



Bangladesh – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 12 December 2013

What efforts has Bangladesh made to stop trafficking of children?

A report published by the Child Rights Governance Assembly, in a section titled “Child trafficking”, states:

“Trafficking is an issue of grave concern in Bangladesh and of course, most of the trafficked victims are children. In recent time, some positive steps have taken to combat trafficking. For example, Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012 has been enacted which identifies all individuals below the age of 18 as children. This act has also addressed legislative gaps such as the absence of a prohibition on the trafficking of men. The National Plan of Action for Combating Human Trafficking has also been adopted to ensure adequate awareness, capacity and accountability in implementing the newly enacted law on human trafficking and to coordinate actions against the crime. Bangladesh has received an improved status in US report on ‘Trafficking in Person’ being elevated to ‘Tier-2’ level from previous ‘Tier-2 Watch’ level.¹¹ Children’s unsafe migration from rural to urban area mostly contributes to child trafficking which needs to be adequately addressed.” (Child Rights Governance Assembly (CRGA) (December 2012) *UPR Report: Situation of Child Rights in Bangladesh*, pp.14-15)

An IRIN News report, in a paragraph headed “Unreported”, states:

“Thousands of children trafficked from Bangladesh to other countries go unreported each year, say aid workers and government officials. ‘We cannot be certain about the actual number,’ Michael McGrath, country director of Save the Children Bangladesh, told IRIN. ‘The only reliable statistics [on missing children] are those that refer to the number of children ‘rescued’ each year, and the number of cases opened against traffickers or traffickers convicted each year. Each of these figures is very small.’ However, according to Abdul Quader, programme manager at the UK-based NGO Plan International, an estimated 200,000 Bangladeshi girls were lured under false pretences into the sex industry in neighbouring countries over the past 10 years. Others put the figure even higher. Little data is available on missing children in Bangladesh; police and media reports are the main source of information. ‘Lack of awareness among the masses and an absence of a nationally integrated reporting system triggers a large number of missing children going unreported,’ said Shabnaaz Zahreen, a child protection specialist at the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Dhaka.” (IRIN News (6 September 2012) *Bangladesh: More data needed on abandoned children, trafficking*)

The 2013 US Department of State report on human trafficking in Bangladesh states:

“Within the country, some Bangladeshi children and adults are subjected to sex trafficking, domestic servitude, and forced and bonded labor, in which traffickers or recruiters exploit an initial debt assumed by a worker as part of the terms of employment. Some street children are coerced into criminality or forced to beg; begging ringmasters sometimes maim children as a means to earn more money. In some instances, children are sold into bondage by their parents, while others are induced into labor or commercial sexual exploitation through fraud and physical coercion. According to an international expert on debt bondage, some Bangladeshi families and some Indian migrant workers are subjected to bonded labor in Bangladesh's brick kilns; some kiln owners sell bonded females into prostitution purportedly to further recoup the families' debts. That same expert also reported that some Bangladeshi families are subjected to debt bondage in the shrimp farming industry in southeastern Bangladesh and that some ethnic Indian families are forced to work in the tea industry in the northeastern part of the country. In some instances, girls and boys as young as eight years old are subjected to forced prostitution within the country, living in slave-like conditions in secluded environments. Trafficking within the country often occurs from poorer, more rural regions, to cities. Many brothel owners and pimps coerce Bangladeshi girls to take steroids to make them more attractive to clients, with devastating side effects.” (US Department of State (19 June 2013) *2013 Trafficking in Persons Report – Bangladesh*)

This report also states:

“Bangladesh does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government drafted rules to implement the 2012 Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act (HTDSA) and began prosecuting cases under the law. However, the lack of adequate law enforcement efforts and institutional weaknesses continued to contribute to the trafficking of Bangladeshi migrant workers abroad. The government took limited steps to regulate fraudulent recruitment agents and their unlicensed subagents. Inadequate trafficking victim protection remained a serious problem.” (ibid)

A UN Human Rights Council report, in a section titled “Right to life, liberty and security of the person” (paragraph 32), states:

“CEDAW requested adopting a comprehensive action plan to address trafficking and sexual exploitation and ensure its effective implementation. CRC reiterated its concern over the rising number of children living or working in urban centres who are prime targets of organized child trafficking rings. UNHCR welcomed the ongoing work on a new anti-trafficking law, however, noted that unregistered Rohingya women and children have not truly benefitted from the Prevention of Oppression Against Women and Children Act (2000, amended 2003). The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations requested the Government to take necessary measures to strengthen law enforcement mechanisms in order to effectively investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking in persons, both for sexual and labour exploitation.” (UN Human Rights Council (8 February 2013) *Compilation prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21: Bangladesh*, p.8)

A report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime states:

“Bangladesh has had laws specifically on trafficking right from 1933. There are action plans to protect children, including plans to specifically protect children against sexual abuse and exploitation. In order to strengthen protection and prosecution, a number of steps were taken including a new legislation in 2000 and the setting up of the Police Monitoring Cell for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in the Bangladesh Police Headquarters. The latter is a 15 member strong team of police officers. There is also a 12 member police anti-trafficking investigative unit to support this cell and an inter-Ministerial committee on human trafficking chaired by the Home Minister.” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (27 April 2011) *Responses to Human Trafficking in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka (Bangladesh excerpt)*)

This report also states:

“Protection of victims of trafficking has seen a number of legal, medical, psychosocial and economic support services by the State as well as by NGOs. Four NGOs especially have been pinpointed by the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2010 as playing a crucial role in sheltering victims of trafficking, viz., the Association for Community Development (ACD), The Thengamar Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS), the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) and the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA). The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employments operates shelters for female Bangladeshi victims of trafficking and exploitation in some places overseas, though Indian cities are not among them.” (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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