

Bangladesh

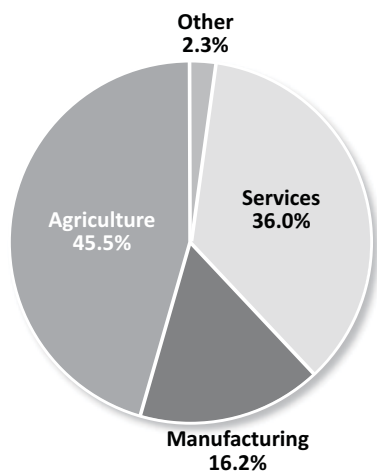
In 2011, Bangladesh made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Bangladesh passed the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012 which makes trafficking (including labor trafficking) a capital offense, developed and fully funded a Child Labor Monitoring Information System to manage child labor related data and began implementation of a \$9 million child labor project. However, legal protections regarding child labor are limited and the capacity to enforce child labor laws remains weak. Bangladesh maintains a low compulsory education age. Children in Bangladesh are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service.



Statistics on Working Children and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5-14 yrs.	10.1 (3,717,540)
Attending School	5-14 yrs.	81.2
Combining Work and School	7-14 yrs.	6.8
Primary Completion Rate		Unavailable

Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Sources:

Primary completion rate: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012.(1)

All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis from LFS Survey, 2005-2006.(2)

Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Bangladesh are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service.(3-6) Children working in agriculture perform a variety of tasks and may be exposed to risks such as dangerous machinery and tools, harmful pesticides and heavy loads.(4, 7)

Children, mostly girls, work as domestic servants in private households in Bangladesh. Some child domestics work in exploitative conditions and are vulnerable to abuse, including sexual abuse.(3, 5, 8)

Children engage in dangerous work that includes welding, carpentry, rickshaw pulling and automobile repair.(5) Children work in poultry farming and in drying fish, which exposes them to harmful chemicals, dangerous machines that can cut off their fingers, and long hours of work in the hot sun.(5, 9-11)

Children are also involved in the production of salt, soap, matches, bricks, cigarettes, footwear, steel furniture, glass, jute, leather and textiles.(3, 5, 11) While producing these goods, often in small workshops or homes, they face dangers that may include working with hazardous chemicals and sharp objects in cramped conditions with low lighting for long hours. Children collect and process shrimp, which has led to

back injuries, repetitive strain, muscle inflammation, diarrhea and infections.(12, 13) Children also work dismantling large ships into smaller pieces. Children lack the physical strength necessary for ship breaking and risk exposure to hazardous chemicals.(14, 15)

Children are also found working on the streets, garbage picking, vending, begging and portering.(3, 5, 16, 17) They may face multiple dangers including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements. Children working in hotels and restaurants face long working hours and potential abuse.(5)

Forced child labor occurs in Bangladesh. Children perform forced or indentured labor in drying fish.(10)

Bangladeshi children are also exploited in the commercial sex industry; some are trafficked internally and to India for sexual exploitation.(18) Boys and girls, often those living on the streets, are exploited in illicit activities, including smuggling and trading arms and drugs.(5, 19, 20)

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Labor Code establishes the minimum age for work at age 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at age 18.(21) The Labor Code allows certain exceptions, permitting children ages 12 to 13 to perform light work, but it restricts the kinds of work they can do. It also limits the hours children ages 14 to 18 can work.(21) However, the Labor Code excludes many sectors of the economy in which children work including work on small farms, domestic service and home-based work.(21) In 2011, a tripartite consultative committee consisting of the Government, employers and workers, approved a list of hazardous work prohibited for children.(22) The list contains 36 occupations such as ship breaking, leather manufacturing, construction and work in automobile workshops. The list is now waiting for an official notification from the Government.(23)

The Labor Code prohibits parents or guardians from pledging their children's work in exchange for a payment or benefit and the Penal Code prohibits forced labor.(20, 21) Those who violate the law are subject to penalties, which include imprisonment.(5, 20, 21)

The Women and Children's Repression Prevention Act of 2000 (amended in 2003) criminalized the trafficking of children and established strict penalties and fines for violators, but failed to include such penalties for labor trafficking.(20) In February

	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	No
	Minimum Age for Work	14
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	10
	Free Public Education	Yes

2012, the Parliament approved a new national anti-trafficking law, the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012, which expands the definition of trafficking to include labor trafficking, covers men and boys and makes trafficking a capital offense with a maximum sentence of the death penalty.(22, 24) The Penal Code and the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act of 1933 criminalizes the prostitution of girls under age 18.(25)

Bangladesh has only voluntary, not compulsory military service. While there is no legislation establishing a minimum age for voluntary military recruitment, each branch has designated their own minimum age with the Air Force setting the youngest age 16.(26) However, the Government reported that, in practice, the minimum age to serve in combat is age 18.(26) The lack of a legally binding minimum age for both joining the military and engaging in combat leaves children vulnerable to potential exploitation.

While the law establishes that education is free and compulsory in Bangladesh, children are not required to attend school after age 10. Although education is free, in practice, the costs of teacher fees, books and uniforms are prohibitive for many families; therefore, children are not sent to school.(5) Additionally, permitting children to stop attending school at age 10, when they are too young to work legally, makes children particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor.

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Government of Bangladesh has established a Child Labor Unit (CLU) in the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) to monitor, coordinate and supervise child labor programs.(5, 27) In 2011, the Child Labor Unit developed a Child Labor Monitoring Information System (CLMIS) to manage child labor-related data collected by different ministries. During the reporting period, the CLU developed a Web site on which the CLMIS will be publicly available.(22, 28)

An inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee oversees national efforts to combat human trafficking. This committee, chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), monitors trafficking issues.(20)

The Office of the Chief Inspectorate of the Department of Factories and Establishments under MOLE is responsible for enforcing labor laws, including child labor provisions. In 2011, the Government reported an increase in the number of labor inspectors to approximately 157 from 50 in 2010.(28) The inspectors work from 31 offices across the country and each one conducts from 5 to 100 monthly inspections.(29) In addition, there are five special inspection teams that monitor labor violations in the shrimp sector.(27) Government officials reported that inspections revealed 18 child labor violations during the reporting period.(28) The Government indicated that its 157 inspectors are not sufficient to effectively identify all cases of child labor.(28)

The city of Dhaka has 42 community-based workplace surveillance groups (CWSGs) that monitor workplaces in four zones to ensure hazardous child labor does not exist in these communities.(30) The CWSGs comprise community volunteers and are responsible for reporting any child labor violations in the formal and informal sectors to the appropriate government authority. This type of monitoring system exists only in the city of Dhaka, and thus does not address child labor violations in other areas of the country.(30)

MOHA is the lead agency designated to enforce the country's forced labor and anti-trafficking laws.(17) It maintains an anti-trafficking police unit and provides trafficking training to police officers and other public officials.(17, 29) MOHA also maintains a special anti-trafficking of humans unit in Dhaka that comprises 12 police officers charged with investigating all forms of trafficking.(17) From January to March 2011, MOHA rescued 19 child victims from trafficking situations.(28)

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Child Labor Eradication Policy is the policy framework for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.(31) The policy serves as a guiding instrument for the formulation of future laws and policies regarding child labor. In 2011, the National Child Labor Welfare Council was formed as part of this policy to monitor the child labor situation at a national level in conjunction with the Child Labor Unit, the entity responsible for monitoring child labor elimination programs.(28, 31) As of 2012, this Council had not met.(22) In 2011, the Supreme Court ordered the Welfare Council to monitor the conditions of child domestic workers and to ensure that no child under age 12 is employed as a domestic worker.(32) In 2011, MOLE drafted a National Plan of Action (NPA) that lays out a strategy to implement the National Child Labor Elimination Policy. The NPA is scheduled to be finalized in 2012.(33) Until the NPA is finalized and approved by the Government, the National Child Labor Eradication Policy lacks resources and a strategy for implementation.

In 2011, the Government incorporated child labor into numerous important policy and planning documents, including the Bangladesh Sixth Five Year Plan (2011-2015), the National Education Policy (2010) and the National Policy for Children 2011.(22) The Government's PRSP also contains a strategic goal to protect child laborers and eliminate the worst forms of child labor.(34) The 3-year, 2009 PRSP seeks to accomplish this through raising awareness of child labor, drafting minimum wage and other protective standards, creating a child-friendly code of conduct for employers and improving educational opportunities for working children.(34) Trafficking in persons is also mentioned as an ancillary item in a number of government policies including the PRSP.(34)

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

UNICEF continued to collaborate closely with the Government in implementing the second phase of a project that establishes education centers to provide non-formal education and livelihood skills to more than 350,000 working children and adolescents.(17, 35) The Government is also providing funding for the third phase of a \$9 million project that aims to withdraw 50,000 child laborers from hazardous work through non-formal education and skills-development programs.(22, 27)

The Government of Bangladesh participated in a \$10 million project funded by the Government of the Netherlands that aims to prevent and eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the Dhaka informal economy. The Government of Bangladesh also participated in a project funded by the European Commission that provides children of legal working age and working in hazardous jobs with technical and vocational skills training to transition them into safer work opportunities.(27, 36) Additionally, the Government participated in a USDOL-funded project to conduct a national child labor survey.(37) The Government lacks targeted social programs for child laborers in rural areas, specifically in agriculture.(27)

To combat child trafficking, the Government participated in a USAID-funded project that builds the capacity of the police to identify and prosecute traffickers, expand public awareness on trafficking and provide services to trafficking victims.(38) Additionally, the Government supported nine shelters for

women and children who have experienced violence, including trafficking, and is participating in a child helpline service funded by the Danish International Development Agency.(20, 39)

The Government spends over 15 percent of its total public expenditures on 84 social safety net programs that serve the poor.(40, 41) The Employment Generation Program for the Poorest, Bangladesh's largest social safety net program, provides short-term employment for the rural poor.(42, 43) The Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program is Bangladesh's other large social safety net program. During the reporting period, this program assisted more than 750,000 vulnerable families by providing them with food assistance and training in an alternative livelihood.(44, 45) In 2011, the Government initiated a pilot project to study the feasibility of creating a national population database with the intention of improving access to these social safety net programs.(46) The question of whether these programs, or other social safety net programs, has an impact on child labor has not been studied.(28)

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Bangladesh:

Area	Suggested Actions	Year(s) Action Recommended
Laws and Regulations	Raise the compulsory education age to 14, in line with the established minimum age for work.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Amend the Labor Code to protect the large numbers of children working in small-scale agriculture, domestic service, family enterprises and home-based work.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Amend the Labor Code to comply with international standards on the minimum age for military service.	2011
Coordination and Enforcement	Increase the number of labor inspectors to better enforce child labor laws and protect against exploitative child labor.	2009, 2010, 2011
	Expand the community-based workplace surveillance groups' model to cover locations of high incidence of child labor outside of Dhaka.	2010, 2011
Policies	Finalize and approve the NPA for implementation of the National Child Labor Elimination Policy.	2011
	Operationalize the National Child Labor Welfare Council.	2011
Social Programs	Assess the impact that existing social safety net programs may have on reducing child labor.	2010, 2011
	Expand current social programs targeting child laborers to include children working in agriculture.	2011

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