

BASELINE SURVEY ON PREVALENCE OF CHILD LABOUR IN HARMFUL WORK



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Executive Summary

Background

Child labour, a sheer reality in Bangladesh like many other developing countries, is one of the major socio-economic problems in the country. The working children, as a socio-economic group, happened to be the most disadvantaged because for survival of self and family. They are forced to work for living, sacrificing their childhood along with their future. Studies revealed that one in every six children in Bangladesh were working children. The gravity of the situation led Save the Children UK (SCUK) to facilitate this “Baseline Survey on Prevalence of Child Labour in Harmful Work” in their work area at Dhaka, Khulna and Kurigram. The study looked into one of the key aspects of child protection – prevalence of harmful child labour using the definition of children and harmful labour drawn by SCUK. The study also generated baseline information on major characteristics of child labour including income and household dependency on work/income from the children.

Objective

The key objective of the study is to find out the prevalence of harmful child labour. The specific objectives are: (a) to estimate the prevalence of harmful child work, and (b) to quantify household dependency on the work/income of children.

Methodology

The prime purpose of the study is to assess prevalence of child labour and harmful child labour and quantify household dependency on the work/income of children. The study was conducted in three locations: Dhaka (Lalbag: ward # 60 and 61), Khulna (Ward # 22 and 30, and Uttar Bedkashi union), and Kurigram (Ward # 1 and Holokhana union).

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used as a means of credible and reliable data collection methods to obtain data/information on selected indicators related to the study. Of the qualitative methods, the Child Participatory Method (CPM) was one of the central approaches used to address pertinent perceptual aspects. This exploratory study has tried to draw clear insights into children’s perception and a deeper understanding on child labour in harmful works.

The sample size for quantitative survey was determined using a sound statistical formula with 95% confidence level and 5% precision level. For ensuring approximation of normality as well as enough number of working children the sample size was increased by 25% and comprised 345 households. The survey was administered using sampling frames in rural and urban study areas, which were provided by SCUK. Simple Random Sampling Procedure was adopted to select sample households. A total of 345 interviews were conducted with 323 male household heads and 24 female household heads. A total of 154 child labourers (104 boys and 50 girls) identified in the sample households were also interviewed.

The study used number of different types of instruments/methods (quantitative and qualitative) to explore the extent of child labour and perception of child labour in harmful work. A total of five data/information collection instruments were used in the study. SCUK was consulted at all phases during the study including design phase. A total of 15

field staff were recruited, trained and deployed in the field for 15 days. In addition to the training on the objective of the study and data/information collection instruments, field practice, a two-day orientation on child protection issues was imparted to the trainees.

Major Findings

The study findings based on research on (i) background of child labour, (ii) prevalence of working children and child labour at harmful work, (iii) determinants of harmful child labour, and (iv) causes and consequences of child labour have been presented in this chapter. The pertinent **key findings** are:

1. About 46% of the household members are children under 18 years of age. The share of children in the working child age group between 5 and 17 years is 36% of the household members. Of all children in working child age group, 40% are working children and 24% are child labours. The prevalence of child labour at harmful work is 23.5%. In other words, three in every five working children are child labours at harmful work. More alarmingly, 99% of child labour is harmful labour.
2. Average age at entry to work for child labours is 12.6 years, and over one in every four child labour start working before their 11th birthday. Mean years of schooling of child labour is 4.7 years with 59% having 2.4 years of education.
3. On average, the child labours work 55.8 hours per week (9.3 hours daily and 6.02 days weekly). About 38% child labours work more than 10 hours daily. About 65% of the working children do not wholeheartedly perceive their work as socially acceptable.
4. According to indicators of harmfulness at work, about 99% of child labours do not have basic facilities at their work places and 80% have 'prolonged working hours'. About one in every two child labours have to suffer from 'abuse'.
5. In terms of 'lack of basic facilities in work places', the key determinants of harmful child labour are (i) lack of 'break for education (83.4%)', (ii) lack of 'safety measure (83.4%)', and (iii) lack of 'facility for health and hygiene (75.3%)'. Only 8% child labour have got on job training.
6. The most frequently reported factors of harmful labour were (i) paying low and irregular wage, (ii) having risk of physical injury and illness, (iii) having risk of incidence of abuse, (iv) not allowing to enjoy holidays, (v) lack of facility for health and hygiene, and (vi) long working hour as a barrier to attend school.
7. Household/economic-hardship was the most frequently reported reason for children to be involved in work: (i) more than three-fourths of children work to supplement household income, (ii) fathers' illness and inability to earn enough compel their children to work regardless of their age, (iii) one in every three working children are at work to meet family debts, and (iv) about one in five working children mentioned their lack of interest in education.
8. Sixty percent children reported that they are satisfied because they are employed. About two in every five children shared their satisfaction with the work as they manage their own food from the same. Nearly 60% work for ensuring better future. One-third child labours are happy as they can buy 'fancy things'

- (cheap snacks/imitation ornaments/toys) for themselves, friends, and other members of the family.
9. Poor payment is a major reason for unhappiness reported by 61% of the working children and about two in every five has reported their inability to fulfill household demand with current income. Working children also mentioned prolonged working hours, heavy workload, absence of leave, verbal abuse, risky workplace, bad physical environment, salary deduction, and physical abuse as reasons of their dissatisfaction.
 10. The key reasons for not attending school are: (i) parents' non-affordability to bear educational expenses, (ii) family's inability to spare the child for schooling instead of working, and (iii) loss of income from work (if they are sent to school).
 11. More than one in every three working children has reported of suffering physical injuries at work. About two in every five has experienced verbal abuse at work place. About 14% has mentioned of being physically abused while 2% has reported sexual abuse at their work place (social taboo on admitting of being physically/sexually abused be the plausible reason for lower reporting about the same).
 12. Child labour contributes 20% of their monthly household income (Tk. 1184 out of Tk. 6023).
 13. About 22% working children contribute to household income. More than one third households having working children have more than one child to supplement their household income.
 14. Mean total monthly income of working children of 5-17 age group is Tk. 1184, while the same for 5-13 and 14-17 age groups are Tk. 774 and Tk. 1379 respectively.
 15. The contribution of children to household's income was as high as 51-100% in 34% of the households. The child labours contribute 26-50% of monthly household income for 24% of such households.
 16. Overall 34% of the households fell below the per capita income of Tk. 594 per month (poverty line for moderate poor) and almost 17% below per capita income of Tk. 408 per month (poverty line for extreme poor).
 17. In Dhaka, Khulna and Kurigram, 83%, 58% and 16% of the households respectively employed their children in wage earning activities despite the fact that they had income above the poverty line.
 18. More than one-fifth of total earners upto Tk.500 are children. For income range of Tk 501-1000 and Tk 1001-1500, children's proportion is 33% and 26% respectively.

Recommendations

All child labourers in the study areas are involved in harmful work. Yet the prevailing socio-economic and legal conditions do not permit elimination of child labour overnight. Based on the analysis of the findings the following **recommendations** having policy and programmatic implications have emerged.

1. Use of protective equipment, regulations concerning procedures and safety practices can control occupational health hazard as well as lessen the degree of harmfulness.
2. Advocacy and networking arrangements needs to be developed with existing improved primary health care systems, such UPHCP, NSDP, etc. to make services available to carious categories of working children. Moreover, NGOs can explore different health services for working children in semi-urban and rural areas.
3. Save the Children (UK) with other stakeholders like government, other NGOs, local institutions, ward commissioners, media can play active role in advocacy to lessen the working hours without any negative effect on wages of the child labours.
4. An all-encompassing attempt needs to be made to determine and implement wage-scale for the children who are compelled to work both in rural and urban areas so that they are not discriminated.
5. Comprehensive interventions needs to be designed to boost household income for some targeted group of households and raise their awareness so that they support their children's schooling atleast upto completion of primary level. Incentive for sending and supporting completion of primary education for certain categories of households also may be proactively considered.
6. A number of NGOs can take initiatives to pursue basic learning which deserves appreciation. Several factors should be kept in mind regarding this initiative. Firstly, hours spent for the learning should be longer to be properly educated. Secondly, the employers may get incentives if they allow their employees to be educated at the NGO-run or privately initiated education institutions.
7. Government as well as NGOs needs to arrange on the job training facilities for respective occupations in such a way so that (a) the working children become skilled; (b) employers can afford to let their employees to get the training; (c) a strong incentive as well social awareness should be targeted to employers for this initiative.
8. An effective initiative may be undertaken by SCUK for facilitating an alliance between government and rights-based organizations (including PNGOs and INGOs) for undertaking in line with Child Protection Policy (CPP) various interventions on social awareness building, prevention of child abuse at their work places both in urban and rural areas along with rehabilitation promotion of the abused child labours.
9. An in-depth comprehensive study needs to be conducted to understand the employers' perspective on child labour, harmful work and other pertinent issues like ensuring basic facility at work place, and skill development of working children.