

GREENPEACE

Greenpeace is an international non-governmental organisation founded in 1971, working on global environmental problems. Greenpeace started its shipbreaking campaign by highlighting this environmental and human rights disaster in 1998. Since then the environmental organisation has been working for a global solution be it through the UN Basel Convention (Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal), the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) and/or the ILO (International Labour Organisation) as well as in the shipbreaking countries such as India and Turkey.

FIDH, the International Federation for Human Rights, was created in 1922. It now includes 141 national human rights NGOs from all regions of the world. FIDH has a generalist mandate and consequently works on all human rights be they civil, political, economic, social, or cultural rights. FIDH carried out fact-finding missions on shipbreaking in India and Bangladesh, which resulted in the publication of a mission report in 2002 entitled 'Labour Rights in Shipbreaking Yards in South Asia, Where do the floating dustbins end up?'



YPSA (Young Power in Social Action) is a youth led and youth managed social development organisation that started in 1985 in Bangladesh. It aims at promoting sustainable development through a holistic approach. YPSA follows the issues related to workers rightsworkers rights, tries to get improved working conditions at Chittagong shipbreaking yards and does advocacy for a policy to ensure human rights in the shipbreaking industry. In addition to awareness raising activities and publications about the subject, YPSA also provides instant help to injured shipbreaking workers.





WORKERS AT SHIPBREAKING YARDS IN BANGLADESH, FEBRUARY

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CONTENTS

4	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
5	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
7	INTRODUCTION	
9	1. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY	43
9	1.1. Objective	43
9	1.2 Methodology	43
9	1.3 Scope and limitations	
10	1.4 Future diseases	43
12	1.5 Official figures	44
15	2. VICTIMS OF SHIPBREAKING IN BANGLADESH	45
15	2.1 Shipbreaking in Bangladesh	45
17	2.2 Death of a shipbreaking worker: three stories	48
21	2.3 Deadly accidents: list of victims	48
25	2.4 Injured shipbreaking workers: five short stories	48
31	3. VICTIMS OF SHIPBREAKING IN INDIA	51
31	3.1 Shipbreaking in India	55
33	3.2 Dead shipbreaking workers: two stories	
35	3.3 Deadly accidents: list of victims	57
39	3.4 Injured shipbreaking workers: two stories	
41	3.5 Injured shipbreaking workers: list of victims	
	4. INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK	
	4.1 International legal framework	
	4.1.1 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal	
	4.1.2 International Maritime Organisation	
	4.1.3 International Labour Organisation	
	4.1.4 Joint ILO/IMO/Basel Convention Working Group	
	4.1.5 Other human rights obligations	
	4.2 National legal framework	
	4.2.1 Bangladesh	
	4.2.2 India	
	5. CONCLUSIONS	
	6. RECOMMENDATIONS	
	7. REFERENCES	

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Regarding the research in India, we wish to thank Somaya Tripathi, who did a tremendous job in the villages of Orissa by helping us out contacting the right people at the right places. We should not forget Bullu, our local assistant from Behrampur and our driver Prakash. In Alang, Sambhubhai Nakrani, Ragunath Manwar and Sunil Jha contributed a lot to our work.

Last but not least, many thanks to the shipbreaking workers and to the families of dead workers who were willing to give us time and to share with us the painful memories of a friend, a husband, a son or a father who died at work.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'End of Life Ships – the human cost of breaking ships –' is a joint report by Greenpeace and FIDH, that aims to shed light on the extremely poor working and environmental conditions that are still prevailing at shipbreaking yards all over the world. We illustrate this by using the specific examples of the two biggest shipbreaking countries: India and Bangladesh.

Shipbreaking involves environmental justice as well as human rights issues. This is why, for the first time, Greenpeace and FIDH decided to bring together their expertise in these respective fields and publish this joint report.

Shipbreaking yards provide the last resting place for End of Life Ships. At these yards, ships are scrapped, primarily for their steel content. Ship scrapping, often referred to as 'ship-breaking', provides employment to thousands of workers in Asia and allows the recycling of many materials used in the ship's construction. However, it is a dirty and dangerous business. Almost all of the vessels condemned for breaking contain hazardous substances such as asbestos, oil sludge, paints containing lead, other heavy metals like cadmium and arsenic, poisonous biocides as well as PCBs and even radioactive substances.

People who lose their lives due to shipbreaking activities are hardly ever mentioned and when they are reported, it is mostly as 'numbers' and 'statistics', whether it is in governmental or intergovernmental fora or in the media. Greenpeace and FIDH delegations went to the working and living places of these workers in India and Bangladesh. We wanted to learn more about the real stories behind these statistics. The present report is the fruit of both desk and field research. From the beginning it became immediately clear that there are serious discrepancies between these 'numbers' and the witness stories.

It is extremely difficult to gather comprehensive data about the shipbreaking workers. Most of the time there simply are no records kept by the authorities and if these records do exist, they often do not reflect the reality. Gujarat Maritime Board in India records 372 casualties due to accidents from the beginning of shipbreaking activities in 1983 up to mid 2004. But, when compared to eyewitness statements, these official 'figures' about deaths by accidents seem largely underestimated. In Bangladesh there are no records kept, neither by yard owners, nor by the authorities. The only written sources are the reports of local media. We estimate that at least 1,000 people have died in Chittagong due to accidents over the last decades .

In addition, the official and estimated figures do not include casualties as a result of diseases: the 'hidden' deaths. Greenpeace and FIDH estimate that the total death toll of shipbreaking practices in the world over the last twenty years might be thousands. In spite of international attention on the issue it seems that things have not changed for the better.

It is striking that only on the second day of their visit to one of the Bangladeshi yards, the Greenpeace/FIDH researcher witnessed a serious accident in which three workers died and one was severely injured. They also found out that two other workers died three weeks earlier. Only nine days later they learned that one man was killed in a new accident.

Many die or get handicapped on the spot because of accidents like explosions due to ship tanks not freed from gas and accidents due to a lack of safety measures. Yet others die slowly because of illnesses related to the toxic fumes and materials they are exposed to the whole day. Some cancer types and asbestos related diseases will only occur 15-20 years later. There is no record of death due to diseases. One thing is clear, however: hundreds of workers have died and are still dying due to shipbreaking, and they leave hundreds of widows and orphans without resources.

One of the main characteristics of the working force in the yards is that those workers migrate to Alang in India and to Chittagong in Bangladesh from the poorest parts of these countries. They are totally unqualified workers, having very little education and are thus easy to exploit. Workers are being provided neither with the adequate training nor with the equipment to work in such a dangerous and toxic environment, although shipbreaking is considered by the International Labour Organisation as one of the heaviest and most hazardous occupations in the world. Their general living conditions after migrating to the yards are extremely bad. Yet those workers cannot generate income in their home places. An Indian worker from Khaling village summarizes why they keep migrating: ³) F) GO TO ! LANG MAYBE ONE PERSON WILL DIE BUT IF) STAY ½ VE PEOPLE WILL D

The current system of sending ships for scrap without taking preliminary precautionary measures continues to ruin the lives of thousands of people in Asia. National governments of the countries where the yards are situated hold prime responsibility for protecting the rights of the workers. However, the other operators along the chain cannot be exonerated: e.g. the shipowners, the yard owners, governments from industrialised countries.

We were able to make this estimation after three visits to Chittagong over the last five years, after lots of cases collected and after talking to most of the people involved in one way or the other with shipbreaking in Bangladesh. This figure is also confirmed by media reports. According to media figures, 500 people died during the last fifteen years (Daily Azadi, 1 June 2000) or 200 during the last five years (Ittefaq, 30 September 2003) which in both cases amounted to roughly 1,000 to 1,200 over the last three decades, assuming that the annual loss of life of shipbreaking workers is more or less the same each year.



SHIPBREAKING YARDS, BANGLADESH, NOVEMBER

©GP/DEHOMMEL

The producers currently escape their responsibilities and the 'polluter pays' principle is not being applied. Ship owners in the northern hemisphere, yard owners and governments are ignoring their international human rights and environmental commitments. Poor and vulnerable people are the first victims.

Greenpeace and FIDH acknowledge that closing the yards or returning the shipbreaking activity to industrialised countries in which the business would be more regulated is not the solution, since the activity is an important source of income for the countries concerned and provides jobs for many workers. However urgent action is needed to address the current situation at the yards.

Greenpeace and FIDH consequently call upon UN institutions and governments to implement an effective and enforceable mandatory regime, based on the existing Basel Convention and on the ILO, IMO and Basel Guidelines on shipbreaking. Such a mandatory regime must ensure the following:

- The respective responsibilities of all participants involved in the process must be established, from the designer of the ship to the breaker.
- Ship owners and exporting countries are responsible and held liable for the proper handling of hazardous and explosive materials on board of End of Life Ships.
- International standards on labour, safety, health and the environment should be respected at shipbreaking yards all over the world.
- A fund fed by the ship owners and governments must be created, that supports the improvement of working conditions at shipbreaking yards and compensates the victims and their families.

With a view to the need for clean steel scrapping in developing countries and the immediate need to save human lives, Greenpeace and FIDH also urge the shipping industry and developed countries to arrange for gas free for hot work certification for End of Life Ships and to pre-clean ships in developed countries.

In addition, Greenpeace and FIDH urge the yard owners and the governments of countries where the yards are situated, possibly in cooperation with ILO, to keep a precise and publicly available record of workers that die, fall ill or get injured in relation to their work on the yards.

Finally, the national governments of shipbreaking countries such as India and Bangladesh, but also China, Pakistan and Turkey, should endeavour to guarantee the full implementation of their domestic legislation and their international commitments to protect workers and the environment.

INTRODUCTION

THE VOICE OF THE POOR DOESN'T ring worker in Chittagong to a Greenpeace delegation in 2002. By publishing this report Greenpeace and FIDH give a voice to the poorest of the poor in India and Bangladesh: the shipbreaking workers. We want to picture the lives and work of people that seem statistically non-existent, workers that break the world's End of Life Ships with their bare hands. Yet we can only tell their stories thanks to the ready cooperation of the injured workers and of the families and friends of those who died.

DIRTY JOBS

India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China and Turkey are the homes of the world's shipbreaking facilities. Every year the shipping industry sends around 600 ships of all types to be dismantled on their beaches. The yards provide work, directly and indirectly, to thousands of people. Yet working at a shipbreaking yard is a dirty and dangerous job. Every worker knows that. Still they keep coming, from thousands of miles away, to apply for a job. They don't have a choice: it is impossible to earn a living in their home village and they have to support their families.

DEADLY ACCIDENTS

Every year hundreds of workers are the victims of deadly accidents at the yards of India, Bangladesh and other shipbreaking countries. The working conditions are extremely bad and safety measures hardly exist. If the shipbreaking workers don't die or get seriously injured because of an accident, they suffer a big risk of falling ill or dying from toxic waste-related diseases. At the yard and in their sleeping quarters they breathe toxic fumes and asbestos dust. Toxic waste that is being transferred as part of the structure of the End of Life Ships.

REPLACEABLE WORKERS

No enforceable international regime on End of Life Ships and shipbreaking protects these workers and the shipping community continues to send its ships for scrap, contain-

ing a global race to shipbreakers, to the beaches of developing countries. Day by day the workers dismantle the ships without any training or protection and when they die in a gas explosion or get injured by a falling steel plate, they simply 'disappear' from the statistics. The dead or injured worker is being replaced by another poor man coming from far away to risk his life for a small handful of money.

FACES AND FAMILIES

FIDH and Greenpeace, in cooperation with local organisations such as YPSA in Bangladesh, conducted this research to give a real face to the people who are losing their lives every day due to the inhumane conditions at the shipbreaking facilities. These people are not only 'numbers' or 'statistics'. They have names, families and friends who mourn them. They had a life, but they lost it due to the carelessness of the shipping industry and the yard owners, and due to the negligence of governments. Governments that allow these ships to be sent to developing countries without any precautionary measures, thereby ignoring international law. And governments that do not ensure safe working conditions at the yards.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE...

This research is a joint initiative of Greenpeace and FIDH, because the international trade of End of Life Ships is an environmental justice as well as a human rights issue. The illicit transfer and dumping of toxic waste to developing countries in the form of old vessels is a blatant breach of the UN Basel Convention Regime that was carefully designed precisely to protect developing countries.

...AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In addition, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) imposes upon states the obligation to respect and fulfil the rights contained in the Covenant, but also to prevent violations by third parties. One of these rights is the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work. Another right is that to an adequate

standard of living for oneself and one's family. The ICESCR also declares as a right to everyone the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. Furthermore there are various conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that are relevant to the working conditions at the shipbreaking yards.

URGENT NEED

FIDH and Greenpeace tried to trace the stories of some dead and injured workers. We went out to the yards and the villages and searched for witnesses of their lives, their work and their death. This report tells some of these stories - examples of the stories of all shipbreaking workers. Stories that confront the international community with the human tragedies behind the shipbreaking practices. This report intends to send a clear message to the shipping industry and to governments: there is an urgent need to respect and include the environmental justice and human rights principles when negotiating a more effective global regime on End of Life Ships and shipbreaking.



SHIPBREAKING YARDS IN BANGLADESH, OCTOBER

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1. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 OBJECTIVE

Most press reports on accidents at shipbreaking yards only inform us about the number of people involved: 'an accident happened, three workers died and three were injured'. The dead and injured people are reduced to statistics, the destroyed lives don't seem to count that much and if it comes to workers who died of diseases related to exposure to toxic substances at the yards, there are not even any numbers or statistics. Therefore the main focus of this report is on the 'deaths by accidents'.

FACT-FINDING MISSIONS

The principal objective of FIDH and Greenpeace by publishing the present report was to give a face to those victims, shed some light on their lives and break the silence surrounding their fate. In order to do so, we sent fact-finding missions to India and Bangladesh to gather information about these workers who lost their lives due to shipbreaking: their names, the cause of their death, their age, personal stories and if possible some photos.

TIP OF THE ICEBERG

It was clear from the start that it would be a very difficult task as no official or scientific comprehensive records are being kept by the relevant authorities and institutions in these countries, nor in UN bodies. During the research, it became obvious that it would only be possible to unveil the tip of the iceberg. Therefore the stories and the information gathered in this report should be seen as a glimpse of what is happening in shipbreaking countries.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The research focused on India and Bangladesh, as these two countries have been the leaders of the shipbreaking industry in the last decade, both in numbers and tonnage of ships broken. However it is important to note that the

conditions in other shipbreaking countries such as Pakistan, China and Turkey do not differ very much from India and Bangladesh.

SOURCES IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, there is no governmental body keeping records of the shipbreaking accidents or the diseases related to shipbreaking. In this country an important source of information were the press clippings that reported accidents and mentioned the names of people who died. The local non-governmental organisation YPSA significantly contributed in gathering the initial information about the victims. Several shipbreaking workers were interviewed by the Greenpeace/FIDH delegate. The delegation also visited some of the villages where many workers come from, in Northern Bangladesh, and interviewed families and friends of the victims.

SOURCES IN INDIA

In India, the local press does not report the names of the victims after an accident. The Gujarat Maritime Board, a governmental body, keeps numbers of 'deaths by accident', classified by the type of accident. But, when compared to eyewitness statements, these official 'statistics' turn out to be very much incomplete (see 1.5).

Both the local police and the hospitals did not want to reveal the cases of accidents that occurred in shipbreaking yards. Therefore the main sources of the research in India are the testimonies of workers and their families. The Greenpeace/FIDH delegate visited their living quarters at Alang shipbreaking yards and also some of their home villages in Orissa, a state in Eastern India, thousands kilometres away from where they work. In many cases it turned out to be impossible to get the exact date and cause of death. Also it was difficult to lay hands on a photo of the victim, as the families tend to burn the belongings of their beloved, to put an end to a painful episode.

1.3 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Greenpeace and FIDH tried to establish a comprehensive list of shipbreaking workers who died or got handicapped as a result of accidents at the yards in India and Bangladesh. This turned out to be extremely difficult, for the following reasons:

- There is no complete registration of workers by the yard owners nor existing reliable statistics by the authorities. In India alleged false reports of numbers and causes of death prepared by the yard owners remain the only official documents available. In Bangladesh the reports in the local press are the only source. In general workers are reluctant to talk, as they fear losing their jobs.
- Authorities are not willing to cooperate, either at a local or national level. They try to protect the status quo, which is mainly benefiting the local economy.
- Workers are seasonal, they come and go. It is often difficult to find anybody who can remember the stories of people who died due to accidents or diseases.
- Workers at the shipbreaking yards are not represented because the yard owners don't tolerate trade unions. This is in violation of domestic legislation and international law.

Total historical ship scrapping volumes (all types) by region and year (1994-2003) as reported in the EU Assessment report: Oil tanker Phase Out and the Ship Scraping Industry, EC-DG-TREN COWI, June 2004. Bangladesh scrapped a total of 603 ships (9,6 mLDT) and India a total of 2,638 ships (21,7 mLDT).

See Greenpeace reports on shipbreaking in China and Turkey and ILO report on shipbreaking in Asia.



CHILD CLEANING THE MUD FROM AN IRON PIECE TO BE CUT AT SHIPBREAKING YARDS, BANGLADESH, FEBRUARY

©RUBEN DAO/FIDH

- Ministries of Labour in India and Bangladesh generally close their eyes to what is happening, notably because of corruption at various levels.
- Ministries in Exporting Countries are closing their eyes to what is happening with the End of Life Ships. They do not comply with their obligation under the Basel Convention Regime, to assess the dismantling facilities in the importing countries.

LIST OF VICTIMS

In spite of those obstacles we were able to draw a list of victims who died or were severely injured during their work at the yards. We collected individual stories: testimonies of victims and their families and friends that form the basis of this report. Clearly they illustrate a more general pattern of deaths and injuries among workers of all shipbreaking yards in developing countries.

INJURED WORKERS

Though the main focus of this report were the 'deaths by accidents', during our research we encountered several workers that were injured and handicapped due to shipbreaking work. We included some of their stories in this report. Yet there must be many more injured and disabled workers. To give one clear indication: in Bangladesh we found more than sixty cases of injured workers in just one day in one village (Saria Kandi).

1.4 FUTURE DISEASES

WE HAVE BREATHING PROBLEMS DUE TO THE DANGEROUS CHEMICAL WASTES THAT ARE BURNT IN THE SHIPBREAKING YARDS. WE HAVE TO COVER OUR NOSES ALL THE TIME EVEN INSIDE OUR HOMES.

An important cause of death among shipbreaking workers is no doubt the toxic waste-related diseases they suffer from. This part of the story should be inside our report, but

unfortunately we had to leave it out. It turned out to be virtually impossible to get any data about the people who died because of diseases related to the exposure to toxic materials.

FUTURE DEATHS

There is no medical monitoring programme for the workers and nobody keeps track of former workers. In addition, asbestos related illnesses such as asbestosis and mesothelioma appear 15 to 20 years after the exposure. One may fear that many other workers will die in the future because they are constantly being exposed to a deadly cocktail of toxic fumes and materials. These circumstances contributing to future illness are merely another aspect of the general bad working and living conditions at the yards.

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS

Where medical statistics are absent, some significant statements from doctors provide an indication of the real impact of the toxic environment in which the shipbreaking workers do their dirty jobs. According to a doctor at the Red Cross Hospital in Alang, working one day at the shipbreaking yard is equal to smoking 10-15 packs of cigarettes .

Art 4.2 (e) Each Party shall take the appropriate measures to not allow the export of hazardous wastes or other wastes to a State or group of States belonging to an economic and/or political integration organization that are Parties, particularly developing countries, which have prohibited by their legislation all imports, or if it has reason to believe that the wastes in question will not be managed in an environmentally sound manner.

Statement of a doctor in the documentary 'SHIPBREAKERS', a co-production of the National Film Board of Canada and Storyline Entertainment, 2004.

Statement of a doctor in the documentary 'SHIPBREAKERS', a co-production of the National Film Board of Canada and Storyline Entertainment, 2004.

A German occupational health officer stated that due to the lack of safeguards in handling the various contaminants, every fourth worker in Alang must be expected to contract cancer .

RISE OF DISEASES

Dr Rupa Abdi summarizes in her report about Alang ship-breaking yards: 'The labourers in Alang live in poor housing and sanitary conditions and little attention is paid to their health and safety concerns. According to the physicians in and around Alang who treat numerous Alang patients, the combination of hazardous working conditions, congested and unhygienic living conditions, poor quality drinking water, (...) and rampant prostitution have given rise to a number of skin, gastrointestinal, and liver diseases besides tuberculosis, leprosy, malaria, malnutrition, cancer, HIV-AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD).'

ASBESTOS

Greenpeace sampling in 2000 in Alang showed that workers were exposed to deadly asbestos fibres 24 hours a day. Asbestos fibres were found not only at the yards, in the living quarters and in the waste dump (200 meters inside) but even in the Hindu temple where the workers were praying. This poses a serious health risk not only to the shipyard workers, but also to the roadside sellers that trade in ship parts. Furthermore the Gujarat Maritime workers stationed at the shipbreaking yard as well as the neighbouring communities of peasants are in danger of getting asbestos-related diseases .

POISON AND RUST

No medical check-up to assess the prevalence of asbestos-related ailments is being done on the workers or on other people frequenting the shipbreaking yards in Alang and Chittagong. Despite the absence of hard data it wouldn't be too farfetched, given the prevailing conditions, to assume that the afflictions could be of serious proportions. Hasan, a shipbreaking worker in Turkey, put it in very plain words to a



Greenpeace delegation in 2001: 'YOU NEED NOT HAVE ANY ILLUSIONS THIS IS NOT EARTH YOU ARE STANDING ON THIS IS A MIXTURE OF POISON AND RUST'

Public statement by Dr. Frank Hittmann, the occupational health officer of the German state of Bremen. Interview with ARD-TV, Nov. 23, 1998.

India's Ship-Scraping Industry: Monument to the Abuse of Human Labour and the Environment, By Rupa Abdi, IIAS Newsletter, November 2003.

Ship for scrap III: Steel and toxic waste for Asia, Greenpeace 2001.



SHIPBREAKING YARDS, BANGLADESH, NOVEMBER

©GP/DEHOMMEL

1.5 OFFICIAL FIGURES

When FIDH and Greenpeace compared their findings and the testimonies they collected, with the official figures - when there are some - it became clear that the real numbers of workers who are losing their lives or are becoming handicapped due to accidents and diseases in the yards, may be several times higher than the official numbers.

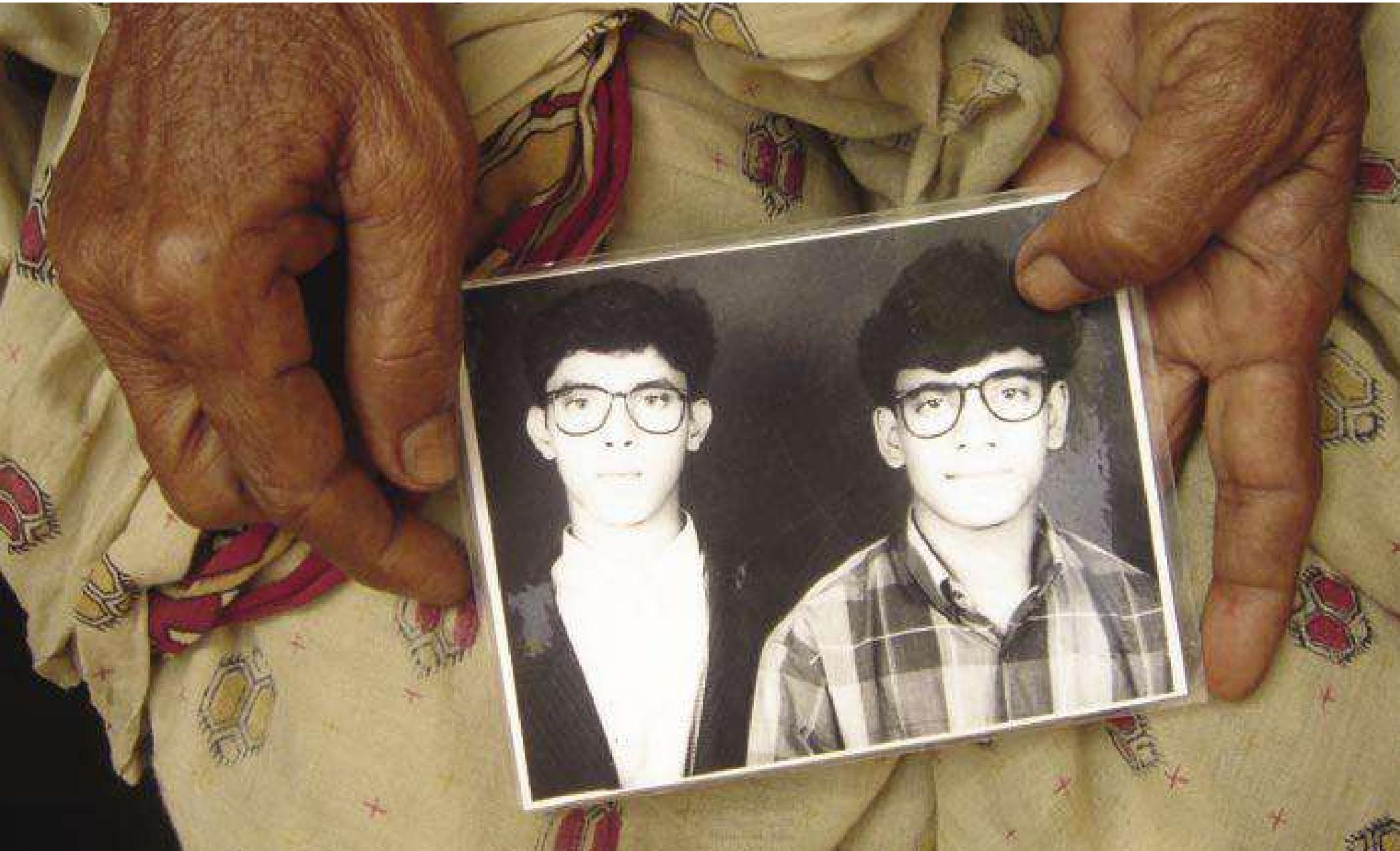
INCOMPLETE

In India for example, according to the figures of the Gujarat Maritime Board, seven workers lost their lives due to explosions and fire in 2003. However, eyewitnesses from a Greenpeace delegation found at least twenty people dead in two explosions in 2003. Furthermore five big accidents involving deaths happened that year. This indicates that the official 'statistics' are very much incomplete.

DISAPPEARED

The information collected by Greenpeace and FIDH is only the tip of the iceberg. The people for whom no records are available have simply 'disappeared' - at least from the statistics. Yet one just needs to read the stories of some of them to know that all these shipbreaking workers did have a life and that somewhere friends and families are still mourning their death.





MOTHER HOLDING PICTURE OF MOHIDUL (BOY ON THE LEFT), SEE STORY PAGE BANGLADESH, OCTOBER ©RUBEN DAO/GP/FIDH

2. VICTIMS OF SHIPBREAKING IN BANGLADESH

2.1 SHIPBREAKING IN BANGLADESH

On average one shipbreaking worker dies at the yards in Bangladesh every week and every day one worker gets injured. These are shocking numbers that can never be found in any official statistics. It seems like nobody really cares: shipbreaking workers are just replaceable instruments for the yard owners and the governments. One is lost, so another replaces him.

BIG INDUSTRY

Shipbreaking is a major industrial activity in Bangladesh and an important source of revenue to the Government. More than thirty years ago the first vessel was dismantled on the shore near Chittagong in Southern Bangladesh. Now this industry is a big supplier of second-hand machineries, diverse materials and millions of tons of steel to be recycled. In Bangladesh, ship scrapping provides about eighty percent of the country's steel needs and contributes to the production of, for instance, cement and construction materials. According to various interviews carried out locally, it employs directly an average of 30,000 workers and indirectly between 100,000 and 200,000.

CLOSED DOORS

Despite the size of this recycling industry, there is a distinct lack of figures, especially regarding the accidents that kill and wound hundreds of workers every year. Unlike other industrial sectors in the country, the government of Bangladesh has no statistics, no serious records, detailing this dangerous activity. Yard owners generally consider themselves to be above the law and do not give any information. They try to keep the doors of their yards closed at all costs, especially when it comes to the matter of working conditions and accidents. They don't want to suffer bad publicity or pay for compensation.

EYEWITNESS

Although no statistics are available, it is possible to assess that at least a thousand workers died on the Bangladeshi yards these last decades. That assumption is based on discussions with various persons involved in shipbreaking in the years 2000, 2002 and 2005. However the same conclusion can be drawn from comparison of the available information with the witness stories we collected. This is reflected by a recent experience. On the second day of their visit to the Bangladeshi yards in October 2005 the Greenpeace/FIDH researcher witnessed a serious accident. Three workers died and one was severely injured when collecting sludge in a tank in the MT Dia. They also found out that two other workers died three weeks earlier. Only nine days later they learned that one man was killed and another was severely injured in another accident.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Only when an explosion on a shipwreck is big enough to alert local journalists and outside observers such as NGOs will the news spread out. Then the authorities might feel obliged to investigate the case and force the ship breakers to promise better working conditions. That is exactly what happened after the explosion on the tanker TT Dina in May 2000 that killed dozens of workers. Yet five years later, the situation still remains the same. The government continues to close its eyes to a dirty business controlled by very well connected businessmen, collecting taxes and bribes and unable - or unwilling - to implement existing laws. The promise made in 2000 by the BSBA (Bangladesh Ship Breakers Association) to build a hospital near the yard was only aimed at answering critics and pressures after deadly explosions. In Chittagong, the shipbreaking business continues to be as dangerous and dirty as usual.

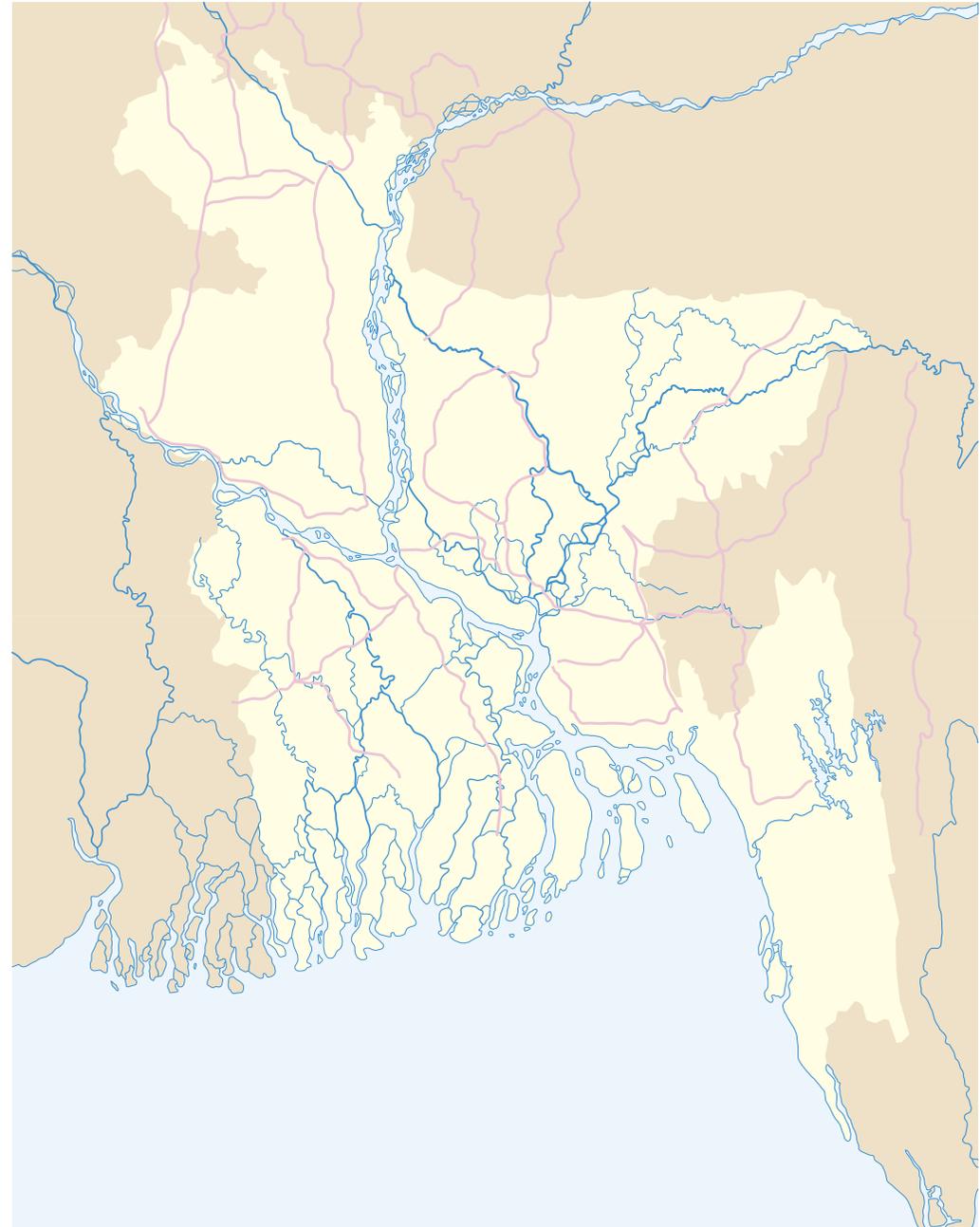
Shipbreaking activities in Bangladesh, document submitted by Bangladesh, ILO/IMO/BC WG 1/7/1, 23 January 2005, para. 6.

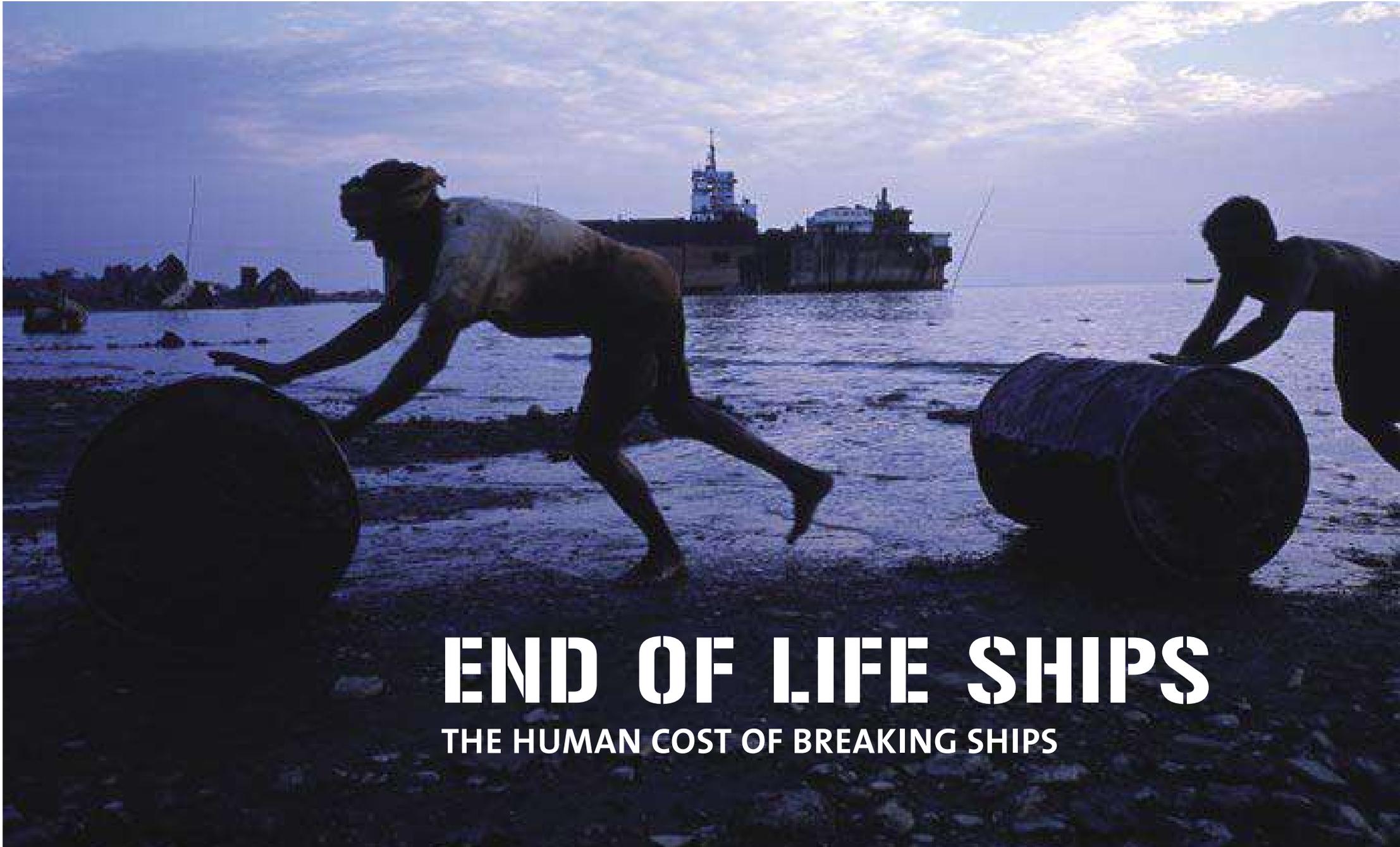
It should be noted that the government of Bangladesh claims that about three million people are directly or indirectly employed in the industry, although that number seems largely overestimated – see Shipbreaking activities in Bangladesh, document submitted by Bangladesh, ILO/IMO/BC WG 1/7/1, 23 January 2005, para. 9.

TRAVEL FAR

Around the yards, from shed to shed, workers talk about explosions and accidents that kill a fellow worker, a cousin or a brother. But to get a bit closer to this reality one must travel to the North, to the poorest districts of Bangladesh, to villages like Nandail (north of Kishorganj), Saria Kandi (near Bogra on the river side) or Chandan Baisha, Dac Bangla and Kolni Bari (south of Saria Kandi). From there the farmers leave to work at the Chittagong ship-breaking yards, to be able to feed their families.

There, from village to village, day after day, the stories emerge: families remembering their killed son, brother or father. Disabled workers detailing what happened at the yards and describing their lives after the accident. Many wounded workers showing their scars, explaining what the accident means to them. They tell about the lives they lived as a farmer, often without land, and why they were forced to go to Chittagong's yard and do this risky shipbreaking work.





END OF LIFE SHIPS

THE HUMAN COST OF BREAKING SHIPS