



**Understanding Children's Work**  
An Inter-Agency Research Cooperation Project



# Understanding children's work in Bangladesh

Understanding Children's Work Programme  
Country report

*July 2011*

# **UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S WORK IN BANGLADESH**

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Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Programme

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## FOREWORD

The Government of Bangladesh has accorded the fight against child labour a prominent place in its national development agenda and has made a number of important commitments in this area. There is a wide range of on-going Government, bilateral, multilateral and NGO interventions of relevance to child labour in Bangladesh.

But important gaps still persist. The critical challenge moving forward is to extend current efforts within a unified strategic framework to ensure that they effectively address child labour.

The current report aims to help inform national efforts against child labour. The report presents evidence concerning the extent, nature, causes and consequences of child labour, and, on this basis, identifies key policy priorities moving forward.

The report restates the case for placing child labour at the forefront of the national development agenda, presenting a range of evidence indicating that child labour is not only a serious violation of child rights, but also constitutes an important impediment to the achievement of many desirable national development outcomes – the Millennium Development Goals, Universal Primary Enrolment, Education for All, poverty reduction and Decent Work foremost among these.

The report also outlines a strategic approach for the Government to strengthen and accelerate action against child labour, in partnership with employers' and workers' organizations, civil society and international agencies.

There are still millions of Bangladeshi children who are exposed to the dangers of child labour and who are denied primary schooling. It is hoped that this report will contribute to national efforts to ensure better lives for these children.



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Representatives from the Bureau of Statistics, the ILO/IPEC, UNICEF, World Bank country offices and the UCW Programme set the broad parameters for the report and guided the research process.

A number of agency experts provided valuable inputs and guidance at various stages of the report development process. The UCW is particularly grateful to the officials of the Child Labour Unit of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the Ministry of Mass and Primary Education, Farzana Ahmad and Christine De Agostini (UNICEF); Sophea Mar, Ronald E. Berghuys and Bijyoi Raychaydhury (ILO); and Shaikh S. Ahmed, Ashiq Aziz (World Bank) and the World Bank education team in Bangladesh.

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\* The inter-agency research programme, Understanding Children's Work (UCW), was initiated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank to help inform efforts towards eliminating child labour. The programme is guided by the Roadmap adopted at The Hague Global Child Labour Conference 2010, which laid out the priorities for the international community to address child labour. Through a variety of data collection, research, and assessment activities, the UCW programme is broadly directed toward improving understanding of child labour, its causes and effects, how it can be measured, and effective policies for addressing it. For further information, see the programme website at [www.ucw-project.org](http://www.ucw-project.org).

# UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S WORK IN BANGLADESH

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Child labour constitutes an important obstacle to achieving Universal Primary Education and other Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh.*

Child labour constitutes an important obstacle to achieving Universal Primary Education and other Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh. It not only harms the welfare of individual children, but also slows broader national poverty reduction and development efforts. Children forced out of school and into labour to help their families make ends meet are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for gainful future employment, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

An estimated 3.6 million children aged 7-14 years were in employment<sup>1</sup> in 2006,<sup>2</sup> of which about 2.1 million also attended school. A comparison with earlier estimates suggests important progress in reducing children's employment, although survey comparability issues mean that trend estimates should be interpreted with caution.<sup>3</sup> Seventeen percent of 7-14 year-olds were in employment in 2003 (National Child Labor Survey) against 12 percent in 2006 (Annual Labour Force Survey). The apparent progress in reducing children's employment during this period extended to both boys and girls, and to both urban and rural places of residence. But this progress was *not* matched by gains in school attendance, which remained largely unchanged over the period from 2003 to 2006.

There are several important characteristics of the population of children in employment of relevance for policy. First, while children's employment is more common in rural than in urban areas, the rural-urban gap is much smaller than in most other developing countries. Second, there are substantial regional differences in children's employment, underscoring the need for the geographic targeting of efforts against child labour. Third, there are large differences in children's involvement in employment by sex, suggesting that gender considerations play an important role in the assignment of children's work responsibilities in Bangladesh.

It is worth recalling that employment is not the only category of productive activity involving children. An even larger proportion of children are engaged in other productive activities, and specifically

<sup>1</sup> *Children in employment* is a broad concept covering all market production and certain types of non-market production (principally the production of goods for own use) (see also Box 1). It includes forms of work in both the formal and informal sectors, as well as forms of work both inside and outside family settings.

<sup>2</sup> But discrepancies between estimates based on data from Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey (BALFS 2005/06) and MICS 2006 mean that this result should be interpreted with caution. Calculations based on micro-data from MICS 2006 yields a higher estimate of children's employment of 16 percent. Results based on MICS micro-data are presented in Annex 1.

<sup>3</sup> It is also worth noting in this context that estimates based on MICS 2006 do *not* corroborate this downward trend: the MICS 2006 survey yielded a children's employment estimate of 16 percent, almost the same as that yielded by the national child labour survey for 2002/03. Detailed estimates from the MICS 2006 survey are presented in Annex 1 of this report.

*Children's employment in Bangladesh is distinguished by a relatively high urban prevalence, large geographical disparities and by the relative importance of the service and manufacturing sectors.*

household chores. An estimated 65 percent of 7-14 year-olds were engaged in housekeeping activities or household chores in own parents' or guardians home in 2006.<sup>4</sup> Involvement in household chores tends to start earlier than employment but is less time-intensive. Girls are much more likely to perform household chores than boys, and ignoring this form of work therefore biases estimates of children's work in "favour" of boys.

The relative importance of service and manufacturing sectors is also a unique feature of children's employment in Bangladesh. These two sectors together accounted for over half of all non-student<sup>5</sup> children's employment in the country in 2006, while the 46 percent of non-students in employment were found in agriculture. Other forms of employment involving children include the shrimp industry in the sea beach areas and the local cigarette industry ("Bidi workers") in the northern areas. About 108,000 non-student children worked in the former and about 33,000 non-student children worked in the latter in 2006.<sup>6</sup> Significant numbers of children also worked in the dry fish industry in the Chittagong and Kuakata areas.

Children's employment in Bangladesh appears incompatible with schooling, underscoring the importance of child labour as a barrier to achieving Education For All. The school attendance of children in employment lagged behind that of their non-working counterparts at every age in Bangladesh. Not surprisingly, attendance was negatively correlated not only with involvement in work but also with the time children spend actually working. Children in employment also lagged behind their non-working counterparts in terms of grade progression, presumably at least in part due to poor performance, and were much more likely than their non-working peers to be over-aged. These latter results point to the difficulty that working children face in keeping up in the classroom with children that are not burdened with work responsibilities.

Children's levels of educational attainment and literacy are generally low in Bangladesh, in part due to the exigencies of early involvement in work. Over eight percent of 7-17 year-olds, almost three million children in absolute terms, have never attended school. In addition, almost one-third of children from this age group with past schooling experience (but

*Low levels of educational attainment and literacy underscore the importance of expanding and accelerating on-going efforts in second chance education.*

<sup>4</sup> Due to absence of the necessary information about household chores in the Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006, estimates for involvement in household chores are based on the Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey for the year 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Note that the information concerning the sector and modality of children's work is only available for those working children *not* also attending school, a group that makes up about 40 percent of all children in employment.

<sup>6</sup> The standard 3- or 4-digit industry and occupational codes used in the Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey (2005-06) do not match precisely with local industries such as the Bidi industry, meaning estimates should be interpreted with caution.



not currently enrolled) are unable to write a letter. Functional illiteracy also appears to extend to current students – about half of those attending school are unable to write a letter. These figures underscore the importance of expanding and accelerating on-going efforts in second chance education and in providing other services that enhance children's life options.

Not discussed up to this point is the extent to which children's work in Bangladesh constitutes "child labour" for elimination. This question is critical for the purposes of prioritising and targeting policy responses to children's work. Child labour measured on the basis of a benchmark indicator constructed for global comparative purposes is very common in Bangladesh. Over 1.3 children below the age of 12 years were in employment and an additional 1.7 million (12-14 year-old) children in employment were below the minimum age for this type of work in 2006. A further two million older, 15-17 year-old children were at work in hazardous employment. Summing these three groups yields a total of 5.1 million 5-17 year-old children in child labour.

*Determinants of child labour in the country include household income, household head education, local labour market conditions and school availability.*

What are the causes of child labour in Bangladesh? Econometric evidence points to some of the factors influencing household decisions to involve their children in work or school:

- *Household composition.* Children from households with more adults, and therefore more available breadwinners, are less likely to work and more likely to attend school, although the magnitude of these effects are not large. Children from households with more children, and therefore more dependant mouths to feed, on the other hand, are more likely to work and less likely to go to school, although again the size of the effects is small.
- *Household income and land ownership.* Econometric evidence confirms the importance of household income in decisions concerning children's time. Both land ownership and farm ownership also influence the composition of children's activities, and particularly the likelihood of full-time school attendance. Children from households with land or with a farm business are about five percentage points more likely to attend school full-time, while at the same time slightly less likely (about one percentage point) to work full-time in employment.
- *Education of household head.* The effect of an increase of parents' education levels on children's school attendance is strong and positive. Children from households where the head has at least a primary education are six percentage points more likely to attend school full-time relative to children from households whose heads are uneducated. A secondary education level results in a further five percentage point rise in the likelihood of full-time school attendance.

*Bangladesh has made a number of important legal commitments relating to child labour but important gaps remain in terms of children's legal protection.*

Higher levels of parental education reduce children's risk of full-time employment, though the size of the effect is not large.

- *Local labour demand and supply.* Household decisions concerning children's work and schooling also appear strongly influenced by local labour market conditions. Higher labour demand results in a large rise in the likelihood of children's full-time employment and a large fall in the likelihood of full-time school attendance. The relative supply of children and youth workers with respect to adult workers also appears to have a positive impact on the probability of children's employment.
- *School availability.* The presence of a primary school in a village makes it much more likely that families send their children to school. Providing a local primary school makes it six percentage points more likely that a child attends school full-time, while at the same time reducing a child's risk of full-time employment by two percentage points. This result underscores that school distance can constitute an important barrier to school attendance in Bangladesh, particularly in rural areas.

Bangladesh has made a number of important legal commitments in the areas of child labour and children's schooling. The Government has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms), but not ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age). The Labour Act enacted in 2006 replaced the range of fragmentary laws related to child labour in force previous to this date and established a uniform minimum age for admission to work. Important gaps, however, remain in terms of children's legal protection from child labour. Current legislation focuses on formal or semi-formal work settings and largely ignores the employment of children in the rural economy. No reference is made in the legislation to the agriculture sector (with the exception of tea plantations), to small-scale informal sector businesses or to family-based employment, which collectively account for as much as 80 percent of total children's employment. The lack of adequate legislative provisions relating to hazardous work is a particular concern. The enforcement of child labour legislation outside the export-oriented garment sector also remains a major challenge.

Child labour is a complex phenomenon that cuts across policy boundaries. In order to achieve continued progress against it, a policy response is required that is cross-sectoral, coordinated and comprehensive in nature. There is a wide range of on-going Government, bilateral, multilateral and NGO interventions of relevance to child labour in Bangladesh. But implementation is constrained by resource and capacity constraints, and by a lack of cohesion and coordination among concerned actors. Important gaps in the policy framework relating to child labour also persist. The critical challenge moving forward is to

Specific priorities include strengthening legislation, promoting quality schooling, extending ECD opportunities, second chance learning, reducing indirect school costs and expanding social protection.

extend current efforts within a unified strategic framework to ensure that they effectively address child labour.

There are a number of specific priorities for accelerating progress in the fight against child labour in Bangladesh:

- *Strengthening legislation:* Labour legislation consistent with international child labour standards is necessary both as a statement of national intent and as legal and regulatory framework for efforts against child labour. Bangladesh made important progress in this regard with the passing of the new Labour Act in 2006, but, current legislation still does not constitute a comprehensive legal framework for protecting children against child labour, and in particular those working in informal sectors. Raising the rate of birth registration is also a critical element in enforcing legislation relating to minimum age for entry into work.
- *Promoting quality schooling:* Combating child labour requires investing in education as its logical alternative. There is a particular need to address the access and quality issues influencing parents' decisions to enrol and keep their children in school, including curricular relevance, teacher capacity and pedagogical methods. There are a wide variety of programmes underway addressing primary and second education, second chance education, direct and indirect schooling costs and vocational training, but there remains a need to improve their coordination and strategic coherence within the broad framework provided by the new National Education Policy.
- *Extending early childhood development (ECD).* ECD programmes can promote learning readiness, increase school enrolment and school survival, and help keep children away from work in their early years. The government, recognising the importance of early childhood development, would like to ensure that ECD education is available in rural areas and that it is particularly targeted at children from poor families and first-time school goers. In the absence of adequate budgetary resources for the large-scale provision of the ECD programmes, the government has an important role to play in laying the regulatory and administrative groundwork for a national ECD network.
- *Second chance and life skills education.* Extending school access to child labourers and other disadvantaged groups who are out of school poses a particular challenge. Second chance and life skills education programmes can play an important potential role in this context. The Reaching Out of School Children Project (ROSC) operated by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children project implemented by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education are the major government programmes for reaching disadvantaged children

A policy response to child labour is required that is cross-sectoral, coordinated and comprehensive in nature.

with second chance learning opportunities. The results of an on-going impact evaluation of the ROSC programme, expected in early 2011, will help assess the programme's potential to increase school enrolment and student learning outcomes.

- *Offsetting the direct and opportunity costs of schooling.* Additional measures are needed to account for the indirect or opportunity costs associated with children's school attendance. Particularly important in terms of offsetting schooling costs will be extending and improving the targeting of the country's main conditional cash transfer schemes. These include the Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP), which provides cash transfers conditional on children attending 85 percent of school days and obtaining at least 40 percent in the annual examination empirical results, and the Cash for Education programme, which also provides cash transfers to households of children in poor areas on condition that children are enrolled at school and maintain a minimum attendance level.
- *Expanding social protection.* Social protection instruments serve to prevent vulnerable households from having to resort to child labour as a buffer against negative shocks. The government recognises that reducing household vulnerability by expanding social protection is a critical priority in the country, and is implementing programmes in a number of areas. Taken together, however, these efforts fail to cover a large portion of those in need. The need to scale-up and strengthen efforts relating to social protection therefore constitutes a particular priority.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Child labour constitutes an important obstacle to achieving Universal Primary Education and other Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh. It not only harms the welfare of individual children, but also slows broader national poverty reduction and development efforts. Children forced out of school and into labour to help their families make ends meet are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for gainful future employment, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

2. The current report provides an overview of the child labour phenomenon in Bangladesh – its extent and nature, its determinants, and its consequences on education. The report also addresses the national response to child labour, and policy options for its elimination. The analysis considers the various causes of child labour and follows a cross-sectoral approach, especially in the identification of determinants and strategic options. Particular attention is given to the links between child labour and schooling, and to the importance of child labour as a constraint to Education For All. The 2005-2006 Annual Labour Force Survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is the primary dataset; additional information is drawn from the 2006 Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey carried out by BBS in collaboration with UNICEF.

3. Three related objectives are served by the report: (1) to improve the information base on child labour, in order to inform policy and programme design; (2) to promote policy dialogue on child labour and accelerated progress towards national child labour reduction targets; and (3) to promote regular child labour data collection and analysis.

4. The remainder of the report is organised as follows. Section 2 outlines the process by which the report was developed. Section 3 briefly reviews the national context and the socio-economic conditions underlying the child labour phenomenon in the country. Section 4 presents descriptive data on the nature and extent of children's work and Section 5 assesses the sub-group of working children in child labour in accordance with international child labour measurement standards. Section 6 looks at the educational and health impact of child labour and Section 7 at factors influencing household decisions to involve their children in work rather than schooling. Section 8 discusses the national response to child labour. Section 9 looks at policy options for the progressive elimination of child labour.

## 2. REPORT METHODOLOGY

5. The report was developed under the aegis of a Working Group, comprised of the Child Labour Unit (CLU) of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and, of the Ministry of Mass and Primary Education, as part of its mandate for knowledge management in the area of child labour.

6. Representatives from the Bureau of Statistics, the ILO/IPEC, UNICEF, World Bank country offices and the UCW Programme, set the broad parameters for the report and guided the research process. The representatives of the Working Group will also act to ensure that the research results are “mainstreamed” into programmes and projects at field level upon publication of the report.

7. Other concerned Government ministries and bodies, international development partners, employers’ and workers’ organisations and representatives from civil society provided feedback and input at various stages in the development of the report.

8. The research initiative was launched in mid-2008 with the convening of the Steering Committee and agreement on the parameters and modalities for the research process. Report development began in the first quarter of 2009, and a first draft of the report was completed and shared for detailed comment in mid-2009. A revised draft of the report, incorporating feedback from actors inside and outside the Steering Committee, was completed in mid-2010. Following a further round of comments and discussion, the report was finalised in the first quarter of 2011. A national workshop will be held in the second quarter of 2011 to present the report results and discuss follow-up to it.

9. A background study on policies and legislation with a bearing on child labour was undertaken to feed into the report. The study looked at child labour policies and programmes, and the extent to which child labour concerns have been mainstreamed into broader national and sectoral development plans. The study also looked at current legislation on child labour, its consistency with international child labour norms, and the efficacy of implementation, enforcement and monitoring mechanisms.

10. A training workshop on child labour data analysis was also undertaken in support of the research process. The workshop, held in Dhaka in May 2009, covered child labour concepts and terminology, as well as the processing and analysing of child labour survey data. It was designed to leave participants with the understanding and technical skills needed to help produce detailed, policy-oriented assessments of the child labour phenomenon in the country.

### 3. NATIONAL CONTEXT: FACTORS UNDERLYING THE CHILD LABOUR PHENOMENON IN BANGLADESH

11. Bangladesh is located in the Ganges Delta bordered on the west, north, and east by India, on the southeast by Burma (Myanmar), and on the south by the Bay of Bengal. The country's total area of 144,000 sq km is primarily flat and low-lying, and subject to annual flooding; most land areas are less than 12 metres above the sea level, and therefore extremely vulnerable to climate-related rises in the level of the sea. The land is devoted mainly to rice and jute cultivation, although recent years have also seen a rise in the production of wheat. Geographically, historically, and culturally, Bangladesh forms the largest and most populous part of Bengal, the remainder of which constitutes the neighbouring Indian state of West Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

12. The country's total population of 156 million (2009) – eighth largest in the world – is growing at an annual rate of 1.29 percent (2009). Almost 40 percent of the population is below the age of 15, and 50 percent between the ages of 10 and 24, meaning dependency rates are very high.<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh is among the most rapidly urbanising countries in the world. The capital and largest city, Dhaka, home to 5.4 million persons (2006 estimate), is one of the world's fastest-growing metropolitan areas.

13. Bangladesh has seen impressive progress since the beginning of the 1990s. Very poor when it won its independence in 1971, and suffering from massive war-related damage to its institutional and physical capital, Bangladesh has achieved a positive development record, outperforming many South Asian and other developing countries. The advent of democracy in the early 1990s was accompanied by a quickening in the pace of economic reforms with greater macroeconomic stability, a trend towards openness, and economic deregulation. Notwithstanding these advances, the country's development agenda remains daunting. State institutions remain weak, with the judicial system, public financial management, public administration, and local governance all in need of substantial reforms. In 2006, Bangladesh ranked 147th out of 177 countries in the human development index (HDI).<sup>3</sup>

14. Bangladesh experienced sustained economic growth over the last decade and a half; the economy grew by an average of almost five percent per year

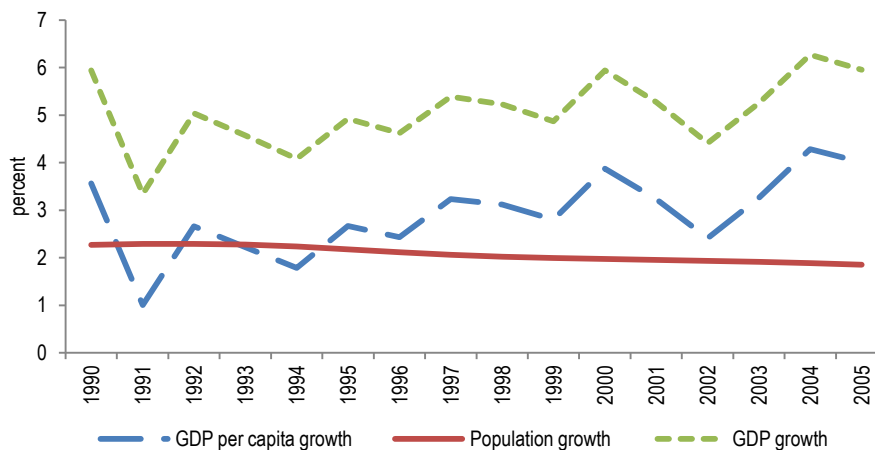
<sup>1</sup> This section is drawn primarily from the following documents: Bangladesh – *Country Assistance Strategy 2006-2009*, (World Bank, 2006); Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, *Bangladesh: strategy for sustained growth*, Bangladesh Development Series N.18, 2007

<sup>2</sup> *The common country assessment, Bangladesh*, United Nations (2005), and [http://www.unfpa-bangladesh.org/php/about\\_bangladesh.php](http://www.unfpa-bangladesh.org/php/about_bangladesh.php)

<sup>3</sup> The human development index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, as measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge, as measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools; and a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) US dollars. United Nations Development Program, [http://hdrstats.undp.org/2008/countries/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_BGD.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/2008/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_BGD.html)

throughout the 1990s and maintained this pace in the first part of the current decade. At the same time, inflation has remained relatively low and domestic debt, interest and exchange rates have been fairly stable. This growth, coupled with reduced population growth, has led to a steady increase of the gross national income (GNI) per capita, from US\$270 in 1990 to US\$470 in 2007.<sup>4</sup> Growth has been broad-based, but has benefited in particular from strong exports, mainly in garments. Large remittance inflows fuelled growth in construction and services sectors. The country's future growth prospects have been dimmed somewhat by the effects of the global economic slowdown on exports and remittances and by lower domestic demand.

Figure 1. Trends in economic and population growth, 1990-2005



Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank (2007)

15. Bangladesh witnessed major progress in reducing poverty in the first half of the current decade, but poverty levels nonetheless remain high. An estimated 40 percent (25 percent) of the population lived below the upper<sup>5</sup> (lower<sup>6</sup>) poverty line in 2005, down from 49 percent (34 percent) in 2000. In absolute terms, the population below the upper and lower poverty line declined by nearly six million and 8.3 million respectively between 2000 and 2005, but still leaving around 56 million Bangladeshis below the (upper) poverty line, 35 million among whom were below the lower or extreme poverty line. Progress extended to both rural and urban areas of residence, though the decline was higher in urban areas. Rural areas in 2005 accounted for 75 percent of the total population of Bangladesh, but for 82 percent of the poor population. Progress in reducing poverty extended to all divisions with the exception of Barisal and Khulna, although the size of the poverty decline

<sup>4</sup> *The Common Country Assessment, Bangladesh*, United Nations (2005)

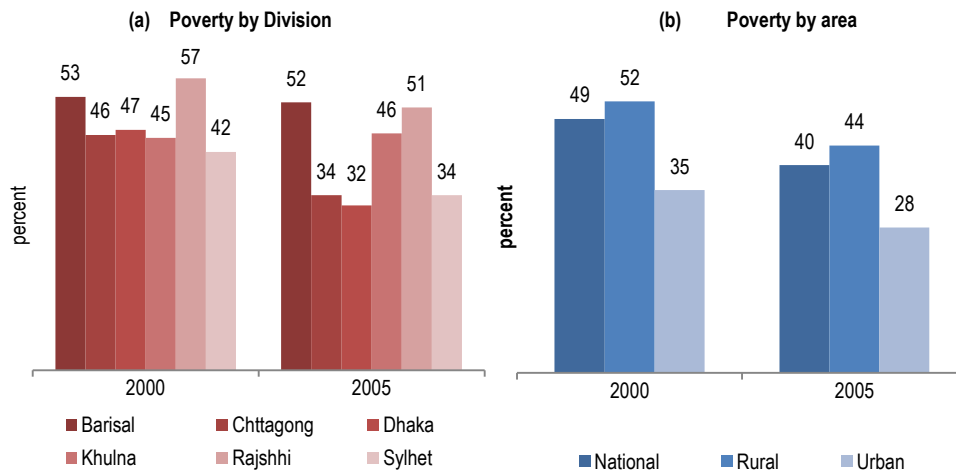
<sup>5</sup> Set at 2,122 kilo calorie per capita per day.

<sup>6</sup> Set at 1,805 kilo calorie per capita per day.



varied considerably across divisions and large differences in poverty levels by division persisted in 2005.

Figure 2. Incidence of poverty by division and residence, 2000 and 2005/06



Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

16. Distributionally sensitive measures of poverty also declined over the 2000-2005 period: the depth of poverty (measured by poverty gap) declined by 30 percent and severity (measured by squared poverty gap) by 37 percent. A fall in the poverty gap measure indicates that the average “distance” of the poor from the poverty line fell; a decline in squared poverty gap indicates that the distribution of consumption among the poor has become more equitable.<sup>7</sup> These improvements occurred at similar rates for the poor populations in urban and rural areas.






17. The rapid decline in poverty during 2000-05 was product of a large, across the board, rise in per capita consumption expenditure. Per capita consumption expenditure increased by 12 percent in real terms between 2000 and 2005 – an average annual growth rate of 2.3 percent. The growth in consumption occurred for both the poor and non-poor: per capita consumption of the poorest and richest population deciles grew by 14 percent in real terms between 2000 and 2005, and that of the second-poorest and second-richest deciles by 12 and 11 percent respectively.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with the growth patterns, relative inequality as measured by the Gini index of per capita real consumption for the country showed no change between 2000 and 2005. Progress in reducing the non-income poverty has also been substantial

<sup>7</sup> Ambar Narayan, Nobuo Yoshida and Hassan Zaman, *Trends and Patterns of Poverty in Bangladesh in Recent Years*. A background paper for Bangladesh Poverty Assessment (2007), South Asia Region, World Bank.

<sup>8</sup> Ambar Narayan, Nobuo Yoshida and Hassan Zaman, *Trends and Patterns of Poverty in Bangladesh in Recent Years*. A background paper for Bangladesh Poverty Assessment (2007), South Asia Region, World Bank.

in Bangladesh, as evidenced by the human poverty index (HPI). The index, which reflects the proportion of people below a threshold level in three dimensions of human development, i.e., living a long and healthy life,<sup>9</sup> having access to education,<sup>10</sup> and a decent standard of living,<sup>11</sup> declined from 43.3 in the early 2000s to 36.9 in 2006.<sup>12</sup>

Table 1. Status of Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh

 <p>1 ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER</p>	<p><b>Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger</b> There is indication that Bangladesh is on its way to achieve targeted prevalence of poverty by 2015, however, meeting the target of hunger within the given time frame remains uncertain. Rising inequality is offsetting some of the gains in poverty reduction.</p>
 <p>2 ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION</p>	<p><b>Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education</b> Significant progress has been made in primary education towards achieving the NER target, rising from 61 percent in the 1990/91 base year to 92 percent in 2008. However, Bangladesh will be unable to meet the targets for the proportion of pupils completing the primary school cycle, as well as for the literacy rate of 15-24 year olds by 2015.</p>
 <p>3 PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN</p>	<p><b>Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women</b> Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education. Indeed, in primary education, historical trends have been reversed and it is now low levels of male relative to female enrolment that are cause for concern. The country still lags behind in terms of achieving gender parity in tertiary education. Non-agricultural wage employment for women has increased at a slow rate leading to a decline in women's share in non-agricultural wage employment.</p>
 <p>4 REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY</p>	<p><b>Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality</b> The country is on track with regard to achieving this goal. Significant strides have been made in all three indicators and if the trend sustains, the country will meet the 2015 target well ahead of schedule.</p>
 <p>5 IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH</p>	<p><b>Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health</b> Maternal mortality rate (MMR) declined by 40 percent during the 1990-2005 period and remained stable around 350 per 100,000 in the following four years. Wide differences are observed in MMR across regions as well as income classes. The proportion of child birth attended by skilled birth attendants (SBA) increased substantially but it is still very low.</p>
 <p>6 COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES</p>	<p><b>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases</b> Short and long-term trends show a decline in number of malaria cases and deaths through 2009 as a result of major interventions for malaria control. The rate of multidrug-resistant TB, though increasing, appears still low and does not yet have an important impact on the country's epidemiology.</p>
 <p>7 ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY</p>	<p><b>Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability</b> Bangladesh is likely to meet quantitative targets for just three of the ten indicators; namely, CO2 emissions, consumption of ozone depleting substances and the proportion of the population using an improved drinking water source.</p>
 <p>8 GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p><b>Goal 8: Develop a Global partnership for Development</b> Although the share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in national income has been declining steadily and disbursements of ODA have consistently been below commitments, ODA allocations to pro MDG sectors have witnessed an upswing since the mid 2000s.</p>

Source: *Millennium Development Goals: 2009 Bangladesh Progress Report for Millennium Development Goals*. General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

<sup>9</sup> As measured by the proportion of people who are not expected to survive age 40.

<sup>10</sup> As measured by the adult illiteracy rate.

<sup>11</sup> As measured by the unweighted average of people without access to an improved water source and the proportion of children under age 5 who are underweight for their age.

<sup>12</sup> *The Human development report 2001*, UNDP (2001), and [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_BGD.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_BGD.html)

18. Bangladesh is on track in relation to some but by no means all of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets (Table 1). The country will likely achieve the targeted prevalence of poverty by 2015, but meeting the target of hunger within the given time frame remains uncertain. With regard to targets such as expansion of primary and secondary education, infant and child mortality rate, containing the spread and fatality of malaria and tuberculosis, Bangladesh has done remarkably well and may well reach several of these targets before the stipulated time.

19. Improving maternal health stands out as a key remaining challenge faced by the country. Bangladesh is also struggling in terms of maintaining protected areas, especially the wet lands, for bio-diversity. Access to safe drinking water and sanitary latrines, particularly in the rural areas, is also an aspect where focus is required. Yet another challenge that Bangladesh faces is in addressing pockets of poverty that are lagging far behind with respect to the national averages and where the benefits of MDGs attainment need to be specifically reached. These areas include the urban slums, the hill tracts, coastal belts and other ecologically vulnerable areas.<sup>13</sup>

20. Primary net enrolment rates increased significantly over the last 15 years, but coverage is still not universal, and far fewer children are attending school than are enrolling. The net primary school enrolment rate (NER) increased from 61 percent in 1990 to 94 percent in 2009. Sex disparities in primary enrolment have reversed since the start of the second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) and the enrolment of girls now significantly surpasses that of boys. Indeed, the widening gap between boys and girls is raising concerns: NER for girls has risen from 5.5 percent above boys in 2005 to 10 percent above boys in 2009. As such, Bangladesh may need to cautiously re-examine achievement of gender parity in primary enrolment, and reconsider policy interventions targeting groups left behind.

21. The primary school completion rate (i.e. the proportion of pupils starting grade one that reach grade five) rose from 43 percent to 55 percent over the period from 1990 to 2008, but remains far below the MDG target of 100 percent completion. Repetition rates also remain high (39 percent), resulting in a child needing 6.6 years on average to complete a five-year primary education cycle. The number of contact hours students spend at school is limited. Grade 1 and 2 students in formal school attend class for only 2.5 hours a day. Grades 3, 4 and 5 students spend four hours a day at school. The annual contact time is lower than 590 hours, one of the lowest in the world. As a result, children's achievement levels are far below the national targets. Only about half of the primary school graduates achieve the minimum national curriculum competencies.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Drawn from <http://www.undp.org.bd/mdgs.php>.

<sup>14</sup> The second primary education development programme (PEDP – II), UNICEF, [http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Quality\\_Primary\\_Education\\_\(PEDP-II\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Quality_Primary_Education_(PEDP-II).pdf)

22. Among those who are not enrolled and those who have dropped-out, a significant number come from poor households and live in rural areas, urban slums, coastal areas and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).<sup>15</sup> Raising enrolment among children from urban slums constitutes a particular challenge. Statistics from the 2009 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey indicate that children living in urban slums are less likely to attend and more likely to drop out of all stages of education than anywhere else in Bangladesh: only 13 percent of children in slums attend pre-school (10 percentage points below the national average); only 65 percent of children in slums attend primary school; children in slums are six times more likely to drop out of primary and secondary school compared to the national average; and only 18 percent of children in slums attend secondary school.

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<sup>15</sup> *Millennium Development Goals, Bangladesh Progress Report*, jointly prepared by the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Country Team in Bangladesh (2005)

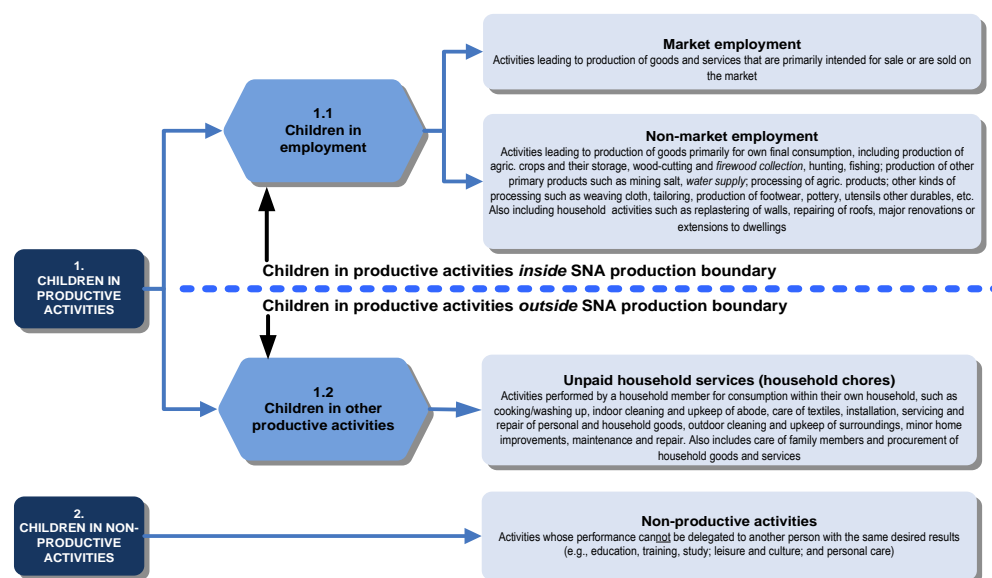
#### 4. CHILDREN'S WORK AND SCHOOLING

23. This section looks at the time use patterns of children in Bangladesh, focusing in particular on the extent of children's involvement in work and schooling. The analyses in this and the remaining sections are based primarily on data from the 2005-2006 Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey (BALFS 2005/06), a nationally representative household-based survey designed to study the participation in and characteristics of the Bangladesh labour force. Some additional estimates, which could not be derived from the BALFS 2005/06 dataset, are based on the 2006 Bangladesh Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS) and the 2002/03 Bangladesh National Child Labour Survey (NCLS).

##### Box 1. Children's work and child labour: A note on terminology

Terminology and concepts used for categorising children's work and child labour (and in distinguishing between the two) are inconsistent in published statistics and research reports, frequently creating confusion and complicating cross-country and longitudinal comparisons. In this study, "children's work", is used broadly to refer to all productive activities performed by children. Productive activities, in turn, are defined as all activities falling within the general production boundary, i.e., all activities whose performance can be delegated to another person with the same desired results. This includes production of all goods and the provision of services to others within or outside the individual's household.

In accordance with the standards for national child labour statistics set at the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Res. II), the study distinguishes between two broad categories of child workers – children in employment and children in other productive activities. The definition of **children in employment** in turn derives from the System of National Accounts (SNA) (Rev. 1993), the conceptual framework that sets the international statistical standards for the measurement of the market economy. It covers children in all market production and in certain types of non-market production, including production of goods for own use. **Children in other productive activities** are defined as children in productive activities falling outside the SNA production boundary, consisting mainly of unpaid work activities performed by household members in service to the household and its members, i.e., household chores.



**Box 1.Cont'd**

The term “**child labour**” is used to refer to the subset of children’s work that is injurious, negative or undesirable to children and that should be targeted for elimination. It can encompass both children in employment and children in other productive activities. Three main international conventions – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms) and ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) – provide the main legal standards for child labour and a framework for efforts against it. Child labour in the context of Bangladesh is defined primarily by the Labour Act enacted in 2006. The specific statistical definitions used to measure child labour in the context of Bangladesh are discussed in Section 5 of this report.

#### 4.1 Involvement in work and schooling

24. Children’s involvement in work is common in Bangladesh. An estimated 3.55 million children aged 7-14 years and 2.8 million children aged 15-17 years were in employment<sup>16</sup> in 2005/06 (Table 2).<sup>17</sup> An even larger number of Bangladeshi children in both age groups worked in other productive activities<sup>18</sup> during this period (see Box 1 on terminology), as discussed further below. A comparison with previous survey data points to progress in reducing children’s employment: 17 percent of 7-14 year-olds were in employment in 2002/03 against 12 percent in 2005/06. Child labour trends are discussed further in section 4.2.

Table 2. Child activity status, by age group and sex, 2005/06

Activity status	Children aged 7-14 years		Children aged 15-17 years	
	No.	%	No.	%
Total in employment	3,551,440	11.6	2,803,860	47.5
Total in schooling	25,973,940	85.1	2,476,830	41.9

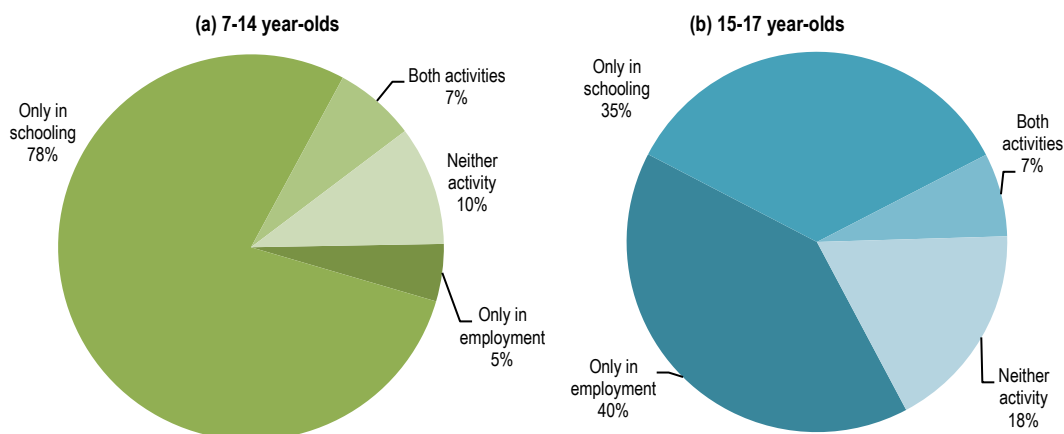
Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

<sup>16</sup> *Children in employment* is a broad concept covering all market production and certain types of non-market production (principally the production of goods for own use) (see also Box 1). It includes forms of work in both the formal and informal sectors, as well as forms of work both inside and outside family settings.

<sup>17</sup> But discrepancies between estimates based on data from Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey (BALFS 2005/06) and MICS 2006 mean that this result should be interpreted with caution. Calculations based on micro-data from MICS 2006 yields a higher estimate of children’s employment of 16 percent. Results based on MICS micro-data are presented in Annex 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Children in other productive activities* are those performing unpaid domestic and personal services to their own household and its members. These production activities comprise items such as cleaning, preparing meals and care of other household members (see also Box 1).

Figure 3. Distribution of children by activity category, 7-14 years and 15-17 years age groups, 2005/06



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

25. Another way of viewing children's involvement in employment and schooling is by disaggregating the child population into four non-overlapping activity groups – children only in employment, children only attending school, children combining schooling and employment and children doing neither (Table 3 and Figure 3). This disaggregation shows that in 2005/06, seven percent of all 7-14 year-olds worked in employment and attended school at the same time, and five percent worked in employment without also going to school. A further 78 percent of all children aged 7-14 attended school exclusively, while the remaining 10 percent of 7-14 year-olds were not involved in employment or in schooling (but likely involved in other productive activities). Activity patterns differed somewhat for older, 15-17 year-old children: a smaller share was in school exclusively and a greater share was in employment exclusively or inactive. Overall school involvement among 15-17 year-olds was equal to 42 percent. Youth activity patterns are discussed in more detail in Volume II of this report.

Table 3. Child activity status, by age group, 2005/06

Activity status	Children aged 7-14 years		Children aged 15-17 years	
	No.	%	No.	%
Only in employment	1,471,060	4.8	2,384,210	40.4
Only in schooling	23,893,560	78.3	2,057,180	34.8
Both activities	2,080,380	6.8	419,650	7.1
Neither activity	3,060,390	10.0	1,045,530	17.7
<b>Total in employment <sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>3,551,440</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>2,803,860</b>	<b>47.5</b>
<b>Total in schooling <sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>25,973,940</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>2,476,830</b>	<b>41.9</b>

Notes: (a) Refers to all children in economic activity, regardless of school status; (b) Refers to all children attending school, regardless of work status.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

26. Aggregate estimates of children's activities mask important differences by residence, region, age and sex. Table 4, 5 and 6 illustrate the main patterns (note that child-, household- and community-related determinants of child labour are discussed in Section 7 of this report).

27. **Residence.** Children's employment is more common in rural than in urban areas, but the rural-urban gap in employment is not large (Table 4). About 12 percent of rural children were in employment in 2005/06 against nine percent of their peers living in cities and towns. Rural children's greater involvement in employment does not translate into greater disadvantage in terms of school attendance: the proportion of children attending school in 2005/06 differed little between rural and urban areas, and rural children *in employment* actually attended school in greater proportion than their urban counterparts in employment (59 versus 54 percent).

Table 4. Child activity status, children aged 7-14 years, by residence, 2005/06

Activity status	Residence			
	Urban		Rural	
	No.	%	No.	%
Only in employment	276,850	4.2	1,194,210	5.0
Only in schooling	5,266,360	80.7	18,627,200	77.7
Both activities	324,990	5.0	1,755,380	7.3
Neither activity	657,110	10.1	2,403,280	10.0
<b>Total in employment<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>601,840</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>2,949,590</b>	<b>12.3</b>
<b>Total in schooling<sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>5,591,350</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>20,382,580</b>	<b>85.0</b>

Notes: (a) Refers to all children in economic activity, regardless of school status; (b) Refers to all children attending school, regardless of work status.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

28. **Region.** Sub-national data from BALFS 2005/06 point to substantial regional differences in children's employment, underscoring the need for the geographic targeting of efforts against child labour (Table 5). The Rajshahi and Barisal divisions featured the highest levels of children in employment in 2005/06, at over 15 percent. In Chittagong division, by contrast, only eight percent of children were in employment in the same year. To reduce these disparities, Bangladesh needs to scale up services in line with the needs of low performing regions and hard to reach areas. School attendance also varied somewhat by division, although it exceeded 80 percent in all of them. No division is yet close to achieving universal primary enrolment.



Table 5. Child activity status, children aged 7-14 years, by division, 2005/06

Activity status	Chittagong		Dhaka		Khulna		Rajshahi		Barisal		Sylhet	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Only in employment	290,358	4.0	389,635	4.4	163,227	5.2	283,317	4.4	132,767	5.8	211,757	8.6
Only in schooling	5,967,402	81.3	7,025,107	78.9	2,487,767	79.5	4,816,622	75.5	1,697,174	73.7	1,899,491	77.3
Both activities	324,525	4.4	482,468	5.4	253,005	8.1	696,842	10.9	219,278	9.5	104,258	4.2
Neither activity	755,919	10.3	1,001,136	11.3	224,510	7.2	582,624	9.1	254,540	11.0	241,662	9.8
<b>Total in employment<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>614,883</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>872,102</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>416,232</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>980,160</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>352,045</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>316,015</b>	<b>12.8</b>
<b>Total in schooling<sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>6,291,927</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>7,507,575</b>	<b>84.3</b>	<b>2,740,772</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>5,513,464</b>	<b>86.4</b>	<b>1,916,452</b>	<b>83.2</b>	<b>2,003,749</b>	<b>81.5</b>

Notes: (a) Refers to all children in economic activity, regardless of school status; (b) Refers to all children attending school, regardless of work status.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

**29. Gender.** There are large differences in children's involvement in employment by sex, suggesting that gender considerations play an important role in the assignment of children's work responsibilities in Bangladesh (Table 6). Almost 18 percent of boys aged 7-14 years were in employment in 2005/06, against only about six percent of girls from the same age group. It is worth recalling, however, that *other* productive activities, such as child care and household chores performed within one's own home, where girls predominate, were not considered here. Differences by sex in the involvement of children in work defined more broadly as all productive activity (i.e., both employment and household chores) are likely smaller, or indeed "favouring" female children. Unfortunately, information on non-economic activity was not collected by BALFS 2005/06, meaning that an estimate of children's total work involvement is not possible.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the share of boys and girls aged 7-14 in school were almost equal in 2005/06 (84 and 86 percent, respectively). However, the school enrolment of rural girls still lags behind that of rural boys (not shown), undoubtedly owing at least in part to the practice of early marriage among girls, which is more common in rural areas.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> In the discussion on other productive activities micro-data from MICS 2006 are used as the basis of estimates.

<sup>20</sup> Figures for 1999 indicate that 44 percent of urban females and 72 percent of rural females aged 20-24 years were already married by the age of 18 years. (Source: UNICEF, *Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice, A Statistical Exploration*. The United Nations Children's Fund, ISBN: 92-806-3869-6, 2005.)

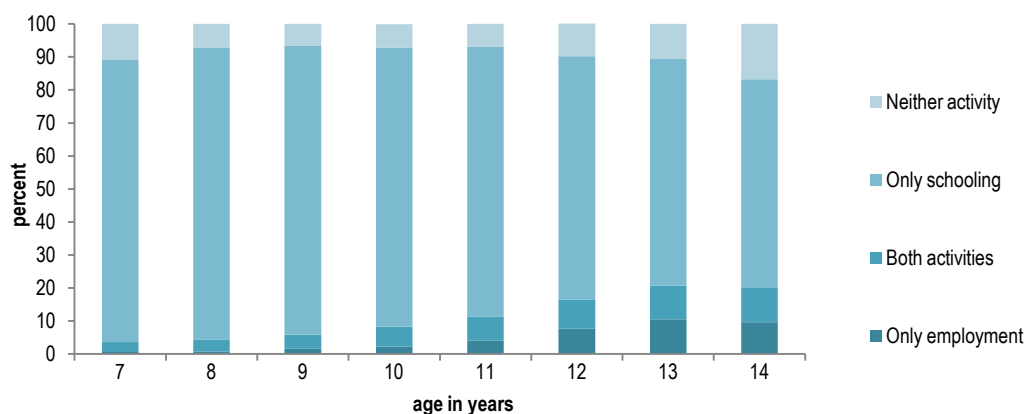
Table 6. Child activity status, children aged 7-14 years, by sex, 2005/06

Activity status	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Only in employment	1,180,530	7.6	290,530	2.0
Only in schooling	11,576,740	74.1	12,316,820	82.7
Both activities	1,546,480	9.9	533,900	3.6
Neither activity	1,313,850	8.4	1,746,540	11.7
<b>Total in employment<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>2,727,010</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>824,430</b>	<b>5.6</b>
<b>Total in schooling<sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>13,123,220</b>	<b>84.0</b>	<b>12,850,720</b>	<b>86.3</b>

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

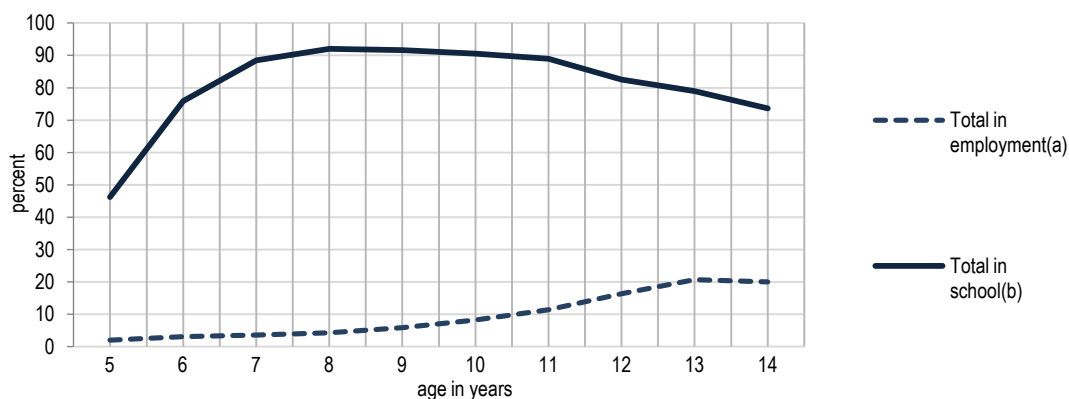
**30. Age.** Children's employment rises with age, but even very young children are in employment. Around 59,000 (two percent) of five year-olds, 107,000 (three percent) of six year-olds and 142,000 (four percent) of seven year-olds were already in employment in 2005/06 (Figure 4). These extremely young working children constitute a particular policy concern, as they are most vulnerable to workplace abuses, most at risk of work-related ill-health or injury and are most affected by compromised education. Many are believed to be children accompanying their parents to the workplace, although this is an area requiring further research.

Figure 4. Child activity status, by age, 2005/06



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

Figure 5. Children's involvement in employment and schooling, by age, 2005/06



Notes: (a) Refers to all children in employment, regardless of school status; (b) Refers to all children attending school, regardless of employment status

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

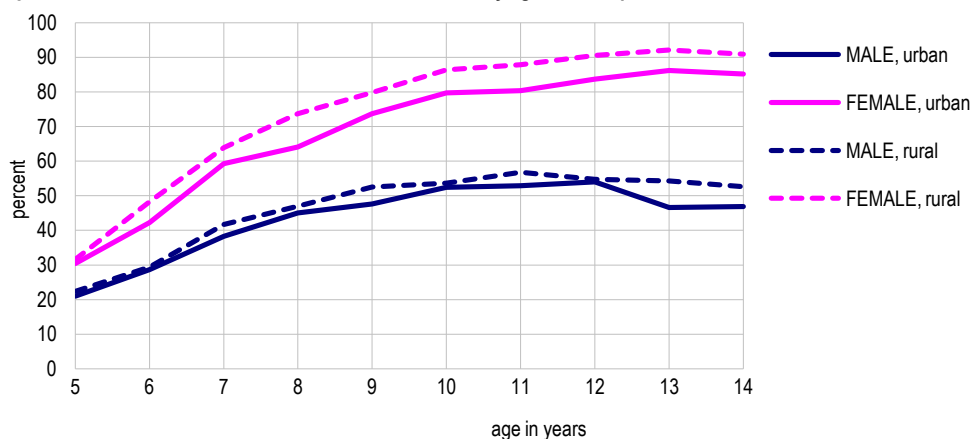
31. Figure 5 illustrates children's "transitions" from inactivity to school and employment from age five to 14 years in 2005/2006. Only 76 percent of children are enrolled in school at age six years, the first year of primary schooling, pointing to substantial levels of late entry. School attendance rises (i.e., late entrants exceed early drop-outs) for subsequent age cohorts, peaking at 92 percent at age eight years, in the middle of the primary cycle. Thereafter, attendance slowly declines as children begin leaving school and taking on full-time work responsibilities. About three percent of children were already economically active at age six years, and over eight percent were economically active by the age of 10 years. Employment reaches 20 percent at age 14 years. The proportion of children neither in schooling nor employment is high among young children but declines steadily up to the age of nine years. Beyond the age of 11 years, the share of children out of school and employment begins to slowly rise again, as more children assume full-time domestic responsibilities within their own households.

32. Employment is not the only category of productive activity involving children. An even larger proportion of children were engaged in other productive activities, and specifically household chores, that fall outside the international System of National Accounts (SNA) production boundary and are typically excluded from published estimates of child labour (see Box 1 on terminology). An estimated 65 percent of 7-14 year-olds were engaged in housekeeping activities or household chores in own parents' or guardians home in 2006.<sup>21</sup> Involvement in household chores tends to start earlier than employment but is less time-intensive, as discussed below. Girls are much more likely to perform household chores than boys (Figure 6), and ignoring

<sup>21</sup> Due to absence of the necessary information about household chores in the Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006, estimates for involvement in household chores are based on the Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey for the year 2006.

this form of work therefore biases estimates of children's work in "favour" of boys.

Figure 6. Children's involvement in household chores, by age, sex and place of residence<sup>(1)</sup>, 2006



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006

33. Considering household chores adds another layer of complexity to the discussion of children's time use, as children may perform chores in combination with school, employment or in combination with both (Figure 7). This more complex – but also more complete – picture of children's activities is depicted in Figure 8.<sup>22</sup> It shows that six percent of all 7-14 years performed both employment and household chores while also attending school, with obvious consequences on their time for study, rest and leisure. An additional three percent of children performed double work duty (i.e., employment and household chores) without attending school. Only one-quarter of children were able to attend school unencumbered by any form of work responsibilities. About four percent of Bangladeshi children were apparently completely inactive, i.e., not attending school or performing any form of productive activity. It is likely that at least some in this putatively inactive group was in reality performing worst forms of work other than hazardous,<sup>23</sup> which are beyond the scope of household surveys (see also discussion on worst forms of child labour in Section 5.2 of this report).

<sup>22</sup> As this analysis is based on the MICS 2006 dataset, caution should be exercised in drawing comparisons with the earlier discussion based on the BALFS 2005/06 dataset. The change in the reference dataset was made necessary by the lack of information in BALFS 2005/06 relating to household chores.

<sup>23</sup> In accordance with Resolution II (2008) of the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians, "worst forms of child labour other than hazardous" refer to activities covered under paragraphs (a)–(c) of Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; and (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties. See also discussion on child labour in Section 5 of this report.

Figure 7. Children's time use

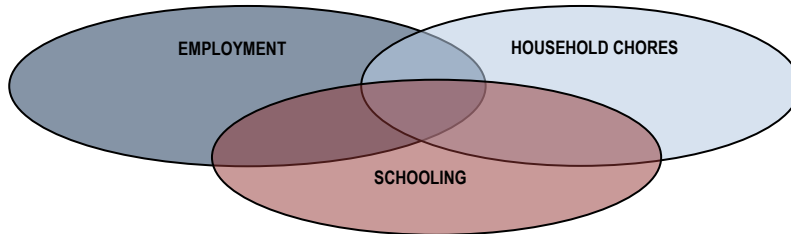
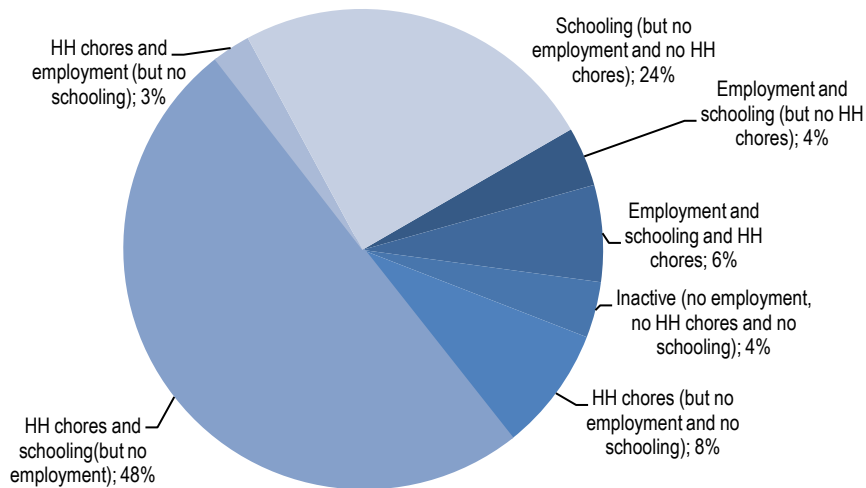


Figure 8. Distribution of 7-14 year-olds by activity category, including involvement in household chores<sup>(a)</sup>, 2006



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006

34. Children's involvement in employment and household chores needs to be combined to obtain a measure of children's total participation in work. One way of calculating children's total involvement in work is by simply combining employment and household chores as defined in the Bangladesh MICS 2006 survey questionnaire. An estimated 65 percent of Bangladeshi 7-14 year-olds, 24.2 million children in absolute terms, were involved in some form of work using this measure in 2006, based on the MICS 2006 data surveys. Girls' work involvement using this combined measure exceeds that of boys at every age, again underscoring that using employment alone as the measure of work understates girls' work involvement relative to that of boys. But caution should be exercised in drawing comparisons between these figures and those cited earlier in the discussion based on the BALFS 2005/06 dataset.

## 4.2 Trends in children's employment

35. A previous national child labour survey covering the period 2002/03 permits a look at how the level and composition of children's activities, and particularly children's employment, changed from 2002/03 to 2005/06. A comparison of the results from the two surveys shows a decline in children's employment of five percentage points during this period (from 17 percent to 12 percent). The apparent progress in reducing children's employment during this period extended to both boys and girls, and to both urban and rural places of residence (Table 7).

36. The decline in employment was not, however, accompanied by gains in children's school attendance. This highlights the fact that school attendance and work are not always substitutes – a change in one of the variables is not necessarily accompanied by the opposing change in the other – and that focusing on schooling alone is not likely to succeed in eliminating child labour.

Table 7. Changes in child activity status, 7-14 years age group, by sex and residence, 2002/03-2005/06

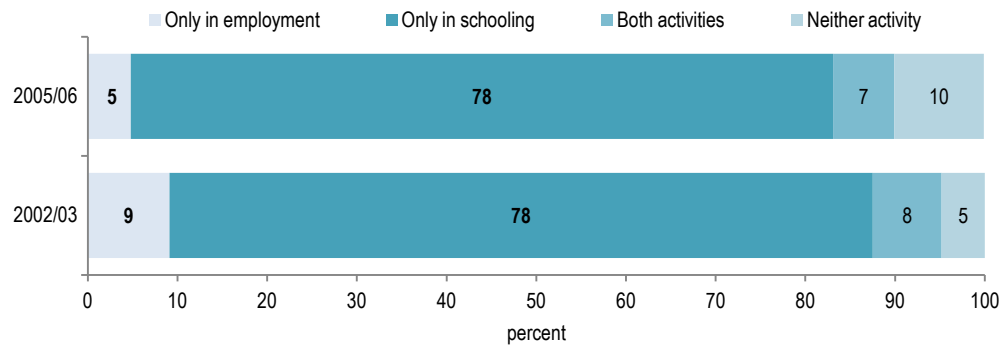
Activity status	Sex				Residence				Total	
	Male		Female		Urban		Rural		2002/03	2005/06
	2002/03	2005/06	2002/03	2005/06	2002/03	2005/06	2002/03	2005/06		
Only in employment	12.3	7.6	5.7	2.0	8.5	4.2	9.3	5.0	9.1	4.8
Only in schooling	72.1	74.1	85.2	82.7	81.2	80.7	77.7	77.7	78.4	78.3
Both activities	11.0	9.9	4.0	3.6	5.4	5.0	8.3	7.3	7.7	6.8
Neither activity	4.5	8.4	5.0	11.7	4.9	10.1	4.8	10.0	4.8	10.0
<b>Total in employment<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>11.6</b>
<b>Total in schooling<sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>83.1</b>	<b>84.0</b>	<b>89.2</b>	<b>86.3</b>	<b>86.6</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>86.1</b>	<b>85.1</b>

Notes: (a) Refers to all children in economic activity, regardless of school status; (b) Refers to all children attending school, regardless of work status.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006 and on Bangladesh National Child Labor Survey, 2002-2003

37. Two data points are in any case insufficient to safely conclude that children's employment in Bangladeshi is on a clear downward path. It is also worth noting in this context that estimates based on MICS 2006 do not corroborate this downward trend: the MICS 2006 survey yielded a children's employment estimate of 16 percent, almost the same as that yielded by the national child labour survey for 2002/03. Detailed estimates from the MICS 2006 survey are presented in Annex 1 of this report.

Figure 9. Changes in the composition of children's activities, 7-14 years age group, 2002/03-2005/06



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006 and on Bangladesh National Child Labor Survey, 2002-2003

38. Figure 9 illustrates how the composition of children's activities changed over the 2002/03 to 2005/06 period. It shows that the measured reduction in children's employment was not the product of a movement of children from employment into schooling (indeed, school attendance actually fell by one percentage point over this period), but rather of a movement of children from employment to the group neither in employment nor schooling. This raises the possibility that the putative progress against children's work realised during the period from 2002/03 to 2005/06 was in fact largely a shift in children's work from categories of production measured by the two reference surveys (i.e., employment) to categories of production that were not measured (i.e., household chores). But as the methodologies and questionnaires differed somewhat in the 2002/03 and 2005/06 surveys, caution should be exercised in interpreting changes in the composition of children's work over the two periods.

### 4.3 Nature of children's work

39. Information concerning the sector and modality of children's work is only available for those working children *not* also attending school, a group that makes up about 40 percent of all children in employment.<sup>24</sup> In 2005/06 non-student children in employment were concentrated in the agriculture and service sectors. Forty-six percent of non-student 7-14 year-olds in employment were found in agriculture and 36 percent in services; manufacturing accounted for much of the remainder, 16 percent of total children in employment. Forms of employment falling in the "other" category include children working in the shrimp industry in the sea beach areas and children working in the local cigarette industry ("Bidi workers") in the northern areas. About 108,000 non-student children worked in the former and about 33,000 non-student children worked in the latter.<sup>25</sup> Children in the dry fish industry in Chittagong and Kuakata areas also fell in the residual "other" category.

40. Existing studies also found that 149,000 children were engaged in five hazardous industries – welding, auto-workshops, road transport, battery recharging and recycling, and street children. They were also found in bidi (hand-rolled cigarettes) factories, construction industry including brick breaking, leather tanneries, fisheries, agriculture and informal sector and in domestic services (ILO-IPEC, 2004).<sup>26</sup>

41. Children's sex, age and place of residence appear to play important roles in determining the type of work they perform (Table 8). Boys were relatively more likely to be found in agriculture and girls in services. Older non-student working children were less likely to be in agriculture and more likely to be in services, than their younger counterparts. Agricultural work was not surprisingly much more common in rural contexts than in urban ones, although even in rural areas it accounts for only a little over half of total (54 percent versus eight percent) non-student children's employment. Services and manufacturing predominated in urban areas, accounting for 54 and 34 percent respectively of non-student urban children's employment. Again, however, these figures reflect only the sub-group of working children not in school, and caution should therefore be exercised in generalizing these results to the overall population of children in employment.

<sup>24</sup> Due to the BALFS data design we observe sector and modality only for those who worked exclusively, i.e. those that did not attend school in the 2005/06 reference years. The lack of information on these characteristics for child workers attending school may distort distributions of total economically active children by sector and modality.

<sup>25</sup> The standard 3- or 4-digit industry and occupational codes used in the Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey (2005-06) do not match precisely with local industries such as the Bidi industry, meaning estimates should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>26</sup> *A Critical Analysis of CRC Trends and Implementation Status in Bangladesh*; Prepared under Alternative Report Preparation Initiative on CRC of Save the Children Sweden and Denmark; December 04, 2007



Table 8. Sector of employment,<sup>(a)</sup> by child age, sex and place of residence, 2005/06

Background characteristic		Agriculture	Services	Manufacturing	Other	Total
Age in years	7	62.9	19.2	17.9	0.0	100
	8	67.5	26.2	6.3	0.0	100
	9	54.4	32.8	12.9	0.0	100
	10	51.1	37.2	11.8	0.0	100
	11	47.9	35.6	14.7	1.8	100
	12	46.4	38.4	13.4	1.7	100
	13	42.7	35.2	18.9	3.2	100
	14	42.1	37.0	17.8	3.1	100
Sex	Male	49.3	34.1	13.8	2.8	100
	Female	29.1	45.1	25.7	0.1	100
Residence	Urban	8.2	54.3	34.2	3.4	100
	Rural	54.1	32.0	11.8	2.0	100
Division	Chittagong	41.7	36.3	21.3	0.8	100
	Dhaka	36.1	39.3	21.8	2.7	100
	Khulna	43.3	44.0	11.7	1.0	100
	Rajshahi	43.5	33.9	18.8	3.8	100
	Barisal	42.0	46.1	9.6	2.2	100
	Sylhet	74.3	20.7	2.4	2.6	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>45.5</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>100</b>

Notes: (a) Estimates refer only to the sub-group of child workers only in employment; caution should therefore be exercised in generalizing the results to the overall population of working children.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

42. There are also important geographical differences in the composition of children's employment in Bangladesh. Sylhet division stood out in particular in this context. Children's employment in Sylhet was much more focused on agriculture, and much less focused on services and manufacturing, compared to the other divisions. Barisal and Khulna divisions, on the other hand, have the highest proportions of children in the services sector (46 and 44 percent, respectively), while Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi have the largest shares of children in manufacturing (22, 21 and 19 percent, respectively). The work performed by children living in areas defined by unique geographic features, such as the riverine char and wetland haor areas, undoubtedly varies substantially from national- and division-level averages, but data from BALFS 2005-06 do not permit such detailed geographical breakdowns.

Table 9. Modality of employment,<sup>(a)</sup> by child age, sex and place of residence, 2005/06

Background characteristic		Unpaid family worker	Paid employee	Self-employed	Domestic service	Apprentice	Other	Total
Age in years	7	13.8	68.0	7.1	9.7	1.4	0.0	100
	8	43.2	40.9	3.5	10.4	1.1	1.0	100
	9	29.5	55.5	2.0	10.5	2.4	0.0	100
	10	37.8	32.1	4.4	16.9	5.9	2.9	100
	11	33.4	43.5	3.5	8.6	9.6	1.4	100
	12	38.8	34.5	5.4	9.6	9.7	2.0	100
	13	36.0	35.2	7.7	9.1	10.1	1.9	100
	14	35.0	36.7	9.9	6.5	10.1	1.7	100
Sex	Male	39.1	36.1	8.0	4.8	10.4	1.7	100
	Female	21.3	43.2	3.8	26.2	3.5	2.0	100
Residence	Urban	15.4	44.3	6.2	15.5	15.8	2.8	100
	Rural	40.6	35.8	7.4	7.2	7.5	1.5	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>35.7</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>100</b>

Notes: (a) Estimates refer only to the sub-group of child workers only in employment; caution should therefore be exercised in generalizing the results to the overall population of working children.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

43. In Bangladesh, unlike in most other developing country contexts, children's employment appears to take place primarily outside the family, at least for the subgroup of non-student working children. In all, 37 percent of non-student children in employment worked as paid employees and a further 27 percent worked in other non-family modalities (domestic workers, apprentices or self-employed), while only 36 percent worked without wages within their own families (Table 9). Work modality appears to be conditioned to a considerable extent by children's sex and residence. Non-student girls aged 7-14 years were much more likely involved in domestic work (26 percent versus five percent) and in paid employment (43 percent versus 36 percent), while boys were relatively more likely to be found in unpaid family work (39 percent versus 21), in self-employment and apprenticeship. Non-student working children living in the countryside were much more likely to work for their families (41 percent versus 15 percent), and less likely to be involved in waged work, domestic work and apprenticeship, compared to their counterparts living in cities and towns.

#### 4.4 Time intensity of children's work

44. Not considered thus far in the discussion of children's work is the question of how much time they actually spend performing it. Hours worked provide insight into the possible health and educational consequences of work. Data from BALFS 2005/06 suggest that employment is typically quite time intensive for Bangladesh children. Children aged 7-11 years in employment logged an average of over 21 hours each week, and 12-14 year-olds in employment put in over 28 hours per week (Table 10). Not surprisingly, working hours are strongly negatively correlated with school attendance. Non-students put in three times more working hours each week

than students in employment; this group of non-students in employment logs very long working hours, over 40 hours per week, comparable to full-time adult workers in the industrialised world.

Table 10. Average weekly working hours by working status, age group, industry and modality, 2005/06

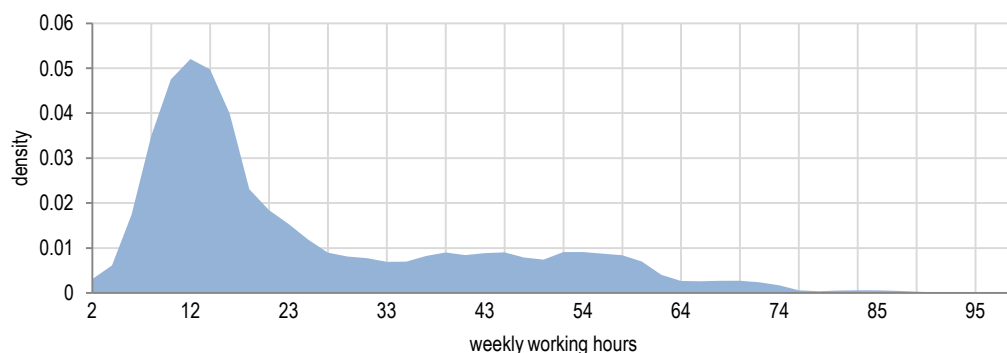
Category		7-11 years (ave. weekly working hours)			12-14 years (ave. weekly working hours)		
		Only employment	Employment and schooling	Employment <sup>(a)</sup>	Only employment	Employment and schooling	Employment <sup>(a)</sup>
Sex	Male	42.2	13.8	22.1	41.6	16.1	28.6
	Female	41.9	12.9	19.5	39.7	14.4	25.8
Residence	Urban	44.3	15.2	22.5	44.5	15.8	31.8
	Rural	41.7	13.1	21.0	40.4	15.7	27.3
Sector	Agriculture	42.5	-	-	38.6	-	-
	Manufacturing	43.6	-	-	44.4	-	-
	Services	45.4	-	-	45.9	-	-
Modality	Self-employed	36.2	-	-	38.9	-	-
	Paid employee	47.5	-	-	45.4	-	-
	Unpaid family worker	38.7	-	-	38.0	-	-
	Domestic work	47.4	-	-	52.5	-	-
	Apprentice	48.6	-	-	46.8	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>42.1</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>28.0</b>

Notes: (a) All children in employment, regardless of whether or not they are also in school.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

45. Differences in the time intensity of work were not large between male and female children in employment, or between rural and urban children in employment. Time intensity does, however, appear to vary across work sectors and work modalities. Children in family work and self-employment worked fewer hours than their peers in other modalities of work. Agricultural work was less time intensive than work in other sectors, particularly among older, 12-14 year-old, children.

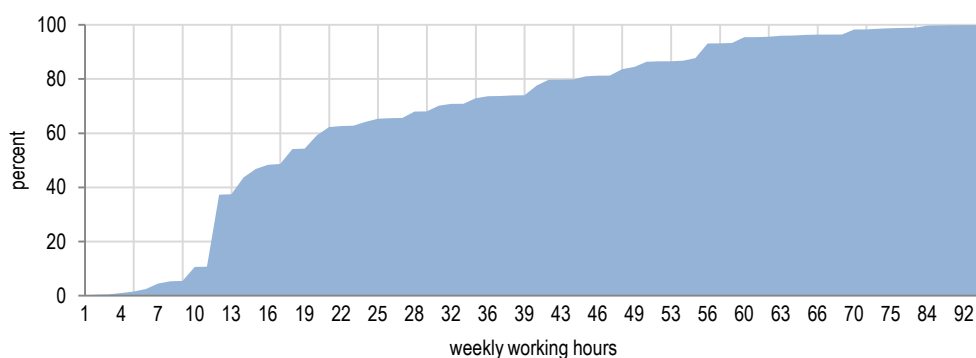
Figure 10. Distribution of children in employment by working hours, 7-14 years age group, 2005/06



Source: UCW calculations based Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

46. The distribution of children in employment by weekly working hours indicates that while most working children were concentrated in the range of 10-14 hours per week, there was also a significant proportion of children in the “tail” of the distribution performing exceptionally long working hours, i.e., 40 or more hours per week (Figure 10). In absolute terms, 218,000 children aged 7-11 years, 701,000 children aged 12-14 years and 1.9 million children aged 15-17 years worked at least 40 hours of work per week. These were among the worst off working children, as their work responsibilities preclude their rights to schooling, study, leisure and adequate rest. Their prolonged exposure to workplace risks also undoubtedly increases their susceptibility to work-related sickness and injury, although data shortcomings make this difficult to demonstrate empirically.

Figure 11. Cumulative distribution of children in employment by working hours, 7-14 years age group, 2005/06



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

Table 11. Average weekly working hours in household chores, by age, sex, and residence, 2005/06

Category		Average weekly hours of household chores	% of children performing household chores for more than 20 hours per week
Age in years	7	6.8	1.7
	8	7.5	2.3
	9	8.0	2.7
	10	9.5	5.1
	11	10.1	6.2
	12	11.7	9.8
	13	13.0	13.6
	14	13.6	14.4
Sex	Male	8.3	2.8
	Female	11.2	10.6
Residence	Urban	9.9	6.6
	Rural	10.1	6.7
Total		10.1	6.7

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006

47. Many children also spent a non-negligible amount of time each week performing household chores. Children aged 7-14 years performing household chores did so for some 10 hours a week on average (Table 11). About seven percent of 7-14 year-olds logged more than 20 hours of household chores each week. Girls were more likely to have to perform chores than boys (see previous discussion), and girls spent on average about three hours more per week on them than boys. Girls performing chores were also more than three times more likely to do so intensively (i.e., for more than 20 hours per week) than their male peers. Household chores were less burdensome for young children than for their older counterparts. Children aged seven years logged an average of seven hours of chores each week, while children aged fourteen years spent an average of 14 hours each week performing chores.

## 5. CHILD LABOUR

48. Before leaving the discussion of children's work, it is worth addressing one final question – the extent to which this work constitutes “child labour” for elimination in accordance with national legislation and international labour standards.<sup>27</sup> This question is critical for the purposes of prioritising and targeting policy responses to child labour. Lower-bound estimates of child labour are presented below following the new global guidelines for child labour measurement<sup>28</sup> and with reference to national child labour legislation.

### 5.1 Involvement in child labour

49. The Labour Act enacted in 2006 provides the primary legal framework regarding child labour in the country (see discussion in Section 8 of this report). The Act sets a general minimum age of 14 years for employment in any occupation or establishment (Section 34), but states that a child who has completed twelve years of age may be employed in such light work as not to endanger his health and development or interfere with his education (Section 44). Sections 39, 40 and 42 of the new labour law indicate some activities for which the employment of children aged 14-17 years is strictly prohibited, but the Act contains no comprehensive listing of the hazardous forms of work.<sup>29</sup>

50. The lack of clear provisions for light work and a national list of hazardous forms mean that constructing a general statistical measure of child

<sup>27</sup> Implicit in this distinction is the recognition that work by children *per se* is not necessarily injurious to children or a violation of their rights. Indeed, in some circumstances, children's work can be beneficial, not harmful, contributing to family survival and enabling children to acquire learning and life skills. Three main international conventions – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms) and ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) – define child labour and provide a framework for efforts against it. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognises the child's right to be protected from forms of work that are likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. In order to achieve this goal, the CRC calls on States Parties to set minimum ages for admission to employment, having regard to other international instruments. ILO Conventions No. 138 (Minimum Age) and No. 182 (Worst Forms) target as child labour 1) all forms of work carried out by children below a minimum cut-off age (at least 12 years in less developed countries); 2) all forms except 'light work' carried out by children below a second higher cut-off age (at least 14 years in less developed countries); and 3) all 'worst forms' of child labour carried out by children of any age under 18 years, where worst forms include any activity or occupation which, by its nature or type has, or leads to, adverse effects on the child's safety, health, or moral development.

<sup>28</sup> Global guidelines for child labour statistics are set out in Resolution II (2008) of the Eighteenth International Conference of Child Labour Statisticians (ICLS). For further details, see: Resolution II, Resolution Concerning Statistics of Child Labour, as cited in: International Labour Organization, *Report of the Conference, 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 24 November–5 December 2008. Resolution II. Rpt. ICLS/18/2008/IV/FINAL*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> The employment of the adolescent is strictly restricted for the following activities: a) cleaning of the machinery while it is in motion; b) lubrication or other adjustment operation of the machinery while it is in motion; c) any work in-between the moving parts of a machine and d) any work under ground or under water.

labour on the basis of legislation alone in Bangladesh is not possible. The child labour estimates constructed below therefore also make use of the new global child labour measurement guidelines and the hazardous list used in ILO global estimates of child labour. This means that the estimates produced do not necessarily coincide with child labour as defined in Bangladesh legislation, but nonetheless provide a benchmark for international comparative purposes. Following the global guidelines, and restricting the estimate to SNA production due to data limitations,<sup>30</sup> child labour comprises all 5-11 year-olds in employment, all 12-14 year-olds in regular employment or worst forms, and all 15-17 year-olds in worst forms (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Framework for statistical identification of child labour

Age group	General production boundary					
	SNA production				Non-SNA production	
	(1a) Light work <sup>3</sup>	(1b) Regular work <sup>4</sup>	Worst forms of child labour		(3a) Hazardous unpaid household services <sup>1</sup>	(3b) Other non-SNA production
(2a) Hazardous work			(2b) Worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work			
Children below the minimum age specified for light work (for example, 5-11 years) <sup>2</sup>	Employment below the minimum age for light work	Employment below the general minimum working age	Employment in industries and occupations designated as hazardous, or work for long hours and/or at night in industries and occupations not designated as hazardous	Children trafficked for work; forced and bonded child labour; commercial sexual exploitation of children; use of children for illicit activities and armed conflict	Unpaid household services for long hours, involving unsafe equipment or heavy loads; in dangerous locations; etc.	
Children within the age range specified for light work (for example, 12-14 years) <sup>2</sup>						
Children at or above the general minimum working age (for example, 15-17 years) <sup>2</sup>						


<sup>1</sup> (3a) is applicable where the general production boundary is used as the measurement framework for child labour.

<sup>2</sup> Age-group limits may differ across countries depending upon the national circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> Where applicable at the national level.

<sup>4</sup> Children in employment other than those covered under columns (1a), (2a) and (2b).

 Denotes activities not considered child labour

 Denotes child labour as defined by the resolution

Source: International Labour Organization, *Report of the Conference, 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 24 November–5 December 2008. Resolution II. Rpt. ICLS/18/2008/IV/FINAL*, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> As discussed previously, the BALFS 2005-06 dataset does not contain information on involvement in household chores. The figures on household chores reported earlier in this report were calculated using the MICS 2006 data, while estimates of employment reported were calculated using micro-data from Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey 2005-2006. It is therefore not possible to produce an aggregate estimate of child labour incorporating children's employment and household chores (i.e., an estimate of child labour based on the general production boundary).

51. Child labour based on these measurement criteria is very common in Bangladesh. Over 1.3 million children below the age of 12 years were in employment and an additional 1.7 million (12-14 year-old) children in employment were below the minimum age for this type of work (Table 12). A further two million older, 15-17 year-old children were at work in hazardous employment. Summing these three groups yields a total of 5.1 million 5-17 year-old children in child labour.

52. It is worth emphasizing that this constitutes a lower-bound estimate of child labour, as it excludes children in hazardous household chores and children in worst forms other than hazardous, groups for which BALFS 2005/06 provides no information. This estimate also excludes two other groups, due to specific data limitations associated with the BALFS 2005/06 dataset: children aged 12-14 years in hazardous work for less than 14 hours per week, and students aged 15-17 years in hazardous employment. Further details concerning the estimates are provided in the technical notes for Table 12.

Table 12. Estimates of child labour involvement, based on national legislation and international statistical methods and standards for measuring child labour<sup>(a)</sup>

	SNA production									
	(A)		(B)		(C)=(A)&(B)		(D)		(E)=(A)&(B)&(D)	
	Children aged 5-11 years in employment		Children aged 12-14 years in regular employment <sup>(b)</sup>		Children aged 5-14 years in child labour		Children aged 15-17 years in hazardous employment <sup>(c)</sup>		Children aged 5-17 years in child labour	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Male	899,090	7.2	22.7	1,454,350	12.5	2,353,440	87.8	1,815,046	19.9	4,168,483
Female	435,060	3.7	4.3	266,710	3.9	701,770	73.3	221,030	5.0	922,795
Urban	232,940	4.6	10.5	288,970	6.7	521,910	85.8	456,337	11.7	978,250
Rural	1,101,210	5.7	14.6	1,432,080	8.7	2,533,290	86.0	1,579,739	13.3	4,113,028
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,334,150</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>1,721,060</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>3,055,210</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>2,036,076</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>5,091,278</b>

Notes:

(a) Specifically, the definition of hazardous employment follows the method used by ILO in producing global child labour estimates (see IPEC, *Every child counts: New global estimates on child labour*, Geneva, ILO, April 2002.). The definition of light employment follows from ICLS Res. II(2008).

(b) A time threshold of 14 hours is used for distinguishing light and regular employment, in accordance with ICLS Resolution II (2008) which states that "in determining the hours threshold for permissible light work, national statistical offices should take into consideration the stipulations set forth in national legislation or, in their absence, use a cut-off point of 14 hours during the reference week, below which work can be considered permissible light work." Column B does not, however, include children in hazardous employment for less than 14 hours, as identifying this group from the BALFS 2005-06 dataset requires excluding children combining school and employment. Column B therefore understates total 12-14 year-olds in regular employment.

(c) Excludes children combining school and employment, as BALFS 2005-06 did not collect information on sector and occupation for this group. In the absence of a national list of hazardous sectors and occupations, the estimate is based on the IPEC list of hazardous sectors and occupations used in its global child labour estimates (IPEC, *Every child counts: New global estimates on child labour*, Geneva, ILO, April 2002.) Hazardous industries in the ILO/IPEC draft list are: mining, quarrying and construction. Hazardous occupations in the ILO/IPEC draft list are: optical and elect equip operators; health associated professional; nursing midwife; protective services; forestry and related workers; fishery, hunters and trappers; miners, shot fires, stone cutters and carvers; building frame and related workers; building finishers; metal moulders, welders, and related workers; blacksmith, tool makers and related workers; machinery mechanics and fitters; electrical and electronic equip mechanics and fitters; precision workers in metal; potters, glass makers and related workers; mining and mineral processing plant operators; metal processing plant op.; glass, ceramics and related plant op.; wood processing and papermaking plant op.; chemical processing plant op.; power production and related plan operators; metal and mineral machine operators; chemical machine operators; rubber mach. op; wood products mach. op.; textile, fur, leather mach. op.; food mach. op.; assemblers; other mach. op.; motor vehicle driver; agric and other mobile plant op.; ships' deck crew and related workers; street vendors and related workers; shoe cleaning other street services; messengers, porters, doorkeepers, and related workers; garbage collectors and related workers; agric. fishery and related workers; mining and construction labourers; and transport and freight handlers. The ILO/IPEC global estimates also include as hazardous work children working excessive hours, i.e., children working for 43 or more hours per week.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006



## 5.2 Worst forms of child labour

53. Children involved in worst forms of child labour, as set out in ILO Convention No. 182,<sup>31</sup> are the sub-group of child labourers whose rights are most compromised and whose well-being is most threatened. For these children, the risks and damage associated with child labour go far beyond compromised education. They therefore constitute the most immediate policy priority. Bangladeshi national legislation contains no specific list of hazardous forms of child labour, but estimates based on the list of hazardous forms used by ILO in its global child labour estimates suggest that a large proportion of children's employment falls into the hazardous category.

54. On the basis of the ILO list, and considering only non-students in employment due to data limitations, *hazardous* forms of employment accounted for 63 percent of employment among 5-9 year-olds, 56 percent of employment among 10-11 year-olds and 12-14 year-olds, and 57 percent among 15-17 year-olds (Table 13).<sup>32</sup> Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006 does not provide information about occupations and industries for those who attend school and work simultaneously. These estimates, therefore, may not be representative of the hazardousness of children's employment generally, and should be interpreted with caution. A similar number of (student and non-student) children work for excessive hours, i.e. for greater than 43 hours per week.

55. A recent series of specialized baseline surveys and rapid assessments provide additional information concerning involvement in specific hazardous forms of child labour in Bangladesh, as summarized below. Information on involvement in worst forms of child labour *other than hazardous*,<sup>33</sup> in Bangladesh as in most countries, is scarce, due both to the methodological difficulties inherent in investigating them and to their cultural sensitivity. These children are often beyond the scope of households surveys such as BALFS 2005/06 because they may not belong to a household, having to live

<sup>31</sup> According to Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182, the worst forms of child labour comprise: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties; and (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

<sup>32</sup> Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006 does not provide information about occupations and industries for those who attend school and work simultaneously. These figures, therefore, may not be representative of the hazardousness of children's employment generally, and should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>33</sup> In accordance with ICLS Res. II (2008), worst forms other than hazardous refer relate to Art. 3(a)-(c) in ILO Convention No. 182: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; and (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties.

instead in the street or at their workplace. Further, targeted research utilising specialised survey instruments is needed in order to generate more complete information on this highest-priority group of child labourers.

Table 13. Involvement in hazardous employment as defined by ILO/IPEC draft list, by age group

	5-9 years	10-11 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Children not attending school <sup>(a)</sup> in hazardous industries <sup>(b)</sup> or hazardous occupations <sup>(c)</sup>	64,090	112,460	611,100	1,354,760
Children working excessive hours <sup>(d)</sup>	68,997	108,561	547,008	1,637,258

Notes:

(a) Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006 does not provide information about occupations and industries for those who attend school and work simultaneously.

(b) Hazardous industries in ILO/IPEC draft list are: mining, quarrying and construction.

(c) Exclusive of children also in hazardous industries. Hazardous occupations in ILO/IPEC draft list are: optical and elect equip operators; health associated professional; nursing midwife; protective services; forestry and related workers; fishery, hunters and trappers; miners, shot fires, stone cutters and carvers; building frame and related workers; building finishers; metal moulders, welders, and related workers; blacksmith, tool makers and related workers; machinery mechanics and fitters; electrical and electronic equip mechanics and fitters; precision workers in metal; potters, glass makers and related workers; mining and mineral processing plant operators; metal processing plant op.; glass, ceramics and related plant op.; wood processing & papermaking plant op.; chemical processing plant op.; power production and related plan operators; metal and mineral machine operators; chemical machine operators; rubber mach. op.; wood products mach. op.; textile, fur, leather mach. op.; food mach. op.; assemblers; other mach. op.; motor vehicle driver; agric and other mobile plant op.; ships' deck crew and related workers; street vendors and related workers; shoe cleaning other street services; messengers, porters, doorkeepers, and related workers; garbage collectors and related workers; agric. fishery and related workers; mining and construction labourers; and transport and freight handlers.

(d) Exclusive of children in hazardous industries and/or in hazardous occupations. Excessive hours defined as >43 hours per week.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

56. A 2003 baseline survey on **child labour in the battery recharging/recycling sector**<sup>34</sup> estimated that there were some 5,500 children aged 5-17 years working in this sector in over 12,000 establishments throughout Bangladesh, about one-quarter of the total sector workforce. The survey found that the children concerned had to work an average of over eight hours per day, for six or seven days per week, in exploitative conditions with extremely limited remuneration. Some 15 percent of the child workers were forced to work exceptionally long hours – 11 or more per day; just eight percent attended school. Very few (13 percent) of the children were provided with any form of protective gear, contributing to a very high rate of work-related illness and injury (23 percent). “Obedience” and “low pay” were among the most common motives cited by establishment owners for hiring child workers.

57. A 2002/03 baseline survey of **child labour in welding establishments**<sup>35</sup> put total children concerned aged 5-17 years at 39,000 (one-third of the sector workforce) in over 28,000 establishments throughout the country. The survey found that the work was very time intensive – children worked on average nine hours per day – and that school attendance among the children concerned was not surprisingly extremely low (four percent). Welding work,

<sup>34</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Battery/Recycling Sector*, 2003, (2004). The survey was conducted during September and October 2003, based on a sample of a total of 416 child workers from 416 establishments.

<sup>35</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Welding Sector, 2002-2003*. This survey was conducted from November 2002 to January 2003. The baseline survey covered a sample of 434 children from 404 sample establishments.

hazardous even for adult workers, was found to be even more so for children: 41 percent reported some form of work-related injury or illness almost all (93 percent) requiring medical attention. Burning was a particularly serious hazard, affecting some 2,272 children. Almost half (45 percent) of the children concerned were deprived of safety gear, including masks for eye protection while welding. Again, “obedience” and “low pay” were among the most common motives cited by establishment owners for hiring child workers.

58. A 2003 baseline survey on **child labour in the road transport sector** (bus, mini-bus, tempo, taxi, rickshaw, van, push cart, trucks, etc.)<sup>36</sup> estimated that some 85,600 children (overwhelmingly boys) were engaged in road transport activity across almost 10,000 locations/sites throughout the country. Of the children concerned, one-half were helpers on buses or minibuses, one-third were rickshaw pullers/push cart drivers, one-fifth were conductors and the remainder were cleaners or conducted miscellaneous tasks in accordance with the instructions of the driver. This form of child labour was also very time intensive: almost half of concerned children worked seven days per week, and children put in an average of almost 10 working hours per day. Again not surprisingly, very few of the children concerned (two percent) managed to also attend school. Almost half of concerned children reported health problems, and 42 percent reported abuse by owners/employers at the workplace. Abuse was typically but not exclusively verbal in nature. One-quarter of the children concerned did not live with their parents, increasing their vulnerability.

59. A 2002/03 baseline survey on **child labour in automobile establishments**<sup>37</sup> put total children concerned aged 5-17 years at 15,900 (all boys), constituting 42 percent of the total sector workforce. The survey found that children worked for an average of over nine hours per day for six or seven days per week, largely precluding their ability to attend school (almost 97 percent were out of school). Specific work tasks included mechanical repairs (78 percent), reconstructing/repairing damaged vehicle bodies (20 percent) and painting vehicles (10 percent). Most of the children concerned were sent to work in the auto workshops either by their parents (57 percent) or by other relatives (24 percent). Rates of illness and injury to children were very high (32 percent), testimony to the adversity of the work environment in auto workshops and to the lack of protective gear. About 28 percent of the

<sup>36</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), *Report of the Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Road Transport Sector, 2003*, (March 2004). The baseline survey was conducted during September and October 2003. Due to the nature of this sector, it was not an establishment-based survey but a location/site-based survey. Results are based on a sample of 442 child workers in the road transport sector from 23 regions (greater districts) of the country.

<sup>37</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), *Report of the Baseline Survey on Working Children in Automobile Workshops, 2002-2003*, (2003). The survey was conducted during November 2002 to January 2003 and covered 350 auto establishments out of the total 9614 in the country. The sample consisted of 380 children aged 5 to 17 years from 350 establishments; data was also collected from 350 owners/employers of the auto establishments surveyed.

children were reportedly abused by their employers, of which about one in ten were physically abused.

60. A 2005/06 baseline survey of **child domestic labour**<sup>38</sup> found this form of child labour to be very common, involving over 421,000 children in 2006. Most were from very poor households lacking in cultivable land – “family poverty/hunger” was the most common reason cited for migrating from their places of origin to become domestic workers. Almost all (94 percent) were found to be working full-time without a weekly day off (99 percent); the average working day extended from seven o'clock in the morning until well into the evening. Only about half had ever benefited from schooling, and only 11 percent were attending school at the time of the survey. Most of the children (80 percent), however, said they would be interested in schooling if afforded the opportunity. Sixty percent of the domestic child labourers reported suffering some form of abuse; scolding was the most common form, but one in five also reported having been slapped and/or beaten. Many of the children concerned have their basic freedoms curtailed: one in five of the domestic child labourers reported not being free to leave their job, and 12 percent of female domestic child labourers reported not being allowed to visit their homes.

61. A 2003 baseline survey of **street children**<sup>39</sup> put the total number of children living (i.e. sleeping, eating and working) on the street at around 2,600 nationwide. The survey authors, however, caution that this figure likely constitutes a significant underestimate, owing to the methodological difficulties in capturing this elusive population. The study found that the street children were involved in a wide variety of activities in order to eke out an existence on the street: collecting old papers, cooli<sup>40</sup>/minti<sup>41</sup>, tokai<sup>42</sup>, begging, hawking, shoe polishing, selling flowers, etc. Key informants also

<sup>38</sup> International Labour Office (ILO), *Baseline Survey on Child Domestic Labour in Bangladesh*, (2006). The survey employed representative sample collected from rural and urban areas using a stratified two-stage cluster sampling procedure. Information was collected from 167,051 households, 3,841 child domestic workers and 3,805 employers from 725 urban and rural PSUs. A child less than 18 years was defined as a child domestic worker (CDW) if s/he performed domestic chores in others' household regardless of the amount or kind of remuneration s/he received.

<sup>39</sup> Foundation for Research on Educational Planning and Development (FREPD), *Baseline Survey on Street Children in Bangladesh*, 2003. A stratified two-stage sampling design was used to capture the relevant information. A sample of 450 street children were covered following a proportional allocation scheme. The sample was drawn from 17 greater districts (regions). Key informants and a few employers were also interviewed. For the purposes of the survey, street children referred to those children aged 5-17 years living (i.e. sleeping, eating and working) on the street of a particular city, town or thana head quarters. The study did not include those children who live with their parents/family on the roadside/pavements, or in a slum.

<sup>40</sup> Persons who earn their livelihood by carrying baggages of others in the railway station, ferry terminal, bus terminal are known as Cooli. They are generally registered by the authority.

<sup>41</sup> They do the same job as that of a cooli. But they are not registered. They work in the markets, shops, railway station, ferry ghat, bus station etc. In places where both cooli and Minti work, the latter has lower wage rate.

<sup>42</sup> Tokai is a popular Bengali term used for child ragpickers. A child who moves around the town to pick up various used items like papers, bottles, shoes, cloths, etc is called tokai.

indicated children's involvement in various illicit activities including theft, purse snatching, pick pocketing, drug selling, and commercial sexual exploitation. Feedback from the children themselves highlighted the harsh conditions they lived in: over half reported feeling sick at the time of the survey; one-quarter reported having no regular place to sleep; 84 percent reported having no winter clothing; and one-fifth reported having been arrested by police. Abject poverty or abuse within the home were the most common reasons cited by children for leaving home for life on the street. Only eight percent children were aware of organizations which provide assistance to street children and even fewer (six percent) had ever visited such organizations.

62. A 2005 rapid assessment on **trafficking in children for exploitative employment**<sup>43</sup> constitutes one of the few in Bangladesh addressing worst forms other than hazardous. The study, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, was designed to identify and understand how the trafficking process functions and the extremely harsh conditions often endured by the children who are its victims. It indicated that the magnitude of trafficking in Bangladesh has increased over the years, but that neither the extent nor the real expansion could be verified.

63. The illegal structure of trafficking, community vested interests, and a lack of information networking were cited as major constraints preventing verification. In one of the study areas (Shibganj), girls had been found employed in Indian *bidi* factories and boys trafficked to Dubai as camel jockeys. Girls from each of the four study areas (Patgram, Shibganj, Teknaf, and Dhaka) had been found trafficked to brothels in India (Bombay, Delhi, Kolkata, and other areas). But in general, internal trafficking in children was a much larger problem than external trafficking in children. The origins of rescued girls at NGO shelters (BNWLA and ACD) cited in the study indicated that internal trafficking of children occurs within almost all districts of the country. The study argued that discrimination against girls in all spheres of society contributes to their increasing vulnerability to trafficking. Early marriage and dowry pressures make the girl child highly vulnerable to trafficking.

64. More recent studies note that both the girls and boys are exposed to sexual exploitation<sup>44</sup> and indicate the presence of children working in ship-breaking.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> International Labour Office (ILO), *Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Exploitative Employment in Bangladesh*, (2006). The study used a rapid assessment methodology, which included the following elements of data collection: review of literature and newspapers; consultation with knowledge institutions; Interviews with key informants; observation; in-depth interview and case study; focus group discussion (FGD); participatory learning workshops; and short questionnaire-based household surveys.

<sup>44</sup> INCIDIN Bangladesh, *Boys and Bullies*, ECPAT; *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Bangladesh*, UNICEF, 2008

## 6. IMPACT OF CHILDREN'S WORK

### 6.1 Educational impact

65. The degree to which work interferes with children's schooling is one of the most important determinants of the long-term impact of early work experience. Reduced educational opportunities constitute the main link between child labour, on the one hand, and youth employment outcomes, on the other. Clearly, if the exigencies of work mean that children are denied schooling altogether or are less able to perform in the classroom, then these children will not acquire the human capital necessary for more gainful employment upon entering adulthood. Links between child labour, human capital levels and youth employment outcomes in Bangladesh are explored in more detail in the companion UCW study *Understanding Youth Employment Outcomes*, currently in draft form.

66. Children's employment in Bangladesh appears to interfere with their ability to attend and benefit from schooling, underscoring the importance of child labour as a barrier to achieving Education For All. Available data<sup>46</sup> permit the generation of three core education indicators – school attendance rate, average grade-for-age<sup>47</sup> and average age-for-level.<sup>48</sup> When disaggregated by children's work status, these indicators point to important differences between working and non-working children in terms of their ability to participate in school, and to progress through the school system once there.<sup>49</sup> Data requirements for other indicators of school survival and progression are more stringent, in that they require information on schooling status for two consecutive school years, and therefore are not discussed here.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Childbreaking Yards: Child Labour in the Ship Recycling Industry in Bangladesh; FIDH-YPSA; 2008.

<sup>46</sup> Data from DHS 2004 and MICS 2006 are used in addition to data from BALFS 2005/06 for the generation of the education indicators.

<sup>47</sup> Grade for age is computed as average grade completed of children currently attending school at a given age.

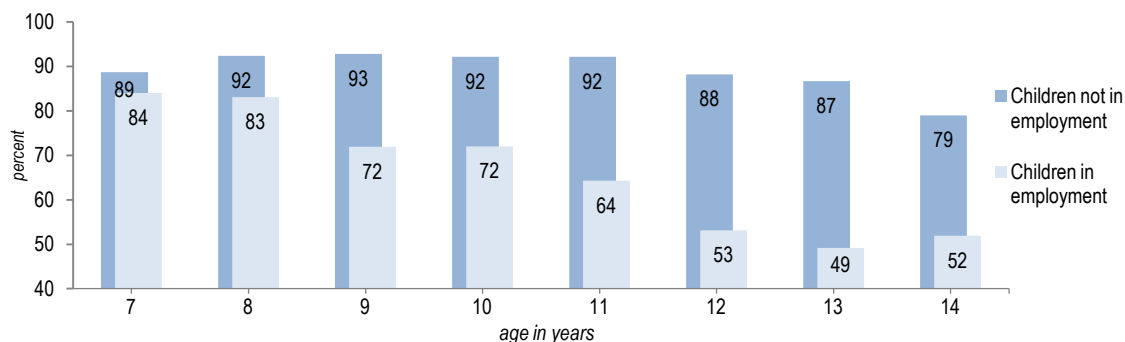
<sup>48</sup> Age for school level is computed as average age of children currently attending a given school level.

<sup>49</sup> While suggestive, a causal relationship between child labour and school cannot of course be asserted from descriptive data on these indicators. Establishing causality is complicated by the fact that child labour and school attendance are usually the result of a joint decision on the part of the household, and by the fact that this decision may be influenced by possibly unobserved factors such as innate talent, family behaviour and or family preferences.

<sup>50</sup> This in turn requires either two-year panel data or retrospective questions relating to school attendance (for the calculation of *dropout-out rates*) and relating to grade level (for the calculation of *transition* and *repetition rates*). The *survival ratio* requires panel data for several years (true cohort method) or data on drop-out and repetition (reconstructed cohort method).

67. The school attendance<sup>51</sup> of children in employment lagged behind that of their non-working counterparts at every age in Bangladesh (Figure 13). Children’s employment appears to interfere strongly with their ability to attend school in Bangladesh. There was a five percentage point attendance gap between children in and not in employment at age seven years, rising to 27 percentage points at age 14 years. Not surprisingly, attendance was negatively correlated not only with involvement in work but also with the time children spend actually working. As illustrated in Figure 14, the likelihood of a working child attending school falls off sharply as the number of hours he or she must work each week increases. Data are not available in Bangladesh on the *regularity* of school attendance, i.e. the frequency with which children are absent from or late for class, but evidence from several countries indicates that attendance regularity is also adversely affected by involvement in employment and the time intensity of employment.

Figure 13. School attendance rate, by children’s employment and age



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006.

Figure 14. Work intensity and the probability of school attendance, working children aged 6-14 years<sup>(a)</sup>



Notes: (a) Kernel regression results

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006.

<sup>51</sup> School attendance refers to children attending school at the time of the survey. As such it is a more restrictive concept than enrolment, as school attendance excludes those formally enrolled in school according to school records but not currently attending.

68. Why does work appear to be incompatible with schooling for many children in Bangladesh? The relative importance and interplay of work-related factors (e.g., sector, intensity, setting, work schedule, etc.) and school-related factors (e.g., duration of the school day, flexibility of the school calendar, school distance, etc.) remain poorly understood, constituting an obstacle to identifying forms of work most disruptive of schooling as well as to designing policies aimed at making schooling and (benign) work more compatible. The influence of unobserved factors such as innate talent, family behaviour or family preferences also needs to be better understood. On the basis of cross-sectional data alone it is difficult to know, for example, if it is low talent that induces a child not to go to school and hence start to work, or if it is the preference or need to work that then induces a child to drop out of school. More research is therefore needed to improve understanding of the link between child labour and school attendance. The use of panel or retrospective data in particular can help to address at least some of these issues and to obtain firmer results in terms of causality.

69. Not discussed thus far is the possible impact of child labour involvement on the ability of children to learn effectively once in the classroom. It stands to reason that the exigencies of work limit the time and energy children have for their studies, in turn negatively impacting upon their academic performance. But in the absence of test scores or some other direct measure of achievement, it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions regarding the link between school performance and child labour.

70. Data from BALFS 2005/06 on average grade-for-age and average age-for-level show that children in employment lagged behind their non-working counterparts in terms of grade progression, presumably at least in part due to poor performance.<sup>52</sup> As shown in Figure 15 the gap in grade progression between working and non-working children already appears at age nine years, and widens thereafter.<sup>53</sup> By the age of 14 years, children in employment were one-half grade behind their non-working counterparts. And because child workers are more likely to drop out at early ages, and because drop outs are presumably those with higher accumulated delay, the gap in Figure 15 is likely to underestimate the true gap in completed grades, i.e., the gap that would be observed in the absence of selective drop out. Table 14 shows that children in employment in secondary school were much older on average than their non-working counterparts, and much more likely than their non-working peers to be over-aged. These results point to the difficulty that working children face in keeping up in the classroom with

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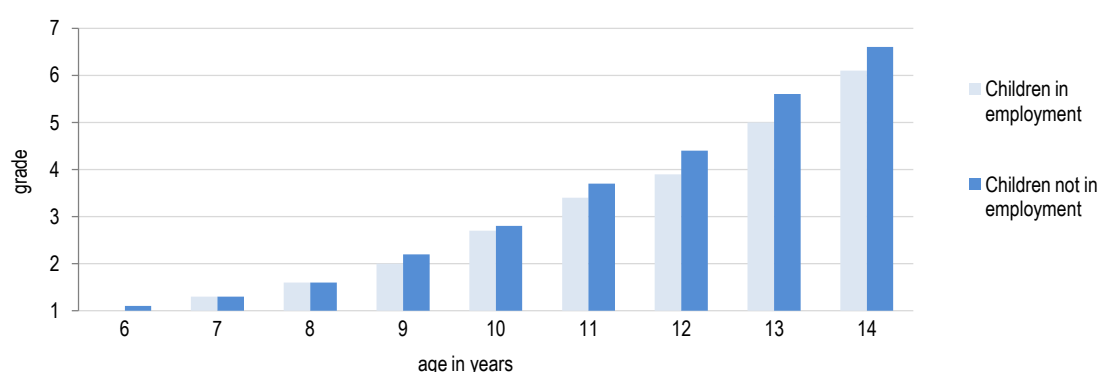
<sup>52</sup> The lags in progression might also be due to higher incidence of late entry among children who are identified as workers, or to higher absenteeism among child labourers in turn leading to grade repetition.

<sup>53</sup> Since the Bangladesh annual Labour Force Survey for the year 2005/06 does not contain information about the average grade completed, the calculations of the average grade are based on the Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey for the year 2006.



children that are not burdened with work responsibilities, and constitute another indication of the human capital cost associated with children's work.

Figure 15. Average grade completed of children currently attending school, by age and involvement in employment



Source: UCW calculations based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006

Table 14. Age of students in secondary school, by sex, residence and involvement in employment

Category		Average age at secondary school		Proportion of children attending secondary school who are overaged <sup>(a)</sup>	
		Children not in employment	Children in employment	Children not in employment	Children in employment
Sex	Male	14.8	17.4	19.5%	48.6%
	Female	14.5	17.3	13.5%	49.4%
Residence	Urban	14.8	17.4	17.1%	54.2%
	Rural	14.6	17.4	15.9%	47.6%
Total		14.7	17.4	16.2%	48.8%

Note: (a) Overaged children refers to those in the age group 18-24 years.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2004

71. Children's levels of educational attainment and literacy are generally low in Bangladesh, in part due to the exigencies of early involvement in work. Over eight percent of 7-17 year-olds, almost 3 million in absolute terms, have never attended school (Table 15). In addition, almost one-third of children from this age group with past schooling experience (but not currently enrolled), around 1.5 million in absolute terms, are unable to write a letter (Table 16). Functional illiteracy also appears to extend to current students – about half of those attending school (14 million in absolute terms) are unable to write a letter.

Table 15. Education attainment, children aged 7-17 years, by sex and residence

Category		Out-of-school children						Currently attending school	
		No previous schooling		Some previous schooling		Total out of school		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Sex	Male	1,780,492	9.3	2,986,215	15.5	4,766,707	24.8	14,469,968	75.2
	Female	1,210,701	7.0	1,982,980	11.5	3,193,681	18.5	13,980,796	81.4
Residence	Urban	652,040	8.2	1,047,460	13.1	1,699,500	21.3	6,298,972	78.8
	Rural	2,339,153	8.2	3,921,735	13.8	6,260,888	22	22,151,792	78.0
Total		2,991,193	8.2	4,969,195	13.6	7,960,388	21.8	28,450,764	78.1

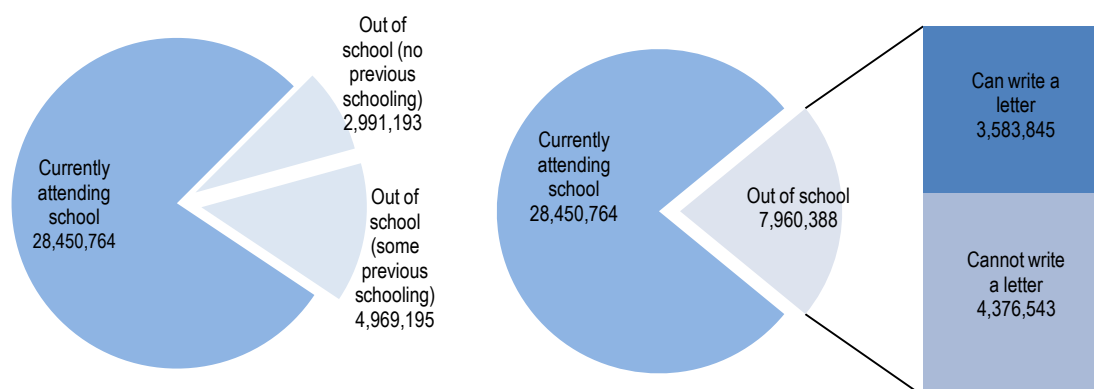
Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006.

Table 16. Literacy levels<sup>(a)</sup> and education attainment, children aged 7-17 years, by sex and residence

Category		No previous schooling and cannot write a letter		Some previous schooling and cannot write a letter		Currently attending school and cannot write a letter	
		No.	% of total with no previous schooling	No.	% of total with some previous schooling	No.	% of total currently attending school
		Sex	Male	1,718,354	96.5	932,393	31.2
Female	1,162,019		96.0	563,777	28.4	6,780,950	48.5
Residence	Urban	615,739	94.4	295,348	28.2	2,815,837	44.7
	Rural	2,264,634	96.8	1,200,822	30.6	11,190,799	50.5
Total		2,880,373	96.3	1,496,170	30.1	14,006,636	49.2

Notes: (a) The ability to write a letter is the only indicator for literacy available in the Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-06. This indicator is, of course, only an imperfect proxy for functional literacy.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006.

Figure 16. Education attainment and literacy levels<sup>(a)</sup>, children aged 7-17 years, by sex and residence

Notes: (a) The ability to write a letter is the only indicator for literacy available in the Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006. This indicator is, of course, only an imperfect proxy for functional literacy.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006.

72. These figures underscore the importance of expanding and accelerating on-going efforts in second chance education and in providing other services that enhance children's life options. Children with little or no schooling will be in a weak position in the labour market, at much greater risk of joining the ranks of the unemployed and the poor. If left alone, these children and youth are likely to be in need of other (more costly) remediation policies at a later stage of their life cycle.

## 6.2 Health impact

73. Children's employment is also undoubtedly damaging to children's health in Bangladesh, but this is an area where information is limited largely to that provided by the specialized baseline surveys cited in Section 5 of this report. Neither of the two most recent national household surveys with information on child labour (BALFS 2005-06 and MICS 2006) contained information on work-related ill-health or injury. But even if this information were available, the full health impact of employment would be difficult to assess because much of the relationship between work and health is dynamic. While some of the health risks child workers are exposed to have an immediate effect on health, other adverse health effects develop over many years and only become manifest in adulthood, and therefore are not captured by the measures of immediate health impact in household surveys.

74. The specialized baseline surveys provide some idea of the immediate health consequences associated with children's employment in specific sectors. The 2003 baseline survey on child labour in the battery recharging/recycling sector<sup>54</sup> indicated that very few (13 percent) of the children were provided with any form of protective gear, contributing to a very high rate of work-related illness and injury (23 percent). The 2002/03 baseline survey of child labour in welding establishments<sup>55</sup> indicated that welding work, hazardous even for adult workers, was even more so for children: 41 percent reported some form of work-related injury or illness, almost all (93 percent) requiring medical attention. Almost half of children concerned reported health problems in the 2003 baseline survey on child labour in the road transport sector (bus, mini-bus, tempo, taxi, rickshaw, van, push cart, trucks, etc.),<sup>56</sup> and almost one-third of children concerned reported

<sup>54</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Battery/Recycling Sector, 2003*, (2004). The survey was conducted during September and October 2003, based on a sample of a total of 416 child workers from 416 establishments.

<sup>55</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Welding Sector, 2002-2003*. This survey was conducted from November 2002 to January 2003. The baseline survey covered a sample of 434 children from 404 sample establishments.

<sup>56</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), *Report of the Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Road Transport Sector, 2003*, (March 2004). The baseline survey was conducted during September and October 2003. Due to the nature of this sector, it was not an establishment-based survey but a location/site-based survey. Results are based on a sample of 442 child workers in the road transport sector from 23 regions (greater districts) of the country.

experienced work-related ill-health in the 2002/03 baseline survey on child labour in automobile establishments.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the 2005/06 baseline survey of child domestic labour<sup>58</sup> indicated that 60 percent suffered some form of abuse and that one in five of the domestic child labourers were not free to leave their job.

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<sup>57</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), *Report of the Baseline Survey on Working Children in Automobile Workshops, 2002-2003*, (2003). The survey was conducted during November 2002 to January 2003 and covered 350 auto establishments out of the total 9614 in the country. The sample consisted of 380 children aged 5 to 17 years from 350 establishments; data was also collected from 350 owners/employers of the auto establishments surveyed.

<sup>58</sup> International Labour Office (ILO), *Baseline Survey on Child Domestic Labour in Bangladesh*, (2006). The survey employed representative sample collected from rural and urban areas using a stratified two-stage cluster sampling procedure. Information was collected from 167,051 households, 3,841 child domestic workers and 3,805 employers from 725 urban and rural PSUs. A child less than 18 years was defined as a child domestic worker (CDW) if s/he performed domestic chores in others' household regardless of the amount or kind of remuneration s/he received.

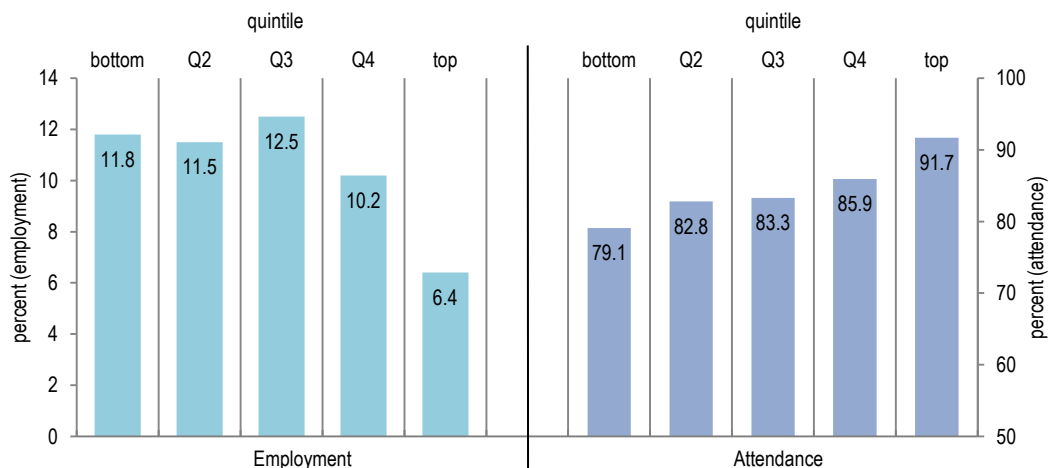
## 7. DECISIONS CONCERNING CHILDREN'S WORK AND SCHOOLING

75. As most children (excluding those that live on their own) exercise little control over their time allocations, determining why children work requires investigating why parents choose to engage their children in work rather than sending them to school or leaving them idle at home. Both socio-cultural and economic considerations are important in this context. Households are influenced by the perceived costs of child labour and benefits of schooling. But factors which influence decisions concerning children's schooling and child labour can extend well beyond economics. Social norms, cultural attitudes and perceptions, e.g., regarding girls' schooling or early marriage, also direct household decisions on children's school and work.

76. This section makes use of both descriptive and econometric evidence from BALFS 2005/06 to identify some of the factors influencing parents' decisions concerning their children's time use.

77. Descriptive evidence suggests that economic considerations play a major role in parents' decisions to involve their children in work or send them to school. Simple correlations point to a strong inverse relationship between household income, on the one hand, and children's employment, on the other. At the same time, school attendance increases with household income (Figure 17). These results suggest that children's earnings or productivity can play an important role in household survival strategies among low-income families, and point to the need for some form of compensatory income or earnings schemes as part of a broader effort for encouraging school attendance and discouraging children's work among poor households.

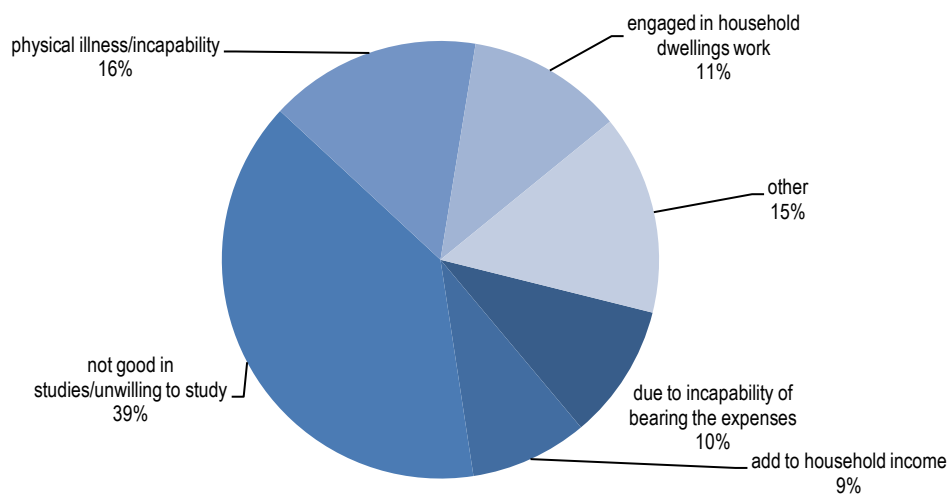
Figure 17. Children's employment and school attendance, 7-14 years age group, by household expenditure quintile



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

78. Many families also cite economic considerations in explaining their decisions to keep their children away from school. The need to work for income or for household production is reported in 20 percent of cases in which children are out of school. But other, school-related, factors also appear to be an important consideration: 39 percent of respondents cited poor school performance or unwillingness to study (Figure 18) as reasons for children not going to school, in turn a likely reflection of the quality concerns affecting the school system (see discussion in Section 9 of this report). School expenses are cited in 10 percent of cases, a reflection at least in part of the increasing trend and costs of private tuition in Bangladesh. A 2006 Education Watch report concluded that given the extremely low public expenditure on education, families are spending more on private tutors. Household expenditure on tuition goes up with each year of school and makes up the largest component of indirect costs of education.<sup>59</sup> “Other” reasons for children being out of school, accounting for 15 percent of responses, are likely to include issues such as inflexible school timing, school travel expenses, and a lack of appreciation for the importance of children’s schooling within the household.

Figure 18. Distribution of out-of-school children by stated reason for not going to school



Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

79. Multivariate analysis<sup>60</sup> permits a more precise identification of the factors influencing household decisions to involve their children in work or school.

<sup>59</sup> *Education Watch 2006: Financing Primary and Secondary Education in Bangladesh*. Published by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) Bangladesh, December 2007.

<sup>60</sup> A bivariate probit model was used to jointly determine the correlated decisions on child schooling and work. A simple economic model of household behavior is used to guide the empirical specification. For detailed information on the model, see Cigno, Rosati and Tzannatos, *The Economics of Child Labour*, 2005. The analysis carried out in this section is, obviously, conditioned by the information available. Notwithstanding the extensiveness of the survey utilised, potentially important variables are missing. In particular, information on the relative price of child work is difficult

The results of three separate regressions are presented in order to be able to include as wide a set of explanatory variables as possible. Table 17 and Table 18 report results of the estimates with different explanatory variables based on the 2005-2006 Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey data. The first regression (Table 17) includes the impact of the local labor market characteristics, while the second regression (Table 18) includes the impact of the region of residence. A third regression (Table 19), based on the 2004 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, includes the impact of school availability. Some of the key qualitative inferences from the regressions are presented below.

**80. Child age.** The analysis shows that the probability of a child working increases with age. The available information is insufficient to provide a precise idea of the relative importance of the two probable reasons for this, i.e., the rising opportunity cost of schooling as a child grows older, or the lack of access to schooling at the post-primary level.

Table 17. Determinants of children's employment and schooling (including local labour market characteristics),<sup>(1)</sup> marginal effects after bivariate probit estimation, 6-14, year-olds

Explanatory variables		Only employment		Only schooling		Both activities		Neither activity	
		dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z
Child age and sex	Age	-0.0255	-14.0	0.1398	22.2	0.0371	10.0	-0.1515	-31.6
	Age squared	0.0017	18.8	-0.0082	-27.0	-0.0011	-6.1	0.0077	33.0
	Male	0.0288	25.1	-0.0874	-23.8	0.0672	33.3	-0.0085	-3.2
Household characteristics	Ln expenditure per capita	-0.0192	-15.7	0.0789	17.3	-0.0125	-5.4	-0.0472	-14.0
	Own any assets <sup>(2)</sup>	-0.0105	-8.4	0.0544	12.4	0.0082	3.9	-0.0520	-15.9
	Own some decimals of the land	-0.0118	-6.2	0.0426	6.8	-0.0114	-3.3	-0.0194	-4.1
	Household size	-0.0031	-8.1	0.0110	7.6	-0.0047	-6.1	-0.0032	-3.0
	Siblings 0-4	0.0032	3.7	-0.0088	-2.7	0.0088	5.1	-0.0033	-1.4
	Siblings 5-14	0.0048	7.6	-0.0180	-7.6	0.0056	4.6	0.0076	4.4
	Sex of the household head	-0.0042	-2.0	0.0232	3.1	0.0046	1.3	-0.0236	-4.1
Education of household head <sup>3</sup>	Primary education	-0.0131	-12.9	0.0606	14.7	0.0008	0.3	-0.0483	-17.4
	Secondary education	-0.0243	-23.8	0.1123	27.7	-0.0009	-0.4	-0.0871	-32.6
	Tertiary education	-0.0206	-13.8	0.0988	11.8	-0.0112	-2.0	-0.0671	-14.7
Residence	Urban	-0.0010	-0.8	0.0028	0.7	-0.0023	-1.0	0.0005	0.2
Local labour mkt. characteristics	Prime age employment to population ratio	0.3472	9.7	-1.1953	-9.1	0.5750	8.7	0.2732	3.0
	Youth to working-age population ratio	0.0172	3.2	-0.1077	-5.3	-0.0453	-4.3	0.1358	9.3

Notes: (1) Regression with local labour market characteristics included among explanatory variables; (2) Household own assets relating to some of the following activities: animal husbandry, poultry production, dairy farm, fishing farm, horticultures(nursing); (3) Reference category "No Education"

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

**81. Gender.** Parents' decisions concerning whether to involve their children in school or work also appear strongly influenced by gender considerations.

to capture: indicators for returns to education, work and household chores are not easily available (for a discussion of the role played by unobservables refer to Deb and Rosati, *Determinants of Child Labour and School Attendance: The Role of Household Observables*, December 2002).

Holding constant household income, parents' education and other relevant factors, boys are more likely to be in employment only or to combine employment and school than their female counterparts. Being a girl, on the other hand, makes it more likely to be at school full time. It is worth noting, however, that these results do not extend to involvement in household chores, a variable not included in the multivariate analysis. The descriptive evidence presented above suggests that gender considerations are also an important factor in the assignment of responsibility for chores in the household. These results reflect in part social norms dictating that while boys may work to earn for their families, girls should instead stay home to help in running the household.

Table 18. Determinants of children's work and schooling (including division of residence),<sup>(1)</sup> marginal effects after bivariate probit estimation, 6-14, year-olds

Explanatory variables		Only employment		Only schooling		Both activities		Neither activity	
		dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z
Child age and sex	Age	-0.0253	-13.9	0.1400	22.3	0.0370	10.1	-0.1517	-31.6
	Age squared	0.0017	18.7	-0.0082	-27.0	-0.0011	-6.2	0.0077	33.0
	Male	0.0287	25.1	-0.0870	-23.8	0.0666	33.2	-0.0084	-3.1
Household characteristics	Ln expenditure per capita	-0.0181	-14.4	0.0761	16.4	-0.0088	-3.7	-0.0492	-14.3
	Own any assets*	-0.0115	-9.0	0.0558	12.6	0.0047	2.2	-0.0490	-14.8
	Own some decimals of the land	-0.0113	-6.0	0.0416	6.6	-0.0099	-2.9	-0.0204	-4.3
	Household size	-0.0031	-8.0	0.0108	7.5	-0.0045	-6.0	-0.0033	-3.0
	Siblings 0-4	0.0032	3.7	-0.0087	-2.7	0.0089	5.2	-0.0034	-1.4
	Siblings 5-14	0.0050	8.0	-0.0185	-7.8	0.0064	5.2	0.0071	4.1
	Sex of the household head	-0.0045	-2.1	0.0239	3.2	0.0040	1.1	-0.0235	-4.1
Education of household head <sup>3</sup>	Primary education	-0.0130	-12.8	0.0602	14.7	0.0007	0.3	-0.0479	-17.2
	Secondary education	-0.0244	-23.8	0.1131	27.9	-0.0023	-0.9	-0.0864	-32.2
	Tertiary education	-0.0209	-14.4	0.1011	12.3	-0.0140	-2.7	-0.0663	-14.3
Place of residence <sup>4</sup>	Urban	-0.0012	-1.1	0.0029	0.7	-0.0036	-1.6	0.0019	0.6
	Chittagong	-0.0126	-6.8	0.0468	6.1	-0.0196	-5.5	-0.0146	-2.7
	Dhaka	-0.0136	-7.1	0.0537	7.0	-0.0166	-4.5	-0.0235	-4.5
	Khulna	-0.0103	-5.3	0.0486	5.9	0.0048	1.0	-0.0431	-8.8
	Rajshahi	-0.0050	-2.4	0.0286	3.5	0.0165	3.5	-0.0401	-8.0
	Barisal	0.0032	1.2	-0.0072	-0.7	0.0133	2.5	-0.0093	-1.5

Notes: (1) Regression with divisional dummy variables included among explanatory variables; (2) Household own assets relating to some of the following activities: animal husbandry, poultry production, dairy farm, fishing farm, horticulture(nursing); (3) Reference category "No Education"; (4) Reference category for urban "rural"; Reference category for division of residence "Sylhet"

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006

**82. Place of residence.** There are differences by geographic division in the likelihood of school attendance and child labour, although the magnitude of the effects is not large. Holding other factors constant, a child living in Dhaka, for example, has a five percentage point greater probability of studying full time, and a 1.3 percentage point lower probability of working full-time, compared to a child living in Sylhet division. Conditional on region of residence and the other observable individual and household controls,



children's risk of employment, however, is not significantly affected by whether they live in rural or urban areas.

**83. Household composition.** Children from households with more adults, and therefore more available breadwinner, are less likely to work and more likely to attend school, although the magnitude of these effects are not large. Children from households with more children, and therefore more dependant mouths to feed, on the other hand, are more likely to work and less likely to go to school, although again the size of the effects is small.

**84. Household income and land ownership.** Econometric evidence confirms the importance of household income in decisions concerning children's time. Both land ownership and farm ownership also influence the composition of children's activities, and particularly the likelihood of full-time school attendance. Children from households with land or with a farm business are about five percentage points more likely to attend school full-time, while at the same slightly less likely (about one percentage point) to work full-time in employment.

**85. Education of household head.** The effect of an increase of parents' education levels on children's school attendance is strong and positive. Holding income and other factors constant, children from households where the head has at least a primary education are six percentage points more likely to attend school full-time relative to children from households whose heads are uneducated. A secondary education level results in a further five percentage point rise in the likelihood of full-time school attendance. Higher levels of parental education reduce children's risk of full-time employment, though the size of the effect is not large. It is worth reiterating that these results are obtained holding income constant, i.e., independent of any disguised income effect. One possible explanation is that more educated parents might have a better knowledge of the returns to education, and/or be in a position to help their children exploit the earning potential acquired through education. The results underscore the value of investment in adult education as part of a broader strategy against child labour and school exclusion.

**86. Local labour demand and supply.** Household decisions concerning children's work and schooling also appear strongly influenced by local labour market conditions. Two indicators were used at the division level to assess links between the local labour market, child labour and schooling: prime age employment to population ratio, an indicator of labour demand; and youth to working-age population ratio, an indicator of labour supply. Higher labour demand results in a large rise in the likelihood of children's full-time employment and a large fall in the likelihood of full-time school attendance. If higher labour demand is reflected in higher wages (or returns to work) for both adults and children, it is likely to generate both an income (associated with reduced children's employment) and a substitution effect (associated with increased children's employment). In the case of

Bangladesh, it appears that the latter outweighs the former, and that children's work is therefore pro cyclical in nature. The relative supply of children and youth work with respect to adult work, also appears to have a positive impact on the probability of children's employment. Most likely, higher dependency ratios are associated with higher poverty, explaining why relative supply seems to be associated to higher child labor.

**87. School availability.** The presence of a primary school in a village makes it much more likely that families send their children to school. Providing a local primary school makes it six percentage points more likely that a child attends school full-time, while at the same reducing a child's risk of full-time employment by two percentage points. This result underscores that school distance can constitute an important barrier to school attendance in Bangladesh, particularly in rural areas.

Table 19. Determinants of children's work and schooling (including school availability),<sup>(1)</sup> marginal effect after bivariate probit estimation-6-14, year-olds

Explanatory variables		Only employment		Only schooling		Both activities		Neither activity	
		dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z	dy/dx	z
Child age and sex	Age	0.0211	1.6	0.0766	3.0	0.0196	4.6	-0.1173	-5.2
	Age squared	0.0001	0.3	-0.0061	-5.3	-0.0007	-4.0	0.0067	6.7
	Male	0.0631	15.9	-0.0847	-10.7	0.0193	10.3	0.0023	0.4
Household characteristics	Poor	0.0285	5.2	-0.0822	-7.1	0.0019	1.1	0.0518	5.3
	Rich	0.0007	0.1	0.0291	2.5	0.0044	2.4	-0.0342	-3.6
	Household size	-0.0034	-3.2	0.0112	4.5	-0.0001	-0.3	-0.0077	-3.9
	Siblings 0-4	0.0046	1.7	-0.0195	-3.2	-0.0004	-0.5	0.0153	3.1
	Siblings 5-14	0.0069	3.5	-0.0224	-4.8	0.0002	0.4	0.0152	4.1
	Sex of the household head	-0.0036	-0.6	-0.0056	-0.4	-0.0027	-1.1	0.0119	1.1
Education of household head <sup>2</sup>	Primary education	-0.0082	-2.2	0.0470	5.4	0.0027	1.7	-0.0414	-5.8
	Secondary and tertiary education	-0.0238	-6.2	0.0976	10.4	0.0019	1.2	-0.0757	-10.1
Access to school	Primary school is in the village/mohalla	-0.0155	-2.4	0.0584	4.1	0.0007	0.4	-0.0437	-3.7
Place of residence <sup>3</sup>	Urban	0.0381	7.6	-0.1004	-9.9	0.0032	2.2	0.0591	7.2
	Chittagong	-0.0221	-4.	0.0717	6.2	-0.0013	-0.7	-0.0483	-5.0
	Dhaka	-0.0171	-3.41	0.0744	6.3	0.0022	1.0	-0.0595	-6.4
	Khulna	-0.0269	-6.0.	0.1101	10.2	0.0024	0.9	-0.0856	-10.4
	Rajshahi	-0.0211	-4.3	0.0924	8.0	0.0031	1.2	-0.0744	-8.4
	Barisal	-0.0206	-4.3	0.1035	9.3	0.0061	2.3	-0.0890	-10.8

Notes: (1) Regression with school availability included among explanatory variables; (2) Reference category "No Education"; (3) Reference category for urban "rural"; Reference category for division of residence "Sylhet"

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2004

**88.** But children's employment is a complex phenomenon and the factors mentioned above clearly represent only a partial list of determinants. Better data and more in-depth analysis are needed for a more complete understanding of why children become involved in work. More information on availability of infrastructure, school quality, access to credit markets, coverage of social protection schemes, is especially needed. As stated at the

beginning of this section, decisions concerning children's work and schooling are driven by both economic and socio-cultural factors, and a better understanding is also needed of the role of the latter. Studies indicate, for instance, that early marriage is an important factor in decisions regarding girls' schooling in rural Bangladesh.<sup>61</sup> The unique circumstances causing children's involvement in worst forms of child labour other than hazardous, not captured by traditional household surveys, is an area requiring particular research attention.

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<sup>61</sup> Field E. And Ambrus A., "Early Marriage, Age of Menarche, and Female Schooling Attainment in Bangladesh." *Journal of Political Economy*, 2008, vol. 116, no. 5.

## 8. NATIONAL RESPONSE TO CHILD LABOUR

### 8.1 Legal protection from child labour

89. Bangladesh has made a number of important legal commitments in the areas of child labour and children's schooling. The Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 and subsequently endorsed the optional protocols to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Bangladesh has also ratified ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour) and a number of other ILO Conventions with a bearing on child labour. The country has not, however, yet ratified the ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age), perhaps the most important international legal standard relating to child labour.

90. The Labour Act enacted in 2006 replaced the range of fragmentary laws related to child labour in force previous to this date<sup>62</sup> and establishes a uniform minimum age for admission to work. In May 2010, the Government approved the National Education Policy 2010 featuring compulsory-primary education from grades one through eight. According to the Labour Act (2006), "child" means a person who has not yet completed fourteen years of age and "adolescent" means a person who has completed fourteen years of age but has not completed eighteen years of age. The Act states that no child shall be employed or permitted to work in any occupation or establishment (Section 34), but that a child who has completed twelve years of age may be employed in such light work as not to endanger his health and development or interfere with his education (Section 44).

91. The Act states that an adolescent shall not be required or allowed to work in a factory unless (a) a certificate of fitness granted to her/him under section 68 is in the custody of the manager of the factory and (b) the adolescent carries a token giving a reference to such certificate while he is at work (Section 34). The provisions for adolescents exclude those employed in any occupation or in a factory as an apprentice for vocational training. Sections 39, 40 and 42 of the new labour law indicate some activities for which the employment of the adolescent is strictly prohibited.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> These included: (a) The Factories Rules, 1979; (b) The Children Act, 1974; (c) Employment of Children Act (No. 26 of 1938 as amended 1974); (d) The Factories Act, 1965 (No. 4 of 1965); (e) Shops and Establishments Act, 1965 (No. 7 of 1965); (f) Tea Plantations Labour Ordinance, 1962 (No. 39 of 1962 as amended); (g) Road Transport Workers Ordinance, 1961 (No. 18 of 1961); (h) The Children Act, 1938; (i) Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933 (No. 11 of 1933); and (j) The Mines Act, 1923 (No. 4 of 1923).

<sup>63</sup> The employment of the adolescent is strictly restricted for the following activities: a) cleaning of the machinery while it is in motion; b) lubrication or other adjustment operation of the machinery while it is in motion; c) any work in-between the moving parts of a machine and d) any work under ground or under water.

92. Important gaps however remain in terms of children's legal protection from child labour. Current legislation focuses on formal or semi-formal work settings and largely ignores the employment of children in the rural economy. No reference is made in the legislation to the agriculture sector (with the exception of tea plantations), to small-scale informal sector businesses or to family-based employment, which collectively account for as much as 80 percent of total children's employment. The lack of adequate legislative provisions relating to hazardous work is a particular concern. While Bangladesh has ratified ILO Convention No. 182, the Labour Act (2006) does not contain a general prohibition of hazardous work of children under 18 years and no national list of hazardous sectors and processes has yet been made public.<sup>64</sup>

93. The enforcement of child labour legislation outside the export-oriented garment sector also remains a major challenge.<sup>65</sup> Legislation specifies penalties for child labor violations, typically nominal fines of less than \$80 (5,000 taka), but there are very few recorded cases of application of sanctions against the employers for violating the child labour laws. The Office of the Chief Inspector of Factories under the Ministry of Labor and Employment is responsible for implementation and enforcement of labor laws, including child labor provisions, but its capacity to supervise and monitor factories is very limited. And informal sector of the economy where the largest proportions of the children are found to be working is largely outside formal inspection regimes. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Bangladesh increase the number of labour inspectors and develop a comprehensive child labour monitoring system in collaboration with NGOs, community-based organizations and ILO/IPEC.<sup>66</sup>

## 8.2 National policy framework

94. Bangladesh's national development priorities are detailed in the second National Accelerated Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NASPR-II). The NASPR is the planning tool that dictates the Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) followed by most of the relevant ministries. Several of the strategic clusters contained in the document relate to the situation of children in the country generally and to the situation of child labourers in particular. Foremost among these are clusters relating to decent employment,

<sup>64</sup> Section 39, 40 and 42 of the 2006 Labour Act lists only four activities for which the employment of the adolescent is strictly prohibited: (a) cleaning of the machinery while it is in motion; (b) lubrication or other adjustment operation of the machinery while it is in motion; (c) any work in-between the moving parts of a machine; and (d) any work under ground or under water.

<sup>65</sup> In 2007, the Ministry of Commerce had set up a high-level Social Compliance Forum (chaired by the Minister of Commerce) for the garment industry to ensure, *inter alia*, compliance with labour standards in this sector.

<sup>66</sup> CRC/C/15/Add.221, 27 October 2003, Para 27.

education, excluded children, and the protection of children, as summarised in Table 20.

*Table 20. National Accelerated Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NASPR-II): overview of the strategic clusters relevant for child labour*

<i>Policy matrix</i>	<i>Cluster</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
Policy Matrix 6: Promoting Decent Employment		Ensuring and enhancing occupational safety and health
		Quickening elimination of child labour and Worst Form of Child Labour (WFCL)
		Quickening elimination of child labour and Worst Form of Child Labour (WFCL)
Policy Matrix 14: Social Inclusion and Empowerment; Children's advancement and Rights	IV. Education	Developing and implementing early childhood development (ECD) policies and programmes
		Reducing inequity and disparity in ECD programme
		Increasing enrolment in primary school and improving quality
		Improve access, retention and equity at the primary level
		Increase equity of outcome
	V. Excluded children	Formulating programmes for street, indigenous, working children without parental care and under-privileged children
		Equipping all children with basic education to develop life skills
		Mainstream vocational education as a component of secondary education
		Ensuring qualitative non-formal education for children and expand opportunities for excluded children
	VII. Protection for children	Strengthen research and documentation on salient issues of child abuse, exploitation and violence
		Increasing livelihood options for children and developing life skills to meet current demands of the local job market
		Establishing mechanisms to prevent and protect children from all forms of abuse, exploitation and violence
		Protecting children against torture and other cruel, inhuman punishment.
		Protecting children from corporeal punishment in home, schools and other institutions
		Taking measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour as per International Labour Organization Convention No. 182
		Protecting street children from all forms of abuse and exploitation
		Improving the plight of children who live under difficult situation
		Safeguarding the interests of indigenous children

95. Child labour issues are taken up directly in the Third National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children in Bangladesh (2004-2009). The protection cluster of the NPA (section 6.5.2.) contains the objectives of taking immediate and effective measures to protect child labourers, and of eliminating the worst forms of child labour, with a particular focus on child domestic workers, migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups. The cluster also contains a range of specific intervention areas in service of these objectives, including: (a) conduct studies, e.g. occupational health, informal sector, child domestics, labour market analyses, etc.; (b) conduct a mapping of worst forms of child labour through baseline surveys in identified sectors; (c) formulate child-friendly code of conduct for employers of children; (d) develop policies and programmes for children in the informal sector, focusing first on those in the worst forms of child labour; (e) introduce regulations regarding minimum wage and protective standards for health, leisure and education for working children; (f) ensure that working children have access to education, including livelihood skills and income generation; and (g) identify and promote positive incentives for the private sector, both formal and informal, to address child labour.

96. Following ratification of ILO Convention No. 182 in 2001, the Ministry of Labour and Employment began the development of a framework for policy and direct action on the worst forms of child labour (WFCL). The framework was based on two processes: first, creation of an in-depth knowledge base to improve understanding of the nature and scope of the WFCL; and second, extensive and systematic consultations with a view to building a wide consensus, commitment and alliances among the full range of child labour stakeholders to address the WFCL problem.<sup>67</sup>

97. In 2004, ILO-IPEC, UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank assisted the Government of Bangladesh in formulating a National Time-Bound Programme (TBP) framework for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. It was reviewed by the stakeholders in 2006, and in 2008 it was further reviewed and updated. As depicted in Figure 19, the national TBP efforts are directed towards five primary “impact” areas: national laws having a bearing on child labour enforced; compulsory and free education ensured for all children; income of vulnerable families covering basic needs, rural-urban migration reduced; and family size reduced.

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<sup>67</sup> ILO, [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).





Table 21. Key elements of the 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy

<b>Strategic area of action</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target activities</b>
1. Policy implementation and institutional development	With a view to eliminate child labour comprehensively, ensure proper action planning and institutional development and maintain transparency and accountability of programmes or activities.	Within the stipulated timeframe, formulating working strategy towards the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and play appropriate role in developing and implementing necessary strategies.
2. Education	Providing free and compulsory pre-primary and, or primary education for the children who are likely to engage as child workers, and creating opportunities of practical and flexible education including semi-formal and secondary level education for working children.	within the stipulated time frame, ensuring free, compulsory and quality education for working children.
3. Health and nutrition	In line with the National Health and Nutrition Policy, formulate specific and separate action plans for ensuring physical and mental health and nutrition of working children both at workplaces and homes, and effectively implement them.	In line with the national health policy, implement comprehensive health and nutrition programmes and projects for working children.
4. Social awareness raising and motivation	To raise social awareness among general population on elimination of child labour; to encourage people against child labour and change attitudinal and behavioral pattern towards the children.	To improve social awareness amongst the public at large including children and their parents or guardians, employers' or owners' associations, professional associations, and media; to raise awareness on family planning, elimination of economic exploitation and suppression; and to discourage people of all level to combat against child labour.
5. Legislation formulation and enforcement	To reform existing Acts, formulate rules for implementation of existing Acts and implement rules and regulations effectively to eliminate child labour including assurance of their safety through sound enforcement of Acts, rules and regulations.	Apart from formal sector, bring in the child labour in the informal sector within the ambit of existing laws, rules and regulations and add separate schedules for formal, informal, hazardous, safe, light and heavy work in which children are likely to be involved.
6. Employment or labour market	To create adequate employment opportunities and access to competitive labour market for children or adolescents after receiving appropriate trade based skills training and becoming apt for work according to Act.	After the children engaged in both formal and informal sectors have acquired necessary skills in particular trades, ensure that they will receive technical training, as appropriate, and get employment at home and abroad. To also create adequate work opportunities to help them sustain themselves in the competitive labour market, and to create opportunities for families of working children to participate in income generating activities.
7. Prevention of child labour and safety of children engaged in labour	To take necessary measures to prevent the incidence of child labour; to protect the working children from the possible casualties to their lives; to prevent unsafe migration of children from rural to urban area; and to reduce the life risks of working children through improving the working environment and conditions.	--To arrange provision for fulfilling the fundamental rights of children at the grassroots level so that they may not have to migrate from the village to town for reasons like poverty, river erosion, family break up, etc. To rehabilitate and create employment and alternative livelihood opportunities for the capable family members of the affected children; --To protect working children from hazardous work and to ensure all their lawful rights, including working hours and wages; and To take necessary steps to prevent trafficking of children.

Table 21. Key elements of the 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy

<b>Strategic area of action</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target activities</b>
8. Social and family reintegration	To take necessary measures for ensuring social and family reintegration by withdrawal of working children from hazardous and worst forms of work and reintegrating them with their families and society.	--To gradually withdraw children who have been engaged in hazardous occupations in both formal and informal sectors since their early childhood days, and reintegrate them in the society; --To organize their reintegration with family, where possible; --To arrange for correctional centres, rehabilitation centres, drop-in centres, helpline, psycho-social counseling, necessary treatment, food and entertainment at divisional, district, upazila and even at the union level for the physically and psychologically distressed children.
9. Research and training	To conduct research and training with a view to review and determine the underlying causes of perpetuation of child labour and its associated issues, including possible ways of addressing it.	--To design and develop relevant and appropriate research programmes on multi-faceted national and international child labour situation and context, causes of child labour, prevention and protection strategies, implementation of child labour policies, etc. To review and determine the relevant Acts and regulations reform areas, including organizing appropriate training at field level. Moreover, to establish authentic database information through conducting scientifically coordinated surveys on child labour in both formal and informal sectors by accomplishing necessary data collection, preservation, and analyzing.
10. Monitoring and evaluation	To monitor the policy implementation and institutional development; to ensure education, health and nutrition of working children; to raise social awareness, motivation and sensitization; to formulate and enforce laws and legislations; to create employment and labour market opportunities; to implement relevant policies pertaining to the children's reintegration with families; to promote institutional capacity development towards the prevention and protection of child labour; to monitor and evaluate the progress of research and training programmes and performance of key responsible and support organizations in carrying out their duties of respective fields and to recommend on those.	To monitor and evaluate the concerted efforts of responsible and support organizations in implementing and taking effective and efficient measures with a view to achieving the main objective in line with the specific plan of action and provide directives to the responsible and support institutions towards the elimination of child labour.

Source: *National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010* (Unofficial translation). Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, March 2010.

99. The National Child Labour Elimination Policy was accompanied by a new National Education Policy approved by the Government in May 2010. The new policy involves compulsory-primary education from grades one through eight, pre-primary education for children aged five years, and a unified curriculum for general, *madrassa*, and vocational education up to the secondary level. The Government is currently finalising a draft comprehensive Early Childhood Care for Development (ECCD) policy (for children aged 0-8 years) that will coordinate ministerial efforts relating to the education, health and protection of young children. This policy mentions the right to education for all children – with special mention of the disadvantaged – but does not cite child labourers specifically.

### 8.3 Projects and programmes relating to child labour

100. There are a wide range of on-going Government, bilateral, multilateral and NGO interventions of relevance to child labour in Bangladesh, all helping to operationalise the legal and policy frameworks discussed above. These interventions address child labourers directly as well as key factors underlying child labour. But implementation is constrained by resource and capacity constraints, and by a lack of cohesion and coordination among concerned actors. Important gaps in the policy framework relating to child labour also persist. Children involved in the informal sectors of the economy in particular have received relatively little policy attention. These children include those involved in worst forms of child labour such as the ship-breaking and leather industries. Urban slums, home to a large number of working children, also have very few services targeting them.

101. The sustainability of the interventions remains an important question mark in the face of changes in planning and strategic directions, a lack of institutional coordination and limited community ownership of interventions. The high level of dependence on external funding partners also constitutes a challenge to sustainability, as the dictates of funding can mean discontinuing projects independent of their effectiveness or strategic importance. The government and NGO representatives have identified a number of factors to assure sustainability of the child labour interventions. These include the strong participation of NGOs and the community in designing interventions, and the mainstreaming of child labour concerns in the design of sectoral development programmes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Consultant's note of Group work on Sustainability of Child Labour Program-factors and actors; Second National Workshop; UCW; Dhaka; 2009. Other sustainability conditions identified included: child protection system offering a comprehensive social security/safety-net to the children with a clear role (strategy, monitoring, relationship with others etc.) of government with a reviewed and revised pragmatic time-frame, on gradual elimination of child labour; empowered multi-stakeholder consultative process/taskforce/forum to address the overall (including informal child labour sectors) situation of child labour – leading to self-awareness on the legal bindings of the employers and parents; process of facilitating alternative livelihood options for the children and their families, holistic approach to address the cross-sectoral aspects - along with delivery of multiple services (education, health and legal aid); databank and regular update and monitoring of child labour situation; good

*Donor-supported Government actions addressing child labour*

102. The **National Time-Bound Programme (or TBP)** framework for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour constitutes one important vehicle for implementing the broad objectives set out in the 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy. The TBP framework, containing two major strategic objectives, each with a number of outputs, was reviewed by a multi-stakeholder roundtable meeting held in 2008. The first strategic objective concerns the national policy environment and the second concerns targeted interventions at the local level.<sup>2</sup> Various child labour projects that either directly or indirectly support the achievement of the national TBP goals are currently being implemented.

103. The **Prevention and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Urban Informal Economy of Dhaka City or the Urban Informal Economy (UIE)** is one of two key ILO projects in support to the national TBP framework. Implemented with ILO support by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, this five-year programme aims at removing approximately 48,000 children from hazardous work in the urban informal sector (battery recharging, blacksmith shops, metal workshop helpers, automobile repairing, welding and painting, metal casting, plasto-rubber, vulcanising, carpentry, shoe factories, plastic recycling, chemicals, and dyeing), where children are exposed to gas, fumes, harmful chemicals, and sharp equipment, and preventing children from entering the labour market in Dhaka city. The project, which is funded by the Netherlands Government, commenced in January 2007 and the current phase will be completed in December 2011.<sup>3</sup>

104. The **Technical and Vocational Education and Training Reform (TVET) project** is the other major ILO effort undertaken in the framework of the TBP. The TVET project, funded by the European Commission for a period of five years (2007-2011), aims to help Bangladesh in reforming technical and vocational education and training policies and systems, so that more people can acquire employable skills and, ultimately, gainful employment. 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

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practices documented and replicated as programmes; adequate fund allocated in the national budget to undertake child labour programming; sustainability of results ensured through social mobilization to bring in changes in prevailing negative social norms, attitude, acceptance and practices; institutional approach to coordination and knowledge management, and Process and prominence of child participation from planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

<sup>2</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008

<sup>3</sup> ILO-IPEC; Urban Informal Economy Project Summary, Dhaka, Bangladesh

disadvantaged groups – youth with low literacy levels, child labourers, women, and rural communities.<sup>4</sup>

105. The **Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) Project** operated by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education with support from the World Bank is aimed at creating primary education opportunities for out-of-school children and students who have dropped out. Since its inception in mid-2004, about 22,000 learning centres have been established and more than 700,000 children have been enrolled from areas where the drop-out rate is high due to extreme poverty. The GoB has now expanded the ROSC activities in existing upazilas<sup>5</sup> and extended the approach to 30 additional upazilas. 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 also been set up to improve existing monitoring mechanisms, and an initial set of 11 education resource providers who provide training to teachers has been enlisted and trained.<sup>6</sup> An impact evaluation of the project is currently underway, with results expected in early 2011. The results will help assess the project's potential to increase school enrolment and student learning outcomes.

106. The second phase of the **Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children project** is directed towards providing urban working children aged 10-14 years with basic life skills education. It is the Government's only major initiative targeting working children in urban slums. Implemented by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education with support from UNICEF, SIDA and DFID, the project currently reaches approximately 166,000 children in six divisional cities of Bangladesh. The Bureau of Non-Formal Education is currently considering scaling up the programme after 2011 to reach 64 districts. Strategically, the project is designed to address educational as well as child rights and child protection issues. Based on an interactive teaching learning model, the basic education course runs for 40 months and comprises five learning cycles (each cycle a term of eight month). The children achieve competency in Bengali, Environment and Life Skills equivalent to grade five of the national curriculum; in Mathematics equivalent to grade three, and in English to a functional level. All learners acquire non-technical livelihood skills such as communication, negotiation, job searching and CV-writing skills as part of the Life Skills curriculum in cycles 4 and 5.<sup>7</sup> The project also involves advocacy at the national level and social mobilisation at the grassroots level

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<sup>4</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Administrative unit (sub district)

<sup>6</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF Bangladesh Factsheet, [http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Education\\_for\\_Working\\_Children\\_\(BEHTRUWC\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Education_for_Working_Children_(BEHTRUWC).pdf).

aimed at raising awareness about child rights and child domestic workers.<sup>8</sup> The second phase of the project has not been subject to a rigorous evaluation, meaning there is little evidence concerning its impact on child labour and eventual employment outcomes. Whether class time substitutes, or is merely added on to, time in child labour is a particularly important question in this context. Whether youth graduates from the project are more successful in securing gainful employment than similar non-participants is another important question in terms of evaluating project impact.

107. The second phase of the Government **Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh project** aims at withdrawing 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 were also targeted with credit support to supplement income loss. The second phase ran until the end of 2009 in the six divisional cities of Bangladesh. Over 76 local NGOs worked under the project.<sup>9</sup>

108. The **Protection of Children at Risk (PCAR) Project** targets street children and children without parental care.<sup>10</sup> PCAR is a tripartite initiative of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Department of Social Services and the UNICEF aimed at protecting street children and children without parental care from abuse, exploitation and violence and improve their life conditions by promoting a protective environment. Major components include (a) non-formal education; (b) alternative livelihood training; (c) basic health services including HIV/AIDS prevention; (d) legal aid support; (e) community sensitization and community mobilization; and (f) policy dialogue, networking and capacity building.

#### *Multi-lateral actions addressing child labour*

109. ILO-IPEC and UNICEF are the two most important multilateral partners of the Government in efforts against child labour. **UNICEF** actions fall within the broader framework of child protection.<sup>11</sup> UNICEF cooperation relating to child protection is directed towards ensuring (1) that government decisions are influenced by increased awareness of child protection rights and improved data and analysis on child protection; (2) effective legislative and enforcement systems and improved protection and response capacity to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse, including exploitative child labour; (3) better protection of children from the impact of armed

<sup>8</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008

<sup>9</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008

<sup>10</sup> Economic Relation Division (ERD), Government of Bangladesh

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF Child Protection Strategy; UN Economic and Social Council; 20 May 2008

conflict and natural disasters; and (4) children and families identified as vulnerable are reached by key community and government services aimed at reducing their marginalization. UNICEF supports the *Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children* and the *Protection of Children at Risk (PCAR)* projects described above. Support birth registration, necessary for the implementation of national legislation on minimum ages, is another important component of UNICEF cooperation.

110. ILO-IPEC has a long history of cooperation in Bangladesh against child labour. Since IPEC activities in Bangladesh officially started in 1995, 75 action programmes have been implemented through the Government, NGOs, and employers' and workers' organizations, benefiting more than 50,000 children directly or indirectly. Past cooperation included a 1996-2002 project implemented jointly with UNICEF and BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association) targeting child labour in the Bangladesh garments industry. A comprehensive evaluation of the project indicated that it was successful in effectively containing child labour at BGMEA member factories (incidence fell to less than one percent), while at the same time establishing a credible and comprehensive child labour monitoring, verification and reporting system.<sup>12</sup>

111. The IPEC country programme in the country has now phased out all smaller pilot intervention programmes, and broadened its focus to larger projects that cover an entire sector, a particular geographical area or a combination of several sectors in a geographical region, within the national Time-Bound Programme (TBP) framework. The *Prevention and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Urban Informal Economy of Dhaka City or the Urban Informal Economy (UIE)* and the *Technical and Vocational Education and Training Reform (TVET)* projects described above are the two most important current IPEC efforts being undertaken in support of the national TBP framework goals.

#### *NGO actions addressing child labour*

112. The **Together with Working Children (TWC)** network provides a key framework for NGO action against child labour. The network was launched in 2005 and is made up of a number of national NGOs acting in concert with Save The Children (Sweden-Denmark). Network members work together in a number of programme areas, including (a) research and information, education and communication (IEC) material development; methods and tools development; child rights programming; policy-level advocacy; and facilitation of child-led organizations among the child labourers. The network also contributed to the development of the National Child Labour Elimination Policy and a code of conduct for employers of children engaged

<sup>12</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Combined Evaluation of ILO/IPEC garment sector projects as part of the "Memorandum of Understanding" framework with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association*. A final project evaluation by an independent evaluation team, April 2004.

in informal sectors. Table 22 provides an extensive listing of the NGOs concerned and the specific projects being undertaken by each.

Table 22. Child labour actions undertaken by the thematic NGO group on child labour

Name of the Project	Objective	Target groups	Target Area	Time frame	Development partner(s)
Chinna Mukul Prokalpa	Alternative livelihood options for children in hazardous labour within the project location have been ensured.	The direct target beneficiaries are different types of working children within the age of 8 – 17 years from different informal sectors including domestic helper, brick breaker, welding, led machine, Bus and tempo helper, fish seller, waste picking, rickshaw pulling, etc.	Target area is ward number 53, 54, and 55 under Ramna Thana in Dhaka Metropolitan city	January 2008 to December 2010	Society for Underprivileged Families (SUF)
Intervention towards Child Development Project	Alternative Livelihood options are accessible for child labour and street children by 2010	Street children and working children from different informal sectors	25,27,28, and 60 no. ward under Dhaka city corporation	January 2008 to December 2010	Nari Maitree
Development Programme for the Child Labourers through Alternative Training (DPCLAT)	By 2010, more development options created for children in hazardous jobs	The target beneficiaries are working children of 7 to 12 years of age group who are employed in benarasi saree factories, karchupi work, jori and embroidery work	Mirpur section 10 and & 11 under Pallabi Thana, Ward # 3 of Dhaka City Corporation	January 2008 to December 2010	Social and Economic Enhancement Programme SEEP
Access to Education, Skills Development and Employment for Urban Disadvantaged children	Child rights promotion, protection and good Governance enhanced in Bangladesh	Under privileged children in general and urban working children in particular between the ages of ten and seventeen, includes domestic aids, hawkers, shop assistants, porters, workshop helpers, transport helpers and day labourers.	Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet, Barishal, and Rajshahi Metropolitan Cities	July 2007 – June 2010	Under Privileged childrens' Education Program (UCEP)
Protection of Full time Child Domestic workers from Abuse and Exploitation	Full time child domestic workers have been protected from abuse and exploitative condition of domestic employment	Full time and part time child domestic worker	Ward no. - 44,47,50,51,52,47,49,11,12,14 of Dhaka City Corporation.	January 2008 to December 2012	Ain – O – Salish Kendra (ASK)
Adolescent Development initiative (ADI)	Alternative livelihood options have been accessible for child labour of adolescent group	Adolescent children age ranges 9 -14 who are engaged in hazardous work and vulnerable to be in labour i.e. engage in motor mechanics, welding work, Jori embroidery, butcher, including disable, ethnic, minority group children	Ward no. – 42,43,44,45,46,46 under Mohammadpur thana	January 2008 to December 2012	Community Participation and Development (CPD)
Reducing child labour among Children with Disabilities and Rehabilitation	By 2012, Children with disabilities are enjoying better quality life	Children with disabilities living in the street and slums of Dhaka City age between 0 to 18	Streets and slums of Dhaka City Corporation	January 2008 to December 2012	Center for services and Information on Disability (CSID)
Non-formal Basic Education and Healthcare Programme for the Child Labourers in Mirpur, Dhaka	Alternative livelihood options for Bihari ethnic minority child labourers enabled	Marginalized children of the Bihari refugee community of Mirpur area engaged in hazardous child labour	The project area is located in in the rehabilitation settlement camps for the Bihari refugee at section no. 12,ward no. – 2, Mirpur, Dhaka	January 2008 to December 2010	INCIDIN Bangladesh
Improved Educational Services for Children of Indigenous groups in Chittagong Hill Tract	By the end of 2012, at least 2000 children have received non-formal and ICT based education that linked with modern knowledge and social mainstreaming	Children of Indigenous Groups in Chittagong Hill Tract region have access to quality inclusive education and decent employment opportunity	Chittagongmg hilltracts (Bandarban and Rangamati)	January 2008 – December 2010	Bangladesh Institute of Theater Arts (BITA)



Table 22.Cont'd

Protect rights of rural child labourer in agriculture (PRCLA)	By 2010, develop social safety through mobilizing community, stakeholders, duty bearers, caregivers to become more responsive to fulfill child labourers in agriculture's special needs, and fulfillment of their rights	Rural children who are engaged in work with agriculture sectors & children are at risk of becoming child labourer	The project area is located in 9 working area in Chittagong, Kumiulla, Chadpur, Kushtia & Pirojpur District	January 2009 to December 2010	United Development initiative for Programmed Action (UDDIPAN)
Introduce employment based opportunity for indigenous & rural child labourer in agricultural sector	By 2010, develop Social Capital through mobilizing community, stakeholders, duty bearers, caregivers to become more responsive to fulfill special needs and rights of indigenous and rural child labourer	Indigenous and rural child labourer in agricultural sectors	The project area is located in Chittagong & Bandarban district	January 2009 to December 2010	Bangladesh Institute of Theater Arts (BITA)
Promoting Children's right to protection by mitigating rural – urban migration of children, for hazardous work in Bangladesh	By 2010, rural – urban migration of children for hazardous work is reduced among the target group of children in 11 Union Parishads of Mymensing and Netrokona districts in Bangladesh	890 rural children who are engaged in work in rural areas and are at risk of becoming child labourers through migration	Mymensing District: 8 Union under Sadar and Fulpur thana:  Netrokona District: 3 Unions under Sadar thana		Society of Under Privileged Families (SUF) and Ain O Salish Kandra (ASK)
CAUSE (Children's Action Against Urban Slavery Through Education)	By June 2011, one thousand full time child domestic workers, 2,000 urban disadvantaged children are protected from abuse and exploitative conditions through participation and enrolment in educational skills development programmes.	Child domestic worker & Disadvantaged children	Dhandimondi, Mirpur and Mohammadpur	July 2009 – June 2011	Ain O Salish Kandra (ASK) and Community Participation and Development (CPD)
Develop appropriate alternatives in rural areas to reduce rural – urban children migration	By 2010, more development options created for children in hazardous jobs	A total number of 500 children within the age of 5 – 18 years from domestic and agriculture work	Mymensing Sadar thana	January 2008 – December 2010	Society for under privileged Families (SUF) and Ain O Salish Kandra (ASK)

113. There also are a number of other NGO actors and NGO groupings active in efforts against child labour.

114. The **Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (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.<sup>13</sup> Under its poverty and working children programme, **Save the Children UK**<sup>14</sup> supports targeted interventions on the economic/social empowerment of families through the BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Centre) ultra-poor programme in Rangpur and PKSF in Jamalpur. The organisation also supports pilot programmes focusing mainly on the informal economy (selected areas in Dhaka, Jamalpur, Kurigram and

<sup>13</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Child Labour and Responses: Overview Note – Bangladesh, ILO, 2004

Khulna), including the provision of non-formal education and improvement of workplaces (environment and conditions) through employers' participation and establishing community pressure groups.

115. The **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 northwest region of Bangladesh. CLEAN share information, run workshops and mobilize local actors such as local government to help identify and eliminate hazardous child work.

116. 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, was formed in 1999 but is currently inactive. The JCLWG aims for better coordination and synergies amongst different child labour programmes through knowledge sharing, including lessons learnt from various activities undertaken by group members. ILO-IPEC has taken the lead in re-activating and coordinating the group as part of a broader effort towards ensuring the effective implementation of the National Child Labour Elimination Policy adopted by the Government in March 2010.

117. **Domestic Workers' Rights Network (DWRN)**, formed in December 2006 and comprising human rights organizations and trade unions, promotes 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.

#### *Government and non-government efforts in sectors relating to child labour*

118. In addition to the Government and NGO actions directly targeting child labour outlined above, there are a number of important on-going efforts in sectors with a bearing on child labour. Empirical evidence from Bangladesh and elsewhere indicates that a lack of access to quality schooling, high direct and indirect schooling costs and a lack of social protection are among the most important factors leading households to send their children to work rather than to school. The programmes outlined below, while not explicitly targeted to child labourers, address these key determinants of child labour.

119. The **Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II)** is an ambitious education sector reform effort. Its overarching aim is to ensure the achievement of universal primary education by investing in quality improvement, infrastructural improvement and in equitable access to quality schools. With a substantial budget, the programme will contribute to strengthening the capacity of the 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.<sup>15</sup> Early indications are that the project has the right focus on improving and investing in educational inputs and has 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 on child labour,<sup>16</sup> but there is a proposal before the Ministry to target working and vulnerable children as part of broader efforts towards universal enrolment in the post-PEDP II period.

Table 23. Primary Education Development Programme-II (PEDP-II)<sup>17</sup>

<i>Development Partnership</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Major Components</i>	<i>Project Period</i>	<i>Sector/Organizations</i>	<i>Project Key Dates</i>
E.C (Grants) Euro 105 million	To improve quality of and access to formal primary schooling for all children, train teachers to provide good quality teaching, improve capacity of MoPME, DPE and primary education bodies.	Organizational development and capacity building at all levels: Quality improvement in schools and classrooms, Quality improvement through infrastructure development, Improvement and supporting equitable access to quality schooling.	From : May 2004-- To : Dec 2011--	Sector: Education Ministry:M/O. Primary and Mass Education. Agency: Directorate of Primary & Mass Education	Signing Date : 13-05-2004 Effective Date : 00-00-0000 Closing Date : 31-12-2011
DFID US\$ 200 million	To reduce poverty through universal primary education and contribute to sustainable socio economic development and equity.	- Civil Work -Equipments & Computers -Learning Materials -Training (local & Foreign, etc..	From : 20-01-2004 To : 31-12-2009	Sector: Education Ministry:M/o Primary & Mass Education Agency: Directorate of Primary & Mass Education	Signing Date : 20-01-2004 Effective Date : 20-01-2004 Closing Date : 31-12-2009

120. The **Secondary Education Sector Development Programme (or SESDP)** is another important sub-sectoral development programme focusing on supporting management systems, building quality systems, capacity building and reforming policies at the secondary education level. The goal of the programme is to address weak and overlapping policy and planning structures, poor learning outcomes, low internal and external efficiency and limited access and equity.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> MoPME (May 2008) RDDP for PEDP II

<sup>16</sup> Associates for Development Services Limited, 2006a

<sup>17</sup> Economic Relation Division (ERD), Government of Bangladesh

<sup>18</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008

Table 24. Secondary Education Sector Development Programme (SESDP)

<i>Development Partnership</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Major Components</i>	<i>Project Period</i>	<i>Sector/Organizations</i>
IDA (Loan) US\$130.7 million	To improve the quality of secondary education, systematically monitor learning outcomes, and to increase access and equity in project upazilas	(i) improving education quality and monitoring of learning levels in project areas (ii) improving equity and access in project areas through provision of stipends to poor girls and boys (iii) strengthening the institutional capacity of MoE both at central and local levels (iv) establishing an effective monitoring and evaluation system	From : 15/08/2008-- To : 31/12/2013--	Sector: Education & Religious Affairs Ministry: Ministry of Education Agency: Directorate of Secondary & Higher Education

121. More than 700 NGOs offer one or more types of **non-formal education programmes** in the country for out-of-school children, including working children.<sup>19</sup> 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. There are currently over 1.5 million children in non-formal education programmes run by international and national NGOs. An overview of some of the non-formal education programmes is provided in Table 25 below.<sup>20</sup>

122. The success of non-formal education programmes is based on the fact that the programmes are flexible, adaptive and responsive to the needs of learners. Non-formal education programmes remove some of the direct costs for households by providing a tuition-free education and learning materials free of cost. Non-formal education programmes 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. But the combination of work and study can be counter-productive when children are too tired to study and, therefore, some of the children in non-formal education may derive only the minimal benefits from their studies. Non-formal education has yet to receive national equivalency, and there exist no quality standards or systems for monitoring by any authority.

<sup>19</sup> Associate for Development Services Limited, 2006b

<sup>20</sup> Child Labour and Education in Bangladesh: Current Practices and Policy Recommendations; ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO; Dhaka, Bangladesh, June, 2008

Table 25. Description of major NGO-run non-formal education programmes

Organisation	Programme details
BRAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provides ECCD, pre-primary, primary, adolescent programmes, programmes for indigenous children and children with disabilities.</li> <li>2. BRAC Primary and Adolescent Primary Schools provide a full primary education.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>4. Parental and community involvement is critical.</li> </ol>
Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Runs education and skills development programmes in (i) early learning (ii) primary and basic education (iii) empowering adolescent girls (iv) adult literacy and (v) continuing education.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. With UNICEF and ILO support, runs a non-formal primary education programme in urban metropolitan areas, aimed at rehabilitating children aged 8-13 years engaged in hazardous work. Provides courses from Grade 1 to 3 with flexible hours on a daily basis for a year or more.</li> </ol>
Underprivileged Children's Education Programme (UCEP)*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UCEP provides general education and vocational skills training and on-the-job apprenticeships for poor urban working children.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>
Friends in Village Development Bangladesh	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Non-formal education programme built on adult education and primary education</li> <li>2. FIVD implements a hard-to-reach programme of BNFE and UNICEF for urban working children.</li> <li>3. Runs a child education programme, providing high-quality primary education for out-of-school children aged 5-10.</li> </ol>
Surovi*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Main beneficiaries of non-formal education programmes are child domestic workers aged 8-14, brick chippers, street children and destitute boys and girls.</li> <li>2. Runs a two-year long non-formal education programme for child domestic workers, with the aim of mainstreaming, with flexible hours and child friendly classrooms.</li> <li>3. Runs a MOLE programme 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.</li> <li>4. Runs a quality primary education programme providing urban working children aged 5-14 a 9-year programme from pre-primary to Grade 8.</li> </ol>

Note: \* Has a specific focus on working children

123. A recent study of learning outcomes found that working children attending non-formal education programmes 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. This indicates that many non-formal education programmes 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.

124. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) non-formal primary education programme offers an accelerated primary education programme, enabling most completers to join mainstream secondary

<sup>21</sup> Associate for Development Services Ltd, 2006.

education. The BRAC programme operates 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. The BRAC primary school model has been adopted by at least 400 other NGOs, many with BRAC's technical and financial support.

125. There are four categories of transfer programmes promoting **social protection** that have direct or indirect impact on child labour situation: a) education-related transfers; b) cash for work; c) food transfers and d) employment schemes. Some of the key transfer programmes falling into each of these four broad categories are described below.

126. The **Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Programme (FSSAP)**<sup>22</sup> provided cash grants, book allowances and tuition fees for girls in secondary schools in the 121 poorest upazilas of the country. Run by the Ministry of Education (Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, and supported by the World Bank, the programme targeted all unmarried girls of secondary school age studying in recognised secondary level institutions in the targeted upazilas. Beneficiaries had to attend school for at least three fourths of the days in the school year, maintain academic performance above a set minimum, and remain unmarried. Evaluations indicate that the programme broke new ground in addressing girls' access to education, and is recognised worldwide as a pioneering undertaking.<sup>23</sup> The FSSAP programme has now been replaced by a new World Bank-supported programme, entitled **Secondary Education Quality and Access Improvement, which targets both poor boys and girls**. As of the last quarter of 2010, the stipends and tuitions component of the new programme, based on proxy-means testing (PMT), had reached all 122 project upazilas, providing stipends and tuition support to 0.8 million poor boys and girls, and tuition support only to an additional 0.5 million girls.<sup>24</sup>

127. The **Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP)**<sup>25</sup> provides cash transfers conditional on children attending 85 percent of school days and obtaining at least 40 percent in the annual examination. Operated by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (Directorate of Primary Education), the programme covers an estimated 5.5 million pupils from the poorest

<sup>22</sup> Please see-Gabriele Köhler; Marta Cali; Mariana Stirbu; Social Protection in South Asia: A Review; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), July 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Female enrolment, as a percentage of total enrolments, increased from 33 percent in 1991 to 48 percent in 1997 and to about 56 percent in 2005. The Secondary School Certificate pass rates for girls in the project area increased from 39 percent in 2001 to 58 percent in 2006.

<sup>24</sup> World Bank, *Secondary Education Quality and Access Improvement (P106161) program: Implementation Status & Results*. Report No: ISR1837, Bangladesh, October 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Please see-Gabriele Köhler; Marta Cali; Mariana Stirbu; Social Protection in South Asia: A Review; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), July 2009.

households who are enrolled in eligible primary schools in rural areas of Bangladesh. The programme is the largest cash transfer scheme in the country.

128. The **Cash for Education** (since 2002; previously Food for Education 1993-2002) programme also provides cash transfers to households of children in poor areas on condition that children are enrolled at school and maintain a minimum attendance level. The programme targets economically under-developed areas with low literacy rates in poor thanas, and within these areas, households with less than 0.5 acres or landless, heads of households who are day labourers, female heads of households, and persons in low-income professions. Evaluation results point to a 9-17 percent rise in school enrolment and nearly full attendance among beneficiaries, as well as improvements in long-term opportunities for the children. One study found that improvement in school attendance did not result in proportionate reduction in child labour, however, suggesting a reduction in children's leisure time.<sup>26</sup>

129. The **Programmed Initiative for the Eradication of Monga (PRIME)** was launched in 2006 as an effort to eradicate monga, a seasonal food deprivation in the north-western part of Bangladesh. The programme benefits the poorest households through giving them seed money and linking them to 'protection nets' whenever possible. The programme is implemented by the Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), a microfinance (microcredit and capacity building) umbrella organisation for 192 NGOs. An evaluation conducted in 2007 in Lalmonirhat upazila showed a considerable increase in the number who had three meals a day during monga after participating in the scheme. The cash flow substantially improved household welfare both in the short- and in the long-term, by helping households avoid resorting to coping mechanisms that increase their future vulnerability, such as selling their assets during seasonal shocks.<sup>27</sup>

130. The **Vulnerable Group Development Programme (VGD)** is a food-based transfer with a complementary package of development services. Operated by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in partnership with World Food Programme and other bilateral donors, the programme aims to increase the business skills of women by providing training, motivating savings for initial capital accumulation, and providing scope for obtaining credit. A complementary package of development services includes health and nutrition, education, literacy training, savings, and support in launching income-generating activities. The VGD cardholders are physically able women aged 18-49, selected from the most vulnerable and poor households in the union. The programme is national in scope, covering 296 upazilas

<sup>26</sup> Meng, X. and Ryan, J. 2003. "Evaluating the Food for Education Program in Bangladesh", available at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

<sup>27</sup> For further reference see R. Faridi and M.A. Baqui Khalily, "Impact of Prime Interventions at the Household Level" posted on [www.org.bd/sem\\_monga/document/summary/surhad.pdf](http://www.org.bd/sem_monga/document/summary/surhad.pdf)

designated as food insecure regions according to WFP's vulnerability and mapping system. The WFP reports good results at improving the nutritional status of malnourished women and children.<sup>28</sup> But a Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) working paper<sup>29</sup> observes that "the effectiveness and long-term success of the programme depends on whether the balance is in favour of accountability to communities or corruption and bias to achieve the political goals of local Union Parishad elites."<sup>30</sup>

**131. Food for Work programmes** are run by a number of Ministries, formally the coordination of the programme is with the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs. The programmes involve employment generation for the poor, mainly in the dry season, through infrastructure creation and maintenance. It also aims at reducing food insecurity. They target the functionally landless; those who lack productive assets; generally female-headed households; day labour or temporary workers; those with income less than Tk 300 per month. The programmes cover about 1,000,000 participants annually at a cost of US\$ 40 million.

**132. The Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction Programme (CFPR)**<sup>31</sup> aims to build up the asset base of the poorest, beginning with transfer of income-generating assets, health and education support, training, social development and later integrating with micro-credit programmes. Implemented by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), the programme targets the poorest of the poor identified by means of poverty maps combined with proxy means testing. Some 70,000 households in Northern Bangladesh had been covered by 2006 at a per household cost of US\$ 300. A 2004-mid-term assessment study on 2002 entrants and a comparison group found that programme participants fared significantly better in nutrients and in overall calorie intake. In addition, 97 percent of participants reported to be in 'food deficit' at the baseline, but this was reduced to only 27 percent two years later. The corresponding figures for the comparison group of ultra poor households were 82 percent at the baseline and 75 percent two years later. Severe malnourishment (MUAC<125mm) among under-5 children was reduced by 27 percentage points for participants but only 3 percentage points for the comparison group.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> World Food Programme, [home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/liaison\\_offices/wfp190321.pdf](http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/liaison_offices/wfp190321.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> "The politics of what works: the case of the Vulnerable Development Programme in Bangladesh", December 2007. CPRC Working Paper 92 Posted at [www.cprc.abrc.co.uk/pubfiles/92Hossain.pdf](http://www.cprc.abrc.co.uk/pubfiles/92Hossain.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>31</sup> Main source: A. Barrientos and R. Holmes, Social Assistance in Developing Countries Database (2007). Available online at <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/2/partners-pages.php>

<sup>32</sup> Barrientos and Holmes, Social Assistance Database (2007) p.18. For further review of the programme see R. Holmes, J. Farrington, T. Rahman and R. Slater. "Extreme poverty in Bangladesh: Protecting and promoting rural livelihoods". ODI Project Briefing No. 15, September 2008.



133. The **Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP)**<sup>33</sup> aims at halving extreme poverty and improving livelihood security in the riverine areas of Bangladesh by 2015. CLP provides the poorest households with: income generating assets (13,000 Taka); livelihoods interventions support, including a monthly stipend for 18 months (approximately Tk 300 per month); infrastructure development; social development training; seasonal cash for work and safety nets; and promotes enterprise to facilitate growth in agricultural and non-farm sectors. Run by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (Rural Development and Cooperative Division, the programme covers 150 riverine unions in 28 upazila in five districts at a cost of 50 million GBP for seven years 2004-2011. A descriptive paper was written 15 months into the programme, but no formal evaluation has been done to date.

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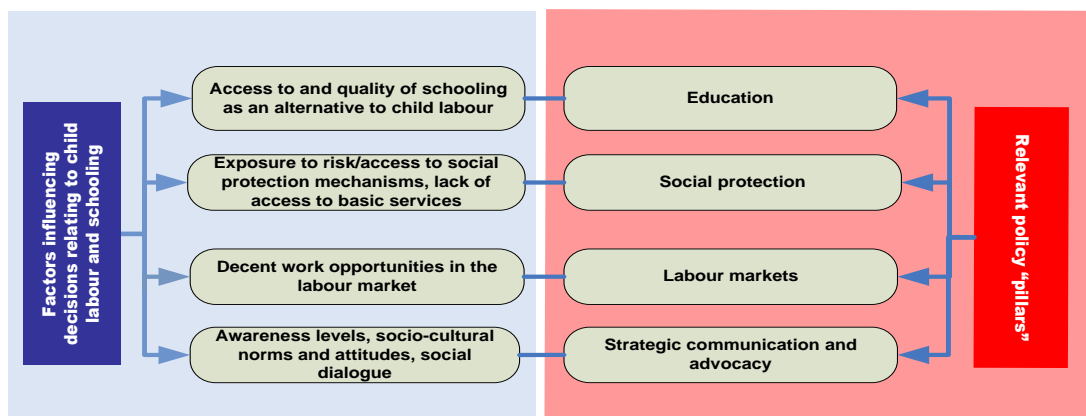
<sup>33</sup> Please see-Gabriele Köhler; Marta Cali; Mariana Stirbu; Social Protection in South Asia: A Review; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), July 2009.

## 9. TOWARDS ELIMINATING CHILD LABOUR: A DISCUSSION OF POLICY OPTIONS

134. This section presents policy priorities for accelerating progress in the fight against child labour in Bangladesh, drawing on empirical evidence concerning its causes and on lessons learnt from past policy efforts, and building on the general strategies identified in the 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy. It feeds into a broader dialogue around the formulation of a national plan of action on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour (NPA-WFCL).

135. As shown in previous sections, child labour is a complex phenomenon that cuts across policy boundaries. In order to achieve continued progress against it, a policy response is required that is cross-sectoral, coordinated and comprehensive in nature. There is a wide range of on-going Government, bilateral, multilateral and NGO interventions of relevance to child labour in Bangladesh. But implementation is constrained by resource and capacity constraints, and by a lack of cohesion and coordination among concerned actors. Important gaps in the policy framework relating to child labour also persist. The critical challenge moving forward is to improve and extend current efforts to ensure that they effectively address child labour. The need to scale-up and strengthen efforts relating to social protection constitutes a particular priority.

Figure 20. Key determinants of child labour and schooling and policy pillars to address them



Source: UCW Project, Joining forces against child labour : Inter-agency report for The Hague Global Child Labour Conference of 2010. Unpublished draft, Rome, March 2010

136. Some of the key factors determining household decisions regarding child labour are depicted in the left side of Figure 20.<sup>34</sup> More accessible and better quality schools are important because they affect the returns from schooling vis-à-vis child labour, making the former more attractive as an

alternative to the latter. Households without adequate social protection may rely on their children's work to make ends meet, rendering them unable to sacrifice the immediate returns from work in favour of the future returns from schooling. In the absence of decent work opportunities upon graduation from school, there is little incentive for households to invest in their children's education. Finally, if households are insufficiently aware of the benefits of schooling (or of the costs of child labour) they are also less likely to choose the classroom over the workplace for their children.

137. The right side of Figure 20 lists primary policy “pillars” addressing these economic and socio-cultural determinants of child labour – education, social protection, strategic communication and advocacy and labour markets. The first three pillars are discussed in the sections below. Policies relating to labour markets are looked at in the companion UCW report on youth employment outcomes in Bangladesh. Above and beyond these general policy priorities, there is a need for immediate, direct actions to ensure the removal, recovery and reintegration of children in worst forms of child labour. Such action is relevant in all cases of trafficked children, children in other forced labour situations, children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, and children facing other forms of hazard in the workplace. Finally, strengthening institutional capacity at all levels of Government is needed for the effective implementation of a comprehensive policy response to child labour.

## 9.1 Strengthening child labour legislation as a foundation for action

138. Labour legislation consistent with international child labour standards is necessary both as a statement of national intent and as legal and regulatory framework for efforts against child labour. Bangladesh made important progress in this regard with the passing of the new Labour Act in 2006, but, as discussed in Section 8.1 of this report, current legislation still does not constitute a comprehensive legal framework for protecting children against child labour, and in particular those working in informal sectors.

139. **Legislation.** Particular priorities in terms of strengthening child labour legislation include: (a) ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and amending domestic legislation accordingly; (b) finalising the national list of hazardous forms of work and amending legislation and regulations accordingly; and (c) amending the 2006 Labour Act in order to broaden its scope to include children working in the informal sector. National legislation also needs to be reviewed to ensure that it provides for adequate redress and compensation for children who have been subjected to child labour, and for adequate sanctions for violators. Adopting and implementing the international guidelines for specific sectors (e.g. the Basel Technical Guidelines for the Environmentally Sound Management of the Full and Partial Dismantling of Ships as well as the ILO Guidelines on Safety and Health in Ship-breaking) is another

important priority in establishing a comprehensive regulatory framework around the issue of child labour.

**140. Monitoring and enforcement.** Legislative efforts need to be accompanied by the establishment of effective mechanisms for the monitoring and enforcement of laws. As also discussed in Section 8, the enforcement of child labour legislation outside the export garment sector is currently weak.<sup>35</sup> The government's capacity to supervise and monitor factories is very limited, owing in large part to understaffing, and the informal sector of the economy is for the most part outside formal inspection regimes. There are very few recorded cases of application of sanctions against the employers for violating the child labour laws.

141. Machinery for enforcement and monitoring therefore needs to be reviewed and properly resourced. More human resources are needed in order to increase the reach of the inspections system and improve the enforcement of legislation, including laws regarding working hours and the prohibition of hazardous work. Regular training for inspectors, police and the judiciary on child labour legislation is also required.

142. But given the extent of child labour and the limited resources for inspection, the formal inspection system alone is unlikely to be effective in protecting children from workplace violations, even with more training and a clearer legal framework. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in this context that labour inspectors join hands with other organizations (e.g., employers' organizations, social workers, local community organizations) to form more broad-based child labour monitoring systems.<sup>36</sup> Replicating ILO-supported pilot community monitoring programmes is one possible vehicle for achieving this. Another interesting model in this regard is a pilot initiative involving ILO support to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to incorporate child labour into its trade licensing system, which is in turn monitored by DCC tax officers and community-based surveillance groups.

**143. Birth registration.** Raising the rate of birth registration is a critical element in enforcing legislation relating to minimum age for entry into work. Estimates suggest that as few as seven to ten percent of births are registered in Bangladesh (UNICEF 2007), meaning that employers have no means of verifying their workers' ages. The child protection cluster of the NASPR-II identified a set of ministries (social welfare, women and children's affairs, education) with lead responsibilities for ensuring compulsory registration of children at birth, but none of these ministries has included it as a strategic

<sup>35</sup> In 2007, the Ministry of Commerce had set up a high-level Social Compliance Forum (chaired by the Minister of Commerce) for the garment industry to ensure, *inter alia*, compliance with labour standards in this sector.

<sup>36</sup> CRC/C/15/Add.221, 27 October 2003, Para 27.

objective in its medium-term budget framework.<sup>37</sup> The Birth and Death Registration Act 2004 (Act XXIX of 2004) made it compulsory to register the birth of a child, and with the help of partners such as UNICEF and the non-governmental organization Plan Bangladesh, the Government is undertaking to boost the birth registration rate figure. The Government has emphasized the role of media as well as teachers and religious leaders in spreading the message about birth registration, especially in rural areas.

## 9.2 Education access and quality

144. Combating child labour requires investing in education as its logical alternative. There is broad consensus that the single most effective way to stem the flow of school age children into work is to extend and improve schooling, so that families have the opportunity to invest in their children's education and it is worthwhile for them to do so. School attendance needs to be made an attractive prospect for children and parents/guardians both by addressing the costs of school attendance and by ensuring that schooling is inclusive and relevant. Providing schooling as an alternative to child labour is important not only for the individual children concerned, but also for society as a whole, as children who grow up compromised educationally by child labour are in a poor position to contribute to the country's development as adults.

145. The empirical results presented in Section 6.1 indicated that Bangladeshi working children are less likely to be attending school, and, if enrolled, are more likely to lag behind their non-working counterparts and to drop-out prematurely. These results underscore the need to address the access and quality issues influencing parents' decisions to enrol and keep their children in school, including curricular relevance, teacher capacity and pedagogical methods.

146. Actions should take place in concert with the on-going Government reform education efforts. Most important in this context is mainstreaming child labour concerns into the National Education Policy approved by the Government in May 2010 (see Section 8). There are a wide variety of programmes underway addressing primary and second education, second chance education, direct and indirect schooling costs and vocational training (Table 26), but there remains a need to improve their coordination and strategic coherence within the broad framework provided by the new National Education Policy.

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<sup>37</sup> General Economics Division-Planning Commission; Moving Ahead : National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II; Annex-3; Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; October 2008

Table 26. Major education sector policies and programmes

	Primary education reform	Secondary education reform	Second chance education and life skills	Scholarship and conditional transfer programmes	Technical and vocational training
National Education Policy	■	■	■	■	■
Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP II) (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education)	■				
Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) Project (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education)			■		
Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children Project (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education)			■		
NGO non-formal education programmes (approx. 700 separate initiatives)			■		
Female Secondary School Assistance Programme (FSSAP) (Ministry of Education)				■	
Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP) (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education)				■	
Cash for Education				■	
Technical and Vocational Education and Training Reform (TVET) project					■
Secondary Education Sector Development Programme (Ministry of Education)		■			

**147. Early childhood development (ECD).** Evidence from a range of developing countries suggests that ECD programmes can be highly effective in addressing problems experienced by children at later stages of their education. ECD programmes can promote learning readiness, increase school enrolment and school survival, and help children away from work in their early years. The government, recognising the importance of early childhood development, would like to ensure that ECD education is available in rural areas and that it is particularly targeted at children from poor families and first-time school goers. Progress has already been made in this area. A large number of government and non-government agencies<sup>38</sup> are running pre-primary schools. But a recent mapping exercise served to underscore the size of the challenge to take these efforts to national scale. It estimated that 88,800 centres at 25 children per centre would be required to bring the entire population of 5-6 year-old children into an ECD programme.

**148.** The government is working closely with NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) to expand service coverage. But even in the absence of

<sup>38</sup> Including MOPME, MOWCA/ MOCHTA, MoRA, City Corporations, NGOs including BRAC/Plan Bangladesh/SC-USA/ DAM/Members of CAMPE/Members of the ECD network, and the private sector such as proprietary kindergarten owners.

adequate budgetary resources for the large-scale provision of the ECD programmes, the government has an important role to play in laying the regulatory and administrative groundwork for a national ECD network. Particularly important in this context is ensuring that all pre-schools are registered with the government. Also important is establishing standards for teachers and teacher remuneration. Other important steps include setting a national curriculum and syllabus for pre-school education, and developing a certificate course for pre-school teachers at teacher training colleges. In March 2008, the Government put in place an Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education as a first step in addressing these issues. The Government is also currently finalising a draft comprehensive Early Childhood Care for Development (ECCD) policy (for children aged 0-8 years) that will coordinate ministerial efforts relating to the education, health and protection of young children.

149. **Quality education.** There is a general need to improve school quality in order that schooling is seen by parents as a worthwhile alternative to child labour. Only about half of the primary school graduates achieve the minimum national curriculum competencies, evidence of the quality challenges facing the system. The survival rate to grade 5 – the EFA indicator used to measure quality – is also low. Administrative data from the government school census reports indicates that only 55 percent of children who start grade 1 are completing a full cycle of primary school.<sup>39</sup> Although measurement issues make the school quality-child labour link difficult to demonstrate empirically for Bangladesh, research elsewhere suggests that quality considerations can be important in decisions concerning child labour.<sup>40</sup>

150. Measures addressing quality feature prominently in the country's education reform plans but now need to be operationalised across the education system. The promotion of quality education will entail the introduction of inclusive methods of learning that encourage questioning and children's participation rather than rote learning, and that are adaptive to children's different learning needs. It will also entail revamped teacher training, in order to bring teaching into line with methods that respect children's rights and recognise their humanity. There is a large body of empirical evidence indicating that teacher education is positively associated with enrolment and negatively associated with child labour. Improved school quality will also mean introducing into the curricula issues of relevance to children's lives, including child labour and other social concerns, and basic life skills, in an age-appropriate manner. Decentralising education planning and administration will help ensure that schools are more responsive to local

<sup>39</sup> 2008 PEDPII Annual School Sector Report.

<sup>40</sup> For a more complete discussion of this point, see, UCW Project, *Does school quality matter for working children? A summary of recent empirical evidence*. Draft UCW Working Paper, Rome, April 2007.

needs. Effective systems of monitoring are needed to track the impact of quality measures on school attendance and persistence.

**151. School access.** The empirical results presented in Section 7 indicated that the presence of a primary school in a village makes it much more likely that families send their children to school. This result underscores that school distance can constitute an important barrier to school attendance in Bangladesh, particularly in rural areas. The possibility of schooling as an alternative to work does not exist in many communities, simply because school facilities remain lacking or are too crowded to accommodate more children. School infrastructure is an important component of PEDP II, and the Government targets a net primary enrolment rate of 95 percent by the completion of the programme. Achieving this target will depend, *inter alia*, on the effective targeting of school expansion efforts. Enrolment and attendance figures suggest that urban slums, coastal areas and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are among the areas where access is relatively poor.

**152. Second chance and life skills education.** Extending school access to child labourers and other disadvantaged groups who are out of school poses a particular challenge. As discussed in Section 6.1, a total of almost eight million 7-17 year-olds are out of school, of which three million never entered and 1.5 million have some previous schooling but are functionally illiterate. Second chance and life skills education programmes can play an important potential role in this context. More than 700 NGOs offer one or more types of second chance or life skills education programmes in the country for out-of-school children, but these efforts are typically fragmented, poorly coordinated and fall short of total need. Measures are needed to ensure non-formal programmes operate in close synergy with the formal system rather than as parallel systems. Ensuring equivalency in the learning outcomes and bridging from the non-formal to formal systems is especially important in this context. Integrating second chance and life skills education programmes with social workers' outreach services for follow-up and referrals with child labourers and their families is also important. Ensuring that these non-formal education programmes function within a clear institutional and regulatory framework is another important priority: there are currently no national quality standards or systems for monitoring by any authority. Finally, the NGO programmes cover an estimated 1.5 million children – less than one-fifth of out-of-school children – and therefore need to be scaled up significantly to meet total need.

**153.** The Reaching Out of School Children Project (ROSC) operated by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children project implemented by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education are other major programmes for reaching disadvantaged children with learning opportunities (see Section 8.2). The results of an on-going impact evaluation of the ROSC programme, expected



in early 2011, will help assess the programme's potential to increase school enrolment and student learning outcomes.

**154. Offsetting the direct and opportunity costs of schooling.** Additional measures are needed to account for the indirect or opportunity costs associated with children's school attendance. Parents often choose work over schooling for their children because they cannot afford to renounce their children's earnings or production or because the direct costs of schooling are too high. The growing trend towards private tuition in Bangladesh is adding to the costs of schooling and reinforcing disparities in terms of access. Education Watch 2006 concluded that given the extremely low public expenditure on education, families are spending more on private tutors. Household expenditure on tuition goes up with each year of schooling and makes up the largest component of out-of-pocket costs of education.

155. Particularly important in terms of offsetting schooling costs will be extending and improving the targeting of the country's main conditional cash transfer schemes. These include the Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP), which provides cash transfers conditional on children attending 85 percent of school days and obtaining at least 40 percent in the annual examination empirical results, and the Cash for Education programme, which also provides cash transfers to households of children in poor areas on condition that children are enrolled at school and maintain a minimum attendance level. These schemes differ from conventional scholarships in that their primary purpose is encourage enrolment and only secondarily to allow talented children or young people of modest means to obtain an education.

156. The PESP programme is the largest cash transfer programme in the country, covering an estimated 5.5 million pupils from the poorest households who are enrolled in eligible primary schools in rural areas of Bangladesh. But the truly needy or the poorest pupils may not always benefit as identification occurs at the school level, each school proposing 40 percent of its enrolment, which assumes that prevalence of poverty is evenly distributed across the country. Moreover, not all schools are eligible for the programme: in order to be eligible a child must first enrol in primary school but there is no guarantee that the poorest families will enrol their children.<sup>41</sup> Neither the Cash for Education programme nor the PESP programme include removal from work as an explicit eligibility criterion, and at least one assessment indicated that the programmes may be more successful in raising school attendance than reducing child labour.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For further reference see: The Bangladesh Primary Education Stipend Project: A descriptive analysis. A study prepared under the management and guidance of Carolyn Winter (World Bank). Posted at [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2004/03/29/000160016\\_20040329173239/Rendered/PDF/282570PAPER0\\_BangladeshStipend.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2004/03/29/000160016_20040329173239/Rendered/PDF/282570PAPER0_BangladeshStipend.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Meng, X. and Ryan, J. 2003. "Evaluating the Food for Education Program in Bangladesh", available at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

**157. Adult education.** The empirical evidence presented in Section 7 indicated that parents' education has a significantly positive effect on children's time use, pointing also to the importance of investing in adult education as part of the strategy against child labour. Developing and expanding efforts in promoting good parenting, functional literacy and numeracy, work-related skills training and basic education equivalency programmes are all important in this context. The adult literacy rate (persons aged 15 years and over) stands at only 49 percent in Bangladesh<sup>43</sup> while at the same time, the MDG Needs Assessment (2009) suggested that in the last few years, adolescent and adult literacy programmes have been one of the most neglected area in terms of resource allocation by the Government. Existing literacy programmes are often dependent on volunteer teachers and do not provide adequate incentives for quality teaching. UNESCO also reports that inadequate continuing education opportunities for adults have pushed semi-literate adults back into illiteracy.

### 9.3 Expanding social protection

**158.** The importance of social protection in reducing child labour is well-established. Social protection instruments serve to prevent vulnerable households from having to resort to child labour as a buffer against negative shocks. The food price crisis in Bangladesh offers an illustration of how children can suffer in the absence of adequate social protection when households are faced with a shock. A recent study found that the food price hike led to a six percent rise in drop-out among poor households. Children were taken from school both to save on schooling costs and to help their families make ends meet during the crisis.<sup>44</sup> A separate study in Nepal indicated that over 20 percent of households would take their child out of school as a coping mechanism against the food price crisis.<sup>45</sup>

**159.** There is no single recipe for implementing social protection programmes to reduce household vulnerability and child labour. Unconditional cash transfers, including various forms of child support grants, family allowances, needs-based social assistance and social pensions, are relevant in easing household budget constraints and supplementing the incomes of the poor. Conditional cash transfers offer a means of alleviating current income poverty *and* of addressing the under-investment in children's education that can underlie poverty. Public works schemes can serve both the primary goal of providing a source of employment to household breadwinners and the secondary goal of helping rehabilitate public infrastructure and expand basic services, both being potentially relevant in

<sup>43</sup> 2008 UNESCO Literacy Assessment Survey.

<sup>44</sup> Selim Raihan, November 2008. *Study on Impact of Food Price Rise on School Enrolment and Dropout in the Poor and Vulnerable Households in Selected Areas of Bangladesh.*

<sup>45</sup> World Food Programme, January 2009. *Food Security Bulletin*. Issue 22, Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System.

terms of reducing reliance on child labour. Micro-loan schemes can help ease household budget constraints and mitigate social risk. While there are already a number of such schemes in place in the country, many are stand-alone and poorly linked to other development initiatives.

160. The government recognises that reducing household vulnerability by expanding social protection is a critical priority in the country, and is implementing programmes in all the areas mentioned above. Programmes being implemented through the Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) of the NASPR-II include stipends for primary students,<sup>46</sup> stipends for dropout students,<sup>47</sup> stipends for girl students<sup>48</sup> and educational stipends for students with disabilities.<sup>49</sup> Other efforts, discussed in more detail in Section 8.2, include Reaching Out of School Children Project, the Cash for Education programme, the Programmed Initiative for the Eradication of Monga (PRIME), Vulnerable Group Development Programme, Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction Programme, the Chars Livelihoods Programme and a variety of food for work programmes.

161. Taken together, however, these efforts fail to cover a large portion of those in need. Social protection coverage among the urban poor is very low. There also exist large regional variations in coverage. Indigenous communities, traditional communities and marginalized geographical communities (e.g. the river island localities) benefit less from government interventions. No safety programmes target growing numbers of migrant children. The ultra-poor are largely beyond the reach of micro-credit programmes and are in particular need of better social protection. Biharis, an especially vulnerable group of children in Bangladesh, are provided only meagre provision under the NASPR for meeting the electricity and water bills of the Bihari camps. While street children are targeted through the Protection of Children at Risk (PCAR) project, the number of street children has increased from an estimated 244,000 in 2000 to 674,000 in 2005 (BIDS, 2006).

162. Another important gap of social protection system in Bangladesh is the lack of a system of social monitoring through professional social workers. Without a professional social work system, grass-root level social monitoring is less likely to be effective. A professional social work system would help ensure individual follow-up through case management, which would in turn

<sup>46</sup> The programme is covering around 55 lakh students of the primary level across the country with an allocation of Tk. 500 crore in FY 2008. About 40 percent of the students from poor families are covered under this programme.

<sup>47</sup> The programme covers around 5 lakh students at the primary level across the country for which Tk. 589 million was provided in FY 2008.

<sup>48</sup> The programme is covering around 30 lakh girl students across the country with an allocation of Tk. 2324.8 crore in FY 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Stipend programme for the poor students with disabilities at all levels of education has been introduced. Under the programme the stipend for the primary level is Tk. 300; for the secondary level Tk. 450, for the higher secondary level Tk. 600, and for the university level Tk. 1000 only. The budget for the programme for 2007/8 is Tk. 5 crore.

ensure the child labourers (and their families) have access to the services and referral mechanisms needed for their effective reintegration.

163. In response to some of these concerns, the National Accelerated Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NASPR II) for 2009-2011 aims at expanding coverage for a variety of social protection programmes, including Old Age Allowances, Allowance for Insolvent Persons with Disabilities, Stipend Programme for the Students with Disabilities, Allowance for Widows and Distressed Women and Maternity Allowance for Poor Mothers. A national social protection policy is also being formulated providing guidelines for annual resource allocations.

#### 9.4 Strategic communication and advocacy

164. Strategic communication and advocacy are needed to build a broad consensus for change. Policy responses to child labour are unlikely to be effective in the absence of household awareness, the active participation of civil society and of social partners in implementing them, or a high-level political commitment to ensure they are accorded priority in all national development agenda. Similarly, laws to protect children from child labour are unlikely to be effective if they are not backed by social consensus.

165. **Strategic communication.** Public awareness about what constitutes child labour and its cost to children and society remains limited in Bangladesh. This underscores need for expanded strategic communication efforts on the negative effects of child labour and the benefits of schooling as part of an overall strategy against child labour. Child labour is a clear example in which both social norms and economic considerations are important, and strategic communication efforts need to be designed with this in mind.

166. Households require information concerning the costs or dangers of child labour and benefits of schooling in order to make informed decisions on their children's time allocation. Lack of information, for instance, is considered as one of the important factors behind sending children to hazardous Bidi factories. In the framework of an ILO-IPEC project, parents received information regarding these dangers, after which it was found that they became more aware of the hazardous nature of the jobs of their children and tried to find alternative working opportunities for them.<sup>50</sup>

167. But factors which influence decisions concerning children's schooling and child labour can extend well beyond economics or work conditions. Social norms, cultural attitudes and perceptions, e.g., regarding girls' schooling or early marriage, can also direct household behaviour and impede schooling in favour of child labour. Rural Bangladesh features one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, posing a particular challenge to

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<sup>50</sup> ILO (2005b).

raising school enrolment among rural girls. Communication efforts need to target these socio-cultural factors as well. Baseline information on local knowledge and cultural attitudes towards child labour is needed to tailor communication messages, and to evaluate changes in awareness and attitudes following communication activities.

168. Communication efforts need to take place at both national and local levels, and involve a wide variety of communication channels. A mix of conventional (e.g., radio, television and print media) as well as of non-conventional communication channels (e.g., religious leaders, school teachers, health care workers) is important in order to achieving maximum outreach. The urgent need to address unconditional worst forms of child labour should be a particular focus of communication efforts. Providing information on national child labour legislation, presented in terms that are understandable to the populations and communities concerned, is another communication priority. For girls in particular, there is also a need to educate families on what are acceptable domestic chores for children and what are not. While doing light chores around the house is important for the socialization of children, research shows that children are working very long hours in the home and have little time for rest, study or leisure.

169. **Advocacy.** Achieving sustainable reduction in child labour requires social consensus well beyond the level of the household. Advocacy aimed at generating political will and mobilising society is also critical to ensuring a successful response to child labour. Society needs to be fully engaged in the fight against child labour and to cease being actors – witting or unwitting – in its promulgation. A political commitment at the highest level is also needed to ensure that child labour reduction occupies a prominent place in the national development agenda and is accorded adequate budgetary resources. Advocating for the effective “mainstreaming” of child labour concerns into broader national development plans, including education and social welfare/work reform efforts, is of particular importance.

170. ILO, Save the Children Alliance and UNICEF are advocating with the Government of Bangladesh, and in particular the Ministry of Labour and Employment, to take a leading role in the formulation of a national plan of action for the elimination of worst forms of child labour. The national plan should be developed based on strategic directions set in the national strategic policies, initiatives and concepts contained in: i) the draft Prospective Plan for Bangladesh 2011-2021; ii) National Development Plan 2011-2015 which is being developed; iii) National Child Labour Elimination Policy, 2010; iv) National Time Bound Program Framework on WFCL; v) Sectoral Policies and Annual Development Plans of concerned ministries and institutions; vi) international instruments, especially the UNCRC and ILO Convention No. 182; and vi) other child labour (related) national and local policies, strategies and initiatives.

171. Other advocacy priorities in Bangladesh include the ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 and the effective operationalisation of the time-bound programme framework for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. Institutionalising and consolidating the Child Labour Unit established in 2008 under the Ministry of Labour and Employment is also an important advocacy priority. There is a need to ensure the Unit is adequately resourced and staffed, and that it has a clear mandate for coordinating, supervising and monitoring all child labour-related programmes in Bangladesh. Upgrading the Unit to departmental level within the Ministry of Labour and Employment administrative structure would be a useful step in this context.

172. Social mobilization is critical to engaging a broad range of social actors in efforts against child labour. Care providers in direct contact with children, including teachers and health workers, are in an especially good position to identify and refer child labourers, and therefore constitute particularly important allies in the fight against child labour. Also important are employers' and workers' organizations, which together can work to ensure that children are not present in the workplace. Labour inspectorates also have a key role to play in this context. The creation and strengthening of institutional structures such as community-based child protection networks provide useful vehicles for bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders to combat child labour. Initiatives such as community-based child protection networks provide useful vehicles for bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders – government and non-governmental – to combat child labour.

## 9.5 Targeted actions against worst forms of child labour

173. Targeted, direct actions are needed to ensure the removal, recovery and reintegration of working children whose rights are most compromised, i.e., those facing the greatest degree of hazard and/or exploitation. This refers, first and foremost, to children in so-called “unconditional worst forms of child labour” (activities against fundamental human rights) and those in hazardous forms of work (activities compromising children's safety, health or moral development). Children involved in the work activities listed in Sections 39, 40 and 42 of the 2006 Labour Act are especially relevant in this context.<sup>51</sup> Also relevant are children in worst forms of child labour such as the ship-breaking and leather industries. The 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy recognizes the importance of withdrawing children from worst forms and contains a number of target activities for achieving this.

174. The effective identification and follow-up of these groups depends, first and foremost, on mobilising and capacitating the local State and non-governmental actors that operate closest to where these frequently-hidden

<sup>51</sup> These activities include: a) cleaning of the machinery while it is in motion; b) lubrication or other adjustment operation of the machinery while it is in motion; c) any work in-between the moving parts of a machine and d) any work under ground or under water.

forms of child labour occur. Establishing community-level child labour monitoring programmes working alongside a professional social work system is particularly important in this context. A professional social work system would help ensure individual follow-up through case management, in turn ensuring that child labourers (and their families) have access to the social services needed for their effective reintegration.

175. The 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy specifically cites the need for correctional centres, rehabilitation centres, drop-in centres, helpline, psycho-social counselling, necessary treatment, food and entertainment at divisional, district, upazila and the union level for physically- and psychologically-distressed children withdrawn from child labour. In addition, adequate regulatory frameworks need to define minimum standards of care for former child labourers and other vulnerable children, and to specify the respective roles of the various State and private actors in meeting these care needs.

## 9.6 Building national capacity to act against child labour

176. Strengthening institutional capacity at all levels of Government is needed for continued progress towards child labour reduction goals. While the National Accelerated Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NASPR-II) the Third National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children in Bangladesh (2004-2009) and other development plans provide solid bases for action, these frameworks are unlikely to be implemented effectively in the face of capacity constraints. Institutions require strengthening in a number of areas, including using data for strategic planning, policy and programme design, programme monitoring and evaluation, programme coordination, and the mainstreaming of child labour in broader development plans and programmes.

177. As child labour is a cross-sectoral issue, requiring close collaboration across a range of Government bodies, the clear delineation of roles and the strengthening of coordination and information-sharing is also critical to the effective functioning of Government institutions and their social partners in efforts combating child labour. While the NASPR-II and the 2010 National Child Labour Elimination policy identify ministries and government agencies of relevance to efforts against child labour, implementation is hampered by the absence of a central mechanism/body to effectively coordinate inter-governmental efforts. A review of the national programme on child labour noted a need for greater policy cohesion between child labour and related policies and sectoral programmes as well as the crucial need to strengthen coordination between line ministries and civil society/private sector programmes.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Labour and Employment; International Labour Office (ILO); The Bangladesh National Time Bound Programme-The Way Forward; Dhaka, 2008

178. The Child Labour Unit within the Ministry of Labour and Employment was established with ILO support to help take up these concerns. The Unit is intended as the lead agency responsible for coordinating, supervising and monitoring all child labour-related programmes in Bangladesh. It is not yet, however, fully operational, and immediate steps need to be taken by the Government to ensure that the Unit is sufficiently resourced and staffed to fulfil its coordination role effectively.

179. The establishment of an inter-ministerial coordinating committee on child labour, linked closely to the Child Labour Unit, is a possible additional step to ensure better coordination and information sharing among concerned ministries. The 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy also cites the need for one focal ministry for child labour related matters and recommends that the Ministry of Labour and Employment, and specifically the Directorate of Labour within the Ministry, play this role.

180. Ensuring close links between the Child Labour Unit and the main NGO networks, including the Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), the Together with Working Children (TWC) network, and the Child Labour Elimination Action Network (CLEAN) will be important to the effective coordination of local action against child labour. Effectively re-activating the Joint Child Labour Working Group (JCLWG), grouping ILO, UNICEF, Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Save the Children Alliance and Centre for Mass Education in Science, will also be important in this context.



## ANNEX 1. ESTIMATES OF CHILDREN'S WORK AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BASED ON THE MICS 2006 SURVEY

182. Table A1 presents alternative estimates of children's employment and schooling based on the Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) for the year 2006. A comparison with estimates based on BALFS 2005/06 (Table A2) reveals a number of important differences. First and foremost, MICS 2006 yields a considerably higher estimate of children in employment (16.2 percent versus 11.6 percent). The differences in estimates of children's employment are especially large for boys (25.7 percent versus 17.5 percent). These differences are consistent with a general finding that MICS surveys generate higher estimates than labour force surveys,<sup>53</sup> but nonetheless merits further investigation. The MICS 2006 survey, on the other hand, yields slightly lower estimates of children's school attendance, again especially among boys.

Table A1. Child activity status, children aged 7-14 years, by sex, based on MICS 2006 survey

Activity status	Children aged 7-14 years					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Only employment	1542820	10.1	296631	2.0	1839451	6.1
Only schooling	9716474	63.8	11923053	80.5	21639527	72.0
Both activities	2374013	15.6	656184	4.4	3030197	10.1
Neither activity	1595402	10.5	1938939	13.1	3534341	11.8
<b>Total in employment<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>3916833</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>952815</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>4869648</b>	<b>16.2</b>
Total in school <sup>(b)</sup>	12090487	79.4	12579237	84.9	24669724	82.1

Notes: (a) Refers to all children in employment, regardless of school status; (b) Refers to all children attending school, regardless of work status.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006

Table A2. Child activity status, children aged 7-14 years, by sex, based on BALFS 2005/06 survey

Activity status	Children aged 7-14 years					
	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Only employment	1180531	7.6	290530	2.0	1471060	4.8
Only schooling	11576741	74.1	12316821	82.7	23893562	78.3
Both activities	1546475	9.9	533901	3.6	2080376	6.8
Neither activity	1313851	8.4	1746540	11.7	3060391	10.0
<b>Total in employment<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>2727006</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>824432</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>3551437</b>	<b>11.6</b>
Total in school <sup>(b)</sup>	13123216	84.0	12850722	86.3	25973939	85.1

Notes: (a) Refers to all children in employment, regardless of school status; (b) Refers to all children attending school, regardless of work status.

Source: UCW calculations based on Bangladesh Annual Labour Force Survey, 2005-2006.

<sup>53</sup> For a more complete discussion of this point, see UCW Project, *Towards consistency in child labour measurement: assessing the comparability of estimates generated by different survey instruments*, draft, Rome, February 2009.

## ANNEX 2. RESEARCH TERMS OF REFERENCE



### **Understanding Child Labour in Bangladesh: Proposal for research collaboration**

Terms of reference  
14 September 2008

#### **BACKGROUND**

Child labour constitutes a key obstacle to achieving universal primary education and other Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh. It not only harms the welfare of individual children, but also slows broader national poverty reduction and development efforts. Children forced out of school and into labour to help their families make ends meet are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for gainful future employment, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Household survey evidence for Bangladesh for the 2002-2003 reference period indicates that children's involvement in economic activity is commonplace and frequently harmful in nature. Seventeen percent of children aged 7-14 years, some 4.5 million in absolute terms, were engaged in economic activity in this reference period. About 2.5 million of these working children were denied schooling, compromising their future prospects, while 317,000 were working on the street and approximately 1.3 million in hazardous work, compromising their immediate safety and well-being.<sup>54</sup> Some of the worst-off working children were those trafficked into exploitative labour.<sup>55</sup> Information from other sector-specific baseline surveys also highlights the difficult conditions faced by children working in road transport,<sup>56</sup> automobile establishments,<sup>57</sup> domestic labour,<sup>58</sup> welding establishments<sup>59</sup> and in battery recharging/recycling.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> UCW calculations based on Bangladesh National Child Labour Survey (SIMPOC survey, 2002-2003).

<sup>55</sup> International Labour Office (ILO), *Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Exploitative Employment in Bangladesh*, 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), *Report of the Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Road Transport Sector*, 2003.

<sup>57</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), *Report of the Baseline Survey on Working Children in Automobile Workshops*, 2002-2003.

The proposed programme of research cooperation will build on this initial evidence to provide an in-depth review of the child labour situation in Bangladesh and the policy response to it. The review will consider the economic as well as the social costs of child labour and follow a cross-sectoral approach, especially in the identification of determinants and strategic options. It will place particular emphasis on the most vulnerable sub-groups of child labourers, i.e., those on the street, those trafficked into exploitative labour and those in other “worst forms” of child labour. Means by which the set of child labour-related interventions already in place can be made more effective will be another important research focus. Additional data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2006) and the Household Budget Survey (2004) will be used for the empirical components of the proposed research cooperation programme.

Research cooperation in Bangladesh will be designed to inform the on-going and planned programmatic efforts of the UCW partner agencies (i.e., ILO/IPEC, UNICEF and World Bank). These include, *inter alia*, the World Bank Disability and Children at Risk and the National Social Protection projects, ILO/IPEC support to the national Time-Bound Programme for the elimination of worst forms of child labour, and the UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation. The research cooperation effort in Bangladesh will be built on similar UCW efforts undertaken in countries including Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Morocco, Yemen, and Nepal. The Inter-Agency Reports developed in each of the countries were the first such documents presented jointly by the three agencies to Government. The reports, based primarily on new, previously-unanalysed datasets, helped establish a common information base on the child labour phenomenon, and helped stimulate policy debate with national counterparts on child labour elimination.

## OVERALL GOALS

The proposed programme of research cooperation in Bangladesh will have three overall aims:

- (1) strengthen the information needed for the identification, design and targeting of child labour (related) policies, with a particular emphasis on information relating to the most vulnerable sub-groups of child labourers;
- (2) strengthen information on policy impact, and on the effectiveness of the current set of interventions on child labour;

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<sup>58</sup> International Labour Office (ILO), *Baseline Survey on Child Domestic Labour in Bangladesh*, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Welding Sector, 2002-2003*.

<sup>60</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Baseline Survey on Child Workers in Battery/Recycling Sector, 2002-2003*.

- (3) promote policy dialogue on child labour, and its social and economic costs, making use of a strengthened information base; and
- (4) build national capacity in the analysis and in the application of child labour data for policy design.

## **PROJECT COMPONENTS**

Research cooperation efforts will focus on four major components. The implementation of the first component is envisaged for the last quarter of 2008, while the second, third and fourth components will follow in the first half of 2009, building on the in-depth review developed in the first research component.

### **Component 1: The status of child labour in Bangladesh.**

This first component will review child labour, its determinants, its social and economic consequences, and broad strategic options for addressing it. The research will be developed and implemented in consultation with the recently established Child Labour Unit under the Ministry of Labour and Employment. As such, it will provide an important common basis for action in addressing child labour. The findings of the in-depth review will be presented in the form of an inter-agency report (Part A) that will consist of (a) a profile of the child labour situation in the country (i.e., descriptive statistics on the extent, intensity and nature of work); (b) analysis of the causes/determinants of child labour jointly with alternative uses of time, e.g., schooling; and (c) discussion of policy implications. The report will be presented at a national feedback and validation workshop.

The descriptive evidence of changes in the size and composition (i.e., age, sex and residence,) of the child labour population in Bangladesh over the period of analysis will primarily draw on Child Labour Survey (CLS) 2002 and on Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2002. If made available, important information can be obtained from Poverty Monitoring Survey 2004, Labour Force Survey 2005, Household Budget Survey 2005, and Demographic and Health Survey 2007. Possible changes in the structure and characteristics of child labour (i.e., sector, modality and intensity) will also be examined.

This component will also present descriptive evidence of concomitant changes in the general activity patterns of children (i.e., involvement only in economic activity, involvement in economic activity and schooling, involvement only in schooling, and involvement neither in economic activity nor in schooling). An additional section will analyze the sectoral distribution of child labour.

The descriptive evidence on child labour under the first component will be complemented by econometric evidence relating to the causes/determinants of child labour and their implications for policy. A bivariate probit model or similar approach will be used to identify the various child, household and community factors influencing family decisions concerning children's involvement in school

and work. A simple economic model of household behavior will be used to guide the empirical specification.

### **Component 2: CL policies & programs (PP) and their impact & evidence**

The second component will analyse child labour in the national development policy framework. It will map out existing programmes and identify gaps of coverage and targeting of working children. In addition, it will analyse policies in child labour and related fields (e.g., education and social protection), and on this basis, identify policy shortcomings and areas where the acceleration or reorientation of current policy interventions appears necessary. Evaluations, if available, will be used to draw lessons learned from current program experience. The findings of the in-depth review will be presented in the form of an inter-agency report (Part B). The report will be presented at a national feedback and validation workshop. The possibility of a specific evaluation of interventions targeting street children will also be considered.

### **Component 3: Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of child labour elimination for Bangladesh.<sup>61</sup>**

This third component will analyse the resource requirements and economic benefits associated with eliminating child labour, building on the 2003 ILO study *Investing in Child Labour: An Economic Study of the Costs and Benefits of Eliminating Child Labour*, as well as on the policy/program mapping exercise described under component (1.2). It will augment the child rights argument for child labour elimination by providing a compelling economic case for combating child labour, highlighting the constraint that child labour poses to broader national development goals. Research conducted under this component, as well as under component (1.2) will be brought together in a set of workshops and as a companion report to the Inter-Agency Report, and be used by Government and the three agencies in follow-up discussions with key donors and as support to policy design. The findings of the CBA will be presented in the form of an inter-agency report (Part C). The report will be presented at a national feedback and validation workshop.

### **Component 4: Capacity-building for regular child labour data collection and analysis.**

A short training course for counterparts from the Bureau of Statistics and other relevant stakeholders is envisaged for all three previously described component stages. The details of the capacity building components will be elaborated on the basis of an informal assessment of training needs, to be conducted by the partner agencies in cooperation with the Child Labour Unit under the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Knowledge transfer will also take place through direct

<sup>61</sup> Update: Component 3 was not implemented as part of the current research initiative, owing to its significant time, cost and data implications. Rather, it will form part of a separate policy appraisal exercise scheduled for the 2011-2012 period.

research collaboration. In the course of developing the inter-agency report, technical counterparts from the Bureau of Statistics and other relevant bodies will be provided hands-on experience in areas such as definition and construction of child labour indicators; extraction of child labour data from larger survey datasets using statistical software; construction of descriptive tables; and econometric techniques for analysing child labour determinants. This fourth component will be integrated into the separate and more elaborated Terms of Reference to be prepared for the first, second and third component.

### **IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES**

The research cooperation project will operate under the supervision of an inter-agency Working Group comprised of representatives from the ILO, the World Bank and from UNICEF in Bangladesh, as well as the GOB focal point, i.e. the Head of the recently established Child Labour Unit. Other concerned Government ministries and bodies, multi- and bi-lateral development partners, employers' and workers' organisations and representatives from key civil society stakeholders will be involved in this inter-agency research collaboration through three national workshops for feedback and validation.

The UCW Project will provide the required technical assistance at all stages of the research collaboration through regular missions to Bangladesh and electronic means. The representatives of the Working Group will also act to ensure that the research results are "mainstreamed" into programmes and projects at field level. The consolidated inter-agency report will be issued jointly by the UCW partner agencies and the Child Labour Unit. The launching of the report will be the starting point for the development of a platform for action based on it.