

# Bangladesh Country Paper-2006

## Child Labour Situation in Bangladesh December 16-17, 2006, Kathmandu

### Socio-Economic Context:

#### Demography:

- Total population (million), 2003: 136.6
- Annual population growth rate (%), 2003: 24.3
- Urban population (% of total), 2003, 24.3
- Population under 18 (million), 2003: 65.3
- Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live birth), 2003: 46

#### Economy:

- GDP/capita (US \$), 2003: 1,770
- Population living below the national poverty line (%), 1990-2002: 49.8
- Unemployment rate (% of 15+ labour force), 2001-2003: 4.3
- Labour force 15 + population (million), 2001-2003: 46.3
- Male/female participation in labour force (%), 2001-2003: 87/26
- Youth labour force (15-29) (million), 2001-2003: 19 (M-13, F 5.5)

#### Education:

- Adult literacy rate (15+), 2000 -2004: 41.1 (M-50, F-31.4)
- Youth literacy rate (15-24), 2000-2004: 49.7 (m-57, f- 41.1)
- Net Enrolment ration(NER) in primary education, 2001:86.6(Gender parity index F/M-1.02)
- Net Enrolment ration (NER) IN SECONDARY EDUCATION, 2001: 43.8 (Gender parity index F/M-1.10)
- Pupil/teachers ration in primary education, 2001: 55%
- % of primary school entrants reaching grade V, 1998-2001:65 %

Bangladesh, with a population of over 130 million, is one the most densely populated countries in the world. The population growth rate has, however, shown a marked decline over the last decade, from 204 per cent in 1995 to 1.7 per cent at present. About half of the population (65.3 million) is children under 18 years of age. Bangladesh has been ranked 139th among 177 countries in the Human development Index (HDI, 2005). It economy characterized by low levels of income, and the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2003 was estimated at USD 376 with a GDP growth rate of 5.3 per cent in real terms. The national poverty incidence fell from 59 per cent in 1991/92 to 50 per cent in 2000. Progress in poverty reduction (a rate of one per cent per year) during the 90s is linked to accelerated growth in income and consumption expenditure. Introduction of sound macroeconomic management measures such as the reduction of fiscal deficits and the promotion of export-led growth have also contributed to this positive trend.

Despite the steady GDP growth rate and improved poverty situation, the incidence of poverty in Bangladesh continues to remain alarming. Approximately 50 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line with a higher poverty incidence in rural areas (53%) compared to that urban areas (37%). The absolute number of poor people increased from 51.63 million in 1991/92 to 55.91 million in 2000, an increase of 8.3 percent in 10 years.

The country has made significant progress in the basic health sector; Improvements have also been recorded in child immunization, access to safe drinking water and life expectancy. The infant mortality rate decreased from 75 to 46 per 1,000 live births from 1995 to 2003, and under - five mortality rates fell from 116 to 69 from 1995 to 2003.

The expansion of the economy has created employment opportunities resulting in an increase in employed population from 34.8 million (1995/96) to 44.3 million (2001/03). In spite of dynamic changes in the labour market, especially the increase in the labour force participation rate and slow growth of employment, have resulted in an unchanged unemployment rate at 4.3 percent and a rise in the underemployment rate from 16.6 to 37.6 percent between 1999/00 and 2001/03. Thus Bangladesh has been less successful in reaping the full benefit of the virtuous circle of economic growth leading to poverty reduction via growth of employment with higher productivity. The future growth process must generate employment opportunities for the poorer sections of the population and returns from employment, both self and wage, must generate adequate earnings for them so that they can break out of poverty.

The adult (15+ years) in Bangladesh has increased from 34.2 percent in 1990 to 41.1 percent in 2001. Although the literacy rate among females marked a significant increase during 90s, literacy rate among male (50.3%) still remain higher than that among females (31.4%). It has been found that there is a positive correlation between the adult literacy rate and the standard of living in terms of GDP.

Substantial progress has been made in primary school enrolment rate from about 73.3 percent in 1992 to 86.6 percent in 2001. Also, the primary school completion rate rose from 62 percent in 1994 to 65 percent in 2001. This improvement was mainly attributed to various government policies and programmes such as compulsory free primary education, massive stipend programmes at primary level, and the Food for education programme as well as due to increase in the government budgetary allocation for girls education. Despite this progress, ensuring quality primary education for all children still remains a big challenge as the issues such as access and equity are yet to be effectively addressed. In spite of government's initiatives to promote equity and access to primary education for underprivileged children, some 2.4 million 6-10 year old children are still not enrolled in primary schools. High drop-out rates amongst children from poorer households are mainly attributed to the failure of the system to keep children in school and the parents inability to bear the indirect and opportunity costs involved

with child's education. Among drop-outs, a large portion adds to the existing child workers in the job market.

### **Child labour Situation:**

The National Child Labour Survey 2002-2003 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics was conducted throughout the country and covered the child population aged 5 - 17 years living in the households. The estimated number of children in this age category was about 42.5 million of which 22.7 million are boys and 19.7 million were girls. According to the National Child Labour Survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 17.5 percent of the total child population in the 5 - 17 years age group (Apx. 7.4 million) was engaged in economic activity in 2002-2003. 57% of the child workers work only for food, they are not paid worker. 70% of the child labours entered in to labour market due to poverty. The incidence of child labour in Bangladesh during 2000-2003 was estimated at about 3.2 million out of 7.4 million working children based on the criteria of hour, of which permitted in relation to age as followed by ILO in Global Estimates on child labour, 2002.

### **Bangladesh Child Labour Policies and ILO Convention-182 & C-138:**

The current population size of Bangladesh is relatively large with respect to land area. A large segment of the country's labour force is engaged in informal activities and child labour is also a notable feature of the country's growing informal labour market situation. Due to legislation enforced by Government rules there is very little scope for children to be employed in formal sectors. But in reality, many children are found working in formal sectors as well as quasi-corporations. Govt has long recognized the problem of child labour. A wide segamut of legislation exists in the country to take the various problems of child labour. These laws have had their origins in the Bangladesh Constitution, the ILO (International Labour Organization) recommendations and the UN declaration of the Rights of the Children and areas of child labour covered by legislation. Different laws and regulations have also been enacted with a view to protect children from some kinds of jobs, particularly the hazardous ones.

The GOB has formulated and adopted a National Children Policy as a commitment to the children's right. Bangladesh has ratified the ILO Convention (No.182) on the "Worst forms of Child Labour" adopted in 1999 and the UN Convention on "The Rights of the Child"(1989). This convention serves as a vehicle by which Bangladesh could take initiative to eliminate worst forms of child labour in the country. But is yet to ratify the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 C 138.

### **Areas of Hazardous Child Labour:**

In Bangladesh, children are found working in almost all the sectors of the economy except mining, quarrying, electricity, gas and water. Many of them work 48 hours a week on an average, earning less than 500 taka per month. A large number of

children work in occupation and industries, which are plainly dangerous and hazardous. In 1995 the Ministry of Labour and Manpower in collaboration with UNICEF undertook a study, entitled "Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh" to identify the hazardous economic activities involving children.

¶ This study identified the following economic activities as hazardous:

- ▶▶ Automobile workshop worker
- ▶▶ Bedding manufacturing worker
- ▶▶ Brick/stone crushing
- ▶▶ Child prostitution
- ▶▶ Construction
- ▶▶ Electric mechanic
- ▶▶ Goldsmith's assistant
- ▶▶ Laundry boy
- ▶▶ Printing press worker
- ▶▶ Battery recharging shop worker
- ▶▶ Blacksmith
- ▶▶ Car painting/metal furniture-painting/spay painting works
- ▶▶ Dyeing workshop worker
- ▶▶ Engineering workshop worker
- ▶▶ Hotel/mess cook
- ▶▶ Porter
- ▶▶ Rikshaw/rikshaw van

¶ The workplaces and activities that were discovered to be most hazardous included:

- ▶▶ Bedding manufacturing shops
- ▶▶ Making bricks or stone chips
- ▶▶ Welding
- ▶▶ Plastic and rubber factories
- ▶▶ Engineering workshop
- ▶▶ Blacksmith's shop
- ▶▶ Printing press
- ▶▶ Scavenging
- ▶▶ Shrimp processing
- ▶▶ Bidi factories

¶ The *major hazardous elements* are exposure to flame, gas, fume, harmful chemical substances, electricity, sharp equipment, high speed machinery, extreme heat or cold, insufficient or dazzling light, heavy load, stressful working conditions and continuous work with ice and water.

### **National Child Labour Survey:**

The NCLS, 2002-03 by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics covered the child population aged 5-17 years living in the households. The estimate number of children in this age category was about 42.5million(as on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2003). According to the NCLS by the BBS, 17.5% of the total child population in the 5-17 age group (approximately 7.4 million) was engaged in economic activities.

Children, being an individual workforce, are engaged in many hazardous occupations in the informal sector. Besides, working in agriculture and family enterprises, children work as domestic servant, street vendors, brick chippers, rag pickers, bidi factories, restaurants and hotels. They engaged in diverse occupation are exploited in terms of wages, hours of work and type of work.

They are frequently denied of their remuneration, engaged in work for interminable hours, confined to unhygienic, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions resulting in respiratory diseases and physical disabilities.

## **Education:**

### **a. Primary education**

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in primary education over last few years. This has been due to introduction of compulsory primary education (CPE) in 1992 along with many other innovative educational initiatives at this level.

There are more than 18 million children of primary school age (age 6-10) in Bangladesh, out of a total population of 137 million. Almost half of them are girls. Gross enrolment has increased to 97.5 per cent, whereas net enrolment is 82 per cent, and there are equal numbers of boys and girls in primary education.

One third of children drop out before they have completed five years of primary education, and of those who do graduate from primary school, most do not acquire the nationally defined basic competencies. The main focus of GOB/UNICEF's activities for this age group, therefore, is to improve the quality of education, to increase the net enrolment and reduce the dropout rate.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has recently initiated the second phase of its Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), which is due to introduce major reforms between 2003 and 2009.

### **b. Working children**

In Bangladesh nearly 4.9 million children between the ages of 5 and 15 are involved in different types of work, many of them with little or no pay. Of the 301 occupations children are engaged in, 48 are categorized as hazardous. Many working children of both sexes have no access to education, with the result that they become trapped in low-skilled, low-paid work that further cements them into the cycle of poverty.

### **c. Action**

The overall goal of the child development and education initiatives is to make it possible for children to participate effectively in learning activities that are appropriate for each stage of childhood. This will enable them to develop mentally and socially, so they can become creative, responsible members of society.

To achieve this goal, UNICEF aims to work with the government and communities to provide:

- A safe, secure and stimulating environment for the child
- High quality primary education for all children, which will result in
  - 95 per cent net enrolment

- 80 per cent completion of the 5-year cycle
- Successful learning, leading to competence in all the basic educational skills.

- Quality basic education for working children and a reduction in child labour.

These objectives will be achieved through the projects outlined below.

#### **i. Education for All and Child Labour issues:**

- Government of Bangladesh has been taken long term plan to reach Education for All. Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh has been running program under the project on "Primary Education Development program-2". Government has takes plan to achieve Education for All within 2015. Under the Ministry of Labour and Manpower Bangladesh Government running project "Elimination on Worst forms of Child Labour". Under this program Child workers education issues is a major activity.
- ILO-IPEC Elimination of child labour program focus on working children education.
- Unicef Bangladesh running working children education program with Government.

#### **ii. Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) Project**

This project is a part of the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Its aim is to ensure high quality education through improved teaching and learning methods, better supervision, and participatory planning and community involvement at local level.

The project started in one district in 1996. Now it covers 9 million children who attend 36,826 schools in 36 districts.

#### **iii. Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Children (BEHTRUC) Project**

This project aims to provide 351,000 urban working children in six divisional (provincial) cities with two years of non-formal education. This would bring them up to the educational level of children in Grade III, and enhance their life skills. The project targets children aged 8-14, who are engaged in hazardous working conditions in urban areas.

#### **iv. Achievement and future course of actions**

Over the past decade, the gender gap in primary school enrolment has been eliminated. However, the quality of education — particularly teaching and learning in the classroom, and learning outcomes — has become a matter of concern.

The IDEAL project has popularized an educational approach called Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning (MWTL), and this has been incorporated into the non-formal, basic education being offered to urban working children.

The involvement of the community, parents, employers and children is crucial for achieving universal primary education.

Communication and social mobilisation have become important for the success and sustainability of the programme.

### **Poverty situation:**

According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000 the headcount poverty ratio declined from 58.8 percent in 1992 to 49.8 percent in 2000 in Bangladesh. Considering population growth, the present number of the poor shall be around 60-62 million.

### **Problems:**

#### **Root causes of child labour:**

- Extreme poverty
- Remarkable wage differences between adult workers and the child workers
- Rural under-development
- Attitude of 'learning by doing' on the part of children and their parents
- Family value system
- Breakdown of family
- Inability of the education system to provide relevant and useful education
- Dysfunctional families
- Gender discrimination
- Ethnicity
- Rapid growth of rural urban migration
- Land erosion and other natural calamities
- Special advantage of child labour
- Employer's preference-children are docile learn easily and demand less
- Ignorance about child right
- Children are in demand in trafficking of drugs, smuggling of weapons and in specific trades, such as child prostitution and pornography as well as camel jockeys in the Middle Eastern countries
- Lack of proper implementation of laws
- Loopholes in the existing legal provisions and absence of congenial social and political environment
- Lack of adequate resources for labour inspection
- Globalization

## **An assessment on the impact on the child labor situation**

A working child may be exposed to the following hazards and adverse conditions at workplaces:

- Exploitative works for low salaries
- Operation of potentially harmful machines in harmful processes
- Use of chemicals, insecticides and toxic elements
- Unhygienic conditions
- Violence and physical abuse
- Immoral activities
- Serious physical and psychological stress and injuries
- Extreme heat or cold, lack of light and air
- Long working hours

The adverse conditions cause irreparable damage to a child's growth development. The work at young age often spoils children's possibilities of becoming productive adults and good citizens.

### **Effects on Labour market:**

- Increasing unemployment rate of adults due to child labour recruitment
- Encouraging cheap labour
- Trade union membership is not increasing as the labour law - prohibits children below 18 to be organised
- Weak collective bargaining due to less membership in TU
- Decreasing labour standards

### **Recent legislation that has direct or indirect impact on child labor.**

It is happy to say that a new labour law 2006 comprising 50 laws has been enacted in the last 2006 parliament session, which is all set to make practice. Though there are some limitations but in general it can say that the new code of labour laws will definitely help the workers in great dill especially the child labour. Some articles of the labour laws in brief related to child labour are given below; such as-

- i) Government will publish time to time gazette notification of hazardous work/sectors where Child under age of 18 will not be allowed to recruit in any hazardous work.
- ii) Child under age of 14 will not be recruited without the certification of registered Doctor. Doctor will certify his/her capabilities of work and nature. Daily working hours for adolescent workers must not be higher than 5 hours and weekly 30 hours in a factory or mine. But in establishment, their daily working hour should not exceed 7 hours and 42 hours in a week.

- iii) 12 years old child will be allowed for recruitment in light work where child's mental, physical, moral conditions will not be hampered as well as his/her education also.

### **Country poverty reduction strategy (PRSP)**

- In PRSP document Child labour elimination is one of the major plan of Government
- Under the PRSP Government has been running program for the child labour education program in formal & non formation institutions
- Government has start child labour elimination project and implemented through 73 NGOs in Bangladesh.

### **Monitoring instituted previously with ILO-IPEC.**

The Department of Inspection for factories and Establishment under the Ministry of Labour and Employment are responsible to ensure to factory and establishment related laws including appointment of child labour.

The labour Inspectors are expected to go on physical inspection of factories and establishments on a regular basis and give on the spot advice to management in compliance with the legal standards. They may, as well, written actions including prosecution for noncompliance of legal provisions and instructions.

It would be noted here that there are only 111 inspectors for 40,00,000 establishments including 23000 registered factories. So, it is easily can imagine about the regular inspection of such numbers of factories/establishments by the small amount of inspectors.

### **Good practices:**

#### **i. Multi-Purpose Centers:**

- Descriptive title: Multi-purpose Centers as a platform for delivery of integrated and interrelated services.
- Action program title: Provision of Non-Formal Education for children engaged in WFCL in the urban informal economy of Dhaka. (2002 to date)
- Project title: Prevention and Elimination of selected worst forms of child labour in the informal economy of Dhaka.
- Implementing agency: Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) and Resource Integration Center(RIC)
- Supported by: ILO-IPEC, Bangladesh

## **ii. BILS interventions to child labour issues:**

For the last 4 years, BILS has been implementing Child Labour Elimination Project with the assistance of BILS development partner LO-FTF Council, Denmark in order to enhance children's education and future employment opportunities in Bangladesh and in order to better living conditions for child labourers. From March 2002, CLEP was implementing its scheduled main activities by setting-up local centres for basic skills training and non-formal education in Tongi, Dist. Gazipur. Furthermore, CLEP activities have also been started in March 2003 in Mirpur and Keranigonj, Dist. Dhaka. The phase-I of the CLEP have been ended on February 2005 and Phase-II have been started from March 2005. The ongoing phase will be ended on February, 2007. CLEP is working for target group of child labourers those who are the age level of 12 to 14 years old.

### **Report on the activities one-year for GM within the national context:**

- BMSF Keep contact regularly with GMSA secretariat
- BMSF send CL related information/document for GM SA Newsletter
- BMSF sharing GM activity with ILO-IPEC, Unicef Bangladesh, local related NGOs

The names and addresses of the member organizations of Global March:

Break up of the new organizations that have applied for membership:

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