

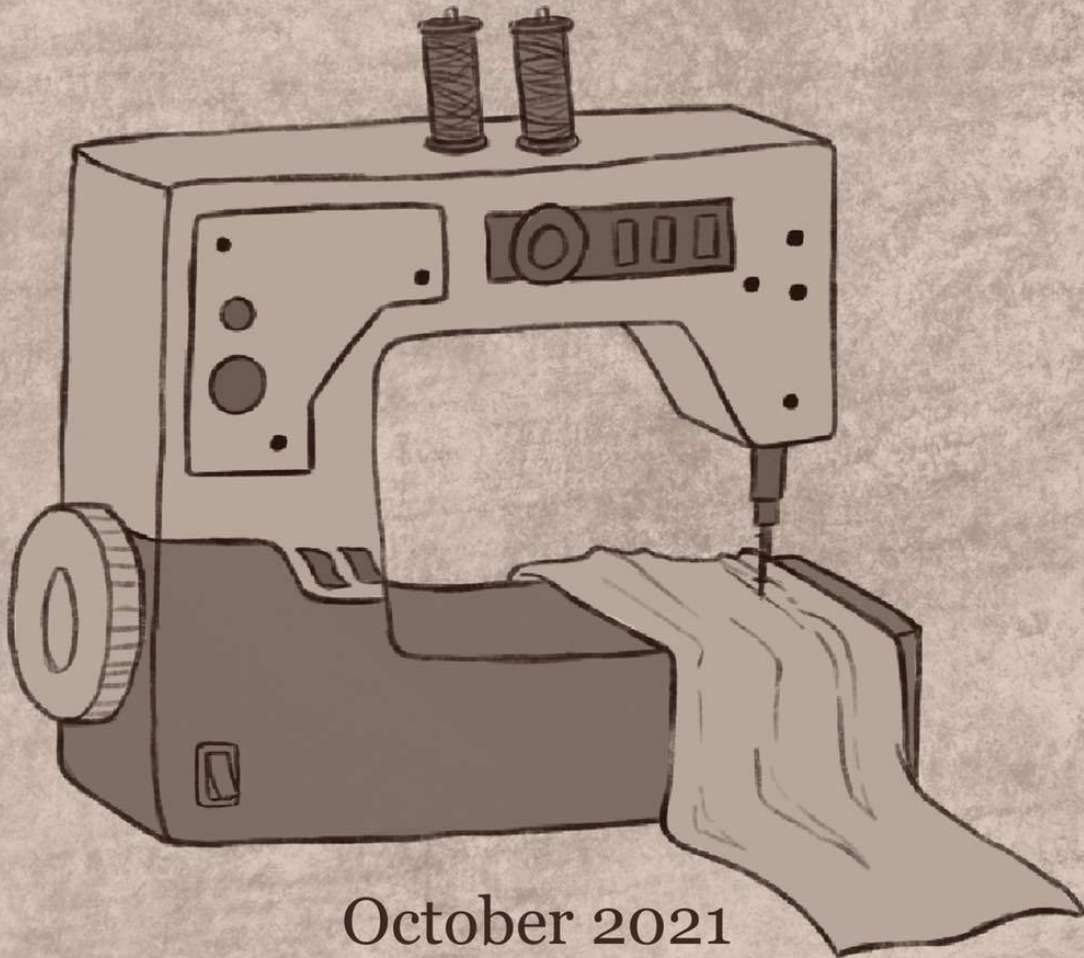
*Global Access Movement*  
**GAM**



# GAM RESEARCH



CHILD LABOUR IN  
BANGLADESH  
What makes it still exist?



October 2021



GAM Research is a part of the Global Awareness Movement. It is an initiative that combines all of our research work in one place. You can find all data, statistics and knowledge we have gathered while working on our projects here. We believe it is extremely important to explore deeply what we are passionate about as it is the best way to learn. This whole process is done in collaboration with experts from different fields, which allows us to maintain professionalism while discovering new things in a creative way.

~ Karolina Sosnowska

# Child labour - What makes it still exist?

By Helena Drzazga and Hanna Okurowska

We, as a society often focuses on issues that are happening right now or for some reason grabbed international media attention. Of course, I am not denying the importance of current news and problems that the world is facing every day, week or month. However, in this month's GAM Times we would like to focus on a problem that is still present and is influencing thousands of people lives, especially children's in Asian countries



(this problem is not only present in Asia, but we will focus on this area). In fact, child labour has decreased by 38 per cent in the last decade but 152 million children are still affected. Needless to say, I have in mind child labour. Our main field of research was Bangladesh, but this problem is universal, therefore many of later presented theses might apply to all countries struggling with child labour problem.

With our motto in mind, we made an attempt to provide you with a full picture of this difficulty that is preying on children from poor families by huge, multimillion dollars worth of companies. Therefore, we conducted a global survey asking people from all countries of all ages about their views and opinions on child labour in Bangladesh. But first, let us dive into facts you need to know to have a more comprehensive understanding of data from our questionnaire.

## ***Key facts you need to know to understand the topic properly:***

Child labour in Bangladesh is the source of many myths and theories. In order to understand our survey and comments properly, there are certain facts you need to know. Even us, starting our work and research for this piece had completely different understanding of how child labour works and more importantly- how it is perceived by people of Bangladesh.

In 2015 National Child Labour Survey reported that 1,2 million children are still forced to work in the most terrible conditions. However, the truth is that since 1994 Bangladesh has actively been trying to fight child labour through its International

Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and ratifying conventions such as ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2001.

So, I believe it's crucial to mark here that on contrary to the typical perception of Bangladesh as a country that forces children to work, the state has in fact passed the Labour Act in 2006 prohibiting children under the age of 14 to labour (although, 12- and 13-year-olds still can perform what's called "light work" up to 42 hours per week). The law is supposed to ensure that children up to 14 years old won't work night shifts or in places such as factories, railways, or ports, but as it often happens most of the child laborers work unofficially and therefore it is impossible to present any valid data or keep an eye on obeying these rules.

The main reason for all that child labour happening in Bangladesh is poverty- the economic situation of many families forces parents to send their underage children to work as house maids or, probably the most associated with that part of the world sector- textile industry. On average a working child earns about 2 dollars a day, unacceptably low sum that forces these kids to work up to even 100 hours a week. This closes the vicious cycle of poverty, as the studies find that the significant majority of children working full time cannot read a simple sentence in Bengali, therefore they are stuck at the low-wage jobs, forever.

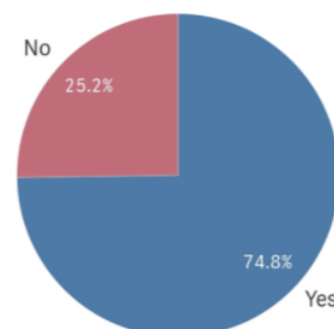
***Below are presented results from our survey:***

(We received 811 answers)

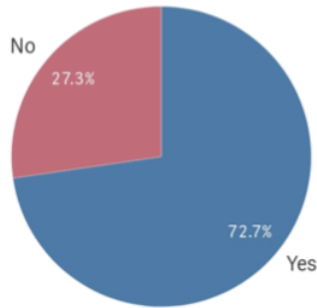
To gain a better understanding of our respondents we started with some questions regarding them. We found out that most of the people that answered were teenagers in ages 13 to 18, they took almost 70% of the whole group. The second biggest group were young adults, up to 25 years of age. What is worth mentioning we were also able to reach younger people and even those over 60 years old. The absolute majority reported they were females (slightly more than 80%). It might be rather out of topic but we can observe another social dilemma that four times more women are interested in child labour and are willing to contribute to a questionnaire that popped out of nowhere on their Facebook page. Moving on, as I mentioned before we received answers from people from all over the globe we have people that declared to be from all continents.

Now, let's move on to the point of our questions. Our first „real” question was: „Do you shop at fast fashion shops/chain stores?”, as we predicted the vast majority (three quarters) stated „yes”. To be honest, I was positively surprised that 25% of people shop in vintage shops, wears hand-me-downs etc.

Do you shop at fast fashion shops/ chain stores (zara, h&m etc) ?



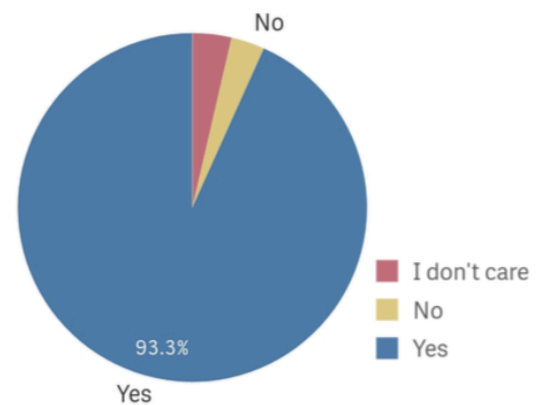
Are you aware of the conditions in which children in Bangladesh work to sew clothes?



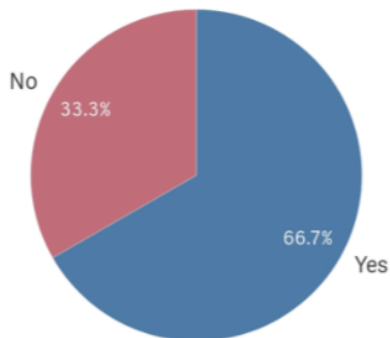
Our second question was as follows: „Are you aware of the conditions in which children in Bangladesh work to sew clothes?”. Again, the majority (almost 73%) said „yes”. What is worth emphasizing is that at least 2/3 of people that shop at fast-fashion stores are aware of the damage they are doing for children in Asia.

Moving on to the third question, „Do you think that child labour in Bangladesh should be fought?”, the absolute majority answered positively. However, people that said „no” and „I don’t care” combined made up for almost 7% of respondents. I was shocked when I found out that 30 people that decided to fill out this survey said they „don’t care” about fighting this problem. What is even more shocking is that more than half of those careless are aware of the conditions in which those children work.

Do you think the problem of child labour in Bangladesh should be fought?



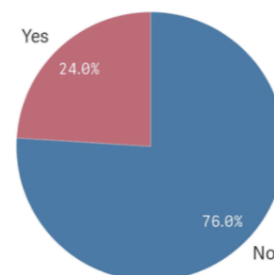
Is the source of clothes you buy important to you?



Subsequently, we asked, if the source of clothes is important to you. I am happy to inform you that almost 67% said „yes”. Relations between those two last questions really interested me. Especially people that said that they do not shop in fast fashion shops and also said they do not care about the source their clothing comes from. I found out that almost every 8th respondent from unknown reasons and not on purpose is „helping” in reducing child labour in the modern world.

Our last question, and to be honest the one that was the most intriguing to me was: „Do you think that buying clothes from shops like that or working for them is ethically right?”. Not surprisingly, most of the people, more than 76% said „yes”. On the other hand, however, more than every 5th responded said „yes”. To put this in perspective, exactly 81 people said that the source from which their clothes comes

Do you think that buying clothes from shops like that or working for them is ethically right?



from are important to them, they are aware of conditions in which children work to make those clothes and at the same time, they believe that working and shopping in fast fashion shops is ethically right. I can not see any logical explanation for this combination of answers, besides lack of knowledge on the topic. I think that they, do not know that children in Bangladesh work in those terrifying conditions. Therefore, here we come to spread the knowledge on this topic.

### ***Child labour in numbers:***

- Around **4,5 %** of Bangladeshi children (5 to 14 years old) are engaged in exploitative work to support their families.
- It is affecting **152 million** children
- It has decreased by **38%**
- Alomst **50%** of children works in occupations considered hazardous fot their life and health
- **12%** of the children aged 5-14 in South Asia are involved in child labour
- The young, 5-11-year-old children, make up about **one-fifth** of all child laborers in South Asia.
- child labor for the 5-17 years age range in India is - **5.8 million**, Pakistan - **3.4 million** and Nepal - **2.0 million**.

### ***Main companies that use child labour:***

- Nestle
- Hershey's
- Mars
- Forever 21
- GAP
- Nike
- Zara
- Addidas
- Victoria's Secret
- Apple
- Disney
- Toys R

### ***What we need to do to stop child labor:***

1) Child labor is called the harvest of poverty. To reduce child labor, we need to eradicate poverty at first.

- 2) To stop inhuman child labor, we have to change our mental attitude and think of other peoples children as our own.
- 3) The government has to implement the existing laws to eliminate child labor and adopt short, medium, and long-term plans. It is possible to reduce child labor with the joint initiative of all.
- 4) To reduce child labor, it is necessary to discover where it is present to spread more information about it in the media.
- 5) We should give more priority to this issue in the national social security strategy.
- 6) Every working child must ensure education.
- 7) Creation of public awareness about child labor and children's rights is necessary.

If you want to make a first step to prevent child labour here are some inspiring foundations focusing on elimination this problem:

- <https://globalmarch.org>
- <https://www.love146.org.uk>
- <https://stopchildlabor.org>
- <https://www.savethechildren.org>

To summarize it all and put in simple words, here are children explaining to us, child labour (click on a link below to watch):



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQhNv1MAETw&t=136s>

To make sure we are understanding this topic correctly and fully we directly asked teenagers from Bangladesh for their comment on this topic. Here are their answers:



The issue of child labour connects to the increasing rate of poverty in Bangladesh. Increasing a number of people are living below the average standard of living, while they can't even afford their own food and necessity materials. This has forced many to send their children into working sectors, disconnecting them from their normal life and schools. Factories and companies also hire child laborers as they can pay less to them and have an increase in their revenue while making them work as hard as the adults. The rate of child labour has dwindled over the last few years, with constant implementation of laws and policies by Bangladesh government. Yet, many small businesses are hiring child laborers as the kids come searching for jobs, out of necessity for living.

~ Priyonti Jahan, 16 years old

---



Most kids go to work when they are about 9 years old. Boys work as helper and girls are mostly married off early or sent to households in cities as helping hands or maids and 12+ age children are sent to work in garment factories with fake ids. Me commenting on it would be hypocrisy as our house also had several small girls as maids and my mom is still looking for another one from village. You cannot say that stealing is bad when you are also a thief and in this case I am a thief. We do it because young girls are good with household works as they have to take of their household and siblings as young as 5 years old and their families cannot even provide for her. Also it is cheap to hire them compared to older or town maids. I am not sure if it is ethical because I grew up with these things on a daily basics.

~Kazi Rowshan Mashfiat

---



Aahhh...

First of all, the children who are doing work in Bangladesh as child laborers are younger than 18 which is prohibited by our government...which is a great decision from my side ... but then why are children still taken to work, that's a question.

And there is only 1 answer for this and that's because of family... yes family. Basically poor people in Bangladesh are having so many children and only fathers can't handle the financial problems of a family so to earn more money and to have a better and peaceful life the children go to work without going to school. So, the only factor that is increasing child labour in Bangladesh is financial problem.

~ Jobidul Talha, 18 years old

---



In a country like Bangladesh poverty is in every state and in every corner. Due to poor financial condition of the family, parents usually fail to provide their children with educational facilities, and they end up pushing them into garments, local jobs where they can earn and feed themselves and don't have to starve to death. Poverty is one of the main reasons for child labour, most of the time they do this due to family pressure and also different institutions make groups of young girls and boys usually who are homeless and make them work.

~ Arpita Saha, 20 years old

---





Due to incessant activism, the Government of Bangladesh ratified the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2001. National legislation on hazardous child labour was successively reviewed in 2006 and a list of menacing forms of child labour was adopted in 2013. Bangladesh, the growing dragon of south-east Asia and key player of the global knit and woven garment industry has a zero-tolerance policy for child labour in the formal industrial and economic structure. However, a lot of children or under- eighteens are still working in the informal structure and businesses. Most of these businesses are either not enlisted with the government or they are not registered. Some of this work includes house help, street-side kiosks, vendors, roadside food stalls etc. There is always an argument about child labour in Bangladesh as a lot of these children are working for survival, even though the numbers are decreasing, along with the rise in GDP and income per capita. Despite all the statistics and data, leaving all the arguments behind, it should be a practice of value that all children should be set free, and everyone should have the right to a better as well as brighter future, with basics being full filled until they turn into adults.

~ Faizul Islam Anik, 28 years old

---

At the end we would like to give a special thanks for our correspondents from Bangladesh that helped us with our research.

- Ramisa Tuy
- Mehtab Ullah Anan
- Safwan Samir



## Helena Drzazga

Hi! My name is Helena, and I am 17 years old high school student. I am editor in chief of GAM Times. My goal is to spread awareness among youth, mainly on human rights and politics. In my free time you can find me in an art gallery, cinema or fighting for equality.

---



## Hanna Okurowska

Hi! I am 17 years old high school student. My job in GAM is to be up to date with current political and social events and write them up for my GAM Highlights section, as well as run a GAM Facts series. In my free time you'll usually find me with a good book in hands or watching my favorite movies.

---