

INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh a large number of children are deprived of their basic human rights due to unacceptable health, nutrition and education as well as social conditions. In addition, children are exposed to severe forms of physical and mental violence at home, in the work place, in institutions and other public places. The nature and extent of violence against children irrespective of age, sex and class has been increasing day by day. On the whole, our children are not safe despite efforts made by government and non-government organisations in ensuring the rights of the children.

Broadly, violence against children can be defined to include physical, emotional or psychological violence or threat of violence against children perpetuated by individuals, as well as by institutions or society at large. Depriving children of basic necessities of life, health care and education, so much widespread in a developing country like Bangladesh, are encompassed by this holistic definition.

In order to discuss the situation of children in jail in Bangladesh, it is first necessary to understand the position of children in society and the violence many faces, both within the home and outside. A lot of this violence and abuse ultimately causes them to end up in prisons or correction homes. A lot of violence also occurs within these institutions as well.

Acts of Violence against Children in 2001

Children in Bangladesh are subjected to violence in the forms of sexual and physical abuse in many aspects of their lives. In 2001, there were 7 young domestic workers injured by their employees, 3 were raped and 4 killed. Eight year old Zahirul of Khagrachari was beaten by his employer for eating a piece of cucumber without permission. A fifteen year old girl accidentally let her employers child fall off her lap. She was punished with hot oil being poured over her. Then there are types of gross physical and sexual abuse which are reserved almost exclusively for girls. These include physical torture, rape and dowry-related violence and sometimes heinous attacks with acid and other corrosive substances. 14 year old Poppy in Narshingdhi was a victim when her husband threw acid on her over dowry demands. Not only is she scarred for life, she is a victim of child marriage, illegal in Bangladesh. Sexual abuse of children and adolescent girls is a growing problem, but this remains largely hidden due to the stigma attached to the victims of such offences. Newspaper reports of such incidents show that girl children are lured away by the promise of chocolates, biscuits, to play games, watch television or they are ambushed and raped while going to or coming from school or the lavatory. In 2001, a total of 356 cases of rape were documented from the newspapers where the victims were under 16 years of age.⁴

Acid attacks, in which acid is thrown at the face or body of the victim, is a particularly devastating form of violence. The most common circumstances of acid violence are where a girl has been harassed by a boy with proposals of romance or marriage which she has turned down, or in connection with demands for dowry. In the majority of cases the boy or husband aims the acid at the girl's face, seemingly by way of revenge and in order to destroy her future marriage prospects. Acid throwing is committed both within and outside the family. In 2001, 66 reported cases of acid-affected children was recorded from 9 daily newspapers. The majority of the victims are girls, many below the age of 18 years, who rejected sexual advances and marriage proposals.⁵

Children are victims of trafficking and sold to brothels and to be trained as camel jockeys. On 24 May, 2001, Akhtar Mia (4) and Sarkar (5) were rescued from Pripal village near the Bangladesh - India border. They were being trafficked by agents to be trained as camel jockeys in the Middle East. They both hail from Mymensingh.⁶ The underlying causes of trafficking in women and children, range from the expansion of global market forces and a growing materialism perpetuated by the media, to rapid social transformation and the erosion of social values. Moreover, the problem of unemployment, under employment and abject poverty has led to the increase of international trafficking and labour migration of women and children in recent years. They also include continuing cultural attitudes which place a low value on girls. As they are mostly the lowest strata of the society and in their search for alternate opportunities, they fall into more critically vulnerable situations. These factors, together with

the help of unscrupulous exploiters such as pimps, procurers, brother owners, traffickers and agents, trap young girls into sexual exploitation. Trafficking in children is considered an invisible problem as none of the official sources refer to it. In most cases, known persons are the procurers. Once they gain confidence, they can easily entice or lure young girls and children to leave home for better jobs and marriage.

Although Bangladesh has ratified the international convention prohibiting slavery and prostitution, it has been unable to curtail exploitative practices involving children, particularly young girls. There is a general lack of enforcement of legislation against trafficking and prostitution. In the absence of adequate interventions by the government, families themselves try and trace out their children. The process of repatriation, however, is drawn-out and often results in the child being held in 'safe-custody' only to be released on bail, which their families can scarcely afford.

Acts of Violence against Children in 2001*

Months	Killed	Raped	Victims of Acid	Arrested	Suicide	Abducted	Trafficked
January	18	29	1	1	5	10	0
February	7	36	1	0	3	2	0
March	13	37	6	1	3	10	1
April	16	39	8	0	4	3	0
May	17	34	2	0	1	7	2
June	22	52	13	1	10	20	4
July	32	25	9	6	3	14	0
August	17	16	9	0	6	14	0
September	11	9	3	3	2	3	5
October	14	31	5	0	1	6	0
November	22	27	4	1	7	10	0
December	21	21	5	1	4	12	1
Total	210	356	66	14	49	111	13

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Silent Violence

Quite apart from the above-mentioned forms of violence against children, there are other forms of violence taking place on a regular basis. Usually these are not seen as "violence" by our societal culture and thus not reflecting in the various discussions on children and violence, although it is damaging the mental growth and overall development of a particular child as an impact of these "unnoticed violence". Some of the forms of such violence are discussed below:

Physical punishment at home and in educational institutions

Physical punishment is being widely applied for disciplining children at home and at educational institutions. In our society physical punishment is generally considered necessary for disciplining children. A child needs positive discipline and applying positive discipline requires confidence from parents and teachers to bring children up with family and classroom co-operation, rather than adult authority and childish obedience.

All children need guidance and rules but they do not need to be beaten to obey. In most countries, children are beaten or smacked with the assumption that the punishment is "in the best interest of child." Actually, all forms of physical punishment are objectionable as a method of bringing up children, and that physical punishment effects the physical and psychological development of children. Children who have been physically punished more often relate to the humiliation of the punishment rather than the actual physical pain. In an international study of children's perception of their working lives, conducted by Woodhead et.al, (1998), children were asked to describe which circumstances in their lives made them feel bad. Their answers were almost identical. An Ethiopian student who reported that he was

punished in the classroom by his teacher, who put a pencil in between his fingers and squeezed them, describe the feeling: "it was not the pain that hurt me but the feeling of humiliation I underwent when my classmates laughed at me. That was the last day for me to be at the gate of that school." (The Ethiopian Educational Broadcasting Lagadadi radio, 1995).

Often the physical pain is overshadowed by the feelings of humiliation and shame experienced by children who are punished. A child who is constantly exposed to physical punishment faces a risk of losing his/her self-confidence and self-esteem, and as a result may develop negative personality traits such as being excessively aggressive. People who are excessively aggressive were often likely to have experienced severe physical punishment and neglect as children.

What is physical punishment?

Physical punishment involves using some degree of physical force to cause pain or discomfort. Hitting children with a hand or with a cane strap, belt or other object; kicking, shaking, or throwing children; scratching, pinching or pulling their hair; and locking or tying them up are some of the most common examples of physical punishment. In its mildest forms, physical pain is administered without causing injury. In its most extreme form, however, physical punishment leaves noticeable marks and scars or internal injuries, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

a. Reasons for punishment by the parents

In Bangladesh, adults give higher priority to parental rights. Parents who hit their children usually have a past history of receiving the same treatment from their parents when they were children.

Parents often hit out of anger and frustration and because they have no knowledge of alternative methods. Parents also do not have any idea about the adverse impact of physical punishment. These are the basic reasons of punishment by the parents in our country.

According to a recent survey, Bangladeshi parents, in general were, in favour of using mild physical punishment. They were basically confused about how to consider children's opinions, since they lived in a society where children had almost no opinion. The survey found that parents were not much motivated in responding towards children's needs and rights and that some parents practised relatively strict and protected systems of child rearing, while some practised too much freedom, indulgence and inconsistency in rearing children.

b. Reasons for punishment by the teachers

The majority of teachers believe that physical punishment is the best means of discipline. They also believe that students follow school rules better when threatened with a stick. They were not aware about the negative impact of physical punishment. Most of the teacher does not know the alternative techniques. They think physical punishment is the only means to disciplined students. Most of the teachers think that student expect to be physically punished if they are disobedient, and physical punishment is a part of common culture, (a sort of understanding) between the teacher and the student. They think that when physical punishment becomes "institutionalised" in a society, children tend to accept it as part of growing up and physical punishment is beneficial for them.

Violence at the work place

The working children are subject to verbal and physical abuse while working in factories and other informal sectors. In addition to work hazards, children have to face the abusive behavior of their employers simply because they do not have other options to survive. Violence against children in the work place includes using abusive languages, low payment, long working hours, no leisure time or holidays, beating, throwing sharp equipment at children etc. Although some studies have been done to determine the hazards faced by working children no significant effort has been made to determine the level of violence children are facing at their work places, especially in the informal sector which encompass a majority of the working children. Violence in the street:

The street children have to face a daily routine of exploitation and violence. Hooligans, City

Corporation officials and members of the law enforcing agencies subject street children to harassment. Older children as well as adults, including those in positions of public authority, also abuse them. They are exposed to a world of crime with few viable alternatives. Rather than receiving protection and security by those in authority, a life of petty theft and drug-taking leads to beatings, arrest and imprisonment alongside adult offenders in harsh conditions – with no recourse to a compassionate juvenile justice system. Amongst all the children, adolescent girls are most exposed to the dangers of sexual abuse and prostitution on the street, for which they are unjustly punished.

Studies by Save the Children UK show that the police beat street children severely and generally used very abusive language with them. They would pass 'bad' or 'dirty' comments and remarks to the adolescent street girls in particular. The children also said that torture by police normally increased during the night before a hartal. Musclemen (mastan) regularly abuse them and take their hard-earned money by threatening them. Mastans also compelled them to steal and provoked them into buying intoxicant items, smuggle arms and ammunition and to do other 'bad' and dangerous activities. If they protested, mastans would physically torture them and evict them from the area. Each of the street children spoke about how adults misbehaved with them, regardless of their background - whether they are rich or poor, literate or illiterate. In their day-to-day work, the children had to confront abusive adults, who usually called them 'kangali' meaning destitute. The children also experienced verbal or physical abuse from adults whenever they took a seat in a shop or entered a public building. The children felt that they were constantly mistreated and harassed by adults without any reason. According to the children, no street girl wanted to do bad activities, yet they were compelled to do so in order to survive in the streets. It is interesting to note that adults and older children who engaged the girls in 'bad activities' categorised them as 'bad girls.' When the street children wanted to protest against any misdeed or injustice against them, they quickly learnt that it was impossible, as they had no support. They felt helpless and had to passively accept torture for the most part of their life and there was no alternative.

Violence in the Institutions:

Street children in particular are frequently subjected to various forms of institutional violence. Children generally have to suffer abuse from the law enforcing agents in pre-trial and post-trial stages. Police frequently apprehend or arrest children believing them to be criminals. Police are negligent in documenting children's cases and children face abusive behavior from police at the police station, which includes scolding, beating, employing force for realizing false statement, inadequate food, undertaking personal errands for the police etc. Street children never get the opportunity to be properly represented in court. The Magistrate decides their fate based on a one-sided hearing from police.

Incarceration in jail, the correction centers or vagrant home may be for indefinite periods without any follow-up process. Children are denied many basic necessities of life and have to endure very abusive behavior from adult prisoners and jail authorities, as well as authorities at the National Correctional Institutes and vagrant homes. Convicted, under-trial and protective custody children are kept together with adults in jail in contravention with the law.

The shortcomings of the prisons are well known to the authorities concerned. The debilitating conditions of the legal system in relation to children in conflict with the law and the existing situations in detention centres strongly suggest that the prison system itself desperately needs reform. The victims typically represent the most vulnerable sectors of society: the poor, deprived, ignorant and with no standing that would afford them protection from the lawlessness of the law enforcing agencies.

Using children for political activities and for trafficking arms and drugs

The members of political parties and other vested interest groups have been using a large number of children (mostly street children) for different violent activities that include throwing bombs / bricks at police and cars and on the processions of opposition parties. Using children as carriers of arms/ ammunitions, narcotics are also common practice in recent times. In 2001, Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) and Aparajeo Bangladesh jointly carried out a study on 'Using Children in Carrying Arms and other Illegal Activities'. A total of 16 children were interviewed who had been engaged in such activities. The findings of the study showed that people like local political leaders, student leaders, leaders of the transport workers unions, members of the local clubs and musclemen usually use children for illegal activities. The activities include attacks on political opponents, occupying slums/illegal lands, trafficking drugs, collecting tolls from contractors, snatching, pick-pocketing etc.

The amount of payment varies from case to case (ranging from 50 taka – 1000 taka) depending on the importance of the incidents. Besides, these children feel proud becoming a part of terrorist groups, which gives them additional 'honor' in the locality they live in and a sense of security.

Children are more aware than the adults about the risk of getting involved in such activities, however, they usually do not care about the risks. According to the children, some of the main risks they face include the chance of being beaten by the police, ending up in jail, severe injury, receiving abuse and/or physical torture in case of failing the mission etc. Many children have already experienced some of these risks. Usually children are not aware about the long-term negative impact on their lives due to their involvement in such illegal activities.

Early marriage

Early marriage is a violation of child rights. This is an extremely traumatic form of physical and mental abuse against children. Hundreds of children, mostly girls, in the rural areas are exposed to child marriage, although there is a law to prevent it. Most of the parents are not aware about the negative impact of early marriage on both boys and girls in their mental and physical development. Therefore, parents do not hesitate to arrange early marriage, for their 'daughters' in the name of securing their lives.

One of the obvious consequences of the early marriage of girls is violence against young women at family level. Studies show that in 2001, 70 percent of the women who were killed by their husbands were aged between 13 and 18 years.

Reasons for violence against children

The main reason for violence against children could be the conflict of interest and power between adults and children. Adults in Bangladesh usually tend to impose their choices on children without taking into consideration children's expectations or opinions. If children do not want to follow adult's decision they are likely to suffer abusive behavior, physical punishment and other forms of cruelty from adults. Most adults do not recognise the ability of children to express their opinions and have a role in household decision making. Lack of awareness about child rights among most of the adults could also be considered as one of the contributing factors towards the incidents of violence against children. Some specific reasons are discussed below.

1. Lack of awareness about child rights among adults and children

Although children are very welcome in our personal and family life, most adults do not have adequate knowledge about the rights of the children. As a result, in most cases, adults' behavior towards children is not always supportive of the welfare and overall development of the children. Children are also unable to protest against the violation of their rights as they are not fully empowered to do the same.

2. Adults' negative attitude towards children

Adults do not usually see children as responsible opinionated human beings. Rather they consider children as fully dependent on others. It is easy for adults to forget the potential that children have and their special needs as children.

3. Lack of opportunity for children to express opinions

The right to express opinions is one of the fundamental rights of children recognised by national and international provisions. However, in reality, children usually do not get the opportunity to share their own feelings on matters that have a direct or indirect effect on their lives. Adults have a general feeling that children are not capable to form their opinions regarding good and bad things and thus impose decisions on children, which sometimes turn to an act of violence against children.

4. Lack of proper implementation of the laws relating to children

The children of Bangladesh seem to be lucky in the sense that a special law for them, the Children Act, was enacted in 1974 which was quite early in comparison with the emergence of the UNCRC in 1990. The Children Act 1974 provides almost all necessary rules and regulations in order to protect the rights of the children of Bangladesh. However, it is really unfortunate that all those things are yet to be fully materialised.

There is a strong link between violence against children and proper implementation of the laws that are supposed to protect their of the children. It has been observed that in most cases, the perpetrators easily escape the judicial procedure. As most of the child victims belong to the poor section of the society, they cannot afford the cost (in terms of time and money) of the long process of justice.

5. Non-availability of children's own organisations

There is no strong and effective children's organisation, especially in the rural areas, through which children could mobilise themselves in order to protest against violent activities. There is also a lack of coordination among the existing children's organisations.

6. Poverty

Due to the poor economic condition at family level, many children suffer abusive behavior and physical torture by their parents. In some cases, failing to provide basic necessities parents force their children into income earning activities at a very early age, which in turn exposed children to various violent situations.

Steps by the Government to ensure the Safety of Children

The most important step made by the Bangladesh government towards national law and policy with regards to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, has been the formulation of a National Policy on Children in December 1994. The principle objectives of the policy are to formally harmonize all child development activities in the country with the provisions of UNCRC. It declares six general commitments.

- Safe birth and survival;
- Proper educational and psychological development;
- Ensuring family environment for development ;
- Providing assistance to children in difficult circumstances;
- Ensuring the best interests of the child; and
- Protecting children's legal rights and thus protect them from discrimination.

It was followed by National Plan of Action for Children 1997-2002 which was adopted in November 1998, designed especially to continue the implementation of the UNCRC in Bangladesh.

Some initiatives taken by the NGOs

Many non-government organizations in Bangladesh have a child rights component. Some are mentioned below:

BRAC started a project called Adolescent Peer Organised Network (APON) in 1993 under its poverty eradication and women empowerment programme. The main objective of the APON project is to ensure economic empowerment of the adolescent girls from disadvantaged families. The idea was that if the poor adolescent girls could earn their livelihood then they would be able to protect themselves from violence. APON has three components namely, Life Skill (daily hygiene, reproductive health etc.), Awareness (legal rights) and Violence. Under the violence component, BRAC provides livelihood training to adolescent girls that includes photography, agriculture, nursery, poultry and computer. After completion of the training BRAC provides them with credit so that they can set up their own business. In some cases, BRAC supports adolescents to make linkages with other projects (e.g. Rural Development Programme for agriculture training).

There are 2300 adolescent girls aged between 14 and 19 involved in the APON project in 7 areas at the moment. The areas are: Natore, Rajshahi, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Chandina, Feni and Chittagong. The APON project enrolled only those adolescent girls who were previously involved with BRAC one way or another. Some of them came from Adolescent Reading Center project, some came from the non-formal schools and some were the children of the BRAC's beneficiaries.

Apart from the livelihood activities, the adolescent girls hold weekly meetings to share experience and learning among themselves. Besides, peer motivation is another regular activities for these adolescents.

In 1997, the NGO Breaking the Silence organised a two-day national workshop, where a large number of parents and other adults took part. The issue of non-commercial sexual abuse against children was discussed at length and it was felt by the participants that there should be regular activities in addressing the issue.

Since then, Breaking the Silence has been conducting their awareness programmes among different adult groups. They believe that prevention is the best policy in reducing non-commercial sexual abuse against children. If adults, especially parents, are aware about the issue, it should not be a difficult task to protect children from this kind of abuse. Therefore, they decided to concentrate on the need of raising the awareness of adults, especially parents.

The main activities that are carried out by the organisation include meetings with teachers at formal and non-formal schools, social counseling for parents and children, regular meetings with parents, distributing leaflets and brochures, workshops and capacity building of NGOs and other social organisations.

The Center for Mass Education in Science (CMES) initiated a project called The Adolescent Girls' Programme (AGP) in 1991. The objective of the programme is to empower girls through continued education, skill training, awareness about health, reproductive health, social and legal rights, family life, cash income earning, access to credit and leadership development. 16,000 adolescents from the most disadvantaged families (girls –14000, boys – 2000) aged between 11 and 19 years have been enrolled till now, in 20 projects divided into 4 zones throughout the country.

The main components of the AGP are Gender Sessions, Education and Skill Training, Leadership for the Girls, Home to Home Interventions in Health and Environment, Peer Education, Credit Scheme, Cultural Development and Participant's Conventions. There are some activities where both boys and girls take part. Adolescent boys are brought into the programme so that gender awareness is developed among boys and girls equally. These activities include joint gender sessions, joint conventions and joint social actions.

Apart from the economic activities, girls get involved in active interventions under the component of Social Actions to prevent early marriage, dowry, discrimination etc. They also take up activities to help the community such as repairing roads or bamboo bridges, provide relief during natural disasters and organise protests against issues relating to gender.

Shoishob Bangladesh is a pioneer organisation in Bangladesh in addressing the issue of violence against domestic helpers of which ninety percent are girls. Four types of violence monitored care by Shoishob, namely, physical, sexual, mental and social. Shoishob's activities are solely based in Dhaka City since its inception in 1991.

The main activities are:

- Learning center
- Active employers' meeting
- Half-way house
- Action against abuse

There are 203 learning centers that are operational at the moment in 6 thanas in Dhaka city where around 4,500 girls aged between 6 and 17 years are receiving basic education (Bangla, Math and social awareness). The learners stay at the centers from 3-5 p.m. 6 days a week. The employers of the respective area provide the space for the learning centers.

Under the activity of active employers' meeting, Shoishob holds quarterly meetings with employers, where rights and responsibilities of the domestic girls as well as employers are discussed in order to motivate the latter. Emergency meeting(s) with the employers also take place as and when necessary.

Under the activity Action Against Abuse, Shoishob assess a case of abuse against a particular girl and initially try to solve it through other employers. In case of failing to solve the problem through employers, they refer it to the legal aid organisations like ASK, BNWLA etc. for taking legal action, although there are very few instances where Shoishob had to refer cases to the legal aid organisations. There is a halfway house for the victims of domestic violence, who wait for legal action.

Step Towards Development (STD) has been working as a major gender network of the country with 180 local NGOs in 60 areas. The main objective of STD is to develop an institutional framework for the local NGOs and community to institutionalise gender for sustainable development.

Their main activities are

- Education, awareness, advocacy and campaign
- Develop local trainers group
- Developing organisational management capacity for project planning from gender perspective
- Gender policy development for network members
- Develop gender sensitive monitoring, evaluation and reporting system of the local organisations
- Information collection, documentation and dissemination
- Social volunteer group and students volunteer group development
- Asses changes and impacts of different initiatives taken at local levels

One of the key strategies of STD is to directly work with the community people e.g. cultural activists, teachers, social entrepreneurs etc. in addressing the issue of gender more effectively at community level. These community groups become responsible to take appropriate measures whenever any discrimination occurs against women.

Under the broad area of gender, STD has a special focus on violence against the girl child. In order to reduce discrimination against girls, STD has taken up activities such as producing posters, campaign against early marriage, producing audio-visual documentaries, organising school debates and discussions with children (both boys and girls) in the respective working areas. Besides, social mobilisation involving community pressure groups is an on-going process to protect girls from violence.

Nari Pokkha is a platform for women working as pressure group at local and national levels in designing and implementing women-sensitive national programmes and policies. Through its four major components, Nari Pokkha has been addressing the issue of violence against women at family and community levels. The components are:

- Networking
- Monitoring
- Counseling for women victims of domestic violence
- Action Research

There are 300 women's organisations throughout the country, who belong to the Nari Pokkha network. Being part of national level activities, these organisations are aiming to create a broader women's movement against all sorts of discrimination and violence against women. Nari Pakkha provides them support in the area of understanding and clarification of knowledge regarding violence, through meetings, workshops and trainings.

Under the monitoring component, Nari Pakkha monitors police stations, hospitals, the judiciary, etc to oversee the procedural gaps and attitudes towards the victims of violence. They share their findings with relevant authorities to improve the existing practices. They also provide training to other organisations to do the same.

Counseling is a regular activity for the victims of domestic and social violence. Minor girls need intensive counseling when Nari Pokkho become the victims of sexual abuse. For the rape victims Nari Pokkha also provide support to do medical examinations properly and provide legal support during the trial.

Nari Pokkha conducts action researches on various policy issues, which are directly linked to the interest of women.

Side by side, Nari Pokkha provides monitoring training to its 20 partners (these are local legal aid NGOs). After receiving training from Nari Pokkha these NGOs are expected to monitor government interventions in the areas of hospital, jails and courts, where a large number of women and girls regularly come for various reasons.

International Conventions

Under Article 19 of the UNCRC, children have a right to protection from violence, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation while in the care of parents or anyone acting in their place. Both physical and mental forms of abuse and maltreatment are included, and sexual abuse is specifically mentioned. The duty of the ratifying State to protect children from sexual abuse in all its forms is also stated in Article 34, (for example by using them as prostitutes). This includes action to prevent children being persuaded or forced to take part in illegal sexual activity. A failure to uphold these rights is likely to involve the violation of other rights, in particular, the right to education and to rest and leisure (Article 31). Article 37 guarantees protection to children against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Where a child has suffered physical or psychological damage as a result of abuse, maltreatment or torture, ratifying State must take steps to aid the child's recovery and social reintegration (Article 39). Bangladesh became a signatory of the UNCRC and ratified it in

Conclusion

Children are probably the most neglected members of society and hardly have any voice, even within the home. As a result, they are consistently becoming easy victims of all sorts of violence. Though there is the Children Act 1974 purported to dealing with juvenile justice, even that, too is inadequate. Furthermore, the legal system, especially the criminal justice system – and more specifically the law enforcement agency – are indifferent to such laws and more often than not treat children just as they would treat adult criminals. Violence against children must stop and the judiciary, law enforcing agents and the parents and guardians of children themselves, must be sensitised to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the laws protecting children in Bangladesh. Furthermore, children need to be protected from vested interest groups and acts of impunity towards children by those purporting to protect society must be dealt with seriously and in accordance with the law.