

# INEFFICACY OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS OF BANGLADESH: THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

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## Abstract

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups when in interaction with the criminal justice system. In Bangladesh, prolonged neglect, inaccessible justice, lack of legal representation along with deprivation of legal rights are common in the juvenile criminal justice system, illustrating a gap in law and its implementation to protect the rights of juveniles who in turn become victims when in conflict with law. Equally crucial are conditions of juveniles staying in the child development centers, the rehabilitative approaches adopted and the social integration process in place. The paper enquires on the effectiveness of these centers as institutes which are expected to develop, reform and rehabilitate juveniles; while also looking into the legal barriers posed by juvenile courts for their trials. With use of qualitative methodology and purposive sampling, in-depth semi-structured interviews were taken of 30 juvenile offenders, 10 family members, 5 lawyers, 8 correctional center officers, and 5 social welfare officers from all the correctional centers of Bangladesh. to assess whether the centers are being able to effectively ensure a juvenile's proper re-integration into society; and to identify the barriers that leave juveniles isolated socio-legally. Findings show how the centers are not able to ensure effective social re-integration and provision of socio-legal services. Centers also become harmful environments with power dynamics, lack of medical assistance, education and counselling. Overall, while the centers aim to re-integrate the juveniles, they are failing to do so effectively.

**Keywords:** Juveniles, Correctional Facilities, Child Development Centers, Social Reintegration.

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## **Introduction**

A correctional facility is any residential facility that has the means to limit the movements and activities of the individuals placed in the Centre who have been in Conflict with the law and in some special terms, in contact with the law. It is used for the placement of juveniles who have been found guilty of a crime, or for anyone who has been convicted of a criminal offense, if applicable. Since its establishment, the system of justice for juveniles has attempted to strike a balance between the purposes of rehabilitation and punishment (Singer, 1996).

In spite of the fact that the juvenile justice system still considers rehabilitation or resocialization to be one of its primary objectives, incarceration in a juvenile correctional facility is likely better understood as punishment with treatment components added on (Van Vleet, 1999). Youth serving time in these facilities view their incarceration as a harsh and isolated form of punishment (Inderbitzin, 2006). However, confinement in juvenile facilities also provides a considerable 'time out' for troublesome youth, putting an end to their careers as criminals and their connections to other criminals in the greater community (Inderbitzin, 2005).

### ***Child Development Centers and Juvenile Courts of Bangladesh***

Different from adults are children and teenagers who have not yet reached the age of eighteen. As a result, they are required to adhere to specific standards of evidence and procedure for the course of their trial. Their case is governed by the Children Act of 1974, the Criminal Procedure Code of 1898, the Probation and Offenders Ordinance of 1960, and the Prison Code. The government has implemented a variety of programs as a reaction to the problem of delinquency among young people. In compliance with the Child Act, the government has established a variety of institutional settings for juvenile delinquents.

There are currently three Child Development Centers (CDCs) in Bangladesh, all of which are devoted to the rehabilitation and correction of children. The first one was built in Tongi in 1978, the second one was built in Pulerhat, Jessore in 1995 (both for male children), and the third one was built in Konabari, Gazipur in 2003. (for female children). Inmates are separated into two categories: those who have been sent there by their parents, and those who have been sent there by the court because of the offenses they have committed. The juvenile court in Tongi has jurisdiction over the divisions of Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet; the juvenile court in Jessore has jurisdiction over the divisions of Khulna, Rajshahi, and Barisal. The jurisdiction of the Konabari Juvenile Court for Girls extends throughout all

seven administrative divisions of Bangladesh. As a consequence of this, the old legislation was repealed by the Children Act of 2013, people considered to be a step away from taking a punitive approach to the problem of juvenile delinquency in 2013.

The purpose of the CDCs is to create a pleasant atmosphere not only within the family but also within society as a whole. This will be accomplished by giving the appropriate amount of attention to each and every aspect of the children who are in conflict with the law in order to ensure their survival, as well as their protection and growth. The government has made a determined effort to consider the specific ethical and human rights needs of juvenile offenders. The purpose of the CDC is to prevent the negative consequences that lead to children becoming delinquent through the use of effective correctional techniques. And more specifically, to help young offenders return to society as law-abiding, productive members, assisting them in their rehabilitation and reintegration; putting family and society first in the process of rehabilitation; emphasizing on correction, not punishment; and to render court decisions with the utmost empathy.

Like many countries in the world, the juvenile justice administration started functioning in Bangladesh with the enactment of the Children Act, 1974 and the Children Rules, 1976. The Children Act was enacted in 1974 and was enforced in 1976 only for the Dhaka District and for other districts, it was enforced in the year of 1980. At the same time, according to Section 3 of the Children Act, 1974 the first juvenile court was established at Tongi correctional institution in 1978 for the male child. But there were no juvenile courts (neither for the male nor female child) for other districts in Bangladesh. In fact, there was hardly any focus on the juvenile justice until 1990s in the media, administration and judiciary as a whole.

In 1990, after signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989 the issue of juvenile justice was stressed on by the GOs and NGOs as an international issue. Thereafter, two juvenile courts were established at Pulerhat, Jessore in 1995 for the male child and the other at Konabari, Gazipur in 2003 for the female child.

It can be said that until 1995, there was only one juvenile court for male children. Similarly, until 2002, there was no such court for the girl child in Bangladesh. Accordingly, there are only three designated juvenile courts for eight divisions in the country as of yet. Except for the three juvenile courts, there is no separate juvenile court which ensures that juveniles are separated and treated differently from adults at all stages of the criminal proceedings.

### **Research Questions**

The study looks into three main aspects which concern the social and legal reintegration of juvenile offenders;

- Are the Child Development Centers of Bangladesh providing effective services for the social reintegration of juvenile offenders?
- Are the Child Development Centers of Bangladesh in cooperation with Juvenile courts providing the necessary legal services for the juvenile offenders?

### **Research Objective**

There are various different Child Development Centers located in Bangladesh. The rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and their unsupervised reintegration into society are the primary focuses of these initiatives. However, these Child Development Centers are constrained in a number of ways, including environmentally, politically, organizationally, and administratively.

The Department of Social Services (2006) reports that between 2001 and 2005, 2,716 juvenile delinquents received institutional care, which represents a smaller proportion of the total population. In the three existing CDCs, 16,714 Juvenile Delinquents were released and rehabilitated from the program's inception to January 2013 (CDC, 2013). The primary objective of this research project is to assess the effectiveness of these Juvenile Correction Centers within the context of the current environment and if the Correctional Centers are playing any part in the re-integration of the Juvenile Delinquents back in the Society.

### **Literature Review**

The correctional facilities for juveniles are comprehensive establishments that are similar to adult jails in many respects (Goffman, 1961). The occupants of the facility live out virtually every part of their lives in the company of other juveniles who are also detained and under the supervision of staff members. When peers are essential to teenagers in general, the pressure and influence of peers can have a tremendous, concentrated effect on juveniles who are housed in institutions (Preveaux et al. 2004).

Those who are detained in juvenile correctional facilities typically have access to treatment that is more rigorous and developmentally appropriate, and they have a lower risk of being assaulted or abused while they are behind bars. In general, they

have lower rates of recidivism and, on the whole, tend to have better outcomes than their counterparts who are released from adult jails and return to the community (Steinberg, 2009). The juvenile correctional institution's aim is to incarcerate, care for, and rehabilitate young delinquents. However, circumstances in the centers of Bangladesh present a different scenario which this paper attempts to highlight.

Research conducted on juvenile corrections has, for the most part, come to the conclusion that confinement has a negative impact on the youth who are incarcerated and can lead to further involvement in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems rather than breaking the cycle of offending or assisting in rehabilitation. When compared with minors who are diverted from detention or confinement institutions, those who are in custody have a significantly higher risk of committing additional crimes or of being transferred to the adult court system (Holman & Zidenberg, 2006).

Aside from the inherent challenges of working in a juvenile correctional facility, those who work in the field confront numerous other challenges, including a lack of funding, inadequate training, and structural limits (Inderbitzin 2007; Mitchell et al. 2000). This is also the case as found through interviews with the center's staff at the Bangadeshi centers. However, the study did not look into how well the juveniles were being equipped to re-integrate into society as a whole.

In the 1970s, a detailed study of a juvenile training school said that the juvenile correctional system was anti-therapeutic, anti-rehabilitative, exploitative, and demeaning to both the keepers and the people who were locked up. Just like any other institution, the juvenile correctional facility is or can be crueler and more inhumane than most people outside of it can imagine. The juvenile institution is the worst of what a free society has to offer (Bartollas et al., 1976)

With regard to more recent literature on juvenile correctional centers in Bangladesh, a study shows how lack of education, vocational training and health care providers were common in the centers (Islam, 2021). This echoes the findings of this paper; however, it points to how there was gradual social inclusion of the juveniles which contradicts the findings of this paper in which juveniles are seen unable to cope and re-integrate, rather just manage and survive in the center's circumstances.

## **Methodology**

Adopting the paradigm of interpretivism to understand how realities were socially constructed by the juveniles, the research used a qualitative design. This was done

as the lines of enquiry focused on the juveniles' experiences and lived realities at the correctional facilities. All respondents were purposively sampled, and contact was made after an official approval was received. Sample numbers were determined once data saturation was reached.

Researchers used mainly in-depth semi-structured interviews. 30 juvenile offenders were interviewed, 10 family members of the juvenile offenders, 5 lawyers, 8 correctional center officers, and 5 social welfare officers were interviewed from all the correctional centers of Bangladesh. Researchers also conducted 3 Focus Group Discussions (2 FGDs with male juvenile offenders and 1 FGD with female juvenile offenders) with each group having 5 juvenile offenders.

The data was collected over a period of 6 months and then analyzed narratively as well as thematically using a coding paradigm that helped identify recurring themes, patterns and categories. Proper consent was taken from the respondents after the purpose of the study was explained to them in details.

### **Findings: The failure of Centers to re-integrate**

Themes that emerged from the data encompass the services provided, but their insufficiency as well as inability to properly rehabilitate and consequentially re-integrate the juvenile offenders. Statements from the juveniles, the center officers and social welfare officers draw a picture of centers which provide the basic needs but are unable to equip the juveniles for return to society. Interviews with the lawyers dealing with juvenile cases also highlight how there are legal barriers as well that prevent the juvenile offenders from receiving swift, proper justice that would in their true sense work towards the proper and effective re-integration into society. The findings highlight how the juvenile offenders are unable to receive the services they need to go back to society; while also suffering in a legal system that is slow and not supportive of their needs.

### ***A Juvenile's journey into the Child Development Center***

As per the Ministry of Social Welfare, the centers have to care, protect, provide food, housing, clothing, medical care, education, vocational training, and correctional and human development, and counseling to the juveniles (Hossain, 2020). All the responsibilities are as per the provisions of The Child Act, 2013, the National Children Policy, and in accordance with the provisions of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The authorities start by taking a child into custody. After that, they are transported

to the police station as well as the court. Following the issuance of the court order directing that the child be detained in the Correctional Facility, the child is then transferred to the facility. When a boy arrives at the Correctional Center for the first time, he typically does not feel at ease there. They believe that everything here is a bit overly organized. A correctional official from Jessore stated that the detainees do not like to continue to be subject to such a large number of rules. They advise their parents to make them legally an adult by increasing their age to 18 so that the authorities can arrest them and put them in jail. They have the expectation that the prison will provide them with additional amenities.

The Juvenile Delinquents have to continue to abide by a lot of regulations when they are in this rehabilitation center, and they do not always get what they want. If they choose to remain there, there are a lot of rules that they have to obey. They dislike being required to conform to the norms. On the court documents, the children who were punished are given the designation of ‘convicted,’ and the same designation appears on the documentation from the development center. These correctional facilities are primarily used for the purpose of rehabilitating juvenile offenders.

### **Sub-theme: Segregation in the Centers and accommodation don’t support correction**

The children are segregated into different areas according to their ages. For instance, the children who are a little bit older are kept on the fifth floor, and the children who are a little bit younger are kept on the fourth floor (Social Welfare Officer, Personal Communication, 2022). During this step, the youngsters are organized onto the various floors according to their ages. Legally according to section 63 of the Children’s Act, children above 9 will not be kept with children aged 10. Also, children above 10 will not be kept with children above 12 in the same room as well as floor. However, this is not strictly followed in the centers which suffer from serious overcrowding issues especially in the male centers. According to one juvenile offender aged 15;

We have to share rooms with boys of various ages and we are not able to even sleep comfortably at night for the lack of space. It is very crowded but there is nothing to do. We try to share as much as we can but it makes me frustrated to live like this (Respondent 4, 2021)

An officer who works at the correctional facility in Gazipur said that the facility’s layout makes it possible to house up to 200 children in a suitable manner. However,

the government administration has announced that the number has been upped to 300 without making any other substantive changes. In most cases, they are required to house between 800 and 900 children at the Correctional Center. The officers working in the correctional facilities have discussed the difficulty in providing adequate housing, which is one of the primary reasons why these facilities are always overcrowded. As mentioned by another juvenile aged 14;

The older boys get more facilities for space as they are older and more powerful. The officers also listen to them more than they listen to us. So, we have to manage with the rooms we have or else if we complain we get punished (Respondent 7, 2021)

Another mentioned how the lack of space affects motivation;

It is very hard to focus on other things when it is so noisy all the time. I can't find any peace here and it is hard for me to think alone. I miss my room where I would stay with my siblings. It was easier to think there.

### **Sub-theme: Growth of competing groups within floors re-instill delinquency**

Interviews brought forth how the lack of accommodation, and overall resources lead to the growth of groups within the juveniles who compete as well as bully others. Most of the ones who bully are of the older ages, controlling younger juveniles. The 'leader' of the groups engages in physical assault of the younger juveniles, even making them do tasks and punishing them if they refuse. As mentioned by a juvenile offender aged 14;

The floor above ours is the more powerful one. The seniors live there and they get more facilities than we do. They bully us and even slap us when we don't listen to what they ask us to do or do something that makes them angry. Even the officers have better relations with them, and so we can't complain to them comfortably.

We observe how instead of correction which ought to be the main objective of the centers, delinquency sees growth with emergence of juvenile groups based on seniority or other factors such as wealth of family.

The administrators of the Correctional Center are required to keep ten to twelve children in each room (the rooms are usually ideal to accommodate the highest 2-4 people). A correctional center officer from Gazipur discussed the protocols that were followed during the COVID-19 period that they had practiced. Following



their arrival to this child correctional center during the Corona period, the children are required to remain on the second level for a period of 15 days, after which they are escorted to their respective rooms. Prior to the Corona period, the children who had recently arrived at this location were subjected to close monitoring. They were kept in different locations.

Overall, numerous statements regarding the serious problems with accommodation point to how poorly the juveniles are kept. Excessively overcrowded rooms do not support correction mentally, lead to a lack of proper functioning of the juveniles, and also give birth to separate groups within floors who compete for resources.

### ***Effectiveness of services at the centers and role towards re-integration***

In order to meet the fundamental needs of these juveniles, the government has set aside a certain amount of fund in its budget for their care, and in the event that any of these juveniles are in need of assistance of any kind, a daily meeting is held at which the authority receives an update on the things that the juveniles want. An officer stated that every group has representatives who are responsible for communicating the needs of the group as a whole (Child Development Center Officer 3, Personal Communication, 2021). Additionally, there are ‘house parents’ who take care of anything else that may arise for the juveniles.

### **Insufficient Institutional and Technical Education**

The first and foremost area which showed a lack of effectiveness towards re-integration was the provision of institutional and technical education at the centers. The sub-themes include lack of education as per age, insufficient teaching, poor quality of teaching, irregularity of classes and unwillingness of trainers.

#### **Sub-theme: No general education provided**

While primary level education has to be provided based on legal grounds, there is no secondary education provided. Moreover, there is no general education provided. This is a prime issue as most juveniles who are sent to the centers are of the age at which they require secondary education. As mentioned by a Social Welfare officer;

The juvenile offenders are not given the education they need as per their age. There are no services for the older children who are supposed to be receiving secondary level education. This keeps them lagging behind considerably as they are out of touch with their education.

A juvenile offender aged 16 years at Gazipur expressed;

We are not given education that is of the general type so we are not able to use what we are leaning even. I can not therefore go back to school if I leave this center as I would have a huge gap in my studies (Respondent 17, 2021).

An officer stated, in reference to the provision of support for the arrangement of opportunities for conducting board exams, that the Juvenile Delinquents are unable to complete their education here. In the event that there is a board examinee and the court grants the order, then they are able to make preparations for that individual to provide examination. Immediately following the conclusion of the examination, the children in concern are transported back to the correctional facility.

### **Sub-theme: Poor quality of teaching**

Responses from focus group discussions highlighted how the provision of teaching as well as training did not meet satisfactory standards to help the juvenile offenders develop skills. The juvenile offenders mentioned;

We are not properly taught in the centers, and classes also are not taken at times. The teachers do not cover as much in the classes so we learn less than what we used to learn in the schools (Respondent 12, FGD 1, 2021).

The same was mentioned by other juvenile offenders who expressed they had difficulty keeping up with the classes and not being able to remember the contents being taught in classes. Another female juvenile offender mentioned;

It is hard to keep track of the things we are taught because it is very stressful to stay here all the time. I miss my family and I don't want to stay here like this for so long. I am not able to focus in the training as well because I feel stressed (Respondent 21, FGD 2, 2021).

In correctional facilities, detainees can continue their formal education up until the fifth grade, after which they are transitioned into a program that focuses on technical education. An officer stated that through the use of counseling, they attempt to communicate the notion that the individual should return to their family. Their primary objective is to help them reintegrate with their families. However, the quality of education provided does not guarantee the children developing their skills to be able to return to society effectively.

**Insufficient Medical Assistance hindering correction**

Officers at the juvenile correction centers have made certain that the appropriate steps have been done by the government to fulfill their responsibilities of offering appropriate medical treatment to the juveniles who are detained at the centers. An officer has stated that the female juveniles have a requirement for the necessity of having some additional medical care;

The girls are provided with sanitary pads on schedule each and every month. They do not have a doctor who is available 24/7, but when an emergency occurs, they are sent to hospitals. Whenever any of the girls need hospital treatment, the authorities drive them to the nearest hospital in a car. There is only one civil surgeon who they go to for advice.

When they are ill or injured, the staff of the Gazipur Correctional Centre transport the juvenile inmates to the Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital in Gazipur; on occasion, the juveniles are transferred to the Dhaka Medical College. In addition, the juvenile correctional facility is responsible for the care of female juveniles who are residing with their own children, and pregnant juveniles receive special attention.

However, interviews with the juveniles and parents bring forth a slightly different scenario, in which, medical teams are not available 24 hours. Medication is not provided in variety, and only general medicines are provided such as NAPA tablets in case of fever and pain. As mentioned by a male juvenile offender aged 13;

I got ill a few months ago and I would not stop vomiting. I informed the officers here but they said only pain killer will work, and to eat carefully. I later informed my parents and they arranged the medicines for me.

Speaking to parents of the juveniles, statements regarding gravely ill children not being cared for were brought forth. "My boy was very sick for a week with high fever, but I was not told about it as he was not allowed to speak to me. When he became extremely ill they allowed him to call me and then we immediately sent him medication." Proper medication, and healthcare are vital for correction, and effective development which can be seen in scanty amounts within the centers.

**Need for more regular and effective Psychological Counseling and Recreation**

There is a dire need for trained, and regular counselors within the centers to meet the needs of proper reintegration of the juveniles. Interviews highlight the lack of

such resources within the centers, and also the irregularity seen in the provision process.

Officers mentioned juveniles suffering from conditions including anxiety, stress, and depression. As expressed by a Social Welfare Officer;

It is possible for suicidal tendencies to develop within juveniles who are detained in juvenile detention centers because, after committing a crime and seeing how their family members react to it, most juveniles experience feelings of depression (Officer 5, 2022).

In order to combat these possibilities, an officer suggests the following, “They have ceiling fans, but they are mounted rather high, and there are no elevated beds; people sleep on mats instead. These things are done to reduce the risk of someone killing themselves through suicide.”

Because the majority of juveniles claim they did not commit the offense in the first place, the officers who work in the juvenile correctional facility first work to earn the juveniles’ trust before beginning the counseling process with them. Different types of counseling are provided to detainees at various correctional facilities, and this is determined by the nature of the offense they have committed. One of the officers stated that the varied types of crimes result in the provision of different types of counseling services;

At first, the majority of them will deny that they committed the offense, and they will frequently lie. However, after enough time has elapsed, they eventually admit to committing the atrocities. These adolescents have access to the facility at the correctional center that allows for the arrangement of recreational activities, which is beneficial to both their physical and mental health.

This is different from the data collected when interviewing the juvenile offenders who mentioned pre-dominantly that counseling services are irregularly provided and play time is also scanty for older offenders getting the priority. As expressed by a female juvenile offender;

I wanted to talk to a doctor because I was having serious anxiety in the first month of coming here. But there was no one available at the time. I had to wait for a few days till I got to speak to one (Respondent 24, 2021)

Cases of juveniles waiting for counselors were frequently recorded. Regarding

recreation, the inability to play when they wished was also a theme that came forth. Because of overcrowding, they only get a chance to play weekly instead of daily; as expressed by a juvenile offender aged 14 years;

We only get to play once a week as there are so many groups who play during various times. We are not able to play when we wish. Even the board games are occupied by seniors and we have to wait. We don't get much chance to play (Respondent 19, 2021)

Based on the interviews of the center officers, there are other indoor activities available, including chess, carom, ludo, and more, as stated by an officer. There is a field that is open for any form of outdoor recreation. Additionally, the authorities organize celebrations to commemorate the holidays. However, as the interviews show, there was considerable irregularity in the provision of these services hindering the proper correction and successful re-integration of the juveniles into mainstream society. Indeed, a core aspect of correction is the proper support of psychological counseling which allows there not only to be reflection over the delinquency but also a chance to rectify behavior. As mentioned by one father of a juvenile offender;

If my son is not able to get the time he needs to feel de-stressed, how will he change his behavior? The counselors are not available when necessary and they come irregularly.

### ***Lack of legal representation and lack of financial support***

With regard to the legal barriers that prevent the proper reintegration into society, interviews brought forth two main themes namely the lack of proper representatives and financial inability of juvenile offenders to pay for their cases and legal support.

#### **Sub-theme: Lack of effective legal representation**

There are quite a few challenges which are faced during the trial process of juvenile offenders as well which mainly surround the facts that the children are left without proper representatives and become victims of a faulty system that is not designed properly to meet their needs for justice. This hampers their ability to timely return to society if proven innocent; and also the overall hassle of dealing with a criminal justice system that is not properly facilitative may cause psychological stress.

Most Courts do not comply with the requirement to separate juvenile cases and deal with them at a different time of day than the adult proceedings. Magistrates

do not communicate directly with the child, and it has been noted that children exhibit a greater deal of fear in court and sometimes cry. Although there is a legal aid system in place, many children are unrepresented, or are taken advantage of by unscrupulous lawyers. When being transported from the police station to the court, children are packed into ill ventilated prison vans together with adults.

The case of Mohammad Hridoy<sup>3</sup>, 13 years is an example of the hassles faced by hundreds of the juvenile offenders. Charged for the trafficking of drugs, he was sent to the correctional center in June, 2018. Md. Hridoy was not able to go to school for his financial conditions since his childhood. He entered the correctional facility in June of the year 2018 on account of drug trafficking charges. He expressed the many difficulties he faced in the trial process of his own case. He mentioned that he had gone to court twice but that both times he faced issues.

In his first experience, his visit to the court was cancelled since his security could not be guaranteed. Hridoy also did not have a fir representative who could accompany him to the court premises. This delayed the start of the trial by many months. And in his second time, the court asked him to bring a lawyer for his defense which he was unable to do since he came from a very poor family. When he mentioned this is the second time of appearing before court, a government lawyer was promised who would be taking on his case from the next appearance. In this dilemma, a total of 9 months passed.

21 interviews of juvenile offenders and 4 interviews of family members mentioned a similar experience of the above where the trial was delayed for lack of a representative or financial issues. The mother of a juvenile offender mentioned;

My son has been stuck in the legal process for over 8 months now as there are no legal representatives being assigned to him. We are poor, so we can not even do anything. We don't know when he will get his chance to come home (Family member 7, 2021)

### **Weak Social Re-integration approach and non-existent Follow-up process**

The interviews brought forth another core aspect of a weak follow up system to monitor the progress of the juveniles after release. In most cases, officers mentioned that they were not able to track the juveniles. After an individual has been released from a correctional facility or transferred to another institution, their case should be monitored and followed up on. In most cases, they stay in touch for anywhere

<sup>3</sup> Alias used for protection of the juvenile offender

between six months and a year after they have been set free. The following, as reported by an officer:

It might be challenging to continue a follow-up process under many different circumstances. The officials at the correctional center are able to get in touch with individuals who have permanent addresses, but they are unable to communicate with individuals who do not offer contact information (particularly girls who belong to floating families).

A correctional officer shared in his interview that the rehabilitative measures appointed by the correctional center have not been appropriate for the juveniles in terms of ensuring a safe life after they go back to their society. Officers shared that there is a need to ensure jobs for the juveniles after they leave the correctional centers in order to facilitate the proper reintegration of the juveniles into society. One of the staff members at the correctional facility in Gazipur claims that they do not have a rehabilitation program of this nature;

It would have been wonderful if they could have been allocated in any kind of employment sector while they were in our correctional facility, but it has not been possible for them to do so. A boy will stay in the correctional facility for either six months or one year. We can't offer that help.

In addition, he elaborated on the failure of the overall process of following up by saying, "In our law, it has been described about maintaining a follow up system but such a tendency is not practiced in our centers. We have been operating this center for the last 20 to 40 years, such a system is not practiced here."

## **Discussion**

Effective rehabilitation can help young offenders reintegrate into society as productive members, reducing recidivism and improving community safety. However, as the themes have shown, Bangladesh's child development centers require increased investment and focus to effectively play a role in the correction of juvenile behavior.

A host of measures are necessary which include more strict enforcement of the laws in place to protect rights of children, providing age-specific general education and vocational training to equip them with skills necessary for gainful employment and reduces the likelihood of reoffending. Proper and regularly available psychosocial support is mandatory. Involving the family more closely with the process, and

starting community-based rehabilitation programs can also provide support networks for juveniles.

Continuous support after release from detention is crucial. Aftercare services, including follow-up counseling, job placement assistance, and mentoring, can help juveniles transition smoothly back into society. Here, collaboration can be sought out. Collaboration between the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can enhance rehabilitation efforts since NGOs often have the expertise and resources to provide specialized programs and services. Regular monitoring and evaluation of rehabilitation programs ensure they are effective and allow for adjustments to improve outcomes.

## Conclusion

The findings show how dire circumstances at the centers leave juveniles compromised, and unable to re-integrate into society. With serious issues of overcrowding and compromising hygiene, healthcare, and safety, the congested environment can impede positive development and rehabilitation. Along with the lack of basic services needed at the centers, findings reveal the lack of an effective follow up system that would have contributed to the proper reintegration.

Limited educational opportunities, vocational training, and psychological support hinder the development of life skills necessary for successful reintegration. Indeed, the responsibility of facilitating the proper and effective return of the juveniles to the real society is not undertaken with sincerity, and also not supported with the required amount of resources.

By focusing on these aspects, Bangladesh can work towards a more effective juvenile justice system that prioritizes rehabilitation and reintegration over punitive measures, ultimately benefiting juvenile offenders, stakeholders involved and the society as a whole.

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