

CHAPTER VII

Assessment of Education and Skill Training Initiatives of UN Bodies, INGOs, Donors, and the BGMEA for Urban Working Children in Bangladesh

Besides the Government and the NGOs, UN Bodies, INGOs, donors and the BGMEA (as part of the business sector of Bangladesh) are also playing important role in building up policies, institutions and programmes, to provide non-formal education, skill training and other important services for the urban working children. In fact, the Government and the NGOs, as we mentioned earlier, are not self-sufficient in their services for the working children and in this context, UN bodies, INGOs, donors and the BGMEA act as the programme partners and fund providers with the Government and the NGOs.

UN bodies like UNICEF, ILO, and UNDP, and INGOs like Save the Children (UK and USA), World Vision, Action Aid, etc. started forming policies and action plans to tackle the child labour problem considering it to be a serious threat to the whole society since the beginning of the 1980s. Presently, they are also supporting several action programmes which started mainly from the early nineties. From the business sector, BGMEA was also involved in this process as a result of international pressure and their self-awareness in the collaborating process. Their activities started in the mid-1990s specially in providing non-formal education to the under-aged ex-garment workers.

7.1. UN Agencies, INGOs and the BGMEA's Response on Child Labour Issue in Bangladesh: The Background

United Nations is the largest and most influential organization throughout the world which has the special mandate and several action programmes on working and other disadvantaged children specially in the developing countries. Different UN agencies like UNICEF, ILO, UNESCO, UNDP, World Bank, etc. are involved in various child-centred programmes with the governments, NGOs

and other organizations for providing assistance to several action programmes to this end.

In addition to that, the UN Human Rights Commission has a working group on the modern forms of slavery, before which cases of forced or bonded labour throughout the world are regularly examined. “In 1993, the UN Human Rights Commission...adopted a comprehensive Programme of Action for the Elimination of Exploitation of Child Labour. The Commission urged UN bodies, governments and non-government organizations to bear the Programme of Action in mind when deciding on policies and programmes relating to the child population and the family” (ILO/IPEC, 1994: 34).

UNICEF, the exclusive child welfare and child development organization of the UN, has been working in Bangladesh since 1952 in the Pakistan period. Most of the UN agencies as well as INGOs, however, started their functions in Bangladesh after its independence from Pakistan in 1971 – specially from 1973 onwards. The cooperative relationship between Bangladesh and the UN was established primarily by the comprehensive relief, rescue and rehabilitation operations throughout the war-torn country immediately after the liberation war. From 1973, UN bodies started to function in the fields of large-scale socio-economic development process of the new-born country. ILO, UNDP, World Bank, etc. established their offices in Dhaka since 1972. The other UN agency, UNESCO, established its office in Dhaka in 1996 (Hamid & Stalker, 1998: 4-31). These UN agencies have been playing very important roles in the field of child development and other child right issues along with other socio-economic, cultural and developmental issues. Among these UN agencies, UNICEF and ILO are the two most important organizations that are providing assistance for the uplift of the urban working children in Bangladesh.

7.1.1. The UNICEF:

As the only UN organization dedicated exclusively to the world’s children, UNICEF works with governments, other UN agencies, committees, NGOs, families and children themselves in myriad ways. Its mission is to help protect children’s rights and improve the lives of the world’s young; and progress in this regard, measured in terms of lives saved and development achieved, has been great.

The organization is guided in its efforts by the UN CRC adopted in 1989 (UNICEF, 1998). However, “UNICEF’s primary goal is to realize the rights of all children and women, enabling even the most disadvantaged of them to fulfil their basic needs, to protect them from harm and abuse and to develop their full potential as human beings” (UNICEF, 1997b: 4).

UNICEF works on behalf of children on the basis of their needs, without discrimination with regard to race, creed, nationality, status or political belief. It works in close cooperation with national governments, as well as with NGOs and other UN agencies, to identify the needs of children and uses the energies and capacities of individuals, families, communities, organizations and governments to help countries address to their children’s needs. Some 85 per cent of UNICEF staff work in the field (assuring child rights on the basis of CRC), assessing needs, evaluating plans and liaising with government authorities and development partners to provide services, secure supplies and stimulate local capacity.

UNICEF also assists governments in revising policies and institutions, and making and enforcing laws that uphold the “best interests” of children. However, UNICEF has a legitimate interest in child labour issues as part of its global responsibility to improve the situation of children. In Bangladesh, it has been working for the best interest of children with the GOB and all other groups as mentioned above. In the middle of the decade of 1990s it planned the “GOB-UNICEF Cooperation Programme 1996-2000” covering all the child right issues like survival, protection, development and welfare of the children and emphasizing those children who are in especially difficult circumstances, e.g. the street and working children.

7.1.2. ILO and Its IPEC Programme:

One of the fundamental objectives of ILO’s policy is the abolition of child labour. Since its foundation in 1919, ILO has made the question of child labour as one of its special concerns. However, since 1973, ILO has been playing an important role in the field of working children’s protection and development with other labour-related issues in developing countries like Bangladesh. Actually ILO is not a donor for the governments and other organizations rather it is an executive

agency and the funds for its major technical assistance programmes are supplied largely by UNDP and partly by the multiple donors and international financial institutions (Hamid & Stalker, 1998: 12-13).

At the international level, ILO has a leading but not the exclusive role to play in the struggle against child labour. In its own process, however, "since the early 1980s, the ILO has been supplementing its standard-setting work on child labour with research, dissemination of information and direct technical assistance. All this work has demonstrated that a more comprehensive and coherent effort was needed in matters concerning child labour at the national and community levels. IPEC is a response to this challenge" (ILO/IPEC, 1994: 21).

ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is the world's largest technical cooperation programme in child labour founded in 1992 with seven partner countries. IPEC works towards the elimination of child labour by strengthening national capacities to address the problem of child labour and by creating a worldwide movement to combat it. The adequate political will and specific commitment of individual governments to address the child labour problem is the "starting point" for all IPEC actions. In practice, member states express this by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with IPEC to initiate action to fight child labour. Child labour cannot be solved overnight. Recognizing this reality, IPEC gives top priority to action which will bring an end to extreme forms of child labour, the exploitation of children in prostitution, pornography and for illicit purposes, and the hazardous working conditions and occupations. In addition to that, IPEC gives special attention to children who are particularly vulnerable, e.g. those who are very young, those in hidden and harmful work situations, girls and children with special vulnerabilities or needs (ILO, 1999c). The long-term development objective of ILO, and indeed of IPEC, is the effective abolition of child labour. The immediate objectives are:

- "to enhance the capability of ILO constituents and NGOs to design, implement and evaluate policies and programmes aimed at the elimination of child labour and the protection of working children;
- to determine the comparative strengths and weaknesses of various types of intervention at the local community and national levels as models for replication and adaptation; and

- to establish mechanisms both at the national and international levels capable of generating and supporting intensive public awareness and social mobilization to combat child labour” (ILO-IPEC, nd: 12).

The key strategy of IPEC is to give support to partner organizations to develop and implement measures which aim at preventing child labour, removing children from hazardous work, providing for their rehabilitation and social re-integration, and providing alternatives for them and their families.

In recent years (2000-2001), IPEC has been strengthened with its new improved strategies like:

- “An increased emphasis on the worst forms of child labour;
- A significantly enhanced campaign on the elimination of child labour;
- Intensified collection of data and integration of statistical information, analysis and further research into designing policies and programmes, technical cooperation and advocacy” (ILO-IPEC, 1999: 7), etc.

On the other hand, signing of an MOU is in the centre of IPEC’s ‘Country Programme Approach’. Within the MOU, IPEC support is based on a phased, multi-sectoral strategy with the following elements:

- “Encourage ILO constituents and other partners to make dialogue and create alliances;
- Determine the nature and extent of the child labour problem;
- Assist in devising national policies to counter it;
- Set up mechanisms to provide in-country ownership and operation of a national programme of action;
- Create awareness in the community and the work place;
- Promote development and application of protective legislation;
- Support direct action aimed at preventing child labour and withdrawing children from work;
- Replicate successful projects;
- Integrate child labour issues systematically into social and economic development policies, programmes and budgets” (ILO-IPEC, 1999: 7).

Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Thailand and Turkey signed their MOUs with IPEC in 1992 when it was established. However, Bangladesh signed a MOU in 1994 with IPEC as well as with other Asian countries like Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and the African country of the United Republic of Tanzania. As in 1999, 35 countries of Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America signed MOUs and a

further 28 were in preparation. A growing number of donor countries are supporting action against child labour through IPEC¹ (ILO, 1999c).

The aim of ILO-IPEC cooperation “is to support the Government, the NGOs, the trade unions, the employers’ organizations and other relevant agencies to strengthen their capacity to improve the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the country so as to progressively restrict and regulate child labour with a view to its ultimate elimination. Keeping the above objective in mind, ILO-IPEC has been closely working with the GOB, the trade unions, the employers’ organizations and the NGOs since early 1995” (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, 1999: 1). The Ministry of Labour and Manpower is the focal point of the IPEC activities in Bangladesh, but other relevant ministries viz. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Textile, Ministry of Foreign Affairs are also involved. There is also the NGO Affairs Bureau. All of these organizations have their representatives in the 23-member National Steering Committee (NSC). This NSC has also representatives from various trade unions, employers’ organizations and NGOs. ILO-IPEC and UNICEF are the two “observers” of the NSC (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, 1999: 1).

7.1.3. Involvement of BGMEA from the Business Sector:

On behalf of the business sector in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association i.e., BGMEA’s involvement in the child labour eradication process has created a new era in this field. It is also a great example of community responsibility to fight against the child labour problem throughout the world – though BGMEA involved itself under a tremendous pressure from the international community, especially from the “Harkin Bill” of the US Congress which severely affected Bangladesh’s garment exports to that country.

Bangladesh today is one of the world’s major garment manufacturers and exporters. In fact, this is the country’s principal non-traditional industry with an estimated more than 73 per cent share of total exports, which generates the highest

¹ IPEC started in 1991 with the assistance of a single donor country: Germany, and in 1992: Belgium. However, Since 1995, the major donors for this programme are as follows: Australia, France, Norway, USA, Canada, Denmark, Italian Social Partners Initiatives, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Sweden, Japan, National Trade Union Rengo-Japan, Poland, Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Pakistan, Comunidad Autonoma de Madrid, etc. (ILO-IPEC, 1999: 5).

amount of revenue for the government (US \$ 378.94 million) (H & M, nd). Even, according to a current account the export of readymade garments constitutes 76 per cent of the total export earnings of Bangladesh (Mian, M.J.A., 2001: 3).

There were 1,696 garment factories in 1993 employing 8,15,500 workers of which 85 per cent were female workers (Mian, *ibid*: 3). This is the only occupation where women (including under-aged girls) outnumber men. During early 1990s, it was generally thought that children under 15 (mostly girls) made up approximately 10 per cent of the garment industry workforce. A study by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) also found that there were about 80,000 children in garment industry in 1993. Another survey conducted by ILO found that the children started to work when they were about 11 years old. Hardly any of the children had ever been to school (cited in Chawla N. 1996: 14-16).

The children of the garment industry “gained international attention in 1993 when American political and economic interests threatened a boycott of garments manufactured in Bangladesh. The instrument of this boycotting movement was to be the widely publicized Harkin Bill presented in the US Congress. The boycotting of garments and other manufactured goods, ‘produced with child labour’, was seen by some humanitarian-motivated people in the US as a way to reduce child labour in the developing countries...” (Pelto, B. 1997b: 22).

The first reaction of the garment factories in early 1993, however, was the dismissal of a large number of children from this industry – as intended by the child labour activists in the USA. By 1995, the number of working children had declined to 10,547² from the 1993 figure of 80,000 as children had been summarily dismissed by factory owners who panicked under the threat of a boycott of their garments (Chawla, N. 1996: 15). In the expectations of some of the child welfare activists, some of them should have gone to schools, but the result was not as expected. This dismissal forced young workers to find work in less secure environments, generally with less pay and, conditions that were worse than the employment in the garment factories (Studied by Susan Gunn in 1994 as cited by Pelto, B. 1997b: 23). Therefore, this attempt to remove child labour from the garment industry actually worsened the situation.

² As jointly surveyed by ILO-UNICEF and BGMEA in 1995 .

In addition to that, the BGMEA and the constituent garment factory owners developed plans for terminating all the rest of the child workers (under 14) from the industry during 1994-95. "At that point international organizations led by UNICEF and ILO intervened urging that the remaining children in the garment factories not be terminated from their jobs until a system of schooling could be put in place for them" (Pelto, B. 1997b: 23). There was pressure from national and international communities to do something both for the children and for the industry. At the same time, UNICEF, ILO and the US Embassy in Bangladesh started to negotiate with BGMEA to find out an immediate socially acceptable way of removing child labour without hurting exports (UNICEF-Bangladesh, 1998: 7).

In this background, the business sector as well as the private sector in general took a keen interest in the proceedings and became a key partner in the effort. The involvement of the BGMEA, however, was essential, because this organization protects and promotes the interests of the industry and, in particular terms, it was closest to the issue and directly involved in the children's future (Chawla, N. 1996: 30). A MOU, therefore, was signed on 4th July, 1995, culminating after nearly two years of discussion and negotiations between the BGMEA, UNICEF, ILO, and the US Embassy representatives, to stipulate that export-oriented garment factories in Bangladesh could no longer offer work to children under 14 years and appropriate schooling should be developed for them. In addition, the children entering the proposed schools would be given stipends of Tk. 300 per month as a partial income maintenance provision. Preference would also be given to members of the children's families in the hiring of replacements in the factories. In this action process, BGMEA became an important partner with ILO, UNICEF and others – and this should be seen as a unique example and a landmark in the field of child labour prohibition movement in the world.

7.2. The Response of UNICEF for Urban Working Children in Bangladesh

UNICEF has played a significant role in improving the condition of child labour and has been a major funding agency for improving the miserable condition of working children in Bangladesh. "UNICEF instituted a Broad Policy on Child

Labour in 1986 which committed the organization to work for the total abolition of all forms of child labour” (Bissel & Sobhan, 1996: 23), but the new child rights approach and the new direction of thinking on child labour issue grew out of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of the UN since its inception by the UN General Assembly in 1989. This new direction of thinking rised new concerns in UNICEF for promoting the safety and welfare of children – specially those who need special care.

UNICEF, throughout the world, approaches the challenge of child labour at least at five levels:

- Developing international laws/conventions based on CRC;
- Advocacy and technical cooperation for promoting national legislation and enforcement of it;
- Compulsory basic education by the “All Children in School” programme;
- Promoting the empowerment of women and children by alternative vocational training and income generating activities;
- Social mobilization on the harmful effects of child labour and need for education and other services for all children, especially the girl children (Chaturvedi, S., *ibid*: 120-21).

With its new reviewed policies on child labour UNICEF is working in Bangladesh as well as India, Philippines etc. with a broad range of partners in an innovative strategy to eliminate exploitative child labour in a phased manner. To this end, UNICEF is collaborating with ILO, UNDP, World Bank and other international agencies, NGOs, trade unions, industrial sector, legal experts etc. Usually, GOB is the main partner of UNICEF in Bangladesh.

Though UNICEF is not a direct service provider to the working children it is playing a very important role by supporting the GOB departments/ministries and also NGOs working in urban areas, e.g. BRAC, ISDE (*Integrated Social Development Effort*), NAF, SEP, Shoishab-Bangladesh, UCEP, etc. These are being supported by funds or logistic supports or by both for implementing different programmes including non-formal basic education and skills training.

Another field of UNICEF's response is data collection and situation analysis on children and child labourers covering both rural and urban areas. UNICEF either involves itself in the process of different research or supports government and other organizations (e.g. NGOs or apex body of NGOs) to collect child-related data or to evaluate any national initiative towards the welfare and development of children – especially for the underprivileged group. To this end, one of the major important initiatives of UNICEF is its involvement in the process of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) collaborating with the UN Statistical Division, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) of GOB and the Institute of Statistical Research and Training (ISRT) of Dhaka University. This statistically sound survey design was able to generate data on the condition of children and women, covering sub-national (i.e., district)-level cost effectively. This rapid survey methodology is being implemented in all 64 districts of Bangladesh since 1993 and from then UNICEF was closely involved in it (BBS & UNICEF, 1999: 7).

7.2.1. UNICEF in the Garment Sector Child Labour Project:

UNICEF's first major response, in the process of combating the child labour problem in Bangladesh, started with minimizing the negative impacts of the Harkin Bill of the US Congress on the under-aged garment labourers. It tried to redress child labour in the garment industry in four different stages:

(i) In the first stage, UNICEF invited local and international NGOs, industry representatives, officials from the Department of Labour of the GOB, and representatives from the ILO and the US Embassy in Dhaka to an informal meeting to formulate a plan of action that would truly safeguard the best interests of the working child, particularly in the garment industry (Bissel & Shobhan, *ibid*: 4).

(ii) Ultimately, UNICEF's willingness was endorsed by different parties and UNICEF was able to point out that removing children from garment factories was an insufficient means of tackling child labour unless measures were in place for their rehabilitation. UNICEF was able to act as a mediator, drawing together the different stands of the debate and facilitating the development of a common policy in view of the best interests of the children.

(iii) UNICEF, however, was the most important partner and signatory of the tripartite MOU, signed on 4th July 1995 together with ILO and BGMEA – and was able to get support from the GOB and the US Embassy. UNICEF was involved in a joint survey to count exactly how many children were employed in the garment factories. Then, based on the actual locations of the children surveyed, UNICEF began to map out where and how many schools should be established. It took the major responsibility of sponsoring special schools for the dropped working children of garment factories – mostly in Dhaka, Chittagong and Narayanganj. For this purpose it also provided the lion's share of funds. Only in the education programme, UNICEF planned to contribute 1,75,000 US dollars in 1995, and an additional support later on. UNICEF was also a member of the “local informal steering committee” with other members to observe the functioning of the MOU (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, 1996).

However, it became the main contributor in the MOU education programme and by the end of 2000, a total of 9,219 children were enrolled in 336 MOU schools run by UNICEF. It also contributed to the income. Upto May 2000, UNICEF provided skill training to 1,106 students (Sinha, A.R. 2000: 3) – which was a unique achievement of the MOU. UNICEF also played a very important role to the domestic and international resource mobilization for the project. As Susan Bissel and Barbara Sobhan studied, the linkage between education and work specially for the urban working children that developed during the course of the MOU project had a profound impact on the work of UNICEF-Bangladesh.

(iv) Besides non-formal education, UNICEF (as well as other partners of MOU) laid great emphasis on providing skill development training to some working children. “An agreement was reached on 30th June 1999 between Under-privileged Children Education Programme (UCEP) and UNICEF, and ... both UNICEF and UCEP signed another agreement to provide one-year courses to eager students on garments, wool knitting, electronics, carpentry and auto electricity. UNICEF bore all expenses of education, tiffin money, conveyance and tuition fees of the ex-garments students” (BGMEA, 1999: 8). According to the BGMEA's Annual Report 2000, upto May 2000, a total of 1106 MOU students were provided skill training by

UNICEF (BGMEA, 2001: 43). UNICEF also planned to provide training to a total of 1100 students more (Mian, M.J.A. 2001: 7).

After completion of the 5-year tenure of the first MOU, in 16th June 2000, UNICEF signed the 'MOU-II' (in Geneva with other partners e.g. BGMEA and I.L.O) to continue the education and skill training support to the child labourers in the garment sector.

7.2.2. UNICEF in the BEHTRUC Programme:

After the successful involvement in the MOU project during the mid-1990s, UNICEF realized the usefulness and growing demand of educational and other services for other than the MOU working children in the urban informal sectors. At the same time, it understood the importance of cooperation among the international community, donors, GOB, and the national, international, as well as local NGOs.

Even before the MOU was signed, UNICEF began to negotiate with the Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) of the Ministry of Education for a special urban non-formal education project. The Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Children Project (called as BEHTRUC or the HTR project) – the largest educational project of its kind – was developed for the urban working children with the backdrop of the mounting child labour debate in Bangladesh. The project was jointly managed by the DNFE of the Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF. This HTR project aimed to give working children, who were involved in hazardous and exploitative jobs in major urban areas, access to quality basic education and the opportunity to better their situation³. UNICEF was involved in this HTR project since its inception in 1996 as part of UNICEF's 'Bangladesh Country Programme 1996-2000' (UNICEF-Bangladesh, 1997b), and till date, "this project is UNICEF's major response to the child labour situation in Bangladesh" (UNICEF-Bangladesh, 2001). UNICEF is the largest investor in this social sector project⁴.

³ The HTR Project, however, was discussed and assessed in details in Chapter V.

⁴ The two other donors SIDA (Sweden) and DFID (UK) – who are the main donors of this project – are also providing funds through UNICEF.

Some important impacts of UNICEF's intervention through the HTR project are the following:

i) Through the HTR project, UNICEF engaged more than 150 NGOs in providing NFE. With these many of the NGOs became experienced and trained-up in this field.

ii) UNICEF introduced skill training for the HTR children to allow working children to have better opportunity – which is another important achievement.

iii) UNICEF has been able to create wide consciousness on the child labour issue and on the educational needs for them among the respective families, communities, employers, GOB departments, NGOs, civil society, and different other groups. This consciousness and environment of collaborative effort is very important to combat any deep-rooted national socio-economic problem like child labour.

iv) Through this HTR project, UNICEF was able to bring the GOB departments to a single platform with greater cooperation and responsibility for the betterment of working children.

7.2.3. UNICEF for the CEDC⁵ Group:

UNICEF instituted a broad policy on child labour in 1986 which committed the organization to work for the total abolition of all forms of child labour throughout the world. UNICEF was, however, mainly concerned with its programme for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC) [ILO-IPEC, 1994: 34]. UNICEF developed a special programme for the CEDC section, especially for the working children, who are not usually reached by the mainstream UNICEF programmes.

UNICEF's response for this CEDC section was, however, reflected in its two-stage approach to the programme. In the short run, the focus was to reduce the level of immediate vulnerability of CEDC through advocacy and social mobilization. The long-term goal has been on developing interventions within the mainstream programmes such as health, nutrition and education to reduce the total

⁵ CEDC meant 'Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances', which covers: Street children, children in conflict with the law, orphaned and abandoned children, working children, victim of abuse and neglect, child prostitutes, disabled children and victims of armed conflict or natural disaster.

number of CEDC (Bissell & Sobhan, 1996: 24). UNICEF supports these children by different projects, through the DSS of the GOB.

7.3. The Response of ILO-IPEC for Urban Working Children in Bangladesh

7.3.1. ILO-IPEC's Response in General:

Generally, a cursory glance in the context of the role of ILO for combating child labour goes to establish in a convincing manner that the concerned recommendations of the related international authorities have not been ratified and enforced in an effective manner by the member countries, particularly, the developing ones like Bangladesh. In this context, however, ILO through its IPEC programme initiated in 1995, in the field of child labour, has extended technical cooperation to the member states in order to enable them to frame their national policies in consonance with the international labour standards propounded by it so as to ensure its effective implementation as well as eventual ratification by all member countries (Varandani, G. 1994: 22-24).

ILO-IPEC basically works with the member states through 'technical cooperation'. The role of technical cooperation is to bring national laws and practice closer to the model set out in the international labour standards (Varandani, G. idid: 295). ILO-IPEC operates by signing MOU with bilateral partners, as mentioned earlier, to promote:

- direct action aimed at combating child labour in hazardous occupations and under abusive conditions;
- programmes aimed at meeting the developmental needs of working children;
- assistance to national governments in formulation of policies and programmes against child labour; and
- establishing or strengthening appropriate institutional structures (Chaturvedi, S. 1994: 120).

In each participating country, however, IPEC applies a multi-sectoral approach in different phases:

- The first step is motivating ILO constituents and other relevant partners to engage in a dialogue on this issue and to create alliances to overcome them.

- Secondly, IPEC assists in carrying out a situational analysis to find out the magnitude and nature of child labour problems.
- The third step is helping the concerned parties in devising national policies to address special child labour problems.
- The fourth step is strengthening existing organizations and setting up institutional mechanisms aimed at building partnerships and creating a sense of in-country ownership.
- The fifth state is creating awareness on the issue of child labour, both nationwide and at the community and workplace levels.
- Sixthly, IPEC supports demonstration projects aimed at the prevention of child labour, withdrawal of children from hazardous work and provision of integrated sets of interventions.
- The seventh stage is replicating and expanding successful demonstration projects with a view to integrating them into the regular programmes and budgets of the social partners (e.g. NGOs).
- The last stage is mainstreaming child labour issues into social and economic development policies, plans and budgets at the national and local levels (ILO, 1996: 32-33).

In order to implement the IPEC programme in Bangladesh, ILO signed a MOU with the GOB in October 1994 and followed the following strategies in Bangladesh:

- Withdrawal of children from hazardous work where possible and placing them into school and/or skill training programmes;
- Economic empowerment of the poor families of the working children through additional income generation activities so that they do not have to depend on their children's earning and can afford to send their children to school;
- Institutional development/capacity building (e.g. imparting training, development of resource materials etc. for the GOB officials/NGOs/trade unions and the employers or organizations;
- Providing non-formal education to the working children with a view to mainstreaming these children into the government primary schools;
- Providing safety training to the working children involved in hazardous work and distribution of safety equipments to these children for reducing work-related hazards (where withdrawal from work is impossible because of heavy dependency of their families on their earning);

- Providing stipend and healthcare services (in highly deserving cases) while under education or skills training programme;
- Different forms of awareness-raising programmes against the negative consequences of child labour;
- Launching preventive measures to reduce the in-flow of children to work;
- Advising the relevant social partners for protective legislation and development of national policies and plans of action;
- Networking with other NGOs to integrate the child labour component with their credit programmes/poverty alleviation programmes/non-formal education programmes” (ILO-IPEC, 1998: 4-5).

7.3.2. Major ILO-IPEC Activities in Bangladesh:

a) **Research Studies Aiming at Situation Analysis for Programming Projects:** In order to have a clear understanding of the child labour situation in Bangladesh and to design appropriate programmes since its inception in Bangladesh IPEC carried out, either by itself or in collaboration with UNICEF and the GOB, the following five studies: (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, 1998: 2).

i) *Child Labour Situation in Bangladesh – A Rapid Assessment* (by Wahidur Rahman, 1997). This study was conducted to gather different types of qualitative information regarding child labour both in urban and rural areas of the country.

ii) Under an ILO/IPEC-funded action programme, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 1996) conducted a *National Sample Survey of Child Labour in Bangladesh, 1995-96* in order to quantify the magnitude of the problems.

iii) With the technical assistance of ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, a third study titled *Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh* was conducted by the Department of Labour under the Ministry of Labour and Manpower, to identify different forms of hazardous child labour and to ascertain the nature and extent of harms and hazards involved with those occupations (by Wahidur Rahman, 1996).

iv) Survey of the child workers (below 14 years) in the Bangladesh garment manufacturing industry jointly with UNICEF and BGMEA, in 1995.

v) A fifth study on *Situation of Child Trafficking in Bangladesh: An Overview* by the support of IPEC Dhaka (by BNWLA, 1997).

In addition to that, a number of studies on child labour have been conducted during the period of 1998-99, such as, *Trafficking in Children and their Commercial Exploitation and other Intolerable Forms of Child Labour* (ILO, 1998); *Child Labour in the Plantation Sector* (ILO, 1999); and *Child Labour in the Sea-Food Industry* (ILO, 1999/still in draft form) [ILO-IPEC, 1999: 16]. These studies are the main source of child labour-related data in Bangladesh for further study or any action programme for the ILO-IPEC and other organizations including the GOB.

b) Priorities of IPEC Programme in Bangladesh: Having a clear understanding of the child labour situation and assessing the needful actions from the above studies, ILO-IPEC made a priority list, according to the ILO and IPEC objectives and strategies, for the IPEC programme in Bangladesh. These priorities are as follows (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka 1998: 3):

i) Addressing Hazardous Child Labour. This important priority area includes analysis of the hazardous conditions through empirical study; withdrawal of children from harmful work and placing them in school; humanizing the working conditions by providing safety training to the children as well as to the employers; distributing protective equipments like gloves, masks, goggles, shields, and reducing working hours; healthcare training and facilities.

ii) Changing Social Perception on Child Labour. To change people's perception and attitude towards the child labour problem positively, IPEC includes a lot of activities like seminars, workshops, media campaign, preparation and distribution of posters, pamphlets, booklets, information kit on child labour, etc. In this respect, IPEC also supports various social partners.

iii) Making a Major Social Mobilization against Child Labour. To achieve this, IPEC follows a strategy to involve as many partners as possible within the government ministries/agencies, NGO community, employers, workers, international organizations, UN bodies, foreign missions in Bangladesh, teachers and other elites, and common people of the civil society. As a result, child labour has become a highly focused social issue in Bangladesh in recent years.

iv) Awareness Raising on the Issue. Awareness raising against the negative consequences of child labour and motivating the parents and community to enroll the children in school is also a priority. IPEC implements various action programmes towards this aim.

v) *Economic Empowerment of the Families*: In order to reduce dependency on children's earning – economic empowerment of the poor families of the working children was an effective strategy to attack child labour. Through small credit programmes, poultry farming, and other income generation activities, the families were given opportunity to improve their socio-economic condition and to make them able to send their children to school.

vi) *Institutional Development through Strengthening the Capacity of the Partner Organizations*: As a leading organization, IPEC emphasized on institutional support and training of manpower on child labour issues to government and non-governmental personnel.

c) Individual Action Programmes of ILO-IPEC in Bangladesh: Based on the priorities, there are three major individual action programmes of ILO/IPEC for the child labour problem in Bangladesh. These are:

i) *Institutional Development and Capacity Building*: Institutional development and capacity building support on child labour issues to the government and NGOs (those who are the partners of IPEC) is one of the major IPEC interventions in Bangladesh. With a view to strengthening the formal and non-formal education system in Bangladesh to combat child labour, 24 master trainers from the PMED, DNFE, NAPE, MOL and DAM were trained on teaching methodology, curriculums, dropout reduction and quality education. After completion of this training, the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) introduced a child labour component in its training courses for the District Primary Education Officers (DPEO) and Thana Education Officers (TEO). Ultimate objective of this effort was to equip the primary school teachers to improve the quality of education and to reduce dropout from school. It was completed in July 1998 (ILO/IPEC – Dhaka, 1999: 7). One of those action programmes, however, was implemented by the Public Administration Training Centre (PATC) of the GOB and about 300 GOB officials received orientation training on child labour (ILO/IPEC – Dhaka, 1999a: 4). To this end, a total of US \$ 14,837 was expended by ILO-IPEC in Bangladesh in 1998-99 period only (ILO/IPEC – Dhaka, 1999: 7). This was, however, the first phase of this programme.

Under the second phase of the same programme, IPEC covered several NGO partners through BSAF. As we mentioned earlier, BSAF is an apex body of 110 local, national and international NGOs active in the field of protecting and promoting child rights. This second phase of this action programme included capacity building activities for its member NGOs. During this phase, it revised its training module on child labour and conducted three training courses. A total of 79 NGO officials from 39 NGOs were trained on the child labour situation, the national legal context, the ILO conventions, and the possible strategies to combat child labour in Bangladesh. For the second phase, IPEC expended US \$ 25,997 in 1998-99 (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, 1999:7).

ii) Awareness Raising: Eight action programmes and four mini-programmes were implemented towards this aim. Two of these mini-programmes developed short television programmes on child labour and cast in the “Bangladesh Television” (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, 1998: 3). Many of such programmes were implemented by the NGO partners. For example, in 1998-99 through 2 NGOs, i.e., Bangladesh Jatio Sramik Dal (BJSJ) and Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BLIS), IPEC implemented two awareness raising activities at the local, regional and national levels. These activities included arrangement of workshops and seminars, development and distribution of posters and stickers, motivation of journalists and other professionals, preparation and telecast of TV films on child labour, developing a manual for workshops, etc., (ILO/IPEC, Dhaka, 1999: 7-8).

iii) Direct Support Programmes: Besides the above two indirect action programmes, IPEC also ran some direct support programmes to fight against the child labour problem in Bangladesh. Most of the support programmes were implemented by different national, regional and local-level NGOs – who were involved in child rights-related interventions. ILO/IPEC covered almost all of the priority areas, i.e., non-formal basic education, vocational/pre-vocational skill training, awareness raising, income generating and family support services, protection of children from hazardous occupation as well as reducing work hazards, legal protection, rehabilitation, health care, advocacy and social mobilization activities. It also covered urban and rural areas of the country. This programme was IPEC’s most important intervention in Bangladesh.

Since the inception in Bangladesh in 1995, ILO-IPEC has implemented 48 Action Programmes (AP) till June 1998. Among them 34 were direct support programmes, implemented by the NGOs and about 40,000 children were benefited from all these (including garment sector's child labour education) programmes (ILO-IPEC, Dhaka 1998: 2-3).

During the 1998-99 biennium ILO-IPEC implemented a total of 22 direct support programmes through NGO partners. Among them, 10 were in four metro city areas and the other 12 were in other urban and rural areas. Eight support projects – 1 in metropolitan areas and 7 in other areas – provided NFE with rehabilitation, healthcare, income generation, and other support services to the working children group. Two projects, both in Dhaka areas, provided pre-vocational skill training (with income generation and other support services). Nine support projects were engaged in providing both non-formal basic education and pre-vocational skills training. Five of them were in the metro cities and 4 were in other areas.

Table 7.1: Direct Support Service of ILO-IPEC in Bangladesh in 1998-99

Major Field of Intervention	No. of Supported NGOs		Expended Funds (\$)	
	In Metro Cities	Out of Metro Cities	For Metro Cities	For Outside of Metro Cities
Non-formal basic education (with rehabilitation, healthcare, income generation, etc.)	01	07	21,320	1,01,132
Pre-vocational skill training (with income generation, etc.)	02	--	38,992	--
Non-formal basic education & pre-vocational skill training	05	04	78,383	64,991
Withdrawal of children from hazardous work & distribution of safety equipments (with NFE)	01	01	25,997	12,998
Shelter service for child sex workers ("safe homes" with food, lodging, clothing, etc.)	01	--	25,997	--
Total	10	12	1,90,689	1,79,121

Source: Prepared by the author from *IPEC Implementation Report: 1998-99 (Bangladesh)*, ILO/IPEC – Dhaka (1999); pp. 8-14.

Nayan Action Foundation (NAF) of Dhaka was designed for about 3000 working children in hazardous occupations, in different engineering workshops with a programme of either withdrawing them from hazardous work or providing

them with safety training and safety equipment to humanize the working conditions. In another programme implemented by this Society for Social Services (SSS, an NGO), there was a provision of shelter services for under-aged sex workers in urban areas in its "Safe Homes" programme with food, lodging, clothing, etc. (Table 7.1). These two programmes also provided NFE. In most cases, ILO/IPEC was the major funding agency for the NGO programmes where the INGOs and other donors were involved as partners. For its 10 metropolitan support programmes, IPEC expended US \$ 1,90,689 and for the rest 12, it expended US \$ 1,79,121 in 1998-99. Thus, the total expenditure in its support programme in a single year, i.e., in 1998-99, was US \$ 0.37 million (Table 7.1).

Table 7.2: Individual Action Programmes of ILO-IPEC in Bangladesh during 1995-99 (excluding 1997-98)

Major Areas of Action Programmes	1995-96	1996-97	1995-96-97 Mini-Programmes	1998-99	Total
1. Different programmes for working children of rural & semi-urban areas	07	06	01	07	21 (23%)
2. Programmes for working children in major urban areas:	16	20	13	22	71 (77%)
a) Non-formal basic education	03	04	01	04	12
b) Technical/vocational skill training	01	03	--	01	05
c) Non-formal education & technical/vocational skill training	06	07	--	08	21
d) Integrated programmes for working children	02	02	--	03	07
e) Advocacy and awareness raising programmes	--	--	05	03	08
f) Working children's family support programme	--	--	03	--	03
g) Child labour training for civil servants, institutions & school teachers	01	01	01	01	04
h) Research/studies on child labour situation & evaluation of action programmes	01	--	03	--	04
i) Others*	02	03	--	02	07
Total	23	26	14	29	92

*Others include: a) Networking and enhancing NGO capacity on child labour; b) Safety training and welfare services for hazardous child labour; c) Child labour verification and monitoring system in garment factories; d) Action programme proposal development for hazardous child labour.

Source: Prepared by the author based on *Data Base: Bangladesh* (for ILO-IPEC) by Mustafa, A. Rahman, ILO-Area Office, Dhaka, 1998, pp. 75-88.

Table 7.2 above shows the status of individual action programmes of IPEC during 1995-99 (excluding the year 1997-98). A total of 92 action programmes were implemented through partner NGOs, GOB departments and others during this time. Out of the 92, seventy one (i.e., 77%) were implemented in major urban areas covering all divisional headquarters and other district towns e.g. Jessore, Kusthia, Rangpur, Dinazpur, Tangail, Narayanganj, Cumilla, etc. Among these 71, more than half (e.g. 54%, a+b+c) of the urban programmes covered either non-formal education or skill training or both for the working children. However, IPEC action programmes also covered other service areas, such as 'integrated programmes for working children' (07 projects), 'advocacy and awareness raising programmes' (08 projects), 'family support programmes' (03 projects) and 'child labour training programmes' (04 projects), etc.

The various impacts of IPEC activities in Bangladesh can best be guessed by studying a single year (1998-99) which is given in the next Table (7.3). IPEC implemented several programmes through NGOs, GOB departments and other organizations like BGMEA and at least 28,724 children with their 10,754 family members were directly benefited in terms of eliminating child labour. At the committee/society level, at least 11,220 community members including several social organizations were benefitted. Among these children, a total of 5,060 were impacted by NFE (literacy/numeracy/skills). Children were also benefited by basic nutrition and health services (3,580), enjoying safer working environment (1,300), shelter and safe home facilities (40), elder children benefited from financial assistance for income generating activities (100), removal from hazardous work (1,069) and financial assistance for income generation (100), and children got employment after reaching employable age (616). Another 1,070 children were impacted by mainstreamed informal primary education and 1069 children were impacted by immediate removal from hazardous work, whereas the other 5,000 were benefited by 'prevention of dropouts from formal education and other 5,000 prevented from entering work.

Parents and family members were benefited by the major areas of: being sensitized on the negative consequences of child labour and benefits of education (3,560) micro-credit services to set up income generating activities and withdrawal

Table 7.3: Impacts of IPEC Activities for Working Children in Bangladesh in a Single Year (1998-99)

Impact on the children	No. of beneficiaries	Impact on the family	No. of beneficiaries	Impact on the community/society	No. of beneficiaries
Non-formal Education (literacy/numeracy/skills)	5,060	Parents are sensitized on the negative consequences of child labour and benefits of education	3,560	More awareness and sensitization on the issue of child labour among community, elite, trade union and political leaders	810
Basic nutritional and health services	5,580	Parents/families benefit from micro-credit services to set up income generating activities and they withdraw their children from work	2,396	More awareness and understanding of child labour problems throughout industrial areas of Bangladesh	8,000+ (In four metro cities)
Safer working environment	1,300	More awareness among the mothers on the danger of child prostitution, STD and AIDS prevention	60	More awareness among employers about the negative consequences of child labour and the benefits of education and training for them	2,170
Shelter and safe home facilities	40	Basic health care services	600	Trade union activists and vigilance groups working on child labour issues	120
Elder children benefit from financial assistance for income generating activities	100	Increase in income level through cooperative farming	250	More awareness among the people resulted in child labour interventions and concrete actions to progressively eliminate it	National level, long term effect
Gainful wage employment or self-employment on reaching employable age (including BGMEA)	616	BGMEA: parents are sensitized on the negative consequences of child labour and the benefits of education	3,889	Community concern is generated on the general situation of child domestic workers	Local urban based level
Mainstreamed in formal primary education	1,070		--	More awareness on child labour legislation	120
Immediate removal from hazardous work	1,069		--	Information gathering, analysis and dissemination to relevant partners for effective child labour policy and programme designing	Govt. level, multiplier effect
Children (younger siblings) prevented from entering work	5,000	Able to send their children to school	Not available	More awareness on education/ schooling	National level
Prevention of dropouts from formal education	5,000		--	Capacity building of GOs, NGOs and teachers/educators and their organisations to combat child labour	113 NGOs/GOs
BGMEA: Immediate withdrawal from work and NFE/skill training	3,889		--	National consensus on child labour issues through lobby, advocacy, networking and campaigning	Regional, national and international level
Total	28,724		10,754		11,220*

* With these other organizations, people, communities, etc. were also benefited.

Source: a) IPEC Implementation Report 1998-99 (Bangladesh); ILO/IPEC-Dhaka, 1999: 6 (Concised); b) ILO/IPEC Implementation Report 1998-99; ILO/IPEC, Geneva: 18.

of their children from work (2,396), healthcare facilities (600), and income generating facilities through co-operative farming (250). Some sixty mothers of working children were more aware on the danger of child prostitution, STD and AIDS prevention. Some parents were also able to send their children to school. The major impact areas for the community/society were awareness raising on the issue of child labour and on its negative consequences by the community people and employers (810), more awareness and understanding of child labour problems throughout the industrial areas (8,000+), more awareness among employers about the negative consequences of child labour and the benefits of education and skill training for working children (2,170). Among other areas, 120 community members were specially aware on the child labour legislations, and 113 GO's and NGO's personnel were benefited by capacity building facilities to combat child labour (Table 7.3).

d) IPEC's Involvement in the Under-aged Garment Workers' Education Programme: In addition to the above-mentioned Action Programmes – the biggest IPEC-event was the signing of an MOU between BGMEA, ILO and UNICEF to remove all child workers below 14 years from more than 2000 garment factories and to place them in school. ILO's involvement in this MOU project in various stages were:

- ILO signed the MOU with BGMEA and UNICEF as one of the parties of the project;
- ILO involved itself in the joint survey (with BGMEA and UNICEF) to count exactly how many children were employed in the garment factories. ILO also provided funds, along with the other two parties, for this survey.
- This MOU programme also included continuous monitoring and verification of the garment factories to ensure their compliance with the MOU. It was ILO, which took the responsibility and developed a monitoring and verification system with an expanded contribution from the US Department of Labour.
- Under a separate Action Programme, ILO/IPEC administered the stipend programme ⁶ through a local bank. In addition, ILO contributed a portion of the funds under the expanded IPEC action programme for the provision of stipends.

⁶ Under the MOU Programme, there was a provision to provide stipends to terminated child workers attending school programmes at the rate of Taka 300 (US \$ 7 at the rate of 1995) per month.

- ILO also played a very important role by involving itself in the said “local, informal steering committee” to coordinate the whole MOU programme with BGMEA and UNICEF⁷.

ILO-IPEC provided its cooperation continuously to the MOU project. After completion of the first MOU in 2000, ILO-IPEC also signed the MOU-II with two other partners in Geneva on June 16, 2000.

However, ILO, especially through its IPEC programme, playing very important role directly and indirectly to intervene various services to the working children, especially in urban areas. According to the President of BGMEA, about 50,000 children, mostly working children, were benefited from the IPEC programmes of ILO in Bangladesh (Sinha, A.R.. 2000: 4).

7.4. The Response of INGOs and Donors for Urban Working Children in Bangladesh

International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) were the other important party in the field of intervention for the working children group. INGOs such as Action Aid Bangladesh, Bilance (Netherlands), Enfants du Monde (EDM), Radda Barnen, Red Barnet, Save the Children (Australia, Denmark, UK, & USA), Terre des Homes (Switzerland, France, Netherlands, & Italy), and World Vision of Bangladesh, are the major organizations that have outstanding response for working children especially in urban areas⁸. Most of these INGOs were working with technical support and providing for the action programmes through local or national NGOs (Table 7.4).

Action Aid Bangladesh (AAB) first started its programme in 1995 for children and adolescents (mainly for the underprivileged girls), as the identified priority vulnerable group. Under the ‘Urban Adolescent Unit’ of AAB, it supported thirteen different partner NGOs working with 10-19 year-old slum girls in the urban areas of Dhaka and Chittagong. The major NGO partners of AAB are ASD, AMWC,

⁷ The Steering Committee dealt with the issues of resolving cases, in which termination of under-aged workers is not being implemented in accordance with the MOU, ensuring the monitoring of school attendance, stipend distribution and other issues according to the MOU (UNICEF-Bangladesh, 1997b).

⁸ Some other famous INGOs involved in this special area are: Defense for Children International, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Anti Slavery Society, International Catholic Children’s Bureau, the CHILDHOPE, Child Workers in Asia (CWA), etc. – many of them are not directly involved in Bangladesh.

BITA, Nari Maitree, etc. Partner organizations' activities were based on a programme framework developed by AAB, which included skill training and income-generating activities. Children were trained in a variety of trades, of which the most popular were sewing, food processing, embroidery and knitting (UNICEF-Dhaka, 1999: 18).

*Enfants du Monde (EDM)*⁹ was a Swiss NGO founded in 1968 with the aim of sustainably improving the living conditions of children in the poorest countries of the world. It has been involved in support of activities in Bangladesh since 1972. Since that time, EDM's approach has been of a pragmatic and project-oriented type. Majority of its projects have been implemented by EDM itself as an operational organization in the field. However, the cooperation with local partner NGOs has taken momentum in recent years. The overall goal of EDM-Bangladesh is to sustainably improve the living conditions of destitute children in Bangladesh by developing the capacities of their families and their communities for autonomous and self-reliant development (EDM, 2001: 8-10).

EDM's most important support programme for working children in the urban areas was in cooperation with UCEP. EDM contributed, in particular, to UCEP's overcoming of a serious management crisis in the 1980's. It also contributed to the implementation of a new concept for technical training (started in 1989) based on the needs of the working students as well as of the job market. Moreover, EDM was one of six other donor organizations who shared the project expenses of UCEP – from 1986 to 1997 (EDM, 2001: 28)¹⁰.

Radda Barnen and *Red Barnet* supported several NGOs to provide different child right services to the urban working children group. *Radda Barnen* helped 6 NGOs viz., ASD, CDC, NAF, Prodipon, UCEP and UST. The South Asian Office of *Red Barnet* provided funds to ASK, BMSF, Nari Maitree etc. (Table 7.4).

Several of the *Save the Children* alliance members¹¹ have been running community-based projects through NGOs, aimed at working children in the

⁹ "Enfants du Monde" means "Children of the World".

¹⁰ EDM also provided technical and financial help for the working children in rural areas through Destitute Rural Boys' Training Centres (DRBTCs) from 1990 to 1998.

informal sector in urban and rural areas. Their entry points have been education and vocational skills. Through NGOs, they have piloted a few projects on participation of working children and developed a manual which focuses on techniques of involving children and the stage at which they can be involved. However, their coverage in all these activities did not exceed more than 25,000 working children (GOB & UNICEF, 2000: 46).

Table 7.4: INGOs, Donors and their Supported NGOs/Programmes Involved in Child Labour-Related Services in Urban Bangladesh

Name of INGOs	Supported NGOs/Programmes		Name of Donors	Supported NGOs/Programmes	
	Names	No.		Names	No.
Action Aid Bangladesh (AAB)	ASD, AMWC, BACE, BITA, Ghashful, ISDE, Nari Maitree	07	Aus Aid	ASK, IDF, SDI	03
Bilance (Netherlands)	DAM, SDI, SPK	03	CIDA – Canada	BRAC, DAM, NAF, NUS, Proshika, SUF, UST	07
Enfants du Monde (EDM)	CTRDW, JC, DRBTCs, UCEP	04	DANIDA	BACE, NUS, UCEP	03
Radda Barnen	ASD, CDC, NAF, UCEP, Prodipon, UST	06	DFID-UK	BACE, GSS, BRAC, HTR Prog. of GOB, Proshika, Shoishab, UCEP	8
Red Barnet	ASK, BMSF, Nari Maitree, NUS	04	EC	BRAC, GSS	02
Save the Children (Australia)	Maitree Parishad	01	EU Donor Consortium	Proshika	01
Save the Children (Denmark)	ACD	01	Ford Foundation	ASK, UST	02
Save the Children (UK)	CDC, UST	02	NORAD	ACD, ASK, UCEP	03
Save the Children (USA)	UST	01	NOVIB	ASK, BRAC, Prodipon, Proshika, UCEP	05
Terre des Homes (TDH, France)	Jagorini Chakra	01	Royal Norwegian Embassy	ACD, ASK, GSS, UCEP, UST	05
TDH (Italy)	Aparajeyo Bangladesh	01	SCF – UK	BITA, MP, Prodipon	03
TDH (Netherlands)	SEEP, UST	02	SDC	ACD, UCEP	02
TDH – (Switzerland)	Aparajeyo Bangladesh	01	SIDA	ACD, GSS, IDF, Proshika, & HTR Prog. of GOB	5
Total	13	23	SKN – Netherlands	ASD, UST	02
			US Dept. of Labour	BGMEA-ILO-UNICEF MOU Programme	01
			Total	15	19+2

Source: i) *Directory of NGOs engaged in CRC Activities – 1998* by BSAF, 1999;

ii) *Directory of Services of Working Children*, by DAM, 1999 and respective NGOs' *Annual Report/Brochures*.

¹¹ These are: Save the Children, Australia, Denmark, UK and USA. The major NGOs supported by them are shown in Table 7.4.

Terre des Hommes (TDH) Alliance members viz. TDH France, TDH Italy, TDH Netherlands, TDH Switzerland, were also providing support to the urban working children through NGO interventions. The major NGOs, working in urban areas and supported by TDH alliance were: Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Jagoroni Chakra, SEEP, and UST. Towards the end of the 1990s, there were 13 different INGOs providing technical and financial support to at least 23 NGOs who were providing services to the working children in urban areas (mostly in 4 metro cities) of Bangladesh (Table 7.4). INGO-supported programmes covering services like non-formal basic education, vocational/pre-vocational skill training, rehabilitation, protection and shelter, safety training and protective equipments distribution, awareness training, income generation, etc.

There were some 15 or so donor agencies/countries supporting child labour-related services, provider NGOs working mainly in the major urban areas of Bangladesh. The major donors were: CIDA-Canada, DANIDA, DFID-UK, NOVIB, Royal Norwegian Embassy and SIDA. These donors were providing financial support to those several NGOs. DFID of UK and Swiss SIDA were providing important support to the biggest non-formal education project in urban areas of Bangladesh, i.e., the HTR project of the GOB through UNICEF-Bangladesh. The German Government was also supporting the ILO-IPEC programme in Bangladesh for the rural and urban working children. US Department of Labour was the other important donor supporting the BGMEA-ILO-UNICEF MOU programme for the under-aged garment workers of Bangladesh (Table 7.4)¹².

The impact of INGOs' and donors' response cannot be identified separately because most of them do not involve themselves in direct service. But they are playing a very important role by providing the major part of funds to the service provider organizations e.g. NGOs, GOB departments, UN agencies – who are working for the working children in urban and rural areas. Without their continuous support, however, the achievement of different bodies, especially the NGOs in this field, might not have been possible at all.

¹²The amount of German funding for IPEC programme in Bangladesh in 1994-1999 was US \$ 14,88,586 and the US funding for the period 1994-2000 was US \$ 16,08,277 (Rahman, M.A. 1998: 88).

7.5 Response of BGMEA for the Under-aged Workers of the Garment Industry in Bangladesh

It may be mentioned first that the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) is neither a developmental organization like the NGOs nor a government or international organization dedicated to the people's interest. It is simply a business and manufacture-related association. This association of the entrepreneurs in the readymade garment industry made history by signing the tripartite MOU (on 4th July 1995) and implementing the document, in collaboration with the ILO and UNICEF. Whatever the background of BGMEA's involvement in this process, it created a unique example throughout the world by taking part in the fight against child labour. BGMEA's involvement in the MOU programme was also highly acclaimed by different international child rights organizations. UNICEF for example, recognized BGMEA's response by stating that... "an important initiative to protect child workers is unfolding in Bangladesh" (Bellamy, C. 1997: 60).

The response of BGMEA towards the immediate impact of the Harkin Bill of the US Congress since 1994-95 was studied by Susan Bissell and Babar Sobhan. In their own words, "two immediate steps had to be taken, with the cooperation of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA). First, it was clear that factory owners had to (temporarily at least) suspend their policy of dismissing child workers to allow UNICEF and local NGOs time to devise a programme for their rehabilitation. Second, BGMEA would have to provide information about the number and distributions authorised to perform that task". Again they commented that "the idea looked simple on paper, but putting it into practice proved to be much more contentious than was originally anticipated" (1995: 5). BGMEA, however, came forward to take some specific responsibilities in this regard:

i) BGMEA was involved in the negotiation process by UNICEF and agreed with all its member factories¹³ and with the other two parties on the terms and references of the draft MOU and finally signed it on 4th July 1995. Thus, BGMEA, for the first time, as a trade organization in a developing country, involved itself in a

¹³ It was unanimously decided in an 'Extraordinary General Meeting of BGMEA' to eliminate child labour completely by 31st October 1994 and, accordingly, all factory owners were strictly advised to eliminate their last child worker by the stipulated date. Meanwhile, BGMEA also decided to set up School-cum-Health Centres in different areas of garment factory conglomeration of the country (Mian, M.J.A. 2001: 4).

joined venture with the main objective – “to establish the basic rights of the children” (Sinha, A.R. 2000: 1).

ii) According to the “understanding of the MOU”, BGMEA participated in the “Survey” programme following a decision taken by it on 17th May 1995. BGMEA, however, conducted a survey in 2,152 member garment factories and revealed the existence of 10,547 child workers in 891 factories in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong and Khulna cities (Razzaque & Rahman, 1996: 99). This survey helped to plan an action programme for the working children of garment factories.

iii) In the “education” component of the MOU, BGMEA became the main partner with UNICEF immediately, whereas UNICEF took the main responsibility to establish MOU schools through the NGOs (e.g. GSS and BRAC). The education programme, however, was started from January 1996. BGMEA was also committed to spend US \$ 50,000 annually for school costs, with UNICEF assuming the responsibility for the balance as deemed necessary (Bissel & Sobhan, 1996: 19).

iv) In the process of verification and monitoring of the export-oriented garment sector of Bangladesh regularly to keep it child labour free, BGMEA also coordinated with ILO and GOB, though it was the main duty of ILO. As Sinha says “The BGMEA Child Labour Monitors are assigned for factory monitoring with the ILO and GOB for three days a week and in other three days they are visiting factories to raise awareness among the factory owners so that they do not employ child labour...” (Sinha, A.R. 2000: 2). In each monitoring team consisting of 4 members, there was a BGMEA monitor. This monitoring work was so intensive that during 2000 a total of 8,079 visits was made to different BGMEA factories (Mian, M.J.A. 2001: 6). Obviously, without the effective cooperation of BGMEA, it could not be possible.

v) The MOU programme intended, as we cited earlier, to provide stipends to terminated child workers attending school programmers at a rate of Taka 300 (US \$ 7.00) per month. According to the undertaking, BGMEA contributed 50 per cent of cost of stipends (to a maximum limit of US \$ 2,50,000 per year). In this “Income Maintenance” process, BGMEA also undertook to offer employment to the qualified family members of terminated child workers. As per ILO’s report, a

total of US \$ 8,76,384.00 was paid by December 2000 as compensation of income loss to the MOU students (Mian, M.J.A. 2001: 7).

vi) BGMEA was also involved in the coordination process of the MOU programme being a member of the said “Local Informal Steering Committee”. With the leadership of ILO/IPEC and the GOB, BGMEA developed its own inspection team for this process.

vii) BGMEA’s keen interest in the welfare of the working children in garment factories was further proved when it initiated a new concept out of the MOU undertakings – “Earn and Learn Programme”¹⁴. This positive extension of the MOU was designed by BGMEA for the above-14 age group of the former child labourers who completed their schooling under MOU schools and wanted to continue their study (BGMEA, 1999: 8). As of May 2001, BGMEA had already employed 741 fourteen plus MOU students in garment factories as part-time workers matching with the locations of their school and residence (Mian, M.J.A. 2001: 8).

viii) Besides these, depending on the needs, small credits were also being given by BGMEA to the elderly members of the families of the retrenched child labourers. Adult family members of 300 MOU students were planned to be covered by this programme (Mian, *ibid*: 8).

Like all other parties of this project, BGMEA was also committed to continuous support to the helpless children on behalf of readymade garment factories of Bangladesh by signing the MOU-II on 16th June 2000 in Geneva. Thus, BGMEA was initially involved in the MOU because they had very little option except to be so. But through their involvement in the MOU they became socially conscious entrepreneurs. Though it is to some extent true that BGMEA might have gone along under pressure, it is also equally true that they did so with enthusiasm and a sense of social responsibility, which is worth emulation by other industries.

From the initial stage it was felt that the cooperation of the garment sector as a whole, and BGMEA in particular, was very much necessary because the

¹⁴ BGMEA studied that 80% of the garment sector child labourers wanted to continue education after reaching 14 years of age. They wanted to work part-time if possible and continue school. BGMEA inaugurated the Earn and Learn Programme from this observation (told by the then BGMEA Chairman and cited by UNICEF-Bangladesh, 1998).

problem was global and also complex and multi-dimensional in nature. BGMEA fulfilled this necessity. BGMEA was put into a situation where it had to analyze its own situation and address itself to the emerging needs which included having a social service outlook. The sector committed US \$ 50,000 annually to the MOU to set up schools for the children made jobless by the prospect of the ban. It is a fact that no other sector made a direct financial contribution to the well-being of its ex-workers. It was not only willing to support the children through a process of education and training but continue to acknowledge their link to the sector as well. This was a level of commitment not always visible in Bangladesh or elsewhere (UNICEF-Bangladesh, 1998: 24).

BGMEA sincerely participated in all the MOU processes, e.g. in survey of industries, education and stipend programme etc. BGMEA also showed its keen interest in the monitoring and verification system and it developed its own monitoring team with the assistance from ILO-IPEC. It may help to develop in future its own independent monitoring system regarding a child labour-free garment sector in future.

The “Earn and Learn” programme was not in the MOU provisions originally, but BGMEA developed the programme. Strategically this was a moderated technique in terms of the fight against child labour. However, as of May 2001, BGMEA had employed 741 fourteen plus MOU students in garment factories as part-time workers matching with the locations of their school and residence. Efforts of BGMEA for absorption of more students in it were also under way by mid-2001 (Mian, M.J.A. 2001: 8). These part-time workers received Taka 950 per month as salary plus Taka 300 as stipend for studying in the school.

Not only through creating an example but also through negotiation and sharing experiences, BGMEA was also trying to raise awareness to eliminate child labour from other organized sectors of the economy. Moreover, it created a god positive impact among the US and European buyers of BGMEA’s child labour-free products. .

7.6. UN Bodies, INGOs, Donors and the BGMEA in Networking and Collaboration for Urban Working Children in Bangladesh

As we cited earlier, networking, collaboration and cooperation among different bodies in different stages is very essential to successfully fight against any multi-faced deep and nation-wide socio-economic problem like child labour. In Bangladesh, a new network has been established as part of the global network of combating child labour problem specially in urban areas since the middle of the decade of 1990s. It is a unique network in a sense that almost all the partners of development e.g. the GOB departments, the NGOs, UN Agencies, INGOs, Donors and the BGMEA, were brought together on one platform. However, in this process, the Government was taking up new policies and programmes, INGOs and the donors were allocating new funds, and the NGOs were taking new initiatives towards ensuring child rights to the underprivileged children. In many cases, UN agencies in Bangladesh were working as a local coordinators and distributors of INGOs' and donors' funds.

Generally, none of the INGOs, donors and the business sector works as a direct service provider, rather in most cases, they work with a collaborative approach with the GOB departments and the NGOs. ILO is the single exception, it involved itself to provide awareness and child rights-related training to the GO and NGO officials. The action programmes of IPEC, however, were implemented mostly through the NGO partners.

In case of UNICEF and ILO, like other members of the UN family, the primary partner has always been the Government. Most notably, the Department of Labour is the focus of UNICEF's work on child labour (Bissel & Sobhan, 1996: 15). To achieve the goal of CRC of UN in a phased manner and especially to eradicate exploitative and hazardous child labour from urban areas of Bangladesh – UNICEF is also collaborating with other UN agencies e.g. ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, NGOs, trade unions, etc. "Many international NGOs, such as Rotary International, Junior Chamber International and Kiwanis International, are partners of UNICEF, helping in fund-raising, advocacy and programmes. NGOs work as grassroots partners in setting up and implementing UNICEF-assisted country programmes,

supporting mobilization efforts by raising community awareness and encouraging participation in development activities” (UNICEF, 1997a).

ILO also has the major collaborative relations with its main partner the GOB. The focal ministry of collaboration of ILO-IPEC is the Ministry of Labour and Employment, but it makes indirect partnership with other relevant ministries, such as “Ministry of Establishment that provides training to the government civil servants; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs which is responsible for implementation of the UN CRC including the national plan of action for children; Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs which is important in the context of child labour legislation; Primary and Mass Education Division which can prevent the supply of child labour, etc.” (ILO/IPEC-Dhaka, 1999: 17). ILO-IPEC collaborates with these GOB departments as a supporting agency in the implementation of the plan of action on children and IPEC needs to extend its cooperation in this regard. However, ILO-IPEC maintains this relationship with GOB mainly through its ‘Institutional Development and Capacity Building’ programme component.

ILO-IPEC also cooperate with NGOs, labour organizations and employers’ organizations through its Awareness Raising programmes. NGOs, however, collaborate with ILO-IPEC more widely and deeply through IPEC’s ‘Direct Support’ programmes in the fields of providing different services to the working children specially in urban areas. ILO-IPEC also has a strong linkage with several INGOs and donors like DANIDA, NORAD, DFID, SDC, etc. for funding of its multi-phased programmes in Bangladesh. This donor support for IPEC during 1998-99 reached unprecedented levels. At the end of 1999, IPEC enjoyed the support of 19 donor countries and 4 contributive international organizations (ILO-IPEC, 1999: 4).

Similarly, INGOs and donors help the GOB to develop programmes and to implement them. They also collaborate with UNICEF and ILO-IPEC, and in many cases, cooperate with the NGOs directly to develop and implement several programmes for working children mainly through providing necessary funds. Some are involved in the forms of advocacy (e.g. for policy change), awareness raising, research etc. in the field of child labour-related issues through partnership, cooperation and linkage.

The BEHTRUC project and the MOU project for the garment sector's working children are the two important and unique examples of networking, cooperation and collaboration between different bodies to combat the child labour problem in Bangladesh. The HTR project is a joint venture of the GOB and UNICEF where the SIDA (Sweden) and DFID (UK) were also involved with financial support. The learning centres of the project are set up and managed by some 150 NGOs in six divisional headquarters in Bangladesh.

In the MOU project, on the other hand, where UNICEF, ILO-IPEC and BGMEA are collaborating together for the under-aged garment workers, NGOs are also involved to provide education and skill training to these children. The GOB and the US Embassy in Bangladesh are closely related in the MOU process¹⁵. INGOs, donors and the US Department of Labour are providing funds for it. Thus, the MOU as well as other child labour-related projects has become successful mainly due to the cooperation, collaboration and networking among the different national and international bodies.

¹⁵ The US Embassy played an invaluable role in ensuring BGMEA's cooperation, mediating disputes between the BGMEA and local NGOs, and conducting important advocacy work on behalf of the project in the US (Bissel and Sobhan, 1996: 12).