

SUMMARY REPORT

Child Rights & Wellbeing Situational Analysis (CRWSA)



Bangladesh



Acknowledgements

Note for the Reader

This Summary Report was produced as part of the “Child Rights and Wellbeing Situational Analysis (CRWSA)” study commissioned by Educo Bangladesh and conducted by Inspira Advisory and Consulting Limited. The study followed a qualitative-focused methodology and was complemented with comprehensive secondary research.

The study findings have been divided into three broad themes: Education, Protection, and Empowerment. Under each theme, there are findings on the current status of children’s rights and wellbeing in Bangladesh. The Inspira team has also provided broad strategic recommendations for actors working to improve the condition of child rights and well-being in the country.

This document contains summarized findings from a larger report. For additional insights and information, please reach out to: zamal.uddin@educobd.org

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We would also like to express our sincerest gratitude to all respondents, focus group discussion (FGD) participants, and key informants from the relevant representatives of the Government of Bangladesh, NGOs working on child rights issues, subject experts, and implementers, and most importantly the children and parents for their valuable insights, which helped us shape the key findings and insights of this report.

Study Team

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Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to the detection of gaps, deficits, and deprivations in the case of child rights and well-being by asking the children and adolescents and their communities (parents, teachers, and other stakeholders).

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives include addressing child rights and well-being;

- To assess the strength of the children and adolescents as right holders, duty bearers, communities,s and other stakeholders;
- To assess the aspirations of children and adolescents, how do they think about their world and outside;
- To assess the ability of the children and adolescents, duty bearers, and communities to make into real the children’s aspirations;
- To assess the strengths, challenges, and barriers for Educo Bangladesh and its partner NGOs in addressing child rights and wellbeing in Bangladesh;
- To map a way out the for action of Educo Bangladesh and its partners in addressing child rights and wellbeing in Bangladesh.

Study Methodology

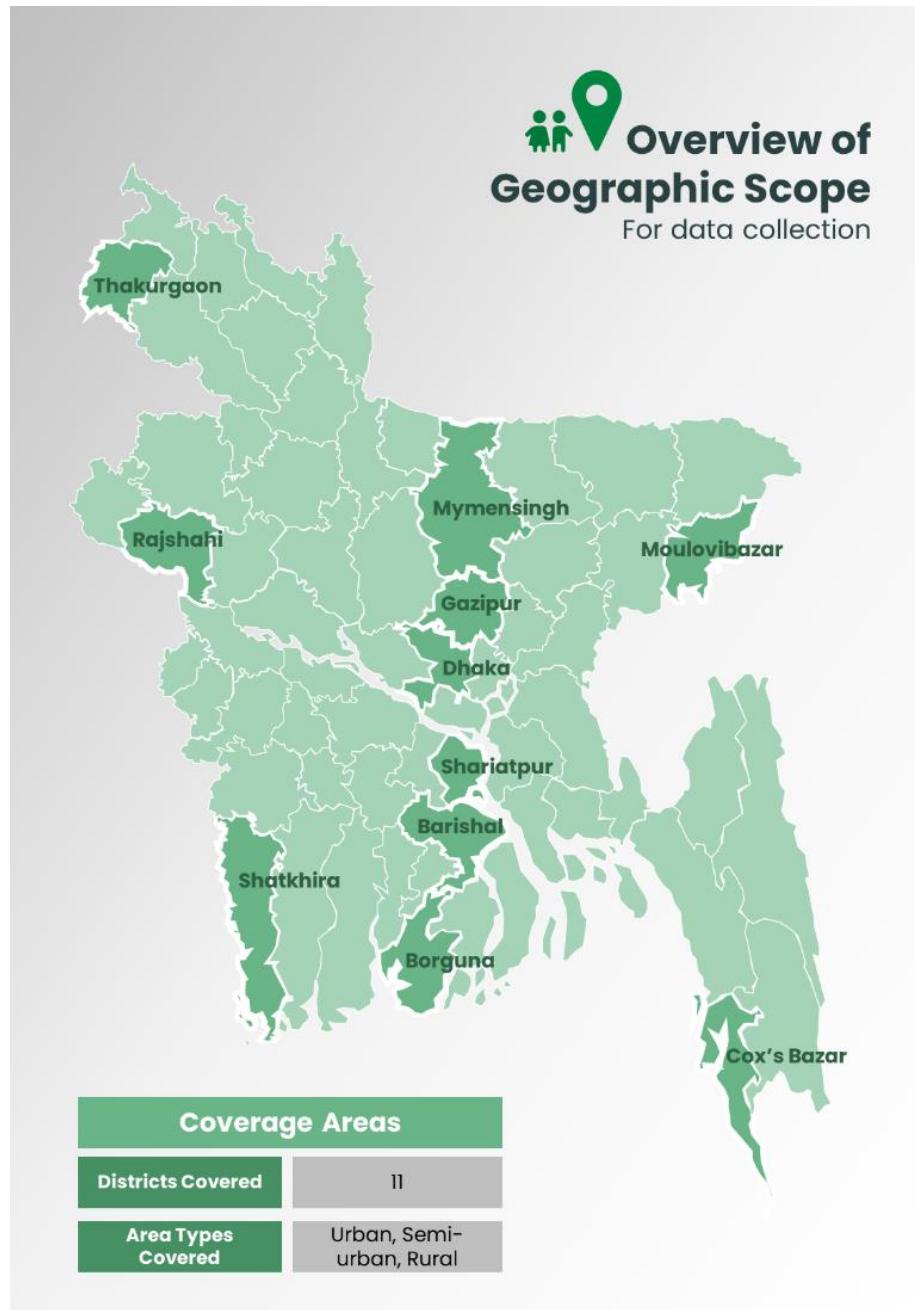
The primary data for the study was collected from the **11 districts**, namely Rajshahi, Thakurgaon, Mymensingh, Gazipur, Dhaka, Shariatpur, Barishal, Barguna, Satkhira, Moulvibazar, and Cox’s Bazar. The primary data collection included **25 focus group discussions, 18 in-depth interviews, and 47 key informant interviews**, accumulating information from children, parents, teachers, government stakeholders, and subject matter experts. Both male and female children were represented equally in data collection. 6 children with disabilities, and 11 parents of children with disabilities were also consulted for the study. Additionally, secondary data from national surveys, reports, academic journals, and databases were leveraged to provide a comprehensive view of the nationwide context.

Method	Number	Number of Stakeholders Engaged
Focus Group Discussion	25	209
Key Informant Interview	47	47
In-depth Interview	18	18
Validation Workshop	3	28
Total Stakeholders Engaged		301

Context of CRWSA

Bangladesh was one of the first two countries in South Asia to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) in August 1990¹, a Convention that entitles children to their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, regardless of their age, race, and gender. The Convention says that childhood is separate from adulthood, and all individuals under 18 years of age have all the rights in this Convention, including non-discrimination, birth, registration, name, nationality, care, protection, preservation of identity, and so on. In alignment with the Convention, Educo works with

children and their communities to promote just and equitable societies that guarantee their rights and well-being. Following this vision, Educo conducted several Child Rights and Wellbeing Situational Analysis (CRWSA) studies across Bolivia, Peru, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mali, and Guatemala. Building on this global initiative, Educo Bangladesh undertook a CRWSA study to comprehensively assess the status of children in Bangladesh, focusing on their rights and well-being covering three broad thematic areas: Education, Protection, and Empowerment.



¹ UN Human Rights Treaty Body Database



EDUCATION

Lost in Transition from Primary to Secondary Education: Lack of Motivation, Child Labor, and Financial Struggle at the Roots.

Bangladesh has made commendable strides towards improving access to elementary education. Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in Primary-level education has increased over the past two decades. In 2022, the NER reached 97.56%, up from 87.2% in 2005, indicating an inclination of a greater number of Primary school-age children to education. The primary school completion rate stood at 86.25% in 2022 meaning every 8 in 10 children who enrolled in primary education could complete the education. While NER and school completion rates remain high at the primary education level, the situation is not as satisfactory at the secondary level. The NER in secondary education was 56.62%, indicating a 42% drop-off after primary school¹. Primary findings reveal the following reasons behind this backdrop: lack of motivation due to academic struggles, financial constraints, and desire to earn at an early stage among children leading to child labor. According to BANBEIS (2023), gender parity has been seen in primary education with a GPI¹ of 1.05, but disparity against boys is evident in secondary education with a GPI of 1.21. Reports from teachers and Government representatives draw attention to a trend of children between the ages of 10 to 12 dropping out to join the workforce, with the trend being particularly pronounced among boys



Two in Three

Respondents Reported That Children Cannot Pass Happy Time at School due to lack of motivation



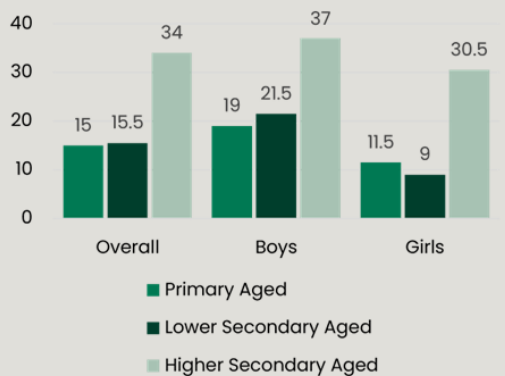
Three in Five

Teachers Said They Did Not Participate in any Mental and Physical Wellbeing Session

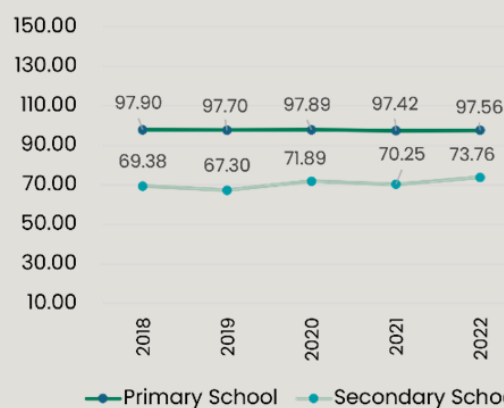


Four in Five

Teachers Reported They Do Not Provide Mental Health Counselling at School



% of Out-of-school children by gender at different education level (Unicef 2021)



Net Enrollment Rate (NER %) at primary and secondary level (BANBEIS, 2023)

Teachers Lack the Capacity to Employ Effective Learning Methods, Especially at Pre-primary and Secondary Education Level.

There is a clear need for enhanced professional development for pre-primary teachers in Bangladesh, especially in adopting play-based learning methods and understanding diverse learning patterns. Despite well-designed learning materials, their implementation remains subpar, hindering cognitive development. The government's initiative for multimedia classrooms has been effective in primary schools but underperforming in secondary schools as only a few teachers are equipped to generate and utilize multimedia materials effectively.

At the secondary school level, teachers lack emotional engagement with teenage students, failing to address their unique developmental needs. While teachers monitor absenteeism, they do not provide space for students to discuss personal or communal issues. Moral lessons are superficial, and interactive teaching methods are virtually absent in secondary schools.

Only **3%** of teachers in primary schools received specialized training in Pre-primary education.

Only **1 or 2** teachers in secondary schools in peri-urban to rural areas received training on effectively generating and delivering multimedia materials.

Children with Disability and Children from Ethnic Communities Are Falling Behind.

Children with Disabilities face a range of challenges in accessing education - from societal and personal obstacles to infrastructural limitations. Parents of these children, particularly in peri-urban and rural areas, are either unaware of specialized schools for children with disabilities or, if aware, lack the motivation to enroll them due to the social barriers they have already encountered. Families expressed despair about their child's future, as they would not be able to acquire a job, so education seemed like a waste of time. Well-off families would rather amass savings for a secure future.

Teachers also fail to use tailored teaching methods for children from ethnic communities who do not learn Bangla as their first language. These students are only exposed to the language after entering school, making the learning process especially difficult. The lack of special training for teachers to teach Bangla as a second language further challenges inclusivity.

More than **70%** of teachers in pre-primary education are not familiar with the term **"INCLUSION"**

60% of the children with disabilities in Bangladesh cannot attend school



Multiple Protection Threats Are Increasing Alarmingly: Children's Well-Being at Risk.

Child marriage is now more covert. According to national data, both the rate of marriage before the age of 15 among women aged 20-24 and the rate of marriage before the age of 18 for women of the same age group increased. Primary research has identified key contributing factors, including religious customs, the desire to protect family honor, a lack of recognition regarding the importance of girls' education, and fears related to finding an eligible groom. While poverty is still a factor, it is now somewhat less dominant in the current context.

Child labor statistics show significant improvements over the past years. Yet it is prevalent in the 14-17 age bracket where almost **every 2 of 10 children is involved in child labor**. In the Cox's Bazar district, the surge in economic activities following the Rohingya refugee influx has driven demand for child labor which is resulting in early school dropouts.

Child mortality rates in Bangladesh have worsened between 2021 and 2023, with increases in infant, neonatal, post-neonatal, and under-five mortality rates. Potential causes include setbacks in healthcare services, such as disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental factors, and limited access to quality neonatal and maternal care. **A significant portion of pregnant women in the country (60%) lack sufficient prenatal care, and 33% still give birth at home**. These challenges indicate the ineffective running of primary healthcare, maternity, and postnatal services. The situation underscores the need for improved healthcare access and adherence to WHO guidelines for maternal care.

Drug use among teenagers in Bangladesh is becoming a growing concern, with 92,909 drug seizures reported, primarily in border districts, though non-border areas like Shariatpur and Barishal also showed rising cases. The internet and the dark web are increasingly facilitating drug access for young people. Street children are particularly vulnerable, spending a significant portion of their income on drugs. The study revealed that boys are three times more likely to use drugs than girls, and teenage drug use is linked to juvenile delinquency and gang culture.

Multiple statistics reveal an unsettling increase in the number of children affected by extreme violence, including physical abuse, rape, abduction, and murder. The motives behind these cases of violence against children are rooted in a combination of societal, familial, and individual factors. Within families, dynamics such as domestic violence, mental health issues, and economic stress can increase the risk of child abuse, with perpetrators sometimes projecting their frustrations onto children. Even within the supposed safety of their homes or dormitories, children are not entirely secure.

While the punishment culture has been reduced in schools, families are yet to be sensitized in this matter. According to a child discipline module survey, **35% held the view that physical punishment is necessary for a child's upbringing**. Most of the parents interviewed do not usually ask their children about their distress unless something of great attention appears. This reflects the lack of emotional engagement from primary caregivers.

Major Protection Threats for Children



Bangladesh ranks among the **top 10 countries in the world with the highest levels of child marriage.**



Approximately **1.8 million children in Bangladesh are engaged in child labor.**



In 2021, **over 19,000 children under five lost their lives to air pollution-related conditions**, such as lower respiratory tract infections, while an additional 15,000 deaths were linked to ozone-related Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD).



Between January and October of 2024, **482 children lost their lives** to physical abuse, violence, rape, abduction, and murders following disappearances—an increase of 61 child deaths compared to the same period in 2023.



Severe drug addiction among street children, with **drugs becoming the second highest expenditure after food.**



Sharp rise in infant mortality rates: **5 per 1000 live births** in last two years.



88.8% of the children aged 1-14 years had been subjected to either physical punishment or psychological aggression by their caregivers



EMPOWERMENT

Children Have High Career Aspirations but Lack Guidance on How to Achieve Them.

The children of different age classes, quite enthusiastically, expressed interest in pursuing a range of career aspirations, including professions such as doctors, engineers, police officers, nurses, teachers, and defense officers. Even girls from remote areas of Shariatpur and Gazipur expressed interest in pursuing challenging professions such as becoming police officers. Their aspirations usually originate from societal and familial hegemony. Most of the children especially the teenagers reported that they do not discuss their career goals with parents, hence never received any guidance. Children's voices at home are mostly unheard since most parents think their opinions do not hold value in reality unless they come of age.



3 in 6 Children Did Not Participate in Extracurricular Activities



3 in 4 Parents Did Not Know About Ambitions of Their Children



Parents Think Children's Opinions Are Not Valuable in Real-Life Scenarios

Leadership Attributes Are Stifled by Familial and Societal Fabric.

Most of the concerned parents or caregivers are preoccupied with attaining higher scores in examinations and focus on extracurricular activities is limited. Only three out of six students have been reported to participate in extracurricular activities. There remains a religious barrier for adolescent girls not only in cultural program participation but also in the participation of physical sports activity.



Perceptions among children regarding child rights



"Child rights mean ensuring no obstacles to our growth and providing nutritious food and a good living environment."



"Having nutritious food and proper sleeping is our right."



"I have my right to education and sports and nothing more I can think of."



"I know 3 rights- social rights, the right to get food and clothes."



"Education and Gender equality are our rights."



"A child should have some rights. If a child is not educated, he/she will not get to know about citizen rights. This is he/she will be excluded as a child and as an adult in the future."

Note: Quotes from in-depth interviews with children aged 7-12 and 13-17

While sports participation is unrestricted for boys, performing in cultural programs is strongly discouraged as well. The forbiddance in this case not only comes from the family end but to a considerable extent from teachers. Participating in several co-curricular activities like debate, religious hymn recitation, Olympiads, and science fairs are permissible in their opinion.

The rise in digital device adoption and addiction is keeping them away from social, cultural, and sports activities, as some respondents suggested. On the positive end, parents and caregivers are less stringent on younger children (mostly at the primary education level) in this case regardless of gender. Some parents from the upper-mid economic strata shared their willingness to involve children in creative activities but the lack of cultural institutions within reach remained as a barrier.

Although participants demonstrate a basic understanding of children's rights and well-being, the study team identified significant gaps in awareness and gender inequality within the study area. One respondent shared a personal observation, noting that while schools may treat boys and girls equally, things are different at home. In many households, boys tend to receive more attention and preference. Boys are often granted more freedom, while girls face restrictions that can hinder their confidence and personal growth. The respondent explained that gender equality is not always practiced in families or communities. In some instances, girls are denied opportunities to study, participate in extracurricular activities, or make decisions for themselves, which limits their education and development compared to their male counterparts. The respondent recalled a classmate who had to drop out of school because her parents chose to prioritize her younger brother's education. This, they said, is a common scenario in many families where financial constraints lead to a bias toward supporting boys' education over girls'. These discussions eventually lead to the conclusion that girls somehow understand their rights have been violated in the form of discrimination.

Recommendations

Programmatic Recommendations for Educo Bangladesh and Its Partner Organizations

- 1. Designing a Child-Centered Social Support (CCSS) Program for Vulnerable Children** First, by advocating for precise targeting criteria and engaging community-based organizations, Educo can ensure equitable beneficiary selection, using tools like Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) to enhance transparency and effectiveness. Second, Educo can guide beneficiaries through the application process, simplifying access and boosting participation rates among the most vulnerable. Third, mandatory awareness sessions for parents, tied to fund access, will promote proper utilization of funds, ensuring they address genuine needs. Together, these actions aim to optimize the impact of social safety nets by reducing leakages, improving access, and enhancing accountability.
- 2. Establishing School Counselling Systems (SCS) in Schools** Educo Bangladesh can advocate for formalizing a school counseling system addressing academic, career, and personal/social needs. Through advocacy with the government and expert coordination, Educo can facilitate national workshops to embed counseling within education policies. Schools can adopt tailored counseling models—such as hiring individual counselors, partnering with organizations, or training teachers—based on their specific needs and resources, ensuring efficient implementation. Capacity-building programs for under-resourced schools and partnerships with certified counselors for well-funded schools can further bridge gaps. These efforts aim to create a sustainable counseling system, enhancing student well-being and preparing schools for long-term support.
- 3. Strengthening Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Cognitive Development** Educo can implement a comprehensive strategy focusing on teacher training and the establishment of community-based early learning centers. Specialized training programs will equip teachers with skills in play-based learning and socio-emotional development, supported by mentorship for practical application. Simultaneously, community-based centers in marginalized areas will provide safe, culturally relevant spaces for children up to age five, emphasizing inclusive and developmental learning. These centers will also engage parents and caregivers through workshops on child health and parenting. Together, these efforts aim to improve classroom outcomes, bridge rural-urban disparities, and foster holistic development in young children.

General Recommendations

- 4. Develop Scientific Learning Materials for Early Childhood** To enhance the quality of early childhood education, the development of scientifically designed learning materials that are age-appropriate, engaging, and cognitively stimulating should be prioritized. These materials should be based on research-backed principles of child development and tailored to foster key skills such as language acquisition, numeracy, motor skills, and social-emotional growth. Incorporating interactive elements like games, puzzles, and storytelling will make the learning process more engaging while supporting the diverse learning needs of young children.

5. **Localization of Learning Materials and Teacher Training** The current curriculum in Bangladesh often does not fully reflect the local context, including the cultural, linguistic, and social variations. As a result, the learning materials may not resonate with students' lived experiences, potentially hindering their engagement and understanding. Educo should advocate for policy changes at the national level to support the localization of both curriculum content and teacher training. This includes working with the Ministry of Education and local education authorities to ensure that teacher training programs are aligned with the local context, especially addressing the diverse needs of ethnic communities.
6. **Increase Awareness Regarding Digital Device Usage** To ensure healthy and balanced digital device usage, Educo should implement a comprehensive awareness program targeting both children and parents. Children, especially in the early years, need to be educated about the potential risks associated with excessive screen time, such as the impact on their physical health, social development, and academic performance. They should also be informed about the importance of using digital devices for educational purposes and how to navigate online environments safely and responsibly. For parents, the awareness campaign should focus on the importance of setting boundaries around screen time, encouraging physical activities, and fostering healthy digital habits at home. Parents should also be educated about the risks of digital addiction, the importance of monitoring children's online interactions, and how to use digital devices as tools for learning rather than entertainment. By providing targeted guidance for both children and parents, Educo can help promote a balanced and informed approach to digital device usage that supports the well-being of children while also empowering parents to take an active role in managing their children's digital engagement.
7. **Scale up effective ways of Community-based Rehabilitation Service Delivery** To enhance the impact and sustainability of Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) services, Educo should focus on scaling up the most effective service delivery methods identified through previous CBR initiatives, especially for child victims and child abuse survivors. This involves systematically documenting successful strategies and models that have proven effective in addressing the diverse needs of these vulnerable children. These strategies should include how services are delivered, the roles of local partners, and the methods used to engage families and communities in supporting rehabilitation efforts. By capturing this knowledge, Educo can develop best practices that can be shared across regions and replicated in other areas facing similar challenges. Additionally, scaling up these successful models will require building stronger partnerships with local stakeholders such as community leaders, health professionals, and government entities, ensuring that CBR services are integrated into broader social and healthcare systems.
8. **Increase Awareness regarding Child Rights and Wellbeing Among Parents** To enhance parental understanding of child rights and well-being, targeted community-based awareness programs should be developed and implemented. These programs can include interactive workshops, media campaigns, and local events focusing on children's rights, health, education, and protection. Collaborating with schools, local organizations, and health centers can help ensure widespread reach and engagement. Parenting sessions should be designed to provide practical guidance on nurturing, non-violent discipline, and creating a supportive environment for children. Regular follow-ups and feedback mechanisms can assess impact and sustain awareness efforts.



This report has been prepared by Inspira Advisory & Consulting Limited under the “**Child Rights & Wellbeing Situational Analysis (CRWSA)**” in collaboration with Educo Bangladesh.

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