Boys outnumber girls in child labour
3.6m children aged 7-14 yrs
in employment: Report

FE Report

About 3.6 million children aged between 7-14 years are in employment, which is 12 per cent of the total child labour where boys constitute three times more the number than that of girls of the same age group, said a study released Thursday.

More than 0.9 million children work at least 40 hours a week where more working hours means more exposure to work related hazards, the report said.

It also said as many as 45 per cent girls are engaged in service sector, especially in domestic services while child labour primarily takes place in family.

"By age 14 the number of girls becomes double against the number of boys in performing household chores," said the report prepared by International Labour Organisation, Bangladesh, UNICEF, Bangladesh and World Bank, Bangladesh.

Labour and employment secretary Shafique Alam Mehdi launched the country report titled Understanding Children’s Work in Bangladesh, at a function at a city hotel with joint secretary of the same ministry Fazlur Rahman in the chair.

ILO country director Andre Bogui, UNICEF, Bangladesh deputy representative Michel Saint-Lot, World Bank co-task team leader Dilip Parajuli, joint secretary of women and children affairs ministry Reaz Ahmed, representatives of NGOs, employers and labour leaders were also present on the occasion.

"Work in domestic services constitutes a particular concern among girls, accounting for one-fourth of girls' employment," it said.

In Bangladesh, Rajshahi (15.3 per cent) and Barisal (15.3 per cent) divisions have more children involved in employment followed by Khulna (13.3 per cent) and Sylhet (12.8 per cent).

"Child labour works as an impediment in achieving MDG 1, 2 and 7 goals," Michel Saint-Lot said.

Mr Michel drew the attention of the authorities to include domestic work in the hazardous work list that is yet to be finalised in compliance with the ILO convention 182. He referred to the recent incident of inhuman torture on a domestic help Komela (10) at a sub-inspector's house and criticised the role of police.

"Domestic labour can be the worst form of child labour," he said, adding, "We should not see the visible worst forms of labour only rather, the invisible works that are hazardous for children should be taken into consideration," he added.

He criticised the government for allocating inadequate budget for children mentioning that only 10 per cent of the total safety net allocation is for children. Only 16 out of 84 social safety net programmes are for children, he added.

Scott Lyon, senior policy analyst, Understanding Children's Work (UCW) programme, in his presentation of the report said 0.26 million children aged between 5-7 years are already at work compromising education and they are most susceptible to exploitation and abuse in workplace.

Shafique Alam Mehdi said the sustainable economic growth is hindered by child labour and concerted actions should be taken to address the issue as the government is fully committed to it.

Reaz Ahmed said survival and development of many Bangladeshi children are still threatened with malnutrition, exploitation, lack of opportunity for education, health facilities and violence against them.

He called for harmonization of laws affecting children and sought public support for survival and development of children.