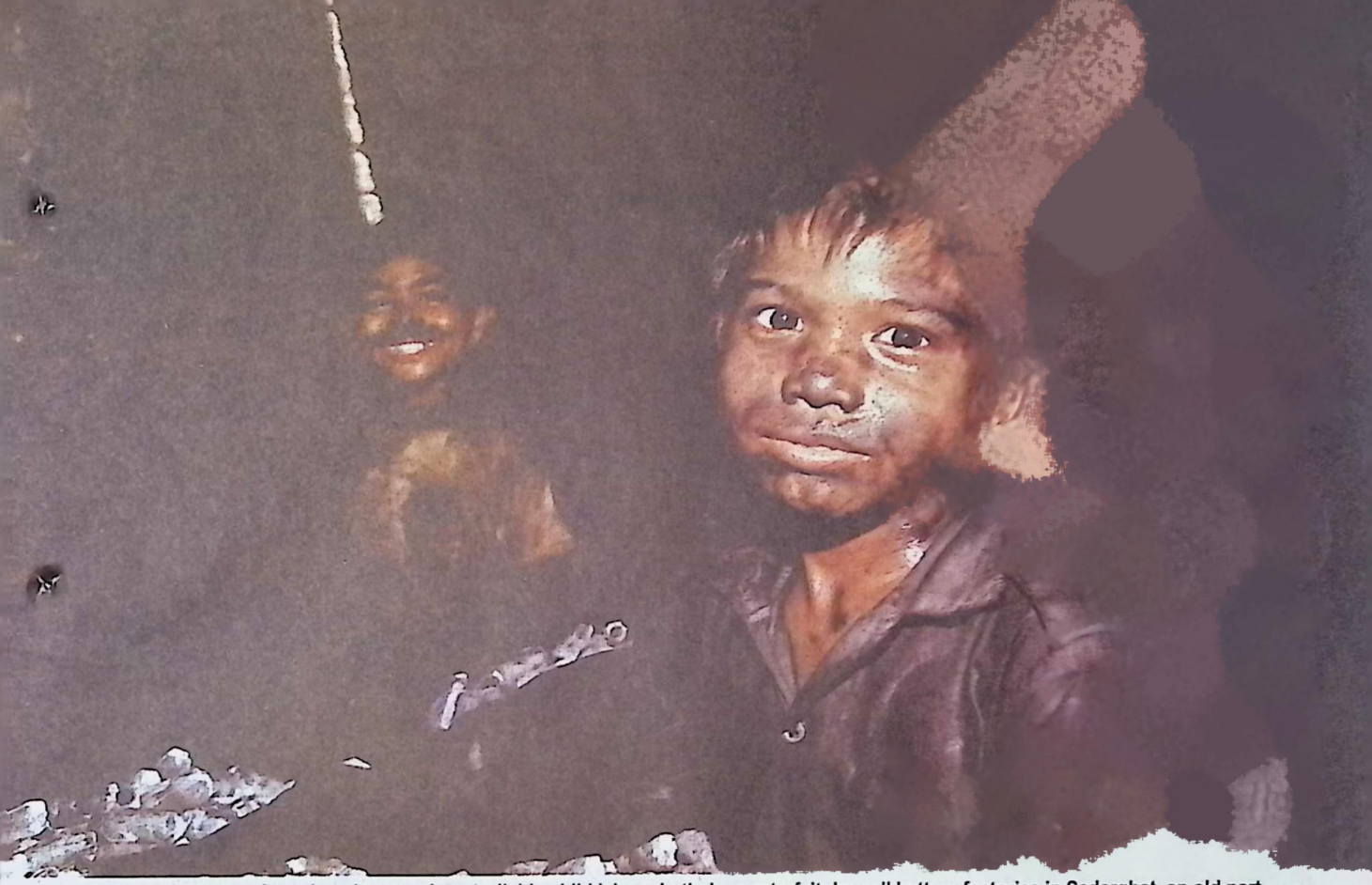


Factory owners prefer using cheap and controllable child labour in their counterfeit dry cell battery factories in Sadarghat, an old part of Dhaka. by: Azizur Rahim Peu, DrikNews.

Nazma Yesmin, the Programme Officer of Bangladesh, BILS, in fact stresses on the need for family planning, which is probably the root of all evils in this country, which also includes the rapid population growth. "Families do not pay any heed to family planning, especially those living in the rural areas," she says. According to Nazma, the age old ideas, unfortunately, still reign amongst families, not only in the low-income families but also in middle-class and upper middle-class families in Bangladesh. "Many parents believe that if they have more sons than daughters, they would have a better future. In poorer families we still see parents having more and more children only so they could have more earners in the family. What they do not realise is that they are giving birth to more mouths to feed. When these children turn 6 or 7 years old, they are sent to homes to work as domestic workers and factories to work under dangerous conditions. This is an issue which should be tackled before anything else. This way at least 50% of our problems can be eliminated."

Ahmed also says that people like us also have a very important role to play in eliminating child labour. "Every generation is responsible for the next one," he says. According to Ahmed, since legal adoption is not possible as yet in Bangladesh, families can take care of orphans and poor children starting from their very own doorsteps. That is why, he says, that we must create our very own Social Security Net starting with a 'Sponsor a Child' programme. "Each family can sponsor one child. There are adolescents who work in many homes. We can educate them and also give them vocational training." Ahmed says that more and more young people can work as apprentices in factories as long as they are not exploited. "There used to be an old tradition where young children used to live in the homes of rich people, help them in the household works, like looking after the family cow and also helping in the kitchen. In return, these children were given education and food. We can bring this tradition back into our homes, with slight modifications, through the 'Sponsor a Child' programme."

In spite of all the hypothetical solutions put forward, which Ahmed truly believes can be put to work in our society, what the poverty-stricken people want are real actions and a drive from the authorities which will not only give them and their children security, income, shelter and regular meals, but also education and respect as hard working citizens. Abolishing child labour might be another point which will make us look good on paper, however if the government is unable to provide an alternative plan along with implementing this policy, poverty will increase at a faster rate instead of being reduced.