

The children we forgot

 **Aminur Rahman**

 Last updated at 05:23 pm May 4th, 2018  Published at 07:28 pm May 3rd, 2018



Children of sex workers remain excluded, while their acceptance in the mainstream is either very low or virtually absent in Bangladesh. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) declared that every child has the right to be educated and enjoy other forms of children's rights.

Children of sex workers often suffer from high instances of deprivation, abuse, and social exclusion. They are one of the most vulnerable groups in Bangladesh, often deprived of even the most basic rights, left to suffer from many psycho-social crises.

Their deprivation starts from early childhood, due to the denial and abusive treatment from care-givers and the local community. A study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR) Trust found that half the children of sex workers faced psychological abuse from their own community.

In addition, a significant portion of them faced physical abuse (50%) and sexual abuse (3%).

More than half of them reported that people maintained their distance from them once their identity had been disclosed. In those cases, they are often referred to as "bastard child," "cursed people," "result of the mother's sin," and other hurtful, derogatory remarks.

The older they get, the more they tend to feel psycho-social pressures and stigma from their peers.

Lack of safe housing and proper care is yet another challenge which hampers the overall development of the children of sex workers. Within the sex worker community of Daulatdia brothel, it is a common practice to rear the children, keeping them with paid care-givers, or with the sex workers' parents.

However, in both cases, children are found facing challenges. Due to physical limitations, the old-aged parents of sex workers are often unable to provide adequate care to their children in regard to their nutrition, clothing, and entertainment, which are required for a child's development.

Care-givers, although paid, tend to mistreat children, due to their mother's occupation. The study revealed that around Tk2,000-Tk5,000 is paid to the care-givers for looking after each child.

Although this includes food and accommodation, the care-givers often spend less than the given amount of money and do not provide the children with healthy enough food nor a positive environment. It often leads to malnutrition and unhealthy physical and psychological growth of the children.

For street-based sex workers, it is more difficult to ensure safe housing and adequate care for their children. As a result, they and their children often have to live and sleep on the streets, where the children are at risk of being trafficked and abused.

Moreover, girls are often victims of rape. The lack of social security along with continuous torture and maltreatment by people also cause harmful effects on their mental health.

When children are living out of brothels, they do not see anyone as fathers. And when mothers mention no certain work as their occupation, or if a neighbour speaks negatively of their mothers, they start asking about their occupation.

Bangladesh still needs to have specific focus on the children of sex workers as one of the most vulnerable groups

Respondents reported that children aged between 6-12 years are mostly curious about their mothers' occupation, and the reasons for their fathers' absence. If children become aware that their mothers are sex workers, it brings a negative impact on them, especially on sons.

Sons tend to lose their hopes and expectations about living a decent life in society. They have verbal fights with their mothers, sometimes even leaving their mothers for long periods of time. In addition, they get involved in various illegal activities. Some of them even attempt suicide.

For girls, they often confine themselves in their world. They start wondering whether to adapt their mothers' occupation.

However, being one of the first countries to sign the CRC, and to have the commitment to ensure the rights of children, Bangladesh has already taken steps towards child protection, which are reflected in its national policies and strategic planning.

But the country still needs a specific focus on the children of sex workers as one of the most vulnerable groups. First of all, there is a lack of specific policy which separately focuses on the protection and development of the children of sex workers.

Second, there is a need for an effective childcare system for them. Although some local and international NGOs are providing shelter and care, the results are not lasting, due to their limitation of funds.

In most of the cases, their systems and local level coordinations are gradually becoming inactive after phasing out the projects. To find an effective system, the government or donor agencies can conduct research in this field.

Third, the children of sex workers need psychological therapy from professional psychologists, who have expertise about the specific psycho-social needs of those children.

Although some NGOs are also providing such services, they are inadequate with regards to the accessibility and quality. To this end, a counsellor can be made available at the Upazilla Health Complex of the vulnerable areas.

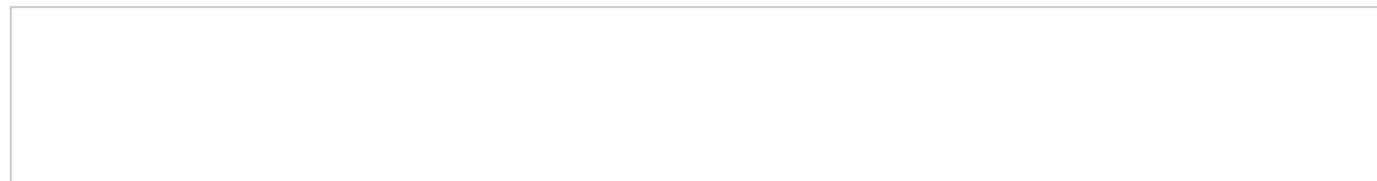
Fourth, community people, service providers, and law enforcement agency members need to be given adequate knowledge and awareness regarding the rights and vulnerability of these children.

Fifth, Local Government Institutes (LGIs) can incorporate or implement some NGO-supported activities which have already brought some success into the protection of the sex workers' children.

For example, coordinated activities by various stakeholders can play a significant role to reduce the stigma against these children.

To build a protective community for these children, attempts need to be made by various stakeholders, keeping pace with the changes taking place in our society.

Aminur Rahman is a Research Officer of Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR) Trust. By profession he is an anthropologist. His areas of research interest are gender violence, child rights, marginalization and social inequality, social exclusion, and human trafficking.



RELATED NEWS



Dear UNESCO, do you have a Plan B?



Blazing summer heat takes toll on children

DT

IG prisons gets threat

DT

Illegal fishing continues in Chitra River

DT

Bangladesh-US relationship is strategic now



The US labour market matters



Bangladesh

Children

Abuse

Discrimination

child rights

Sex Workers

Brothels

UNCRC

LEAVE A COMMENT

Please read our Comment Policy before posting

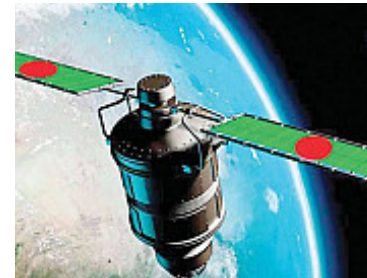
WORTH READING



Deal or no deal?



Lunch



Countdown for
Bangabandhu-1 launch



Friends
from th

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [Advertise](#) [Subscribe](#)

Connect With Us



Copyright © 2012-2018. 2A Media Limited. All Rights Reserved.

8/C, FR Tower, Panthapath, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh.

Kazi Anis Ahmed, Publisher