

# **VIOLENCE AGAINST UNDER PRIVILEGED WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES IN BANGLADESH**

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## **Introduction**

Bangladesh has made a steady growth in its economic sector, opening up an era of sustainable development. A constant threat to sustainable development is human rights violation, particularly the violence against under privileged women and children (VAUPWC) which has been associated with human civilization and evident from the pre-historic times. The term “violence against women (VAW)” means “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” (UN General Assembly Resolution 48/104). Termed as a global epidemic VAW is as much fatal as any serious diseases or accidents that causes deaths of women of reproductive ages (World Bank 1993). WHO’s multi-country study (10 countries including Bangladesh) demonstrates that most of the women in the study areas experienced physical and sexual spousal violence in their lifetime which ranged from 15% to 71% (WHO, 2005).

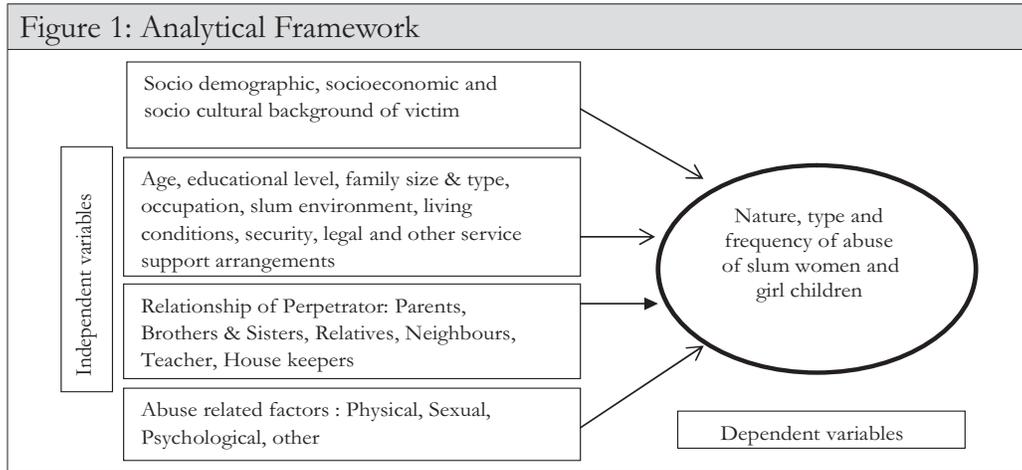
‘Underprivileged’ refers to persons or groups of people who are deprived of a decent standard of living, adequate education, and economic security through poverty, discrimination, and so on (Webster’s Dictionary, 2010). In this study, being ‘underprivileged’ is particularly an issue of having low social status and economic capital, being uneducated, even illiterate, and being economically poor. The rural destitute, slum dwellers, floating/street children, domestic helps, prostitutes, garments workers, daily labourers, various transport helpers, beggars etc, all belong to under privileged group in Bangladesh. However, considering the resource and time constraints the study has been categorically focused on to slum women and girl children of Dhaka city. A slum is a densely populated run-down area of a city characterized by substandard housing. 46% of these houses are one-roomed and the average size is 120 square feet. Ventilation, drinking water, electricity and sewerage facilities are absent in these houses.

Most of the slum dwellers have to spend money for drinking water and use of toilets, which is unaffordable for many. They are also deprived of primary health care facilities. The child death rate is unusually high, more than 15%. Most of the children suffer from malnutrition. The slum dwellers also suffer from periodic eviction for no fault of their own. In every aspect of life, slum girls and women routinely bear burdens and endure treatment that reflects their unequal status.

The UN In-Depth Study (UN, 2006) and VAW Survey 2011 by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reports wide range of prevalence of violence against under privileged women and girls in Bangladesh. This violence has far-reaching consequences for women, their children and community and society as a whole. Women who experience violence suffer a range of health problems and their ability to earn a living and to participate in public life is diminished.

In South Asian civilization the female child is not believed to be a gift of the God to be nurtured with love, care and affection. Since the time of her birth, even when she is in her mother's womb (if it detected that it is a girl child) from that moment the inequity starts. Due to poverty education remains a myth for a slum girl child, though incredible success have been recorded up to primary level, but above that level the drop rate is very significant, poverty being the main cause. Being one of the initial signatories to the United Nations Convention on elimination of violence and following the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) 1995 Bangladesh has initiated multi-sectoral approach for holistic and coordinated arrangements where the under privileged women and children victims can get all required services and supports from one place. However, we observe that in spite of having Constitutional Provisions, Supreme Court's Directives and many legal protections of women in the society this form of violence is still continuing and in some cases are increasing day-by-day as evidenced from the various manifestations in the daily news papers and Medias. So apart from enacting laws and improving legal system we must find out the socio-economic factors those cause the violence to occur upon the voiceless and peaceful slum women and girl children.

Since there are not many researches available on women and girl children of Dhaka Slums, this study will try to unveil the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables to ascertain the nature, type and frequency of violence against slum women and girl children. A conceptually devised analytical framework to be used for the said purpose is shown below:



The paper will unfold with an overview of violence against under privileged women and children in Bangladesh followed by enumeration of institutional responses in terms of scopes, opportunities and limitations to VAUPWC. There after findings will be analysed with respect to analytical framework to paint the exact picture of VAUPWC in Bangladesh and will finally recommend measures to combat VAUPWC with a view to protecting honour, dignity and human rights of women and girl children of the slum society.

## **Violence Against Under Privileged Women and Children in Bangladesh-An Overview**

### **Nature of Violence Against Women (VAW)**

**Physical Violence:** Physical abuse is that which causes bodily pain, harm, or danger to life, limb, or health or impair the development of the health of victim. (The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010).

**Psychological Violence:** Psychological abuse includes insults, ridicule, humiliation or threats of any nature; harassment; or restrictions on mobility, communication or self-expression.

**Sexual Violence:** Sexual abuse is a conduct of behaviour that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the dignity of the victim. Nature of sexual violence is diversified.

**Rape:** If any male person except in marriage tie, without the consent or by any deceitful means, cohabits with a woman then it shall be presumed that he has raped her (The Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children Act, 2000).

**Sexual Harassment:** Sexual Harassment includes a wide range of activities. Few of them are : (i) undesirable sexual appeal/facial expression; (ii) forced sexual relation; (iii) exhibition of pornography; (iv) sexually provoking jokes/comments, letters, telephone calls, mobile calls, SMS, etc.; (v) recording still and videos to blackmail and last but not the least, building sexual relationship by pretending or false promising (Writ Petition No : 8769/2010).

**Economic Violence:** That includes deprivation of financial resources or property, forbidding the use of articles of daily necessities, transferring without consent or prohibiting the victim from applying legal rights for his/her own assets and so on.

**Burn Violence:** Abuse by any burning object like, hot water, hot things, fire of burner, cigarette searing, kerosene oil, fire from lamp etc.

**Acid Violence:** It means the person who was physically affected by acid thrown or by any kind of acid (The Acid Control Act, 2002).

**Nature of Violence against Children** (UNICEF, 2014).

**Physical Violence:** It includes all corporal punishment and all other forms of torture, degrading treatment as well as physical bullying and hazing by adults or by other children and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort.

**Psychological Violence:** It is often described as psychological maltreatment, mental abuse, verbal abuse and emotional abuse or neglect and also include psychological bullying/threatening via information and communication technologies (ICTs) known as 'cyber-bullying'. (UN Document CRC/GC/13, 2011).

**Sexual Violence:** It comprises any sexual activities imposed by an adult on a child against which the child is entitled to protection by criminal law.

**Neglect or Negligent Treatment:** It means the failure to meet children's physical and psychological needs, protect them from danger or obtain medical care, birth registration or other services when those responsible for their care have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so.

## Prevalence of Violence

The prevalence of violence against women and girl children (VAWC) is high in Bangladesh. The leading newspapers of Bangladesh almost daily find a place for banner news in various manifestations. Women and girl children of slums face similar violence everywhere they go, safe to say, from womb to tomb. Almost all researches revealed that in-house violence on women and children of any society is many times more than violence outside which is world-wide termed as 'Domestic violence' (DV) and encompasses all forms of violence.

VAUPWC also takes place in the work and public places in the form of extortion, sexual exploitation etc. and by dint of social media, and technologies the news is in the air soon as it occurs. These have both positive and negative consequence on victim. BBS 2011 survey shows that as many as 87% of currently married women reported to have experienced some kind of violence in any form in that year. Regarding violence against women by partners, the rate for physical violence is 67% but the rate of psychological violence is 82% and economic violence is 53%. (BBS, 2013). In case of burn violence, it is caused by hot stick or cigarette. The total number of affected women and girl children are 86.44% (MSPVAW Baseline Survey, 2008, p. iv).

The ICDDR,B-Naripokkho survey reported that the percentage of women who had experienced sexual abuse by an intimate partner during their lifetime was 37.4 per cent in the urban area and 49.7 per cent in the rural areas of Bangladesh (ICDDR,B 2010). According to a UNICEF report released in 2011, one-third of women aged 20-24 in Bangladesh were married by the age of 15, and about two-thirds were married by the age of 18.

A survey conducted in Bangladesh in 2006 reported that within urban areas the prevalence of physical and /or sexual violence against women and girls of ages 10-59 years was 66% in the slums as compared to 45% in non-slum areas (Health Survey 2006). A statistics on VAWC related information published in the 24 National Dailies is appended below in Table 1.

<b>Table 1: Statistics on Consequences of VAWC 2009-2014</b>										
Year	Physical Violence			Sexual Violence			Burn and Acid Violence			Total
	Consequence			Consequence			Consequence			
	Injury	Murder	Suicide	Injury	Murder	Suicide	Injury	Murder	Suicide	
2009	283	779	150	456	77	5	122	36	14	1922
2010	674	935	340	710	84	23	167	38	8	2979
2011	652	1383	497	908	75	32	160	62	13	3782
2012	928	1382	690	1046	75	20	157	44	15	4357
2013	729	1474	799	1185	99	15	143	32	9	4485
2014	899	1547	865	1048	105	18	135	47	12	4676
Total	4165	7500	3341	5353	515	113	884	259	71	22201

**Factors Contributing to VAWC in Slums.** Numerous factors cause VAUPWC in the slum areas. It is not possible to cover the entire spectrum in detail due to size limitation of this paper therefore; the important ones are listed below:

- Traditional Practices.
- Mindset of the People.
- Poverty.
- Lack of Education and Awareness.
- Dowry System.
- Early Marriage.
- Son Preference.
- Improper Housing.
- Improper Washroom and Toilet Facilities.
- Lack of Religious Motivation and Practices.
- Lack of Trust on Legal System and Law Enforcing Agencies.
- Lack of Community Involvement.
- Lack of Economic Independence and Income.
- Use of Drugs.
- Polygamy, Adultery and Perversion.
- Childhood Experience of the Abuser.

## **Magnitude and Socioeconomic Costs of VAWC in Bangladesh**

The experience of violence can affect the foetus in the womb. More specifically, when maternal levels of the stress hormone cortisol are raised during pregnancy, the result is poor foetal growth and negative effects on brain development (Bilkis, 2015). Violence against women may result in unwanted pregnancy and the emotional and physical strain can lead to suicide.

Children, in particular, can be direct witnesses to spousal violence. Children in violent families may also be victims of abuse in childhood and later when grows up male child may turn into a perpetrator. The violated girls chose a darker life when family and society ignore them. These damaged children are trafficked to prostitutions by a criminal group and instead of care they find themselves in the horrors of atrocities (Friedberg 2000, p. 72).

Violence in marriage or within families is perceived as the most undesirable situation for women because at home where they should have security and worthy position, instead they are usually in threat of possible intentional attacks by the closest ones which consequently have physical impact as well as mental ones. The 'dowry-deaths' has become synonymous with wife battering and DV (Sagar, 2011, p. 129). Physically and/or sexually violated women face different reproductive health problems, mostly gynecological. Even abusive husbands suffer from sexually transmitted diseases (STD) that ultimately makes women vulnerable to STDs as well to many other common psychological problems. (Fikreeu and Bhati 1999).

## **Institutional Responses to VAWC in Bangladesh**

**Institutional Arrangements:** The arrangement for the under privileged women and children victims of violence is the major focus of this paper. Different types of arrangement have been made for the women and children victims of violence by the Government/ International Non-government/ Private organizations including the UN. A number of laws have been amended and new legislations made to prevent VAWC in Bangladesh.

## **State and International Institutional Measures for Advancement of Women and Children**

**The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh** has addressed 'Gender Discriminations' and rights of women and children in various articles, such as, articles 27, 28.4 and 31 respectively.

**International Commitments and Declarations:** A few are highlighted below:

- Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979.
- Convention on the Right of the Child 1989.
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993.
- The Beijing Declaration and the platform for Action 1995.

**United Nations Campaign to End VAWC:** A few are mentioned below:

- UNITE to End VAW
- International Day for the Elimination of VAW (UN Resolution 54/134)
- The 16 Days of Activism for No VAWC

## **Government Initiatives to Prevent VAUPWC Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA)**

The MoWCA as part of the National Women Machinery acts as the key ministry on behalf of the Government on issues of gender equality and women's advancement and to promote and coordinate a broader and more consistent response by all government agencies to the needs and priorities of women and children. There is a National Council for Women and Children Development (NCWCD) headed by Hon'ble Prime Minister who provides policy and implements critical policy decisions related to women's and children's development.

**The Central Cell to Prevent VAWC.** The cell receives monthly reports from VAW Committees of 64 districts, Department of Women Affairs, Jatiya Mahila Sangstha, Police Headquarters, MSPVAW and NGOs. These reports are compiled, edited and presented in the meeting of Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee to Prevent VAWC and prevention of dowry and follow up the cases.

**Department of Women Affairs (DWA).** It has taken the following steps to curb violence:

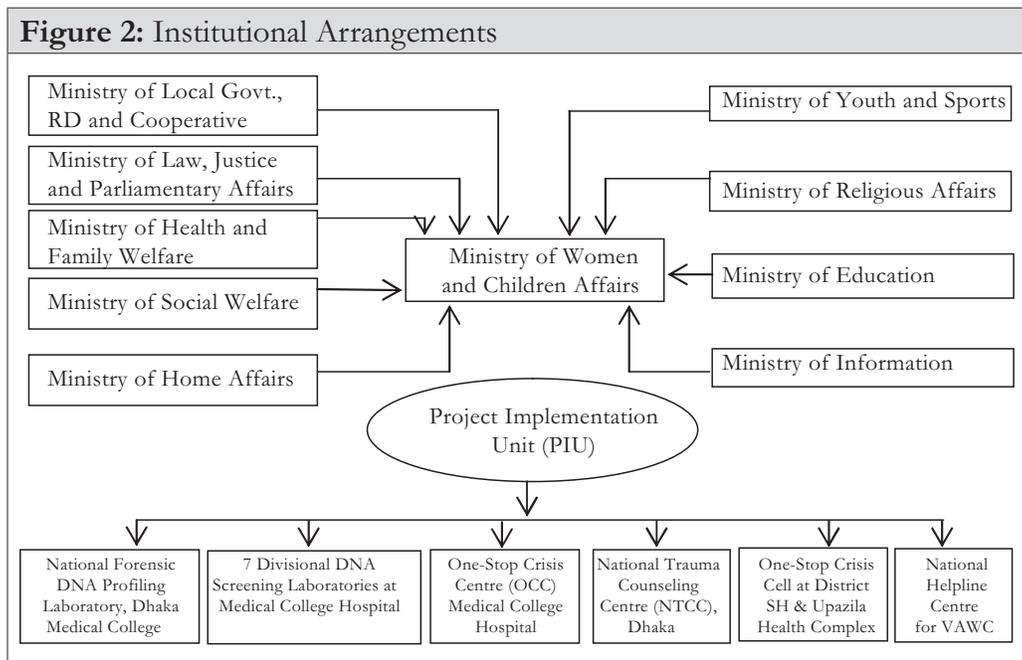
- Legal Assistance Cell for the Prevention of VAW
- Home Shelter for Women and Children Victims with Free Facilities
- A 100 Beds Safe Custody with Free Support Services for Women Children and Adolescent

### Jatiya Mahila Sangstha (JMS)

The legal aid cell is composed of one legal adviser, two executive members of JMS and an officer of Sangstha. Oppressed women are given free services and in the event of failure of mitigation, cases are referred to the court.

### Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women (MSPVAW)

MSPVAW of the MoWCA is jointly implemented by the Government of Bangladesh and Government of Denmark since 2000 in collaboration with 10 partner Ministries (MSPVAW, 2000-2016). This arrangement has been scheduled to continue up to June 2021. This is illustrated in the figure below:



Other Arrangements of MSPVAW are :

- **One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC):**

Eight One-Stop Crisis Centres have been established in districts Medical College Hospitals to provide all required services of violence from one place.



- **One-Stop Crisis Cell:** 60 One-Stop Crisis Cells have been established to make linkage among the government and non-government organizations, civil societies and other stakeholders to extend support to the victims of violence.
- **National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory (NFDPL):** To ensure speedy and fair trial of the incidence of VAWC the NFDPL has been established in Dhaka Medical College Campus.
- **Divisional DNA Screening Laboratory:** To identify the criminals and support the victims seven DNA Screening Laboratories have been established in seven divisional Medical College Hospitals.
- **National Trauma Counseling Centre (NTCC):** It has been established for strengthening psychosocial counseling for the women and children victims of violence.
- **National VAW Database:** Was established to retain data on the incidences of VAWC across the country.
- **Rehabilitation Activities:** All OCCs organize monthly former client (victim) meetings to obtain feedback on the OCC services and also enable them to express their needs.

- **NHC for VAWC:** A NHC for VAWC has been established on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2012 with a Toll Free Helpline 10921 to provide information to prevent sexual harassment and stop early marriage.
  - **Awareness Campaign:** Booklets, brochure, publication, posters, media broadcasting, workshops/seminar/training on VAWC, different programmes and rally show on the significance of International Women's Day, International Violence Prevention Day are published/organized/arranged.
  - **Contribution to Legal and Policy Reformation:** Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2015 (Draft) and National Women Development Policy 2011, National Child Policy 2011, are few of the MSPVAW's contributions in this field.
1. **National Centre on Gender based Violence:** Was established to implement the National Action Plan to Prevent VAWC.
    - **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare:** The Ministry has been inextricably involved with combating VAW of the country through awareness programme, family welfare training to various medical assistants.
    - **The Directorate General of Health Services:** It provides training to doctors and nurses for better services to the women and children victims of violence.
    - **Ministry of Social Welfare:** It has implemented rehabilitation programme for acid-burn women at upazila social service offices including training and rehabilitation programme for socially retarded women at respective centres.
    - **Department of Social Services (DSS):** It established Safe Custody for Women, Children and Adolescent's Custodians at divisional headquarters which are popularly known as Safe Homes with free accommodation, food, psycho-social counseling, training and education facilities.
    - **Ministry of Home Affairs:** It has established Victim Support Centres in seven Divisional Headquarters and Rangamati, 'Special Cell' comprising female police personnel at Police Headquarters including Women's Investigation Division under Dhaka Metropolitan Police and 'Acid Monitoring Cell'.
    - **Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs:** It has set up National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO) in order to facilitate poor citizens' access to justice and enforcement of their rights.

- **Directives of High Court Division:** The Honorable High Court Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh has given directives detailing a set of guidelines for action in cases of sexual harassment of women in academic institutions, workplaces or organizations.
- **Dhaka North City Corporations:** According to BBS, DNCC looks after 1644 slums with the population of 4,96,669 (Slum Census 2014). The Social Welfare and Slums Development Department of City Corporation have only one agenda for the slum dwellers known as Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) project financed by UNDP and UKAID and supervised by Bangladesh.

### **Non-Government Initiatives to Prevent VAWC**

- **BRAC:** Meyeder Jonnyo Nirapod Nagorikotto (safe citizenship for girls) and Gender Quality Action Learning are the projects of BRAC which aim at combatting sexual harassment at public places and facilitating gender equality and empowerment of women. (BD Report 2014, p.1).
- **Bangladesh Mahila Parishad:** The major activities are: to establish women rights; to provide legal support. They also provide free facilities at their shelter home named 'Rokeya Sadan' with all related facilities ([www.mahilaparishad.org](http://www.mahilaparishad.org)).
- **Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA):** BNWLA promotes the rights and status of women lawyers alongside fighting for access to justice for the most disadvantaged women and children, in Bangladesh through four thematic approaches: prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration.
- **Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF):** This foundation basically provides funds and technical supports to the different NGOs. The basic objectives are to : establish human rights and good governance (MJF, Annual Report 2013, p. III).
- **Safe Project, icddr,b:** Safe project under the icddr,b is being implemented at 19 slums of Dhaka city. The major objectives are to reduce incidences of VAWC; reduce child marriage and early pregnancy, increase the uses of contraceptives and aware the young women and adolescent girls for their health rights. ([www.safeprojectbd.org/who-we-are/icddrb](http://www.safeprojectbd.org/who-we-are/icddrb)).
- **Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST):** BLAST is one of the largest legal services organizations in Bangladesh, operating over 19 districts to assist both women and men. BLAST is the only NGO who has access to the apex court (BLAST, Annual Report 2011).

- **Ain O Shalish Kendro (ASK):** ASK, a national legal aid and human rights organisation, provides legal and social support to the disempowered, particularly women, working children and workers. It seeks to create an environment for accountability and transparency of governance institutions (ASK, Annual Report 2013).
- **Aparajeo-Bangladesh:** Aparajeo-Bangladesh (AB) is a national child rights organization. Its goal is to reduce their unbearable poverty, distress and vulnerability caused by the harshness of slum life ([www.aparajeo.org](http://www.aparajeo.org)).
- There are many other NGOs/INGOs who are working alongside the Government offices to protect women and girl children from violence and promote women empowerment in slum areas. Protecting Human Rights Programme (PHR), Plan International Bangladesh, Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), ActionAid Bangladesh, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, We Can Campaign are few of them.

## **Analysis of Findings**

**Introduction:** The nature, type and frequency of violence of slum women and girl children are completely contingent to a number of independent factors which are outlined in the analytical framework in Chapter 1. This will now be examined in light of primary data obtained through face to face interview, FGDs and question and answer sessions and by physical visits to the slum areas.

**Victim's Socio Demographic, Socio Economic and Socio Cultural Background:** The slum women are religiously orthodox, considers husband's violence against them and their girl children as right of the husbands. They are socially and generally shy, submissive and their values and ethics are overpowered by poverty. They consider early marriage as safety/security of their girls. It has been found that home is often breeder of violence and yet they shy to come out from that vicious circle. Thus, the extent of violence against women remains largely hidden and undocumented. It is evident from different surveys that the huge majority of violated women never seek help from the police or other law enforcing agencies. Therefore the available data on violence from formal sources severely underestimate the magnitude of the problem. Poverty and hunger leads slum dwellers to get involved in unethical and corrupt livelihoods like, drug trafficking, begging, stealing, dowry, etc. Their tolerance limit decreases with increase of poverty/hunger and often reflected through abusing each other, for no valid reasons. Wives and girls are beaten, scolded and psychologically violated. Such data are put below:

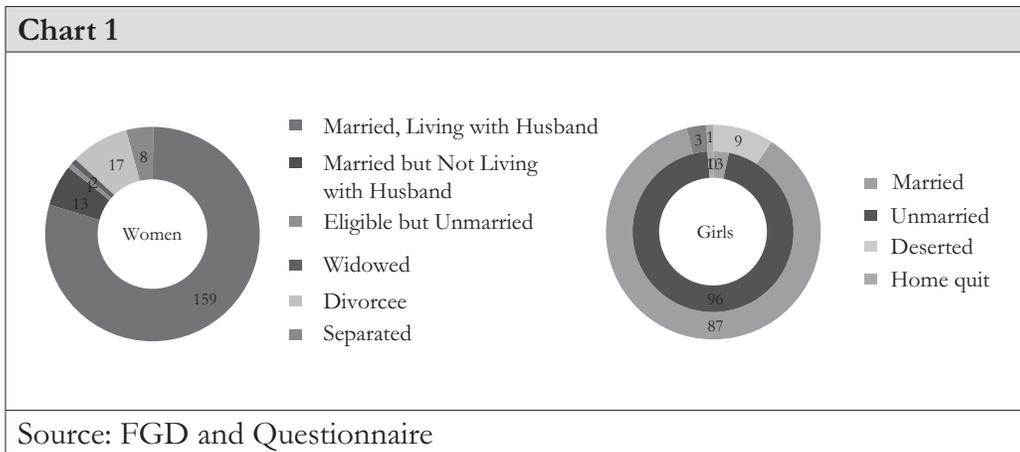
**Population Distribution of Respondents**

Respondents	Slums							Total	
	Mirpur			Bhashantek	Mohammadpur		Mohakhali		
	Bhola Bosti	Duaripara Bosti	Baoniabadh Bosti	Begun Tila Bosti	Bhashantek Bosti	Geneva Camp Bosti	Chollisher Bosti		Korail Bosti
Women	715	2850	5000	2000	7941	36925	945	28650	85026 23.89%
Children	1416	8550	7500	4000	11911	49388	1925	42975	127665 35.86%
Total Member Including Males	4250	19,950	20,000	12000	31,762	1,47,700	5,720	1,14,600	355982

Source: BRAC, BLAST, BNWLA, Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Marie Stopes.

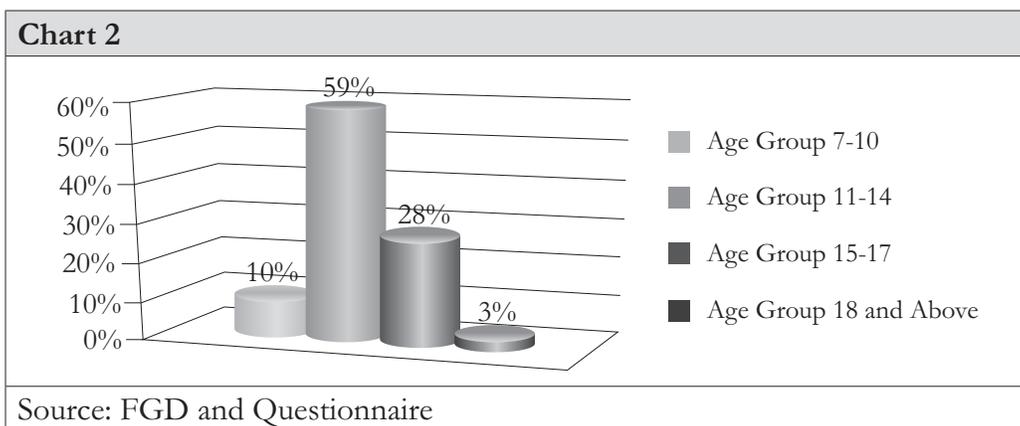
The above table shows that in slums female members are a little more than the male members so scopes of violence remain largely open.

### Marital Status of Respondents



The above left chart indicates that 6.5% women live without husbands and consequently suffers from psychological anxieties and threats of violence from opportunist as they live with only minor children or may be with grown up girls who are the most vulnerable members in the family.

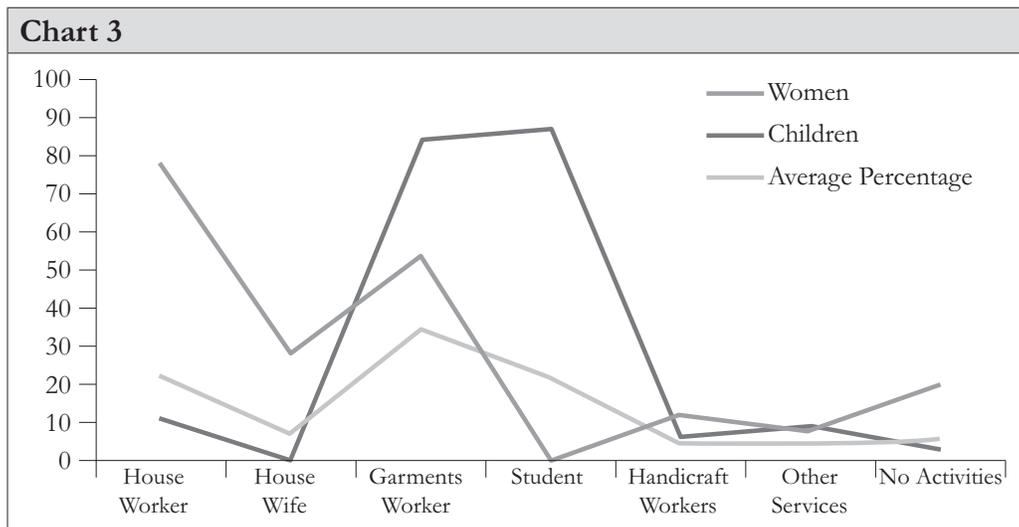
### Distribution of Women by Age of First Marriage



The above chart indicates that 97% married women in the slums got married before the legal age, so the problems of conjugality began at a very early age and the early marriage being the first and foremost reason of violence.

**Victim’s Age, Education, Family Size and Type and Occupation:** The girls in the slum areas are married at an early age and upon entry into a joint family their incapability of motherhood and house hold chores lead her to a horrible life, accentuated by her in-laws. When the teen aged girl becomes mother she fails to cope up with social requirements as mother and house wife. As a result she appears to be a burden to her husband. In a slum family woman does not enjoy freedom to spend her own earnings. It is the husband who enjoys the full rights to his wife’s earnings, irrespective of his qualifications and social status. The table below enumerates this:

### Professional Characteristics of Respondents



The above chart reveals that a large percentage of women and girls who work in different professions remain vulnerable to violence at work places.

**Slum Environment and Living Conditions:** In slum lack of appropriate accommodation induces intergenerational violence as girls and boys see their mother/sisters being violated physically and psychologically and in some cases sexually. The lasting impression of this barbaric act leaves a negative impact with which he/she grows up and is likely to resort to similar action later. Ventilation, drinking water, electricity and sewerage facilities are absent in the houses and the dwellers buy drinking water and use toilets on payment, which is unaffordable for many. The community latrine and washroom are the most vulnerable places for violence apart from home. As slum dwellers are deprived of primary health care facilities, infant mortality is unusually high, more than 15% (WHO 2013).

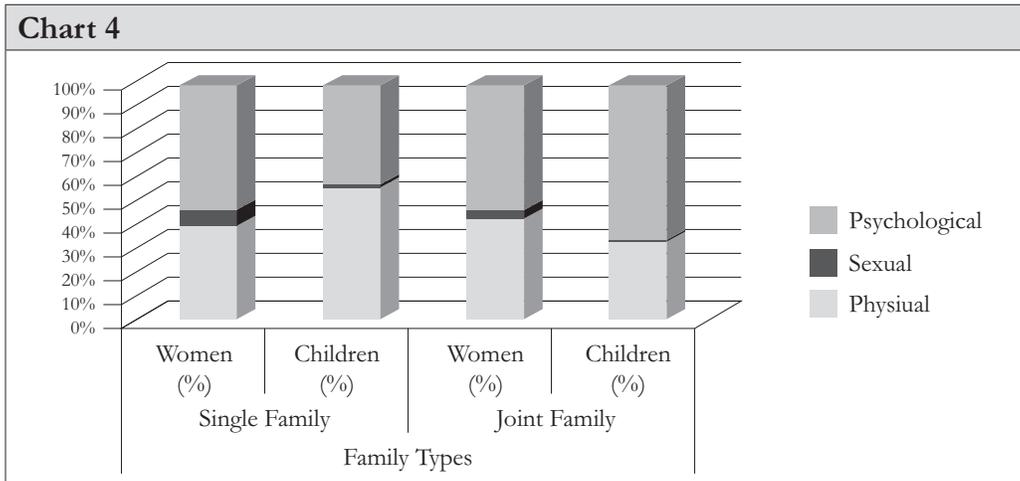
## Experience of Different Types of Violence by Respondents

Table 3						
Types of Violence	Time of Occurrence					
	Experienced in last 12 months			Ever experienced		
	Women	Children	Total	Women	Children	Total
Physical	126 (63)	58 (29)	184 (46)	138 (69)	82 (41)	220 (55)
Sexual	46 (23)	6 (3)	52 (6.5)	82 (41)	18 (9)	100 (25)
Psychological	170 (85)	74 (37)	244 (61)	178 (89)	134 (67)	312 (78)
Economic	138 (69)	38 (19)	176 (44)	142 (71)	74 (37)	216 (54)

Note: Number in the parentheses indicate the percentage

The above table indicates that psychological violence on slum women and girls are more than the physical and sexual violence.

## Distribution of Respondents by Family and Type of Violence



In a single family occurrence of physical violence is more but psychological violence is more in joint family, possibly because of more family members, especially the in-laws.

## Distribution of Respondents by Age and Type of Violence

Table 4				
Type of Violence	Age Category			
	Girl Children		Women	
	5-12 (%)	13-17 (%)	16-20 (%)	21-30 (%)
Physical	59	39	40	43
Sexual	3	6	34	41
Psychological	38	55	53	66

The above table indicates that girls of 13-17 years age group suffer most from sexual and psychologically abuse and women of age of group 20-30 years suffer maximum from all types of violence.

## Distribution of Respondents by Place and Type of Violence

Table 5						
Place of Occurrence	Type of Violence					
	Physical		Sexual		Psychological	
	Women	Children	Women	Children	Women	Children
Home	133	126	77	24	161	38
	66.5%	63%	38.5%	12%	80.5%	19%
School	-	21	-	2	-	10
	-	10.5%	-	1%	-	5%
Park/Play Ground	13	5	11	52	1	6
	6.5%	2.5%	5.5%	26%	.5%	3%
Road	2	4	67	22	15	26
	1%	2%	33.5%	11%	7.5%	13%
Field/Solitary Place	4	11	38	62	4	58
	2%	5.5%	19.0%	31%	2%	29%
Work Place	48	33	7	38	19	62
	24%	16.5%	3.5%	19%	9.5%	31%
Total	200	200	200	200	200	200
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The above table indicates that home is always the breeder of violence.

**Security, Legal and Other Service Supports Arrangements Available:**  
Protection of women and children against wide spread violence is a priority

agenda of all working organizations. The Constitution of Bangladesh has clearly articulated state responsibilities in defending rights of under privileged women and children. The MoWCA with the National Council for Women and Children Development (NCWCD) headed by Hon'ble Prime Minister, a Central Cell and an Inter-Ministerial Committee is responsible for gender governance and National Action Plan to prevent VAWC. Apart from these, the other concerned Ministries are also working coherently from their view points to prevent violence against under privileged women and girls. The Honourable High Court Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh has given directives detailing a set of guidelines for action against all forms of violence. A good number of NGOs are working for a permanent solution to this misery. But still these service supports are quite inadequate. Moreover the slum dwellers are resistant to change and have stubborn attitude. Therefore, the survey shows that most of the females are not at all aware of any VAWC. When asked about the national help line (toll free) number, 99.99% could not say anything about it. So it is very important to ensure effective awareness programme for the target group.

### **Distribution of Respondents by Reasons for Not Taking Treatment After Violence**

<b>Table 6</b>				
Reasons	Children		Women	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Afraid of Husband	-	-	80	40
Husband didn't Allow	-	-	10	5
Feel Unnecessary for sense of insecurity	34	17	90	45
Afraid of Other Family Members	4	2	4	2
Afraid of Social Prestige	14	7	12	6
Father do not allow	68	34	-	-
Mother do not allow	78	39	-	-
Both parents do not allow	-	-	-	-
Financial Insolvency	0	0	2	1
Other	2	1	2	1
Total	200	100	200	100

With the fear of divorce 40% women do not take treatment and 45% feel it unnecessary. 68% parents forbid their children because of fear of making parent's violent attitude public including degradation of social dignity.

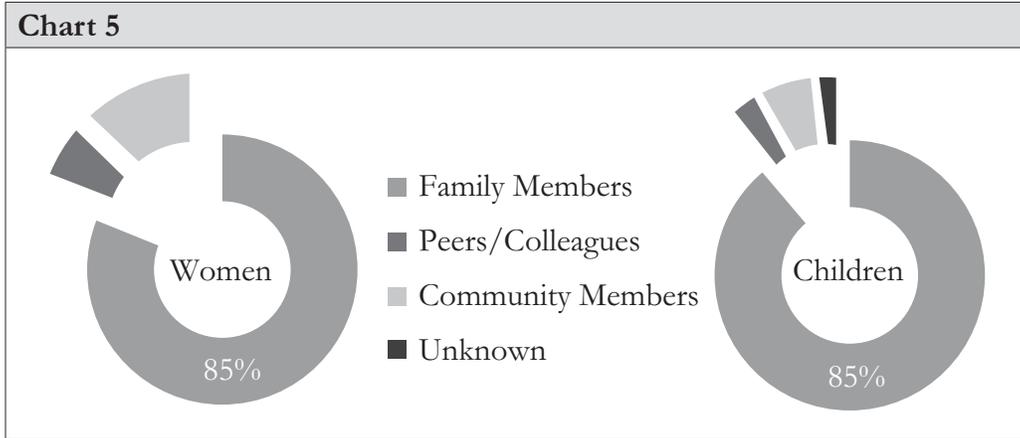
### Distribution of Respondents by Reasons for Not Taking Legal Action

Reasons	Children		Women	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Fear of Husband	-	-	86	43
Husband has right to torture	-	-	8	4
Husband didn't allow	-	-	6	3
Didn't not feel necessary	62	31	60	30
Fear of other family members	4	2	2	1
Thinking future of children	-	-	14	7
Thinking of family and own defame	12	6	2	1
Father/Mother did not allow	92	46	-	-
Fear of Perpetrators	22	11	2	1
No Faith on Judgment	8	4	18	9
Lingering Process	-	-	2	1
Total	200	100	200	100

The above table shows that 43% of respondents do not ask for legal support due to fear of divorce, 30% feel it unnecessary and 9% do not ask legal help due to lack of faith on judiciary.

**Relationship with Perpetrator:** In an average 85% violence occurs within the family, so eventually the male members of the family are the perpetrators. Therefore the girl children of single family are most vulnerable at home in absence of their mother. In a slum environment no one is trustworthy. Wife doesn't believe husband for the safety of their own daughter and the daughter also doesn't feel safe with father and brother in absence of her mother. As perpetrators are close relations the scope of violence increases which is also why violence are hardly reported and cannot be eliminated in its entirety. Therefore, violence elimination process must aim at motivating and rectifying the family members before anyone else.

## Respondent’s Knowledge about Perpetrator’s Identity



**Table 8**

Family Member	Women’s Opinion		Children’s Opinion		Total Percentage (%)
	Safe	Unsafe (%)	Safe (%)	Unsafe (%)	
Father	-	100	-	100	
Brother	-	100	-	100	
G/Father	-	100	10	90	
Relatives	-	100	30	70	

**Physical, Sexual, Psychological and Other Abuse Related Factors:** Poverty is the root cause of all violence. Hunger and poverty leads to temper and aggrieved mind gets psychologically traumatized which generates criminality and erodes ethical values.

### Other Discriminations on Women and Girl Children of Selected Slums

#### Education, Wedding, Spending Money

Factors	Decision with Parents	Children Enjoys Freedom	Minor to Take Decision
Education	31%	51%	18%
Wedding	72%	-	28%
Spending Money	55%	17%	28%

**Earning:** 88% girl respondents are studying and rest are earning through various activities to contribute to the family.

**Patriarchal Attitude, Role of Police and Community Leaders and Lax Law Enforcement:** Traditionally men have been in a dominant position and this leads to legitimization of patriarchal attitudes on the basis of tradition and orthodox religion. Various community leaders actively oppose women’s power within the community.

**Fatwa:** People’s lack of knowledge about the law and religion, poor education and absence of social awareness are key factors, which allow half educated village mullahs (clerics) to play with Fatwa in slums (World Bank, 2008, p.93).

**Sexual Harassment (Eve-teasing):** Sexual Harassment (Eve-teasing) is a great concern today in Bangladesh and particularly evident in the rural and slum areas.

**Prostitution and Trafficking:** Many women and girls are forced into prostitution either by their parents, husbands or boyfriends or due to poor economic and social conditions. At times they are also lured into prostitution, by traffickers with a false promise to find them a husband or a job in a foreign country.

### Awareness of the Respondents about the Availability of Government’s Service-Supports

Service Supports	Women Awareness		Children Awareness	
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC)	3	97	-	100
NTCC	1	99	-	-
National Helpline Centre	-	100	3	97
NFDPL	-	100	11	89
Victim Support Centre	7	93	-	-
Legal & Police	88	12	95	5
Shelter Home	6	94	-	100

Source: FGD and Questionnaire

The above table shows that most of the women and girls are not at all aware of any government programme on VAWC. They do not know what to do, where

to go in time of need. They only know about slum committee and upon which they have no trust.

**Slum Committee for Action:** In the slum areas various types of committees functions in order to solve day to day problems and size and number of committees depends on the size of the slum. The numbers of the members generally range from 6-10 and include local elites, political leaders, religious teachers, school/madrassa teachers, media personnel, representative from the community, etc.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the overall findings of this study, the considerations of following issues may result in gradual elimination of violence. The Government Institutions, INGOs, Private Organizations, Academic and Training Institutions, Community and Media People, Law Enforcing Agencies all should ensure effective enforcement of:

- **Awareness Build-up Programme :**
  - ◆ Ensure that women know their rights and are empowered to demand and exercise them.
  - ◆ Prevent early marriage by explaining the cost and negative effects of it to the slum dwellers with prevention of school drop rates by the girl children at higher classes.
  - ◆ Promote victims/survivors' knowledge of their rights and service-supports available to them.
  - ◆ Address stereotypical attitudes and behaviour that contribute to male violence against women as part of preventing VAW.
  - ◆ Strengthen the knowledge data base of all forms of VAWC to delineate a strategic action plan.
- **Educational Programme to:**
  - ◆ Ensure school enrolment and attendance of girl children should be monitored and the cause of their high drop rates at secondary school levels should be studied.
  - ◆ Ensure appropriate educational modules on rights of Women and Children at varying levels of teaching in all educational centres of the country.

- ◆ Ensure that all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women are respected, protected and public awareness increased through education.
- **Community Engagement to:**
  - ◆ To break the social stigma and collect information and share those with professionals and service providers to generate political will and sustained action to end VAWC.
  - ◆ Form a strong social network by engaging people from all segments of life to show positive attitude towards the victims.
- **Special Programme for Male and Boys to:**
  - ◆ Integrate and mainstream men and boys in the violence elimination process so that they stop protecting perpetrators or condoning their activities
- **Poverty Alleviation Strategy to :**
  - ◆ Improve the health situation, especially the neglected teen-aged mothers and the grown up girl children.
  - ◆ Manage food crisis through a free rationing system so that slum dwellers do not fall trap to different kind of violence in exchange of food and enough employment opportunities to be created to prevent their dependency on GO/INGO's service support.
- **Hygienic and Secured Accommodation to:**
  - ◆ Ensure appropriate health and hygienic conditions of slum accommodation with a view to protect women's and girl children's privacy.
- **Appropriate and Gender Sensitive Sanitary System to:**
  - ◆ Ensure that washrooms and toilets are hygienic and gender sensitive by increasing the number of latrines and washrooms to respect and protect privacy of women and girl children.
- **Qualitative and Quantitative Improvement of Service Support System to:**
  - ◆ Ensure adequate quality victim support shelters to overcome the trauma and to assist them to leave abusive relationships.

- ◆ Help in rehabilitation and reintegration of victims in society through training.
- **Institutional Arrangements to:**
  - ◆ Increase collaboration between researchers, practitioners and policy makers to ensure that services remain effective and responsive to service users and service providers.
  - ◆ Build, coordinate and sustain strong multi-sectoral strategies to ensure a holistic approach to combat violence
  - ◆ Evaluate data on promising practices to facilitate replication, scaling up and institutionalization of effective interventions to end VAWC.
- **Improvement of Legal System to:**
  - ◆ Enable government to ratify human rights treaties and conventions to support actions related to VAWC.
  - ◆ Ensure that women and girl children have easy access to justice and protection of the law.
  - ◆ Promote the competence of personnel in the legal and criminal justice, systems to meet needs of victims/survivors.
- **Enforcement of Laws and Service Oriented Law Enforcing Agencies to:**
  - ◆ Enforce adherence of laws effect attitudinal changes to earn trust of victims and community.
  - ◆ Prevent perpetrators from misusing of legal.
- **Strong Political Commitment to:**
  - ◆ Compulsorily integrate Human Rights Development Agenda in policy decisions.
  - ◆ Ensure continuous commitment of financial and other resources to evaluate and monitor innovative programs.
- **Powerful Media Play to :**
  - ◆ Harness the power of the media to change norms and values around gender roles and violence and be aware of non-sensationalizing the issue.

- **Healthy Religious Practices to:**
  - ◆ Create a mindset that reinforces the word, ‘NO’ and forbids them to commit VAWC.
  - ◆ Develop a healthy family environment to sensitize people against VAWC.

## **Conclusion**

Violence against women and girl children is an age-old phenomenon of a living community. Its ramifications widely endanger women’s lives and totally impede the full development of women’s and girl children’s capabilities in a poverty-ridden society. The objective of this study was to review institutional responses to provide various support and services to the underprivileged women and children victims of violence in Bangladesh and suggest corrective actions. In doing so, this paper outlines many forms and manifestations of VAWC in a wide range of slum settings, including the family, the slum community, state custody and all institutional responses.

Due to socio-economic factors, the incidence of neglect, abuse and deprivation, particularly in the case of women and girl children in the slums has gradually increased where domestic violence at the hands of an intimate partner particularly from own family members is a grave concern.

Feminization of poverty, consequential unemployment, wage discrimination and structural adjustment policies exacerbate VAWC both by increasing its incidence and by making them more vulnerable. It has direct consequences on women’s physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health. Its economic cost is heavy and it adversely affects psychological development of children. A coordinated effort for practical and efficient interventions need to be challenged.

There has been significant progress over the past two decades, in elaborating and agreeing on international standards and norms which has formed a baseline of commitment by States and other stakeholders, including the United Nations system, to work to end VAWC. However, these obligations are not completely implemented. Impunity for violence against women compounds the effects of such violence as a mechanism of male control over women. When the State fails to hold the perpetrators of violence accountable and society explicitly or tacitly condones such violence, impunity not only encourages further abuses, it also gives the message that male violence against women is acceptable or normal.

Social awareness, educational programs should focus on patriarchal social norms that perpetuate domestic violence and concentrate on training to develop skills for economic empowerment of women. Police, judicial and law enforcement personnel – all must be trained on gender sensitivity and domestic violence issues. Support services for the victims should offer employment opportunities, housing facilities, legal aid and daycare facilities. Finally, a coherent approach by people of all walks of life must be ensured and pursued to build a violence-free Bangladesh.

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