated Yaba have expanded the narco market. It is easier now to reach the consumers spread throughout Bangladesh.

Image 3

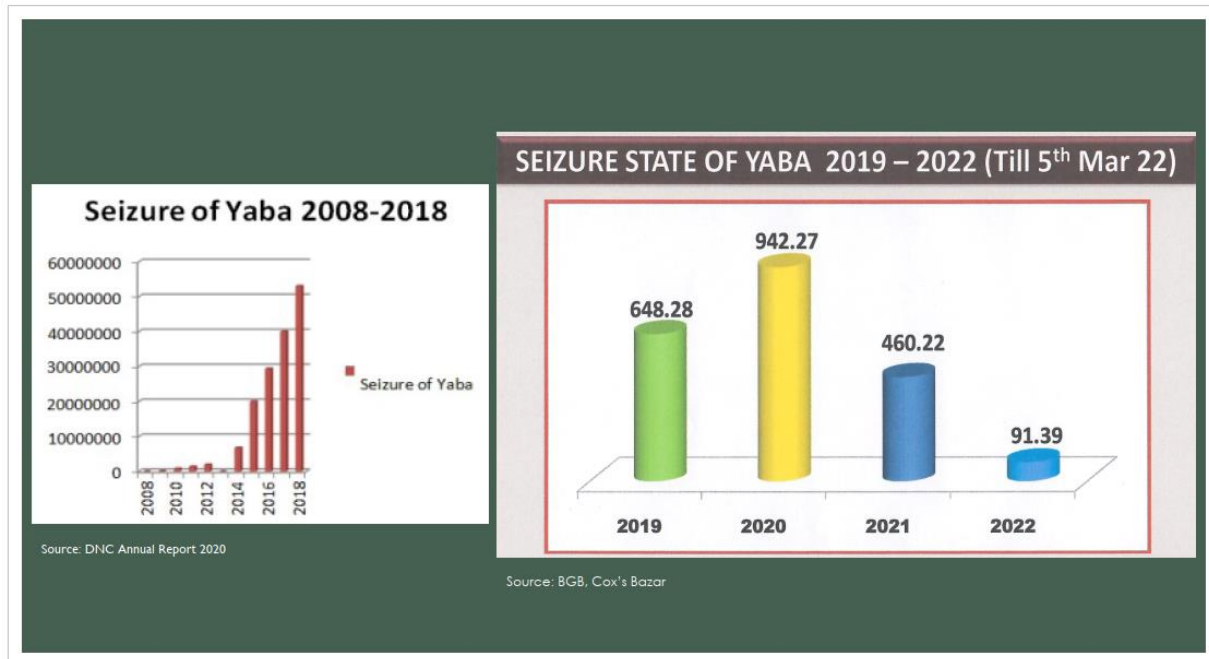
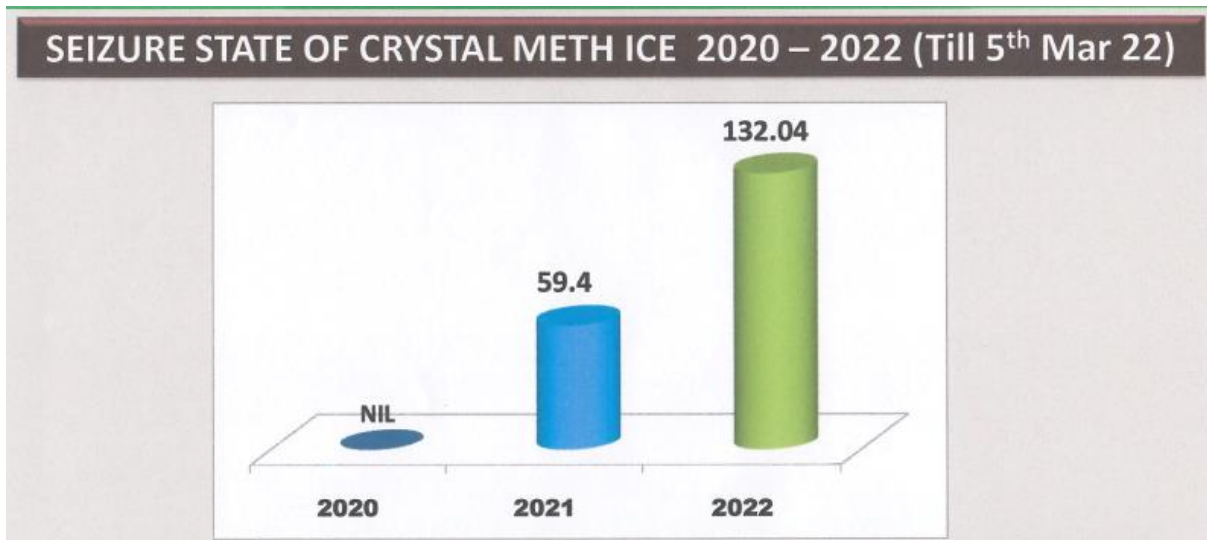


Image 4



Source: BGB, Cox's Bazar

Where do the Rohingyas fit into all this? The Rohingyas are not consumers of Yaba; they are the middle person selling Yaba. And there are a couple of reasons for that. Firstly, the Rohingyas are familiar with the other side of the border, namely Myanmar, which makes it easier for them to transport the drug. Secondly, Rohingya camps work as an ideal storing place for Yaba consignments as the houses look identical to each other, making it difficult for the law enforcement agencies to trace, recover or seize them unless they have specific information. The smugglers visit Rohingya refugees deep within the camps and pass on the drug consignments to them, mainly for safekeeping. Some of the Rohingyas who are allowed to go out of the refugee camps also use the opportunity to engage with locals in drug dealing. There is big money for the Rohingyas for both safe keeping and peddling. One may point out that in just one year of the Rohingyas' exodus into Bangladesh in 2018, Bangladesh's security forces seized an astonishing amount of Yaba pills, as many as 10 million, in Cox's Bazar alone!

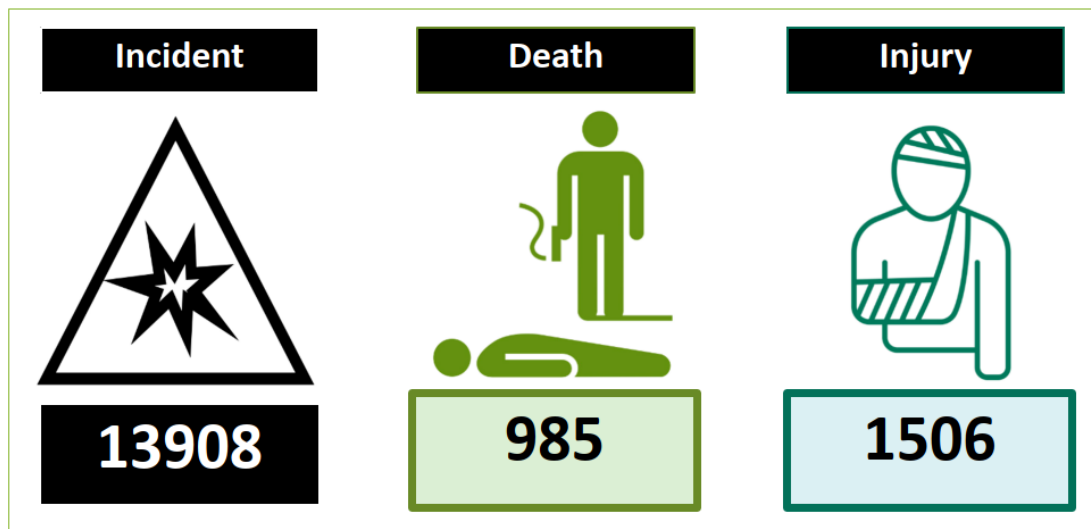
There is a critical link between the Rohingyas and the drug peddlers. Many Rohingya men, especially those fluent in Bengali, cross the border from the southern sub-district of Teknaf to Myanmar on foot or by motorcycle and return with the drugs and supply them to the Bangladeshi peddlers. One of the main reasons for Rohingya involvement in this trade is that it is a lucrative venture, particularly in the backdrop of being without work. According to a report published in *The Business Standard*, an average

household in the Rohingya camps gets paid about Taka 20,000 to 50,000 for keeping Yaba consignments for one night. Indeed, if that is the amount of money one can get just for safekeeping, it is pretty worthwhile to take the risk, and that is what is happening. However, the drug money is not without risk, and often the peddlers face deadly consequences. As indicated before, the Rohingyas are not consumers of Yaba; one hardly finds a severe addict among the Rohingyas. But then, the Rohingyas became involved in narco-terrorism because of the opportunity to earn quick money, which shot up drug-related incidents in Bangladesh, particularly in the Cox's Bazar area.

Image 5 briefly overviews the number of drug-related incidents in Bangladesh from 2013-2021. But then, the difference in numbers becomes apparent if we look at the quarterly trend of violent incidents, categorized as pre- and post-Rohingya exodus (Image 6). In 2013, the number of incidents was meagre, but it gradually increased and peaked in the post-Rohingya exodus period.

Image 5

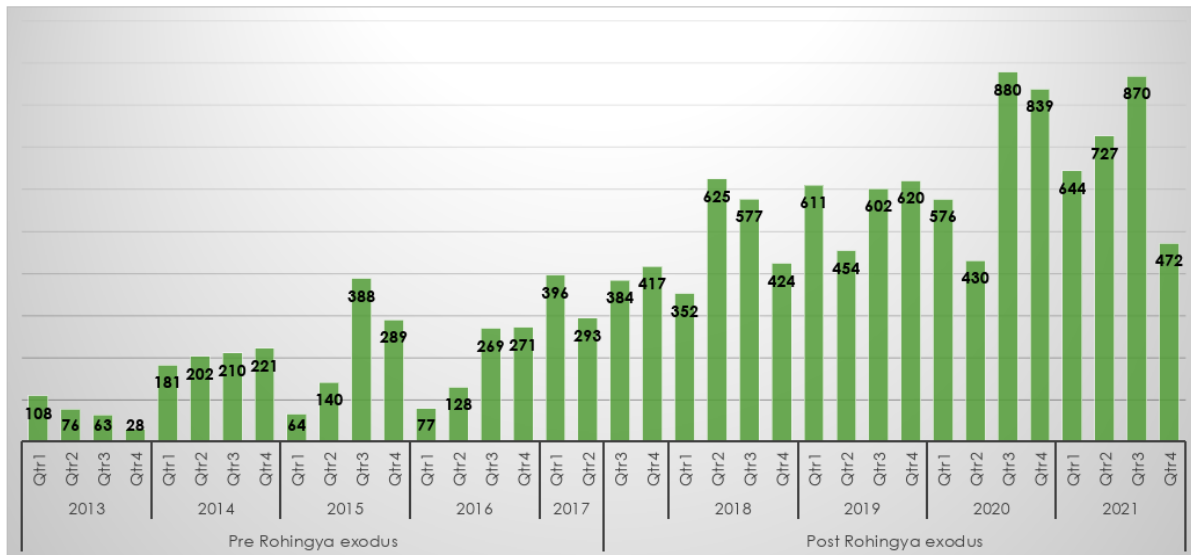
Overview of Drug-related Incidents in Bangladesh (2013-2021)



Source: BPO

Image 6

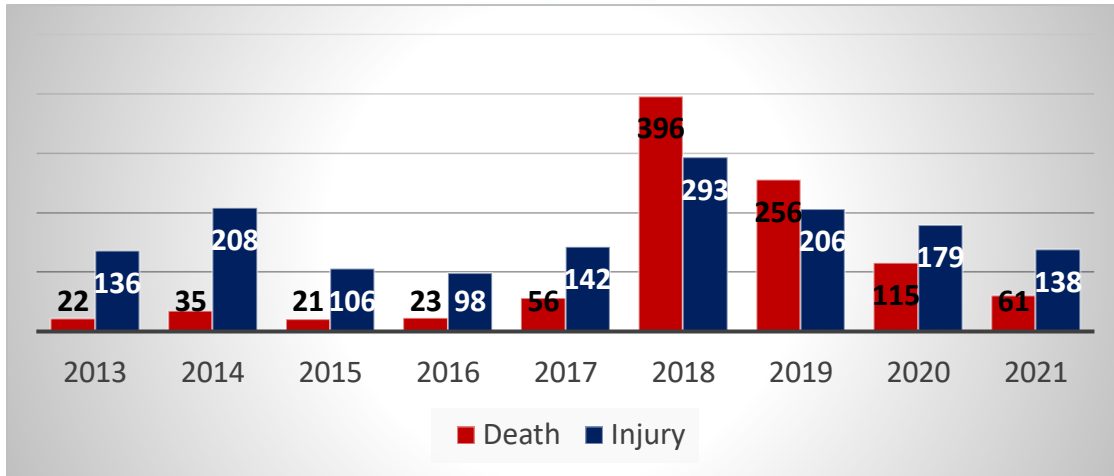
Quarterly Trend of the Drug-related incident (Pre & Post Rohingya Exodus)



Source: BPO

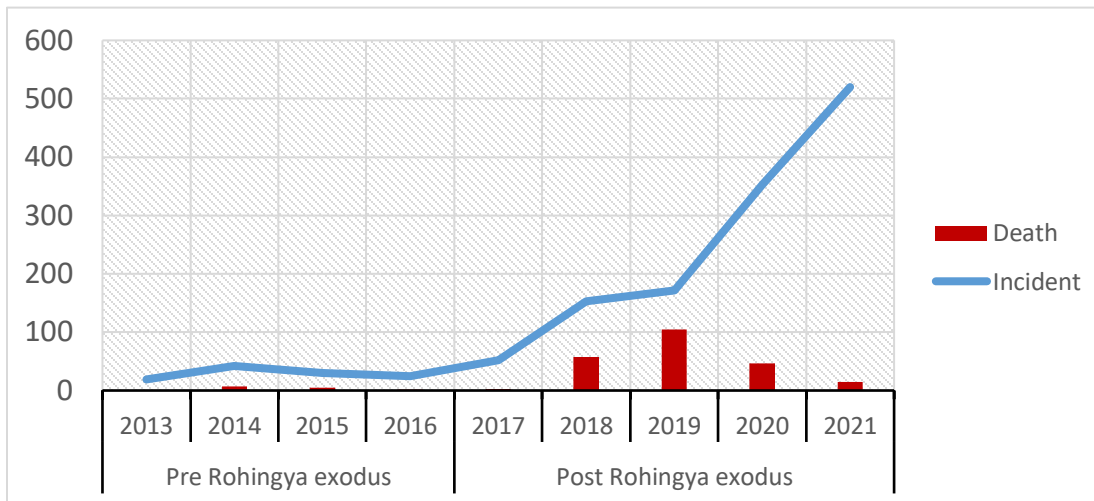
Moreover, if we focus on the number of drug-related death and injury, one can notice similar trends (Images 7 and 8). In 2013, deaths and injuries were very low compared to 2018-2019, when Bangladesh had the bulk of the Rohingya refugees residing in the Cox's Bazar area. If we look at the drug-related injury and death in the top 10 districts of Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar alone has 241 deaths, which is more than 5 or 6 districts combined (Image 9).

Image 7
Consequences of the Drug-related incident
(Yearly Trend)



Source: BPO

Image 8
Drug-related incident in Cox's Bazar
(Pre & Post Rohingya exodus)



Source: BPO

Image 9

Top Ten District in terms of Death (Drug-related)

Rank	District	Incident	Death
1	Cox's Bazar	1366	241
2	Dhaka	1394	84
3	Mymensingh	184	50
4	Cumilla	334	45
5	Chattogram	1600	43
6	Jashore	288	41
7	Narayanganj	425	32
8	Gazipur	239	31
9	Kushtia	76	30
10	Rajshahi	510	28

Source: BPO

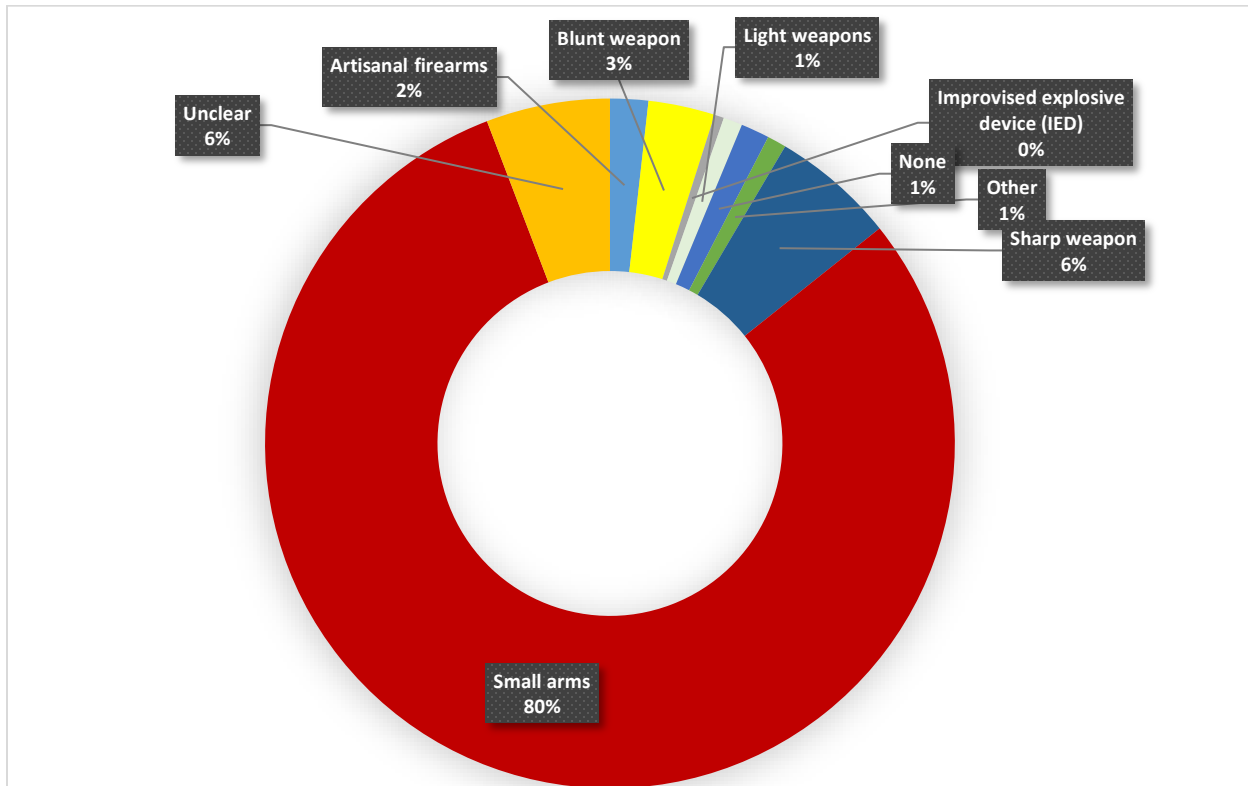
The data on the drug-related incidents otherwise tells us why Cox's Bazar has been transformed after the Rohingya exodus. Incidentally, the 2018-2019 period also increased the extrajudicial killings in Cox's Bazar area. Since the drug dealers are mostly armed, it is more likely that the judicial process was compromised. The security forces probably took instant measures to enforce the zero-tolerance policy of the Government of Bangladesh against illicit drugs, if not out of fear for their own lives. This brings us to the issue of illicit weapons.

The confluence between illicit drugs and illicit weapons is well established. After all, the drug lords and peddlers need weapons to protect their products and their earnings. Any 'safekeeping' too would require weapons for protection. This becomes clear from the data on the types of firearms used in drug-related incidents in Cox's Bazar (Image 10). The drug peddlers used 'small arms' in 80 percent of the cases. 'Sharp weapons' come next, only 6 percent. Other weapons used remain insignificant. More interestingly,

no instances of any use of 'improvised explosive devices,' which is also an indicator that 'small arms' are readily available. This is potentially dangerous, for it can go beyond the lucrative business of drugs.

Image 10

Types of Weapons Used in Drug-related Incidents in Cox's Bazar



Source: BPO

Several years back in 2015, the UNDP requested me to identify the root causes of radicalization and violent extremism in the Maldives. There was a good reason why the UNDP was eager to carry out such a study on the island-state. In terms of population ratio, the Maldivians were second after Tunisia, who joined al Qaeda and ISIS. UNDP wanted to know why so many Maldivians got recruited into the

global violent extremist outfits. Interestingly, after collecting life stories or micro-narratives of the people on the island from different walks of life, we found that most of the violent extremists now in prison or on bail or freed after incarceration were mainly former drug addicts. One could only guess that a drug addict on the grounds of spiritual salvation or a promise for heavenly life becomes easy prey to the recruiters of violent extremism! In this context, one can hardly ignore the confluence between illicit drugs, weapons, and violent extremism. This is an issue that merits global attention and collaborative action.

Money laundering is the second issue that merits global attention and collaborative action. The Rohingya drug dealers cannot deposit the ill-gotten income in local banks or invest in licit businesses. They have to launder the money abroad, mainly to developed countries, for safe investment and good life. The drug money is also used for the so-called "boat people" or human trafficking by sea. Often a family member or relative living abroad becomes the contact through which the money is laundered. The destinations include Canada, Australia, the US, the UK and some other European countries, including some east Asian and middle eastern countries. It is not difficult to see that unless the international community wakes up and recognises the two-way confluence of money laundering, focusing on both the sending and receiving countries, it too becomes complicit in narco-terrorism and money laundering!

What is to be done then? The international community should put sanctions on Myanmar for producing and profiting from illicit drugs. There are already legal processes for putting sanctions; for example, the INCB or International Narcotics Control Board can name and shame Myanmar and even recommend that member countries put sanctions on Myanmar. Other countries can also activate their respective anti-narco trafficking laws. The US, for example, has well-codified policies for sanctioning illicit drug-producing and drug-trafficking countries, and there are instances of the US using such rules and putting sanctions on individuals and entities. The time has come for the international community to probe into the confluence between drugs, illicit weapons and violent extremism and pressurize Myanmar to end the production and distribution of illegal drugs.

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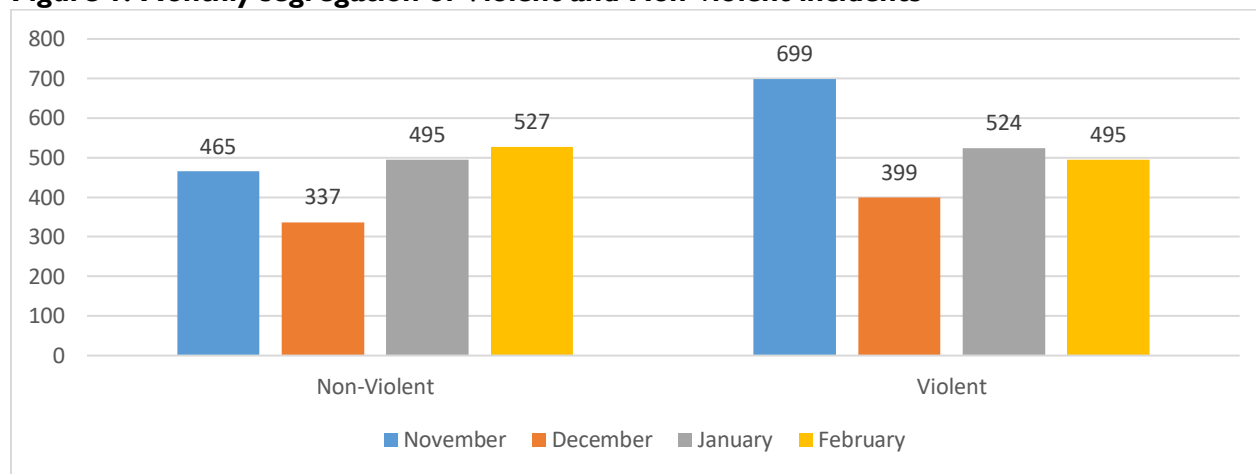
Crime and Violence Update in Bangladesh: An Analysis from BPO

Violence update (January-February 2022)

The Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) brings together different streams of publicly available data on violence using news reports from prominent national and regional dailies. From January-February 2022, BPO has recorded a total of 1019 violent² and 1022 non-violent³ incidents. Figure 1 shows the monthly segregation of the violent and non-violent incidents of November-December 2021 and January-February 2022. Drawing a comparison between these two timelines, it is noticeable that non-violent incidents had a sharp

decline in December and gradually increased in the rest two months. On the other hand, the violent incidents also had a sharp decrease in December and after a rise in January, the violent incidents gradually declined in February. BPO data shows that the overall number of incidents increased by 6.90% in January-February 2022 than in the previous two months. Table 1 summarises the updates on major violence types that constitute most of the violent incidents. A brief description of each category is available in the Annex.

Figure 1: Monthly segregation of Violent and Non-violent incidents



² 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.

³ 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.

Table 1 depicts that incidents under some categories like Gunfight, Clash, Destruction of property, Abduction, and Assault have decreased and in other categories like Sexual Assault, Fight, and Mob Violence have increased. Table 2

illustrates the comparison of the changes in consequences. The total number of deaths, abductions, sexual assaults, arrests and injuries has decreased from July-August 2021 to September-October 2021.

Table 1: Comparison of Major Violence Types

Major Violence Types	November	December	January	February
Abduction/hostage	12	4	2	10
Assault	430	261	344	303
Battle	0	1	0	0
Clash	141	78	66	58
Coup	1	0	0	0
Destruction of property	23	5	29	19
Fight	16	6	14	12
Gunfight	5	4	0	1
Mob violence (large group assault)	2	1	5	11
Other	1	0	1	6
Sexual assault	52	34	58	74
Unclear	14	6	25	14
Unspecified	0	0	1	0
Violence against civilians	0	0	1	1

Table 2: Comparison of the changes in consequences

Consequences	Total Killed	Total Injured	Total Abducted	Total Sexually Assaulted	Total Arrested
November-December'21	531	4774	19	85	4518
January-February'22	606	2550	32	135	4980
Changes in Percentage	12.38%	-87.22%	40.63%	37.04%	8.03%

Understanding the Low Number of Assaults

BPO enlists the inter-personal attacks by different parties against one person/persons by another person/persons for various motives under the assault category. BPO recorded a total of 647 cases of assault in January-February 2022. The motives include domestic violence, dowry-related, land and other enmities related to economic factors, social-personal rivalry, attacks with criminal intent, suicide attempts, etc. Under the assault category, 149 cases of suicide and attempted suicide were reported, and in those cases, 152 people were killed, including 86 women. Besides, the recovery of unidentified dead bodies is also enlisted under this category.

A Decreasing Number of Clashes

The total number of clashes decreased in January-February 2022 than November-December 2021.

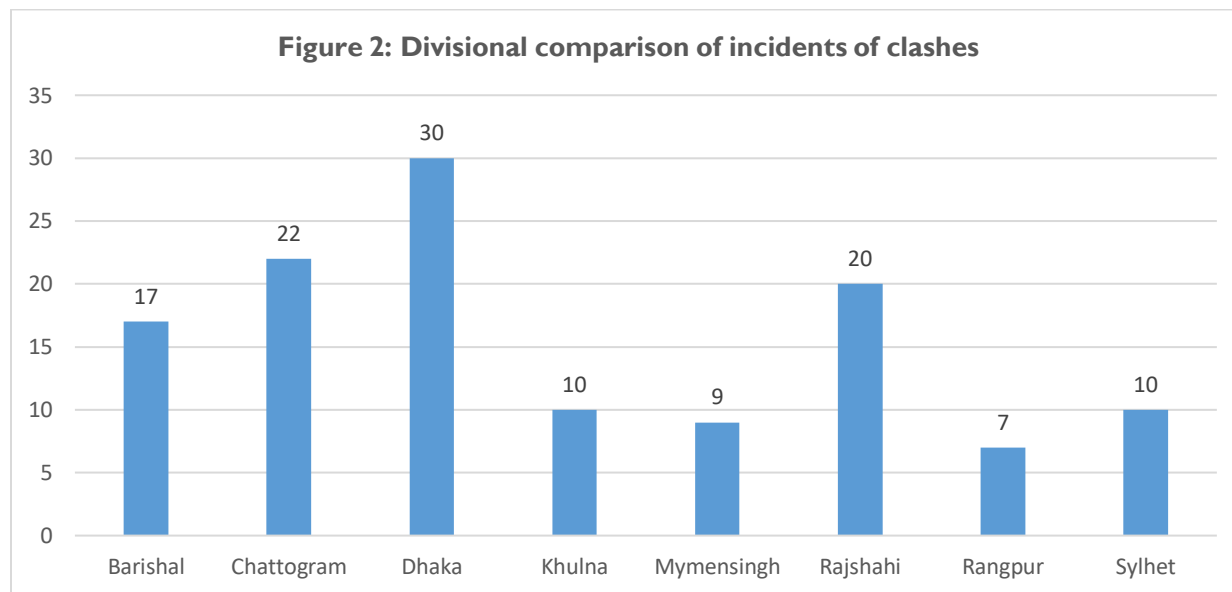
Less clashes took place in February than in January (see Table 1). Among 125 clashes reported in January-February 2022, 1542 people were injured, including 29 women. There are 22 reports of clashes injuring 20 people and over. The main motives of these clashes were election-related confrontations, political and social rivalry, control over land or natural resource, economic and business-related feuds, and other trivial matters. Nine cases of violence against minorities were reported. 39 reported cases were results of post-election violence after the 6th phase of 218 Union Parishad elections, which were scheduled on 31 January across the country.⁴ Figure 2 depicts the divisional distribution of the clash incidents. It shows that Dhaka, Chattagram, Rajshahi and Barishal have higher incident numbers than other districts. Quite a few municipalities and Union

⁴ '6th phase of UP polls on 31 Jan' *The Daily Star*, 19 December 2021, Cited in <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/elections/news>

/6th-phase-polls-jan-31-2920581, Accessed on- 30 March 2022.

Parishad in these divisions were having elections.⁵ Most of the election-related clashes took place in the Chattogram and Dhaka divisions, and at least

17 people were reportedly killed, and 1282 were injured in these divisions in election-related clashes.



Increase in Sexual Assault

Reported incidents of sexual assault have increased in January-February 2022 than November-December 2021. Out of 135 reported cases of sexual assaults, there were 26 gang rapes. The perpetrators of these offences were men of different ages, including a few minor boys, teasers, local miscreants, teachers, family members, relatives, neighbours, etc. However, most of the victims were girls, and in three cases, boys were

also the victim of sexual assaults. In some cases, rape by teens and teen gangs was also notable.

A Sharp Rise in The Destruction of Property

There are 20 more reported property destruction cases in January-February 2022 than in November-December 2021. A sharp rise in incidents was noticeable in these two months. In addition, most of the reported cases were about the election, which was 41.67% of all the total incidents, local Hindu temples were attacked, and idols of Hindu

⁵ 'Voting for 6th phase of Union Parishad elections going on' *New Age Bangladesh*, 31 January 2022, Cited in <https://www.newagebd.net/article/161446/voting-for-6th->

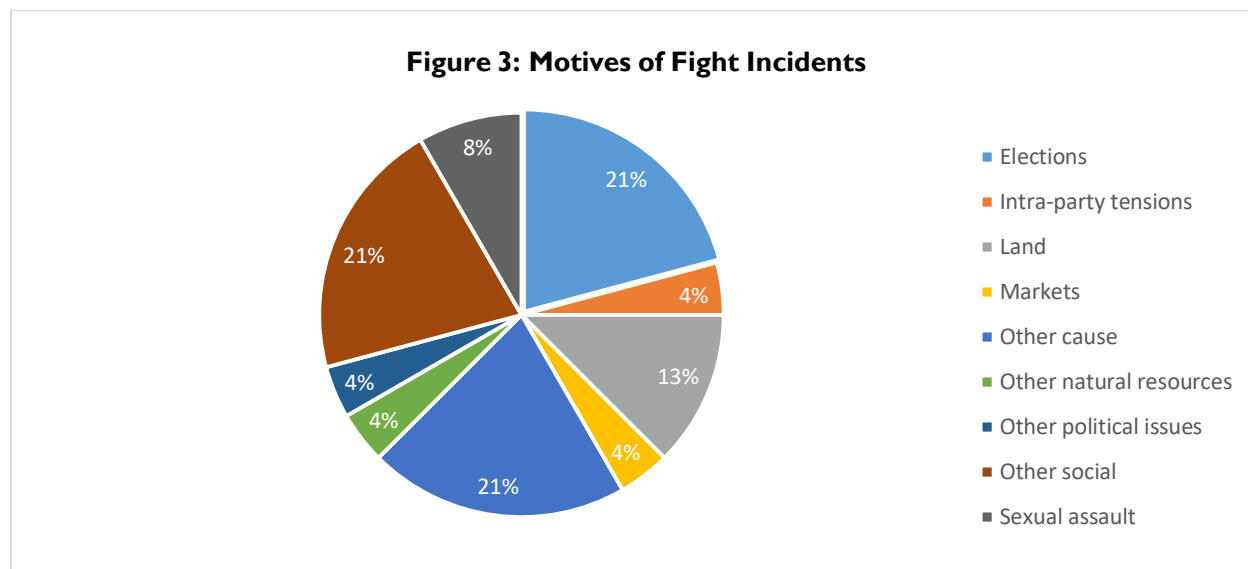
[phase-of-union-parishad-elections-going-on](https://www.newagebd.net/article/161446/voting-for-6th-phase-of-union-parishad-elections-going-on), Accessed on- 30 March 2022.

deities were vandalised. Besides, organised crime and land-related dispute also led to vandalism.

Increase in Fight

The number of incidents of fights increased in January-February 2022 than in November-

December 2021. The significant motives for these violent incidents are Elections, land-related disputes, various crimes, financial, social and personal feuds, sexual assault, political tensions, etc. (see Figure 3)



A Low Number of Gunfight Persists

The number of gunfights went down since August 2020. In January-February 2022, the number of gunfights incident is only one, which is eight cases less than in November-December 2021. In August 2020, a retired Major of the Bangladesh Army was killed in a reported gunfight. This event might have influenced the sudden decline in Gunfight in August and onwards.

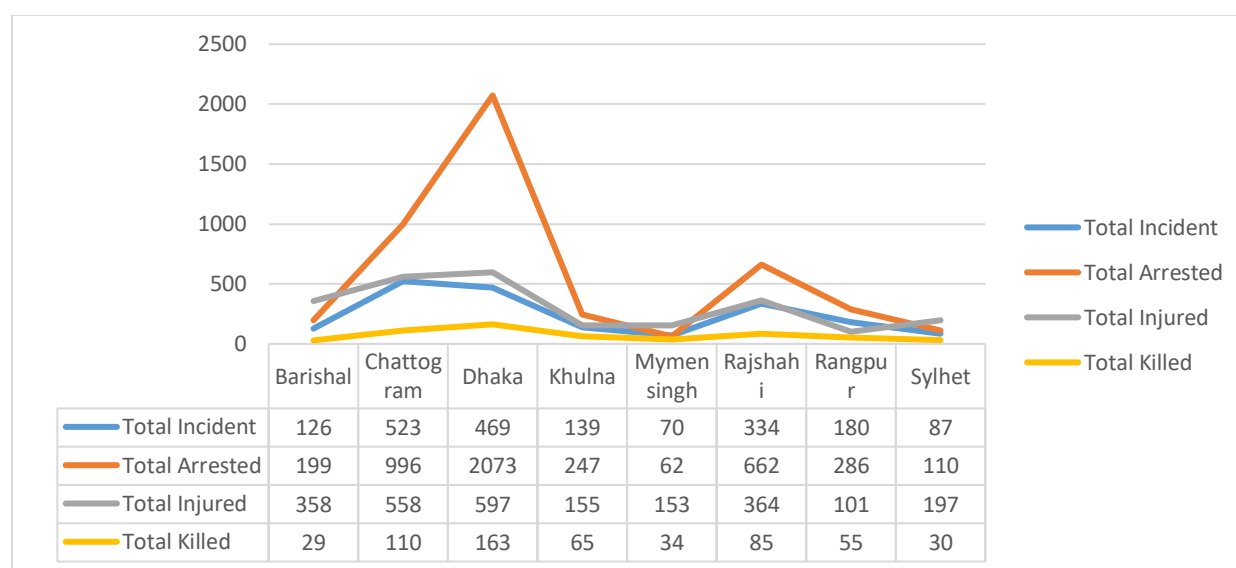
Violence-population Nexus

Figure 4 provides a spatial glimpse through the divisional distribution of the recorded incidents and their consequences. The graph illustrates that Chattogram, Dhaka, and Rajshahi are the first, second, and third respectively in terms of incidents and are second, first, and third respectively in terms of the death count. In addition, these three divisions are the most populous in Bangladesh.

But if the population ratio⁶ is applied to understand the incident prevalence and its consequences, then a different picture emerges. In that case, the Barishal division has the highest injury rate, second-highest sexual assault rate, and third-highest incident rate. The Rajshahi division is the first in terms of incident rate, second in death,

female death and injury and third in sexual assault rate. Chattogram occupied the second-highest incident rate and third-highest injury rate. Sylhet possesses the highest position in case of death, female death, and sexual assault rate. Dhaka, Khulna, Mymensingh, and Rangpur have lower rates than other divisions (see Table 3).

Figure 4: Divisional distribution of incidents and consequences



⁶ 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- 02 January 2022.

Table 3: Divisional segregation of incidents and consequences in terms of population: January-February 2022

Division	Incident	Rate by pop*	Death	Rate by pop*	Female Death	Rate by pop*	Injury	Rate by pop*	Sexual Assault	Rate by pop*
Barishal	126	2.27 (3 rd)	29	0.52	8	0.14	358	6.45 (1 st)	13	0.23 (2 nd)
Chattogram	523	2.69 (2 nd)	110	0.57	36	0.19	558	2.87 (3 rd)	26	0.13
Dhaka	469	1.41	163	0.49	52	0.16	597	1.80	30	0.09
Khulna	139	1.33	65	0.62 (3 rd)	20	0.19	155	1.48	9	0.09
Mymensingh	70	0.92	34	0.45	14	0.18	153	2.02	3	0.04
Rajshahi	334	2.71 (1 st)	85	0.69 (2 nd)	34	0.28 (2 nd)	364	2.95 (2 nd)	21	0.17 (3 rd)
Rangpur	180	1.71	55	0.52	25	0.24 (3 rd)	101	0.96	13	0.12
Sylhet	87	0.32	30	1.33 (1 st)	10	0.46 (1 st)	197	1.15	8	3.01 (1 st)

Bangladesh's Campaign against Drug Trafficking: BPO Data

Arefin Mizan*

*Drugs spread like a disease in the society ...
Nobody will be spared, however influential he
may be. We must root out the curse of drugs
from the society.*¹

-Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Illegal drug trafficking can directly influence a country's economic and social aspects. It is a growing problem in Bangladesh, with the majority of victims being young, between the ages of 18 and 30, and coming from all strata of society.² Numerous epidemiological studies conducted in Bangladesh indicate that the country is on the

verge of becoming a drug hub due to the fast growth in the number of addicts.^{3,4,5} To protect our society from this dangerous situation, illegal drug trafficking must be prohibited. Bangladesh, a country that does not directly manufacture drugs, confronts grave danger as a result of its geographical location at the crossroads of Asia's major drug trafficking zones — the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent.⁶ Bangladesh is a convenient transit point for international drug traffickers.⁷ Bangladesh is strategically located between the 'golden triangle' (Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos) and the 'golden crescent' (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran).⁸ Additionally, it is bordered

* Research Data Analyst, Bangladesh Peace Observatory, Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka

¹ The Financial Express. 2018. "Hasina Takes Tough Stance on Drugs", May 30, 2018. Cited In:

<https://www.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/hasina-takes-tough-stance-on-drugs-1527686290>, Accessed on: 18 March, 2022.

² Farial Naima Rahman, Mushtaq Ahmad and Mohammad Ali. 2016. "Socio-Economic Status of Drug Addicted Young People in Dhaka City". *Journal of Armed Forces Medical College, Bangladesh* 12 (2): 15-20. doi:10.3329/jafmc.v12i2.41079.

³ Mohit Kamal, N. Huq, B. Mali, H. Akter, and Arafat S.M.Y. 2018. "Epidemiology of Substance Abuse in Bangladesh: A Narrative Review." *Journal of Mental Disorders and Treatment*. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2471-271x.1000165>.

⁴ Faruque Ahmed and Shakil Ahmed, 2019. "The Impact of Drug Addiction among the Students of Tertiary Level in Bangladesh". *Journal of Education and Practice*. doi:10.7176/jep/10-7-03.

⁵ Mahbuba Naznin Sani. 2010. "Drug Addiction among Undergraduate Students of Private Universities in Bangladesh". *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 5: 498-501. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.131.

⁶ "South Asia Regional Profile". 2005. (New Delhi: UNODC), pp: 9-12, [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/South%20Asia%20Regional%20Profile%20\(Sept%202005\).pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/South%20Asia%20Regional%20Profile%20(Sept%202005).pdf).

⁷ Azizul Islam and Md. Faruque Hossain, 2017. "Drug Abuse and Its Impact on Bangladesh". *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 9 (11): 143-156. doi:10.5897/ijsa2016.0736.

⁸ Ahmadul Hassan, 2022. "Bangladesh At The Hub Of Three Drug Trafficking Regions". *Prothom Alo (English)*, 07 Jan, 2022. Cited In: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime-and-law/bangladesh-at-the-hub-of-three-drug-trafficking-regions>, Accessed on: 18 March, 2022.

by Asia's main drug trafficking nations, several of which are improving their drugs legislation and enforcing existing laws. Bangladesh is becoming as a key transit hub due to its convenient land, sea, and air connectivity. Traffickers that distribute drugs throughout Northern America, Africa, and Europe transport their supplies via Dhaka, Chattagram, Cumilla, and Khulna, and other locations in Bangladesh.⁹

To combat the exacerbated drug trafficking and drug abuse situation in Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) adopted a 'Zero Tolerance Policy' toward drugs. In accordance with the GoB's 'zero-tolerance' policy, the Narcotics Control Act of 2018 (Act Number 63 of 2018) was adopted on 27 December 2018.¹⁰ The legislation regulates the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts. However, the war on drugs is being waged in other sectors as well. In accordance with the Narcotics Control Act, the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) conducts year-round awareness campaigns against illicit substances across the nation as part of its demand reduction efforts. The Department of Narcotics Control, in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, ministries, government offices, non-governmental organisations, and educational institutions, is fostering a social movement against drug misuse through a public awareness campaign. Section 6 of the Narcotics

Control Act demands preventative education and anti-drug campaigns to raise general/mass public knowledge about the detrimental effects of narcotics.¹¹ These awareness activities include mass media and social media campaigns, including: digital campaigns, advertisement, LED billboards, KIOSKs, and digital vans, the 'Say no to drugs' campaign, guiding and monitoring anti-drug activities of NGOs, anti-drug slogans, and anti-drug volunteer groups at the upazilla level, and so on.¹²

This report will examine the impact of the Narcotics Control Act 2018, as well as the awareness programs and efforts of Bangladesh's law enforcement authorities to combat illicit drug trafficking and misuse, on the country's present drug trafficking scenario. The essay will evaluate pre- and post-adoption (of the Zero Tolerance Policy) drug trafficking conditions using data from the Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO), which maintains a large dataset on violent and criminal activities in Bangladesh over a decade (2012-2022), including drug related violence. The purpose of this inquiry is to ascertain Bangladesh's accomplishments and failures in combating its drug problem. This research may assist policy analysts in developing more effective policy recommendations for the GoB's war against illicit drug trafficking.

⁹ Azizul Islam and Faruque Hossain, *op.cit.*

¹⁰ *Narcotics Control Act, 2018*. 2018. (Dhaka: Department of Narcotics Control).

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² "Annual Drug Report, 2020", 2021. Pp-48-49. (Dhaka: Department of Narcotics Control, Bangladesh).

Definition of Drug Trafficking

According to the WHO (World Health Organization), a drug is a chemical compound of natural, synthetic, or semi-synthetic origin that is used therapeutically, diagnostically, or palliatively, or alters the physiological and psychological functioning of man and animal.¹³ Since medications directly influence human physiology, they may exhibit some addictive potential in the form of mild, moderate, or severe side effects. Over the past two decades, the prevalence of drug usage has accelerated to the point that it has spread to every corner of the globe. There are several definitions of drug trafficking in various pieces of law. However, the majority of definitions have a common meaning. The UNODC defines drug trafficking as "a worldwide unlawful trade including the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of drugs prohibited by law."¹⁴¹⁵ "The Drug Trafficking Act, 1994" in the United Kingdom specifies that "substance trafficking" includes manufacturing or providing a controlled drug, transporting or storing a controlled drug, and importing or exporting a controlled drug in violation of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 or a

¹³ Md Nahiduzzamane Shazzad, Syed Jamil Abdal, Muhammad Shoaib Momen Majumder, Jahangir ul Alam Sohel, Syed Mohammad Monowar Ali, and Shamim Ahmed. 2014. "Drug Addiction in Bangladesh and Its Effect." *Medicine Today*. <https://doi.org/10.3329/medtoday.v25i2.17927>.

¹⁴ "Drug Trafficking". 2022. *United Nations : Office On Drugs And Crime*. Cited In: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/drug-trafficking/index.html#:~:text=Drug%20trafficking%20is%20a%20global,comprehensive%20understanding%20of%20their%20dynamics>. Accessed on: 27 March, 2022

related statute.¹⁶ "The Narcotics Control Act, 1990," makes it quite apparent that cultivating, refining, transporting, importing, exporting, supplying, buying, selling, keeping, preserving, storing, exhibiting, or using any intoxicant other than alcohol is strictly illegal. If any Bangladeshi or foreigner individual conducts the aforementioned forbidden act inside the Bangladeshi territory, they would be prosecuted under article 19 of Bangladesh's "Narcotics Control Act, 1990." Thus, we may define drug trafficking as the trafficking of drugs that are illegal to make, export, or import, as well as legal drugs of unlawful use on a domestic or international level.

Legal Framework for Drug Abuse and Trafficking Prevention in Bangladesh

Drug abuse and trafficking prevention are no longer confined to a particular nation or area; instead, they have evolved into a global issue. Bangladesh has complied with international conventions on this subject, including the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended

¹⁵ United Nations Office On Drugs & Crime, 2021. "World Drug Report 2021." *CrimRxiv*. <https://doi.org/10.21428/cb6ab371.e39c4e60>.

¹⁶ Md. Nurul Islam, 2019. "Identifying And Mapping The Routes Of Drug Trafficking In Bangladesh: Pitfalls And Way Forward". DNC Study Reports. (Dhaka: Department of Narcotics Control). Cited In: https://dnc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/files/1e26d081_8f8a_4721_a1f1_598d55a9f455/2021-08-18-08-50-7958b2da82e5935bd45b770e0d386fea.pdf. Accessed on: 27 March, 2022

by the 1972 Protocol¹⁷, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances¹⁸, and the 1988 United Nations Convention on the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances¹⁹. Again, Bangladesh has complied with international obligations by propagating a unique legislation in 1990 called the Narcotics Control Act. This Act seeks to address the looming problem of drug abuse via legal and regulatory frameworks. Additionally, law enforcement organisations have been enlisted to work together under the Narcotics Control Act.

However, the legislative frameworks has resulted in a classification of various substances and a variation in the nature of legal penalties for illicit drug usage and trafficking. The Acts' primary objective is to combat drug trafficking, consequently, it takes a more police-service-oriented strategy and institutional framework in addressing and reacting to drug misuse in Bangladesh. In response to this experience, the occurrence of the yaba pandemic has decreased as a result of the establishment of specific legislative measures.²⁰ Bangladesh's government has agreed to pass a new legislation with stricter penalties.

¹⁷ *The International Drug Control Conventions*. 2013. *The International Drug Control Conventions*. <https://doi.org/10.18356/5f5bd72f-en>.

¹⁸ I. Khan, 1979. "Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971." *Progress in Neuro-Psychopharmacology*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0364-7722\(79\)90064-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/0364-7722(79)90064-x).

¹⁹ "United Nations: Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances." 1989. *International Legal Materials*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020782900021756>.

The Narcotics Control Act 2018, which updated the 1990 Narcotics Control Act, provides for harsher punishments such as death sentence or life sentence for trafficking, dealing, storing, manufacturing, processing, applying, and consuming more than five grams of yaba or methamphetamines.²¹ However, the issue remains whether rigorous punishment (centered on deterrence and detention) alone, and even if it is applied reactively by a few state agencies, is sufficient to fight drug misuse in Bangladesh.²²

Types of Illegal Drugs Available in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, drug abusers and traffickers use several kinds of drugs. Yaba, cannabis, phensedyl, heroin, rural liquor, and foreign liquor are the most common. Yaba is now the most widely used and marketed illegal substance in Bangladesh, followed by cannabis, phensedyl, and heroin. Yaba is a pill made up of amphetamine and caffeine. It is a dangerous and highly addictive stimulant that has a significant adverse effect on the body and mind; users are prone to rage, confusion, suicide ideation, or even murderous frenzy. Previously, the most readily accessible and extensively used

²⁰ Prothom Alo (English). 2018. "Drug Routes Must Be Blocked", 26 May 2018. Cited In: <https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/Drug-routes-must-be-blocked>. Accessed on: 27 March, 2022.

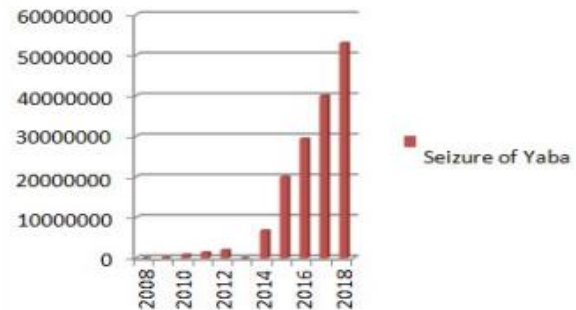
²¹ *Narcotics Control Act, 2018, op.cit*

²² KF. Rahman, 2021. "Prevention of Drug Addiction in Bangladesh: Challenges and a Way Forward." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3936819>.

narcotics in Bangladesh were phensedyl and heroin.²³

As the most frequently used substance, yaba ranks first among all drug users in urban and rural locations. It is the most popular drug among the younger generation and students. The prevalence is alarming among students enrolled in private universities and English medium Schools.²⁴ One study showed that among students of private universities, almost 65% have tried hard drugs as an experiment at least once, and more than 30% take drugs on a regular basis.²⁶ It is neither manufactured nor imported in Bangladesh. In the figure below, we can get a glimpse from the increase in seizure of Yaba through a 10 year period, the increased availability of yaba in the drug market.²⁷

Seizure of Yaba 2008-2018



Analysis of Drug-related Violence in Bangladesh and Discussion on the Effects of Narcotics Control

From our analysis of data of violent incidents related to drug abuse and drug trafficking, we have extracted data from BPO, which has a collection of data related to violent incidents on over a hundred categories of violence, motives and actors, with time ranging from 2012 to 2022 (up to February). For the purpose of this report, we have downloaded data from January 1, 2013, to February 28, 2022, using actor tags 'Drug Peddler' and 'Department of Narcotics Control'.²⁸

²³ "Annual Drug Report, 2020", 2021. Pp-14-15. (Dhaka: Department of Narcotics Control, Bangladesh).

²⁴ "Annual Drug Report, 2020", 2021. Pp-25-28. (Dhaka: Department of Narcotics Control, Bangladesh).

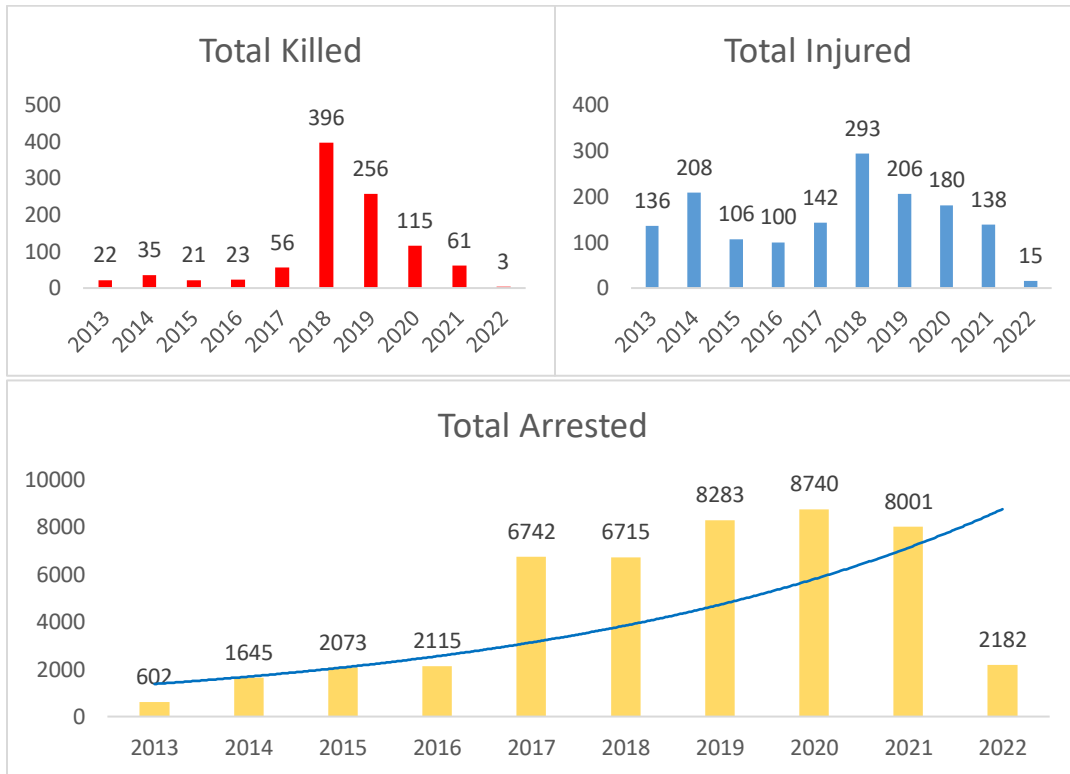
²⁵ The Independentbd, 2017. "Yaba supply now in lozenge packets." 11 October 2017, Cited In: <https://m.theindependentbd.com/post/118235>. Accessed on: 3 July 2022.

²⁶ Mahbuba Naznin Sani, 2010. "Drug addiction among undergraduate students of private universities in Bangladesh." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 5, pp. 498-501. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.131>.

²⁷ Iffat Anjum, "The Crux of Transnational Yaba- Trafficking Nexus in Bangladesh: Explaining the Reasons and Advocating Counter- Strategies. (2020) " *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI)*, Volume VII, Issue II.

²⁸ Bangladesh Peace Observatory Data Guide

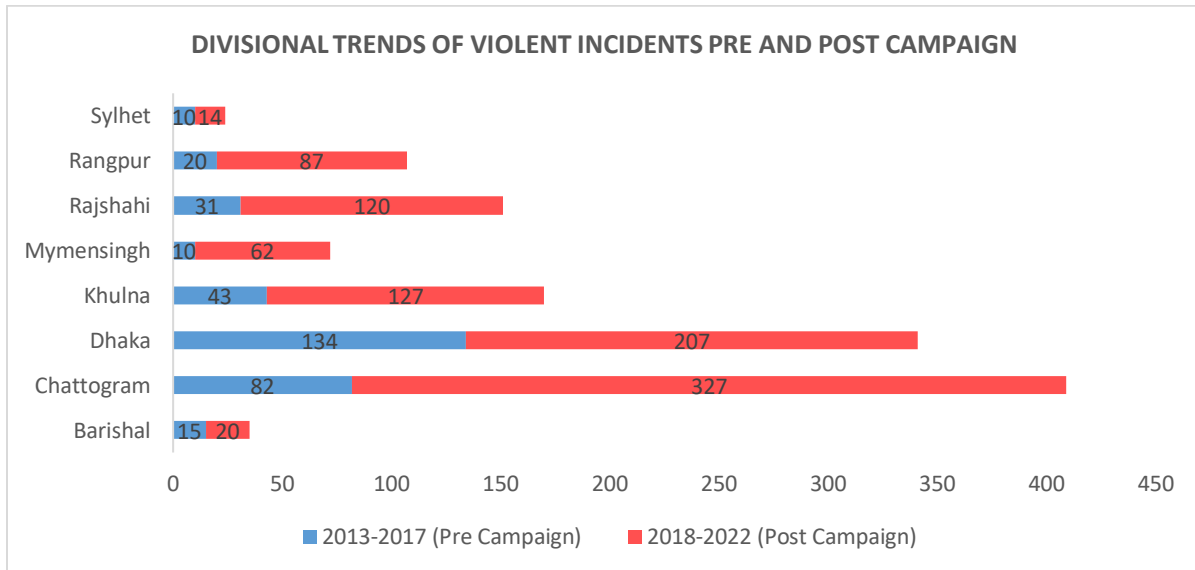
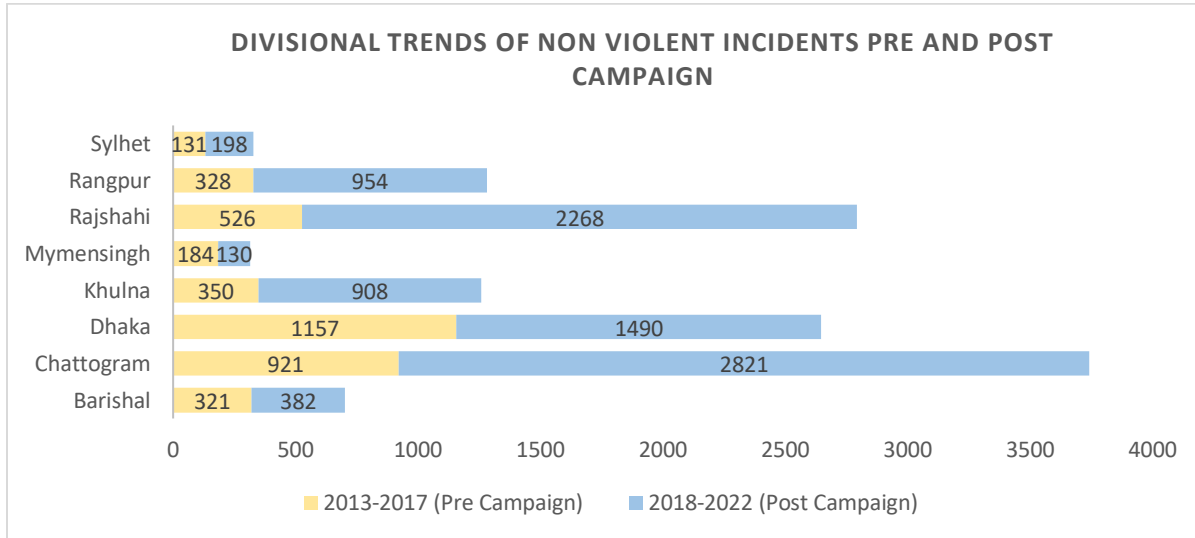
Figure I: Total Number of People killed, injured and arrested in drug related incidents over the years.



The three primary indicators of violent tendencies in Bangladesh (number of people murdered, number of people wounded, and number of people detained) in drug-related crimes are shown in Figure I. We can notice an immediate increase in the overall number of killed and injured in 2018, followed by a gradual decline in succeeding years. However, the overall number of arrests continues

to rise even beyond 2018. These changes may be traced back to the zero-tolerance drug campaign that began in mid-2018 and was quickly followed by violent narcotics seizures and raids. Following years saw a shift toward a lighter strategy focused on imprisonment, which explains the growing trend in overall arrests.

Figure 2: Trends of Violent and Non-Violent Incident in different divisions of Bangladesh in two separates 5-year time periods counted as Pre-Campaign and Post Campaign Period.



As seen in Figure 2, violent incidents (assaults, fights, or situations in which at least one person was injured according to BPO data) and non-violent incidents (arrests, raids, or other incidents in which no assault or injury occurred) are classified separately. From 2013 to 2017, we refer to the time period as the Pre-campaign period, which refers to the period prior to the implementation of the Narcotics Control Act 2018. We refer to the period between 2018 and 2022 (February) as the Post Campaign period. As can be seen from both graphs, Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, and Khulna are the divisions with the largest number of occurrences in both time periods and categories. However, one interesting

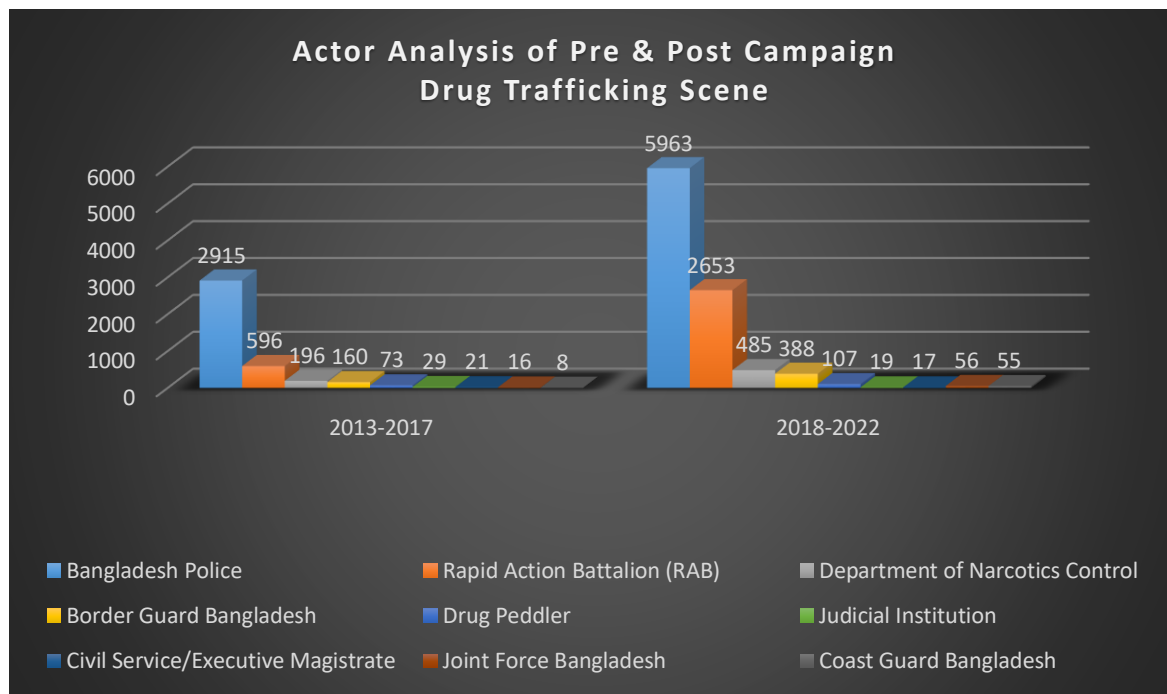
shift between the pre- and post-campaign periods is the Chattogram division taking the lead in terms of incidents during the post-campaign period. We assume from our study of annual variations in each division that the common routes of drug trafficking were switched to Chattogram in response to the campaign. This could be because the implementation of Narcotics Control Act was strongest in Dhaka, making it unfeasible for drug traffickers to use the Dhaka division as their primary transit point.

Table I further illustrates our point that there has been a geographic shift in the drug trafficking scene in pre and post campaign period.

Table I: Top 10 Districts with highest number of incidents in pre and post campaign period.

Top 10 Districts with Most Incidents Involving Drugs between 2013-2017		Top 10 Districts with Most Incidents Involving Drugs between 2018-2022	
District	District	Number of Incidents	Number of Incidents
Dhaka	Chattogram	1333	527
Chattogram	Cox's Bazar	1257	357
Narayanganj	Dhaka	924	210
Cumilla	Bogura	805	189
Rajshahi	Dinajpur	390	182
Cox's Bazar	Rajshahi	347	168
Barishal	Chapai Nawabganj	343	130
Dinajpur	Khulna	328	128
Jashore	Naogaon	226	120
Gazipur	Narayanganj	224	115
Tangail	Joypurhat	220	99

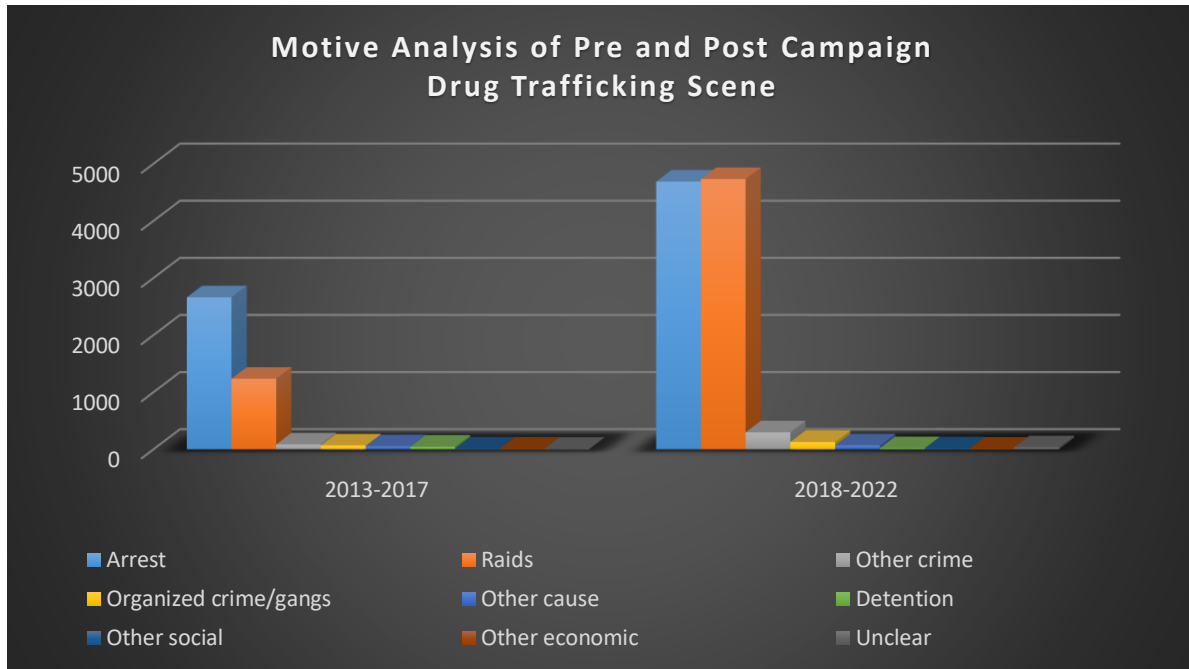
Figure 3: Analysis of key actors involved in drug related violent incidents in pre and post campaign time periods.



Following the campaign, the participation of the two primary actors, the Bangladesh Police and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), in drug-related occurrences increased by about fourfold, according to the study of important participants shown in Figure 3. Also noticeable is the prevalence of law enforcement agencies among key actors in drug-related incidents, which implies that law

enforcement is disproportionately involved in violent incidents in Bangladesh when compared to drug traffickers themselves who are involved in violent incidents in Bangladesh. This raises the issue of whether taking a tough stance against drugs is really exacerbating the problem rather than decreasing its severity.

Figure 4: Analysis of motives behind violent incidents involving drug trafficking pre and post campaign.



One noteworthy insight we may get from the motive analysis shown in figure 4 is that the number of raids grew more than the number of arrests throughout the post-campaign period. This also supports our contention that the Government of Bangladesh places a greater emphasis on response rather than prevention when it comes to drug trafficking. A more in-depth examination of event reports involving raids revealed that there are more instances of injuries and deaths during raids than previously thought. To guarantee that persons are not subjected to needlessly harsh treatment as a result of violations

of their human rights, effective investigations and legal procedures should be put in place.

Conclusion

While data available are insufficient, current information indicates that around 2.5-7.0 million individuals in Bangladesh are addicted to narcotics. As an indication of the size of the legal drug market economy, regulatory authorities seized over 40 million pills of Yaba (methamphetamine) in 2017; according to the Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh's Annual Drug Report 2017, with the recent Rohingya crisis and COVID-19

Pandemic has allegedly complicated the already complex drug market.³⁵³⁶ However, only a small percentage of drug users have access to harm reduction programs. And in light of severe recent raids and drug bust incidents analysed from the BPO database, there is a clear tendency of law enforcement agencies to capture and eradicate rather than capture and rehabilitate when it comes to drug trafficking.

A zero tolerance approach may be relevant and effective for the local context, based on evidence from our analysis; but following global and regional practices based on more humane approaches towards curbing the drug problem is necessary to resolve some of the ethical dilemmas. Human rights need to be protected; and softer, long-term reduction approaches should be prioritised over hard-line approaches. Primary prevention strategies focusing on risk factors for addiction

may be particularly effective at keeping young people away from addictive drugs, also secondary prevention strategies focusing on those who are already addicted and incorporating a variety of rehabilitation/correctional services are important strategies. Provision of suitable correctional facilities for those jailed for drug selling and/or misuse may include harm reduction programs and treatment of pre-existing health concerns. A methodology for generating further evidence-based information to support future policy making might be critical.

To summarise, a fusion of science and sensibility is necessary to solve the complex challenges surrounding the drug abuse and drug trafficking. While the current method is a "search for 'criminals,'" the problem requires a well-thought-out "study for scientific evidence."

³⁵ N. Islam (2018). "The international medical community must act to help Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh." *British Medical Journal Opinion*. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.25874>

³⁶ Sungida Rashid, 2021. "Impact of COVID-19 on Selected Criminal Activities in Dhaka, Bangladesh." *Asian Journal of Criminology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11417-020-09341-0>.

Synthetic Contraband Drug Trafficking in the Chattogram Region

Sadia Afreen Prama*

Introduction

Illicit drug trade and drug abuse is a multidimensional issue. This stems from varied political, geo-political and societal issues. It is also the root cause of many societal problems. It has links to the deterioration of law and order situation and has the ability to destroy the future of a nation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) has warned in their annual report that, the growing demand for synthetic opioids in East Asia and Southeast Asia is an indicator that the region will continue to grow as a source of synthetic drugs.¹ Bangladesh is in a precarious position due to its geographical situation and is simultaneously being used as a transit and destination country of the drug trafficking network. In Bangladesh, Yaba consumption has surfaced as a menace and the prevalence of Cannabis is still higher than any other drugs. Ice has also entered the market and gradually started to capture the market as well. The detection of cases and seizure of Yaba

increased in an unprecedented manner during the period of Covid-19 lockdown. More than 70 per cent seizure of Yaba was made at Chattogram, mainly pertaining to its geographic location as Cox's Bazar district shares a critical border with the Myanmar, a country belonging to the Golden Triangle.² This write up will address this regional nexus of drug trade in Bangladesh, especially focusing on Chattogram Division. It will also present a picture of the overall situation regarding drug trade and the role of law enforcement agencies in this particular region.

Contraband drugs

According to the UNODC, the term 'illicit drug' refers to any of the substances listed in Schedule I-IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (The International Drug Control Convention, 1961), which can be either natural or synthetic, may or may not have a licit medical purpose but which are produced, trafficked or consumed illicitly, such as, Opium, Cannabis,

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¹ Vaishali Basu Sharma, 'Why Bangladesh's Yaba Drug Epidemic Continues to Fester,' *The Wire*, 25 January 2021, Available at <https://thewire.in/south-asia/bangladesh-india-yaba-drug-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

² Annual Drug Report Bangladesh 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Security Services Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, June 2021. Cited in http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afbcfb/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

Heroin, Coca leaf, Cocaine, Methadone, Morphine, Methamphetamine (synthetic) etc.³

The nexus between Golden Triangle and Bangladesh

Golden Triangle (Thailand, Laos and Myanmar) is now one of the biggest synthetic drug production and distribution points in the world. Most of the clandestine drug laboratories are being found in the hills of Shan state in northern Myanmar along the border with China, where crystal and methamphetamine tablets are being produced in a bulk amount for militia groups and organised crime syndicates.⁴ From another source, it was discovered that the production is mainly controlled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), which is a rebel group.⁵ This rebel group had inked a ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) in 1989.⁶ Intel information suggests that, including the disturbed Rakhine state and Sagaing Division, these labs have been found in other places of Myanmar as well.⁷

³ Iffat Anjum, 'The Crux of Transnational Yaba- Trafficking Nexus in Bangladesh: Explaining the Reasons and Advocating Counter- Strategies,' *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI)*, Volume VII, Issue II, February 2020. Cited in

<https://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijrsi/digital-library/volume-7-issue-2/13-20.pdf>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁴ Mazoe Ford and Supattra Vimonsuknopparat, 'Asia's infamous Golden Triangle and the soldiers tracking down the drug smugglers who rule its narcotics trade,' *ABC News*, 12 December 2021. Cited in <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-12-12/golden-triangle-drug-smugglers-who-rule-narcotics-trade/100677834>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

In terms of Opium production, Myanmar is the world's largest cultivator of poppies (base ingredient for heroin). But according to an UNODC Study, during the lockdown period in 2020, the poppy production has dropped drastically down to 11 to 12 per cent in comparison to the previous year.⁸ However, at the same time, the drug lords and syndicates shifted their focus on the synthetic drug trade accruing to its rising demands in this region.

Reuters published a report in 2022 where it was revealed that authorities in Laos, Thailand and Myanmar have already seized 90 million methamphetamine tablets and 4.4 tons of crystal methamphetamine in January 2022 alone.⁹ Most of this was manufactured in Myanmar's Shan State.¹⁰ It implies that due to increased instability, the drug trade has gained more traction in this region since the military coup in Myanmar.

⁵ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, 'India's Northeast Emerges as a Drug-Trafficking Corridor Between Myanmar and Bangladesh,' *The Diplomat*, 2 May 2019, Cited in <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/indias-northeast-emerges-as-a-drug-trafficking-corridor-between-myanmar-and-bangladesh/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Sebastian Strangio, 'Illicit Drug Production Has Surged Since Myanmar's Coup,' *The Diplomat*, 2 February 2022. Cited in <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/illicit-drug-production-has-surfed-since-myanmars-coup/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Figure I: Golden Triangle and the position of Bangladesh



Source: IDSA

Bangladesh is used as a transit country for drugs produced in the Golden Triangle. Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar is one of the most notorious passageways for transporting synthetic drugs from Myanmar to Bangladesh, and more than 20 organised criminal gangs⁴⁷ and syndicates are

involved and operating in there to smuggle them to, particularly Dhaka and all over the country.⁴⁸

In terms of routes, Superintendent of Police R. Salio revealed that Champai route, which is well connected to cities in Myanmar, including Tiddim and Mandalay, has been the most active one in

⁴⁷ Golam Mortuja and Sankar Barua Rumi, 'As drugs and arms pour in, Rohingya camps see a rise in crimes,' *Bdnews24*, 13 October 2021. Cited in <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2021/10/13/as-drugs-and-arms-pour-in-rohingya-camps-see-a-rise-in-crimes>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁴⁸ Sreeparna Banerjee, 'Drug trafficking and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh,' *Observer Research Foundation*, 15 March 2019. Cited in <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/drug-trafficking-and-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-49005/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

carrying drugs to Bangladesh.⁴⁹ Several other routes are active in the district of Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, which is swarmed with tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees. The Yaba pills are transported from Maungdaw city of Rakhine to the Tombru border, where it fluxes into the Rohingya camps situated just beside the zero line along Bangladesh.⁵⁰ Rohingya camps work as an ideal storing place for those Yaba consignments as the houses look identical to each other, making it difficult for the law enforcement agencies to trace, recover or seize them unless they have specific information.⁵¹ According to several news articles published in various media reports, the smugglers visit refugees deep within the camps or deserted forests and pass on the drug consignments/package to them, or they are sometimes passed on by fellow Rohingya neighbours for safekeeping for a while.⁵² Also, The Rohingyas are allowed to go out of the camps for medical purposes and to receive relief goods, and during that time, some of them take advantage of this opportunity and engage in drug dealing.

⁴⁹ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, 'India's Northeast Emerges as a Drug-Trafficking Corridor Between Myanmar and Bangladesh,' *The Diplomat*, 2 May 2019, Cited in <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/indias-northeast-emerges-as-a-drug-trafficking-corridor-between-myanmar-and-bangladesh/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Vaishali Basu Sharma, 'Why Bangladesh's Yaba Drug Epidemic Continues to Fester,' *The Wire*, 25 January 2021, Available at <https://thewire.in/south-asia/bangladesh-india-yaba-drug-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

Although traffickers use Rohingya men to deliver the package but they prefer Rohingya women or children as the couriers since they normally face less stringent security checks than men.⁵³ The drugs are carried in one's footwear, undergarments, belt, rectum and even in the abdomen.⁵⁴ The traffickers maintain such confidentiality that even the refugees living in those camps have no idea about who is involved in this business, so they cannot disclose anyone's names during raids. Thus, the refugee camps are being used as both a marketplace and a storehouse for 'Yaba'.

Naf River has seemingly turned into a hotbed for smugglers and other cross-border criminals. Bangladeshi Law Enforcement Agencies have increased vigilance along the most notorious routes, Teknaf. This prompted gangs and syndicates to adopt alternate routes. Currently, along with Teknaf route, the hilly region that shares borders with Myanmar, especially, Naikhyanchhari Upazila of Bandarban is being used as a safer entry points for Yaba.⁵⁵ From a

⁵² Sreeparna Banerjee, 'Drug trafficking and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh,' Observer Research Foundation, 15 March 2019. Cited in <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/drug-trafficking-and-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-49005/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Vaishali Basu Sharma, 'Why Bangladesh's Yaba Drug Epidemic Continues to Fester,' *The Wire*, 25 January 2021, Available at <https://thewire.in/south->

statement of Lt. Col. Ahmed Yousuf Jamil to the media in Bangladesh On April 5, 2019, it had come up that they had seized a huge consignments of yaba at Sylhet which actually originated in Myanmar and were transported through India.⁵⁶ This statement reveals that there are multiple exit points of Yaba along the border in the Indian states of Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya.

Involvement of Rohingya Refugee in drug trade

It has been found that the gangs who are involved in smuggling other contrabands, such as, gold and heroin in Myanmar are responsible for smuggling Yaba and Ice as well.⁵⁷ A large number of gangs runs the network and it is easy to find traffickers along the India-Bangladesh border due to their low income and economic condition. More recently, Rohingya men and women from the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar have been recognised as the vulnerable section who are being increasingly recruited as drug mules. Bangladesh is currently hosting more than one million Rohingya.⁵⁸

asia/bangladesh-india-yaba-drug-trade. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁵⁶ Rajeev Bhattacharyya, 'India's Northeast Emerges as a Drug-Trafficking Corridor Between Myanmar and Bangladesh,' *The Diplomat*, 2 May 2019, Cited in <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/indias-northeast-emerges-as-a-drug-trafficking-corridor-between-myanmar-and-bangladesh/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Linah Alsaafin, 'I carry yaba to survive': Rohingya and Bangladesh's meth trade,' *Al Jazeera*, 19 August 2018, Cited in

According to Dhaka Tribune, law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh have seized more than 10 million Yaba pills from local drug peddlers of Cox's Bazar and the Rohingyas in camps since the arrival of thousands of Rohingya refugees in August 2017.⁵⁹ Most of the Rohingya Refugees living in the camps have come to this country with almost nothing. After fleeing from the Myanmar, the Rohingyas found shelter in the Rohingya camps of Cox's Bazar. The aid they are getting from the NGOs, INGOs, Bangladesh government and other agencies is not adequate to ensure a good life for them. According to JRP Report 2019, 97 per cent of youth and adolescents lack access to quality education and learning opportunities despite several education programmes being run in the camps.⁶⁰ The food supply is limited and as there are some restrictions in place, they can not secure work. Some of them have tried to set up a small business but they could not manage loans to do that. But as they have mouths to feed and families to provide, they are desperate and when approached by the gangs they fall easy prey to them. One of them said that he did this just to survive.⁶¹ He usually receives BDT 5,000 for every

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/8/19/i-carry-yaba-to-survive-rohingya-and-bangladeshs-meth-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Sreeparna Banerjee, 'Drug trafficking and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh,' *Observer Research Foundation*, 15 March 2019. Cited in <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/drug-trafficking-and-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-49005/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁶¹ *Op. Cit.*

1,000 pills he manages to move from Kutupalong camp to Cox's Bazar, a popular tourist destination 40km away.⁶² Many Rohingya men, especially those fluent in Bengali, cross the border from the southern sub-district of Teknaf to Myanmar on foot or by motorcycle or bicycle and return with the drugs, which they supply to Bangladeshi peddlers. Body concealment and concealment in transport vehicles-these two ways are used mostly in transporting the drugs. Statelessness, no employment opportunity, financial hardship, insecurity and several other factors are working as push factors for them to find out illegal ways to earn.

Top Three Contraband Drugs found in the Chattogram Division

Recent analysis of drug trafficking trends show that although almost all the 32 border districts are being used as drug trafficking routes, in terms of Chattogram division, four districts-Chattogram, Cumilla, Brahmanbaria and Cox's Bazar are the most drug-prone areas.⁶³ Yaba, Cannabis and Ice

are the three topmost drugs which are being dealt by the syndicates in this region.

Yaba

In January 2021, Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) raided a suspected boat on the Naf River, which flows between Teknaf, Cox's Bazar district and Myanmar's Rakhine state and seized nearly 520,000 Yaba pills worth \$1.8 million.⁶⁴ This is one of many cases in terms of Yaba seizure in that area. Yaba, nicknamed "crazy medicine" in Thai and also 'crazy pill', 'Nazi speed' or 'madness medicine'⁶⁵ is a highly-addictive stimulant.⁶⁶ It is locally called "Pepey (Papaya)" in Bangladesh.⁶⁷ Popularly it is called 'Baba' as well by the youths of this country. It is a mix of methamphetamine and caffeine that usually comes in the form of colourful, candy-like tablets. Bangladesh has long been struggling to cope up with the drug trafficking issues and now, the Yaba trade has become a headache for the government as millions of Yaba pills and heroin are flowing in from Myanmar. Although concrete figures are hard to come by, an estimated 4.6 million yaba users were detected in Bangladesh in 2012, and the number is increasing at a great speed

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Annual Drug Report Bangladesh 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Security Services Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, June 2021. Cited in http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afbc/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁶⁴ Vaishali Basu Sharma, 'Why Bangladesh's Yaba Drug Epidemic Continues to Fester,' *The Wire*, 25 January 2021, Available at <https://thewire.in/south-asia/bangladesh-india-yaba-drug-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Linah Alsaafin, 'I carry yaba to survive': Rohingya and Bangladesh's meth trade,' *Al Jazeera*, 19 August 2018, Cited in <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/8/19/i-carry-yaba-to-survive-rohingya-and-bangladeshs-meth-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁶⁷ *Op. Cit.*

each year.⁶⁸ According to a report published by the National Institute of Mental Health, Dhaka, in 2016, 42 percent of addicts seeking treatment in rehabs and hospitals were addicted to Yaba across the country.⁶⁹

Statistics show that in recent years, while trafficking of Heroin and Phensedyl has fallen, Yaba trafficking has risen dramatically in both vertical

and horizontal manner in the last ten years in this region. According to DNC's annual report, in 2020, law enforcement agencies have seized 3,63,81,017 Yaba pills all over the country.⁷⁰ In 2021 up until August, law enforcers and DNC officials seized 2,34,02,115 yaba pills.⁷¹ The same report revealed that the use of 'Yaba' has skyrocketed in the country by 1450 folds over the past ten years.⁷²

Table I: Statistics on Division wise number of cases and seizure of drugs by the DNC in 2020 (Source: DNC Database)⁷³

Name of Offices	Heroin (Kg)		Cannabis (KG)		Phensedyl (bottle)		Yaba (Pcs)	
	Case	Seizure	Case	Seizure	Case	Seizure	Case	Seizure
Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Dhaka	318	1.461	3155	690.633	62	2126	1423	242823
Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Mymensingh	79	0.277	439	46.423	4	58	63	3597

⁶⁸ Op. Cit.

⁶⁹ Siddhartha Roy, 'Yaba: The Red Pills and the Rohingya,' *The Diplomat*, 4 June 2018. Cited in <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/yaba-the-red-pills-and-the-rohingya/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁷⁰ 'Myanmar doing little to stop drugs smuggling to Bangladesh: Daily Star,' *Eleven Myanmar*, 29 October 2021. Cited in <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/myanmar-doing-little-to-stop-drugs-smuggling-to-bangladesh-daily-star>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Iffat Anjum, 'The Crux of Transnational Yaba- Trafficking Nexus in Bangladesh: Explaining the Reasons and Advocating Counter- Strategies,' *International Journal of Research and*

Scientific Innovation (IJRSI), Volume VII, Issue II, February 2020. Cited in <https://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijrsi/digital-library/volume-7-issue-2/13-20.pdf>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁷³ Annual Drug Report Bangladesh 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Security Services Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, June 2021. Cited in http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afbc1/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Chattogram	0	0	1267	849.766	98	4840	1289	1454206
Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Rajshahi	531	4.86	961	165.459	277	14607	465	39760
Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Rangpur	89	0.654	957	404.067	149	5361	147	24393
Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Khulna	34	0.533	1116	220.794	137	3501	214	17994
Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Barishal	0	0	336	37.86	4	31	138	4216
Divisional Narcotics Control Office, Sylhet	0	0	557	242.444	7	265	127	25127
Intelligence Wing	36	1.165	306	84.804	21	1256	228	214382
Total	1087	8.95	9094	2742.25	759	32045	4094	2026498

Director General of DNC, Md Jamal Uddin Ahmed stated in May 2018 that "according to the NGOs, the number of drug addicts is about seven million"

and five million of them are Yaba users.⁷⁴ In Bangladesh, the detection of cases and seizure of Yaba increased by 19.49 per cent in 2020 in

⁷⁴ Linah Alsaafin, 'I carry yaba to survive': Rohingya and Bangladesh's meth trade,' *Al Jazeera*, 19 August 2018, Cited in <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/8/19/i-carry-yaba-to-survive-rohingya-and-bangladeshs-meth-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

comparison to the last year. According to the case filed by the DNC, 34.76 per cent cases are detected in Dhaka zone, 31.48 per cent in Chattogram zone, 11.35 per cent in Rajshahi zone, 5.23 percent in Khulna zone, 3.59 per cent in Rangpur zone, 3.37 per cent in Barishal zone, 3.10 per cent in Sylhet zone and 1.5 per cent in Mymensingh zone. The seizures of Yaba made, were 11.98 per cent in Dhaka, 0.18 per cent in Mymensingh, 71.76 per cent in Chattogram zone, 1.96 per cent in Rajshahi zone, 1.20 per cent in Rangpur zone, 0.89 per cent in Khulna zone, 0.21 per cent in Barishal zone and 1.24 per cent in Sylhet zone. A close observation of Table I will substantiate all these statistics and it clearly shows that Chattogram Division and Dhaka Division are the two most crucial region for drug peddling.

Crystal Meth

Crystal meth-popularly known as ice has caused a raucous over the country recently. Crystal meth is also a highly addictive drug which is mostly

smuggled into the country from Myanmar through the border in Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas of Cox's Bazar, and Naikhongchhari upazila of Bandarban according to the DNC officials.⁷⁵ In 2021 up until August, DNC officers recovered more than 15kg of ice in several raids in Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar.⁷⁶

Cannabis

Cannabis still holds the first position in terms of its prevalence. In this region, most of the Cannabis is being smuggled through eastern border-Cumilla and Brahmanbaria and is destined for mainly Dhaka.

The seizures made of Cannabis, were 25.18 per cent in Dhaka zone, 1.69 per cent in Mymensingh zone, 30.99 per cent in Chattogram zone, 6.03 per cent in Rajshahi zone, 14.73 per cent in Rangpur zone, 8.05 per cent in Khulna zone, 1.38 per cent in Barishal zone, 8.84 per cent in Sylhet zone and 3.09 per cent of seizure was made by the Intelligence wing of DNC in all over the country.

⁷⁵ 'Myanmar doing little to stop drugs smuggling to Bangladesh: Daily Star,' *Eleven Myanmar*, 29 October 2021. Cited in <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/myanmar-doing-little-to->

[stop-drugs-smuggling-to-bangladesh-daily-star](https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/myanmar-doing-little-to-stop-drugs-smuggling-to-bangladesh-daily-star). Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

Trends and Comparison of Drug-related Violence in Chattogram Division and among the Divisions

Table 2: Yearly and Divisional Distribution of BPO Data on Total Arrests related to Contraband Drug Smuggling (2015-2022*) (*Up until 28 February 2022)⁷⁷

Year	Barishal	Chattogram	Dhaka	Khulna	Mymensingh	Rajshahi	Rangpur	Sylhet	Grand Total
2015	153	665	477	188	118	215	184	23	2023
2016	82	695	427	215	209	298	145	44	2115
2017	259	664	3668	503	87	363	1068	130	6742
2018	107	1051	2351	832	56	1331	933	54	6715
2019	166	1069	4179	807	130	1129	692	111	8283
2020	269	1457	4011	959	58	1376	464	146	8740
2021	130	2090	3418	197	39	1597	476	54	8001
2022*	26	184	864	15	6	210	73	9	1387
Total	1192	7875	19395	3716	703	6519	4035	571	44006

This table shows the trend of total arrests related to drug smuggling and drug-related violence over the years (from 2015 to 28 February 2022). Dhaka is in the first position in terms of total arrests over this time period, followed by Chattogram and Rajshahi, in the second and third position respectively. When yearly grand total is considered, it is evident that after the enactment of National Narcotics Control Act 2018, the

number of arrests surged in 2019 and in the later years as well. In February, 2019, 102 drug lords and peddlers surrendered to the authorities under a special surrender programme.⁷⁸ At that time, many went into hiding and people from the Rohingya community came forward to carry on with this trade. Two years have passed since this surrender programme and things have already gone back to as it was. Given the surge in the

⁷⁷ Bangladesh Peace Observatory. Cited in <http://peaceobservatory-cgs.org/#/>. Accessed on 28 March 2022.

⁷⁸ Sreeparna Banerjee, 'Drug trafficking and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh,' *Observer Research Foundation*, 15 March 2019. Cited in <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/drug-trafficking-and-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-49005/>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

number of arrests, law enforcement agencies and government could claim that the Zero Tolerance approach against drug peddling is extremely effective in eradicating this issue from its root. However, this type of crackdown could lead to violation of human rights, including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and the stigmatisation of drug abusers.

On 22 January 2020, a Rohingya man (25 Years old) suspected to be a Yaba trader was killed during a gunfight with BGB in Bandarban, Chattogram.⁷⁹ He belonged to the Kutupalong Rohingya camp, and was entering Bangladesh from a hilly area of Myanmar with a group of eight to ten people when he was apprehended by the BGB.⁸⁰

Table 3: Yearly and Divisional Distribution of BPO Data on Gunfight cases related to Contraband Drug Smuggling (2015-2022*) (*Up until 28 February 2022)⁸¹

Year	Chattogram	Dhaka
2015	11	1
2016	0	5
2017	10	7
2018	88	52
2019	92	31
2020	34	12
2021	16	3
2022*	0	0
Grand Total	251	111

According to the BPO data, Gunfights related to drug smuggling mainly occurred in two divisions- Chattogram and Dhaka. After the passing of the Narcotics Control Act 2018, the reported number of gunfights surged 8/9 fold in 2018 and 2019 than previous years. The number of reported Gunfight,

collected from local and national newspapers is more than double in Chattogram division than Dhaka division and most of these took place in Cox's Bazar and Chattogram districts. According to the Police, in 2018, 13 arms cases were filed against the Rohingya with Teknaf and Ukhiya

⁷⁹ Vaishali Basu Sharma, 'Why Bangladesh's Yaba Drug Epidemic Continues to Fester,' *The Wire*, 25 January 2021, Available at <https://thewire.in/south-asia/bangladesh-india-yaba-drug-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Bangladesh Peace Observatory. Cited in <http://peaceobservatory-cgs.org/#/>. Accessed on 28 March 2022.

Police.⁸² The number increased to 17 in 2019 and further rose to 27 in 2020. Until September 2021, the number of arms cases filed was 13.⁸³ As of June 2020, following an anti-narcotics crackdown, almost 519 people were killed in gunfights with over one lakh people arrested for their alleged

involvement in drug related crimes.⁸⁴ Although the law enforcement agencies claimed that there has been no collateral damage during the crackdowns and no innocent people were killed, there lies a considerable amount of doubts regarding the claims, as these are hard to avoid in real situations.

Table 4: Divisional Distribution of Violent Incidents: Contraband Drug-related Violence (2015-2022*) (*Up until 28 February 2022)⁸⁵

Year	Barishal	Chattogram	Dhaka	Khulna	Mymensingh	Rajshahi	Rangpur	Sylhet	Grand Total
2015	93	238	180	83	58	129	73	13	867
2016	55	179	232	84	25	113	58	23	769
2017	139	333	481	117	43	191	144	57	1505
2018	64	546	377	186	67	454	271	28	1993
2019	106	495	539	311	66	486	235	66	2304
2020	148	832	382	420	27	617	240	89	2755
2021	77	1160	329	111	27	745	259	25	2733
2022	7	97	38	7	5	86	36	4	280
Grand Total	689	3880	2558	1319	318	2821	1316	305	13206

⁸² Golam Mortuja and Sankar Barua Rumi, 'As drugs and arms pour in, Rohingya camps see a rise in crimes,' *Bdnews24*, 13 October 2021. Cited in <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2021/10/13/as-drugs-and->

[arms-pour-in-rohingya-camps-see-a-rise-in-crimes](https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2021/10/13/as-drugs-and-arms-pour-in-rohingya-camps-see-a-rise-in-crimes). Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Op.Cit.*

Table 5: Divisional Distribution of Contraband Drug-related Violence (2015-2022*) (*Up until 28 February 2022)⁸⁶

Division	Barishal		Chattogram		Dhaka		Khulna		Mymensingh		Rajshahi		Rangpur		Sylhet		Grand Total	
	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured
2015	1	7	9	42	8	7	1	16	0	1	2	12	0	13	0	2	21	100
2016	0	3	5	15	11	49	4	22	0	3	3	3	0	5	0	0	23	100
2017	0	7	15	56	19	45	8	7	2	5	7	12	1	8	4	2	56	142
2018	7	8	123	67	59	53	83	27	39	22	45	48	37	67	3	1	396	293
2019	2	2	141	89	43	38	29	14	17	10	17	14	2	28	5	11	256	206
2020	2	2	59	61	26	56	11	25	1	2	8	20	5	14	3	0	115	180
2021	0	4	25	36	16	59	4	8	2	0	7	22	7	9	0	0	61	138
2022*	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	5	3	15
Total	12	33	377	366	184	312	140	119	61	43	90	136	52	144	15	21	931	1174

Table 4 and 5 give an overview of drug-related violent incidents using the parameters of total violent incidents, total killed and total injured. It shows that the Chattogram division is holding the first position in all three categories while Dhaka division is in the second place. In terms of years, 2018 and 2019 are marked by the numbers of

most drug peddlers getting killed or injured while incident wise 2020 and 2021 are ahead of others. The fact that Chattogram is surpassing all other division by a greater number in total injury and total killed in drug-related violence is evident from the following figure 2 and 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Figure 2: Yearly and Divisional Distribution of Total Injury from Drug-related Violence (2015-2021)⁸⁷

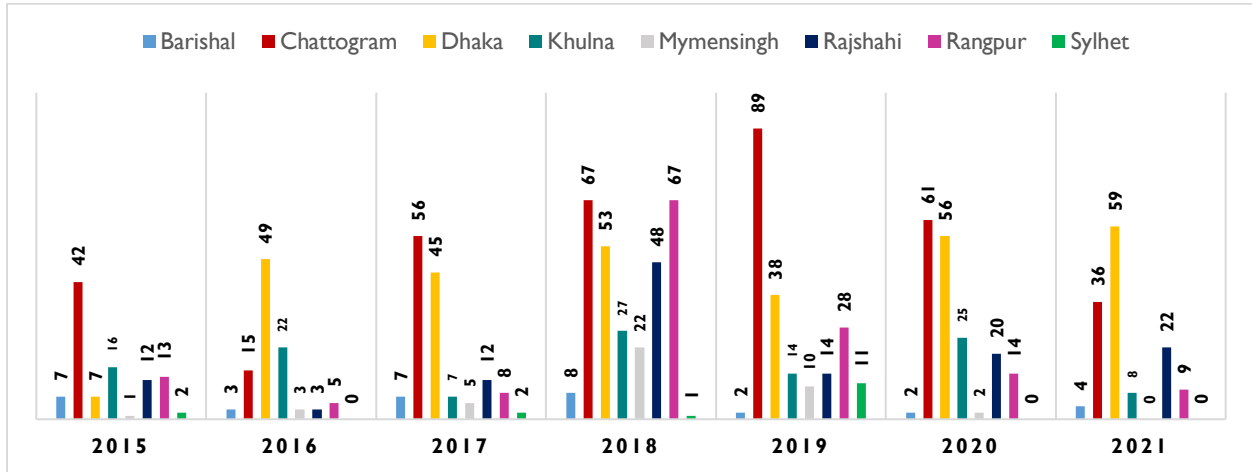
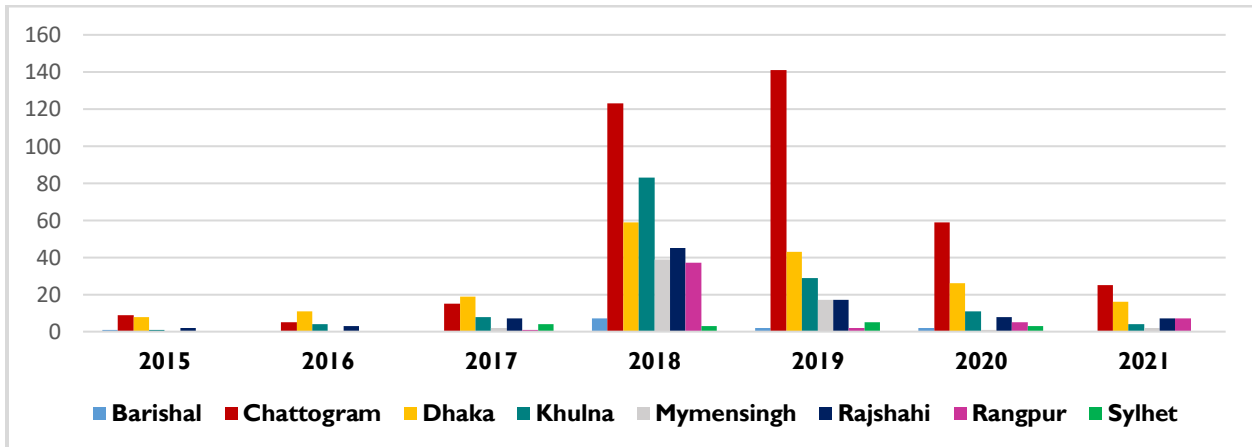


Figure 3: Yearly and Divisional Distribution of Total Death from Drug-related Violence (2015-2021)⁸⁸



⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Efforts made by the Government for Curbing Drug Trafficking

Bangladesh is a signatory to all the three UN Conventions of 1961, 1971, 1988 and the SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1990. The other legislations related to drugs are: The Special Power Act, 1975 (to prevent and control the smuggling of drugs), Customs Act, Coast Guard Act 1995, The code of criminal Procedure, 1989, The Evidence Act, 1872, The Narcotics Control Rules, 1999, The National Narcotics Control Board Fund Rules, 2001 and The Private Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre Rules, 2005. The most recent efforts made by Bangladesh government is the passage of the Narcotics Control Bill in October 2018, on 27 October 2018 with a provision of death sentence or life-term imprisonment as punishment for drug-related crimes.⁸⁹ The act has been enacted on 27 December 2018. The act has been amended for the first time in 2020. To tackle the drug issue in Bangladesh, the government has taken on a more "holistic approach". Most of the measures in connection to drug trafficking and drug abuse is made through the Narcotics Control Act 2018 which paved the way to form the highest advisory body-The National Narcotics Control Advisory Committee. The department of Narcotics Control

⁸⁹ Annual Drug Report Bangladesh 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Security Services Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, June 2021. Cited in http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afbc

is the Nodal Drug Law Enforcement Agency. The departments of Police, BGB, Customs, Social Welfare, Education, Information, Health, Youth Development, NGOs and Local Government have their own functions in their respective jurisdiction.

The geographical location of Bangladesh and porous border with India and Myanmar is already making things extremely difficult to handle. Moreover, lack of manpower and not being able to take instant preventive measures due to inadequate surveillance system at the Naaf river and coastal areas are obstructing the efforts. To address the issue with surveillance system, watch towers has been set up in Dhaka and Teknaf of Cox's Bazar and 388 Walkie Talkie has been purchased.⁹⁰ The workforce of DNC has been increased from 1706 to 3059⁹¹ yet it is not enough against the magnitude of this problem. Also, there is no special or separate dedicated Court, so the trial of drug offences is done in the general judiciary system in Bangladesh. The DNC has its own prosecutors to persecute cases in courts but the manpower is inadequate.

It has already been mentioned that the anti-narcotics crackdown enforced by the law enforcement agencies has left nearly 519 people killed in gunfights, with over one lakh arrested for their alleged involvement with the narcotics trade,

/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

as of June 2020.⁹² Moreover, many times the law enforcement agencies have been accused by the victims' families of using the drug war as a cover to get rid of political activists. Recently, after facing some criticism regarding the highest penalty being death by hanging, government is thinking of amending this. The carriers or peddlers who get caught with small amount of Yaba pills do not get prosecuted as it is a lengthy process and rather they get a sentence of up to six months in jail or a fine.⁹³

Bangladesh government has made a proposal to India to hold a tripartite meeting with Myanmar to put diplomatic pressure on its government to curb drug trade in the region in 2019.⁹⁴ The govt. was compelled to do this as Myanmar authority did not take any meaningful action to curb drug trafficking to Bangladesh even after seeking for their cooperation to prevent this for nearly a decade. Bangladesh authorities have met with their Myanmar counterparts several times during this time period which led to no solutions, due to Myanmar's reluctance to comply.. Bangladesh sought intervention from India as India is also dealing with the inflow of drugs from Myanmar and

they could be instrumental to find a breakthrough during future negotiations.

Concluding Remarks

Illicit drug trafficking indicates instability in the region and has the potential to threaten national and regional security. It leads to high level corruption and violent confrontation between armed organised gangs and law enforcement agencies that hinders the peace and prosperity of a state. This has direct impacts on the future of a country. Bangladesh goernment has made several efforts to curb drug trafficking in the country including zero tolerance towards it. They have been successful in bringing down drug-related crimes. But a few issues, like the involvement of Rohingyas, violation of human rights during operations, ineffective regional mechanisms and the lack of interest to solve this issue from the source country need to be considered with utmost attention and urgency. Alternative development plans should be taken by the government to provide employment to the marginalised people involved in drug peddling. This is a transnational crime and requires transnational efforts to combat it.

⁹² Vaishali Basu Sharma, 'Why Bangladesh's Yaba Drug Epidemic Continues to Fester,' *The Wire*, 25 January 2021, Available at <https://thewire.in/south-asia/bangladesh-india-yaba-drug-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁹³ Linah Alsaafin, 'I carry yaba to survive': Rohingya and Bangladesh's meth trade,' *Al Jazeera*, 19 August 2018, Cited in <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/8/19/i-carry-yaba-to-survive-rohingya-and-bangladeshs-meth-trade>. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

⁹⁴ Annual Drug Report Bangladesh 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Security Services Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, June 2021. Cited in http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afbc1/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf. Accessed on 5 April 2022.

Drug Abuse and Women's Involvement in Drug-related Crimes in Bangladesh

Faizah Sultana*

Historically in Bengal, drugs were taken by the people as tradition. The opium intake became very popular among the Mughal nobility after it entered South Asia through Arab traders. In Bengal, it was also in high demand, used in religious establishments and in greetings. It had a big market and produced an opportunity of large business for the British rulers of that time.¹ With time, the harmful effect of using such drugs is identified. Bangladesh banned cannabis in 1988, and has strict laws for drug abuse and alcohol consumption. But the harmful practice continues to spread its effect on the population. There are numerous studies on the impact and trends of drug abuse among Bangladeshi population. Although those studies revealed many aspects of drug abuse scenario in Bangladesh, most of the studies did not include gender disaggregated information. Similarly, the impact of drug abuse on women were overlooked. Considerable amount of research works was done in western setting, which have been used in this write-up, but the absence of such work from

Bangladesh perspective indicates a new scope of study.

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is defined by the Britannica as- 'the excessive, maladaptive, or addictive use of drugs for nonmedical purposes despite social, psychological, and physical problems that may arise from such use'.² Familiar in another more formal term as substance abuse, it is defined by WHO as, 'the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs'.³ According to the Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh, 'drug abuse is chronic and habitual use of any substance to alter the state of body and mind' while addiction is-'the continuing

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¹ Opium, Banglapedia, Cited in- <https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Opium?fbclid=IwAR05InStx-uZ2FDTZRM-sfgVyNOMaOtB0Hfd8jWw4aDenWiYrgPvTGhNU> , , Last accessed on- 30 March 2022

² 'Drug Abuse', Britannica, Cited in-<https://www.britannica.com/topic/crack-epidemic>, last accessed on- 3 April 2022

³ Substance Abuse, WHO Africa, Cited in- <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/substance-abuse#:~:text=Overview-Overview,consequences%20experienced%20by%20its%20members>. Last accessed on- 3 April 2022.

and compulsive use of the drug despite the physical and/or harm to the user and the society'.⁴

Drug situation In Bangladesh: A brief overview

The drugs and precursor chemicals for drugs are not manufactured in Bangladesh. But the location of Bangladesh puts it at risk of easy access to drugs. Bangladesh shares border with Myanmar, the second-largest opium producing country. Large scale drugs originated from India are also smuggled in from India through porous border. Bangladesh is also used as a transit for the golden triangle (Myanmar, Laos and Thailand).^{5 6}

Drug abuse and drug related crimes poses a serious concern for Bangladesh. Not only the vulnerable geological location, the demographic features of the population, the sociocultural setting also are considered as factors for this

phenomenon. Most of the drug abusers are young, illiterate, belong to low-income household and drug traffickers target unemployed slum dwellers to engage in drug trafficking. Curiosity, peer pressure, the lack of guidance during adolescence, weak family relationships, lack of parental control, lack of education, poverty, are major causes of drug abuse.⁷ Drug abuse is also noticeable among the street children, especially in urban areas.⁸

The Rohingya influx in 2017 has also contributed to the deterioration of the drug related crime situation in the host locality. Many Rohingya criminals were involved in drug trafficking in Cox's Bazar.⁹

Government of Bangladesh has strict policy on drug abuse and alcohol use. Narcotics Control Act 2018 was enacted where capital punishment can be given to yaba traders carrying 5 gram or more

⁴ Annual Drug Report 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Cited in-

[http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afcb/2021-11-11-08-20-](http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afcb/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf)

[2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf](http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afcb/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf) , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

⁵ South Asia Regional Profile: Bangladesh, September 2005, UNODC, cited in-

https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south_Asia_Regional_Profile_Sept_2005/08_bangladesh.pdf , Last accessed on- 3 April 2022.

⁶ International Drug Policy Consortium, South Asia, cited in-
<https://idpc.net/policy-advocacy/regional-work/south-asia/> , Last accessed on- 3 April 2022.

⁷ Annual Drug Report 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Cited in-
<http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.b>

[d/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afcb/2021-11-11-08-20-](http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afcb/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf)

[2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf](http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afcb/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf) , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

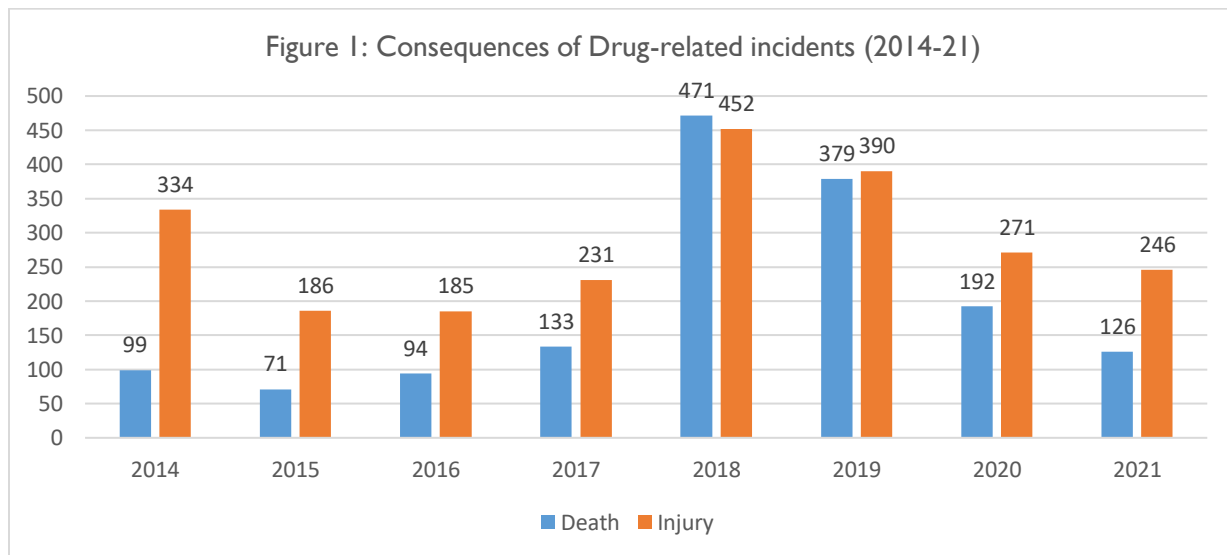
⁸ "Mahmud, Iffat; Ahsan, Karar Zunaid; Claeson, Mariam. 2011. Glue Sniffing and Other Risky Practices Among Street Children in Urban Bangladesh. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. Cited in-
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/12674/704310ESW0P11100report0final0Nov027.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

⁹ Rashid .M. MD, 'How Cross-Border Crime Ensnarers and Endangers Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh', The Diplomat, 5 November 2021, Cited in-
<https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/how-cross-border-crime-ensnarers-and-endangers-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh/> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

yaba pills.¹⁰ In May 2018, crackdown on drug dealers and peddlers was initiated by the law enforcement agencies which resulted in rise in number of deaths of drug dealers in reported gunfights.¹¹

Figure I shows the death and injury counts of drug related incidents from 2014 to 2021. There were 751 gunfights related to drug peddling and smuggling in those years, 1125 reported cases of

assaults and other categories of violence. In the non-violent incidents, the law enforcement agencies recovered large to small consignments of drugs namely, cannabis, yaba, heroin, phensedyls and other drugs. Figure 2 shows the amount of drug seizure and number of accused from 2013 to 2018. This information was extracted from Annual Drug Report 2018 by the Department of Narcotics Control.¹²



¹⁰ 'Death penalty for yaba offenders', The Daily Star, 9 October 2018, Cited in- <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/drug-control-act-2018-bangladesh-death-penalty-for-yaba-trading-1644190>

¹¹ 'Crackdown on drug peddlers to continue: Home Minister', The Financial Express, 22 May 2018, Cited in- <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/crackdown-on->

[drug-peddlers-to-continue-home-minister-1526912325](https://www.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/crackdown-on-drug-peddlers-to-continue-home-minister-1526912325) , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹² Annual Drug Report 2018, Department of Narcotics Control, Cited in- https://dnc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/d5c18a1b_a5cd_402f_839b_351d5fd39003/Drug%20Annual%20Report%202018.pdf , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

Figure 2: seizure of drugs and number of accused according to Department of Narcotics Control

Name of Drugs	Name of The Year					
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Heroin (in kg)	123.73	78.3	107.539	266.785	401.633	451.506
Codeine preparation (Bottle)	987661	741137	8,70,210	566525	720843	715529
Codeine (loose) (in liter)	857.55	438.22	5104.75	275.68	338.72	539.95
Cannabis (in kg)	35012.54	35988.56	40916.284	47104.655	69989.508	60295.124
Buprenorphine (Ampoule)	99509	178889	85946	152740	109063	128708
ATS (Yaba) (Tablet)	2821528 & Amphetamine Powder 5kg	6512869	20177581	29450178	40079443	53048548
Total No. of Cases	40250	51801	57420	69739	106546	119878
Total Number of Accused	47531	62080	70581	87014	132893	161323

Drug Abuse among Women: Global and National Scenario

Globally, one in every three drug abusers is a woman.¹⁰⁷ Female drug abusers have different characteristics than their male counterparts in terms of consumption of different category of drugs, behaviours, health impact, social impact and in treatment seeking. According to World Drug Report 2018, men use cannabis and other drugs

more than women, but use of non-medical opioids¹⁰⁸ and tranquillisers among women is significant compared to men. Experience of violence, trauma, drug abuser partners influence women to go down to the path of abuse. Cultural factors contribute to minimising the overall drug use of women than men. The health impact of drug use is more harmful on women. Women are vulnerable to the health risks such as HIV/AIDS, STIs and violence posed by drug abuser partner or

¹⁰⁷ UNWomen, Bringing women's needs into policy response on drug use, 23 June 2016, Cited in- <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/6/bringing-womens-needs-into-policy-response-on-drug-use> , Last Accessed on-2 April, 2022.

¹⁰⁸ **Opioids:** According to WHO, the term 'opioids' includes compounds that are extracted from the poppy seed

as well as semisynthetic and synthetic compounds with similar properties that can interact with opioid receptors in the brain. Cited in- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/opioid-overdose> , Last accessed on- 3 April 2022.

spouses.¹⁰⁹ Women also show different reactions to drugs and substances.¹¹⁰ Also, the social stigma associated with the drug abuse affects women more.¹¹¹

Demographically, the adolescent and youths are majority of the drug users in Bangladesh. The most used drugs are cannabis, yaba, heroin. Cannabis was a traditional drug in Bangladesh and it was banned in 1988. There were other prescription drugs like sedative, tranquillisers and hypnotic drugs which are administered as medicine. Abuse of this type of drugs are common among 'female population, people under stress, anxiety or mood disorder and other psychiatric problems'.¹¹² The male-female segregated data on the count of drug abusers in Bangladesh is hardly found in the government reports, but the existence of drug abuse among women was mentioned in a few of them. In the reports published and facilitated by

the DNC (Department of Narcotics Control), the number of female abusers were not separated from the total abusers, though some have expressed the difficulty to access the women for survey and interview.¹¹³ There are news articles available which reported that the number of female drug users are increasing alarmingly.¹¹⁴ In a press briefing, DNC shared that, almost 20% of the total abusers are female, which is a significant rise from the previous years.¹¹⁵ The information of ICDDR'B also matched with DNC.¹¹⁶ Women drug users and partners of male drug abusers are at great risk of HIV/AIDS and other STIs due to the lack of protective measures. A study conducted on the aforementioned groups revealed that, the risk of intimate partners of the male abusers are largely unnoticed and lack of education, income and decision-making power leave them more vulnerable. Frustration, influence of intimate partner and family members are main

¹⁰⁹ UNODC, World Drug Report 2018, Booklet 5, Women and Drugs, Cited in-
https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/prelaunch/WDR18_Booklet_5_WOMEN.pdf , Last Accessed on-2 April, 2022.

¹¹⁰ National Institute of Drug Abuse, Sex and gender differences in substance use, Cited in-
<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/substance-use-in-women> , Last Accessed on- 2 April, 2022.

¹¹¹ *ibid*

¹¹² Annual Drug Report 2020, Department of Narcotics Control, Cited in-
http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/fdcb3aab_5681_4973_9bc1_17b5909afbc1/2021-11-11-08-20-2e42979e261c0ae15d867387912c158b.pdf , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹¹³ Baseline study on drug addiction in Bangladesh, 2017, prepared for Department of Narcotics Control, Cited in-

http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/files/1e26d081_8f8a_4721_a1f1_598d55a9f455/DNC%20Research%20Paper%202017.pdf , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹¹⁴ 'Alarming rise in drug abuse', The Financial Express, 13 January 2020, Cited in-

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/alarming-rise-in-drug-abuse-1578932293> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022

¹¹⁵ 'Female drug addict numbers on the rise', The Dhaka Tribune, 23 February 2017, Cited in-
<https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2017/02/23/female-drug-addict-numbers-rise> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022

¹¹⁶ 'Female drug abuse on the rise', The New Age, 8 January 2018, Cited in-

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/32066/female-drug-abuse-on-the-rise> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

causes of drug abuse in women.¹¹⁷ The treatment and rehabilitation opportunities for women is very low. The government provided treatment facility is severely insufficient even for the male abusers.¹¹⁸ The social stigma of a female drug abuser is a serious impediment in life. In a project run by Dhaka Ahsania Mission, significant positive change was noticed when rehabilitation programs were initiated among the prisoners, some of them had history of substance use.¹¹⁹

Involvement of Women in Drug-Business

Women have taken part in drug business in a several parts of the world. In Afghanistan, the largest opium producing country, women's participation in opium cultivation is evident, as well as in coca cultivation in Colombia. In Africa and Latin America, there are women who were convicted as a part of international drug trafficking

organisations. Though, for some women the participation may be the result of force or unavoidable circumstance, for some women, this participation may represent empowerment.¹²⁰ In USA, the changing drug market seems to open new opportunities for women to engage in the business more than before, creating chances of financial benefits.¹²¹ A study conducted on Mexico, in the process of criticising the insensitive drug policy for female drug abuser and trafficker, the researcher has shown the vulnerability of women to the drug business.¹²² In Bangladesh, the role of women in drug business can be characterised as drug 'mules' or carriers. Women are used to carry drugs in secret as they are more likely to slip the attention of the law enforcement agency. But women also work as drug dealers alongside

¹¹⁷ UNODC & ICDDR'B, 'Report On Rapid Situation and Response Assessment Among Female Drug Users And The Female Regular Sex Partners Of Male Drug Users', 2010, Cited in-

https://www.unodc.org/documents/southasia/reports/BGD-FIDU_printed_report.pdf , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹¹⁸ বার্ষিক প্রতিবেদন ২০২০-২১, মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রন

অধিদপ্তর, cited in-

http://www.dnc.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dnc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/eb18c80f_9ad8_4346_aa1c_e323a5be0c28/2022-03-13-06-21-a9331d235b6102ccb3d75ffdae9b2da.pdf , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹¹⁹ Improvement of the Real Situation of Overcrowding In Prisons (IRSOP), AMIC, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Cited in- <https://www.amic.org.bd/improvement-of-the-real-situation-of-overcrowding-in-prisons-irsop-project/> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹²⁰ UNODC, World Drug Report 2018, Booklet 5, Women and Drugs, Cited in-

https://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/prelaunch/WDR18_Booklet_5_WOMEN.pdf , Last Accessed on-2 April, 2022.

¹²¹ Anderson, T. & Kavanaugh, Philip. (2018). Women's Evolving Roles in Drug Trafficking in the United States: New Conceptualizations Needed for 21st-Century Markets. Contemporary Drug Problems. 44. 009145091773511.

10.1177/0091450917735111. Cited in-

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320642827_Women%27s_Evolving_Roles_in_Drug_Trafficking_in_the_United_States_New_Conceptualizations_Needed_for_21st-Century_Markets , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹²² G,Corina, "The Gendered Impacts of Drug Policy on Women: Case Studies from Mexico", International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement, 2020,

<https://journals.openedition.org/poldev/3966> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

men.¹²³ ¹²⁴ According to BPO data, from 2014 to 2021, a total of 716 female drug peddler were arrested with drug consignment of different

amount from all over the country. Table I shows the number of female inmates in the prisons in Bangladesh incarcerated in drug related cases.

Table : Number of Female prisoners in a drug related cases in Bangladesh

Year	Number of female prisoners	Number of Drug Related Inmates (based on the 43% threshold)
2003	1,910	821
2006	2,222	956
2010	2,324	999
2014	2,211	951
2021	3,222	1385

*Source: Female Prison Population [<https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/bangladesh>] Estimated 43% of all prisoners are incarcerated on drug related charges [<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/07/20/43-of-all-inmates-are-accused-in-drugs-cases>]. Based on this statistic an estimate of women arrested for drug related offences

¹²³ 'DMP lists 56 drug dealers, patrons', The Daily Star, 24 May 2018, Cited in- <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/dmp-lists-56-drug-dealers-patrons-1580776> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹²⁴ 'Female drug dealers now reign supreme', The Daily Sun, 27 September 2018, Cited in- [https://www.daily-](https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/338912/Female-drug-dealers-now-reign-supreme)

[sun.com/printversion/details/338912/Female-drug-dealers-now-reign-supreme](https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/338912/Female-drug-dealers-now-reign-supreme) , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

Impact of Drug Abuse and Related Crimes on Women

Drug abuse is a major factor that contributed to the crime and violence in Bangladesh. It is identified as a significant cause of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.¹²⁵ According to BPO, there are 2115 violent incidents which were related to drug abuse and business. At least 1556 people were killed in those reported cases including 159 women from 2014 to 2021. The total number of injuries is 2290 including 259 women. In 42 reported cases, women were raped by drug peddlers and abusers. 131 cases of domestic violence were carried out by drug-addict family member/s. Few women were involved in drug related crimes in those reported cases. In most cases, women were victim of drug addict husband, father, son and other relatives as they refused to financially support the drug-addict member of the family.

¹²⁵ Gadd. D, Henderson. J, Radcliffe. P, Stephens-Lewis. D, Johnson. A, Gilchrist. G, (2019), The Dynamics of Domestic Abuse and Drug and Alcohol Dependency, The British Journal of Criminology, Volume 59, Issue 5, September 2019, Pages 1035–1053, Cited in- <https://academic.oup.com/bjc/article/59/5/1035/5486457> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

¹²⁶ UNWomen, Bringing women's needs into policy response on drug use, 23 June 2016, Cited in-

Conclusion

There are several issues which pose difficulties in investigating the impact of drug abuse on women. The accessibility to the respondents for information is very critical. Due to this, the real number of female drug abusers are unknown. The social and cultural factors put barriers to come out with such problems. This has an impact on treatment seeking behaviour of women. Also, in several studies, the gender insensitive drug policies of some countries, such as in America, were criticised for not acknowledging the women's needs and vulnerability in drug abuse and trafficking scenario.¹²⁶ The drug policy of Bangladesh is at risk of making the same mistake if it continues to ignore the need of gender disaggregated data and difference of experience of male and female abusers. Also, importance should be given to the mental health condition of the adolescent population as this period signifies a crucial moment and need proper guidelines.¹²⁷

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/6/bringing-womens-needs-into-policy-response-on-drug-use> , Last Accessed on-2 April, 2022.

¹²⁷ Substance Abuse, UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Cited in- <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-programme-of-action-for-youth/substance-abuse.html> , Last accessed on- 4 April 2022.

Micronarratives on Drug-related Violence

"I can hardly control this situation. Everyday these boys consume alcohol and sit for gambling. Some of them are also involved in drug trafficking. Most of them are from criminal gangs and the ruling political party. As soon as I arrest them the very next day, they get bail. And they come back to their same actions. Now I receive threats from some of their leaders for complaining against them in police stations."

An on-duty traffic police

"Transnational syndicates are using Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport of Dhaka as a route to smuggle nerve stimulant Amphetamine powder to other countries from India. Recently Customs officials have detained a Botswana national along with over 3kg of heroin-like granular at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. At least two to three consignments of crystal meth, also nicknamed ice, each weighing around 0.5kg-1.5kg, have arrived every month over the last three years through the country's various airports."

Md. Saddam Hossen (Sub Inspector, Special Branch, Bangladesh Police)

"Owing to my curiosity, I started taking Dandy (Sniffing Glue). After few months, I used to smoke cigarettes. After four years of helper life, I joined as a driver. Then my income was raised to 800-1000 taka per day. I used to take hemp and yaba. But consuming yaba is costly. Every day I needed 4-5 yaba pills that costs 1500 taka approx. Then I started selling yaba which gave me more profit than driving and fulfilled my daily consumption without money. Within few days, I bought a human hauler."

Chunnu (Drug addict, Hazaribagh)

"My brother took drugs when he was a nine-grader student, and he behaved in an abnormal way at that time. All my family members tried hard to bring him back from this wrong path, but nothing worked properly. As the days went by, he became more addicted. One day he hurt my mother physically for money, and on that very day, we decided to send him to a Rehab Centre. After staying in that centre for three months, he returned home and seemed like he was better than before. But after a few months he again started going here and there with his drug addicted friends. And this time, my parents did not give him any more money, and for that, my brother started destroying our properties by cutting down trees, selling domestic animals in the local market and finally started stealing valuables from our and neighbours'

houses. My father felt so irritated and ashamed by his behaviour that he called the police himself and handed him over to them. My brother was in jail for three months. My uncle got him out of jail and asked him to help his fish hatchery. He worked there for a month, and after coming back from there, he wanted to go abroad to build a career. We were happy then, thinking that he must have realised his past mistakes. So we all together somehow managed the money to send him to Saudi Arabia. He went to Saudi Arabia in 2019 and stayed there for eight months because he could not adapt himself to that kind of hard work. We were frustrated and disappointed again. Nothing has changed in our life though we tried a lot. A drug-addict person is enough to destroy a family."

Nobel (Pseudonym), Shibpur, Narsindi

"I used to own multiple garment factories until I became addicted.... Cigarettes were my first introduction to narcotics, thanks to my friends. Later, I began consuming alcohol, phensedyl, yaba, cocaine, and whatever else I could access. I was continuously inebriated and developed an addiction. Even I couldn't run the factories efficiently. As a result, I had no choice except to sell these factories.

My young girl became ill and died..... In order to collect the burial money, I laid her body on the road. I went to get drugs when I got the money. When I returned, I saw her body was missing. I cried. It's not that my daughter's body was lost..... It's just that I couldn't have drugs using her dead body as a bait. My humanity was entirely obliterated. In my absence, the locals buried her. There are many stories that I cannot say..."

Anonymous, Drug Addict

"As far as I can tell, the number of girls addicted to narcotics is steadily rising. Drug addiction is more common in people between the ages of 16 and 30. The wealthy normally treat drugs as a luxury. Whereas the underprivileged have nothing to lose, it is natural for them to get hooked on drugs. Drug addicts from the middle-class families seem to go to rehabilitation more. They wish to bring their loved ones back since they can not afford the luxury, and they are terrified of losing their respect."

Abu Sayed, Executive Director, Kheya Drug Addiction Medical Assistance and Integrated Rehabilitation Initiative, Naogaon

Annex:

Some definitional clarification according to BPO Codebook.

Gunfight. Shootout between the law enforcement agencies and criminals, militants, or other irregular forces, including amongst the latter, that does 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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