

## **A Study on Present Scenario of Child Labour in Bangladesh**

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**Abstract:** The problem of child labour is a socio-economic reality of Bangladesh. This issue is enormous and cannot be ignored. This study indicates the child labour increase in a developing country like Bangladesh and the positive and negative effects of child labour on the society. Poverty is the main reason for the children to become child labourers. The child labour problem has become one of the most striking issues in the developing countries. Therefore, a need to identify the vulnerable children and point out their problems has come into the light. Many government and non-government organizations have taken several progression steps to decrease child labour problem from the society. An attempt is made in this article to present the socio-economic scenario of child labour in Bangladesh and to find out the ways in which child labour can be decreased gradually.

**Keyword:** Child labour, Poverty, Education, Hazardous work, Developing Countries,

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### **I. Introduction**

#### **1.1. What is Child Labour?**

Child labour is now a global concern and as such attracted attention of people in various sectors. In fact, it is the product of an unequal society. As Vittachi observes, child labour shows up, in exaggerated form, a labour problem deeply woven into the fabric of an unequal society [1]. The term ‘child labour’ refers to the engagement of children in any work that takes away all or most of their rights as children, i.e. right to attend regular school, uninterrupted mental and physical development. According to UNICEF, “Child labour is work that is likely to interfere with a child’s education and development; labour that exceeds a minimum number of hours, labour that is hazardous; and/or labour performed by a child who is underage according to state legislation. A child is considered a person under the age of 18 years” [2]. ILO signifies some activities as the worst form of labour. It defines, “The worst forms of child labour include trafficking, armed conflict, slavery, debt bondage, sexual exploitation and hazardous work” [3].

Estimating the number of children working around the world is a difficult task. This practice of employing children to perform any sort of harmful and dangerous work is considered exploitative by many international organizations. A number of human rights and social welfare organizations have been working hard to reduce the number of child labour around the world. There are many laws enforced to prohibit child labour. However, these laws do not consider all work by children as child labour; exceptions include work by child artists, supervised training, and other certain categories of work performed by children [4]. There are some situations where it is hard to imagine how an activity could not be harmful to the children i.e. forced prostitution, child soldiers; but these activities are very rare. Whether an activity is harmful or beneficial for the children depends on the circumstances of the activity, and ultimately, its impact on the children and the counterfactual of what the child would be doing in the absence of that work. If a child is above the minimum labour age, paid fairly and the work does not interfere with their health, schooling and development, then their participation in work can be beneficial. It can contribute to the welfare of their family while equipping them with skills and experience that can lead to them becoming a productive adult member of society [5].

Child labour is found in every part of the world, particularly in developing countries. According to the international Labour Organization (ILO) Convention:

#### **Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973**

Child labour is work that children should not be doing because they are too young to work, or – if they have reached the minimum age – because it is dangerous or otherwise unsuitable for them. Countries that ratify

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this Convention undertake a legal promise to stop child labour and make sure that children below a certain “minimum age” are not employed. At the end of 2010, this Convention had been ratified by 156 of the 183 member States of the ILO.

**Table 1.1: The framework as to the minimum age is as follows:**

	The minimum age at which children can start work	Possible exceptions for developing countries
<b>Hazardous work</b> Any work which is likely to jeopardise children’s health, safety or morals should not be done by anyone under the age of 18	18 (16 under strict conditions)	18 (16 under strict conditions)
<b>Basic Minimum Age</b> The minimum age for work should not be below the age for finishing compulsory schooling, which is generally 15	15	14
<b>Light work</b> Children between the ages of 13 and 15 years old may do light work, as long as it does not threaten their health and safety, or hinder their education or vocational orientation and training.	13-15	12-14

Source: [6]

## II. Literature Review

Child labour can affect a child in many ways. Long, strenuous hours of activity affect a child’s mental health, physical health, social development and general wellbeing and, often interfere with his/her education. Children who simultaneously work long hours and study, experience higher levels of negative attitudes towards school, decreased school attendance and grades, than before working [7].

Many children involved in child labour would technically be considered trafficked. Trafficking of children is the act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a child for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes at a minimum the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs [8].

The reason some parents may allow their children to go with a trafficker is these people are usually known and trusted by the victim’s parents and they are generally deceived by traffickers about the nature of the work their children will be involved in and the destination they will go. Both the laws and the resolution need to be introduced for a child to be considered as a victim of human trafficking. Singlehanded children being migrated using unsafe methods to avail economic opportunities are genuinely at risk of human trafficking.

### 2.1. Why Children Work?

Child labour is defined as an activity with negative impact on the children who is involved in it. Although child labour is hazardous to the children, it has some beneficial sides for the children and their families. A study in Peru found that working children aged 10 to 12 contribute 7.5 percent and children aged 13 to 15 add 12 percent of the family income [9]. It is more likely that the estimates from a study in rural India, where children’s income constituted only 6 percent of family income, give a more complete picture [10]. Beside this child labour is accepted in communities where the point of view of general people downplays the risks of children working or where it has become part of culture, tradition or family expectations. There are some other factors such as poor enforcement of labour laws; corruption and improper protection guide line for children in the society that boost up the amount of child labour within a community. Children are attractive to employers as workers motivated by profit because children are easier to control, more compliant and are less likely to claim a wage increase or improved working conditions.

### 2.2. Push and Pull Factors

Factors that ‘push’ children out of school include poor quality education, lack of relevancy in lessons, language used, physical accessibility issues and the absence of school in the child’s community. Children who become members of gangs are often forced into petty crime, sometimes to ensure their own protection. These crimes may include stealing and selling drugs – increasing risk of exposure and addiction to harmful substances. The pull factors involve economic and other issues associated with poverty that ‘pull’ the children out of school. Families often depend on their children to fetch in additional income and thus accept child labour under unavoidable circumstances. Other common reasons that pull the children child labour include the non-payment of minimal wages to the parents, high unemployment among adults, the need to pay off family debt and to meet their own survival needs if they are fending for themselves[11].

In some societies women have limited work choices which then lead to a labour shortage in different sectors within those communities. Children are used to fill this labour shortage. There are many household activities where parents may need additional assistance to complete some tasks on time, e.g. seasonal agricultural work. For some families, start working at an early age is a tradition and children are likely to trail the same path as their parents. If the costs associated with education become burden for a poor family they may pull their children out of the school. Child education may also not be prioritized if there is little evidence of being employed. All these factors result in an intergenerational child labour and a prolongation of the poverty child labour cycle.

### **2.3. The Effects of Child Labour**

Most of the child labourers work in hazardous conditions such as direct contact to pesticides, chemicals, dusts and carcinogenic agents in agriculture, mining and quarrying, and manufacturing. These increase the risks of developing bronchial complaints, cancers and other form of life threatening diseases. Child labour may include operating precarious machinery; heavy lifting, repetitive tasks and poor posture that increase the chances of musculoskeletal problems in later life. Similarly, children involved in industries like garbage recycling and waste management work in an unprotected environment and as a consequence are exposed to many dangerous materials such as; broken glasses, sharps, rotten food and other that can cause serious and permanent health consequences.

### **2.4. Poverty and Child Labour**

Hundreds and thousands of children are forced to work as labourers due to poverty. Some may start their life as labourers even before entering school and many leave the school and become labourers to meet their everyday needs. Devastated by suffering at early age, these children require psycho-social rehabilitation, education and economic opportunities within their communities. The World Bank [12] reports that the labour force participation rate of children aged between 10 to 14 years is the highest in countries with per capita income of \$ 500 or less (at 1987 prices). The number is 30-60 percent. However the figure is quite smaller, 10-30 percent, in countries with income between \$ 500 and \$ 1000. This scenario is opposite in the affluent developing countries. In general, parents of child labourers are not people who let their children work instead of themselves, but people who find it necessary to draw on more of the household's resources to secure the necessary income. Child labour thus does not replace adult labour, but complements it; in some cases it enables adult family members to enter the labour market [13].

### **2.5. Education and child labour in developing countries**

Many countries like Egypt and Zimbabwe, that have rapidly expanded their primary school coverage, have seen a considerable increase in primary school enrollment which results in a reduction of child labour [14]. Africa and South Asian countries, where school enrolment is low and child labour is wide spread. The children in these areas work in contracts as plantation work, tender arrangements, bounded labour and subcontracted price work. This creates a burden not only on the individual child but also on the entire education system. For example in Yemen, the working children who have to repeat classes probably leads to more than 300000 additional pupils in the primary school alone [15].

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the basis of UNICEF's work, calls for compulsory education, but allows states to ratify the CRC without requiring it. For the last decade, UNICEF has moved towards a larger programmed approach, rather than specific projects. One such programmers is the Global Campaign for Girls Education. In General, UNICEF argues for universal compulsory education on a human rights rationale. Child labour programmes follow the drive toward universal education as natural priority for UNICEF [16].

The World Bank started in 1996 that it does not have an operational policy on child labour. It clearly states the negative relationship between child labour and economic development and hence makes an argument for that issue to fall within the World Bank mandate. Today this position is not argued within the World Bank [17].

### **2.6. Gender disparities: impact on health**

In spite of the fact that the literacy rate for women has improved over the last two decades, in many countries it is less than half that of their male counterparts.

As shown in the Table, where gender disparities in literacy rates exist, there is a tendency towards higher mortality rates for infants and children up to 5 years of age. However, while this trend is certainly present, mortality is no doubt strongly influenced by many other factors such as the availability of food, infectious diseases, or lack of potable water. LeVine et al. found that better educated girls participate more in society as a result of school-based interactions with their peers and with adults such as teachers or village elders;

they also have greater participation in decision making processes with regard to their health and the health of their children [18].

As their language and literacy skills improve, women are better able to understand health messages, adhere to good health practices such as breastfeeding, improve nutritional practices, comply with immunization schedules, and assure the sterilization of water

**Table 1.2: Comparison of literacy rates between males and females and the Mortality rate for children younger than 5 years of age**

Country	Literacy rate 1990	Literacy rate 2000	Morality rate per 1000 live birth (birth age 5) 2001		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Niger	18	5	24	9	265
Pakistan	49	20	57	28	107
Afganistan	40	12	51	21	256
Angola	56	29			208
Leberia	55	23	70	37	190
Niger	18	5	23	8	156
Nicaragua	61	61	64	64	36
Philippines	93	92	96	95	29

Source: [19]

## 2.7. The Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits, world leaders came together at United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which, among other things, committed their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and set out a series of time-bound targets – with a deadline of 2015 – that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, to providing universal primary education – all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest [20].

The Millennium Development Goals are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development. [21]

Bangladesh is on track in relation to some but by no means all of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets (Table 1.3). The country will likely achieve the targeted prevalence of poverty by 2015, but meeting the target of hunger within the given time frame remains uncertain. With regard to targets such as expansion of primary and secondary education, infant and child mortality rate, containing the spread and fatality of malaria and tuberculosis, Bangladesh has done remarkably well and may well reach several of these targets before the stipulated time.

**Table 1.3: Status of Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh**

 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<b>Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger</b> There is indication that Bangladesh is on its way to achieve targeted prevalence of poverty by 2015, however, meeting the target of hunger within the given time frame remains uncertain. Rising inequality is offsetting some of the gains in poverty reduction.
 Achieve universal primary education	<b>Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education</b> Significant progress has been made in primary education towards achieving the NER target, rising from 61 percent in the 1990/91 base year to 92 percent in 2008. However, Bangladesh will be unable to meet the targets for the proportion of pupils completing the primary school cycle, as well as for the literacy rate of 15-24 year olds by 2015.

 <p>Promote gender equality and empower women</p>	<p><b>Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women</b> Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education. Indeed, in primary education, historical trends have been reversed and it is now low levels of male relative to female enrolment that is cause for concern. The country still lags behind in terms of achieving gender parity in tertiary education. Non-agricultural wage employment for women has increased at a slow rate leading to a decline in women's share in non-agricultural wage employment.</p>
 <p>Reduce child mortality</p>	<p><b>Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality</b> The country is on track with regard to achieving this goal. Significant strides have been made in all three indicators and if the trend sustains, the country will meet the 2015 target well ahead of schedule.</p>
 <p>Improve maternal health</p>	<p><b>Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health</b> Maternal mortality rate (MMR) declined by 40 percent during the 1990-2005 period and remained stable around 350 per 100,000 in the following four years. Wide differences are observed in MMR across regions as well as income classes. The proportion of child birth attended by skilled birth attendants (SBA) increased substantially but it is still very low.</p>
 <p>Combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases</p>	<p><b>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases</b> Short and long-term trends show a decline in number of malaria cases and deaths through 2009 as a result of major interventions for malaria control. The rate of multidrug-resistant TB, though increasing, appears still low and does not yet have an important impact on the country's epidemiology.</p>
 <p>Ensure environmental sustainability</p>	<p><b>Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability</b> Bangladesh is likely to meet quantitative targets for just three of the ten indicators; namely, CO2 emissions, consumption of ozone depleting substances and the proportion of the population using an improved drinking water source.</p>
 <p>Develop a global partnership for development</p>	<p><b>Goal 8: Develop a Global partnership for Development</b> Although the share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in national income has been declining steadily and disbursements of ODA have consistently been below commitments, ODA allocations to pro MDG sectors have witnessed an upswing since the mid-2000s.</p>

Source: [22]

### III. Methodology

This paper is based on secondary data, primarily through literature review and collect information from cross section of people and experts. The data are fairly consistent and reliable, although there are some discrepancies between government and non-government source. The emphasis has been given on qualitative analysis but some quantitative data has been used to supplement the qualitative analysis.

### IV. Analysis

#### 4.1. Child labour scenario in Bangladesh

In 2012, Bangladesh made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. Bangladesh passed the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012 which makes trafficking (including labour trafficking) a capital offense, developed and fully funded a Child Labour Monitoring Information System to manage child labour related data and began implementation of a \$9 million child labour project. The Government also approved the Child Labour Elimination National Plan of Action (NPA). Over the reporting period the Government began a new initiative to eliminate child labour from urban slums and in rural areas. However, legal protections regarding child labour are limited and the capacity to enforce child labour laws remains weak. Bangladesh maintains a low compulsory education age. Children in Bangladesh are engaged in the worst forms of child labour, primarily in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service [23].

#### 4.2. Child Labor in Bangladesh

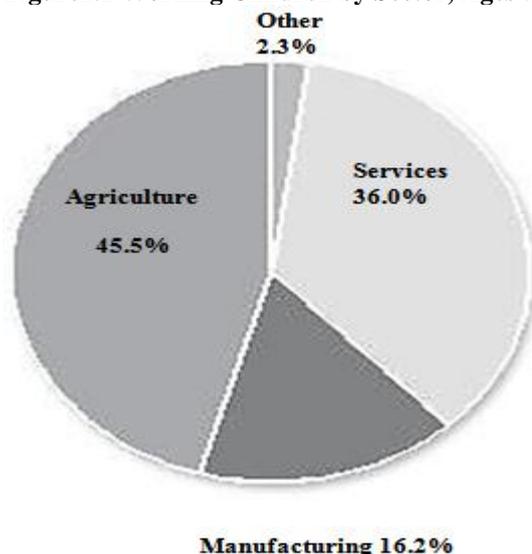
Bangladesh is the home to more than five percent of world's working child population [24]. According to the International Labour Organisation definition (right), there are about 3.2 million child labourers in Bangladesh. Working children is a visible part of everyday life in Bangladesh: young children serve at roadside tea stalls, and weave between cars selling goods to motorists. Besides, children work in jobs that are hidden from view, such as domestic work, which makes monitoring regulation difficult. On average, the child labourer work 55.8 hours per week (9.3 hours daily and 6.02 days weekly). Nearly 38% labourer work more than 10 hours daily and about 65% of the working children do not wholeheartedly perceive their work as socially acceptable (Abul et al., 2007). On average, the children work 28 hours a week and earn 222 taka (3.3 USD) a week. The majority of child domestics tend to be 12 to 17 years old. However, children as young as 5 or 6 years old can also be found working and a survey of child domestic workers found that 38 percent were 11 to 13 years old and nearly 24 percent were 5 to 10 years old [25].

Furthermore, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics estimated in 2004 that the total number of children of age group 5-17 years in January, 2003 was at 42.4 million of which 35.1 million were in the age group 5-14 and 7.3 million were in 15-17 years age group. Out of the total estimated child population aged 5-17 years about 22.7 million were boys and 19.7 million girls [26].

Many of the jobs that these children in Bangladesh perform are considered hazardous, and put their physical and mental development at risk. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern in 2009 that many Bangladeshi children continue to work in five of the worst forms of child labor, namely welding, auto workshops, road transport, battery recharging and tobacco factories. The Committee also raised attentions towards the fact that the enforcement and monitoring of child labor laws is not up to the standards and the awareness of public in the society about the negative effects of child labor is not sufficient [27].

Children in Bangladesh are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, primarily in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service [28]. Children working in agriculture perform a variety of tasks and may be exposed to risks such as dangerous machinery and tools, harmful pesticides and heavy loads [29]. Children, mostly girls, work as domestic servants in private households in Bangladesh. Some child domestics work in exploitative conditions and are vulnerable to abuse, including sexual abuse [30]. Children engage in dangerous work that includes welding, carpentry, rickshaw pulling and automobile repair [31]. Children are also involved in the production of salt, soap, matches, bricks, cigarettes, footwear, steel furniture, glass, jute, leather and textiles [32]. While producing these goods, often in small workshops or homes, they face dangers that may include working with hazardous chemicals and sharp objects in cramped conditions with low lighting for long hours. Children also work dismantling large ships into smaller pieces. Children lack the physical strength necessary for ship breaking and risk exposure to hazardous chemicals [33]. Children are also found working on the streets, garbage picking, vending, begging and pottering [34]. They may face multiple dangers including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements. Children working in hotels and restaurants face long working hours and potential abuse [35]. Forced child labor occurs in Bangladesh. Children perform forced or indentured labor in drying fish [36]. Bangladeshi children are also exploited in the commercial sex industry; some are trafficked internally and to India for sexual exploitation [37]. Boys and girls, often those living on the streets, are exploited in illicit activities, including smuggling and trading arms and drugs [38].

**Figure1.1 Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14**



Sources: Primary Completion Ratio: [39].

**All other data:** [40].

#### **4.3. Legal Protection**

Bangladesh passed the labour act in 2006 known as 'Labour Code 2006'. This act includes a chapter on child labour. This act outlaws the employment of any child less than 14 years of age and it also prohibits hazardous forms of child labour for anyone under the age of 18 years. However, according to the act, children who are aged 12 years and above may get involved in "light work" that does not bare the risk of any potential damage to their mental and physical development and does not hamper their education. The law does not provide a strong enforcement mechanism for the child labour provisions. Additionally, the vast majority of children (93 per cent) work in the informal sector [40] this is making the enforcement of the relevant legislation challenging.

In the year 2010, the Ministry of Labour and Employment has adopted a National Child Labour Elimination Policy, which provides an agenda to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2015. The policy's objectives are: removing child labourer from hazardous jobs; creating more income opportunities for parents of poor families to reduce their reliance on children's income; offering incentives for working children to attend school; ratifying necessary laws and improving law enforcement to eliminate child labor. A Child Labor Unit has been established as part of this policy, which will have responsibilities including collecting and disseminating data relating to child labor [41].

The Labour Code 2006 establishes the minimum age for work at age 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at age 18. The Labour Code 2006 allows certain exceptions, permitting children ages 12 to 13 to perform light work, but it restricts the kinds of work they can do. It also limits the hour's children ages 14 to 18 can work. However, the Labour Code 2006 excludes many sectors of the economy in which children work including work on small farms, domestic service and home-based work [42].

In 2011, a tripartite consultative committee consisting of the Government, employers and workers, approved a list of hazardous work prohibited for children [43]. The list contains 36 occupations such as ship breaking, leather manufacturing, construction and work in automobile workshops. The list is now waiting for an official notification from the Government [44].

The Labour Code prohibits parents or guardians from pledging their children's work in exchange for a payment or benefit and the Penal Code prohibits forced labour [45]. Those who violate the law are subject to penalties, which include imprisonment [46]. The Women and Children's Repression Prevention Act of 2000 (amended in 2003) criminalized the trafficking of children and established strict penalties and fines for violators, but failed to include such penalties for labour trafficking [47]. In February 2012, the Parliament of Bangladesh approved a new national anti-trafficking law, the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012, which expands the definition of trafficking to include labour trafficking, covers men and boys and makes trafficking a capital offense with a maximum sentence of the death penalty (24). The Penal Code and the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act of 1933 criminalizes the prostitution of girls under age 18 [48].

Bangladesh has only voluntary, not compulsory military service. While there is no legislation establishing a minimum age for voluntary military recruitment, each branch has designated their own minimum age with the Air Force setting the youngest age 16. However, the Government reported that, in practice, the minimum age to serve in combat is age 18 [49]. The lack of a legally binding minimum age for both joining the military and engaging in combat leaves children vulnerable to potential exploitation.

While the law establishes that education is free and compulsory in Bangladesh, children are not required to attend school after age 10. Although education is free, in practice, the costs of teacher fees, books and uniforms are prohibitive for many families; therefore, children are not sent to school [50]. Additionally, permitting children to stop attending school at age 10, when they are too young to work legally, makes children particularly vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour.

#### **4.4. Child labour and education**

The National Education Policy of the government of Bangladesh made education free and compulsory up to grade eight. However the policy could not change the fate of many of the less fortunate and more than a million children still never made it to their school. Many children drop out of the education system before completing primary school and begin working. Most working children cite an inability to bear educational expenses as the main reason for not attending school, because there are many indirect costs such as transport and uniforms. Limitations within the education system such as poor teaching quality and a high teacher-student ratio may also discourage children from completing school. Additionally, children living in slums often move frequently due to evictions, civic unrest and employment instability, further exacerbating dropout rates [51].

Many child labourers miss out on their right to education because they do not have the time to go to school or to study. Data show that working hours are negatively correlated with school attendance [52]. About half of all child labourers do not attend school at all, and among child domestic workers only 11% attend school

[53]. As a result, working children get stuck in low paying, low-skilled jobs, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

#### **4.5. Abuse, exploitation and violence**

Working children particularly those in hidden jobs such as domestic labour, are at risk of abuse and exploitation. Bangladesh's 421,000 child domestic workers face particular vulnerabilities because they work behind closed doors. All most all children domestic workers work seven days a week and 90% sleep at their employer's home [54]. This means these children are absolutely dependent on their employers and generally face restrictions on their mobility and freedom. Levels of exploitation these children experience are also tremendously high. The fact that more than half of these domestic workers receive no wage at all, instead of monetary benefits they receive benefits such as accommodation, food and clothing.

Hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi children work in hazardous jobs. These are jobs that have been identified by the ILO to expose children to hazards including: physical, psychological or sexual abuse; excessive work hours; an unhealthy environment. For instance, 3400 children work in brick/stone breaking for the construction industry [55].

A survey of these child workers found that almost all had some sort of respiratory problem and were not provided with any safety gear or protection from brick dust. Other child workers in hazardous jobs include 123,000 children working as rickshaw pullers, 153,000 children working in restaurants or tea stalls, and 56,000 working in carpentry [56].

#### **4.6. Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labour**

The National Child Labour Eradication Policy is the policy framework for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour [57]. The policy serves as a guiding instrument for the formulation of future laws and policies regarding child labour. In 2011, the National Child Labour Welfare Council was formed as part of his policy to monitor the child labour situation at a national level in conjunction with the Child Labour Unit, the entity responsible for monitoring child labour elimination programs. As of 2012, this Council had not met [58]. In 2011, the Supreme Court ordered the Welfare Council to monitor the conditions of child domestic workers and to ensure that no child under age 12 is employed as a domestic worker [59]. In 2011, MOLE drafted a National Plan of Action (NPA) that lays out a strategy to implement the National Child Labour Elimination Policy. The NPA is scheduled to be finalized in 2012 [60]. Until the NPA is finalized and approved by the Government, the National Child Labour Eradication Policy lacks resources and a strategy for implementation. In 2011, the Government incorporated child labour into numerous important policy and planning documents, including the Bangladesh Sixth Five Year Plan (2011-2015), the National Education Policy (2010) and the National Policy for Children 2011 [61]. The Government's PRSP also contains a strategic goal to protect child labourers and eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The 3-year, 2009 PRSP seeks to accomplish this through raising awareness of child labour, drafting minimum wage and other protective standards, creating a child-friendly code of conduct for employers and improving educational opportunities for working children. Trafficking in persons is also mentioned as an ancillary item in a number of government policies including the PRSP [62].

#### **4.7. Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labour**

UNICEF continued to collaborate closely with the Government in implementing the second phase of a project that establishes education centers to provide non-formal education and livelihood skills to more than 350,000 working children and adolescents [63]. The Government is also providing funding for the third phase of a \$9 million project that aims to withdraw 50,000 child labourers from hazardous work through non-formal education and skills-development programs [64]. The Government of Bangladesh participated in a \$10 million project funded by the Government of the Netherlands that aims to prevent and eliminate the worst forms of child labour in the Dhaka informal economy. The Government of Bangladesh also participated in a project funded by the European Commission that provides children of legal working age and working in hazardous jobs with technical and vocational skills training to transition them into safer work opportunities [65]. Additionally, the Government participated in a USDOL-funded project to conduct a national child labour survey [66]. The Government lacks targeted social programs for child labourers in rural areas, specifically in agriculture [67]. To combat child trafficking, the Government participated in a USAID-funded project that builds the capacity of the police to identify and prosecute traffickers, expand public awareness on trafficking and provide services to trafficking victims [68]. Additionally, the Government supported nine shelters for women and children who have experienced violence, including trafficking, and is participating in a child helpline service funded by the Danish International Development Agency [69]. The Government spends over 15 percent of its total public expenditures on 84 social safety net programs that serve the poor [70]. The Employment Generation Program for the Poorest, Bangladesh's largest social safety net program, provides short-term employment for the rural

poor [71]. The Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program is Bangladesh's other large social safety net program. During the reporting period, this program assisted more than 750,000 vulnerable families by providing them with food assistance and training in an alternative livelihood [72]. In 2011, the Government initiated a pilot project to study the feasibility of creating a national population database with the intention of improving access to these social safety net programs [73]. The question of whether these programs, or other social safety net programs, has an impact on child labor has not been studied [74].

## **V. Policy Implications**

What should be done about the general incidence of child labor? The strongest case for the need for direct attention to the types of child labor that pervade the low-income world is made by poor families themselves. These families' reveals that they do not want their children to be working: child labor declines very rapidly as families become richer and their dependence on the income of children decreases.

Economic development that raises the incomes of the poor is the best way to reduce child labor. But this process may be taken long time. If we were to take the cross-country relationship between per capital income and child labor personated earlier in Figure 1 seriously as a forecast of what will happen to economic activity rates as countries grow richer which it clearly is not we could compute how economic growth will reduce child labor in future.

Direct policy tools like bans on child labor or requirements that children attend school, however politically appealing, are of doubtful effect.

1. Developing countries often lack resources to enforce child labor bans, especially when most children work for their parents on family farms. Non-compliance with compulsory schooling laws countries to be a large problem in today's developing world [75][76].
2. There is no guarantee that such policies will alter local labor markets in a way that increase family income, and thus an economic incentive for children to work will remain. Real-world labor market regulation can affect enough of the child labor market to have general equilibrium effect on wages as required in [77]. For Example, the high profile ban on child labor in Bangladesh involved mainly children working for pay in the garment industry. This ban allegedly affected the employment of 10000 children, which corresponds to a tenth of one percent of economically active children in Bangladesh. Thus, although a legal ban might reduce child labor, this outcome is not guaranteed, especially when labor laws.
3. Policies that keep children from working in one type of job might push children into no exporting sectors. In the Bangladesh case, anecdotes abound about children leaving garment factories, for prostitution or work in stone quarries. The employment of children owing to the threat of sanctions, like the Bangladeshi garments industry and Pakistani soccer balls [78].
4. At the consumer level, boycotts of products produced by child labor and more generally ant sweatshop activism have become popular. Such campaigns seek to pressure multinational produces of high profit brand name products to improve their labor practices.
5. Attempts to require either bans on child labor or compulsory school attendance are subject to the problems above.
6. It is difficult to distinguish whether these measures reflect genuine interest in the well-being of children in poor countries or whether they are just a palatable excuse for protectionism. Overall, it is difficult to make a strong case for trade policy or consumer boycotts as n effective tool to combat child labor. Consumer activism has brought the problem of child labor into the spotlight, but we are not aware of any systematic empirical evidence of the effectiveness of consumer activism in reducing child labor.
7. Policies targeted at improving school infrastructure and reducing the cost of schooling provides the most promising targeted ways to reduce child labor. These initiatives might work best when combined with conditional cash transfers programs for households that send children to school, such as Food for Education in Bangladesh and Progress in Mexico. Such Programs have been successful in increasing school attendance, which ameliorates one of the concerns about child labor.
8. The process of replacing the 1974 Children Act with a new act is in its final stages. The 1974 law as well as the new draft provides penalties for engaging children in child labor.
9. UNICEF has also been working with the ministry of Social Welfare and other ministries and NGOs to undertake mapping and assessment of Bangladesh's child protection system. Based on this a child Protection Policy will be developed, including child labor aspects.
10. Social workers also provide targeted outreach services to children working in invisible location such as small factories or homes, to prevent abuse and exploitation.
11. UNICEF support drop in centers provide children at risk with various psychosocial services such as referrals to legal aid, support for family reintegration and shelter.

## **VI. Suggestion for eliminating or decreasing child labour**

Ways of reducing child labour is a challenging task, which necessitate financial, moral and political sustenance from all the tiers of the society. Because the problem of child labour is indissolubly imbedded in our society, so attempts should be made to decrease it from the primary stage. Poverty, as mentioned earlier, is the primary reason behind child labour and it drives children to involve in employment to fight against starvation and to supplement their family income. This is why; the effective solutions of child labour must be based on the reduction of chronic poverty through economic and social development, with emphasis on human resource development. To eradicate the problem, child centred educative sensitivity and awareness is essential at political, community and family level. To create educative sensitivity among parents, family members and in the community the existing schooling process should be restructured. Unfortunately, budget provided for education are not adequate enough and used properly for its designed purpose because of the corruption and inefficiency of the system. Enclosure of knowledge about child labour in school curriculum will help building awareness nationally. Employment creation and income generation for adults will help to eradicate poverty and child labour problem in the country. Legislation concerning child labour is adequate enough but improper implementation of laws is main obstacle.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Bangladesh is obliged under both national and international law to protect and promote the rights and interests of children. The Constitution of Bangladesh and the Children's Act 1974 guarantees basic and fundamental human rights and ensures affirmative action for children. These rights are the guiding principles for formulating policies and laws relating to child development. In conclusion we earnestly hope that as Bangladesh is one of the earliest signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), therefore these initiatives will be widespread and the affluent, elite countries and international organizations will come forward to help our government and NGOs not only in case of financial assistance but also in the actual performance of the field level work. Children are the future of a nation. Therefore, if they are exploited at a very early age, they would not be able to contribute to the country and would hamper progress. Moreover, children consistently expressed their concerns about the absence of a safe environment, which leads to violence, abuse and exploitation within the family, community, street, work place, and school, in state and non-state institutions and also in the justice system. The current governance deficit in Bangladesh has further aggravated the situation because the duty bearers such as lawmakers, executives, police, probation officers, and even judges remain insensitive to children's rights and fail to provide protection, special care and treatment. In recent years, however, child rights have featured increasingly in policy debates and discussions amongst government officials and NGOs. News reports on violence and torture against children in the print media and in the private TV channels have increased. Many organizations are also working to sensitize the public so that there is increased awareness of child rights. It is necessary to mention here that the government is committed to protect the child but it lacks depth of understanding and consistent planning. That's why action at the national level is needed now, as timely taken steps can only bring positive impact on decreasing or elimination of child labour from all tiers of the society. But in case of taking action in full conformity with reality, all the factors such as, economic, social, political, cultural have to be taken into consideration. Further, it is not proper in the context of existing social system to refrain children from work which only breed's poverty rather initiatives have to be taken at first to keep them away from exploitative and dangerous works and to provide appointment letter, identity card to ensure the payment of their due wages and other rights as workers, which other adult workers enjoy, has to be ascertained. In this case we have to pay serious attention to the working children so that they could finish the basic schooling beside light work. Moreover, child sensitivity approach has to be strong along with adopting multiplier measures. But the good news is that child labour problem has attracted a large concerted attention in recent times and the government, NGOs and some private organizations are, though less than needed, working with a view to solving the problem and consequently the rate of child labour has decreased in a little. Further, Bangladesh is a signatory to, and has ratified, most of the major international conventions related to children, except for the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No.138). Again, it has introduced a number of policies and plans over the years intended to reduce or eliminate child labour. Bangladesh is obliged under both national and international law to protect and promote the rights and interests of children. The Constitution of Bangladesh and the Children's Act 1974 guarantees basic and fundamental human rights and ensures affirmative action for children. These rights are the guiding principles for formulating policies and laws relating to child development. In conclusion we earnestly hope that as Bangladesh is one of the earliest signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), therefore these initiatives will be widespread and the affluent, elite countries and international organizations will come forward to help our government and NGOs not only in case of financial assistance but also in the actual performance of the field level work.

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