



Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh:

Evidence and Policy Recommendations

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We sincerely hope that this publication will benefit policy makers in and outside the Government of Bangladesh, education practitioners, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society at large. Finally, it is expected that benefits from this publication will be accrued to our agencies' intended beneficiaries, i.e. the millions of children that are deprived of basic primary schooling and the millions of children that are engaged in (hazardous) work.

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Foreword

The international community's efforts to achieve basic education for all children, and the progressive elimination of child labour, are inextricably linked. Both the 2006 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Report and the 2007 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report drew attention to the challenge that remains if international targets on education set in the MDGs and the Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All are to be met. Both reports also identified child labour as an obstacle to progress on education. These objectives have been embraced by the Government of Bangladesh which has continuously since the 1990's demonstrated its political will to achieve EFA and elimination of child labour through ratification of international instruments (UN CRC and ILO C182), the Education for All: National Plan of Action (1991 - 2000, 2003 - 2015), targeted programs (e.g. the Food for Education and stipend programs, institutional mandates (e.g. setting-up of the Primary and Mass Education Division and the Directorate of Non-Formal Education, the Child Labour Unit under the Ministry of Labour and Employment), etc.

At a global level, in recognition of the linkage between child labour and education access, in 2005 the EFA High Level Group endorsed the establishment of a Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All. This new partnership brings UN agencies (ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank and UNDP) together with Education International and the Global March Against Child Labour. This new partnership is looking at the policy and programme issues involved in mainstreaming child labour issues with education sector policies and programmes. Recent assessments in Bangladesh also echo recognition of this direct link between child labour and education. Mentioning should also be made of the expressed wish of the Government to raise compulsory education to Grade 8 and – closely linked to this – to seriously consider the ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Employment.

Nearly 50 per cent of primary school students in Bangladesh drop out before they complete Grade 5 and gravitate towards work, swelling the number of child labourers. A high drop-out rate is linked with low quality of public primary education, low adult literacy, low awareness of the importance of education, teacher-student ratio (sometimes this goes up to 1 per 100), non-availability of didactic and learning materials, and the cost of education.

Basic primary education is free as far as direct costs and school books are concerned. But many indirect costs are involved, including transport, uniforms, pens, pencils, and paper/notebooks. Bangladesh has only limited provision for pre-vocational/vocational skills training and there are related constraints such as the quality of the skills training, market and employment linkages and certification. Visibly, notwithstanding efforts already made, there is still much left to do.

The annual observance of the World Day Against Child Labour (WDAKL) in 2008, which carried the theme "Education – the right response to child labour" created an excellent opportunity to forward the EFA and child labour elimination goals through UN inter-agency cooperation. ILO, UNICEF and UNESCO joint activities were undertaken to observe the WDAKL. One of these activities concerned the commissioning of research analysis on child labour and education, the findings of which were presented at a National Seminar on Child Labour and Education on 12 June 2008, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME). The release of that research analysis report is subject to this publication.

Finally, UN inter-agency efforts on child labour and education did not end last year. In March 2009, a four-day capacity building training workshop followed by a National Seminar on Child Labour and Education took place. Both events were inline with internationally adopted approaches and in response to the needs identified in country. The Government of Bangladesh (MOLE and MoPME) in collaboration with ILO (i.e. Dhaka and the International Training Centre in Turin, Italy), UNESCO and UNICEF jointly organized the workshop and seminar in an effort to take stock of lessons learned and, on this basis, reflect on future steps for EFA and child labour elimination. Recommendations generated by the capacity building training workshop were presented at the national seminar and UN inter-agency follow up action is to be expected in due time.

Acronyms

BBS	:	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BEHTRUWC	:	Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children
BEP	:	BRAC Education Programme
BNFE	:	Bureau of Non-Formal Education
CDW	:	Child Domestic Worker
CAMPE	:	Campaign for Popular Education
CLEAN	:	Child Labour Elimination Action Network
CLU	:	Child Labour Unit
DNFE	:	Directorate of Non Formal Education
DPE	:	Directorate of Primary Education
DWCP	:	Decent Work Country Programme
DWRN	:	Domestic Workers' Rights Network
EAC	:	Economically Active Child/Children
ECCE	:	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	:	Education for All
FSP	:	Female Stipend Program
GCE	:	Global Campaign for Education
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
GER	:	Gross Enrolment Rates
GPS	:	Government Primary School
HCL	:	Hazardous Child Labour
ILO	:	International Labour Organization
IPEC	:	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
MDG	:	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	:	Ministry of Education
MOLE	:	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MOPME	:	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MWCA	:	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NAPE	:	National Academy for Primary Education
NCLS	:	National Child Labour Survey
NER	:	Net Enrolment Rates
NFE	:	Non-Formal Education
NFPE	:	Non-Formal Primary Education
PEDP II	:	Second Primary Education Development Program
PESP	:	Primary Education Stipend Program
PRS	:	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PTR	:	Pupil-teacher Ratio
RNGPS	:	Registered Non-Government Primary School
ROSC	:	Reaching Out-of-School Children
SESDP	:	Secondary Education Sector Development Project
TBP	:	Time-Bound Programme
TTI	:	Technical Training Institute
TVET	:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWC	:	Together With Working Children
UCW	:	Understanding Children's Work
UIE	:	Urban Informal Economy
UNCRC	:	United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989)
UPE	:	Universal Primary Education
WFCL	:	Worst Forms of Child Labour

Data Summary Sheet

Demography		
Population (2003)	141.8 million	UNESCO, 2008
Urban population (2003)	33.1 million	UNDP, 2005
Annual population growth rate	1.7%	UNDP, 2005
Total Child Population (5-17)	42.3 million	BBS, 2003
Female Child Population	19.7 million	BBS, 2003
Male Child Population	22.7 million	BBS, 2003
Economy		
Per Capita GDP	\$489	ADB, 2008
Population Below Poverty Line	49.8%	UNDP, 2005
Income less than \$1 a day	36%	UNDP, 2005
Income less than \$2 a day	82.8%	UNDP, 2005
Child Labour-Global		
Global Child labour (5-17)	218 million	ILO, 2004
Global Child labour (5-14)	166 million	ILO, 2004
Global Hazardous Child labour	126 million	ILO, 2004
Child Labour-National		
Child Labour (5-17)	3.2 million	BBS, 2003
Rural Child Labour	2.4 million	BBS, 2003
Total Economically Active Children (EAC)	7.4 million	BBS, 2003
Rural Economically Active Children (EAC)	6 million	BBS, 2003
Male, Female Child Labour Ratio	3:1	BBS, 2003
Hazardous Child Labour (HCL)	1.29 million	BBS, 2003
% of HCL male Child Labour	90.7%	BBS, 2003
Education		
Gross Enrolment Rate (primary)	98.8%	DPE & MOPME, 2007
Net Enrolment Rate (primary)	91.1%	DPE & MOPME, 2007
Drop out rate (5 years cycle)	34.9%	UNESCO, 2008
Completion rate (5 years cycle)	72%	UNESCO, 2008
Out of School (Girls)	57%	UNESCO, 2008
Total Adult literacy rate (15+), 1995-04	47%	UNESCO, 2008
Male Adult literacy rate (15+), 1995-04	54%	UNESCO, 2008
Female Adult literacy rate (15+), 1995-04	41%	UNESCO, 2008
Projected (2015) total adult literacy rate (15+)	61%	UNESCO, 2008
Total Youth literacy rate (15-24), 1995-04	64%	UNESCO, 2008
Male Youth literacy rate (15-24), 1995-04	67%	UNESCO, 2008
Female Youth literacy rate (15-24), 1995-04	60%	UNESCO, 2008
Projected (2015) total adult literacy rate (15-24)	83%	UNESCO, 2008
Pupil/Teacher ratio in Primary education	55:1	UNESCO, 2005
Child Labour and Education		
Child Population (5-17) attending school	33.3 million	BBS, 2003
Children attending school not working	30.9 million	BBS, 2003
Children attending school and working	2.4 million	BBS, 2003
Children not attending school	9 million	BBS, 2003
Children neither at school nor at work	4 million	BBS, 2003

Executive Summary

This publication aims to capture the findings of a research analysis on child labour and education commissioned by the ILO in cooperation with UNICEF and UNESCO on annual World Day Against Child Labour in 2008 which carried the theme “Education – the right response to child labour”. It therefore aims to present i) an understanding of the linkages between child labour and education, by examining the educational, household and socio-cultural determinants that act as constraints or incentives in the decision between labour and education; and ii) an overview of relevant mainstream, specific project and non-formal educational responses.

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. As a result, Bangladesh has introduced a number of policies and plans over the years intended to promote equitable, inclusive and high-quality education and to reduce or eliminate child labour.

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). Bangladesh signed and ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), which obliges states to protect and promote the rights and interest of the child, such as the right to a compulsory and free education (article 28 & 29), the right to be protected from exploitative work or performing any work that may be considered hazardous, interferes with the child's education or is harmful to the child's development (article 32) and the right to an adequate standard of living (article 27). Bangladesh is also the first South Asian country to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) in March 2001 which imposes an obligation upon Bangladesh to “*take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency*” (article 1), such as all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, child prostitution, child pornography, using children for illicit activities and work, which would harm the physical, social and moral development of children (article 3).

Section 1 of this publication looks at the triangulation of the fulfilment of rights, promotion of capabilities and formulation of human capital, and argues for the full, simultaneous implementation of both EFA and child labour elimination goals. It also stresses that the triangulation of fulfilment of rights, promotion of children's capabilities and potential and formulation of human capital for national development strengthens the possibility to work on a wider range of policy interventions, with close collaboration and co-ordination among major stakeholders. Section 1 also touches on the objectives of the research analysis that fed into this publication as well as the scope and methodology of the research analysis and the definitions used throughout the publication that are broadly agreed upon by the majority of the international community.

Section 2 (sub-sections A, B and C) describes international standards, progress made on these standards and global evidence of the connection between child labour and education.

In particular, section 2A elaborates on a host of international conventions and laws that help to protect and promote the rights of children below 18 years of age, particularly the right to education and the right to be free from any form of exploitation and degrading activity or work that will harm the child's physical, cognitive and social development (as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or UNCRC, the ILO Conventions 138 and 182 on the Minimum Age for Employment and the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child

Labour respectively, the Millennium Development Goals, the Education for All goals, as well as outlined in the Global Taskforce on Child Labour and Education For All - a collaborative partnership of key stakeholders in the area of education and child labour involving ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank), the Global Campaign for Education and the “Understanding Children’s Work” project.

Section 2B describes progress made on meeting the EFA and child labour elimination goals from a global perspective using data that highlights progress in some regions and identifies the lack of progress in others. Section 2C provides compelling evidence on the intrinsic and perpetuating link between child labour and education.

Section 3 shifts focus from the global perspective to the situation in Bangladesh with regard to the links between child labour and education.

Section 3A elaborates on important policy initiatives with an impact on child labour and education following the signing and ratification of the CRC in 1990. The section addresses the *Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990*, which made (in theory) primary education free and compulsory (in respect of both enrolment and attendance) to all children, the National Child Policy 1994, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (I and II), the National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2009) and the National Plans of Action on Education for All (2003-2015). The same section further looks at the National Non-Formal Education Policy Framework (2006), the (reformed) Labour Act (2006), the National Child Labour Elimination Policy (draft) and the ILO Decent Work Country Program (2006-2009) of which the second major objective is “Elimination of the WFCL”.

Section 3B defines a framework for analysis, without which a thorough understanding of key incentives (pull factors) and constraints (push factors) in relation to education and work will not be gained. Section 3C addresses the magnitude of the child labour problem in Bangladesh (incidences of economically active children, child labour and hazardous child labour. 3,2 million children in Bangladesh are involved in child labour, of which approximately 1.3 million or 3 per cent are involved with hazardous labour). A socio-economic profile of an average child labourer and his/her family complements this section with staggering data.

Details of children in and out of school and work is given in section 3D. The section touches on increasing and encouraging gross enrolment and net enrolment rates (98.8 per cent and 91.1 per cent respectively), and on drop-out and completion (of primary education) rates. Section 3E draws causality links between child labour and education by analyzing the issues of attendance, school performance and drop out. Determinants related to education, in particular those related to access and quality of formal primary education are analyzed in section 3F. The section elaborates on direct and indirect (‘hidden’) costs of education that prevent poor families from sending their child to school or may lead them to withdraw their child from education; on issues related to “home-school distance”; deficiencies in formal curricula; insufficient resources; accountability of school management; capacity of teachers; and equity issues in the classroom.

The decision at a household level on sending a child to work is complex and multi-layered, requiring parents to consider a number of factors. Section 3G looks at household determinants, analyzing factors leading to their decision and elaborates on parental perceptions and expectations of education, household income and size, educational level of parents, and the age and sex composition of their children. The section reveals that such factors are extremely significant when parents are confronted with the choice of sending their child to work or school.

Cultural values are fluid, dynamic and evolve in response to a changing social, economic and political landscape. Although there is hardly any systematic research on this issue, section 3H aims to bring together “indications” generated by analytical studies on how social and cultural factors influence child labour in relation to education. The section addresses pervasive and persisting perceptions among parents, child labourers and employers regarding schooling and education, particularly with regard to gender, indigenous groups and children with special needs.

Compelling nationally- and universally-accepted arguments exist to achieve EFA and child labour elimination goals simultaneously due to the intrinsic and perpetuating link between them. Response has been reflected in international and national policy and standard setting and a growing consensus and commitment on the scale of the problems regarding child labour in relation to education and the various determinants that influence parents’ choice to send their child to school or to work.

Beyond policy development and standard setting, programmatic responses to eliminate child labour and expand basic education opportunities are being implemented as addressed in Section 4 on “Eliminating Child Labour and Expanding Educational Opportunities: National Responses”. Programmatic responses are grouped under three categories: a) general education interventions within the mainstream education system; b) non-formal education; and c) specific, time-bound project interventions.

A series of educational interventions have taken place at primary and secondary levels to improve and expand access to all, including girls, children in difficult circumstances, ethnic minorities and children with disabilities. Most of these interventions aim to raise the quality of education and to stem drop-out, through the sub-sector PEDP II for formal primary education and the SESDP for formal secondary education projects and various stipend programs such as the PESP and the FSP.

Ample interventions in the field of non-formal education exist in Bangladesh; more than 700 NGOs run one or more non-formal education programs for out-of-school children (including working children) – of these 72 are relatively large-scale programs. Section 4 provides an overview of the major NGO-run non-formal education programs and emphasizes the importance of non-state non-formal education entities in providing an essential ‘second chance’ option for out-of-school children, including child labourers. However, it should be noted that non-formal primary education would not be needed if efforts in Bangladesh to provide formal, quality primary education had succeeded.

A significant number of specific programs and projects that aim to address child labour are also described in Section 4, including i) National Time-Bound Program framework or TBP on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Bangladesh by 2015; ii) the ILO executed Projects of Support to the national TBP (the Urban Informal Economy project and the TVET Reform project); iii) the Reaching Out of School Children Project (ROSC); iv) the UNICEF Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project; v) the MOLE executed ‘Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh’ project; and vi) Hazardous Child Labour project executed by the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS).

Section 4D describes stakeholders and field programs contributing to the fight against child labour, particularly the regional Child Labour Elimination Action Network (CLEAN), the Joint Child Labour Working Group (JCLWG) comprised of ILO, UNICEF, Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Save the Children Alliance and Centre for Mass Education in Science, the Domestic Workers’ Rights Network (DWRN), which aims to improve the protection of domestic workers), and the UN inter-agency research collaboration

(ILO, World Bank and UNICEF) under the global Understanding Children's Work (UCW) project.

Section 5 summarises major findings and recommends for future action. The magnitude of the child labour problem and significant deficiencies in education are reiterated, as well as the intrinsic and perpetuating link between them. Educational, household, social and cultural determinants emphasize the difficult choice parents face when deciding whether to send their child to school or work is also discussed.

The important role of non-formal education in general and more specific initiatives to combat child labour are highlighted.

A series of recommendations are formulated and directed at various stakeholders, including the Government of Bangladesh, schools and communities, NGOs, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, development partners and international agencies, the media and civil society at large. Based on its constitutional obligation and its commitment to international standards on children (CRC and the Worst Forms of Child Labour ILO Convention No. 182), it is obvious that the government will need to take the lead in pursuing the EFA and child labour elimination goals, in order to meet its long-term development needs. The most important recommendations are therefore those that relate to the adoption of the Child Labour Elimination Policy, the establishment of an inter-ministerial National Taskforce on Child Labour and Education, a review and effective implementation of the Labour Act (2006) and the urgent need to increase the capacity of the recently established Child Labour Unit under the MOLE and to ensure that the CLU can bear its responsibilities and function effectively.

I. Introduction

A. *Child labour and education: A triangulation of the fulfilment of rights, promotion of capabilities and formulation of human capital.*

The international community has long since regarded compulsory and free primary education as a fundamental and indivisible right for all children, as embodied in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The issue of education has once again captured the attention of the international community, with the 2000 Dakar Framework of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) paving the way forward by re-affirming education as both a human right imperative and a central plank of development goals, particularly poverty alleviation. Developing countries have been set the ambitious goal of achieving universal and compulsory primary education, of good quality and free from inequity and disparity of education received by females, ethnic communities and children with special needs, by 2015.

Bangladesh has taken successful strides in meeting the goal of universal primary education, particularly in improving and expanding access. The 2007 School Survey Report (DPE and MOPME, 2007) places the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at 98.8% and the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at 91.1%. According to Ahmed et al (2007), in 2004, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at primary education level was approximately 89% and the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) was 101.7%. This tells us that the GER is stabilizing and more children are enrolling at the appropriate age. Bangladesh has achieved gender parity at primary and secondary level access. However, drop out at both primary and secondary education levels continues to be high and transition to, and retention at, secondary education remains very low. This is due to the poor quality of education as well as the economic circumstances of poor parents who are unable to afford the direct and indirect costs of education. In poor urban areas, the attendance is 20% lower than in rural areas.

Child labour is a multi-dimensional and complex issue: it is symptomatic of economic vulnerability, an inadequate legislative framework and labour laws, institutional barriers, cultural and social inequities and an inaccessible, low-quality educational system, including inadequate provision of technical and vocational education (TVE).

The incidence of child labour in Bangladesh is high. Bangladesh is a low-income country. In 2003 the per capita gross domestic product was estimated at USD 489 (ADB, 2008) and from 1997-2006, 36% of the population lived below the poverty line with an income less than \$1 USD per day (UNDP, 2005). It should be noted that nearly 83% of the population had an income less than \$2 USD (UNDP, 2005). Research has shown that in countries with a per capita income of \$500 USD or less, the child labour force participation is extremely high at 30-60% (ILO, 2006). Children either drop out or become irregular attendees at school, to work to augment the family income. According to Psacharopoulos (cited in Ravallion and Wodon, 2007), child labour leads to two years less schooling on average.

However, there is little systematic evidence that demonstrates that child labour is indispensable or necessary for poverty alleviation. A '*Baseline Survey for Determining Hazardous Child Labour Sectors*' (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2005) states that only 8.1% of families whose children are engaged in hazardous child labour would slide into poverty if there was a loss of child labour income. However, evidence does show that child labour hinders future economic growth and the accumulation of human capital. Children are deprived of future income-generating capacities and their lifetime earning ability is reduced by 13-20% due to entering the workforce at a young age (Ilahi,

Orazem, Sedlacek, 2005). Child labour reduces the bargaining capacity of adult workers, depresses adult wages, creates adult unemployment and underemployment, and reduces the economic competitiveness of the country thereby perpetuating the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

ILO (2006) states that if child labour was eliminated and replaced by universal education, by 2026 the economic and social benefits would exceed costs by 6.7:1, and 7:2:1 in Asia. However, child labour can only be eliminated when parents are able to perceive that the rate of return of education is higher to that of child labour. This can only happen when the quality of education is assured and costs to parents are removed or significantly reduced.

Other than the contribution to human capital development, child labour should be eliminated and replaced by universal education because this is the way to protect and promote the rights of children, which is the recognized obligation of states and societies. A part of the obligation of societies, governments and all who have a role in protecting children is also to create environments that nurture individual capabilities, empower children and assist them to realize their full potential.

Large numbers of child labourers in Bangladesh work in the informal sector, often in hazardous and exploitative conditions. This situation is in violation of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Minimum Age Convention (No.138) as well as ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). The decision to become a child labourer does not rest with the child but with the parents who may not at times act in the best interest of child or with appropriate or full information, especially when it comes to females or children with special needs. Education is both a protective and enabling right: education protects and promotes the physical, cognitive, social and moral development of children and by developing their capabilities they are able to live a life that they have 'reason to value' (Sen, 1995).

Key stakeholders in Bangladesh are working on preventing child labour and promoting education as a means to this end. These include IPEC-ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA), international and national NGOs, unions, private sector, schools and civil society. The mainstream education system under the purview of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) are contributing to preventing child labour by improving access to, and quality of, education to prevent drop out.

A triangulation of fulfilment of rights, promotion of child capability and potential, and formulation of human capital for national development strengthens the possibility to work on a wider range of policy interventions, with close collaboration and co-ordination among major stakeholders to achieve the twin goal of eliminating child labour and achieving education for all. This overall perspective has guided the work of this paper to synthesize information and examine policy and action recommendations about the situation of child labour and how it relates to opportunities for children.

B. Objectives of research study

The key objectives of the study are to:

- provide a synthesis of information relating to child labour and education in Bangladesh
- identify and describe the relationship between child labour and education and perceptions of key stakeholders in Bangladesh

- assess the impact of work/programs/policies relating to child labour and educational issues in Bangladesh
- suggest policy recommendations for key stakeholders in relation to research findings.

C. *Scope of the study and research methodology*

The scope of the study and its methodology comprise of a literature review of secondary sources related to child labour and education in Bangladesh, including publications of international and national agencies such as ILO (IPEC), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), World Bank and UNICEF, and studies undertaken by research and academic institutions such as the Education Watch group and the Institute of Educational Development at BRAC University. There was also a series of interviews with individuals representing key stakeholders to verify and validate information from findings and to test policy recommendations.

D. *Definitions*

The following definitions embedded in international conventions (ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182) are broadly agreed by the majority of the international community¹. It should be noted however that the definition of ‘child labour’ varies in terms of age and type of work from country to country. The commonly used definition for ‘child labour’ is constrained by its exclusion of work undertaken by children in their households (Fares & Raju, 2007).

‘Economically Active Children’ – Includes all productive activities undertaken by children between the ages of 5-17 whether for the market or not, paid or unpaid, on a casual or regular basis, legal or illegal. It excludes chores undertaken in the child’s own household. A child must work for at least one hour on any day during a seven day period.

‘Child Labour’ - Based on ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No. 138), refers to the economic activities of children aged between 5-17 but excluding all those children aged 12 years or older who are working only a few hours a week in permitted light work and those aged 15 years and above whose work is not classified as ‘hazardous’.

‘Hazardous Child Labour’ or HCL- Includes any activity or occupation undertaken by a child between 5-17 that has, or leads to, adverse affects on the child’s safety, health (physical or mental) and moral development. Hazards can also be a result of excessive workload, physical conditions of work and/or work intensity in terms of the duration of hours of work even where the activity is known to be non-hazardous (see Conditional WFCL).

‘Worst Forms of Child Labour’ or WFCL– As defined in the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) includes activities undertaken by children aged 5-17 and is comprised of two different strands of work: conditional and unconditional WFCL².

Conditional WFCL - when children aged 5-17 work for more than 43 hours per week or in specified hazardous conditions.³ This is often referred to as “hazardous child labour”.

¹ The situation in Bangladesh is somewhat complicated. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics uses definitions that derive from the ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 on the one hand, but has also used definition formulated by UNICEF for the Multi Indicators Cluster Survey. For reasons of consistency, the definitions of the aforementioned ILO Conventions are used throughout the document.

² At the 18th International Conference on Labour Statistics (ICLS) held in December 2008, a resolution was adapted, that brings hazardous unpaid household services for long hours (in their own household) under the child labour definition when the country uses the “general production boundary” (rather than the “SNA production boundary”) as the measurement framework for child labour.

Unconditional WFCL - when children aged 5-17 are engaged in the following activities:

- all forms of slavery or practice similar to slavery such as sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage or serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict and other illicit activities
- procuring or offering a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or offering a child for pornographic performance
- procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, particularly for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties.

Globally accepted standards on working children in relation to their age and the conditions of work are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1

Nature of work		Age of Child		
		5-11	12-14	15-17
Non-hazardous work	Light work (< 14 hrs/week)			
	Regular work (>14 but <43 hrs/week)			
Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL)	Hazardous work (>43 hrs/week or in specified hazardous occupations)			
	Unconditional WFCL (Trafficked or forced labour, armed conflict, prostitution etc.)			
<i>(Areas shaded red indicate work considered to represent child labour)</i>				

³ The term “conditional” is used, because it is the responsibility of Governments of Member States that ratified the ILO Convention No. 182 to determine what it considers to be hazardous sectors, occupations, activities and/or conditions after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned (Art. 3(d), 4.1)

II. Child Labour and Education: A Global Perspective

There are a host of international conventions and laws that aim to protect and promote the rights of children under 18 years of age, namely the right to education and the right to be free from any form of exploitation and degrading activity or work that will harm the child's physical, cognitive and social development. Bangladesh is a signatory to, and has ratified, most of the significant international conventions relating to children except for the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No.138).

A. *International conventions and measures*

UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1989) – One of the most significant articles in relation to child labour are those about the right to education. The CRC requires signatories to make primary education compulsory and free to all. Furthermore, it stipulates the right of the child to be protected from exploitative work or performing any work that may be considered hazardous, interferes with the child's education or is harmful to the child's development. Signatories are required to stipulate minimum age/s for legal employment

ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138 (1973) - Minimum age of employment is no less than the age at completion of compulsory schooling, which should not be less than 15 years. A country with insufficient economic and educational facilities may stipulate an initial age of 14 years. National laws may permit the employment of children who are aged 13-15 (or 12-14 where the minimum age is 14) in limited light work, which does not interfere with their development or affect their attendance at school.

ILO Worst Form of Child Labour Convention No.182 (1999) – Requires countries to implement time-bound measures to eliminate the WFCL.

Millennium Development Goals (2000) - Overarching development agenda for developing countries, with targets set for 2015. Most relevant goals are that of universal primary education and eliminating gender disparity in terms of access to primary and secondary education.

Education for All Goals (2000) – Global education agenda outlining six goals to meet the basic learning needs of every child, youth and adult. Most important goals are: ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic communities have access to free and compulsory primary education; equitable access to appropriate life skills and lifelong learning programs; and ensuring quality of education in all aspects so that measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Global Taskforce on Child Labour and Education For All – A collaborative partnership of key stakeholders (ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the Global March Against Child Labour) in the area of education and child labour. The main objective is to assist developing countries in eliminating child labour and achieving education for all by 2015. The Global Taskforce will work on strengthening knowledge on the link between child labour and education; advocacy and social mobilization; and policy coherence, program support and developing partnerships.

Global Campaign for Education - A civil society movement that aims to hold governments to account for their promises made to provide education for all (ensuring every girl, boy, woman and man has the right to free, quality public education). The campaign was formed in 1999, is active in over 100 countries across the world, and brings together civil society organizations, trade unions, child rights campaigners, teachers, parents and students. The international secretariat headquarters is based in

Johannesburg (South Africa) with two smaller offices in London (UK) and Washington (USA). The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) is the chapter office of Bangladesh.

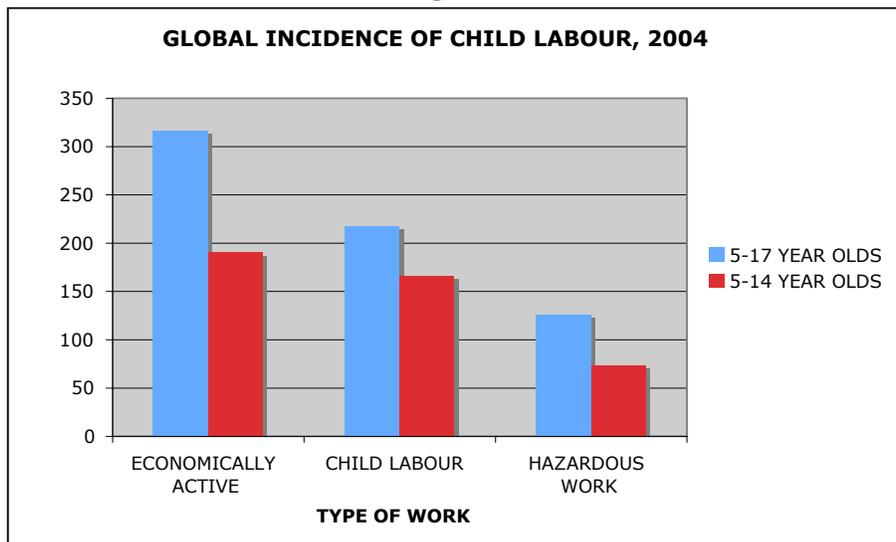
Understanding Children’s Work - As part of broader efforts towards eliminating child labour, the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank initiated the inter-agency research project, Understanding Children’s Work, in December 2000. The project is guided by the Oslo Agenda for Action, unanimously adopted at the 1997 International Conference on Child Labour, which laid out the priorities for the international community to address child labour. The Agenda specifically identified the crucial need for better information on the child labour phenomenon. The project also responds to the need articulated at the Oslo Conference to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination among the three partner agencies in the child labour field.

B. Progress on meeting goals of UPE and eliminating Child Labour.

The MDG and EFA goals strengthened the impetus for developing countries to undertake measures to ensure universal primary education for all. Governments in 14 countries abolished primary school tuition fees, a measure that greatly enhanced access for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable who had not been able to afford the direct costs of education (Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All, undated). Primary school enrolment rose from 647 million to 688 million worldwide between 1999 and 2005, increasing by 36% in sub-Saharan Africa and 22% in South and West Asia (UNESCO, 2008). The global net enrolment ratio rose from 83% to 87% between 1999 and 2005, with sharpened increases in sub-Saharan Africa (23%) and South and West Asia (11%) (UNESCO, 2008).

However, according to EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2008), while there has been a 25% decrease since 1999 in the number of children not at school, 72 million were still not in school by 2005. Girls account for 57% of all out-of-school children. The number of additional children to be enrolled by 2015 in the high population E-9 countries is approximately 70 million if the goal of UPE is to become a reality (Delamonica, Mehrotra & Vandemoortele, 2001). The E-9 countries are Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan and between amount to more than half of the out-of-school children in the world.

Figure 1



Source: International Labour Organization (2006)

There has been a decline in the incidence of child labour since 2000. In 2004, it was estimated to be at 13.9% compared to 16% in 2000 (ILO, 2006). There has been an even sharper decline in children undertaking hazardous work, 26% for the 5-17 age group and 33% for 5-14 groups in the four years from 2000-2004. Approximately 87% of member states have now ratified Convention No.182. These states include more than 77% of the world's child population.

Nonetheless, the high incidence of children involved in child labour continues to persist. Figure 1 shows that in 2004, 218 million aged between 5-17 children could be described as child labourers, of whom 76% were aged between 5-14. Furthermore, 58% of 126 million children aged 5-17 engaged in hazardous work were between the ages of 5-14.

Research has shown huge economic gains for developing countries by eliminating child labour and enrolling children in education. ILO has estimated economic gains of USD \$5 trillion over a 20 year period as well as other externalities such as higher rates of innovation, productivity, faster introduction of new technology and economic competitiveness if countries were to invest in good quality education for all (ILO, 2004).

However, in order to achieve good quality education, a minimum level of spending is required on quality indicators such as wages, materials, maintenance and infrastructure. While total direct aid to education has increased by 85% (from USD \$4.6 billion in 2000 to US\$8.5 billion in 2004) basic education aid is only 4.8% of all aid to developing countries. This is well below the amount required for low-income countries (UNESCO, 2007). The World Bank has estimated that from 2001 the global cost to reach education for all by 2015 would amount to a minimum of USD \$9.1 to \$11 billion annually (at 2003 constant price) (Delamonica, Mehrotra & Vandemoortele, 2001; UNESCO 2007; UNESCO, 2008). Global public expenditure on education will have to increase by 1.4% in order to reach the education goal by 2015. In South Asia, it will take sustained growth of 2.7% per year.

However, external funding will only be available if beneficiary countries are able to indicate good governance through the effective disbursement of aid, a strengthening of institutional capacity and political commitment on meeting EFA goals.

C. Evidence connecting child labour and education

There has been a spate of research that demonstrates a clear relationship between child labour and education, produced by organizations such as Understanding Children's Work, an inter-agency research co-operation project between ILO, UNICEF and World Bank Group. Fares and Raju (2007) in their paper '*Child Labour Across The Developing World: Patterns And Correlations*' provide empirical evidence that countries with higher rates of working children also have higher rates of children not attending school. Poverty is quite clearly a critical barrier to children accessing school, attending regularly or completing school. In some countries, households contribute over 40% of total spending on education costs (direct and indirect costs such as fees, textbooks, uniforms, transport, etc).

However, research shows that school participation rates among economically active children appear to be particularly low in the South Asian region - an average of 41.1%, when compared to other developing regions such as Latin American countries, which have an average participation rate of 78.8%. This difference suggests that other factors, in addition to economic poverty, such as prevailing cultural, religious and political customs and norms of a country or region may also affect school participation.

III. Linkages between Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh

A. Policy initiatives with an impact on child labour and education

Following the signing and ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child in 1990, Bangladesh has undertaken a number of initiatives and introduced policy measures that impact on the issue of education and child labour.

Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990 – Primary education was made free and compulsory (in respect of both enrolment and attendance) to all children. Six-member ‘compulsory primary education committees’ were set up at the local level. The committee was discharged with the responsibility of ensuring the enrolment and attendance of all primary aged school children in their locality. The local committees, however, have become inactive in recent years and do not appear to be an instrument anymore for implementing compulsory primary education.

National Child Policy 1994 – National Council for Children was formed to protect the rights and interests of children, to ensure effective implementation of existing laws relating to children and initiate necessary legal reforms in the field. The main areas of intervention included education and psychological development, assistance to children in difficult circumstances as well as protecting the best interests of the child (Khair, 2005). There is little evidence to indicate how active the Council is.

Poverty Reduction Strategy II: Moving Ahead (2009-2011) – The second phase of the strategy (following PRS I: “Unlocking the potential”, 2005). “Quickening elimination of child labour and WFCL” is one of the strategic goals of PRS II, along with the reduction of the incidence of child labour, development of socio-economic indicators of child workers, and strengthening advocacy to expand poverty reduction programmes for families of child labourers. It continues by stipulating that education programmes for working children need to be introduced, implemented and monitored, capacity improved, and the national child labour policy adopted.

National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2009) – Mentions the elimination of child labour as being directly linked to development targets. Particular emphasis is placed in providing early childhood care and education, non-formal education and opportunities for technical and vocation education in the fight against child labour. Furthermore, under the theme ‘*Protection from Abuse, Exploitation and Violence*’, the plan highlights the need to link the time-bound program with economic growth strategies and to take immediate and effective measures to eliminate WFCL, with a particular focus on child domestic workers.

National Plan of Action on Education for All (2003-2015) – Succeeds the first National Plan of Action (1991-2000) as a manifestation of Bangladesh’s strong commitment to eradicating illiteracy and providing education for all. Key targets of the plan is to narrow the gap between non-formal and formal primary education, sustain achievements, increase the net enrolment rate to above 95% and effective literacy rate to 90% by 2015. The plan also makes early childhood care and education a key focus to combat illiteracy and strengthen the commitment to school.

National Non-Formal Education Policy Framework (2006) - The government defined the vision, mission scope, monitoring and evaluation activities and organizational framework by which NGO-run non-formal education programs can contribute to the achievement of EFA goals; helped expand access to, and quality of, life-long learning opportunities and continued education programs, particularly for children and adults who have missed out on formal education.

Labour Act (2006) – The act defines children as those below 14 years and adolescents as those aged between 14-18 years. The government will publish a regular notification of hazardous work/sectors that children under 18 are not to be involved with. Children of 14 years or younger cannot be recruited without the certification of a registered doctor. It also stipulates the hours and type of work that an adolescent between the ages of 14-18 can do. A 12 year old can be recruited for light work that does not harm their mental, physical and moral development or their education. The law provides a framework for regulating child labour and preventing harmful child labour. Implementation of the law remains a challenge.

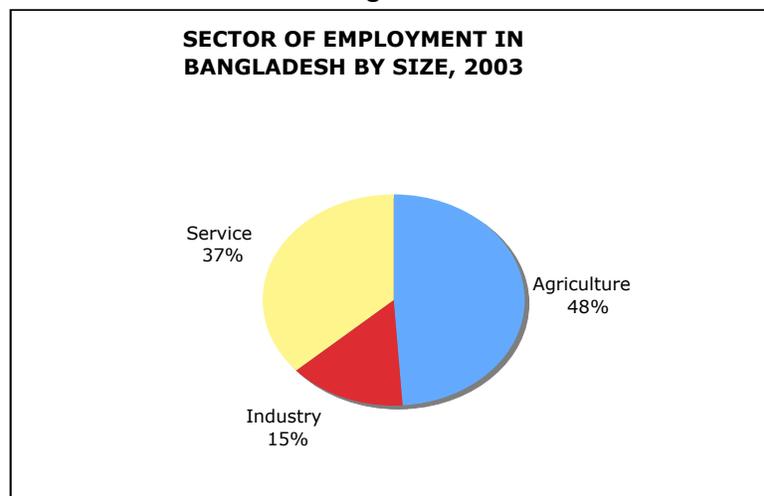
National Child Labour Elimination Policy (draft) – in 2001 the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) developed a national policy on child labour as a response to the national commitment to eliminate child labour. In 2008, after a long process of consultation with key stakeholders, MOLE finalized the draft National Policy on Child Labour. The final draft policy document has been submitted to higher authorities for approval.

ILO Decent Work Country Programme 2006-2009 – ILO through a consultative process including industry based and sectoral dialogue approaches assisted in the development of the country programme. The programme has three priorities with corresponding outcomes. Outcomes include "fundamental principles and rights at work are promoted, including the elimination of the WFCL", "implement a national plan of action on WFCL", "a TBP for WFCL adopted and implemented", "capacity developed of national and local institutions", "a child labour unit established", and "study conducted to identify areas of interventions"..

B. Defining a framework for analysis of link between child labour and education

Over the last decade, economic growth has been promising. Gross domestic product has increased by 60% and the real per capita GDP by 36% during 1991-2000 (BBS, 2003). However, evidence also suggests a widening gulf in wealth and quality of life between the rich and the poor (UNESCAP, 2007).

Figure 2



Source: BBS, 2003

Figure 2 shows that at the aggregate level, agriculture is still the largest sector of employment with nearly 20 million compared with 6 million in industrial and 15 million in

service sectors in 2003 (Associate for Development Services Ltd, 2006b)⁴. According to UNDP, MDG poverty line measures during 1990-2003 showed that 36% of Bangladeshi's lived on an income less than a USD \$1 a day and 82.8% on less than USD \$2 a day or less (UNDP, 2005). In 2004 the total number of children of primary school age that can be characterized as extreme poor was between 3.9 and 5.3 million, depending on criteria used. It would seem that child labour is an inevitable and inescapable certainty for many children in Bangladesh. However, whether a child becomes engaged in child labour is not dependent on a single, isolated factor but is determined by a whole host of factors. These factors act as constraints (push factors) or incentives (pull factors) when parents or children choose between work and school (Fares & Raju, 2007).

Only by understanding what the key incentives and constraints are in Bangladesh, we can move towards eliminating child labour and achieve education for all. The main incentives (pull factors) and constraints (push factors) and their interaction are mentioned below:

Incentives:

- i) work opportunities for cheap and unskilled labour relative to the inaccessibility of school
- ii) economic benefits of sending child to work is greater than that of going to school.

Constraints:

- i) extreme poverty
- ii) death of earning member in family
- iii) parental divorce
- iv) abandonment of children
- v) economic shocks
- vi) catastrophic health problems in family
- vii) natural calamities.

Interactive factors:

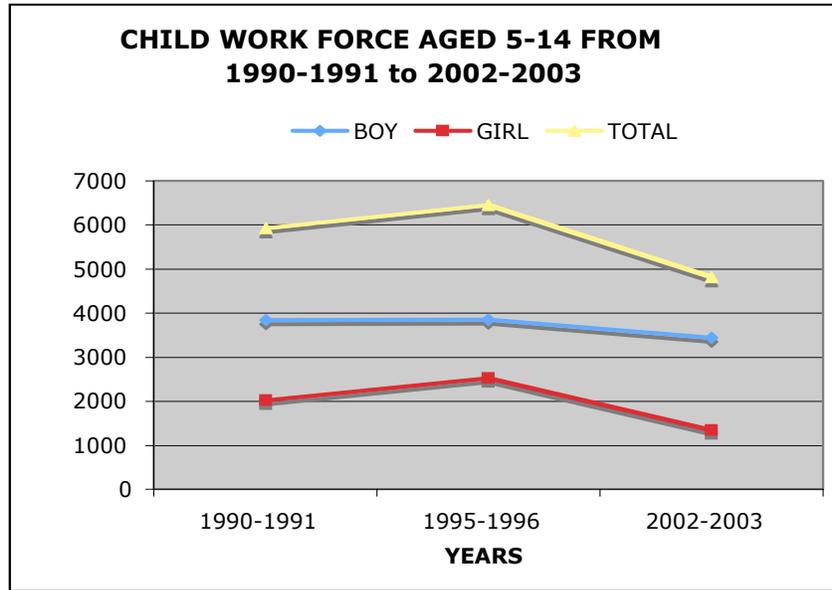
- i) inaccessible and low quality education, including inadequate provision of technical and vocational education
- ii) opportunity and direct costs of schooling are too high
- iii) parental disinterest
- iv) value and attitudes regarding education, especially of girls and children with disabilities
- v) Inadequate legal enforcement of provisions regarding education and child labour
- vi) ethnic and gender discrimination.

C. Child labour and magnitude in Bangladesh

In 2003, the total number of children aged 5-17 years in Bangladesh was 42.3 million. Of these it is estimated that 19.7 million were female and 22.7 million male. Approximately 77.8% of these children live in rural parts of Bangladesh (BBS, 2003).

⁴ This figure includes both formal and informal sectors

Figure 3

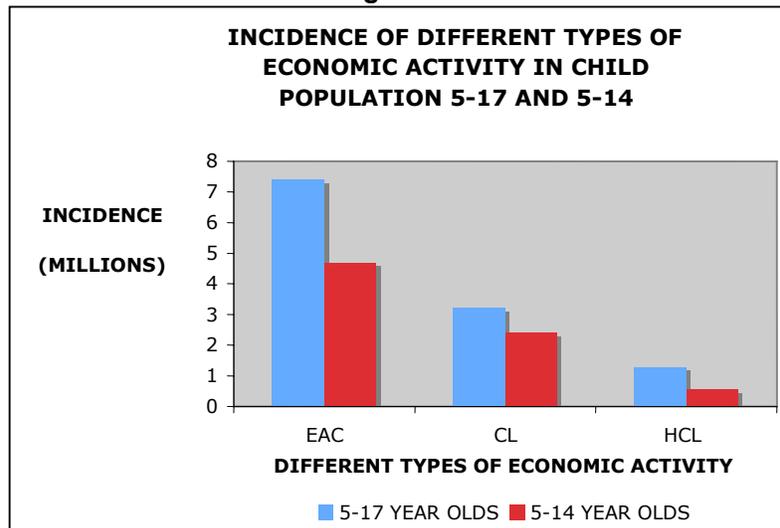


Source: BBS, 2003

While the incidence of child labour remains quite high, there are positive indications that it is abating. There was a 25% decline in the number of 5-14 year olds entering the labour market from 1995-2003 and a significant decline in the number of females entering the workforce (47% compared to 10% decline in male children entering the workforce).

These statistics are of course highly sensitive to the definition applied to child labour and the rigour exercised in the methodology and collection process. Exclusion in the definition of child labour of work at home or in the context of household economic activities including farming, which may be critical to family subsistence and an impediment to children's participation in education, has been noted. These statistical estimate limitations must be kept in mind when considering the quantitative data used in this study.

Figure 4



Source: BBS, 2003

Economically Active Children - Figure 4 shows that 7.5% of the total child population aged 5-17 years (7.4 million children) are engaged in economic activities. Out of the 7.4 million children, approximately 3.3 million children are aged between 5-14 year old. Over 81% of the economically active children are from the rural areas. Approximately 73% of the children aged 5-17 years engaged in economic activities are male (BBS, 2003).⁵

Child Labour - Figure 4 also shows that 7.5% (or 3.2 million) of the total child population aged 5-17 years are engaged in child labour. Approximately 58% of child labourers are aged 5-14. It is also estimated that 2.4 million or approximately 77% of child labourers are from rural areas. The proportion of male to female child labourer is 3:1 (BBS, 2003)

Hazardous Child Labour - Figure 4 shows that 1.29 million children (or 3%) of the total child population are involved in hazardous child labour. Approximately 42.9% of those involved in hazardous child labour are 5-14 year olds. Over 90.7% of the children involved in hazardous work are male (BBS, 2003).⁶

Agriculture engages 4.5 million children (56.4%), while the services sector engages 2 million (25.9%) and industry engages 1.4 million (17.7%). As many as 93.3% of all working children aged 5-17 years, operate in the informal sector. The informal sector is outside the legal framework and thereby unregulated. Hence, children are found to be working in marginal activities, for long hours and in hazardous conditions. A *'Baseline Survey on Child Domestic Labour in Bangladesh'* (ILO, 2006b) showed the estimated total number of child domestic workers in 2006 was 421,426. Approximately 78% of these children were female; the minimum age was six years and over 21% were found to be below 11 years of age. On average, they work nine hours a day and 99% work for seven days a week. Child domestic workers were reported as being vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and having very little recourse to help, as they were isolated from their families. Furthermore, in another survey which identified 45 types of hazardous child labour sectors, it was found that of 521,641 children engaged in hazardous activities, over 100,000 children worked for 43 hours or more consecutively; were abused by their employer; worked under extreme temperature; worked with risk of hurt, cut or burn; and worked under direct sunlight for long hours (BBS, 2005).

The formal sector is subject to national laws and regulations and thereby can be penalized if they are found to be in violation of these laws. However, there are problems enforcing these laws, especially in respect of children working in smaller cottage industry type factories, such as those producing bidi, matches, cigarettes, candles, glassware, etc.

In 2002-03, approximately 56.7% of economically active children were unpaid, 76.7% of females were unpaid, and 7.1% of economically active children were found working regularly (BBS, 2003). A total of 1.3 million children are estimated to be working 43 hours or more per week. The average weekly income for child workers aged 5-17 was 288 taka and an average monthly income is 977 taka (BBS, 2003).

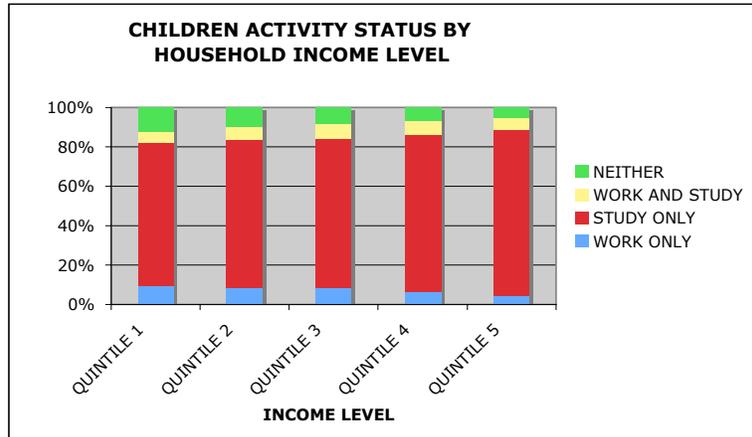
Socio-economic profile of a child labourer

In Bangladesh, 58.3% of households had an average monthly income of 3000 taka or less. Approximately 41.1% of urban households had an average monthly income of 3000 taka or less, compared to 63.7% of rural households (BBS, 2003).

⁵ Once again it should be noted that the definition of EAC does not include children engaged in domestic chores within their own households, unless a country uses the "general production boundary" as the measurement framework for child labour (18th ICLS, December 2008)

⁶ Criteria used for estimating HCL is that of children working for 43 hours or more. Therefore, the incidence of HCL may be higher if other criteria such as the nature, type of work and working conditions were applied.

Figure 5



Source: ILO (2004)

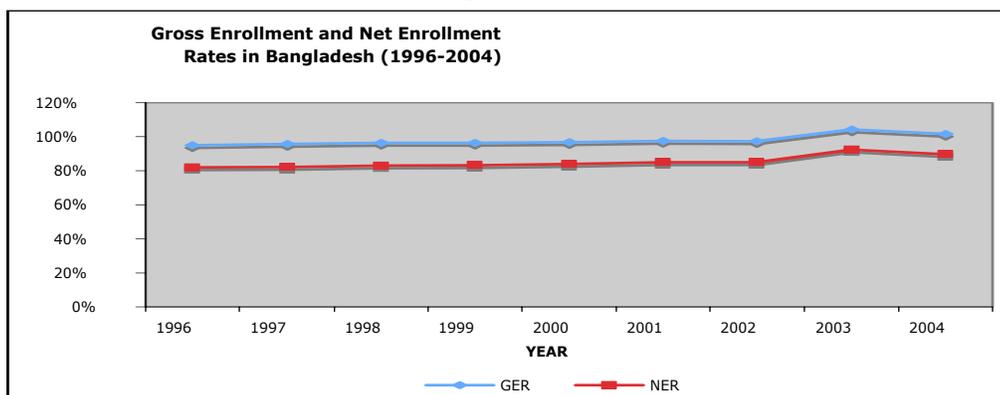
The ILO Country Brief on Bangladesh (2008) states that children coming from the poorest households with the lowest levels per capita expenditure are more likely to be engaged in child labour than at school. Figure 5 shows approximately 9.3% of children from the poorest households (Quintile 1) are only working in comparison to the 4.1% of children from the richest households (Quintile 5). Furthermore, only 72.8% of children from the poorest households attend school without working compared to the 84.7% in the richest households. Children who live in rural areas are more likely to be engaged in work than study - 14% compared to 11.1% in urban households (ILO, 2008). Two-thirds of working children have no education. Of working children who do have an education, 41.3% reported education to primary level, 41.7% to junior high school, and only 4.2% to SSC/HSC level (BBS, 2003).

D. Children in school, out of school and work

In 2002-03, 33.3 million (or 78.7%) of the 42.3 million children in Bangladesh aged 5-17 were attending school. Approximately 86% of children at school were aged between 5-14 years, a 12% increase in six years (BBS, 2003).

Of the 33.3 million children attending school, 30.9 million were attending school and not working and 2.4 million were attending school and working as well. Approximately 9 million were not in school, 4.9 million were working and 4 million were neither at school or work. Of the non-school going population, 63% were male.

Figure 6



Source: Ahmed et al (2007)

In 2004, the gross enrolment rate (GER) was 101.6%, this was an increase of 6% from 1996. In 2004, net enrolment rate (NER) was 89.7%, an increase of 9% since 1996. The growth in enrolment rates for females was three times higher than males (Ahmed et al, 2007). The latest statistics released by the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) place GER at 98.8% and NER at 91.1% (DPE & MOPME, 2008), an improvement on the GER and NER of 2004. GER appears to be decreasing while NER appears to be increasing which means that more children are enrolling at the appropriate age. Hence, there are fewer over- and under-aged children enrolling in the system.

Around 11 types of educational institutions deliver primary education. However the main providers are government primary schools (GPS) and registered non-government primary schools (RNGPS), which are attended by 80% of the primary school-going population. Approximately, 1.5 million children are enrolled at non-formal primary education (NFPE) institutions or centres run by NGOs (Ahmed et al, 2007).

The primary education drop-out rate is extremely high. Most recent statistics show that the survival rate to Grade 5 is 51.9% (DPE & MOPME, 2008). In 2004, almost half of the students in primary education dropped out. However, the data on drop-out rates do not reflect horizontal migration and therefore may be somewhat less than purported. On a positive note, drop-out rates have decreased by 20% from 1991-2004, when over two-thirds of students were dropping out. Transition rates from primary to secondary education have improved but 17% of children failed to move onto Grade 6 from Grade 5 (Ahmed et al, 2007).

An Educational National Watch Survey in 2001 tested the competency levels of students as set in the primary education curriculum found that only 1.6% of children in formal educational institutes acquired all 27 competencies tested, with a higher rate for NGO-run non-formal education institutes (6%). Disturbingly, the survey also revealed that after completing five years of formal primary schooling, one-third of children remained non-literate or semi-literate (Ahmed *et al*, 2005).

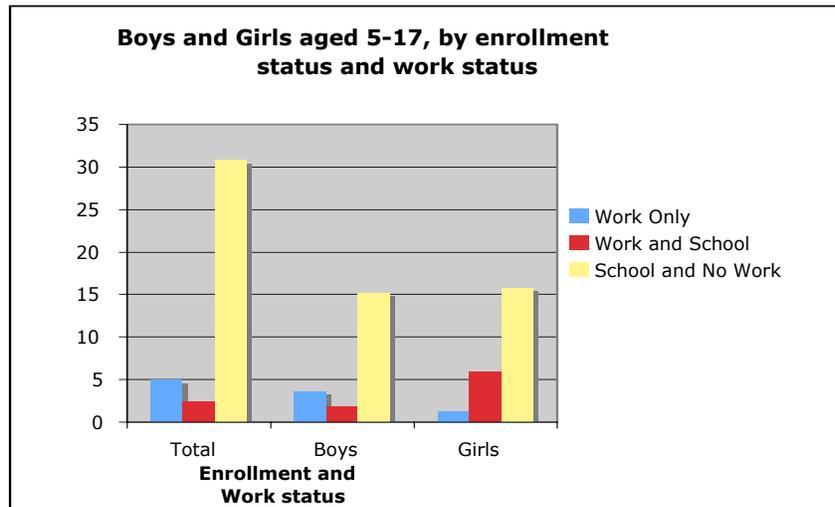
The GER at secondary level continues to be fairly low, at 65% in 2004 but this is still an improvement of 44% in 2003. The GER regional variation is marked, with Khulna at 70% and Sylhet at 43%. Secondary education drop-out rate was extremely high at 83% in 2003, with completion rates at just 16%. Approximately 55.4% of dropouts at secondary level occur in Class 10 (Ahmed et al, 2007).

The improvement in enrolment rates are encouraging and it indicates that Bangladesh is making good progress in respect of achieving universal primary education enrolment by 2015; although according to the Education Watch report of 2003-04, 1 in 5 children was still out of school in 2003 (Ahmed et al, 2005). High drop-out rates as well as low levels of competency amongst school-going children indicates that the education system is failing to deliver high quality education. It is most certainly likely that those who are most impacted by the failings of the education system are the most vulnerable in Bangladeshi society and who thereby end up in child labour.

E. How child labour and education interact

It is difficult to draw direct causality between child labour and education because of the interplay and inter-dependency of multiple factors. However, evidence does suggest a strong and clear relationship between child labour and education, for example nearly 50% of children drop out of primary education before completion and are therefore potential candidates for the labour market (ILO, 2004). The impact of child labour is seen in enrolment rates, attendance, school performance, drop out and transitional issues.

Figure 7



Source: BBS, 2003

According to the National Child Labour Survey 2002-03 (NCLS 2002-03), 4.9 million economically active children are not attending school, 72% of them are male (BBS, 2003). It is also estimated that 2.4 million children are working and attending school. Around 837,000 of 3.2 million child labourers are attending school and working. This would indicate that 73% of child labourers who should be at school are not enrolled or attending school. Reference is made to section III D of this document on “Children in School, Out-of-School and Work” on page 22.

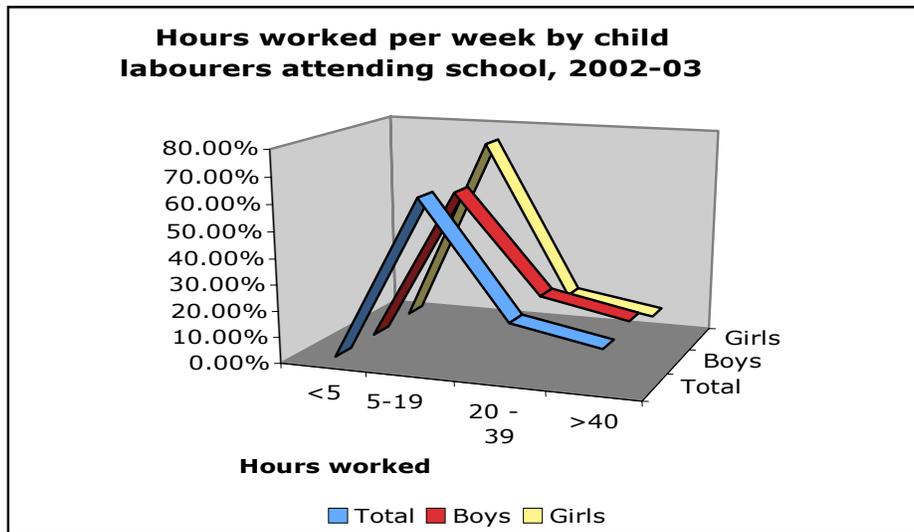
The statistics do not indicate whether those who are not attending school have never been enrolled, but it does indicate that children who should be at school are otherwise engaged in child labour. According to the National Child Labour Survey 2002-03, the main reason given by children aged 5-17 for not going to school is that education is too expensive (17.8%). Reference is made to section III, G “Household determinants” on page 30.

Reasons for not attending school including being busy with household economic activities (16.3%); having to work for wages (9.6%); are weak in education (8.2%); have not found it possible to study or have been unsuccessful in exams (7.2%). While it is quite clear that the affordability of education and economic poverty of the household are critical obstacles in children attending school, children are also not going to school because they perceive themselves as being weak students or have been unsuccessful in exams. This indicates a problem in the way schools assist students and how inclusive and effective they are in responding to students with different abilities.

Attendance, performance and drop out

Research shows that in countries where child labour is common, working children face an ‘attendance disadvantage’ in comparison to non-working children in their ability to go to school (Guarcello, Lyon & Rosati, 2005). Attendance rates at primary and secondary levels in Bangladesh are low, averaging 60-62% at the primary level and 50% at the secondary level (Ahmed et al, 2005). It is reasonable to assume that child labourers are one of the groups of irregular attendees at primary level because they often work long hours, work during harvesting seasons in rural areas and need to do more household chores. In urban slum areas it is estimated that the school-aged attendance rate is 15% less than the national average (UNICEF, MICS, 2006).

Figure 8



Source: BBS, 2003

Figure 8 shows that approximately 63% of the 2.4 million working children who attend school are working at least 5-19 hours a week and 20% work 20-29 hours per week. Irregular attendance of working children impacts on their school performance because they are falling behind on their lessons and most do not have a private and paid tutor to help them at home. It should also be noted that many parents are unable to assist their school-going children with their school “homework” due to their own low level of education. Working children often find themselves being ‘silently excluded’ as they do not understand what is happening in the classroom (Ahmed et al, 2007). Over 68.3% of child labourers attending school said that their work affected their regular attendance or studies (BBS, 2003).

Evidence shows that child labour is associated with high proportion of children leaving the schooling system prematurely. In a study of children who had dropped out and were currently engaged in the WFCL, it was found that 56% of the respondents had dropped out at the primary level (Sodev Consult, 2006). Most drop outs occur at Grade 4 at primary level (16.1%) and Grade 5 at secondary level (55%) (Ahmed et al, 2007).

Child labour is a vicious cycle as it prevents students from attending school regularly, takes away their time and energy from study and school work, so that they are not able to perform well and fall behind in class. Consequently, they also tend to leave the schooling system early for reasons of failure and being unsuccessful in examinations.

F. Educational determinants: access and quality issues

If the economic vulnerability of the parents is coupled with an inaccessible and low-quality education system then the opportunity cost of sending the child to school will be higher to that of sending the child to work.

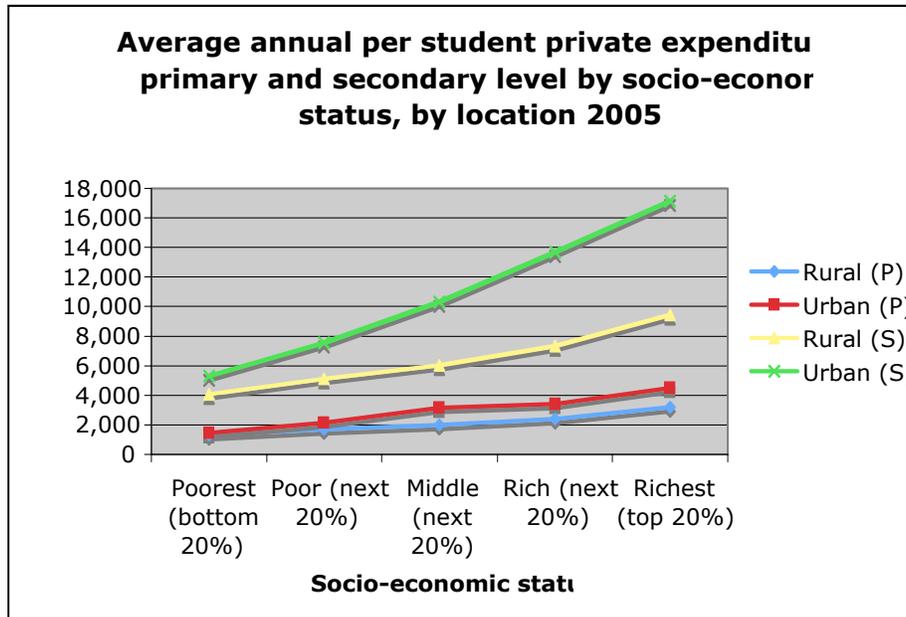
Direct and indirect costs of education

Direct and indirect (‘hidden’) costs of education prevent poor parents or guardians from sending their child to school or it leads them to withdraw their child from education. Whilst the *Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990* rendered education free and provided textbooks, the main reason that children do not attend school was that families

still could not afford educational expenses (BBS, 2003). Public funding of primary and secondary education in Bangladesh is low with the government expenditure in the education sector only 2.2% of gross domestic product (Ahmad et al, 2007)

Private expenditure at primary and secondary levels is so high that it places the poor at a serious disadvantage. Some of the major educational costs at government primary schools are books, stationary, uniforms and lunch (Ahmed et al, 2007). Private expenditure at the primary level at government schools constitutes about 59% of the total student expenditure and 67% at the secondary level (Ahmad et al, 2006).

Figure 9

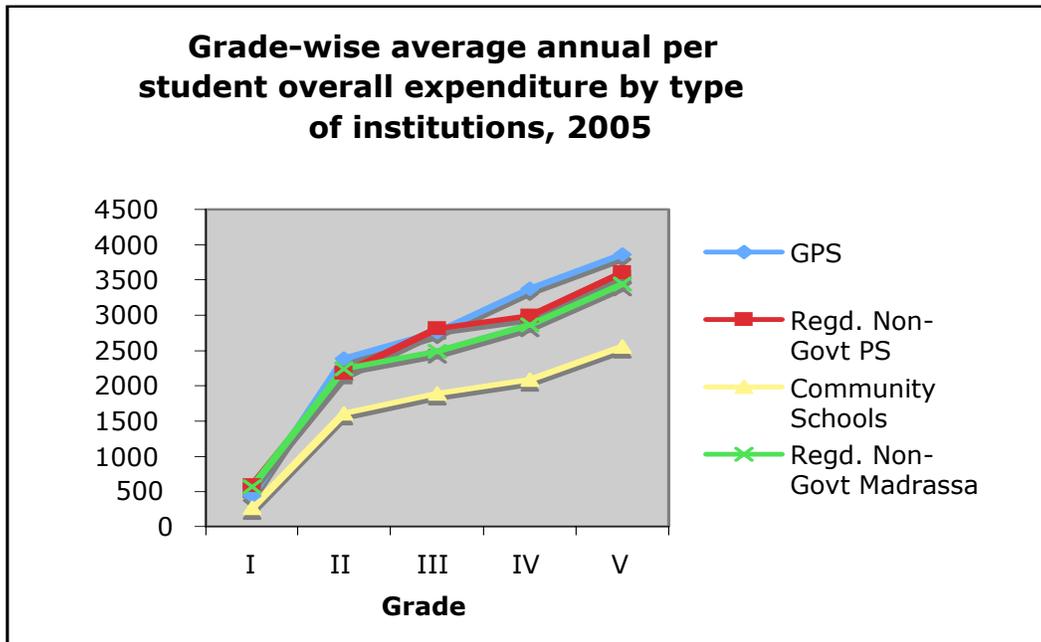


Source: Ahmed et al (2007)

Research conducted by Ahmed et al (2007) revealed, not unexpectedly, that private expenditure at primary and secondary levels increases with socio-economic status. Figure 9 shows that expenditure at primary and secondary education levels is lowest for households in the poorest quintile and highest for those in the richest quintile. The point being that poor families are not able to afford the necessary costs that a child's education incurs, which leads to the child's poor performance and eventual drop out from school.

There is a vast difference in education expenditure at primary and secondary levels for those living in urban areas. Statistics show that the richest families in urban areas are likely to spend three times more than the urban poorest. Educational expenditures reveal a qualitative difference in the education received by the poor and the rich. The rich are able to spend more money on additional educational inputs such as private tutors and books, which will raise the quality of schooling received by their children. Poor households suffer a 'double disadvantage' of having to spend a substantial amount of their household budget on educational goods to only be able to afford a very basic education where quality is not assured.

Figure 10



Source: Ahmed et al (2007)

Research shows that the overall expenditure for students increases each school year. Figure 10 shows that at the primary level, expenditure at Grade 5 in comparison to Grade 1 is 5.9 times higher in government schools and six times higher in community schools. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that as it is more expensive for poor parents to keep their child in education, they are likely to withdraw them from school.

Distance, time spent going and coming back to school and time spent at school

Parents take into consideration the opportunity costs (foregone benefits of child labour including the time spent going to, from and at school that could otherwise be spent working) when deciding on their child's education. There are an insufficient number of primary schools to meet the demand for education. According to Ahmed et al (2007) there is a deficit of 50-60% of schools, classrooms and teachers, even if modest criteria for adequate provisions for schooling are applied. In 2003, the National Education Commission recommended establishing a school for every population of 1500. This would mean adding another 10-12,000 to the existing 80,000 schools in Bangladesh. At present, the average distance between two schools is approximately 2 km; in specific terrains the distance is greater, particularly in some rural and remote areas. Hence, parents often decide to withdraw their child, particularly girls, if the distance and time spent going to and from school is too great and engaging them instead in household economic activities. In particular seasons when the roads are in poor condition and unsafe, parents are reluctant to send their children to school. Approximately 5.2% of girls aged 6-14 had never enrolled because school was too far from their homes and 6.4% of children never enrolled said that the road to school was too insecure (Ahmed et al, 2005).

Most primary and secondary schools have a rigid and centralized timetable that makes it difficult for parents to send their children to school during particular seasons, such as the harvesting when extra help is needed.

Deficiencies in formal curricula and insufficient resources and accountability of school management

A successful educational model is defined by its inputs, process and learning outcomes of the student engaged in school (Reimers, 2000). For poor households who often invest a disproportionate amount of money and forego income loss for the education of their child, it is pertinent that the education system is seen to create better opportunities for their children. Parents or guardians will often withdraw the child if they fail to see any future benefits from schooling the child.

In a study on parents' perception of the education system in Bangladesh and why they would look at early employment for their child, 41% said that educational curriculum failed to provide vocational skills, 19% said schools failed to develop technical, income-earning and agriculture-oriented skills, 11% said schools failed to generate moral values and 10% said schools created inequality in society (Svenska Consultants Ltd, 2006)⁷. The major limitations as reported by the parents were the lack of qualified teachers (22%), inadequate number of schools (22%), absence of practical education (11%) and inadequate technical education in rural areas (11%). The curriculum was perceived as being inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of poor households.

Learning provisions and facilities at both primary and secondary levels are inadequate. There are an insufficient number of classrooms and teachers at primary level, which in turn creates a high pupil-teacher ratio (PTR). The national average PTR is 49:1 but the average number of pupils per classroom is 63 in government primary schools and 60 in registered non-government primary schools. More than 90% of schools run double shifts (DPE & MOPME, 2008). High PTRs make it difficult for classrooms to be inclusive and responsive to the different abilities of students. Double shifts also mean that teacher-pupil contact hours are limited.

Schools at secondary level are insufficiently equipped, have poorly resourced libraries and science equipment and computers. According to Ahmed et al (2007), about half of the schools had science laboratories of varying qualities, only 15% of institutions had libraries that could be judged as adequate and less than 40% of institutions had 15 computers had less.

The strength and success of a school lies in the management of schools. Schools in Bangladesh are as poorly managed as they are poorly resourced. Hence, schools are often too inefficient and slow in responding to the needs of children and their parents. Research into school management shows that Assistant Upazila Educational Officers, who are the frontline supervisors of schools and teachers, have inadequate training and preparation and did little more than paperwork. The heads of schools failed to provide leadership and annual work planning in schools were inadequate (Ahmed et al, 2005). According to the '*School Survey Report of 2007 of the Second Primary Education Development Programme*' (DPE & MOPME, 2008), only 45% of head teachers at government primary schools received training in school management, 29% in teacher support and 28% in community mobilization. Head teachers are clearly unprepared to take on the responsibilities that the role demands of them and their failure to do their job properly has a negative impact on teachers, parents and learners.

Research confirms parents' perception that technical and vocational education in Bangladesh is inadequate (Ahmed, Ali and Khan, 2005). Enrolment in technical and vocational education is very low, constituting only about 3% of post-primary formal

⁷ The study from which this data was drawn had a sample size of 1270 (urban 264 and rural 886) spread over six divisions and 16 districts.

education enrolment. This is likely caused by a seriously inadequate number of (vocational) skill training facilities (an issue of quantity), compounded by the fact that the criteria for admission to formal vocational skill training is still set at Grade 8.

The curriculum for technical and vocational education is highly circumscribed; not well aligned to market needs and provides only basic skills, which hinder the possibility of poor children being able to progress into highly skilled jobs and better incomes. Furthermore, technical and vocational education does not confer the same status of traditional academic subjects and is seen to be an inferior form of education amongst parents and society at large.

Furthermore, the 11 formal Technical Training Institutes (TTI) that are available lack sufficient capacity, training and expertise (Khair, 2005). Formal technical and vocational education institutes exclude children who did not complete education up to Grade 8, thereby largely excluding the poor who are most in need of skill development to improve life chances. A lot of vocational and skills training takes place in non-formal education and the private sector but have no links with the formal training system and therefore may not be recognized or be seen by employers to be equivalent to formal technical and vocational education training (Ahmed, Ali and Khan, 2005).

In a highly-skilled and technologically advanced modern global economy, poor households are left far behind as their children are unable to develop even the most basic of skills in the formal educational system.

Teacher issues and equity in the classroom

Teachers are integral to delivering quality education in the classroom. Good teachers are able to develop, harness and nurture the skills of students and encourage them to learn more and do better. However, teachers often fall short of the mark because they lack the necessary qualifications, academic training and motivation to teach well (Ahmed et al, 2005). In a focus group discussion on why some children never enrol or drop-out, parents reported that teachers had advised them that their children did not have the "brain" to continue study and recommended discontinuation. Parents from poor households also reported that teachers favored well-off children (Ahmed et al, 2007). The lack of teacher training on child labour means that they are not sensitized to the issue or needs of poor children who have to engage in economic activities (Associate for Development Services, 2006). Teachers at primary and secondary levels were reported to use the stick and the 'chalk and talk' method to manage classrooms (Ahmed et al, 2005). The behaviour of teachers is usually the result of a lack of academic training on classroom management. Primary school teachers are required to have completed a one-year 'Certificate-in-Education' course to prepare them before taking classes. In 2007, only 69.7% teachers had completed C-in-Ed training and reportedly there are 305 untrained teachers working in the system (DPE & MOPME, 2008). Continuous professional development is critical in helping teachers to build on their initial training, to reflect and develop on their teaching experiences (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). However, less than half of teachers in government and registered non-government primary schools (30% and 31% respectively) have received in-service training (DPE & MOPME, 2008).

In classroom observations of teachers from government and registered non-government primary schools, it was found that teachers often lacked subject knowledge and made serious errors in teaching the core subjects of mathematics, English and Bangla in terms of their explanation, examples and pronunciation. Rich children have the remedy of private tutoring to compensate for poor teaching in the formal education system but poor children who are subject to the unfavourable treatment of teachers can only rely on the teaching that is imparted in the classrooms.

Whilst there are enough female primary teachers less than a fifth of teachers at the secondary level are female (17.9%). Male teachers may not be sensitive to the needs of their female students and some parents might perceive this as inappropriate from a cultural and religious point of view, so they decide to withdraw the girl children from school and engage them in economic activity (Ahmed et al, 2005).

If classroom is not conducive to joyful learning, children will become disengaged or lag behind in their classrooms and find it even more of a struggle to catch up if the teacher is unable to provide the necessary support. One of the reasons often cited by children who dropped out of school was they that 'did not like school' (Ahmed et al, 2007). Children gravitate towards work because education does not appear to be a better alternative.

G. Household determinants

Decision-making process at the household level on whether to engage a child in work is complex and multi-layered as parents have to take several things into consideration:

- future benefits of schooling
- resource constraints
- immediate and future needs of family
- religious and cultural perceptions
- parents own education and financial situation.

Parental perceptions and expectations of education and child labour

Parental engagement is necessary to tackle child labour and encourage education. If parents are unable to perceive the value or worth of education, then it is almost impossible to withdraw children from the labour market.

According to the National Child Labour Survey (BBS, 2003), the main reason given by parents for sending their children to work was that of needing help to increase family income rather than education being too expensive. No significant differences occur when disaggregated into rural and urban areas. Hence, either the parents are making short-term financial decisions based on income needs or they do not think that there is much economic value in sending their child to school (Khair, 2005). Poor parents are more inclined to engage their children in work because they will gain income generating skills on the job (on a farm, in a factory or shop) rather than in an education system which is far too academic.

In a research study on '*Non-Formal Education and its contribution to the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour*' (Associate for Development Services, 2006b), the main reason parents stated for their child's engagement in WFCL was poverty (56%) and a lack of awareness (22.6%). Furthermore, both father and mother had high expectations for their children and regarded the education of their child as very important.

The degree of importance given by both parents on the education of their boy and girl child is slightly different. Approximately 86% of parents thought it was important for boys to have an education and 81% thought it was important for girls to have an education. The expectation of parents on the minimum level of education that they wanted their children to attain was quite high - 35% of the fathers wanted their son to achieve a Masters and 24% wanted their son to have Bachelors, whereas for girls it was slightly lower, 30% wanted their daughter to get an SSC and 23% wanted their daughter to get an HSC. However, both parents did not expect their child to attain them. Parents perceived many benefits of educating their child, such as better jobs, upgrade of social

status, and that their child would grow up to be contributing citizens. Particularly for girls, 34% of parents thought that by receiving an education, they could arrange better marriages.

It seems that very few parents are aware of the illegality of child labour (11.1%) and most did not know much about the international standard minimum working ages. The pressing financial need of parents coupled with a lack of awareness of international or national measures on child labour and their belief that the educational system does not serve their needs may drive parents to choose labour over education for their children.

Household income and size

Resource constraints such as household income and family size often force children to work in order to meet the short-term financial needs of the family. In a research study on the *'Formal education system and its linkages on the worst forms of child labour: the perceptions of teachers, service providers and other stakeholders'* (Sodev Consult, 2006b), the reasons given by guardians with an income bracket of 5000 taka or less for their child dropping out of school and engaging in WFCL was extreme poverty. In a study on children who dropped out of school and engaged in WFCL (Sodev Consult, 2006a) the two main reasons given were the need to supplement family income (61.2%) and to help with the running of the household enterprise (11.4%).

The majority of working children engaged in WFCL used their income on household expenditures, only 8.1% used the earning for themselves and 1.1% used their earnings for their educational expenses. Approximately 97.4% (or 7.2 million of the 7.4 million) economically active children are contributing all or part of their income to their household (BBS, 2003).

More than half (57%) of child labourers (2.4 million) who were combining schooling and work lived in households with a family size of 5-7 members (BBS, 2003). Almost half (49.1%) of the child labourers engaged in WFCL said that their living situation would deteriorate and nearly a quarter (24.1%) said that their family livelihood would be threatened if their work were to end (Sodev Consult, 2006a). The pressure of low household income coupled with a large family size without the guarantee of immediate returns from education may mean that children are forced to engage in labour to feed the many mouths in their household.

Parent's education

Research has shown that there is strong inter-generational transfer of human capital from parents to children, which means that in households with educated parents, particularly mothers, the child is more likely to go to school and less likely to work (Assad, Levison and Zibani, 2001). Economic status and parental education are closely linked with education participation in Bangladesh (Ahmed et al, 2007). Children from "food surplus" households are twice as likely to be at school, than children in "food deficit" households. Approximately 75% of children whose mothers had secondary education were in secondary school, compared to 31% of children whose mothers had no formal education (Ahmed et al, 2007)

Fathers with children engaged in WFCL were found to be working in low-income and low-skilled professions such as agriculture, day labour and rickshaw-pulling, indicating that they were largely uneducated. 72.5% of the mothers of children engaged in WFCL were housekeepers, domestic workers and non-agricultural day labourers (Associate for Development Services, 2006b).

However, for parents whose children re-entered school after dropping out, the main reason given was an increase of awareness among parents (Sodev Consult, 2006a). As lack of education of both parents is clearly associated with child labour, evidence also shows that work in raising awareness amongst parents on the consequences of child labour and the importance of education has a positive effect.

Age, sibling sex composition and order of birth

Research shows that the age and sex composition and age distribution of siblings are important variables in influencing the incidence of child labour. The incidence of child labour is usually higher for the older children than the younger children and the presence of older siblings creates space for younger siblings to be involved in education (Canagarajah and Nielsen, 1999). There is no systematic research done on the impact of age and age distribution in determining child labour in Bangladesh. However, it would stand to reason that in large families of 5-7 members, older children, able to maximise earnings, would be chosen by parents to work.

Research reveals that female child workers are often underestimated because statistics do not reflect household activities or the work that female child domestic workers do as productive activities (Fares and Raju, 2007). Hence, female child workers are part of a hidden economy and thereby largely invisible in the eyes of people drawing up statistics or forming laws on child labour. Approximately 2.6% of never enrolled female children and 8.3% of female drop outs were reported to be working at a home of their own or at another home (Ahmed et al, 2007). Parents may have higher expectations for their daughter but have even higher expectations for their son when it comes to education, because the son will carry the patriarchal lineage (Khair, 2005). Hence, educating their daughter could be seen to be an opportunity cost that they cannot afford. Furthermore, parents, particularly from rural areas, are more likely to remove their daughter after she has reached puberty because they feel that it maybe unsafe for her to travel to school alone or that she is needed at home more to complete household chores. (Ahmed et al, 2005).

H. Cultural and social determinants

Cultural and social values in any society are not static but fluid, dynamic and evolve as they respond to a quickly shifting social, economic and political landscape. It is important to identify what makes the environment conducive to child labour, what the prevailing attitude is and what the potential levers for change are. Only then can society be mobilized effectively to eliminate child labour and help achieve education for all. Systematic research has not been conducted to identify the cultural and social determinants of child labour in Bangladesh. Some indication about how these factors influence child labour are given from available evidence.

Perception regarding schooling in the community

The construct of childhood varies from one country, culture and context to another. Khair (2005) writes that work is often regarded as a fundamental part of the socialization process where family values and traditional skills are often transmitted from one generation to the next. This is particularly the case in rural and agricultural areas where sons are expected to take ownership of their land and to acquire practical skills in agriculture and farming. School is therefore seen to be of little merit especially when it does not teach practical subjects such as agricultural science (Sodev Consult, 2006b). The same could also be said of girls who are expected to take over household duties or

responsibilities when older or married. Hence, school may not be seen to be the place to prepare children for their future roles in adult life.

Social mobility is not a dominant feature in Bangladesh society. The poor are expected to be in service of the rich and little is expected from them in terms of skills or knowledge. It is normal to employ poor children because society has few expectations of them. This mindset becomes internalized by poor people who have seen little progress or mobility in their lives. This, in addition with other factors, may cause many people to believe that employing child domestic workers is 'normal' (UNICEF, 2004).

The perception of social origin being social destiny is a mindset that has become embedded in Bangladesh and is slow to change. The change can come only through increased awareness in society about child rights, detrimental consequences of child labour and the positive externalities of education for all.

Perception regarding education: Gender, indigenous groups and children with special needs

The most vulnerable child populations in Bangladesh are those who are poor and female, poor and indigenous and poor and with special needs. They face a 'double disadvantage' of being poor as well as being from a marginalized cross section of the population. These three groups face severe disadvantages in education because their needs are often neglected and the curriculum, school infrastructure, learning materials and teachers exclude them from the educational process. In a study that examined the lives of a sample population of girls with disabilities, 64% of girls dropped out of education and 34% reported being unsupported in their educational environments (Anam, 2002). Educational programs for children with disabilities are fragmented and inadequate (World Bank, 2004, UNICEF, 2003). There are only 13 government-supported schools for children with visual, auditory and mild to moderate intellectual disabilities to serve an approximate total population with such special needs numbering 7.7 million (Ackerman, Thormann and Huq, 2005).

Poor parents who are interested in enhancing their earnings perceive little economic benefits and high opportunity costs in educating children falling in any one of these three groups because school, curriculum and teachers are not sensitized to their needs. Hence, child labour becomes an appealing alternative for these parents to an inaccessible and low quality education.

1. Child labour and education: views of child labourers and employers

A child labourer's perspective on work and education.

The perspective of child labourers is essential to understand what determines the decision to leave or never enrol in school and to enter the labour force, so that effective policy or measures can be made to eliminate child labour; address defects in the education system or design educational models according to their needs.

In a study on the perspectives of children who dropped out of school and then became engaged in WFCL, the majority (41.4%) said that they wanted to continue the work they are doing. While the majority (57.75%) stated that education would be useful, a substantial proportion (33.2%) said education would not be useful to their future life. Around 42.2% of children involved in WFCL were unable to identify any benefits to education (Sodev Consult, 2006a). According to the National Children Labour Survey 2002-03 (BBS, 2003), 54.1% of working children identified full-time work for higher

income as part of their future plan compared to the 43.9% of children who identified going to school as their future plan. More female child workers compared to their male counterparts identified going to school rather than working full time as their future plan (47.4% of females, 42.7% of males).

It is reasonable to assume that child labourers did not think that school was the medium to achieve higher income or for developing the skills and competencies needed in the labour market. In the study of children who dropped out of school and became engaged in WFCL, over 41.3% did not have any general or pre-vocational training before entering child labour (Sodev Consult 2006a). Hence, it is possible that households send their child to work because they believe that the child is more likely to learn the skills they need on the job rather than in school. A high quality, focused and relevant education is needed to convince child labourers to withdraw their labour and engage in education.

Employers perspective on child labour and education⁸

It is critical to identify the role played by employers in perpetuating child labour and understand why employers should be targeted to help both in tackling child labour and in encouraging children to re-enter education. There have been some major initiatives to withdraw child labour from industries with the support of employers, such as the BGMEA/UNICEF/ILO project in the garments industry in Bangladesh, which started in 1995. The BGMEA initiative withdrew child workers below the age of 14 years from 2,000 formal sector garment factories, provided them with education and a monthly stipend of about USD \$7. In the informal sector however, where nearly 90% of all economic activities take place and where most child workers are employed largely unprotected, for long hours and in hazardous working conditions, much larger interventions are required to tackle the problem.

Child labour exists because most employers are willing to exploit children and the cheap, docile, unskilled labour that they offer. By employing children on very low wages, employers are able to maximize on their profits (Majumdar, 2001). The National Child Labour Survey 2002-03 data shows that 82% of child workers in Bangladesh do not get the same wage rate as adults in Bangladesh (BBS, 2003). By offering children jobs that adults should have, it creates adult unemployment and underemployment. There is a collusion of interest between employers and parents who are forced or willing to rely on their children to supplement family income. According to the baseline survey produced on hazardous child labour sectors (BBS, 2005), some of the major reasons given by employers for employing children in hazardous conditions was that parents requested them to employ their child (39%) and because they were able to pay low wages (22.5%).

Most of the employers (55%) in the hazardous child labour sectors are aware of the illegality of employing child workers yet they continue to violate these laws because there is no strict monitoring and verification system of child workers in the formal or the informal sectors.

⁸ The study from which the findings are drawn did not include parents that involved their children in their own work.

IV. Eliminating Child Labour and Expanding Educational Opportunities: National Responses

Policy and programmatic responses to eliminate child labour and expand basic education opportunities can be grouped under three categories: a) general education interventions within the mainstream education system; b) non-formal education; and c) specific time-bound project interventions aimed at addressing the situation of working children.

A. Interventions in the mainstream education system

A series of educational interventions have taken place at the primary and secondary level to improve and expand access to all, including girls, children in difficult circumstances, ethnic minorities and children with disabilities. The interventions are intended to raise quality at the primary and secondary level, to stem the outflow of dropouts and encourage promotion to the next stage of education. These include : a) the Second Primary Education Development Programme (2004-2009) or PEDP II , b) the Secondary Education Sector Development Program or SESDP, c) Primary Education and Secondary Level Female Stipend Programs and d) BRAC (BEP) and other non-formal education programs at the primary and pre-primary level.

1. Second Primary Education Development Programme 2004-2009 (or PEDP II)

A sub-sector-wide approach to mainstream primary education. PEDP II is an ambitious sub-sectoral educational development program. The overarching aim is to ensure the achievement of universal primary education by investing in quality improvement at the institutional, school and classroom level, infrastructural improvement and support of equitable access to quality schools. development. It tries to redress the weaknesses of PEDP I, which suffered from 'weak co-ordination and duplication' (Ahmed et al, 2007).

PEDP II has a substantial budget of nearly US\$ 1.2 million⁹. PEDP II will work on strengthening the capacity of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME), improving school infrastructure, providing textbooks and learning materials to students, and the review and development of teacher recruitment, training and management. Work is being done to on strengthening the National Academy of Primary Education as an apex teacher training institute. Furthermore, pro-poor interventions (such as the Primary Education Stipend Programme) are ongoing to vulnerable groups with access to education.

Early indicators are that the project has the right focus on improving and investing in educational inputs and the financial resources to achieve it. However, work still needs to be done to strengthen the institutional capacity of MOPME, particularly the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) that manages the implementation of this project. PEDP II has no specific interventions for working children and therefore does not mention or raise awareness on the child issue, particularly children engaged in WFCL (Associates for Development Services Limited, 2006a).

2. Secondary Education Sector Development Program (or SESDP)

A sub-sector development program focusing on supporting management systems, building quality systems, capacity building and reforming policies. The goal of the

⁹ MoPME (may 2008) RDDP for PEDP II

programme is to address weak and overlapping policy and planning structures; poor learning outcomes; low internal and external efficiency; and limited access and equity.

3. Stipend programs: primary and secondary level female stipends

Stipends have been used in many countries as an educational incentive for poor families, helping to offset the direct and opportunity costs that would be associated with sending their child to school. Therefore, parents who engage their children in work may be encouraged to send their children to school. Bangladesh has two main stipend programs and both have had mixed results.

a) The Primary Education Stipend Program (or PESP) was launched in January 2003 as a substitute for the initial stipend program, Food For Education. The target was to support 5 million pupils throughout rural Bangladesh, who would receive a stipend of 100 taka per month only on the condition that students attain at least 40% marks in term examinations and have 85% monthly class attendance. Research shows that improper targeting and administration has meant that those needing the PESP the most are not receiving it. Over two-thirds of children from the 'always in deficit' in category receive the stipend, while 27% of children who fall in the 'surplus' category are receiving the stipend (Ahmed et al, 2007). The PESP is not a compensation for quality; poor parents are still likely to remove their child from education or the child will drop out of school if they feel that their schooling is of little value to their future.

b) Nationwide Female Stipend Program (or FSP) dates from 1982 and aims to increase participation of rural girls in secondary education and, as a corollary, to prevent their early marriages or engagement in full-time household activities. The FSP provides monthly stipends of 25 to 60 taka depending on grade, which are disbursed in two instalments per year directly to the girls. Stipend recipients receive a tuition-free education and they also receive further allowances such as a book allowance and a discount on examination fees. To be eligible, female students must attend 75% of classes in a year, obtain an average mark of 45% in half yearly/annual examinations and must remain unmarried. Research shows that the FSP has been an empowering experience for girls and enrolment increased. While the FSP has been successful in challenging cultural discrimination towards the education of girls, parents are still likely to remove their daughters from school if they perceive any dangers associated with sending her to school in terms of distance, the time taken to go to and from school as well as the condition of the roads (Ahmed et al, 2005).

B. Non-formal education interventions

Non-formal education programs and their contribution to the elimination of child labour: an overview

More than 700 NGOs offer one or more types of non-formal education programs in the country for out-of-school children, which include working children (Associate for Development Services Limited, 2006b). There are currently over 1.5 million children in non-formal education programs run by international and national NGOs. A 2004 survey (Cited in Associates for Development Services Ltd, 2006b) showed that of these 700 NGOs only 72 were running large-scale programs. An overview of some of the non-formal education programs is provided below:

Table 2: Description of major NGO-run non-formal education programs

NGO	Detail of program
BRAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides ECCD, pre-primary, primary, adolescent programs, programs for indigenous children and children with disabilities. 2. BRAC Primary and Adolescent Primary Schools provide a full primary education. 3. Classes consist of one teacher and 30-33 students. Children receive basic textbooks as well as supplementary learning materials. A student-centred model is promoted. Class hours are flexible making allowances for seasonal work. 4. Parental and community involvement is critical.
Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Runs education and skills development programs in (i) early learning (ii) primary and basic education (iii) empowering adolescent girls (iv) adult literacy and (v) continuing education. 2. Works with formal primary schools in helping Grade 1 or 2 children acquire reflective learning skills and provided remedial support to children with learning difficulties in Grades 3 to 5. 3. With UNICEF and ILO support, runs a non-formal primary education program in urban metropolitan areas, aimed at rehabilitating children aged 8-13 years engaged in hazardous work. Provide courses from Grade 1 to 3 with flexible hours on a daily basis for a year or more.
Underprivileged Children's Education Programme (UCEP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UCEP provides general education and vocational skills training and on-the-job apprenticeships for poor urban working children 2. 30 general schools, 3 technical schools and 6 para-trade training centres. Working children between 11-15 years are provided education from Grades 1 to 8 in condensed form.
Friends in Village Development Bangladesh	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-formal education program built on adult education and primary education 2. FIVD implements a hard-to-reach program of BNFE and UNICEF for urban working children. 3. Runs a child education program, providing high-quality primary education for out-of-school children aged 5-10.
Surovi	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main beneficiaries of non-formal education programs are child domestic workers aged 8-14, brick chippers, street children and destitute boys and girls. 2. Runs a two-year long non-formal education program for child domestic workers, with the aim of mainstreaming, with flexible hours and child friendly classrooms. 3. Runs a MOLE program on 'Eradication of Child Labour' that aims to withdraw children aged 8-14 by providing them with literacy and skills training up to a competency level of Grade 2 to prepare them for Grade 3 of formal education. 4. Runs a quality primary education program providing urban working children aged 5-14 a 9-year program from pre-primary to Grade 8.

Non-formal education offered mostly by non-government organization has played an essential role in providing 'second chances' for out-of-school children such as child labourers to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills alongside other life skills to help them to either transition into the formal educational sector or enter into skilled and better paid work.

The success of non-formal education programs is based on the fact that the programs are flexible, adaptive and responsive to the needs of learners. Non-formal education programs remove some of the direct and indirect costs for households by providing a tuition-free education, and all learning and teaching materials and learning aids free of cost. Furthermore, non-formal education programs reduce some of the opportunity costs of attending education by providing condensed courses and running classes on a flexible basis, so that children are able to work and study. The combination of work and study can be counteractive when children are too tired to study and, therefore, some of the children in non-formal education may derive only the minimal benefits of studying.

The major benefits of non-formal education programs, as mentioned by working children attending the classes, are the teacher-student relationship, parent-teacher relationship, relationship between employers of learners and their teachers, and the relationship between the community and teachers (Associate for Development Services Limited, 2006b).

Working children attending non-formal education programs also saw much improvement in their reading, writing and numeracy, but a substantial proportion said they saw little improvement in their English vocabulary and life skills (Associate for Development Services Ltd, 2006). This indicates that many non-formal education programs may be crippled by the same weaknesses as the formal primary education system in offering good quality basic skills but failing to offer additional skills that can expand the opportunities to poor children.

More importantly, a substantial proportion of working children said that they learnt nothing about issues of child labour and hazardous child labour in their classes, although they had learnt about the negative effects of telling lies and dowry and early marriage. In order for non-formal education programs to contribute to the elimination of WFCL, awareness of WFCL needs to be placed in the curriculum. Teacher training also needs to incorporate a module on the causes and consequences of WFCL.

On the whole, non-formal education programs are more creative compared to formal education in their pedagogy, flexible delivery modes and adaptive curricula. The goal nonetheless is to create an equivalency of outcome in their programs, so that the children can eventually be mainstreamed into formal education. As a case in point, BRAC's non-formal primary education program offers an accelerated four-year program equivalent to formal primary education, enabling most completers to join mainstream secondary education.

The overarching goal of BRAC's education program is to raise educational achievement levels to help alleviate poverty and empower disadvantaged people. BRAC is working in pre-primary, primary, secondary and continuing education to provide cost-effective and quality education with particular focus on girls, ethnic minorities, children with special needs and ultra-poor children. As noted in Table 2 above, BRAC's primary education program offers a full equivalent of formal five-year primary education in an accelerated program of four years, targeting children over age eight (those who have passed the entry age for formal primary school), especially girls, who come from the disadvantaged segments of society.

BRAC schools are located in relatively underserved communities with a minimum number of out-of-school children to justify the establishment of the school. The localities include remote areas, ecologically disadvantaged regions and areas with ethnic minorities. Innovative curriculum and a pedagogic approach has been adopted for children of ethnic minorities and an inclusive approach has been applied to accommodate children with special needs in BRAC schools. Over 95% of BRAC primary school graduates have gone on to enrol in secondary school.

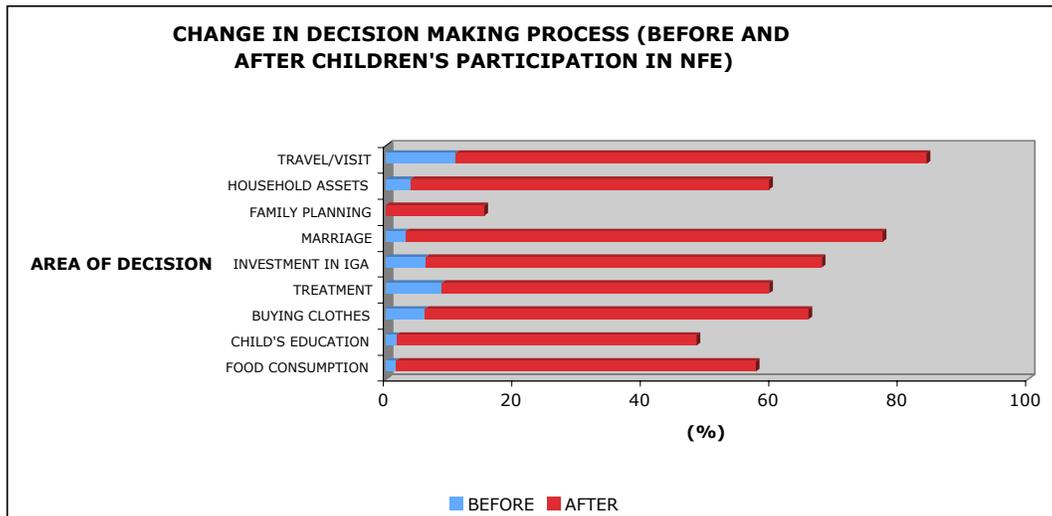
The BRAC primary school model has been adopted by at least 400 other NGOs, many with BRAC's technical and financial support. Other NGOs that are not directly supported by BRAC, such as the Dhaka Ahsania Mission, also have adopted variations of the BRAC model. With some 1.5 million children (over 8% of total children enrolled at the primary level) who otherwise would have missed the opportunity for primary education, the non-formal primary education approach has made a significant contribution to extending opportunities for primary education, mitigating the effects of child labour in those communities.

Community and parent perception of non-formal education

One of the strengths of non-formal education programs is the 'opt-in' of parents and community. The opt-in of parents and community ensures fewer drop outs and greater legitimacy by involving them in meetings between parents and teachers, by getting them to become members of the School Management Committee or by providing them with micro-credit so that children are not withdrawn from the program.

Research shows that NGO investment in relationship building with the community often pays dividend; over 75% of communities either help to provide land for the non-formal education centre, enrol learners or help oversee non-formal education centres and their activities (Associate for Development Services Limited, 2006).

Figure 11



Source: Associates for Development Services Ltd, 2006b

Attitudinal changes were recorded in parents as a result of their engagement with non-formal education programs. More than half (68%) of the parents of working children attending non-formal education programs said that they were more aware of the effects of WFCL and the need to eliminate it. Furthermore, 40.13% said there was a change in the decision-making process, with a significant increase in joint decision-making with family members on food

consumption, children's education, buying clothes, treatment, investment, marriage, family planning, household assets, and travel or visits.

C. Specific project interventions to address child labour

1. National Time-Bound Programme (or TBP)

Following the ratification by Bangladesh of the ILO Convention No.182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the ILO, UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank came forward in 2004 to assist the government to formulate a national Time-Bound Programme that would provide a comprehensive framework for achieving a measurable and timely set of interventions to eliminate WFCL at both policy (up-stream) and field (down-stream) levels. The TBP framework was adopted in 2006 and reviewed in 2008 to assess the relevance and consistency of the framework in a changed development context and in light of emerging child labour issues so that it would continue to achieve national goals. Based on a revalidated TBP situation analysis (undertaken during the preparatory phase of the programme) and issues identified and recommendations made by key stakeholders during the review process, the reviewed framework, called "TBP – The Way Forward". The framework, containing two major strategic objectives, each with a number of outputs, was adopted by a multi stakeholder roundtable meeting held in 2008.

The first Strategic Objective concerns "Policy environment (upstream at national level)" with major Outputs regarding a) Effective national coordination mechanism and structures; b) Policy coherence; c) Strengthened legal framework and enforcement; d) Mobilized employers, workers and civil society; and e) Enhanced knowledgebase on child labour.

The second Strategic Objective concerns "Targeted interventions (downstream at local level)" with major Outputs regarding a) Enhanced knowledge base at local sector level; b) Capacity building and coordination at local level; c) Educational and training opportunities for children; d) Appropriate social integration and protection for children; e) Socio-economic empowerment of affected families and employers; and f) the establishment of a community-based, multi-tier and multi-disciplinary child labour monitoring system.

Various child labour projects that either directly or indirectly support the achievement of the national TBP WFCL elimination goals are currently being implemented. Two major ILO executed projects of support to the national TBP are:

a. Prevention and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Urban Informal Economy of Dhaka City or the Urban Informal Economy (UIE) project. The project, which is funded by the Netherlands Government, commenced in January 2007 and in the current phase will be completed in December 2011. The major objectives are to: i) strengthen the knowledge base and prepare models that regulate, monitor and address hazardous child labour in an urban informal economy for country-wide replication; ii) develop and implement a multi-disciplinary and multi-tier Child Labour Monitoring (CLM) system; iii) provide viable alternatives for children and their guardians, families and/or households and their employers in the form of non-formal education, skill development training, social and economic empowerment, workplace improvement programs, and other needs-based supplementary service programs. A sophisticated beneficiary tracking and workplace surveillance system, social mobilization and community participation and strengthening the capacity of primary (e.g. Government, Dhaka City Corporation, Employers' and Workers' organizations) and secondary partners (e.g. NGOs and CBOs) are complementary strategies.

b. Technical and Vocational Education and Training Reform (TVET) project – funded by the European Commission for a period of five years (2007 - 2011). The project aims to assist Bangladesh in reducing poverty through reforms of technical and vocational education and training policies and systems so that more people can acquire employable skills and thus generate income through wage-earning jobs or self-employment. The rationale for the project stems from the national poverty reduction strategy. The project is intended to contribute to the improvement of productivity in industry and services through better responding to their skills needs; to ensure rapid formation of the national human capital and improved employability of vocational education and training graduates; to enhance labour market participation, social inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged groups –low literate youth, child labourers, women, and rural communities.

The project objectives will be achieved through corresponding components in the project:

- TVET policy, management and systems
- Quality and relevance of TVET
- Management of TVET institutions and teacher training
- Workplace skills development
- Access to TVET by underprivileged groups including working children

2. Reaching Out of School Children Project (ROSC)

Under the auspices of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, ROSC commenced in mid-2004 with the intention of creating primary education opportunities for out-of-school children and students who have dropped out. About 8,000 learning centres have been established and 246,000 children have been enrolled from areas where the drop-out rate is high due to extreme poverty. Out-of-school children receive primary education from Grade 1 to Grade 5 and 45 Child Welfare Primary Schools have been established in metropolitan and other urban areas of Bangladesh. These schools are providing primary and skills-based education to working and street children as well as those who have dropped out of schools. Under the project, a comprehensive management information system has been set up to improve existing monitoring mechanisms and the initial set of 11 education resource providers who will provide training to teachers have been enlisted and trained.

3. Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC)

With support from UNICEF, SIDA and DFID the former Directorate of Non-formal Education (DNFE), Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Government of Bangladesh undertook the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Children Project – 1st Phase (also known as the Non-Formal Education 3 Project) in 1997 and completed it in June 2004. The Non-Formal Education 3 Project targeted 350,000 urban children of 8-14 years in six divisional cities for being provided with a two-year non-formal basic education course. It was realized from the experience of the project that “the education response to child labour needed to be more comprehensive and at the same time more targeted, addressing the special needs of different categories of working children, particularly those in hazardous and exploitative situations, and those whose work prevents them from attending school”¹⁰.

¹⁰ UNICEF BCO, Project Proposal, Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) Project Second Phase, 2004 – 2009, Dhaka, August 2004.

The 2nd phase of the project (July 2004 – June 2009, to be extended to June 2012) is seeking to reach 200,000 urban working children aged 10-14, of which 60% is girls, in six divisional cities, providing them with basic life skills education. The 2nd phase will also pilot with up to 10% of those urban working children a livelihood skills education component. The general objective of the BEHTRUWC Project - 2nd Phase is “to enhance the life options of urban working children and adolescents to access their rights to education, protection and development and participation.”

Strategically, the project has been designed to straddle both education and child rights and child protection. The BEHTRUWC Project 2nd phase uses the strong pointers revealed in evaluation of the Project’s 1st phase in the location and functions of the learning centres (LCs), the selection of learners, teachers and NGOs; and the management of the LCs, etc. Important strategies of the Project include developing a basic education curriculum with use of the national curriculum competencies and significantly supplementing the content to match the need of life skills education, ensuring participatory teaching and learning methods, and applying an integrated approach in advocacy at national levels and social mobilisation at grass root level for awareness about child rights and child domestic workers.

4. Government of Bangladesh ‘Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh’ project

The first phase of the program ran from 2003-2005. The second phase is ongoing and will run until the end of 2009 in the six divisional cities of Bangladesh. The aims of the second phase of the project is to withdraw 30,000 child labourers from hazardous jobs by providing two years non-formal education including training to develop skills, and information to raise awareness about child rights and hazardous work. Over 20,000 parents would be provided with credit support to supplement income loss. Over 76 local NGOs are working under the project.

5. Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS)

BILS runs a Hazardous Child Labour Project funded by the Trade Union Council of Denmark. The project manages non-formal educational centres and technical training services for child workers aged 12-14, in Gazipur, Keranigonj, Mirpur and Tongi. Child workers are provided with basic education, vocational training and information sessions on their rights before they enter the labour market. The project also runs a primary health care service for trainees and students as well as a motor mechanic workshop for intensive training on the trade for the centre graduates.

D. Other actors/programs in the field

NGOs (local, national, international), private sector, unions

There are a number of actors in the field who are undertaking small-scale programs that help combat child labour and ensure access to good quality non-formal education programs. However, the lack of documentation or knowledge sharing between these different actors makes it difficult to assess the impact of these programs. It also means that programs are usually disjointed and fragmented because other actors on the field may be duplicating programs, expending more resources than necessary by running these isolated, small-scale programs and achieving only negligible results. Nonetheless, some of the small-scale programs have been very successful in raising awareness, mobilizing their target population and in being creative in the design of their programs.

1. Child Labour Elimination Action Network (CLEAN) is a regional network formed in 2004 consisting of 40 child-focused NGOs with the key objective of reducing and eliminating child labour from north west region of Bangladesh. CLEAN share information, run workshops and mobilize local actors such as local government to help identify and eliminate hazardous child work.

2. Joint Child Labour Working Group (JCLWG) formed in 1999 comprised of ILO, UNICEF, Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Save the Children Alliance and Centre for Mass Education in Science. The JCLWG aims for better co-ordination and synergies amongst different child labour programs through knowledge sharing, including lessons learnt from various activities undertaken by group members.

3. Domestic Workers' Rights Network (DWRN) was formed in December 2006. The network comprises of a group of human rights organizations and trade unions. The main objective of DWRN is to initiate healthy discussion with policy makers, civil society, different professional groups, trade unions and human rights organizations on the protection of domestic workers. The Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) functions as the secretariat of the network.

4. Together with Working Children (TWC) - a network of nine NGOs initiated by Save the Children, Sweden/Denmark in 2005 aiming to protect working children's rights and reduce hazards at their workplace. Child labour partners of Save the Children Denmark developed this common platform in 2005 to implement an integrated advocacy plan, create scope for experience sharing, knowledge building and information dissemination. The network contributed to the development of the National Child Labour Elimination Policy and a code of conduct for employers of children engaged in informal sectors. TWC is also working as a platform to express solidarity on child rights issues and to raise awareness of relevant actors such as employers, working children, parents and local and national government.

5. Understanding Children's Work project (UCW) - As part of broader efforts toward durable solutions to child labour, the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank initiated the interagency Understanding Children's Work project (UCW) in December 2000. The project aims to improve understanding of child labour, its causes and effects, how it can be measured, and to develop effective policies for addressing it. UCW interagency research collaboration in Bangladesh started in 2008 and is ongoing. It aims to assist the government (Child Labour Unit, Ministry of Labour and Employment) to identify gaps in the existing knowledge base on child labour, analyse the impact of national development policies and programs on child labour and, through a cost-benefit analysis, provide strong and compelling economic arguments for the elimination of child labour.

V. Summing Up: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

A. *Linkages between child labour and education in Bangladesh: Main Findings*

Child labour is a complex and multi-dimensional issue spawned by economic vulnerability, an inadequate legal system and labour laws, institutional barriers, cultural and social inequities as well as the result of an inaccessible and low-quality educational system. Education is key to combat child labour because it ensures and promotes the enjoyment of children's rights to education and protection from harm, enables them to develop their capabilities, and contributes to the formation of human capital. Education enhances children's ability to live a life they have reason to value. Child labour deprives children and society of future income-generating capacities, thereby perpetuating intergenerational poverty. One estimate suggests that the economic and social benefits of eliminating child labour and replacing it with universal participation in primary education will exceed costs by a factor of seven.

Child labour in Bangladesh

1. The latest available data (BBS, 2003) shows that 7.42 million children between the ages of 5-17 (17.5%) were economically active¹¹. Of these, 81% were from rural areas and 73% were male. Scattered data suggests that the rural/urban migration rate is steadily increasing. About 7.5% of the children aged 5-17 (totalling 3.2 million) were categorized as child labourers, with girls often in disadvantaged and discriminatory conditions. Children of ages of 5-14 in child labour totalled 1.9 million (or 58% of all child labourers). The number of children in hazardous work was 1.29 million (or 40%) of children engaged in child labour and 90.7% of them were male. The overall proportion of male child labourers to females was 3:1.

Education in relation to child labour

2. In 2002-03, 33 million children aged 5-17 were attending school (78.7% of children in Bangladesh). About 2.4 million children were attending school and working. Of 9 million children who were not at school, 54% were working. According to the 2007 School Survey Report, the gross enrolment rate (GER) was 98.8% and net enrolment rate (NER) at 91.1%. In 2004, GER was 101.6% and NER was 89.7% for primary schools. The change in GER and NER are positive indications that more children are enrolling and at the correct age. In 2004, about 80% of the primary school-going population studied at government and registered non-government primary schools. Some 1.5 million children attended non-formal primary education programs run by NGOs. Drop-out rates at the primary education level are high at 34.9% (UNESCO, 2008). In 2004, 48% of children dropped out of primary education. Transition rates from primary to secondary level have improved but 17% of children still failed to move on to Grade 6 from Grade 5. Only 2.1% of children in formal primary schools were reported to have acquired all 27 competencies, which could be tested and required by the primary curriculum and one-third of children after five years of school remained non-literate or semi-literate.
3. GER at secondary education level continues to be low, at 65% in 2004. Drop-out rates are extremely high at 83% in 2003; 55.4% dropped out at Grade 10. Enrolment rates are encouraging but high drop out, low transition and low levels of competency raise serious issues of quality of schooling received.

¹¹ Once again, it should be noted that children engaged in domestic chores within their own households are not considered Economically Active, unless a country use the "general production boundary" as measurement framework for child labour (18th ICLS, December 2008).

Relationship between child labour and education in Bangladesh

4. There is a strong and clear relationship between child labour and education; nearly 50% of the students starting Grade 1 drop out of primary education and become potential candidates for the labour market. The impact of child labour is seen in enrolment rates, attendance, school performance, drop out and transitional issues. About 837,000 children were involved in child labour and schools simultaneously in 2003, but 72% of working children were not at school. Their main reasons for not going to school are that education is too expensive, that they are engaged with household economic activities or that they are weak in education and are not successful in their exams. Their reason for being weak and not being successful in education could be due to their irregular attendance because they have to work for long hours. Approximately 63% of working children work 15-29 hours a week. Hence, they fall behind on their lessons, do not have the help to catch up and struggle to understand what is happening in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers may not be sensitive to their learning difficulties and, therefore, offer them little support.

Educational determinants of child labour: issues of access and quality

5. When the economic vulnerability of the parent is coupled with an inaccessible and low-quality education system, the opportunity cost of sending the child to school becomes higher than sending the child to work. Poor households suffer a 'double disadvantage' of having to spend a substantial amount of their household budget on schooling, but can afford only a very basic level of education, usually of poorer quality, without the extra inputs/resources that richer families can buy through private spending. Some of the major educational costs in the public primary education system are private tutoring, books, stationery, transportation, uniforms and lunch. Expenditure increases each year, making it more difficult for poor parents to keep their children in school.
6. There is insufficient provision for primary schooling, even if modest criteria for classrooms, class-size, teacher-student ratio and contact hours are applied. There are still villages where schools are more than two kilometres away, especially in remote areas and in difficult terrains, which may parents make decide to withdraw their children, particularly girls, from school. Formal primary schools have an average student teacher ratio of over 60:1. Overall, in terms of safe classrooms, reasonable student-teacher ratio, and acceptable contact hours with single-shift schooling, there is a shortfall of 50 to 60% in the primary education system.
7. Teachers are central to delivering quality education in the classrooms. However, teachers often fall short of the mark because they lack the necessary qualifications, pedagogical training and motivation to teach well. Teachers at primary and secondary levels were also reported to be wielding the stick to manage classrooms and the teaching-learning method was usually the 'chalk and talk' method, which teachers found easier in overcrowded classrooms. Lack of adequate teacher remuneration, professional support, incentives for professionalism, and opportunities to advance their career are de-motivating factors working against better teacher performance. When the classroom environment is not conducive to joyful learning, children do not learn, drop out and gravitate towards work.
8. Mainstream primary and secondary education reforms and development, such as PEDP II and Secondary Education Sector Development projects, are directed at overall improvement in access and quality; but are yet to give specific attention to, and develop, strategies for working children, taking into account their circumstances

and measures needed in terms of policies and operations of schools to respond to the needs of working children.

9. Stipends have been used in many countries as an educational incentive for poor families, helping to offset the direct and opportunity costs associated with sending their children to school. Bangladesh has stipend programs at the primary level for children in poverty and for girls in secondary schools, both offered to the rural population. The primary stipend program has suffered from improper targeting and administration, which has meant that many of those needing the stipends the most are not receiving it. The female stipend program has been an empowering experience for girls and enrolment has increased. However, neither of the stipend programs is a compensation for poor quality and irrelevant schooling. Parents are still likely to remove their child from education or the will child drop out because of the poor quality of instruction or the negative perception about the value of the education offered.

Household, social and cultural determinants of child labour

10. The decision-making process at the household level to engage children in labour, instead of sending them to school, is a complex and multi-layered process. Parents have to take several things into consideration such as their expectations on the future returns of schooling, resource constraints, and religious and cultural considerations. The level of parents' own education also affects these decisions.
11. Studies show poverty was the main reason given by parents for their children being involved in the WCFL. Parents also considered the skills taught in school would not be required working on farms or in factories or shops. Some were not fully aware of the impact of WCFL on their children. Most parents (father and mother) however had high expectations for their children and regarded the children's education as very important.
12. Resource constraints such as household income and family size often force children to be engaged in child labour in order to meet the immediate financial needs of the family. Approximately 97.4% (7.2 million of the 7.4 million) of economically active children were contributing all or part of their income to the household. Of those involved with child labour (2.4 million), 57% lived in households with a family size of 5-7. The pressure of low household income coupled with many mouths to feed and no immediate, or uncertain, future returns from education are important factors in household decisions about child labour.
13. Economic status and parental education are closely linked with education participation in Bangladesh. Children from households with "surplus" food at home are twice as likely to be in school as children from "deficit" households. 75% of children whose mothers had secondary education were in secondary school compared with 31% whose mothers had no formal education. Research shows that the age, sex composition and age distribution of siblings are important variables that determine participation in child labour. The incidence of child labour is usually higher for older children, the presence of older siblings creating space for younger siblings to be involved in education. Parents have higher expectations for their sons, because in the patriarchal system the son carries the family lineage.
14. The construct of childhood varies depending on country and cultural contexts. Work is often regarded as fundamental part of the socialization process where family values and traditional skills are transmitted from one generation to the next. School is not necessarily seen to be the place to prepare children effectively for their future

roles. Opportunity for social mobility is limited in Bangladesh; it is seen as “normal” to employ poor children in work because society has few expectations for them. This is also a mindset that is internalized by poor people who have seen little progress or mobility in their lives. At the same time, cultural and social values are not static, rather they evolve as they respond to shifting social, economic and political conditions. This dynamism in values is evident to a degree in the greater participation of girls in education and perhaps, in a reduction in the proportion of girls in child labour. This also suggests the importance of social mobilization and the role civil society can play in bringing about change in attitudes and practices.

Non-formal education and child labour

15. Non-formal education provided, mostly by NGOs such as BRAC, DAM, UCEP, GSS, FIVDB and SUROVI and others, have played an essential role in providing ‘second chances’ for out-of-school children, including working children, to learn basic literacy and numeracy and other skills that will help them to either transition into the formal educational sector or enter into skilled and better paid work. About 8% of the children enrolled at the primary level, mostly from disadvantaged segments of society and those who have passed entry age or have dropped out of formal primary school, are served by non-formal primary education system. The success of non-formal education programs is based on the fact that the programs are flexible, adaptive and responsive to the needs of learners. Non-formal education programs try to involve parents through regular meetings between parents and teachers, getting them to become members of the School Management Committee and providing them with micro-credit so that children are not withdrawn from the program.

Specific initiatives to combat child labour

16. Awareness and concern have grown about child labour, WFCL, and working children in general. Specific projects, such as several time-bound projects, have been undertaken to address the problem of children engaged in hazardous work. Issues related to institutional capacity, the large emphasis on quantitative targets, and resource constraints also need to be addressed. The absence of full equivalency between non-formal education and formal education remains a major problem.
17. There are a number of actors on the field who are undertaking small-scale programs to combat child labour and ensure access to good quality non-formal education programs. However, the lack of documentation or sharing of information between these different actors makes it difficult to assess the impact of these programs. It also means that programs are usually disjointed and fragmented.
18. The majority of parents of working children perceive the general education program as failing to offer vocational, income-earning and agriculture-oriented skills. Enrolment for formal technical and vocational education (TVE) at the secondary level is below 3%. However, what is offered as TVE is not well aligned to labour market needs and provides only basic skills of indifferent quality, not highly valued by employers. Formal TVE exclude children who did not complete education up to Grade 8 thereby largely excluding the poor who are most in need of skills development to improve life chances. Vocational and skills training through non-formal education and the private sector do not have sufficient links with the formal training system and a system of equivalency has not been established.

B. Conclusions on child labour and education in Bangladesh

1. Child labour and education is inextricably linked. Child labour impacts on the enrolment, drop out and transition rates at primary and secondary education levels. Also, an inaccessible and low-quality educational system increases the incidence of child labour and thereby undermines the life chances for the most vulnerable in society.
2. The decline in child labour rates and the increase in gross and net enrolment rates over the last 15 years or so have been promising. Available statistics suggest that there has been a decline of 25% in the number of children aged 5-14 entering the labour force. The decline has been sharper for girls compared to boys. However, the precise magnitude of decline, or if a decline has occurred at all, cannot be ascertained definitely because the definitions and methodology of measurement have not been consistent and comparable.
3. The work that has been done by key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, ILO-IPEC, UNICEF, UNESCO, NGOs, and the private sector has raised awareness, improved social mobilization and strengthened institutional capacity and commitment to achieve the twin goals of eliminating child labour and achieving education for all. Work in mainstream primary and secondary education under the purview of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, the Ministry of Education and NGOs have expanded access to education, especially of girls, and to that extent have contributed to the mitigation of child labour.
4. Despite the positive developments noted, the absolute and relative numbers of working children including those involved with WFCL persist as a serious problem. This situation is a key factor in high drop out, low transition from the primary school, low competency levels and is a general impediment to the effective participation of children in education. A significant proportion of children (at least 7.5%) aged 5-17 are categorised as child labourers; more than half whom are involved in the worst forms of child labour, therefore subjected to serious violations of their human and child rights. 17.5% of the children categorized as economically active remain vulnerable to a denial of their rights including full participation in education and a lack of protection from harm.

C. Policy recommendations for key stakeholders

The hazards of child labour and the deprivation of children from their right to education and protection from harm will continue until policies and strategies are not only adopted, but also implemented, to remove the constraints and offer the incentives that children and their families need to favour education over work. Successful measures will require effective partnerships, collaboration and co-operation among key stakeholders and their commitment to make partnerships work. These measures can be solidified only through knowledge sharing, mobilizing technical and financial support and strengthening capacity.

The government must lead the change, build partnerships, and adopt and implement policies and strategies. Along with various government agencies, other key stakeholders who must commit themselves include schools and communities, NGOs and civil society organisations, the private sector (employers and trade unions), development partners, and the media.

Government of Bangladesh

1. The government, with the Ministry of Labour and Employment serving as the focal point, can take critical steps to create policy and signal the political will to address child labour and the denial of children's rights to education and protection from harm:
 - a. The government should approve the National Child Labour Elimination Policy and initiate its implementation. As a step towards implementation of the policy, it is recommended that the ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Child Labour be ratified and the operationalisation of the time-bound program framework for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour be given high priority.
 - b. A National Taskforce on Child Labour and Education should be formed, including adequate NGO stakeholder representation. This body would lead dialogue; advise and maintain a watch on policy implementation; monitor and coordinate issues; and promote adequate mobilization of resources, budget allocations and accountability.
 - c. The *Labour Act 2006* should be effectively implemented. The status of implementation of this act and other legal measures relevant to elimination of the worst forms of child labour need to be reviewed and steps taken to remove obstacles to their effective implementation.
2. With ILO assistance, the Child Labour Unit (CLU) was established in 2008 under the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The CLU is the lead agency responsible for coordinating, supervising and monitoring all child labour-related programs in Bangladesh. Immediate steps need to be taken by the government to ensure the CLU is functioning effectively, which involves:
 - planning, coordinating and monitoring child labour programmes
 - managing knowledge including data collection and reporting
 - strengthening the policy and legal framework on child labour in Bangladesh including heading the process for determining hazardous sectors, occupations, activities and conditions in the country
 - developing and implementing a multi-disciplinary and multi-tiered child labour monitoring system and
 - undertaking advocacy and awareness raising and social mobilization activities.
3. A comprehensive strategy to address child labour and universal primary education needs to incorporate four key components:
 - a. Actions within mainstream primary and secondary education should be taken to: make education more inclusive, flexible and adaptive to the needs of different types of learners; address especially the needs and circumstances of working children and those in child labour; increase public spending on education; expand access and quality of technical and vocational education; develop multi-sectoral monitoring mechanisms; allow for local level planning and a decentralized implementation system.
 - b. Expansion of non-formal education is required, adopting lessons learnt from successful equivalency programs such as NFPE, but adapted to the needs of child labourers and working children.

- c. Special interventions for children engaged in the worst forms of child labour are required. Interventions should adapt a basic education programs to the circumstances and vulnerabilities of these children and offer additional social and economic support essential for them according to their age and sex.
 - d. Synergy and partnership between government, NGOs and the private sector should be encouraged to develop and implement a comprehensive national education programme for both formal and non formal education systems. In particular this would ensure equivalency in the learning outcomes of children in non-formal and formal primary education systems and allow out-of-school children to enter formal education as a means to eliminate child labour.
4. The comprehensive strategy for child labour and education, in line with Education for All and MDG goals, should be incorporated into sectoral plans, national development plans such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, national initiatives on Education for All, and in policies and practices at the local level that promote good governance and effective implementation of education and child labour initiatives. Inter-ministerial co-ordination among MOLE, MOPME, MOE, MOWCA, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Finance and Planning and others should be strengthened for this purpose. The National Taskforce proposed above can play a role in this coordination.

Schools and community

5. The policy measures and strategies indicated above can be meaningful only to the extent that schools and communities accept these and participate effectively in implementing them. A range of actions, adapted for local conditions, include:
- content and learning activities on child labour incorporated into social studies curriculum so that children are knowledgeable about their rights, the legality of child labour, the negative effects of child labour and what can be done
 - child labour awareness training for teachers and content on child labour issues in teacher-guidebooks
 - school, community and local government initiatives to improve provisions and quality at primary and secondary levels including more and better schools, classrooms, teachers, textbooks and learning materials
 - partners of NGO-run non-formal education programs to share ideas and good practices and develop a knowledge base on school/classroom management practices, creative and structured teaching-learning methods and evaluation and monitoring systems
 - monitoring of attendance and school performance and incorporating risk assessment as part of the student progress report
 - building community monitoring systems to verify the incidence of child labour, drop out and never-enrolled children in the community
 - student counselling sessions and after-school programs to support students in their learning
 - preventative work at the local level through raising awareness at the community level; building relationships with community leaders; encouraging parental participation by expanding School Management Committee roles and responsibilities; providing after-school adult-literacy and skills training programs; undertaking more home visits and the head teacher taking a more active leadership role in the community.

Non-government organisation

6. NGOs, through their creative non-formal education initiatives and awareness raising activities on their own and with government support, have demonstrated their capacity and potential to play a critical role. Their contribution can take different forms including:
 - helping directly with the elimination of child labour by reviewing their own education and development programs and activities to incorporate appropriate strategies, objectives and contents; providing and supporting basic education and primary equivalency for children; and undertaking youth and adult literacy schemes, skills training, micro-credit programs and transitional educational programmes
 - promoting child labour and education issues within their target communities through workshops, seminars and dissemination of information about child rights, laws about child labour, and providing support and available resources
 - encouraging and participating in multi-sectoral and inter-sectoral collaborative prevention programmes for the withdrawal, rehabilitation and protection of child labourers
 - increased partnership and networking to strengthen knowledge base, identify good practices, capacity build through research and technical support, and avoid duplication and gaps in curriculum and services.

Private sector, employer groups and unions

7. The private sector, especially employers in formal and informal sectors and bodies of employers and workers, are both positive and negative actors in respect to child labour. Their negative role has to be discouraged and positive role enhanced through appropriate actions, such as:
 - strengthening the alliance between private sector, employers and unions to help eliminate child labour through strict enforcement and monitoring of labour regulations; campaign and advocacy work; and sector-based projects
 - strengthening of public-private partnerships by working with non-government providers and with technical training institutions (TTI) to identify labour market needs; help TTI develop a modular competency-based accreditation system and link up with technical and vocational education providers by offering on-the-job placements
 - developing safety nets, codes of conduct and procurement/recruitment policies to protect children from undertaking any hazardous activities.

Development partners and international agencies

8. Development partners (including multi-lateral and bilateral agencies and international NGOs) are important providers of resources and technical support and allies in creating a positive policy environment. Their contribution includes:
 - assistance to develop institutional capacity at national and local levels by offering financial, technical and program support
 - participating in dialogue with the government and other stakeholders on child labour and education policy and strategy development; encouraging fulfilment of commitments in respect of international and national obligations; and promoting, monitoring and evaluating programs for implementation transparency and accountability
 - providing funding for key initiatives including multi-sectoral approaches to tackle child labour and achieve education for all
 - promoting coordination among all relevant sectors.

Media and civil society

9. The necessary changes in values and attitudes and nationwide mobilization to achieve the envisioned outcomes in respect of child labour and educational strategies rely on the media and civil society taking a central. The media and the civil society mobilized through the media can contribute by:
 - helping to create a national movement against child labour and ensure education for all by increasing awareness and understanding of the issues and by mobilizing public support for action at the national and local levels
 - forming campaigns and advocacy groups at local levels to raise awareness about child rights
 - helping to monitor and report child labour issues
 - lobbying international and national actors, bodies or groups for popular and political support for action against child labour.

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