



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 8 (1) OF THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ON THE
INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT**

Initial reports of States parties due in 2004

[16 November 2004]

Introduction

1. Bangladesh signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 6 September 2000. The Optional Protocol came into force on 12 February 2002. This report has been prepared in compliance with article 8 of the Optional Protocol, providing information on measures taken by the Government towards implementation of the provisions of the Optional Protocol, to date. This report has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Committee.

Article 1

2. The recruitment rules of the Bangladesh Army do not permit any person who has not attained the age of 18 to participate in any armed hostilities.

Article 2

3. There is no provision for compulsory recruitment into the armed forces in Bangladesh.

Article 3

4. The following are the age limits for the voluntary enrolment of recruits in:

- (a) The Bangladesh Army:
 - Combats: 17-20 years;
 - Non-combats: 17-20 years;
 - Commissioned ranks: 17-40 years.

After being enrolled all of them have to complete their respective basic training courses prior to their employment for actual services;

- (b) The Bangladesh Navy:
 - (i) Cadets: 17-21 years;
 - (ii) Sailors: 17-20 years.

After initial recruitment cadets undergo a basic training course of two years and sailors for a minimum of 15 months before they are commissioned and employed for actual service. Therefore, no personnel of the Bangladesh Navy are actually employed in the naval service before attaining the age of 18 years;

- (c) The Bangladesh Air Force:
 - (i) Flight cadets: 16½-21 years;
 - (ii) Airmen: 16-21 years;
 - (iii) MODE: 17-22 years.

The consent of parents is required prior to enrolment in the training programme. After successful completion of the training course they may serve in the Bangladesh Air Force;

(d) The Police, Bangladesh Rifle (BDR), Ansar (Paramilitary Force): the minimum age for recruitment: 18 years.

5. There is no scope for any person to be employed for actual service or combat duty in the defence services, internal security services or paramilitary forces of Bangladesh before attaining the age of 18.

6. The minimum age for enrolment in the defence services was set much ahead of the ratification of the Optional Protocol. Persons are recruited into the armed forces on a genuinely voluntary basis. The armed forces of Bangladesh are not required to recruit and employ persons under 18; as such, the operation of a special school for the under-18 recruits mentioned in the article does not arise.

7. It may be mentioned here that like other services, standard procedure is followed for enrolment in the defence forces. The procedure starts with advertisements in the print and electronic media specifying the eligibility criteria, which includes a minimum age requirement, academic qualifications, physical requirements (height, physical fitness), etc. Age upon enrolment of recruits is verified from the birth certificate, secondary school certificate, school leaving certificate or other document.

8. The applicants are short-listed and only the eligible candidates are initially called for written examination, particularly in the case of the recruitment to the officer ranks. On the basis of the result of the written examination, the successful candidates are called for other tests like physical fitness, psychological and medical fitness tests. The successful candidates are finally selected on the basis of these tests. This process is a long exercise, taking nearly a year. After the final selection all the recruits are asked to undergo necessary training of different durations. The recruits for the commissioned ranks of the Bangladesh Army, cadets of the Bangladesh Navy and flight cadets of the Bangladesh Air Force undergo training of two years before they are employed for actual service. Thus, though the minimum eligible ages for application for recruitment in the Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force are 17 and 16½ years, the recruits are actually employed upon completion of their basic training after they attain the age of 18 years.

Article 4

9. There is no armed group in Bangladeshi territory, so the question of involving under-18s in such a group does not arise.

10. It may be mentioned here that the armed conflict which continued for more than two decades with tribal minorities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts has ceased following signing of the Peace Accord on 2 December 1997 between the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity and the Government.

11. Government has a strict policy relating to the prevention of serious hostilities against women and children. Law enforcement agencies receive special training and instructions and are actively engaged to curb violence and crimes committed against women and children.

12. Persons who have not attained 18 years of age and are affected by violence are protected by law. A draft outline for a Social Policy on Alternative Models of Care and Protection for Children in Contact with the Law has been developed in the light of the Bangladesh Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in consultation with different ministries, departments, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations.

13. The draft outline is in the process of finalization. The objective of this policy is to address the problem of deprivation affecting children in conflict with law.

Article 5

14. There are a good number of legal instruments to protect the rights and interests of the children, which include:

The Constitution of Bangladesh;

The Children Act, 1974;

The Penal Code, 1860;

The Family Courts Ordinance, 1985;

The Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933;

The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1992;

The Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1839;

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980;

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933;

The Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children (amended) Act, 2003.

15. The Government has formulated various plans and policies at different times to address specific situations. These include the National Children Policy, 1994, the National Education Policy, the Health Policy, the Safe Water Supply and Sanitation Policy, the Nutrition Policy, the National Plan of Action for Children, the National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking, etc., all of which have important bearings on the lives of children, in particular on the girl children, of Bangladesh. The draft National Child

Labour Policy for the removal of some anomalies in the legislation, fixing a uniform age for admission to work and, simplification and consolidation of all legal provisions for the progressive elimination of child labour, including its worst forms, will be finalized soon.

16. Bangladesh is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which explicitly addresses the right of children to be free from exploitation (art. 32), the right to education (arts. 28 and 29), the right of children to participate in the decisions affecting them (art. 12) and the right to an adequate standard of living (art. 27). Bangladesh has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol.

17. Bangladesh has ratified various conventions of the International Labour Organization, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

18. During the Summit of the South Asian Association for Region Cooperation (SAARC) held in Katmandu on 15 January 2002, Bangladesh signed the following conventions relating to child rights: (i) SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and (ii) SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia.

Article 6

19. The Government of Bangladesh reviewed the Optional Protocol before ratification. Its provisions are enforced in line with the national legal and administrative framework.

20. The Inter-ministerial CRC Standing Committee at the national level, and the district and *upazila* coordination committees at subnational level have been working to protect the rights of the child. These committees entrusted to monitor the implementation of the Convention are comprised of members of Government organizations, civil society, and NGOs working for children. The principles and provisions of the Convention as well as the Optional Protocol are widely known to them. The mass media of the country are also campaigning to protect the interests of children.

21. A child-friendly version of the Convention has been published. Measures are also under way to publish a similar version of the Optional Protocol in Bengali. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and all other relevant conventions, protocols and national and international instruments have been included in the module of various civil and military training institutes of Bangladesh.

Article 7

22. The Government of Bangladesh has taken positive steps in implementing a special project, namely “Empowerment and protection of children and women (2001-2005)”, to address the situation of the children of Bangladesh, with necessary support from UNICEF. The project has developed various programmes especially in the areas of reducing child marriage, child abuse, juvenile justice, and a countrywide awareness-raising campaign. These programmes are being implemented in cooperation with concerned ministries and NGOs. Various training

programmes are also launched for combating child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation, including trafficking and protecting the rights of children in contact with law. The primary challenge of this project is to address the root causes of violence that have occurred which are hidden from public view within the household.

23. Under the project, a five-year-long National Plan of Action (NPA) against the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, including trafficking, was launched in 2002 to provide a comprehensive framework for developing more integrated, holistic approaches to child protection in Bangladesh. The project has taken measures to review all laws relating to safeguarding and promoting the rights of children. These efforts demonstrate the Government's commitment to implement the Optional Protocol.
