

# Exploring the Processes and Consequences of Child Labour in Building Resilience of the Extreme Poor: The Genealogy of Child Labour in Northern Districts of Bangladesh

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>1- INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2- LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. Child poverty and labour in Bangladesh	5
2.2 Child labour and well-being	6
2.3 Child labour and extreme poor households' livelihoods	7
2.4 Conceptual framework	7
<b>3- METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Research objectives	10
3.2 Selection of the study area	10
3.3 Research techniques	11
3.4 Data Analysis	11
<b>4- FINDINGS</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Economic base of the parent's family	12
4.2 Main causes of child labour	15
4.3 Consequences of child labour for households' and children' resilience	17
<b>5- CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>22</b>

## **Operational definition of major terms used**

### **Extreme Poor**

According to Shiree it is a complex and dynamic phenomenon in which numerous social, cultural and health factors influence a household's ability to lift itself out of poverty or to sustain positive gains. ([www.shiree.org](http://www.shiree.org))

### **Child labour**

According to ILO, the term "child labour" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- interferes with their schooling
- deprives them of the opportunity to attend school;
- obliges them to leave school prematurely; or
- requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. (<http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>).

### **The minimum age for work**

One of the most effective methods of ensuring that children do not start working too young is to set the age at which children can legally be employed or otherwise work. The main principles of the ILO's Convention concerning the minimum age of admission to employment and work are listed below.

- **Hazardous work:** Any work which is likely to jeopardize children's physical, mental or moral health, safety or morals should not be done by anyone under the age of 18.
- **Basic Minimum Age:** The minimum age for work should not be below the age for finishing compulsory schooling, which is generally 15.
- **Light work:** Children between the ages of 13 and 15 years old may do light work, as long as it does not threaten their health and safety, or hinder their education or vocational orientation and training.

### **Hazards**

Hazards can be defined as dangerous phenomenon, human activity or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage; and shocks refer to smaller, low impact events and seasonal factors, including unemployment, ill health, local conflicts which can undermine livelihoods (Pasteur, 2011)

### **Vulnerability**

Is the degree to which a population or system is susceptible to, and unable to cope with, hazards and stresses, including the effects of climate change. The causes of vulnerability are multi-dimensional. Vulnerability can be understood in terms of physical exposure to specific hazards: people are vulnerable to flooding when they live in low lying areas or on river banks; they are vulnerable to earthquakes when they live in areas with unstable plate tectonics. Vulnerability is also understood as being connected with social and economic conditions relating to people's livelihoods – few or fragile resources, low caste or class, poor education, lack of savings and so on. (Pasteur, 2011)

### **Resilience**

It is the ability of a system, community or society to resist, absorb, cope with and recover from the effects of hazards and to adapt to longer term changes in a timely and efficient manner without undermining food security or wellbeing. (Pasteur, 2011)

## **Executive summary**

Globally some progress has been made in reducing the number of child workers – from 215 million in 2010 to 168 million in 2013. Bangladesh has also made some achievements in reducing the worst forms of child labour. Currently, 39.7% of its population is below 18 years. The Child Equity Atlas conducted in 2013 by BBS, UNICEF and BIDS jointly shows that the Child Labour rate has been reduced. It was 6% in 2011, down from 10.5% in 2001. This achievement came from different child protection initiatives such as stipend for primary and secondary schooling, free books distribution, overall poverty reduction and growing awareness among poor parents of the importance of sending their children to school. However, a global child-risk analysis advisory group, Maplecroft, listed 64 child-risk countries, including Bangladesh.

Despite increasing enrollment, a good number of children still do not go to school: more than 2 out of 10 children. This rises to 45 out of 100 children aged 6-10 years old in some upazilas (sub-districts), referred to as the worst of the deprived districts according to the Child Equity Atlas. Different surveys and reports on child labour in Bangladesh have found that children from poor and extreme poor families are mainly remaining out of school and work as wage labour.

“Pathway From Poverty”, a joint project of Shiree and Practical Action, has been implementing a programme in Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Kurigram districts situated in the northern part of Bangladesh to lift people out of extreme poverty through a graduation model. Despite their progress in getting out of extreme poverty, different studies including shiree’s regular Change Monitoring System (CMS), reveal that there are many children in those households who work as paid labour. Besides, some of the upazilas of these districts scores the lowest in the Composite Social Deprivation Index (CDI) and still 4.5% of the children are in paid work according to Children Equity Atlas, at a national level report.

Although there have been several studies on child labour in Bangladesh, most of them lack historical perspective and contextual analysis of this phenomenon. The present study is mainly an ethnographic endeavor where Case Studies, Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used for collecting qualitative data. In addition, the findings of secondary researches were also used for analyzing and comparing child labour issues from a broader perspective. The study was conducted in Rangpur, Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat districts of the Rangpur division during November and December 2013.

The present study revealed that child labour has an intergenerational aspect. The then-grandparents were employed when they were very young. Parents could not understand the importance of schooling. The entrance of children into work was dependent on age and the family’s socio-economic condition. The children of those who had large areas of land available had opportunities to spend leisure time in tours and games but those who were poor farmers, their children did not stay for a long time without work. But schooling was not a popular thing at that time. Children of other occupational groups such as carpenters, different smiths and other skills-based artisan occupations were nurtured as part of an enculturation process into family enterprises and children were encouraged to learn through apprenticeships. They were not forced to work as that was part of culture and tradition. It was perceived that often older children needed to practice their skills whereas younger children were more likely to learn quickly. Also, we found that girls take part in household chores as followers of their mothers, which in this study is considered as *children’s work* and that often, girls were married off earlier than in other better-off households (around twelve years old for example).

This empirical research has found some differences between the two generations. There were a few parents who went to school. Those who went to school and completed three or four years education at least, were more likely to send their girls and boys both to school, delay marrying off girls in their households and were successful in using birth control. It does not mean that their economic situation was better than their precursors. These behavior changes happened as the necessity of education was felt by a cross section of people; along with participation in other development initiatives as well as with a gradual increase of public resources into educational stipend programs. In this study, it has also been revealed that there were some extreme poor households who could not ensure minimum compulsory primary education (five years) for their children. These children have been working as child labour. The causes of child labour were that their parents were non-literate too, parents did not have a skilled job, more children in their household, dependent on mother's daily or domestic wage, perceived cost of continuing formal education, lack of skills to manage children with special needs, and unavailability of alternative opportunity for the children to continue formal schooling. From intergenerational data it has been revealed that if parents have skills in literacy and numeracy they have a more sustained income with other social benefits compared to households where either parent does not have that education. It was found that often the father with some education skills had started their livelihood as a child labourer with a skills base employment such as carpentry, agriculture trading, rickshaw repairing, tailoring or catering and then they became small entrepreneurs. Even among present child labourers who had some formal education and opportunity to engage with technical enterprises such as apprenticeships, their earning ratio was better and had better scope for gradual professional growth.

This study has found a distinct gender perception of child labour. However, the dominant practice of these societies is to marry off their girl children after reaching a certain age and believes that parents should not depend on a daughter's income. In reality this situation is being changed and poor parents send their daughters for earning outside of their regions and even to different districts. Amongst all of them reported that when fathers were incapable of providing meals for their children, then they sent their girls to work outside the home. Girls in the extreme poor families are yet to get access to skills-based employment for complementing parents' income, resilience and develop their own household in the near future. Extreme poor households having very limited material goods and low human skills are more vulnerable to issues of combatting their immediate daily hunger. If a household possesses skilled labour they are more likely to have a regular income and more resilience to shocks. Therefore, often children are pulled out of formal education temporarily in order to cope with shocks, this however, can significantly disturb their educational development. Social protection schemes could therefore, be designed for these children who are likely to drop out of school. The current study was confined to searching the ethnographic evidence of child labour and has attempted to make a causal analysis with building the economic resilience of the extreme poor. It has the limitation of seeing any association with other variables like its relationship with the national overall macroeconomy.

**Key Words:** Child labour, intergenerational poverty, resilience, skilled based education

## **1- Introduction**

Bangladesh has a vision to become a middle income country by 2021 (GED, 2011). Some recent successes in both economic and social sectors have given more credence to this vision. One of the major challenges is the majority of the labour force that are non-literate and low-skilled or unskilled. They engage in informal, low productive and low paid jobs. According to the economic research group, Goldman Sachs, Bangladesh is the 'Next 11<sup>th</sup>' country of the future global economy (Goldman Sachs, 2007). Besides, Bangladesh has been passing a demographic advantageous period as its workforce population is significantly higher than the total number of dependents population, 61.6% are of workforce age (15-59 years) compared to 38.4% of 1 to 14, and 60 and above, years old (ULAB, 2013). With a view to achieving middle income group status, there is a prerequisite to make the human resources of its workforce able to take advantage of its demography as dividends.

Globally child labour has reduced from 215 million to 168 million over 13 years (The Guardian, 2013). However, it is still a big concern for a developing country like Bangladesh where poverty is a big challenge for ensuring child rights. Different studies, including Shiree's, has revealed that many poor parents cannot continue with their children's education, dropping out from schooling to support the households economy (Shiree, 2013; World Bank, 2013; Create, 2011 and BRAC, 2011). The Maplecroft advisory group listed Bangladesh one of the 64 child-risk countries. The country has, however, made inspiring progress in reducing children in the workforce. The proportion of child workers has reduced from 10.1% in 2001 to 6% in the year 2013 (Children Equity Atlas, 2013; LFS 2005-2006). The country's constitutional obligation is to develop an economic and social plan, giving privileges to disadvantaged people with the aim of freeing them from all kinds of exploitation (Bangladesh Constitution, 1998). This supreme political commitment has also been reflected in the different policy documents such as the 'Perspective' plan that prioritized education and human resource development as key means of accelerating the country's economic growth (GED, 2011).

Practical Action, Bangladesh, has been working with 31,850 internally displaced landless extreme poor households settled at different embankments (namely Rangpur, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Kurigram) in the northern districts, aiming to lift them out of extreme poverty through the Pathways from Poverty (PFP)/Shiree Project. They lost land and livelihood options, mainly falling victim to riverbank erosion and other environmental hazards. There are many adolescents in these households, with very limited or no scope at all to become better skilled for their future livelihood. They are also more susceptible to be caught up in a similar poverty trap to their parents. Acquiring alternative livelihood skills in their childhood, they can become change agents in their current household economy and build resilience as well as skilled human resources for higher growth in their adulthood, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Hence, this present research is useful to know from the cultural perspective: why the children of extreme poor households on the embankments engage in labour; what are the consequences and what options are available for them to become skilled with a view to improving economic support to their current family and be able to find a way out of intergenerational poverty.

## **2- Literature review and conceptual framework**

### **2.1. Child poverty and labour in Bangladesh**

Most of the literature revealed that poverty is one of the basic causes of child labour in Bangladesh. Currently, there are an estimated 31.5% people who live under the upper poverty line and 17.6% who

live below the lower poverty line (BBS, 2010). The latter population is generally not able to fulfill their basic needs and often relies on their children's labour and work (Nasir, 2009). Sometimes children as well as their parents have no interest in education and think education is not a real life necessity. Furthermore, poor schooling is often attributed to child labour in Bangladesh, particularly in the rural areas (Khair, 2005).

As stated by Emerson and Knabb (2007), there is a renewed interest in this topic among economists, which has led to a series of theoretical studies with the aim of better understanding the causes and consequences of child labour and to help guide appropriate policy responses and addressing (i) the linkage between child labour and trade (ii) child labour and child abuse (Bhattacharya, 2007), (iii) domestic and international initiatives to reduce child labour (Castle *et al.*, 2002), and (iv) the linkages between child labour and educational issues. Child labour is considered to be damaging and violates children's rights as it hinders the harmonious emotional, physiological and psychological growth of the child (Khaleda, 2001).

## **2.2 Child labour and well-being**

Many studies found different types of child work and their magnitude with risks and severity in association with lack of maintaining employees rights, violation of labour policies and child rights. Most of the children are engaged in a wide variety of work in ploughing, manufacturing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, crop watching, transplanting, fishing, boating, cattle grazing, farm helpers, domestic workers, garbage pickers, waste collectors, metal workers, leather and tannery workers, canteen boys, hotel boys, shoeshine boys, electroplate workers, newspaper sellers, rickshaw pullers, daily laborers, shop assistants, vendors, book binders, transport helpers and domestic activities (Sharma & Mitter, 1990; Khair, 2004).

Galli (2001) found that the most obvious economic impact of child labour at the family level in the short run is increased household income. All researchers and practitioners agree that poverty is the main determinant of child labour supply, and that child labour significantly increases the income for survival and sustenance of the family. In these circumstances, the family depends on child labour irrespective of whether it is carried out in hazardous or non-hazardous activities, in formal or informal economy, or even in paid or unpaid family activity. This last point deserves clarification: unpaid family workers contribute to their own household's income and survival by helping their parents in both paid and self-employment activities. It is common for families to engage in sub-contracting where the family is paid at piece rates (i.e. against producing certain number of units/pieces), so that the help of children is crucial to increase household productivity and daily income. Moreover, children (especially girls) are often engaged in unpaid family activities in order to free their parents from housework and allow them to undertake paid work (Galli, 2001).

Although parents may act rationally by sending their children to work in order to increase their probability of survival, they may not perceive the long term negative implications of child labour for their own family. Since child labour competes with school attendance and proficiency, children who are sent to work do not accumulate (or under-accumulate) human capital, missing the opportunity to enhance their productivity and future earnings capacity. This lowers the wage of their future families, and increases the probability of their offspring being sent to work. In this way, poverty and child labour is passed on from generation to generation (Galli, 2001).

Mamun and his co-workers (2008) investigated the factors that influence the health complications of the child laborers of Rangpur district. They found that (i) an increase in working hours increased the likelihood of health complications, (ii) children working in more hazardous sectors face more health problems than those working in comparatively less hazardous sectors, and (iii) children that enter into work at an early age face more health complications than those entering work at an older age.

### **2.3 Child labour and extreme poor households' livelihoods**

Empirical studies on non-agricultural child labour in fact found that activities performed by children are mostly unskilled (e.g. Anker *et al.*, 1998) and that children who entered younger into the labour force earn less on average than children who entered older (Swaminathan, 1998). He found that, "Child labour can depress long run growth of a production system also by slowing down technological progress. The availability of cheap, unskilled child labour in fact allows employers to avoid investing in fixed capital and upgrading production processes, thereby, dampening technological progress, labour productivity and output growth in the long run. Once child labour – their most important profit source – is removed, the cost of unskilled labour is likely to go up. To the extent that this will happen, petty employers will go out of business. The disappearance of these small enterprises, however, may well induce the bigger enterprises to undertake investment and technological innovations"

Most of the available studies only focus on the negative points of child labour and recommended how to eradicate this. These studies have some major limitations in understanding the issue from its societal and historical context, current state of the art of both formal and informal sectors and prime labour force, major characteristics of small and medium entrepreneurs, and access to higher valued employment as well as technology from a gender perspective (Fruzzetti, 1982; ISIS, 1991). In the South Asian countries, like Bangladesh, a vast number of girl children marry off early and enter into unpaid work in their in-law's houses. This is a super-structural issue of a society which exists through different cultural connotations, like preserving virginity, perception of keeping purity of girls, gender segregating and discrimination against women on the labour market.

Besides the available studies on child labour, they often lacked qualitative data to understand the complex processes and inter-related dynamics existing between extreme poor families and the labour market. There still exists many professions which are dominated by certain communities or castes, like carpentry, weaving traditional clothes e.g. *Jamdani shari*, masonry, blacksmith, goldsmith, hair cutting, pottery and making utensils from brass and other metals, embroidery like handicrafts (stone and clothes) and many more. However, these traditional artisan communities are getting lost day by day, but their craft is extraordinary and part of our heritage. So, how can these traditional skills be further nurtured as social capital? How these valuable heritage-skills can be preserved with the support of modern science and technologies is missing in the existing literature.

### **2.4 Conceptual framework**

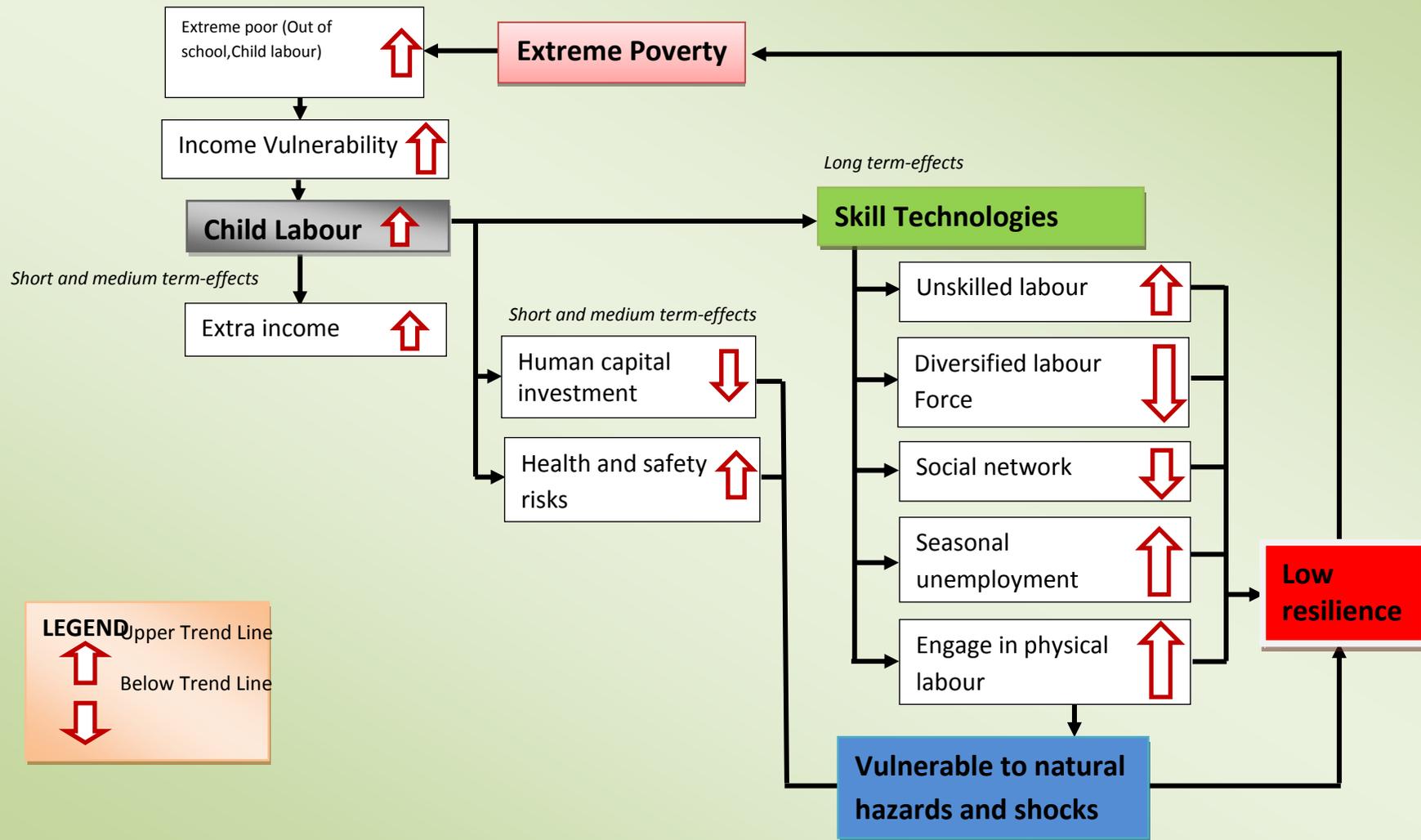
Extreme poor household members are not only poor monetarily, but also have very low level of human capital. Most of the literature show that the dominant feature of those households is inherited poverty (so-called intergenerational). The underlying theoretical causes might be structural or both structural and functional as illustrated in Figure 1. Here, the common variables include people who are mainly peasants, girls getting married at an early age, scope for getting technology as well as basic education is lacking, women-headed households, very limited safety net and other development

initiatives from the state for the vulnerable, early pregnancy, low productive capacity due to ill health of household members, shocks (both natural and man-made), poor resilience in combating those shocks and children discontinued or deprived of their development as well as human rights .

The study's contextual focus is to explore the process of child labour and outline its consequence on individual and intra-household economic resilience. Child labour has been perceived as an intergenerational issue and an underlying basic cause is that these households have no human or monetary capital. So, the conceptual framework of this study is designed to know the starting point of the intergenerational poverty. Findings could be utilized for empowering teenagers through providing technical knowledge and skills-training so that they are better able to support their households and do not need to involve their children in labour in order to avoid falling into extreme poverty. This inter-generational process can contribute to making people chronically poor. To understand this sequential processes, an ethnographic research is needed.

Practical Action's vision is to reduce technology divide within society. This study explores the process and consequences of child labour for extreme poor households' resilience. It aims to provide advocacy and programmatic recommendation on how to empower these adolescents through creating access to a skills based education programme. This way, the vulnerable section of the population will enjoy their rights in participating in sustainable economic growth with equitable access.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for extreme poverty and child labour**



### 3- Methodology

#### 3.1 Research objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the process of becoming a child labourer in an extreme poor household
2. To understand the factors that motivate parents/children towards child labour
3. To understand parents' perceptions of schooling and skills education
4. To explore how child labour increases the technology divide
5. To understand the consequences of child labour for household resilience

#### 3.2 Selection of the study area

The Shiree regular survey or Change Monitoring System (CMS5) data ([http://www.shiree.org/extreme-poverty-monitor/cms-5-tracking-studies/#.Ut-dv\\_txWt8](http://www.shiree.org/extreme-poverty-monitor/cms-5-tracking-studies/#.Ut-dv_txWt8)) shows that 83% households of Gaibandha, Rangpur and Lalmonirhat districts have children who are engaged in income generating activities. Therefore, in this study, these three districts were selected where three partner NGOs of Practical Action Bangladesh are operating under the Pathways from Poverty project.

The study used mixed methods including both quantitative and qualitative data. The CMS-1 ([http://www.shiree.org/extreme-poverty-monitor/cms-5-tracking-studies/#.Ut-dv\\_txWt8](http://www.shiree.org/extreme-poverty-monitor/cms-5-tracking-studies/#.Ut-dv_txWt8)) baseline data of the PFP-Shiree Project beneficiary households was used as secondary data to understand the overall socio-economic and demographic situations of the participants of the study. Besides, quantitative data from other available similar national level surveys and reports were also used for analyzing and comparing with the current study. Figure: 2 shows study locations coloured in green.

**Figure: 2 Map of the study areas**



### 3.3 Research techniques

**Focus Group Discussions** FGDs were conducted to understand community views and the cultural construction of child labour. This also helped to reveal the general and various discourses among different sex and age groups on this particular social issue. Collected narratives served as the missing link to develop a history of intergenerational poverty, child labour and marginalization.

**Case studies** Case Studies have been conducted to capture individual experiences and illustrate the child labour context in that particular region. They also help to understand the complex holistic macro and micro structural scenario of a society where one kind of marginalization like loss of shelter can exaggerate exclusion from other safety nets.

**Individual Interviews** Long interviews using life history method with household heads- either mother or father, or both of them who have sent their children into the labour market. Individual household base interviews provided a detailed causal explanation of intra-household human resource management, household gender relationships and the building of an intra- household explanatory model of utilization of children for earning, as a strategic decision in combating different shocks and hazards.

**Key Informant Interviews (KII)** have been undertaken among employers of domestic workers, agricultural workers, off-farm workers, chiefs or local heads of skills-training educational institute/s, District Women and Child Affairs Officer and Unicef Divisional Officer. The main objectives of the KII are to get different views of the problem and to understand the causes and consequences and gaps in implementation of the child protection policies and strategic plans. It can give an overview of their experiences with child labour. The KIIs have also been used for validation of information by the different stakeholders.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed applying both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The study will also analyze base line quantitative data using SPSS (statistical data analysis software) while qualitative data will be analyzed manually. Interpretative theory method will be employed to analyze descriptive data. (Geertz, Clifford 1973). Table: 1 shows applied tools and techniques in this ethnographic study.

**Table: 1 Summary of Research tools**

Methods	Number	Types of participants	Areas of investigation
Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)	2	Mothers who have a child labourer	<i>To understand Behavioral Structure of Child Labour and intergenerational poverty</i>
		Fathers who have a child labourer	
	4	Adolescents (Boys and Girls)	
Case studies	8	Male- headed Beneficiary Household with child labourer	<i>To understand the process and consequences of child labour</i>
		Female- headed Beneficiary Household with child labourer	

Key informant interviews	6	Skilled provider education institute	<i>Policy implication to reduce child labour</i>
		Person involved with Child protection implementation (2 KIIs)	
		Agricultural employer	
		Off-farm employers (2 KIIs)	

#### **4- Findings**

##### **4.1 Economic base of the parent's family**

The life histories of earlier generations, both men and women, illustrated that most of the girls were married off at an early age and they mainly did domestic work in their own houses. On the other hand, the men were engaged in cultivation. They informed that in their parent's time, they had some cultivable land, but they had lost their inherited property to repeated floods and river erosion. Therefore, they were virtually landless. They used to cultivate in some cases as share-croppers, but most of the time they worked as daily labour.

Recalling their childhood (first generation) memories the respondents described that they could not go to school as their parents were also poor. Besides, both old men and women added that since their parents were illiterate they did not understand the necessity of children's education and they lacked the education support from the government and the society. *"In our time, there was no government support. Now girls are getting a stipend from the government"*, commented one of the old women when the group was rationalizing their lack of education.

These people had more children. The average household size was six, where most of the boys could not complete primary education and were engaged in agricultural daily labour, rickshaw pulling or other available daily work. The girls were married off when they were 15 or 16 years old. The older girls had a couple of years of school experience and for the younger ones schooling experience was comparatively higher- up to lower secondary level (Higher Secondary is eleventh to twelfth grade whereas, Lower Secondary is sixth to eighth grade). The children born later, both boys and girls, had higher levels of education.

When comparing these two generations, we observed that the latter is better off with regard to having education and income. The second generation men, who have some primary education, married girls who had more schooling.

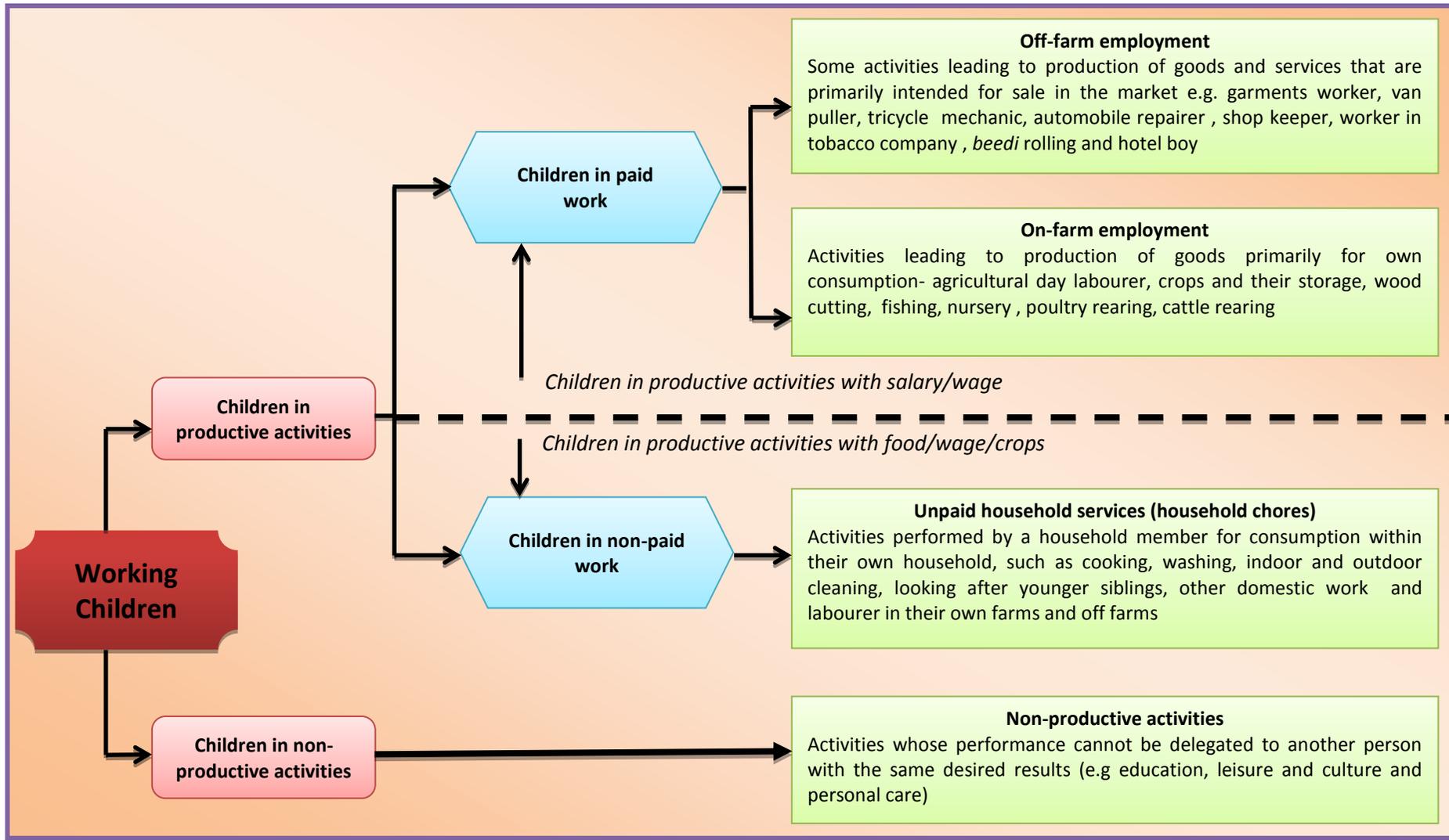
It was found that among the second generation parents, those who had primary education, were more likely to send their children to school and were able to maintain a smaller family. Some cases illustrated that the second generation fathers with primary level education were employed in light engineering or rickshaw repairing, petty trading, tailoring or owned carpentry shops and restaurants. Their income was comparatively better than those who did not have any literacy at all. Mothers of the second generation, those who had primary to higher secondary education, were better at household management compared to their mothers. The second generation mothers reported that they were better than their mothers in child rearing, maintaining health and hygiene, sending children to school, trying to save money, engaging with NGOs and other economic activities.

For qualitative assessment, we met with 95 adolescents, 60 were girls and 35 were boys. Data showed that among all adolescents, there were 56 children who were not going to school (i.e. dropout rate of

around 60%). Most of these dropouts were under-employed and many of them were employed. Among the under-employed, most of them were girls. However, most of the adolescent girls, both the school goers and the dropouts, support their mothers with household chores and some of them do embroidery work in their homes. On the contrary, boys who were going to school also supported their households with shopping and helped in their father's trades- agriculture, petty trading, light engineering and running tea stalls.

Extreme poor households were the dominant child labour providers in this region. Although the extreme poor are perceived as homogenous economically, it was found that they were different in many ways. One of the differences was found within the human development indicators. Among the extreme poor labourers it varied significantly. For example, it was observed that within the same upazila there were large differences among the children with regard to their schooling. It was found that school enrollment and continuation of schooling has become popular, but the duration of schooling varied within the same economic class. Most of the fathers of the child labourers were daily-labourers and they mainly worked in agricultural fields. Most of them informed that their mothers were housewives. It was also observed that there were some other factors associated with child labourers: they came from families where the father is the single income-earner, have no land-based income opportunity (like any investment in agriculture), where the household head suffers from chronic illness and have more female children. It was universal that parents with no education were more likely to have children working as child labourers. Figure-2 shows different types of child labourers in the rural areas.

**Figure 2: Child Labourers in different works**



## 4.2 Main causes of child labour

### Poverty

When asked, the respondents instantly identified ‘poverty’ as the first and foremost cause of letting their children enter into the labour market. The community universally thought that due to their parents’ poverty, both husband and wife (respondent parents) could not get education. Their history of poverty started with their parent’s poverty—they, as parents, were poor because their parents were also poor.

It has been widely reported that most of them were victims of river erosion. Their land and livelihoods were washed away by the River Teesta. Many currently settled on the edge of the embankment claimed that they were displaced repeatedly. When Teesta washed away their homestead land, they rebuilt their homes in another place. They shifted their homes to another place which was perceived as less risky, but they had to shift again. In desperation, they resettled on the embankment (on the edge of a river erosion protection wall).

Among the present parents, a few women were found who went to schools but could not complete ten-years of schooling. Although they thought that they could not complete education due to their parents’ poverty, they argued that though their parents were poor, they were more concerned about their children’s education compared to their grandparents. They felt that if their parents could understand the importance of girls’ education then they would not have married them off before their Secondary School Certificate examination. They could not continue their schooling due to social pressure that girls should marry when they become *dangor* (adult)- *Dangor maiya beshidin ghorey rakha bhala na* (It is not wise to keep an adult girl at home without marriage)”

### Child marriage

Child marriage is indirectly associated with child labour. Poor parents marrying off their daughters before the age of eighteen was a very dominant practice among the extreme poor in the study areas. Dominant perceptions were that girls in their adolescence are “in danger of losing their virginity”, parents should not depend on daughters’ income so there is reluctance to invest in daughters and lack of prospective grooms once they become older. Therefore, poor parents feel social pressure to marry off their daughters with low skilled grooms. It has been found that there were some couples where their husbands had a lower number of schooling years than their wives. In most cases dropouts were girls married to poor youths with low dowry payments. Child marriage results in underage girls having to take responsibility of all household chores. They also become pregnant in their early age which has negative health implications. Children born in poor families have below minimum nutritional dietary intake, low weight babies, malnutrition in early childhood with lack of proper child care.

### Parents’ education and technical skills

Poor mothers illustrated how they were different from their mothers. They thought that as they had completed primary education, they were more successful in managing their children and home relative to the earlier generation. They tended to keep their family size small, sent their children to school, maintain sanitation and hygiene in the household and dreamt of providing higher education to

their children. Both generations (mothers and grandmothers of child labourers) agreed that if their husbands could have had formal education or technical skills, such as motor mechanic training, driving or business skills, then their income could have been better sustained. They argued that their formal education gave them some skills in managing home, children and household expenditure, but it could not support generating household income directly. Both the generations agreed that if they were trained in sewing, rearing chicken, gardening, mobile phone repairing and women's salon skills, then they could contribute more to their household income.

### Large family size

When a family comprised of four or five children, they were more likely to send their children into the labour market. Most of the children who were employed had four or five siblings, father worked as daily labourer on a farm or off-farm at local level and their mothers were housewives. Parents sent their elder children to work. Initially these children took part in household chores, then accompanied their family in farming or petty trading, or supported share cropping, and finally they became employed as full time child labourers. On the contrary, the younger children continued schooling. In this regard, if the younger siblings were girls then they continued till junior secondary schooling.

### Inadequate performance in school

In a few cases, children were deemed incapable of learning by their parents and the community. They then dropped out of school and the girls were employed as domestic workers and the boys as daily-labourers in agriculture or canal digging, embankment maintenance and so on- all of which are low paid jobs.

In a few cases children could not continue with their education due to their negligence. Their school attendance was irregular and eventually they dropped out. After leaving school, initially they would help out with household work and finally took up low paid jobs depending on their sex as mentioned above.

### Inadequate social safety net

Parents acknowledged that nowadays there was some support from the government for schooling which was mostly for girls' education. A very old woman pointed out that in her time they did not have support for education. Although social safety nets had some positive implications, children who were continuing schooling told us that the actual weekly expenditures on tuition fees, exercise books, pens and tuition fees for private teachers were greater than the stipends.

### Access to technology

It was revealed that there were many entrepreneurs who were once child labourers but that they got the opportunity to engage in apprenticeship in some highly technical skills-based enterprises: welding, carpentry, tailoring, sanitary, electrical repairing, and even shop keeping. Some of them had had junior secondary education (up to eighth grade) which helped them to write and read documents needed for their profession. They believed that this minimum education supported them a lot to understand tasks including measuring things using different scales. Without that minimum education they might not have been able to reach their current stage. An entrepreneur of a tricycle repair shop in Gangachara upazila talked about the difference a formal education had on his life: "We need to take

measurements all the time. Without reading and writing, how could we measure and complete our tasks!”

It was observed that there were many children who had already dropped out of school when they had only completed a couple of years of schooling. They forgot what they had learnt in school. They were then mostly involved with physical labour like rickshaw pulling, loading goods on lorries, digging earth and other manual low-paid employment including agricultural daily-labour. Due to having little to no formal education, they have limited scope for learning technical skills. Similarly, their parents were marginalized and excluded from acquiring technological skills as they did not get opportunities to use machines and other intermediate technology. The oral histories of parents and present child labourers alike referred to access to technology and linked literacy with higher classes or income.

### **4.3 Consequences of child labour for households’ and children’s resilience**

#### **Job availability**

Different types of job opportunities were present even at the urban periphery level, but they required some skills. Most of the employment was in small enterprises, where the labour force and capital are small and workspaces were tiny. These SMEs included light engineering, carpentry, tailoring, motor repairing, welding and small parts-production houses, motor-driving to carry passengers, power-tiller driving, sales and service jobs at restaurants and shops, agricultural labour, plumbing and electric services.

Even in the rural areas with the expansion of technology and infrastructural development, both in production and service sectors, many new employment opportunities have been created. These include topping up cell phone talk-time, cell phone repairing, computer (use of MS Excel and MS Word) and scanner operators, photocopier operators, battery recharging for electric tricycles and retailing shop for internet browsing with downloading facilities. Employment opportunities in these professions were especially high in the areas close to the urban periphery, Upazila Headquarters or close to the district town.

Availability of employment depends on sources of information, education or skills, location of where the labourers live, references, social values (e.g. obedience with fewer demands) and gender. At the initial stage, employers were reluctant to hire any new labourers without experience if he did not have a crying need. It has been reported that if a person had some skills, was a patient worker, was punctual and reliable, then he would be able to find work. Similarly, one coordinator of a vocational institute informed us that each year there was scope to train 90-110 adolescents in their institution and almost 100% were employed in the garments and machine factories and food processing industries.

It is a general phenomenon that children are more likely to be involved in traditional employment instead of looking at future prospects. They did not know where to go or what would be suitable for their career in the future.

Most of the available jobs were perceived suitable for boys. The nature of jobs among child labourers was gender segregated. Adolescent respondents to the study informed us that boys were more likely to be involved with activities which were traditionally perceived as men’s work or those jobs that required working closely with other males. In contrast, it was found that girls worked at home as

domestic workers, RMG factory workers and in other informal sectors such as in beauty parlours and women’s dress making, packaging in rice mills, embroidery work, sewing at home and mat weaving.

There was no difficulty in obtaining employment in the ready-made garments (RMG) industry or even in domestic work for a girl. A returnee RMG adolescent worker said *“Initially my neighbour’s sister helped me to get a job in an RMG factory. Now I know how to get a job there. They recruit at the beginning of the month. Each month many positions become available and they hang a notice in front of the factory. Basic education is helpful to get a job in a garments factory”*. However, employment in domestic work was more in demand from many wealthier households who wanted girls, preferably around 10 years old, to help their housewives with household chores. In the case of domestic work, parents of poor child labourers wanted their girls to have food, clothing and support with better shelter and to be reared as the children of their employers. Unlike other formal sectors, obtaining employment in domestic work, labourers were dependent on local relatives or neighbours to mediate, with much ambiguity among parents of child labourers about information on the employers.

Among the adolescent respondents, only a few were engaged in their own farming or self-employed: one was engaged in his father’s light engineering shop, the second one worked as an agricultural daily labourer in others’ farms and sometimes his own share cropping and the third one was a van puller. One of the children was going to be admitted to an undergraduate level class. He often helped his father. He used to look after his father’s shop when his father could not work. His father was a rickshaw repairer as was his grandfather. Table 2 shows some of the main economic and social factors, reported by respondents, which led to child labour.

**Table 2: Consequences of child labour**

<b>Social</b>	<b>Economy</b>
<b>More family members</b>	Less income/low paid/more expenditure
<b>More dropouts</b>	Unskilled child labour
<b>Early marriage</b>	Paid dowry
<b>Physically intensive labour</b>	Costs of being ill more often due to strenuous labour
<b>Less social connectivity</b>	More dependent on social protection
<b>Lack of health and hygiene practice</b>	Costs of being ill more often

**Wage, income sustainability and promotion at work**

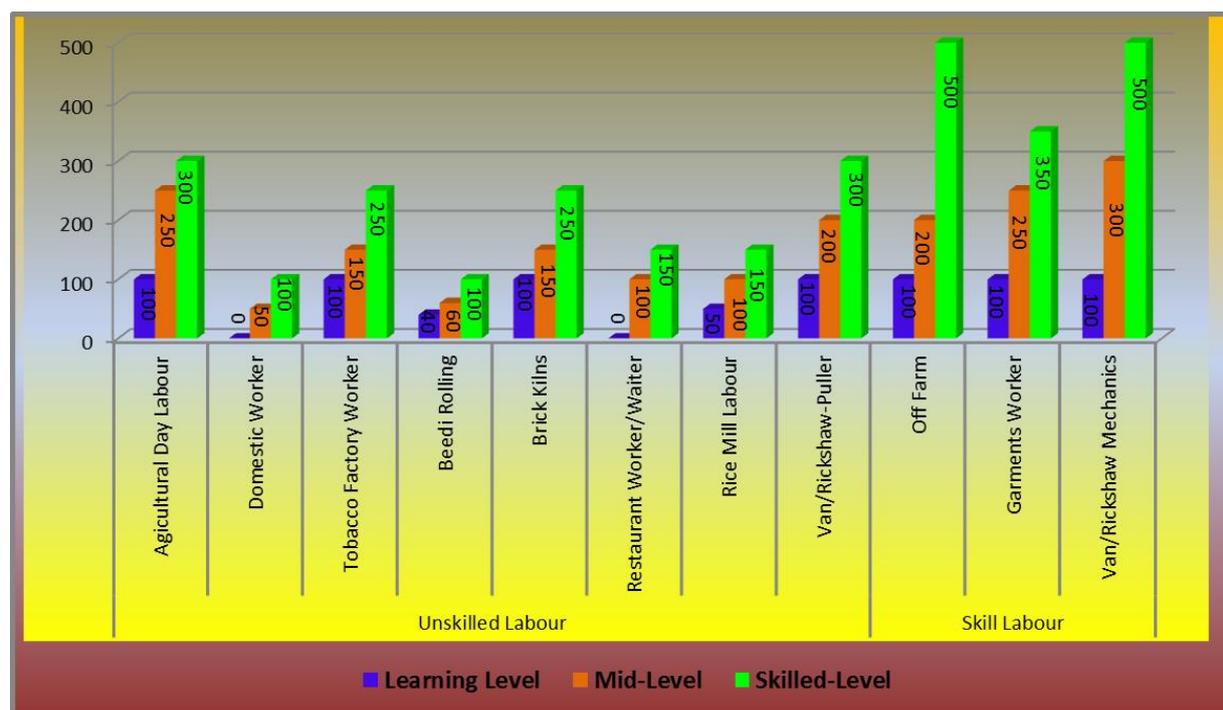
Payment or economic benefit varied according to age, sex, experience and formal education of the labourers. The boys who worked as daily wage labourers in agriculture or in the local market in conditions of demanding physical labour earned Taka 80-100 initially and then Taka 200-300 daily when they became adults.

On the other hand, children who entered into skills-based employments, like motor mechanic work, welding and electric repairing, carpentry and cooking at restaurants, initially earned Taka 100 daily. After six months, they earned Taka 150 daily. When they had two to three years of experience, they could earn Taka 300 daily. To be a full professional in these sectors requires minimum five years experience. Generally, there was one high skilled person in the shop, in most cases the owners themselves, and his income was Taka 500-600 daily.

One of the child workers in the RMG sector informed us that she got promoted from merely an assistant to a full operator of a sewing machine after six months. She could earn Taka 6000-7000 each month. Besides, she had some overtime and altogether she earned around Taka 8000 monthly. A man reported that his two daughters worked in a *gul* factory (processing tobacco dust- a kind of tobacco product for oral use) at Sadarghat in Dhaka. They have been working there for two years. The working environment of that factory is good. Each of them earned Taka 3000-4000 with accommodation and water supply free for the female employees within the factory compound. Comparatively, young girls did not continue for a long time in their workplaces. After a couple of years, mostly they returned back to their homes. Their employment decisions were taken by their parents. They could not take their own decisions.

Children who worked at skills-based jobs, like in the motor garage, carpentry and masonry, had good earnings even in the local market. In the first three to six months, when they were learners, they were paid only Taka 200 weekly or around 30 taka daily. But after that they were paid Taka 100 daily. Their earning package could rise three times from this wage if they could complete about three years of work. The following figure (Figure 3) shows the differences of skilled and unskilled child labourers and their wages.

**Figure 3: Trajectory of life history comparing skilled and unskilled child labour**



Working environment, health, safety and security

Injuries from machines and foreign particles were very common when children worked during the harvesting period. Some common injuries were eye injuries from rice husks while husking, and injuries or even loss of fingers and hands from machines in industrial accidents. These often caused permanent disability due to lack of proper medical treatment.

Children driving public transport, working in motorbike workshops and in the construction sector were more at the risk of severe injuries. However, informants of the present study did not have any such experiences, but they recounted the cases of their peers.

Children who work as daily labour for loading and unloading of goods during harvest and post-harvest period, labourers in construction, van and rickshaw pullers- perform physically taxing work. They reported that they could not work a whole day and needed to take a couple of days off per week. They often suffered from body aches, pain in the knees, muscles and other joints; also from constipation, feeling feverish and skin problems. Children who worked in distant places could not come back to their homes everyday, hence, they had to live in their workplaces. Inadequate drinking water, living in unhygienic spaces with no clean beds, inadequate aeration and natural lights were common features of the living conditions of child labourers. In addition, these accommodations harboured many people of different ages, with diseases and habits like smoking. These caused some common illnesses, like scabies, chronic cough and cold and frequent suffering from other air and water borne diseases. Girls working in the garments sector and as domestic workers faced major insecurity within their living spaces. One of the domestic workers was physically assaulted by her employer's wife and was not allowed to meet her parents.

Big accidents, like fire and building collapses are common in the RMG factories. Every year several such accidents occur. In 2013, a building called Rana Plaza, that housed many RMG factories collapsed and 1,133 lives were lost (CPD, 2013) and thousands injured were rescued. A garments factory worker worked nearby that factory site but she did not want to go back to her work. Similarly, another neighbour of hers returned home. Both of them were staying at home and were unwilling to return to their jobs because of the trauma of the incident.

However, wages of RMG workers was better when compared to other informal factories, such as packaging and processing factories. But many were concerned about the 'working environment' of the RMG factories. They reported that in the RMG factories there was no privacy for girls. Both men and women work together in a place, making it hard to maintain *pardha* (seclusion).

Working hours varied according to child labourers' occupations. It was found that child labourers worked for roughly 8 to 10 hours a day.

In many cases, hazardous working environment, lack of workplace safety, lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, long working hours, insufficient sleep and rest with low nutritional food intake and recreation caused suffering from illnesses frequently and loss in the total number of hours worked. Poor medical care also caused erosion of monetary resources with little to no positive results

### Impact on human capital

Dropping out of school is associated with child labour, so it is likely that child labourers would have lower literacy rates. Most of the children had three years of education and in a few cases they had five to six years of education. All of them had dropped out of formal schools and could not continue their education along with their jobs. All respondents informed us that to get a skilled job and to learn the required skills, some formal education is necessary. For example, a labourer should be able to read instructions for machinery operation, for fitting spare parts and using different scales- which are usually written in English. Literacy helped to be able to provide better services. One of the child workers described this phenomenon:

*“Initially I was ordered to cut and finish off different spare parts. Once, one of the elder employees enquired of me, ‘Do you know how to use a Bernier scale?’ I replied that I did not know. He seemed astonished. I learnt from him on that day how to use that scale. My formal education helped me. I had completed seven years of schooling. My elder brother dropped out of school earlier than me. My father is a scooter driver. I think I can be a skilled labourer within three years.”*

**Case 1: From child labourer to a carpentry shop-owner**

Kamrul is a carpentry shop owner. He is now 28 years old. When he was 13, he joined a carpentry shop. He dropped out of school. He worked at the carpentry shop for eight years and became a full *mistree* (a skilled carpenter). He was then earning Taka 500–700 daily. In 2006, he established his own shop where two labourers worked for him: one was 11 years old and the other one was 15 years old. They had had 3-4 years of schooling. They earned Taka 200 daily and when there was more work, their remuneration increased. Kamrul’s future plan was to make his shop bigger.

**Gender discrimination in technology divide**

In peasants’ society, women can often store seed, add value to food through different processing like making puffed rice, threshed rice, preparing traditional cakes and even processing rice into boiled or *atap* rice. These traditional sciences were controlled mainly by women. Nowadays, in the study areas we have observed that males were preparing traditional cakes at local markets, modern cakes were sold in local markets, puffed rice and threshed rice was also being prepared by automated processes and industrial machinery, over which women have very little control. Dominant ideology of the society was gender segregated. Therefore, one of the key informants recommended gender segregated skills for adolescents of extreme poor households, *“Skills programs for girls on how to operate sewing machines, embroidery machines and giving them machines after their training will be helpful. Alongside, boys can be trained in carpentry, masonry, electrical equipment repairing, so that they will be able to support their poor parents along with their education”*.

Consequently girls are deprived of equal access to all kinds of employment. Even if girls have literacy and numeracy skills, they do not have the scope to learn technical skills due to restrictions on their mobility. There are many trades in vocational and technical institutions (carpentry, repairing cellular phones, labourers in the restaurants, electric wares etc) that a girl is easily capable of doing but such jobs are perceived as men’s work. Therefore, girls were deprived in the broader employment market as they could not learn how to operate those technologies. So, if girls drop out of school, they cannot work as their male counterparts.

A similar situation was described by a key informant when she explained the common barriers of extreme poor children, particularly girls. She said:

*“There is a very strong lack of protection and development initiatives for adolescents in the northern districts. Parents and community members are more willing to marry off their girls. They even wanted to return the whole stipend that they received for their daughter’s education under the*

*Secondary School Stipend Programme from the Ministry of Secondary Education”.*

She concluded by recommending that technical education can help girls to get employment and reduce their poverty. Men had control over technologies which were producing on a massive scale and therefore, women became marginalized in their control over production systems in the society. Following (Table 3) table shows the characteristics of skilled and unskilled child labour.

Table 3: illustrated consequences between skilled and unskilled child labourers.

Skilled	Unskilled
<b>Regular income in Cash</b>	<b>Irregular income (Cash and/or in kind)</b>
<b>Continuation of job</b>	<b>Discontinuity of job</b>
<b>Seniority is counted</b>	<b>Demand for strenuous labour and long hours</b>
<b>Professional skills are valued</b>	<b>No professionalism</b>
<b>Experienced are more valued</b>	<b>Higher vulnerability in old age</b>
<b>Scope of entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Dependent on others’ support and social safety nets</b>

## **5- Conclusion and Recommendation**

Children of the poor are employed in the labour market, supporting their parents economically before attaining adequate physical, cognitive and skill levels. The rate of participation in schools has increased among the poor both in primary and secondary levels irrespective of their sex (Shiree, 2010). But the dropout rate is still high even in the primary level (CREATE, 2011). Dropouts take part both in the household economic and non-economic activities. Initially, these are segregated by gender, but later on they become employed permanently in earning for their families.

The present study has revealed that in most cases, child labourers are twelve years old when they start working. But it was found that girls started even earlier as paid domestic helps. Some households living in extreme poverty on the embankments were forced to send their children to work. Children who joined the workforce later usually had had the chance to have more schooling in comparison to the ones who joined younger.

Existing studies and policies have strongly opposed child labour (Anker et al. 1998; Swaminathan, 1998; Galli 2001; Khaleda2001; Bhattacharya). Galli (2001) found that child labour reduced household income by lowering human capital of the child as the child struggled or failed to manage both schooling and work. Child labourers are more likely to send their children to work as well. In this way, poverty and child labour is passed down from generation to generation. The present study does not fully disagree with Galli but it has revealed that poverty is one of the major reasons why parents send their children to work. But parents’ illiteracy along with some other causes like peasant culture where occupational skills are more valued in agriculture and other crafts (Gold and other smiths), child marriage, lack of childcare, children reluctant to go to school and lack of other opportunities for skills development contributed to the prevalence of child labour. Kate Bird (2007) produced similar findings: “Children are more likely to be child labourers if their parents have limited education and worked as children”.

The study has found that almost all the children who were sent into trades had some literacy and numeracy skills compared to earlier generations. The present study also takes into account the adverse situation of displaced extreme poor households and has explored the rationality of intra household income diversity and sending children into employment. Parents did not send all their children off to earn. Younger siblings tend to have more years of schooling than their elder siblings. It shows that parents diversified their income sources and did not spend all on consumption, rather, they also invested in the future generation.

Some existing studies argued that child labour had some long term negative consequences such that it has slowed down technological progress and reduced the earnings of households compared to children who start working later in their lives (Ankel et al., 1998; Swaminathan, 1998). Child labour has, in some cases, provided a steady income, along with the benefits of other behavioural changes which was beneficial for the poor households. The benefits included maintaining a small family, sending children to school and improving sanitation (Miah, 2013; Ahmed et al., 2011; Hossain and Mahabub, 2004). The present study also showed that, 41% (LAS, 2011) of its population age 15 years to 45 years are illiterate, therefore, the main driving force of the Bangladesh economy is illiterate or in the lower level of literacy. Empirical findings also support the view that not all trade hampered or created barriers for the child labourers' future growth. Children involved in skills-based trades such as carpentry, motor mechanics, welding, masonry, plumbing, tailoring restaurant work and even in traditional smithing trades, had opportunities to increase their earnings and could become entrepreneurs. In this regard, their elementary literacy and numeracy skills helped them to acquire relevant technical skills quickly and supported them to initiate their own enterprises.

Marrying off adolescent girls is the dominant cause of discontinued schooling and girls' entry into household's economically and non-economically productive activities. Without having physical, psychological and minimum life skills, they get into household responsibilities and reproduction in the very early stages of their life. These young women live with difficulties when they enter into a household economy where the in-laws' human and material resources are poor and their husbands' earning power is limited. When they fall into adverse situations associated with health shocks, crop failure or natural hazards like floods, then these young mothers are even more vulnerable than the rest. In such adversities, it becomes more culturally acceptable for them to work outside the home, and acquire new skills.

Some studies have found girls in hazardous working conditions e.g. in bidi factories or in sex work, but even domestic workers face hazards as they are often victims of physical and sexual abuse. Liborio & Ungar (2010) showed both negative and positive consequences for children associated with labour. These varied according to the trades and persons involved with trades. The present study found that some girls migrated to urban areas and worked initially as domestic workers before being employed in the ready made garments sector. They often work to support their parents' households until they are married off.

Another example we found was of a woman who went into ready made garments work when she was thirteen years old and continued this work for 12 years. She was able to return home with acquired skills to operate a sewing machine and good savings. Her only son was studying in grade five. Thus, not all trades are hazardous for children, rather, some trades provide scope for (formal or informal) apprenticeships. For instance, in the ready made garment sector when a girl child enters, she is likely to spend the first six months learning skills and then be contracted as a regular employee with regular

wage. In Bangladesh, where government investment in technical and vocational education skills development is very poor (only 2.7% of secondary school students have a technical and vocational education), the scope for obtaining employment via apprenticeships exists as an alternative social safety net. However, dominant cultural practice is still not to send young girls away for income-earning. Parents are more likely to marry off their girls in their adolescent age. Parents are concerned about their daughters' security and afraid of them losing their virginity before marriage, which will devalue their parents in the eyes of the society. To avoid that social shock they hurriedly marry off their young daughters.

Patriarchal ideology is also reflected through different cultural institutions, for example, in perceptions of girls' education, preferred work for girls, cultural acceptability of when and where a girl can work and how close they can be to men. A lot also depends on their marital status. Some times after marriage, girls' mobility increases with permission from their husbands and in-laws, but often they are not allowed to work as employees in full-time jobs, like RMG jobs. Some times just after marriage, wives are not expected to work outside of their home. It is believed to devalue the social status of the in-laws. If the household requires additional earning, as the husband is disabled or suffering from chronic illness, then the wife may be allowed to work. Even in these cases, it also depends upon the age of the married girls. If the girls are young, then her mobility is also restricted. They then find employment at houses as domestic workers. Girls become more vulnerable when they become mothers, have more children in the family or experience shocks, such as when their husbands (main income earner) become ill.

Studies showed that girl children participate less in agriculture than in service and industry. In comparison with the earlier generation (of this study), the second generation has more literacy skills. In Bangladesh, agriculture is increasingly dependent on modern technologies. In the earlier generations, women played an intensive role in harvesting time, which devalued women's status in the peasant culture. But existing studies and even current Agriculture Policies acknowledge women's responsibilities and praise women's participation. However, there is little evidence for the handover of modern agricultural technologies and skills to the new generation of mothers (IDE, 2012; Hossain et al., 2011; New Agriculture Extension Policy, 1996). Transferring technological skills needed for operating different machinery, utilizing pesticides, fertilizers, irrigation etc. and agricultural entrepreneurship can add more value to women's role in the household economy as well as in the community. This process can be encultured by a new generation of mothers as they are more literate than their earlier generations and thus, more able to adopt these technical skills. The present study showed that among the extreme poor households who were supported by on-farm activities like pumpkin cultivation, adolescent girls (who had dropped out of school) participated in looking after the pumpkin fields and displayed more intellect than their elders when they were asked about sandbar cultivation and the required inputs.

Social safety net programs, like the primary stipend and stipend for girls at secondary level are partially contributing to access primary and lower secondary level education. However, the cost of educating a child, along with other essential child rearing costs, is still difficult to bear by a household which does not have a steady income, such as the family of a daily-wage labourer. In most cases, parents having very low literacy skills are likely to have more children than those with higher levels of education. As a consequence, parents cannot continue with their children's education and (sometimes unwillingly) have to send their children to earn at a very early age (CREATE, 2011).

Parents do not have information about standards of education, nor about the benefits of completing a certain level of basic education and the costs in terms of opportunities lost without that minimum education. Therefore, they cannot take informed decisions for their children. Instead, they accept their children dropping out of school and also fail to measure the costs of early employment.

Since the 1980s, an increasing range of rural non-farm employment opportunities have been created, alongside more traditional employment. These new opportunities are less health and psychosocially hazardous, and offer a wide scope for human resource development through learning and becoming skilled. Children, who drop out of school due to poverty or other social causes, should get proper guidance from social institutions and through alternative educational provision to learn the necessary skills and choose a decent profession. The opportunities are very limited for the extreme poor. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) project has, however, acknowledged the situation and reserved spaces for children who dropped out early and who do not have grade eight education such as victims of river erosion.(ADB, 2008)

Some studies (Mamun, 2008; Liborio, RMC & Ungar, M. 2010) identified the health effects of child labour. This study does not disagree with the existing literature but equally emphasized the lower level of public health awareness and overall improvements in the health sector. Bangladesh is the lowest investor among the South Asian countries in the health sector- per capita \$27 (Asian Scientists, December 2, 2013). It has been revealed that among the extreme poor, of those who suffered from chronic illness and died, one quarter did not seek any health care and 15-20% sought health care support from unskilled health care practitioners (RED, BRAC 2009). In Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and in other formal and informal employment settings, Overseers and Foremen in off-farm and on-farm systems are uninformed about health and occupational safety due to low literacy, limited understanding of precautions and the use of available safety measures. Most of them started their careers as child labourers and therefore, do not perceive child labour as particularly risky. Besides, most employees are reluctant to use various safety measures while working as they are uncomfortable with irregular practices (Akhter et al., 2010; BHIS, 2005; WHO, 2008).

In the light of this study, we make the following recommendations.

- Early adolescents among the extreme poor, particularly in households living on the embankments, need marketable skills that are in demand, in accordance with the ILO Child Labour Policy on apprenticeships.
- The scope of vocational and technical education opportunities along with primary grade progress for the children of victims of river bank erosion must be widened- particularly for girls and made free of charge.
- Adequate stipends need to be provided to the children of geographically marginalized extreme poor, up to grade eight, so that they can manage all educational costs
- Both adolescent girls and boys need to be trained in modern agriculture/use of agricultural equipment so that they can be a trained farmer/ cultivator in their future, thus, adding more value to society
- Skill-based training requires a minimum of eight years of education, but there are already many who have dropped out of school before completing five years of education. Special

curricula and learning methods should be designed for this non-literate or semi- literate section of society.

- Strengthen advocacy activities to educate the community to provide scope and access for girl children to become involved in so-called ‘men’s work’ (e.g. employment in workshops, driving, agriculture, carpentry and catering).

To realize the above recommendations multi stakeholder engagement is needed. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, United Nations Agencies particularly UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO, development partners involved with supporting poverty reduction, and national and international NGOs working for children, along with the civil society could all play major facilitating roles.

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