

Human Right Abuse: A Case Study on Child Labor in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT this paper concern about the child labor in Bangladesh involves different sectors such as agricultural, service and industries. The primary objective of this paper is highlighting the response of parents, community, UNICEF and ILO about child labor in Bangladesh. The secondary objective of this paper is draws successful strategies to use human right frame work for reducing child labor in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Child Labor, Convention, UNICEF, ILO, Human Right

I. INTRODUCTION

Child labor refers the full time employment of children who are under a minimum legal age. In Bangladesh there is no exact definition of child in relation to a minimum age. Sumon (2007) stated that a child as “an individual under the age of 18 years” [1]. This definition is based on the 1989 United Nation Convention on the right of the child and on the 1999 ILO (International Labor Organization) convention on the worst forms of child labor. Sumon (2007) considers that “child labor refer to the economical active population under the age of fifteen years old who are employed in various industries [1]. Bangladesh has a high incidence of child labor because half of its population living below poverty line. For this reason children have to work for their families survive. Poverty and child labor are associated with each other and these have significant impacts on childhood malnutrition and incompetent labor force of a nation [6&7]. Bangladesh population census and Labor Force Survey (LFS) estimated that in 1974 to 1999-2000 the number of child workers of ages 10-14 increased from 2.5 million to 6.8 million [4]. There are different types of child labor in Bangladesh [8]. Some of them are work in industry, some of them are work in agriculture sector, some of them are work in service.

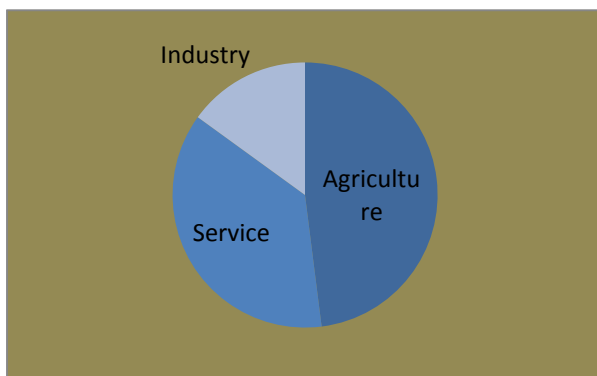


Figure: 1 Sector of employment child labor in Bangladesh by size in 2003 (Source: BBS, 2003).

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In 2003 Bangladesh Bureau Statistics (BBS) estimated a report that there are 48% children are involve in agriculture sector, 37% are involve in service sector and 15% are involve in industry sector [8]. Summon (2007) summarizes that there are five factors that can lead to child labor in Bangladesh. The Author said that poverty is the major cause of child labor. He also said that illiterate and poor are interring related [1]. Illiteracy parents of working children are poor because they are illiterate and illiterate because they are poor. Social factor that can be include dynamics of parents and children as a family unit and socio-economic inequality that can be lead to child labor in Bangladesh [9-11]. International Labor Organization (ILO) also estimated that there are 30% of children’s in Bangladesh are economically active [8].

II. RESPONSE OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY ABOUT CHILD LABOR IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is an agricultural country. In a community most of the people are poor and the average family size is six persons. Most of the families’ father works as a rickshaw puller or day laborer and the mother as a domestic help. Poverty leads to quarrels, tension and can ultimately result in cruel treatment of children. The mother is busy for family domestic work so they can loose interest in her children and neglects them. About 56% per cent of people of Bangladesh are landless. If father is farmer then his children do work in field to help them. For families that depend on wage labor and sharecropping, children become an important source to draw upon in old age and disability. Some time they are send their children factory owner or textile mills owner to work for money. They cannot afford to send their children school because they are poor [12]. On the other hand Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Two-thirds of the population earns their income from agriculture. Every year during the annual rainy season, more than one-third of the country is flooded, significantly affecting the nation’s development and economic growth. When fields are flooded and crops are destroyed, communities lose their source of livelihoods and food. In this situation communities used their children every years different kinds of works because lack of adequate health care, water, shelter, or sanitation [13-15].

III. RESPONSE OF UNICEF AND ILO ABOUT CHILD LABOR IN BANGLADESH

UNICEF already started works with the government of Bangladesh to reduce child labor and establish learning in urban area because in urban area a lot of child labor working in garments industry and textile mills. They through a project called Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC). Their time line is classes last for 2.5 hours a day, six day a week. In this way children are continue to support their families and to learn their

education right way. Their learning centers provide basic education in Bangla, English, Social Science and Mathematics. They also learn life-skills education, interpersonal relationships, critical thinking and decision making that can be help children future life. Students whose aged 10-14 they have to work at least seven hours in a weak. The basic education course duration is 40 months and there are five learning cycles of eight months. Students work and study in small groups. These groups are making according their skill level and sometimes random selection to encourage peer to peer learning [16]. Children also take benefit from the opportunity to socialize with other students and teachers who use interactive rather than punitive teaching techniques. This training can be contributed private sector, export-oriented businesses, family businesses or apprenticeships. It aims to allow children to move into safer employment and earn a better income to improve their life style and their families. This program contributes to national efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Bangladesh.

In 2010 UNICEF also developed National Children Policy and its specific objective is to protect children from child labor. UNICEF has been advocating for the creation of a children code in order to harmonize domestic legislation with the convention on the right of the child including article 32 on child labor [17]. They also work with Ministry of Social Welfare and other Ministry and NGOs to undertake mapping and assessment of Bangladesh child protection system. In 2004 the government of Bangladesh adopted the new births and deaths registration which makes birth registration compulsory for everyone. UNICEF has also improved birth registration rates and emphasized the use of birth certificates as a child protection tool [18]. International Labor Organization (ILO) thinks that child domestic workers are a high risk group and children of sex workers are strong social stigmas that every body hates them. Child sexual exploitation occurs on the streets, brother and in some hotel. They say that the children who are involve sexual works most of them have no birth registration and the weakness of the police force contribute to the placement of children in brothers. They are looking a number of factors that lead to child labor in Bangladesh such as poverty, high rates of adult under employment and unemployment. Employers seek child workers because they are cheaper than adult and easily control them. They also say that child labor is widely accepted in society and the harms of the child labor are not well recognized. In 1999 Bangladesh has ratified the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (No.182) but in 1973 has not ratified the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138). They say that corruption and weak institutional capacity is the main problem in the monitoring process of the government in Bangladesh. The monitoring system addresses only the formal sectors, where as child labor is in the informal economy. Bangladesh government has not taken action to reduce commercial sex with children. ILO convention no.182 requires the government to take effective and time bound measures to

- Prevent the engagement of children in the worst forms of child labor
- Provide the necessary and appropriate direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labor and for their rehabilitation and social integration

- Ensure access to free basic education and, wherever possible and appropriate, vocational training, for all children removed from the worst forms of child labor.
- Identify and reach out to children at special risk
- Take account of the special situation of girls.

In 2001 after ratifying the convention Bangladesh government takes a project to combat the worst forms of child labor in urban areas. At the same time ILO and Royal Netherlands Embassy help a pilot project to develop a time-bounded program (TBM) to reduce the worst forms of child labor [19].

IV. APPLICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK TO REDUCE CHILD LABOR IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is obliged under both national and international law to protect and promote the rights and interests of children. In 1990 Bangladesh government passed the primary education Act and in 1993 it established the compulsory primary education system for children age 6 years and above. In 1991 to 1996 the government of Bangladesh adopted the National Children Policy (NCP) and formulated the national plane of action for children [20]. The constitution of Bangladesh and children's Act 1974 guarantees basic and fundamental human rights and ensures affirmative action for children. The rights are the guiding principles for formulating policies and laws to protect restricting development and hazardous work that can help children to develop in free way. As a result Bangladesh government has taken initially a number of policies and plans to promote equitable inclusive and high quality education to reduce child labor. Bangladesh is a signatory to and has ratified most of the major international convention related to children except for the ILO (International Labor Organization) Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) [12]. Bangladesh has signed and ratified the convention of the Right of the Child (1989) which indicates to protect and promote the rights and interests of the child, such as the right to a compulsory and free education (Article 28 & 29) the right to be protect from exploitative work or performing any work that may be considered hazardous, interferes with the child's education or is harmful to the Childs development (Article 32) and right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27). Bangladesh is also the first South Asia country to ratify the Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (No. 182) in March 2001 which imposes an obligation upon to "take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor 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) [4]. The Government of Bangladesh also ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol as well. Article 7 of UN CRPD ensures the rights of Children with disabilities [20].

V. DISCUSSION

There are many causes like poverty, culture and tradition, barriers to education, market demand, the effect of income

shocks on householder and lack of legislation or poor enforcement of existing legislation that can led child labor in developing country like Bangladesh. Everything has good and bad side's child labor is one of them. Child labor that can destroys - children creativity and innocence because at that time they need to learn something. It can also damaged children physical and mental health and involves children bad activities like drugs, robbery etc. Child labor can also reduce to get good job opportunity because in this life time they need to have a good education. It can also decrease the efficiency of the work force because more uneducated workforce [21]. In developing countries like Bangladesh most of the people are poor and uneducated they are live from hand to mouth. So most of the families are depend their children for their survive. In this situation they can provide their family with a way of paying their way out of poverty. So child labor is a solution to poverty. A survey states that there are 70% of child labor in Bangladesh is members of landless and floating families to reduce poverty. Some one says that in developing country child labor can help their parents to earn money for their daily expenses and it can be also good work experience. Another survey states that there is no link between child labor and education. They said that in some regions the prevailing tradition is that children combine work and school but on the other regions girls in particular do neither because they are very busy with domestic duties [22]. I think that child labor is very harmful of children in Bangladesh that can lead no right way to grow and develop in free way. It can also damage children physical and mental health. We know that children of today become the adults of the future and need invest to protect them. I believe that poverty is a great problem in our country that can lead increase child labor but I don't support this responses that if father is a farmer then his children do work in the field to help them we can change this tradition. Bangladesh is a small country but population size is increases day by day so population is the main problem in Bangladesh for this reason most of the people are poor and they cannot proper take care for their children's. So at first we have to control our population size and ensuring education for all children. Family planning can reduce our population size. We have to building awareness of the parents who are sending their children factory and textile mills for money. I also think that some time they are victim by natural disaster and send their children different kinds of works. Bangladesh is a land of rivers and the people of Bangladesh are affected by floods two major caused [23]. One is three large rivers flowing through the country and another is all of the land is very low lying. At first we have to increased capacity of the river. It is done by building a concrete wall on the river bank raising the height of the bank. If we protect floods then communities are not used their children for this purpose.

To my opinion I would recommend Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) of this program because it can easily reduce child labor in urban areas but we know that Bangladesh is an agricultural country and most of the people live in rural areas. In rural areas so many child labor here so they have to take another project for rural children to reduce rural child labor and give same opportunity like urban children. They have also taken another project like National Children Policy it can obviously reduce child labor I support this project. UNICEF also helps to improved birth registration and at last they are

able to give birth certificates everyone in Bangladesh I believe that this will also reduce child labor. For example when a child comes to industry for work then we can easily identify how many years of his/her age to see his/her birth certificate. I think they can also take another project like building awareness. The benefit of this project is that if the parents will make awareness they can improve public perception, enhanced credibility and image for this way they can not send their children agricultural sectors, textile mills and garment industries [24]. Furthermore, I think ILO convention no. 182 it can reduce child labor in Bangladesh I recommended this convention because it can protect children all hazards works and it can also spread awareness among the children themselves by creating places or clubs for them to come together and empowerment. ILO and Netherlands Embassy also help time-bounded program (TBM) it can reduce the worst forms of child labor because it is includes awareness-raising and advocacy, policy and legal reform, urban informal economy, rural informal economy, basic education, technical education, poverty reduction and unconditional worst forms of child labor. We know that child labor is a great problem in Bangladesh [25]. At first Bangladesh government immediately take action on corruption because if government has corruption then any one can not apply their policy. ILO can also communicate with local NGOs to apply their policy. They also can take another project food for education. For example if the parents send their children for education then they will get food. So most of the parents who are poor they will send their children for education. In this way we can reduce child labor in Bangladesh.

VI. CONCLUSION

Bangladesh is one of the poor countries in South Asia. Most of the families are poor. In a poor family it is simply to understand that everyone has to work. If the children are not want to go for work or cannot earn targeted income each day then their family gives us punishment like scolding beating and not given food etc. So we can see that poverty is the main problem that can increase child labor. First we need to create employment opportunities for family members and financial support to increase income of families. We can make employers and families aware and sensitize regarding child rights. We can also make partnership, collaboration and co-operation among stakeholders and their commitment also we can knowledge sharing, mobilizing technical and financial support and strengthening capacity to reduce child labor. We have to increase public spending on education, expand access and quality of technical and vocational education [35]. “-Khanam (2005) suggest that a combination of policies would be suitable and effective to reduce child labor [26]. Policies targeted at improving school infrastructure, the quality of education and reducing the cost of education, provide the most effective way of reducing child labor [27]. These policies could work better if combined with conditional cash/kind transfers to the householders that send their children to school” [19]. Education reform would be an effective way to reduce child labor. Education reforms it means flexibility in school schedules that can help the children who combine school and work to remain in school and allow classes after finish work. A new type of modeling tools such as micro simulation modeling [28-34] has been developed in many countries for obtaining significant factors for the policy

indicators. Such a model can be used to evaluate different policies concerning the child labor and their health, education and wellbeing. It is also mention that such a level of flexibility in school schedule would serve to enhance schooling as it would effectively allow children to combine work and school in a manner that is consistent with the requirement of their employment needs” [26]. We have to formulate child labor law and its proper implementation. At last everyone should love and care for children not to ignore.

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