



Save the Children



# Child Domestic Workers Convention 2012

## MESSAGE



I am happy that Save the Children and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) are organizing “Child Domestic Workers Convention, 2012”. Both organizations are trying to empower child domestic workers through giving them basic education, vocational skills, training and life skills.

I think it is the crucial time for Government along with civil society organizations to take necessary actions to protect child domestic workers rights through legislative measures. I believe that proposed new “Domestic Workers Registration and Protection Act” drafted by Ain o Salish Kendra would help to frame new law by the government for the welfare of child domestic workers.

I wish all the success of the Child Domestic Workers Convention, 2012.

**Barrister Shafique Ahmed**  
Minister  
Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

## Save the Children in Bangladesh

**Vision:** All children in Bangladesh realise their rights and grow to their full potential as active, respected citizens.

**Mission:** Save the Children in Bangladesh is the leading child rights organisation with innovative, quality programmes and advocacy, including during emergencies. To maximise impacts for children, we will use resources efficiently and act with courage, ambition and integrity.

## Child Domestic Workers in Bangladesh

**Brighter future for child domestic workers**  
We are aiming at Transforming Child Domestic Workers into Empowered Citizens through our work. As child domestic workers are being mentally and physically abused and tortured through social and economic exploitation, they are vulnerable citizens. So we need to ensure their establishment as human capital and make them more capable of managing hazards.

**Struggles of child domestic workers**  
Child labour is a matter of great concern as it is estimated that around 7.4 million children are economically active of which, around 400,000 child domestic workers (CDW) aged 6-17 years old in Bangladesh. The study ‘Child domestic workers - living inside rooms and outside the law and the Role of government and civil societies’ showed that child domestic workers are often confined in a house where they are deprived from all rights. In this situation, adolescent girls aged 6-16 are the most vulnerable group. The study showed that 80% of the domestic workers are girls. They became domestic workers due to poverty; poor parents are often unable to meet family financial needs and they always do work for further income. This is often the result of a large family size, the fact that they have no land for cultivation, or sickness on the part of the main wage earner. Around 50% of children who come to cities to work as domestic workers are influenced by their parents, and the other half were engaged through a middleman. Child domestic workers do not work in one house for a long period of time. They change households frequently due to heavy workload, bad behaviour on the part of the employer, insufficient facilities and for higher wages and better benefits. These frequent changes hinder the children's education and psychological growth. The study showed that 36% of CDWs work on average 9-12 hours a day, and 30% of CDWs work on average for 13-15 hrs. One alarming finding from the study indicated that 16% of CDWs work on average 16 hours a day. According to ILO convention 182, long working hours is a major indicator for the 'worst form of child labour'. Due to long working hours, CDWs are often denied an education. Despite the CDWs stated interest in study and recreation, CDWs have very limited opportunities to develop both mentally and physically.

**Government initiatives at policy level**  
Even though while the Government of Bangladesh has long acknowledged the need to address child labour and has formulated the National Child Labour Elimination policy 2010 (NCLEP) and National Children's Policy (NCP) in 1994 to promote and protect children's rights. The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) is working to develop a National Plan of Action to implement the NCLEP 2010. The International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children and two civil society networks, Together with Working Children (TWC) and Bangladesh Shishu Adikar Forum (BSAF) are included in this process. There is still a lack of political will to implement and enforce stated policy, to successfully realize the Conventions on Child Rights and protect children working in hazardous work, especially in the informal sector.

**Save the Children strives for improving the lives of child domestic workers**  
Save the Children have three programs that seek to address CDW issues from different perspectives. Save the Children's Education Program provides comprehensive education to children who are already engaged in domestic work and creates educational opportunities for children who are at risk to become domestic workers through its sub-thematic program “Education for Youth Empowerment (EYE) Program”. This compressive education includes basic education, vocational skills and life skills (personal and professional) training, aiming to transform child labourers into productive citizens. Save the Children is also working to establish “community based child protection system” to protect children from abuse and exploitation as well as harmful child labour. Finally, Save the Children works with local government, trying to establish a “registration system” within local government mandates to reduce unsafe rural urban child migration to domestic work.

The education component was designed to support a range of child domestic workers, including: 1) full time child domestic workers who are living 24 hours under the control of their employers; 2) part time CDWs who are living with parents or relatives but work in the day at an employer's house; 3) Children who are at risk to be CDW living in source areas, from where children came to cities for work.

Around 45,000 CDWs receive comprehensive education in a combination of non-formal basic education, vocational skills and life skills training through 150 community based learning centers, 20 vocational units and 40 child clubs or socialization centers located in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet city corporations and across Bangladesh's seven districts. Projects are implemented by six NGOs, led by Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK).

Based on more than 15 years of experience addressing CDW issues, Save the Children and its partner NGOs have developed and introduced a number of approaches to reach these most vulnerable and invisible groups and bring them into education. These approaches include:

**Reaching out to child domestic workers**  
To reach CDWs, the program has developed and applied a 10

step strategy. Since the CDWs live away from their parents in their employers' houses, they are almost invisible and inaccessible to government inspectors, statisticians, NGO workers and even neighbours. An important component of the outreach strategy is community engagement (door-to-door surveys, informal consultations, corner meetings, distribution of project leaflets), and in-depth knowledge of local communities.

As employers are reluctant to send CDWs far away from their households to school, 150 Community-based Learning Centres (CLCs) have been established close to employers' homes, with the locations chosen following consultations with the employers. This has not only ensured easy accessibility for CDWs, but has also secured their employers' willingness to allow CDWs to attend courses and NFE classes.

Children's clubs or social centres have been established near clusters of 5 to 6 CLCs or NFE centres. These have been created so that the CDWs can come to the centres and participate in music and art based activities, and receive training in vocational and life skills. The centres are open all day, so that the CDWs can attend at a time that is convenient for them. The centres also serve as information centres, where CDWs can report any violence they have been victim to, and where meetings can be conducted with the employers.

**Reaching out to employers**  
Reaching out to employers is an essential component of the program. It not only ensures the capacity and legitimacy to interact with CDWs, but it builds sustainable change. Save the Children's 10-step strategy includes various steps to reach out to employers. Another effective strategy that has been used is raising the awareness and sympathy for CDWs amongst the children of households employing CDWs.

**Reaching out to communities**  
It is nearly impossible to reach out directly to communities. Community Watch Groups (CWGs) fill the gap, and are points of contact with the communities and also act as a “sounding board” for communicating core awareness messages. Community involvement has been a focus of Save the Children's work since the start of the project.

**Reaching out to other target groups**  
A school-based awareness raising campaign was conducted, highlighting CDW issues across 40 schools, aiming to reach children in households employing CDWs. Debates and drawing competitions were organised, and teachers committed to discussing child rights in social studies classes. This has sensitised children from households employing CDWs on child rights to act as change makers within their families and society. Children from households employing CDWs can be powerful agents of change in efforts to change perceptions of, attitudes and behaviors towards CDWs. (source: SCiB internal report)

- Challenges to ensure quality education for child domestic workers**
- Low attendance rate in NFE classes; in most cases employers do not allow CDWs to participate in classes when:
    - Any guests or visitors come to house;
    - Any family members are sick;
    - Employers torture them if they show sign of physical abuse, employers keep them at home.
  - High dropout rates; around 50% of CDWs drop out before completing a one-year NFE course due to:
    - High internal migration as CDWs change households quite frequently due to workload, bad behavior on the part of the employer, and to get higher wages and better benefits;
    - No tracking system (registration) to trace them internally.
  - CDWs are often tired when they do attend class which limits their ability to learn. This is a result of:
    - Working long hours;
    - Most employers allow CDWs to participate in afternoon classes but they are tired after a full morning's work.

- Good practices to help empower child domestic workers**
- Create alternative, age-appropriate education in source areas to protect children from becoming domestic workers;
  - Introduce social parenting for the employers of CDW to sensitize them regarding child rights and their responsibilities toward the CDWs;
  - Introduce parenting education for parents to raise their awareness about the long term benefits of education as well as the bad effects of child labour;
  - Work with the Government to increase social safety net

## MESSAGE



It is a great pleasure to know that Save the Children is organizing “Child Domestic Workers Convention 2012”. To my honest utterance that the event will focus on the rights of the child domestic workers countrywide. Due to acute poverty and both social and natural shocks, parents send their children to other houses for domestic works. The government has taken appropriate measure to eliminate child labour in particular from hazardous jobs. To make it reality the government has adopted National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010 (NCLEP). In conformity with this policy and ratified ILO convention 182, a National Plan of Action (NPA) is being finalized. For the successful implementation of NPA, Education is the first and top most strategic tool.

I encourage all the development agencies, like Save the Children to come forward with positive mindset to address the challenges through comprehensive education which include basic education, vocational skills training and life skills for child domestic workers. I hope this event will add new directions to address the challenges for better future of the child domestic workers.

All the best wishes to Save the Children for taking such wonderful initiative to realize rights of child domestic workers.

**Mikail Shipar**  
Secretary (in charge)  
Ministry of Labour and Employment

## MESSAGE



It is a great pleasure that Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) and Save the Children are jointly organizing the Child Domestic Workers Convention 2012. Domestic work is one of the most hazardous and exploitative forms of work entailing long hour of labour in risky and unhealthy environments. Child domestic workers normally have to live far away from their homes under the control of adults whose first concern is not the well being or security of these children but how to maximize their contribution to the well being of the household. As a matter of rule, in most cases they are deprived of their basic rights to education, health, recreation and development given to live with minimum facilities of lodging and sanitation.

The hidden nature of child domestic work also means it often escapes the reach of the law and heightens the risk of abuse for workers at the hands of their employers. Domestic workers typically tend to be not registered, under-paid and unable to access complaints procedures. Considering the situation, Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) strongly feels the necessity of a specific law for the protection of domestic workers, especially the child domestic workers.

I hope this convention will end successfully with providing specific legislative recommendations and in support of making specific law for the well being of domestic workers by the participants.

**Sultana Kamal**  
Executive Director  
Ain O Salish Kendra

## Recommendations for policy makers

- Move more quickly to approve the National Plan of Action (NPA) to implement the NCLEP;
- Stronger political will to implement education strategy under the NPA that will help transition of the CDWs from hazardous working conditions into education;
- Declare a new social safety net program to ensure that child domestic workers receive an education that will help transform them into productive citizens;
- Establish a registration system at the local government level that helps trace CDWs as well as ensure they receive services they are entitled to.

**Elizabeth Pearce**  
Education Director