

Alternative Movement for Resources and Freedom Society (AMRF)

# From Open Fields to Secluded Households: Child Domestic Workers in Bangladesh

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All names in this report are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the children.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS IN THIS STUDY

AMRF Society	Alternative Movement for Resources and Freedom Society
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyer's Association
CDW	Child Domestic Worker
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GD	General Diary
ILO	International Labor Organization
NDWWU	National Domestic Women Workers' Union
NGO	Non Government Organization
RMG	Ready-Made Garment
SIMPOC	Statistical Information and Monitoring Program On Child Labor
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNO	United Nations Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Child labor has a long history in this world. Most countries, regardless of their present wealth, have made use of the worst forms of child labor. Many still do, particularly in the least developed regions of the world. While child labor in the formal sector has received much attention, we know less about child labor in informal industries, such as domestic labor in Bangladesh.

Most domestic workers in Bangladesh are girls and young women, from 6-18 years old, a demographic often described as "the poorest of the poor." These child workers are, purposefully or unintentionally, neglected by society, their unsung deeds quickly forgotten. Moving from a rural environment to a new urban household, the female child workers and the families they leave behind are unaware of the dangers of their new work. Children their age direly need love and affection. All children, regardless of gender, nationality, race, caste, creed or background, are entitled to primary education. Instead, child domestic workers often must endure hunger and inadequate nutrition, lack of attention, lack of recreation, and inadequate payment.

## 2. CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS IN BANGLADESH

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) the term “domestic worker” means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship (ILO 2011). According to the National Domestic Women Workers’ Union in Bangladesh, “those who have been recruited to perform Domestic Work, part-time or full-time, are regarded as a Domestic Worker” (NDWWU 2011:10).

In Bangladesh, child domestic work has until recently been an unchallenged social practice. In this hidden and historically overlooked type of child labor, child workers too easily become victims of abuse. In recent years, awareness of child domestic service has grown and the government has identified it as one of the worst forms of child labor. However, the complex nature of the bonds between the child workers and their employers renders a clear understanding of child domestic labor difficult. Moreover, children, working in the domestic sphere, work in private homes away from the public gaze, making monitoring and regulation veritably impossible.

According to the Bangladesh Labor Law of 2006, the minimum age for adulthood and most work is 18. But this law does not apply to domestic workers. Although Bangladesh has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Bangladesh has not implemented it legislatively or administratively, in violation of Article 4 of this convention.

The latest data from the ILO’s Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labor (SIMPOC) shows that, globally, at least 15.5 million children, age 5 to 17, were engaged in domestic work in 2008. This number represents almost 5% of all economically active children in this age group. A little more than half of them are 15 to 17 years old, while the rest of them, or 7.4 million, are 5 to 14 years old (The Daily Star 2011).

Domestic service commonly begins when children are between six and nine years old (UNICEF 2004: X; Blanchet 2001 [1996]: 101). The average age of child domestic workers have been estimated to vary between 11 and 13 years (Blanchet: 101; Khair 2004: XVI; UNICEF 2004: X). A recent study by Islam (2010) reveals that six to eight year olds constitute .58% of all child domestic workers; eight to ten year olds make up 3.88%; 10-12 year olds make up 12.0%; 12-14 year olds make up 22.14%; 14-16 year olds constitute 32.39%; and 16-18 year olds make up 28.97% of child domestic workers. Girl domestic workers are often dismissed when they reach puberty.

A majority of child domestic workers’ family members remain in rural districts, where these children have been brought up. Typically, they come from extremely poor circumstances, and in many cases take up domestic

work to support their families, although some do so “because they want to escape a miserable home situation, or because they see work in town as a possible step up in life” (Black 2005: 4).

Islam (2010) found that 88% of 849 child domestic workers interviewed for his study were female. The multitude of tasks performed is typically regarded as women’s work, principal among which are cleaning, washing dishes, mopping the floor, and serving food. Sometimes children are engaged in childcare, cooking, fetching water, taking care of the elderly, food shopping and running errands. The nature and the quantity of tasks is somewhat socially defined but is ultimately determined by the employer. Boys more commonly work outside the house. Completing the household chores often requires long working hours, working at night, and confinement to the premises of the employer.

Child workers’ secluded domesticity combined with broad political neglect has made them “the invisibles.” These children are beyond the reach of regulations. The employer, who maintains constant access to the children’s body and labour by sharing their social and physical space, is a screen between the household domain, where they reside, and the outside world, keeping them in close confinement. Though physical necessities such as food, clothing, and housing are often provided to children, their psycho-social wellbeing is largely disregarded by the employer. “Nobody understands me,” the children often lament, despairing at being unseen and ignored. They have nobody with whom they can share their feelings.

Only extreme and violent instances of physical abuse may become public knowledge, either through the media or a neighbourhood network. This limited exposure has created an image of these children as helpless and physically abused creatures. Based on this image, priority concerns in the past have mainly been “treatment of the child’s physical body,” such as the provision of sleeping space, clothes and proper nutrition. But children are not robots. Simply meeting their basic physical needs does not ensure their wellbeing.

Public knowledge about the emotional deprivations, desires, and future aspirations of these children is limited. Therefore the aim of this study is to reveal and examine the perceptions of child domestic workers, their employers, family and other concerned individuals and organizations in order to foster a broader socio-economic and political understanding of their lives.

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main focus of the study is to reveal:

- The root causes of child domestic work in Bangladesh.
- Working conditions measured against the standards of ILO conventions ratified by the Government of Bangladesh.
- Bangladeshi child domestic workers' access to basic human rights, including education, health, and leisure.
- Domestic worker sourcing patterns.
- Child domestic workers' understanding and perception of their own lives.
- Gaps in current legislation, policies and laws necessary to protect child domestic workers in Bangladesh.

The purpose of the study is to create awareness of the plight of child domestic workers and pressure policy makers to formulate effective national laws regarding domestic work.



## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Methods**

Semi-structured interviews was the primary data collection method, which allowed for the generation of in-depth accounts and ensured that the voices, knowledge and perspectives of the child domestic workers could be captured within their own frame of reference.

One focus group discussion was conducted with eight people engaged in different child labour projects of the ILO and non-governmental organizations, in order to explore their perceptions and attitudes towards child domestic work and their suggestions.

The World Health Organization research guidelines and standard procedures for ensuring participant confidentiality and safety were adopted (WHO 2001). Verbal consent was obtained from each participant prior to conducting the interview.

Most of the interviews were conducted separately, outside of the house where the child workers are employed. However, the interviewers were forced to conduct two interviews in presence of the employers.

Secondary data was collected from study reports, reports of national and international organizations, websites, and review of national laws and policies.

### **4.2 Sampling**

A purposive sampling technique was followed to get 15 in-depth interviews. Samples were drawn from at least three different locations of Dhaka City on the basis of sex, age and types of job to represent the workforce in the household activities. A focus group discussion was held with concerned individuals from the ILO, the Bangla Academy, the NDWWU, Care Bangladesh, and AMRF.

### **4.3 Data analysis**

To enhance reliability, the researchers kept detailed written notes of the interviews and took careful notes of the interview context. Given the limited scope of this study, a descriptive rather than theory-building approach was adopted for the analysis stage. The raw transcribed data was coded and categorized into themes and headings.

#### **4.4 Limitations**

This research is limited by its scale and scope, as data has been generated from a small sample population from 15 households in one area of Bangladesh, Dhaka City.

It is also important to note that given the sensitivity of the research topic, some participants may not have felt at ease disclosing the full details of their status and experiences. Moreover, it was a challenge to get the children out of their employers' house. One interview was conducted through the barred balcony. Another interview was conducted in the presence of the employer, and a six-year-old girl domestic worker was severely punished when her employer found out she had participated in an interview.

It is acknowledged that the data generated from this study was heavily influenced by the relationship between researchers and participants. However, the findings may be generalizable insofar as they confirm theories and concepts from other studies; they may also advance understanding of a previously under-explored area.

Despite these limitations we are confident that we have captured a range of perspectives on child domestic work, and generated a preliminary understanding of the working condition of the Bangladeshi child domestic workers and violations of the universal rights of the children in this sector.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1 Causes of child domestic work

#### 5.1.1 SOCIO ECONOMIC REALITY

A broader economic and societal shift is evident in the rural part of Bangladesh, regarded as a major cause of migration to the capital, Dhaka. This migration is often spurred by the death of a head of household or loss of land due to flooding, a cyclone, or droughts. The study found that one of the major causes of child domestic work is extreme poverty.

Fatema is mute by birth, but not deaf. She explained everything with sign language and written sentences:

*“I’m 15 years old. I’m the youngest of three siblings. My parents barely earn enough to feed two mouths. I never agreed to work but was emotionally blackmailed by my parents. I’ve been working here for a month. Through my years in primary school, I was found well versed in Bengali, mathematics and English. I do not know how to use sign language appropriately hence I face a lot of problems expressing myself. My employer makes me do the dishes, laundry, and cut vegetable. I’m not maltreated but she scolds me every now and then. There is no unequal distribution of food and I’m allowed to sleep on the bed. Being optimistic about life is my motto and I only want to go back home and continue my secondary school.”*

Khadeja’s family is also very poor. She explains:

*“I am an 11 year old domestic child worker and I’ve been working for three years at my employer’s house. I’m the third one out of five siblings. My monthly income is 1,000 (US \$12) and my father’s is Tk 2,000 (US \$24). My father is a day laborer and my mother is a housewife. My elder sister is also a domestic worker and my brother works in an industry. I am a primary school drop-out; I studied til my second grade.”*

This study reveals child domestic workers’ monthly pay ranges from Tk 500-2,000 (US \$6 – US \$24), consistent with the findings in Islam’s study (2010). Nearly one-third (31.8%) of the children he interviewed are the primary breadwinners for their families; none of the children’s household income was more than Tk 4,000 (US \$48) per month; 30.27% children reported that their gross family earning was Tk 2,000-3,000 (US \$24-US \$36) per month; and 27.79% of the children said their families had no consistent monthly income. Islam’s study also shows that average family size of the child workers is six and a half. All the families in his study lived below the poverty line. An ILO study from 2004 found even lower wages for Bangladeshi domestic workers: an average

of Tk 223.60 (US \$2.73) per month (Khair 2004: XIX).

These female child domestic workers are the principal money-yielding sources for their families. Many of the respondents state that their parents forced them to go to work because they needed the money.

*"I'm paid Tk 500 (US \$6) monthly which is duly taken away by my parents"* (Rojina, eight years old).

*"I was forced by my parents to work in a foreign home for their daily bread. I was told I would be paid Tk 500 (US \$6) per month"* (Rojina, 15 years old; she does not know for certain how much she is paid).

*"My parents forced me to Dhaka City to work as house help"* (Khadeja, 11 years old).

*"The job I had initially was for eight months. I willingly agreed to work myself considering my family's dire need. The Tk 2,000 (US \$24) I'm paid monthly, I keep to give to my family. When I fall sick, I try not to say anything [to my employer] but try to heal myself with a few known medications"* (Rijia, 15 years old).

There are many possible arrangements between employers and families of domestic workers for the reward or benefit of the children and their parents. However, there is typically an agreement for a fixed monthly payment to the parents. Another common arrangement is a fixed sum for a specified duration of time that service is to be provided. In this case, a part of the salary is often paid as a form of a credit to the parents that must be worked off by the child, a form of indentured labour. Sometimes a combination of different forms of arrangements exists, and children and their parents sometimes receive extra benefits for the services rendered by the child. Unfortunately, it is also common that payments and benefits are held back by the employer for a certain period of time or not paid at all.

This is how the children describe the economic arrangements between themselves, their families, and their employers:

*"I am a 14 year old child. I'm the third out of five siblings. My youngest brother also works for the same family. My parents received Tk 10,000 (US \$122) in advance to keep me at my employers for one whole year. Despite this contract, I yearn to see my family again after working for four uninterrupted months. It was discussed among us (her family and her employer) that I would be paid Tk 1,000 (US \$12) monthly"* (Rahima, 14 years old).

*"There is never any money with me and I've no idea how much I'm paid. My mother and grandmother take*

*my money away*" (Yesmin, six years old).

*"I'm paid Tk 500 (US \$6) monthly which is duly taken away by my parents"* (Rehana, eight years old).

### 5.1.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Most of the respondents noted that their parents have been ensured that their marriages will be taken care of. Khadeja, 11 years old, observes, *"My parents live on the false hope that one fine day my employers will arrange my marriage."*

When recruiting these vulnerable children, especially girls, the employers promise their families that their children's marriage and dowry payment will be ensured. Many employers do not fulfill this promise. The uninformed parents consent to what the employers advise and send off their young ones to a foreign environment where the children will not only stay all hours of the day but also perform almost all the services for the employer's family. Being able to get daughters married on time and with the payment of dowry is a crucial part of these people's lives and culture. The child domestic workers are taught that settling down with a good husband and starting a family is the panacea to all their hardships and their parents' hardships. A good husband who earns enough can bear the economic burden of his wife's family. The scenario is the same all over the country in almost any home that houses a female child domestic worker.

Marriage is a major concern for about half of the child domestic workers we interviewed. They adamantly believe that once they are married their life will be better than it is now. Being able to pay the dowry is another reason for working in a household. When they are recruited, the employers promise their parents that their children's marriage and dowry will be taken care of.

Rojina, 15 years old, says: *"When I'm married I will be happy and I'll try to keep my husband very happy too. My employer will bear expenses of my wedding and dowry."*

Most of them receive their wage monthly as promised but, with just one exception, it is taken away by their parents or kept aside by their employers. Fully 95% of the respondents said that they had no money. They told our researchers that they are working to help relieve their families of the burden of paying their dowry. The employers promised the parents they would ensure the children's marriage and pay the required dowry, and felt that bearing the burden of sheltering and feeding the children was ample compensation for the little help around the house the children provide. Paying the child on a monthly basis is more than a blessing to the child's parents. This is the mind-set of the employers and the child domestic workers' parents.

Rahima, 14 years old, says: *“My employer gave my family Tk 10,000 (US \$122) for a one year contract. I have not seen any monthly payment to me or my parents ever since I came here.”*

Some of the respondents said that their brothers have been sent to school but they have been sent to work. Families often regard their female children as a burden. Parents do not feel inclined to invest in them, and the problem of the dowry can be solved by sending the children to work.

In Bangladesh, women are predisposed to dependency; they are accustomed to having a male caretaker such as their father or husband and are traditionally expected to remain in the “protected” household sphere. In the rural areas, where many families experience extreme food scarcity, women and girls do work outside the home out of necessity. But, especially for unmarried adolescent girls, this is often not socially respectable. Therefore, for some parents, their girls’ work in a middle class home means that their girls are protected. Usually female child domestic workers have very limited opportunities to meet people outside the home in which they work. Employers have a similar rationale, legitimating the practice of locking children in the house by citing the risks of the streets for adolescent girls (Jensen 2007: 2; UNICEF 2004: 66-7).

The problem of domestic child labor is deep-rooted and complex in Bangladesh’s socio-cultural context and requires comprehensive mitigation strategies.

### 5.1.3 SOURCING PATTERNS

Migration creates an indispensable bond between rural and urban areas for many families. Richer families living in the city often have family members and land in a rural district. Poor and rich people alike are linked by family, kinship, and employment bonds, including those of domestic workers. There is a sense of dependency embedded within these networks; it is not uncommon for former employees to ask favours or money from a richer family.

Mita describes these rural and urban connections:

*“I’m eight years old and I’m motherless. My father remarried and I have two younger stepsisters. My father lives in a village in Comilla and works as a utensil maker. I used to read in first grade in the year 2010 and it has been one whole year since I’ve started working in my employer’s home. One of the employer’s relative brought me here.”*

When a domestic worker is needed, members of richer families commonly ask poorer families in their village if they know a child who can work in their house. People in the village are well informed about families that

struggle and suffer economic scarcity and direct inquiring employers to the parents in these families. Hoque (1995) found that child workers' families "sent them to work only when there was an acute economic hardship." This is often true, but as Rehana, eight years old, explains, there are exceptions:

*"I was brought here by my aunt. She knew the employer very well. But my family was scared of sending me to the city. No one, not even my parents, wanted me to work in a foreign home; neither did they need the money. The whole idea of my working anywhere was my aunt's. One day, taking the advantage of an opportune moment when my father was away, my aunt approached my mother and took me to this employer's house. I cried aloud. I didn't want to go. But no one listened to me, not even my mother because she believes my aunt."*

Sometimes there are even hired recruiters that contact children and families directly. They act as middlemen between the urban and rural areas, the rich and the poor. This recruitment process of domestic workers also demonstrates the importance of social and patronage networks. Rahima, 14 years old, explains:

*"A lady I knew from my village introduced my family to my employer. My family, considering our impoverished livelihood, forced me to start the job, which was to be my first employment."*

## 6. WORKING CONDITIONS

### 6.1 Type and nature of work

#### HAZARDOUS AND EXTENSIVE WORK

As revealed in Islam's study (2010), along with regular domestic chores child workers must perform a number of hazardous tasks such as washing and ironing heavy clothes, boiling water, operating machines for pumping water, lifting and carrying heavy things, and going shopping by crossing a busy road. He also noted that 39% of his total respondents carry out hazardous work on a daily basis. Massaging the male head of the family is regarded as a part of the household chores. Islam (2010) in his study found that 218 out of 849 child workers provide massages on a regular basis, some of which amount to sexual abuse.

The children we interviewed complained about long hours of work and a range of hazardous activities:

*"I am scared to boil water in big heavy utensils. Once a huge bowl of boiling water scalded my leg. It hurt me for days. My employer yelled at me for dropping the bowl and said that it served me right. She put some burn cream on my leg and said that it was no big deal" (Tamanna, 13 years old).*

*"I tediously work for 10-12 hours daily cooking, doing the dishes and laundry, ironing, cleaning and so on. Sometimes I carry water from the water tank in the ground. It hurts my back and hands when I lift the heavy buckets full of water up five floors (10 flights of stairs). When the electricity runs out, the water pump doesn't work so there's no water in the kitchen and bathroom. This is when I am forced to fetch pails of water for all purposes like dish washing, drinking, bathroom use and so on and so forth" (Khadeja, 11 years old).*

*"I wake up at 6 am and go to bed at 12 am. My daily chores include sweeping and wiping the floors and stairs (the building I work in is 6 floors high), doing the dishes and laundry, opening the main gate downstairs, switching on machines, little bit of shopping, cleaning the toilet and so on. In the morning I got to finish lots of works. I help to prepare breakfast, and I eat two breads (hand-made bread called 'ruti') for myself in a hurry. The same situation arises during lunch and dinner time; I always eat last" (Moyna, six years old).*

The chores sometimes even include carrying out unethical activities. In Islam's study (2010) nearly 40% children mention that they are made to steal, buy or sell drugs or pornography, act in pornographic videos, or do other undue work. In our 15 interviews, we did not encounter this kind of work.



## FOOD AND NUTRITION

The quantity of food given to the child domestic workers appears acceptable in most cases and the frequency of their meals also seems adequate. However, for the most part they eat empty calories, such as large amounts of rice, and nobody monitors if the children receive a balanced diet with adequate nutrition. Half of the respondents said they are fed only after the employer's family has completed their breakfast, lunch or dinner. Most of the time it is the child domestic worker who prepares the meal, hungry, only to be fed late herself. Two of the respondents said that they eat the leftovers of a guest's meal. This is unhygienic and degrading. One of the interviewees mentioned that she may be called to work while she eats. She then has to stop eating and tend to her employer's call.

According to Kanta, 16 years old: *"When the guests leave any food, they tell me to finish it. They don't give me the freshly made food then."*

Anika, 15 years old, says: *"When my employer's toddler throws away some food he dislikes she tells me to eat it."*

All the children we interviewed were stunted and malnourished and looked much younger than their actual age.

## CLOTHING

The clothing of the children was a sad sight to behold. A small minority said that they are happy with the clothes they get and feel they are to have any clothes to wear at all. Two of the respondents reported that the clothes they are given are the ones the employer's children grow out of; those old and tattered clothes are altered and hemmed then handed over to the child worker. Eid brings them new clothes and they wait excitedly for the auspicious day. Anika, 15 years old, says, "I wear the frocks the employer's daughters grow out of"

## MEDICAL CARE

Medical treatments for the child domestic workers we interviewed are mainly prescribed by the employers. Usually the employers provide the same medicine for any kind of ailment. Most of the children had not visited a doctor in more than 15 months. Running certain medical tests is expensive and the employers find every possible way to avoid a visit to the doctor when their child domestic worker falls ill.

Nishat, 12 years old, explains: *"I asked them if I could see a doctor for a pain I had in my head for several days. They told me not to fuss about it and just take a Paracetamol. The pain still persists and it aches now and then."*

One of our researchers talked with a six-year-old child, Moyna, who was sick.

Interviewer: *Your hands feel really warm. Do you have a fever?*

Moyna: *Yes I am suffering from fever for a week.*

Interviewer: *Did you see doctor?*

Moyna: *No, my employer (lady) gave me some medicine.*

Interviewer: *Is she a doctor?*

Moyna: *No she is a house wife.*

Interviewer: *Have you ever been taken to a doctor by your employer for illness?*

Moyna: *No, never.*

Rojina, 15 years old, says, *"Yes, I was gravely ill once and I was taken to a hospital."* Her female employer interrupts rudely to make a point to the researcher: *"Not just any hospital, the most reputed one in the capital, Square Hospital. We took her there!"*

## LEISURE AND RECREATION

Most children we interviewed had no leisure or recreation. The ones who went to school used their free time studying as much as they could. A number of respondents said they did not have the time to relax. All they can do is sleep when there is no work because they are so exhausted all the time. The rest of the children said that they watch soap operas with their employers and it depends on the employers which channel they watch.

The children told us:

*I'm not allowed to watch television (Moyna, six years old).*

*When it comes to recreation, my employer does not like me talking to anyone, not even the other maids in the neighborhood. I prefer talking to boys but they don't allow it because they do not allow adult talk. Watching television is allowed but I'm not allowed to choose programs. They prefer programs about games or recent affairs. I occasionally read the newspapers or magazines (Tamanna, 13 years old).*

Most of the children we interviewed said that they are restricted from communicating with people outside

the employer's family, including neighbors, guests, boys, and other maids. , Fatema, 15 years old, says, "They don't let me communicate with their neighbors or stay on the terrace for too long." The few children who are allowed to interact with others seem happy about it and consider this an act of generosity.

## 6.2 Psychological torment

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The Story of Parvin:

*I'm 15 years old and I'm an ex-domestic worker. I worked for the same family but in different households and different places of Bangladesh. I have never been to school.*

*Growing up in the vast fields of the rural Rangpur (in the northern part of Bangladesh) one can compare my confinement to house-arrest when I started working for the family. I grew up into adolescence without the guidance of a mother and without the protection of a father, although both my parents are alive. I was made to do all possible household chores including the cooking. When they found me at fault or making any mistake, I was scolded bitterly, slapped, kicked, cuffed or even hit with a spatula or anything in reach. I was even called to work when I was in the middle of my lunch or dinner break or when I slept in the middle of the night. The first born of the employer's family was baby-sat entirely by me. Other than breast feeding, I did practically everything to bring the baby boy up. When my employer's family went on trips, they made me carry excessively heavy luggage. I was always physically abused by my female employer.*

*Once I was gravely ill and when the kind-hearted male member of the family admitted me to a hospital in the capital, the female employer somehow brought me back home to renew her torture. All the household chores were still being managed by me.*

*I secretly made many attempts to escape back home, but the employer followed me back to my village home and convinced my parents to send me back to work.*

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It appears that life outside the employers' apartment is non-existent for child domestic workers. Consequently, most research on child domestic workers has merely analyzed the working situation within the employer's household, ignoring the fact that child domestic workers act in a wider social world. As Tamanna, 13 years old says:

*“This Eid when I return home for holiday I wish to resume my education. I want to become a doctor when I grow up. ....my mother comes to visit me sometimes; we travel together for fun.”*

To place the children at the centre of analysis, therefore, requires acknowledging their full human nature. Only then can we understand their hurts and needs, future aspirations and resources, frustrations and despairs that have shaped their lives.

All the respondents of this study migrated from a rural area to the city, leaving behind their families in the process. Some of them revealed how much they miss their place of origin:

*“I feel confined within the tiny apartment and yearn to run in the wide open fields again. I miss my school, friends and my village”* (Rahima, 14 years old).

*“When children of my age come to visit the employer’s family, I feel the contrast between their lives and mine. I want to return to my family and village. I’m allowed to sleep on the bed and there is no unequal distribution of food. I know that I’m better off here than at my parents’, yet I miss my mother and just want to be beside her at any cost”* (Samreen, eight years old).

All respondents are frustrated living with the families of their respective employers’. Although a few respondents have mentioned that they like working as it kills their time, they all said directly or indirectly that they are unhappy and desperately want to go home to their own families.

### **6.3 Bonded labour**

*“My employer told me that if I’m to leave now my family would have to pay Tk 20,000 (US \$244). I have no money myself and I don’t know if there actually is any money being delivered at all. I miss school, my friends and the village. Here I work from six in the morning till midnight”* (Rahima, 14 years old).

Our study reveals that the working situation of the children is similar to slavery. The child workers are living in the employer’s house and are expected to be available at all times to carry out various tasks. As there is no physical separation between the work place and the living space, a child’s reality is heavily influenced by this confinement. It is a common practice to lock girl domestics in the house when left alone.

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## The Story of Moyna and her Interviewer

*Moyna is a six-year-old domestic worker. She has no father and her mother has remarried. She has a step-brother as a result. Her grandmother, who is old and earns very little money, kept her for a while. Moyna returned to her mother when she was five years old, but could not stay there for too long. Her step-father beat her without any reason. It was her grandmother who sent her to work ten months ago at her employer.*

*She never has any money with her and she has no idea how much she is paid. Her mother and grandmother take her money away. She has not contacted her elder sister in a long time. She has never been to school. The interviewer first met her when she was cleaning the staircase. She said she wakes up at six in the morning and goes to bed at midnight. Her daily chores include sweeping and wiping the floors and stairs (the building she works in is 6 floors high), doing the dishes and laundry, opening the main gate downstairs, switching on machines, a little bit of shopping, cleaning the toilet and so on. After she helps to prepare breakfast she eats two breads (ruti) for herself in a hurry. The same situation arises during lunch and dinner time; Moyna always eats last. She is not allowed to watch television and is made to wear old clothes (she is indifferent about it though). She is anything but happy.*

*If she makes mistakes, she is throttled, slapped, or abused verbally. Talking to anyone is not allowed. All the experiences she has had are bitter. The only good memories are the ones she has with her grandmother. When she asked what she wants, she replied she wants to return to her village and play like any other child.*

*The researcher was touched by Moyna's story and ardently wanted to help her. She, the researcher, looked for a suitable school to send her to. When she informed the employer, she threatened to file a case against the researcher or call the police for attempted kidnapping of their hired help.*

*Moyna was interviewed three times. The first time she had had fever and cough, and her employer had apparently beat her up. The second time, her employer had prescribed antibiotics even though she is not a doctor.*

*The interviewer contacted Moyna a third time to rescue her and to send her to school. But her employer found out, beat her brutally and locked her up for 24 hours without any food. A few days later the researcher met her on the street while shopping. She was terrified to talk to the researcher and frequently looked around. However, the researcher convinced her that no one was around. Moyna said that her employer had threatened her and that if she communicated with any of the researchers, she would be killed. The researcher gave Moyna her phone number and told her that if she had any news or if she had no food, she could call her. She even gave her some money that Moyna hid within her belongings. The employer soon recovered the cash and beat*

her again. The employer also threatened the researcher, saying she would call the police if she tried talking to Moyna again. This was the reason why the interviewer stopped all connections with the family and Moyna. One day the reporter met Moyna in the staircase but she seemed distraught and did not utter a single word.

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A domineering female employer is enough to keep a small child worker enslaved and intimidated in a household. The interview with Rojina was wholly monitored by the employer who stood close by without moving an inch throughout the time the researchers spoke to the interviewee. It seemed that most of the questions were answered by the employer herself and she gave her version of the answer after the child was done speaking. Many questions were left unanswered, leaving Mousumi staring endlessly at the researcher.

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The Story of Rojina:

*I'm 15 years old. (Immediately her employer states that she is more than 16 years old). I've been working for four and a half years in the household, my first job. I was forced by my parents to work in a foreign home for our daily bread. My monthly wage is Tk 500 (US \$6), which is duly deposited in the bank by my employer.*

*I don't have any money and I know that my dowry will be soon taken care of. Once I fell very ill and I was taken to the doctor. (The employer interrupted to say that she was taken to the reputed Square Hospital of the capital.)*

*My active working hours range from 7:30 am to 12:30 am. (Her employer cut in to point out that she does sleep during the afternoon hours). The chores I do are cleaning, dusting, laundry, little bit of shopping and so on except cooking, which is taken care of by an elderly maid.*

*I have my breakfast at 10 am or 11 am. Then I have my lunch at 3 pm or 4 pm. Finally, my dinner is served right before I sleep. I spend my free time either watching television or playing with the employer's toddler. I always sleep in the room where there is a female person of the house, and it is not on the bed but on the floor. Eid brings me good new clothes and red is my favorite color. If I'm ever given the chance to study, I definitely will. When I fall sick I do not work. On an annual basis, I visit my village twice because of Eid. Talking to anyone I want is allowed.*

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## 6.4 Abuse and Harassment

On August 17, 2011, The Daily Star, a large daily newspaper, reported that 6.6% of boys and 15.3% of girls, nine to seventeen years old, face sexual harassment in Bangladesh. The rate of abuse for child domestic workers is even worse.

Islam's study (2010) shows that a large number of child domestic workers are abused every now and then. Some 67% of the children in his study said that they are the victims of at least one type of abuse, verbal, physical, mental or sexual. Almost all the children, 95%, said that they are verbally abused. Some 73% of the children said that they are physically abused and 17% said they are sexually abused. Almost all, or 95%, of the children who said they were abused said they were abused by the employers; 30% by the other family members; and 1% by relatives. More than half of the children, 52%, said they are abused regularly.

Our study reveals that safety in the children's work place is a problem to ponder upon. One of the respondents vividly described her feelings of insecurity when her employer, who is a female divorcee, brings home her male friends and colleagues. She reported that a few of the men tried to make sexual advances towards her. Another respondent said that she sleeps with one of the female members of the employer's family but on the floor. The rooms they sleep in at night do not make them safe and secure from sexual assault.

Verbal, mental, physical or sexual abuse is a common problem for nearly every child domestic worker we interviewed. It is worse when the child is a female one. For any indiscretion they are slapped, kicked, punched, pulled by their hair or addressed in vulgar and obscene terms.

Parvin, 15 years old, says, *"Apa (female employer) shouted at me for little things all the time. She hit me on my head to wake me up. I was always severely beaten up by her and wept almost every day as far as I can remember."*

Rahima, 14 years old, says, *"She brings home her male friends who try to touch me every now and then. I don't like the way they touch me. Even their look makes me uncomfortable."*

Tamanna, 13 years old, says, *"Verbal abuse is now a part and parcel of my life and I want to flee from this somehow."*

The young girls in our study who work as hired help with little or no security are particularly susceptible to sexual abuse. Rahima, who is 14 years old, is uncomfortable with the male friends and relatives who visit her employer. She understands that the men try to make sexual advances towards her. She relates:

*“They touch me when my employer goes to another room. I don’t like the way they touch me. Even their look makes me uncomfortable. Some of them come to the kitchen frequently without any reason and touch me.”*



## 7. RHETORIC AND REALITY

The domestic work sector is considered an informal employment sector and is not addressed in national labor law. Labor law therefore impedes, rather than supports, domestic workers' rights.

The recent guidelines, put forward as a High Court verdict (Annex 1) and Draft Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy-2011 (Annex 2), have been lauded as huge break-throughs; yet, the progress is limited. The draft policy paper does not present a solution for real life situations where rights must exist not just on paper, but also be enforceable. On the one hand, the draft policy paper proposes domestic workers be covered by the Bangladesh Labor Law of 2006. On the other hand, it stops short of proposing formal enforcement of this law in the case of domestic workers. Instead of the formal legal system, the new policy draft suggests an alternative dispute resolution process led by local elected members, non-elected members, and the administrative officers. In this kind of informal arrangement the power holders (the employers) are likely to dominate the disadvantaged (the domestic workers, both children and adults) who lack power and money.

Furthermore, the law does not allow criminal offenses, including physical torture, sexual harassment, and forced or indentured labor, to be resolved through alternative dispute resolution, but only through a the formal judiciary process. While it is preferable to deal with problems of the domestic workers in labour courts and criminal courts, there is nobody who can assist the domestic workers, whether children or adult, through this process. The members of the alternative dispute resolution boards are not available for this purpose.

When it comes to addressing child domestic workers' rights, the situation becomes even more complicated. It is difficult to see children as citizens in political and socioeconomic terms. While child citizenship can be well expressed in ethical terms by recognizing their social status as domestic workers, this study shows that the domestic child workers' social status is poorly understood. They are virtually enslaved with no recognition of their basic human rights as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This argument leads to the question: Are the child domestic workers in Bangladesh being treated as citizens of this country? If the answer is affirmative, how so?

All our respondents said that neither their parents nor their employers care about their opinion or choice. They do not have any control over their income and they have no right to raise their voices against any injustice they suffer. So, do these children, who are treated inhumanely, have the right to make a claim against the perpetrator or against the state? The law of the nation allows only adults to claim their rights. Minors must present their claim through their parents or legal guardians. However, citizens do have the right to inform the authorities and file complaints of human rights violations perpetrated on others. Therefore, all citizens have a role in

protecting the rights of the children employed in the domestic periphery.

To enact the Bangladesh Labor Law in a real life situation is something more than just having it written on paper. One of the interviewers of this study tried to help one of the child workers, six-year-old Moyna. After several failed attempts to rescue her, the interviewer ended up at the local police station. The interviewer simply wanted to make it possible for Moyna to go to school and to free her from part of her enslavement. But the police declined help. They explained that only in cases of victims bearing marks of severe bodily torture could they intervene.

The experience of abolishing child workers from the readymade garment sector indicates that unless there is a strong pressure group, acting exclusively for protecting the right holders, it is hard to ensure the effective implementation of the child labor policy. In the export oriented formal sector, the non-tariff barriers on trade and international consumer pressure groups are catalyst to implement the child labour policy. In other formal and informal non-export oriented sectors child labor remains a problem. One of the major causes is the lack of institutional capacity of the government; another cause is the lack of citizens' awareness and understanding.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Islam's study (2010) shows that there are curative, preventive, and developmental approaches to stop domestic child work.

According to some, domestic child work should be stopped immediately as it is inhumane and it has a wide range of negative impacts on the children. Others think it should be stopped gradually. If it is stopped there will be a vacuum in the society because people are accustomed to domestic child labor, and many families who depend on this income will suffer. Yet others believe domestic child work should continue (Islam 2010).

Almost all respondents in this study yearn for their home and resuming their education. Considering this fact—that is, considering how domestic child laborers themselves feel about their lives—we must try our level best to immediately stop hiring anyone under the age of 18 for household help. Yet, given the socio-economic and cultural reality it is hard to stop domestic child labor unless comprehensive preventative and curative measures are adopted. The next section proposes some alternatives essential for abolishing child domestic work.

### 8.1 Ensuring Universal Primary Education

Four out of fifteen child domestic workers in this study have never been to school and all of them, except one, are more than eight years old. The children who attended primary school had to drop out of school in order to work. Only one of them tries to regularly attend school for two hours at mid-day, but she sometimes misses classes because of her work-load. Some of the children we interviewed want to grow up as educated citizens and help others who face similar circumstances; they adamantly believe that if they are given the chance they can do it.

Nishat, 12 years old, says: *"I've never been to school. I wish someday I will be able to."*

Parvin, 15 years old, says: *"Maybe if I knew how to read and write I could be engaged in a better job."*

The various initiatives by the Government of Bangladesh to ensure universal primary education have significantly increased enrollment, yet the dropout rate remains as high as 10% (Government of Bangladesh 2009). We urge the government to ensure 100% enrollment of girls and to prevent them from dropping out.

The National Child Policy 2010 proposes many alternatives such as employment opportunities for the poor parents. However, we argue that poverty might not be the only reason parents send children to do household

work; the cultural mindset and gender stereotypes remain the greatest obstacles to abolishing domestic child labor. Therefore, we urge a massive campaign in order to establish the concept of domestic child labor as a crime and a nuisance and to bring to light the fact that children have equal rights to other citizens of the country.

## **8.2 Citizen Awareness**

We recommend a nationwide campaign with non-governmental organizations and other interested bodies be immediately launched in order to stop under-age children (below 18 years old) in domestic work and in other formal and informal industries. The campaign message should stress the values of children's rights and the potential loss of human capital through child labor. The campaign should mark any person who hires any child as a bad citizen of the country and the society. Parents should be informed that their children, especially their girls, are not money-yielding machines or social burdens; rather, their children have certain rights and they have a future role in the country. Therefore, one of the expected goals of the proposed campaign is to create social pressure on the parents of child workers and on their employers.

The joint campaign should also strongly convey that employing children is not a legitimate way of helping poor people with an income opportunity; rather it is a crime. The government should be responsible for ensuring the economic wellbeing for the property-stricken population. The general perception of the parents of the child workers is that their children are safer at their employer's than at their own homes, but that has been proven wrong. The children are much more vulnerable to physical, sexual and mental abuse employed in other people's homes than living in their own homes. We urge that this dark part of domestic child labor be communicated to the general population.

Children should have the right to make complaints against their parents, their employers, and others if they feel that their rights are being violated. The state should develop a mechanism that enables children to attain their legal rights in an easy, non-discriminatory, safe and cost-free manner.

Finally, non-governmental organizations and other interested bodies should put pressure on the government in order to hold the government accountable for ensuring children's rights.

## 9. ANNEXES

### 9.1 ANNEX1: Writ Petition No. 8769 of 2010: A High-court verdict on abolishing domestic child work/labour

The new Children Policy of 2011 defines a child as anyone up to the age of 18. At long last the definition of a child has come in line with the definition as recognized internationally. We note that the Labor Act, 2006 defines a child in section 2 sub-section (63) as anyone below the age of 14 years and section 2(8) defines anyone between the ages of 14 to 18 years as an adolescent. This can easily be amended so as not to conflict with the general definition of child. At this juncture, we may simply point out that for the sake of uniformity a child should be defined in all laws as anyone below the age of 18 years, and, if necessary, the restriction or concession to allow children of a certain age to work may be defined in the Labor Act as has been done. Therefore, children up to the age of 14 may not be engaged in doing work as mentioned in section 34 of the Labor Act. The law is relaxed to some extent by section 44 which provides that a child who has reached the age of 12 years may be engaged in light work, if it does not harm his health or if his education is not hampered. Section 44 of the Labor Act provides as follows:

Exception in certain cases of employment of children:

(1) A child who has completed twelve years of age may be employed in such light work as not to endanger his health and development or interfere with his education: Provided that the hours of work of such child, where he is school-going, shall be so arranged that they do not interfere with his school attendance.

(2) Children who have crossed twelve years may be engaged in light work only and there is emphasis on education of the working child, which cannot be hindered in any way. Section 34 also provides that an adolescent, i.e. a child between the age of 14 and 18 years, may be engaged to do work so long he has a certificate from a registered medical practitioner certifying his fitness. We are of the view that the same provision should apply to children working in the domestic sector. We note from the draft of Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy, 2010 that similar provision is embodied in the draft policy. This, in our view, is commensurate with the provision as mentioned above in section 44 of the Labor Act. The National Child Labor Elimination Policy 2010 recognizes the provisions and definitions of child and child labor within the Labor Act, 2006. We note that in general the National Child Labor Elimination Policy 2010 contains very many beneficial provisions which, if given effect to, would ameliorate the situation of child workers within the country. It is recommended in the said Policy that there will be a focal Ministry/focal point dealing with matters of working children recognizing that such supervision has not been allocated to any Ministry. It further recommends the establishment of Child Labor Units and National Child Labor Welfare Council.

The draft Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy 2010 also contains very many beneficial provisions

including, in the case of children between the ages of 14 and 18, the provisions for having a contract with the employer and the parents and guardian of the child giving details of the type of engagement, the wages, working hours, rest and recreation time, arrangement for education, type of work, board and lodging etc.

1. In order to make the provision and concept of compulsory primary education to be meaningful, we direct the government to take immediate steps to prohibit employment of children up to the age of 12 from any type of employment, including employment in the domestic sector, particularly with the view to ensuring that children up to the age of 12 attend school and obtain the basic education which is necessary as a foundation for their future life.
2. Education/training of domestic workers aged between 13 and 18 must be ensured by the employers either by allowing them to attend educational or vocational training institutes or by alternative domestic arrangements suitable to the concerned worker.
3. We urge the government to implement the provisions mentioned in the National Elimination of Child Labor Policy 2010 published in the gazette dated 08.04.2010. In particular, we strongly recommend the establishment of a focal Ministry/focal point, Child Labor Unit and National Child Labor Welfare Council in order to ensure implementation of the policies as mentioned in the Policy, 2010.
4. We direct the government to include domestic workers within the definition of "worker" in the Labor Act, 2006 and also to implement all the beneficial provisions of the draft of Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy 2010 as announced by the government.
5. The cases relating to the violence upon the domestic workers must be monitored and prosecution of the perpetrators must be ensured by the government. We note with dismay the disinterested and sometimes motivated way in which the prosecution conducts the investigation and trial procedure resulting in the perpetrators being acquitted or discharged or even remaining untouched due to the high position, which they hold in the society. The government has a duty to protect all citizens of this country, be they rich or poor. It must not be forgotten that the domestic workers come from a poverty-stricken background and deserve all the more protection from the government and the authority setup by the government.
6. In order to prevent trafficking, in particular, and also to maintain a track on the movement of young children from the villages to the urban areas, parents must be required to register at the local Union Parishad the name and address of the person to whom the child is being sent for the purpose of employment. The Chairman of the Union Parishad must be required to maintain a register with the details of any children of his union who are sent away from the locality for the purpose of being engaged in any employment. If any middleman is involved, then his/her name and other details must be entered in the register.
7. Government is directed to ensure mandatory registration of all domestic workers by all employers engaging in their household any child or other domestic worker and to maintain an effective system through the respective local government units such as Pourashava or Municipal Corporations in all towns and cities for tracking down each and every change of employment or transfer of all the registered domestic workers from one

house-hold to another.

8. Government should take steps to promulgate law making it mandatory for the employers to ensure health check up of domestic workers at least once in every two months.

9. The legal framework must be strengthened in order to ensure all the benefits of regulated working hours, rest, recreation, home-visits, salary etc. of all domestic workers.

10. Laws must also ensure proper medical treatment and compensation by the employers for all domestic-workers, who suffer any illness, injury or fatality during the course of their employment or as a result of it.

## **9.2 ANNEX2: Draft Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy-2010 (Translated to English):**

(This Draft Policy Paper has been submitted to Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of Bangladesh)

According to National Child Labor survey, 2010. There are 125000 children (5-17 yrs) working as domestic workers out of which 80% are female. 2,000,000 women are still working as domestic workers.

1. Definition of Domestic Work: Any sort of engagement like cooking, washing, shopping, cleaning, baby sitting, caring for the old or handicapped, and any other work regarded as a household chore, but not any engagement in any investment or profitable business or venture is known as Domestic Work.
2. Definition of Domestic Worker: Those who have been recruited to perform Domestic Work, part-time or full-time, are regarded as a Domestic Worker.
3. Definition of Employer: Those who recruit anyone to perform Domestic Work are referred to as Employers.
4. Definition of Registration Authority: Within the country, any office of the City Corporation, Municipality, and Union Council will be regarded as a Registration body.
5. Medium: Any organization or individual who supplies workers should receive permission/registration from the City Corporation, Municipality and Union Council can be considered as a medium.
6. Policy Implementation Ministry
  - 6.1 Ministry of Labor and Employment will be regarded as a Focal Ministry.
  - 6.2 Ministry of Labor and Employment will be responsible for the Implementation of the policy and the relevant Ministries will help them.
  - 6.3 Any clarification if needed should be provided by the Ministry.

### **Responsibilities of an Employer**

1. If the employment contract is for a worker who is 14-18 years old, their guardians should be involved in the contract. But if the worker is above 18 years old, then they can be personally dealt with. The job contract will comply with all salient features of Bangladesh labor law, 2006.



2. Appointment letter and (Identification) ID card
  - 2.1. Each Domestic Worker should be provided with an ID card with a picture on it given to them by their Employer.
  - 2.2. The Employer will keep a copy with them.
  - 2.3. A copy will be kept with the Registration Authority
  - 2.4. If possible a copy will be forwarded to Social Welfare/Municipality/Local Union Council/Commissioner's office.
  
3. Informing the Registration Authority: As per the information provided on the ID card that has been registered from the Local Government, the Employer will have to reserve the information. The Employer will also inform the relevant Registration Authority about the starting and ending of the Domestic Work contract.
  
4. Wage: No Domestic Worker will be recruited without a wage settlement.
  - 4.1. Payment of wage: Within the 7 working days of the next month the Employer should pay the dues. The wage will include the festival bonus and the system will be in place for annual increment. Nobody will receive the wage except the worker.
  - 4.2. Full-time worker's wage: Until the Government announces the minimum wage for the Domestic Workers; the wage will be settled bilaterally. The wage will be mentioned in the appointment letter and the Employer must pay accordingly, but if the Government declares the minimum wage, the Employer has to adjust this accordingly. Domestic workers' clothing, medical treatment and accommodation will be provided on top of the workers' wage.
  - 4.3. Part-time Domestic Workers: Their wage will be negotiated according to the working hours. However, clothing, medical and accommodation will be provided on top of the worker's wage.
  
5. Working hours, leave and rest: It will be provided as per International labor standards and Bangladesh labor law 2006.
  - 5.1. Each worker will enjoy 8 hours of sleep and 4 hours of rest and recreation.
  - 5.2. One day weekly holiday
  - 5.3. No one can force working on holidays. It is the employer's consent that he/she can go outside the house.
  - 5.4. Annual leave of 14 days will be allocated to the worker according to their religious beliefs.
  - 5.5. Sleep and rest should be provided in a safe place
  - 5.6. 16 weeks of Maternity leave (6 weeks before child birth, 10 weeks after child birth) with wage

and required treatment. During pregnancy the worker cannot be forced to do any heavy work and opportunity for rest and benefits will be given.

- 5.7. Education and training: Encouraged to take professional development skill training according to the interest of the worker. Employer will give the opportunity to the worker to impart knowledge on their respective religion.
- 5.8. Medical facilities: In no case can the employer force any domestic worker to work if he/she is ill. All required medical facilities will be given to the worker and the employer will bear the cost. When ill, in due cases, young workers cannot be sent home without medically treating them first.
- 5.9. Compensation for accident: If a worker undergoes an accident while employment, employer will bear all the costs of treatment and will provide the compensation. The compensation will be decided by the City Corporation Upozela Nirbahi Officer (Sub-District Executive Officer).

## **Responsibilities of the Government of Bangladesh**

### 1. Registration

- 1.1. Government will provide necessary information regarding registration of the domestic workers to the local Administration Department. The Government will ensure the Registration Authority in each region.
- 1.2. Government will take all necessary initiatives to inform citizen through mass media.
- 1.3. Government will take the initiative to establish a telephone help-line for domestic workers.
- 1.4. Government will implement the code of conduct and will take programs to raise the awareness of the domestic workers about their rights.

### 2. Wage Fixation

- 2.1 Government will announce the minimum wage for this sector on a monthly basis.
- 2.2 A wage card will be provided to each domestic worker where the employer and the domestic worker both will sign on a monthly basis as an evidence of the wage payment.
- 2.3 Employer will deposit the monthly wage in the bank with the consent of the workers who do not have parents or any legal guardian.

### 3. Measures taken against abuse and harassment

- 3.1 Under no circumstances can the employer torture /abuse/ harass the domestic worker.

- 3.2 According to the law of the country, for any report of abuse or harassment on a domestic worker will be taken under justification which the government will ensure. In this regard, labor and employment Ministry of women and children's affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Social Welfare will submit a clear guidance and information to the law enforcement agencies.
- 3.3 If any worker undergoes mental or sexual abuse or, sexual proposition by the members of the employer's family or his or her relative will be dealt with by an immediate action by a remedy of legal measures. Such as: file a (General Diary) GD in the local police station to inform the investigation officer with proper information about overall situation and collection and submission of relevant evidences will be provided in the relevant police station. Responsible Ministry will inform or enforce the Ministry of Home Affairs to enforce the police station to take immediate measures.
- 3.4 Responsible Ministry will discuss the cases of abuse and harassment in Inter-Ministerial meetings in order to formulate strategic action plan for the prevention of abuse/harassment on any domestic worker.

#### 4. Inspection

- 4.1 A central monitoring cell will be formed under Labor and Employment Ministry, under the leadership of Regional Executive Officers under Dhaka City Corporation. As per requirement monitoring cells will be formed in other City Corporations and relevant Sub-District as prescribed by District Commissioners. In each District monitoring cell will be formed headed by District Commissioner and in Sub-District level monitoring cell will be headed by UNO. District and Sub District level an inspection team will be formed with the representation of employers, workers union, civil society and the local Government members. However, with the recommendation of District/Sub District monitoring cell more than one inspection team can be formed at Union level.
- 4.2 Inspection teams are entitled to inspect or visit every household to understand and see the real working situation of the domestic workers. If they come to know about any misconduct including abuse and harassment, they will instantly inform to the head of monitoring cell at District level or at Ministry level.
- 4.3 Continuous monitoring system will be in place to oversee whether the employers are complying with the code of conduct or not.
- 4.4 Inspection team will take significant measures to inform about any complaints and necessary measure; however, they also are entitled to conduct mediation taking their own initiative.
- 4.5 All the responsible Government members will put forward inspection report to the relevant administrative authorities. They are also entitled to file cases against the perpetrators.

5. Domestic Worker's role and responsibilities:

Resignation/termination:

- 5.1 Under normal circumstances, one month's notice period should be given for resignation/ termination (applies for worker and employer).
- 5.2 Both parties will comply with the conditions mentioned in the employment contract if it does not go beyond the law of the country and the Code of Conduct.
- 5.3 In case of a specific complaint, both parties are entitled to terminate the job contract with the consent of registration authorities.

6. Grievances:

- 6.1 A Domestic worker him/herself or his/her recruitment bodies can complain to monitoring cells through telephone or by writing a letter, third party(overhearing neighbor), or in any other form regarding abuse/harassment, or any form of denial of rights breaching the contract by the employer. Claims can be brought through telephone helpline.
- 6.2 In case of abuse and harassment the victim is entitled to file a case under criminal law.

7. Policy bindings:

- 7.1 Under any circumstance, children aging below 14 years cannot be employed in any domestic work. However, in circumstances which ensures the child's health, education and a sound working environment (non hazardous), a 12 yr old child can be employed.
- 7.2 If the child used to go to school, it cannot be stopped, and his/her working time will be adjusted according to the school timing.
- 7.3 Under no circumstances will the child be locked up in the entire apartment/home all alone. A spare key should be given to the domestic worker in case of an emergency.
- 7.4 Considering the age and fitness of the domestic worker the respective sort of work should be entitled to them.
- 7.5 No domestic worker should be employed against his/her will. They should not be asked to carry out any unethical job.

### 9.3 ANNEX 3: Questionnaire Basic Information

#### *Interview Guide*

*Before starting the interview, we need to explain the purpose of the interview to the interviewee and ask for his/her verbal consent. We also need to answer any questions she may have.*

*Key points to remember:*

- *Let the interviewee tell his/her own story, don't "put words in her mouth";*
- *Look engaged and interested...give signals that you're engaged...;*
- *Look for signs that the interviewee may be distressed, and wants to take a break- don't force a person to talk if they don't want to;*
- *Don't be afraid of silence; let the interviewee take her time;*
- *Remember that your role is not of a counselor but an interviewer- we need to remain supportive but neutral.*

1. Name of data collector: .....

2. Date:.....

3. Area:.....

#### **WARM UP QUESTIONS**

1. Where are you from?
2. How many siblings do you have?
3. Do you have parents?
4. Where do they live?
5. What is your position among the siblings?

#### **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

##### **Personal information**

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Did you go to school?
4. If yes, what class did you read in?
5. Do any of your siblings work/study?

6. Do you like school? Why?

Let here speak him/her own story.....

### **General Information (a guide for the interviewer)**

1. How long have you been working in this house?

2. Is it your first job?

3. Who brought you to this house?

4. Why did you choose this work?

5. Do you like your job? Please explain.

6. How much do you earn? Is the payment monthly/quarterly/half yearly/yearly or in any other form?

7. Who is the money given to?

8. Do you get any other facilities except your salary?

- Medical: What happens when you get sick? Did you ever suffer from any major disease? Where were you treated? Who paid for the treatment?

- Clothing: does your employer bear your clothing cost? How often do they give you clothes? Please explain. Are there any other facilities beside these?

9. How long do you think you will be working in house hold?

10. Do you have any future plan; for instance marriage?

### **Working condition**

1. How long do you work for in a day?

2. How do you feel about the work you do?

3. When do you wake up and when do you go to bed?

4. Where do you sleep? With whom do you sleep?

5. What sorts of work are you required to do? Please explain.

- Food: How many meals are you given a day? What do you take for breakfast, lunch and dinner? Do you eat the same food the employer eats? Is the food good and is it enough for you?

- Leisure: Do you get any time for yourself? What do you like to do then? Please give me a detailed description of your daily routine (let her/him describe her/his own way).

6. Do you get leave? Where do you often go on your leave? Are you allowed to visit your parents? Are you allowed to talk to others?

7. Could you compare living with your family with living with your employer's family?

8. What do you expect from your family/employer/state?

**Abuse**

How do you feel work in this house? Do you want to share anything? – let him/her decide....

**Education**

1. Does your employer allow you to go to school?
2. What is your life's aspiration?

**Closing Questions**

1. If you were given one wish which will be granted, what would it be?
2. Do you want to know anything about us or this study or anything you wish to know?
3. Do you have any comment/complain/suggestion?

Do you think we should use your name in this study? Yes/No

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. The information you provided will be confidential and will be only used in study and campaign purposes.

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