

ECONOMICALLY BONDED LIFE IN CASE

XYZ born in remote village in south east of Bangladesh, they are poor farmers children, unfortunately at this young age they already experienced severe hardship in life, they cannot remember whether they had three full meals a day, most of the meals were half, common was rice, water and salt, almost every night they went to bed hungry except those days when the rich families in the village offered food to the poor for any occasion. They didn't go to school, and unfortunately had no scope of attending it, most of their ancestors were illiterate and they were following the same path. They had spent their days playing with similar age children. Their parents were worried about their future but could not figure out what they possibly could do to change the course. A

businessman from the same village has a factory in Dhaka had offered their parents that he will take care of food and shelter if these children work in his factory. This was grand offer and their parents had immediately agreed to the proposal. For them this is big relief from feeding their siblings. This statement is harsh and inconsiderate but for many families in Bangladesh this is the fact and real world. According to ILO report¹ 115 million children around worldwide (estimated) are engaged in hazardous work, in Bangladesh the number of working children is 7.9million according to Save the Children.



Children are working hazard environment in the factory



Children are carrying heavy stuff on head

and contribute to personal, family, society and in the country.

SOHAY's programme is to bring the children including the hazardous working children back to education because this is the path children should take for their knowledge and development to engage in productive work in future. So as part of its programme activities SOHAY employees move house to house, slums to slums and factories to factories to find children that are not going to school. Surprisingly it has found lot of children working or not working are not going to school despite the infrastructure and parents interest are there. The retrieve of these children back to education where the parents could afford children food are tough but possible. This education year SOHAY has admitted large number of children to



Children are spending pleasure time in factory

several Government Primary Schools in its working areas, please note, on sustainability ground SOHAY does not run non-formal schools because these schools will immediately disappear immediately after the programme funding ends but the case for Government Primary Schools are completely different, whatever the condition these school will exist and provide the education support to the children.

However, it has observed withdrawing the economically bonded children from their work place is hard and really tough because the finance plays critical role and completely imbalance to other efforts. These children need regular food and shelter. The owners of many factories have agreed with SOHAY that they are ready to release these children from their factories for education because they understand the importance of education for them but at the same time were clear that they immediately will cease their food and lodging at the factory as they will not work for the factory anymore, so either SOHAY has to arrange their food and accommodation in addition to their education or they have to return to their village home which is square one situation for them and much worse than the present condition.

Hence SOHAY is planning for sponsorship programme for these children for their education at least up to primary level. It has discussed with a locality where these children could stay in safe environment in a dormitory and go to a nearby primary school. SOHAY feels that would be the best environment for these children if there are sponsors ready to support the programme. SOHAY has done an initial home work how much the organisation may need to provide primary education to 72 children in a dormitory environment, where the organisation will bear the following expenditure, i.e., three meals a day, dormitory accommodation, books, clothing, support to children completing home work at the dormitory and security. As these children will be fully withdrawn from the hazardous work environment and the organisation will carry full responsibilities along with security it appears the organisation needs USD 60,000 for five years which is **less than half a dollar per children per day**. If SOHAY could manage the fund from donors or sponsors the life of 72 children will be completely different they will sit for education like these children and this will start their life changing journey, no return back to the old days they had endured both at the initial with their family and later at the factory. At the end of five years all these children will complete their primary level education.



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ⁱ ILO Children in hazardous work – what we know what we need to do published in 2011