

Vulnerability of the children and families
of the garments workers deceased
in Savar building collapse



*This report is developed on information from a phone-survey
on 278 deceased garments workers who left behind children*

June 30, 2013

Vulnerability of the Children and Families of the Garments Workers Deceased in Savar Building Collapse

This report is developed on information from a phone-survey on 278 deceased garments workers who left behind children

Final draft

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The survey was coordinated by **Sajid Raihan** and **Abdul Alim**. **Abdullah Al Nakib** and **Jahidul Islam Khan** collected the primary data. **Avaya Dutta** and **Shubhomoy Haque** contributed to prepare the report, which was reviewed by **Reefat Bin Sattar**, **Mayeeda Choudhury** and **Asgar Ali Sabri**.

June 30, 2013

Cover photo: Shohidul with his boy – shocked and bemused

[Both Shohidul Islam and his spouse Parvin Akhter were employed by Ether Tex. Ltd. – one of the five factories housed in the Rana Plaza that crumbled in on thousands of garments workers. Parvin died in the incident while Shohidul, who is recovering from minor injuries in the waist and neck, is left with two children and vast uncertainty.]

Cover photo and design:

Amiruzzaman/ActionAid

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Chapter 1: Background of the Phone Survey

Introduction:

The incident of Savar building collapse is the second largest global human-made industrial disasters after the Bhopal tragedy. The nine-storied commercial building *Rana Plaza*, which housed five garment factories, a commercial bank and a market, fully collapsed on 24th April 2013 causing large number of casualties. As per the official statement by Major General Chowdhury Hasan Sarwardy, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Nine Infantry Division of Bangladesh Army at the press conference on 13th May 2013 after official closure of the operation, the total number of lives rescued stand at 2438, 834 dead bodies of the workers were handed over to their relatives, 234 unidentified bodies were buried in graveyard and 59 bodies were kept in morgue. (Source: *The Independent*, Tuesday, 14th May 2013¹). As on 13th May 2013, the total number of missing is 98 as per district administration information. As per the latest information, the number of death reached 1130.

Immediately after the incident, Government, NGOs, private organisations and many individuals came up with various types of support for the survivors, deceased workers, their family members and the rescue workers. In addition, some members of *National Alliance for Risk Reduction and Response Initiative* (NARRI), a consortium of ten International NGOs, conducted a Rapid Need Assessment (RNA) on the survivors to develop a database and identify their initial needs to find out key areas for future interventions.

However, there has hardly been any survey on the deceased workers or their families. Neither is there adequate information available on the status and needs of their children. Though the families of the deceased workers received immediate financial support, it could not meet the requirements of their children. Requirement of children is crucially important in the sense that if their present need remains unfulfilled or unaddressed, it may have serious psychological, socio-economical and cultural bearings on them. To be specific, these children are likely to be -

- at risk of dropping out of school.
- engaged in hazardous child labour
- detached from family and moved to live / work in streets
- involved with anti-social and criminal activities
- nutritionally deficient specially under 5 yrs of age
- Emotionally / psychologically disordered

The above situation demands explicit information on children of deceased workers. In this backdrop, a *phone survey* was conducted recently.

¹ http://www.theindependentbd.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=169003:army-plans-to-wrap-up-rescue-operation&catid=132:backpage&Itemid=122

Objective of the Survey

The aim of the survey was to prepare a database on the children and families of the deceased workers to explore areas for future intervention.

Specific objectives of the survey are:

- To assess the current situation of the children and the families of the deceased workers
- To identify specific areas of support for the children and the families of the deceased workers
- To put forward a set of recommendations based on the findings of the survey

Methodology

This phone survey was carried out on the basis of telephonic conversation with the family members of the deceased workers. They were contacted over telephone for collecting data. A set of questions was used to collect data from those families. The database of 834 deceased workers, whose dead bodies were handed over to their families from the Adhar Chandra school ground, was used for data collection. A two- member team was formed to collect data. From primary data collection up to data processing and report generation, the following process was followed:

- Primary data collection: Phone survey was conducted on the spouses and other family members of the deceased workers. Family members/respondents were consulted over phone to collect info;
- Data input method: Data entry was going on in parallel with data collection;
- Data processing: Database was categorized and output database was produced in MS Excel Spreadsheet;
- Tabulation and report generation: Objective-wise and category-wise tables were produced. The final report was prepared on the basis of the information gathered;

Limitations of the Survey

The phone survey has the following limitations:

1. The phone survey found 278 deceased workers from the database of 834, who have children. As the total number of deceased workers reached 1130, there may be more deceased workers who have children.
2. The phone survey was conducted in a very short notice. Though it collected some specific and basic information, it could not gather detailed information of children and family members of the deceased workers.
3. Few deceased workers' families could not be contacted due to having no information/contact number or address.

Chapter 2: Phone Survey Findings

Findings of the Phone Survey

The survey investigated the key information on the children and the family members of the deceased workers. According to the official data, 834 dead bodies were handed over from Adhar Chandra school ground. Of them, 278 deceased workers having a total of 415 children were surveyed. The survey also found two pregnant wives of the deceased workers. The following tables and charts present the current status and needs of children and the families of these deceased workers.

Table 1: Number of deceased workers having children by sex

Sex	No. of Deceased Workers	%
Male	108	39
Female	170	61
Total	278	100

The above table shows that among the 278 deceased workers, 39% are male and 61% are female. Therefore, the number of female deceased workers having children is higher.

Table 2: Number of Children of the deceased workers

No. of Children	No. of Deceased Workers	%
1-2 children	252	91
3-5 Children	22	8
Above 5 Children	02	1
Total	276	100

Table 2, representing the number of the children of the deceased workers shows that 91% of the deceased workers have 1-2 children and 1% have above 5 children. The following chart explains it as well:

Chart 1: Number of Children of the deceased workers

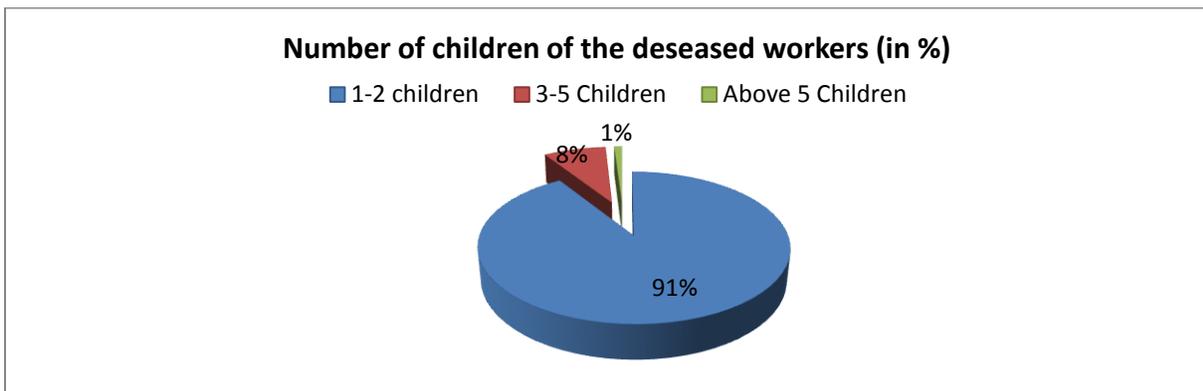


Table 3: Age and sex of the children

Age Group (years)	Boy		Girl		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
0 to 5	82	51	80	50	162	39
6 to 10	80	58	59	42	139	33
11 to 14	39	51	38	49	77	19
15 to 18	14	38	23	62	37	9
Total	215	52	200	48	415	100

Table 3 disaggregated the number of children of deceased workers by sex and age. It shows that 52% of the total children are boys and 48% are girls. Of the total 415 children, 39% are 0 to 5 years of age, where 58% of them are boys and 42% are girls. 9% of the total children are 15 to 18 years of age, where 38% of them are boys and 62% are girls. This table also shows that 72% of the total 415 children are below 10 years of age.

Table 4: Educational status of the children

Education	Boys		Girls		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Pre-Primary	8	67	4	33	12	3
Primary	99	57	76	43	175	42
Secondary	22	39	35	61	57	14
SSC & above	5	56	4	44	9	2
Others	6	86	1	14	7	2
No education	75	49	77	51	152	36
No information	0	0	3	100	3	1
Total	215	52	200	48	415	100

Most of the children of the deceased workers are continuing their studies. Of total 415 children, 42% are studying at primary level and 2% at SSC and above level. It was found that 36% children have no education, either they are not eligible for going to school (age limit) or discontinued schooling due to work for wage-earning.

Table 5: Children's Current Parental Status **(before the incident)*

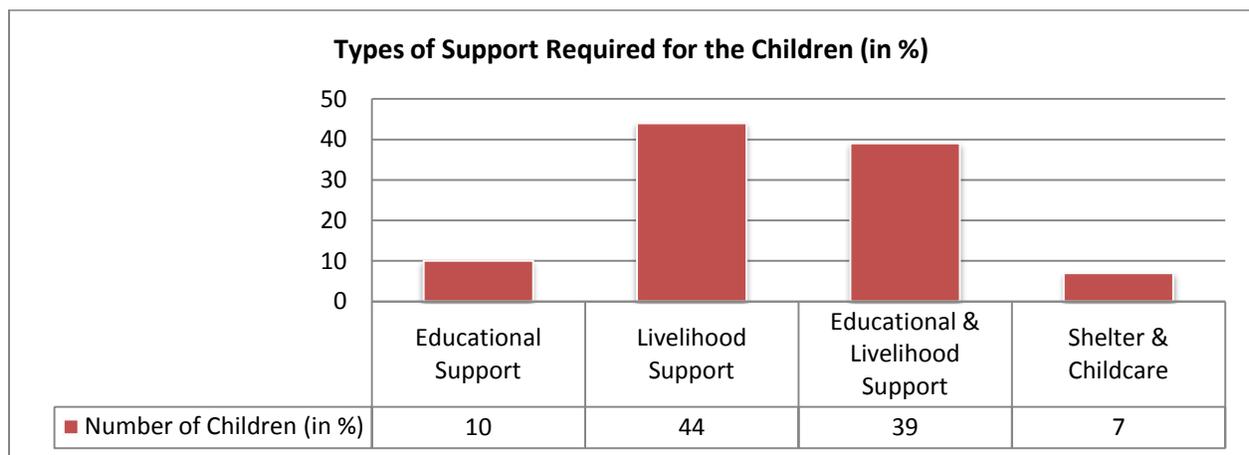
Age Group of Children (years)	At least One Parent Alive		No Parent Alive		Parents Separated/Divorced*		Total	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	#	%
2 or below	23	33	2	0	3	0	61	15
3-5	48	41	3	1	2	2	97	23
6-10	76	60	4	1	1	1	143	34
11-14	36	35	1	2	2	1	77	19
15-18	14	22	0	1	0	0	37	9
Total	197	191	10	5	8	4	415	100

The survey found that among 415 children, 388 children have at least one parent alive. 27 children do not have any living parent, 20 of them being 10 years of age. They lost either their father or mother in the Savar incident. Among those 27, 15 children’s parents had died before the incident and 12 children’s parents had divorced or separated before the incident.

Table 6: Type of support required for the children

Need/Requirement	No. of Children	%
Educational Support	43	10
Livelihood Support	182	44
Educational & Livelihood Support	165	39
Shelter & Childcare	27	7
Total	415	100

Chart 2: Type of support required for the children



The survey explored several types of support required for the children. Among 415 children, 44% require financial support to cope with the present unfavorable situation. 10% require support to carry on their education while 39% need both educational and financial support.

Table 7: Status of Spouse

Status of Spouse	No. of Deceased Workers	%
Alive	257	92
Dead	10	4
Separated /Divorced*	11	4
Total	278	100

*(before the incident)

Table 7 indicates the status of spouses of the deceased workers. Here we can see that 92% of the deceased workers’ spouse are alive and the remaining 8% deceased worker’s spouses are either dead or divorced/separated before the incident.

Analytical Discussion:

Undoubtedly, most of the children and family members were directly or indirectly dependent on the deceased workers as they were the main wage earners. They have been distressed due to the incident and are now most vulnerable. The survey found 15 children who lost both their parents, 12 children's parents were separated earlier and the only parent died in the Savar incident, 61 children who are below 2 years and 2 women who are currently pregnant. It also found 2 spouses of 2 deceased workers having respectively 6 and 7 children. 23 girl children are between the age group of 15 to 18 years.

Bangladesh being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all responses to the needs of the children must be guided by the principles of CRC. The articles of the CRC contain the following guiding principles and categories of child rights:

Guiding principles: The guiding principles of the Convention include non-discrimination; adherence to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right to participate. They represent the underlying requirements for any and all rights to be realised.

Survival and development rights: These are rights to the resources, skills and contributions necessary for the survival and full development of the child. They include rights to adequate food, shelter, clean water, formal education, primary health care, leisure and recreation, cultural activities and information about their rights. These rights require not only the existence of the means to fulfill the rights but also access to them. Educational and livelihood support may ensure the survival and development rights of the children.

Protection rights: These rights include protection from all forms of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and cruelty, including the right to special protection in times of war and protection from abuse in the criminal justice system. Livelihood support to the families of the children of deceased workers, shelter and childcare support may ensure their protection rights.

Participation rights: Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. Participation rights include the right to express opinions and be heard, the right to information and freedom of association. Engaging these rights as they mature helps children bring about the realization of all their rights and prepares them for an active role in society.

The equality and interconnection of rights are stressed in the Convention. Children's understanding of rights will vary depending on age and community in particular should tailor the issues they discuss, the way in which they answer questions and discipline methods to the age and maturity of the individual child and respond to the need of each individual child accordingly.

Conclusion

This survey gives an overview on the status and needs of the children and spouses of the deceased workers. It shows that among 278 workers, 39% are male and 61% are female. 91% of them have 1 to 2 children and 1% have above 5 children. Among the total 415, 39% children are 0 to 5 years of age and 9% are 15 to 18 years of age. 42% children are studying at primary level and 2% at SSC and above level. 38% children have no education. 388 children have at least one parent and 27 children do not have any living parent. The survey explored that 44% children require financial support to cope with the present situation, 10% require support to carry on their education, 39% need both educational and financial support and 7% need shelter and childcare support. 92% of the deceased workers' spouses are alive; remaining 8% spouses of the deceased workers were either died or were divorced/separated before the incident. The survey collected key information of the children and the spouses of the deceased workers. It urges to undertake further survey/investigation to find out in depth information on the status and needs of the children and the spouses of the deceased workers.

Way forward

It is clear from the findings of the phone survey that the children and families of deceased workers are in a deep state of vulnerability given their urgent need for both immediate and long term support for their survival, development and protection. As the age groups of the children differ, appropriate response will also vary. Protection of these children and families has been the major concern. In this backdrop, the following actions are immediately needed to address the vulnerability of children and spouses of the deceased workers:

- Financial support to address the present economic insecurity.
- Employment opportunity for the spouses of the deceased workers who are jobless.
- Support to ensure proper nutrition for the children.
- Support to continue education.
- Psychosocial support for both the children and the spouses of the deceased workers.
- Special care for the pregnant women.
- A coherent mechanism for the monitoring and management of long-term support.

All children must be supported to continue their relevant education, whether be it basic/primary or technical/vocational, in order for them to prepare for a better future. Their other skills and capacities also need to be developed. The adolescent girls will need special protection so that they are not vulnerable to any exploitation like sexual abuse, trafficking or violence.