



The Progress of Nations

A Tale of Joy and Sorrow of Children

by Abul Hasnat Monjurul Kabir

The day will come when nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour of their capital cities and public buildings, but by the well being of their peoples; by their levels of health, nutrition and education, by their opportunities to earn a fair reward for their labours; by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives; by the respect that is shown for their civil and political liberties; by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children.

THE Progress of Nations, 1997, the fifth like previous four issues charts the advances made since the 1990 World Summit for Children, at which governments pledged to take specific steps to improve the lives of their children. By now, it has become a universal and credible scorecard of the social health of nations, the nations of the world ranked according to their achievements in child health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and progress for women. The Progress of Nations, published annually by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) expresses its sacred dream in the following way: The day will come when nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour of their capital cities and public buildings, but by the well being of their peoples; by their levels of health, nutrition and education, by their opportunities to earn a fair reward for their labours; by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives; by the respect that is shown for their civil and political liberties; by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children.

found impact on children's lives — and ways of living. The report discusses various key issues under seven broader perspectives: water and sanitation, nutrition, health, education, women, special protection and industrial countries. Adequate sanitation is the foundation of development, but a decent toilet or latrine is an unknown luxury to half of the people on earth. The percentage of those with access to hygienic sanitation facilities has declined slightly over the 1990s, as construction has fallen behind population growth. The main result can be summed up in one deadly word: diarrhoea. It kills 2.2 million children a year and consumes precious funds in health care costs, preventing families and nations from climbing the ladder of development. Director of the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi (Pakistan) which has brought modern sanitation to a squatter community of 1 million people, Akhtar Hameed Khan writes on this crucial issue. He was also the Director of the Pakistan Academy of Rural Development (presently BARD).

For babies everywhere, the benefits of breast-feeding are undisputed. But for babies in developing nations breast-feeding is imperative: their very survival depends on the immune — boosting properties of mother's milk. For them, infant formula is not just inferior, it can cause disease or even death. Poor families often over-dilute, or use formula with unclean water and mix it in unclean bottles, adding to the risk. Yet, despite international pleas and a marketing code agreed to 16 years ago, manufacturers still market infant formula and other substitutes unethically around the globe. In the article "Putting babies before business," the Right Reverend Simon Barrington Ward highlights all these in detail. He was until recently Chair of the International and Development Affairs Committee of the Church of England's General Synod.

The world's children are benefiting from several decades of unprecedented health progress. Child-killing diseases are succumbing to vaccination campaigns and low-cost reme-

diates, reducing death rates and improving the quality of young lives. But in about 30 developing countries HIV/AIDS is threatening and even reversing these strides. Meanwhile, in the industrialised countries, AIDS is starting to be called a manageable disease, as costly miracle drugs seemingly pull its victims back from the brink of death. Now the fight against AIDS faces new dangers: complicity in the industrialised countries and divisiveness between them and the developing nations. Dr. Peter Piot Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS focuses on the recent trend and issues of fighting against AIDS.

Harry Sawyer recently retired as Minister for Education of Ghana writes on quality education. Three years before the millennium, 140 million children are still not in school, despite universal pledges to achieve universal access to basic education by the year 2000. Many of the youngsters who are in school find themselves squeezed into overcrowded classrooms, lacking even a slate, while a teacher drills lessons by rote. Over the past 20 years, while countries rushed to increase the number of schools and teachers, quality and relevance of education often took a back seat. But quantity is not an acceptable trade-off for quality.

Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today. Its forms are both subtle and blatant and its impact on development is profound. But it is so deeply embedded in cultures around the world that is almost invisible. Yet this brutality is not inevitable. Once recognised for what it is a construct of power and a means of maintaining the status quo it can be dismantled. And Charlotte Bunch, the Executive Director of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University (US) analyses in depth the issue of violence against women and girls. Lisbet Palme, a psychologist specialising in children, and a member of the Swedish Child and Youth Advisory Committee writes on the children who come into conflict with the law.

Whether due to government paternalism or to simple disregard for their rights, juveniles who come into conflict with the law often face justice system that treat them capriciously and offer fewer protections than they offer adults. Children in many countries face the wrath of law for the 'crimes' of being poor, neglected or abused. Regardless of the reassers for their offenders, young people are entitled to fair treatment at the hands of juvenile justice systems that are designed to aid youngsters' return to productive society as quickly as possible. Economic development has brought comfort and convenience to many people in the industrialised world, but in its wake are pollution, new health problems blighted urban landscapes and social isolation. Growing numbers of the dispossessed are also being left on the sidelines as the disparity back grounds in thousands of communities are joining together with government agencies under the Healthy Cities/Healthy Communities banner to improve the quality of life in their towns and cities. Leonard Duhal and Trevor Hanock, founders of the Healthy Cities/Healthy Communities Movement pinpoints the inter relation between healthy cities and healthy children as the former are the precondition for the latter.

In detailing a broad range of both achievements made and challenges remaining, the report is a very useful tool not just to fulfil the pledges explicit in the goals established at the summit but to maintain children at the very top of their national agenda. No doubt this is a universal document on the real progress of nations depicting some of the major and remarkable successes and failures, of the children of this world. The knowledge it unearths is fundamental to solving problems, because information is the first ingredient needed by those with the will and the means to make change. And the Progress of Nations provides all such required and credible information besides of its being, as a whole, a total story of joy and sorrow of millions of children of the world.

Saga of Domestic Child Servants

by Naseem Jahan Eva

AT 10 Shahana does everything in the house. Waking up at the first call of Fazr Azaan (morning prayer) the maid servant is up until midnight all days in a week grinding spice, peeling vegetables, cooking, washing, cleaning and even preparing the children for school.

A couple of things the illiterate girl is not allowed to do are watching TV at her will or play with her master's children her age.

Shahana, one of the four daughters of a landless peasant, did not mind. Until one day last week.

"I was happy as long as I had food to eat and a place to sleep," said the girl, tears trickling down her pale face. "Now I want to leave," she said sitting outside her master's house at Dhaka's Naya Palton.

One morning last week Shahana was beaten by her master's wife, the housewife she calls as "Khala Amma" or an aunt.

Reason: the housewife, mother of three children, found a 20-taka note missing from her steel shelf.

With no second thought the 35-year-old lady concluded that the stealing must be the work of Shahana, who unsuccessfully screamed her denial.

The truth revealed after the eldest son of the house arrived at the scene a few hours later telling his mother he took the money to buy a pen he urgently needed for his college exam.

Shahana was exonerated. But no apology was offered to her.

When her father visited her the next day Shahana narrated the story pleading that he takes her back home or to a compassionate family.

The poor man declined saying, "stay here, my daughter. This is our fate."

Poverty is the other name of this fate.

In Bangladesh, poor parents

send their children, mainly girls, to work not only at affluent families but also at lower middle class families usually in exchange of food, clothing or monthly cash payment.

Hiring domestic services is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh. Not legally recognised as part of the country's productive labour force, the number of domestic servants is unknown.

"The number may be as many as the number of households in Bangladesh with some exceptions in the very low income groups," writes Helen Rahman, director of Shoisab Bangladesh, a child rights group, in a study on child domestic workers.

The system of domestic service is a special section of the child labour situation where the entire society is involved.

"This is the largest and most open, yet invisible, form of informal child labour," says Mr. Rahman.

Also invisible is the many untold tales of the domestic servants.

"They (domestic servants) are the children of the lesser God," says Abdul Huq, a school teacher, "we take their services without caring for their needs, hopes and dreams."

Fumes Huq, "our society has created a new form of slavery in almost every household."

Consider Shima, another 11-year-old maid servant, who works at a house at Dhanmanti residential area.

"When the family goes out on long vacation they leave me alone locked inside the house," complains the girl.

On one occasion the family's vacation lasted eight days. "I had the food to eat, but not the TV to watch," she says, "and I could not sleep because I used to dream ghosts every night."

The employers did not find it wrong.

"We have done it, not only for the security of our house, but mainly for her own safety," says Shima's employer, a government employee.

True, the domestic servants do get something better than nothing. At least they get an accommodation, no matter it's usually the kitchen. They get food to eat, even though the quality is usually much inferior. During illness they get medicines.

Though recreation and holidays are not regular, the servants do get gifts during festivals.

"Here at least they have food and a house for shelter," said Mohammad Aslam, a businessman, "or else she would have found herself languishing on the streets or even at a

brothel." This group of people, however, fail to understand the myriad of other problems the young children endure. Physical torture apart there are examples of many girls being sexually abused.

After years of extensive studies Therese Blanchet, a Canadian researcher, has recently produced a book, "Lost Innocence, Stolen Childhood."

The study contained the story of Aleya, a 16-year-old girl who was raped first by the son of his employer and then by her master himself.

"At the age of 11, she was raped by the 17-year son of her employer's family. She told no one knowing that announcing she had become a 'spoiler' girl would be of no help. Six months later she was raped again by the first rapist's father," writes Ms. Blanchet after interviewing Aleya, who began working as a domestic servant at the age of five when his father remarried after her mother died.

"The morning after the rape by the father figure," writes Ms. Blanchet, "she ran away to the big city without telling anyone."

Aleya could run escape, but many others can't.

The system of keeping domestic servants can't just be wished away. But the attitude towards them can be changed with more compassion for them and recognition of their basic human rights. And the gross inequities that exist between the employers and the domestic must go.

"The society's quiet sanction of using the existing socio-economic malaise... for continuing this type of relationship cannot be accepted," says Ms. Rahman. "If this relationship can be transformed, then there is a potential for changing the lives of the millions of children from a life of servitude to a life with a better future."

That's what a prime time campaign ad on BTV is telling the people. Sponsored by Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, in co-operation with Radda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children), an international NGO, the ad tells the story of Moyna, a maid servant in her early teens.

Her employers rebukes her when she plays with the family's daughter and breaks her toy car or stand by the dinner table as the family eats a lavish dinner.

No, that's not the way to treat your domestic servants, says the campaign ad pleading for a bit of sympathy and compassion for them.

— News Network

LAW WATCH

Age of criminal responsibility

AGE of criminal responsibility is just one variable influencing how juveniles are treated but justice systems. Other variables include whether there is a separate juvenile law based on child rights; subject to punitive sanctions or only to socio-educational measures; and whether the country has separate court systems and jails for young people. A juvenile justice system provides legal protections and an objective standard for treatment. In its absence, young people may be handled by the adult criminal justice system or be held in protective custody, where they have no legal protections and may face arbitrary or harsh treatment.

Minimum age at which children are subject to penal law in countries with 10 million or more children under 18 years old

Mexico	6-12	Indonesia	8	Korea, Rep.	12	Russian Fed.	14
Bangladesh	7	Kenya	8	Morocco	12	Viet Nam	14
India	7	UK (Scotland)	8	Uganda	12	Egypt	15
Myanmar	7	Ethiopia	9	Algeria	13	Argentina	16
Nigeria	7	Iran	9	France	13	Brazil	18
Pakistan	7	Philippines	9	Poland	13	Colombia	18
South Africa	7	Nepal	10	Uzbekistan	13	Peru	18
Sudan	7	UK (England)	10	China	14	Congo, D. Rep.	-
Tanzania	7	UK (Wales)	10	Germany	14		
Thailand	7	Ukraine	10	Italy	14		
United States	7	Turkey	11	Japan	14		

Source: UNICEF

From now onward LAW WATCH, an alternative forum for Legal and Human Rights Studies and Action contributes to this page (Law and Our Rights) regularly.

BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verbatim Text of Cross Examination of Fourth Prosecution Witness

(Continued from yesterday)

Following are the remaining part of the excerpts from cross examination of Havilder (Retd) Mohammad Qudus Sikder by Abdur Razzak Khan, defence counsel for accused Hon Capt (Retd) Abdul Wahab Joardar, held on July 31 (Thursday).

Q: Where and to whom did you report for your duty after the incident?

A: I was in Bangabandhu's house till 10 am of August 17. After that I went to Ganobhaban and reported to Subedar Kabir.

Q: How long were you on duty there (Ganobhaban)?

A: The whole company left for Comilla on August 18 morning and reported to the Commanding Officer Lt Col Syed Ali Asgar.

Q: Do you understand the difference between G-3 rifle, SLR and Chinese shot gun?

A: Yes.

Q: For which regiment of Bangladesh Army the Chinese rifle was allotted during the time of the incident?

A: 1st Bengal Lancer.

Q: You don't know that those arms were allotted for 1st Bengal Lancer during that time.

A: It is not true.

Q: When the bodies were lying at Bangabandhu's house on August 15, some people came to take photographs... who was that photographer?

A: Was Col Hamid there?

A: I can't say.

Q: When the photographs were taken?

A: On August 15 and FIU (Field Intelligence Unit), DFI and another groups came with running (movie) camera to take photographs.

Q: You did not prevent them from taking photographs?

A: I did not resist them because they were authorised.

They gave their identity that they were from army's FIU.

Q: There were five police posts for the police guards in that house. How many police used to guard from each post?

A: One police man with arms.

Q: One DSP was in charge of the police force and what was his name?

A: DSP Nurul Islam.

Q: After how many hours was the duty of police guards shifted?

A: I don't know. That was the matter of police.

Q: Whether the police guards at that house came from Rajarbagh or police control?

A: I only knew that they were police of Bangladesh.

Q: Did you see any police force coming from police control to that house after the incident till you were there?

A: None came.

Q: Are Naik Subedar Motalab and Subedar Kabir still in service?

A: They have retired.

Q: Did you give the identity of those army personnel who were killed or injured in that house on the night of occurrence to the IO?

A: I did not give their identity as he (IO) did not ask me.

Q: How long does it take to play the national anthem in bugle?

A: About two minutes.

Q: Where was the bugle played?

A: At the south of the reception room inside the compound wall.

Q: Where were the police guard posts situated?

A: In all sides of the house that is north-south-east-west sides of the house.

cused in the murder case cross-examined the fourth prosecution witness, Mohammad Qudus Sikder.

Following are the excerpts of the cross-examination of Havilder (Retd) Mohammad Qudus Sikder by Fariduddin Ahmed, state defence for absconding accused Lt Col (Retd) Rashid Chowdhury:

Q: How many promotions you got since 1973 till your retirement and how many during your stay in Pakistan?

A: I got two promotions in Pakistan and got since 1973 till my retirement.

Q: Where had you been during your two-month leave after you came back to the country?

A: On my village home.

Q: On which date and on what day you came to Ganobhaban from Comilla in 1975?

A: I cannot recollect the date and the day.

Q: Before the incident how many days you performed your duty at Bangabandhu's house?

A: Seven days, but duty was on every alternate day.

Q: How many policemen were on guard regularly in that house?

A: Five policemen. There were seven sentry posts in that house and five were for police and two for army.

Q: Were the commands of army and police different?

A: Yes, there were different commands.

Q: What are the Bangla words of duty and guard?

A: Responsibility and security or sentry (in Bangla kartabya and paharadan).

Q: What is the job of a sentry?

A: To challenge an intruder.

A: No.

Q: You are giving evidence as taught by others.

A: Not true.

Following are the excerpts of the cross-examination of Havilder (Retd) Mohammad Qudus Sikder by Mohammad Huq, state defence for absconding accused Dafadar Marafat Ali:

Q: What is your academic qualification?

A: Passed SSC in 1966.

Q: At that time whether the degree was SSC or entrance?

A: SSC.

Q: Did you sit for any departmental examination for educational qualification?

A: Yes.

Q: What were those?

A: Fast map reading, English and Roman Urdu.

Q: What are equivalent degrees of those?

A: If anyone passed those that would be equivalent to SSC.

Q: Being such an educated person why didn't you become a complainant of this case instead of a witness?

A: The victims were not my relations, that is why I did not lodge this case.

Q: You did not witness any such incident as you are narrating now.

A: It is not true.

Q: You are here as a witness being influenced by the IO and others.

A: Not true.

Q: One of those whose names you mentioned was involved in the incident.

A: They were involved.

Q: You are not Havilder Qudus, you are impersonating.

A: It is not true.

Q: You are giving evidence by taking financial benefit from the IO and the complainant.

A: It is not true.

Following are the excerpts of the cross-examination of Havilder (Retd) Mohammad Qudus Sikder by Mohammad Abdul Wahed, state defence for ab-

sconding accused Lt Col (Retd) Shariful Huq Dalim:

Q: When did you join the 1st Field Artillery in Comilla?

A: In December, 1973.

Q: Can you say the date?

A: No.

Q: Who was the second in command (Two-I-C) of your regiment?

A: Major Shariful Huq Dalim.

Q: Upto which date he was your Two-I-C in your regiment?

A: I don't remember the exact date.

Q: You knew that Major Shariful Huq Dalim was retired from the army.

A: No.

At this stage, the judge wanted to know whether he (Dalim) went on retirement.

A: He did not take retirement, he was released.

Q: When?

A: I can't give the exact date.

Q: You have said that Major Dalim went to the regiment once or twice after his retirement. Can you say when he visited?

A: I can't say the date.

Q: Did you take ambush at Bangabandhu's house with your associate guards?

A: Yes.

Q: To stay in waiting to attack the enemy in military posture is called ambush.

A: To take position shifting from the specified position to resist the attack of enemy is called ambush.

Q: You took ambush with your accomplices whether to protect yourself or to protect the President?

A: To protect ourselves. If we can't protect ourselves, how will we protect the President?

Q: Did the police guards resort to counterfire after Bangabandhu's residence came under attack?

A: I could not mark that.

Q: Who used to coordinate between army and police?

A: There was no coordination.

Q: You took the security

charge with ammunition on August 15, 1975 and made ambush.

A: It is not true.

Q: When the attackers were killing the President and his family members, you were on move on the first and ground floor of that house and the attackers did not obstruct your movement.

A: No.

Q: The attackers did not snatch your arms.

A: True.

Q: One havilder took Russel upstairs and after coming back said 'all finished' — did you mention the name of that havilder in your statement?

A: I did not say because I don