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April 2016

At both ends of the gun  
**Street-connect Children in Dhaka  
and Politics of Violence**

Rehnuma Rahman  
Zion Rabbi Samadder  
Abu Ahasan

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## ACRONYMS

Hartal	Strike
Aborodh	Blockade
Bhangari	Plastic, metal and paper scraps or left-over
Bhangari dokan	Scrap shop
Bhangariwala	Owner of a scrap shop
Boro Bhai	Literally means elder brother in Bengali. But for street-connected children mostly it refers local politically and economically influential persons. They use the term for their employers as well.
Mazar	A Muslim shrine or enshrined tomb
Coolie	Porter
Maal	Scraps
Kangali	Needy and homeless people

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Stree-connect Children in Dhaka and Politics of Violence

## ABSTRACT

Prior to the 10th national election in Bangladesh, in 2013, political atrocity reached its peak with unprecedented number of deaths and injuries. Bangladesh's political violence typically reaches its peak during every national election. Moreover, in 2013 due to resistance from the ruling party, instead of partisans' acts of political violence were mostly outsourced to low income, slum dwelling people. In accordance with adults, children, for whom the street is a central reference point for living and livelihood, were used as an instrument to carry out political atrocity. Thus, by following a qualitative method using case studies and interviews, this paper explored the consequence of political violence prior to the 10th national election on street connected children of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Findings show that the street-connected children got affected by political violence both as victims and perpetrators which stifled their physical and mental integrity. Children were found to be hired, forced, or trapped to take part in political activities. The paper concludes that relationship between the street connected children and the adult world along with the wider environment through which they live and pursue their livelihood increased their risk of becoming a victim as well as their "recruitment" as miscreants to instigate violence during *hartal* (strike)/blockade.

Key Words: Street-connected children, hartal (strike), blockade, political violence, Bangladesh

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# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The journey of Bangladesh's relatively young democracy has been repeatedly disrupted by periodic political struggles between ruling and opposition parties regarding the democratic transition of power. For the most part, it is the 'street'- not the parliament that was used as an arena for raising political demands and stage violent protests typically in the form of *hartals*<sup>1</sup> (strike) and blockades. During every political election, Bangladesh's political violence reaches its peak. Similar to earlier parliamentary elections in Bangladesh, the election period of 2013 also witnessed vivid political violence. According to Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), the overall human right condition was under threat during the period prior to the 10th national election. Since the end of January 2013 Bangladesh witnessed 76 days of hartals and blockades along with street violence, vandalism of public and private properties, arson attacks and loss of innocent lives. Deliberate attacks against civilians using homemade explosives and easily accessible flammable liquids claimed as many as 492 lives and leaving more than 22 thousand injured (ASK 2014). As per newspaper reports of 2013-14, political violence during the election period was beyond clash between major political parties; it was mainly targeted towards general public to hinder its everyday life, even by loss of innocent lives.

The activities of opposition parties during election time were restrained by the ruling party through prohibition of party meeting and imprisonment of activists of all level. Thus, violent political acts during hartals and blockades were outsourced. As per various media reports these activities were carried out mainly by vulnerable people of the society such as day labourers and poor slum dwellers rather than actual partisans. According to human rights watch report, in accordance with adults, children were also hired to execute these violent activities (Human Right Watch 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> *Hartal* literally means strike. Hartal days are crucial in Bangladesh for the political careers of party leaders, cadres and organisers who survive on their performance during *hartal* days. The willingness to take risk and the ability to recruit *hartal* participants helps local party organisers to show, maintain and improve their position in the party power structure of his/her area.

The changing political trend posed serious threats mainly to street-connected children. Unlike earlier pre-election political turmoil, in 2013 during election period, at least 22 children were killed and many others were severely injured<sup>2</sup>. According to newspaper reports, children were subjected to political violence through participation in demonstrations, arson attacks and bomb explosions while playing and getting caught in the middle of gunfight. Generally, street-connected children from very low-income families or no family, earning minimum wage, working and sleeping on street or in urban slums were reported in the media to be used in political violence. Media reports explained the stereotype of considering children as agents of purity and virtue to be the principal reason behind recruitment of children in political violence.

## OBJECTIVE

Therefore, this paper explores the consequences of 2013's political turmoil on the street-connected children of Dhaka city. In particular the study tries to shed lights on how and why children who are not members of any political party, even too young to acquire membership, were victimised as well as lured to take part in political violence prior to the 10th national election. The study has four specific objectives:

- ▶ To explore how street-connected children get affected by the political violence of hartals and blockades.
- ▶ To understand the nature of involvement of street connected children in political violence prior to the 10th national election.
- ▶ To investigate the main drivers behind such involvements.
- ▶ The reason for involving children for conducting political atrocity.

## SCENARIO OF STREET CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM

Street children are widely perceived as any inadequately protected or supervised children, for whom the street has become a habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood (Aptekar 1994). However, not all street children are orphans and homeless. There are children who work on streets in day time and return back to their families at night, there are also children who got migrated to cities to support their family back home. Many slum dwelling children, spend most of their day time in public places like bazaars, terminals, streets, interact with people from various backgrounds, work as apprentices and spend most of their waking hours away from their families. Thus, the term street child is a complex phenomenon. The United Nations Children Fund categorised these children into two groups as 'children on the street' and 'children of

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), The Daily Star, Dhaka Tribune and The Independent

the street' (UNICEF 1984). Even though both groups are distinctively different in terms of dwelling places, the fact that both types of children spend a considerable amount of their waking hours in the street. Anne Louise Meincke (2011) coined the term "streets-connected children" to recognise the significance of street in the lives of these children's. Here street refers not only to the infrastructure of in-land communication or public thoroughfare but also to other public spheres like unoccupied dwellings, wastelands, market places, parks, terminals, *mazar*, etc (Lalor 1999). Another major reflection is that how the street plays a vital role for these children and how they use this space. The street is the space to survive for street children and other street-connected people. But though they may have physical access to public sphere it does not guarantee their access to necessary activities and services available in these spaces that are essential for survival (Brown and Lloyd-Jones 2002). Still street-connected children manage and use various urban niches to survive in the street (Van Blerk 2005). To these children the street is the place of employment, sleep, socialisation, learning and recreation (Ennew and Swart-Kruger 2003). It is not that they deliberately choose to be in these public spaces rather it is a result of lack of options and accessibility rooted in the structural discrimination of our society. Accordingly there are two important concerns. One is the elements that the street offers to street-connected children and the other is how these elements meet various needs of these children. Hence, a child who does not sleep on street, yet spends in public spaces for an extended period to work or socialise can be term as street-connected children. So, the operational definition of street-connected children for this study is - children who spend a considerable amount of time in street to sleep, work and/or socialise, thus, for a street-connected children the street act as a source of shelter, livelihood, learning and/ or socialisation. Moreover, this street-connectedness poses multiple risks and vulnerabilities to children such as homelessness, exploitation, physical-verbal-mental abuses, health difficulties, lack of education, coercion and control by adult gangs, conflict with the law, and lack of identification papers (West 2003, Milky and Ahmed 2000).

## STREETS OF DHAKA AND ITS CHILDREN

In Bangladesh street-connected people, both adults and children, dwell mostly on streets, parks and open spaces, bus stations, railway terminals and platforms, religious centres (such as *mazars*, mosques, etc.), construction sites and around graveyards and in other public places with no roof (BBS 2001). Most of the street connected children belonged to poverty stricken families, but that does not necessarily mean that all children of poor families end up in the street (Subarna *et al.* 2014). There are other drivers that amplify the state of poverty and push children to the street. One major factor that pushes children towards street lives is domestic violence and arguments with parents or step-parents (Hulme and Conticini 2006). So, the situation gets worse for children when deprivation of care and affection is added with the insufficiency of basic material needs (food, clothing and shelter) and this mishmash pushes children to cross the boundary of home and family and to live their own life (Seymour 2012). On the other hand the street of Dhaka offers children various

informal opportunities like earning a living, autonomy from adults and the freedom of street life (Blanchet 1996).

As per several studies Bangladeshi street children are found to be engaged in various livelihoods activities like: scrap picking, begging, assisting in human haulers, carrying goods as a porter, working as petty traders etc. (Subarna *et al.* 2014, Khatun & Jamil 2013). Most of these jobs require children to be street-connected or on the street and other public places. So, eventually they are always exposed to the harshness of nature and environment as well as urban pollution that poses serious risks to their health (Sarma *et al.* 2011, NIPOORT 2009 and Podymow 2011). Odds of road accident are also a vital threat for these children due to their street-connectedness. Besides stigmatisation of street children as dangerous, immoral, criminal and glue sniffer results everyday verbal and physical abuse by both civilians and law enforcement agencies and this negative portrayal also justifies violence against them (UN OCHA 2007, de Benítez 2007, Schernthaner and Bau 2011). Moreover, in the absence of supervision and guidance from responsible adults street-connected children are at risk to get influenced or targeted by hoodlums and miscreants (Hai 2014). Therefore the UN-HABITAT (2007) considers street children and youth as both victims and perpetrators of urban crimes due to survival needs as well as their exposure to the culture of violence.

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research techniques were used to understand the effect of political violence on street-connected children of Dhaka city during *hartals* and blockades prior to the 10th national election (2013-14). The data of the study was derived from a BRAC<sup>3</sup> longitudinal qualitative study entitled “Lives of children in street and shelter” that commenced from November 2013. That study aimed to examine whether BRAC’s “Reaching out to the Urban Street Children program,” initiated as a pilot programme in May 2013, could bring positive changes in the lives of street connected children. Under that programme, BRAC established two main centres in Mirpur-1 and Sadarghat that provided facilities like lunch, non-formal education, life-skill and moral lessons to street-connected children.

## STUDY LOCATION

Two major urban areas Mirpur and Sadarghat were selected for the pilot due to their sizes, location, high commercial activities and the fact that they served as transit points to other towns and cities in Bangladesh. Significant number of street-connected children were found concentrated in both these areas due to availability of various livelihood opportunities, social networking and unrestricted dwelling opportunities.

Hazrat Shah Ali Mazar in Mirpur-1 is the central place of earning, roaming and sleeping for a significant number of street-connected children of Mirpur area. Everyday many visitors came to the Mazar premises from various parts of Bangladesh. This frequent gathering of people in Mazar premises, allows children with opportunities for begging and stealing. Thus, for the street children of Mirpur area the Mazar was a source of food, accommodation and livelihood. Moreover, Gabtoli Bus Terminal, one of the largest inter-district bus terminals in Dhaka, was also quite close to Mirpur. Thus, some street children staying at Mirpur area worked there as assistants in public vehicles like bus and human haulers. Most of the street children of Mirpur area slept

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<sup>3</sup> BRAC is an INGO based in Bangladesh. It is the largest NGO in the world considering number of employees and number of beneficiaries. It was founded by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed in 1972. One of the BRAC’s targets is to work for the development of street-children, so, the organisation decided to run this study.

at the mazar premises, some slept under the foot-over bridge and others on the corridors of local shopping malls and local cinema halls.

On the other hand Sadargahat had a ferry terminal for facilitating communication mainly with many districts of Bangladesh. Based on this river front, different factories, and wholesale markets were established, making this area economically significant. Picking plastic, metal and paper scrap was a very common occupation for street-connected children of this area. Moreover, Sadarghat ferry terminal also provided other work opportunities for street-connected children like: begging, carrying baggage's of travellers, arranging passengers etc. Most of the street children of Sadargahat slept either at the Sadarghat launch terminal or inside local scrap shops.

As these were important entrances to Dhaka city along with high concentration of street-connected children, these areas also had a high rate of violence during hartals and blockades.

## RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Multiple research methods such as observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and case studies were combined for methodological triangulation. A team of nine researchers conducted fieldwork for 6 weeks from December, 2013 to January, 2014. Due to the sensitive nature of the study topic and to minimize risk for both respondents and researchers FGDs were primarily conducted with the children from BRAC's children centres. Potential respondents for IDIs were selected from FGDs who were able to give relevant information on children's involvement in politics and even in hartal violence. For gathering more information, snowballing sampling method<sup>4</sup> was adopted. Total 57 boys and 12 girls aged between 10 to 15 years participated in the study. In compliance with child safety policy, pseudonyms were used for the child respondents. As key informants, few adults closely involved with the street children phenomena such as Project Organisers of the Reaching out to the Urban Street Children programme and children's employers like *bhangariwala*<sup>5</sup> were interviewed. Other key informants were police, journalists and slum based NGO activists. Data were recorded through field notes, tape and video recording and photography. As secondary information, relevant news reports published in 2013 were reviewed.

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4 This method tends to manipulate social networks of people to figure out useful respondents in terms of relevant experience and information

5 *Bhangariwala* refers to owners of scrap shops. *Bhangari* is the Bengali colloquial term for plastic and paper scraps. Street-connected children in different parts of Dhaka collect plastic and paper left-over and sell these to *bhangariwalas*.

## FINDINGS

Recent political turmoil precariously placed children at ‘both ends of a gun’ as it was also the case in some other conflict torn countries across the world (Machel 1996). Vulnerable street-connected children accumulated complex experiences of political violence, as victims, witnesses and perpetrators. Children became subjected to political violence through participation in demonstrations, arson attacks, crude bombs explosions while playing and got caught in the middle of a gun fight etc. Political parties were increasingly using children in rallies, picketing and even in violent activities like arson attacks (Alamgir 2013).

The findings section is divided into two sub sections: ‘Violence against Children’ and ‘Children in Violence.’ The sub section ‘Violence against children’ outlines effects on the street-connected children who became victims during the political violence of *hartals* and blockades. On the other hand, the sub section ‘Children in Violence’ discusses the children who took part in the political violence. It illustrates the types of violence carried out by the children, the process of recruiting the children and the reasons behind children’s involvement in political violence.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

News reports showed that majority of child victims of *hartals* and blockades came from low-income families and their reliance and relation to the streets exposed them to violence and risks. Exposure of children to these violent political programmes caused them both physical harm and psychological problems.

#### Physical Harm

“Numerous people have died already. Bullets are flying around. Bombs are being hauled. Streets and roads are out of vehicles.”Ria, female, age – 10, IDI, Location - Sadarghat, Data - 15/12/2013. Many children got burned and shot during last year’s mindless political violence. Here we present one such story.

#### *A Deadly dumping ground*

Ten year old scrap collector Raqib was a victim of arson attack during 2013 hartal. We met Raqib in a prescheduled group discussion after he was subjected to a bomb

blast. After the death of his father, Raqib was forced to work with his mother in a plastic factory where his duties were to collect plastic scrap from various dumping zones of the locality.

On the day of the horrific incident; while looking for plastic bottles Raqib came across an eye-catching bottle like object wrapped tightly in red tapes lying in a dumping ground. As he was curious to know what was inside the box, he tried to break it by heating it hard with a hammer. Nothing happened initially. Then, suddenly followed by a loud bang his right hand started to feel heavy instantly. He was scared and ran towards a nearby shop, but the shopkeeper told him to go to the police station. He ran to the police camp but instead of helping him the policemen harassed him by asking unnecessary questions. As Raqib was in unbearable pain he could not respond to unnecessary queries but ran towards his grandmother's house which was quite near from where the accident took place. From his grandmother's place Raqib was later taken to the emergency ward of Dhaka Medical Hospital by his cousin. After some primary treatment in the hospital, Raqib was sent to the National Institute of Traumatology & Orthopedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) commonly known as Pongu Hospital. As Raqib's both eyes needed immediate surgery, he was sent to the National Institute of Ophthalmology. After his eye surgery on January 9th, he was sent again to Pongu Hospital for the treatment of his wounded hand. Raqib's right thumb and index fingers were totally blown off and rest of the fingers were in critical condition. Raqib's relatives already spent BDT 28,000 for his treatment. A BRAC staff who worked in the Urban Street Children Programme also visited Raqib and bought medicine worth BDT 3000 on behalf of BRAC. Later that particular staff informed that he arranged operation for the boy's right hand for free after consulting with the hospital authority. But an expenses were rising for a mother who could not earn more than BDT 6000 per month, undoubtedly it was a colossal burden for her and the family. Yet, several more operations were needed and more expenses were waiting for Raqib's mother who was unable to earn more than BDT 6000 per month. She had no clue how she could meet the expenses of the long term medicine cost of Raqib in the post-hospital stage. However, she has relived that at least Raqib was alive.

Like Raqib, many other children were affected by *hartal* in 2013. Through analysing various newspaper reports published in 2012-2013 on *hartal*, we included a table of children who fell victim to arson attacks in annex-1.

### ***Psychological Issues***

"Fierce dispute and conflict are taking place. War is going on between two parties." - Chadni. Female; Age – 14; IDI; Location – Mirpur; Date - 19/12/2013.

Despite all such incidents political leaders didn't hesitate to involve children in their violent activities. Children were continuously subjected to ruthless political violence and were getting killed, burned, blinded and paralysed for life in the name of politics. Political violence caused psychological problems among the children. Psychiatrists said that frequent exposure to violent activities and scenes could lead children to become monsters in later life; Habib (2013) referred psychiatrist Mekhala Sarkar in his

article “Children Suffer in Silence” in which she stated that children involved in violent political activities started feeling a sense of self confidence and gratification which encouraged them to get involved in other anti-social activities. Moreover, innocent children who became victims of such activities were vulnerable and their self-confidence deteriorated through development of permanent anxiety and unwarranted fear that could disrupt their mental development and behaviour.

The following is an account of a *hartal* victim who was still suffering from psychological trauma after witnessing a fresh arson attack during our interview.

### *Living and working under the fear of arson attack*

Ananta, a trainee motor vehicle mechanic of Saidabad bus terminal, was traumatised with the recent waves of *hartals*. Ananta was forced to migrate to the streets of Dhaka when he was only eight years old. Back home in Chandpur, he lived with his parents and four siblings. Nearly five years ago, he came to Dhaka city with one of his neighbours. Soon after arriving to Sadarghat terminal (River Port of Dhaka), he lost his travel companion. He came out from the terminal to look for him with no money in his pocket and without any knowledge of the city, he was unable to find his neighbour. Since then Ananta lived and worked in many places of Dhaka city for survival. During the horrific incident, Ananta was working as a trainee motor vehicle mechanic in the Saidabad bus terminal with some other trainee boys. To ensure the security of their owner’s vehicle, all the trainees were required to sleep inside the buses. However, during *hartals* the parked public vehicles became one of the main targets for arson attack.

Ananta already witnessed at least 4 cars set on fire around Saidabad bus terminal. The most horrifying experience of political violence for him happened in one night in November, 2013. As usual, Ananta was sleeping inside a bus at the terminal. While sleeping, he overheard a conversation coming from another bus, parked next to where he was sleeping. He woke up to see from the window, a group of people leaving the bus hastily. He clearly saw a young guy throw a burning match into that bus. Within a blink of an eye, the bus blazed with fire. As soon as he realised that the fire could spread to the bus where he was sleeping, he quickly stepped down from the bus and began to scream for help. As the fire was controlled by the crowd Ananta was able to get out of the situation unharmed.

Besides witnessing arson attacks from close proximity, Ananta was also offered to throw bombs for BDT 500 by a stranger. Even though Ananta got out of the incident unharmed, he was gripped with fear and insecurity. His future plan was to be a car mechanic, learn driving and eventually start his own automobile repair shop. Now, he was so traumatised that he thought of quitting his current profession. When asked, ‘Who were responsible for this incident?’ Ananta said, “Powerful political leaders make young people like us to burn vehicles...if a Muslim person takes life of another Muslim then what kind of Muslim could he be!”

The stories of Raqib and Ananta gave us insight as to how hartals threatened the safety of children who were involved in some of the most risky occupations in Dhaka city.

## CHILDREN IN VIOLENCE

Street children are less able to protect themselves on their own and in the absence of proper guardians these children would become increasingly vulnerable to a variety of predatory and abusive practices. As per our findings street connected children, especially boys, were extensively involved in the politics of hartal violence. The 'risk' associated with the violent *hartal* has increasingly 'outsourced' from vulnerable street children. The relationship between children and adult's world and wider environments in which they lived and pursued their livelihoods penetrated to 'recruit' them to participate in *hartal* violence

Among 69 respondents who participated in our IDIs and FGDs, 10 reported that in the last three months, they were approached at least once by strangers to take part in political violence like throwing cocktails and acting as bomb carriers.

### Type of children's involvement in political activities

With regard to the types and risks of political activities and roles played by children, we found two modes of participation of children in political activities: Non-violent and violent.

#### *Non-violent activities*

By non-violent activities we refer to taking part in political activities such as attending political meetings, participating in rallies or processions and shouting slogans with others in rallies. A survey, done by Action Aid Bangladesh and Democracy Watch in 2001, showed that poor people such as footpath vendors and daily labourers were employed to gather people in such meetings and processions (Chawdhury and Morshed 2000). In certain cases, people were also forced to attend these political activities. Sometimes participants were paid with money or food.

We found that along with adults, street children were also employed in such activities. For most children, attending a meeting or rally was like joining a carnival for them: an opportunity for visiting another place in Dhaka in a group as well as earning BDT 100-200 (1.25-2.5 USD) along with food and beverages.

Both boys and girls aged around 10-15 years of Mirpur area had experience of attending such meetings. One respondent in Mirpur informed, "Often local political leaders send for young and old children from mazar. They would take each child for BDT 200 (2.5 USD). Young children were given BDT 150 (1.9 USD), whereas, older ones were given BDT 200/250 (2.5/ 3.1 USD)." - Karim, Male, Age-13, Mirpur,

FGD, 08/12/2013. Another boy added, “In fact children go wherever they see an opportunity of making quick cash”- Bablu, Male, Age-14, Mirpur, FGD, 08/12/2013.

### *Violent activities*

By violent activities, we refer to children’s involvement in direct hartal violence which can be both direct and indirect. Indirect involvement means acting as a courier for explosives or as an informant for the partisans. On the other hand, direct involvement includes throwing stones on vehicles, blasting cocktails on street, torching buses on instructions of political activists.

Most of the respondent children of Sadarghat and Saidabad area were found to be involved in violent forms of political activities such as throwing stones, torching vehicle and blasting cocktails during rallies. Respondents in Saidabad informed that different forms of political violence such as setting fire on vehicles and throwing cocktails were very common during the recent political unrest.

Generally, boys who worked in the transport sector and local metal factories were recruited by *borobhai*’s<sup>6</sup> for conducting these activities. Abdullah, a 10 year old boy from Saidabad, shared that he set fire on two buses in Saidabad bus terminal in the evening before a *hartal* day after getting instructions from such a *borobhai* during last year’s political turmoil.

Children were paid higher for taking part in political violence than for attending a meeting or rally. They were paid between BDT 200 to 1000 (2.5 to 12.5 USD). The amount varied based on the risk involved in the task. Thus, economic gain was one of the main motivations of street connected children behind taking such risks.

News reports also highlighted their participation in political violence as an opportunity of earning quick cash for street-connected children, considering them as an individual always desperately in need for money (Khan 2013, Mahmud 2013 and Daily Star 2013). However, the study showed a slightly different picture. Among the respondents, 10 reported of being approached by strangers to take part in political violence such as throwing cocktails, acting as a bomb carriers or torching vehicles. Except one, all denied taking up such offer. Most children showed their fear of being injured or getting killed in political violence. “A man asked me, ‘Do you want to go to a rally and throw a bomb? You will be paid BDT 500 (6.25 USD) for each bomb.’ But I refused. I don’t want to go to jail for throwing bomb? Attending a rally may cause trouble for me as well as for others” Sahin (13), a boy who works as *coolie*<sup>7</sup> at Sadarghat expressed during a FGD at BRAC centre in Sadarghat.

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<sup>6</sup> *Boro Bhai/ Bhai* literally mean elder brother. But for street-connected children the word “*borobhai*” has different connotation. With this word, they generally refer to a political leader or activist who is influential in the area and could stand beside the street-children during any trouble. This dependence to *borobhais* develops a patron-client relationship between *borobhais* and street-connected children.

<sup>7</sup> porter

These children looked intimidated with the possibility of getting caught by law enforcement agencies because police often searched them and arrested them as primary suspects of arson attack and torching vehicles. This fact was also opined by street-connected children in Sadarghat and Saidabad areas as well as by the children who slept under the Mirpur-1 over-bridge. A scrap picker, named Babu (12), in Sadarghat area shared his story about police harassment during FGD. “*maal*<sup>8</sup> cannot be collected. Police may come and catch us. They (police) said that *kangali*<sup>9</sup> must be arrested. It is *kangali* who throw bombs.”

In cases of these children, people who offered them to carry out such activities were involved in local politics mostly as youth leaders or political activists of those areas with whom children were in good terms early on. These youth leaders can be deemed as children’s employers. In a word children took offer from someone who had control over them and is considered trustworthy and were able to assure safety from above mentioned risks especially from the risk of being arrested. Therefore, the possibility of street-connected children involved in *hartal* violence depends on their social connection as well.

### Types of recruitment process

From the above discussion, it can be said that street-connected children can be offered to participate in political violence by someone who is connected to them in terms of profession, locality or kinship or who is a complete stranger. However, these recruitments can be done by means of various techniques. Three types of recruitment process were found through this study: 1. Forced, 2. Recruited and 3. Trapped.

#### *Forced*

Forced recruitment means employing someone forcefully (through life threat or blackmail) to throw bombs or torch vehicles etc. As per our findings street-connected children can be forced by both known and unknown adults to perform such activities. This happened to one of our respondents named Aladin during the end of 2013.

In a December morning of 2013 Aladin went to Gulistan from Saidabad for some personal reason. While returning home, he was stopped by a total stranger in an empty alley who forced him to throw bomb while holding knife against his neck. Afraid that the man had the ability to hurt him physically, Aladin was compelled to throw two cocktails in an empty road next to the alley.

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<sup>8</sup> Here refers scrap

<sup>9</sup> needy and homeless people

### *Recruitment*

In case of recruitment, prior to the actual event, children are informed of the violence, its nature and the role they are to play in the event for which they will be paid. During political turmoil in the last year, children were paid from BDT 200-500 (2.5-6.25 USD), sometimes up to BDT 1000 (12.5 USD), according to the risks involved in the task. A child can be hired by a person who is known to him/ her or by a complete stranger. For a known person, it can be local political activists or *borobhai* who directly offer children to conduct such tasks. Sinbad in Saidabad was hired to set fire on vehicles at Saidabad bus terminal during hartal by a local young partisan of the major opposition party whom Sinbad knew for some years. He added that political leaders in the areas have a tendency of becoming very friendly with bold and smart boys like him during political unrest. Street-connected children can be hired by their employer too. A *bhangariwala* who was also an active member of the opposition party sends and pays children who works for him for attending meeting and rallies, but never pushed them into hartal violence. However, later he added 'his' children would not refuse to be involved in *hartal* violence if he ever asked for it as children obeyed him and had faith in him.

We found an interesting case regarding hiring street-connected children in *hartal* violence in Mirpur. Many street-connected children in Mirpur were addicted to glue sniffing ( popularly known as dandy). At the end of the last year a 12 year old street-connected boy went to a local hardware store to buy "dandy" (dendrite which is mainly shoe glue) for sniffing. However, instead of demanding money for dandy the shopkeeper approached him for throwing bomb on streets but the boy immediately refused the offer and left the shop. There is a prevailing notion of connectedness between drug addiction and involvement in hartal violence. A noticeable number of children (8) who avoid all political activities believe that boys (not girls) who take drugs and consequently possess low level of morality, commonly engage in violent activities like throwing cocktails or torching vehicles with the intention of earning quick money for buying drugs. But we did not find enough evidence to prove this popular notion. Rather our earlier example contradicts this conception.

### *Trapped*

In this kind of recruitment, children are not informed of the substances and the responsibility that are given to them. Compared to adults, trapped recruitment mostly happens to children as they are naive and easy to manipulate.

A Sub-inspector of Banani Police Station shared one such case. On a day in the last week of November 2103, a boy of 13/14 years of age came to the police station with a cocktail in his hand. He told the duty officers, "A stranger has handed me this and gave BDT 500 (6.25 USD) and told me, 'Now go. Throw this cocktail at Mohakhali Rail gate'."

## Reasons behind children's involvement

Definitely there are some motives behind engaging street-connected children in political activities and violence and those are mainly derived from their street-connectivity, livelihood pattern, role of their family, existing culture of politics. From this study there are four major rationale behind recruitment of street-connected children in *hartal* violence. They are:

- ▶ Network with Political Activists and street gangs
- ▶ Fragile Family relationship
- ▶ Informal Livelihoods
- ▶ Dwelling places

### *Network with Political Goons and Street Gangs*

"Children go because *borobhai* called..borobhais pay them too..." – Sinbad, Male, 15, Saidabad, IDI, 12/12/2013.

Most children who become involved in *hartal* violence get affiliated with political agencies and step into such network which lead them to regular political activities such as rally, procession and meeting and even political violence such as: arson attack and torching vehicles.

In Saidabad, children and young people are involved with political violence As far as we know comparatively older children (14-18) who are in good terms with ward based young political leaders whom children called *borobhai* take part in political procession or rally and even in political violence like throwing stone and brick, charging cocktail, torching vehicles especially in the Saidabad bus terminal. Majority of these children work in small metal factory called Leder (lathe machine) *dokan* in Bangla. We talked to one of these children several times to know the dynamics and the network working behind political violence in Saidabad.

### *The boy who plays with fire*

Sinbad is a 15 yearold boy, living in Saidabad, who spends most of his time on street hanging over with friends and sometimes with local young political leaders, playing cricket and working as a trainee in a small metal factory near to Saidabad bus terminal. But what makes him one of our cases is his direct involvement in political violence in Saidabad area such as torching vehicles at Saidabad bus terminal and his intimate relation with a local political leader of the opposition party.

Sinbad lost his father when he was not even 6 months old. He had his mother and an elder brother who was unemployed. They were staying at one of the 7 brick built one storied houses with tinned roof which were built by Sinbad's paternal grandmother who worked at WASA. They gave rent to rest of the houses to other people. Rent from those houses is the only source of their income.

He is a boy with the knowledge regarding illicit activities such as syndicates of Cannabis and Yaba in Saidabad as well as of local and national politics. And he related these narratives without any hesitation. He liked politics because only politics can give him the chance to fight and dispute regularly. He preferred the opposition party and had a good term with a young politician of that party. He had burnt several vehicles recently on order of a person. A week ago at night he poured petrol on an empty vehicle near Saidabad Bus terminal and set the bus on fire with a match. He said that in time of political turmoil political leaders in the area become relatively intimate with bold and smart boys like him. He said, "Strike is called for tomorrow so we are going to start making chaos from this evening." It demonstrates the current trend of occurring violence on the day before *Hartal* (Strike). 10 days before he was interviewed, he claimed that he threw 20 cocktails with the command of a local leader of the youth wing of the opposition party.

He also showed his feelings about negative impacts of *hartal* (strike) on low income people. He said, "In *hartal* (strike) those who are poor are struggling to live even on hand to mouth. We (referring his family) might not be able to survive if we did not get house rent. We do not need to work for earning. But other people will starve if no job is available to them. I personally think these people should be out of *hartal*."

According to the personal observation of a staff reporter of a renowned daily newspaper in Bangladesh, children who threw cocktails or set vehicles on fire already had an intimate relation of dependency with local political leaders or thugs. They maintain these relations in order to ensure their security. In South Dhaka, many children are engaged in illicit activities such as stealing, snatching and drug trafficking. In order to minimise the possibility of being caught or to avoid arrest or to negotiate inter-group conflict, they maintain a sound relation with some *borobhais* or political leaders. Often they form groups under one or two leaders. Over time, these *borobhais* save them from getting beaten in public after being caught red-handed or upon confrontation by the police. In return, they remain ready to do 'anything' for their *bhais*. Hence, it can be said that this attachment with political actors and agencies increases the probability of street-connected children's involvement in political violence.

### ***Fragile Family relationship***

"Those who have no contact with their family, just laze around on streets all day they explode cocktails mostly." - Anik, Male, Age -14, Mirpur, IDI, 17/12/2013.

A popular as well as generalised notion about street-connected children is that poverty is the primary reason that pushes them to street. It is true that apart from our 1-2 respondents all were from low income family. However, crucial point to be noted is that most street-connected children interviewed were from single parent family (mostly single mother); either their father died or left and married another woman. Also, there were cases in which mother or father re-married after death of their spouses.

Therefore, one of the primary needs for street-connected children is emotional support and sensible guidance and supervision. Two owners of scrap shops in Sadarghat area during IDIs. Informed that they always tried to handle kids taking into consideration their emotional well-being. Children want care and affection from adults and when they get that from someone, they become devoted to him. It happens not only due to fragile family relationships but also for existing stigmas regarding street-connected children that make them ignored and ostracised by other people of this society. This is how the notion of *borobhai* developed among street-connected children. These *borobhais* are someone often with political power in the locality and take care of the problems of these children. These *borobhais* can manipulate emotionally-starved children effortlessly which had been seen in the reaction of children during FGD at Sadarghat.

Moreover, sometimes children get involved in politics and even political violence through kinship. We found a case of a child of about 12 years old who was motivated to get involved in politics and even throw cocktails more than once in recent hartals on request of one of his paternal uncles. Twelve years old Arif thought that it would be very prolific for his future to assist his uncle in political activities as he believed that his uncle would be a powerful politician in the near future.

During an FGD in Sadarghat area, it was noticed that children who lived with their parents were relatively reluctant regarding attending political rally and meeting even though they were aware of the chances of making quick money. Parents' restriction regarding involvement with such activities kept them away from becoming a miscreant.

### **Informal Livelihoods**

"Whose political rally do you go to?"

"To whichever rally our owner sends us to" – Babu, Male, Age – 12, Kamalbag, FGD, 19/12/2013

Many of the street-connected children in Dhaka live alone and are solely responsible for their own living cost. Therefore, these children are fully dependent on their employers. Hence, relation between *bhangariwalas* and children working for them is structurally similar to patron-client relationship. Most of the children working in the scrap shops around Sadarghat come from other districts and are mostly detached from family and relatives. Therefore, for these children *bhangariwalas* are their guardian as they provide the children means of survival: job, shelter and peer group. Sometimes, these *bhangariwalas*, who have affiliation with local political parties, send the children to political procession or gathering. Usually, *bhangariwalas* are given money for providing children. That is why the respondent children fearlessly stated, "We'll run forward and throw... ..since *bhai* (*Bhangariwala*) asked for it, it must be done. Even if it causes death...*bhai* will take care of everything." - Shuvo (12), Sagar (12) and Babu (12), Males, Sadarghat, FGD, 19/12/2013

However, not every *bhangariwala* ends their employees to political activities for financial gain or keep good relationships with local political leaders. Sometimes

notorious political activists come and gather children from scrap shops for political procession, rally or meeting without the consent of the owner.

### *Dwelling places*

Every street-connected child is relatively exposed to the streets than 'other' children. As the streets are the main source of income for the street-connected children, livelihood and recreation, a place to live, sleep, laugh, and make a life out of, these children naturally develop a deep connectedness with the streets like one have for his or her home. Partisans often manipulate this strong connection of the children and the street for their own benefit.

Children's involvement also depends on the socio-economic and political climate of the places where they work, roam and dwell as political violence does not take place all over the city. Points like Saidabad, Gulistan, Sadarghat, Motijhil, Malibagh, Farmgate, Shahbagh, Gabtoli, Mirpur are the main centre for political violence. And interestingly, some of these points are also the main hub for public transports and gateways to the other parts of Bangladesh. Therefore, Saidabad and Sadarghat are the places where torching vehicles and exploding cocktails are very common events during any political turmoil.

The above findings contradict with media reports that expound the urge of earning quick money as the main reason behind street-connected children's' involvement in these heinous acts. It showed that children are not only hired but also forced and trapped to do such acts. Children were also found to take part in these acts in order to maintain good terms with *borobhais* since they were important for their day to day survival as the state has failed to provide a safe shelter to them.

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## CONDITION OF EXISTING POLICIES

The high risk of street-connected children getting exposed to multiple threats through political violence is overlooked in policy development and service delivery for street children of Bangladesh (UNICEF 2008). For example, the incidence of children getting used in violent political activities in return of a small amount of money is a clear violation of article 6.7.4 of National Children Policy that prohibits use of children in any political activities (UNICEF 2013). Besides, Bangladesh is also a signatory of CRC<sup>10</sup> and article 19 of CRC states that the state is obligated to protect its children against maltreatment and abuse (UN 1990). Incidences in which street-connected children are falling victims of political violence are a proof that state has not been able to fulfil its duties. While there are existing national and international policies for protection of child rights, our findings show that, in reality, there is hardly any implementation of such policies. As a result, hardly anyone gets punished for luring or forcing children into violent political activities (Alamgir, 2013).

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<sup>10</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with 194 countries that are party to it, except for Somalia, South Sudan and USA

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## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Politics is an area of great frustration in our country although theoretically it should serve for the greater good of general public. It has turned into a field of ultimate attainment of power through any mean. Whether it is ruling party or the opposition party, both have violated laws without any hesitation. The incidence of involving street-connected children to political atrocity is one of the major proofs of this degradation of our politics, law and its implication.

UNICEF's annual State of the World's Children reports have for many years highlighted the extremely difficult circumstances in which street-connected children work and live (UNICEF 1986). According to Stichick and Bruderlein (2001), devoid of all basic amenities of life like food and shelter, these vulnerable children tend to seek refuge to street gangs or armed groups for securing their basic needs as child combatants. Similar condition could be reflected analysing the street-children's situation during the political turmoil in Bangladesh preceding the 10th national election. Many of the street connected children, mostly boys, were found to be involved in the *hartal* violence. The relationships of children with adults' world and wider environments through which they lived and pursued their livelihoods were penetrated in to recruiting them to participate in violence during *hartal* and blockades. Majority of the street children of Dhaka city are involved in some of the very unsafe and even illicit occupations where they cannot but reside in the midst of political violence all day long. In order to survive in street children have to resort to adults as most socioeconomic activities are shaped, executed and maintained by adults, especially by men. So, the reliance and connectedness to the street and the exploitative relationships through which they are connected to the adult's world expose these children to the frontier of violence and risks. Several researches done worldwide also indicate political turmoil, ethno-political conflict and war, genocide and displacement in several countries of Africa such as Sudan, Kenya, Northern Ethiopia, Rwanda and Angola is a significant factor to push numerous rural and urban children to urban streets (Veale 1996, Veale and Donà 2003, Aptekar 1994 and Moberly 1999). For example the conflict between ethno-political parties in Rwanda that claimed 800,000 to million lives only between April-July in 1994 also made scores of children exposed to violence either as witness, victims and even perpetrators (Veale and Donà 2003 and Omaar and De Waal 1994). Thus, it is expected that these sorts of experiences will lead children to life long trauma and other psycho-social attributions. However, two separate studies on this

issue shows that not a trivial number of street-connected children express any form of mental and emotional pathology during the period of political turmoil in Northern Ireland, Congo and South Africa, rather many of these children displayed various forms of resilience against political violence (Dawes 1990, Killian 2002 and Seymour 2012). According to some psychological theory, persons who are able to control their own lives and related decisions as well as to maintain a sense of autonomy and self-efficacy are more likely to be resilient individually in any adverse situations (Rutter and Quinton 1984, Garmezy 1985 and Bandura 1977). Hence, street-connected children who survive mostly without any perpetual supervision of adults and by making their own decision develop their own forms of coping strategy, some of those might be of relatively higher risk. In the eastern Congo where war is an everyday possibility, children adopt the high risk coping strategies like voluntarily joining any of the militant groups fighting the various iterations of local and regional conflict in order to ensure physical protection or fulfilling material needs or both; but not always do they join willingly rather sometimes children get forced into these conflicts (Seymour 2012).

A very strong patron-client relation can be seen between street-connected children and adults. In this relation one part is a privileged group that can provide selective access to goods and opportunities as well as divert resources and services. And the other group is mainly the opposite of the previous one – powerless, limited access to resources, socioeconomic and political services and various opportunities. The privileged group or patron do favour for the under privileged group or client so that later this under privileged group can be manipulated (Roniger 2004). Vote buying is a common example of this sort of patron client relationship, as per Mason (1986) generally in this kind of relationship generally patrons expect both economic (rent, labour, etc) and social (deference, loyalty etc) contributions from clients. Devoid of basic rights, these children remain obedient to their masters (meaning employer) or to local political leaders and goons since many ways children's survival on street is dependent on various economic, social and even political support provided by the patron group. In return, some of these children do not hesitate to get involved in violent activities during *hartals* and blockades as ordered by these informal guardians. So, it is not always monetary interest that tempts these needy children into political atrocity, rather social networks with particular adults derived from street is also a major source that offer children these sorts of job and some street children take these offers mainly to maintain and strengthen these social networks regarding various safety issues and also as a survival strategy. These children also get orders, threats or lucrative offers by strangers for taking part in the political violence. However, our data show most children declined the strangers' call and those who got involved in direct violence were employed by known persons. Ahmed and Johnson (2014) provide extensive insights on how powerful chain of networks works behind to capitalize on the extreme vulnerability of the urban poor living in the informal settlements. Similar to our findings Ahmed and Johnson (2014) found urban poor as powerless pawn of a top down process of criminal/illegal activities. Shafi (2010) also show related findings of how innocent informal settlement dwellers are often victimised by 'organised criminal gangs' to commit crimes.

In a nutshell the study examined how the relationship between children and adults world and wider environments in which they live and pursue their livelihoods are penetrated in order to recruit them to participate in *hartal* violence. Although these children are not members of any party, even too young to acquire membership, still they were manipulated for the sake of demonstrating political power. This is because sometimes the children depend on political activists to survive in street, enjoy much freedom due to fragile family relationship and their informal nature of livelihood. Thus, it can be concluded that the violent political demonstrations during *hartals* and blockades intensify vulnerability of street-connected children as victims as well as perpetrators.

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**Annex 1. List of child hartal victims of 2012-2013**

Issue	Month	Incident of death
Hartal/Blockade against war crime tribunal	January	Seventeen-year-old Abdullah died in <i>hartal</i> violence in Bogra.
		Rabbi, 12, died after being caught in crossfire during a factional clash of the Chhatra League at Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh on 19 January.
	February	Sajjad Hossain, 17, in Cox Bazar, Akmal Hossain, 14, in Rangpur and Qurban Ali, 17, in Noakhali, died in <i>hartal</i> violence on February 28.
	March	Shahidul Islam, 15, in Chittagong died during participating in picketing on 2 March.
		March 3, Mahfuji Hossain, 15, in Sirajganj and Nasiruddin, 16, in Jaipurhat, died during pickets and lawmen clashed.
		Kulsum Akter, 9, and Riya Akter, 4, died in a bomb explosion at Mirpur the capital on 24 of March.
	May	Mahmudul Hasan Zubair and Muktar Hossain, 15, died in clashes between Hefazat-e-Islam and the police on May 5.

Issue	Month	Incident of death
	June	Arman, 8, died in a gunfight between Awami League fronts the Chhatra League and the Juba League in a railway tender brawl in Chittagong on 24 June.
	July	Nadia sultana a nine year old of Gazipur was crushed to death by a bus while running away from picketers chasing her during <i>Jamaat</i> enforced <i>hartal</i> .
<i>Hartal</i> /demanding non-party poll time government	October	14 year old Mohammad Arzuffell victim to a bout of violence between ruling party and opposition factions in Chandpur on 28 of October.
		Murad, nine-year-old Rahima in the capital's Jurain, Rony, 7, and Milton, 8, of Bogra, and Surmon, 16, of Jhalakathi, had got themselves critically injured over the last six days since October 27 after picking up unexploded cocktails. Assuming those to be ball or toys.
		A 16 year old picketer injured himself while carrying crude bomb on 27 October 2013.
		Sohaid (8) was targeted by a crude bomb in Bogra while picking flower from roadside shrub (28/10/2013).
	November	14 year Monir got burned and died on 7 November. He was coming to city with his father while pro-hartal rowdies torched his Dad's covered van.
		Nahid Morol, 18, of Madaripur, died on 29 November in Burn unit of Dhaka Medical College suffering from the burn injuries he sustained in an arson attack on a bus near Shishu Park in Dhaka the day before.

Issue	Month	Incident of death
		Surma (8) and Lal Mia (9) got injured in Chittagong when they picked up a crude bomb mistaking it for a ball on 5 November 2013.
		13 year old Ronny got burnt when pickets torched the bus he was travelling on 10 November 2013.
		Rakib (7), the victim was watching television in a shop when warring factions of the two arch rivals aimed their anger at the boy. Sustained burn injuries as he was caught up in a clash. (26/11/2013).
<i>Hartal</i> /demanding cancellation of 10thparliament election schedule	December	In Sathkhira, 14-year-old Hosain Ali and 16-year-old Arijul Islam died when the police fired into picketers during blockade on 3 December.
		5 year old Sumaiya was on her way to school yesterday morning when she was struck by splinter from a cocktail hurled from a procession of BNP-led 18 party opposition alliance activists in Chittagong.
		Fifteen-year-old bus assistant Mohammad Hasan died on 5 of December when he was burnt in a petrol bomb attack on a bus at Syedabad.
		10-year-old schoolboy Alamgir Rahman Sumon died on 9 December after being caught in a gunfight between the police and BNP and <i>Jamaat</i> activists in Sirajganj.
		On December 13, 7 year old Sanjida as well as Sumi (28), her mother got burnt to death when blockade supporter torched the covered van her family were travelling in.

Issue	Month	Incident of death
		Seven year old Belal lies in bed with injuries to his forehead got hurt as blockader exploded crude bombs.
		Six year old Lima lost 5 fingers after picking up an object from street thinking it as a ball.
		A young boy and his father sustained bullet injuries when the police opened fire on a procession of Jamaat-Shibir activists, in the capital's Malibagh Chowdhury Para, around 11 am on 7 December 2013. The injured were identified as Majedur Rahman, 45, an employee of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and a resident of East Nayatola in the city, and his son, Mahir Ahmed, 6.
		In Shahbagh, unidentified miscreants exploded a crude bomb near the Ganajagoran Mancha around 3:00 pm. They had exploded five crude bombs at the same place on 10 December 2013. Mancha activists caught a 17-year-old youth, Rasel, from the spot and handed him over to the Shahbagh police.
		Two schoolboys hit by stray bullets on 11 December 2013.
		On 13 December, 11 year old Shanto Alam turned up at casualty ward hit by a rubber bullet. He got shot during a clash between police and <i>Jamaat</i> activist in the capital's Motijheel area.
		Mohin Hossain (5), Rajshahi; his left hand blew away from the wrist and fingers of his right hand injured severely after picking thing thinking it to be a red ball while playing on the premises of Rajshahi's Ward-15 unit Awami League office which is just opposite to victim's house. (21/12/2013).

Issue	Month	Incident of death
		<p>On 21 December 2013, Ruhul Amin (15), working in an automobile repair shop/ car garage in Wari and living at a slam in Gopibagh, got injured while allegedly carrying or throwing a cocktail. Both of his hands were affected severely. He was admitted to a local hospital by 2-3 unknown young boys who left the hospital immediately and never came back.</p>
		<p>Yasin, a student of class two whose father is a rickshaw puller got injured after picking up a thing from the outside of their house. His left eye and some parts of his face were affected quite badly. This incident happened in Taragoan village of Akhaurapazila in Brahmanbaria. (28/12/2013).</p>
		<p>Hasanul Haq Banna, 10, son of Motihar Thana Jamaat chief Abdus Samad, and 'Musanna', 5, son of Samad's brother Abdus Salam Sabur, another Jamaat man got injured after tugging a bag full of handmade explosives hidden underneath a pile of dry leaves just next to their house while gathering leaves. (29/12/2013).</p>
Violence on the day of 10th parliament election	January	<p>Md. Raqib, who collected scraps around Sadarghat and Lalbag, sustained the explosion injuries while collecting scrap materials at 6 am on 5 January 2014. He was first taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from where he was shifted to the Pongu Hospital.</p>
		<p>On 5 January 2014, in Kadomtoli, at least 5 people, including a 4-year-old child and an Ansar man, sustained injuries as three crude bombs were exploded outside the polling centre at Onirban Pre-cadet School around 9:30 am. Jannatul, 4 was with her father Ali Akbar, 28 at the time of the attack. Both of them got injured.</p>

List of respondents and Nature of their involvement in Political Violence

**Annex 2. FGD (Focus Group Discussion)**

Location	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Nature of involvement in political activities and violence
Saidabad	8 boys (11-15) 1. Palash 2. Masum 3. Abdulllah 4. Sujan 5. Hridoy 6. Kajol 7. Aladin 8. Sajib	M	14 10/11 10 10 14/15 12 15 12	Except for Aladin, every works in a local scrap shop, where they also sleep at night. Aladin works as a trainee in a small metal factory called Leder Dokan in Bangla.	5. Hridoy was offered by a stranger, but refused. 3. Abbullah was offered by a local political goon, and threw 2-3 cocktail once. 7. Aladin was involved in political violence like throwing cocktail and setting fire on vehicles. Once he has been forced to throw bomb in Gulistan.
Kamalbagh, Sadarghat	7 Boys (11-15) 1. Billal 2. Raqib 3. Mohammad Faruq 4. Yeasin 5. Sagar 6. Akash 7. Mohammad Hasan	M	12 10 11 12 12.5 13/14 9	All the participants work in a scrap shop. One of them sometimes pushes rickshaws, vans on Badu Bazar Bridge besides working in scrap shop.	All of them informed they go to political rally and meeting but never involved in any political violence. 4. Yeasin was offer for 500 Tk. by a stranger, but he refused thinking that thing might be bomb or something that could cause harm. 5. Sagar informed he was asked by a stranger to carry a packet from Sadarghat to Postogola , Lalbagh. But he refused.

Location	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Nature of involvement in political activities and violence
Kamalbagh, Sadarghat	6 Boys (11-15)	M		All the participants work in a scrap shop.	All of them informed they go to political rally and meeting but never involved in any political violence; though four of them showed their enthusiasm in throwing bomb if they are asked by their <i>bhangariwala</i> (owner of a scrap shop)
	1. Md. Hossain		10		
	2. Suman		11		
	3. Md. Shuvo		12		
	4. Md. Sagar		12		
	5. Md. Babu		12		
6. Md. Akash Ali		11			
Sahidnagar, Sadarghat	9 Boys (6-15)	M		All of them collect scraps for scrap shops.	Two of them once attended political meeting; rest of them never go to any political activity.
	1. Rana		11		
	2. Nayan		9		
	3. Tareq		9		
	4. Imon		10		
	5. Mehedi Hasan		9		
	6. Ratan		12		
	7. Sultan		12		
	8. Zahid Hasan		13		
9. Habib		10			
Banglabazar, Sadarghat	9 Boys (11-15)	M		Most of them work as <i>coolie</i> (labour) at Sadarghat Launch Terminal and Sham Bazaar.	3 of them (5, 6 & 9) have been offered by strangers, but they refused
	1. Sakbul Hasan		13		
	2. Md. Samim		12		
	3. Alamin		12		
	4. Md. Sarif		13		
	5. Hossain		12		
	6. Manik		14		
	7. Rahim		12		
	8. Sajib		12		
9. Sahin		13			

Location	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Nature of involvement in political activities and violence
Mirpur	<p>9 Boys (11-15)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sagar</li> <li>2. Asadul</li> <li>3. Jewel</li> <li>4. Asad</li> <li>5. Akash</li> <li>6. Abul Kashem</li> <li>7. Nurul Hossain</li> <li>8. Md. Jewel</li> <li>9. Nasir</li> </ol>	M	<p>11</p> <p>14</p> <p>10</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>11</p> <p>14.5</p> <p>12</p> <p>11</p>	<p>Asadul works with the van that collects garbage in Mirpur- 1.</p> <p>Akash hijacks people mostly who are newcomers in the city sometime.</p> <p>Nurul Hossain helps his maternal uncle in his vegetable store.</p> <p>Rest of the respondents often beg or work as <i>coolie</i> (labour) at Mirpur-1 Bazaar.</p>	<p>7 of them attended to political meeting for several time, but never involve any kind of political violence).</p> <p>1 of them (5. Akash) have been offered but he refused.</p>
Mirpur	<p>7 Girls (10-15)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ripa</li> <li>2. Jhumur</li> <li>3. Shamima</li> <li>4. Sonia</li> <li>5. Tania</li> <li>6. Rubina</li> <li>7. Moni</li> </ol>	M	<p>10</p> <p>12</p> <p>12</p> <p>15</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>11</p>	<p>Except for 2, all girls beg at Hazrat Shah Ali Mazar. But they looked very shy about begging.</p> <p>Two of the girls sell flowers on streets.</p>	<p>Attended political meeting for several times, but never involve any kind of political violence.</p>

Total respondents of FGDS: 55 (48 boys and 7 girls)

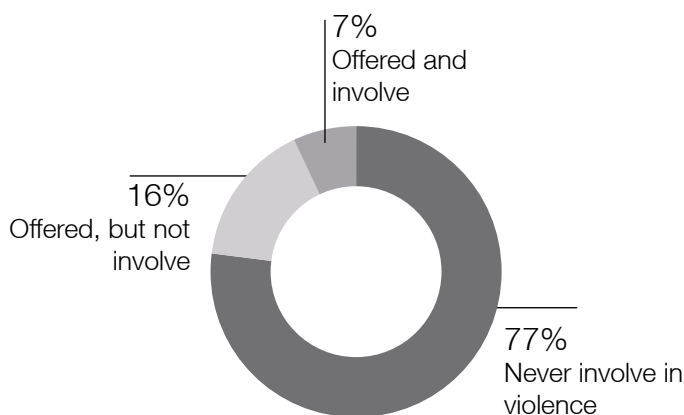
**IDI (In-Depth Interview)**

Location	Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Nature of involvement in political Activities & violence
Saidabad	Sinbad	M	15	Trainee in a small metal factory.	Attend to political meeting and involve in political violence such as throwing cocktail and burning down vehicle.
Saidabad	Ananta	M	14/15	Trainee of a car mechanic at Saidabad Bus Terminal.	Offered by a total stranger, but refused.
Karnalbagh, Sadarghat	Riaz	M	15	Labour in <i>Bhangarishop</i>	
Karnalbagh, Sadarghat	Popy	F	11	Work in a scrap ship, collects mostly plastic scraps.	Never attend any political meeting or violence.
Karnalbagh, Sadarghat	Ria	F	10	Work in a scrap ship, collects mostly plastic scraps.	Never attended any political meeting or rally.
Karnalbagh, Sadarghat	Arif	M	12	Work in a scrap shop of his paternal uncle.	Attend to political meeting, procession quite regularly and involve in political violence like throwing cocktail.
Sadarghat	Habib	M	10	Work in a scrap ship, collects mostly plastic scraps.	Attend to political meeting and involve in political violence such as throwing cocktail twice in recent time.
Sadarghat	Md. Anowar Hossain	M	15	<i>Coolie</i> (Labour) at Sadarghat.	Shared some detailed experience of violence, but he never admitted on his involvement.

Sabarghat	Sahin	M	12	Coolie (Labour) at Sadarghat	Once offered by a stranger person but refused.
Sadarghat	Sohag	M	11	Labour, Thief	Offered local <i>borobhai</i> (that what children called local political leaders and goons which means literally senior brother) but refused.
Mirpur	Chadni	F	15	Begging	Attended political meeting for several times, but never involve any kind of political violence.
Mirpur	Shakila Aktar	F	12	Begging	Attended political meeting for several times, but never involve any kind of political violence.
Mirpur	Anik	M	14	Day Labour, and hijack occasionally	Offered from a person in a local hardware store, but refused.
Mirpur	Salma	F	12	Begging	Attended to political meeting for several times, but never involve any kind of political violence.

**Annex 3. Total respondents of IDIs: 14 (9 boys and 5 girls)**

Overall number of male respondents.	57
Overall number of female respondents.	12
Total street connected children.	69
Number of the respondents of 10 years old or less.	13
Number of the respondents from 10-15 years of age.	56
Number of the respondents who directly involved in political violence.	5 (7.2% of the total respondents)
Number of the respondents who have been offered to be engaged in political violence, but refused.	11 (almost 16%)
Number of the respondents who have been offered by strangers.	10
Number of the respondents who have been offered by known person.	7

**Fig 1. Respondents involvement in violence.**

Interestingly, no respondent in Mirpur have not involved in violence. 3 from Saidabad and 2 from Sadarghat area have taken part in political violence like hurling cocktail/bomb and torching vehicle. The case of torching vehicle can be seen in Saidabad only.

We did not find any female respondent who took part in any form of political violence.

#### Annex 4. KII (Key Informant Interview)

Location	Name/Professional identity	Sex	Age	Profession/ Designation
Kamalbag	Md. Javed	M	28	Bhangariwala
Kamalbag	Md. Ibrahim	M	36	Bhangariwala
Kamalbag	EnamulHauque	M	30	P.O (Project organizer in BRAC-USCP)
Jatrabari	Mamun	M	30	P.O (Project organizer in BRAC-USCP)
Bonani	Police	M	38	SI, BananiThana
Karail Slam	NGO Activist	M	46	Work in NDBUS (Organisation of the Urban Poor in Dhaka)
Kalyanpur Slam	NGO Activist	M	42	Work in NDBUS (Organisation of the Urban Poor in Dhaka)
Mohakhali	Journalist	M	32	Journalist in a well known online news site
Karwan bazar	Journalist	M	36	Staff Reporter in a renowned daily in Bangladesh

Map of Research areas:



Sadarghat and around  
(from Hazaribagh to Jatrabari)



Mirpur

# About

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## BRAC Research and Evaluation Division

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