

# CHILD LABOUR IN SHRIMP FRY COLLECTION IN TARGETED UPAZILAS IN BANGLADESH

Global March against Child Labour and Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum conducted a mapping in three targeted Upazilas (Paikgacha and Koira Upazila of Khulna and Soronkhola Upazila of Bagerhat District) in southern Bangladesh to understand the prevalence and causes of child labour in shrimp fry collection.

Below are some key findings and recommendations:

## Child Labour Findings



- No child labour found in processing plants.
- Some factories engage children as contractual workers
- Other supply chain actors, such as arats, depots, ice manufacturing, transportation, packaging may employ child labour for short time and for light work
- Work done by the children in depots and other layers of supply chain is not considered hazardous work
- Child labour (both boys and girls) are predominantly engaged in wild fry catching, sometimes independently and sometimes along with their parents.
- Children aged between 12-17 works in shrimp fry catching and as day labourers in shrimp farms and children aged 7-8 years also go for fry catching along with their parents.
- Huge wage gap between adults and children. If adult gets 500 taka per day, a child gets 80 taka and sometimes they get only food without any wages



## Education Findings

- Almost all the children get enrolled in primary schools but are irregular.
- About 70% of children belonging to small and marginal shrimp farming families can study up to class eight or nine. Only a few can complete Secondary or Higher Secondary Education

## Root causes of child labour in shrimp supply chain

### Push Factors



- Household poverty
- Indebtedness of the family
- Social and cultural acceptance of child labour
- Lack of awareness about the long term effects of child labour
- Lack of adequate social protection services
- Economic shocks (due to sudden and long term illness of the adult income earning family members and climate induced natural disasters)

### Pull Factors

- Low wage
- Vulnerability to exploitation
- High demand of wild fries, independent nature of work
- Inability of the small farmers to hire workers
- Desire to earn money to satisfy personal wishes, such as buying junk foods, recreational items etc.
- Availability of work in shrimp farms, arats etc.
- Lack of strong monitoring and weak enforcement of laws

## Impact of COVID-19 and Amphan Cyclone



- Child labour increased in aftermath of Amphan and COVID 19.
- At the initial period of COVID 19 caused lockdowns, the livelihoods of the fry catchers and workers from other shrimp supply chain that includes children were affected harshly.
- Fry catchers family could not go for fry catching, and workers at the arat and depot level had to work with half of the wages they get in normal time.
- Temporary workers of processing plants lost their jobs since the factories were closed.
- Lack of support from the government and non-government organizations.
- Due to irregularities and bias of the local government representatives, support of different social safety net programs does not reach the poor people of the targeted Upazilas.

## Recommendations

- Develop a statistical database on the number of children engaged in different kinds of child labour including in the shrimp supply chain and prepare socio-economic profile of their households for evidence-based interventions
- Do a power analysis of relevant stakeholders ( local and national government officials, local government representatives, national-level policymakers, business associations to understand their position on the issue and design influencing interventions engaging them accordingly.
- Organise the children, parents, local community women and men in groups to make them aware and sensitize about the issues of child labour, its adverse consequences and their rights as recognized by different national and international instruments.
- Design interventions engaging the employers of children to make them aware of child labour, its consequences, and their responsibilities as derived from different national and international instruments.
- Take interventions in activating local level business associations to strengthen their negotiating role in promoting their businesses in a sustained and socially responsive manner.
- Build linkage with existing social safety net programmes and ensuring that the targeted children and their families access them, and explore possible collaboration with different initiatives working in the shrimp sector or on child rights and child labour.
- Carry out analysis on the adequacy and effectiveness of the available social safety net programs for targeted groups in targeted areas and do national-level policy advocacy on special allocation for the targeted communities.
- Identify like-minded parliamentarians and influence them in engaging budget advocacy for the special allocation for the social protection of the targeted children and their families.
- Mobilise locally active and trusted NGOs and CSOs in disseminating message about the child labour issues focusing on the internationally recognized concept of child labour that can address the issue of social and cultural acceptability of child labour.
- Carry out collaborative policy advocacy to bring shrimp fry catching under government regulations and ensure enlistment of fish/shrimp fry catching as hazardous works.
- Engage in the ongoing process of reviewing of National Action Plan on Elimination of Child Labour to ensure that the concerns of child labour in the shrimp supply chain are adequately addressed.
- Devise strategy activating government-led local monitoring bodies, such as district and Upazila based child welfare boards.
- Explore the opportunities to engage with buyers at the international level to influence them for a special project targeting the children in shrimp fry catching from CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) perspectives.