



What we do in Bangladesh

- We've persuaded 5,252 employers to adopt a code of conduct to protect working children
- We're enabling 7,500 children from minority ethnic groups to get an education
- We've helped 53,000 children recover from Cyclone Sidr



Just over half the population of 157 million people are aged 15 or under. Many children and young people don't have enough to eat and can't get treatment when they are ill. Many have to earn money to help support their family. Although 85% of children start primary school, nearly half of them drop out. However, Bangladesh has made good progress in reducing poverty over the past 20 years. The number of children who die before their fifth birthday has halved since 1990, and the proportion of the population living on less than US\$1 a day has fallen to 30%.

The low-lying delta lands of Bangladesh – home to 30 to 40 million people – are particularly prone to floods and cyclones. Following two years of emergency rule, a new government was elected in December 2008, promising greater political stability. The indigenous minority ethnic groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, one of the areas where we work, suffer discrimination. Until recently there was a strong military presence in the region.

Save the Children in Bangladesh

We've worked in Bangladesh since 1970, providing relief during and after the war for independence from Pakistan. Since then we've focused on improving children's nutrition, health and education both in towns and the countryside. We've also developed a model for protecting children caught up in emergencies by running community-based safe places.

With local partner organisations, we're working to protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation, especially those who have to work or are in prison. We're also helping more children get a good quality basic education. We work mainly in the flood and cyclone-prone areas of the delta, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Kurigram in the north.

Key areas of work

We're helping children recover from Cyclone Sidr

In November 2007, Cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh, leaving 200,000 families homeless. Within three weeks we'd set up 40 child-friendly spaces. This meant that 13,000 children had a safe place to be, a nutritious meal every day, and clean drinking water.

We provided temporary shelter for 3,000 children and their families, and supplied teaching and play materials to 500 preschools attended by nearly 53,000 children. We gave cash or books to more than 1,000 children who would otherwise have had to drop out of school.

We're continuing to help with the recovery by providing cash, materials and training so that parents can support their children. So far this has benefited 25,800 children. We've also trained nearly 7,000 girls and boys in how to prepare for and protect themselves from future disasters.

We're campaigning to keep children out of jail

Most of the children who get arrested by the police are from the poorest sectors of society. Many of them live on the street. We're campaigning to stop children being sent to jail, where they are often abused by adult prisoners.

Thanks to our lobbying, 57 district jails now have fewer child prisoners. And all of them have separate cells so children aren't locked up with adult prisoners. We're lobbying the government to improve and implement the 1974 Children Act so that children living on the street, for example, aren't locked up and get the support they need.

There's still much to be done. We want fewer children arrested, more community-based alternatives to prison, and a juvenile justice system that considers children and young people's needs and rights. As a result of our work, there have been numerous reports in the press and on TV about the plight of arrested children. And, partly as a result of our advocacy work, juvenile courts were set up in four cities.

We're improving the lives of working children

About 4.9 million Bangladeshi children aged 5–14 work to support their families or for their own survival. They do many different jobs – as domestic workers, garage helpers, factory workers, porters in railway stations and markets, workers in small foundries. The hours are

usually long and the pay low. The conditions are often hazardous. Working children are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Most don't have access to education.

Working with the government and NGOs in five districts, we've helped to set up special schools that are open during break times and at night. Here, working children can drop in and catch up on the education they're missing. So far, 2,500 children between the ages of 5 and 12 are benefiting. About 2,600 children are able to get free basic medical advice and treatment through a referral system to NGO-run clinics and government health centres.

As a result of our lobbying, children's employers in 5,252 small factories and workshops have signed up to a code of conduct. This means that nearly 10,000 working children are now getting one hour off each day for education, one day off a week, a first aid service, regular wages and a safer working environment. Also, in Kurigram, 149 children are taking part in a savings scheme, so they can save a portion of their earnings.

We're helping children from minority ethnic groups get a good start in life

Children from indigenous minority ethnic groups are often turned away by teachers and administrators because they don't speak fluent Bangla. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts we've helped to adapt the preschool curriculum and materials to incorporate local languages and traditions. Together with local teachers, we've produced 20 'big books' for use with the whole class, and collected local stories, rhymes, songs and riddles to use in the classroom. As a result, 2,500 indigenous children now have access to good quality preschool education in their mother tongue.

We've helped the Hill District Council produce teaching materials in local languages so now nearly 7,500 primary-aged children are being taught in their mother tongue. The local government has also changed the school calendar to fit with local customs.

We're enabling communities to protect their children

It's not just at work that children's rights are violated. For example, approximately half of Bangladeshi girls are married before they're 18. Most disabled children never go to school. Street children are often arrested and put in jail.

Together with our partner organisations, Save the Children has set up community child protection committees. Children can take their complaints to their local committee. The committees also act as a watchdog, rescuing children from jail or young teenage girls from marriage and asserting the right of disabled children to get an education. Over the last year, 63 children brought their problems – ranging from rape to abduction – to the committees, which also distributed warm clothes to 560 children.

With our support, 14 institutions in Kurigram – including the police, teachers associations and parents' groups – have signed up to a community code of conduct. This means they've

promised to make sure that all children are registered and educated up to class 5, that girls aren't forced into early marriage and that all children are protected from violence and abuse.

We're saving children's lives

Despite Bangladesh having halved child mortality and reduced childhood malnutrition, nearly half of all children below the age of five are either underweight or stunted. Malnutrition is still an underlying cause in two-thirds of the deaths of children under five. Children often die, even when correctly diagnosed with malnutrition, because they don't receive the treatment they need.

We're targeting the poorest 10% of children in the areas where we work, ensuring they have access to healthcare, proper sanitation and safe water. Over the past year, thanks to our financial and practical support – such as providing cash, seeds and fertilizer, and boats and nets for fishing families – nearly 11,000 children are getting an adequate diet and going to school regularly.

We're also working to ensure that health clinics always treat malnourished children according to the guidelines laid down by the World Health Organization. As a result, health and nutrition professionals have agreed to develop their own, national guidelines to use both in emergency and day-to-day settings.

As part of Save the Children's global Get on Track campaign in September 2008 – to persuade donors and governments to 'get on track' to reduce child mortality by 2015 – 15,000 children joined in media and public activities calling for fairer and better healthcare and nutrition. The event was widely publicised in both print and electronic media.



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