

An Analysis of Budgetary Share of Labour in Bangladesh

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Labour is the main driving force of the economy of Bangladesh. Unfortunately they are also the most neglected community. Much has been talked about for their welfare. But little has been done. Government can play a vital role for the development of labor through appropriate budgetary allocation. The present paper aims to identify the problem of labor, existing budgetary allocation for labor, whether the allocation is sufficient and done in line with the needs of labour, the sectors that require budgetary allocation most and what can be done for future development of labor through increasing and implementing budgetary allocation.

Field of Research: Human Resource Management, Developing Economies

1. Introduction

Labour is the main driving force of the economy of Bangladesh. Unfortunately they are also the most neglected community. Much has been talked about for their welfare. But little has been done. Government can play a vital role for the development of labor through appropriate budgetary allocation. National budget of Bangladesh is the most influential instrument in the hand of the Government through which labour's potential can be reaped the best. Because National budget can not only provide facilities necessary for labour to be efficient and competent but also solve the problems faced by them. It has immense role in developing the status of labour. Hence, it is essential to assess the extent to which national budget of Bangladesh has performed this role. It is also essential to assess to what extent labor could have availed the facilities provided by the national budget of Bangladesh and what are the problems labor face in availing budgetary facilities.

Annual Development Program (ADP) included in the development budget is a powerful tool of the government to achieve its labor related objectives fixed in various national documents. To achieve these objectives, elements like-what type of program should be undertaken; how much income could be generated and from which sector; how much should be spent in which sector; which sector should be given priority are determined by the government through the ADP in

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the national budget. This is a mechanism through which the government can determine its priorities for allocation to the public expenditure in favor of developing the status of labor. Thus, an evaluation of ADPs is essential. In this paper, ADPs have mainly been evaluated in terms of its performance in achieving the labour related objectives set in various national policy documents and removing the factors that affect the development of labour negatively.

Section 2 of the paper gives the a brief review of literature. In section 3, we develop the hypothesis according to our objectives. Section 4 gives an overview of the current status of labour. Section 5 discusses the problems of labor. Section 6 and 7 provides Methodology of the study and Review of ADPs form analyzing budgetary share of labour. Finally section 8 recommends possible intervention and their impacts.

2. Literature Review

In her article Claire Salmon (2005) uses data from the Bangladesh Labour Force Survey 2000 and found that 'child labour' problem is large in Bangladesh, with around 5.4–7.9 million, or about one-fifth of all Bangladeshi children between the ages of 5 and 14 years, being classified as child workers in 2000. Most of these child workers work in the agricultural sector. Among the poorest quintile of households, the share of family income contributed by child workers reaches nearly 50 percent. The article finds support for the widely-held hypothesis that poverty compels children to work. The analysis of links between adult employment and child labour also lends support to the hypothesis that children are the last economic resource of the household. Children are much more likely to work when they live in a household where the potential of income generation is low and where this potential has already been used up.

Articles written on the labor issues mainly focused on child labor, problems of labor, issues pertaining to migrant labors and others .But no work has been done on a issue like budgetary allocation. Paul-Majumder in her book Status of Women in the National Budget of Bangladesh (2006) elaborated the status of women workers and other issues.

3. Hypothesis Development

Labour is the main driving force of our economy. Unfortunately they are also the most neglected community. Much has been talked about for their welfare. But little has been done. Government can play a vital role for the development of labor through appropriate budgetary allocation. The present paper aims to identify the problem of labor, existing budgetary allocation for labor, whether the allocation is sufficient and done in line with the needs of labour, the sectors that require budgetary allocation most and what can be done for future development of labor through increasing and implementing budgetary allocation.

Based on the objectives, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1: There is a positive association between the budgetary allocation and labour development.

H2: Government has paid little attention to labour development

H3: Elimination of child labour is given least attention

H4: Safety net program for labour is given less attention

4. An Overview of the Labor in Bangladesh

The rapid changes in the labour market are the most significant aspect of the demographic development in Bangladesh. The labour force in the country has grown at a much faster rate than the growth in population and the demand for labour. During 1961 to 1991, total population increased by nearly 120 per cent – from 50.8 million to 111.5 million – while the labour force grew from 16.9 million to 51.2 million – an increase of 203 percent. The population of Bangladesh increased by about 17 million between 1989 and 1995/96 while the net entrants into the labour force were over 8 million. Although non-agricultural sectors have been the main engine of job creation during the 1990s, agriculture is still the largest sector of employment with more than 63 per cent of total employed labour of 54.6 million in 1995/96 (BBS 1998). Despite overall increases in the level of employment, significant imbalances in the labour market persist. According to the Labour Force Survey, total civilian labour force increased from 50.7 million to 56.0 million between 1989 and 1995/96 (that is, by more than 10 per cent). Over the same period, the number of employed persons increased by about 9 per cent – from 50.1 million to 54.6 million. This indicates that the unemployment rate more than doubled during the period from 1.2 per cent to 2.5 per cent.⁸ A more serious concern, however, is the high rate of underemployment.⁹ The problem of underemployment reflects the fact that more than one-third of the employed work less than 35 hours a week, a low level for a developing country such as Bangladesh. This, combined with the relatively low female participation rate (in 1995/96, as per the 'usual' definition, the female participation rate for persons aged 10 and above was only 18.1 per cent compared to 77 percent for males), suggests that there exists significant 'surplus labour' in the country. Moreover, the situation seems to have deteriorated over time. During 1989, 43 per cent of the employed labour worked for less than 40 hours a week and the share increased to more than 49 per cent in 1995/96.

Another feature of the pattern of employment relates to its growing in formalization. In spite of the conceptual difficulties, bulk of employment generation between 1989 and 1995/96 has taken place in the informal sector. Some estimates put informal sector employment at 59 per cent of urban and 73 per cent of rural employment outside agriculture (Mahmud 2001). Moreover, more than 79 per cent of those employed in the informal sector during 1995/96 are categorized as 'unpaid family labour' or 'self-employed'. This indicates that increasing landlessness in rural areas has largely pushed the rural labour force out of agriculture into low productivity self-employment activities in the informal sector. In the event that such informal employment is a supplement to farm

employment, even low returns from informal sector activities contribute to increased household incomes and consequent increase in welfare of labour households. However, if informal employment becomes the only source of income of the participants, which has largely been the case in Bangladesh, then expansion of informal sector employment dominated by traditional low productive activities provides only subsistence to the participants and become a source of 'distress employment' for the poor labour households.

Table 1: Underemployment in Bangladesh, 1995/96
(Persons aged 15 and over)

Category	Total	Urban	Rural
Absolute unemployed persons ('000)	1,266	401	865
Unemployed persons (unpaid workers < 15 hrs/week; '000)	1,802	163	1,639
Underemployed persons (<35 hrs/week; '000)	18,903	1,942	16,961
Total unemployed and underemployed ('000)	21,971	2,506	19,465
Underemployment rate (% of total labour force)	38.5	22.1	42.1
Male	13.7	10.9	14.5
Female	79.0	54.2	82.4
Unemployment and underemployment rate(% of total labour force)	39.2	24.6	42.5

Source: Mustafa Mujeri, Poverty implication for trade liberalization in Bangladesh: A general equilibrium approach, August 2002, Internet Edition, Accessed on 25th November 2004.

Table 2: Employment Status

(Million)

Characteristics	1989-90	1990-1	1995-6	1999-00	2002-03
Employed population	50.1	50.2	54.6	39.0	44.3
Male	29.4	30.5	33.8	31.1	34.5
Female	20.7	19.7	20.8	7.9	9.8
Unemployed	0.6	1.0	1.4	1.8	2.0
Male	0.4	0.6	0.9	1.1	1.5
Female	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.5
Participation (%)	46.9	46.9	46.0	31.9	34.7
Male	53.1	54.5	55.8	48.3	52.7
Female	40.2	38.6	35.7	14.1	15.9
Refined activity (%)	74.7	69.6	64.8	54.9	57.3
Male	85.3	79.6	78.3	64.0	87.4
Female	63.4	58.2	50.6	23.9	26.1

Source: Foreign Trade Statistics of Bangladesh, V-I, Bureau of Statistics, Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, p. 61.

5. Problems of Labour in Bangladesh

I. Occupational Safety and Health Hazards

The constitution of Bangladesh recognizes productivity as basic need for development and covers right to work and reasonable wages, medicare and, disease and disablement. This constitutional policy direction did not turned into a formal national occupational health and safety policy. For certain work environment factors, manufacturing process, machineries and toxic substances, the levels or concentrations of substances in the air have been recommended by various international organization and agencies, which are considered to be safe, are implemented in the respective countries.

Lack of work environment standards and exposure limits for different hazards and lack of requirement for periodic structured objective driven medical examination are the major deficiency of the legislations in terms of occupational health and safety. The provisions of medical care are nonspecific and vague. The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923 is limited and does not cover all occupations. Moreover, there is no legal requirement for safety committees and employment of safety officers. The occupational health & safety services are not well organized. Different ministries such as railway, port and shipping, jute, textile etc. operate the occupational health care program through various departments and directorates. It is the legal obligation of the employers to provide medicare in case deterioration of health or injuries result in or from exposure to agents related to work situation.

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The laws in Bangladesh have been framed which requires employers to undertake corrective measures on occupational safety and health. Labor unions are allowed in almost all occupations except in export processing zones. The trade unions mainly focus on issues of workers right, although OSH issues are also considered but obtaining secondary importance. The NGO activities on OSH are limited, few conducts awareness, training and research activities regarding OSH issues. Training and education facilities on OSH are inadequate and limited mainly in governmental undertakings. National Statistics concerning OSH is inadequate and gather information mainly from secondary sources and there is no proper primary data collection system is in place. So, the problem of under reporting and miss reporting cannot be ruled out. The occupational accident and injury statistics are available with the Department of Inspection. No occupational illness has ever been reported to the department of inspectorate, though in the studies conducted by NIPSOM, a number of occupational diseases have been found to be prevailing in various industries.

Regarding Occupational illnesses till now no occupational diseases has been reported to the Inspectorate of Factories and Establishments, even those declared as to be modifiable by the Factories Act, 1965 and the Factories Rules 1979. On the other hand studies carried out by DOEH-NIPSOM indicate the very existence of occupational diseases in several industries. The Common illnesses among the workers of different industries were respiratory illness (21.1%), peptic ulcer (19.0%), joint pain (13.8%), diarrhea (12.8%), Skin diseases (8.4%), Dental Problem (8.7%), Hearing Problem (7.3%) etc.

Table 3: Physical characteristics of the working environment in the industries

Characteristics	Status industries in %
Ventilation	Adequate
Exhaust Fan	Working well
Room Temperature	350c
Humidity	65%
Illumination of work floor	well illuminated
Floor areas	Uneven
Emergency exits	Exits
Doors	at least 2 open outwards

(Reported by Nizam Baddrudoza, General Secretary Bangladesh Garment and Tailors Workers League-GTWL(TWARO 12th Conference, 11-14 November 2002, Okayama, Japan).

Table 4: Common illnesses among the workers of different industries

Illnesses	Prevalence	Average (%)	Range (%)
Peptic Ulcer		19.0	14.2-23.6
Diarrhea		12.8	11.9-14.2
Skin Diseases		8.7	3.9-14.2
Joint pain		13.8	12.3-15.1
Respiratory Illnesses		21.1	15.0-26.6
Hearing Problem		7.3	3.7-13.8
Eye Problem		2.9	2.5-3.6
Dental Problem		8.4	3.9-14.7
Hypertension		4.4	1.8-7.5
Diabetes		1.5	1.1-9.1
Injuries		3.9	2.6-4.9

(Reported by Nizam Baddrudoza, General Secretary Bangladesh Garment and Tailors Workers League-GTWL (TWARO 12th Conference, 11-14 November 2002, Okayama, Japan).

II. Non-compliances of labour laws: In most the cases there is non-compliance of the laws. and ILO conventions. Because the labour legislations in Bangladesh were prepared in-conformity with ratified conventions, country's constitution and in considering the socio-economic conditions. Therefore, non-compliances or non-implementations of labour laws have short-term and long-term effect on the economy of Bangladesh. However, certain adverse effects for non-compliances of conventions and legislation may be estimated in the following:

- a) The work place environment in factories and mills will turn into hazardous which causes accidents and incidents.
- b) All accidents and incidents create human sufferings, having direct or indirect costs on the productivity and profits
- c) The hazards, which are prevailing in the industries e.g. electric short circuit in the garment industry, fire in the garment industries are responsible for the occurrence of injuries and diseases, are mostly the outcome of the absence of good working conditions, absence of protective and preventive measures, poor house keeping etc.
- d) The direct cost of preventing hazards in much smaller than the indirect costs of accidents and illnesses. Cost benefit analysis of an accident may give a clear picture of various items of loss. The productivity as well as the profitability of any industry largely depends upon how far the measures have been taken to prevent and illnesses in the industry.
- e) Therefore, the lack of implementations of legal provision i.e. the non-compliances of the ILO conventions in the work places not only cause loss

of the workers, it causes a huge loss to the employers and the nation as a whole.

III. Child Labour Problem

In 2002/03, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) conducted the second National Child Labour Survey (NCLS) (1). This survey has been designed and conducted in the context of the commitments made by the Government of Bangladesh, following the ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) 1999. According to the survey, there are 4.9 million working children — 14.2 per cent of the total 35.06 million children in the age group of 5-14 years. The total working child population between 5 and 17 years old is estimated at 7.9 million. The proportion of boy and girl child workers, in the age group of 5-17 years, is 73.5 per cent and 26.5 per cent, respectively; The total number of working children aged 5-17 years in rural areas is estimated at 6.4 million as against 1.5 million in urban areas; As many as 93.3 per cent of all working children in the age group of 5-17 years operate in the informal sector. Agriculture engages 4.5 million (56.4 per cent children), while the services sector engages 2 million (25.9 per cent), and industry, 1.4 million (17.7 per cent);A total of 1.3 million children are estimated to be working 43 hours or more per week. More boys than girls are engaged in this form of child labour across all age groups.

The factors that generate child labour in Bangladesh can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ Extreme forms of poverty play a crucial role. Child labour is part of a vicious cycle, with poverty as a main cause as well as a main consequence. This implies that child labour cannot be addressed in isolation. Among factors contributing to child labour are rapid population growth, adult unemployment, bad working conditions, lack of minimum wages, exploitation of workers, low standard of living, low quality of education, lack of legal provisions and enforcement, low capacity of institutions, gender discrimination, conceptual thinking about childhood, etc. One or more of the above contribute to the large numbers of children working under exploitative or hazardous conditions;
- ❖ There is a direct link between child labour and education. Nearly 50 per cent of primary school students drop out before they complete grade 5, and then gravitate towards work, swelling the number of child laborers. The high drop-out rates are correlated with the low quality of public primary education, low adult literacy, low awareness of the importance of education, teacher-student ratio (sometimes this goes up to 1 per 100), non-availability of didactic and learning materials, and the cost of education. Basic primary education is free as far as direct costs and school books are concerned. But many indirect costs are involved as well, such as transport, uniforms, pens, pencils, and paper/notebooks. Bangladesh has only limited provision for pre-vocational/vocational skills

training and there are related constraints such as the quality of the skills training, market and employment linkages and certification. While this could be an attractive option to working/disadvantaged children and their families, neither the Government of Bangladesh nor many of the non-governmental organizations have the institutional capacity and technical expertise required to deliver skills training facilities effectively;

- ❖ Finally, the level of awareness on the issue of child labour is still low. Society in general has a rather indifferent attitude towards the problem. In many cases, it is not realized that the children who are employed in, for example, domestic service, often have no access to education or medical care.

IV. Other Problems

Lack of efficiency, low rate of education, vulnerability to frequent layoffs, uneven demands in production, few options for alternative employment also prevail and hinder the development of labour.

6. Methodology

The data for the study is collected from reviewing the Annual national budget of the GOB to fulfill the objectives of the study. Data from the secondary sources have also been used. Amount of budgetary resources is directed towards labor development through labour focused development projects in ADP. In this paper, ADP is used to assess the role of national budget of Bangladesh for the development of labour.

7. Review of ADPs form analyzing budgetary share of labour

Annual development Programmes (ADPs) are the primary tools of the government to achieve labour related commitments made nationally and internationally. Finding out the labour's share in such programmes is a daunting task.

The projects taken under ADP are mainly training projects for labour. There is no project found for safety net program, only one project for eliminating child labour was found under Ministry of Labour and Employment. Therefore it is clear that ADP allocation is not done according to the existing needs of labor.

We went through the names of all the projects in the 17 sectors of the ADPs for the years 2005 to 2010 to identify projects exclusively aiming at labour development. First we looked into the ADPs for projects directly aiming at labour development and we found only one such project. Then we broaden our search by including projects aiming at development of labour indirectly.

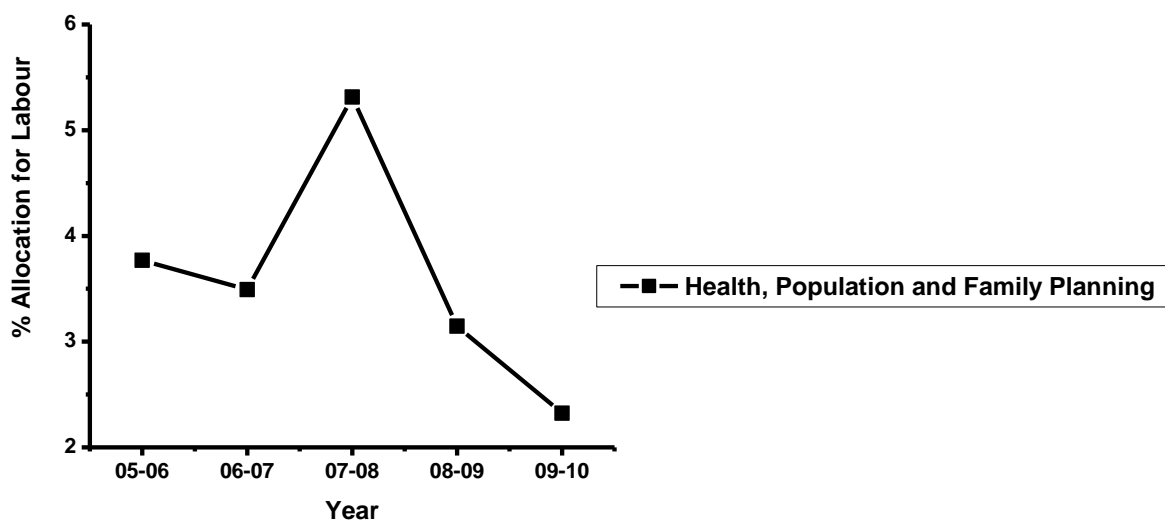
Table 5: Allocation for Labour Projects in Different Fiscal Years (in %)

Year	Education and Religion	Rural Development	Social Welfare, Women Affairs and Youth Development	Labour and Employment	Agriculture	Industries	Health, Population and Family Planning
05-06	0.437	0.003	0.398	0.304	0.206	0.019	3.769
06-07	0.412	0.003	0.375	0.305	0.219	0.018	3.492
07-08	0.907	0.006	0.829	0.509	0.285	0.028	5.314
08-09	0.865	0.055	0.45	0.28	0.076	0	3.147
09-10	1.004	0.19	0.349	0.182	0.056	0	2.323

Source: ADP; 2005-2010: Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh

Table 5 gives an overview of allocation of labour projects as a percentage of total ADP allocation (in 7 sectors of the economy). Since the percentage of allocation varied widely for different sectors, we divided the above 7 sectors into three categories for convenience of understanding:

1. Most Favored Category where allocation is more than 2%: Health, Population and Family Planning sector even had allocation up to 5%. The reason may be that this is a priority sector of the economy and accordingly allocations for projects are greater. This reveals the concern of the Government towards the public health which acts in favor of labour.

**Figure 1: Most Favored Category**

2. Medium Favored Category where allocation is less than 2%: Sectors like Agriculture, Education and Religion, Social Welfare, Women Affairs and Youth Development and Labour and Employment fall under this category. The projects taken under these sectors are mainly indirect projects and most of them are training projects. Though labor is required in almost all the 17 sectors of the economy, the responsibility of- development of labor has remained the task of Ministry of Labour and Employment alone. It received a very insignificant share in the budget. The projects taken under this Ministry are mostly training projects. But labor requires not only training but also other projects for their well being (like-education, health, nutrition etc). Labour are far behind in acquiring human capital in terms of education and skill training.

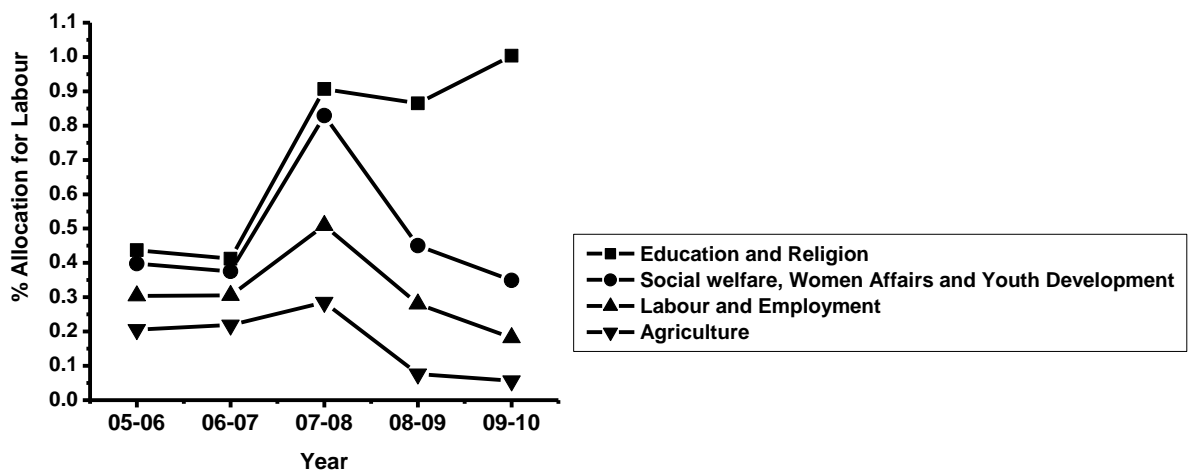


Figure 2: Medium Category

3. Least Favored Category where allocation is less than 0.5%: Industry sector should have been allocated the greatest amount for labour since the sector is not automated. But this sector received scanty allocation with which no positive impact can be made. Rural Development sector also received a small amount. But these two sectors require labour most.

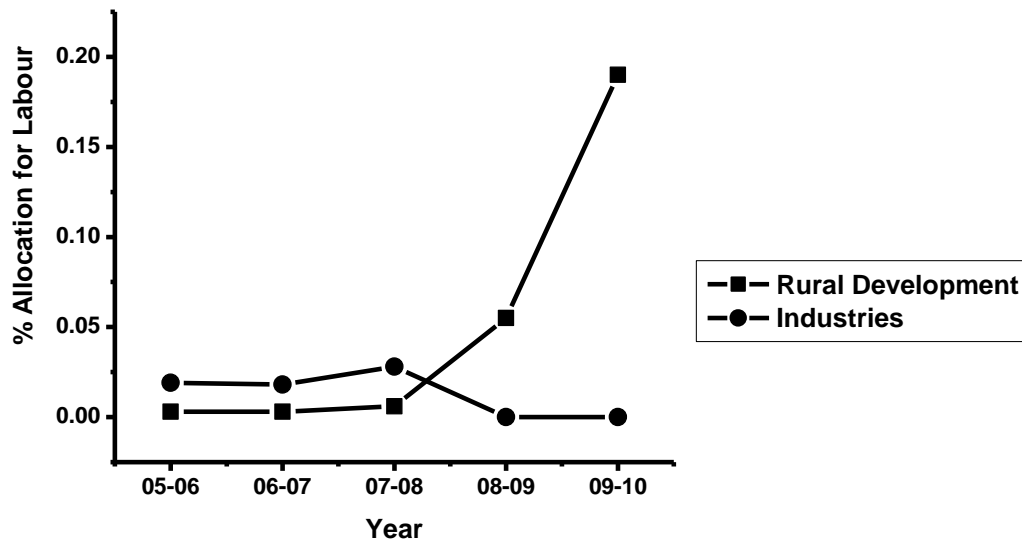


Figure 3: Least Favored Category

The evidence in this study shows that budgetary allocation for labour has not been done purposively and supports the hypotheses such as H1, H2, H3 and H4 from the research. In this study we find that there is significant relationship between the budgetary allocation and labour development. The insignificant budgetary allocation for labor (indirect projects) justifies H2. Again undertaking a single project like **Elimination of Child labour in Hazardous Occupation** under Ministry of Industry justifies H3. Absence of allocation for safety net programs for labour supports our final hypothesis.

8. Recommendations

I. Safety Net Program:

Social Safety Nets are non-contributory transfer programs targeted in some manner to the poor or those vulnerable to poverty and shocks – like labours. It is supported strongly by moral philosophy, expressed in many different ways. They also play a productive role in helping households to manage risk and assist in their own livelihoods, in helping prevent the inter-generational transmission of poverty and in allowing societies to make more efficient choices in macro, trade, labor and many other sectoral policies.

Anticipated Impact: Safety nets will reduce the need to make decisions that will diminish the chances of escaping poverty in the long run, such as withdrawing children from school or selling the assets that the labors livelihood rely upon.

Specific Recommendation: Common safety net programs where budget allocation is required include:

- A bloc allocation is required under the Ministry of Industries in case of sudden lay-off.

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- Provide ownership to the labor so that they may also share losses between labor and employer.
- Cash Transfers
- Food-related Programs
- Price & Other Subsidies
- Public Works
- Health care services
- Education, electricity and housing
- Motivation like-vacation, bonus, good behavior.
- Maternity leave with job guarantee
- Observation of the behavior of the employer and introduction to appropriate remedy.
- Tripartite health insurance.
- Pension
- Special programs for HIV-Aids prevention.
- Establish an institution like USA Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for the permissible levels or various standard limits for working environment by altering regulations in terms of standards and permissible limits like 1. Establish National Occupational Safety & Health Council and
- Establish autonomous OSH institute with proper lab facilities for services and research.
- Update the laws and reduce inconsistencies (like the Factories Act 1965 and Factories Rules of 1979 and Appropriate remuneration
- The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923).
- Incorporate workplace environment standards, biological monitoring and formative medical examination scheme.
- Campaign for the universal ratification and implementation of ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment as well as ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour;
- Make provision for the education and vocational training to those children who
- remain in the workforce
- Increase the number of projects for eliminating child labour.

II. Research and Market Access:

A. Local Market Research and Access: Identifying The strength and weaknesses of labour. Discover the ways to improve their productivity.

B. International Market Research & Access: Preparation of need based study paper for countries where our labor can get jobs.

Anticipated Impact: Better market access in the International Market.

Specific Recommendation:

- Special blok allocation for research and development of labour under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- Activate local statistics department and department of Social welfare and others to provide data for research.
- Develop active data collection system.
- Establish labour surveillance.
- Establish national and regional accident and incident database.

III. Capacity Building

Training for skill development, efficiency rising. Capacity building for the ministry of Labour and Employment.

Anticipated Impact: Improvement of capacity of labour.

Specific Recommendation:

- Increasing the number of Inspectors in the ministry of Labour and Employment to monitor whether the owners are complying with the welfare related issues of labour.
- Organize formal training program for all categories of inspectors for proper enforcement of laws.
- Increase frequency of inspections and ensure proper inspection, monitoring and vigilance in workplaces.
- Establishing a Labour Academy, which will design and organize appropriate training

8. Limitation and Future Scope of Work

There has not been any work found in the literature in the context of allocation for labour development in the national budgets of Bangladesh. Therefore conducting the study has faced difficulties to identify and collect the relevant data. A better analysis may be made if a larger time period is included. The task is enormous and much time consuming. This inclusion may also reflect the attitude and intention of different tenure of Governments towards the development of labour. The paper considers only the allocation in the Annual Development Programs. The projects aiming at the development of labour in the Revenue budgets taken under different Directorates, Divisions and Departments of the Government should be thoroughly investigated. Therefore, there is a scope for further research in this regard.

9. Conclusion

Bangladesh has signed ILO convention, which reveals Bangladesh's positive intention for labour welfare. To comply with ILO convention and maintain International Core Labour Standards, increase in budgetary allocation and monitoring of the funds are vital. A coalition among civil society, trade union,

media and government can play a significant role by preparing our labour to face the future challenges ahead.

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