

School for Child Laborers in Bangladesh.

The Danish Trade Unions and Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies-BILS has initiated a Child labor elimination project, to help some of the poorest children of Dhaka, the capitol of Bangladesh. The program has been running successfully for one year now, with its prime objective to give the young participants a chance at a decent education, and therefore, a chance at something resembling a healthy and fulfilling life.



The program's activities are concentrated in a section of Dhaka where garment manufacturing is the dominant industry. Here, the children are living a hard life, working 8 to 12 hours a day in order to help their families survive. They earn approximately \$20 per month- or, \$0.06 an hour. Not much! But vital to their survival.



These children work in a number of dangerous and unsanitary conditions. Some children work with their small fingers separating the fibers of junk cloths so that the fabric can be used again as filling for pillows. Many boys spend their days moving and sorting junk and waste. Some children in Dhaka work

extracting the lead from batteries. These children are often burnt by the acids or poisoned by the heavy metals. Other children work seven days a week chopping bricks into small pieces. These children often go home at night with bloody hands and weary backs. The lucky youths work as aids in offices and stores.



A few years ago, many of these children were working in garment factories. Since then, the western world has exerted significant pressure on Bangladesh and other countries, urging them to eradicate the use of child labor in factories. While this is a noble pursuit, it was incomplete and poorly planned. Pressure from the western world has since had the opposite effect on child labor. These children, out of work at the factories, are now working in far worse jobs than before. But now, this new problem is out of sight, as the children are employed in unregulated, unregistered workplaces, such as those detailed above.



The program implemented by the Danish Trade Unions has since helped to mildly alleviate this paradoxical circumstance. Founders of the project have been able to convince the children's parents to allow the children to spend about 3 hours a day studying. These loving parents have embraced this solution as something that is beneficial both to the children and to the community.

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At school, the children receive a basic education. Perhaps just as importantly, they learn about children's rights. They are also taught organizational skills that will help them to better deal with the trying life of an adult in Bangladesh.



After completing their basic education, the children can go on to attend a working school. Here, girls learn to sew and boys learn how to fix tree wheelers and electrical circuits. To a westerner, this seems almost ridiculous, but to these children, it gives them a rare opportunity to advance in life.



Upon visiting the schools involved with this program, one sees that the children are well aware of, and sincerely thankful for, this privilege. A visitor will find the children working hard, taking full advantage of a chance at a better life. They are dedicated and bright. Certainly, many of them will one day take part in HiQH projects.

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