

IMPACTS OF SHIPBREAKING INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH: SEARCH FOR A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The impacts of shipbreaking industry in Bangladesh and effectiveness of legal instruments relating to it have been identified through the analysis of peer reviewed journal articles, reports and related online materials. This has revealed that, although Bangladesh is one of the top shipbreaking nations in the world, the industry is poorly regulated with little consideration for workers' occupational health & safety matters or the impact on the coastal environment. Heavy metals, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), asbestos and hazardous wastes are potentially damaging to both the natural environment and to worker's health. Despite this, the industry is important as a contributor to the national economy providing significant employment and supplying steel as a raw material underpinning the vibrant development sector. The plethora of international regulations including the Basel Convention, Hong Kong Convention, ILO guidelines, and the Shipbreaking Rules, 2011 in Bangladesh, have not changed this situation and this research investigates the legal tools and how these are implemented by the industry in Bangladesh. Resource scarcity, lack of expertise, coordination, and monitoring are identified as the main challenges although there have been some recent improvements with the government as well as businessmen committed to greening the shipbreaking industry in Bangladesh. The sustainability of the industry depends on effective management and implementation of the legal instruments by government institutions, businessmen and stakeholders. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) evaluation matrix, with mitigation measures for improving the industry, is recommended.

Key words: Shipbreaking, occupational health & safety (OH&S), heavy metals, sustainability, stakeholder.