



CHRISTMAS DONATION

SINCERE WISHES FOR A PEACEFUL HOLIDAY

DECEMBER 2021
LEEDO, Bangladesh

Stockholm December 17th 2021

The yearly Christmas Donation has become a tradition at Tundra. Through a small financial contribution to a carefully selected organization we highlight topics that we consider important. Previous donations have been directed towards organizations operating in our core markets, focusing on topics such as nature conservation, poverty eradication, gender equality, anti-trafficking and many more.

In 2021, Tundra made an Action Pledge to advance knowledge on children's rights in frontier markets. To emphasize our commitment to doing our small part in the fight against child labor, we have chosen to give our Christmas contribution to LEEDO, a local NPO based in Bangladesh. LEEDO aims to improve the life chances of children forced to live in extreme difficulties on the streets and also to address the needs of the growing number of vulnerable street children in Bangladesh. The organizational vision of LEEDO is to keep children in school and thereby having a brighter future.

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THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION

Two years into the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 continues to deepen with dramatic increases in poverty and inequalities worldwide as a consequence. As UNICEF commemorates 75 years of work for the rights of children, a new report (*Preventing a lost decade*) lays out the work in front of us by summing up the ongoing devastating impacts of COVID-19 on children and their education [1].

Even before COVID-19 hit, the world was experiencing a learning crisis which disproportionately affected the most vulnerable children in low- and middle-income countries. The pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented disruption to education worldwide, affecting more than 1.6 billion students at its peak. As the world moved into a second year of the pandemic and school closures for many countries have continued, potential losses in learning and life-time earnings are expected to grow [1].

Globally during the first year of the pandemic, schools were fully closed 43% of the time intended for in-person classroom instruction. Latin America and the Caribbean has been the most affected region with 80% of instruction time disrupted due to full school closures. South Asia, the most populous region where the loss of instruction time accounted for 57%, and Middle East and North Africa accounted for 51% [1]. According to recent data from UNESCO, Bangladesh has seen school closures for a total of 73 weeks [2].

When schools closed, some countries were better equipped with resources and connectivity to offer remote learning. Only 14% of children in lower-middle income countries have internet access at home, compared to 87% in high-income countries. The combination of prolonged school closures and inadequate remote learning could translate into substantial learning loss, further exacerbating the learning crisis [1].



LOCAL EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

LEEDO is a not-for-profit development organization founded in 2000. The organization was initiated by a group of educated social and human rights activists and educators aiming to improve the life chances of children forced to live in extreme difficulties on the streets and also to address the needs of the growing number of vulnerable street children in Bangladesh [3].

LEEDO provides children living on Dhaka streets with informal schooling, meals, clothing, medical treatment, temporary shelters, and even permanent housing in its Peace Home. It is the first comprehensive, long-term home in Dhaka specifically built for kids who used to live on the street, and it now serves more than 50 children with plans to expand. The community-based organization provides free, weekly classes to children in local parks through its initiative School Under the Sky. Its Mobile Schools travel to the locations where children are most in need, engaging them through educational games and activities [4]. “The vision is very simple: children go to school; children do not work,” said Forhad Hossain, Executive Director of LEEDO. “Last year we enrolled more than 30 children into formal school. Before they worked on the street, now they go to school” [5].

OVERVIEW OF CHILD LABOR IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has not established a uniform minimum age for admission to work and national legislations set several employment ages for employment in specific sectors. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), a child between 5–11 years of age working for any period of time in a non-hazardous job is a child laborer. Hazardous child laborers are those, irrespective of 5 to 17 years old, working for more than 42 hours each week. Working children include those who are 12 to 17 years old carrying out non-hazardous work up to 42 hours each week; such work is considered permissible [6].

The country has made significant progress on addressing child labor in recent decades. Data from the BBS indicates a 50% reduction in child labor from 2003 to 2013. While important achievements in the fight against child labor continue to be made in Bangladesh, some 1.2 million children are still trapped in its worst forms [7]. The latest National Child Labor Survey published in 2015 has estimated approximately 3.45 million working children in the country between the age of 5 to 17 years old. Among which, 1.75 million are not child laborers by national definition and 1.7 million are child laborers including 1.28 million children working in hazardous conditions [6]. Planning is underway for the ILO and BBS to produce an updated survey report on child labour by early 2022.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK

At the national level, Bangladesh has established laws and regulations related to child labor, such as the Labor Act 2006, the National Children Policy 1994, the Children Act 1974 which has been updated as the Children Act of 2013. In 2010, the government also announced the National Child Labor Elimination Policy 2010. This policy mandates eliminating all forms of child labor from the country by implementing laws of various national acts, providing financial grants, ensuring primary education, strengthening relevant institutional capacity, and raising social awareness [8]. As a result of continuous advocacy, the Government of Bangladesh ratified the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [7].

Nevertheless, gaps exist in Bangladesh's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work. The country has not ratified the Minimum Age Convention No. 138. Minimum age protections in the Bangladesh Labor Act do not cover children working in the informal sector including domestic work, street work, and work on small agricultural farms. In addition, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover producing garments and drying fish; both are areas of work where there is evidence that children work in unsafe and unhealthy environments for long periods of time [9].

CHARACTERISTICS

According to the National Child Labor Survey conducted in 2013, the total number of working children aged 5 to 17 years old was estimated to be 3.45 million. The total number of boys working was estimated to 2.1 million while the number of girls reached 1.3 million. Working children belonging to the age group 12 to 17 years old and working for up to 42 hours per week in non-hazardous work were estimated at 1.75 million. The survey reported a total of 1.7 million children aged 5 to 17 years old engaged in child labor. Boys accounted for more than half (56%) and the largest segment (1.21 million) belonged to the age group 14 to 17 years old [6].



Framework by the Bangladesh National Child Labor Survey 2013. Source: BBS & ILO

The proportion of children aged 5 to 17 years old currently attending school was reported to be 79.5% while the proportion went down significantly to roughly 31% among working children. The two leading causes of children never attending school were inability to afford the expenses (45%) and responsibility to do domestic chores (18%). However, when taking into account sex difference, girls were found to be disproportionately represented in citing domestic chores as the hinderance. The average working hours regardless of male and female difference was 39 hours per week and the average monthly income was TK5859. The predominance of working children in rural communities is notable, accounting for almost 72% of the working children. Children were found to be engaged in different sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, wholesale, retail, transport and other. The agriculture sector accounted for the majority (37%) and manufacturing accounted for 27%; however, manufacturing called for more hazardous jobs. A very large proportion of the working children were employed in informal terms without any formal documents of engagement or guarantee of work. The most common hazard that working children face included: being subjected to constant shouting and insult by employer; exposure to dust, fumes, noise or vibration; sexual abuse with girls reporting higher frequency to boys [6].

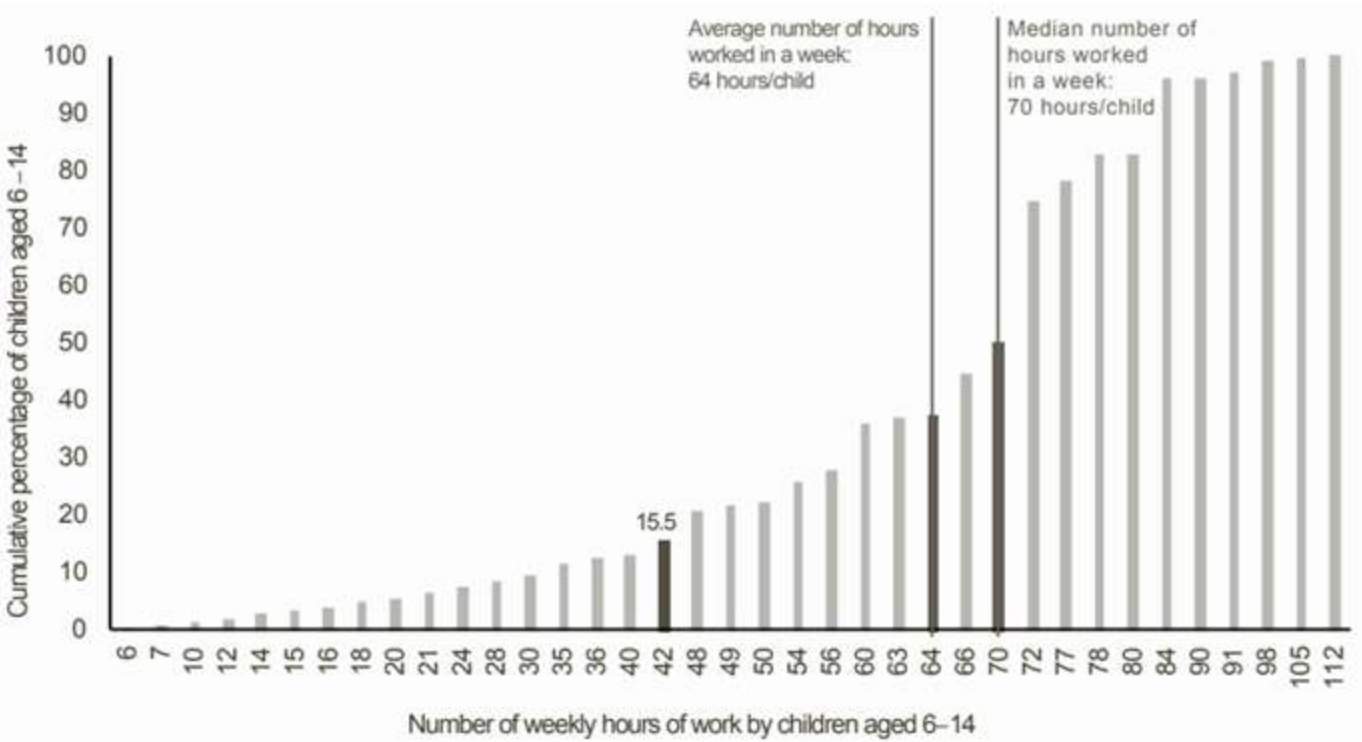
A CLOSE-UP AT CHILDREN IN THE CITIES

Bangladesh, home to more than 160 million people, is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Around 3.5% of the population migrate internally every year. People move to urban centers after losing village homes and livelihoods following disasters fuelled by climate change; They also come to the city seeking better employment opportunities. However, despite the nation's significant progress in cutting its poverty rate, a large proportion of migrants from villages end up in urban slums. Dhaka city has more than 5,000 slums inhabited by an estimated 4 million people [10].

The situation of children in urban slums could be much worse than in rural Bangladesh, as per data from the Child Well Being Survey 2016 and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013. In addition to water and air pollution from poor waste and traffic management, limited access to safe sanitation exposes slum-dwelling populations to serious health risks. Flooding and waterlogging are frequent occurrences [13]. For children living in slum areas, there are high rates of malnourishment, school dropout, child marriage, child labor and child abuse [10]. The pandemic and subsequent loss of employment for many families as well as the disruption in education and loss of safe spaces for young people have placed children at high risk of early marriage, exploitation, and trafficking [11]. Moreover, girls and boys experience urban life in different ways. Beyond the risks of violence, assault and harassment, women and girls often face discrimination in their daily life [10].



A report by researchers from the London-based Overseas Development Institute surveyed nearly 3,000 households in the slums of Dhaka. They found children as young as 6 years old employed full-time and others working up to 100 to 110 hours a week [12]. The probability of a child working increased sharply from the age of 8. Among children aged 6 to 14 years old, 15% were reported to be working in the survey areas and by the age of 14, almost half of children living in the slums of Dhaka were working. The median child worker in the survey reported 70 hours in employment, well beyond the 42-hour limit set by national legislation. The overwhelming majority of working children were out-of-school. Both boys and girls were most likely to work in order to supplement family income, with inability to afford school costs also a prominent cause [13]. Another study on urban child labor in Bangladesh also indicated that a large proportion (33%) of child laborers aged 5 to 17 years old had never attended school. According to this study, the top-ranked push factors for child labor also pointed towards similar direction: poverty, schooling expenses and lack of access to opportunities in primary schools [8].



Working hours: reported weekly work hours, children aged 6-14
Source: Quattri, Maria and Kevin Watkins, 2016

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