



COVID 19: Lives and livelihoods of child labours in Bangladesh

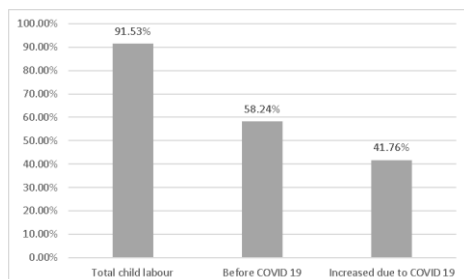
COVID 19 & Child Labour in Bangladesh

COVID 19 pandemic has brought new realities in terms of increasing trend of child labour and sufferings for working children in Bangladesh. Millions of lives and livelihoods are at stake, so are the country's important achievements in the fight against child labour. Children, especially those suffering from poverty and inequity, are among the most vulnerable to the harsh socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

Increased poverty is projected to create an additional barrier to children's rights and children from vulnerable households, including those with no wage earners, lower levels of access to alternative learning modalities.

Study finds that the scenario of child labour is increasing in Bangladesh due to COVID 19. Among 800 studied child labour, in urban and rural areas before COVID-19, 58.24% were engaged with child labour but it increased at

Figure: Changing scenario of child labour due to COVID 19

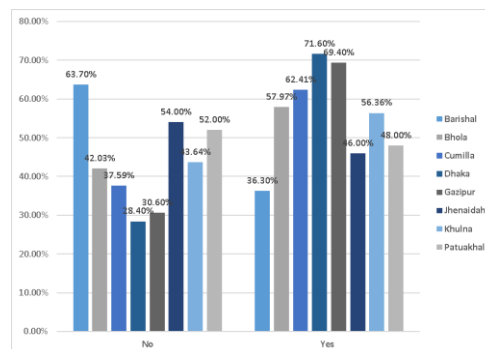


91.53% as well as 41.76% child labour increased due to COVID 19.

Changing scenario of child labour due to COVID 19

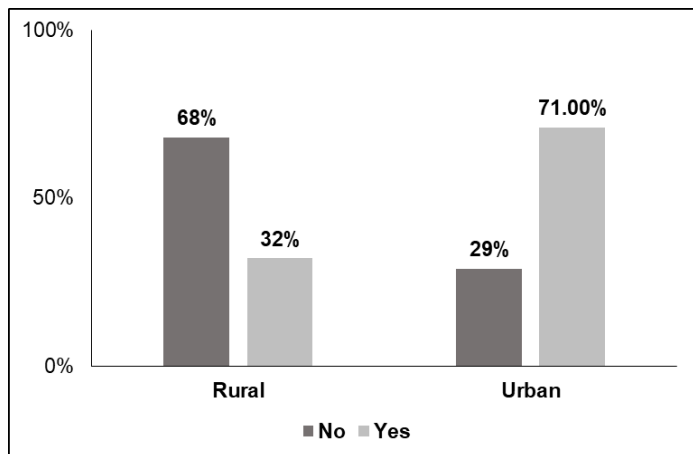
In Barishal, 63.70% child labour increased due to COVID 19 who were not involved with child labour before COVID 19. Similarly, in the other districts' child labour has increased due to COVID 19 pandemic. In Cumilla, it has increased 37.59%, in Bhola 42%, in Dhaka 28.40%, in Gazipur 30.60%, in Jhenaidah 54%, in Khulna 43.64% and in Patuakhali 52% child labour increased due to pandemic.

Figure: Child labour s scenario in study area



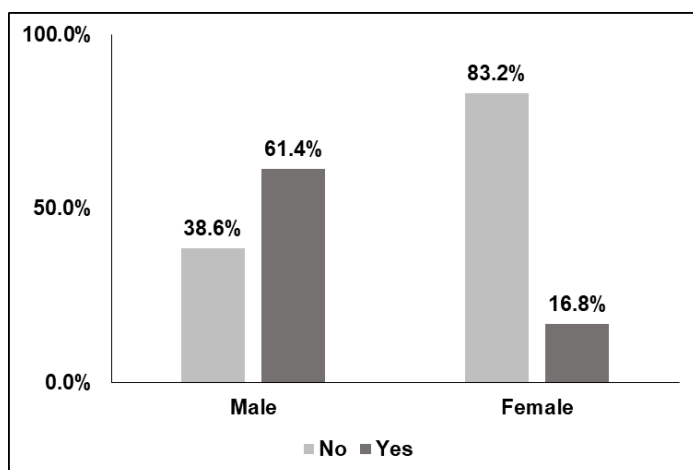
On the other hand, in rural and urban areas, also child labour increased due to COVID 19. Before COVID 19, only 32% studied children were engaged with child labour but due to COVID 19, more 62.8% children involved with child labour due to loss of income sources by household members. In urban areas, overall, 29% more child labour increased with COVID 19 pandemic.

Figure: Changing scenario of child labour in rural-urban setting



The remarkable involvement of female children with child labour due to COVID 19 also observed. Before COVID 19 only 16.8% studied female children was engaged with child labour but now 83.2% female child labour increased in all eight districts among studied children.

Figure: Gender segregated changing scenario of child labour



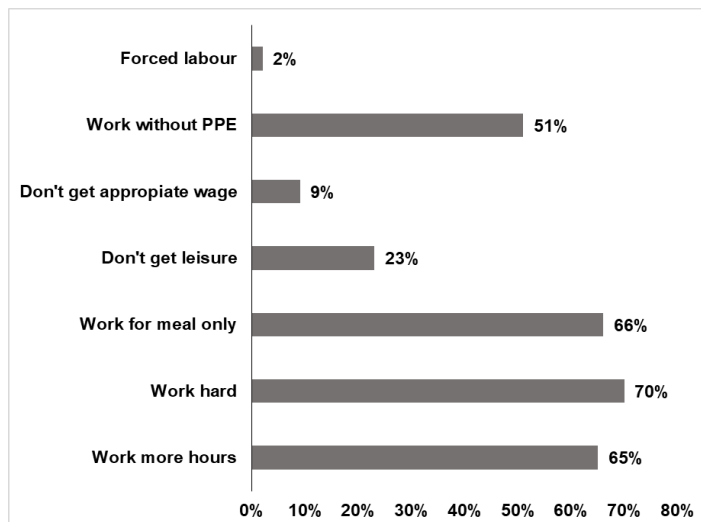
Vulnerability of child labour

In the work place of child labour, most of the children suffer from physical injuries, mental health burden, verbal abuse, physical torture, economic exploitation, sexual abuse. Due to COVID 19, economic stress has increased in small and medium enterprises which induced more vulnerability on child labour. Mental torture, increasing working house, reducing daily wage, physical injury, sexual abuse, food insecurity increased due to COVID 19.



Different forms of workplace hazards increased due to COVID 19 pandemic. Hard working (70%), work only for food without cash payment (66%), increased working hour (65%), and work without PPE during COVID 19 situation (51%), leisure less work (23%), don't get appropriate wage (9%) and also forced labour (2%) was observed during the study.

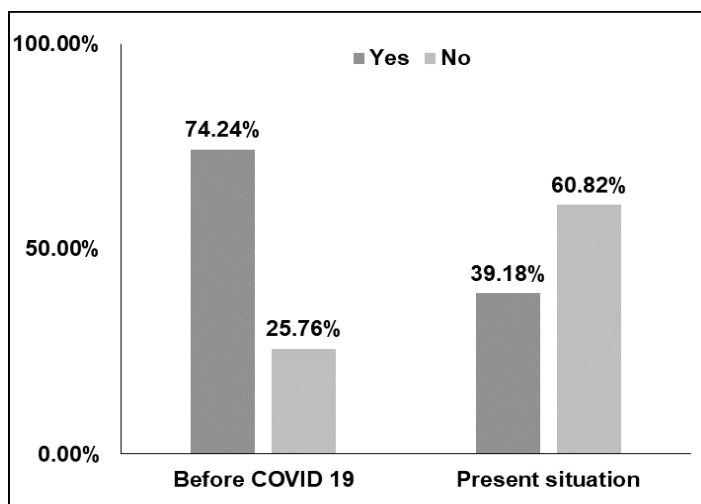
Figure: Different forms of vulnerability increased due to COVI 19



Food insecurity

Food insecurity is common problem among the studied child labour. Due to poverty, most of the child labour don't get sufficient meal in their households but due to COVID 19, this rate has increased. 25.76% child labour mentioned that before COVID 19 they have not sufficient meal in their household but now it increased at 60.82%.

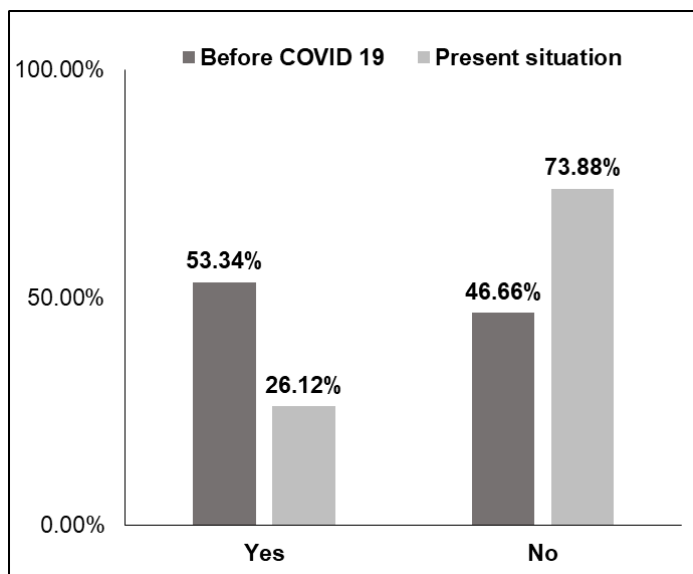
Figure: Situation of household food security



Food intake has reduced at household level due to decreasing income and 83.35% family has reduced their food intake to come up with current income.

Along with the household level, in workplace food intake has reduced. Before COVID 19, 53.34% child labour have got sufficient meal in workplace but now it has decreased and only 26.12% child labour mentioned that they have sufficient meal in their workplace.

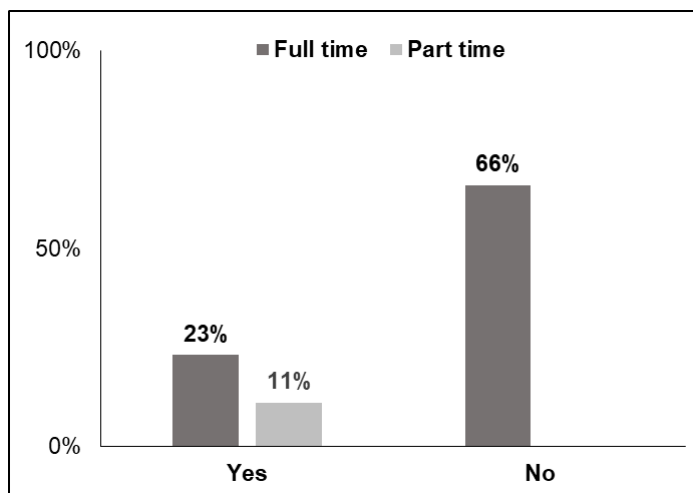
Figure: Food security situation at workplace



COVID 19 response and recovery

23% children were engaged with child labour during COVID 19 lockdown fully though 11% worked partly. As a whole 34% child labour had to have work during lockdown.

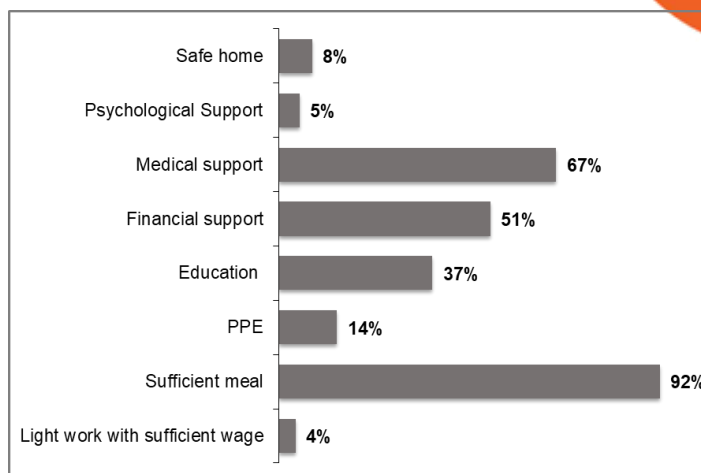
Figure: Working scenario during lockdown



84% child labour don't know any person or organization is working to protect child labour from COVID 19 whereas only 16% child labour are known to the person and organizations have worked in terms of response and recovery of COVID 19. Government organizations, NGOs, volunteer organizations, individual persons worked with 16% child labour to protect from COVID 19 impact.

Most of the organizations and persons supported daily food but these supports were not sufficient. They need more support on mask, safe home, educational facilities, educational equipment, technical training, employment support, medicine support, food and cloths.

Education is most demanding support and 88% child labour are interested to enroll in school for education but they don't have opportunity though 42% were school going before COVID 19 and 28% respondents are involved with schooling at present.



Policy gaps

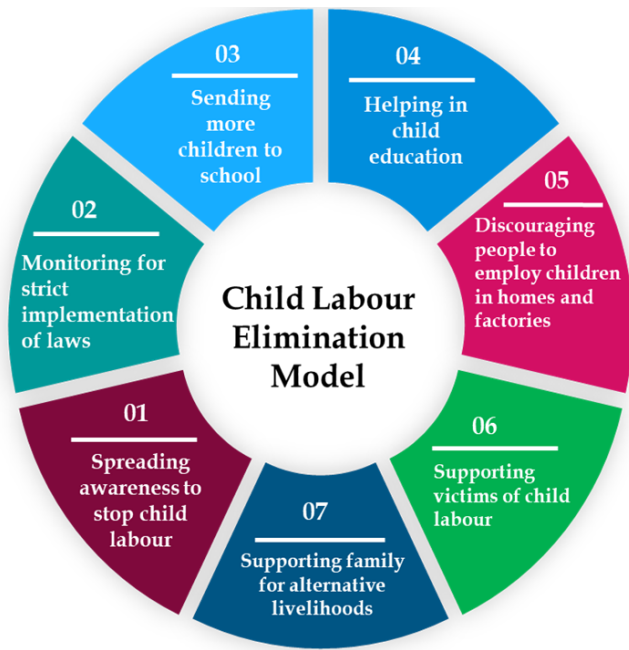
The National Child Policy (2011) is applicable to all children without any discrimination to ensure child rights in the light of the constitution of Bangladesh, Child Act and International Conventions, poverty alleviation of the children, elimination of all forms of child abuse and discrimination, elimination of all forms of abuse of and discrimination to female child and participation of the children and accepting their views into consideration in overall protection and, in the best interest of the children but the reality is different. Child labour is exist in the society even now and discrimination persist in different forms all over the country. National Child Labour Elimination Policy (2010) was enacted to make meaningful changes in the lives of the children by withdrawing them from all forms of child labour including the hazardous work and worst forms of child labour. But due to poverty, social discrimination and also COVID 19, child labour is increasing which is evident. Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19, Bangladesh was developed to prevent and control of COVID-19 in Bangladesh to reduce impact on the health, wellbeing and economy of the country but the plan did not properly embed the issues of child labour, floating people and street child in terms of rescue and recovery of COVID 19.

Way forward and recommendations

Children is driven into work for various reasons. At the age of schooling, most often, child labour occurs when families face financial challenges or uncertainty in terms of household wages due to poverty, job loss or loss of primary wage-earning sources. In urban areas, some child labour also engaged in risky earning source because of parent lessness. The consequences of child labour are staggering. Child labour is curse of a nation and can result in extreme harm in society as well as in nation. It is a slavery and sexual or economic exploitation. Child labour cuts children off from schooling and health care, restricting their fundamental rights and threatening their futures as well as economic and social wellbeing of a nation. By consultation with different actors, communities and child labour, an integrated model is developed to eliminate child labour from society which is termed as "Child Labour Elimination Model". The model constitutes of seven interactive thematic areas including:

- Spreading awareness to stop child labour
- Monitoring for the strict implementation of laws
- Sending more children to school
- Helping in child education
- Discouraging people to employ children
- Supporting victims of child labour and
- Supporting family for alternative livelihoods.

Figure: Child labour elimination model



Spreading awareness to stop child labour

Parents are the key agent to stop child labour. Parental awareness is essential to stop child labour as it can prevent children becoming labour. The lack of awareness among parents and other family members about the consequences of child labour, most of the children becomes child labour sector.

Monitoring for strict implementation of laws

Policy is vital for long-lasting social change, lobbying better for laws and bringing considerable benefit to society. Government of Bangladesh has enacted policy, laws and acts to reduce child labour but at the implementation level, weak performance of these laws is responsible for increasing child labour. Strong monitoring mechanism, one stop service center at local level government agencies, multi-stakeholder taskforce for monitoring and implementing child protection laws should be established and strengthened.

Sending children to school

Bangladesh has the world's most extensive and universal educational system. However, it faces several hurdles of low literacy in poor societies because of low enrolment due to poverty. Government, non-government and civil society organizations should focus on sending every child to school. The research organizations should map out the school-going children who are at risk of dropping out in different geographic locations.

Helping in child education

Support the children in need and their families to send them to school and provide enrollment assistance in regard to it. Child friendly, Interactive and lucrative learning methods should be introduced in schools.

Discouraging people to employ children in homes, factories and shops

Child labour is illegal in Bangladesh yet people employ children in their businesses, industries for reducing cost. Proper initiative should be taken to aware people to take this issue sensitively to stop child

labour as a social evil. Law enforcement agencies should be made efficient mechanism in implementing laws in terms of child labour elimination in any forms.

Supporting victims of child labour

Many children require immediate legal aid support as they are the victims of child labouring and these should be provided within the existing policies. From local level to national level, support mechanism should be strengthened by government, non-government and civil society organizations.

Supporting family for alternative livelihoods

Lack of livelihoods and wage-earning source are responsible for increasing child labour. During COVID 19, most of the family has lost their income sources. On the other hand, due to climate induced extremes, climate vulnerable families have lost their wage-earning sources in their origin. As a result, as supporting hand, they have involved their children in child labour. Initiative should be taken to provide alternative livelihood support to the families. In climate vulnerable areas climate resilient livelihoods option should be introduced through capacity building and input support.

For further details



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The policy brief is prepared based on the “Study on Impact of COVID 19: Lives and livelihoods of child labors of Bangladesh”.