Report:
Baseline Study on Child Labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub
Acknowledgement

This baseline study on child labour in Keraniganj Apparel Hub is a collaborative research initiative between BLF and CBSG.

The study team gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Mr. Abdus Salam Khan, Chairman, BLF and Mr. Z M Kamrul Anam, Secretary General, BLF to the study design and data presentation.

We would also like to acknowledge the valuable inputs and comments of Mr. M A Kashem Masud, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, GoB, Mr. Bijoy Ranjan, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment, GoB, Mr. Sukkur Mahmud, President, Jatiyo Sramik League during the Round Table Discussion held on October 28th 2015 at CIRDAP, Dhaka. There are many other participants who deserve to be mentioned, but allow us to refrain from doing so lest we forget one or two names.

We are grateful to the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) for providing support, input and comments on the draft report, the presentation and the final study. We would also like to thank Ms. Angela Kalyta, PhD Candidate at McGill University, for her support to finalise the study.

Our special thanks goes to Keraniganj Garments and Shop Owners for allowing us to gather information, in particular for interviewing child workers. We are also grateful to Keraniganj Khudra Garments Sramik Kallayan Union leaders and UP representatives for making the challenging fieldwork possible with their generous support and cooperation.

Last but not the least, our sincere thanks goes to the respondent workers, particularly the child workers who have proactively given their informed consent for the interview, without which this study would have not been possible.

Finally, while acknowledging the valuable inputs of all the above, the study team stands by the conclusions reached during the baseline study and believes these to be a sound response to the information and evidence available. However, the findings and recommendations, including any errors and omissions contained in the report, are our own.
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>Annual Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLF</td>
<td>Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSG</td>
<td>Capacity Building Service Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIRDAP</td>
<td>Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSID</td>
<td>Centre for Services and Information on Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLU</td>
<td>Child Labour Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCRMF</td>
<td>District Child Rights Monitoring Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCLWC</td>
<td>Divisional Child Labour Welfare Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FES</td>
<td>Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY</td>
<td>Financial Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoB</td>
<td>Government of Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIES</td>
<td>Household Income and Expenditure Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDA</td>
<td>International Development Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGA</td>
<td>Income Generating Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLWC</td>
<td>National Child Labour Welfare Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLEP</td>
<td>The National Child Labour Elimination Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>National Plan of Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMG</td>
<td>Readymade Garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSC</td>
<td>Reaching out of School Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRH</td>
<td>Sexual and Reproductive Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TK</td>
<td>Taka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVE</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLMC</td>
<td>Upazila Child Labour Monitoring Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## Executive Summary

## Chapter One

**Introduction**
- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Objective of the study
- 1.3 Methodology
- 1.3.1 Study location
- 1.3.2 Study design and sampling
- 1.4 Structure of the report

## Chapter Two

- Status of child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub
- 2.1 Incidence of child labour in Bangladesh
- 2.2 Incidence of child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub
- 2.3 Nature of contracts between child workers and employers
- 2.4 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of child workers
- 2.4.1 Age and sex distribution
- 2.4.2 Family situation
- 2.4.3 Migration and home districts
- 2.4.4 Parent occupations
- 2.4.5 Contribution of child labour to monthly household income
- 2.5 Educational status of child workers
- 2.5.1 Educational attainment
- 2.5.2 Reasons for leaving school
- 2.5.3 School enrollment and attendance
- 2.6 Current residence
- 2.7 Becoming a child worker in the apparel sector
- 2.7.1 Reasons for joining the sector
- 2.7.2 Process of joining the sector
- 2.8 Types of work that child workers do

## Chapter Three

- Working conditions of child workers in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub
- 3.1 Work hours per day
- 3.2 Rest time
- 3.3 Wages and benefits
- 3.3.1 Wage structure
- 3.3.2 Food /snacks provided by employers during working hours
- 3.3.3 Leave and holidays
- 3.4 Space and seating arrangements
- 3.5 Water and sanitation facilities
- 3.6 Safety and security
- 3.6.1 Use of protective gears
- 3.6.2 Accidents
3.7 Attitude of employers/supervisors and fellow workers towards child workers
3.8 Prevalence of scolding, physical torture, and abuse
3.8.1 Scolding
3.8.2 Abuse
3.8.3 Physical torture
3.9 Submitting complaints
3.10 Job changes
3.11 Future plans

CHAPTER FOUR
Elimination of child labour from Keranganj Apparel Industry in Bangladesh
4.1 Laws and regulations on child labour
4.1.1 Labour act 2006, amended 2013
4.1.2 National child labour elimination policy (NCLEP), 2010
4.1.3 National plan of action for implementing the NCLEP 2012-16
4.2 National budget and child labour in Bangladesh
4.3 Child workers’ knowledge of their existing legal protections
4.3.1 Legal age of children
4.3.2 Legal working hours for children
4.3.3 Trade unions
4.3.4 Hazardous work
4.4 Support from government and non-government organizations
4.5 Attitude of parents and owners about child labour
4.6 Challenges to eliminate child labour from the keranganj apparel hub

CHAPTER FIVE
Conclusions and recommendations
5.1 Conclusions
5.2 Recommendations
Annexes
Executive Summary

BLF and CBSG have conducted this study entitled “Baseline Study on Child Labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub” with the intention of implementing a pilot project to improve working conditions of workers in general, and child labourers, in particular. The general objective of this study is to explore the prevalence and nature of child labour and household socioeconomic status in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub. Keraniganj Apparel Hub was chosen because it is where most – around 70% – of the domestically sold apparel is manufactured.

The study selected two locations, with two unions under the auspices of Keraniganj Upazila in Dhaka District – a) Aganagar Union and b) Suvadda Union. The field data was collected in August 2015 and employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

The survey was carried out on a sample of 402 children working in the apparel sector in Keraniganj. Key informant interviews and FGDs were carried out with relevant stakeholders using a checklist/guideline. In addition, case studies were also performed on critical issues. Data analysis was conducted under the auspices of SPSS.

The great majority (83.47%) of the children in our study are between 14 and 17 years of age. Surprisingly, a number (16.53%) of working children are under 14 years of age in this sector. A considerable proportion of child labourers are boys: 80.51%. An overwhelmingly majority (87.3%) of child labourers’ have parents where both are stay at home. A number of child labourers (12%) come from single-parent homes; one child out of ten are from single-mother homes. Only a few of the ones we interviewed are orphans: 0.7%. The overwhelming majority of the children (90.3%) have attended school at some point; about one-fifth have completed third year, while one-fourth of them have completed fifth year. Only 16.6% have progressed beyond primary level (years 1 to 5). Financial insolvency is the major reason for dropping out of school (56%), followed by lack of interest in continuing education (38%). In general, they donot attend school: only a few of them (1.9%) are enrolled in formal/informal schools, attending irregular basis. Findings indicate that child labourers migrate from rural areas, with the majority (36.3%) of them coming from central Dhaka, followed by southern districts (30.8%).

The most common occupation of their fathers, accounting for about two-thirds (66%), is cultivation/agricultural work and day labour, followed by puller and small businesses (11.4% and 11.1%, respectively). A great majority of children’s mothers’ occupation is housewife (95.1%), followed by domestic worker (4.6%).

About seven out of ten child labourers (67.4%) live in the factory with co-workers, while about 31% of them live with their parents or relatives near the factory in Keraniganj.

Poverty is the primary driver (66.4%) compelling children to work in this sector. Other key factors are a desire to develop tailoring skills and to become self-reliant. The majority (66.2%) of children joined the sector through family members and relatives followed by neighbours and friends, accounting for 24.4% and 3.5%, respectively. Child labourers in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub have two types of contractual agreements: one is for an apprenticeship with the instructor who is employed there as operator or cutting master; the other is as helper hired on a monthly basis by the owner of the factory or sales centre. Generally, the apprenticeship is for two years. The contractual agreement is solely verbal.

Working times for working children are very long. In the lean season, or normal production time, a child labourer works around 13 hours per day on average, with the range being from 10 to 16 hours with one day off per week on Friday. In the peak season, children have to work an additional 3 to 4 hours per day without any weekend. In general, there is a 2-hour lunch break everyday. We have found that the majority of child labourers have no place to rest in private. There is neither any formal or structured leave system in Keraniganj Apparel Hub, nor is there any
standard wage structure. There are three types of pay: monthly salaries, piece rates, and subsistence-based. Full monthly salaries are paid once monthly, while piece-rate salaries are paid weekly. Unfortunately, we found that 49% of the child labourers (apprentices) are paid informally in a subsistence-based system. They are not directly paid for their work: they receive modest amounts of food (three times a day), while 94%, particularly those in need, are provided accommodation within the plant. These types of labourers work longer hours than other child labourers because their masters work by piece rate, and thus work longer hours with them.

The monthly salary of children working as helpers ranges from TK 2,000 to TK 5,000 on the basis on an average working day of 13hrs per day 6 days a week. No overtime or additional work is calculated and paid because there is no standard salary structure. The majority of children in this sector are helper cum apprentices (48%), while around 22% of them are operators and only 1% are cutting masters. The operators mostly work on a piece-rate basis, with their average monthly income ranging from TK 6,000 to 8,000, while cutting masters usually earn TK 10,000 to TK 12,000, depending on their skills and the quality of their work. Again, all the salary figures are based on an average of a 13-hour day 6 days a week. What is more important, apprentice do not receive any salary in cash. They only get food and accommodation, with weekly incidental cash ranging from TK 50 to 112. More than three out of four (75.4%) child labourers do not get any food/snacks from their employers during working hours. Half of the children we interviewed told us that there is no adequate ventilation system at the workplace (49.3%).

Monthly salaries are paid on a more or less regular basis. As far as payment structure is concerned, salaried workers are paid on a monthly basis – with most payments being effected in four parts (every Thursday night, but settled on the first Thursday of the following month). Piece-rate workers only receive a subsistence allowance on every Thursday nights and the remainder on the eve of two EID festivals. If workers leave their job during the year, it is very difficult to get any money owed to them from the employer. This puts piece-rate workers in a more vulnerable position than salaried workers. Because employers hold back their pay most of the year, these children can lose many months of their pay if they leave their jobs before the Eids. With 22% of child labourers working for piece-rates and 49% of child labourers working for mere subsistence wages, this means a total of 71% of child labourers who are either not paid or at a high risk of not being paid.

There is not enough seating available to all workers at workplaces. More than one out of four working children sit on the floor while they work. In general, there is no practice of using protective gear. We have found that about one-fifth (18.9%) of child workers have suffered minor accidents during their working lives and in the majority of the cases children have to bear the cost of treatment (62.2%) for work-related accidents. We have found that most child labourers have little knowledge about the hazards of their work. Some of them described some parts of their work as hazardous: carrying excess loads, chemical sprays, work with electrical equipment, and work with scissors. The children working in the apparel sector believe that the attitude of most of the employers/supervisors towards them is supportive (80.6%). The most common abusive practice experienced by children is scolding: an astounding 36.7% of children are scolded on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis. More than one out of ten child labourers experience abuse at their workplace; among the types of abuse they experience, verbal abuse is the most common, followed by mental and physical abuse. Some of the children we spoke to even experience forms of physical torture once per month, week, or day (7.1%). In general, children direct their complaints at some one at the workplace when they experience problems. About one out of four child labourers told us that they have no hope for their future. More than half of the child labourers (55%) interviewed said they want to be an operator or cutting master in future.

Child labourers have no knowledge of labour laws that are in place to protect them. We found that over nine out of ten do not know about the minimum legal working age. Most of them have no idea about maximum legal working hours or are aware that there is a maximum number of hours that they are legally allowed to be asked to work in a day (86.1%). We found that child
labourers rarely seek any support from any government or non-government organizations. None of the child labourers whom we spoke in Keraniganj Apparel Hub had ever heard of trade unions or their role at the workplace.

The Bangladesh Government is committed to eliminate child labour and has adopted several policies and programs to this end. The 2010 National Child Labour Elimination Policy (NCLEP) aims to eliminate every sort of hazardous work for children as well as the worst forms of child labour, and have devised a plan of action. Several hazardous aspects of Keraniganj Apparel Hub that need to be improved have been identified. Despite laws and policies, child labour remains a major challenge in Bangladesh due to lack of proper implementation of these policies and laws.

The main challenge is that the Keraniganj Apparel Hub is still not recognized as being part of the industry and as a result government regulators do not pay enough close attention to existing laws being enforced. Other challenges that the study has identified included: parents are severely burnt out from poverty, therefore often sending their child out to earn for the family; parents and child labourers consider the work to be training rather than a job; the majority of child labourers and operators are attached to one another through kinship ties that makes the work informal in nature; inadequate motivation among owners and fellow adult workers to put an end to child labour, because this generates additional profits for both; inadequate organized support or absence of trade unions to protect child labourers.

Despite the fact that the government has adopted legislation and policies to eliminate child labour, it still continues to exist, sometimes characterised by appalling conditions, particularly in labour-intensive industries such as Keraniganj Apparel Hub. In order to improve the current conditions of child labourers and to gradually eliminate this form of labour in Keraniganj, the study makes the following recommendations:

- Develop a platform encompassing GO, NGOs, INGOs, community leaders, trade union leaders and national workers federations to collaborate on child-labour issues and devise a national plan of action;
- Offer Income-Generating-Activity (IGA) training to the parents of child labourers and provide them interest-free loans;
- Policy advocacy to recognize Keraniganj Apparel Hub as being part of the industry and bring it under the regulatory framework;
- Conduct awareness sessions with owners, senior workers and parents with a focus on existing child labour rules and regulations under national labour law (2013), the national child-labour elimination policy and ILO conventions on child labour;
- Undertake continuing education projects, especially for those who need to leave school to earn money for their families;
- Offer sessions on work-place safety, health and environmental protection to owners, trade-union leaders, workers and parents;
- Mobilize workers with a workers’ rights orientation program. Such a program should reach out to people in the community, including religious leaders;
- Strengthen existing trade unions as well as organize new unions and formulate a industrial federation
- Develop negotiating and bargaining skills among workers, particularly on child labourers’ entitlements;
- Form cluster-based groups of workers to supervise the cluster-wise working conditions of everyone, including child labourers;
- Create opportunities for education on health, including provision of primary health care and SRH services.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation (BLF) & Capacity Building Service Group (CBSG) conducted this baseline study on child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub. BLF is a non-governmental, non-profit; non-partisan organization that represents the interest of the working people in Bangladesh. It has been working in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub to organize workers through an associate union. Keraniganj is a sub-district of Dhaka district, located on the south western side of Dhaka city, on the banks of the Buriganga river. Most of the apparel (70%) for domestic market in Bangladesh is produced in this area.

BLF has recently carried out a detailed mapping of Keraniganj Apparel Hub. The mapping exercise revealed some basic information on characteristics of the apparel industry in Keraniganj such as the number of plants and their size, features, products produced, etc. The mapping exercise indicated that there are 6,350 small-scale apparel plants and 9,500 showrooms. About 185,000 workers are currently employed at these plants and sales centres. Among the overall group of workers, 143,000 are directly employed at plants, while the remaining 42,000 are employed at sales centres. Gender distribution of workers was found to be 81% male and 19% female - pretty much the opposite of the mainstream RMG sector. Surprisingly, 59% of workers in the Hub are under 18 years of age, while 9.75% of all workers are even under 14 years of age.

The aim of this study is to generate more information and evidence on the situation of child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub with a view to better designing plans and activities for improving labour standards of workers in general, and working children in particular.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to explore the prevalence and nature of child labour and household socioeconomic status in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- to explore the nature and prevalence of child labour in Keraniganj Apparel Hub;
- to establish baseline values for socio-economic indicators – age and gender composition, schooling status, family background, wages and benefits, health, working hour, working conditions etc;
- to discover the attitude of stakeholders towards child labour (community, employer, and government officials); and
- to identify challenges to eliminating child labour, and make recommendations to overcome these.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Study location

The study was conducted in Aganagar and Suvadda union of Keraniganj upazila, where a large number of small-scale apparel factories and workshops have been established along the banks of Buriganga river. Cloth-washing plants were among the first primary plants to move into the area, being followed by a large number of small commercial tailoring workshops nearby. Products from these tailoring houses are normally sold on the streets, at rural markets and in low-price shops. During the late eighties, a number of export-oriented garment factories were built in
Dhaka. This fuelled the growth of tailoring activities in Keraniganj. Leftover fabrics from RMG factories became an important source of raw materials for local tailoring workshops in Keraniganj that use the scraps to make low-cost apparels for domestic markets. And it is now the major source of garments for the domestic market.

1.3.2 Study design and sampling

The baseline study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to study problems and issues related to child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub. The steps, techniques, and sources of data-collection were:

I. Desk review of secondary information and reports: This involved the collection of secondary information as well as the review of existing studies and reports, and was driven especially by different civil society and research institutions.

II. A rapid in-person interview with 402 child workers: This in-person interview survey was administered through a pre-structured questionnaire. Respondents were selected from 58 plants (including 8 showrooms). Of the total respondents, about 75% were boys and 25% girls. They were selected purposively to reflect the different sizes of workplaces in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub.

III. Key Informants Interviews (KII): 25 focused in-depth interviews were conducted with fellow adult workers, employers (industry and show-room owners), workers’ union leaders, business association leaders, Union Parishad (UP) representatives, teachers and NGO workers.

IV. FGD with selected groups: A total of six FGDs were conducted with mothers, employers and fellow employees of child labourers.

V. Case stories: Case stories were collected on critical issues by concerned stakeholders in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub.

The study team triangulated the data gathered from different sources and assessed their convergence among the data sources to leverage synergies. Field data was collected in the month of August 2015, with strong quality-control measures being employed. The quantitative survey data was analysed using SPSS, while qualitative information (FGD and KII) was analysed manually.

1.4 Structure of the Report

This report is broken down into five chapters.

Chapter one offers an introduction to the study, discussion its background, objectives and methodology.

Chapter two presents the status of child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub. It maps out the characteristics and prevalence of child labour in this sector.

Chapter three describes working conditions of child labourers at factories, working hours, leave of absence, safety, wages and benefits. Furthermore, it also describes workplace problems in general terms, especially focusing on children.

Chapter four describes the perceptions and attitudes of concerned stakeholders regarding child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub and reviews the government laws and policies regarding child labour.

Chapter five presents conclusions and recommendations by the study.
CHAPTER TWO

Status of Child Labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub

Bangladesh has achieved remarkable success in social development compared to other developing countries. Although poverty, both moderate and extreme, has declined substantially, poverty-induced social problems like child labour remain. The Government of Bangladesh claims that child labour has been eliminated from the formal sector\(^1\). Despite this, a large number of children still work in the informal sector because many families still rely on the income generated by their children for survival.

The garment sector was once a significant employer of child labourers in Bangladesh, but since the introduction of the Harkin Bill in the U.S. Senate in 1992, child labour has almost entirely vanished from the formal garment sector\(^2\), although it is still widespread in the less regulated informal garment sector. Employers often prefer to employ children because child labour is cheaper and children are considered more compliant and obedient than adults\(^3\).

2.1 Incidence of child labour in Bangladesh

The government of Bangladesh does not regularly collect data on child labour, so there is no up-to-date official information on the status of child labour in Bangladesh. The prevalence of child labour in Keraniganj is greater than the national average. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out in 2006, the percentage of children (aged 5-14) engaged in child labour in Bangladesh was 12.8% at that time, while we found this figure in Keraniganj to be 16.5% in a separate project in 2015 (Table 2.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Child Labourers</th>
<th>National(^4)</th>
<th>Keraniganj(^5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working children, aged 5-17</td>
<td>74 Lac</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working children, aged 5-14</td>
<td>47 Lac</td>
<td>0.18 Lac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labourers (according to definition, below), aged 5-17</td>
<td>32 Lac</td>
<td>1.1 Lac (3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children engaged in hazardous labour, aged 5-17</td>
<td>13 Lac</td>
<td>1.1 Lac (8.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child domestic workers</td>
<td>4,21,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of children (aged 5-14) engaged in child labour</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And the difference is even large when one looks at more recent data. According to an estimate by the Centre on Budget and Policy’s Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), the overall proportion of child labour (under 18) is decreasing in Bangladesh - from 12.23% in 2005 and 5.73% in 2014 (Table 2.2). In contrast to the national trend, however, the rate is still high in Keraniganj due to a concentration of unregulated informal industries in the area, especially apparel, which is a major employment sector for children. This chapter presents profiles of children working in apparel workplaces of Keraniganj, their socio-economic background and present status.

\(^1\)National Budget Analysis on Child Labour, 2015, CSID and World Vision
\(^2\)Child Labour in the Informal Garment Production in Bangladesh, 2012, ICF International
\(^3\)Child Labour in the Informal Garment Production in Bangladesh, 2012, ICF International
\(^4\)BBS/UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006, October 2007
\(^5\)Mapping Report on Organizing Workers in Keraniganj Apparel Hub, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2015, Capacity Building Service Group (CBSG), www.cbsg-bd.org


2.2 Incidence of child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub

The 1980’s RMG industrial boom in Dhaka fuelled the growth of Keraniganj apparel production and tailoring activities. Leftover fabrics from the export RMG factories became an important source of raw materials for the local tailoring workshops at Keraniganj that use the scrap cloths to make low-cost apparels for the domestic market. The supply of cheap leftover cloths from RMG factories was the main growth engine for Keraniganj, as the local tailors quickly switched to using cheap foreign cloths to make apparels that are marketed across the country.

The Keraniganj Apparel Hub was built up by the unplanned and unsupervised initiatives of local entrepreneurs who welcomed child workers in their workplaces to enhance profitability. There are 6,350 small RMG plants meeting nearly 70% of denim product demand by the domestic market and over 9,000 showrooms and 100 markets in this apparel hub7.

The Keraniganj Apparel Hub employs both male and female adults (18 years of age and over), children aged 14 to 17 and under 14. Altogether, more than 185,000 men, women and children are currently employed. Out of total employment, 143,000 (77.3%) people are directly employed in factory-level activities, while the remaining 42,000 (22.7%) are employed at sales centres. Around 81% of workers are male, while 19% are female8. The incidence of child labour in Keraniganj apparel industries is high: 109,000 children work there, a staggering three workers out of five are under 18 years of age (Figure 2.1)9.

---

**Table 2.2: Trend in Child Labour in Bangladesh**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIES</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12.23</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

7National budget analysis on child labour, 2015, Centre for budget and policy, University of Dhaka, CSID & World Vision
8Mapping Report on Organizing Workers in Keraniganj Apparel Hub, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2015, Capacity Building Service Group (CBSG), www.cbsg-bd.org
2.3 Nature of contracts between child workers and employers

In the Keraniganj Apparel Hub, contracts between workers and employers are completely verbal. Employers generally employ workers on an annual basis with agreed-upon terms and conditions, including remuneration package (either piece rate or monthly salary). The annual employment cycle in this industry ranges from one Eid festival to another. In most cases, employment terms and piece rates are also laid down at the beginning of the employment year. Any annual raise is also negotiated during this period. This negotiation takes place between the employer and the worker, though nothing is formally written down. Both parties generally comply with their verbal commitment. However, if any dispute arises during the contract term, workers often lose, as they cannot take any remedial measures against employers. In the case of child labourers, the contract is also verbal. Three types of contracts have been identified between owners and workers in Keraniganj Apparel Hub; salaried (29%), piece rate (22%), and subsistence-based (49%) (Figure 2.2). Apprentices have subsistence contracts with their supervisors. Salaried workers are paid on a monthly basis—majority payments are made in four segments (every Thursday night, but settled on the first Thursday of the following month). Piece-rate workers merely receive a subsistence allowance Thursday nights, with the remainder being paid on the eve of two Eid festivals. These contracts are the same for child labourers. Apprentice child labourers (49%) are only paid on a subsistence basis: they are provided food, shelter, and pocket money once a week (for more on salaries, see section 3.3).

2.4 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of child labourers

2.4.1 Age and gender distribution

The age of the overwhelming majority (83.47%) of children is between 15 and 17. Of these, a significant number (16.53%) of children under 14 years of age are working in this sector (Figure 2.3). Among these child labourers, there is a disproportionately high number of boys at 80.51% (Table 2.3, Annex 1). The reason for higher employment of boys in this sector is that apprentices are mostly boys because they sleep inside the factory at night. Girls work from their homes located near the factories.

---

2.4.2 Family situation

The overwhelming majority (87.3%) of child labourers have both father and mother. Some child labourers (12%) have only their father or mother, while some (0.7%) are orphans. One out of ten child labourers only have mothers (Figure 2.4).

In FGD and interviews, we discovered that parents of some child labourers also work in the apparel industry. Socio-economic conditions in single-mother households are more fragile than in others. The majority of these mothers (6 out of 10) are also working in the apparel industries in Keraniganj as home-based workers on a piece-rate basis along with their working children. This intersection between gender, poverty, and vulnerability of workers is an important characteristic of the Keraniganj Apparel Hub. More family characteristics are described in the box 2.1.

Figure 2.4: Family Situation

Box 2.1: Socio-economic characteristics of parents of child workers in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub

- The average mothers’ age is 35, with the range being between 29 and 50 (the total no. of mother interviewed is 10)
- A large majority of them are migrants from villages. Nine out of ten of them are from southern Bangladesh (6 from Barisal, 2 Madaripur and 1 Patuakhali and one from Luxmipur district).
- 6 of them work in the Apparel industry cutting threads off of the finished product for piece rates from their home, earning on average TK 3500 per month.
- Only two of them have formal education upto the primary level, and the rest can only sign their names.
- 6 of them have husbands who are working in the apparel industry as operators; the rest are either divorced, separated or widowed.
- Average earning members per family is 3, including working children.
- Average monthly earnings per family are TK 18,000, ranging from TK 10,000 to TK 35,000.
- The average family size is 5, with the range being from 3 to 8.

Source: Information generated from FGD with mothers of child labour
2.4.3 Migration and home districts

It was found that the households of child workers are made up mostly of migrants from rural areas. The home districts of the majority (36.3%) are central Dhaka, followed by southern district (30.8%). The home districts of northern and northeastern are 15.2% and 10.7%, respectively (Table 2.4, Annex 1). The greater earning potential in Dhaka city and scarce employment opportunities in rural areas are the pull and push factors that affect these migrant families.

2.4.4 Parents’ occupations

Cultivation/agricultural work and day labour is the occupation of about two-thirds of child workers’ fathers (66%), followed by puller and small business (11.4% and 11.1%, respectively). A great majority of children’s mothers are housewives (95.1%), followed by domestic workers (4.6%) (Table 2.5 and 2.6, Annex 1).

2.4.5 Contribution of child labour to monthly household income

The monthly average household income in a child worker’s family is TK 13,768. We have found that 4.7% of respondents’ household income is less than TK 5,000 and 3.9% of their income is above TK 25,000. The average monthly contribution of child labour to household income is TK 3,324, which accounts for 24% of total household income. The contribution by girls is greater (31%) than boys (22%) (Figure 2.5 & 2.6).

Box 2.2: Kawsar (13) is dreaming to be an Operator

Kawsar (13), a drop-out from school, has been working as a helper at a factory at Nuru Market in Keraniganj. He earns around TK 3,500 per month. He contributes this money to his family of five members living in Keraniganj industrial area. Kawsar said economic hardship is the main reason for leaving his school. In the early 80s Kawsar’s family migrated from a rural area of Gazipur district to Keraniganj to start up a business to have a better future. Due to his father taking ill, the business initiative failed. Then Kawsar’s older brother joined the sector as helper at the age of 12, becoming an operator, and earns TK 8,000 per month. Following the footsteps of his brother, Kawsar joined the factory to learn technical skills, and now he is hoping to become an operator in the future.
2.5 Educational status of child labourers

2.5.1 Educational attainment

Among respondents, 4.2% have no education and 5.5% can only sign their names. The overwhelming majority of the children (90.3%) have attended school at some point; about one-fifth have completed third year and one-fourth of them completed fifth year. Only 16.7% have progressed beyond the primary level (class 1 to 5). Very few of them passed ninth and tenth year - merely 0.2% (Figure 2.7).

![Figure 2.7: Educational level attained by child labourers](image)

BOX 2.3: Employing apprentices is lucrative for the supervisors because by spending TK 2,500-3,000 per-month for each apprentice they can earn additional TK 3,000-5,000 per month.

- Razu Ahmed, Cutting Master

Mr. Razu Ahmed (28), started working in Keraniganj at the age of 16 as a cloth bearer. Then he shifted to a jean pants tailoring workshop as a helper. After 3 years of apprenticeship, he became a machine operator and is now working as a cutting master. He earns around TK 16,000 per month. According to Mr. Razu, operators and cutting masters employ children as apprentices in order to train them in garments tailoring. This period generally lasts two years. Supervisors provide them food, clothing, and a lumpsum of money during the Eid festival. Employing apprentices is lucrative for supervisors, as they can earn an additional TK 3,000-5,000 per month on each apprentice because their costs are lower than for an adult. Razu said the work the children do is not hazardous; dye workers and cloth bearers sometimes have some physical problems, such as skin burns and back pain. Like other workers, most child workers donot take protective measures when working.

2.5.2 Reasons for leaving school

Financial insolvency is the major reason for child labourers dropping out of school (56%). Children help their family pay household costs, and the additional costs of education are often too high for them. Lack of interest in education is another significant factor (38%) for school drop-outs. Only 5% of students leave school due to poor performance, while a small number of them (1%) are displaced from their homes (Figure 2.8).

![Figure 2.8: Reasons for leaving school](image)

2.5.3 School enrolment and attendance

At present 98.1% children donot go to any school; only few of them (1.9%) are enrolled in a formal or informal school and attend them irregularly (Table 2.7, Annex 1).
2.6 Current residence

The majority of the working children have no separate residence from work; about seven out of ten workers (67.4%) live in the factory with co-workers. About 31% of child-workers live with their parents or relatives around the factory in Keraniganj. Very few of them (1.7%) live outside Keraniganj (Table 2.8, Annex 1).

2.7 Becoming a child worker in the apparel sector

2.7.1 Reasons for joining the sector

Poverty is the primary driver compelling the majority (66.4%) of the children we interviewed to join this sector. Other important factors include: a desire to become self-reliant, fear of school or unwillingness to study, 11.2% and 9.0% respectively. Some of them (7.4%) stated that sudden family problems like a family break-up, becoming an orphan, and environmental disaster also pushed them into joining the sector (Figure 2.9). In FGD, a mother of working children told us that there is no other option for school dropouts. It is better to work, earn money, learn skills and become independent; otherwise, they will end upon the wrong path and their lives may be ruined.

2.7.2 Process of joining the sector

We discovered that the majority (66.2%) of the children joined the sector through family members and relatives, followed by neighbours and friends, accounting for 24.4% and 3.5%, respectively. Only 2% of them joined through a supervisor and very few of them through a plant owner or co-worker - 1.2% and 0.2%, respectively (Figure 2.10).

2.8 Works that child labourers perform

In the Keraniganj Apparel Hub, children work mostly as helpers in factories and at sales centres. Around half of them are apprentices and perform stitching, but mainly they provide assistance to operators or cutting masters. It normally takes two years for a helper to become a qualified machine operator. Supervisors recruit child apprentices because it increases their income by TK 3,000-5,000 per month.

We found that child labourers work as yarn cutters, yarn winders, cloth bearers, sales assistants and dyeing and washing helpers. Around half of children work as apprentices (48%), followed by yarn cutters (24%). 22% of child labourers are operators and 1% are cutting masters. Few of them work as cloth bearers, sales assistants or dyeing/washing helpers, with these figures being 1%, 2%, and 2%, respectively (Figure 2.11).
Box 2.4: In case of torture or abuse, there is nothing that children can do. Sometime they make a phone call to parents or inform relatives

- Shahjalal, a Sewing Helper

Shahjalal (13) works as a helper at an apparel plant in Keraniganj owned by his maternal uncle. Around one year ago he came to Dhaka from Sariatpur district. His father is a landless day labourer in the agriculture sector and has to bear the cost of a four-member household. His mother is a housewife. After third year he left school due to a change in residence and enrolled in a Madrasha; he lost interest in education as a result of physical torture at the hands of a Madrasha teacher. He joined an apparel plant in Keraniganj as an apprentice under an operator with the support of his village neighbor. At this workplace, most of the workers are from Sariatpur district. The contract is verbal, the instructor is supposed to provide food, accommodation and 50 Taka as weekly allowance. According to Shahjalal, working hours are divided into two shifts; from morning (8.00am/8.30am) to 2.00pm and from 4.00pm to 12.00pm; two hours break for lunch with one day off a week. He worked 8 months under this instructor. He left the job due to a misunderstanding with his instructor. He said that the workplace is congested, but has a fan in the room. Most of the time he suffered from fever, coughs and headaches; the main problem was the bathroom and latrines. Hundreds of people use the common bathroom and toilets; in the mornings there was a long queue. Shahjalal said that his instructor was hot-tempered. When there was work-related pressure or a misunderstanding with Mahajan (Owner), he mistreated him and beat him with the scale. According to Shahjalal, when working children suffer any kind of abuse or torture, there is nothing they can do. Sometimes they make phone calls to parents or inform relatives - if they have any. After returning for two to three weeks to his village, he returned to the apparel sector at his maternal uncle’s plant. Now he receives a weekly allowance of TK 100 with food and accommodation, and expects to have TK 5,000 to TK 6,000 within one year after becoming Operator.
CHAPTER THREE

Working Conditions of Child Labourers in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub

This chapter describes working conditions of child labourers inside the factory, their working hours, leave, safety and security, wages and benefits. Furthermore, it describes problems at work places, both in general terms and especially for children.

3.1 Working hours per day

Working hours for working children are very long. These vary between peak and lean season. In a lean season, or during normal production time, on average a child labourer has to work 13 hours per day, with the range being from 10 to 16 hours a day with one day a week off on Friday. If needed, children sometimes work a half-day on Friday as well. Generally, the factory opens from 8.30 to 9.00 am and continues to operate till 10.00 to 10.30 pm. Sale centres and show rooms open at 10.00 am and close at 10.00 pm. General speaking, there is a two-hour lunch break from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm.

In the peak season, around two months a year, there is a lot of pressure to produce in order to fulfil a higher volume of orders targeting the Eid festivals. We found that minimum working hours of child labourers is 15.73 during the peak season, when they have to work 12 to 18 hours a day. In the peak season, more than one out of 10 children work 18 hours per day, while 27.6% of children work 17 hours (Figure 3.1). Children have to work more hours because the instructor/operators work longer hours.

Box 3.1: There are no additional benefits or any overtime payment system here

- Mother of a child labourer in FGD

“When children work long hours in a factory or sale center, sometimes we go to the workplace to check and see why they are so late and what the children are doing there. The area is safe and secure, but we feel the tension and remain alert. In the peak season, children return home at midnight. Especially at sales centers, they return home at 12.00 to 2.00 am at night. The salary is same; for extended hours of work there are no additional benefits or overtime pay here.”

![Figure 3.1: Work hours of child workers in lean and peak season](image-url)
3.2. Rest time

We observed that there is no specific breaktime during working hours. In general, there is a lunch break, which usually lasts 2 hours per day. During this time, the workers go to their residence, take a shower, cook and eat lunch with their family, and then return to work. During these two hours there is not much time to rest. We found that a majority of child labourers have no separate place to have a rest. Most (72.1%) of the children rest at the workplace, while 23.9% rest at their private residences and 4% rest somewhere outside the factory (Figure 3.2).

3.3 Wages and benefits

3.3.1 Wage structure

There is no standard salary or overtime structure in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub. There are two types of salary; one is monthly and the other is piece rate. Operators and cutting masters work mostly by piece rates, while helpers work for monthly salaries. On a monthly basis, operators receive TK 6,000 to TK 8,000, while cutting masters receive TK 10,000 to TK 12,000.

The monthly salary of children working as helpers at sale centres or apparel plants is TK 2,000 to TK 5,000, depending on skills and quality of work. There is no overtime pay system for additional working hours. Surveys of FGDs showed that the working children receive one month bonus pay during peak season for additional work.

Salaried workers are paid on a monthly basis – the majority are paid in four segments (every Thursday night, but settled up on the first Thursday of the following month). Piece-rate workers receive a bare subsistence allowance every Thursday night, with the remainder of what is owed to them being disbursed on the eve of the two Eid festivals.

49% of child labourers are apprentices. Apprentices are not paid a standard wage – they receive a subsistence allowance, around 50-120 taka weekly for pocket money, weekly clothes washing, etc. They get modest meals (three times a day) and 94% of them are provided accommodation within the plant, particularly those in need. Such types of workers work longer hour, as their master works longer hours on piece rate.

The salary of child labourers can increase when they change jobs. Sometimes apprentices learn

**Box 3.2: it’s the unique factory zone where a simple worker can be a plant owner in future**

- **Mr. Dulal, Owner of plant, DSS Garments**

Mr. Dulal (35) started life in Keraniganj as a helper at the age of 10 in a small tailoring shop and after 14 years set up his own garment plant with 6 machines and 10 workers. He migrated from Patuakhali district about 22 years ago. He said that most of the toilets and washrooms there are unhygienic but in this case the plant owners are not responsible, rather it is due to unwillingness on the part of the market authority. According to him, Keraniganj garment workers are not interested in unionization because it divides workers and hinders industrial growth. It is a unique factory zone where a simple worker can be a plant owner in future. Moreover, workers don’t have hazardous jobs and dedicated workers can earn well, he adds.
skills, then change to jobs with higher salaries. In general, children can begin operating machines at 15 years of age. If they become operators, they receive a higher monthly salary, depending on their skills and the quality of their work. 21% of children interviewed are working at their 2nd job, while 2% are at their 3rd job.

There is no practice of providing overtime payment for working additional hours, as there is no standard salary structure or standard working hours corresponding to the country’s labour laws.

3.3.2 Food /snacks provided by employers during working hours

More than three out of four (75.4%) child labourers do not receive any food/snacks from their employers during working hours (Table 3.1, Annex 1). Of the child labourers who receive food/snacks from their employers during working hours, half of them (49.5%) receive such on a regular basis, while 20.2% get such irregularly, and 30.3% of them only receive food/snacks when they perform extra work (Table 3.2, Annex 1).

3.3.3 Leave and holidays

There is no formal or structured leave system in the apparel sector. On the basis of the interviews and FGDs, we found that children go home for two festivals (Muslim Eids) and have about 10 to 15 days off a year. Working children can also take occasional leave for weddings of relatives or similar occasions and stay home 4 to 7 days depending on their needs. 42.5% of working children interviewed told us that they do not receive paid leave, while a majority of working children (57.5%) reported that they get paid leave when they cannot attend work due to illness (Table 3.3, Annex 1). However, interviews with them revealed that they usually are not referring to paid leave in the sense that we understand. What they mean by paid leave is that when they are sick they sometimes get the day off along with lodging and three meals. Since so many of the child labourers are unpaid apprentices who are mostly paid in food and lodging (or are helpers and operators who live in the factory), they feel that if they get the day off but are still fed and/or lodged then they have been paid.

3.4 Space and seating arrangements

Buildings in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub were not constructed with proper planning for a factory. Half of the working children interviewed said that there is no sufficient ventilation system at their workplace (49.3%). About four out of ten children (37.6%) do not have sufficient space to work (Table 3.5 and 3.6, Annex 1). At the workplace there is not enough seating for everyone. A majority (58%) of child labourers have a chair, while more than one out of four working children sit on the floor (Figure 3.4).

![Figure 3.4: Seating arrangements](image-url)
3.5 Water and sanitary facilities

The great majority of the child labourers do not have any access to safe drinking water. More than nine out of ten working children drink plant-supplied water (90.3%), while 7.5% drink water from tube wells. Only 2.2% of children bring water from home (Figure 3.5). Access to hygienic latrines and urinals is extremely poor. About nine working children out of ten have no access to hygienic latrines and urinals. Only 12.2% have access to hygienic latrines and urinals (Table 3.7, Annex 1). There are almost never separate toilet facilities for males and females (Table 3.8, Annex 1).

Box 3.3: “I sleep on the floor at my plant/workplace, which is spacious but there is lot of dust, while ventilation conditions are poor and washrooms are dark, dirty and dank.”

- Abdullah, Machine operator, Suvadda, Keraniganj

Abdullah (16) started working in Keraniganj Apparel Hub as helper at a pants-making workshop at the age of 11. He is from Naogoan district. At first he worked as a helper in a local furniture shop at Naogoan, where he had to work hard and received TK 80 per day. He was employed there by his neighbor, working as cutting master. After two years, Abdullah became a machine operator and now makes jean pants. Abdullah can make 18-25 pants in a day and gets TK 30 per pants and earns TK 12,000 per month. Abdullah sends on average TK 75,000 per year to his family and saves the rest. Abdullah has to work 12 hours on average a day, but during the lean period he has to work from morning till late at night. He says “I sleep at my workplace, which is spacious but has a lot of dust and the ventilation is poor, but the most displeasing aspect is the sanitary condition of the building. Washrooms are dark, dirty and dank.”

3.6 Safety and security

3.6.1 Use of protective gears

In general, there is no practice of using protective gears. The working children interviewed reported that only 4.2% of them use protective gears; the great majority of working children (95.8%) do not use protective gears (Figure 3.6).

Children use gloves and masks at their own expense, with very few child labourers using the gloves and finger cups provided by their employers and BLF.
3.6.2 Accidents

We found that about one-fifth (18.9%) of child labourers have suffered a minor accident during their working lives at an apparel plant (Figure 3.7). The majority of them (77.6%) experienced needle pinching and 22.4% had finger cuts (Table 3.9, Annex 1). In the majority of cases, children have to bear the cost of treatment (62.2%) in work-related accident, followed by their supervisor (36.6%). Only in 1.2% cases does the employer bear the cost of treatment (Figure 3.8).

![Figure 3.7: Experienced an accident at workplace](image1)

![Figure 3.8: Who pays for treatment](image2)

3.7 Attitude of employers/supervisors and fellow workers towards child workers

Most children working in the apparel sector consider the attitude of employers/supervisors are supportive (80.6%) towards them and only 1.5% find employers/supervisors are harsh. 17.9% are in different towards the attitude of employers/supervisors (Figure 3.9).

Similarly, 90.8% find the attitude of fellow adult workers supportive towards child workers and only 1% felt fellow workers’ attitudes are harsh. 8.2% of child workers view fellow workers to be indifferent (Figure 3.9).

![Figure 3.9: Attitude of employers/supervisors and fellow workers towards child workers](image3)

Box 3.4: “After 40 years of age, physical strength diminishes: can’t run the machine”

-Kalam, Cutting Master

After 40 years of age, physical strength diminishes too much to run the machine swiftly, according to Kalam (44), a cutting master working at an apparel plant in Keraniganj. After passing fourth year, he started working in this sector as Sagred (Apprentice) at the age of 13. He worked 4 years as an apprentice under his Ostad (instructor/supervisor). After that he worked more than 20 years as a sewing operator /supervisor. For the last two years, he has been working as a cutting master. He said one can not work for too long as sewing operator, as physical strength decreases after 35 years of age. It is one of the vulnerabilities faced by workers in this sector.
3.8 Prevalence of scolding, physical torture, and abuse

3.8.1 Scolding

The practice by employers of scolding child labourers is the most common form of abuse that child labourers report. Scolding was defined to the children as: “Angrily pointing out and verbally criticizing someone for any fault or error at the workplace, it can take place privately or publicly.”

We found that more than one out of four (25.3%) child labourers experience scolding monthly, 7.7% child workers experience scolding weekly, and 3.7% face it daily (Figure 3.10). Together this means 36.7% of child labourers experience scolding.

In terms of frequency, 16.9%, 4.2%, and 3.5% of working children interviewed said that they get scolded once a month, week, and day, respectively. 4.2%, 3.0%, and 0.2% of children experience scolding at least twice a month, week, and day, respectively (Table 3.10, Annex 1).

Box 3.5: Life in here is like being in prison

-Masuda, mother of a child working as a helper in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub

“What is our future? Who cares about us? What are the benefits of child labour in the apparel sector?” Masuda (38), mother of a child apparel labourer, raises these questions. Masuda’s husband cannot earn any regular income; she bears the expenses of the household that comprises four members. Masuda said the highest salary here for children is TK 5000 as a helper; there are no fixed working hours, no overtime system, and there is a lack of toilet and bathroom facilities. Children have to sleep inside of congested, dusty workplaces that have no ventilation. She said: “Our life is tied to this laborious work. Life in here is like being in prison. A small room rent is TK 3000. All family members have to sleep in one room. The price of food stuff is increasing day by day. How we can survive?”

Source: FGD with mothers of child labourers

3.8.2 Abuse

About one out of ten working children experience abuse at their workplace. Among the types of abuse, verbal abuse is the most frequent, followed by mental and physical abuse (Figure 3.11). Children were told the difference between scolding and verbal abuse, which we defined to them...
as: “Excessive use of language to undermine someone’s dignity and security through insults or humiliation, in a sudden or repeated manner. Verbal abuse often remains hidden while affecting the victim psychologically. The victim will strive to not respond even though his or her dignity is attacked. This may result in stress, lack of motivation and even depression”. Additionally, physical abuse was defined to them as: “Any intentional and unwanted contact with you or something close to your body. Sometimes abusive behaviour does not cause pain or even leave a bruise, but it’s still unhealthy. It usually happens to female workers”. The majority of abuse is at the hands of adult fellow workers (adult workers who hold a position senior to the child) (48.57%) and employers (42.86%), followed by co-workers (adult workers with the same position or status as the child) (5.71%); 2.86% by supervisors (Figure 3.12).

3.8.3 Physical torture

We even find that physical torture is sometimes practiced on child workers in the apparel sector. Children were told the definition of torture as: “The act of causing severe physical pain as a form of punishment or as a way to force someone to do or say something.” 4.7% of working children experience physical torture on a monthly basis at the hands of their employers or supervisors, 2.2% weekly and 0.2% daily (Figure 3.13). In terms of frequency, 4.5% children face torture once a month, 0.5% once a week, and 0.2% once a day. 0.5% and 0.2% of children experience torture twice and three times a week, respectively. 0.2% of children experience torture three times a month.

3.9 Submitting complaints

Generally, children lodge workplace complaints at the workplace. They go to supervisors (47.8%) and employers (46.4%), followed by managers and co-workers. Very few go to community and union leaders (Figure 3.14). According to child labourers’ opinion, in the majority (62.4%) of cases they are satisfied with the judgment /settlement rendered by supervisors and employees (Table 3.11, Annex 1)

Box 3.6: There is no abuse of child labour; sometimes their fellow worker (trainer) slaps them

According to garment businessmen and market owners, there is no abuse and exploitation and there is no torture or sexual abuse of children in Keraniganj area, but sometimes their fellow worker (trainer) slaps them. They said that there is very little opportunity for recreation for working children during the daytime and outside the workshop. Meals are same almost every week. They can rarely go home due to lack of vacation and are under a lot of pressure from their supervisors because they working on a piece-rate basis. There is no organization working with child-labour issues in this area. Working conditions could be improved by ensuring opportunity for recreation, offering health facilities, increasing salary and reducing workhours.
3.10 Job changes

We discovered that the practice of changing jobs among child workers is not as common as typically found among adult workers. This is because the majority of the children in the apparel sector work as apprentices, who usually do not move between jobs. One out of five working children changed their 1st job. The reasons for changing jobs identified by them are: low wage, ill treatment, poor working conditions, feeling lonely, work-related stress, completion of contract, and no opportunity to become an operator.

Box 3.7: Najma faces scolding every day by a co-worker

Najma, a 10-year-old girl, works at an apparel plant as a helper and earns TK 3500/month. Her mother also works in the same factory. Her father works at a dockyard and earns TK 300 per day. Najma’s family came to Dhaka from a village about one year ago because they could not pay the installments on loans with interest that were taken for the treatment of her elder brother, who lost his two fingers in an accident while working in a ricemill. Najma said she does not like to work in this factory, as she suffers scolding on a daily basis by her co-workers. She told us that her mother is planning to go back to the village when they are able to pay back the loan completely, then she will be readmitted to school.

3.11 Future plans

More than half of working children (55%) interviewed said they want to be an operator or cutting master in future. 17.7% working children have a plan to go into business or become a plant owner and very few of them want to go abroad in search of better earnings. A significant number of working children (24.9%), about one out of four, have no hope for their future. They said they will continue at the same job (Table 3.12, Annex 1).
Elimination of Child Labour in the Keranganj Apparel Industry in Bangladesh

Child labour is a complex social problem. The Government of Bangladesh is committed to eliminating child labour and has adopted policies and programs to this end. The Bangladesh government adopted the National Child Labour Elimination Policy (NCLEP) in 2010 and the National Plan of Action (NPA) in 2012. This chapter reviews government laws, policies and programs on child labour in Bangladesh and describes the perception and attitudes of stakeholders regarding child labour in the Keranganj apparel industries in order to develop a viable plan of action to eliminate child labour in Bangladesh.

4.1 Laws and regulations on child labour

4.1.1 Labour Act 2006, amended 2013

The 2006 Labour Act and its amended version from 2013 includes a chapter on child labour. The 2013 Labour Act prohibits employment of “children” under the age of 14 and hazardous work for “adolescents” under the age of 18 years. This law allows children between 14-18 years to engage in light work if they have a health certificate issued by the authority in charge. However, the law contains a loophole causing confusion over the age of children: children aged 12 and over may engage in “light work” that does not pose a risk to their mental and physical development and does not interfere with their education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard /issue</th>
<th>Description of relevant law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age for work – 14</td>
<td>According to Section 34 (1) of the 2013 Labour Act, which is entitled Prohibition of Employment of Children and Adolescents, “No child shall be employed or permitted to work in any occupation or establishment”.15 2. No adolescent shall be employed or permitted to work in any occupation or establishment unless (a) a certificate of fitness in the prescribed form is granted to him by a registered medical practitioner in the custody of the employer.”16 3. Nothing in this sub-section (2) shall apply to the employment of any adolescent in any occupation or establishment either as an apprentice or for the purpose or receiving vocational training therein.17 “A child who has reached the age of twelve may be employed in such light work as not to endanger his health and development or interfere with his education.”18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age for hazardous work-18</td>
<td>The Government shall from time to time issue a list of hazardous works by publication in a gazette. (2) No adolescent shall be assigned to jobs which are categorised as dangerous by the Government. (3) No adolescent shall be allowed in any establishment to clean, lubricate or adjust any part of machinery while that part is in motion or to work between moving parts or between fixed and moving.”19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15“Child” means a person who has not turned fourteen, Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Chapter 1: Preliminary (83)
16“Adolescent” means a person who has turned fourteen, but has not reached eighteen years of age, Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Chapter 1: Preliminary (8)
17Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 34
18Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 34
19Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 34
20Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 44
21An act adopted to further amend the 2006 Bangladesh Labour Act, Bangladesh Parliament, 22 July 2013
4.1.2 National Child Labour Elimination Policy (NCLEP), 2010

Acknowledging that existing labour law was not sufficient to eliminate child labour, the government of Bangladesh adopted the National Child Labour Elimination Policy in 2010. The NCLEP brings together key concepts that are needed to define and address child labour in Bangladesh. The main objective of the 2010 NCLEP is to bring about significant changes in the lives of the children by removing them from all forms of child labour, including hazardous work and worst forms of child labour. There are nine specific objectives under NCLEP described in box 4.1.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{Box 4.1: Specific objectives of NCLEP 2010}

I. Removing working children from different forms of occupations including hazardous work and the worst forms of child labour;

II. Involving parents of working children in income-generating activities with a view to removing children from the vicious cycle of poverty;

III. Offering stipends and grants in order to bring working children back to school;

IV. Extending special attention to children who are affected by floods, cyclones, tidal bores, riverbank erosions, drought and desertification, etc;

V. Devoting special attention to indigenous and physically challenged children to bring them back into a congenial environment;

VI. Ensuring coordination amongst stakeholders and sectors devoted to the welfare of working children;

VII. Enacting pragmatic laws and strengthening institutional capacity for their enforcement;

VIII. Raising awareness amongst parents, the population at large and civil society about the harmful consequences of child labour;

IX. Planning and implementation of different short, medium and long term strategies and programs to eliminate various forms of child labour from Bangladesh by 2015.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|p{\textwidth}|}
\hline
\textbf{Period and cost of fitness certificate} & Any certificate of fitness issued under this section shall remain valid for a period of twelve months from the date on which it was issued.\textsuperscript{20} Any fee payable for a certificate under this section shall be paid by the employer and shall not be recoverable from the adolescent or his parents or guardians.\textsuperscript{21} \\
\hline
\textbf{Dispute as to age} & If any question arises as to whether any person is a child or an adolescent, the question shall be resolved based on the birth registration certificate, school certificate or a certificate from a registered physician certifying the age of the person concerned.\textsuperscript{15,22} \\
\hline
\textbf{Working hours and weekly leave} & Child workers will not be allowed to work more than 7 hours daily and 42 hours a week at a factory. In some places this shall not be more than 48 hours a week.\textsuperscript{23} Child workers shall not be allowed to work between 7pm and 7am.\textsuperscript{24} Child workers shall receive a weekly holiday just like other workers.\textsuperscript{25} Child labourers shall not be allowed to work at more than one factory per day.\textsuperscript{26} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{20}Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 37 (1)
\textsuperscript{21}Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 37 (1)
\textsuperscript{22}Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 36 (1).
\textsuperscript{23}Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 41
\textsuperscript{24}Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 41
\textsuperscript{25}Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 41
\textsuperscript{26}Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Section 41
The policy recommends a unified definition of a child's age. It also clearly defines hazardous work for children under section 10, entitled ‘Working Environment of Working Children’. The full definition is provided in box 4.2.

The NCLEP identified six specific working strategies. These are

1. Identifying the scope of an action strategy in order to implement the policy
2. Determining goals and objectives
3. Setting up programs
4. Determining the time frame
5. Selecting organizations with vested responsibility for policy implementation
6. Selecting associate/collaborative organizations

Box 4.2: Definition of hazardous work according to NCLEP 2010

“Despite prohibition of child labour by various Acts, children are being employed in various occupations due to circumstances and surroundings. In this connection, there should be constant vigilance over the working environment of the children to make it congenial. If a child engages in labour:

- working for more than 5 hours per day;
- performs work that puts undue strain on his/her physical and psychological health and social status;
- works in an insecure and unhealthy environment;
- works without wage or with irregular payment or for low wages;
- performs duties inappropriate for his or her capabilities;
- works in conditions that hinder his or her education,
- such is deemed to constitute forced labour;
- is compelled to do such work which is demeaning to human dignity;
- becomes the victim of physical and/or mental torture and sexual exploitation; and
- gets no opportunity for leisure or recreation;

then working conditions or the environment are regarded as demeaning and hazardous to his or her physical and mental health i.e. life-threatening. All necessary steps and efforts should be taken to rescue children from such working conditions or environments.”

In order to implement these strategies, there are nine strategic areas of intervention; these are as follows.

1. Policy Implementation and Institutional Development
2. Education
3. Health and Nutrition
4. Social Awareness-Raising and Motivation
5. Legislation and Enforcement
6. Employment and Labour Market
8. Social and Family Reintegration
9. Research and Training
4.1.3 National plan of action for implementing the NCLEP 2012-16

No significant progress has been made to date in the implementation of NCLEP 2010. A Child Labour Unit (CLU) has been set up under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, but it is no longer functioning. The NCLEP did not provide for any sources of funding of implementation of programs. There need to be advocacy initiatives for the proper implementation, review and update of NCLEP. Advocacy initiatives are also needed to strengthen the capacity of CLU.

A National Plan of Action (NPA) 2012-16 has been adopted to implement the 2010 NCLEP. The implementation of NCLEP fully depends on the implementation of the NPA. The NPA has focused on the same nine strategic areas of intervention highlighted in the NCLEP. It has suggested specific intervention corresponding to outputs in the strategic areas with specific roles and responsibilities for various government and non-government stakeholders at local and national levels. The NPA proposed an indicative budget for its effective implementation.

Box 4.3: NGOs are only working for street children in Keraniganj

It was found that there are some NGOs working in Keraniganj Apparel Hub with children. NGOs named Islamic Relief, Bastob and KokioNaki Kodamodachi (K&K) are working in Keraniganj. They are working mostly with street children. Child labour is not their target. The K&K has established a drop-in centre along the river banks of Buriganga in Dhaka city for street children. The objective is to protect street children from abusive male practices. At present a total of 40 children including 5 girls are receiving support from this centre. The street children get food, basic education and facilities for rest and recreation during the daytime. BRAC arranges night shelter for the street children. NGOs have no records on working children in Keraniganj.

Not enough progress has been achieved in the three years since its adoption aside from a few committees being set up. The 2010 NCLEP proposed the establishment of committees at national, divisional, district and upazila levels for its nine strategic areas of implementation. The roles and responsibilities of these committees have been clearly stated in the NPA. A 26-member National Child Labour Welfare Council (NCLWC) headed by the Minister of Labour and Employment was established in February 2014. The Divisional Child Labour Welfare Committee (DCLWC), District Child Rights Monitoring Forum (DCRMF) and Upazila Child Labour Monitoring Committee (UCLMC) also have been established. The mechanisms, roles and responsibilities of these committees are described in Table-4.3. No inter-ministerial mechanism has been established to obtain the required funds from the responsible entities. Strong advocacy initiatives are needed for budget allocation and implementation of NPA. Advocacy initiatives are needed to put the committees on child labour in working order and render effective at the upazila, district, divisional and national levels.

4.2 National budget and child labour in Bangladesh

Despite having good policies and laws to eliminate child labour, all the direct programs relating to elimination of child labour in the Ministry Labour and Employment ended in 2013-14, while new programs are yet to be launched under the national budget of Bangladesh. The project entitled Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh (3rd Phase) ended in FY 2014.

| Table 4.2: Allocation for ROSC project in national budget from FY 2012-13 to FY 2015-16 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| FY2012-13 (TK In Lakh)                         | FY 2013-14 (TK In Lakh) | FY 2015-16 (TK In Lakh) |
| Total  | Capital | Revenue | Total  | Capital | Revenue | Total  | Capital | Revenue |
| 9401   | 0       | 9401    | 24,849 | 926     | 24,473  | 17,000 | 300     | 16,700  |

Source: Annual Development Program, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh
For children who are dropouts, the government has been implementing a project named “Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education to achieve the national goal of “Education for All (EFA)” with support from International Development Assistance (IDA). Aside from the national goal, the aims of this project are to provide access to primary education to those children who are out of school and ensure retention of disadvantaged children. At the same time, it is seeking to improve the quality and efficiency of primary education by strengthening the capacity of learning centres and related organizations. In the current fiscal year TK. 17,000 Lakh has been budgeted for the ROSC project. The NPA recommended a five-year budget, detailing outputs, key activities, inputs and existing programs. This has not materialized; there is no item providing for this in the current national budget of Bangladesh. There is hence a gap between policy declaration on elimination of child labour and budget allocation. Despite there being a high incidence of child labour in the study area, no government intervention can be identified for the education of children who are drop-outs in Keraniganj.

Besides government programs, there are many initiatives in Bangladesh by national and international NGOs targeting protection of poor children and child workers. In the area of the study, we did not observe one single NGO initiative on child labour. Moreover, the target of NGOs is street children in Keraniganj, not child labour (Box-4.1).

A national plan of action has been adopted to implement the NCLEP. The new national child labour survey has been initiated with the technical support of the ILO\textsuperscript{28}. The final list of hazardous work for children has been drawn up. However, the issue of child labour remains a major concern in Bangladesh as proper implementation of policy remains weak.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3: Mechanisms, roles and responsibilities of NCLWC, DCLWC, DCRMF and UCLMC\textsuperscript{29}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committees On Child Labour</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Child Labour Welfare Council (NCLWC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisional Child Labour Welfare Council (DCLWC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{28}Review the Laws and Policies and Assessment the Institutions on Child Labour, 2015, CSID and World Vision, Dhaka
\textsuperscript{29}National Plan of Action for Implementing The National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2012-2016, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of Bangladesh, April 2013
4.3 Child Workers' knowledge of their existing legal protection

4.3.1 Legal age of children

Child workers have no knowledge of the legal age of children (minimum working age). We find that more than nine out of ten are not aware of the legal age of children; only 3.2% knows that it is 18. The perception of the remaining child workers in our sample (5%) is that the age of children is 8 years to 17 years.

4.3.2 Legal working hours for children

Most child labourers (86.1%) have no notion of maximum working hours for child labour; about 10% of child workers think that it is 2 hours. The remainder of the respondents (3.9%) believe that it is 5 to 15 hours per day (Figure 4.2).

4.3.3 Trade Unions

Child labourers in the apparel sector have no idea about trade unions and their role. Knowledge of trade unions among child labourers is nil.

Among the respondents, not a single one had ever heard of trade unions nor did they have any notion about the activities of trade unions. None of them have sought trade union assistance to resolve disputes.
4.3.4 Hazardous work

We found in our interviews and FGDs that working children have no understanding of hazardous work and its definition. Some of them identified some work as hazardous: carrying excess loads, chemical sprays, electrical work and work with scissors.

Box 4.5: Union members face severe challenges, especially political pressure, as owners are local and have powerful political connections.

Workers’ unions started forming in Keraniganj for the first time in 1994 with the aim of organizing workers and then forcing their rights. The union movement was for the most part put to a stop in 1996 in the wake of massive clashes that left many workers injured. Union leaders were killed (the exact number is still not known) at that time. Cases were brought to court against a massive number of workers and activists, which still have not been dismissed. Unions’ radius of action has been greatly curtailed since this traumatic experience. For example, the “Keraniganj Khudra Garments Shromik Kormochari Union” was registered in 2001; it has 21 executive committee members. The President and General Secretary select the other members of executive committee; general workers have no choice in who represents them in their union. It is remarkable that out of 185,000 workers in the area they have only 350 members. Union leaders have close and direct ties with present ruling party, Awami League, and are affiliated with Bangladesh Textile & Garment Workers League (BTGWL). Most of the members of the union work as machine operators, cloth cutting masters and helpers in their respective apparel plants. When organizing workers, union members face severe challenges, especially political pressure from plant owners, individually or collectively, as plant owners are locally powerful and also have political connections. Workers are interested in trade unions, but they fear being sacked by the employer if they get involved with unions.

Source: FGD with union leaders

4.4 Support from government and non-governmental organizations

When problems crop up, most child workers do not get any support from any government or non-governmental organization. It was found that only 1.5% respondents have received support from government or non-governmental organizations.

4.5 Attitude of parents and owners towards child labour

From FGDs we found the arguments of parents regarding child labour. As per their concern, they are helpless without their children’s wage labour, as they cannot maintain monthly family expenses without it. Furthermore, the cost of education is high: there is no government school nearby. Secondly, they consider it rational for the children to learn a skill and became independent, otherwise these drop-out children could fall in with bad people, who could get them into trouble. If there were schools in the area that offered a flexible schedule to work around the working hours of the child workers, then these children could continue their education.

We found that owners of the factories are aware of legal provisions on child labour. They are cautious about the issue and forward arguments against these laws. For example, they said that it is illegal to recruit children below the age of 14, but poor children who are school drop-outs have few choices other than to seek employment.
4.6 Challenges to eliminating child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub

Child labour is a critical social challenge in Bangladesh. It is a multi-dimensional and complex issue that is the result of the deprivation and injustice caused by economic vulnerability, an inadequate legislative framework and governance deficits and a low-quality educational system, including inadequate provision of technical and vocational education (TVE). There is no shortcut or easy path to eliminate child labour: there are many challenges to eliminate child labour in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub.

Most owners and employers do profit from child work and may not support any changes because cheap labour of children is an easy way for them to increase their profits. Secondly, operators also get benefits from child labour, as apprentices are a source of additional income. Furthermore, on the supply side, parents and children will not be in favour of the elimination of child labour without having adequate compensatory support, as it is currently an important source of their livelihood and a primary means for children to become self-reliant. Parents and children often look upon it as training rather than a job.

The absence of an adequate regulatory framework is also a challenge, as this region is still not recognized as part of the industry and, thus, it often escapes the government’s regulatory mechanisms. There is also a lack of monitoring and proper implementation of government labour policies and the child labour plan of action in general. Despite a lot of policy declarations on the elimination of child labour, there has been no budget funds allocated to these plans. Thus they remain mere ideas on paper. Legal awareness of child labour is sufficient among owners, but without reliable regulation they do not follow the laws. Finally, there is no organized group or effective labour organization (trade union) to protect child labour. In sum total, no adults in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub are interested in upholding existing child labour laws, let alone expanding them to eliminate child labour entirely. With no adults working to protect the children of Keraniganj from the routine abuse of their legal rights, it is no wonder that child labourers have little to no knowledge about legal protection that is in place for them, or the potential resources that trade unions can provide. Even if they had the power to uphold their own rights (which our findings suggest that they don't), they would either want to work for the income and training, or do not know their rights enough to defend them on their own.

Box 4.6: “Child labour is bad, but what are the options for drop-out children?”

-Shofiq, Owner of Sale Centre in Keraniganj

Noman (13) is a shop assistant for readymade garments. He left school after fourth year. The owner of the shop, Mr. Shofiq said: “he is not like an employee, I have employed him to save his life, otherwise he would be spoiled. He is my relative (cousin). He also said Noman's father cannot earn a regular income. His elder brother has already been spoiled. He has furthermore supported the marriage of his sister by covering expenses of his family, bearing the costs of looking after his family. He is staying in my house. If needed, I give money to his mother. Child labour is bad, but what are the options for children who dropout of school?”
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

As we have shown throughout the study, child labour is connected to broader complex development issues, like poverty and the unavailability of affordable schooling, that push children into work. Existing child labour laws acknowledge that child labour is a mixed blessing in our current context: families often cannot survive without it. Instead of aiming to eliminate child labour immediately, existing laws aim to limit the harmfulness of labour to children. Do child labour practices in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub violate current laws?

The findings that we present in the previous pages offer a mixed picture. In some ways, it appears that the amount of harm is limited: abuse is rare and even mere scolding does not seem to be the industry norm. Child labourers report that they are mostly satisfied with the result when they complain about workplace problems, and they feel that their employers and co-workers are supportive. Very few feel that adults in their workplaces are harsh to them. Most salaried workers, though they are few, are paid regularly. Most are taken care of by their employers informally in some way when they are sick.

That being said, most child workers are being exposed to legal definitions of harm: work is interfering with their studies, they work for more than 7 hours a day, and they work under great pressure, often at an unsafe and unhealthy workplace (particularly with regard to sanitary facilities and air quality). Most work for no wages because they are apprentices paid only subsistence allowances, not receiving any opportunity for leisure, and some even experience abuse and torture. Mercifully, the rates of abuse and torture are low, but the fact that these practices exist at all is disturbing and certainly violates the most basic standards of human rights, in addition to specific children’s rights under Bangladesh’s labour law. Unfortunately, children have no knowledge of these rights. These are vulnerable children who are doing their best to keep their families afloat. They are easily influenced by the adults around them, who benefit from their illegal forms of labour. In many cases they have accepted the harmful treatment that they experience as normal. Therefore, their satisfaction with their workplaces should not distract us from the facts: child labour law is being violated in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub, and, to make matters worse, hardly anyone is currently working to protect child labourers from violations of the law in this region.

Child labourers in Keraniganj need our immediate attention. In the near future, we need to develop ways to remove the huge supply of child labour by addressing widespread poverty and insufficient education opportunities. But in the meantime, we need to strengthen our regulatory institutions to enforce the laws that are currently in place to protect child workers from harm. In the following section, we describe our recommendations on how to move towards a society and economy that does not require child labour in the very long term, and how to improve working conditions for children from families that still rely on this in the short term. Both of these policy goals are challenging in and of themselves. To address them together, at the same time, will require considerable effort, diligence, and resources.

5.2 Recommendations

Bangladesh has adopted legislation and policies to eliminate child labour from society. In spite of such efforts, child labour continues to exist, sometimes in appalling conditions, particularly in labour-intensive industries such as those in the Keraniganj Apparel Hub. As child labour is an immensely complex issue, it cannot be made to disappear simply by the stroke of a pen. The
study has identified some critical issues for advocacy. Considering the context and situation of child labour in Keraniganj, the following recommendations are being forwarded in order to improve present child labour conditions and gradually eliminate child labour from the industry.

- BLF can now conduct policy advocacy to move the attention of government policymakers towards the Hub as a formal part of the industry. This will enable government line departments to enforce regulatory frameworks and facilitate a lawful environment for the owners and workers. In order to properly implement government policies and practices on child labour, BLF should initiate advocacy for implementation, review, and update of the NCLEP and NPA. Advocacy initiatives are also needed to strengthen the capacity of the CLU.

- To address the prevalence of child labour in Keraniganj Apparel Hub, BLF can provide information to the government and underline the importance of functioning and effective government committees on child labour.

- To address the high prevalence of child labour in Keraniganj Apparel Hub, BLF should conduct awareness sessions with owners, senior workers and parents of child labourers. These sessions should include regulatory rules such as child workers’ minimum age limits, their maximum working hours, and the identification of hazardous jobs. BLF can design a special module and communication materials (leaflets, hand-outs, etc.) for such an awareness campaign.

- Most child labourers have left school and joined the workforce at Keraniganj, mainly to contribute to their families’ ability to earn a minimum livelihood. There should be continuing education projects, especially for those who were compelled to leave school to earn for their family. This type of continuing education program may include relevant issues of workers’ rights and skill development training. BLF can undertake continuing education projects, especially for those who were compelled to leave school to earn for their family.

- Poverty is the main driving force behind child labour. To raise the income of households of child labourers, BLF can create alternative income-generating opportunities for parents through skill development programs for both parents and child labourers.

- In order to encourage workplace safety and environmental protection, BLF can organize meetings and dialogues with the owners and concerned stakeholders.

- To reduce and eliminate the prevalence of child labour, BLF can mobilize people in the local community, local GO and NGO officials, UP representatives, workers' representatives and religious people.

- It has been found that the workplaces in Keraniganj Apparel Hub are congested, have poor air quality and also have problems with safe water and sanitation; workers in general and child labourers in particular suffer from various health problems. BLF can create health facilities, including for sexual and reproductive health (SRH), by establishing primary health care centres.

- BLF can strengthen the capacities of existing trade union leaders in order to develop negotiating and bargaining skills among workers, particularly regarding child labourers' entitlements and rights.
### Table 2.3: Sample Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Selected groups</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 12 years of age</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-17</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>251</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>402</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informants Interviews (KII)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers of children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow adult workers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Discussion (FGD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Association Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers Union Leaders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellow Workers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP Representatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providing NGO workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeepers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health workers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 12 years of age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.4: Home districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home District</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Dhaka</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 2.5: Mother’s Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother’s Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>391</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 2.6: Father’s Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day labourer</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Holder</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puller</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boatman</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivation /agricultural work</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>359</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 2.7: School enrolment and attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Status</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not going to school</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregularly going to formal school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregularly going to informal school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 2.8: Current residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atplant</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside Keraniganj</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Keraniganj</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.1: Food/snacks provided by employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food/snacks</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide food/snacks during working hours</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers donot provide food/snacks during working hours</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.2: Frequency of providing food/snacks by employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide food/snacks regularly during working hours</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide food/snacks irregularly during working hours</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide food/snacks only during extra work</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.3: Paid leave due to illness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid leave due to illness</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.5: Sufficient ventilation system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sufficient ventilation system</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.6: Sufficient space for work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sufficient space for work</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.7: Access to hygienic latrines and urinals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to hygienic latrines and urinals</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.8: Availability of separate toilet facilities for males and females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability of separate toilet facilities for males and females</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.9: Types of accidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of accidents</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needle pinching</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger cut</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.10: Frequency of scolding %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One time</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two times</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three times</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four times</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.11: Level of satisfaction with the judgment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of satisfaction</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly satisfied</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly satisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.12: Future plan of the respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Plan</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be an operator</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be a cutting master</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be a plant owner</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To go abroad</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todo business</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To continue as is</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2: Study team members

Study Team

**CBSG**
- Mr. Joyanta Roy
- Mr. Mohammad Shahid Ullah
- Mr. Qudrat-E-Elahi
- Ms. Monira Begum
- Mr. Md. Al Amin Islam
- Mr. Md. Al-Amin Shishir

**BLF**
- Mr. A.K.M. Ashraf Uddin
- Mr. Md. Tayebur Rahman
- Mr. Saiful Islam
- Mr. Khirmohan Baishnab
- Mr. Aman Ullah
- Mr. Aminul Islam

**Short term moderator and data collector**

- Mr. Mohammad Farid Ahammad
- Ms. Shamme Shamsun Nahar
- Ms. Shamima Akhter Rima
- Mr. Md. Tabin Miah

- Mr. Forhad Hossain
- Ms. Selina Akhter Mortuza
- Ms. Shahnaz Parvin
- Ms. Moly Zohora
Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). Commercial use of all media published by the FES is not permitted without the written consent of the FES.