

In 2013, Bangladesh made a moderate advancement in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government issued a Statutory Regulatory Order identifying 38 occupations considered hazardous for children ages 14 to 18 and adopted the Children's Act, which harmonizes national law with international standards on child protection, including extending the legal definition of a child to 18 years. The Government also increased its capacity to enforce child labor laws through the recruitment and training of an additional 39 labor inspectors, for a total of 183 labor inspectors. With support from the ILO, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics conducted a National Child Labor Survey by including a child labor module in the National Labor Force Survey. However, children in Bangladesh continue to engage in child labor in agriculture and in services. In addition, the Government's Child Labor Unit is no longer functioning, children working in the informal sector lack protections, and the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy has yet to be approved.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Bangladesh are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and services.(1, 2) Child labor occurs more in rural areas than in urban areas and the type of work children are engaged in differs by geographic location.(1) Children working in the coastal areas, specifically in the Chittagong and Kuakata regions, may be employed in the shrimp and dried fish sector, while children working in the northern areas may be employed in the local cigarette or 'bidi' industry.(1) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Bangladesh.

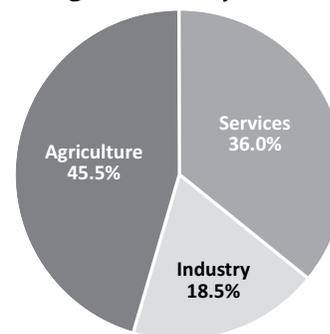
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	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 (%)		74.6

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2011, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014.(3)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from LFS Survey, 2005-2006.(4)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including gathering honey,* collecting tea leaves,* and poultry farming (2, 4-9)
	Gathering and drying fish (2, 7, 10, 11)
	Collecting and processing shrimp (2, 5, 12)
Industry	Mining salt† (2, 5)
	Production of bidis and cigarettes,† bricks,† footwear, garments and textiles, glass,† jute, leather,† matches,† soap,† and steel furniture† (2, 5-9, 13-21)
	Ship breaking† (2, 19, 20)
	Welding† (2, 22)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Construction, activities unknown† (6, 22)
	Carpentry* (2)
Services	Pulling rickshaws (2, 5, 22)
	Repairing automobiles† (2, 5)
	Domestic work (2, 18)
	Street work, including garbage picking, recycling, vending, begging, and portering (2, 5, 6, 18)
	Working in hotels and restaurants* (2, 5)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced labor in the drying of fish (23, 24)
	Forced begging (25, 26)
	Use of children in drug and arms smuggling (2, 5, 27)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2, 28, 29)
	Street work and domestic service as a result of human trafficking (28, 29)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a) – (c) of ILO C. 182.

Some children work under forced labor conditions in the dried fishing sector to help their families pay off debts to local moneylenders.(24) Some Bangladeshi children are trafficked internally and others across borders for commercial sexual exploitation.(28) Children are also trafficked internally for street work and domestic service.(28)

Although by law education is free and compulsory in Bangladesh, the associated costs of teacher fees, books, and uniforms prevent many children from attending school.(2, 7)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Bangladesh has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The Government has established relevant laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	The Labor Code (30)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	The Labor Code (30)
List of Hazardous Occupations Prohibited for Children	Yes		List of Hazardous Occupations and Working Conditions Prohibited for Children 2011; List of Worst Forms of Work for Children 2013 (11, 31)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 370 and 374 of the Penal Code; Chapter 1 and Chapter of the Human Trafficking and Deterrence Act of 2012; and Article 34 of the Constitution (32-34)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		The Human Trafficking and Deterrence and Suppression Act of 2012 (34)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor (cont)

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 372 and 373 of the Penal Code; Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act of 1933 (35); Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children Act (SVWCA) (2, 36); Articles 78 and 80 of the Children's Act 2013 (37)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Penal Code; Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act of 1933 (35); Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children Act (SVWCA) (2, 36)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	16, 17	Air Force (16 years plus 18 to 36 weeks training); Army (17 years plus nine months training) (2, 38)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	10	Primary Education (Compulsory) Act, 1990 (39)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 17 of the Constitution (33)

* No conscription or no standing military.

The Labor Code excludes many sectors of the economy in which children work, including small farms, family enterprises, street work, and domestic service.(30) However, in 2013, the Government of Bangladesh revised the Labor Code to include further protections in formal establishments for children ages 14 to 18. In particular, the amendments require employers to obtain clear age documentation and mandate that the government periodically update the list of hazardous occupations for children ages 14 to 18.(40) In 2013, the Government issued a Statutory Regulatory Order and published a list of hazardous work prohibited for children ages 14 to 18.(41) The list highlights 38 occupations including ship breaking, leather manufacturing, construction, and automobile repair.(31)

In addition, the Government of Bangladesh adopted the Children's Act of 2013 (Act No. 24 of 2013), which harmonizes national law with international standards on child protection, including extending the legal definition of childhood to 18 years.(7, 37, 42)

The 2010 National Education Policy raised the age of compulsory education from grade five (age 10) to grade eight (age 14); however, until the law is amended to reflect the new compulsory education age, the policy is not enforceable.(2, 43-45) This standard makes children ages 11 to 14 particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor, as they are not required to be in school and might engage in activities that jeopardize their health and safety.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Office of the Chief Inspector of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE)	Enforce labor laws, including those on child labor.(2, 43, 46)
Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA)	Enforce the country's forced labor and anti-trafficking laws, including child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Operate an anti-trafficking police unit in Dhaka, composed of seven police officers charged with investigating all forms of trafficking. Provide anti-trafficking training to police officers and other public officials and chair an inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee that oversees and monitors national- and district-level efforts to combat human trafficking.(2, 41, 47, 48)
Child Protection Networks	Respond to a broad spectrum of violations against children, including child labor. Overseen by the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW). Composed of officials from a variety of sectors mandated to act on prevention, prosecution, and protection of any violations; monitor interventions; and develop referral mechanisms at the district and sub-district (<i>upazilla</i>) levels between law enforcement and social welfare services.(2, 6, 7, 41)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)

Organization/Agency	Role
Rescue, Recovery, Repatriation, and Reintegration Task Force	Provide referrals for children trafficked from India per process outlined in Standard Procedures (SOP) Guidelines. Operated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and UNICEF's Task Force.(25)

Law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms, during the reporting period.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2013, the Directorate of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishments (DFIE), within the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE), employed 183 labor inspectors nationwide. This marked an increase of 39 from the previous year.(7, 41, 46, 49) In addition, in January 2014, the Government issued orders to hire an additional 392 labor inspectors; which once implemented would bring the total number of labor inspectors to 575.(49) As of July 2014, these new labor inspectors have yet to be hired because of bureaucratic challenges.(41, 50) DFIE conducts unannounced inspections in both factories and small businesses to investigate various labor issues, including child labor. In 2013, DFIE conducted approximately 500 inspections per month.(41) Working from one of 31 offices located across the country, each inspector conducts between 4 and 20 inspections monthly, depending on the inspector's capacity and number of facilities.(2, 41) Five inspection teams are assigned to monitoring labor violations in the shrimp sector, and specialized monitoring teams regularly inspect export factories in the ready-made garment sector.(2, 43, 51) In 2013, the ILO and the German Government provided training to new labor inspectors, including on the Labor Code (as well as child labor) and inspection techniques.(52)

No enforcement data were publicly available during the reporting period, including the number of child labor investigations, prosecutions, and convictions. While reports indicate that child labor inspections occurred in export garment factories and shrimp processing, child labor inspections were infrequent, with no oversight of the children working in the informal sector, including unregistered subcontractors in the garment sector.(6, 21) On March 30, 2014, MOLE, with support from the ILO, launched a publicly accessible database for labor inspections in all export factories in the ready-made garment sector. The inspection information is under review for quality control and has yet to be included in the database.(7, 41)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2013, the Government reported 377 trafficking cases resulting in 172 prosecutions and 14 convictions. No information is available as to whether these investigations, prosecutions, and convictions involved child victims of human trafficking.(25)

The Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) provides services to trafficking victims. However, there is no systematic referral system for the police to inform the MOSW about trafficking victims.(25) To date, the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of India have not formally signed an MOU to bring the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of the Rescue, Recovery, Repatriation, and Reintegration Task Force into official use, although NGOs report that the two governments are using this system.(25) NGOs also note that there are no formal referral mechanisms for children trafficked from other countries. They allege that government officials refer victims back to the NGOs that initially identified and rescued them.(25)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Child Labor Unit, MOLE	Coordinate and supervise programs to combat child labor, monitor child labor elimination program activities, and oversee the collection and storage of data in the Child Labor Monitoring Information System.(48, 51, 53)
National Child Labor Welfare Council	Coordinate various government agencies and NGOs that implement programs to reduce child labor and eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Ensure child labor programs align with the National Child Labor Eradication Policy (NCLEP). Prepare annual reports on the state of child labor. Monitor child labor at the district and subdistrict (<i>upazilla</i>) levels.(2, 6, 7, 46, 54, 55)
Counter-Trafficking National Coordination Committee, MOHA	Work with other government agencies and international and national NGOs through bimonthly coordination meetings on trafficking, including child trafficking. Oversee district countertrafficking committees, which oversee anti-trafficking committees for subdistricts and for smaller administrative units (unions).(25, 28, 41)

MOLE's Child Labor Unit is no longer functioning. However, MOLE is working to create a permanent body on child labor within its ministry. MOLE's proposal for this permanent body is currently pending with the Ministry of Public Administration.(41)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Bangladesh has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Child Labor Eradication Policy (NCLEP) (2010)	Aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2015 by initiating interventions that will sustainably remove children from the worst forms of child labor and provide them with viable work alternatives.(43, 46, 56)
Child Labor National Plan of Action (NPA) (2012–2016)	Lays out NCLEP's implementation strategy and includes elimination of child labor in other sectoral plans and strategies.(55)
Sixth Five-Year Plan (2011–2015)	Includes the elimination of child labor as a government priority and identifies the NCLEP as the policy and NPA as the plan to eliminate it.(57)
National Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking (2012–2014)	Recognizes the Government's ratification of international conventions on child labor and the development of NCLEP as the means to address child labor.(58)
National Labor Policy	Includes provisions on the prohibition of child labor in both the informal and formal sector in urban and rural areas. Specifies that the Government will take necessary actions to ensure children do not engage in hazardous labor and creates opportunities for children to access primary education.(59)
National Education Policy (2010)*	Specifies the Government's education policy, including pre-primary, primary, secondary, vocational and technical, higher, and non-formal education policies.(45)
National Plan of Action for Education for All (2003-2015)	Targets child laborers for non-formal basic education programs.(60)
National Skills Development Policy (2011)	Outlines skills development program for legally working-age children as a means of contributing to a workplace free from child labor.(61)
National Policy for Children (2011)	Acknowledges NCLEP's strategy to eliminate child labor.(62)

*The impact of this policy on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

During the reporting period, senior government officials, international organizations, and officials of Bangladeshi NGOs met to discuss the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, which was drafted in 2010. If implemented, the Policy would help protect the rights of child domestic workers and include domestic service on the List of Hazardous Occupations and Working Conditions Prohibited for Children; it continues to await official approval.(7, 63)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

In 2013, the Government of Bangladesh funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

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Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description and Objectives
Eradication of Hazardous Child Labor, Phase III†‡	Three-year government program that targets 50,000 children between ages 10 and 14 for withdrawal from hazardous labor through non-formal education and skills development training.(43, 64)
Initiative to Eliminate Child Labor from Urban Slums and Rural Areas	Collaboration between UNICEF, the Ministries of Women and Children's Affairs, and MOSW. Two-year project that provides conditional cash transfers and employment training, outreach and referral services, and social protection services for 500,000 children and 30,000 adolescents.(2)
Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce (CLEAR) Child Labor Project†	\$7.7 million USDOL-funded, 4-year capacity building project implemented by the ILO in at least 10 countries, to build local and national capacity of the Government to address child labor. In Bangladesh, aims to build local and national capacity of the Government to address child labor by improving legislation on child labor. This includes bringing local or national laws into compliance with international standards; improving monitoring and enforcement of laws and policies on child labor; developing, validating, adopting, and implementing the NPA; and enhancing the implementation of national and local policies and programs aimed at the reduction and prevention of child labor.(65)
Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues Project	USDOL-funded project implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries, to support the priorities of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor by 2016 established by the Hague Global Child Labor Conference in 2010. Aims to improve the evidence base on child labor and forced labor through data collection and research in Bangladesh.(66)
Expanding the Evidence Base and Reinforcing Policy Research for Scaling Up and Accelerating Action Against Child Labor	USDOL-funded, 3-year project implemented by ILO-IPEC to provide technical assistance to develop a national child labor survey. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics collected data from January 1 to December 31, 2013 for a National Child Labor Survey as part of the Labor Force Survey. Final report scheduled to be published and disseminated in 2014.(67, 68)
Trafficking Project	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.(2, 46)
Shelter Project‡	Nine shelters provide services to women and children who have experienced violence, including trafficking.(2, 46)
Child Helpline*	Project funded by the Danish International Development Agency that provides child helpline service.(2, 46, 69)
Community-Based Working Child Protection Project‡	MOHA project that aims to combat human trafficking in Dhaka. Objectives include enhancing preventive and protective measures, improving victim care, and strengthening the Government's capacity to prosecute trafficking-related crimes.(7, 36, 46, 51, 70)
Actions for Combating Trafficking in Persons‡	In collaboration with the government, IOM-implemented project that aims to combat human trafficking, enhance preventive and protective measures, improve victim care, and strengthen the Government's capacity to prosecute trafficking-related crimes.(36, 46, 51, 70)
Employment Generation for the Ultra Poor*‡	Government program that provides short-term employment for the rural poor.(71, 72) From 2012 to 2013, the Government of Bangladesh allocated approximately \$148 million for this program.(73)
Vulnerable Group Development Program*‡	Government program that provides vulnerable families with food assistance and training in alternative income-generating opportunities.(46, 74, 75) Government of Bangladesh allocated approximately \$96 million to this program in 2012 and 2013.(73)

* The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

† Program was launched during the reporting period.

‡ Program is funded by the Government of Bangladesh.

Although Bangladesh has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to address the extent of the problem in the informal sector.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Bangladesh (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Laws	Enact legislation to provide protections for children working in domestic service, on the streets, in small-scale agriculture and family enterprises.	2009 – 2013
	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013
	Amend the law to reflect the policy that education is compulsory through grade eight and to match the minimum age for work.	2012 – 2013
Enforcement	Publish statistics, disaggregated by age, on the number of child labor and trafficking inspections conducted and the prosecutions and convictions that ensued.	2012 – 2013
	Develop and implement a labor inspection strategy that targets child labor in the informal sector and that conducts inspections with sufficient frequency.	2013
	Create a service referral mechanism for all trafficked children.	2013
Coordination	Approve MOLE's proposal for a permanent child labor coordinating mechanism to combat child labor.	2013
Government Policies	Finalize and enact the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy draft.	2013
	Assess the impact that existing education policies may have on reducing child labor.	2013
Social Programs	Implement programs to overcome the prohibitive fees associated with education and to specifically address the worst forms of child labor in the informal sector.	2013
	Assess the impact that existing social protection programs may have on reducing child labor.	2010 – 2013

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