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Dhaka

## STUDY REPORT

# Impact of COVID-19 on Lives and Livelihoods of Child Labours of Bangladesh

Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh Project



Manusher Jonno Foundation  
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## Acknowledgment

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## List of abbreviation and acronym

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BMET	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CPE	Center for People & Environ
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HHS	Household Survey
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IEDCR	Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research
ILO	International Labour Organization
KAP	Knowledge Attitude and Practice
KII	Key Informant Interview
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RMG	Ready-made Garments
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USD	United States dollar

## Executive Summary

The year 2020 will always be remembered for COVID-19 and the disruptions, uncertainty and pain it caused worldwide. While children seem to be less vulnerable to the virus directly, school closures, increased vulnerability to abuse, the mental health strains of parents and families, distance from friends, and loss of access to vital health care and protection services have hurt children deeply. The pandemic exposed deep inequalities that have existed for too long, with the worst impact on children in the poorest countries and communities and those already disadvantaged by discrimination, social exclusion, fragility and conflict.

On 8 March 2020, Bangladesh announced the first case of COVID-19 followed by a national lockdown on 26 March, which had extended on several occasions up to 30 May 2020, to prevent human transmission. In 2016, analysis on child poverty conducted by Ministry of Social Welfare reported that 46% children of Bangladesh live below the national poverty level and 23% are in extreme poverty. The multidimensional socio-economic impacts and climate induced disaster vulnerability; deterioration of natural resource base of both rural and urban people including children are typically deprived of four out of seven of the following basic services: water, sanitation, nutrition, education, health, information and shelter. As a result, child labour is a coping strategy of families that are facing daily challenges for their survival. The complex situation is triggered significantly by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Most low-income vulnerable communities in rural and urban settings depend primarily on daily income, and therefore, the loss of these sources of livelihood has forced them to rely on incompetent long-term mechanisms of coping.

To assess the situation of working children and figure out recommendations to improve their livelihoods for advocating with concerned Government department(s) the study was conducted at eight districts (Barishal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Dhaka, Cumilla, Gazipur, Jhainadaha and Khulna) in urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. The study was adopted a participatory and multi-disciplinary approach of data collection and analysis to deeply understand the impact of COVID-19 on household level and children (male and female), current scenario of child labour, vulnerable child labour sectors (rural-urban segregated and also male female segregated), best practice documentation on child labour reduction, knowledge attitude and practice (KAP) of community to children and child labour and its allies, exploring sustainable manner of reducing child labour and COVID-19 impact reduction; understanding present situation of sex and age segregated community KAP, community perception and knowledge on COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children, the following interactive steps were undertaken in this regard.

Both qualitative and quantitative data from the study locations were acquired through household questionnaire survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informants Interviews (KIIs), Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) analysis and case analysis with stakeholder at the study location. 850 children and their family members were interviewed, 48 Focus Group Discussion and 36 Key Informant interview were conducted with different stakeholders including MJF, Dept. of Youth, Dept. of Women

and Child Affairs, Dept. of Social Service, Dept. of Labour, BMET, local government institution, BRAC, Save the Children, Plan International to understand the status of children in the COVID-19 pandemic, institutional strength and weakness to deal with child issues and their capacity, livelihoods etc.

The study has covered 91% male and 9% female respondents from the study areas among those 73% were surveyed from urban areas and 27% from rural areas. It has covered child labour aged within 6-20 years.

The study finds that female child labour are involved in forced begging, domestic work, manufacturing sector, garments, fish processing and tokai etc. Forced begging also found among male child labour. It is also found that female children are involved with forced commercial sex in some areas of Dhaka, Gazipur and Cumilla.

Out of 850 respondents, 92% as well as 782 respondents are involved with child labour. Highest children from urban areas are involved with child labour which is 73% of the child labour. 27% are comes from rural areas who are involved with child labour.

Different types of child labour are found in the study area including hazardous child labour. The study reveals that children are involved with twenty sectors are child labour among those some are highly risky for children. Vendor as well as selling somethings as street business and informal business, 26% children are involved as child labour in the study area. According to the study, salesman in vegetable shop, grocery shop ranks the choice for children as child labour which is account of 16% of the total studied child labour. Similarly, the study illustrates that children are involved with motor mechanic, waiter in hotel and restaurant, tokai, manufacturing work, fish process, rickshaw pulling, coolie, working in tea stall, bus helper, firm labour, forced begging, truck helper, domestic work, garments, driving, tailoring, sweeper, construction works, brick breakings etc.

Child labour is associated with household income, employment opportunity, livelihoods security in the community. All of the child labour comes from lower income families who are living below poverty line. 79% children involved with labour to support from their family economically.

Climate change and allied migration is responsible for increasing child labour. Due to climate change, 41.6% child labour increased and COVID 19 also increased 41.76% child labour.

n 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 rural areas. Before COVID 19, only 16.8% studied female child labour was engaged with this sector but now 83.2%% child labour increased in all eight districts among studied children and their households.

COVID 19 increased vulnerability of child labour in terms of engaging with hard work (70%), work only for food without cash payment (66%), increased working hour (65%), work without mask and PPE during COVID 19 situation (51%), don't get leisure (23%), don't get appropriate wage (9%) and also includes forced labour (2%).

Due to COVID 19, food insecurity increased among child labour and now 60.82% child labour are food insecure and only 26.12% child labour get sufficient meal in their workplace.

The seven interactive issues should be considered to eliminate child labour and their vulnerability:

- 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 in homes and factories
- Supporting victims of child labour and
- Supporting family for alternative livelihoods.

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## 1. Background of the study

### 1.1. Study rationale

The year 2020 will always be remembered for COVID-19 and the disruptions, uncertainty and pain it caused worldwide. While children seem to be less vulnerable to the virus directly, school closures, increased vulnerability to abuse, the mental health strains of parents and families, distance from friends, and loss of access to vital health care and protection services have hurt children deeply. But not all children were affected equally. The pandemic exposed deep inequalities that have existed for too long, with the worst impact on children in the poorest countries and communities and those already disadvantaged by discrimination, social exclusion, fragility and conflict.

In November 2019, the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) started spreading across the Wuhan city in China. Afterwards, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it as the global pandemic. Beginning initially with small transmission clusters, thereafter it merged into larger clusters in many countries with the advancement of the pandemic. Measures such as cancelling international flights, complete lockdown, social isolation, institutional and home quarantine, social distancing and community containment were implemented worldwide without delay. Nevertheless, the rapid spread and effects of the pandemic all over the world have led to fear, panic, anxiety, fear, stigma and depression among mass people (Bodrud-Doza et al., 2020).

With the global trend, the COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in an unpredictable, fearful, and unstable situation in Bangladesh. As 22 January 2021, worldwide positive COVID 19 patients were reported in a total of 195,612,831 cases (and 2,066,176 deaths) (WHO, 2021a). There is also a steady rise in cases in South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, where monsoon rains, flooding and other problems affect testing and checks (WHO, 2021a). As 22 January 2021 country is already placed among the top 30 countries with the highest transmission of COVID-19 with 530,890 confirmed cases and 7,981 official recorded deaths (GoB, 2021).

On 8 March 2020, Bangladesh announced the first case of COVID-19 followed by a national lockdown on 26 March, which had extended on several occasions up to 30 May 2020, to prevent human transmission (IEDCR, 2021). On 24 March, the government deployed military forces to promote social distance. However, more than 11 million people have left Dhaka to come home and spread the diseases throughout the country. In addition, all factories, industries, private offices and business centres, ready-made garments (RMG) had been allowed to open since April 25, 2020, which resulted in a partial lockdown in the state. The migration of RMG workers to the industrial districts and the reduced awareness of the disease amongst millions of people have increased transmission (Bodrud-Doza et al., 2020).

According to the BBS, 2011, 61 million population of Bangladesh are children which account of 40% of the total country population. In 2010, Bangladesh accounts 31% of total households live below the national poverty line (HIES, 2010). In 2016, analysis on child poverty conducted by Ministry of Social Welfare reported that 46% children of Bangladesh live below the national poverty level and 23% are in extreme poverty. The

multidimensional socio-economic impacts and climate induced disaster vulnerability; deterioration of natural resource base of both rural and urban people including children are typically deprived of four out of seven of the following basic services: water, sanitation, nutrition, education, health, information and shelter. As a result, child labour is a coping strategy of families that are facing daily challenges for their survival. The complex situation is triggered significantly by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Most low-income vulnerable communities in rural and urban settings depend primarily on daily income, and therefore, the loss of these sources of livelihood has forced them to rely on incompetent long-term mechanisms of coping.

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. Even when excluding pre-existing high rates of child malnutrition, physical abuse, psychological and emotional abuse, neglect and inadequate access to proper sanitation, the vulnerability of children and their families has been grossly aggravated by COVID 19 and the consequences of containment and risk mitigation measures. In Bangladesh, where almost 45 million children are predominantly subjected to violent discipline, including gender-based violence, reports increased by an estimated 31% during the pandemic (UNICEF, 2020). Across Bangladesh, children now face greater risk of severe hunger, disease, early marriage, child labour and physical and psychosocial health risks (World Vision, 2020). Increased poverty is projected to create an additional barrier to children's rights and children from vulnerable households, including those with no wage earners, reported lower levels of access to alternative learning modalities. School closure, which is one of the containment measures for the reducing transmission of COVID-19, could have future socioeconomic consequences for Bangladesh. UNICEF projections suggest that 620,000 children are expected to permanently drop out of school, of which 350,000 are expected to be girls. Given the sociocultural context in Bangladesh and considering the economic hardship many families have recently faced due to the pandemic, many of these girls could face the risk of child marriage, child labour, and adolescent pregnancy (UNICEF, 2021). Loss of livelihoods is the primary concern for the rural and urban poor and directly impacts on the ability of parents and caregivers to provide for children's well-being, including access to food and nutrition, access to healthcare and essential medicines, access to hygiene and sanitation facilities, and child protection and safety (World Vision, 2020). Children dropping out of school will also have an impact on future economic attainment and education of future generations. A recent simulation by the World Bank quantified the loss of learning in terms of labour market returns and indicated that the average Bangladeshi student will face a reduction in annual earnings of between USD 198 to USD 335 once they enter the labour market, which represents between a 4% and 6.8% drop in annual income. In the intermediate scenario, aggregating for all students, this would cost the Bangladeshi economy USD 89 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually.

“Bangladesh must keep the fight against child labour at the top of the agenda so that progress made in recent years is not lost. We will continue to work closely with all our

partners and focus on compulsory education, skill development, and social protection programmes – not only to address child labourers and vulnerable children, but also to provide decent working opportunities for parents and older siblings. It is high time to maximise the demographic dividend of the country and strengthen measures to produce a skilled, healthy, and productive labour force,” said Tuomo Poutiainen, Country Director for ILO Country Office for Bangladesh.

“With school closures in place since March 2020 and poverty levels rising amidst the pandemic, UNICEF is concerned that growing numbers of children are being pushed into child labour. Families are struggling to cope and using every available means to survive. We need to prioritize the needs of children and address the wider social issues that enable these harmful practices to continue,” said Tomoo Hozumi, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh.

To reverse the upward trend in child labour, the ILO and UNICEF are calling for:

- Adequate social protection for all, including universal child benefits.
- Increased spending on quality education and getting all children back into school - including children who were out of school before COVID-19.
- Promotion of decent work for adults, so families don't have to resort to children helping to generate family income.
- An end to harmful gender norms and discrimination that influence child labour.
- Investment in child protection systems, agricultural development, rural public services, infrastructure and livelihoods.

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has already taken various steps to eliminate all forms of child labour, particularly all types of hazardous work through National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010; National Children Policy 2011 etc. The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE), Department of Labour, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, other government organizations and field level agencies are implementing these initiatives. Government should take measures for efficient implementation of the projects that have been initiated in collaboration with different international and non-government organizations. But there is no study on impact of COVID 19 on child labour, their lives and livelihoods. In this connection, the study was conducted to understand the current scenario of child labour, their daily sufferings induced by COVID 19.

## **1.2. Objective of the study**

The objective of the study is to assess the situation of working children and figure out recommendations to improve their livelihoods for advocating with concerned Government department(s).

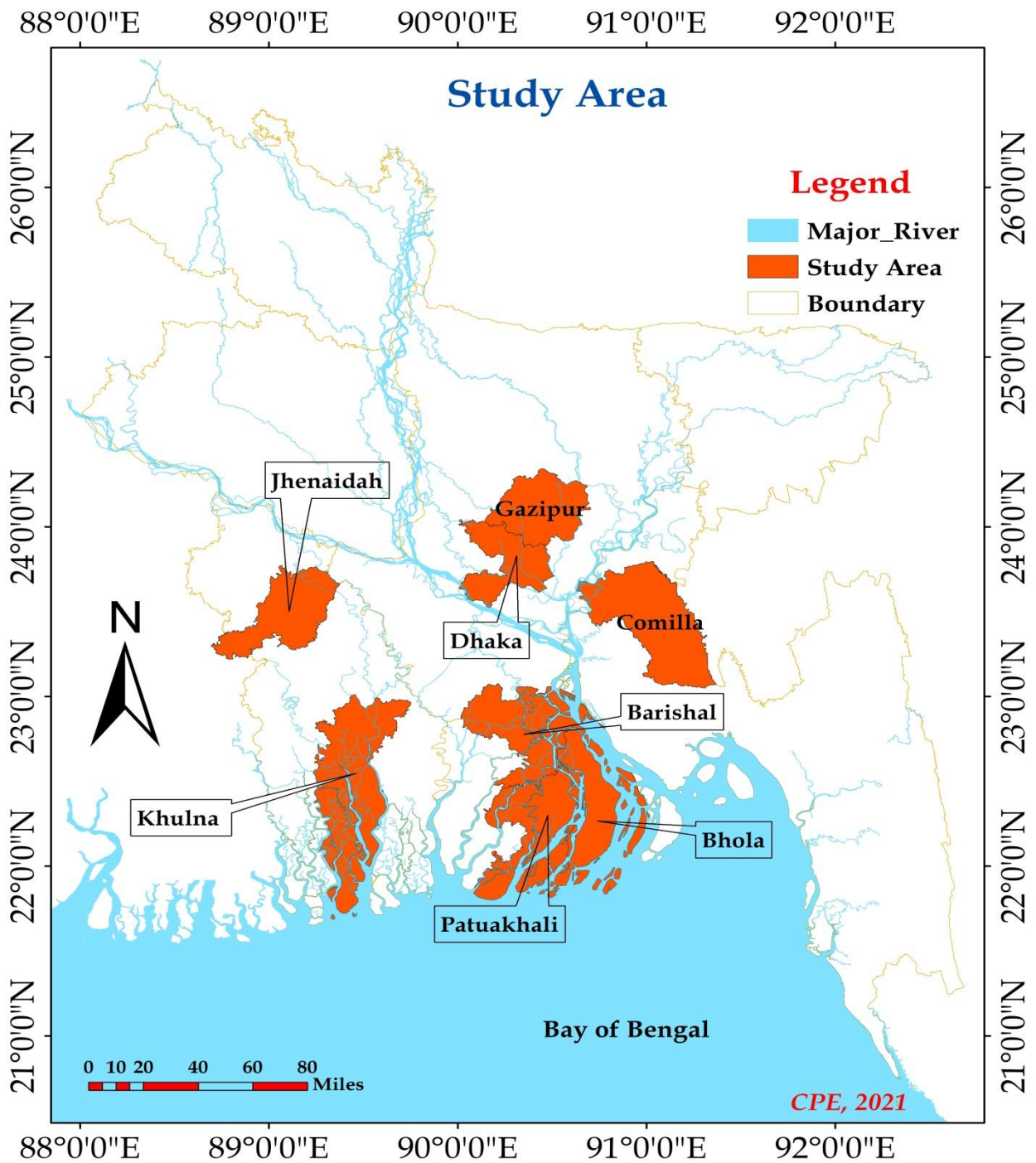
The assessment will cover all the following specific objectives:

- To explore the current status of the different type of child labour vulnerability in the selected areas and Covid 19 impact
- To identify best practices in that community to reduce number of children labour
- To develop a model that is replicable to other areas

- To prepare report with meaningful recommendations for sharing with the public, government high officials, donors, stakeholders etc.

### 1.3. Approach and methodology of the study

The study was conducted at the eight districts (Barishal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Dhaka, Cumilla, Gazipur, Jhenaidaha and Khulna) in urban and rural areas (Map 1).



Map 1: Study area

### **1.3.1. Approach of the study**

The study was adopted a participatory and multi-disciplinary approach of data collection and analysis to deeply understand the impact of COVID-19 on household level and children (male and female), current scenario of child labour, vulnerable child labour sectors (rural-urban segregated and also male female segregated), best practice documentation on child labour reduction, knowledge attitude and practice (KAP) of community to children and child labour and its allies, exploring sustainable manner of reducing child labour and COVID-19 impact reduction; understanding present situation of sex and age segregated community KAP, community perception and knowledge on COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children, the following interactive steps were undertaken in this regard.

#### **1.3.1.1. Participatory research to get actual data, perspectives and knowledge**

The impact of COVID-19 on household level and children (male and female), current scenario of child labour, vulnerable child labour sectors (rural-urban segregated and also male female segregated), best practice documentation on child labour reduction, knowledge attitude and practice (KAP) of community to children and child labour and its allies, exploring sustainable manner of reducing child labour and COVID-19 impact reduction; understanding present situation of sex and age segregated community KAP, community perception and knowledge on COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children employing Household Survey (HHS) through mobile based data collection App (Kobo) for quantitative data and qualitative data would be collected using Key Informant Interview (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) analysis and case analysis.

#### **1.3.1.2. Primary Data collection**

Both qualitative and quantitative data from the study locations were acquired through household questionnaire survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informants Interviews (KIIs), Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) analysis and case analysis with stakeholder at the study location.

Apart from conducting household survey, relevant participatory tools (such as FGDs, KIIs, and KAP and case analysis) were used to capture perspectives of different stakeholders from village/camp to sub-district level.

The analysis of data from the secondary sources were triangulated with primary data and key strategies of promotion of reducing child labour and mitigation of COVID-19 induced risk in child, labour. Child centric and gender responsive options and strategies were validated with the relevant government officials, NGOs, CSOs, sectoral actors and experts in local and national level and acceptability of the identified options.

### 1.3.2. Methodology

#### 1.3.2.1. HHs Survey

Household field data collection in selected locations at various levels were collected through questionnaire survey (using Kobo mobile app). At the household level in particular, data was collected with the support of enumerators.

The study sample determination was made using of probability sampling in order to select the respondents for investigation. The sample size is estimated to ensure the representation of all the indicators set forth in the ToR. The sample size of this study has been estimated in such a way that the obtained result of the study may be within 4 percent of the true value with 96 percent confidence. Therefore, the sample size for the study has been determined by using the formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2 (N-1) + z^2 p \cdot q}$$

Where,

N = Size of population,

n = Size of sample to be determined;

p = Proportion of the target population estimated to have a particular characteristic;

q = 1-p;

e = Acceptable error (precision);

z = Standard variant at a given confidence level.

Overall children of the study area are 9846800 (BBS, 2020).

Using the above-mentioned formula, the sample size will be 845 as well as 850 (Design effect 2.2).

**Table 1: Sample distribution**

District	Number of children	Rural		Urban		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Barishal	942387	35	30	35	30	130
Cumilla	1838223	35	30	35	30	130
Dhaka	3404491	45	35	45	35	160
Gazipur	812756	40	35	40	35	150
Bhola	681247	10	10	15	15	50
Patuakhali	584312	10	10	15	15	50
Jhinaidaha	631796	10	10	15	15	50
Khulna	951588	35	30	35	30	130
Total	9846800	220	190	235	205	850

Questionnaire survey was conducted with child labour and their household members employing mobile based data collection App (Kobo).

### 1.3.2.2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions were conducted with community people including youths (male and female), women, men, religious minorities to understand the impact of COVID-19 on youth, youth labour, their health seeking behavior, knowledge attitude and practice, status of child labour during COVID-19 and lockdown, livelihoods scenario, best practice to mitigate child labour, way forward to reduce child labour etc.. Total 48 FGDs (6 in each district) was took place. Discussions was conducted applying a checklist.

**Table 2: List of focus group discussion**

District	FGD participants	
	Rural	Urban
Barishal	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members
Cumilla	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members
Dhaka	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members
Gazipur	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members
Bhola	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members
Patuakhali	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members
Jhinaidaha	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members
Khulna	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members	Child labour (male), child labour (female), family members

### 1.3.2.3. Key Informants Interviews (KIIs)

Key informants interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders including MJF, Dept. of Youth, Dept. of Women and Child Affairs, Dept. of Social Service, Dept. of Labour, BMET, local government institution, BRAC, Save the Children, Plan International to understand the status of children in the COVID-19 pandemic, institutional strength and weakness to deal with child issues and their capacity, livelihoods etc.

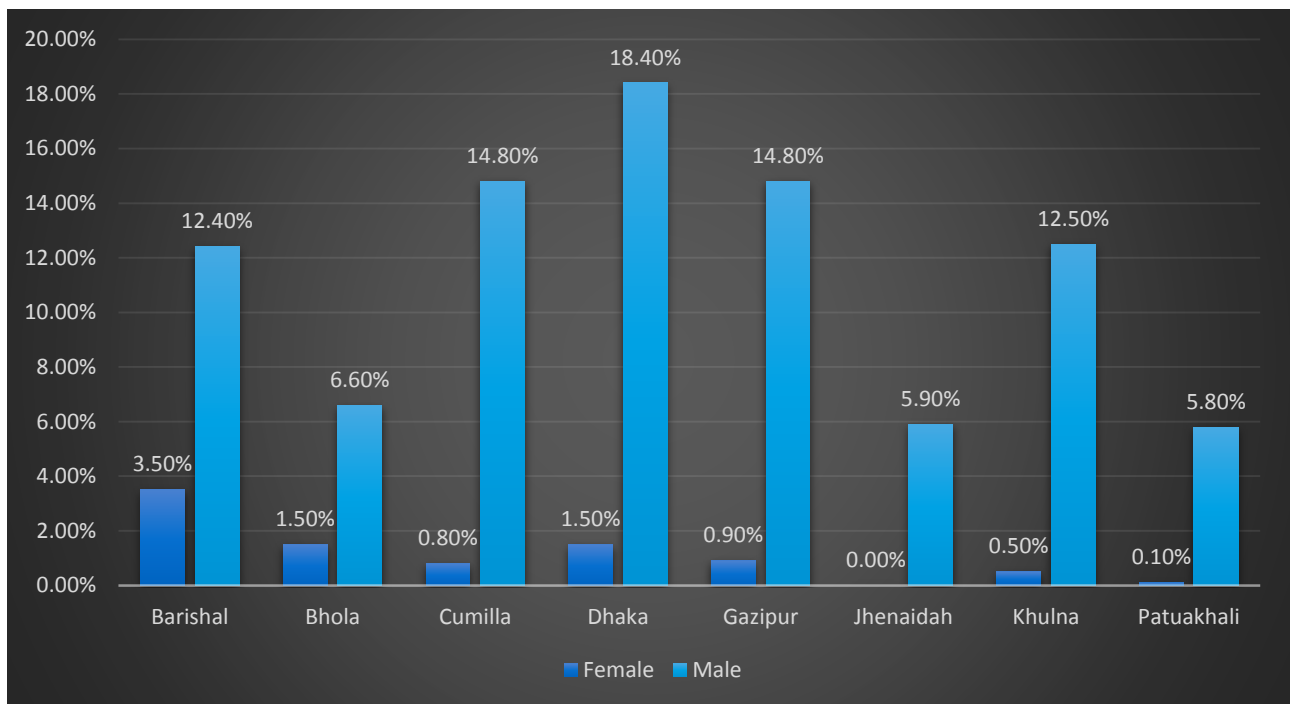
## 2. Socio-demographic information

### 2.1. Spatial distribution of the respondent

The study was conducted in eight districts to understand the spatial distribution and status of child labour due to COVID 19 through gender segregated data generation. Out of 850 respondents, 91% was male and 9% was female respondents. The figure 1 depicts the district wise, male female segregated respondents. The highest

respondents were surveyed in Dhaka (19.9%) among them 18.4% are male and 1.5% are female. In Barisal, male and female respondents were 12.4% and 3.5%. Out of 8.1% respondents in Bhola, there were 6.6% is male and 1.5% is female. In Comilla, out of 15.6% respondents, female was found only 0.8% and male respondents were 14.8%. In Gazipur, among studied population (15.8%), there were 14.8% male and 0.9% female. In Jhenaidah, out of the 5.9% of respondents, there were 5.9% male respondents. In Jhenaidah there none of female respondents was found

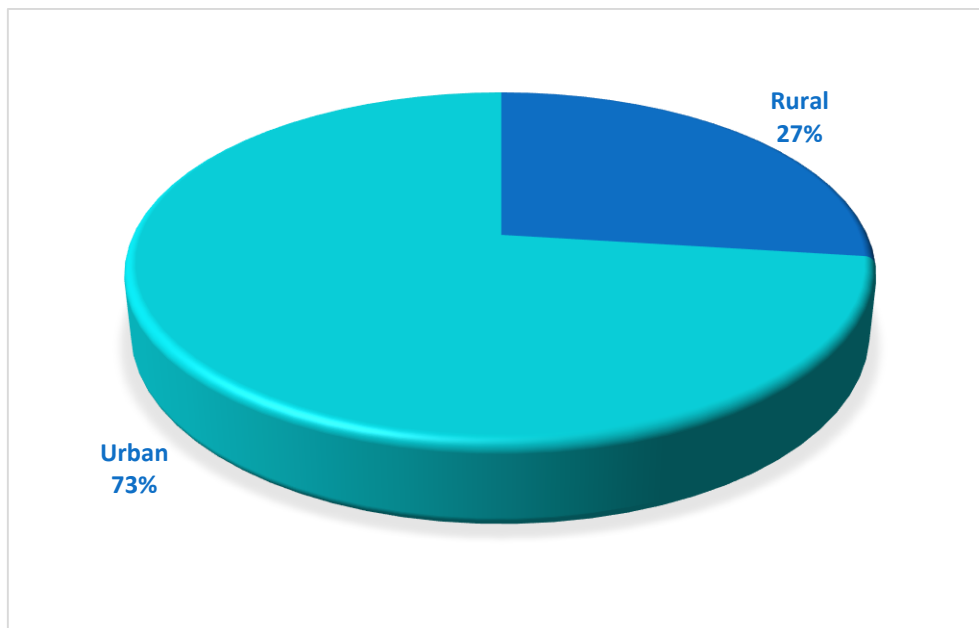
**Figure 1: District and gender segregated respondents**



## 2.2. Rural-urban distribution

In all eight districts, the study was conducted in rural and urban areas to understand the rural-urban dichotomy in terms of COVID 19 impact and child labour status. The figure 2 depicts that 73% respondents were surveyed from urban areas and 27% surveyed from rural areas. In Dhaka all of the respondents were surveyed in urban areas.

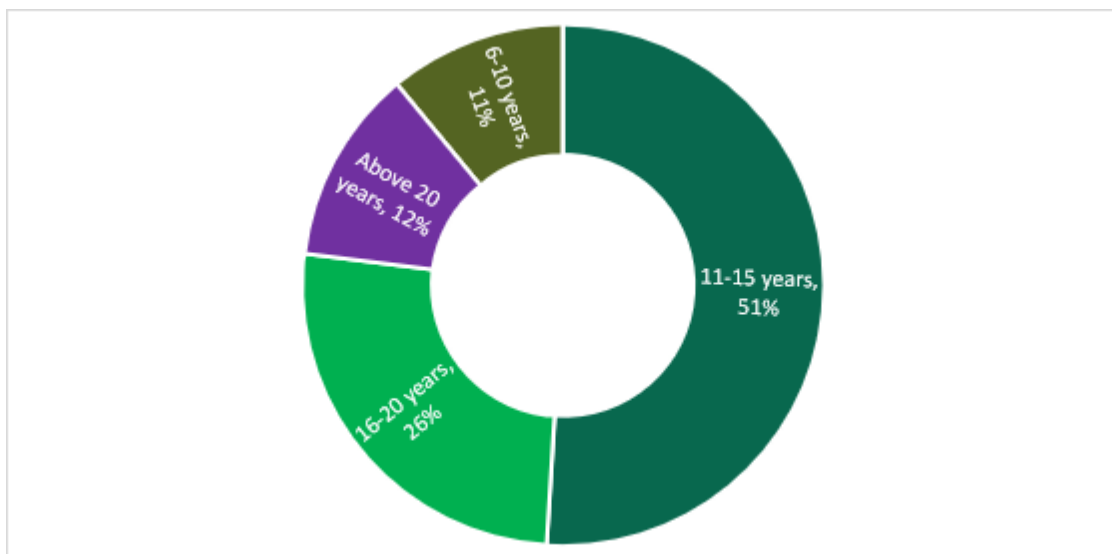
**Figure 2: Rural-urban distribution of respondents**



### 2.3. Age and sex of the respondent

The study was conducted among child labour, their family members and community people of child labour in all eight districts in rural and urban areas. The study covered the respondents aged between 6 to 20 years. The highest respondents were covered aged between 11-15 years and the age between 16-20 years were the second highest respondents which is 26% of the total respondents (Figure 3).

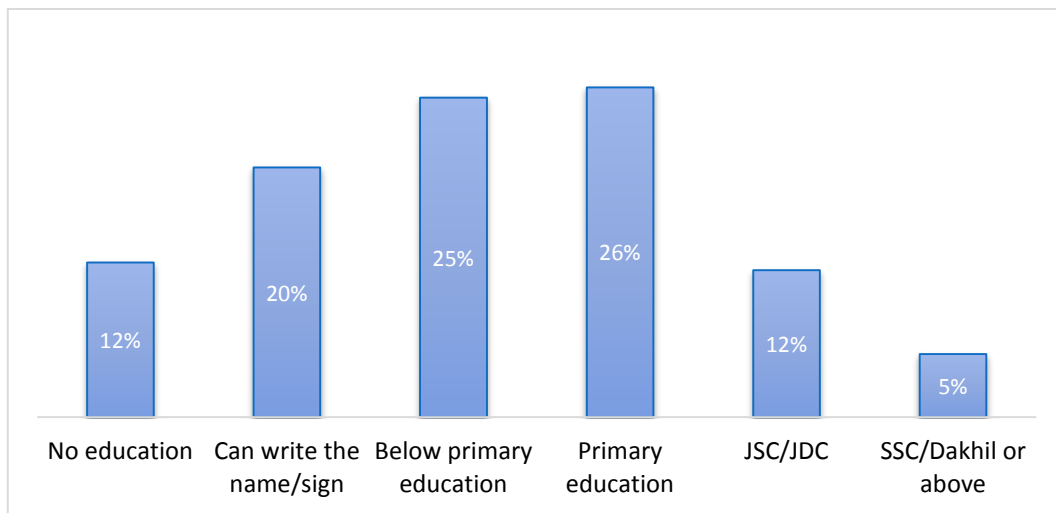
**Figure 3: Age of respondents**



## 2.4. Education of the respondent

Child labour comes from poor and marginalized families who have no access to formal education as whole due insecure livelihoods and lack of financial ability to bear the educational expenses. Most of the respondents below primary education which is 57% of the total respondents. Only 5% respondents were found who possess SSC equivalent education. 12% of the respondent are totally illiterate and 20% can write only.

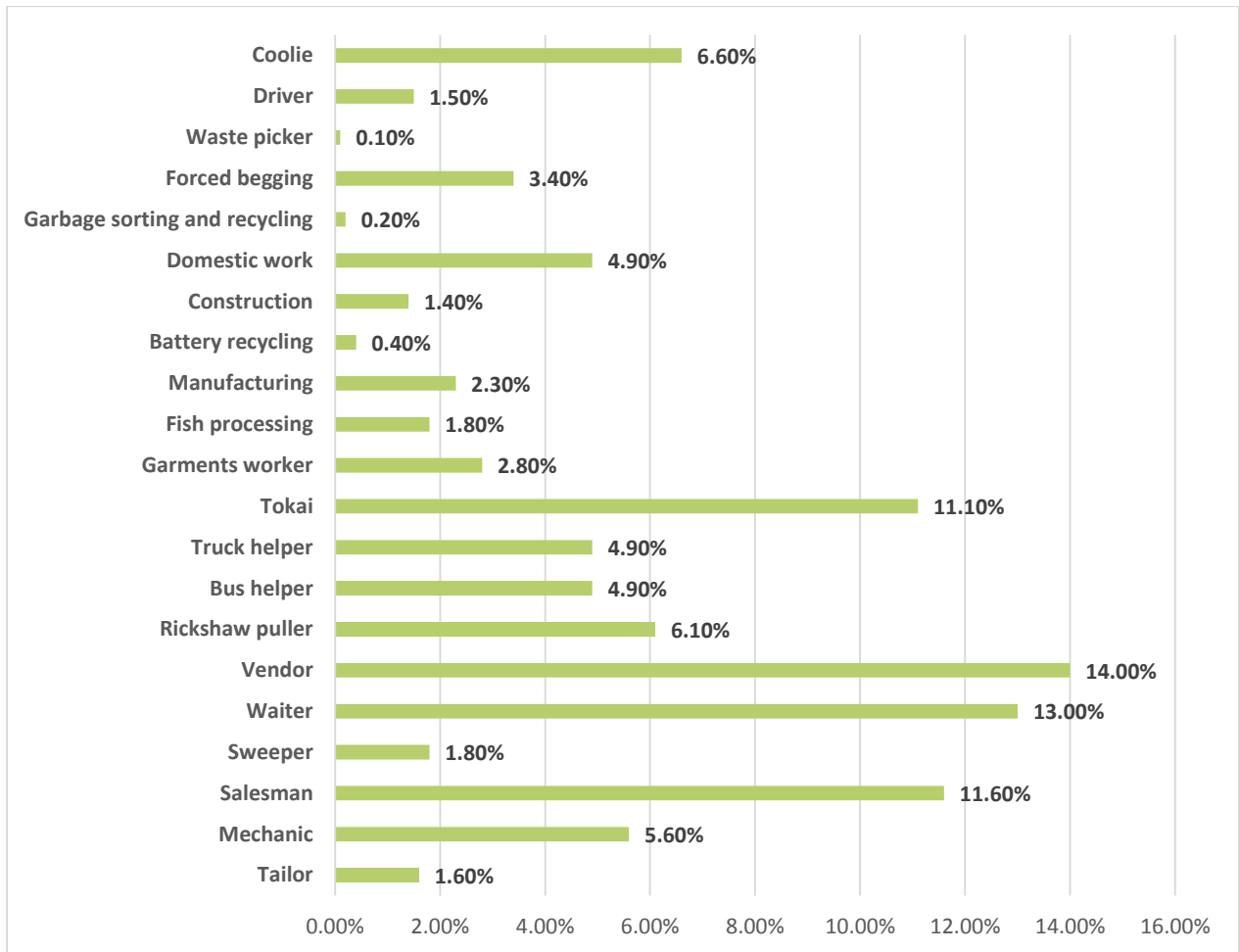
**Figure 4: Educational status of respondents**



## 2.5. Occupation of the respondent

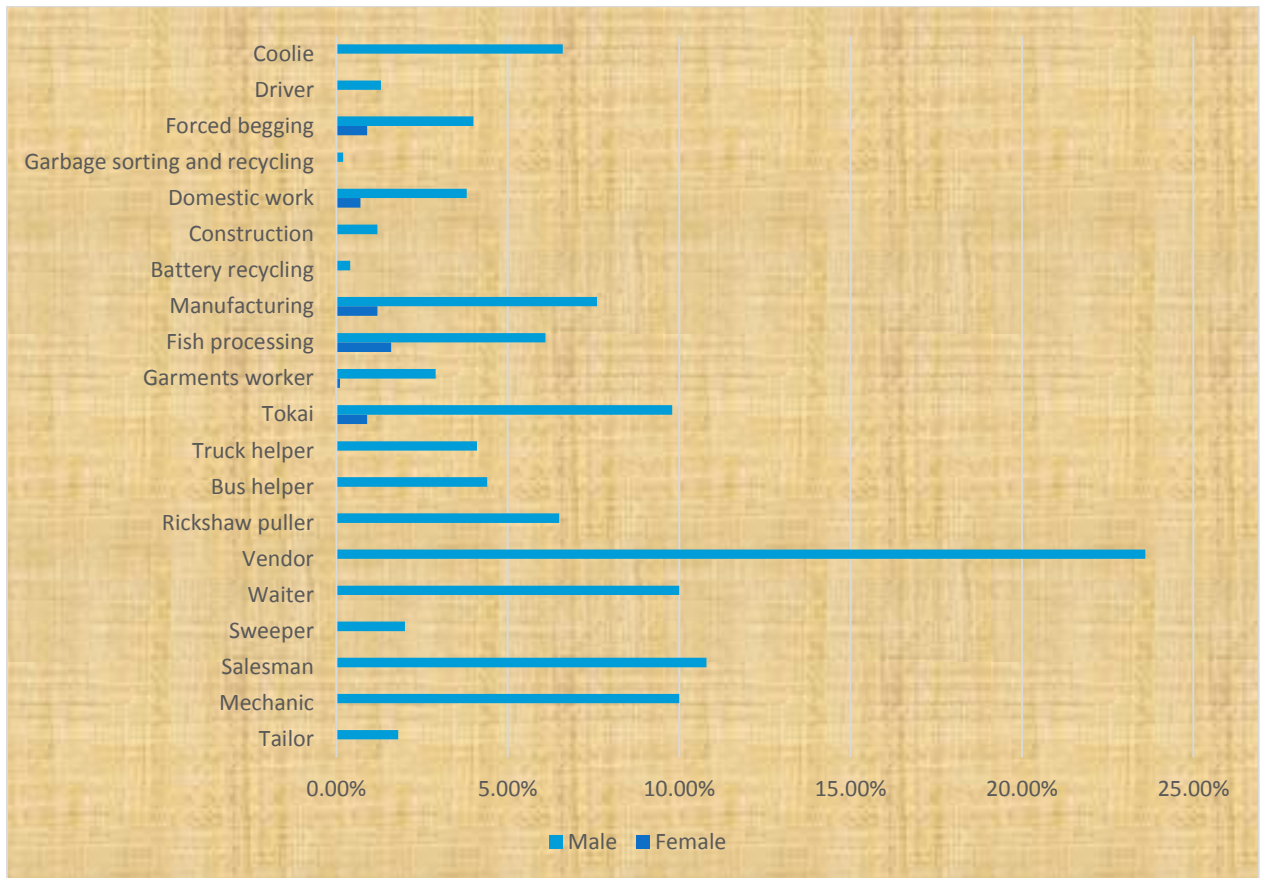
The study reveals that the studied population are involved with different low paid activities. Highest number of respondents are involved with vendor as well as informal business of vegetable, cloths etc. which is 14% of the total respondents. The second highest respondents are involved as waiter in hotel and tea shop which is 13%. Garage and workshop mechanic, tokai, coolie etc. are the mentionable occupation in which the respondents dependent for their wage earning. Construction labour, bus helper, truck helper, garment worker, domestic worker also available in the surveyed community which is depicted in the figure 5.

**Figure 5: Occupation of the respondents**



Female respondents are involved in forced begging, domestic work, manufacturing sector, garments, fish processing and tokai which was found in the study (Figure 6). Forced begging found for both male and female respondents which is totally inhuman activities for wage earning. During the focus group discussion with male and female groups and community people, it was found that the children who are engaged with forced begging are parentless. It is also found that female children are involved with forced commercial sex worker in some areas of Dhaka, Gazipur and Cumilla.

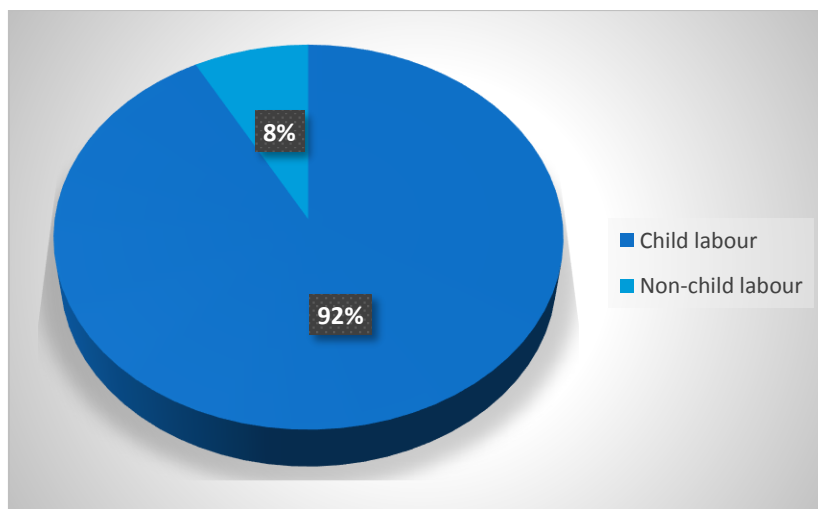
**Figure 6: Gender segregated occupation of respondents**



### 3. Child labour dynamics

Out of 850 respondents, the study illustrates that 92% as well as 782 respondents are involved with child labour to support their family (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Types of respondents**



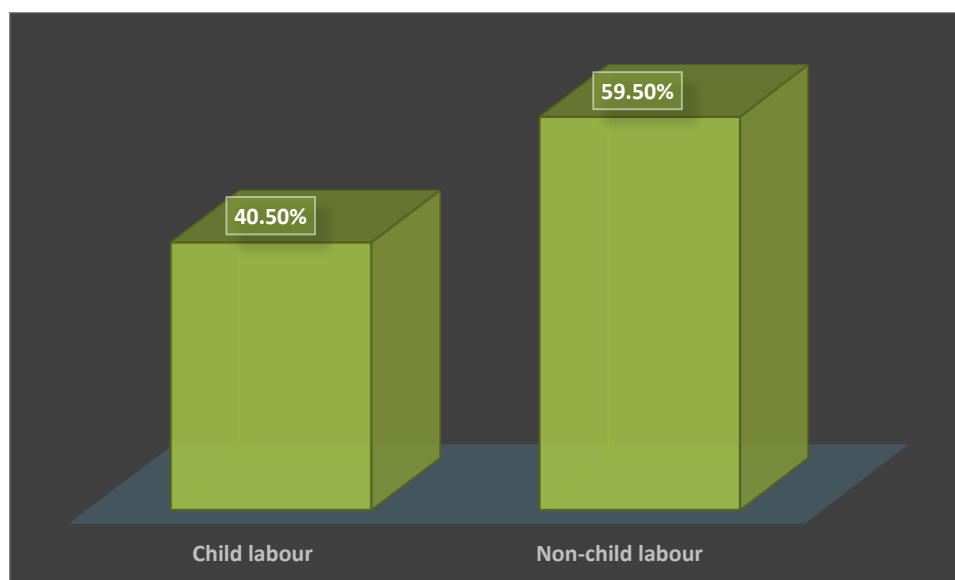
Highest children from urban areas are involved with child labour which is 73% of the child labour. Out of 782 child labour, 27% are comes from rural areas and 73% comes from urban areas as well as city corporation and municipal areas. Though the urban center possesses highest child labour but city corporation areas possess high rate than other municipal areas and among the city corporation areas, Dhaka is in the top most list which is 18%. Barishal, Cumilla, Gazipur and Khulna city corporation possess 12%, 15%, 15% and 13% child labour respectively among the studied population.

**Table 3: Child labour distribution of respondents in the study area**

District	Rural	Urban	Female	Male
Barishal	3%	13%	4%	12%
Bhola	7%	1%	2%	7%
Cumilla	4%	12%	1%	15%
Dhaka	0%	20%	2%	18%
Gazipur	3%	13%	1%	15%
Jhenaidah	3%	3%	0%	6%
Khulna	5%	8%	1%	13%
Patuakhali	3%	3%	0%	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>91%</b>

Out of the 92% respondent household who are involved with child labour, the total family members are 3559. Among these family members, 1442 household members are child labour as well as 40.5% household members are found as child labour.

**Figure 8: Household members involved in child labour**

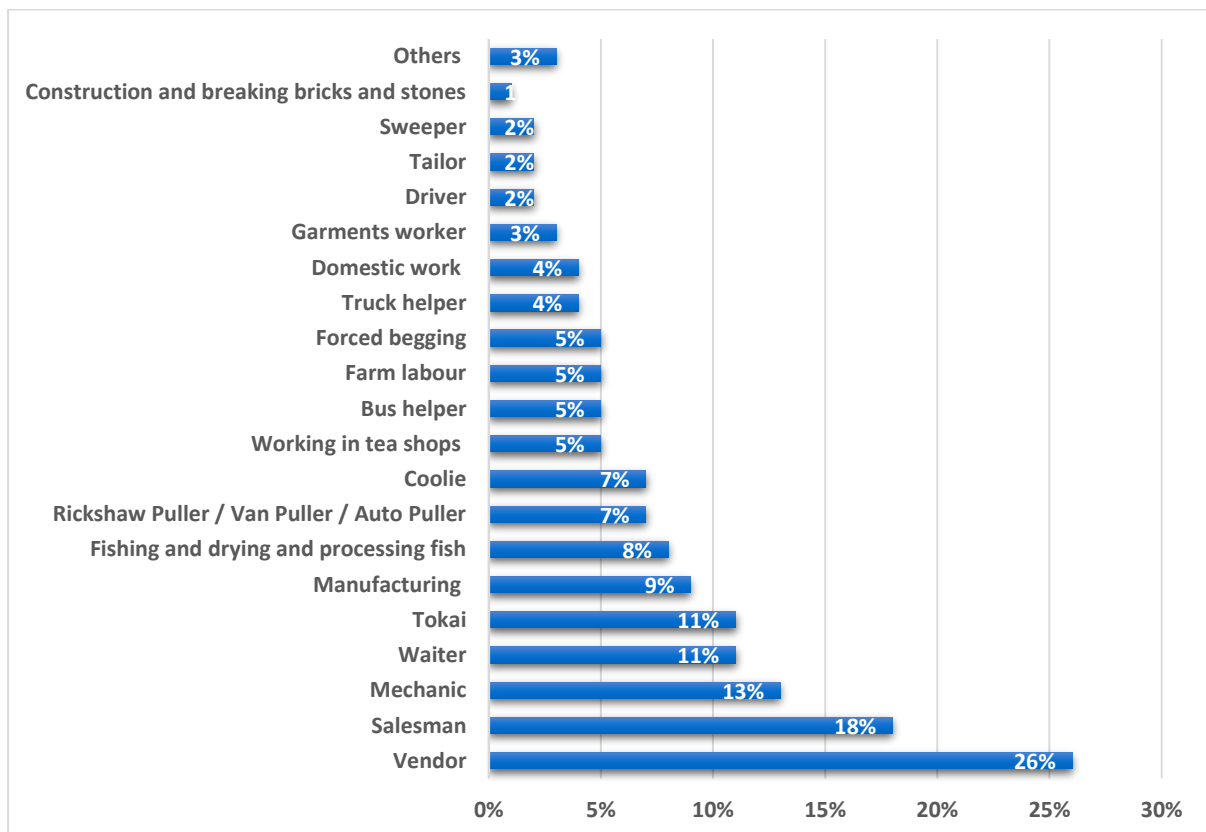


### 3.1. Type of child labour

Different types of child labour are found in the study area including hazardous child labour. The study reveals that children are involved with twenty sectors are child labour among those some are highly risky for children. Vendor as well as selling somethings

as street business and informal business, 26% children are involved as child labour in the study area. According to the study, salesman in vegetable shop, grocery shop ranks the choice for children as child labour which is account of 16% of the total studied child labour. Similarly, the study illustrates that children are involved with motor mechanic, waiter in hotel and restaurant, tokai, manufacturing work, fish process, rickshaw pulling, coolie, working in tea stall, bus helper, firm labour, forced begging, truck helper, domestic work, garments, driving, tailoring, sweeper, construction works, brick breakings etc. which are account of 13%, 11%,11%, 9%, 8%, 7%, 7%, 5%, 5%, 5%, 5%, 4%, 4%, 3%, 2%, 2%,2%, and 1% respectively. It is absurd that children are involved with brick industry, glass, hand-rolled cigarettes factory, match factory, laborious soap factory, garage and workshop, aluminum products, metal products, battery production, driving, bus and truck helper which are hazardous sector and causing ill health of children. Not only so but also producing leather goods, shipbreaking, battery recycling, garbage sorting and recycling, forced domestic work and commercial sex also found during the study.

**Figure 9: Types of child labour**

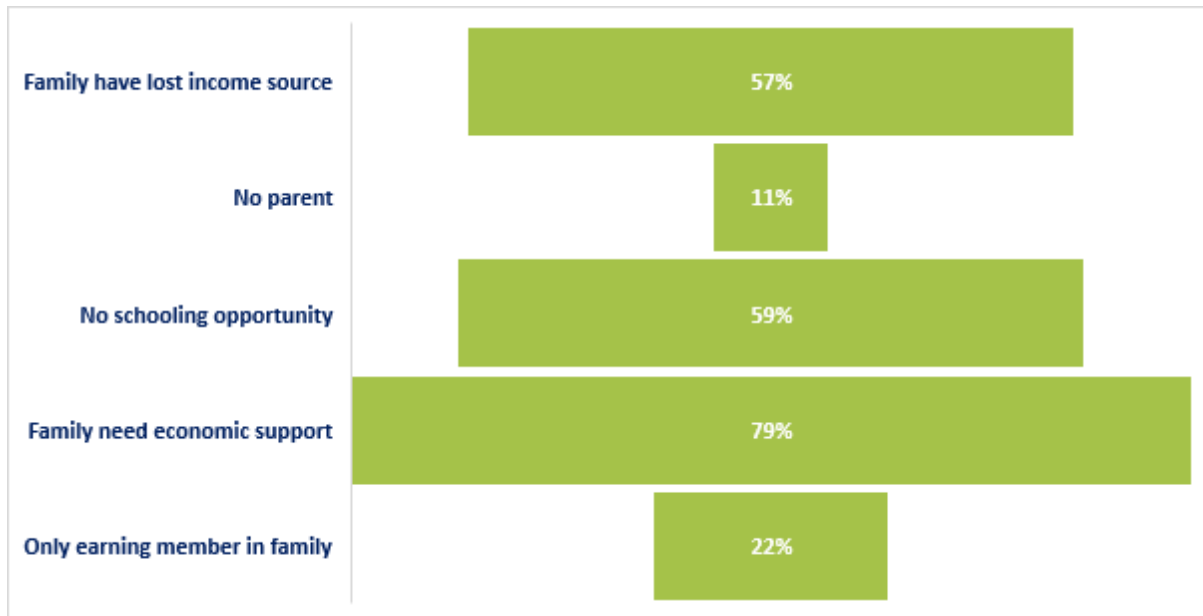


### 3.2. Causes of child labour

Child labour is associated with household income, employment opportunity, livelihoods security in the community. All of the child labour comes from lower income families who are living below poverty line. The causes behind the child labour is figured out by the study. The study made attempt to find out the causes of child labour and found that 79% household needs economic support from their child so why they have involved with child labour in the early age. 59% child labour mentions that their family

don't have ability to enroll them in education so they involved with child labour for income. 22% child labour express that they are the only earning member in their family and they don't have alternate earning source. 11% child labour are homeless and parentless so they need to income for their own wage. 57% child labour were found who have mentioned that due to pandemic and disasters, their family have lost income source including jobs and business (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Causes of child labour**

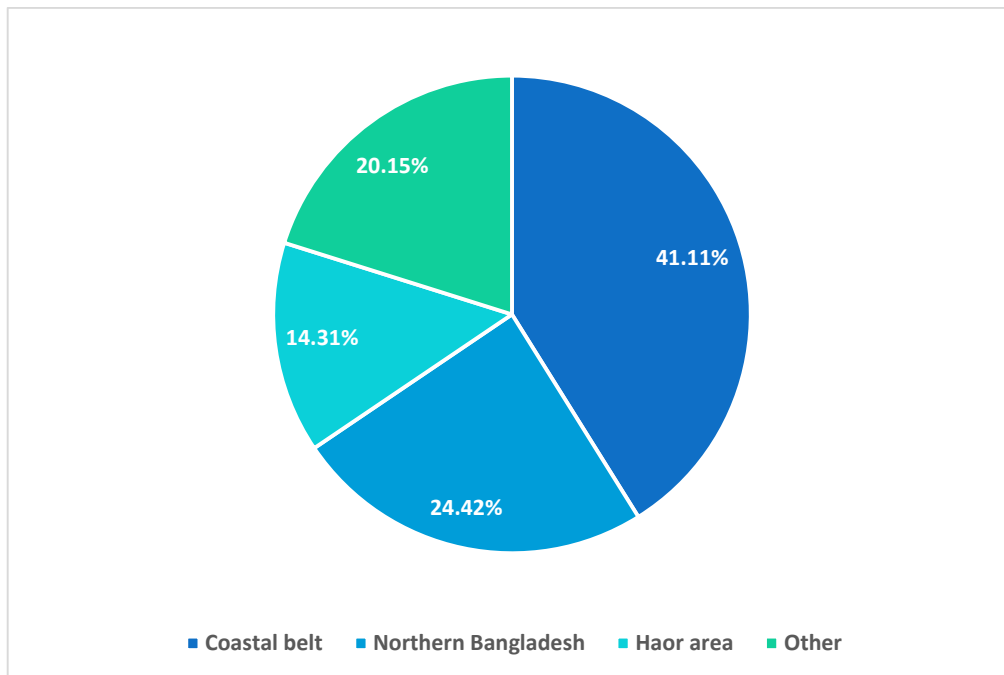


### 3.3. Climate change and child labour

Over half a billion children are living in areas with extremely high levels of floods and nearly 160 million children live in areas of high or extremely high droughts (UNICEF 2015). The environmental factors, whether they are due to natural disasters, climate change, the depletion of natural resources, pollution, dumping toxic waste, invasion of various diseases or destroying ecosystems are becoming more prominent root causes of child labour. As communities develop strategies to deal with changes in the environment, children may begin to work, increase or change the kind of work they engage in, or even engage in some of the worst forms of child labour (des Hommes 2017). Climate change is disproportionately affect poor households, especially women and children (World Bank 2010). Children may be withdrawn from school in response to climatic shocks, with long-run and irreversible impacts on human capital and, consequently, lifetime earnings. In addition, while the majority of child labour is at home, off-farm child labour is very responsive to negative income shocks (Colmer, 2013). Climate changes and environmental changes acted as root causes or exacerbated existing root causes pushing children to work, worsen their conditions of work, migrate or even engage in more hazardous forms of work (des Hommes 2017). Climate induced migration is observed among the studied child labour in all eight districts. Among the studied child labour, 664 child labour as well as 78.11% have migrated from climate vulnerable districts including coastal belt, northern Bangladesh, haor areas (Figure 11). Some respondents were found who have migrated from

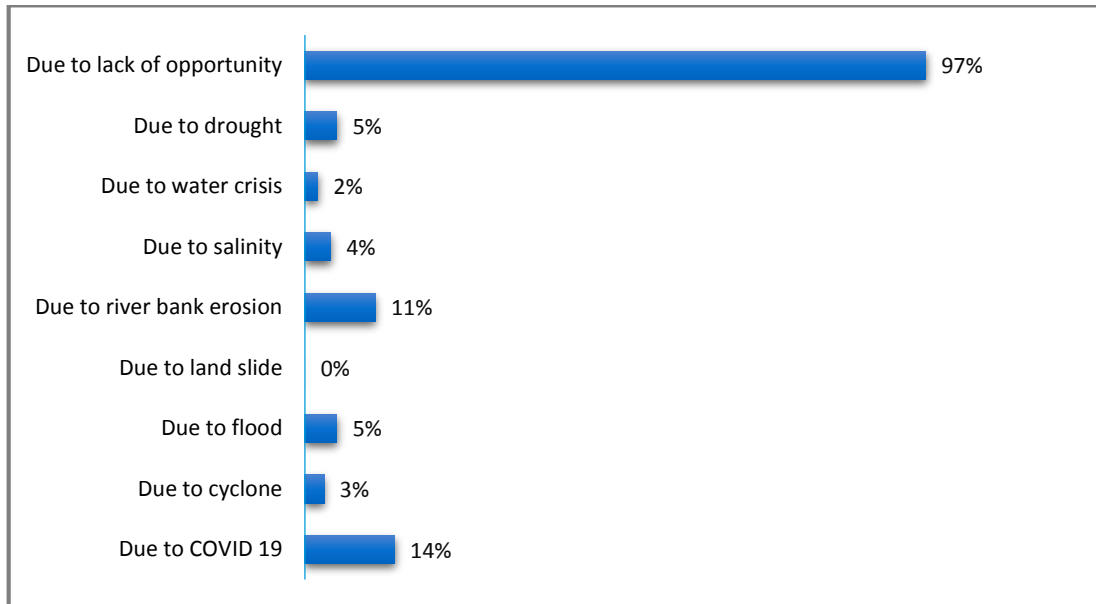
Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and some of the child labour have migrated in the same districts from rural to urban or urban to rural.

**Figure 11: Origin of child labour**

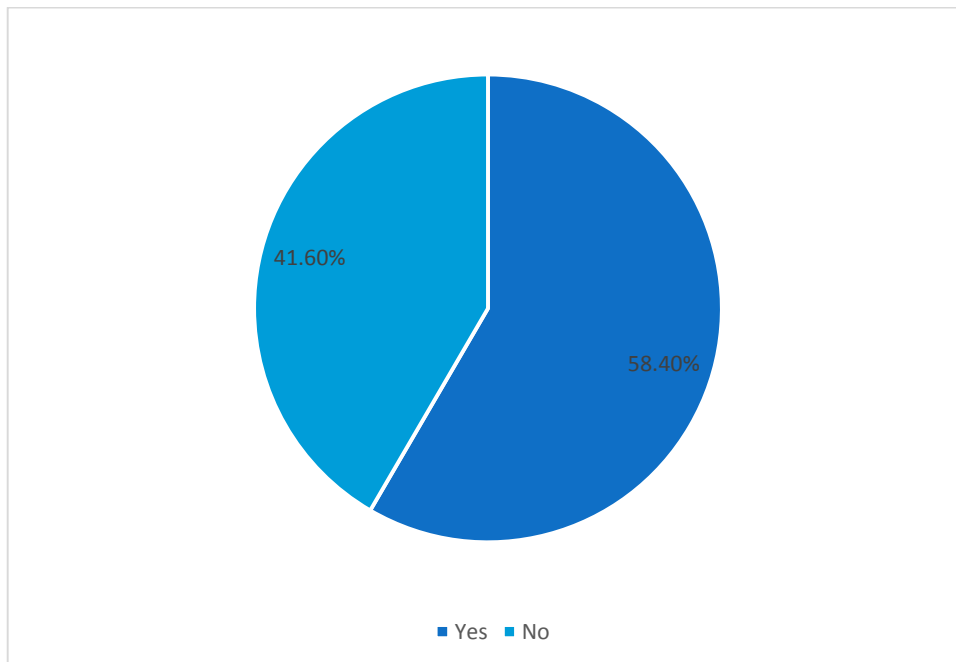


Most of the migrated child labour have mentioned that they may migrated due to lack of opportunity of livelihoods and wage earning which is 97 %. Due to climate induced extremes, livelihoods and wage-earning opportunities are destroyed in the origin. Some respondents also mentioned that they have migrated with their family due to COVID 19 induced lockdown. During lockdown, their family have lost earning source so they have migrated in rural areas. Thus, type of migration was happened in the year of 2020. But other migrated children have mentioned they have migrated some years ago. Causes behind the migration also elucidated by the children that they have migrated due to drought, salinity, cyclone, flood landslides etc. climate induced extremes. It also found that 11% respondents were migrated due to riverbank erosion, 5% migration was happened because of flood. 4% children who are involved with child labour have migrated from northern Bangladesh because of drought their family have lost income generating sources (Figure 12). It is reported that among 78.12% migrated children, 41.6% were not involved in child labour before migration. After migration in the present location they have involved child labour to support their family.

**Figure 12: Causes of migration of the respondents**



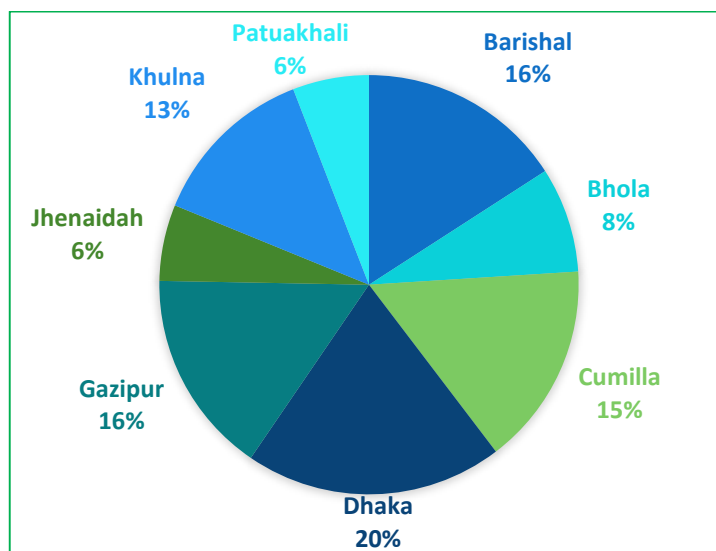
**Figure 13: Migration-child labour nexus**



Migration trends is higher than any other district of the studied districts. The study reveals that 20% child labour migrated in Dhaka form other locations which is the highest response. It is reported that 16% studied child labour migrated in Barishal and Gazipur respectively. It is also found that 15% studied child labour migrated in Cumilla.

It is recorded that 13% studied respondents migrated in Khulna and 8% migrated in Bhola from other locations. It is remarkable that 6% studied child labour migrated in Jhenaidah and Potuakhali respectively from nearby by districts (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Migration scenario of child labour**

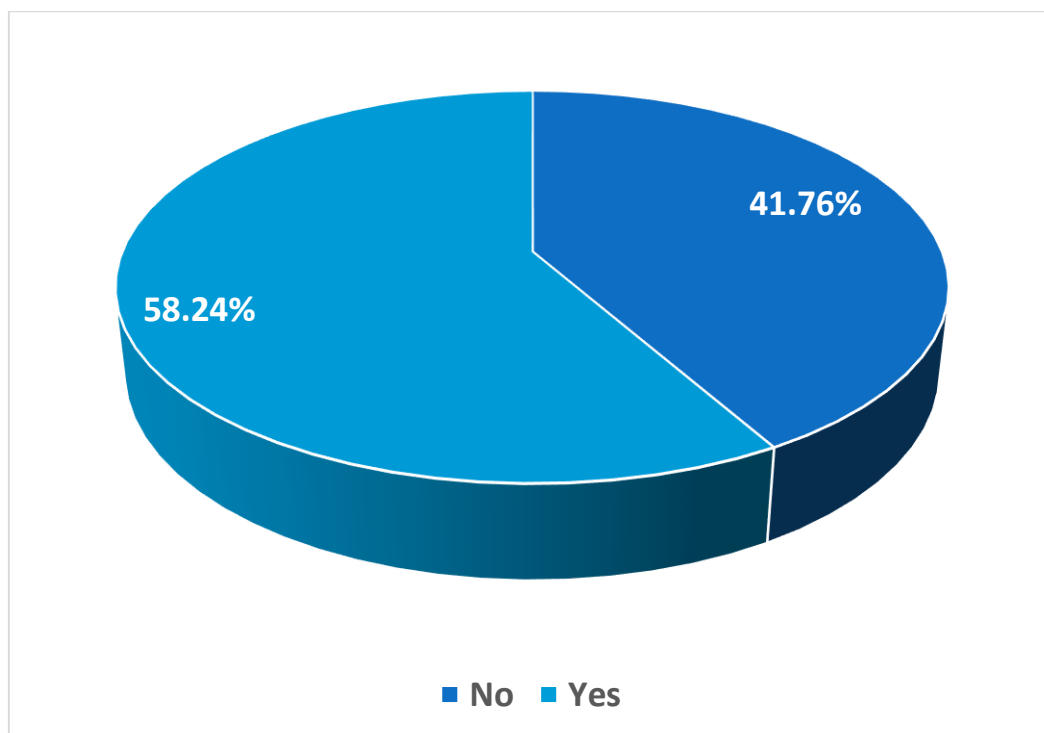


### 3.4. COVID-19 and child labour

Child labour is down by 94 million since 2000, a gain is now under threat. COVID-19 could result in a rise in poverty and therefore to an increase in child labour as households use every available means to survive. According to *ILO and UNICEF, COVID-19 and child labour is a time of crisis, a time to act*, child labour decreased by 94 million since 2000, but that gain is now at risk. Children already in child labour may be working longer hours or under worsening conditions, the report says. More of them may be forced into the worst forms of labour, which causes significant harm to their health and safety. In times of crisis, child labour becomes a coping mechanism for many families in Bangladesh (Nandra and Selim, 2020). Child labor has been a significant global issue associated with poverty, insufficient educational opportunities, and gender disparity and very recently COVID 19 Pandemic (Ibrahim, et al. 2018; Reza et al 2019, Human Right Watch 2021). Many children feel they have no choice but to work to help their families survive, but a rise in child labor is not an inevitable consequence of the pandemic. The unprecedented economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is pushing children into exploitative and dangerous child labor. School closures have contributed to an increase in child labour worldwide (Human Right Watch 2021). More children are likely be forced to work in hazardous labor even in the post-pandemic situation, as many struggling families will still need to mitigate the financial impact of the crisis and repay long-term debts (Educo 2021). Pathways in which the current COVID-19 pandemic could lead to increased enslavement and child labour in the developing world, including in South Asia and also Bangladesh. Loss of livelihoods and economic opportunities because of the crisis has increased the supply of workers vulnerable to exploitation. Bangladesh's two major export sectors – garments and leather – have both been badly hit by the crisis, contributing to massive job losses and drop in income, especially for those in informal work.

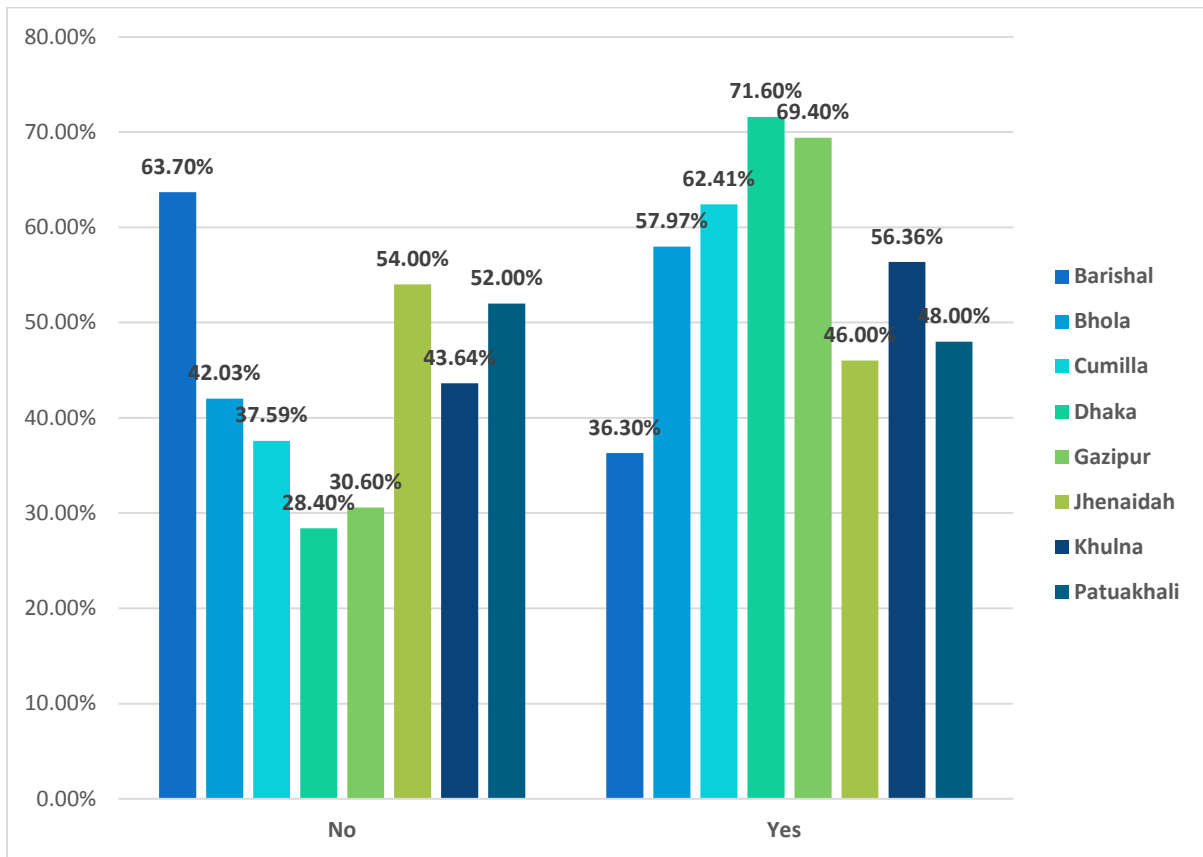
Coupled with school closures, this will fuel child labour as well as worsening conditions (lower pay, longer hours) for children in the informal sector. Children in street situations, traditionally working as rubbish collectors, street vendors and engaged in begging, can no longer do so. Such vulnerable children could be pushed further into poverty and/or end up in more exploitative situations (Idris 2020). The present study revealed the present scenario of child labour in 8 districts in Bangladesh that 91.53% respondents (children) are engaged with child labour. Out of them, 68% children in urban areas are engaged with child labour and 23.53% children in rural areas are engaged with Child Labour. Before COVID-19, 58.24% respondents are engaged with Child labour and 41.76% child labour became child labour due to COVID 19 (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Comparison of child labour before and after COVID 19**



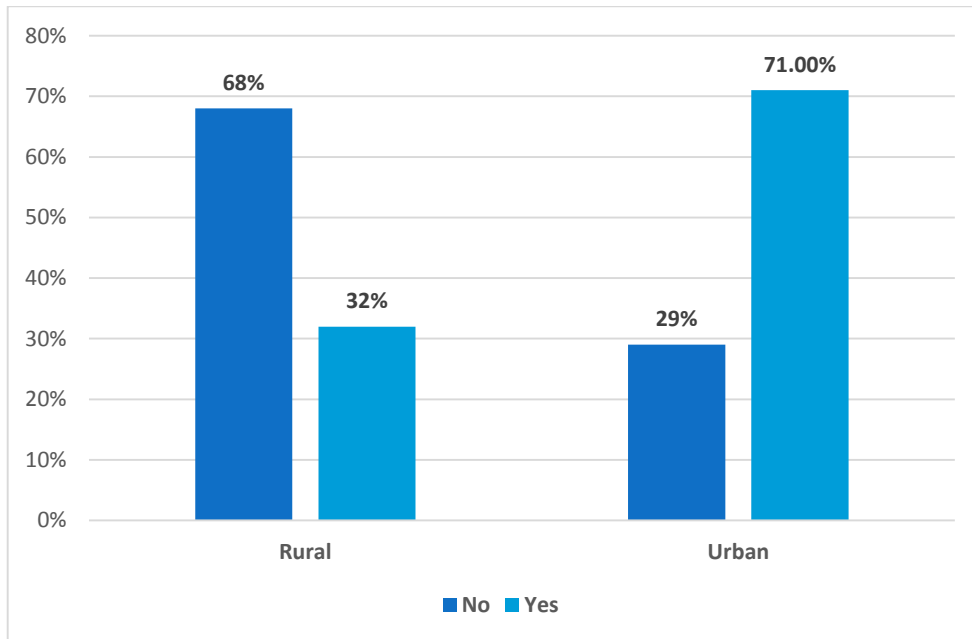
Not only overall scenario but also district wise scenario of child labour has changed due to COVID 19. In Barishal 63.70% child labour increased due to COVID 19 who were not involved with child labour before COVID 19. Barishal is the vulnerable district in where highest number of children labour increased due to COVID 19. Similarly, in the other districts' child labour has increased due to COVID 19 pandemic. In Cumilla, it is increased 37.59%, in Bhola child labour increased 42%, in Dhaka child labour increased 28.40%, in Gazipur 30.60% child labour increased due to COVID 19, in Jhenaidah it increased 54%, in Khulna 43.64% and in Patuakhali 52% child labour increased due to pandemic which is depicted in the figure 16.

**Figure 16: Increasing trend of child labour due to COVID 19.**



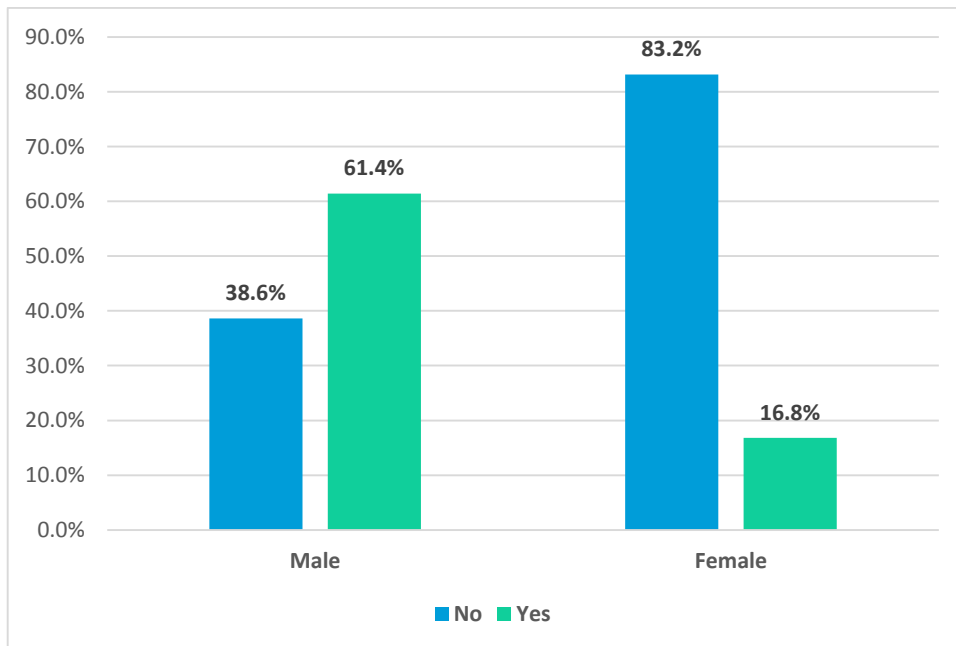
In rural and urban areas, also child labour increased due to COVID 19. Before COVID 19, only 32% studied children were engaged with child labour but due to COVID 19, more 628% children involved with child labour due to loss of income sources by household members. Figure 17 illustrates that in all eight districts, urban areas, overall, 29% more child labour increased with COVID 19 pandemic.

**Figure 17: Child labour in rural and urban areas due to COVID**



The remarkable changes in involvement of female children with child labour due to COVID 19. Before COVID 19 only 16.8% studied female child labour was engaged with this sector but now 83.2%% child labour increased in all eight districts among studied children and their households. Similarly, more 38.6% male child labour is increased due to COVID 19 pandemic (Figure 18).

**Figure 18: Increasing trend of male and female child labour due to COVID 19**



#### 4. Vulnerability of child labour

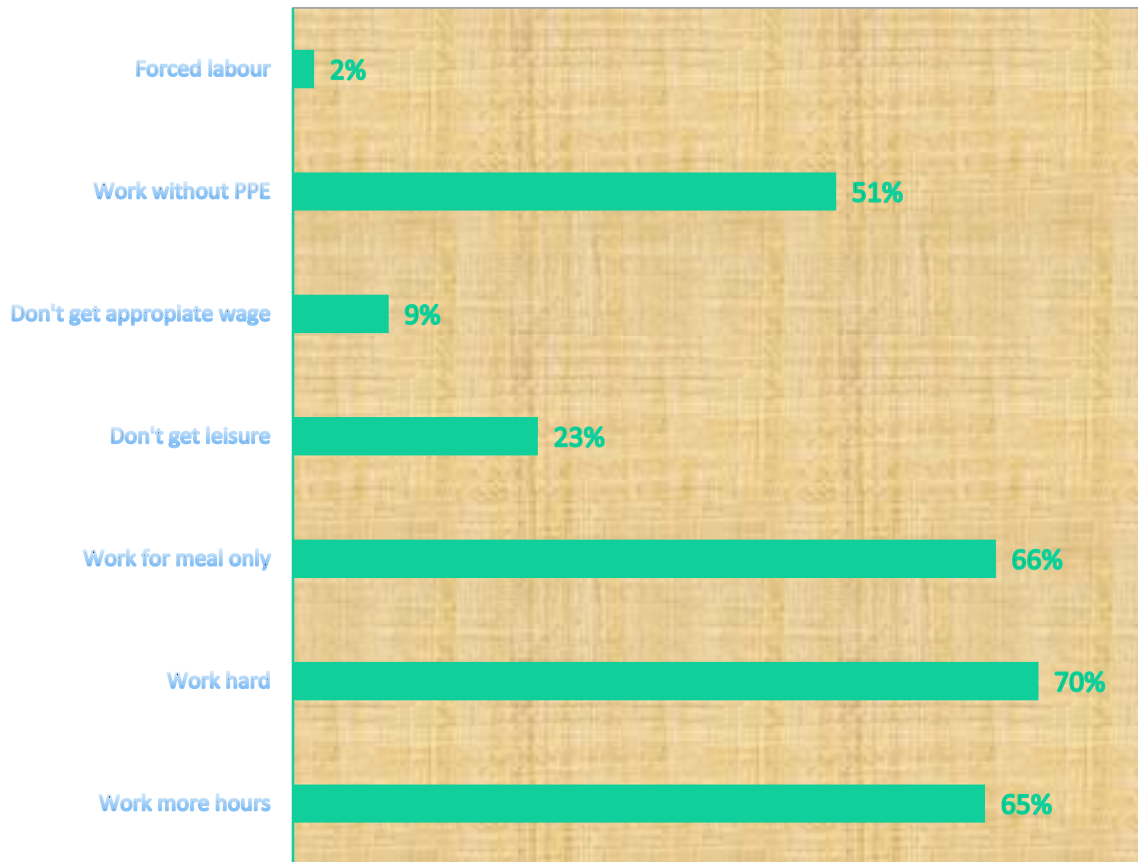
As usually child labour is a vulnerable job for youths. In the work place of child labour most of the child labour suffers from different vulnerability like physical injuries at their workplaces, mental health issues, verbal abuse, physical torture, economic exploitation, sexual abuse etc. Due to COVID 19, economic stress has increased in small and medium enterprise sector which induced more vulnerability on child labour. The study has explored the vulnerability of child labour due to COVID 19 which is illustrated in the figure 19.

**Figure 19: Increased vulnerability of child labour**



The studied child labour expressed that there are different forms of workplace hazards they face due to COVID 19 pandemic. They mentioned that they have to engage with hard work (70%), work only for food without cash payment (66%), increased working hour (65%), work without PPE during COVID 19 situation (51%), don't get leisure (23%), don't get appropriate wage (9%) and also includes forced labour (2%) (Figure 20).

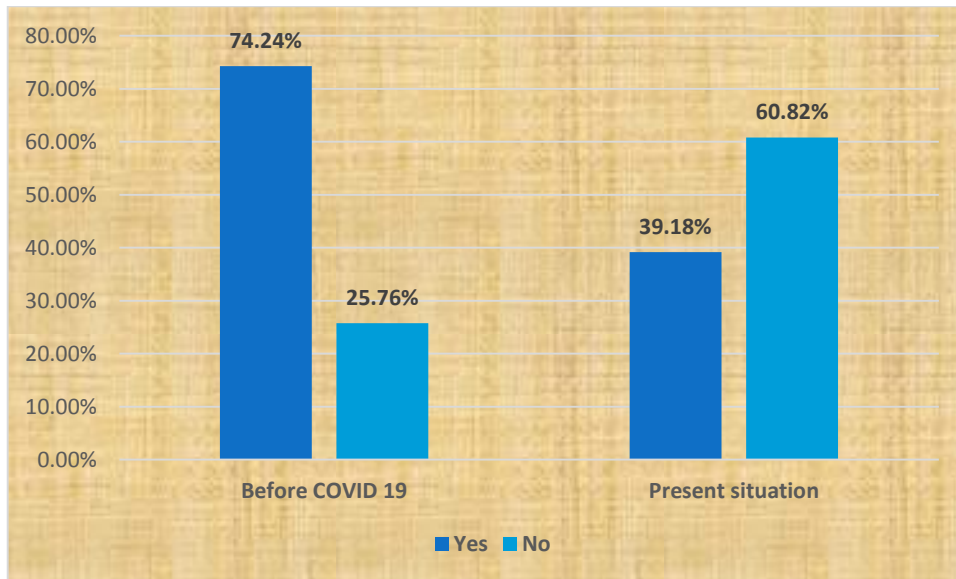
**Figure 20: Different types of hazards in workplace**



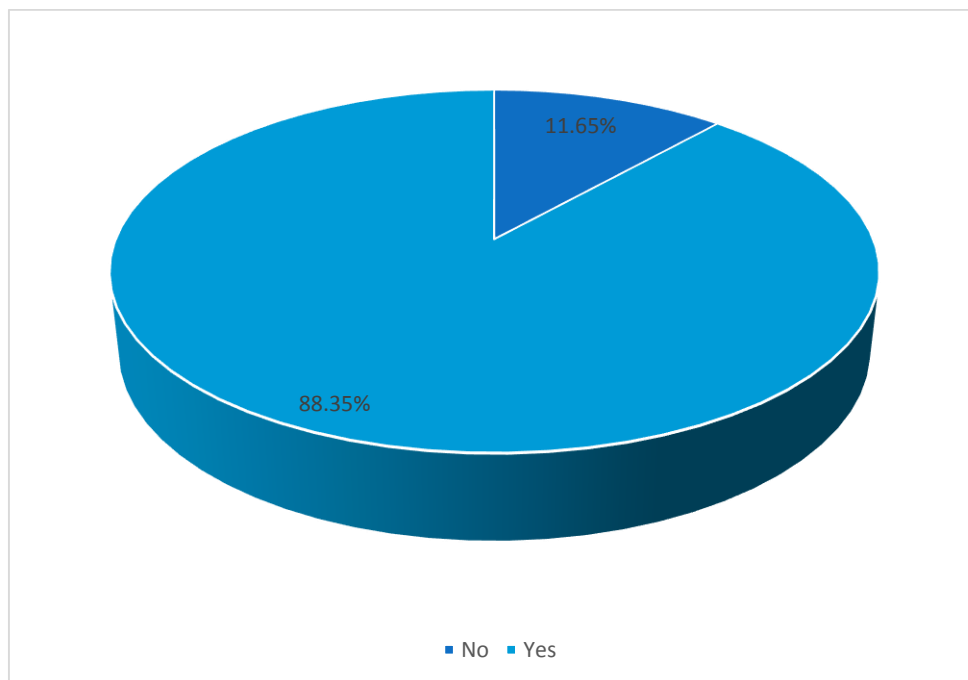
#### **4.1. Food insecurity**

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% which is figured in the figure 21. Not only so but also 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 (Figure 22). Along with the household level, in workplace food intake has reduced which is expressed by the respondents. 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 had sufficient meal in their workplace (Figure 23).

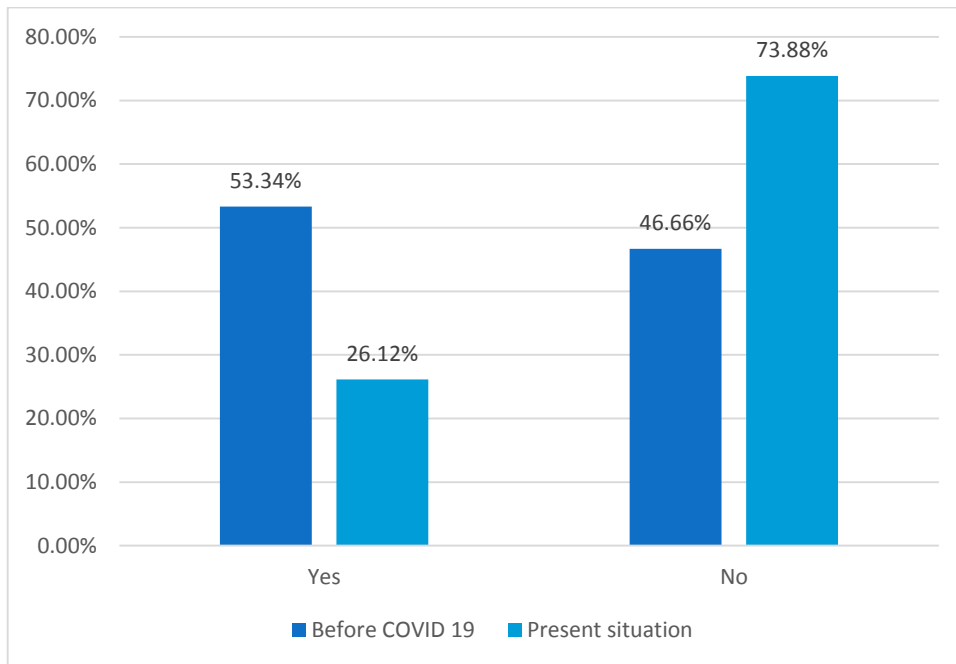
**Figure 21: Meal status at household level**



**Figure 22: Food intake status at household level**



**Figure 23: Food intake status at workplace**



#### **4.2. Mental torture**

Psychological torture or mental torture is common problem in the workplace of child labour. In the form of isolation, threats, deprivation form food, water, and sleep are regular mental torture on child labour was found during the study. Though these types of mental torture are common but in the period of COVID 19 these mental tortures have increased on child labour which is mentioned by almost all of the studied child labour.

#### **4.3. Working hour**

It is reported that 52% child labours have mentioned that their working hour increased at 9-12 hours during COVID-19 period in each day. It is also alarming that 14% child labours are working about 13-16 hours per day at their workplace at present. Before COVID 19 all of the child labour was engaged with their workplace to serve day time but now 23% respondents mentioned that they need to work day and night and 9% work at night shift who mainly comes from restaurant and tea shop.

#### **4.4. Less wage**

Before COVID 19, most of the child labour mentioned that they had daily income not less than BDT 300.00 but now the average daily income decreased at BDT. 140.00 8% respondents have No income because they are not child labour. Not only so but also 66% respondents mentioned that they work only for food.

#### **4.5. Sexual abuse**

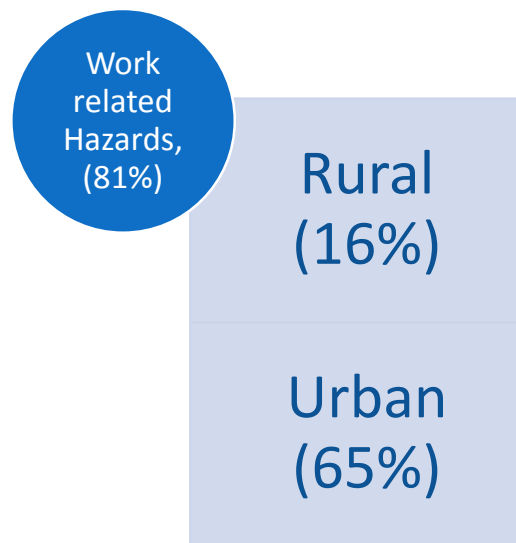
Child labours especially girls, who were studied spoke of the threat of sexual harassment and abuse they encountered while working, such as being inappropriately touched or propositioned by owner in their workplaces. Not only girls but also boys also mentioned similar threat they have experienced. In the lockdown period and

beyond the lockdown, these sufferings have increased because child labour don't have alternatives to ensure their livelihoods, mentioned by working children.

#### 4.6. Workplace safety

According to 81% of respondents think that their work-related hazards has increased. From the study, it is evident that work related hazard increased in urban and rural areas in the form of injury, accident. In urban areas 65% child labour expressed their opinion on increasing lack of safety in workplace which is 16% in rural areas (Figure 24).

**Figure 24: Status of workplace safety of child labour**

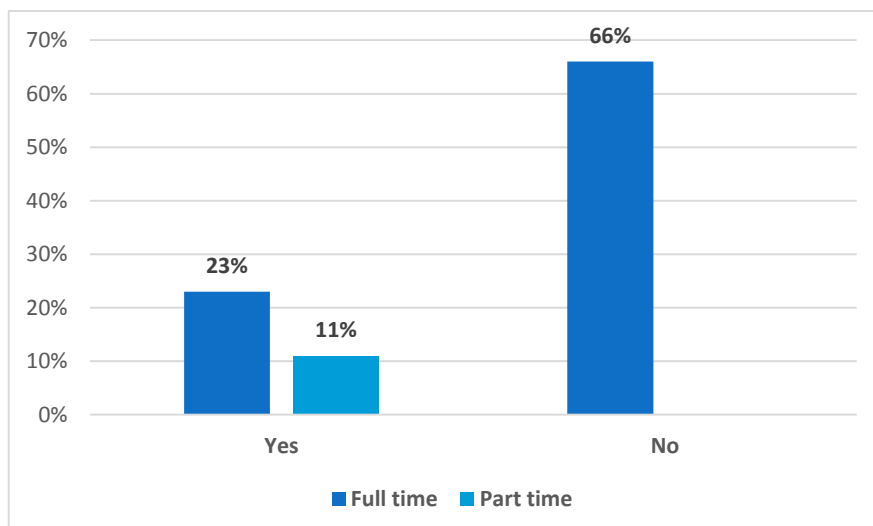


### 5. COVID 19 response and recovery

#### 5.1. Supporting agent

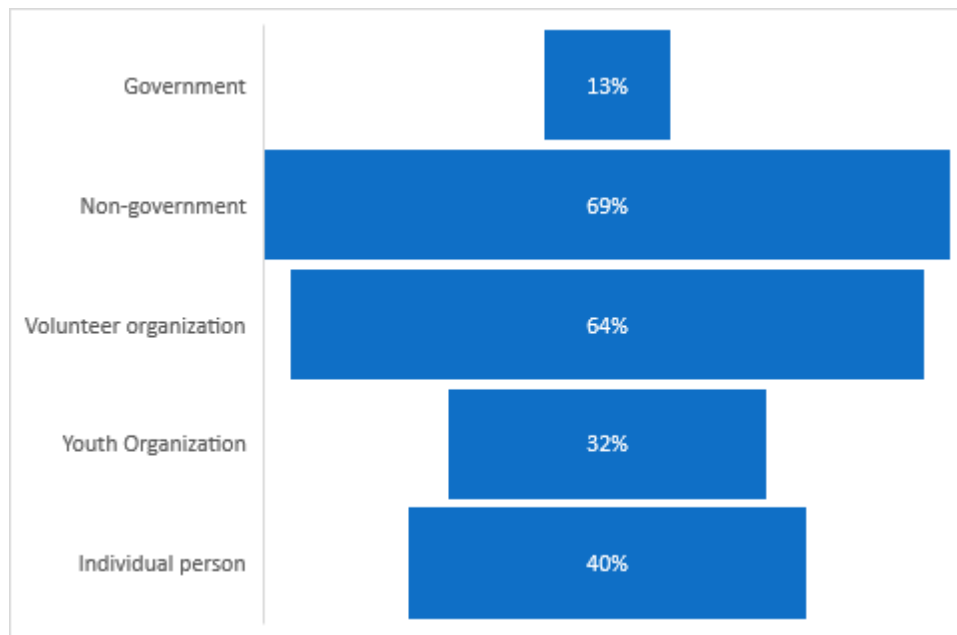
It is found that 23% child labour was engaged with their work during COVID 19 lockdown fully though 11% worked partly during the COVID 19 lockdown. As a whole 34% child labour had to have work during lockdown (Figure 25).

**Figure 25: Working during COVID 19 lockdown**



It is illustrated that that 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 aware about the person and organization who are working in this perspective. Among these 16% child labour, 69% knows about NGO, 64% knows about volunteer organization, 40% knows about individual persons who support to child labour to protect from COVID 19 impact. Only 13% knows that government supports in this regard (Figure 26).

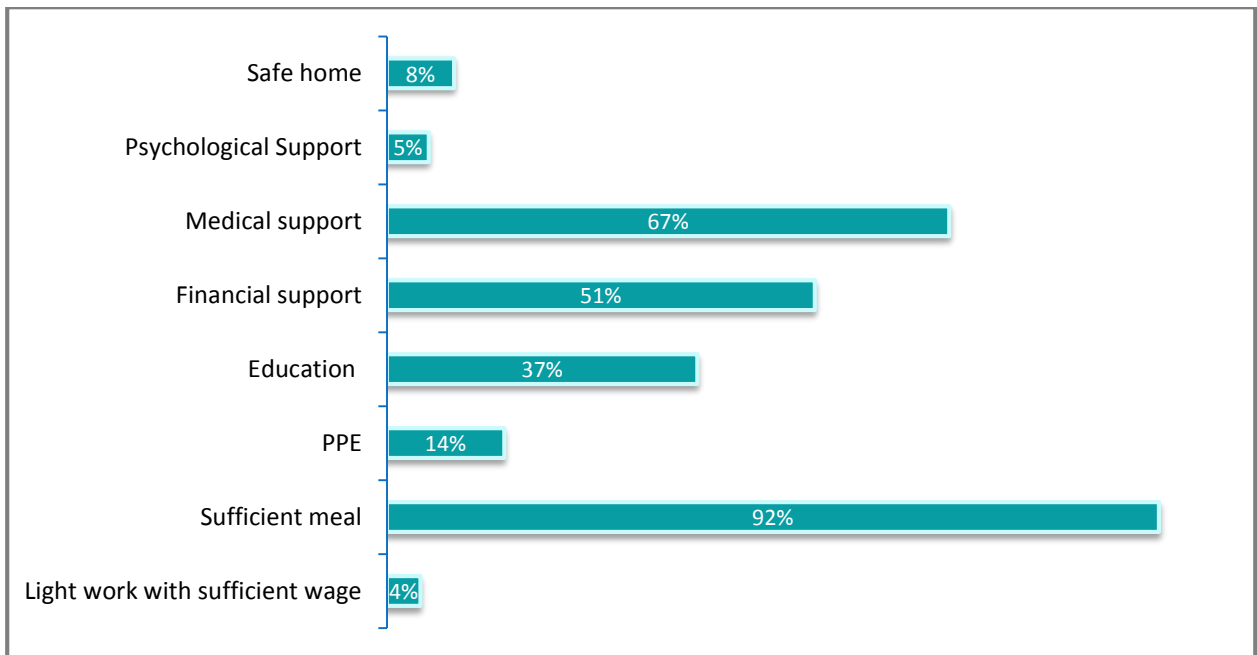
**Figure 26: Supporting organization to protect child labour from COVID 19 impact**



## 5.2. Support needed

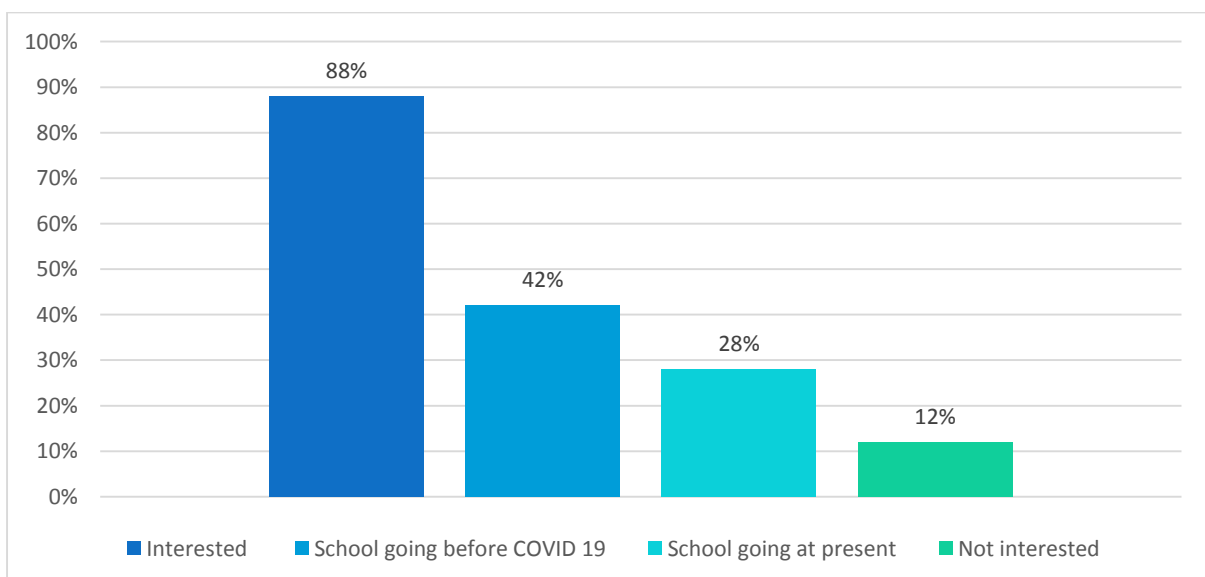
Most of the organizations and persons support daily food but 88% child labour expressed that these supports are not sufficient. They need more support on PPE, safe home, educational facilities, educational equipment, technical training, employment support, medicine support, food and cloths, etc.

**Figure 27: Support needed for child labour**



Education is most demanding support which was expressed by the studied child labour. 88% child labour expressed that they 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. It is remarkable that 12% are not interested to enroll in school again (Figure 28).

**Figure 28: Status of schooling of child labour**



## 6. Recommendations and conclusion

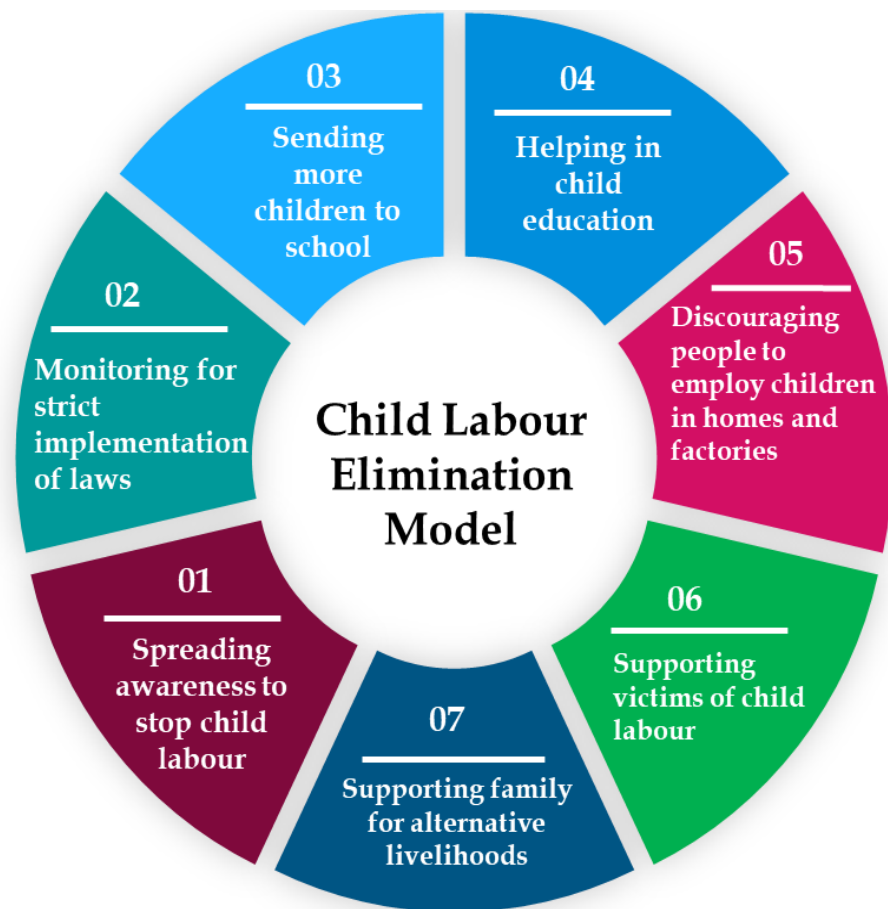
### 6.1. Recommendations

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” (Figure 29). The model constitutes of six 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 in homes and factories
- Supporting victims of child labour and
- Supporting family for alternative livelihoods.

**Figure 29: Child labour Elimination Model**



### **6.1.1. Spreading awareness to stop child labour**

Parents are the key agent to stop child labour. Through parental awareness which is essential to stop child labour as it can prevent children from becoming labour. The lack of awareness among parents and other family members about the consequences of child labour, most of the child labour becomes child labour sector. Spreading awareness among the parents so that they can comprehend and respond to children's issues much more effectively. Spreading this knowledge will help parents to become proactive in sending their children to be child labour. This awareness can be done through different events including sports, theatre performance, folklore performance, exhibition, lessons sharing to parents about the importance of child rights.

### **6.1.2. Monitoring for strict implementation of laws**

Policymaking 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.

### **6.1.3. Sending more 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.

### **6.1.4. 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.

### **6.1.5. 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.

### **6.1.6. Supporting victims of child labour**

Many children require immediate legal aid support as they are the victims of child laboring 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.

### **6.1.7. 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.

## **6.2. Conclusion**

Initiatives from government, non-government and civil society organizations should be taken to eliminate child labour and ensuring dignified life of every children in society. Fighting child labour requires a multi-pronged push, and it is urgently need to make this as a people's issue in Bangladesh.

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