

## ***CLIMB Project Advocating for Increased Government of Bangladesh Directives in Eliminating Child Labor in the Dried Fish Sector***

One of the key objectives of the Child Labor Improvements in Bangladesh (CLIMB)<sup>1</sup> Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, is to strengthen community response and engagement of government on child labor (CL) in the Dried Fish Sector (DFS) centered in the Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh. In the first 18 months of the project, the foundation laid with Civil Society Organization (CSO) partners and in the focus sub-districts of Cox's Bazar Sadar and Moheshkhali Upazilas is showing important progress in establishing functioning and effective Upazila Child Labor Monitoring Committees (UCLMCs). The committees were constituted by the Government of Bangladesh in the two sub-districts to monitor and prevent child labor.

To address the worst forms of child labor (WFCL) as mandated by the policies and monitoring of the country's National Plan of Action (NPA), the CLIMB project, in collaboration with its CSO partner, the Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh (ACLAB), has provided guidance and technical support to strengthen the functioning of the UCLMCs so the committees can fulfil their roles and responsibilities in eliminating CL from hazardous sectors by 2021, and from all sectors by 2025.

CLIMB's efforts with the UCLMCs seek to develop an effective stakeholder platform to:

- Advocate to eliminate CL in the DFS;
- Include the DFS on the government's list of hazardous sectors;
- Inform policy planners, GoB actors and relevant Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on their roles and responsibilities towards elimination of CL from WFCL;
- Develop/improve the UCLMCs' monitoring and enforcement capacity on CL-related laws and policies; and
- Coordinate with the District Child Labor Monitoring (DCLMC) Committee for scaled up results.

On January 27, 2020, the UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer) of Moheshkhali Upazila called its first UCLMC meeting. Of the 35 participants in attendance, 19 were members of the committee. The next day, the UNO of Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila called its first UCLMC meeting, where 41 participants attended, including 24 members of the committee. These were the first full formal meetings called by the UNOs since the formation of the UCLMCs in 2014.

The committees are governed by the GoB under the government act of 2014 with the representatives of the respective government departments, elected members of the Local Government Institutions (LGIs) and selected CSOs.



*Children working in a dried fish processing establishment*

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<sup>1</sup> The CLIMB project is managed by Winrock International under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Labor. The project runs December 15, 2017 through February 28, 2021.



*Meetings of UCLMCs in Moheshkhali and Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazilas*

ACLAB staff supported planning and facilitation of the meetings at the UNO offices to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase committee members' understanding of their roles and responsibilities;
- Raise awareness on CL-related laws and policies that exist in Bangladesh;
- Share the current CL situation prevailing in the DFS;
- Encourage committee members to highlight the lives of the children/communities involved in the DFS;
- Develop action plans for the continued functioning of the committees; and
- Increase capacity of the committees to plan and run meetings as per the original resolution and schedule developed by the GoB.

The members of the committees acknowledge the CL situation in Cox's Bazar Sadar and Moheshkhali Upazilas and expressed their commitments to:

- Assist in implementing NPA to employ National Child Labor Elimination Policy at Upazila level;
- Collect CL-related information and report to the DCLMC;
- Implement awareness-raising activities to encourage social and behavior change to eliminate CL and advocate to the DCLMC for budget provisions for services to vulnerable communities;
- Assess children's needs and protect them from hazardous CL abuse; and
- Continue to meet on a regular basis with the next meeting scheduled for the last week of March or early April 2020 focused specifically on CL in the DFS.

Interventions that strengthen communities' capacity for sustained response and engagement of government on CL in the DFS is critical to CLIMB's objectives and to combatting child labor in Bangladesh. The U.S. Department of Labor, Winrock International, government and local CSO partners are working together to improve functioning of existing mechanisms such as UCLMCs that play a key role in the county's plans to eliminate CL.