



Photo: Tanvir Sharif,
Winrock International

Child Labor Improvements in Bangladesh (CLIMB) Project

Bangladesh's dried fish sector (DFS) is plagued by some of the worst forms of child labor (CL). Child workers labor long hours under direct sun without protection, climb on unstable structures and often do not go to school. They are repeatedly exposed to hazardous chemicals and smoke, resulting in skin and respiratory issues. Family poverty and debt drive many children to work in the sector, and parents often have only limited knowledge of the risks and health impacts associated with dried fish processing.

Although the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has made great strides in addressing unacceptable labor practices, prior to CLIMB's inception, national regulations did not include the DFS on the official list of hazardous child labor, making it difficult for the GoB to prioritize and address labor violations in the sector. Likewise, few civil society organizations (CSOs) that provide working children with education opportunities, build awareness, and advocate for support had the capacity to address CL or improper conditions. Violations also went unreported in the media.

The U.S. Department of Labor-funded CLIMB project (2017-2021), implemented by Winrock, worked to improve awareness of CL in the DFS and promote acceptable work conditions through focused efforts by CSOs and government to identify and address CL and the vulnerability of communities and households.

CLIMB's Primary Objectives

1. Improve CSO capacity to produce accurate research on CL and work conditions to build stakeholders' awareness of the consequences, nature and scale of the problem in the DFS.
2. Strengthen CSO capacity to use findings to raise awareness among vulnerable communities and advocate to GoB, employers, and other key stakeholders to identify CL and enforce policies.
3. Empower CSOs to raise the voices of vulnerable families, refer them to services and address the lack of economic alternatives in fishing communities.

Geographic Focus

CLIMB interventions focused on southeast Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar area, the site of most of the country's dried fish processing activities.



CLIMB's Strategic Approach

- Stakeholder engagement on labor issues from different vantage points, including workers' rights, health and education, informed by research.
- Peer-to-peer learning and engagement to amplify voice and reach of diverse actors such as academic institutions, nonprofits and media at all levels.
- A learning-by-doing model in which CSOs put new knowledge and skills into practice by implementing activities across the three objectives.

CLIMB's Results

- Improved capacity of civil society to identify and document accurate, timely, and user-friendly information on the nature and scope of CL and unacceptable conditions of work for children in DFS.
 - Provided technical assistance to the Sustainable Upliftment Initiative Trust (SUIT) for development and publication of the “*Comprehensive Mixed-Methods Research on CL in the DFS in Cox's Bazar*” report.
 - Developed seven user-friendly materials from the research findings on child labor practices in the DFS.
- Improved capacity of civil society to raise awareness and advocate for the protection of children from CL, forced child labor, and/or unacceptable conditions in the DFS.
 - Completed 12 consultations with National Child Labor Welfare Committee (NCLWC) members, and organized more than 20 advocacy events with NCLWC, the District Child Labor Monitoring Committee, and the Upazila Child Labor Monitoring Committee.
 - Provided 65 CSOs with special capacity training on information technology and business.
 - Formed two advocacy networks groups at the local and national level (operational guideline, members list, activities plan) that successfully implemented activities to improve labor conditions in the DFS.
 - Reached more than 5,000 people through

capacity strengthening activities.

- Improved capacity of civil society to implement initiatives to address CL and/or unacceptable conditions of work for children in DFS, including better access to livelihoods services, grievance mechanisms and remedy for victims of exploitation.
 - Partnered with Youth Power in Social Action (YPSA), Integrated Community and Industrial Development Initiative (INCIDIN), Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP) and Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB) to raise awareness and build support for addressing child labor in the dried fish sector.
 - Formed a grievance coordinator team of legal professionals, journalists, business owners, DFS association members and CSOs supporting 30+ families with access to grievance mechanisms and legal remedies.
 - 954 DFS families were referred to services for support through the Information Service Center.
 - Provided 500 CL-engaged households (HHs) with emergency services packages (food, health, hygiene) and 240 HHs with livelihood training services in poultry, goat rearing and tailoring.

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CLIMB Civil Society Partners

