

## **The Situation of Children in Bangladesh 2020 Analysis of Newspapers**

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This report is based on news reports published in newspapers and depicts the recent trends of child rights but it is not a complete picture of the overall situation of children in the country.  
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Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) presents an annual report of news on situation of children as part of its child rights and protection activities. Although various reports on child rights are published regularly, the arrangement for collection and preservation of information relating to this is limited.

Different organizations publish subject-wise reports and statistics but based on such data, it is not possible to understand the overall situation of children of Bangladesh at the national level. Bringing this to attention, the United Nations Child Rights Committee, in concluding observation on Bangladesh affairs made in 2020, recommended arrangement for collecting and preserving information and data on a regular basis in order to determine the situation of children in Bangladesh. In the context of that recommendation, Manusher Jonno Foundation since 2011 has been collecting and preserving various news items on children affairs, using newspaper reports as sources.

Although Manusher Jonno Foundation is closely working with children exposed to risky child labor, its areas of work encompass various child rights issues including repression of children, success of children, murder and suicide, and sexual abuse of children. The objective of the report is to high light the information reflected in newspaper reports to bring to the attention of the general population but specially to the

Policymakers, and organizations working on child and human rights. Manusher Jonno Foundation is pledge-bound to work alongside other organizations for protection and wellbeing of all children.

Manusher Jonno Foundation publishes the report with the title ‘Bangladesh Shishu Paristhiti’ [The Situation of Children in Bangladesh].

### **Objectives are:**

- To determine the overall situation of children based on specific subjects through newspapers;
- To highlight situation and trends of child rights through statistical analysis;
- To review positive and negative news items on children affairs and identify possible areas of risks;
- To make recommendations for policymaking on important matters of children affairs

**Methodology:**

Clippings of news items on children affairs from eight daily newspapers – Prothom Alo, Jugantor, Samakal, Ittefaq, Kaler Kantha, New Age, The Daily Star and Dhaka Tribune – are collected every day and preserved accordingly. The criteria for selecting these newspapers is their circulation, frequency of covering the issues and credibility of the news stories etc. The news items are then classified by using specific tables made with the help of information and communications technology. Collecting news items chronologically, an analytical brief (report) is prepared at the end of every month. Finally, on completion of the year, a picture of the situation of the children is revealed based on information and data collected throughout the year.

**Duration:** January-December 2020

For convenience of discussion, the news items published in the newspapers have been divided into two broad categories, Positive news which are deemed positive for the children and Negative news which are deemed harmful for children. .

In the year 2020, a total of 330 positive news stories were published and 1361 stories published as negative news.

**Enforcement of law and trial:**

The newspaper carried out as many as 23 news items on rape, attempt to rape, and murder after rape, and arrest and killing of children and arrest of accused and these reports provided information about life-term jail and death sentence for the convicts. Items on abduction and killing after abduction were also published in the year. The items contained news of stopping child marriage with the initiatives of the children alongside the administration. The news items also focused on repression of children, neglect to children, child trafficking, and complexity in caregiving of children after divorce of the parents.

**Rescue:**

In 2020, a total 134 such news reports were published where 128 children were mentioned as rescued.

**Taking administrative decisions:**

The newspapers published 6 reports on availability of opportunities and services as a result of different kinds of administrative decisions of the government in 2020. Such news reports also covered formation of national committee to prevent child marriage, imposing fines on child day care regarding child safety issue, closing of educational institution, initiative to address child labor.

**Unclassified reports:**

Published reports in newspapers included positive news stories which have not been classified. Such news stories numbered 45 in 2020.

Due to the pandemic, few other sectors like Participation in programmer/ festivals, Award-giving and reception, Protest, resistance, Improvement in standard of living, Victorious with indomitable

spirit, Examinations and results, Political pledge, Development in education sector saw less coverage in newspapers. As a result collecting enough data was not possible.

### **Road crashes:**

The number of news items on road accidents on child victim published in 2020 was 116 where 127 dead and 158 injured children were spotted. According to the newspaper reports, the highest number of road crashes affecting children occurred in Dhaka district, followed by Mymensingh. Such accidents also took place in districts like Shirajganj and Kurigram.

### **Other accidents:**

The number of other accidents that reportedly occurred in 2020 was 228 in which the number of injured children victims was 192 and 158 children died. The highest number of such accidents took place in Narayanganj in 2020, followed by Dhaka in second place and Lakshmipur. Tangail in third position.

### **Education-related problems:**

In 2020, there was a serious crisis in education sector because of the pandemic. According to the Newspaper reports around 12.70 per cent households do not have a single mobile phone. Online education caused major damages in the rural area, especially in the poor households. The reports focused on the availability of devices to conduct online education, lack of technological knowledge and dropout rates.

### **Health-related problems:**

In 2020, newspapers published reports about the health risks of children due to the disruption of immunization, nutrition and other health services caused by the pandemic.

The news items focused on the mental effects on children during confinement at home, unknown diseases of children, rare diseases, pneumonia, H1N1, fever, diarrhea, skin diseases, thalassemia, cancer, child mortality, blood deficiency, malnutrition, obesity, tumor, cardiac diseases, in-born flaws, mass hysteria, and conjoined problems.

### **Information on working children**

Of the news items relating to children published in 2020, 8 reports involved working children. In the reports injured victims was 15 girls who were domestic helps in different places of Bangladesh, Dhaka is the most reported area. And 3 girls died who also were domestic help.

The reports included repression of child laborers, their engagement in hazardous jobs and repression of domestic helps. Due to the lockdown many factories and workshops were shut down which led the working children to become unemployed. These children were repressed by their family instead as they could not bring any money for the family.

### **Rape:**

The year 2020 saw publishing of as many as 447 news items on victims of rape and in these incidents, the number of victims was 640 of whom 14 died and 626 were injured. In 2020, Dhaka district topped the list of reports on rape, followed by Narayanganj in the second position, and Mymensingh and Cumilla jointly in the third position. In most cases, the children fell victim of rape by neighbors, stalkers, friends, relatives, unknown persons, landlords, teachers and some others in the house of rapists or victims, derelict places, barren land, gardens, clump of bamboo, jungle, school compound, workplaces, grocery shops, vehicles, and hotels. The rapists allured the victims with assurance of getting married, offering chocolates or foods, by means of intimidation,

giving threat to kill and finding someone alone at home. There were reports of child rape where they were raped while they went to take the relief goods.

**Attempt to rape:**

In 2020, the newspaper published 40 news reports on rape attempts in which 37 children came under attack. The highest number of rape attempt incidents was recorded in Dhaka district, followed by Narayanganj second position and Pirojpur, Gopalganj in the third position. Attempts were made to rape children by neighbors, stalkers, friends, relatives, unknown persons, teachers and landlords in the house of rapists or victims, derelict places, barren land, gardens, clump of bamboo, jungle, field and workplaces. In these cases, the children were allured with chocolates or foods, by means of intimidation, and finding someone alone at home.

**Sexual abuse:**

In 2020, a total of 12 news reports were published on sexual abuse and in these incidents 16 children fell victim, of whom one boy and 15 girls were mentioned. The highest number of such incidents was recorded in Dhaka and Rajshahi.

**Murder and attempts to murder:**

In 2020, as many as 206 news items on murder of children and attempt to murder on children were published and in these incidents the number of victims was 145, of whom 136 died and 9 were injured. Among the death number, 84 were boys and 52 were girls. In 2020, Dhaka district topped the list of number of news reports on murder of children and attempt to murder on children, followed by Cox's Bazar. The reasons of murder as mentioned in the news items included: family conflict,, dispute over property, rejection of offer for love affairs, complexity I love affair, conflict and quarrel, birth as girl children, anger, protest, mental pressure, and abortive attempt to rape.

**Abduction:**

In 2020, the newspapers published 7 news items pm abduction in which 7 children were reported as victims of whom 5 girls and 2 boys were mentioned. Gazipur topped the list of such news stories in 2020. Those who were involved in the reported incidents of abduction included lover of mother, own father, relatives, political leaders, and teachers, friend of father, neighbor, fiancé, tenant and miscreants. The abductors reportedly did the crimes for money, due to complex relation of love affair, refusal of marriage proposal, for taking revenge and for human trafficking.

**Child marriage:**

Because of the lockdown along with educational institutions many other institutions were off and families considered girls who were sitting at home as a liability, so in 2020, the number of child marriage increased by 60% compared to last year. According to the newspaper reports some 101 children were victims of child marriage. Manusher Jonno foundation and its' helping organizations did a research on child marriage where 935 children became victims of child marriage from January to October. Where 713 marriages were managed to stop by the helping organizations in these ten months.

**Repression:**

In 2020, the newspapers published a total of 12 news stories on repression of children in which the number of victims was 16, of whom one boy and 15 girls were mentioned. The children reported

faced repressions due to refusal of proposal for love affair, for not going to school, for suspicion as stealing, as a result of stalking, for trifling matters, for playing, for lack of attention to studies, for chatting during classes, for being late in attending class, for eating fruit without permission, leaving school without permission, for touching the car of the chairman, for protest against stalking, and for buying food borrowing money. The newspapers reported repression by landlords, parents, school teachers, stalkers, local chairman, employers, neighbors, relatives, step mothers, and colleagues. The news items on physical assault on children by teachers, housewives, and stalkers were published.

### **Suicide:**

In 2020, the newspapers published 45 news stories on suicide that involved 34 children where 32 died. Of them the number of girls involved was 26 and 8 boys were included. In 2020, the highest number of such suicide news items was reported in Tangail district. Such incidents were also recorded in Chattogram and Narayanganj. Reasons of reported suicide included failure or poor performance in examinations, anger with family members, love affair, stalking, rape and rape attempt, work as housemaid, children marriage or efforts to do so, drug addiction, harsh criticism by teachers, stopping education, failure in love affair, and frustration. The reasons further included asking for money, pressure of study, sexual repression of children, asking for motorcycle, and publishing of personal photograph and blackmailing.

### **Children's involvement in crimes:**

In 2020, the newspapers published one news item on children's involvement crime and the number of involved children in such incidents was 2. The news story was reported in Dhaka. The published news item was a rape attempt taken by two children.

### **Disappearance:**

In 2020, the newspapers published 24 news items on disappearance of children in which the number of victims was 22, of whom 15 boys and 7 girls were mentioned. Dhaka district topped the list of such news reports.

### **Acid violence:**

The newspapers published two news items on throwing acid on children in 2020, in which the number of victims was three. The news items on acid violence published in 2020 covered Cumilla and Rajshahi.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Formation of a separate Directorate under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, which shall coordinate all activities relating to children affairs and which shall have administrative departments up to the upazila level;
2. Constitution of a National Children Protection Organization with the initiative of the government and comprising non-government development organizations and other organizations, in order to monitor the child rights situation and take necessary initiatives;
3. Activating Child Labour Unit as the main authority to observe various issues of children affairs, in accordance with National Child Labour Elimination Policy; Updating the list of

hazardous works for children and including children engaged in hazardous works such as household works, and collecting waste into the list;

4. Initially keeping separate budgetary allocations for the children and then distributing the money among the ministries that are dedicated to works for the children;
5. Enforcing existing laws, apart from making people aware of, in order to protect the children in the wake of increasing pornography due to misuse of ICT;
6. Proactive role of the Election Commission and political parties in stopping engaging children in political activities and also protecting children from all kinds of violent activities;
7. Undertaking a detailed national plan in which relevant government, private organizations and autonomous bodies will define their roles and earmark resources in order to meet the needs of the children relating to their protection, living, growth and participation.

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