

Reaching an Agreement for the Elimination of Child Labour from the Supply Chains

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Abstract: This article examines how child labour can be eliminated from various supply chains in Bangladesh. Reinforcing this issue is important to comply with international labour standards on child labour and to avoid potential trade sanctions of various types. Therefore, research is needed to identify a suitable mechanism to address this problem which fits the specific social and business context of Bangladesh. This study is one response to this need. Drawing upon the examples of other mechanisms to implement international labour standards particularly in a situation when domestic initiatives remain largely ineffective, it is argued that various local and international actors in the supply chains have a key role to play in actively enforcing this international standard to help support an economy free from the curse of child labour. This article proposes that an international legally binding agreement among global importers, unions, and local stakeholders to improve the child labour situation may provide the best mechanism to eliminate this problem from various supply chains in Bangladesh. The outcomes contribute some important findings to the understanding of policy failure in fight against child labour in Bangladesh and how this can be remedied.

Keywords: *Supply Chain; Child Labour; Multistakeholder Agreements; Readymade Garments; Bangladesh*

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the ratifying countries of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of the fundamental purposes of this Convention is to afford the necessary protection and assistance to the family so that it can fully assume its responsibilities in the balanced development of children's personality. The constitution of Bangladesh along with many other laws including the Penal Code, 1860, the Children Act, 2013, and the Labour Act, 2006 promote children's welfare and safeguard them against negligence, cruelty and abuse. Besides, the introduction of compulsory primary education, free education for girls up to grade eight are some other initiatives taken by the government to help prepare the children to live an individual life in society [1].

Nevertheless, historically child labour is linked with the various supply chains in Bangladesh directly and indirectly. After the Rana Plaza tragedy in 2013 when a multi-storeyed garments factory in the capital Dhaka collapsed killing over 1100 workers the issue of child labour resurfaced along with the issues relating workplace safety and health standards in Bangladesh. Previously, the widespread use of child labour in the readymade garments (RMG) factories led to an outrage in the early 1990s and brought this sector under the threat of trade sanctions following the introduction of the US Harkin Bill which banned trade with countries who used child labour [2].

However, children between the age of 5 to 17 still form a very high percentage of the workforce in Bangladesh as none of the laws or government policies can be properly implemented in the informal sectors, like small factories and workshops, where over 93% of the working children are employed [3]. The problem is further intensified by Bangladesh's non-ratification of the ILO Minimum Age Convention of 1973 and also because there are no specific laws to effectively prevent child labour as different laws of Bangladesh suggest different minimum age and definition of a child [4].

Elimination of child labour is important for Bangladesh at least for two major reasons. It is detrimental to the harmonious development of the future generation of the country and its presence at any stage of the supply chain could trigger trade sanctions from international actors. Because the use of child labour is a direct violation of several international legally binding provisions. Avoiding any such violations and risks is specifically important for a country now celebrating their recent graduation from the UN's Least Developed Countries list to lower-middle-income country status [5].

This article argues that an independent legally binding agreement between different actors in the supply chains is the best way to measure the gravity of child labour and then define specific responsibilities for each actor to ensure child labour free workplace in the absence of an effective domestic policy framework. The first part of the paper will investigate the foundations of an approach to defining multistakeholder agreement arising from a country's obligation to implement international labour standards. Next, this framework will be applied in the context of Bangladesh whose legislative and policy framework does not provide a clear mechanism to fight child labour. The final part will explain the vital role of the multistakeholder legally binding agreement to determine the responsibilities of the actors concerned to eliminate child labour from the various supply chains of Bangladesh.

2. Understanding the role of multistakeholder legally binding agreement in enforcing international labour standards

A multistakeholder legally binding agreement has its root in the multistakeholder governance which essentially means bringing multiple stakeholders together to address certain problems through participatory dialogue, decision making, and execution of such decisions. The underlying idea behind this arrangement is that adequate inputs from multiple interconnected actors involved in a problem make the resulting decision democratically legitimate [6] and can be more effectively executed compared to traditional responses devised by state-based actors only. While private-public partnerships (PPPs) are generally domestic, the concept of multistakeholder governance always includes some international components—any multinational business-affiliated body and a civil society organization—as its key members. This structure provides important strengths to this arrangement to deal with issues that have transnational elements.

Multistakeholder governance has already claimed an important position internationally in addressing many social and business issues of global importance. This is because, as Berman argued, the concept of post-WWII formal 'international organisation' has evolved into the system of informal 'global governance' in the 1990s due to the perceived failure of those organizations [6]. While this argument has merit, this, however, is also true that highly politicised and inherently complex nature of the international organisation is not designed to handle certain emerging problems in the world which require a greater level of transparency, neutrality and commitment for their resolution [7]. This means the rise of multistakeholder governance is obvious alongside the development of the international organisation as the former is often project-based and focused on specific issues where actors commit themselves to carry out specific obligations.

Nowadays a Government needs to collaborate not only with other governments but also with private actors through institutions established for various purposes. The regulatory networks like International Organization of

Securities Commissions and Basel Committee on Banking Supervision; and multistakeholder international partnerships like Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are some of the major examples of a multistakeholder governance approach to achieve specific business and social objectives. These business and social objectives are achieved through very dedicated observance of certain generally accepted standards which are often closely connected to relevant provisions in broader human-rights related instruments.

For example, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, with 170 state parties and 71 signatories, recognizes the ‘right to ... adequate food’ and the right to be free from malnutrition [8]. To this effect, the state parties commit to take measures to improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge. This essentially demonstrates state parties’ commitments to food safety and the welfare of all workers involved in the global food supply chain. However, the spirits of the above-mentioned provisions of international law patronized by UN are probably best contained in the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)—a farm assurance program—which is now known as GLOBAL G.A.P. Founded by several European supermarket chains in the 1990s to establish Europe-wide standard criteria for food safety, workers’ welfare and production methods among others, the EurepG.A.P., later changed the name to GLOBALG.A.P., is a widely implemented farm certification scheme. Today, any entities wish to export agro-food to Europe must comply with the GLOBALG.A.P. standards in the supply chain of their agricultural production [9].

When it comes to international labour standard on decent work, workplace safety and employment injury benefit for the vital workforce in supply chains, there are several globally accepted International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments recognizing these rights. For instance, the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964, Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention,

1952, and the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981. After ratification these internationally accepted minimum labour standards become legally binding on ILO member states. However, the members are at full liberty on how to implement these standards in their supply chain and as a result, violations are often widespread in some of the developing countries [10] due to inadequate supervision and inspections.

There are numerous examples of non-observance of basic safety rules in the workplace leading to devastating consequences which can easily be avoided if employees comply with safety standards, procedures, and regulations [42]. The 2013 Rana Plaza tragedy in Dhaka is one of such examples when a commercial complex constructed with substandard materials and subsequently converted into a factory for industrial use collapsed. The tragic incident killed at least 1,100 garments factory workers and injured more than 2,500. This was one of the worst industrial accidents on record which awoke the world to the poor labour conditions practised in the ready-made garment supply chain in Bangladesh. This incident was one of several similar industrial accidents that occurred during that time in Bangladesh [11].

The incident attracted prompt and harsh criticism from various stakeholders not only on poor workplace safety standards in Bangladesh but also against the US and European retailers who always relied on third party inspection and auditing services to evaluate the integrity of Bangladeshi supply chains. It was alleged that Bangladeshi factories often evaded inspections and monitoring and maintained a very lower level of compliance with workplace safety and health standards [12].

This tragedy and recurrence of similar incidents within a short period in Bangladeshi RMG sectors indicated a serious weakness in the domestic labour laws and the ability of the authority concerned to ensure minimum workplace safety in this sector. Consequently, the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (the Accord) which is headquartered in the Netherlands, was signed in 2013 between global brands and retailers and trade unions. The Accord was designed to build a safer Bangladeshi

RMG sector in a situation when domestic mechanisms have failed to ensure minimum workplace safety prescribed under both national and international laws [12].

The Accord is an independent legally binding multistakeholder agreement between the parties and an example of project-oriented multistakeholder governance. It was supported and established by the IndustriALL Global Union and the UNI Global Union, campaigning Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the Clean Clothes Campaign and the Workers' Rights Consortium [13]. The key components of the Accord included a five-year, which was renewed in 2018, legally binding agreement between brands and trade unions to ensure a safe working environment in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. Under this agreement, there would be independent inspections of factories on a regular basis. A democratically elected health and safety committees in all factories and establishments would be responsible to identify potential safety and health risks. Supported by the brands, the inspection will involve the local unions and the reports would be routinely disclosed for workers' awareness. The program also included arrangements to provide training and development facilities for the workers so that they become more aware of the safety risks and refuse to work if the safety level in certain premises did not match the agreed standard. This is how the responsibility to comply with higher labour standards on workplace safety in Bangladeshi RMG sectors was redistributed among stakeholders with objectives that were specific and verifiable. However, the most important part of the program was the commitment by signatory brands to ensure USD 500,000 annually towards the operational cost of the program. The Accord is helping Bangladesh maintain a much higher level of compliance with international labour standard on workplace safety and health in the RMG sectors [13].

Alongside workplace safety and health, a multistakeholder partnership approach has also been assessed as an effective alternative to conventional approaches to eliminate child labour. Boersma (2017) mentioned that in the transnational context, national laws are inherently inadequate in addressing child labour in

global supply chains, and the governance and enforcement gap that nurture child labour can be better addressed through private regulations and CSR strategies. His opinion supports the idea that child labour like any other international labour issues is transnational and hence, total reliance on national laws and policies to fight against this problem will always remain less effective [14, 49].

Another important outcome of Boersma's research is the identification of specific role stakeholders must play in the partnership. For example, civil society organisations may play an important role in fostering education, poverty relief and gender equality initiatives—some known reason behind the existence of child labour in many parts of the world. On the other hand, the companies can expand their CSR coverage and use the fund to aid these activities. Besides, the researcher rightly said that a multistakeholder partnership helps strengthen companies' ability to rectify some of their harmful practices as well as that of suppliers, customers, consumers and government agencies [14].

3. Efforts to eliminate child labour from Bangladeshi supply chains

According to the 2013 ILO supported child labour survey which was conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, child labour is a growing concern in Bangladesh. The survey suggests that there are 3.45 million working children around the country and among them, 1.7 million or 49.27% are child labour. What is more alarming is that this 1.7 million includes 1.28 million hazardous child labour [15] and a large percentage of them are employed in various chemical-intensive production plants producing candle, soap, salt, bitumen as well as in tiles and ship breaking industries. Child labour can be found in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh. They are mainly engaged in the household works, agriculture, poultry industries, fish processing units, readymade garment industries and in the leather processing sectors [16].

One of the preliminary obstacles in the fight against child labour in Bangladesh is the challenge of fixing the minimum age for lawful employment and its

implementation in both formal and informal sectors. It is a universal challenge in that definition of a child may be affected by several ethnic and environmental factors related to the physical and mental maturity of a child. Besides, social norms, level of poverty, education, the legal system and the types of work the child is engaged in are also crucial in determining the definition of a child.

Table 1: ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) on the minimum age of labour

	Regular provisions	Exceptional provisions for developing countries/under special care
General rule	15 years	14 years
Works which may jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons	18 years	16 years
Light work	13 to 15 years	12 to 14 years

As the table (Table 1) shows, international labour standards have at least three different types of minimum legal age for employment which range from 13 to 18 years depending on the type of the work a person is engaged in. This indicates that a person may be an adult and of legal age for one type of work but disqualified for other types of employment. Then again, these provisions may further vary on special grounds, for instance, socio-economic aspects of a country or when a tripartite—government, employers and employees—agreement on a lower age limit has been reached under special circumstances. These variations are also evident in the laws of Bangladesh as detailed in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2: Age limit for a child under various laws of Bangladesh

Sl No	Name of the laws	Age limit for a child
1.	The Labour Act, 2006	Below 14 years
2.	The Mines Act, 1923	Below 15 years [until 2005]
3.	Children Act, 2013	Below 18 years
4.	Child marriage prevention Act, 2017	Male: Below 21 years Female: Below 18 years
5.	The Contract Act, 1872	Below 18 years
6.	Pornography Control Act, 2012	Below 16 years

The first three laws in the table could be identified as key pieces of legislation on children's welfare. However, the most important instrument against child labour is the Labour Code, 2006. Although this law prohibits child labour (below 14 years of age), hazardous adolescent labour (below 18 years of age) and adolescents' participation of work underground and underwater in the formal sectors, it is silent about the exploitation of child labour in informal sectors like household work, agriculture, livestock, fishery, construction work, brick breaking, pulling of rickshaw/van, day labouring [17] etc. That is, majority of the working children in the country are essentially engaged in works which are beyond the reach of the labour law, and, there are no rules to categorise those works according to the level of health risks they pose or to monitor if the appropriate age group is engaged in the appropriate work.

While the Mines Act, 1923 does not say anything significant on child labour except setting out the minimum age for young workers, the Children Act, 2013 introduces a set of child welfare programs. Chapter three of this Act stresses the establishment of child welfare boards in every district of Bangladesh under the supervision of a board at the national level. This national Child Welfare Board is authorised to monitor, coordinate, review and evaluate the activities of institutions where children are deprived of their liberty including guiding rehabilitation and reintegration of

children. This body is also responsible for collecting data on children in conflict with the law [18].

However, this public body is responsible to look after only those child welfare issues which relate to juvenile delinquency, criminal prosecution, detention in prisons or corrections centers, etc. The use of child labour in various informal sectors is not monitored under this program as if such exploitations are not child welfare issues. Inclusion of these issues under the Children Act, 2013 could ensure inspection and monitoring of child labour in areas not covered by the labour law and strengthen the anti-child labour drives under the labour law. This is because, unlike the labour inspection programs under the labour law which are conducted only in the formal sectors of employment, the Children Act, 2013 has a wider mandate and the welfare board established under this law has the jurisdictions to penetrate deep into the society through the lowest tier of the local government.

This disconnect between two crucial laws is impacting the anti-child labour initiatives in Bangladesh in many ways. Initially, it prevents authorities from obtaining a complete picture of the child labour scenario in Bangladesh which ultimately prevents coordination and joint efforts towards the total welfare of the working children. Proper coordination among key national actors is important to identify the presence of child labour in a particular locality or occupational sector and then to make sure that children are being removed from harmful work and to track what happened to them afterward. This is a crucial tool in the effective elimination of child labour from any supply chain [19].

On a positive note, the 2010 Policy acknowledged the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders for the elimination of child labour. This policy included government agencies, unions, NGOs as well as international development agencies as key partners in policy implementation and development of institutions that will be directly responsible to fight against child labour [20]. The policy, however, does not indicate what role the stakeholders will play and if international stakeholders like foreign companies will play any role in this initiative.

This query is relevant in this discussion because the concept of multistakeholder agreement to eliminate child labour from the Bangladeshi supply chain is not new and history tells us that ‘no deal is better than a bad deal’. When the US Harkin’s Bill of 1993 banned imports of goods that were associated with child labour at various stages of production, its potential fallout on the RMG sectors of Bangladesh forced this sector to introduce some quick steps. In a brief period, thousands of working children were terminated. Later, in 1995 Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers’ Association (BGMA), ILO and UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (1995 MOU) for the total elimination of child labour in the RMG sector [21]. This action attracted nationwide criticism because such rapid action did not eliminate child labour but only transferred them from a formal sector to many informal sectors, probably worse form of work [22]. Most importantly, these actions did not ensure any long term arrangements to guard against the financial hardship caused by the mass termination on all those families the terminated child workers belonged to [23].

4. Multistakeholder agreement to battle against child labour

Scholars have suggested various opinions on how to address the problem of child labour in a country. The research conducted by Sharma (2016) shows that as years of schooling of children and their parents' increases, the tendency of children to participate in the labour force decreases [4]. This indicates that education encourages parents and children to pursue more opportunities and a better life. On the other hand, Kazianga, Walque and Alderman (2012) identified poverty as a vital reason why parents may choose works over schools for their children although some initiatives like ‘food for education’ can help many children return to school [24], as the study revealed. Then again, Fatima (2017) proposed that there is an inherent connection between the adult unemployment rate and child labour [25]. Her study helps us understand how the reduction in the adult unemployment rate, in turn, paves the way for the eradication of child labour. However, appropriate pieces of legislation and their effective

implementation always play a crucial role to help decline the employment of children in the various supply chains, as a study conducted by Thomas (2019) concluded [26]. These multiple reasons for child labour indicate that the fight against this problem may also require a multidimensional approach.

How this multidimensional approach will look like will vary depending on the country in question. The experiences of some of the success stories on the implementation of international labour standards in the RMG supply chains of Bangladesh show that level of compliance is much higher when the program is actively supported by key local and international actors. Especially, when child labour is used in local supply chains which are closely linked with international networks of supply chains then both domestic and international stakeholders contribute to this problem as both benefits from this cheap labour [27]. Therefore, these actors must take responsibility and understand their individual and collective role they must play against child labour by addressing the major reasons behind it. This may be noted here that inclusion of international actors in sector-specific child labour elimination program without a long term commitment to fund, as observed in case of the U.S. Harkin bill and subsequent MOU, or inclusion of international actors without defining their respective roles, as observed in the 2010 Policy, may fail to yield the expected outcome.

In the conference on 'Protecting Working Children in North America: A Shared Responsibility' in 1997 scholars and policymakers agreed on the point that governments, industry, unions, and child rights groups could jointly prevent child labour. The participants considered social supports and services as well as financial assistance to impoverished families that needed their children to earn for the family. They also stressed on finding appropriate long-term strategies to inform children about their rights, legal protection, and ways to battle against exploitative practices [28] in different stages of supply chains. However, any such initiatives to stop baseline abuse of child labour may face resistance from the local community. Changing local culture and practices about

child labour is tremendously difficult, and this can only be overcome through solid commitments of the stakeholders, locally and internationally. Hence, the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, 2013, as mentioned earlier, can be an example of how this commitment may look like and what role each group of stakeholders may play.

The Accord is a European multistakeholder initiative introduced as a binding mechanism to fund factory improvements and monitor performance in the RMG sectors of Bangladesh. Around 60% of the total Bangladeshi export of RMG goes to European buyers [41]. Unlike the 'Alliance' which is an American group providing loans (also compensations) to Bangladeshi suppliers to improve workplace safety and health conditions, the Accord involves the unions, both local and international [12]. This prevented the program from being viewed as an entirely industry-led initiative which often is criticised for being voluntary and unaccountable. Although the Accord is also a sector-specific initiative like the MOU signed under the pressure of the Harkin's Bill, this multistakeholder agreement differs fundamentally on the point that it engages the major stakeholders in key positions of the program under mandatory commitments. Learning from the experience of the Accord the researchers would like to propose that a similar agreement for the elimination of child labour can provide an initial framework for a child labour elimination program in Bangladesh.

The agreement and its subsequent implementation mechanism can be built on the already existing National Child Labour Elimination Policy, 2010. This policy suggests a comprehensive national program to eliminate child labour under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Employment as the main implementing body. The program will run in collaboration with Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, owners' or employers' associations, trade unions, private organizations and various national and international development agencies. Although the policy does not define

what roles they will play, it expressly welcomes the contribution of NGOs and international development partners that would constitute meaningful support for improving the child labour situation in Bangladesh [20]. However, to make this agreement rather more comprehensive at the national level the Department of Social Service under the Ministry of Social Welfare may be included as a stakeholder. The purpose of this inclusion is to widen the scope of the battle by way of bringing the child labour issue under the general children welfare programs backed by the Children Act, 2013. This may particularly help to identify and monitor abuse of child labour in the informal sectors which is not currently covered under the labour law.

The parties to the proposed multistakeholder agreement may establish a Steering Committee with equal representation chosen by the unions, company signatories, major donor agencies, government representatives and a representative from ILO as a neutral chair. This committee shall have the authority for the selection, contracting, deciding on service benefits and performance appraisal of child labour inspectors and training experts, supervision and approval of the budget, financial reporting, audit and other management duties as may be required. This model has already been tested on a limited scale under the 1995 MOU and the Accord and proved to be successful [29].

The multistakeholder agreement will facilitate credible inspection under the proposed arrangement and regular reports will be generated and shared with all stakeholders to ensure maximum transparency. If the reports identify any corrective actions, this will be resolved according to a schedule that is mandatory and time-bound. The training experts appointed by the proposed steering committee shall establish an extensive anti-child labour training program so that persons concerned in various formal and informal sectors know why child labour is harmful, what the minimum age limits are for various types of employment, maximum working hours for adolescent workers and where and how to report if there is a violation, among others. This will require to establish workers'

complaint process and mechanism for every establishment, formal or informal [30].

Under this legally binding agreement, the signatory companies and or the donor agencies shall commit to maintaining a long-term sourcing relationship with the suppliers or relevant stakeholders of Bangladesh. In return, Bangladeshi suppliers will be bound to fully participate in the child labour inspection, remediation, and training activities as described in the agreement. If they do not comply, this will trigger prompt warning notifications from the signatory companies and or donors leading to termination of the business relationship or any other consequences as agreed if the warnings fail. Like the Accord, this proposed program will also receive an equitable financial contribution from signatory companies and empower the steering committee to collect funds from any other legitimate sources they think fit and appropriate [30].

A major difference between the 1995 MOU or the Accord and this proposed multistakeholder child labour elimination program is that the formers deal only with formal sectors of employment, but the latter is recommended to deal with both formal and informal sectors. The experience from the 1995 MOU shows that blanket termination of children from the workplace without arranging a long term post-termination rehabilitation and financial support program for the affected families only shifts the problem from one sector to another. The latest child labour survey, as mentioned earlier, clearly supports this fact. Therefore, the proposed program must not only correct the previous lapses but will formulate inspection programs for informal sectors as well where most of the children are employed. In this regard, the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015 adopted by the Ministry of Labour and Employment can be used as the baseline. The policy is a primary step toward complete legislation recognizing the labour rights of the huge number of domestic workers, many of them are children, across the country. This policy says that under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Employment local administration

in the districts and local government will run monitoring cells and labour inspection programs involving the development agencies and unions [31].

4.1 Impact of removing child labour in the supply chain market

In the wake of increasing corporate disasters across the world, there has been a growing concern on the impact of socially irresponsible business on human life. Hence, as an integral part of modern business the area of Supply Chain Management cannot remain in a policy vacuum especially when the use of child labour in the sourcing is evident in many parts of the world.

Supply chains have a primary responsibility to be law abiding. The obvious effect of the removal of child labour from the supply chains is that this will make the business more compliant with national and international labour laws. In the early 1990s Nike came under harsh global criticism when the *Life* magazine published news on the former's use of child labour in Pakistan to produce soccer balls. This publicity fallout was intense and caused serious damage to Nike's global reputation before Nike could move to eliminate such illegal practices from their supply chain [46]. Today more and more businesses are adhering to strict rules against child labour to avoid such reputational and legal risks.

Also, in today's socially conscious environment both employees and customers place high premium on enterprises that have good CSR reputation. Large multinational companies as customers always ask their suppliers to practice CSR because they are under constant scrutiny from various stakeholders including the competitors, media, consumers, employees and the regulators among others [47]. Some of the recent research works show that global multi-stakeholder initiatives are vital instruments which can improve the social and environmental sustainability of global supply chains [48] and the proposed framework in this article could be considered one of such initiatives.

5. Conclusion

Child labour is a growing concern in Bangladesh. Although several initiatives had been taken in the past to eliminate this problem from the supply chains of Bangladesh, the latest national survey indicates that those initiatives only helped relocate the problem from one sector to another. Most of these initiatives were aimed at the formal sectors like the readymade garments industries which, generally, are under close monitoring of the foreign buyers. Consequently, working children moved to various informal sectors as they must keep supporting their needy families in the absence of any alternative financial assistance. Therefore, it was necessary to explore why those initiatives failed or only partially succeeded.

The researchers argued at the beginning of this article that national child labour programs must be supported, funded, and supervised by international stakeholders to ensure maximum elimination of this problem. Such an arrangement makes national authorities bound to comply with national and international labour standards, and the foreign companies more accountable towards source and manufacturing. Since there are several reasons which are individually and collectively responsible for encouraging young children to join the workforce, the proposed anti-child labour program in Bangladesh must address all these issues simultaneously.

The purpose is not only to eliminate individual reasons behind child labour but also to block its relocation to informal sectors. To date, the policymakers have advanced sector-specific child labour elimination schemes in Bangladesh targeting only those formal sectors where non-compliance might trigger trade sanctions. This study contributes by way of identifying the policy gaps regarding child labour in formal and informal sectors of Bangladesh and offers a promising child labour elimination model which could successfully fill those gaps. The proposed model suggests the establishment of a multistakeholder agreement in the form of already successful 'the Accord' with necessary modifications in collaboration with those

public agencies who are responsible for governing general children welfare programs in Bangladesh.

The idea of fighting child labour through such a nationwide general child welfare program involving all related public agencies and international stakeholders has already been successful in Brazil. In the period from 1992 to 2008 Brazil has witnessed the dramatic success in the elimination of child labour through the Conditional cash transfer programs (CCTs). The primary recipients of the funds were poor women who had no means to support their children's schooling [43]. Similar multi-stakeholder approach was adopted to identify and eradicate child labour from the cotton supply chain in Turkey. From 2016 onward, the Fair Labor Association and the Development Workshop Cooperative—a civil society organization from Turkey—launched a pilot project to trace the readymade garments and cotton supply chains of seven multinational companies buying from Turkey and doing business in the Netherlands. The pilot project was inspired by the Working Group on Child Labour. This was a multi-stakeholder group of Dutch garment sector organizations, garment companies, and NGOs which was formed as part of the Action Plan for a Sustainable Dutch Garment sector. The Working Group investigated ways to eradicate child labour from the textile supply chains of companies doing business in the Netherlands [44].

The above study may lead to further research on the role of Corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity as one of the probable solutions to the problem of child labour. In fact, CSR compliance which includes, among others, absence of child labour at workplace has already become an important area of research in the supply chain field [45].

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