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# 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh

## BANGLADESH (Tier 2)

The Government of Bangladesh does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period; therefore, Bangladesh remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing training on the victim identification guidelines and trauma-informed care for frontline officials and formally adopting an NRM. The government identified more trafficking victims and referred them to protection services. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government investigated, prosecuted, and convicted fewer traffickers and did not take adequate steps to address internal trafficking crimes – including sex trafficking and forced child labor – which remained pervasive. Labor inspectors severely lacked the capacity to adequately monitor informal sectors and hold companies accountable for labor violations. Victim protection and reintegration efforts remained insufficient, particularly for Rohingya refugees and returning Bangladeshi migrant workers. The government continued to permit set recruitment fees that rendered many migrant workers indebted, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking.

## PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes, including complicit officials, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Strengthen the capacity of Anti-Trafficking Tribunal personnel to prosecute and adjudicate human trafficking cases, and expand tribunals to heavy caseload areas.
- Increase the availability and quality of protection and reintegration services for all trafficking victims, including adult male victims, foreign victims, and victims exploited abroad and allow trafficking victims in government-run and -funded shelters freedom of movement.
- Consistently enforce regulations and monitor labor recruitment companies, *dalals* (sub-agents), and brokers who supply labor to recruiting agencies, including by eliminating recruitment fees charged to migrant workers and holding fraudulent labor recruiters criminally accountable.
- Increase the capacity of labor inspectors to identify trafficking crimes, including monitoring the informal sector, filing cases in labor courts, and referring cases for criminal courts investigations.
- Increase efforts to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, including disseminating and implementing formal victim identification procedures and the NRM to refer victims to appropriate services.
- Increase law enforcement efforts to investigate and prosecute credible allegations of trafficking of Rohingya, including cases that do not involve movement, and establish clear procedures for referring Rohingya to protection services.
- Increase training for officials, including law enforcement, labor inspectors, immigration officers, and health care providers, on a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach and on victim identification and referral to services.
- Improve quality of pre-departure trainings for migrant workers, including sessions on labor rights, labor laws, and access to justice and overseas assistance.
- Cease the inappropriate penalization of adult trafficking victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of trafficking.

- Implement the 2015 MOU with India to streamline the identification and repatriation of Bangladeshi trafficking victims.
- Adopt a revised and resourced comprehensive National Action Plan (NAP) that incorporates greater attention to prosecution and protection efforts, including dedicating resources to enhance victim care.

## PROSECUTION

The government decreased overall law enforcement efforts.

The 2012 Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (PSHTA) criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of five years to life imprisonment and a fine of not less than 50,000 Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) (\$440.17). Bonded labor was treated as a separate crime with lesser prescribed penalties of five to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of not less than 50,000 BDT (\$440.17). These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes, such as kidnapping.

In August 2024, civil unrest resulted in the fall of the previous government and collapse of the police force, which hindered Bangladesh's ability to maintain consistent law enforcement and prosecution efforts. The government reported it investigated 811 cases involving 3,334 suspects, including 115 sex trafficking cases, 227 labor trafficking cases, and 469 cases for unspecified forms of trafficking, and continued to investigate 394 cases from previous reporting periods. This compared with the investigation of 975 cases involving 4,042 suspects and continued investigation of 532 cases during the previous reporting period. The government reported initiating prosecution of 452 suspects and continued prosecution of 94 suspects from the previous reporting period. This was a significant decrease compared with the prosecution of 3,475 suspects in the previous reporting period. The courts and tribunals convicted 103 traffickers. This compared to the previous reporting period when courts convicted 407 traffickers. The government reported courts ceased operations for more than three months due to political unrest, hindering overall law enforcement efforts. Courts sentenced 48 traffickers to between three months and 17 years' imprisonment and fines of 20,000 to 2,500,000 BDT (\$168 to \$21,008); the government did not provide sentencing information for the remaining traffickers. The imposition of fines rather than proportionate jail time weakened deterrence and undercut the government's overall anti-trafficking efforts. The government likely reported crimes as trafficking that are outside the international definition of trafficking in its statistics. Victims and their families often hesitated to file claims because of long delays in labor court proceedings and their disadvantaged socioeconomic status, even in cases involving beatings and death, and accepted out-of-court settlements. Limited expertise on anti-trafficking investigations, inadequate evidence, and a reliance on victim-witnesses in criminal proceedings hindered overall law enforcement efforts. Police and prosecutors often did not collaborate effectively, which led to delays and weak cases. In addition, observers reported tribunal judges often disposed of trafficking cases, and judgments did not always align with PSHTA sentencing guidelines. The government continued to train police officers through an anti-trafficking module at the police academy and conducted anti-trafficking training for judges and prosecutors. Police were frequently reassigned to new units every two to three years, which reduced institutional knowledge and negatively affected active cases. Observers noted tribunal judges, prosecutors, and staff required further anti-trafficking training.

The Bangladeshi police – including the Criminal Investigation Department, Police Bureau of Investigation, and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime Unit – was responsible for investigating human trafficking crimes, and a central monitoring cell coordinated investigations. The Anti-Human Trafficking Tribunals, comprising judges and special prosecutors assigned to hear human trafficking cases and address substantial case backlogs, heard trafficking cases in seven of Bangladesh's eight division capitals; judges responsible for 80 women and children courts heard cases involving violence against women and children, including trafficking, in 57 of 64 districts. The government reported at least 4,484 pending trafficking cases,

compared to 4,960 pending cases in September 2023. The government previously announced plans to open additional tribunals, including in Cox's Bazar; however, it did not do so.

Officials lacked a technical understanding of human trafficking and frequently conflated it with migrant smuggling or fraudulent labor practices. In cross-border cases, Bangladeshi officials struggled to coordinate with foreign investigative agencies, request and collect international evidence, and extradite suspected traffickers. Law enforcement frequently relied on civil society organizations (CSO) rather than government resources to address cross-border trafficking crimes. Bangladeshi police coordinated with INTERPOL on transnational trafficking cases. The government maintained mutual legal assistance pacts, including with India and South Africa, to support investigations of ongoing trafficking cases; and maintained extradition treaties with India, South Africa, and Thailand. The government and the Government of the United Kingdom established victim identification SOPs to improve cooperation in addressing transnational crimes, including trafficking.

The government did not sufficiently investigate and prosecute trafficking cases involving the exploitation of Rohingya refugees, despite continued reports of traffickers exploiting Rohingya in forced labor and sex trafficking in Bangladesh. Although the PSHTA included a provision for non-citizens to file trafficking cases, the government did not establish clear legal reporting mechanisms in refugee camps, which impeded Rohingya refugees' access to the criminal justice system and increased impunity for offenders. Police and international humanitarian actors maintained multiple help desks in refugee camps to provide legal assistance to women and child refugee crime victims; however, public distrust of police and security services deterred many victims, including trafficking victims, from seeking assistance.

Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement efforts. Although the government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes, media reported the government filed charges against the owners of 12 recruitment agencies, including a former government official and family members, for allegedly charging workers recruitment fees nearly five times higher than the legal maximum. Government corruption reportedly included officials operating international border crossings. Observers previously alleged some Bangladeshi officials facilitated trafficking of Rohingya, including by accepting bribes from traffickers to gain access to camps, as well as corruption and exploitation. Migrant smugglers sometimes bribed officials to obtain valid Bangladeshi passports for Rohingya refugees, increasing vulnerabilities to trafficking.

## **PROTECTION**

The government increased protection efforts.

The government identified 1,462 trafficking victims, including 144 sex trafficking victims, 285 forced labor victims, and 1,033 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking. This compared with 1,210 victims identified in the previous reporting period. Civil society and international organizations reported identifying an additional 3,410 trafficking victims, including 765 victims of sex trafficking, 2,572 victims of labor trafficking, and 73 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking.

The government had victim identification guidelines for front-line officials. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), the government's lead ministry for combating trafficking, issued directives to implement the victim identification guidelines to identify potential trafficking victims, particularly among vulnerable groups. The government, in partnership with civil society, conducted trainings on the victim identification guidelines and trauma-informed care for frontline officials. Despite these efforts, law enforcement required more training to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, including individuals engaged in commercial sex. Due to inconsistent screening, the government did not take effective measures to prevent the inappropriate penalization of potential victims solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked. Police enforcement

operations at commercial sex establishments resulted in arrests of potential sex trafficking victims without efforts to screen for trafficking indicators. Border officials reportedly received specialized training on trafficking and screened some migrants for trafficking indicators. Immigration officials screened suspected trafficking victims at Bangladesh's three international airports and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) operated a desk at the Dhaka airport, providing financial assistance and information on available NGO services to returning female migrant workers, including trafficking victims. However, observers noted the government's efforts to identify potential victims among the significant population of migrant workers returning to Bangladesh remained inadequate.

The MOHA, with support from civil society and trafficking survivors, adopted an NRM to guide victim referrals to protection services. While the government made efforts to disseminate the NRM, officials did not consistently implement it, impeding victim referrals to appropriate services. The government referred 1,607 victims to services compared with 592 victims referred to services in the previous reporting period. The government reported it could provide trafficking victims with health care, legal services, shelter, vocational training, and other services at support centers operated by MEWOE, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA), and other government ministries. The government provided services to 883 victims, compared to the 193 potential victims it reported during the previous reporting period. NGOs and international organizations reportedly provided services to 8,942 victims.

The MOWCA and Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) provided services to vulnerable populations, including trafficking victims. MOWCA operated six shelter homes for women and children, including trafficking victims. The MSW, through the Department of Social Services (DSS), operated an additional six shelter homes for women and children, three child development centers, and six government shelter homes; men, women, and children could use the services, although none of the centers had specialized services for trafficking victims. Observers suggested additional safe houses – particularly for victims participating in criminal proceedings – were necessary. Police operated multiple centers for women and child victims of violence, including trafficking, in each of Bangladesh's eight divisions, offering short-term shelter, medical services, and psychological care. The DSS operated six centers to provide education and vocational training to women seeking alternatives to engaging in commercial sex, including trafficking victims. The DSS maintained its comprehensive victim services guidelines to ensure minimum standards of care in government-run shelters. The government provided 161.98 million BDT (\$1.36 million) for victim services, a significant decrease compared with 496.6 million BDT (\$4.39 million). There were few government shelters, particularly for men, and accommodations were even more limited outside Dhaka. Observers reported the government did not consistently view men as trafficking victims or routinely identify them or provide adequate services. While some NGO shelters could house male victims and provide other services, the majority of government and NGO shelters could not. The government did not typically have specialized services available for trafficking victims, including for girls removed from child sex trafficking in red-light districts or for victims recovering from significant trauma. The MSW operated long-term shelters for women and child victims of violence, including trafficking victims. The government reported victims did not require a court order to access government services, including shelters, due to the newly adopted NRM. The government required trafficking victims, especially those without legal residency in Bangladesh, to remain in shelters until repatriation to their country of origin; women and child victims residing in shelters reportedly did not have freedom of movement.

The PSHTA entitles victims to protection during judicial proceedings, including police security, and allows victims to provide testimony via video conference; however, observers reported many courts were not equipped to handle video testimonies. The government reported at least 375 trafficking victims participated in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers, but insufficient implementation of the protection provision discouraged some victims from participation. Trafficking victims often did not testify in court because of fears of retaliation or reprisals from traffickers and inadequate police protection. Law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial officials lacked a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach, including when interacting with trafficking victims during trials. The government offered financial support for transportation to testify and free legal services to trafficking victims through public and special prosecutors, the

district offices of the National Legal Aid Service Organization, and government-run District Legal Aid Committees. Some organizations reported victims had difficulty accessing these legal services. The government did not provide legal alternatives to the removal of foreign trafficking victims to countries where they might face hardship or retribution. However, foreign victims of trafficking were legally entitled to the same benefits as Bangladeshi nationals under the PSHTA. The government required most CSOs to receive permission from a court or refugee camp officials to provide shelter services to trafficking victims in Cox's Bazar.

The government provided some assistance to trafficking victims overseas, including some support at embassies, repatriation assistance in certain circumstances, and limited access to accommodations and victim services. The MEWOE maintained 30 labor offices, or labor welfare wings, in embassies and consulates in 27 major destination countries to provide welfare services to Bangladeshi migrant workers through 43 diplomatic officials trained on trafficking issues. These officials were responsible for reviewing and verifying employment documents. The MEWOE operated three safe houses abroad for workers with strong indicators of trafficking who fled abusive employers, but it did not report how many victims it assisted among them. Observers reported the government continued to provide inadequate assistance, such as limited counseling and reintegration services, for victims overseas. The government repatriated 256 Bangladeshi migrant workers with assistance from NGOs and international organizations. The government largely relied on civil society and international organizations to assist with repatriations of trafficking victims and provide support to victims after their return. The Rescue, Recovery, Repatriation, and Integration Task Force continued to cooperate with India on trafficking cases primarily involving women and children. The MOHA and the Government of India continued to finalize previously drafted victim identification and repatriation SOPs to guide officials in the repatriation process, as part of the 2015 MOU. The governments facilitated, and civil society often funded, repatriation of trafficking victims from India, but without formal SOPs, the lengthy and complex approval process resulted in some Bangladeshi victims languishing in Indian shelters for years.

Trafficking victims were entitled to court-ordered restitution from traffickers or compensation from a fund established by the government. The government reported courts ordered 1.71 million BDT (\$14,369) in restitution to 11 trafficking victims. Trafficking victims could also file civil suits seeking compensation. Compensation from the victim fund was rarely awarded in criminal cases, and lengthy delays characterized many civil suits. Out-of-court settlements between victims and traffickers remained common, and most settlements required victims to recant their testimony, effectively eliminating the possibility of the trafficker facing a criminal conviction. The government reported arbitration of trafficking cases with the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) is more common than criminal charges under the PSHTA; officials typically encourage the relevant recruiting agency to offer the victim a sum of money to resolve the complaint. As a result, potential human trafficking incidents may be handled as labor issues involving negotiation and arbitration rather than a criminal offense; the civil penalties in these situations are less severe than those under the PHSTA.

## **PREVENTION**

The government maintained efforts to prevent trafficking.

The National Anti-Human Trafficking Authority, designated as a government-wide supervisory body to combat trafficking, met quarterly; however, it required capacity building and further institutionalization to improve inter-ministerial collaboration. The MOHA remained the focal ministry for anti-trafficking efforts and led the inter-ministerial committee for combating human trafficking. The government continued to support Counter Trafficking Committee (CTCs) at district, sub-district, and union levels to facilitate coordination between local governments and civil society to combat human trafficking. The government, in coordination with civil society partners, continued to implement the 2018-2022 NAP, which was extended through 2025. The government allocated 621.49 million BDT (\$5.22 million) for trafficking prevention, including NAP implementation, a significant increase compared with 2 million BDT (\$517,699) in the previous

reporting period. The MOHA continued to develop an online national trafficking database with support from an international partner. The government conducted national awareness campaigns through print media, television, radio, and text messages, as well as through CTCs and community meetings, at times in partnership with civil society. Most campaign materials were available in Bangla and English. The government maintained several general helplines to report crime, including human trafficking. Officials reportedly received 74 calls involving human trafficking allegations. The government participated in a multi-country working group – including Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand – to combat human trafficking in the Bay of Bengal. The government stated that its procurement rules prohibited and prevented trafficking in its supply chains.

The government implemented 21 bilateral labor agreements in part intended to protect Bangladeshi workers abroad. The government drafted a national reintegration policy for returning migrants, including trafficking victims, to ensure safe returns and successful reintegration in Bangladesh; it was pending approval by the end of the reporting period. The government continued to require Bangladeshi migrants complete pre-departure training, which included safe migration and anti-trafficking components, and a 30-day pre-departure training course for women involved in domestic work. The BMET operated approximately 104 technical training centers offering a pre-departure curriculum including labor rights and skills training; however, only a small percentage of migrant workers participated in the trainings prior to departure. BMET instruction did not adequately address labor rights, medical care while abroad, or the process for safe returns.

The 2013 Overseas Employment and Migrants Act criminalized fraudulent recruitment and unlawful recruitment fees; however, the government continued to set legal recruitment fees at rates between 85,000 and 262,000 BDT (\$714-\$2,201), high enough to render many migrant workers indebted and vulnerable to trafficking through debt-based coercion, and many migrants paid more than the legally permissible rates. The government had fixed recruitment fees for 16 labor-receiving countries with the largest number of Bangladeshi workers. The government signed MOUs with Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Brunei, and Tanzania to employ Bangladesh workers and establish an employer-paid recruitment model. However, workers continued to pay large fees that were greater than the fixed amount to pay for service charges, airfares, passports, visas, medical fees, and other expenses. Observers assessed the high cost of legal migration drove some prospective migrants to unlicensed agents whose promises of alternative paths to overseas employment facilitated exploitation, including human trafficking. MEWOE acknowledged that migrant workers frequently paid fees to sub-agents – or *dalals* – in addition to legal recruitment fees. *Dalals* also directly connected workers to overseas jobs by providing fake visas and other documentation and, in some cases, incorrect or deceptive information about the migration process and job in the destination country.

The Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) oversaw more than 2,200 licensed labor recruitment agencies and collected recruitment fees. MEWOE had the authority to register recruiting *dalals* and required brokers to register sub-agents and representatives; the government did not report how it monitored for compliance. MEWOE, in consultation with civil society partners, began drafting a regulation on guidelines and oversight mechanisms for sub-agents. MEWOE did not report if any recruitment agencies were suspended for operating in violation of the law compared to 126 agencies suspended during the previous reporting period. The government took steps to amend the Recruitment Agency Information Management System to monitor and collect data on labor recruitment. The government's Vigilance Task Force – a multiagency effort to monitor and enforce compliance of rules and regulations during the migration process and prevent illegal immigration – continued operations against corrupt recruitment agencies, travel agencies, and *dalals* who operated in rural locations and connected prospective migrant workers to licensed employment agencies.

The Ministry of Labor and Employment's Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) removed 3,697 children from hazardous conditions through inspections, including potential trafficking victims; this compared to 3,474 children during the previous reporting period. DIFE had the authority to file cases in labor courts; staffing and resources to inspect for labor violations, including forced and child labor, remained severely inadequate.

Observers noted the government did not hold officials or business owners accountable for violating existing labor laws. DIFE could only conduct unannounced inspections in factories located outside designated export processing zones. Inspectors were not empowered to monitor the informal sector despite an estimated 93 percent of child labor – including forced child labor – occurring there. DIFE labor inspectors did not receive sufficient training on forced labor.

The government collaborated with the Inter-Sector Coordination Group – responsible for coordinating the activities of humanitarian organizations in the Rohingya refugee response – to disseminate anti-trafficking awareness messages among Rohingya populations and the host communities and facilitated access for international organizations and civil society to conduct awareness activities in Rohingya camps. Rohingya refugees do not have freedom of movement in Bangladesh; low school enrollment in camps and the inability of Rohingya to work legally increase vulnerabilities to trafficking.

The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts nor make efforts to reduce the demand for extraterritorial commercial child sexual exploitation and abuse by tourists visiting Bangladesh. The government established six centers to provide psychosocial support, vocational training, and other services to women in commercial sex establishments and child sex trafficking victims. Observers reported the centers were over capacity and not capable of addressing the number of internal sex trafficking victims. The government provided basic anti-trafficking training to Bangladeshi military and police officers prior to their deployment as peacekeepers, and reported it provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

## **TRAFFICKING PROFILE:**

Trafficking affects all communities. This section summarizes government and civil society reporting on the nature and scope of trafficking over the past five years. Human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Bangladesh, and traffickers exploit victims from Bangladesh abroad. The government tended to disproportionately focus on international labor trafficking and dedicated less attention to internal trafficking, including bonded labor, domestic forced labor, sex trafficking, and the worst forms of child labor. The most at-risk groups include victims of child marriage and violence against women and girls; low-income households; historically vulnerable castes, including Dalit and Harijan communities; seasonal laborers; poorly educated and unemployed youth and students; people with disabilities; people affected by natural disasters; Rohingya refugees; and people attempting to reach other countries through illegal immigration. A national study concluded that economic need is the largest risk factor creating vulnerability to trafficking; other individual factors include domestic violence, child marriage, health expenses, and lack of access to education. Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of child marriage in South Asia, and approximately 50 percent of girls are married by age 18, with rates rising significantly during the past three years. The government reported floods, prolonged droughts, and landslides increased migration and displacement, compounding trafficking vulnerabilities; officials estimated that 700,000 people have been displaced each year on average during the previous decade because of natural disasters. Traffickers increasingly rely on social media, mobile messages, online platforms, and artificial intelligence to lure potential victims with fraudulent job advertisements, particularly targeting women and girls, for sex and labor trafficking. Traffickers also recruit many victims with fraudulent job offers leading to cyber scam operations, mostly in Southeast Asia.

The government facilitates the migration of tens of thousands of skilled and semi-skilled workers at low or no cost; men comprise the majority of migrant workers, but women increasingly travel for domestic work and employment in other sectors. Most Bangladeshi workers migrate to the Middle East, with others traveling to India, Maldives, Pakistan, European countries, and Southeast Asian countries, including Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Burma, and Thailand. Most migrants are low-skilled or unskilled workers who use middlemen and private recruitment agencies to arrange foreign employment and travel. Recruiters often prefer low-skilled workers, whose employers typically do not cover fees, to increase their profits. Many workers assume debt to pay high recruitment fees, imposed legally by recruitment agencies registered with BAIRA or illegally by

unlicensed sub-agents; this places workers at risk of debt-based coercion. Some recruitment agencies, agents, and employers also commit recruitment fraud, including contract switching; this includes promising women and children jobs and exploiting them in sex trafficking upon arrival. A Bangladeshi parliamentarian associated with one such employment agency was previously convicted and imprisoned in Kuwait on charges involving bribery to bring thousands of migrant workers to the Middle East. Traffickers exploit male victims in forced labor abroad in agriculture and construction. Most Bangladeshi migrant workers report experiencing some form of labor exploitation, including fraudulent contracts, discrepancies in wages or work hours, and low or unpaid wages. In recent years, destination countries have recorded tens of thousands of cases involving underpayment or non-payment of wages, overworked employees, passport retention, physical abuse, and instances of young workers dying from kidney diseases because of inadequate protections in working environments. A 2024 report found that nearly all the deceased migrant workers had died of unnatural causes in destination countries, including Gulf states. Traffickers exploit Bangladeshi women and girls in forced labor and sex trafficking abroad, including in India, Pakistan, and Gulf countries. Female migrants seeking employment as domestic workers reportedly experience significant risks of trafficking, often in the Gulf states and Southeast Asia. Observers estimate that children constitute 40 percent of Bangladeshi sex trafficking victims exploited abroad.

Traffickers often exploit individuals from rural communities migrating to urban areas or abroad. Traffickers use coercive debts to force Bangladeshi families and Indian migrants to work in aluminum, brick kilns, garment factories, dry fish production, shrimp and fish processing industries, shipbreaking, and tea plantations. Bangladesh, one of the largest textile exporters in the world, relies on subcontractors in informal workshops to sustain the ready-made garment industry, but most garment factories lack adequate oversight. Bangladeshi children are at risk for forced labor primarily in the informal sector and industries such as agriculture, production of *bidis* (hand-rolled cigarettes), brick making, construction, domestic work, dried fish processing, furniture production, garment manufacturing, hospitality, restaurants, shipbreaking, street-based work, tanneries, tea plantations, and welding. Observers estimate 120,000 children work in the Keraniganj industrial district's garment factories, often in deplorable conditions; many children are indentured and serve as collateral for their parents' loans. Children also work on fishing vessels and in dangerous jobs in the fishing industry. Traffickers force children younger than 12 years into domestic work; violent incidents – including physical abuse, rape, and torture – were widespread yet underreported, with most cases settled privately. In addition, there are an estimated 3.4 million children who are homeless in Bangladesh, and traffickers coerce some of these children into forced criminality or forced begging; traffickers force children, especially in border areas, to produce and transport drugs, particularly a methamphetamine-caffeine drug called *yaba*.

Traffickers continue to exploit adults and children from all regions of the country in Bangladesh's legal brothels, many illegal brothels, and private hotels. Child sex trafficking remained widespread with an estimated 30,000 girls exploited in Bangladesh. Some women reported they had grown up in brothels because their mothers were engaged in commercial sex and brothel owners then exploited them in sex trafficking as children; observers report children growing up in Bangladesh's red-light districts seldom escape these brothels. A study found that child sex trafficking victims are forced to take more clients at lower wages and experience more violence and sickness than adults voluntarily engaged in commercial sex. Commercial sex is legal in registered brothels, and the individuals involved – including foreign nationals – must receive documentation from police confirming their age and consent; however, some police accept bribes to ignore abuse in the establishment, forego checking for required age documentation, and procure fraudulent documentation for children as young as 10 years old. Children who are homeless or use the streets as a source of livelihood often lack birth certificates or documentation, increasing vulnerabilities to trafficking. Children who are homeless are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including trafficking, and Dalit and Indigenous children faced heightened risks. Observers reported nearly 80 percent of child sex trafficking victims are also exploited in the production of child sexual abuse material.

Bangladesh hosts more than one million Rohingya refugees across 33 camps in the Cox's Bazar district and island of Bhasan Char. Armed groups, militias, and criminal gangs forcibly recruit Rohingya refugees, including children; refugees are further vulnerable to trafficking, including

forced recruitment, due to a lack of economic opportunities, insufficient camp oversight, corrupt policing, and distrust in the government. In addition, traffickers exploit Rohingya from refugee camps in sex and labor trafficking in Bangladesh and transnationally. Traffickers transport Rohingya girls in Bangladesh and internationally to India, Malaysia, and Nepal for sex trafficking, sometimes using false promises of jobs or marriage; some traffickers “trade” these girls through the Internet. Government restrictions on legal employment have led many Rohingya to migrate through illegal channels, thereby increasing their risk of trafficking. Under the previous government, some Bangladeshi officials allegedly facilitated the trafficking of Rohingya, including accepting bribes from traffickers to gain access to camps, and engage in extortion and harassment. Rohingya girls and boys are recruited from camps and forced to labor as shop hands, fishers, rickshaw pullers, and domestic workers. Tourists have increased demands for extraterritorial sexual exploitation and abuse, including exploitation of Rohingya girls, near Cox’s Bazar.