

“Less is Not Enough”
Dilemma of Alternative Primary Schooling Opportunities in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Sayaka Uchikawa

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation focuses on low-income rural-urban migrant children and their families in Bangladesh, living in a severe poverty-stricken environment in the capital city, Dhaka. Specifically, it deals with the dilemma of so-called non-formal primary education (NFPE) programs aimed at providing alternative schooling opportunities to children who do not attend regular school in the city. It describes how such programs do not necessarily help children integrate into the country’s formal school system, but instead continuously prepares them for the subordinate segment of the society. The study particularly addresses the state-sponsored Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project, and examines its three elements: 1) exclusive membership and the making of “working children,” 2) distinction from formal schools and meaning of schooling, and, 3) an implementation model that reflects Bangladeshi social structure. First, the study looks at how the BEHTRUWC project labels its participating children as “working children” (not particularly as students), and provides them with only limited coverage of primary schooling. As a result, children *become* “working children,” not only learning the concept, but also acquiring customs to “act out” as working children. Second, the study problematizes the unique goals and subjects taught at the BEHTRUWC project that ultimately draws clear distinction between its children and formal school students. The children and their parents also realize that their experience in the project would not assure the same level of education as formal schools, or provide them with more skilled and better-paid employment opportunities in the future. Finally, the study examines how

the basic pattern of interpersonal relationships so common in Bangladesh is reflected in the daily practices of the BEHTRUWC project. The project's learning centers remain similar to any other places in Dhaka where children feel morally obligated to teachers and others, and thus, through the project, the children gradually recognize their assumed existing position in relation to other people in society. Through shedding light on the relationships, negotiations, and struggles of the people involved in the BEHTRUWC project, this study explores how these different elements of the project generate the unintended consequence for low-income migrant children in Dhaka.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BEHTRUWC Project	Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children Project
BNFE	Bureau of Non-Formal Education
<i>bosti</i>	“slums” in Bengali language
BPS Program	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee (BRAC) Primary School Program
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<i>desh / bidesh</i>	“(own) country, homestead” / “foreign country” in Bengali language
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
<i>gorib</i>	“poor” in Bengali language
ILO	International Labor Organization
<i>malik</i>	“owner, employer” in Bengali language
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NFE	Non-formal Education
NFPE	Non-formal Primary Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOC	No Objection Certificate
ROSC Project	Reaching Out of School Children Project
SHIKHON Project	Learning Alternative for Vulnerable Children Project
<i>tokai</i>	“waste collection” in Bengali language
UNIQUE Project	Up-scaling NFPE through Institutionalizing Qualitative Endeavour Project
<i>upazilla</i>	“sub-district” in Bangladesh
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

It was May 2007 when I met Saiful for the first time. He was probably around eight to ten years old. He took me around his neighborhood almost everyday, and looked as joyous in accompanying me as much as I enjoyed his company. He was not attending any school but participating in the government's non-formal primary education (NFPE) program, called the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project. In the morning, I observed the children's activities in the project's learning center, and after school, Saiful took me to his house in *bosti* (slum), his workplace, his teacher and friends' houses, and so on. Almost two years passed, and in the very first week of my principal fieldwork in February 2009, I met Saiful again. He was living in the same house with his parents, his older brother, sister-in-law, and baby nephew. He did not look like a "child" anymore, but had grown remarkably. He seemed to become a little shy about taking me—a female foreigner—around in his neighborhood. Instead, this time, his nephew, Nazmal, who was only a few years younger than Saiful and lived nearby, was more active in asking me why I visited their houses so frequently, and then explaining my presence to his neighbors. By then, Nazmal had also become a member of the BEHTRUWC project learning center.

After the learning center closed in November 2009 due to the completion of the 40-month BEHTRUWC project, Saiful and Nazmal first sought admission at a local formal primary school. For Saiful and Nazmal, the BEHTRUWC project was the first schooling experience, and they wanted to continue schooling in (transfer to) a formal primary school, in order to take the national Primary School Completion exam, receive a primary school certificate, and if possible, enroll in a secondary school. While no government primary school accepted

them to their school, Saiful was admitted to Grade 5 of Matrissaya School and Nazmal to Grade 4 of Nazrul Academy in January 2010 (both are small-scale locally-based private schools not formally registered in the government). I asked Saiful which school (Matrissaya School or the BEHTRUWC project's learning center) he liked better. He repeatedly and always answered, "I like the Matrissaya School better," because it was "normal." He proudly showed me his new uniform for the school, which was not required when he attended the BEHTRUWC's project learning center. Saiful implied that the learning center was perceived as a temporary opportunity exclusively for "poor" children, while the Matrissaya School was a permanent school where many of his slightly better-off neighbors were usually enrolled. Nonetheless, after five months in May 2010, Saiful and Nazmal's attendance to the schools became irregular, and they eventually stopped going to schools altogether.

This ethnographic study focuses on low-income rural-urban migrant children, like Saiful and Nazmal, and their families in Bangladesh, living in a severe poverty-stricken environment in the capital city, Dhaka. Specifically, it will deal with the dilemma of so-called NFPE programs, aimed at providing alternative schooling opportunities to children who do not attend any regular school in the city. The study explores the nature of an NFPE program, particularly the BEHTRUWC project, and examines why it has been difficult for children such as Saiful and Nazmal to find a formal school that accepts them when they want to continue schooling after completing the full NFPE program course. This study examines three elements of the BEHTRUWC project and their relation to children: 1) exclusive membership and the making of "working children;" 2) distinction from formal schools and meaning of schooling; and, 3) an implementation model and relationships among actors involved in the project that reflect Bangladeshi social structure. This chapter (Chapter I) outlines the background and catalyst of my

approach to the research. It will also review the intellectual roots and conceptual framework that have led to and structured this study, and will further outline the scope of the dissertation.

Problem Statement

Like Saiful and Nazmal, today, in Bangladesh, an estimated two to three million children among a total 16.4 million primary school aged children (six to ten years old) are not enrolled in school or have left school before completing the full five-year course of primary education (Nath and Chowdhury 2009; World Bank 2011). Of the two to three million children, approximately 14 percent are in urban cities (Nath and Chowdhury 2009), living in *bosti*, while others live in geographically remote, isolated, and disaster prone areas (e.g. floodplain, costal belts, temporary land masses, eroding riverbanks and tidal basins).

The Government of Bangladesh, with a number of international and national development aid organizations, has made various attempts to address the “educational needs” of such Bangladeshi children who do not attend any regular primary school—any institutionalized educational system—to provide them with alternative primary schooling opportunities through so-called non-formal primary education (NFPE) (schooling) programs. Since the independence of the country in 1971, non-formal education (NFE) programs¹ (including NFPE programs) have been a recognized educational scheme, and are widespread in the country. At present, several hundred NGOs run approximately 50 thousand small-scale NFPE schools called “learning centers,” in collaboration with the Government, foreign donors or international NGOs. More than 1.5 to two million children are believed to be participating or have participated in NFPE programs (Nath and Chowdhury 2009). With respect to the number of children, NFPE programs

¹ In addition to NFPE programs, NFE programs include, for instance, so-called Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs, Pre-Primary Education programs, Adolescent Education programs, Adult Education programs, Continuing Education programs, as well as Technical and Vocational Education programs.

comprise approximately ten percent of the primary level educational enterprise in Bangladesh.

The primary purpose of such NFPE programs is to make “in-school learning” opportunities available for children, in order to assure that children, with what-the-international-organizations-claim as “(child) rights,” are provided an “education.” Moreover, NFPE program sponsors often rationalize and justify their programs by assuming and declaring that the “education” (schooling) will help such children gain and achieve “upward mobility,” to ultimately “break the cycle of unskilled-employment and child labor,” and escape from the severe poverty in which they are in today (UNICEF Bangladesh 2012).

In terms of providing an “educational” (schooling) opportunity to children in Bangladesh, regardless of their quality, I believe that NFPE programs have accomplished their objectives. A large number of children enrolled in NFPE programs is telling of this accomplishment. In addition, during my three-month preliminary and eighteen-month principal fieldwork, I observed hundreds of rural and urban children attending NFPE programs that learned to write, read, and calculate, and moreover were simply enjoying being in a place called “school.” Nevertheless, in my opinion, some NFPE programs in Bangladesh rarely meet their rationale of their “interventions,” as they do not necessarily (or directly) support low-income children emerge out of the particular social position where they are today. It is, for example, still extremely difficult for children, having participated in the BEHTRUWC project, to even complete the full course of the program, or for those that stay until the end of the program to further pursue institutionalized educational opportunities, and eventually become employed in the formal sector, which was also never possible for their parents. The NFPE programs may also work as an opposite force, and could reinforce children to remain at the subordinate segment of society.

This study aims to offer an anthropological insight and critical analysis of this unintended consequence and dilemma of NFPE programs in Bangladesh, how the BEHTRUWC project rarely becomes a driving force for children to achieve political and economic “upward mobility” as the project providers intend, but rather prepares and sustains children for their supposed roles in society (Rubbo and Taussig 1983). First, the study looks at the written and unwritten rules of membership, such as who the children (project participants) are, who they say they are, and who they are not. The BEHTRUWC project provides limited coverage of the country’s primary schooling curriculum exclusively to what they label “hard-to-reach urban working children” in urban cities of Bangladesh. This criterion for participants omits and puts children’s diverse “work” behind, but attempts to lump all of the children together as one constructed concept of “working children.” For many of the migrant children in Dhaka, this concept is new and foreign; thus, as a result of the BEHTRUWC project’s intention of helping “working children,” a group of children is defined as “working children.” Through participating in the BEHTRUWC project, the children gradually learn what the concept implies.

Second, the study problematizes the approaches of the BEHTRUWC project (e.g. teaching subjects, relationships with formal schools, etc.) that eventually distinguish children of the NFPE program from students in formal schools. According to Gardner and Lewis (1996), for example, there are “inherent dangers” in alternative educational approaches. They claim that the NFE program providers typically view “highlight[ing] the particular groups of people whom they wish to assist, often terming them ‘beneficiaries,’” would help the “target” group catch up with and be eventually included in the “mainstream” school system; however, the usual consequence of such programs is “the further marginalization of ‘targets,’ along with a reluctance to acknowledge the structural relationships which perpetuate differential access to opportunities”

(1996:106). The question is whether this flexible approach of the BEHTRUWC project is aspired by participating children and their families. The study also discusses the disjuncture between the intention of the BEHTRUWC project and the meaning of schooling shared among low-income families in Dhaka. For low-income migrant children and families in Dhaka, NFPE programs are often a new form of institutionalized educational opportunities. Nonetheless, the longer the BEHTRUWC project is implemented in their neighborhood, the less children and their parents are likely to expect from the program. They begin to show concern about the possibility that they might be misguided by the project providers, and that their participation and experience in the program would not necessarily assure the same level of education that formal school students enjoy, lead them to further schooling, or provide them with more skilled and better-paid employment opportunities. They also realize a certain distinction and distance between NFPE programs and formal schools. As a result, while some children take and accept the BEHTRUWC project as their first and only schooling opportunity, others try to pursue their education in a formal school while situating the BEHTRUWC project as their supplementary school. The study shows the experiences Saiful and other children have had in and through the BEHTRUWC project, and how some children's parents perceive the NFPE program as "not enough" and "less" than formal "normal" primary schools.

Third, this study closely examines everyday practices of NFPE programs—"what is going on"—in and around learning centers, in order to understand how the basic pattern of hierarchical interpersonal relationships so common in Bangladesh are reflected and applied to the daily practices of interactions and communications in and around learning centers (e.g. how teachers treat and care for children, how NGO coordinators try to be accountable to government officials, etc.). While the "conceptualization" of NFPE programs may be foreign and introduced

from outside of the country, their “implementation” is always undertaken by Bangladeshi people in the context of Bangladesh; and, compared to ideological objectives of the state and foreign sponsors that establish NFPE programs in Bangladesh, the perceptions and expectations of local actors toward such programs seem to be more based on practical and pragmatic aspects of their lives. Through interviewing and observing in and around the NFPE program learning centers, for example, I have learned that while some children and their parents see the NFPE programs as a “free schooling opportunity” (e.g. to study, to be a “student,” or to claim their children are in school); for teachers, such programs provide employment and an income opportunity; and, for local leaders, another political resource to give some kind of “charity” to their “poor” neighbors’ children and subsequently increase their authority. For NGOs, the NFPE programs are financial resources to maintain their organization, political and social resources to establish close ties with the central and local government officials, and to assure their continued and safe presence in the area with local leaders. Besides the project’s objective (e.g. “providing a schooling opportunity to children who are not in school”), each actor of the BEHTRUWC project (e.g. children, parents, teachers, NGO coordinators, etc.) has its own purpose to engage in implementation, and builds and works to secure its position in a web of relationships created through the project. Through shedding light on their relationships, negotiations, and struggles, the study explores how the BEHTRUWC project plays a role in preparing the children for their already-expected existing position in society.

The study does not intend to “judge” or “evaluate” the BEHTRUWC project or other NFPE programs in Bangladesh, or simply claim and advocate that they have failed to achieve their objectives and prove their rationale. It is difficult or impossible, and even insignificant only to measure whether the programs are a failure or success for whom and to what extent (without

defining what “failure” and “success” are). Some would say the programs are a complete failure since they did not make a significant change in the lives of children that the programs call their “beneficiaries.” Others might also conclude that the programs are a total collapse due to the large number of children that leave the programs before completing the full course. On the other hand, some may indicate that the programs are extremely successful in generating thousands of jobs for lower-middle class female housewives and college students to earn a stable income of approximately Tk.1,000 to 2,000 (US\$14.29 to 28.57)² every month as teachers. The study focuses on different elements of the BEHTRUWC project, in order to understand how the project continuously influences on the quotidian lives of low-income migrant children in Bangladesh in a way that prepares the children to continue playing their particular subordinate position in society, and how the people perceive the project’s unintended consequences and coordinate with other daily activities of children accordingly.

Intellectual Roots and Conceptual Framework

“Schooling” is part of diverse “educational” activities. Greenfield and Lave (1982) explain that the term “education” includes a wider variety of learning activities. They also say that for anthropologists, “all varieties of educational activities should be included in the education domain, including much more than formal schooling” (1982:182). Learning takes place everywhere—formally in school as well as informally through and outside of such institutional curricula. Informal learning is often motivated by social and cultural experiences, close relationships between teachers and learners, and social contributions (Greenfield and Lave 1982). “Formal” or “non-formal” education implies schooling that takes place in schools,

² Taka is the currency of Bangladesh. During my fieldwork (2009 to 2010), US\$1.00 was approximately Tk.70. This exchange rate is used in this study.

whereas “informal education” is learning activities occurring in and around both “formal” and “non-formal” educational institutions and elsewhere.

Comitas (1967) and Smith (2008) also identify “education” as “one key area of social activity” (1967:935), and describe two primary functions and roles: the first function is to achieve social production and to perpetuate the existing social order “with minimal changes” (2008:2); and, the second one is “revolutionary in nature” to transform society (1967:936). Considering “development from poverty” as the major rationale and *raison d’etre* of the educational interventions (e.g. building alternative schooling opportunities) in Bangladesh, NFPE programs emphasize their revolutionary and transformative aspects and elements that bring a certain change into society as a whole, from the people’s lives to the country’s educational scheme intending to generate fair practices and improve access to schooling opportunities to all children considered as having a “right” to “education.”

This research, on the other hand, focuses on and looks into the other function of schooling—NFPE programs. Some scholars argue against the assumption of NFPE programs that “schooling [can] change social life” (Stambach 2000:10), and rather draw attention to another implication of schooling that maintain and reproduce the existing social order and structure so common in the context. Collins (2009), for example, reviews social reproduction analyses on classrooms and schools, and states such analyses are based on an argument that “schools [a]re not exceptional institutions promoting equality of opportunities: instead they reinforce the inequalities of social structure and cultural order found in a given country” (2009:34). Willis (1977) also describes, in his study of working children and youth in Hammertown, Britain, how working class boys have developed their culture of resistance, an “oppositional culture” through schooling, which indeed creates and maintains their social reality.

Willis (1977) starts his book by saying,

The difficult thing to explain about how middle class kids get middle class jobs is why others let them. The difficult thing to explain about how working class kids get working class jobs is why they let themselves (1977:1).

Willis (1977) brings a dimension of individual “agency” to the social (class) structural analysis, and illustrates how an educational institution (a secondary modern school in Hammertown) is playing a certain role in providing an arena for those boys to socially reproduce the working class themselves. The Hammertown working class children, for instance, identify themselves as “lads,” and have no interest in academic work, because they do not expect schools to give them anything. The lads distinguish themselves from and look down on “*earoles*”—what the lads call most other students, referring to their passiveness. The lads try to identify themselves more closely with the adult world by smoking, fighting, drinking, expressing extremely sexist and racist attitudes, and actively choosing to fail in school. They reject the vision of the school which hopes that the working class kids can achieve other possible futures (e.g. taking white-collar jobs). They do not believe equal opportunities under capitalism, and feel that no matter how hard they work they will be end up engaging in manual labor, just like their fathers. Willis (1977) analyzes agencies in the lads’ behaviors, and argues that the lads find a course for self-esteem and satisfaction in commitment to masculine values and hard manual labor. The lads create and develop the “oppositional culture” by themselves through social interactions inside and outside their group. This accounts for their perception of the social (class) structure.

A study of Rubbo and Taussig (1983) in Colombia on (not schooling but) “servanthood” (young rural female migrants that come to an urban city to become domestic servants in urban middle and upper class households) also describes the reproduction of “the

basic patterns of oppression that make [the] societies what they are today” (1983:5). Rubbo and Taussig (1983) claim that “servanthood reproduces the quasi-familial, authoritarian, and sexist character so common to all hierarchical relations in the society,” and thus, it is significant to study the servanthood as “an essential link between the macrostructure of political life and the microstructure of domestic and personal existence which prepares and sustains people for their roles in society” (1983:5-6). By the late 1980s, social reproduction theory has become less popular, and new analyses emphasizing “‘agency,’ ‘identity,’ ‘person,’ and ‘voice’” have emerged; yet, according to Collins (2009), by now, “efforts to go beyond this [social reproduction] framework ... have not provided comprehensive accounts ... to understand the gross distribution of class-linked statuses and resources” (2009:42-43).

My position in this research is that schooling (including NFPE programs in Bangladesh) is situated between households and society, and in the new social context (e.g. schools and learning centers where schooling takes place), children—participants of NFPE programs—learn, understand, and act their position within school as well as in relation to the outside world (society). In what follows, the section first explains the ideas and notions that support NFPE programs spread as well as the critiques toward such programs. Second, it introduces and discusses the flexible and fluid definition of children and childhood in Bangladesh, and finally, the section explores some additional concepts that help rethink NFPE program approaches in the country.

Schooling as a “Magical Box”?

The NFPE program approach emphasizes economic growth, and conjectures that “with the right combination of raw materials and human capital, poverty can be eradicated and

countries may thrive” (Stambach 2000:11). This “revolutionary” function of education (schooling) has attracted a number of donors and international agencies to conduct educational (alternative schooling) programs in Bangladesh. Stambach (2000) explicates this model:

Pedagogy, seen from within this view, is a matter of transforming knowledge from ‘more’ to ‘less’ educated groups and of assisting underdeveloped peoples and countries in securing basic needs (food, shelter, employment, a certain level of infrastructure). ... At root, school-to-the-rescue models turn upon a particular assumption that ‘becoming modern’ stems from outside cultural forces ... and that modernity is a unidirectional process that moves people toward a common end. ... The modernization literature ... predicted greater empowerment for underprivileged groups. Its idea was that more information and access to knowledge would provide historically disadvantaged groups, including women, with new economic opportunities and greater market access” (2000:10-11).

Schooling as institutionalized education in the modernization theory is acknowledged to spread “a positive impact on development, playing a transformative role in the lives of poor people, by providing with skills, autonomy, freedom, and confidence” (DRC Migration, Globalization and Poverty 2009:1). UNICEF Bangladesh also mentions in its website that “Education is the first step in breaking the cycle of unskilled-employment and child labor” (UNICEF Bangladesh 2009a).

Since Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, the Government has employed this educational approach in their nation building policies and programs. Along with the formal education system, it adopted NFPE programs; and, the NFPE programs have become “a must have requisite of every regime in the post-colonial state” in Bangladesh (Latif 2004:246). The homogeneous image and representation of “poor” and “vulnerable” children in Bangladesh have appealed to foreign funds and development assistance flowing into the country and establishing a large number of NFPE programs. The government and foreign donors foresee schooling as a

magical box, through which the livelihoods of two to three million children, who are currently not enrolled in school, and even their families, can be transformed; their “human capitals” are built and strengthened; and, eventually a positive influence on the nation’s “development” would be accomplished (Stambach 2000; DRC Migration, Globalization and Poverty 2009).

The question is why the government (in collaboration with foreign and international donors) promotes a different educational path for those children who are out of the formal educational domain, instead of bring them into formal schools. The NFPE program providers often claim this is because the situation those children are facing does not allow them to attend a regular type of school, and thus, alternative style of schooling (a different (separated) educational path) is necessary and urgent. Weiner (1991) studies the similar condition of child labor and education in India, and explains how Indian government officials share the fundamental belief that forcing impoverished parents to send their children to school is not the best or ideal way to approach the issue of child labor. He claims that what creates and shapes child labor policies and children’s access to formal compulsory education (schools) in India is based on the belief of governmental officials, which is rooted in the Indian social context.

Critiques toward NFPE Programs

Latif (2004), in her study of state-sponsored NFE programs in Bangladesh, strongly criticizes and calls the programs “failure.” She states that the “failure” is due to the “hegemonical discourse of development” that always keeps “the conceptualization and implementation of [NFE] programs in the hands of those in power,” and prevents the programs from reaching their objectives or benefiting the very people the programs are supposedly assisting (2004:12). According to Latif (2004), the NFE program approach keeps “a discursive practice” that sets

what problems to follow, who can speak about the problems and transform them to policies and plans for whom, at where, “from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise” (2004:8). In this framework, NFE programs in Bangladesh tend to “assume that change comes ‘top-down’ from the state ... [and] ignore the ways in which people negotiate these changes, and indeed, initiate their own” (Gardner and Lewis 1996:19). As a result, “certain relations of domination remain unchanged,” or even further continuously reproduce the relationships of power over the people involved in such programs (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Latif 2004:12).

Second, a distinction in educational goals and approaches (e.g. management system and organization structure) that establishes alternative schooling opportunities for a certain group of the population is seen as problematic, causing further diversification among the people. Comitas (1967), for example, addresses, in his study on rural education in Bolivia, the problematization of distinctive educational approaches particularly for the politically and socio-economically subordinate segment of society. He notes, for example: different ministries are in charge of rural and urban education, and the Ministry of Peasant Affairs—not the Ministry of Education—is responsible for education for *campesinos*. In addition, a language (Spanish) of colonial rulers, which has “little direct value” to the rural *campesino* community, is spoken in the classroom by teachers who are also not familiar with the language; and, the “unrelated curriculum,” as well as “inadequacies of rural teachers,” make the quality of rural education for *campesinos* not effective or sufficient compared to urban areas (Comitas 1967:944-945). Comitas (1967) concludes, “[t]he balkanization of the educational enterprise, the multiple allocation of responsibility, the differing educational goals for different socio-economic groups ... lead inevitably to further qualitative distinctions between these [different socio-economic]

groups” (1967:946-947). Though his study was conducted in Bolivia 45 years ago, I consider it relevant to compare with the current case of Bangladesh. I would describe it too that the distinctive educational approaches in Bangladesh “did little to modify the hierarchical order of the socially significant segments” of Bangladeshi society (Comitas 1967:947). When different educational opportunities are provided to different groups of the population, the consequences would not be an integration of the different groups, but rather (and further) dispersion among the groups.

Third, NFPE programs are also considered as having constructed and spread the homogeneous image of “poor” children in Bangladesh. Much of the literature on children in Bangladesh (e.g. not only of NFPE programs but also development and humanitarian policy and program related documents, media and research papers, etc.) describes the children way too much plainly as “vulnerable” and “disadvantaged,” given the political and socioeconomic context of the country. No matter what children and their families do and where they are from, the literature labels the children as “child laborers,” “street children,” and “working children,” and those that do not attend any regular school, “drop out,” “out-of-school,” and “never enrolled.”

NFPE program providers claim that every child has the “right” with which they are entitled to “education” (schooling). This increasingly recognized notion of children as “rights-holders” deserving a “childhood,” and school as their “entitlement,” is exemplified in the 1989 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The discourse focuses on defining “what children should be doing” and “how children’s quotidian lives should be (e.g. a child should be in school, etc.),” rather than “what children want and need,” because within the discourse, “[t]he problem of disadvantaged children are ... attributed not to their exploitation as

poor, but to their non-recognition as children” (White 2002:726). For example, an illiterate Bangladeshi child who does not attend school and a child laborer in Bolivia could be referred to as the same “poor” and “disadvantaged” children, because they are both not in a place to fully enjoy their “childhood,” and make the most of being a “child,” as defined in the CRC. Throughout the 1990s, development programs addressing those “children’s issues” dramatically increased in Bangladesh (White 2002).

Despite those efforts of the children’s programs not only in Bangladesh but worldwide, however, a number of anthropologists have criticized this homogeneous recognition and representation of “childhood,” and challenged such discourse by analyzing its relationships with knowledge and power (Gardner and Lewis 1996), and drawing attention to children’s agency, skills, knowledge, and experiences. Some scholars, for example, examine “children’s engagement in labor” as a crucial aspect of child rearing, education, and socialization in their pre-industrialized and pre-capitalist social settings (May 1996; Nieuwenhuys 1996; Boyden et al. 1998; Montgomery 2001; Ajavi and Torimiro 2004). Another group of anthropologists is more interested in “child-centered” ethnographies, and highlights the autonomy and “agency” of children (Miles 1993; Porter 1996; Sharp 1996; Rigi 2003). For example, Rigi (2003) studies a young population in Kazakhstan labeled as “disposed youth,” and claims that they have more sophisticated practical knowledge and complex social survival skills than elite youth, as they have acquired such skills through their independent street life starting at an early age. Other scholars also disclose the paradox of the “rights-based” approach. The more laboring children are protected and exclusively categorized as “children” deserving a “childhood,” the less their abilities as “potential economic agents” have been assessed. The labor force of children and the merchandise they produce are, thus, seldom included in the calculation of determining economic

value (Nieuwenhuys 1996; Iversen 2002; Whitehead et al. 2007). As a result, laboring children are pushed into a “weak” position in the local market, facing the risk of exploitation (Nieuwenhuys 1996; Iversen 2002).

In addition, other scholars point out that, in the context of Bangladesh, claiming all children should be “rights-holders” deserving a certain “childhood,” can lead to new discrimination towards poorer children (White 2002). White (2002), for example, demonstrates how children’s “rights” are differently perceived and acknowledged, and can cause negative consequences. She claims that in Bangladesh, where the definition of “child” is more fluid and no concept of “rights” is present, stressing child rights uncritically, instead of a child’s welfare or needs, “may not be sustainable and can have contradictory outcomes for poor children” who cannot afford child “rights” (2002:725, 730). The approach can possibly become a new trigger to socio-economic “class differences” (White 2002). In Bangladesh “where strong sensitivity is required when defining and intervening in any interpersonal relationship,” an “aggressive approach,” for example, appealing for “child rights” to an employer of child workers may add a serious “risk” of “turning the employer against ... the child workers” (White 2002:730). Such employers do not see having a child as their worker (employee) as how the CRC and ILO define “exploitation,” but instead, “charity” or the Muslim *duevt (dyto)* (obligation) of care to their “own poor” (e.g. securing food, shelter, and clothes) (Gardner and Ahmed 2006). Children also “place a premium on the quality of relationships” with their employer, and know how to “show a strong sense of (in)justice and entitlement,” not as a child, but as a laborer and an employee (White 2002:725). In the context of Bangladesh, positions and relationships are equally critical, if not more essential for children, and should be incorporated in the study of the low-income migrant children in the capital city, Dhaka.

Besides the child-centered ethnographies, other ethnographies explore and examine children in broader historical and social forces that are critical to the quotidian lives of children. Kenny (2007) studies “child labor” in urban northeast Brazil, and argues that “child labor” is a socially-constructed “problem,” and “is not an objective ‘thing’ to be studied [separated from historical and social context children live in], but constructed within a web of relationships” (2007:23). Kenny (2007) continues that before considering what can be done for children engaging in labor, it is critical to first identify, “how or if [children see] their work as a ‘problem’ to be investigated, how they [see] themselves in relation to other children, and where their work [is] placed in relation to other concerns in their lives” (2007:23). Similarly, Hashim (2005, 2007) examines independent migration of Kusai children in Ghana, and depicts the significance to incorporate social forces to the study of children. Many children explain their moving to urban south cocoa farms as their own choice; on the other hand, Hashim (2005, 2007) claims there appears to be more complicated negotiations among the families, rooted in their social organization of family-based labor intensive farming, which encourage children to participate in the family agricultural production. The acceptance of such labor is to show respect for obligations to the male head of their households, as well as for better opportunities (e.g. income, jobs, schooling, and marriage) in the future.

The existing “child rights” literature, rooted in “an optimistic model of socially planned change that is often incorporated into international development policies” (Stambach 2000:10), therefore, does not necessarily shed light on the more complicated social structures and mechanism that produce and reproduce the diverse experiences of children, and the social significance of their attitudes, behaviors, and decisions in relation to their family and social networks. The constructed image of children in Bangladesh overlooks, for example, the social

mechanism that supports the continuous influx of rural children to the city for them to remain at the subordinate position of the hierarchically structured urban society, even though complicated social forces and mechanisms are embedded in the fabric of Bangladeshi societal institutions, by which rural children of landless families are accepted into the city, given labor and schooling opportunities, becoming members of NFE programs, and forming the essential labor force of the urban informal economy in Dhaka.

Definition of Children in Bangladesh: Choosing Not to Go to School Yet

The definition of a child is flexible, fluid, and “far from homogeneous” in Bangladesh (Blanchet 2001:2). The same “child” may not be a “child” in one situation, while in another he or she could still be considered immature. The people in Bangladesh deliberate the degree to which a child understands the context and has gained life experiences, and judge how old the “child” actually is in a certain situation. Blanchet (2001) indicates, “[t]he state of ‘understanding’ is not expected, denied, or recognized as an automatic consequence of physical growth, or the accumulation of years of age,” because what to understand and know is all different, according to one life’s path and duty in life (2001:47). The government also does not have one solid definition. It ratified the CRC in 1990³ that indicates a “child” as “every human being below the age of eighteen years;” however, other national laws define a “child” in distinctive ways. The national Children Act (1974) refers to a “child” as a person below the age of 16 years, and by the national Muslim law, a “child” is a person before “becom[ing] an adult on attaining the age of puberty, ... [approximately] the age of 12 years for girls, and 15 [to] 16 years for boys” (Giani

³ The Government of Bangladesh ratified the CRC in 1990; however, in 1991 an observation was made on Article 14 “*Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion*,” 1) “State Parties shall respect the rights of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” The Government observed, “being immature by definition, a child is not a position to consider such complex issues properly” (Blanchet 2001:2; Giani 2006:3).

2006:2).

In addition, the people in Bangladesh are neither aware of nor pay much attention to count their own age and birthdays. One girl I spoke with said to me, “I am ten or 11 or 12 years old.” Another boy told me, “I am 15 years old,” but his friends denied, and started debating how old he should be. A father of six children pointed to each of his children and said, “I do not know their ages, but I know the order. He is the first son, then her, her, two boys (this one and that one), and this is my youngest one.” My journalist friend who traveled to a rural village and interviewed several middle-aged men also mentioned, “All of the men in the village were 55 years old.” This was a common scene in Bangladesh when I asked people how old they were. They people “manifest a lack of knowledge in reporting their age, [because they have] a different approach to age evaluation (Giani 2006:3). Giani (2006) elaborates,

The age for Bangladeshi children is in the experiences they have gained, not the number of years they have been living. Parents too report the biological age of their children at their convenience. For instance, they send their children to school not at a strict specific age, but when consider their child ‘ready’ for it. Consequently the boundaries of Bangladeshi childhood vary according to life experiences, the autonomy and authority gained, physical development and convenience (2006:3).

An English word “child” is usually translated to “*shishu*” in Bengali; yet, the meaning of “*shishu*” is limited only to those from birth to those who still “do not understand” and need close parental care (Blanchet 2001; Giani 2006). The “life stages” commonly acknowledged among Bangladeshis are: 1) *Sishukal* (infancy and early childhood, a stage of a person treated tolerantly, needs mother’s care, plays with children of both genders); 2) *Balyakal* (“school age,” a stage that a person starts school, learns gender roles); 3) *Kaisorer parambha* (pre-adolescence); 4) *Kaisor* (early adolescence, a stage that a person follows gender roles); 5) *Nabajaubon* (late

adolescence, a stage that a person with parental pressure for responsibility on males, girl's marriage, etc.); 6) *Jaubonkal* (youth, "a period of pleasure and achievement," getting married, becoming a parent, etc.); and, 7) *Briddhokal* (old age, a period of anticipating death, and intensifying his or her religious practice) (Aziz and Maloney 1985; Blanchet 2001:44-45). Many of my informants (the children on whom this study focuses), though, do not follow these "life stages" described in the table above. They are not in school when they are six to ten years old at the stage of "*balyakal*" (school age), but start primary school when they are over ten years old, or have never been in school. Some of them have already begun working for the family before turning ten, and thus not had (or, some would say, "could not afford") the stage of "*balyakal*" similar to other middle and upper class children. One of my informants was already at the stage of "*nabajaubon*" when she looked only approximately age 13 (or less) years old, as she was married off to a rural village.

On the other hand, the "calendar-based definition" of children is still and always used in practical events and for convenience purposes (e.g. statistics, development programs, etc.), even when "the constitution of children and adults may be recognized to differ by time and place" (White 2002:726), and the universalistic principal embodied in the CRC may not be appropriate in the context of Bangladesh (Bissell 2003). The context-based way of considering childhood in Bangladesh is, thus, unlikely to be taken into account in the planning and implementation of NFPE programs; yet, this explains the findings of a national network NGO in Bangladesh, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). CAMPE has studied the reasons why parents do not send their children to a school. The foremost reason was "too young for schooling" (Nath and Chowdhury 2009). In Bangladesh, parents are the ones that decide when to send their children to school, according to their judgment and decisions on whether their children are "ready" for

school (Giani 2006). Although NFPE program providers often criticize parents who choose not to send their primary school aged children to school as they are “illiterate” or “ignorant,” assuming that the parents do not know the “importance” of schooling; many parents, especially in rural areas, claim that they cannot send their children to a local government primary school, because the school is too far and they believe that their children are “too young” to commute the distance. The parents are afraid of their children crossing highways and busy roads, and being involved in traffic accidents.

Rethinking “What is Going On” in NFPE Program Learning Centers

Ferguson (1990) says, even when NFE programs seem to “fail” reproducing further inequality in educational opportunities, that is not the “intention” of experts and practitioners who work for the programs; and, it is thus critical to distinguish “the intentions of those working in the aid industry” from “the effect of their work” (Gardner and Lewis 1996:11). Ferguson states that scholars “should analyze the relationship between development projects, social control and the reproduction of relations of inequality, ... [because] structures do not directly answer the ‘needs’ of capitalism, but reproduce themselves through a variety of processes and struggles (1996:11, 72). The study on the interplay and relations among the people, learning centers, and organizations involved in NFPE programs is, therefore, I believe, where anthropological contributions are expected and promised (Collins 2009). As Gardner and Lewis (1996) claim, anthropology “can provide a dynamic critique of development and help push thought and practice away from oversystematic models and dualities (traditional as opposed to modern; formal as opposed to informal; developed versus underdeveloped) and in more creative directions” (1996:2).

People around schools and NFPE programs in Bangladesh make sense of the policies and programs in their own terms and through their own practices. Stambach (2000) studies secondary schooling and social change in Chagga, Tanzania, and states that schooling is “an institution through and around which [the] collective notion of modernity and tradition emerge” (2000:164). She indicates “fundamental disjuncture between policy and practice,” and claims whatever policies and programs brought from outside of a country will always be “valorized in relation to local ideals” (2000:170). Stambach (2000), for example, illustrates how “learning” occurs in and around (inside and outside) secondary schools, and shows the multiple social functions inherent in schools. For the Chagga people, “lessons of schooling” is “a means for social advancement and upward mobility” (2000:166). For girls, secondary school is not only a place for learning the textbooks, but also a place for them to become “students,” and eventually “educated” women and “big sisters of the city.” For their parents, school is a place they send their children, and around which they try to make sense of the notion of “modernity” as well as “tradition” and social change (Stambach 2000).

As Stambach (2000) says, school is not only a place simply to follow and digest the official curriculum, but also an arena where children begin to internalize the social perception of the group to which they belong (e.g. how they are seen, etc.), and reflect it on their behaviors and activities. In Bangladesh, when children are in NFPE programs, they do not “learn to become” a regular school student, but instead, may internalize the constructed notion brought from outside that they are “poor” children from “poor” families that cannot socially and economically afford to send children to a regular school. Lave and Wenger (1991) also argue that learning is contextual, a “situated activity,” and a process through which “newcomers”—“legitimate peripheral participants”—move toward becoming full participant “old-timers.” They describe

learning requires and often occurs unintentionally through social interactions among those who have a common interest (Lave and Wenger 1991).

This study aims to explore and understand the inner nature of NFPE programs in Bangladesh (particularly in Dhaka), through examining and discussing: how children, their families, and other people involved in the programs perceive, talk about, and act in and around NFPE program learning centers; and, and how NFPE programs rarely become a trigger for the children to achieve political and economic “upward mobility” as such programs intend.

Outline of the Dissertation

This chapter (Chapter I) has first outlined the problem statement, background and catalyst of my approach to the research. It has also discussed the intellectual roots and conceptual framework that have led to and structured this study. Second, the following chapter (Chapter II) will describe the setting to understand the context and its brief history of Bangladesh, in which low-income urban migrant families are situated. Specifically, it refers to migration, nature of interpersonal relationships among Bangladeshis, urban poverty, living arrangement, and economic (labor and employment) activities. Third, Chapter III will review the research methods, and, fourth, in Chapter IV, the study offers an overview of NFPE programs, such as organizations, management structures and basic features, through comparing five well-known large-scale NFPE programs in Bangladesh. Fifth, Chapter V focuses on some of the distinctive features of the BEHTRUWC project, its objectives and membership. The BEHTRUWC project provides the limited coverage and level of the country’s primary schooling curriculum exclusively what they call working children in urban cities. The chapter explores the written and unwritten rules of membership, such as who the children (participants) are, who they say they are,

and who they are not. It also illustrates how the project learning center becomes a place for the children to learn the constructed notion of “working children.” Sixth, Chapter VI examines meaning of schooling shared among low-income migrant families in Dhaka, in order to understand the perceptions and expectations toward the NFPE programs among children and their families. The chapter briefly explains the formal school system, and how institutional gaps and barriers, as well as the complicated branching and hierarchical management structure of the BEHTRUWC project seems to make it difficult for children to eventually become integrated into the “mainstream” formal education system. Chapter VI also examines school options and choices of the migrant families. In the same household, some children work when their brothers and sisters do not, instead go to school. Parents also do not send their children to any available school or work, but choose a particular one for each child. Among various schooling opportunities available and affordable in Dhaka, my informants seem not to consider the BEHTRUWC project as a regular or ordinary schooling opportunity. Seventh, Chapter VII closely examines everyday practices of the BEHTRUWC project—“what is going on”—in and around learning centers. It aims to describe how the basic pattern of hierarchical interpersonal relationships common in Bangladesh are reflected and applied to the daily practices of interactions and communications in the learning centers. Finally, this study concludes with Chapter VIII, which discusses the function, implications, and consequences of NFPE programs in Bangladesh, specifically for low-income migrant children and their families in a poverty-stricken environment in the capital city, Dhaka. Chapter VIII summarizes how the nature of NFPE programs in Bangladesh continuously generates the unintended consequence of the programs, and sustain a certain group of children at the subordinate segment of the society.

CHAPTER II. THE CONTEXT: LOW-INCOME RURAL-URBAN MIGRANTS IN BANGLADESH

During my fieldwork in Dhaka, I had several opportunities to travel to rural Bangladesh. On the way, I crossed many rivers and lakes, including the three major rivers, the Ganges (locally known as *Padma*), Brahmaputra (*Jamura*), and Megha. Looking at the gigantic rivers for the first time in my life, my definition of “river” (such as size and scale) completely changed. When I was halfway on the *Jamura* Bridge,⁴ I saw several small houses and people on large towheads cultivating the paddy fields. Driving in the other direction to the northeast, I encountered the floodplain, what Bangladeshi people call “*haor*.” It was the end of April 2010, the beginning of the rainy season in the region. I was passing a one-lane highway by car, and saw nothing but water in every direction. As far as my eyes could see, the view of the horizon was filled with water. It was as if the large warm orange sun was about to float on and then set in the water. Sometimes, houses built on a small hill would become faintly visible. When I saw agricultural laborers using a small boat to harvest (or rather “rescue”) their rice crops, I learned that the water overflowed to their paddy fields to the point that all of their crops were entirely hidden in the water. It seemed that the water came much quicker than the villagers expected. The Bangladeshi driver told me that those laborers would soon become temporary (seasonal) migrants to urban cities, and work as rickshaw pullers to pay for the damage to their landlords (patrons). Along with the temporary migrants, some villagers might decide to immigrate to cities with their families for longer years, if not permanently.

My informants, children and their families in Dhaka, are among those estimated 300 thousand to 400 thousand former or seasonal rural agricultural wage laborers that flow into urban cities every year (World Bank 2007). Of the rural-urban migrants to Dhaka, a significant

⁴ The total length of the *Jamura* Bridge is 4.8 kilometer, about 3.0 miles.

percentage, approximately 40 percent, are estimated to be between zero and 14 years of age (Ahmed 2003). An increasing number of rural children of low-income families migrate to the capital city, either with their family, in groups, or on their own, often settling in *bosti* (slums), if not on the streets, permanently or temporarily (seasonally) (Giani 2006). The children then gradually adapt to the poverty-stricken urban environment. Some attend primary school, while others assume and carry out various work (e.g. formal and informal, full-time and part-time, with and without wage, out-of-household, in shops and factories, on the streets, and in-house) to contribute to the household income, or stay at home to care for small brothers and sisters while their parents are away at work. Some children engage in both, schooling and laboring, while others do neither. Some children spend their days “hanging out” in the neighborhood, playing with their friends, or sometimes looking for opportunities to earn petty cash.

This chapter (Chapter II) introduces the context of Bangladesh, particularly the profile of low-income migrant children and families in the capital city, Dhaka. It depicts their migration experiences and broader social forces, including family relationships and social networks. In what follows, the chapter first briefly reviews the history of Bangladesh, and then describes the meaning of “poor” in the context of Bangladesh, rural-urban (internal) migration, the nature of interpersonal relationships in Dhaka, their urban experiences, living arrangements, job opportunities and economic activities.

Overview: The Country and Its Brief History

The name of the country, Bangladesh, means “Country (*desh*) of Bengal (*bangla*),” and the people, Bengalis, have “evolved a peasant culture of their own based on wet rice cultivation” (Blanchet 2001:229). The title and very first phrase of their national anthem, “*Amar*

Shonar Bengla” (“My Golden Bengal”), *shonar* (made of gold) expresses the color of the paddy field and rice crops, just before harvesting. Agriculture is one of the country’s major industries. About 70 percent of the population resides in rural areas, and roughly half of the labor force is engaged in agriculture (World Bank 2012).

The population of Bangladesh in 2010 is estimated at 150 million, which is the seventh largest in the world. Compared to the other sixth most populated countries (e.g. China, India, and the U.S.), the size of Bangladesh is incredibly small. Population density is approximately 2,956.94 persons per square mile (1,141.68 persons per square kilometers), and it is the highest⁵ in the world. The population of Bangladesh is predicted to reach more than 200 million people between 2020 and 2030 (UNDP 2010; World Bank 2011). “Population pressure” is one element of Bangladesh that is often referenced when the country is mentioned. As a country, Bangladesh is often portrayed as having serious and multiple severe challenges, from population pressure to natural calamities (e.g. floods and cyclones), political infighting and corruption, labor unrest, and inequalities in economic advancement and provision of social welfare and services. The paragraph below is a popular example frequently found not only in documents of international and national development assistance organizations, but also in the media and research papers:

The population in Bangladesh living under US\$1.00 per day has been halved; however, 40 percent of the people are still categorized as ‘poor.’ In addition, 49.64 percent live on less than US\$1.25 per day, and 81.33 percent on less than US\$2.00 (UNDP 2010; World Bank 2011). ... The primary school enrollment rates have reached over 100 percent; however, an estimated 3.3 million children are still out-of-school (UNICEF 2009b).

⁵ The population density of Bangladesh is highest in the world excluding city-states, Monaco, Singapore, Vatican City, and Malta.

These stereotypes and images of Bangladesh have attracted and justified a vast amount of foreign and international development assistance and aid flowing into the country. The Government of Bangladesh seeks funds and assistance from foreign nations and international donors, and on the other hand, interventions in nation building and plans under the name of “development” programs and projects continue. The Government received US\$1.4 billion worth of multilateral and bilateral development aid in 2010, and 12 percent of the government’s expenses in 2009 was financed from the official development assistance (ODA) from Australia, Canada, Denmark, European Commission (EC), Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the US (World Bank 2012). Non-Formal Education (NFE) programs are one such kind of interventions created under the name of “development” policies and programs.

The British Colonial State

Bangladesh is a relatively new country, having celebrated its 40th year of independence in 2011; yet, the region has a long history. Its capital city, Dhaka, has been the heart of politics, militarization, industries, commerce, and culture in the Bengal region since it was the capital of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa under the Mughal Empire in 1608. Dhaka seemed to already be a political, commercial, and market center between the 13th to the 17th centuries (Faraizi 1993; Hossain 2008). Through the 17th century until the 1770s, for instance, the trade and textile industries flourished in Dhaka and the region. Many villagers migrated to Dhaka, and worked as craftsmen, weavers, and spinners. A number of foreign traders from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Europe (e.g. Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British) were attracted to the city’s wealth and traveled to Dhaka. The city had a population of approximately one million (Hossain 2008). This prosperity, however, did not last long, as it had gradually become a threat

to foreign industries, and eventually Europe and Mexico imposed tariff barriers on textile goods from Bengal. The famine in the 1770s further ravaged Dhaka (Faraisi 1993).

The British East India Company gained official control of the region in 1757 after the Battle of Plassey. It extended political, administrative, and commercial controls in the region, and maintained control until the partition divided the region into two independent nation states of India and Pakistan in 1947. Dhaka and surrounding regions became home to industries for cotton, jute, spices, sugar cane, and tea, and the products were shipped to Europe and elsewhere through Kolkata (Calcutta) of West Bengal (India). During this British period, the Bengal region was ruled by British and Hindu elites (Latif 2004). Although the textile industry gained back slight strength in the 1780s, the cruel and harsh conditions and treatment of the East India Company over Bengali (and mostly Muslim) spinners and weavers, many Dhaka residents migrated back and returned to rural villages. The population of Dhaka was nearly 450 thousand in 1765, 200 thousand in 1800, which decreased to fewer than 55 thousand in the 1860s (Faraisi 1993; Hossain 2008). Faraizi (1993) calls this phenomena, “*repeasantization*,” and explains the cause:

The so-called free traders offered a better price to the weavers than the Company. But the Company’s traders found an alternative way. They offered prices and payment in advance to the weavers. They employed local middlemen for this purpose and then imposed fines and other physical punishment (for example, imprisonment or flogging), with the help of the state if weavers failed to supply the cloths in time. Additionally, spinners and weavers lost their traditional support from the [Mughal] administration with the decline of the Mughal bureaucracy. Many spinners and weavers fled the city to escape punishment and the miserable economic conditions of the industry (1993:30-31).

In 1793, the East India Company imposed a new land tenure system, known as the *Permanent Settlement*. Prior to the *Permanent Settlement*, the Mughal administration had the

Zamindari Settlement system, in which *zamindars* (territorial overlords, mostly Hindus) collected revenue from *rayats* (tenants), and paid them to the Mughal rulers. Each *zamindar* held an enormous size of land, and thus needed to involve middlemen, the *jotdars* (rich peasants and local influential) in the process of collecting revenue. After the *Permanent Settlement* was enacted, the *zamindars* established their private property (ownership) rights to land, while the peasants lost their “traditional” rights to their homelands. When the *zamindars* were unable to meet the fixed requirements of revenue dictated by the Company, they sold the land, from which the *jotdars* could gain their occupancy rights. They then rented their land to a large number of tenants, who further sub-leased the lands to sharecroppers. The *jotdars* collected tax from every piece of their land, and when the tenants (or sharecroppers) could not pay taxes on time, the *jotdars* forced them to “borrow money from the rural credit market,” which was also controlled by the *jotdars*. As a consequence, the land size for each peasant household became smaller, whereas the number of tenant increased. The *zamindars* became absentee landlords, whereas the *jotdars*, who benefited most from this system, gradually appeared as “power brokers in the rural power structure” (Faraizi 1993:146, 148).

In this *jotdari* (*jotdars*’) system, agriculture became commercialized as a means to cultivate cash crops and collect raw materials (e.g. indigo and jutes) and meet the demands of manufacturers in Manchester and capitalists in London. In addition, from the late 19th century, the East India Company was in need to produce marketable foods. Landless wage laborers and sharecroppers in the Bengal region began purchasing their household goods in markets (Faraizi 1993), because those “functionally landless” households owned too little land to cultivate and meet their subsistence needs (Jannuzi and Peach 1980; Harris 1991). The regional state administration contracted with *jotdars*, in which the *jotdars* turned wasteland into cultivated land

to produce rice and other food grains, in return for establishing their ownership rights to the land. Under this system, landless laborers and sharecroppers had no alternative but to accept the work offers from multiple *jatdars* in order to subsist (e.g. laboring under one *jotdar*, and for other seasons, migrating to work for another *jotdar*, etc.) (Faraizi 1993). They were not in a position to bargain for their wages. They were dependent on the land they did not own, and agriculture from which they could not subsist. Many scholars argue that due to this system of small-scale land holding and agricultural dominance, no economic advancement or industrial development, but “underdevelopment” resulted in the region (Van Schendel 1981; Harris 1982; Faraizi 1993; Latif 2004). Although the *Permanent Settlement Act* was cancelled in 1859 and the *zamindari* system was abolished in 1950, the hierarchical power relationships that emerged through the *Permanent Settlement* have lasted for decades, and still significantly influence the present social stratification system in Bangladesh.

Partition and Pakistan Period

In the late 19th century, movements for the country’s (region’s) independence from the colonial occupation began. When the region gained independence in 1947 from the British occupation, followed by the partition of India, the Bengal region was divided into two parts, West Bengal and East Bengal, along the religious border of Hindu and Islam. The Hindu dominant West Bengal joined India, and the Muslim dominant East Bengal became a province of Pakistan, and renamed East Pakistan in 1956. The population of Dhaka was approximately 250 thousand in 1947, which increased to 718 thousand in 1961 (Hossain 2008).

Before 1947 until the partition, about 80 percent of rural and urban holdings, government positions, finance and commerce sectors, and other professions were dominated by

Hindu Bengalis; however, after the emigration of Hindus to West Bengal in India, Muslims took over these positions. Nevertheless, West Pakistani elites were mostly in control of the positions in East Bengal (East Pakistan), which caused serious political marginalization and instabilities, as well as economic oppression and difficulties in the region (Latif 2004). Many native East Pakistanis (Muslim Bengalis) felt estranged and exploited by the “unfair” treatment of West Pakistan over East Pakistan. West Pakistani capitalists also established a number of jute processing and export-oriented textile manufacturing mills, and in addition, pharmaceutical factories were built in and around Dhaka by European and American businesses, which helped employ refugees from India and landless laborers migrating from rural areas (Faraizi 1993).

The Bengali Language Movement began in the early 1950s. Although the majority of the people in both West and East Pakistan observed Islam, their ethnicities and languages were different. Bengali was not recognized as a national language, only West Pakistan’s Urdu. After many sacrifices of students and political activists who were involved in demonstrations and killed by police officers, in 1956, the central West Pakistani government approved the official status of Bengali language. As tribute to this language movement in Bangladesh, the International Mother Language Day (February 21) was set by UNESCO in 2000, which is still one of the most celebrated national holidays in present-day Bangladesh. This Bengali Language Movement gradually roused into the Bangladesh Liberation War. In 1971, civil war broke out in East Pakistan. The war lasted for nine months, and on December 1971, Bangladesh won their independence with the support of India (Faraizi 1993; Blanchet 2001; Bose and Jalal 1997). With the new name of the country, Bangladesh was born on January 11, 1972. Faraizi (1993) states, this liberation war “affected every segment of Bangladeshi society” (1993:33). He continues,

Children who lost their parents, and women who were raped by the Pakistani army, were deprived of their traditional base of support. Many took shelter in camps opened for the destitute by the various governmental and non-governmental agencies in the city. The famine of 1974 again pushed thousands of peasants to the city. Slums and squatter settlements quickly grew. After 1971 some garment factories were established in the city but these employed only a fraction of the population. A large number of the migrants are either self-employed or employed by small business operators in the informal and service sectors (1993:33-34).

Hossain (2008) also describes, in Dhaka, “the swamps and wetlands ... started to disappear quickly and new areas of residential, administrative, business and commercial importance began to develop; [at the same time,] slums and squatter settlement also sprang up in different areas of the city” (2008:69). By 1974, the population in Dhaka increased to 1.5 to two million, and 3.4 million in 1981 (Faraizi 1993; Hossain 2008). Despite the civil and political achievement, Bangladesh (especially Dhaka), at the time of independence, seemed already filled with an excessive number of the population that lived in squatter arrangements, worked in the informal sector, and struggled to subsist.

Post-colonial Bangladesh

When Bangladesh was still of East Pakistan era, the “development” apparatus was born and “poverty” became problematic. “Solutions” under the name of “development programs” and “projects” with rationale scientific knowledge were increasingly manufactured that were to lead “undeveloped” and “underdeveloped” to economic growth, social and technological advancement (Esteva 1993; Hobart 1993; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Latif 2004). When Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, it soon adopted this apparatus of development discourse and practices, and began receiving assistance and aid.

Sheikh Mujibar Rahman (Mujib), the leader at the Liberation War, became the first

prime minister of Bangladesh in 1972. He adopted the four basic principles: nationalism, secularism, socialism, and democracy from his political party (the Awami League (AL)) to the newly established national constitution. Though this new government undertook relief and reconstruction efforts with the support (or through the significant dependence) of the UN assistance, economic deteriorations, and social disorders in the country were not easily resolved. It is well known that Henry Kissinger (U.S. secretary of state of the time) referred Bangladesh as the “bottomless basket case” (Latif 2004). In 1974, the government imposed a state of emergency, restricting newspapers, banning political parties but one, and even limiting the legislative and judicial authorities, which escalated criticism towards Mujib’s leadership. In the same year, Bangladesh also expanded its development partners from two countries (India and the Soviet Union, with which Bangladesh had the first bilateral aid arrangement) to the World Bank and 26 foreign governments. They established the Bangladesh Aid Group or Pairs Club in 1974, which is now called the Bangladesh Development Forum (Jahan 2000; Latif 2004).

After the assassination of Mujib, Ziaur Rahman (Zia) (Army Chief of Staff General) took over office in 1976, and became a president in 1977. Many foreign nations and international development organizations welcomed Zia’s government, as Zia shifted economic and industrial policies from Mujib’s socialist-based one, and diminished state-owned enterprises to promote private banking systems and businesses (Jahan 2000; Latif 2004). He also lifted the one-party system, restored democracy, amended the constitution “with the reinterpretation of socialism as ‘economic and social justice,’” and replaced “secularism with ‘absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah’” (Latif 2004:79). The “development” activities, however, did not lead to as much progress as the Bangladesh Aid Group had hoped, and the amount of development assistance to Bangladesh began to decrease after 1980 (Latif 2004).

Hussain Mohammad Ershad (Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General) came to the office in 1982, after dissident military officers killed Zia in 1981. Ershad invoked martial law due to the failure of administrative, economic, and commercial management in the country. Foreign donors were attracted to his commitments to “market-led growth, macroeconomic stability, family planning and education,” which increased the amount of development assistance (Latif 2004:112). As a result, the Bangladesh government’s dependence on such assistance (e.g. aid per capita) significantly increased during the Ershad regime. In the 1980s, the student-led democracy movements opposing Ershad gradually increased, and he resigned in 1990. After the nation’s known-as most fair, peaceful, and successful parliamentary election of the time, Khaleda Zia (Zia’s widow) was elected as a prime minister in 1991. The country, however, faced continuous political turmoil, and an interim government again implemented a parliamentary election in 1996. This time AL won the election, and Sheikh Hasina (daughter of Mujib) became prime minister. Her administration continued until 2001 when the opposition leader Khaleda Zia again won the election.

Since independence in 1971, the political history of Bangladesh was almost a repetition of the two major political parties (the AL of Mujib and Hasina, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of Zia and Khaleda Zia). The AL took control from 1972 to 1975, 1996 to 2001, 2009 to present; the BNP from 1975 to 1981, 1991 to 1996, 2001 to 2006; the interim and caretaker government from 1990 to 1991, 2006 to 2009; and, Ershad’s Jatiya Party from 1982 to 1990. The AL is currently in office in coalition with the Jatiya Party, after the general elections in November 2008 overseen by the caretaker government. Hasina is prime minister for the second time. The next election will be scheduled early 2014, if not before, and the number of general strikes and public rallies are predicted to increase over the next couple of years.

Despite the average 6.2 percent annual GDP growth between 2005 and 2010 (World Bank 2012), rampant corruption due to the vast amount of development assistance is becoming increasingly serious. For instance, the World Bank recently suspended a \$1.2 billion loan to Bangladesh for a \$2.9 billion bridge project, due to corruption allegations (Wall Street Journal 2011). The Bangladeshi Anti-Corruption Committee also filed a case against the current and past prime ministers, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, in 2007 on a charge of corruption. The High Court, however, stopped the trial in 2008. In Bangladesh, many political leaders still claim their legitimacy and accumulate their popularity based on the amount of foreign and international assistance they can gain (Gardner 1993). As Latif (2004) argues, the “development apparatus” has become “a pervasive aspect of everyday life ... [which also] define[s] not only how policy makers and bureaucrats design development programs, but how the identity of individual citizens is formed ... [and is] the most dominant force in the way everyday reality is shaped and lived” in the country today (2004:268).

Meaning of being *Gorib* (Poor)

Much literature on as well as development programs in Bangladesh describe the country as “poor,” and the majority of Bangladeshi people also see themselves “being behind” in comparison with outsiders (foreigners) (Latif 2004). This, however, does not mean that they consider themselves “poor” within (inside) Bangladesh. Examining the meaning of being “*gorib*” (“poor”) for Bangladeshis tells how they objectify their position in relation to the inside and outside world.

It has been striking for me to that whenever I talk about the country with Bangladeshis, many of them say: “Because we are poor,” and “We are *gorib* (poor), do you understand?” A

Bangladeshi taxi driver in New York City asked me, “Why do you want to visit Bangladesh? The country is poor. I would never go back there.” He seemed confused and did not understand why I was willing to go where he and his family paid so much to leave. Another time in Dhaka, an insurance company owner of an affluent family jokingly said to me, “To work, we must feel oppressed. I think we actually like to feel oppressed, otherwise we will be sitting here, having a cup of tea, and not work.” A car driver in Dhaka also said, complaining about traffic jams, “You know, Bangladesh is poor, so no system in Bangladesh!”

Gardner (1993), a British anthropologist who has studied Bangladesh for more than a decade, also states the same attitudes of her Bangladeshi informants, repeatedly saying, “Our country is poor” (1993:7). Gardner (1993) offers an explanation to how Bangladeshi people perceive their “poorness” in relation to the powerful others, and associate it in the hegemonic relationships of their own country, *desh*, and foreign countries and power, *bidesh*. For Bangladeshi people, the *desh* as their homeland (e.g. village) and as the nation state are contradictory, because “different types of power are important” in each of the two contexts (1993:7). First, the *desh*, as their fertile *shonar* (golden) homeland (e.g. natal village), implies “the social group which is located in the village” (1993:5). The *desh* is where they have been and will always belong no matter how long or how far they are away (Gardner 1993). Many Bangladeshis who say, “Bangladesh is poor,” change their intonation, when they tell me about their *desh* as a homestead. They all proudly describe how beautiful the green and gold scenery of their natal village is, and strongly, sometimes insistently, urge me (outsiders, travelers) to visit. In Bangladesh, the geographic heritage of people (e.g. where they were born, raised, and where their parents and grandparents came from, etc.) is extremely critical information. When introducing themselves, they ask, “*Apnar desh kothay*” (literally meaning, “where is your

country”), and answer a name of their village, *upazilla*,⁶ district, and country. If they are from the same or nearby location, they show a strong sense of camaraderie. For them, the *desh* as their homeland “involves the social power of the kin group, ... [and] is viewed as a source of spiritual power, the locus of socialization and morality, ... [and] the roots of a person” (Gardner 1993:6-7,13). On the other hand, the *desh*, as the nation state, has a rather different connotation. It is often represented as “scarcity,” “want and suffering,” which is “partly attributable to the history and conditions of Bangladesh” (Gardner 1993:7). As having described above, it was *bidesh* (foreign countries and power) that occupied *desh*, taking the resources and industries, and utilized and exploited laborers (Faraizi 1993; Gardner 1993). After independence, the country has also continuously appealed for and relied on “assistance and aid” from *bidesh*.

For Bangladeshis, one of the indices of “poorness” is not necessarily the amount of foreign “materials” they have, but the availability of flexible “access” to foreign materials and land. While the “poor” are trapped and more likely to remain in a given space, the wealthier individuals and households are more capable of moving across and beyond spaces. It does not thus so much matter if they are physically in foreign countries. Some upper-class families rather choose to return and stay in Bangladesh (after their university education), no matter how much infrastructures, medical and health services are limited in the country, because they can travel abroad again anytime. They are the most affluent and elite population of Bangladesh, literally “own” the business sector, and fill executive positions in the government, private companies and associations, as well as in the NGO sectors. When any of their family members become sick, they fly to Bangkok or Singapore for a medical consultation. Their children go to an American (international) school in Dhaka, and talk about their toys and stationeries like, “Where did you

⁶ “*Upazilla*” or “*thana*” is a sub-district of districts in Bangladesh. Currently in Bangladesh, there are seven divisions, 64 districts, 500 *upazillas*, and 509 *thana*. The smaller administrative unit of *upazilla* and *tahana* is a village.

get this?” “I think I got this from my auntie in LA, but those are from Dubai and Bangkok.”

Having this flexible “access” to foreign lands implies the economic success and advancement, and a lifetime opportunity (chance) for economic improvement of the family. The freer, quicker, and easier they have and can build access to overseas locations, the more affluent and powerful the families are considered in Bangladesh.

Among the Bangladeshi, therefore, the *bidesh* is perceived as a place (source) of economic success, advancement, and materialistic power and prosperity, and having something their own *desh* cannot provide. The people take for granted this general condition of “inequality” between the “failing” *desh* and the “powerful” *bidesh* (Gardner 1993). These circumstances result in making the people of Bangladesh perceive and believe that they are and their own *desh* (as a nation state) is *gorib* (poor).

Perceived Characteristics of Gorib

Amongst my informants, low-income migrant families living in *bosti* of Dhaka take not only economic but also political and social factors (indicators) to measure their “poorness” between the households. Rashid and Mannan (2004) conducted a survey with low-income families in Dhaka and Chittagong (the second largest city in Bangladesh), and demonstrate their perceived factors of causing the “poor” (World Bank 2007).

Table 1. Perceived Characteristics of Being “Poor” in Urban Cities of Bangladesh

	Characteristics		
	Less “Poor”	More “Poor”	“Poorest”
Political Linkage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Leader of the neighborhood (slum), and respected by all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Economic Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupations include: landlords, government workers, and having permanent jobs • Having an overseas labor migrant in a household • Having a secure income • Eat three meals a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupations include: rickshaw pullers, day laborers, self-employed vendors, and garment factory workers • Having insecure income • Have less than three meals a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupations and social status include: beggars, widows, elderly, and the physically challenged • Female headed households with small children without any male support • Having no secure income • Having one meal a day if lucky
Facilities and Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic facilities in the household (water, sanitation, electricity, access to health services, etc.) • Some assets (better housing, TV, radio, furniture, good clothes, some jewelry, poultry, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No proper basic facilities, although may have some access • Fewer assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less access to basic facilities • No or few assets (no housing, etc.)
Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less dependent on others • Strong social capital, strong networks inside and outside the neighborhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More dependent on others • No social capital—poor networks inside and outside the neighborhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More (or completely) dependent on others • No social capital
Perceived Social Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Socially respectable” such as locally powerful individuals, <i>mastaans</i> (middlemen), and rich landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Socially less important” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Socially less prestigious”
Intra-Household Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good (stable) • Fewer children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tensions • Children with malnutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tensions • Absence of male members • Children with malnutrition
Schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More schooling experiences • Sending children to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little or no schooling • Cannot afford to send children to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No schooling • Cannot afford to send children to school

((Source) World Bank 2007:9-11)

In the table (Table 1) above, it is noteworthy that in addition to financial and material deficits (e.g. the amount of income, basic facilities at home, and the number of meals a day, etc.), social capital and linkages (e.g. political linkages, social capital, degree of dependency, etc.) are emphasized as an indicator to measure “poorness.” Having a political linkage, social capital, and “good” (stable and dependable) intra-household relationships is a critical aspect of not being “poor” or belonging to the less “socially respected and prestigious” groups. Hence, in Bangladesh, being *gorib* means not only owning few physical assets, but also being more dependent on the powerful others, such as the situation of the country relying on foreign countries (power); whereas, the “poorest” are those that are unable to even access the unequal and subordinate social relationships. Having any patron (e.g. local political and religious leaders, employers, etc.) to depend upon, however, does not mean that the present and future well being of low-income families is and will always be continuously secured. Low-income families in Dhaka and elsewhere constantly look for better options and opportunities, and migration (social mobility) is one of their livelihood means (strategies).

Rural-Urban (Internal) Migration

Everyday more than 500 thousand men and women migrate from villages to urban cities, foreign countries, or to other rural areas of Bangladesh, in order to seek better earning and learning (schooling) opportunities. Scoones (1998) states rural households have three main livelihood options: 1) “agricultural intensification and extensification,” 2) “income diversification,” and 3) “migration” (Waddington 2003:5). In Bangladesh, diversification and expansion of household income-generating activities through migration are a common practice (Akanda 2005; World Bank 2007), as Siddiqui T (2003) indicates that since the 18th century,

Bangladeshi people have facilitated migration as one of their most common livelihood strategies despite their socioeconomic status (positions) in society. Rural to urban (internal) migration is the most dominant form of migration, especially among low-income families. Approximately two-thirds of emigration from rural villages is to urban cities inside Bangladesh, whereas 24 percent directly go overseas and ten percent to other rural areas⁷ (Afsar 2003).

The selection of destinations, migration reasons, experiences, benefits, and external constraints are significantly different according to the migrants' political, social, and economic (financial) resources, capacities, and positions. Today, sons and daughters of affluent upper-class families are expected (presumed) to be educated only abroad, most commonly in the UK, the US, and Australia; and, male family members of lower middle class become short-term contract labor migrants either to the Middle East or Southeast Asia. The total number of overseas migrants comprises a few percent of the total population in Bangladesh, and the percentage of households affected by overseas migration (e.g. having one or more migrants, receiving remittances, etc.) reaches approximately 20 percent (Siddiqui T 2003; Whitehead and Hashim 2005). The focus of this study, children participating in non-formal primary education (NFPE) programs and their families, however, do not belong to either of these groups of cross-border migrants (though few of the children I interviewed mentioned that their father or uncle works overseas). The children's families belong to low-income landless rural villagers living in a severe poverty-stricken urban environment. They dream of cross-border migration; yet, they first migrate to urban cities and seek better earning opportunities (Afsar 2003; Siddiqui T 2003).

Among low-income families, the combinations of traditional practices of livelihoods, individual and family decision making, views and expectations toward earning opportunities,

⁷ These percentages become slightly different when migrants' gender is taken into account; the percentage of female rural-rural migration is higher than that of rural-urban migration due to the common practice of women's marital migration (e.g. after marriage, a woman (bride) moves to live in her husband's natal village (home)).

interpersonal ties and networks, and changing social realities in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh are the reasons they migrate from their natal rural villages to urban cities. Shipton (1995) also rephrases Berry's analysis (1993) on agrarian change in Africa, "[r]ural people's main concern, given so much political-economic instability, is to spread their contracts and keep their options open, to remain ready for opportunities and threats they can neither predict nor control" (Shipton 1995:174). This is also applicable to the context of present Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, not only due to political and economic confusion, but also as a result of constant natural calamities and hazards (e.g. floods, cyclones, and land erosion), many low-income, landless agricultural laborer families leave their villages and move to urban cities where they can find "more options and opportunities" for income-generating activities, such as labor, trade, and business.

Agriculture is the country's major industry; however, the rural population and labor force in agriculture have dramatically decreased in the last two decades. More than 90 percent of the population lived in rural villages until the 1970s, but today, less than three-fourth reside in villages. The percentage of the labor force in the agricultural sector has almost halved from the late 1980s, and now less than 50 percent of employment opportunities are generated from this sector (Afsar 2003; Akanda 2005; World Bank 2012). In addition, among rural households in Bangladesh, income from agriculture declined from 59 percent in 1988 to 44 percent in 2000, while that from non-farm activities (including remittances) increased from 35 percent to 49 percent over the period. The percentage of rural households receiving remittances doubled from 11 percent to 21 percent (1988 to 2000), and today, remittances contribute more than ten percent of the total rural household income (Afsar 2003).

As shown in the table (Table 2) below, the land area per household (the land man ratio)

has also declined over time in Bangladesh. The wealthier households that own relatively larger land in villages have “shifted their activities towards business or services, and gave the land to marginal farmers as tenants” (Akanda 2005:177). Moreover, at the time of inheritance, land is usually divided equally to the number of sons, and each son inherits the same size of land from their fathers. As a result, each son’s plot becomes smaller than his father’s (Harris 1991; Akanda 2005). The table (Table 2) shows the changes in land holding and ownership by different farm size groups in 1960, 1984, and 1990. The percentage of land owned by large farmers decreased while that of small farmers increased.

Table 2. Changing Pattern: Percentage of Farm Holding and Land Ownership by Different Farm Size Group

	1960	1984	1996
Farm Holding (%)			
More than 3.0ha	10.7	4.9	2.51
2.0 to 3.0ha	11.4	6.8	3.83
1.0 to 2.0ha	26.3	18.0	13.69
0.4 to 1.0ha	27.3	29.9	31.07
None to 0.4ha	24.3	40.4	48.90
Land Ownership (%)			
More than 3.0ha	38.1	25.9	17.32
2.0 to 3.0ha	19.3	17.6	14.71
1.0 to 2.0ha	26.4	27.5	26.78
0.4 to 1.0ha	13.0	21.2	28.19
None to 0.4ha	3.2	7.8	12.99

((Source) Akanda 2005:178)

A large portion of land in Bangladesh is cultivated by the landless and small farmers. The landless, as well as what Jannuzi and Peach (1980) calls “functionally landless” (owning less than 0.4ha), own approximately 13 percent of the land, while doing farming activities in nearly 50 percent of the land as tenants. They belong to the lowest socioeconomic position in rural society. They have no or too little land to support their own households, and thus must engage in sharecropping, laboring (both in farm (planting and harvesting), and doing other business. For example, in addition to cultivating the fields and growing rice and other crops, they integrate their homestead with livestock (poultry, goats, and cattle rearing and milk cow rearing), fisheries, and forestry, and are also engaged in non-farm activities including making and selling handicrafts and farm implements, rickshaw pulling, and petty trading. They also sometimes rent more lands to increase agricultural production (Harris 1991; Akanda 2005). Many of them then eventually seek migration to urban cities. The majority of migrant families living in *bosti* in Dhaka were those landless or marginal landholding agricultural laborers in villages (Afsar 2003).

Nature of Interpersonal Relationships

In addition to external environments and situations, one of the most significant factors that influences and shapes migration and urban experiences of Bangladeshis is interpersonal ties and networks (Afsar 2003; Hossain 2004). Strong social ties can be a strong enough reason for a family to remain in a village, or to facilitate migration. On the other hand, a rupture or loss of social ties with relatives and neighbors in a village would also push a family to emigrate to Dhaka or other urban cities. In Bangladesh, family and kin relations and networks of friends and neighbors play a fundamental role both in facilitating and discouraging migration (Gardner 1995; Afsar 2000; Naher 2002; Ahmed 2003).

Prior to moving to a city, migrants make pre-arrangements for a place to stay and work in Dhaka with their relatives or those from the same village, and upon arrival, they maintain close contact with their kin (Opel 1998; Afsar 2000). Relatives and acquaintances spare no effort in providing assistance towards those that are sick, short of money and materials, or are in trouble with their neighbors from different districts (Ahmed 2003). Moreover, the networks induce “a sense of solidarity to face the adversities of squatter life” (Afsar 2000:11). Some migrants also preserve associations with their natal families. They send clothes, money (remittance), and fruits to their kin in rural areas, and sometimes go back for religious festivals (holidays), family-related work (e.g. building a new house), and events (e.g. wedding and funerals) (Afsar 2003; Ahmed 2003).

In such an urban poverty-stricken environment like Dhaka, due to the limited level or the absence of the government’s capacity to assure social security systems and services (e.g. government-sponsored relocation programs for housing, employment, or schooling) (Whitehead et al. 2007), the social and economic resources available to not only low-income families but also most of the residents are mostly generated through other social channels, and formal and informal social networks. Purvez (2003) illustrates formal and informal social networks that low-income families in Bangladesh utilize to subsist. The different types of “formal” social networks are: kin-based, civil society-based (e.g. NGOs), governance-based (e.g. local government), and local institution-based (e.g. market, school, and mosque). The “informal” networks are: friends-based (among friends, neighbors, and fellow villagers), power-based (with local elites and authority), transaction-based (with money lenders and wealthier persons), and association-based (e.g. informal clubs and committees). Graves and Graves (1974) also describe three dimensions of adaptation strategies to the urban setting: individualistic versus

group-oriented, formal versus informal, and generalized versus specialized. Livelihoods in Dhaka depend foremost on those social ties and networks they have and maintain. The Bengali notion of “entitlement” assures that the “poor” feel the moral rights entitled to and also “legitimately” depend on others’ wealth (Maloney 1988; Ghafur 2000; Kochanek 2000).

The description of social ties and networks playing a role as “informal protective mechanisms,” “informal safety nets,” or “social capital” is, however, perhaps too simple and optimistic, and sounds too hopeful (Gardner and Ahmed 2006:4). As Gardner and Ahmed (2006) point out, in Bangladesh, “social protection comes at a cost: in return for the *shahajo*” (help, assistance) (2006:5). When describing the livelihood of low-income migrant families in Dhaka, for example, external constraints, tensions and obligations (in and around social relations) must also be taken into account in order to see “the cultural and moral dimensions of hierarchy and reciprocity” (Wood 2005:13). Gardner and Ahmed (2006) further note that “local institutions of social protection” need to be situated “within the wider political economics in which they are embedded,” and “the forms of power that these relationships involve” must also be deliberately addressed (2006:5).

Among Bangladeshis, the interpersonal relationships are “characterized by a foremost of right and responsibilities, social pressures and conventions, detailing what is due to and from whom” (White 2002:734). Since Bengali Muslims are “subject to ideals of *Jakat*” (Gardner and Ahmed 2006:19), and have the *duevt* (*dyto*) (obligation) of care to their “own poor,” the “poor” can occasionally receive the *shahajo* (help, assistance) of their patrons, including food, clothes, shelter, employment, and access to land on holy days as well as ritual occasions. Nevertheless, the *shahajo* can only be provided for their “own poor,” as this implies over whom the *shahajo* providers (wealthier, patrons) maintain their power and authority, and to whom the “poorer”

have social and moral obligations. In Bangladesh, the people are always fully and clearly aware that who provides the *shahajo* due to whom. The wealthier choose their “own poor” from a larger patrilineage (*gusti*), first close relatives, and lastly non-relatives with whom the wealthier people have constructed the quasi kinship relations (Gardner and Ahmed 2006). Though the society of Bangladesh is often described as patrilineal and patriarchal (Aziz 1979; Giani 2006), Hara (1991) and Gardner and Ahmed (2006) observe the “own kin” would include not only one’s patrilineage (father’s kin) but also mother’s kin, especially those living in the same or nearby villages. White (2002) adds that this patron-client relationship also applies to adult-children relationships. In Bangladesh, “children are identified not as ... a distinct social group, but in categories of belonging,” and “[t]here is a radical difference between my [own] child’ and ‘your child,’ between one who belongs and one who is an outsider” (2002:734).

At present, in Bangladesh, the patron-client-like hierarchical power relationship does not only characterize the traditional relationship between *borolok* (literally meaning “big people,” who sit and eat, e.g. landlords) and *chotlok* (literally meaning “small people,” e.g. peasants, etc.) in villages, but also applies to the relationship between wealthier employers and workers (wage laborers) in non-agricultural sectors of urban cities (e.g. garment factory owner and workers, rickshaw owner and pullers) (Afsar 2000; White 2002). While some studies claim that rapid social change has destroyed the “traditional” patronage system in Bangladesh (Kabeer 2002; Westergaard and Hossain 2005), Ghafur (2002) and Gardner and Ahmed (2006) demonstrate an opposite conclusion that a new type of the patron-client relationship is still widely “encouraged” among both rural villages as well as urban cities. For example, in the village where Gardner and Ahmed (2006) have conducted their study, a number of villagers seek opportunities to immigrate to London. Then, replacing their labor force, migrants from the neighboring regions (usually

economically more challenged districts) come and seek earning opportunities. The patron-client relationship is maintained through those incoming wage labor migrants, and the village native employers (landowners). After the migrants stay and work in the village for a long enough period, they are considered the landowner's "own poor." They "construct quasi kinship relations, and [ultimately] obtain a degree of patronage" from the wealthier employers (Gardner and Ahmed 2006:33). In other words, the "own poor" do not necessarily have a kin relationship with their patron. The best "own poor" for patrons are, sometimes, the most "obedient poor" whom they force to work (and sometimes exploit).

The basic pattern of the patron-client-like hierarchical power relationships is still observed in Dhaka; however, due to the material change, the relationships seem to have a different nature. Many Bangladeshi also have mentioned to me that interpersonal relationships in Dhaka are different from those in rural villages. Ali (2006) states,

Due to the process of urbanization and industrialization associated with technological and material changes, there is a corresponding change in the attitudes, thoughts, values, beliefs, and behavior of the people of Dhaka City who are affected by the material change (2006:291).

Rubbo and Taussig (1983) have revealed a difference in the "inner nature" of human (hierarchical) relationships in urban cities from that of "traditional" ones in villages in their study of young female servants in Colombia. They argue that the nature of "servanthood" in urban cities is changing, while it is still "actively reproducing some of the basic patterns of oppression that make these societies what they are today" (1983:5). They explain, "due to diffuse and subtle causes which are much cultural as economic: that in keeping with the transformation of all economic relations into capitalist contractual ones, servanthood becomes less familial and more

commercial, creating a new pattern of freedom and submission” (1983:6). Berry (1993) studies agrarian change in Africa, and also argues,

Investment in social networks has not ... either reproduced ‘traditional’ institutions intact or transformed them into corporate units of resource management and control. On the contrary, boundaries and structures of social networks have remained fluid and contested, and members’ positions within them vary according to different individual patterns of participation in wider circuits of economic and social activity. Migration, education [(schooling)], and the diversification of income-earning activities have altered relations between elders and juniors, chiefs and subjects, husbands and wives, and reduce people’s ability to count on any particular relationship as a stable basis for access to resources (1993:200).

In rural villages of Bangladesh, low-income migrant families provide an agricultural labor force to their patron (landlord) in exchange for social protection, employment, and material assets (e.g. food, clothes, and shelter). Their landlord owns assets, and keeps stronger political and social linkages inside and outside a village, which are also crucial factors for the laborers (client) in terms of belonging to a social group (organization), and securing political, economic, and social aspects of their livelihoods. The “structural relationships” in rural villages, however, “perpetuate differential access to opportunities,” since the patron controls the assets and resources (Gardner and Lewis 1996:106). The low-income families (agricultural laborers) have limited opportunities in villages. On the other hand, when they migrate to Dhaka, dependency on patrons, as well as the nature of relations with new patrons will change. In the urban context, for example, an employer and a landlord are most likely different people. Instead of offering a labor force of a whole family to a landlord in return for material assets (e.g. shelter), in Dhaka, the migrants must have a job to receive cash (wage) from their employer (or do small business on his or her own, e.g. hawker, etc.), and must then pay rent to the landlord in cash. In addition, it is

common practice in Dhaka for local political leaders, gangs, as well as police officers to collect tolls, illegal rent, and an excessive amount of electricity and water bills from migrants in the name of “protection” (World Bank 2007). This requires slum residents to have cash to pay them. Many such migrants shared their complaints with me saying, “After the election in 2008, the ruling party has changed. Now we must pay to both of the parties.”

In summary, in Dhaka, as a way to assure their economic security, low-income migrant families tend to choose contract-based, commercial relations with their unrelated employers (owners of business) and landlords. Though they separate the “business” relationships from those of families, many migrants still live close to their families, and maintain more complicated obligations and responsibilities expected among family, kin-based relations. They do not solely depend on one relationship with one *malik* (owner, employer) or kin-based relations, but establish access to multiple social organizations and resources in Dhaka.

Destination Dhaka: Urban Poverty and Economic Activities

In contrast to the tranquil rural scenery of paddy fields and green nature, Dhaka, the fast-growing urban capital city of Bangladesh, is full of energy and opportunities. Hundreds of new buildings appear every week. Roads are dusty but crowded with busy working people, colorful rickshaws, and imported used vehicles, and sometimes goats and cows also passing by. Rickshaws are not only for people, but also carry “anything,” such as vegetables, bananas, furniture, and garments. During the day, the city is never quiet with incessant noise. Car drivers are constantly blowing horns, rickshaw pullers are ringing their bicycle bells, and some men and women are shouting at each other on the streets. When traffic lights are out due to a power failure (outrage), green uniformed policemen blow their whistles to control the massive amount

of traffic. Fights (or more like violence) of police officers toward rickshaw pullers are a common daily scene in Dhaka.

The urban population in Bangladesh is 44.81 million (in 2009), or 27.62 percent of the total population. Of the urban population, 31.81 percent (14.25 million) live in the Dhaka Metropolitan Area (DMA), and seven to eight million are inside the city. The population density inside the city is 18,639.31 per square miles (48,275.86 per square kilometers), 42 times more than the country's average. Furthermore, while the population growth in rural areas is 0.7 per year, the growth of urban area is 3.1 (in 2009), mostly caused by incoming migrants from rural villages (World Bank 2007, 2011). Afsar (2003) notes, “[m]igration accounts for about two-thirds of the urban growth seen in Bangladesh since independence” (2003:2). A steady and continuous increase in the urban population is easily predicted in Bangladesh, and at least for a few more decades, Dhaka will remain one of the most populated cities in the world with nearly 20 million residents by 2020 (World Bank 2007, 2011).

Faraizi (1993) indicates that internal (rural-urban) migration to Dhaka was unique unlike other countries, because it was not a result of “the development of industrial capitalism,” but rather of the “social transformations” during the British occupation, which marginalized “the rural population at the advent of agricultural commercialization,” and then later of the partition of India in 1947, in which a large Hindu rural population of Bangladesh moved to India, while Muslims from India settled in urban cities of Bangladesh (Faraizi 1993:36; Hossain 2008). Since the growing migration was not due to industrialization, economic growth, or increasing demands for labor forces, there were few job opportunities available in Dhaka, throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century (Ahsan Ullah et al. 1999). By the 1970s, single male temporary (seasonal) migration was dominant, and the situation dramatically changed in the

1980s. One of the major causes that significantly expanded job opportunities for low-income migrant families in Dhaka is the vast amount of the domestic and foreign investments leading to economic boom in Bangladesh's largest industry—the ready-made garment (RMG) sector—in the mid-1980s. It has drawn a number of young female migrants to urban cities, particularly to Dhaka and Chittagong (two largest cities in Bangladesh), and changed the pattern and nature of internal migration in Bangladesh (Afsar 2003). More than half of the low-income migrant population in Dhaka is now estimated to be younger than 35 years of age (Hossain 2008).

Some of the major challenges in urban cities include: securing a safe residence and establishing access to water and sanitation facilities (Afsar 2003). The city's infrastructure to accommodate migrants is still inadequate, and thus, the number of Dhaka residents living in a severe poverty-stricken environment is more and more apparent (Hossain 2004, 2008). Many of the migrants find their house in *bosti*, and others temporally reside on public lands (e.g. by railways and parks) (Afsar 2003). The *bosti* are found all over Dhaka borders, especially near rivers and lakes, though the owners of those lands are private landlords and the government. In 1976, about ten thousand people were residing in ten *bosti*, which increased to 718 thousand in over two thousand *bosti* in 1993, and one million in over three thousand *bosti* in 1996. More than 40 percent of those settlements are owned by private individuals, 35 percent by multiple private partners, and 21 percent by the government (Hossain 2008). Of the slum residents, about 7,600 households in 44 *bosti* are prone to flooding as their houses are built within 54.6 yards (50 meters) of rivers and lakes. Moreover, slum dwellers are always at constant risk and threat of forced eviction. In 2007, one of my informants lost his house due to the government's eviction order. In 2012, one of the largest *bosti* in Dhaka (Karail-Mohakhali), with approximately 40 thousand residents became a subject of the Dhaka district administration's forced eviction project.

I witnessed more and more new houses constructed everyday in the *bosti* in 2010; however, in 2012, two thousand houses have been demolished, and 4,500 residents were forced to move out of their homes without any advance notice (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2012).

Living Arrangements

A typical low-income migrant household in Dhaka usually consists of two or three generations. The household income and expenditure of male-headed families (both father and mother are present) is relatively higher than those of families with a single parent or female-headed households (Hossain 2004). Most divorced or widowed men or women with small children do not live as a two-generation family. They usually have family support from their father and mother, and brothers and sisters (children's grandparents, uncles and aunts) to live in a house in *bosti* (not on the streets). They spend their income mostly on house rents and food items, especially rice, potatoes, and vegetables. Fruits, meats, and milk are expensive, and thus are eaten a few times a month (Hossain 2004). Most of these families seem to have meals once or twice a day. When they treat a guest, they prepare expensive drinks, Coca-Cola and Seven-up, in addition to a cup of tea, a glass of water, biscuits or seasonal fruits.

A typical *bosti* single-roomed house size of low-income migrants is less than one hundred square feet. Inside the house, they have one bed (similar to the full or queen bed sizes), a few small cupboards, dressers, and cabinets, in which they keep dishes and clothes. Some families also have a TV, but only few, as far as I observed, actually work. A basin for linen and dishes, and bottles for clean water are usually placed on the floor. On the only bed in the house, several family members lie down sideways at different times of a day, and those that cannot fit on the bed sleep on the floor.

The houses in *bosti* are mostly built from inexpensive materials, such as tin, bamboo, and polythene. Only slightly more than 15 percent of houses are constructed from concrete (cement) materials with permanent paved walls and floors, which they call the “*paka*” houses (Hossain 2004, 2005). Some houses are equipped with a fan (with no ventilation system and with irregular electricity); yet, these housing materials absorb the heat and humidity, easily over 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius). Low-income migrants usually rent one of the houses from local landlords. The monthly rent ranges from Tk.1,500 to Tk.3,000 (US\$21.43 to 42.86), depending on the locations and the quality of their housing materials.

On average the distance to toilet facilities and clinics from each house is more than 875.2 yards (eight hundred meters) (World Bank 2007). More than a half of *bosti* residents purchase medicines without consulting a doctor, and only one third of families use health services (Hossain 2004, 2005). While 22 percent have gas facilities for cooking inside the house, others use fuel or do not have such facilities at all (Hossain 2008). Women use a common kitchen in an open space sharing it with several households (men do not cook for their families). Though they have electricity and water supplies (for the use of bath), they are irregular and the water is not safe to drink. For drinking water, the residents use local hand tube-wells (Hossain 2004, 2005), that is often done by young children. The lack of waste disposal system makes the soils inside *bosti* dark gray, posing serious environmental challenges. Such environmental hardship can cause frequent factionalism and conflicts with or among neighbors (Hossain 2009).

Job Opportunities and Economic Activities in Dhaka

Despite the challenges and constraints, low-income rural migrants still find the “material change” in the city “attractive” enough to “move towards Dhaka in order to enhance their

socioeconomic condition” (Ali 2006:291). Through social ties and networks with relatives, friends, and neighbors, 75 percent of low-income internal migrants say that they have had a job prior to arrival in Dhaka; 33 percent have information about the job; and, 60 percent start their work within one week of arrival (Afsar 1999; Afsar 2003). Villagers are increasingly “more informed about job opportunities at work destinations” (Afsar 2003:3). The parents of young girls may have become less “conservative” about sending their daughters to the big city through learning about work availability and job opportunities in the garment sector. The unemployment rate of migrant households is only four percent, while the number doubles for non-migrant households (Afsar 2003). Much of employment opportunities of migrants are found in the informal sector or in the garment factories (World Bank 2007). Although agriculture is still the largest sector in Bangladesh, listening to former migrants and witnessing their success in cities, more and more landless agricultural laborers are leaving their villages for the urban district center, and eventually to the capital city, Dhaka.

The cost of transportation to Dhaka is expensive, and daily expenses in urban cities would be much higher than in rural villages. In the city, however, wages also increase and are more stable (regular). Women and children can also easily engage in labor, and thus the income source of one family multiplies (Afsar 2003; World Bank 2007). One woman told me that, “My family came to Dhaka, because I could find a job here.” Labor opportunities in Dhaka help such households seek and expand their economic security outside of their family relationship. Afsar (2003) states that around 60 percent of migrant households report their economic situation has improved, while 40 percent of non-migrant rural households report such improvement. Between 1985 and 1995, the annual growth of agricultural income was less than one percent; whereas, that of non-agricultural income was 6 percent (Afsar 2003). As a result, between 1996 and 2000,

the growth rate of the labor force in Dhaka was 15 percent, whereas that of Bangladesh as a whole was seven percent (World Bank 2007). Due to rapid industrial growth in recent years, the current gap of income growth between agricultural and non-agricultural income is much larger than the 1980s and 1990s. The differences (gap) in wages are shown in the table (Table 3) below, in which the cost of living differentials (both food and non-food items) are calculated, and the wages in rural areas are adjusted accordingly. The data show the average monthly wage of a low-income migrant is Tk.3,237 (US\$46.24), while other studies indicate the average household monthly income is between Tk.4,452 to Tk.5,250 (US\$63.60 to 75.00), and expenditure ranges from Tk.4,156 to Tk.4,900 (US\$59.37 to 70.00) (Hossain 2004, 2005). The average wage of a low-income migrant household in Dhaka is much higher than that of rural households.

Table 3. Comparison of Monthly Wages in Dhaka and Rural Areas

	Dhaka	Rural Areas	Increase in Dhaka (%)
Average Monthly Wage	Tk.3,237 (US\$46.24)	Tk.2,490 (US\$35.57)	30.0
Male	4,159 (59.41)	2,891 (41.30)	43.9
Female	1,600 (22.86)	1,181 (16.87)	35.5
By Sector			
Agriculture	1,768 (25.26)	1,389 (19.84)	27.3
Construction	6,273 (89.61)	2,410 (34.43)	160.3
Household Services	1,370 (19.57)	1,088 (15.54)	25.9
Manufacturing	2,329 (33.27)	2,426 (34.66)	-4.0
Services	4,507 (64.39)	4,442 (63.46)	1.5
Trade	3,000 (42.86)	1,950 (27.86)	53.8
Transport	3,918 (55.97)	3,476 (49.66)	12.7

((Source) World Bank 2007:24)

Notes: In the report of the World Bank (2007), “services” are stated as “community services.” However, in this dissertation, I have restated “community services” as “services” in order to distinguish between “voluntary (unpaid) services.”

Construction work has the largest gap in monthly wages between in Dhaka and rural areas (more than 160.3 percent), while that of the manufacturing work stays the same or is lower.

Manufacturing work consists of labor in factories, and the wage differentials in Dhaka and rural villages do not vary significantly; however, the number of job opportunities is much higher in and around Dhaka, as factories are usually built near urban cities. The following table (Table 4) compares the percentages of the employed population of the lowest economic level in Dhaka and Bangladesh at large, by sector (including construction, finance, etc.) and employment status.

Table 4. Employed Population of the Lowest Economic Level in Dhaka and Bangladesh by Sector and Employment Status (2000)

	Dhaka (%)	Bangladesh (%)
By Employment Status		
Self Employer	33.5	32.4
Employer	0.3	0.2
Employee	48.8	13.3
Unpaid Family Worker	12.9	36.7
Day Laborer	4.6	17.6
By Sector		
Agriculture	11.8	62.3
Household Services	9.9	2.6
Manufacturing	17.1	7.4
Services	21.7	7.4
Trade	23.2	12.0
Transport	9.3	4.6

((Source) World Bank 2007:102)

Agriculture, trade, transport, and services are male-dominant sectors, while female workers work in the manufacturing and household service sectors. Men work as rickshaw pullers, seasonal fruit or vegetable vendors (traders), construction workers, transportation workers (drivers and helpers), garment factory workers, security guards, peons (helpers) and cleaners in offices, or workers (assistants) in factories and workshops (garages). Men's employment status (styles) varies, from those that are employers themselves to those laboring on a daily basis. Women, on the other hand, are mostly engaged either in domestic work (servant) or garment factory work. Not many women of low-income migrant families are self-employed or are employers; but they are rather working as "employees" and "laborers." Few women are engaged in the home-based business (with or without their husband), such as making pita bread, delivering and selling them in the neighborhood or on the street.

Agricultural Labor and Business: The estimated 11.8 percent of the labor force in Dhaka is engaged in agriculture. Some agricultural fields can be found on the periphery of Dhaka (World Bank 2007). Some of the families I interviewed in northeast Dhaka are working in the fields, cultivate lands, harvest crops (vegetables), and sell them in markets or on the streets. Some men also run small fishery businesses, catch fish in rivers and lakes, and sell them on the streets or in the market. They are self-employed, and besides their agricultural work, they also work as rickshaw pullers and their wives may also work for additional earning.

Self-employed Trade Business: Fruit and vegetable selling (vendors), fish, tea selling (in a shop or on the streets), and pita selling are some of the most common occupations among low-income migrants in Dhaka. Vegetable sellers, for example, lay in a certain amount of seasonal vegetables at a market, open a street shop by the roadside, or walk around as a hawker with a basket on his head. Only a few times have I seen an elderly woman or a young teenage

girl selling fruits or vegetables (e.g. some of them help their father, husband, and brothers, while they are away for lunch or rest, etc.). This type of trading (vendor) is usually a male-dominant occupation. Such workers earn approximately Tk.50 to 100 (US\$0.71 to 1.43) a day.

Transportation Work: One of the most common and popular employment avenues among low-income male migrants is rickshaw pulling (Faraizi 1993), locally called *rickshaw wara*. No female rickshaw puller is found in Bangladesh. The workers rent a rickshaw from a rickshaw owner for approximately Tk.50 to Tk.100 (US\$0.71 to 1.43) a day, and ride a rickshaw for a certain number of permitted hours of the day. They usually earn up to Tk.300 (US\$4.29) a day, and after paying rent, their daily profit is Tk.200 to Tk.250 (US\$2.86 to 3.57). In Dhaka, the traffic authority does not allow rickshaw pullers to enter in some major roads to lessen the traffic; and if rickshaw pullers accidentally (or responding to the passengers' insistent demand) cross such roads, police officers would immediately take violent action against them, including hitting their heads, cutting off their wheels, and taking their rickshaws away. Other transportation work includes: *thelagarhi* puller (a two-wheel carrier made by bamboo, "*thela*" means push, and "*garhi*" means a vehicle), van rickshaw puller, CNG *garhi* or mishuk driver, bus driver and helper, tempo bus driver and helper, boatman and helper, and private car driver. The size of a *thelagarhi* is much larger than a sedan car (the length is twice larger than a sedan), and even if empty, one person pulls and more than two persons must push. The CNG stands for compressed natural gas, and CNG *garhi* (or simply CNG) indicates a three-wheel motorcycle taxi run by CNG. A *mishuk* is also a three-wheel motorcycle taxi run by CNG, but slightly smaller in size than a CNG *garhi*. A tempo bus is what 4WD pickup truck is remodeled, and usually accomodates more than ten passengers. It is one of the least expensive transportation options in Dhaka (e.g. less expensive than CNG). Private and office (company) car drivers are perceived as

the best paid (approximately Tk.5,000 (US\$71.43)) among transportation workers.

Domestic Worker: Many domestic workers are hired by nearby middleclass households or young bachelors' apartment houses called a "mess" arrangement. It is mostly a female-dominated occupation, though some upperclass families and foreign expatriates hire male adults as their cook and servant. Most of them work six days a week (Saturday to Thursday), and are responsible for cleaning, washing dishes and clothes, ironing, and occasional cooking. The average monthly wage for low-income migrant workers is Tk.500 to 3,000 (US\$7.14 to 42.86), depending on working hours, experience, the length (years) of employment at a particular household (employer), and whether she or he can cook. The wage can be up to Tk.7,000 to 8,000 (US\$100.00 to 114.29) for those working fulltime (everyday) at an upperclass or foreigners' house.

Garment Factory Worker: More than two-thirds of workers of the manufacturing sector in Bangladesh account for those in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector (World Bank 2007). The RMG sector in Bangladesh is an export-oriented, multi-billion dollar manufacturing industry, yet, extremely volatile to the demands of the global market (where popular American and European apparel makers sell the garments). For the last few decades, the RMG industry has played a significant role in the country by contributing to export earnings, foreign exchange earnings, and employment creation for both men and women (Chowdhury and Denecke 2007; Haider 2007; BGMEA 2009). About 13 percent of total GDP comes from this sector. The sector consists of nearly five thousand factories and approximately 3.1 million workers of whom 85 to 90 percent are women and 68 percent come from low-income families or rural villages (migrants to urban industrial areas). More than 90 to 95 percent of the factories are locally owned, except several foreign firms located in export processing zones (EPZ) of Dhaka and Chittagong

(BGMEA 2009). In 1997, more than 75 percent of factories had a maximum of four hundred employees each. Today, the number of workers in a factory ranges from a few hundred to several thousand, with an average of five hundred to six hundred workers (FWF 2006). Male and female workers have different roles and types of work: female workers tend to work either in stitching, linking, or finishing department, while in cutting, dyeing, washing, knitting, and ironing departments, most workers are male.

The average working hours are approximately eight to 12 hours a day, six days a week. In October 2006, the Government of Bangladesh announced a minimum monthly wage, Tk.1,662.50 (US\$23.96), which was increased to Tk.3,000.00 (US\$42.86) in 2010. In addition, some sweater factories apply a “per piece” rate by which the factories pay wages by piece (in addition to the minimum wage) to workers in a certain usually male-dominated department (e.g. knitting). The “per piece” rate system gives some advantage to experienced and skilled workers who can produce more sweaters in a month, when there are more production orders in a factory. Some of the skilled workers earn more than Tk.20 thousand to 30 thousand (US\$287.71 to 428.57) per month.⁸ The disadvantages are that this is based on the amount of orders, as well as increasing the wage difference within a factory. Some factories allow workers to transfer from fixed rate to a “per piece” rate department, if their skills meet the requirements. The average wage of the RMG sector is higher than the national average (FWF 2006, 2012).

Other Types of Occupations of low-income migrants in Dhaka include skilled mechanics, craftsman, artisan, and mason, locally known as “*mistiri*,” un-skilled or semi-skilled construction workers (day laborers), as well as beggars. The skilled workers are usually employed by a shop or workshop owner and paid on a monthly basis. On the other hand,

⁸ The monthly salary for entry-level services job for middle-class university-graduated or those who have a master’s degree are approximately Tk.5,000 to Tk.10,000 (US\$71.43 to 142.86).

unskilled laborers work and are paid on a daily basis. I often observed the laborers making queues at certain points of the day in the morning, and a *sadder* (a leader of laborers) forms a group to develop a work contract for the laborers. The *sadder* takes a commission, and sometimes works with the laborers. Many beggars in Dhaka have a fixed point of begging, and they are not necessarily homeless or live on the street, but commute to the point from their home to work for their manager (controller) of the area. I have seen several times that the man, who was always begging at an intersection near my apartment, commutes from *bosti* to the intersection riding on a boat crossing a river.

Women in Labor

A large number of female rural migrants, that come to Dhaka independently or along with their male family members and participate in various economic activities, are sometime seen as “empowering” women and “improving” their status in the society. Ahsan (1997), for instance, claims independent female migration a meaningful social mobility, because that will lead to “equal access to opportunity and full recognition of the role of women both as agents and beneficiaries of [economic] development” (1997:60). He describes, “traditionally” women in Bangladesh have been restricted by many social norms; for example, due to the *purdah* system, women cannot go outside beyond the confines of the house, but live inside to stay out of sight of men or strangers. According to Ahsan (1997), migration and the expansion of female employment in urban cities have broken this “tradition.” Many women are now allowed to work (physically) “independently” outside of their households, and as a consequence, the patriarchy in Bangladesh weakened (Ahsan 1997). Nonetheless, I would argue this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, in Dhaka, the percentage of women engaged in labor activities is higher in low-income

household families, and less in those of wealthier families (World Bank 2007). Despite the increase in schooling and employment opportunities for women, “womanhood” and the fundamental position of Bangladeshi women in society have changed little (Westergaard and Hossain 2005; Rozario 2007). Even when women migrate alone to a city, she is still considered to be a member of her family in a rural village, and continues to keep close relationships until officially separated by marriage (Rozario 2007). The households with laboring women can be seen as families in which women cannot afford not to work and observe the *pardah*.

Kabeer (1997) studies laboring women (wives and daughters) and intra-household bargaining power in Bangladesh, and explains the position of women in the basic structure of Bangladeshi society. He states, “[p]atriarchal structures [of Bangladeshi society] create gender-asymmetries in endowments, risks, and constraints which penalize autonomous behavior for women but also offer them provision and protection if they remain within its parameters” (1997:300). Women in Bangladesh are aware of their own resources and necessities (not only financially but also socially and politically) to rely on family networks, first as daughters to their fathers, and later as wives to their husbands. When women work in Bangladesh, they do not usually intend “to improve their bargaining position within the household” (Kabeer 1997:282) or earn to become financially independent, but to invest in and contribute to their own family and networks, and securing their place in the family. Therefore, though men as heads of households are still acknowledged as the primary decision makers in the household, women’s contributions and their ties to male (and sometimes female) members of their families (e.g. brothers, uncles, etc.) are also critical resources for the families. While men in general seem to have more freedom and women are bound to family obligations, it does not mean that women’s insight, opinions, and decisions are not influential in the family.

Summary: Low-Income Migrant Children in Dhaka

The unique daily routines of children in Dhaka are not only shaped by their household economic situation, but also through the family backgrounds (e.g. migration history), resources and networks, past experiences and future plans, parents' views toward child laboring and schooling, children's position (birth order) in the household, peer networks, and so on. During my field research, I found that most children participating (or having participated) in the NFPE programs were born outside of the city in their father's village, except those who were the younger or youngest among their siblings. Many of the children in the project are either the first or second-generation family migrant: children migrate together with their families; and, children who were born in Dhaka as second-generation migrants, or were taken to Dhaka immediately after birth in a village and grew up in Dhaka. For some cases, family members do not migrate at the same time, yet the ultimate goal is for the whole family to settle in Dhaka either temporarily or permanently. Children (usually elder ones, of 14 to 18 years of age) would come alone to Dhaka earlier than the family in order to gain an earning opportunity (e.g. a teenage daughter at a garment factory, living with her uncle's family), and build a basic livelihood for the entire family to migrate later. They first rely on relatives that have already established their living in Dhaka.

In addition, in Dhaka, there is another type of child migrant—independent child migrants—who migrate to the city, either alone, in peer groups, or with unrelated people (non-family members). Their living situation appears much more severe and unsettling than those of my informants, because they must survive without the immediate protection of the family (guardians). The majority of independent child migrants are either those that escape from a difficult household situation, and in Dhaka they do not have a stable shelter, but sleep on the street or bus stations becoming so-called “street children;” or, those that are taken by wealthier

families in Dhaka to work as a domestic worker in their home. The wealthier families (middle or lower-middle class families only, since the richer (upper-class) families do not hire child domestic workers, but adult workers) typically think that they are doing a favor to the child's "poor" family through hiring the child as their laborer. The child domestic workers, thus, do not go to school, or even become subject to NFPE programs, but help children of their employer's family go to a private school by preparing and carrying their school bags and lunch (snack) boxes.

The present-day social stratification system rooted in long established (conventional) institution of Bangladesh may still keep such children of rural landless agricultural labourers and low-income migrant urban households in the position to "be given," and limit their access to certain resources and opportunities including schooling. As the country's population continues to rapidly increase, the poverty-stricken environment they face will not be eased soon. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the children are passively, silently, or pessimistically waiting and resting in this position. In Dhaka, low-income families establish access to multiple social organizations and resources, utilize different channels to assume employment and income-generating opportunities and eventually settle their livelihoods in the city. In Bangladesh, being "poor" does not only mean owning fewer physical assets, but also relying on the wealthier others. The people does not use their "poorness" to describe their situation, but only to appeal to and negotiate with their wealthier patrons (e.g. landlords, employers, and neighbours), as they believe they are entitled to receive the assistance of their patrons that have the obligation of care to their "own poor."

As Comitas (1967) rephrases the study of M.G. Smith on Latin America, and notes, for the case of Latin America, that the "unequal distribution of opportunity could be part of the normal order of things and ... social consensus could validate inequality" (Comitas 1967:938);

also in Bangladesh, the people consider the “unfair, unequal, and unreasonable” customs and practices, derived from its social stratification system, as their ordinary orders. In these given conditions, low-income migrant families and their children negotiate, choose, and develop their strategies to subsist in Dhaka.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHODS

Data for this study was generated from three months of preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 2007 (May to August), as well as from eighteen months of principal field research (February 2009 to July 2010) in Dhaka and several rural villages of Bangladesh (in the districts of Barisal, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Gazipur, Maulvibazar, Narayanganj, Rangpur, Sylhet, and Thakurgaon). The data collection methods include participant observation, informal conversations, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, household surveys, and literature review. I particularly focused on ten children (five male and five female) from nine households residing in Joar Sahara. Joar Sahara is the northeast part of Dhaka, where I first conducted my preliminary field research in the summer of 2007, and I had known six of the ten children since May 2007. I came to know additional four children, as well as their siblings, cousins, and close friends in February 2009. Due to my continuous, regular and repeat visits, the ten children and their families were most cooperative, understanding, and supportive of my research activities. In addition, in order to understand a larger picture of children's activities in Dhaka, I kept conducting a survey, throughout my fieldwork, with children who (or whose siblings) were participating in the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project, every time I visited the learning centers. By the end of July 2010, the number of children I had the semi-structured interview was 1,176 children (505 male and 674 female). My other informants include children's families and employers, non-formal primary education (NFPE) program-related government and NGO officers, teachers, foreign practitioners and experts, and local leaders involving in such programs. This chapter (Chapter III) reviews the research methods, and briefly introduces the field research site.

Access to the Children: Entering into the Field

In order to study children outside of the formal school and institutionalized educational system, I first looked for relevant international and national organizations working for such children. I then came across the BEHTRUWC project in Bangladesh, implemented by the Government of Bangladesh in close collaboration with UNICEF Bangladesh. In the summer (three months) of 2007, I worked as an intern for the BEHTRUWC project, spending most of my time assisting local UNICEF officers in visiting learning centers, drafting a brochure, participating in “child labor”-related events, and meeting with government and NGO officials. I also became acquaintance with several senior government officials who encouraged and assured my access to project learning centers and children. Recognitions from senior government officials legitimated my presence in and around learning centers. They also helped me return to Dhaka in February 2009. When the project director (the highest-ranking government officer of the BEHTRUWC project) heard of my interest in doing research again in Dhaka, he referred me to an NGO’s director who kindly accepted me as their intern in February 2009. Throughout my eighteen-month principal field research until the summer of 2010, I belonged to a Bangladeshi NGO, Resource Integration Center (RIC)⁹ that is contracted by the government to deliver the BEHTRUWC project. For the first several trips to learning centers, RIC staffs accompanied me; and, after I became familiar enough with teachers, children, and local leaders as well as the areas where learning centers were located, I commuted to those areas on my own, and observed children’s activities inside and outside the centers and their houses, conducted oral surveys and interviews.

⁹ RIC was established in 1981 by Bangladeshi social workers in order to deliver assistance to rural women. They currently have their own formal school program, and also are contracted by the government to deliver some NFE programs. I was not assigned any regular routine tasks, but expected to be flexible in assisting the BEHTRUWC project management (e.g. writing English reports to UNICEF, etc.).

Before entering in the field, the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) requested that this study address ethical issues and potential risks of involving my informants, particularly minors; to limit the contact hours with children each week; and, to not interrupt the children's work hours and chores, because it would affect their position in their family as well as workplace. Throughout the field research, I constantly explained and reminded the purpose of my research not only to the minors but also to their parents, employers, NGO and government officials, and so on. The four types of informed consent forms (for children, parents (guardians), employers, and NGO officers) were prepared in both Bengali and English, orally translated by my interpreter (who understood these ethical issues, was familiar with, and professionally worked with such children) for those who do not read or write, and if agreed, signed by my informants (minors and their parents).

Sample and Selection: The Sites

By the end of my field research in July 2010, I was able to visit approximately one hundred learning centers, and meet over 1,500 children of low-income migrant families residing in Dhaka's several *bosti* (slums), including East Badda, Middle Badda, Purbo Badda, Bhatara, Joar Sahara, Karail-Mohakhali, Nadda, Sattala, and Shajadpur. Of the total 6,466 learning centers, where the BEHTRUWC project is implemented (in the six divisional cities in Bangladesh); RIC, as one of the contractors (20 partner NGOs) of the government, operates 301 learning centers in eight different areas of Dhaka (East Badda, Middle Badda, Purbo Badda, Bhatara, Karail-Mohakhali, Nadda, Sattala, and Shajadpur). Through cluster sampling, I choose several learning centers in each area, and in every center I visited, I conducted interviews with all the children, approximately 10 to 35 children each time, that were available (attending the

learning centers) for the interviews. As a result, if he or she were a regular student, I conducted interviews repeatedly; yet, if the child were an irregular student, I only met him or her for few times. On the other hand, the access to the ten children (five male and five female) from nine households in Joar Sahara was more focused. The map (below) (Map 1) shows the locations of the *bosti* I visited in Dhaka.

In addition, I also became acquainted with a number of staffs from national NGOs (e.g. Aparajeyo, BRAC Center, BRAC University—Institute of Educational Development (BU-IED), Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), CARITAS-Bangladesh, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Center, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB), Prodipan, SUROVI, and Underprivileged Children’s Educational Program (UCEP)), international development and aid organizations and NGOs (e.g. Action Aid Bangladesh, Plan International, Save the Children UK, Save the Children US, and UNESCO), and those working in the private sectors. These Bangladeshi and foreign experts were the rich resources of invaluable data for this study, as they had more comprehensive and multiple views of NFPE programs and low-income migrant children living in Dhaka.

Map 1. Dhaka City and the Location of the Field Sites



((Source) Geo Consult Enquiry, Dhaka, Bangladesh, downloaded from RAJUK (Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakkha, Capital Development Authority of Bangladesh) (<http://www.rajukdhaka.gov.bd>), accessed on February 21, 2011, and marked by the author.)

Joar Sahara

Joar Sahara is the northeast part of Dhaka where I most intensively conducted observations and in-depth unstructured interviews with the ten children (five male: Arif, Ashik, Monjirul, Nazmal, and Saiful; and, five female: Happy, Runa, Saminur, Kohinur, and Sarifa) of nine families. All of the ten children partially or fully participated in the BEHTRUWC project (in the same learning center).

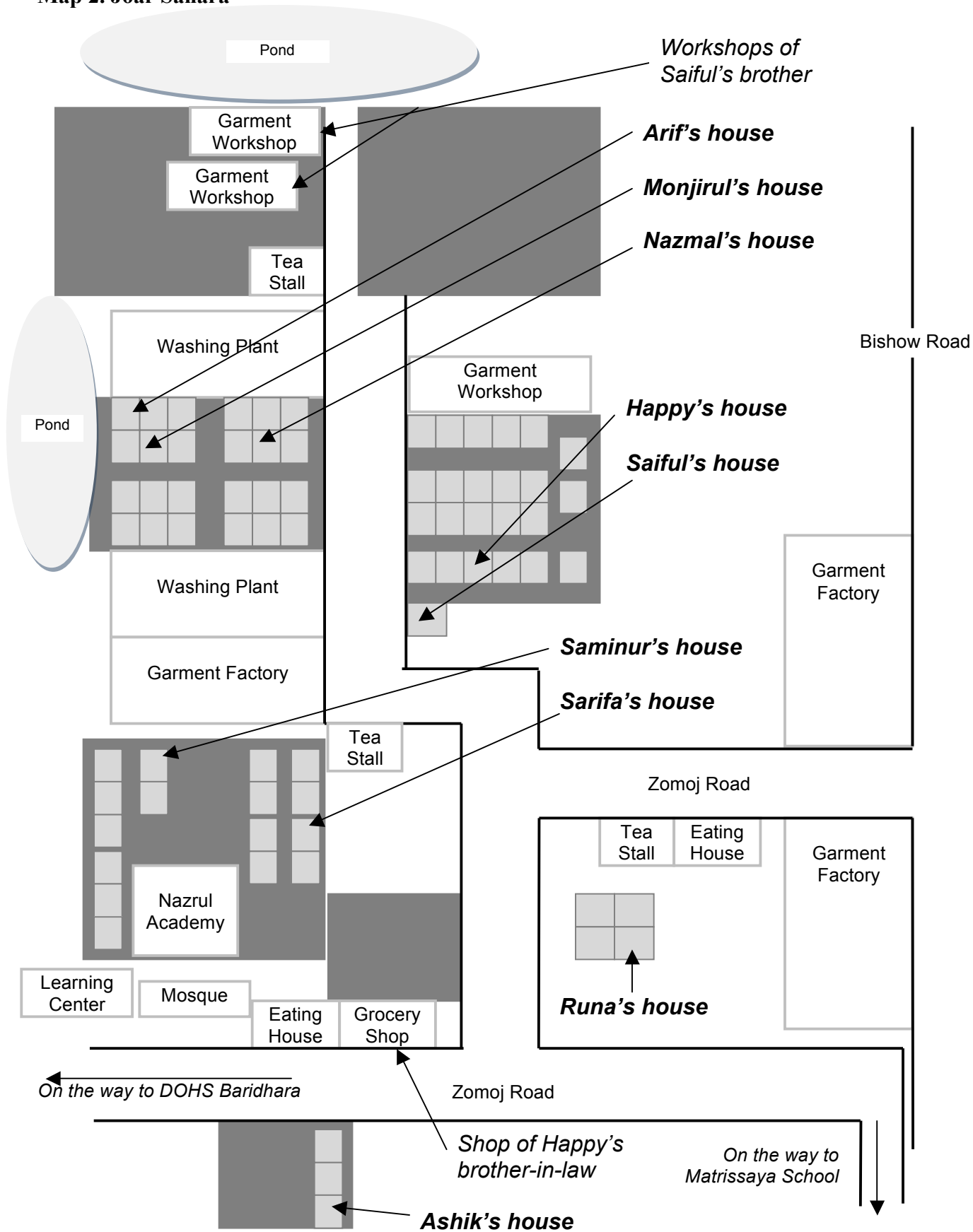
Some migrant families, especially those in well-established *bosti* with a longer history, stay in the same *bosti* for a long time (more than ten to 20 years), whereas many of the families in Joar Sahara move back and forth between Dhaka and their natal village, or to other *bosti* in the city after several months to several years. Of approximately one hundred households in the Joar Sahara *bosti* area, the average household size of 34 selected residences is 4.4 (2.2 male and 2.2 female), and in each household, on average, about half of the family members (including children) are engaged in some kind of income-generating activities.¹⁰ On the other hand, among male adults, 4.6 percent have reasons (e.g. being sick, etc.) not to work outside and earn an income, and 11.3 percent of female adults also stay at home, take care of domestic chores and young children, and do not earn any income. None of the family members from the same household work in the same workplace. The map (Map 2) below shows the location of children's (informants) residences, schools, shops and so on in Joar Sahara. The dark gray-color squares show the *bosti* where the majority of low-income migrant families reside.

The most common occupation in Joar Sahara is a garment factory worker. Of the 34 households, 64.7 percent have one or more family members working in a garment factory. Among all of the garment factory workers from the 34 households, 62.9 percent are female,

¹⁰ Table 8 (in Chapter V) describes ten out of the 34 households, and Appendix A outlines the other 25 households in detail.

which is lower than the national average (85 to 90 percent) of female workers in the garment sector. In Joar Sahara, several washing plants, where workers are dominantly males, have been established in recent years, and thus, the employment opportunities for male workers have increased. In addition, similar to other areas of Dhaka, the other common occupations for adult males in Joar Sahara include: seasonal fruit or vegetable selling, rickshaw pulling, commercial vehicle driving, and recycling-goods trading. Many of the female household members, on the other hand, work as domestic workers (servants) in the nearby area called DOHS (Defense Officer Housing Scheme) Baridhara: either in the upper-middle class households or in a *mess* arrangement apartment shared by young male migrants and university students.

Map 2. Joar Sahara



Data Collection Methods and Analysis

The primary data collection methods of this study are: participant observation, household survey, semi-structured and unstructured (informal) interviews, and literature review. Participant observation is the “foundation of cultural anthropology,” and one of the “strategic humanistic and scientific research methods” that “involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with [the researcher’s] presence,” and “experiencing the lives of the people [the researcher is] studying as much as [he or she] can” (Bernard 2006:342, 344). The gender of the researcher especially mattered when I entered houses of lower-middle classes families, because their inside homes were a private space usually controlled by housewives (Blanchet 2001).

For this study, participant observation was carried out in NFPE program learning centers, informants’ houses, workplaces, and neighborhoods. During the classes in the learning centers, the performance and activities of teachers and children; and, in the houses, domestic activities are observed and recorded, while making conversations with children’s families (e.g. mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, neighbors, etc.). I also participated in a number of local events in order to immerse myself in the field as well as to make my presence visible to the local residents. When the residents see me speaking to local leaders and landlords, they seemed to feel less hostile about my presence. Field notes were written both when I was in the field, and when I was reflecting experiences of each day. Many photos were also taken, which often helped to verify my memories. I focused to remain “explicitly aware of [those] ordinary things” in the field (Bernard 2006:365).

A household survey was conducted with 1,176 children (505 male and 674 female), in order to understand a larger picture of children’s activities in Dhaka. Since children’s writing and

reading abilities were limited, each question was asked in person. Bernard (2006) lists the advantages and disadvantages of personal face-to-face structured interviews (a questionnaire survey format). The advantages are being able to: see the reactions of respondents when answering questions, combine other techniques (e.g. in-depth and informal interviews), further explain questions to respondents if necessary, and know who is answering what questions. The disadvantages, on the other hand, include: interviews can become “instructive” and “reactive,” and are “costly in both time and money” (2006:257). Taking those elements into account, my survey questions were simple, and if necessary, I asked the same questions to the same children a few times at the same or different occasions. The core questions only consist of: 1) What is your name; 2) How old are you; 3) Do you work, if so what do you do; 4) What do your father and mother do; 5) How many brother and sister do you have and what do they do; and, 6) Do you go to school, and if so which school; while making casual conversations on their interests, daily activities, festivals, dresses, sports, and friends.¹¹

My lengthy unstructured interviews were conducted mostly in Joar Sahara with the ten children and their families. Different topics (e.g. migration experiences, schools, families, works, play, religious festivals, future plans, neighbors, etc.) were explored and discussed each day. My respondents led the discussions and conversations. The same and similar questions were brought up multiple times to different family members, in order to ensure and increase the validity of data. After several months of unstructured interviews, games and activities were added and incorporated to interviews particularly with children. For example, the children were divided into two teams to draw and create a large map of Joar Sahara, and then to indicate how many people were living in each house through using stickers and what their occupations were by coloring the map.

¹¹ Appendix B shows the questionnaire guideline for the survey.

In addition, much literature from local bookstores and libraries in Dhaka to the Libraries of Colombia University, the popular newspapers of Bangladesh (e.g. *The Daily Star*, *The Prothom Alo*, and *New Age*), and publications (e.g. articles, books, brochures, and program assessments, evaluation and research reports) of the government offices, NGOs, and international organizations on children, schooling, and laboring was reviewed. After returning from Bangladesh in July 2009, the field notes were coded, and literature and other data were organized and subsequently categorized into four areas of interest: migration, family, labor, and schooling. For the household survey data, I further identified by the topics from the excel spreadsheet in order to understand patterns of migration order of family members, parental status, past and current occupations of parents and siblings, schooling types and experiences, and so on. Some graphs and figures (e.g. on occupations of children and parents) were created, in addition to genealogies that were drawn to elaborate family backgrounds of households in Joar Sahara.

Language and Interpreter

One of the challenges of the field research was language. Bernard (2006) claims, not to be a “freak” in observations, the researcher must “speak the language of the people [he or she is] studying—and speak it well” (2006:360). I must admit, however, that my Bengali language skills were still limited, as I started learning it only five years ago. Given my level of Bengali proficiency, I took a five-month intensive Bengali language course (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in Dhaka. After the course, I was able to understand most of my colleagues’ conversations, speak some sentences and ask questions, conduct a survey, and read the alphabets and signs. Nevertheless, because my informants spoke in a strong local dialect of their natal villages, I still sought assistance of a Bangladeshi native interpreter, especially when conducting

in-depth (semi-structured and informal) interviews with children and their families. My interpreter was one of my colleagues at BRAC University—Institute of Educational Development. She had a master's degree in English literature from Dhaka University, and worked in the field of non-formal education (NFE) (schooling) for more than several years. She was particularly familiar with children who were not attending a formal primary and secondary school; and thus, did not only have the sensitivity required to work with my informants, but also the adequate linguistic capability. She accompanied me to the field, and my informants soon became friends with her. With my informants who spoke fluent English (e.g. most of them were university-educated, working in the government institutions, NGOs, and international organizations), all of the interviews were conducted in English. English is widely spoken, though the country's official language is Bengali. In conversations among the Bangladeshi, Bengali and English words are often mixed.

Limitations of the Research

Other methodological challenges of this study were having limited hours of contact with informants, and being a “dispassionate” observer. Since I did not live inside any *bosti*, I commuted there by rickshaw and CNG (three-wheel vehicle run by compressed natural gas). Many Bangladeshi colleagues warned me of the dangers of walking alone inside and outside *bosti* after night falls, and thus, my hours spent in *bosti* each day was limited. It was also difficult to stay a “dispassionate” observer, while knowing, for example, my informants' family members, including newly born babies were sick, had not eaten anything that day, and so on. Nonetheless, throughout my stay, I was extremely careful not to become a “patron” or seen as another “rich” foreigner, not to change the dynamics of the relationship between my informant and myself, or

also not to put myself in complicated political and social relations of their local society, especially when I was asked to give a certain amount of money, which might risk my presence as well as my informants. This frustration was kept to myself, while maintaining my position as a “dispassionate” researcher, who simply wants to learn and write about their quotidian lives.

In addition, because this study was conducted with a limited number of children and their families in particular areas of Dhaka, the findings may not be easily generalized to other settings in Bangladesh or elsewhere. From my total two-year stay in Dhaka, however, the situations experienced by my informants would not be extremely different from those of the majority of low-income migrant children in Dhaka. What is presented in this study could be acknowledged among others, as another critical example of “what is going on” in and around NFPE programs as well as low-income migrant families living in a poverty-stricken urban environment in Bangladesh.

CHAPTER IV. AN OVERVIEW OF NON-FORMAL PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN BANGLADESH

This chapter (Chapter IV) offers an overview of the non-formal primary education (NFPE) enterprise in Bangladesh by introducing and comparing five well-known large-scale NFPE programs. The five programs are: the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project (of which has been of focus and discussed in this study), the Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) project, the SHIKHON (Learning Alternative for Vulnerable Children) NFPE project, the BRAC Primary School (BPS) program, and the Up-scaling NFPE through Institutionalizing Qualitative Endeavour (UNIQUE) project. These five programs are the largest NFPE programs in Bangladesh, and in total, more than 1.7 million children are or have been involved in the programs through approximately 57 thousand learning centers. The chapter first describes the organization of the NFPE programs (e.g. historical background and management structure in Bangladesh), and then outlines the common features of typical NFPE programs in the country.

Organization of the NFPE Enterprise in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, no nation-wide indiscriminate or compulsory institutionalized education existed before 1971. The first institutionalized but exclusive education was the English language education offered by missionaries during the early British period (the latter half of the 18th century). More formal and systematic education gradually appeared; however, the colonial state apparatus limited the English-medium education to the Hindu upper class elites. The majority of the Muslim population was, on the other hand, in *madrassa* schools initiated by local religious leaders. Although there were also a few British-educated Muslim elites, they share the

view of the colonial state and were strongly against making primary school “universal,” because they did not find it “cost effective or economically profitable” (Latif 2004:69). A Muslim elite class began to see the need for tertiary education in the 1870s; however, little was devoted to the primary level of education (Latif 2004). This shows that not only did a systematic formal education for children of low-income agricultural laborers and sharecroppers exist, but it was not even considered a necessary government social service or function until the 1970s.

When the new Constitution was enforced in 1972, “education” became one of the “basic necessities of life” for the state to deliver, in addition to its responsibility to provide “food, clothing, shelter, medical care, jobs, reasonable rest, recreation, leisure, and social security.” The new policies had promised to “increase access to basic education for ... masses for the rural poor and females, and for greater functional relevance of schooling at all levels of the system” (Latif 2004:82). The first educational programs in the 1970s and 1980s taught technical and vocational skills, in order to produce “educated and skilled workers” for a new nation building; and thus, primary schools were not expanded across the country until the 1990s (Latif 2004:275). Few NFE programs were introduced and implemented at that time, but the programs were all small-scale and not a priority of the Bangladeshi government or international donors. The programs were rather “rhetoric, lip service, and promises” gesturing in and outside of the country (Latif 2004:271).

The critical turning point for the Bangladeshi educational enterprise was the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, and the World Conference on “Education for All” in 1990 held by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. The CRC has altered the “truth” about education from “a basic necessity of life” to a fundamental “right” (White 2002; Latif 2004). Following these events, in the last two decades in Bangladesh, the number of formal

and non-formal schooling programs dramatically increased. Furthermore, an independent ministry, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), was newly established in 1992, exclusively to look for primary and non-formal education, and NFPE programs became a priority of the administration along with formal education.¹² The Compulsory Primary Education Act was also enforced in 1993 to make primary education compulsory and free (Latif 2004).

Although the two major political parties, the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP), have diametrically opposite political positions, their plans and policies of the education sector in the last four decades have been almost comparable to each other. According to Latif (2004), this is because, “the basic tenets of the development discourse” has always been “the dominant thread that linked all political regimes” in Bangladesh (2004:269). Any political regime has always been “a suitable host of donors” (Ferguson 1985:6), and no radical change, thus, has been undertaken in Bangladesh’s education plans after the 1990s until the current AL administration. On the other hand, the “world’s most ambitious NFE campaign” in Bangladesh has been exposed to criticism for decades. They, for example, state that the Bangladeshi NFE programs “suffer from a lack of management and implementation capabilities, lack of vision amongst the political leadership ... an absence of sustainable post literacy and continuing education schemes, increasing politicization, and corruption in the form of ghost NGOs, ... and ‘messed’ literacy statistics” (Latif 2004:278). Nonetheless, today, 830 international and national NGOs still run approximately 50 thousand small-scale NFPE schools (generally referred to as “learning centers”) with funds from the government and foreign donors. Of these, the Government is currently responsible for two programs: the BEHTRUWC project in urban cities, and the ROSC project in rural areas. For all NFPE programs across the country,

¹² Another ministry in charge of education, the Ministry of Education (MOE), was, on the other hand, established in 1972 (shortly after the independence), as the Ministry of Education, Religion, Sports and Cultural Affairs, and became the current MOE in 1993 (Bangladesh Ministry of Education 2012).

more than two million children participate (at this time), and nearly 50 thousand teachers have been recruited (Nath and Chowdhury 2009).

Management Structure: Different Types of NFPE Program Providers

The two major entities (bodies) responsible for providing NFPE programs in Bangladesh are the government offices and NGOs. The figure (Figure 1) below shows the typical management structures of NFPE programs, and the table (Table 5) outlines the major donors and implementing partner organizations of the five largest NFPE programs in Bangladesh.

Figure 1. Management Structure of NFPE Programs in Bangladesh

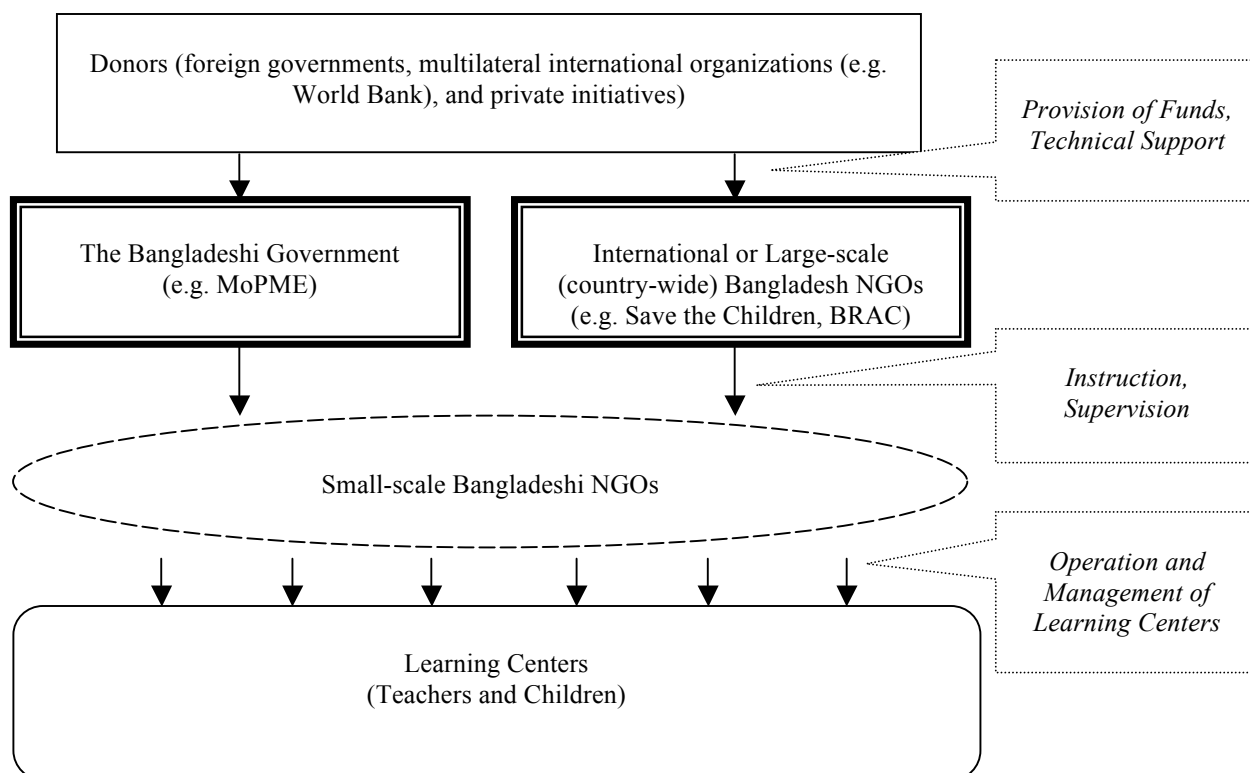


Table 5. Donors and Partners in Implementing the Five NFPE Programs

	Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) Project	Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) Project	SHIKHON (Learning Alternative for Vulnerable Children) Project	BRAC Primary School (BPS) Program	Up-scaling NFPE through Institutionalizing Qualitative Endeavour (UNIQUE) Project
<i>Main Program Implementing Organization</i>	BNFE, MoPME (government)	DPE, MoPME (government)	Save the Children USA (the Bangladesh office of an international NGO)	BRAC (Bangladeshi NGO)	Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) (Bangladeshi NGO)
<i>International and Foreign Donors</i>	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), UNICEF	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), The World Bank	Dubai Cares, EC	UK Department for International Development (DFID), Dutch Government, Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB), Norwegian Government, UNICEF	EC
<i>Number of Implementing Partners (Bangladeshi NGOs)</i>	20	For learning center operation: 400 For technical aspects (teacher training): 12	4	None	4

Note: Appendix C describes the five programs in detail. BNFE stands for Bureau of Non-Formal Education; MoPME for Ministry of Primary and Mass Education; and, DPE for Directorate of Primary Education.

Both state-sponsored and NGO-led NFPE programs receive financial and technical support from foreign and international (both bilateral and multilateral) organizations, follow the purpose and agenda of those donors, and implement the programs in select areas of Bangladesh. For the state-sponsored NFPE programs, the Government of Bangladesh coordinates with international organizations, and entrusts local (Bangladeshi) NGOs with the implementation. For NGO-led NFPE programs, international donors either coordinate with international NGOs (e.g. Save the Children, Care, ActionAid, etc.) that entrust local NGOs with the implementation, or directly work with a large well-established Bangladeshi NGOs and small-scale locally based, experienced NGO(s).

As shown in the table above (Table 5), the two state-sponsored NFPE programs (the BEHTRUWC and ROSC projects) are coordinated by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME). In Bangladesh, there is also another ministry that is in charge of schools: the Ministry of Education (MoE). The MoE is responsible for post-primary education, while the MoPME for the primary level, both formal and non-formal education. Both ministries formulate and reform policies, supervise, plan, execute the plans, monitor, evaluate, and “initiate legislative measures relating to” their responsible levels of education (Bangladesh Ministry of Primary and Mass Education 2012; Directorate of Primary Education 2012).

Within the MoPME, there are four independent administrative units: 1) Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) responsible for formal primary schools; 2) Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) for non-formal primary programs; 3) National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) for training and research; and, 4) Compulsory Primary Education Implementation Monitoring Unit (CPEIMU) for monitoring primary schools. The DPE and BNFE are responsible for distributing textbooks, supervising and assessing schools (and learning

centers), and recruiting, training, and posting teachers as well as school management government officers. In addition, there are a few more administrative units involved in operating primary schools in Bangladesh. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), in charge of developing the curriculum, producing and printing textbooks and teaching guides, belongs to the MoE, though it also coordinates with the MoPME for the curriculum and textbooks for primary schools. For the school infrastructure, building construction and reconstruction, repair, renovation and supply of school furniture and equipment, the Bangladesh Education Engineering Department (BEED) of the MoE as well as Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives are responsible (Bangladesh Ministry of Education 2012). For all levels of *madrassa* education, the Bangladesh *Madrassa* Education Board in the MoE manages all levels of the *madrassa* education.

Theoretically, the DPE and its subordinate divisional, district, and municipal (*upazila*) offices are in charge of implementation, management, and supervision of formal primary schools across the country, whereas the BNFE looks after non-formal primary schooling. The DPE, however, also has its own NFPE program, the ROSC project, which is sponsored by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the World Bank. On the other hand, the BNFE receives funds from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and UNICEF, and implements the BEHTRUWC project. The BEHTRUWC and ROSC projects are the only two NFPE programs under the direct authority of the MoPME (the Government).

Along with the MoPME, another major actor largely contributing to the primary educational enterprise in Bangladesh, especially in delivering NFPE programs, is Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Bangladesh is known as having “possibly one of the

world's largest [and the most diverse] NGO sectors" (Latif 2004:5). The NGO sector in Bangladesh already flourished when the country faced its civil war and famine in the 1970s, and now the sector has grown from relief and rehabilitation efforts to social service (schooling and health) providers. After education (schooling)-related programs became popular in the 1990s, the major role of Bangladeshi NGOs shifted from "civil society bodies" to the "state's contractors" (Latif 2004:272). Today, approximately 20 thousand NGOs are registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare, and more than one thousand NGOs receive funds from international and foreign donors. The two most popular areas of NGO interest in Bangladesh are microcredit finance service and primary schooling (Latif 2004). The microcredit scheme (e.g. offering a small amount of loans to lower-income borrowers who do not have a verifiable credit history or steady income, including rural women) is particularly popular, because that brings income revenue back to NGOs. For the education (schooling) sector, 559 NGOs provided some type of NFPE programs in 2004, and the number increased to 830 in 2006. Since child-related programs attract and are funded well by international and foreign donors, an alternative schooling program at the primary education level is one of the most popular types of "development" programs among Bangladeshi NGOs (Ahmad et al. 2007).

The NGO-led NFPE programs in Bangladesh (e.g. the SHIKHON project, the BPS program, and the UNIQUE project) receive financial support directly from foreign donors, firms, and international NGOs, and the Government of Bangladesh is not involved in their operations. As shown in the table (Table 5) above, while BRAC operates all of their own learning centers, Save the Children (for SHIKHON project) and Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) (for UNIQUE project) seek the support of smaller locally-based Bangladeshi NGOs, and grant all or part of learning center operations to the partner NGOs.

The small-scale and area-specialized Bangladeshi NGOs are involved in both state-sponsored and NGO-led NFPE programs as a contractor. They implement projects, gain financial support, and enhance political ties to the government, larger NGOs, and donors (e.g. closer connections to government officers, which would make the NGO stay as the potential contractor for the future programs). To become an entrusted contractor of the NFPE programs, Bangladeshi NGOs first show their interest in implementing the project as a partner, and then apply to the position through submitting a proposal to the government or international NGOs. After the proposals are approved, the NGOs contract with the program donors, and receive funds for the operation. Following the guidance of the government or the international NGO, they conduct needs assessments, recruit and train teachers and supervisors, establish learning centers, select children to participate in the project, develop rapport with local leaders, operate learning centers, conduct examinations, and regularly report their achievements (e.g. attendance and test scores of children) to the government or the international NGO.

Some Common Features

The NFPE programs in Bangladesh are designed for children that are not enrolled in any formal primary school or have left school before completing the full five-year course. When planning a NFPE program, the program providers first assess: why children do not go to school (what they usually call “access barriers”) and what makes it easier for such children to go to school (so-called “educational needs”). The “access barriers,” for example, include: the nearest primary school is too far, and a child does not have time to go to school due to his or her work commitment. The “educational needs” are: school should be located within walking distance from the children’s residence, and shorter (flexible) school hour is more preferable as it suits the

children's daily schedule (e.g. avoid time conflict with work, etc.).

The five NFPE programs are completely independent from each other in their management, and are designed and planned by different organizations. Nonetheless, the five NFPE programs find similar “access barriers” and “educational needs” of their select group of children, and thus, they share some substantive features that make all of them typical NFPE programs in Bangladesh. They apply, for example: 1) a short commute (locating learning centers close to children's residence); 2) flexible timing (shorter school hours and shorter course duration); 3) increased teacher-student contact hours as well as continuous schooling without the long holiday (to keep children accustomed to schooling); 4) a “friendlier” learning environment (a small number of children per teacher (center), colorful wall decoration, etc.); 5) the development and provision of original (unique) additional (supplementary) materials other than the government textbooks; and, 6) locally recruited teachers. The table (Table 6) below shows the scale (e.g. total number of centers and children) and similar features of the five NFPE programs.

Table 6. Five NFPE Programs: Scale and Similar Features

	BEHTRUWC Project	ROSC Project	SHIKHON Project	BPS Program	UNIQUE Project
<i>Number of Participants (Children)</i>	166,150 Female: 60+%	491,171	154,879 Female: 51.2%	840,000 (in 2009 only) Female: 65.8%	88,702 Female: 51.9%
<i>Number of Learning Centers</i>	6,646	22,752	5,180	32,170 (2010) 38,000 (2009)	2,380
<i>Learning Center: Location Criteria</i>	“Reachable distance” from children’s residence or working place	Accessible for children; adequate space and safe drinking water are available	Accessible for children, close to their residence; adequate space and safe drinking facilities are available	Within 0.5 mile (one km) periphery of children’s residence; no transportation cost required; adequate space is available	Accessible for children
<i>Number of Children per Center</i>	Maximum 25	Maximum 35	Minimum 30 - Maximum 35	Maximum 25-30	Maximum 30
<i>Course Duration</i>	40 months	60 months	44 months	48 months	39 months
<i>Center Hour</i>	6 days a week 2.5 hours a day	6 days a week 3-4 hours a day	6 days a week <u>Grade 1:</u> 3 hours a day <u>Grade 2:</u> 3.5 hours a day <u>Grade 3 to 5:</u> 4 hours a day	6 days a week <u>Grade 1:</u> 3 hours a day <u>Grade 2 to 3:</u> 3.5 hours a day <u>Grade 4 to 5:</u> 4 hours a day	6 days a week 3 hours a day
<i>Materials (besides the government textbooks)</i>	Project-developed textbooks and activity books Readers Reading materials	Reading materials	Storybooks	BRAC storybooks	Storybooks
<i>Teachers Criteria</i>	HSC Local residents	SSC Local residents Female preferred	SSC Local residents Female encouraged Must attend all the trainings	SSC Local residents (living within 0.5 mile (one km) periphery of the center Female preferred Married	Grade 8 to SSC Local residents (from the same ethnic group as children)

Note: “HSC” stands for the High School Certificate, and “SSC” for the Secondary School Certificate (SSC).

The place where NFPE programs take place is referred to as a “learning center,” while children, their families, and neighbors often call it “UNICEF school” or “BRAC school” by the name of the program implementing organization. In urban cities, the program providers or NGOs (as the program contractors) rent a number of one-room tin houses or one room of a building for the learning centers. The monthly rent for the BEHTRUWC project and the BPS program learning centers are Tk.2,500 to 3,500 (US\$35.71 to 50.00) per center, and that of the UNIQUE project is Tk.2,000 to 3,000 (US\$28.57 to 42.86). The local landlords are often in a position of influence in the neighborhood and are well-known among the residents. They usually prefer the NFPE programs to be their tenants. On the other hand, in rural areas, local villagers (e.g. the members of the learning center management committee) usually take initiatives to determine the location of their center, contribute (donate) a center site (land), and build a center using local materials and resources. Many NFPE program providers therefore do not pay the rent for learning centers in rural areas.

Each learning center accommodates 25 to 35 children (in contrast to 45 to 65 in a formal primary school classroom) (Nath and Chowdhury 2009). The minimum size of the ROSC project learning center is 200 square feet, that of the BEHTRUWC project is 240 square feet, the UNIQUE project is 288 square feet, the BPS program is 360 square feet, and the SHIKHON project is the largest and 506 square feet. For 25 to 35 children to read, conduct group work and games, dance and sing, the ideal size of the center seems to be larger than 300 to 350 square feet as far as I have observed. The urban learning centers are equipped with a floor (plastic) mat, a blackboard, a light bulb, a fan, and a trunk to keep materials (electricity is included in rent), whereas many of the rural learning centers do not have a light bulb or a fan, because no electronic power supply is available in the area where learning centers are located. None of the

learning centers have chairs or desks either for children or teachers (except the UNIQUE project that has four small tables per center); thus, children and teachers must sit on the hard concrete floor or mud floor. (The size of a center is too small to accommodate 25 to 35 desks and chairs.) In many of the learning centers I visited, teachers and children decorate the floor, walls and ceiling of learning centers with colorful drawings.

After setting up learning centers, the NFPE program providers arrange materials to be distributed to every center. All the five programs follow the national primary education curriculum of the government; though, the four NFPE programs (except the ROSC project), adopt so-called an accelerated teaching-learning model, in which they shorten the course duration to less than five years (60 months) of the regular primary school duration in Bangladesh. The full course of the BEHTRUWC project is 40 months, the SHIKHON project 44 months, the BPS program 48 months, and the UNIQUE project 39 months. Since many of the participants in the NFPE programs are older than primary school age, the program providers purposely shorten the course duration. This shorter course duration is considered ideal for the children to “catch up” with regular primary school students. On the other hand, this would generate a “time-gap” in the school calendar. If the course of NFPE programs finishes in March, for instance, the program graduates who hope to continue their schooling usually must wait almost one year before enrolling in a formal primary school, since all formal school in Bangladesh begin only in January every year.

All learning centers of the five NFPE programs are open two and a half hours to four hours a day, six days a week, Saturday to Thursday. School hours of formal primary schools are also similar; two and a half hours for Grades 1 and 2, and four hours for Grade 3, 4, and 5, which makes fewer than 590 hours a year. The ROSC project, the SHIKHON project, the UNIQUE

project, and the BPS program (Grade 4 and 5 only) use the government NCTB textbooks, though all five NFPE programs also develop, purchase, and use different supplementary materials in addition to the NCTB textbooks. The BEHTRUWC project, for example, develops its own textbooks, activity books, storybooks, as well as teaching guidebooks to make the material more relevant and attractive to its particular project participants. Many posters on the walls, for example, do not contain many words, but colorful drawings of familiar scenes (e.g. streets, markets, etc.) for the urban child residents.

While setting up learning centers and developing materials, the NFPE program providers recruit teachers and arrange their trainings. For the five NFPE programs, one teacher attends to the same group of the children for the entire course duration (in the same learning center (location)). All five programs strictly limit the teacher and student ratio (the number of children per learning center). The maximum number of children per teacher in the BEHTRUWC project is 25, that of the ROSC project is 35, the SHIKHON project is 30 to 35, the BPS program is 25 to 33, and the UNIQUE project is 30. The roles and responsibilities of the NFPE program teachers also include beyond teaching in a learning center. They are expected to look after their students inside and outside of the center, and required to make their students' home visits, to interact with their parents, and to ensure children regularly attend classes. A teachers' monthly salary is Tk.2,000 (US\$28.57) for the BEHTRUWC project, Tk.1,200 (US\$17.14) for the ROSC project and the SHIKHON project, and Tk.1,500 (US\$21.43) for the UNIQUE project. The BPS program has two regular pay raises; Tk.1,300 (US\$18.57) for the first nine months, Tk.1,350 (US\$19.29) for the second nine months, and Tk.1,400 (US\$20.00) for the rest of the course (30 months).

When appointing teachers for the NFPE programs, locality and closeness (e.g. how

much the teachers are familiar with the neighborhood and children) are more valued than the teachers' degrees or past experiences. The five NFPE programs only recruit teachers from local villages and slums where their students reside. The BEHTRUWC project, the SHIKHON project, and the UNIQUE project locally circulate teacher recruitment advertisements. For the ROSC project teachers, the local villagers select and list their potential teachers. In the BPS program, program staffs list potential teachers while conducting a household survey of their potential students. All five NFPE programs have a written and oral examination, and then finalize and appoint new teachers.

The average schooling (educational) level of the NFPE program teachers is secondary school or high school, while the majority of formal school teachers have a university or master's degree. For the ROSC project, the SHIKHON project, and the BPS program, a Secondary School Certificate (SSC) is required, while for the UNIQUE projects, teachers must have at least the Grade VIII up to SSC degree. The BEHTRUWC project asks for a High School Certificate (HSC), as the project is implemented only in urban cities where more HSC graduates are available. In addition, female applicants are given preference in all five NFPE programs. It is generally believed that giving housewives and young daughters of the family a job as a teacher would help the teachers' family, and also female students would feel more comfortable coming to the learning center.

For teachers to learn about the NFPE teaching methods and materials, as well as the management of the learning centers, the five NFPE programs provide pre-service and in-service trainings, including ten days to three weeks of basic (foundation) training, four to 11 days of grade-wise technical (pedagogic) training, and monthly refresher trainings. Approximately 40 to 50 teachers usually participate in one training at a time. The SHIKHON project, the BPS

program and the UNIQUE project have their own trainers (recruited as the program staff); while the two-state sponsored programs (the BEHTRUWC project and the ROSC project) outsource the trainings to NGOs and local (private) training institutions. The trainers of all five NFPE programs follow the training manuals (guidelines) developed by the program providers. The teachers I interviewed have found the refresher trainings especially useful, because the trainings help them develop the next month's lesson plan, share their ideas and experiences, and consult with other teachers about the problems and challenges they face in the learning center. In addition, the program providers organize subject trainings, as many teachers often find difficulties in teaching mathematics and English.

Outside of the trainings, teachers also receive technical support on-site. All five NFPE programs have a supervision and monitoring system, in which they appoint a "supervisor" for every ten to 16 teachers (learning centers) and several "monitoring officers" per program. The qualification of the supervisor is a BA or higher. Although many of the supervisors are usually young university or graduate students; the ROSC project welcomes retired and experienced primary school teachers as their supervisors, and the SHIKHON project also accepts experienced teachers with a HSC degree. Supervisors usually attend trainings with teachers. The frequency of supervision varies per learning center, depending on how far each center is located, and how easy they can be accessed (e.g. transportation vehicles and fees). The supervisors of the BPS program, for instance, visit the centers twice a week, while those of the ROSC project visit once in a month. The BEHTRUWC project and the UNIQUE project supervisors visit once a week, and those of the SHIKHON project twice a month. While the supervisors stay closer to the teachers and students, listen their challenges and complains, and occasionally organize social events, the major task of monitoring officers includes writing evaluation reports for the donors.

Monitoring officers collect data more systematically (e.g. attendance and achievements of the students), interview parents and local leaders, analyze the data, and write reports.

Each of the five NFPE programs has its own systematic way of conducting weekly, monthly, quarterly, grade-wise, and subject-wise exams for the students. Some exams are prepared by teachers, and others are common exams developed and distributed by the program head office. Teachers record the exam results and grades in a register, and submit them to the NGO, then to the program provider, through which the implementing organizations can continuously observe the academic achievement and learning outcome of the students. Despite of such records of their students' learning outcomes (e.g. exam results and grades), only the BEHTRUWC project and the ROSC project provide their graduates with a certificate of completion. Many parents have mentioned that such certificates are critical for the children and their families, as they can be their only proof and evidence of having completed the primary or basic level of schooling (institutionalized education). The BEHTRUWC project and the ROSC project, unlike the other three NGO-led NFPE programs, on the other hand, however, do not have any systematic means to facilitate their students and graduates to transfer to formal primary or secondary schools.

Summary: NFPE Programs in Bangladesh

This chapter (Chapter IV) has described the historical background of the NFPE approach, the different management structures (e.g. the state-sponsored and NGO-led programs), and similar substantive features of the five NFPE programs in Bangladesh. Childhood experiences in Bangladesh, where more than ten to 15 percent of primary school aged children do not regularly attend school, and where more than half of primary school students do not finish

five years of the primary education, is extremely diverse, depending on what a child does everyday in his or her circumstances. For children that do not attend any regular (formal) primary school, both the Government of Bangladesh and NGOs establish “non-formal” primary education (schooling) programs, specially designed to fit the convenience of such children. The NFPE program providers first indicate the “educational needs” of the potential program participants (e.g. flexible school hours, close distance to the residence, adjusted subjects (curriculum), small-scale classrooms, etc.), so that such children would still be able to enjoy an alternative schooling opportunity through their programs. Although the five NFPE programs introduced in the chapter share the substantive features that make all of them typical NFPE programs in Bangladesh, every NFPE program is implemented completely independent from each other in their management, designed and planed by different organizations. Despite similar or identical features, the ideas and experiences of the five NFPE programs are usually not exchanged among the program providers, and the results (outcomes) are solely reported within each responsible institution and to its own donors.

Since most of the NFPE programs in Bangladesh are a temporary resolution, after a certain period of time, when a group of children finishes the full course of the program, the learning center will eventually close. NGOs and donors are most likely to leave the area, even though many children and families still wish to sustain the centers for their brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces. Many NGO field officers also doubt the capability (feasibility) of the local leaders and families (villagers or slum residents) to continue their own learning centers, maintain the same or similar management system, teachers, and materials, without external assistance. The NFPE programs appear and disappear every few years in front of children and their families, though overall, this popular scheme of NFPE programs in Bangladesh will probably last for a

while.

CHAPTER V. THE MAKING OF WORKING CHILDREN

This study explores the nature of the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project in order to understand how the project rarely becomes a driving force for children to achieve political, economic, and educational “upward mobility” as the project providers intend. This chapter (Chapter V) particularly focuses on the “work” of children, and some of the distinctive features of the BEHTRUWC project: its objectives and membership. While the other four non-formal primary education (NFPE) programs in Bangladesh introduced in the previous chapter (Chapter IV), do not limit their participants by the child work (labor) status (e.g. whether the child is engaged in labor), the BEHTRUWC project highlights children’s responsibility for work, and provides the limited coverage and level of the country’s primary schooling curriculum exclusively to what they label “hard-to-reach urban working children” in urban cities of Bangladesh. The chapter first discusses the written and unwritten rules of membership, such as who the children (project participants) are, who they say they are, and who they are not; and, illustrates the “work” of children in Dhaka, including the social profiles of the ten children in Joar Sahara. It then describes how low-income children that participate in the BEHTRUWC project are labeled as “working children,” and, finally, concludes that the project learning center becomes a place for the children to learn the constructed notion of “working children.”

Unique Objectives and Exclusive Membership

Many NFPE program providers in Bangladesh have told that they strive to give children an “equal” chance and opportunity, carefully consider the criteria of enrollment, and

ensure “inclusion,” employing the UNESCO concept of “inclusive education.”¹³ In Bangladesh, NFPE programs can be considered as one of the means to achieve the “inclusive education.” However, while formal primary schools are theoretically open to any primary school aged children, NFPE programs indeed always *exclusively* select children appropriate and suitable to their own program objectives (e.g. children not enrolled in or have left formal primary school, etc.). The program providers have full authority over which children can be admitted to which learning center, and which children are not. Children and their parents may refuse to participate, though they cannot voluntarily apply or recommend themselves to the program (unless they are selected by the program providers), even if they meet all criteria and are willing to attend the NFPE program learning center. The selection procedure is, in this sense, not entirely an open-to-everyone practice, but *exclusive*. On the other hand, even though NFPE programs choose their participants through its own rules and procedure, the learning centers, particularly those in urban areas, still struggle with the mobility of children leaving the centers before completing the full course of the program.

The BEHTRUWC project provides an alternative schooling opportunity, exclusively to what they call “hard-to-reach urban working children” in urban cities. The term “hard-to-reach” is not unique, but often used by international organizations such as ILO, UNESCO and UNICEF, referring to so-called “working children” and “child laborers” (Islam 2001). These organizations consider “urban working children” in Bangladesh as “invisible” and “inaccessible” for the government to reach or bring to formal schools, because they believe the children are “hidden” in homes, factories, and other workplaces. Through the BEHTRUWC project, the government, in

¹³ According to UNESCO, “inclusive education” is “based on the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives [Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights].” It is an approach “enhancing the quality of education by improving the effectiveness of teachers, promoting learning-centered methodologies, developing appropriate textbooks and learning materials, and ensuring that schools are safe and healthy for all children” (UNESCO 2010).

coordination with UNICEF, attempts to provide schooling opportunities to such children who are engaged in domestic work or some other kind of income-generating activities, though many earn little or nothing.

The primary objective of the BEHTRUWC project is: “To enhance the life options of the urban working children and adolescents to access their rights to education, protection and development and participation.” The project also has the four specific objectives: 1) “To provide quality non-formal, life-skills-based basic education to 200,000 *urban working children and adolescents* ages ten to 14 years of which at least 60 percent will be girls;” 2) “To provide 20,000 (out of 200,000) urban working children and adolescents (13 plus age group) with livelihood skills training, and access to support systems to ensure optimal use of life-skills-based basic education to improve their life;” 3) “Advocate at city and national levels for education, social and economic policies in favor of working children and their families and for protecting children from hazardous working environments;” and, 4) “Increase awareness of all relevant stakeholders to act in favor of progressive elimination of child labor.” The 60 percent rule (“at least 60 percent of the participants will be girls”) is one of the attempts of the project to involve girls who work in their own households or are employed to work in their neighbors’ houses, and adhered to many of the learning centers. The table (Table 7) below shows the main and age criteria of participants and geographical coverage of the five NFPE programs, and highlights that the BEHTRUWC project’s criteria for its participants; “working children” and “the minimum age of ten,” are unique compared to the other four NFPE programs, as the other NFPE programs do not refer to the working (laboring) status of children or set the minimum age younger.

Table 7. Five NFPE Programs: Children Criteria

	BEHTRUWC Project	ROSC Project	SHIKHON Project	BPS Program	UNIQUE Project
<i>Main Criteria of Participants</i>	Working children , currently not in school	Living in socially degraded or geographically isolated areas, currently not in school	From rural and landless families in disaster prone areas, currently not in school	From socio-economically challenged families in rural areas or urban slums, currently not in school	Living in geo-physically backward or socio-economically neglected areas, currently not in school
<i>Age Criteria of Participants</i>	10 to 14	7 to 14	7 to 14	8 to 10	6 to 10
<i>Geographical Coverage</i>	Urban: 6 divisional cities (incl. Dhaka)	Rural: 48 districts	Rural: 11 districts	Rural and Urban: All 64 districts	Rural and Urban: 24 districts

As (un)stated in the project objectives, the ultimate goal of the BEHTRUWC project is not eventually to integrate urban working children into the formal education system. It is instead to provide already busy working children with the “basic” level (part) of schooling opportunities. The BEHTRUWC project anticipates that with the “basic” level of education (institutionalized schooling opportunities), such urban working children (e.g. whose families cannot subsist without children’s income) would be able to have better “life options” (e.g. better paid and more skilled jobs, etc.) in the future.

Throughout the implementation of the project, the BEHTRUWC project providers also emphasize the participant’s criteria as “working children.” On the other hand, the BEHTRUWC project proposal does not clearly define “working children,” but presumably adopts the ILO definition, which has been used also by many international development organizations.

According to the ILO, “working children” are children who are engaged in a broader type of

work—from so-called “child labor” to part-time work, work in households, and on the streets. Although many scholarly and practice-oriented articles often interchangeably use the two terms “working children” and “child labor,” “child labor” by the ILO definition accounts for only one category of “working children.” The ILO’s four major categories of “working children” are: 1) children at work in economic activity; 2) child labor; 3) children in hazardous work; and, 4) children in unconditional worst forms of child labor (IPEC 2008).¹⁴ In addition, the Bangladeshi government establishes the minimum age for admission to employment in the formal sector as: 12 for shops, other commercial establishments, and workshops where “hazardous work is performed;” 14 for factories; and, 15 for railways and ports, mines, and tea gardens (ILO 2004). Though many children work in the informal sector, no standards are set or applied to their employment.

Along with the definition, especially among international and national development assistance organizations, the term “working children” is generally acknowledged and recognized, in the sense that working children are vulnerable and their fundamental human rights are deprived; they have disadvantages in accessing formal schools and other social services because they work; they are subject to economic exploitation; their work is unsafe, unhealthy and even dangerous; and they become trapped in such low skilled and low return work that further pushes

¹⁴ “Children at work in economic activity” are children who work less than 14 hours per week, whereas children engaged in “child labor” work more than 14 and less than 43 hours a week. Children’s “hazardous work” includes: (a) work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; (b) work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces; (c) work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads; (d) work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health; and (e) work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer. The “unconditional worst forms of child labor” are: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; and (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (IPEC 2008).

them into the “vicious cycle of poverty” (Arat 2002; SIDA 2008; UNICEF Bangladesh 2012).

These constructed notions often appeal to international donors to fund projects for such children.

The BEHTRUWC project also upholds these concepts and notions of “working children.”

Dhaka’s “Working Children”

Contrary to the definition and image of “working children” in Bangladesh, the nature and types of children’s “work” in Dhaka are informal and diverse, and supplement adult workers. Each child has a unique work routine, purpose, responsibility, and commitment to his or her work. Some children’s “work” is to help their family members and not necessarily earn an income (e.g. taking care of younger siblings while parents are away for work), while others are hired as “laborers” by *malik* (e.g. an owner of a shop, factory, vehicle, etc.), and contribute to their family’s earnings. In addition, some elder children (mostly male) operate their own vendor business on the streets, in order to become economically (financially) independent from their household.

Children’s engagement in labor is a common strategy for low-income migrant households in Dhaka to add one or a few more family members to the job market, and increase and secure their immediate and multiple household income in urban cities (Hossain 2009). In Bangladesh, over 6.3 million in the workforce are rural migrants under 14 years of age (Narayan et al. 2002; Giani 2006). Another source indicates that approximately eight million or 17.5 percent of children between seven to 14 years of age are engaged in economic activities, which represents approximately 20.9 percent of male and 13.8 percent of female children in the same age group (World Bank 2008; UNICEF Bangladesh 2012). Of the eight million working children in Bangladesh, 1.5 million children live in urban areas, of whom 57 percent are between ten to

14 years of age (ILO et al. 2008; UNICEF Bangladesh 2012). In Dhaka alone, the estimated one million children are working. Despite the large number of child laborers, children's labor is still generally considered as "undesirable" among low-income migrant families. The people mention both sides: "Our children are working, because we are poor," and "We are poor, because our children are working." On the other hand, children's schooling is seen as a "desirable" opportunity and increasing chances of economic upward mobility. Each household weighs its options to ultimately determine how many of which children will go or will not go to work or school.

In Joar Sahara: the Ten Children

Among the ten children in Joar Sahara, one boy (Arif) and two girls (Saminur and Sarifa) are engaged in income-generating activities outside their home, and two girls (Kohinur and Runa) are responsible for staying at home to perform household chores and take care of their younger siblings. The following table (Table 8) describes the family backgrounds of the ten children in Joar Sahara. It shows the number of male and female family members in each household; who earns and depends; the work; and, the birth order among siblings. The numbers (1 to 7) written next to the children's names, "Brother," and "Sister" indicate their birth order; for example, "Saiful-7" means Saiful is the seventh among his siblings, and "Brother-6" means he is the sixth among his siblings.

Table 8. Ten Children in Joar Sahara: Household Structure and Occupations

Name (Approx. Age)	M	F	Total	Earning members (Work Type)	Dependents		
					Primarily responsible for domestic chores	Children not engaged in labor or domestic chores	Small children who needs company at home
Arif (10-12)	3	2	5	- Grandmother (GFW) - Father (GFW) - Arif-1 (helping a <i>hodja</i>)	- Aunt (wife of father's brother)	None	- Son of Aunt
Ashik (13-15)	2	1	3	- Grandfather (fruit selling) - Grandmother (DW)	--	- Ashik-1	None
Happy (12-14)	1	6	7	- Mother (house manager) - Brother-4 (GFW)	- Sister-1 - Sister-2	- Happy-5	- Sister-6 - Daughter of Sister-1
Monjirul (12-14)	1	4	5	- (Father (farmer)) - Mother (DW) - Sister-2 (GFW)	--	- Monjirul-3 - Sister-4	None
Nazmal (10-12)	5	1	6	- Father (rickshaw puller) - Mother (DW)	--	- Nazmal-1 - Brother-2 - Brother-3	- Brother-4
Runa (10-12)	4	5	9	- Father (fruit selling) - Mother (DW) - Sister-1 (GFW) - Sister-2 (GFW)	- Runa-3	- Sister-4 - Brother-5 - Brother-6	- Brother-7
Saiful (13-15)	5	2	7	- Father (security guard) - Brother-6 (GFW) - Brother of a sister-in-law (GFW)	- Mother - Sister-in-law (wife of Brother-6)	- Saiful-7	- Son of Brother-6
Saminur (14-16)/ Kohinur (10-12)	4	4	8	- Father (fruit selling) - Mother (DW) - Brother-1 (fruit selling) - Saminur-2 (GFW)	- Kohinur-3	- Brother-4 - Brother-5 - Sister-6	None
Sarifa (12-14)	1	5	6	- Father (rickshaw puller) - Mother (DW) - Sarifa-1 (DW)	--	- (Brother-2) - Sister-3 - Sister-4	- Sister-5
	26	30	56	<i>(The average percentage of earning members in a household is 47.6 percent)</i>			

Note: GFW means a garment factory worker, and DW a domestic worker. Appendix A (Employment and Schooling Patterns of 25 Households in Joar Sahara) indicates the similar data of the 25 surrounding households in Joar Sahara.

Among the nine families, garment factory work and domestic work are the two most popular (common) occupations. For the ten children, all of their fathers and mothers are engaged in out-of-household labor. The average percentage of earning members per household is 47.6 percent, and that of Happy's family (28.6 percent) is the lowest among the nine families. The four children (Happy, Monjirul, Nazmal, and Saiful) have never been engaged in labor but do not regularly attend a formal school, due to household economic reasons or their own choice. They spend most of their day playing together and hanging out in the neighborhood. Ashik is the only one who does not work but goes to school. Arif, Saminur, and Sarifa are engaged in income-generating activities outside their home, while Runa and Kohinur help with household chores and look after their younger siblings at home. While working, Runa and Sarifa also attend a local primary school, even after the BEHTRUWC project learning center was closed in November 2009. In what follows, each child's brief social profiles, such as family background (e.g. migration) and household structure are illustrated.

Arif: Arif is about ten to 12 years old.¹⁵ He was born in his father's natal village in Rangpur district, and several years ago, his family (Arif and his parents) migrated to Dhaka. Arif's mother passed away five years ago, and he now lives with his father, grandmother (father's mother), aunt (wife of father's elder brother), and nephew (the aunt's first son, about one year old). His uncle (father's elder brother) has been arrested and is in a jail. Arif's grandmother and father work in different garment factories to financially support his family, while his aunt stays at home to take care of the household chores. Arif does not have any siblings, but cares for his nephew as if he were his little brother.

Arif works for a *hodja* of a local mosque. His father found the job for Arif. Every

¹⁵ As explained in Chapter I, in Bangladesh, people do not pay much attention to count their own age and birthdays. Giani (2006) explains, "[p]arents and children ... manifest a lack of knowledge in reporting their age. They often refer to a range of time, usually within two or three years as proximity of their biological age" (2006:3).

morning, lunchtime, and night, he visits neighbors' houses and collects meals for the *hodja*, which takes him ten to 15 to 30 minutes each time. His monthly income is Tk.250 (US\$3.57), paid to Arif and given to his grandmother. Arif says that he has never felt scared of working even at night. His friend, Nazmal comments, "Even something bad happens to Arif, he can still go to the heaven because he has been working to serve a *hodja*." Arif does not usually talk much about his job, as he seems to not want to admit that he is the only one among his close friends who must work. His earnings, however, seem fairly critical for his household. Aside from his work commitment, Arif now spends most of the day on his own or with his friends (Monjirul, Happy, and Nazmal) in the neighborhood.

Ashik: Ashik is about 13 to 15 years old. He lives with his grandfather and grandmother (mother's parents), and does not have a father. His mother and younger sister (about three to four years of age) stay in a village, and visit Ashik in Joar Sahara once or twice a year for roughly one month each time. Ashik has once said that his father is working in a rural village collecting plastics to sell; however, soon after I found out from his grandfather (mother's father) that, "Ashik does not have a father." Ashik does not mention much about this, and seems not to want to talk about his father. Ashik was born in his grandparents' village in Mymensingh district, but they took Ashik to Dhaka when he was even too small to remember the move (according to his grandfather, Ashik was about a year old). Since then, his grandparents have taken care of Ashik as if he were their son.

Ashik's grandfather was working as an agricultural laborer before migrating to Dhaka in 1976. After marriage, his wife joined him in Dhaka. He now works as a fruit seller, and she as a cooking lady at a *mess* apartment. Ashik also sometimes helps his father sell fruits on the streets. The three of them used to live in another part of Dhaka, Tejgaon (about five miles away

to the south-west) until four years ago. Since criminal activities in the area increased, and gang members began asking them to pay tolls, they moved to Joar Sahara. Now they all say they like Joar Sahara better than Tejgaon.

Happy: Happy is known as a unique girl “tomboy” in the neighborhood, because she spends much time together with boys, Arif, Monjirul, Nazmal, and Saiful, while many girls of her age (about 12 to 14 years old) in Bangladesh tend to stay at home, and do not play outside with boys. The neighbors even call her in a friendly manner, “*mami*” (aunt; wife of mother’s brother), implying she is a good friend with the boys and stay with them as if she is married to one of them. Happy almost always plays outside, not only because she likes and chooses to, but her household circumstance allows her to do so.

Happy has three elder sisters (Labuni, Shimuli, and Shilpi, all between 18 to 25 years of age), one elder brother (Ripon, about 16 to 18 years old), and one younger sister (Ria, about four years old). Happy lives with her mother, Labuni, Labuni’s first daughter (Joti, about three years old), Shimuli, Ripon, and Ria. Though Happy says her father is in Dhaka working as a cook at a small canteen, he has never been seen in Joar Sahara, and in addition, Happy has not seen her father for at least more than several years. She has never been to her father’s village. Happy’s mother works as a so-called (house) “manager” in Joar Sahara, collecting rent from tenants for her employer (landlord), and receives commissions as her salary. Happy’s family does not pay the house rent as a result of this connection with the landlord.

Happy does not engage in much of the domestic chores at home; while her second eldest sister (Shimuli) takes care of such chores, including managing household expenses. When Happy needs money, she asks Shimuli. Happy’s brother (Ripon) works as a worker at a washing plant across the street from their house. Happy’s younger sister (Ria) does not go to school or

work, but stays at home. Happy's three elder sisters are especially close to each other, though two of them are already married. None of them work outside, and spend much time together at home, cooking, washing clothes, taking care of each other's babies, as well as occasionally working at the local knitwear workshop. Labuni is married, but since her husband lives with his young brother in another area of Dhaka, Labuni and her daughter stay with Happy's family. Shilpi is also married, and lives with her husband and first son (Apon, about one to two years old) next door to Happy's family. Shilpi's husband has opened a small street convenience (grocery) store in June 2010. Although Shilpi and Apon eat with Happy's family and do not pay for the food, Shilpi's husband must pay the house rent Tk.1,700 (US\$24.29) a month to his landlord, unlike Happy's mother.

Happy's family seems to be the same as or even slightly more affluent than the average low-income migrant family in Joar Sahara, as only two of seven family members are earning in absence of a male head of household. My interpreter and another NGO officer also find Happy's household situation unique, and assume the possible involvement of Happy's mother in illegal activities, which makes Happy's mother financially capable of not forcing any of her daughters to work outside, and allowing her married daughters to continue staying with her. By the time I left Bangladesh in July 2010, I still could not determine exactly how Happy's mother brings sufficient income to her family, in the absence of her husband. Despite this economic background, Happy still chooses not to go to school, and has much freedom to do what she likes everyday.

Monjirul: Monjirul is about 12 to 14 years old, and lives with his mother, one elder sister (Shirina, about 15 years old) and one younger sister (Farzana, about five years old). Monjirul's father stays in a village alone, and works as a farmer to cultivate *paan* (betel) leaves.

Monjirul's eldest sister (Sabina, about 18 years old) married in 2008, and lives with her husband near Joar Sahara. Monjirul's family is an example of "multi-locational households," in which household members live in separate locations, and secure desired employment opportunities in each location (Toufique 2002; Afsar 2003).

Monjirul was born in his father's natal village in Mymensingh district. He migrated to Dhaka with his family several years ago. In the first year in Dhaka, Monjirul's family stayed in the southern part of Dhaka (Narayanganj) where his father cultivated cash crops. After one year, however, they were evicted from the area and moved to Joar Sahara. Monjirul's mother found a new place to work and live through her elder brother who was already residing in Joar Sahara. Monjirul's uncle (the elder brother of Monjirul's mother) still lives next door, which gives Monjirul's family social support and security in absence of Monjirul's father.

When Monjirul's father was still in Joar Sahara, he worked as a rickshaw puller. In 2008, Monjirul's parents arranged their first daughter's marriage and took some loans for her dowry. Monjirul's father then thought that working as a rickshaw puller in Dhaka would never be enough to pay off the loan, which made him move back to the village and begin agricultural work again. Meanwhile, Monjirul's mother and sisters decided to stay in Joar Sahara until they paid off their loan. "Because we can find a job here," many women in Joar Sahara mention this as the foremost reason why they (and their families) migrate to and stay in Dhaka. Monjirul's mother first worked as a garment factory worker, but now works as a domestic worker in DOHS Baridhara, and Monjirul's two sisters (Sabina and Shirina) work in different garment factories. Sabina's husband is currently jobless after he quitted working for a cigarette company selling cigarettes to one shop after another. Sabina is married, but still spends much of her time in Monjirul's house. Sometimes Monjirul's father visits his family in Joar Sahara, and those in

Dhaka also visit him in the village. When Monjirul's father became sick in June 2010, Monjirul, his mother and younger sister went back to the village to nurse their father. The family is planning to move back to the village, as Monjirul's mother says, "We are planning to go back to our village as soon as possible, probably by the end of 2010, after we save enough money to pay off the loan we took for my first daughter's (Sabina's) marriage."

Nazmal: Nazmal is about ten to 12 years old, only a few years younger than Saiful, and says Saiful is his favourite uncle. Nazmal's mother is Saiful's eldest sister. "Dhaka was filled with full of water," Nazmal's aunt (a younger sister of his father) said describing the capital city, when she and her husband arrived there more than ten years ago. Nazmal, his parents and brothers then followed them. Among Saiful's siblings, Nazmal's family was the first to migrate to Dhaka, and encouraged the other members of their family to eventually join them in Joar Sahara.

Nazmal lives with his father, mother, and three younger brothers (Nahid, about seven to eight years old, Zahid, four to five years old, and Sabir, one year old). Nazmal's father is a rickshaw puller, and his mother works as a domestic worker in DOHS Baridhara. When his mother is out for work, his father stays at home to take care of Sabir. Nazmal's father can adjust his work schedule, which reduces Nazmal's responsibility to stay at home and take care of his little brothers. In addition, Nazmal as well as Saiful have many relatives in Joar Sahara, and are socially, financially, and emotionally looked after by the family support network. Though Saiful and Nazmal's families have fewer earning members, Nazmal and Saiful have fewer responsibilities in each household, compared to the other children. Their parents also do not interfere with their daily activities. The presence of a large number of relatives seems to make some difference in the household decisions on children's labor and schooling.

Runa: Runa is between the ages of ten and 12. She lives with her father, mother, two elder sisters (Bilkis and Sathi), Suma, and three younger brothers (Joshim, about nine years old, Oshim, about seven, and Korim, about three). The siblings were all born in their parents' natal village in Netrokona district. Runa's father sells vegetables on the street, and her mother works as a domestic worker in DOHS Baridhara. When Runa's father takes a break, Runa sits on the street with her mother to sell the vegetables.

After finishing her primary schooling in her village in 2007, the oldest sister (Bilkis) first came to Joar Sahara alone, and stayed with her uncle's (mother's eldest brother) family who was already living near Joar Sahara. Bilkis worked as a domestic worker, and her first salary was Tk.1,500 (US\$21.43) per month. About a year later, she started working in a garment factory. Her first salary working as a cleaner in the factory was Tk.1,200 (US\$17.14), less than what she was earning in the previous year as a domestic worker; yet, her salary (minimum wage except overtime pay) has now increased to Tk.2,800 (US\$40.00). She works in the sewing section of the factory, which often requires some overtime work (from 7 to 8 a.m. until 10 to 11 p.m.), and her average wage usually reaches more than Tk.3,000 (US\$42.86) a month. Her salary doubled in her first three years of stay in Dhaka. Runa and her family (except Runa's younger sister, Suma) migrated to the city in 2008, a year after Bilkis first arrived at Joar Sahara. Suma was left in the village to take care of her grandfather (her mother's father). Her uncle (mother's eldest brother) in Dhaka was sending a certain amount of money for Suma and her grandfather in the village. Another year later (in 2009), Suma joined her family in Joar Sahara. Runa's second eldest sister, Sathi, is now in her first year of the garment factory job and earns Tk.1,500 (US\$21.43) per month.

Runa, Suma, and younger brothers (Joshim and Oshim) are all in school. Runa is also

responsible for domestic chores at home, as their parents and elder sisters work outside of their home. She cares for her young brothers, washes dishes and clothes, and cleans the house, though cooking is an exception, and still a responsibility of her mother. Runa's mother has mentioned that some lower-middle class families have been asking her to let the two girls (Runa and her younger sister Suma) work for them as domestic workers. She has refused such requests, because she believes that the working conditions would be too tough and harmful for her daughters. She also hopes Runa and Suma will become garment factory workers in the future, and is aware that many of the "good" (relatively large) garment factories set primary schooling as a minimum requirement for entry-level jobs. She thinks that even if her daughters could begin working in a garment factory without first finishing primary schooling, it would be more difficult in the future for Runa and Suma to be promoted to a better skilled and paid position in "good" factories.

Runa's youngest brother, Korim is still one year old, plays in and around the house, and is taken care by Runa. Korim was born in the village; yet, the family migrated to Dhaka immediately after his birth. They joke about Korim by saying that Korim likes to eat the "city's junk food," such as breads, chips and biscuits, and does not eat rice. The family calls Korim "a city boy." Runa's parents are planning to stay in Dhaka for at least ten to 12 years, and want all of their children to complete at least primary schooling.

Saiful: Saiful is about 13 to 15 years old and lives with his father, mother, elder brother (Kairul), sister-in-law (Kairul's wife, Sopna), Sopna's younger brother, and nephew (the first son of Kairul and Sopna, about two years old). Saiful is the youngest among his seven siblings, and all of his four brothers and two sisters are married. His three brothers and one sister are in Joar Sahara, while the second brother lives in a provincial city of Tangail district, and the second sister in another place of Dhaka (Mohakhali, about four miles from Joar Sahara). Saiful

was born in his father's natal village in Mymensingh district. According to his father, though they still keep a small house in his village, they decided to migrate to Joar Sahara when Saiful was about seven or eight years old. Saiful says that he does not remember much about this move.

Saiful's father works as a night security guard, and earns Tk.3,500 (US\$50.00) a month, while his mother stays at home, taking care of domestic chores with her daughter-in-law (Sopna). Sopna's younger brother (Kairul's brother-in-law) is temporarily staying with Saiful's family, and works in a garment factory. He has his wife and two sons in his village.

Saiful's fourth brother (Kairul), who lives with Saiful, has owned a small garment (knitwear) workshop¹⁶ with his friends for about a year. Saiful and a group of male children (including Arif, Monjirul, and Nazmal) occasionally help Kairul and neighbors' garment workshops as an opportunity to earn petty cash. Saiful always proudly calls Kairul's workshop as "our factory," and sometimes helps his brother in the workshop, not obligatorily but only when he wants to and has time. The size of their workshop is about three to four hundred square feet, built by tin walls, and its monthly rent is Tk.6,000 (US\$85.71). Since 2009, Kairul and his friends are renting this space, receiving some orders, and undertaking a small part of local knitwear production. They, for instance, sew on or take off buttons, and remove fuzz balls and stitches from sweaters. This is one of many subcontract garment workshops found in Dhaka *bosti* (slums); as when manufacturers (suppliers) of large garment factories cannot absorb all of their orders within the price-range asked by their foreign customers, they subcontract part of the production process to these small informal factories and workshops with the minimum price. Kairul and his friends "own" the workshop, but do not have regular employees (workers) and thus, perform all of the work by themselves. When they get busy with extra orders, they ask

¹⁶ After I returned from Bangladesh, I heard from my interpreter that Kairul closed his workshop in March 2011, and started working in a garment factory as a worker.

neighboring children and housewives to help them out in the workshop. Saiful and the other children also say that they like this type of occasional earning opportunity, and sometimes even negotiate per piece rate (e.g. how much each child is paid for every piece of knitwear they sew buttons). When another workshop owner in Joar Sahara decreased the per piece rate from Tk.2 (US\$2.8 cent) to Tk.0.5 (US\$0.7 cent), the children refused to continue working. This does not mean that the boys would try to find another job opportunity, but they simply go back to their regular daily routine—hanging out in the neighborhood, neither working nor going to school. Kairul usually pays Tk.1 or 2 (US\$1.4 cent to 2.9 cent) per piece to the boys. All of the knitwear is for the exports to Europe and the United States. The boys usually spend their earned cash to rent a bicycle or buy snacks.

Saminur and Kohinur: Saminur is about 14 to 16 years old, and works in a garment factory; and, Kohinur is about ten to 12 years old, and helps household chores at home. Their family consists of: father, mother, eldest brother (Johidul, about 18 to 20 years old), Saminur, Kohinur, two brothers (Jakir, about ten, and Sariful, about eight), and one young sister (Nupur, about five). Saminur's parents are from two different villages across a river in Kishoreganj district. Saminur's grandmother (father's mother) has a small land in the village; yet, Saminur's parents believe that they would not be able to claim much of the land, because Saminur's father is youngest among his seven brothers and four sisters. Saminur's father first came to Dhaka alone and settled in another area of the city. Soon after his family joined him and moved to Joar Sahara. While Saminur, Kohinur, and all of their brothers were born in their father's natal village, the youngest sister (Nupur) was born in Dhaka. The family is planning to stay in Dhaka as long as they can, and does not have a plan to go back to the village anytime soon.

Saminur's parents, elder brother (Johidul), and Saminur work outside of the home and

contribute to the household income. Saminur's father and Johidul both work as self-employed street vendors selling seasonal fruits (e.g. bananas, mangos, etc.). They go to the same market and purchase fruits, though they conduct their business completely independent from each other. The father says, because he considers Johidul mature enough to earn alone, he has let Johidul become independent. Saminur's mother works as a domestic worker at four houses in one apartment building. She starts working at 6 a.m. in the morning, comes back home to cook lunch at 12 p.m., goes back to work at 2 p.m., comes back home to cook dinner at 6 p.m., and then goes back to work again until 10 p.m. Three of the houses where she cooks and cleans are young bachelors' *mess* apartments. Five to six men stay in each mess, and Saminur's mother receives Tk.200 (US\$2.86) per person, which adds up to Tk.3,000 (US\$42.86) to Tk.3,600 (US\$51.43) per month. The fourth house is a private family house, and Saminur's mother does not cook but cleans, washes dishes and clothes, and receives Tk.700 (US\$10.00) per month. Her maximum total income can be Tk.4,300 (US\$61.43), though some of the residents always delay the payment, and she has never received the full amount in one month. She has been working in this building for more than six years.

Saminur and Kohinur were both admitted to the BEHTRUWC project learning center in July 2006; however, after two years, they left the center, due to the time conflict with Saminur's new job in a garment factory. When I first met Saminur in the summer of 2007 (when she was still in the learning center), she was a domestic worker. Then, at the end of 2008, she found a new job in a local garment factory. Kohinur also left the center with Saminur. Like most of the first year garment factory workers (especially girls), Saminur started working as a "helper" in the factory. "Helpers" are not involved in the production process (line), but are in charge of cleaning floors, canteen, and offices. They have the lowest wages among the workers, earning

approximately Tk.1,000 to Tk.1,200 (US\$14.29 to US\$17.14) per month (without overtime wage). After one to a few years, the female helpers can be promoted to a skilled position such as stitching, linking, or finishing departments, or they apply to another factory on their own to seek a better position.

Saminur's first salary as a garment worker (helper) was about Tk.2,000 (US\$28.57) a month including overtime. She moved to her current factory in December 2009, and now she receives Tk.2,300 (US\$32.86) a month including overtime pay, though her position is still as a helper. She works from 8 a.m. to 9 or 10 p.m. everyday except Wednesdays. Saminur always tells how proud she is to work in a garment factory, to have the most stable income in her family, and to support her younger brothers and sister attend a local primary school. The total tuition for her three younger siblings is Tk.900 (US\$12.86) a month. Saminur says, "Though my garment factory job is tough, I do not mind working. I will not get married now but later, because I want to continue working. I want Jakir, Sariful, and Nupur to finish school, as Kohinur and I could not." Saminur's income has made three out of six of her siblings' primary schooling affordable for the family. If Saminur were not engaged in labor, none of them would probably be able to go to school. Saminur is also hoping to apply to a different factory again to increase her salary, and eventually buy a sewing machine and open her own tailor shop in the future. Kohinur stays at home all day, and attends to domestic chores and her two younger brothers and her youngest sister. She wakes up at 6 a.m., and begins cleaning inside the house. She does not cook yet, as cooking is still her mother's responsibility. After a couple of years, she wants to start working as a garment factory worker like her big sister.

Sarifa: Sarifa is about 12 to 14 years old, and lives with her father, mother, and three younger sisters (Nipha, about six years old, Shefari, about four, and Chonpa, about two). Sarifa

also has a younger brother (about eight years old) who stays in the village with his grandparents (father's parents) to attend school (Grade 3). Like Sarifa's brother, I have encountered many children in rural villages who stay in their village with their grandparents (or other guardians), while their parents and elder siblings are away to work in urban cities. They are not migrants yet, but are potential migrants, and have a strong interest to migrate to the cities, and to become, for instance, a garment factory worker like their father, mother, brothers and sisters. Although such rural children are away from their parents, their lives are affected by the family structure, geographical, social, and psychological distances from their parents, as well as the amount and frequency of remittances (Whitehead and Hashim 2005).

Sarifa's parents are both from Mymensingh district. About five years ago, Sarifa's father first came to Dhaka alone and stayed with his elder brother. A year later, Sarifa's father found a house in Joar Sahara, and called his wife and four daughters to Dhaka. The monthly house rent is Tk.1,600 (US\$22.86). Sarifa's parents are planning to stay in Dhaka as long as possible until they can save some money. Sarifa's father has been working as a rickshaw puller for four years, and now earns Tk.100 to Tk.200 everyday (Tk.3,000 to Tk.6,000 (US\$42.86 to 85.71) a month). Sarifa's mother works as a domestic worker at two houses in DOHS Baridhara, earning Tk.2,000 (US\$28.57) a month. She has been working in one house for four years and another for three years.

Sarifa also has been working as a domestic worker in her landlord's house for already three years (e.g. cleaning floors and washing dishes). She earns Tk.500 (US\$7.14) every month. Sarifa's mother receives Sarifa's salary, and thanks Sarifa by saying that this income makes a significant contribution to their household. In addition, Sarifa's service for the landlord may be one of the reasons that secures their residence in Joar Sahara (they have been living in the same

house for four years since they first moved to Joar Sahara). At home, Sarifa takes care of her three younger sisters, and prepares breakfast and lunch using vegetables her father brings home. Cooking for dinner is still the responsibility of her mother. Sarifa is known as a “very good cook” among her neighbors. Sarifa also likes sewing clothes and making handicrafts, and does piecework at home to earn some extra money. She hopes to work either in a garment factory or to help a local tailor shop in the future. Sarifa has completed the full BEHTRUWC project course (40 months) from July 2006 to November 2009, and currently goes to two schools: a local primary school (Grade 4) and *madrassa*, while working as a domestic worker.

Other Types of Work

In order to understand a larger picture of children’s diverse work types, hours, responsibilities, and wages in Dhaka, I also conducted a household survey with 1,176 children (505 male and 674 female) who were present in the BEHTRUWC project learning center at the time of survey (of those, 91 children (0.1 percent) have claimed that they are not formally registered in the project). Among them, 57.2 percent of boys and 49.8 percent of girls say that they are laboring for wage. Some children contribute their entire wage to their family (parents), while others (mostly irregular, part-time child laborers) keep their wage for their own use. On the other hand, 21.4 percent of boys and 36.8 percent of girls report that they do not earn any income, but help their family at home, and the businesses of one or more of their family members, or are working together with their father or mother at a workplace. Parents of some children are self-employed vendors on the streets (or a small permanent shop owner), and selling vegetables, fruit, fish, clothes, fried rice (*muri*), tea, and other kinds of foods. The children help them sell goods with them, and sometimes by themselves while their father and mother are away for lunch

or errands. In addition, a small number of children work with their parents for the same employer; for example, some girls help their mothers who work as domestic workers, and boys assist their fathers and mothers at construction sites. Finally, 22.2 percent of boys and 10.2 percent of girls have mentioned they are “not working.” Some children consider “domestic work” as not official (formal) “work,” and say they are “not working.” A few children also purposely informed me they are “serious students” and do not work, considering working is “not good” but schooling is “good.”

Types of male and female children’s work are different. The figure (Figure 2) below shows percentages of children (289 male and 335 female children), who are engaged in income-generating work outside their households, by types of their work and gender.

Figure 2. Number and Types of Work by Gender



Of the 289 male children who have answered they are engaged in laboring (earning income), the most popular type of labor is a shop assistant. More than half (61.3 percent) of the boys help run errands for a shop owner. The types of shops include bakery, CD, fast-food, fish, fruit, furniture, grocery (*mudi*), jewelry, meat, mechanic, mobile phone, pharmacy, tea-stall, and vegetables. The boys take orders from customers, clean inside and outside of the shop, and bring water and food to the owner and workers. Their monthly wage is approximately Tk.300 to Tk.500 (US\$4.29 to 7.14), depending on their experience.

The other types of popular occupations for boys include: a self-employed vendor (selling vegetables, *muri*, or nuts on the streets) (13.5 percent); *tokai* (waste collection) (12.1 percent); a factory worker (4.2 percent); a transportation vehicle assistant (2.4 percent); a tailor's helper (2.1 percent); and, a domestic worker (1.4 percent). Boys who work as self-employed vendors buy vegetables from a large market for Tk.100 to Tk.150 (US\$0.43 to 2.86) a day, and sell them on the street for Tk.200 to Tk.220 (US\$2.86 to 3.14), which makes their daily profit Tk.50 to Tk.70 (US\$0.71 to 1.00). Since they are "self-employed," their work schedule is more flexible and they are independent, though they are more exposed to conflicts and tensions on the streets and within the neighborhood, and are also vulnerable to harassment by adult vendors and customers.

The third popular way of earning, "*tokai*" means picking up various recyclable goods (e.g. plastic containers and bottles, paper refuses, etc.) from the streets, and selling them to a recycling store (Blanchet 2001). This *tokai* is particularly popular among children who are still too young to be hired by any workplace. It is an easy job to start for a child (both male and female) who has never worked outside of his or her household. Some children walk around the neighborhood on their own, while others work together with their siblings and friends to collect

the recycling goods. After a few hours, they bring the goods to a shop near their residence in exchange for small amounts of cash. The average daily income of *tokai* children is approximately Tk.30 (US\$0.43).

The factory work of boys includes making biscuits, paper boxes (called *tonga*, used as a catering meal box), and handmaid chairs (called *mura*). Their wages are paid either on a monthly or piece rate basis. Their monthly wage is about Tk.300 to Tk.500 (US\$4.29 to 7.14). Transportation work implies a helper of buses, tempos, private vehicles, and boats. Children assist drivers and adult assistants in calling passengers and collecting fares. The average wage of such transportation work is usually higher than other types of male child labor, yielding approximately Tk.1,000 to Tk.1,500 (US\$14.29 to 21.43) per month. Among my informants, a few boys are engaged in other types of occupations, such as: brick breaking, helping a *hodja* of local mosques, looking after a landlord's garden, making shoes, taking care of goats and cows, and working as a peon in an office and a construction site.

In comparison with the labor of boys, the types of girls' labor are less diverse. For girls, working outside of her home does not mean that she is completely free of the responsibilities of domestic chores of her own household. Daughters of any low-income migrant household are expected to learn and have various responsibilities at home, including cleaning, washing dishes and clothes, taking care of younger siblings, and cooking, according to their age. Of the 674 female children I interviewed, 49.7 percent work outside of their household, while 36.8 percent have said that they "work" with one or more of their family members (e.g. at home or workplace) but do not earn an income. Among the girls who work outside of the home, 62.3 percent are engaged in domestic work (servants) (Figure 2). In Bangladesh, there are estimated two million domestic workers, and 12.7 percent are under 18 years of age. They perform

domestic chores in their employers' households, regardless of the amount or kind of remuneration they receive. More than 99 percent of them work seven days a week (ILO Dhaka 2006). I have observed some of the girls helping their employers to cook meals, wash dishes and clothes, clean rooms, and take care of small children. One of the girls was also responsible for picking up her employer's children from a local school. Their average monthly wage is Tk.300 to Tk.500 (US\$4.29 to 7.14), and if she can cook, she can earn up to Tk.1,000 (US\$14.29). The cooking skills of the girls are highly valued in an economic sense.

Other popular jobs among girls are: factory work (10.8 percent of respondent laboring girls), *tokai* (8.4 percent), tailoring (and handicraft making) (7.8 percent), shop assisting (5.7 percent), self-employed trading (2.1 percent), and brick breaking (2.1 percent). The factories that employ female children include those producing dolls, garments (e.g. Punjabi dresses), *mura* chair, *tonga*, school bags, and noodles. Similar to boy laborers, female child factory workers are paid either on a monthly or piece rate basis. For example, the monthly wage of a schoolbag factory is Tk.300 (US\$4.29), a noodle factory is Tk.500 (US\$7.14), and a Panjabi factory is Tk.800 (US\$11.43), while in a trouser factory, girls receive Tk.50 (US\$0.71) per piece for cutting fabrics.

Tailoring (handicraft making) implies "piecework" at home in their spare time. Girls take orders from their employer, and make, for example, *nokshikata* (traditional Bangladeshi handicraft), small jewelry, necklaces, and wigs, and receive a commission. Their earning is approximately Tk.300 (US\$4.29) per month. Assisting a shop owner appears to be a more male dominated job in Bangladesh; however, parents may trust their shop owner neighbor, and allow their daughters to work for the owner. The average monthly wage is similar to that of boys, between Tk.300 and Tk.500 (US\$4.29 and 7.14). A small number of girls also work as vendors,

imitating the work of her father and brothers, selling goods (e.g. seasonal fruits) on the streets on her own, and earning Tk.50 to Tk.70 (US\$0.71 to 1.00) a day. In addition, the labor of brick breaking literally means breaking pieces of brick. Since Bangladesh is located in the world's largest delta, no sufficient materials are available for concrete production to rapidly construct buildings in urban cities. Brick breaking workers are hired by a brick seller (a business owner of selling bricks) and work outside, under the sun and in the heat and humidity, smashing bricks into small pieces. Their hands are stained terra-cotta color, and they receive Tk.2 (US\$0.03) for breaking one brick.

Male children are expected to gradually become socially and economically independent in the future, have a family, and take care of their parents; whereas female children are expected to get married and eventually leave the family. The implication of a son's labor is thus to not only earn for his family, but to also gain experience and skills, and become financially independent to secure his own income source for his future. On the other hand, laboring unmarried daughters are expected to contribute to their parents' income: for example, to pay for their younger brothers and sisters' schooling, and also her dowry at the time of marriage. Assuring dowry allows her to have a better marriage (Kabeer 1997; Rozario 2007). In addition, due to the *purdah* (female seclusion) system, many parents of girls want their daughters to work under a strict and safe employer. Female children prefer a workplace that is inside a building (or a house) where only a certain number of people would have contact with them, and thus, occupations as garment factory workers and domestic workers seem popular among female children and parents.

In Relation to Parents' Work

Given the existence of rural-urban migration through family networks as a common livelihood strategy in Bangladesh, I first anticipated that the kin-based networks were also critical for children and adolescents in adapting to a new environment in Dhaka as well as for the process by which they assumed and carried out various work. Nevertheless, soon after I began the field research, I encountered many children who were not working with (or for) any of their relatives but under an employer whom they called *malik* (owner). In the survey, I asked, "Who do you work with?" Most of those who are engaged in income-generating activities said, "I work with *malik*," which means his or her employer is unrelated to him or her. Their family networks were still fairly critical when they sought jobs, solved problems caused at a workplace and elsewhere, and also at the other various dimensions of their quotidian lives; however, in many cases, this did not mean that children and any of their household members were working together in the same workplace under a single employer. Many children are rather employed by unrelated *malik*, because in this way their households can secure multiple income sources.

Many of my informants' parents are both engaged in labor (93.0 percent of fathers and 66.6 percent of mothers), and thus, staying at home and looking after younger brothers and sisters are one of the required tasks often given to elder children (e.g. old enough to take care of small children, yet not old enough to work as an adult (mature) worker outside of the home). Some of the children also care for their nephews and nieces.

When being asked about their parents' occupations, most of the children answered quickly; however, a few children whose parents are blind, begging on the streets, or a public sweeper employed by the City Corporation, often said, "my father is rickshaw puller," telling me a different, more common, socially accepted and desirable occupation. Observing those reactions

to my questions, it seems that the people that are begging on the streets, working as public sweepers, and engaged in illegal (drug) activities, are looked down upon or kept at a distance from the majority of the neighbors. In addition, several children have claimed that “my *ma* is a housewife,” when being asked particularly about their mothers’ occupations, even though their siblings and friends say their mother is gainfully employed. Due to the practice of the *pardah* system observed in Bangladesh, some children strongly believe that it is a social privilege for their mothers to stay at home, and women’s external labor (especially physical labor) would indicate that her family is “poor” and cannot afford to keep the practice of the *pardah*. A female colleague working in UNICEF, who is considered as an “elite” in the country, also mentions, “After my husband passed away, I started working, but my son is not happy because I am working outside home.”

One fourth (25.2 percent) of the children I conducted the household survey among say, their fathers are rickshaw pullers. The second most popular occupation is a construction worker (14.4 percent), followed by a self-employed vendor (11.2 percent), an owner of a small shop (8.0 percent), a transportation worker (5.4 percent), and a security guard (4.0 percent). In addition, 2.2 percent of fathers do not work, and 6.9 percent of children do not have fathers. In order to compare children’s engagement in labor and the work of their fathers, I have categorized the children into four types: 1) earning income, 2) working for no-income, 3) not working, and 4) others. The result has demonstrated that: children who do not have a father or whose father is not working or is sick are more likely to be engaged in labor and earn independently from his or her parents, while children whose fathers are either a self-employed vendor, security guard, or a small shop owner are least engaged in labor. The income of adult male self-employed vendor is not as high as the other types of work, at approximately Tk.50 to Tk.100 (US\$0.71 to 1.43) a day.

Their sons and daughters, however, instead of working independently from their fathers for income, frequently help their fathers increase sales in selling vegetables, seasonal fruits, and other goods on the streets.

Of my informants' mothers, 63.8 percent have jobs, while 31.1 percent are housewives, meaning they do not work for income, but take care of domestic chores at home. The reasons of being a housewife are diverse: some mothers prefer not to work due to the *purdah*; some think they are too old, have little confidence, or are illiterate; and, others have small children to care for at home. Among the laboring mothers, the most popular occupation is a domestic worker (29.4 percent), followed by a garment factory worker (24.2 percent). In addition, 10.2 percent are engaged in other types of labor, such as brick breaking, construction (day labor), and helping (cleaning) at an office or hotel. A small percentage of laboring mothers (0.9 percent) work with their husbands (the child's father) and do not have independent income sources, and 1.3 percent of children report not having a mother. In comparison with the same four types of children (earning income; working for no-income; not working; and, others), the mother's engagement in labor seems to have an opposite influence on her child's laboring from that of his or her father's. While children whose fathers have independent businesses are least engaged in labor, children whose mothers are not working earn the least. Having a father who owns a small shop in the neighborhood, and mother as a housewife may indicate: the child's family has been living in the area for sometime and has connections to local leaders (landlords); the father prefers his wife and children not to work outside of his house; and, the children have fewer responsibilities to earn an income for the family. On the other hand, children who have laboring mothers are more likely to be engaged in labor. In addition, half of the children who do not have mothers are found to be laboring outside home.

Entering the BEHTRUWC Project

As described above, children's labor assures multiple income sources for the low-income migrant households, and multiple relations with various social organizations around the household. It is, however, uncertain the extent to which the children recognize themselves as the constructed notion (image) of "working children" in Bangladesh, and distinguish themselves from other children. The children may be used to consider themselves as workers, and know their "(in)justice and entitlement" as laborers and employees (White 2002); however, they usually do not see themselves as "(working) *children*" or children with their "rights" and entitlements until they participate in the BEHTRUWC project.

No matter what percentage of and how frequent children in the neighborhood had been working, the BEHTRUWC project learning centers were brought to their residential areas by foreign and international donors, the government, and NGOs. The children were told that there would be a "school" opened in a few weeks. Although they might have been informed that the school was specially designed for "working children," it would probably be a little later when they begin to learn what kind of images outsiders such as foreign donors carry for children like them—those often called and labeled "urban poor working children."

For the BEHTRUWC project, the government entrusts NGOs, NGOs recruit teachers, and teachers select their own students among the neighboring low-income migrant children. In the very first BEHTRUWC project learning center I visited in the summer of 2007, a project officer from UNICEF told all of the children to stand up and go to one side of the classroom if they were "working children." It should not have been a surprise to see all of the children gathered to one side, because the BEHTRUWC project exclusively selects "working children." Yet, it was still awkward for me to hear the children introducing themselves, even proudly, "My

name is Reaz, ten years old, and I am a working child,” as if they had been taught and were already accustomed to saying and acting as such.

When selecting participants (children) for the BEHTRUWC project, teachers have full authority to finalize the list of the children they will be teaching in their learning center. (This is indeed their first task as a teacher.) It seems that teachers do not necessarily choose children who are “actually engaged in labor,” but consider “working children” to imply those that come from such families living in *bosti*, who are not likely to send their children to school, and who may potentially prioritize the earning of an immediate income through engaging their children in labor. In addition, since teachers and children usually come from the same neighborhood, their relationships do not only consist of “the teacher and (potential) students,” but also of neighbors in “the lower-middle class and low-income migrant class.” Teachers can ultimately control whose children can be in their classroom (if he or she wants).

My position is that: as a result, the BEHTRUWC project’s criterion for “working children” participants omits and lumps the children’s diverse “work” together as the concept of “working children.” Furthermore, to many of the migrant children in Dhaka, the concept of “working children” is new and foreign as it was introduced by the BEHTRUWC project or similar programs. Due to the BEHTRUWC project’s intention of helping “working children,” a group of children is defined as “working children” for the first time, and through participating in the BEHTRUWC project, they gradually learn the concept. Moreover, children do not only learn, but, I have observed, they also acquire how (and when) they should act as “hard-working children and good students” in what circumstance (e.g. in front of whom and for whom), as described below.

Learning the Implication of “Working Children”

Once children are in the BEHTRUWC project, they are labeled and called as the same “working children” through many various nation-wide, regional, and local events and occasions. For example, the government organizes national events (e.g. singing and drawing contests, etc.), and the NGOs also hold region-wide (and local) events, under the name of “social mobilization” (the BEHTRUWC project’s third and fourth specific objectives). On the annual “Child Labor Day” event, for example, hundreds of children, teachers, supervisors, NGO coordinators, the government officials and UNICEF staff participate in a rally calling for the rights of the “working child.” After the rally, they get congregated in a large auditorium, and join the singing, play (skit), and drawing competitions. For the play and drawing competitions, they are encouraged to express the contrast: “tough” situations of work (labor) and “fun (joyful)” experiences of schooling.

This identification of making children “working children” tends to emphasize, highlight, and exaggerate what children and their families do not have, rather than what children and their families have been doing, own, and want. This would make some children feel unnecessarily uncomfortable or realize even if they become “good students,” in the BEHTRUWC project they are always seen as “poor children” whose families are unable to afford “regular” and “ordinary” schooling. Specially, some older children (approximately 13 years of age or above) gradually refuse to and oppose to be labeled as “working children.” The BEHTRUWC project is one of the means for them to become familiar with the constructed notion of “poor Bangladeshi children,” and how sympathetic foreign donors are trying to “help” them. The exclusiveness and rules of membership of the NFPE programs, as well as strict distinctions from other children make some children feel uncomfortable. The older children are

more likely to recognize the BEHTRUWC project as a way to label them as “poor” children from “backward” and “rural” migrant families, and not necessarily lead to a path or opportunity for “upward mobility.”

Younger children usually say they like the BEHTRUWC project learning centers better than the formal school (if they know the difference), because of the colorful and sufficient materials, attractive events, flexibility, fewer exams, and no tuition; while others, usually more mature ones, say the opposite. The older children do not think that they have an alternating schooling opportunity because they are “children” with the “rights to education,” but instead, consider and interpret that they are given such “free” opportunity because they cannot “afford” (or even are not considered to “deserve”) formal schooling with better quality teachers and better equipped facilities. They think and understand that such NFPE programs like the BEHTRUWC project are for “poor” children, while the formal schools are for “ordinary” children. Saiful in Joar Sahara, for example, seems not to like being labeled as “working children,” or “out-of-school children” by the BEHTRUWC project, but prefers and wants to identify himself as an “ordinary” primary school student. Saiful has completed the full 40-month curriculum of the BEHTRUWC project, has attended the learning center most regularly, and has officially been commended at several project events as a model student of the project; however, he still repeatedly emphasizes that he likes his formal primary school much better than the BEHTRUWC project, because the Matrissaya School is more “ordinary,” and where his wealthier friends go. Saiful is close friends with the children of local landlords, and is allowed to go inside their three-story house, which is usually not a “privilege” for other *bosti* children. Saiful knows that these lower middle-class friends of his would never choose or “have to” go to the free UNICEF school. Saiful specially dislikes his BEHTRUWC project learning center to

being compared with the school of his “rich” friends. He seems to be bothered by how the BEHTRUWC project sometimes overemphasizes and exaggerates their socioeconomic position as “poor children of poor families in the poor country.”

Learning to Act as “Working Children”

The children do not only learn the constructed notion of “poor working children,” but also learn to perform the “working children,” along with “serious students.” In the summer of 2007, during my preliminary fieldwork, Monjirul and Saiful showed me their “workplaces.” In my field notes from 2007, I wrote,

Monjirul’s restaurant and Saiful’s recycling shop are next to each other. Saiful’s house is also close to the shops, located across the small pond. Thus, whenever I visited Monjirul’s restaurant, Saiful came together with me and served me a glass of water and a cup of tea, though he is not the one working in the restaurant. The restaurant owner seemed not to mind Saiful’s behaviors either. On the other hand, I had never seen Saiful working in his shop, except when he posed as if to work in front of my camera. The shop was located on the way from the main road to [the learning centers]. Thus, I passed them every time I visited the learning centers and the neighborhood; however, Saiful was not there. Saiful’s work at the recycling shop seems to be flexible, similar to Liton’s work [Liton was helping his uncle’s small grocery shop].

Nonetheless, after I started my principal field research in 2009, they both acknowledged that, “No, we were not working that time, we have never worked there.” They admitted and explained that they were “just” performing and posing as “working children” in front of a NGO coordinator and me (e.g. outsiders), as they felt obligated to do so, on behalf of their teacher. When I visited some other children’s workplaces accompanied by NGO coordinators and teachers, a coordinator asked the children to “pose” in front of my camera as if they were working.

I first assumed that they were simply speaking and acting as “working children,”

because they were told to do so there or on the morning of my visit. Yet, the more I carried out my fieldwork, the more I became aware that some of the children, especially the “old-timers” of the learning center, already knew what was expected of them in front of a visitor (outsider) like myself, and how to be or to act as “working children” in a manner well suited for the internationally recognized definition and notion of “working children.” One day in a learning center, for example, I asked the children if I could take a picture. A girl then said, “Do you want to take a picture of us studying (gesturing writing something on her notebook with her pencil), or our face up smiling?” In the workplaces, some children also asked visitors what kind of pictures they wanted—posing to work or looking at a camera. The children have shown me that they can flexibly act to be “ideal” working children who study and work hard.

Conclusion: Becoming “Working Children”

Urban children working and assisting adults are a part of daily scenes in Dhaka; however, this does not mean that they consider themselves “working children.” This chapter (Chapter V) has shown that despite of the diverse nature and types of children’s work (ways of working) in Dhaka, the BEHTRUWC project carries the specific definition and image of “poor working children.” Although the children and their families themselves have probably never read or heard what kinds of notions outsiders often have toward children like them, they understand the idea of “working children” is constructed, idealized, and used in the international context. After the learning center was opened in their neighborhood, the children began to learn the implication of “working children,” gain experience performing their “poorness,” and sometimes feel disappointment or even anger toward the project. They gradually realize why the NGOs, the government, and UNICEF emphasize the implication, and underscore their “poverty-stricken

environment,” in order to be accountable to their donors. The children *become* “working children” through participating in the BEHTRUWC project.

I do not intend to say that these children are always forced by the teachers and NGOs to perform “working children.” Observing, interacting with, and interviewing the children, it was apparent that many children were enjoying their time at the learning center, and were eager to learn new things. One boy asked me new English words every time I visited him in the learning center. When I saw him next time, his notebook was filled with his beautiful handwriting of new English words and sentences. Rather, my position is that the constructed notion of “working children” has been brought to urban *bosti* children by the BEHTRUWC project (providers; e.g. the government and UNICEF), and that through participating in the project, the children have gradually *become* “working children;” learned to be what others call and expect of “working children.” Not only the teachers and NGO coordinators, but also the children then try to act out the imagined “working children,” especially in front of their irregular visitors from the government, UNICEF, and international donors.

In terms of reproducing and perpetuating the image of “working children,” therefore, the children are not passive recipients of the BEHTRUWC project, but are active participants. Like Hammertwon kids in Willis’s study (1977), through accepting, experiencing, and opposing to the objectives and notions attached to the BEHTRUWC project, the children begin actively constructing their social reality using the educational institution given to them as an arena for developing their own set of behaviors and attitudes as a response to the social context. The dilemma of the BEHTRUWC project is that: while the project objective states, “To enhance the life options of the urban working children and adolescents to access their rights to education, protection and development and participation,” the project can justify its *raison d’etre*

(substantial reasons), when more children say and stay “working” and have no intention (or resources) to go to regular (formal) school. The BEHTRUWC project makes and produces the “working children.”

CHAPTER VI.
“LESS IS NOT ENOUGH”: MEANING OF SCHOOLING

Living in a severe poverty-stricken environment, *bosti* (slums), of Dhaka does not mean that a father or mother of any household makes all of the children engage in a possible income-generating activity or neglect to send them to school. In the same household, some children work when their brothers and sisters do not and instead go to school. Parents do not force all of their children to earn simply to maximize their household income, but choose one or more of their children to enroll in school. In addition, not working does not mean that the children are in school; on the other hand, working outside of the home does not necessarily mean that children are not in school. Some children work part-time and attend school, while others do neither. Children and parents carefully evaluate what schooling and work bring (or do not bring) to their households.

This chapter (Chapter VI) discusses meaning of schooling shared among low-income migrant families in Dhaka, particularly in Joar Sahara, in order to understand how the families see and utilize (or do not count solely on) the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project. The previous chapters noted the BEHTRUWC project makes “working children.” This chapter problematizes the other features of the BEHTRUWC project that diversify the educational path of each child (individual); and, describes how the BEHTRUWC project, in comparison with formal schooling, does not necessarily support children who hope to continue schooling. It is difficult for the children of the BEHTRUWC project to pursue further schooling, unless the children and their families have and invest in the other opportunity and means of schooling (rather than the BEHTRUWC project). In what follows, the chapter first introduces the formal school system (e.g. levels and types of

schooling) in Bangladesh; second, describes the unique features of the BEHTRUWC project; and, finally, focuses on schooling options and choices in Joar Sahara to explore the meaning of schooling perceived in Dhaka.

Formal School Systems in Bangladesh: Levels and Types of Institutions

Parents of low-income migrant families in Dhaka often speak about the cost and economic burden of their children's schooling; however, they do not send their children to any available or less expensive school, but cautiously choose the school for each child. They sometimes choose a tuition-based private school in *bosti* over a free government primary school or a free NFPE program. The local private schools in *bosti* are usually run by local landlords and leaders. On the other hand, interestingly, the majority of the lower-middle class children (more affluent than low-income migrants) attend a free government primary school.

The formal school system in Bangladesh consists of many different levels and types of institutions: pre-primary, primary (compulsory), junior secondary, secondary, higher secondary (intermediate college), cadet college, degree college, university, graduate schools, and *madrassa* (*ebtedayee* (primary-level), *dakhil* (secondary-level), *alim* (higher secondary-level), *fazil* (bachelor-level), and *kamil* (bachelor- and masters-level)). Each level of schooling is linked to another level. A student enters and completes one level of education, and then he or she can move up to another level to meet his or her goal.

Approximately at the age of six, children enroll either in primary school or *ebtedayee* of the *madrassa* education system, both of which last for five years (Grade 1 to 5). (Some students attend both types of primary schools.) Students graduate when they are ten years old. To complete primary education, they are required to take the national "Primary Education

Completion” exam. After primary school, they move up to junior secondary (Grade 6 to 8 (age 11 to 13)), secondary (Grade 9 to 10 (age 14 and 15)), and higher secondary school (Grade 11 and 12 (age 16 and 17)). After each level of secondary education, students take public examinations known as the Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSC), Secondary School Certificate (SSC), and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), respectively. The scores of each student’s exams will determine which school he or she is eligible to enter and public scholarships he or she can receive. After Grade 12, students continue to the college and university level of education.

In Bangladesh, the primary school level of formal education alone consists of seven different institutions: 1) Government; 2) Experimental; 3) Registered non-government; 4) Non-registered non-government; 5) Kindergarten; 6) Attached to high school; and, 7) Community. The table (Table 9) below shows the categorization of the primary school types.

Table 9. Types of Formal Primary School in Bangladesh

Implementing Organization (Sector)	Public (Government)	Private	Community (Villages, etc.)
Types of Formal Primary School	1) Government; 2) Experimental	3) Registered non-government; 4) Non-registered non-government; 5) Kindergarten; 6) Attached to high school	7) Community

Among different types of primary schools, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) runs “government” and “experimental” schools.¹⁷ The “registered” and “non-registered non-governmental” schools, “kindergarten,” as well as “primary schools attached to high school” are all private institutions; though the “registered” schools receive financial support from the Government for teachers’ salary (while the “non-registered” schools do not). The “registered” and “non-registered non-governmental” schools do not mean they are run by non-profit NGOs, and are not equivalent to non-formal primary education (NFPE) programs. The “registered” and “non-registered non-governmental” schools are private institutions pursuing profits (e.g. “non-governmental” implies “private”), while the NGO-led NFPE programs are operated without any commercial interest (e.g. NGOs means “non-profit”). In addition, what they call “kindergarten” is not only for pre-primary school children, but covers up to the Grade 5 level. It usually implies English-medium schools, and intends to offer (or imitate) foreign (often British or American) teaching programs to the upper, middle, and lower-middle class children. Some villages operate their own “community” primary schools that are exclusively found in rural areas. Nearly 75 percent of an estimated 16.4 million primary school students are either enrolled in the government or registered non-government school (54 percent and 21 percent, respectively), and more than 60 percent of approximately 320 thousand teachers work at either of these two types of primary schools (45 percent and 19 percent, respectively) (Nath and Chowdhury 2009; UNICEF Bangladesh 2010).

The gross and net primary school enrollment rates were 53 percent and 48 percent, respectively, in 1970; 72 percent and 64 percent in 1990; and, 103 percent and 92 percent in

¹⁷ The “experimental” school is a government school managed by the Primary Training (Teacher) Institutes (PTIs) under the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) of the MoPME, for the purpose of teacher training. About 10 thousand students (0.05 percent of the total primary school students in Bangladesh) were enrolled in 54 experimental schools in 2007 (Nath and Chowdhury 2009).

2009 (World Bank 2012); however, the primary school completion rate still remains as low as only half of all students enrolled in primary school at Grade 1 finish the full course of primary education (World Bank 2012). This continuously gives room for NFPE programs in Bangladesh today.

The BEHTRUWC Project: Distance from the “Mainstream” Formal Schooling

As discussed in Chapter IV, in comparison with formal primary schooling, the NFPE programs are more flexible and diverse in their objectives, management, and approaches, which could draw a clear distinction between children with formal schooling and non-formal schooling. In addition, among typical NFPE programs, the BEHTRUWC project is especially unique in its limited coverage of the primary education curriculum and no ties to formal schools. While the four NFPE programs illustrated in Chapter IV (the ROSC project, the SHIKHON project, the BPS program, and the UNIEQUE project), aim to prepare children to return to and eventually “integrate” into the formal school system (within or after completion of the program), the BEHTRUWC project is completely independent from the formal school and other NFPE programs, not having a mechanism to transfer its participants to a formal school, as described below.

Limited Coverage of the Curriculum

The BEHTRUWC project proposal indicates its objective is for children to achieve a skills-level equivalent to Grade 5 in Bangla and Grade 3 in mathematics of the formal primary school curriculum, after they complete 40 months of the project’s full coursework. The table (Table 10) below lists the subjects and grades taught in each NFPE program.

The number of grades and subjects taught in the BEHTRUWC project is less than that of the formal school and the other NFPE programs that cover all of the primary education level of the national (government) curriculum. The BEHTRUWC project also adds one extra unique subject, “life skills,” which is not required by the national curriculum. The definition of “life skills” employs that of the WHO, in which “life skills” are “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable people to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.”

Table 10. Five NFPE Programs: Grades and Subjects Covered

	BEHTRUWC Project	ROSC Project	SHIKHON Project	BPS Program	UNIQUE Project
<i>Grades and Subjects Covered</i>	<u>Bengali:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Math:</u> Grade 1 to 3 <u>English:</u> Grade 1 to 2 <u>Integrated science and social studies:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Life skills:</u> Grade 1 to 5	<u>Bengali:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Math:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>English:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Science:</u> Grade 3 to 5 <u>Social Studies:</u> Grade 3 to 5 <u>Religious Studies:</u> Grade 3 to 5	<u>Bengali:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Math:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>English:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Integrated science and social studies:</u> Grade 1 to 2 <u>Science:</u> Grade 3 to 5 <u>Social Studies:</u> Grade 3 to 5 <u>Religious Studies:</u> Grade 3 to 5	<u>Bengali:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Math:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>English:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Integrated science and social studies:</u> Grade 1 to 3 <u>Science:</u> Grade 4 to 5 <u>Social Studies:</u> Grade 4 to 5 <u>Religious Studies:</u> Grade 3 to 5	<u>Bengali:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Math:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>English:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Science:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Social Studies:</u> Grade 1 to 5 <u>Religious Studies:</u> Grade 1 to 5

A daily schedule of the BEHTRUWC project learning center consists of Bangla (Bengali), English, life skills, and mathematics (and social studies, but only later in the course). In one of the learning centers in Joar Sahara, for example, classes begin at 8 a.m., and when children are late to class, the teacher goes to the children’s houses and looks for them, or the teacher asks a child to find the others. First, in Bengali class (60 minutes), they practice writing and reading storybooks and poems. Second, in English class (20 minutes), they first sing the

ABC song, and then learn one letter of the alphabet and eventually, a few vocabulary words each day. On the day they learn “G,” for instance, they practice the three “G” words: Girl, Grass, and Goat. Third, the “life-skills” class (30 minutes) covers a wide variety of topics. For example, a teacher explains what kinds of foods are important for children to eat. The textbook shows which food has Vitamin A, B, or C. In the end of the class, each child repeats sentences such as, “I will go to a market and buy lemons and mangos, because they have Vitamin C.” The teacher also talks about disease in the class, and the children role-play a doctor and patient. The other topics include a discussion about what types of children’s work are considered as “hazardous,” and when children can (or should) say “no” to their employers’ physical punishment, and so on. These everyday lessons of “life-skills” presuppose children participating in the project are “working children.” Finally, the mathematics class (40 minutes) then usually begins with counting the numbers from one to one hundred. Three or four children are appointed by the teacher and come in front of the class to count the numbers using a poster on the wall. The other children repeat after the child. The teacher also writes several practice questions (e.g. addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division) on the blackboard and all children answer the same questions; or children are divided into four or five groups, and each group is given different questions. After answering questions in their notebooks, the children show them to the teacher. While correcting the children’s answers, the teacher also takes their attendance. At the end of the class, children line up facing one another and sing the Bangladeshi national anthem, and leave the learning center at 10:30 a.m.

In addition, after completing the 40-month of the BEHTRUWC coursework, the project presents children with opportunities for vocational training, instead of transfers to a formal school. The BEHTRUWC project offers children that have completed 24 months or more

of the course with “marketable livelihood skills training” (UNICEF Bangladesh 2012). When I was in Bangladesh, this program had not yet started; however, according to the proposal, the children could choose and receive vocational training from adult professionals (e.g. mechanics, etc.). It is obvious that the BEHTRUWC project aims to prepare children to become better “workers” and not “formal school students.” The “incomplete” coverage of primary schooling does not offer the full scope of primary schooling experience.

Ties to Formal “Normal” Schools?

The BEHTRUWC project reports that approximately ten percent of child participants have left the project before the completion of 40 months;¹⁸ yet, 15 percent of the project graduates have enrolled in formal primary schools. Nevertheless, what I observed in hundreds of BEHTRUWC project learning centers in Dhaka was different. Many children (e.g. estimated 50 to 90 percent of each learning center) had left the project due to their family’s move, a new full-time job, or marriage. In many centers, more than half of the children were replaced with new younger children. In addition, I found that many children participating in the BEHTRUWC project engage in “double schooling,” enrolling in a local formal primary school while attending a BEHTRUWC project learning center simultaneously.

The BEHTRUWC project does not coordinate with any formal schools (or the formal school government offices under the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) of the MoPME); whereas, the four NFPE programs (the ROSC project, the SHIKHON project, the BPS program, and the UNIQUE project) consult with the formal schools, before and during program implementation, so that the same children do not attend the NFPE program and the formal school

¹⁸ The percentage of students leaving the BPS program’s full curriculum is five to seven, and that of UNIQUE project is ten percent.

at the same time, as well as to make it easy for the NFPE program graduates to transfer to the formal school. For instance, when launching a NFPE program in the area where the government primary school is already available, some NFPE program providers coordinate with the formal school in order to avoid enrolling the same students. The BPS program and the SHIKHON project have a system to collect a “No Objection Certificate (NOC),” through which NFPE program providers ask formal primary schools to verify a list of their participants, and to confirm that no students on the list are enrolled in the formal school. The ROSC project does not have the NOC, but submits the list of students to the local government education office, and asks a head teacher of the closest primary school to verify the list. (In addition, the SHIKHON project and the UNIQUE project encourage their teachers to meet formal primary school teachers and to organize social events jointly with formal schools.)

Moreover, the UNIQUE project, for instance, also incorporates a “mechanism” for children who hope to continue (transfer) to the formal primary or secondary levels of education (schooling), as the UNIQUE project has its ultimate goal to prepare their students to enroll in a local formal primary school. The project does not consist of one self-complete full course of primary-level education, but instead, applies the “multi-grade teaching-learning” method, in which, students in each learning center are divided into four different grades (groups) according to their level of understanding and knowledge of each subject. The four grades (groups) are called: “Beginner” (equivalent to Grade 1 of the formal primary education), “Advanced” (Grade 2), “Skilled” (Grade 3), and “Independent” (Grade 4 and 5), and each group has a table for the students to study together (e.g. four tables in every learning center of the UNIQUE project). The same student can be in the “Advanced” grade in Bengali, but “Beginner” in mathematics. Through this system of preparing students for formal primary school, 35 percent of the 88,702

children that have participated in the UNIQUE project (between 2007 and 2009) have already begun attending a formal primary school. The project also has a follow-up system for the teachers and project staff to track former UNIQUE project students in formal schools, to see how the children are adjusting to the new environment, and whether the children are continuing to attend the school.

The UNIQUE project students, as well as the former UNIQUE project students who are now in a formal primary school, sit the Primary Education Completion exam. BRAC also encourages its participants to take the formal Primary Education Completion exam with the formal primary school children. According to the BRAC report, 97 percent of the BPS program students passed the government's national exam in 2009, when the national average was 88.8 percent. In this way, many of the BRAC students have an opportunity to pursue their schooling to the secondary level after completing the full course of the BPS program. Taking such an exam of the formal education scheme seems to open doors for children to have a secondary level of formal schooling, or have proof of reaching a certain level of education that is favorable when finding a job in the future.

On the other hand, the BEHTRUWC project does not have any coordination with the formal schools, or encourage students to take the Primary Education Completion exam, even though the project is sponsored by the government. The BEHTRUWC project is a completely independent scheme from the formal education system in Bangladesh. As introduced in Chapter IV, it is operated by the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) of the MoPME—an independent administrative unit of the MoPME especially in charge of non-formal education, while another administrative unit, the DPE is responsible for all formal primary schools and the ROSC project. Though the BNFE and the DPE both belong to the same ministry (the MoPME),

their office buildings are located in different areas of Dhaka (the BNFE and the DPE have different offices). They do not have any coordination mechanism or policies, and the BNFE and DPE officers seem not to exchange information about each other's project, but appear to keep a distance (e.g. The officials and experts in BNFE and DPE, I spoke to, were not acquaintances). While the ROSC project and the NGO-led NFPE programs have flexible relationships with formal primary schools, the government's vertical administrative structure (vertically-segmented system) and relationships draw a clear distinction and sets boundaries between the government's formal and non-formal school programs (entities), through which children of the BEHTRUWC project cannot easily modify their educational path (e.g. to transfer to and enroll in a formal school). Institutional gaps and barriers, as well as the complicated branching and hierarchical management structure of the BEHTRUWC project seems to be one of the reasons that makes it extremely difficult for children to become integrated to the formal education system.

Meaning of Schooling: Situating the BEHTRUWC Project

The BEHTRUWC project has operated 6,646 learning centers in the six urban (divisional) cities (Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet, and Barisal); of which, the first two thousand centers were opened in July 2006, completed the 40-month of the full project teaching (learning) course, and closed in November 2009. As far as I have observed, throughout the project course, many children (and their parents) show less and less interest and expectations, and pay less and less attention to their BEHTRUWC project learning centers, month after month. The children may have become bored with the teachers' uncreative and repeated lessons, or busy with their new and more mature jobs. Their responsibilities at home increase as they grow older, and they may have realized they do not have much time for schooling and should detach

themselves from the BEHTRUWC learning centers.

After November 2009, I continued following the ten children in Joar Sahara, in order to observe what the children were doing after the BEHTRUWC project center was closed, how the children and their families understood their experiences in the project, and how they ultimately made decisions on their (continuous or new) primary schooling as well as labor opportunities in Dhaka. Participants of the BEHTRUWC project might enjoy a taste of the “schooling” experience and learn how to write, read and calculate; yet, at the same time, they understand that the project does not (even eventually) incorporate the children into the formal school system.

Formal Schooling in Joar Sahara

For children of low-income migrant families residing in Joar Sahara, two government primary schools and three small-scale non-registered non-governmental (private) schools are available, in addition to the BEHTRUWC project. The majority of children go to one of the government primary schools, though it usually takes 30 minutes to commute on foot; or, one of the private schools that are located within Joar Sahara. The two government primary schools (Kalanchapur Government Primary School and Kuril Kuratuli Primary School) have multiple classes in three-story concrete buildings, and cover Grades 1 through 5. Approximately six to eight hundred students are in one school, and one or two teachers look after one grade. The schools apply a shift-system, and students of Grades 1 to 3 come to the school at 7 a.m. and leave at 10 a.m., while students of Grades 4 and 5 start classes at 10:30 a.m. and finish at 1:30 p.m. One teacher takes care of about 50 students at a time (a class), six classes per day, and six days a

week (Saturday to Thursday).¹⁹ In comparison to three non-registered primary schools in Joar Sahara, the government schools are equipped with better physical facilities and supplies; for instance, larger classrooms and playgrounds, desks and chairs for all students, separate teachers' rooms, blackboards, electric lights, and fans. Toilets (separated by sex), drinking water facilities, and school libraries are, however, not available in these schools. Each student is provided with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) textbooks from the government free of charge, though students must buy and prepare their own uniforms and stationery (e.g. notebooks, pencils, schoolbags, etc.) on their own.

The three small-scale non-registered non-governmental (private) schools in Joar Sahara are: Nazrul Academy, Matrissaya Pre Cadet High School, and Dream School; and, most of my informants were either in the Nazrul Academy or the Matrissaya School. The two schools all admit children of the lower-middle class and low-income families who cannot afford to send their children to better-equipped private primary schools (e.g. English-medium) that are popular among the wealthier middle-class families. The Nazrul Academy covers the pre-primary level to Grade 5. The school building is one-story with two large rooms. The owner of the school pays Tk.2,700 (US\$38.57) for each room per month. He further divides one room into two separate classrooms, and thus two classes can be taught in a room at a time. According to the school owner, in the beginning of 2010 when the new academic year started in January, there were about two hundred students; however, the number of the students decreased to 166 after five months. He lamented that many students had left due to the tuition which was an economic burden on the family. The monthly tuition fee is Tk.150 (US\$2.14) per child, and in addition, each student is expected (required) to pay another Tk.150 for an "exam fee."

¹⁹ The national averages of the "number of students per teacher" in 2008 is: 49 for government primary schools, 30 for private (non-governmental) schools, 30 for non-formal schools (learning centers), and 30 for *madrassa* schools (Nath and Chowdhury 2009).

The Matrissaya Pre Cadet High School covers the pre-primary level to Grade 8. This school was opened in 2007, and is a small-scale branch school of the main school in Nuer Cahara (about two miles away to the south of Joar Sahara) that was established in 1997. The main school has more than three hundred students, whereas the Joar Sahara branch school accommodates 125 students. For the Joar Sahara school, the school rents an entire four-story building for Tk.10,000 (US\$142.86) per month to use as a school, and hires ten to 12 teachers. The teachers are all locally recruited, and are mostly female. The teachers who teach the primary school level have either the SSC or the HSC, while the teachers for Grades 6 to 8 have a bachelor's degree. According to the head teacher of the Joar Sahara school, the teachers' salaries are not fixed but depend on the amount of tuition fees they can collect from their students (e.g. some students delay the payments). The monthly tuition fee is Tk.150 (US\$2.14) per student, the same as the Nazrul Academy. The head teacher claims what he is doing is "social work," considering Tk.150 is the minimum amount he can set to maintain the school. He also says that he feels he is doing "charity" for the "poor" neighboring children.

The Matrissaya Pre Cadet High School adopts a shift-system (like the government schools): the first (morning) shift is for students of the pre-primary level to Grade 1, and starts at 8 a.m. and finishes at 10:30 a.m.; and the second shift is from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., which is for Grades 2 to 8 students. In addition, some teachers conduct supplementary "coaching" classes from 3 p.m. until 4:30 p.m., where teachers help children do their homework. The coaching class is not mandatory, but it is common practice in Dhaka for teachers to have this extra income. Each student is asked to pay an additional Tk.300 (US\$4.29) per month as a "coaching" fee. Some children mentioned that when their families are unable to pay the fees, they would feel uncomfortable sitting in the classroom due to teachers' pressures, and discontinue schooling.

According to the head teacher, of 85 new students entered in the pre-primary level in January 2010, 27 students had already left by March 2010, because of the financial burden. Many of the children still live in the neighborhood; yet, neither work nor go to school.

Schooling Choices and Decisions in Joar Sahara

The following table (Table 11) shows the schooling experiences of the ten children and their siblings in Joar Sahara. It demonstrates: the schools (and grades) they attended, completed or left, and the ones they are currently attending; current work if they are engaged in; and, the minimum amount of school-related expense each household pays (or used to pay) every month.

Table 11. Ten Children: School Background, Current Status and Expenses

Name (Approx. Age)	Schooling Background → Current Status of Schooling and Work (e.g. The BEHTRUWC Project, Private or Government Primary Schools)	Minimum amount of school expense
Arif (10-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arif: BEHTRUWC → Private school (Nazrul, G4) → No schooling (No sibling) 	(Tk. 300)
Ashik (13-15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashik: Private school and BEHTRUWC → Private school (Matrissaya, G5) • Sister-2: no school, too young 	Tk. 450 (Tk. 450 per child)
Happy (12-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S-1: completed G5 (married) → No work • S-2: completed G5 → No work • S-3: completed G5 (married) → No work • B-4: completed G5 → GFW • Happy: Government school (Kalanchapur, G5) and BEHTRUWC → No schooling • S-6: no school, too young 	(None)
Monjirul (12-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S-1: completed G8 (married) → GFW • S-2: completed G6 → GFW • Monjirul: BEHTRUWC → Private school (Matrissaya, 5) → No schooling • S-4: no school, the own choice 	(Tk. 450)
Nazmal (10-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nazmal: BEHTRUWC → Private school (Nazrul, G4) → No schooling • B-2: Private school (Dream) → no school, the own choice • B-3: no school, the own choice • B-4: no school, too young 	(Tk. 600)
Runa (10-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S-1: completed G5 → DW → GFW • S-2: completed G5 → GFW • Runra: Government school and BEHTRUWC → Government school (Kalanchapur, G4) (and taking care of household chores) • S-4: Government school (Kalanchapur, Grade 3) • B-5: Private school (Nazrul, Grade 1) • B-6: Private school (Nazrul, Pre) • B-7: no school, too young 	Tk. 600 (Tk. 300 per child)
Saiful (13-15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-1: no school (married) → Rickshaw puller • B-2: no school (married) → Small business • S-3: no school (married) → DW • B-4: no school (married) → GFW • B-5: completed G5 (married) → GFW • S-6: completed G5 (married) → GFW • Saiful: BEHTRUWC → Private school (Matrissaya, G5) → No schooling 	(Tk. 450)
Saminur (14-16)/ Kohinur (10-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-1: no school → Vegetable seller • Saminur: BEHTRUWC and DW → GFW • Kohinur: BEHTRUWC → No work (taking care of household chores) • B-4: Private school (Nazrul, G2) • B-5: Private school (Nazrul, G1) • S-6: Private school (Nazrul, Pre) 	Tk. 900 (Tk. 300 per child)
Sarifa (12-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarifa: Private school and BEHTRUWC → Private school (Nazrul, G4) • B-2: Government primary school (in the village, G3) • S-3: no school, too young • S-4: no school, too young • S-5: no school, too young 	Tk. 300 (Tk. 300 per child)

Note: G stands for Grade, B for brother, and S for sister. The numbers written next to B and S indicate their birth order. GFW implies garment factory worker, and DW, domestic worker.

Six children (Happy, Monjirul, Saiful, Saminur, Kohinur, and Sarifa) started the BEHTRUWC project from the very beginning in June 2006. Saminur and Kohinur (sisters) left the center after two years, while Happy, Monjirul, Saiful, and Sarifa completed the full project course in November 2009. Meanwhile, four children (Arif, Ashik, Nazmal, and Runa) joined the center in 2008 by replacing the children who originally (initially) registered in the project but left prior to the completion of the full course, like Saminur and Kohinur. Though Saminur and Kohinur do not currently attend school, Saminur's family spends the highest amount of expenses for the children's schooling in comparison with the other eight households (Table 11). For Saiful and Saminur's families, the younger siblings are more likely to enroll in school. For Happy and Monjirul's families, on the other hand, even though all of their elder sisters and brother have completed at least Grade 5 back in their villages, Happy and Monjirul still do not go to school.

Not Attending School: In-between Family and Friends

Arif, Happy, Monjirul, Nazmal and Saiful often spend time together, and when one of them does not go to school, they all do not. After the learning center closed in November 2009, they (except Happy) all sought admission to a local formal primary school. Monjirul and Saiful began Grade 5 of the Matrissaya School in January 2010, while Arif and Nazmal were admitted to Grade 4 of the Nazmal Academy. Their school attendance, however, became irregular by May 2010.

They have different reasons for not going to school. Among this group of the children, for example, Happy's family as well as Monjirul's mother encourage their children (Happy and Monjirul) to attend school. Monjirul's mother mentions that they have a plan to migrate back to their village at "the end of 2010." This timing implies the end of school year, as she wants

Monjirul to complete Grade 5 in Dhaka in order to obtain a well-paid job in the future. Monjirul also says that he wants to have a job in Dhaka in the future. In contrast to the other nine children's fathers and mothers in Joar Sahara that are barely able to write the Bengali alphabet or their names, Monjirul's parents are the only ones who have had the primary level of schooling. In addition, Monjirul's two elder sisters have completed Grade 8 and 6, respectively. Monjirul's mother never forces Monjirul to go to school, though she always says, "I hope Monjirul attends school more regularly." Monjirul has completed the full 40-months course of the BEHTRUWC project, and now has the full family support for his schooling; yet, he still does not go to school and spends most of his day playing with his friends, renting and riding a bicycle,²⁰ walking around and gossiping about their neighbours.

Like Monjirul's parents, Happy's mother and sisters want Happy to complete at least primary schooling, as all of Happy's elder sisters and brother have finished Grade 5. Happy's mother also seems to have fewer economic burdens than other low-income migrant families in the Joar Sahara *bosti*. Happy, in fact, was (and technically still is) enrolled in the Kalanchapur Government Primary School, even before, during, and after she was in the BEHTRUWC project learning center, though her attendance to the government school was fairly irregular. She says, "I like the (government) school, because it has a large playground. But I do not like going there. Teachers scold me," and she adds, "But scolding is normal in school."

On the other hand, Saiful's mother complains about Saiful's school expenses (the Matrissaya School's tuition and coaching fee Tk.450 (US\$6.43) per month, which was not necessary when he was in the BEHTRUWC project). Saiful's family was evicted from their old tin house and moved to a slightly larger *paka*²¹ house, and the monthly house rent doubled from

²⁰ Renting a bicycle costs Monjirul ten *taka* each time.

²¹ As mentioned in Chapter II, in contrast to tin houses, the *paka* means the houses constructed from concrete

Tk.1,800 to Tk.3,600 (US\$25.71 to US\$51.43). The salary of Saiful's father has been the same (Tk.3,500 (US\$50.00)) at least for the last three years, and now his single salary does not cover rent. Saiful stopped going to the Matrissaya School around this time. Arif's grandmother also has a similar complain like Saiful's mother. She hesitated to keep paying Arif's school tuition and exam fees (Tk.300 (US\$4.29) a month). Arif seemed to enjoy his schooling; however, when his tuition was unpaid for a few months, Arif started to hide from the school headmaster at school. Several weeks later, Arif then said, "I do not want to go, I am not feeling like going to school anymore," and left the school. Arif's grandmother and father do not say much to Arif about what to do or how he spends his day, unless he continues working for his family.

Nazmal's mother (Saiful's eldest sister) neither encourages nor refuses her sons' schooling. Nazmal has never been a "working child," but because he is the eldest nephew of Saiful, Saiful took him to join the BEHTRUWC project learning center in 2008. After the center was closed in November 2009, Nazmal was admitted to the Nazrul Academy. While Saiful's mother (Nazmal's grandmother) always complains about the economic hardship to pay the school expense for Saiful, Nazmal's mother does not mention much about the school expenses for her four sons. Nazmal's mother says, because Nazmal and her second son (Nahid, about seven to eight years old) have asked if they could go to school, she and her husband let them attend the school. Meanwhile, she also does not insist that they be in school everyday. Their third son (Zahid, about four to five years old) could also start the pre-primary level of schooling if he is interested; yet, Zahid still does not want to go to school, and thus his parents let him stay at home. Six months after Nazmal finished the BEHTRUWC project course and began Grade 4 at the Nazrul Academy, however, he stopped going to school. The primary reason seems to be his close friend, Arif. Nazmal says, "We did not go to school today. I did not want to, and Arif did

(cement) materials with permanent paved walls and floors.

not either.” Arif could not pay his school tuition for a few months, which led him to leave the school, and Nazmal chose not going to school without Arif.

Saminur and Kohimur are sisters, and also do not attend school. They have never been to any formal primary school, yet were both admitted to the BEHTRUWC project learning center in July 2006. They studied for about two years, and left the center in 2008 before completing the full course, due to the time conflict with Saminur’s new job in a garment factory. This, however, does not mean that their parents neglect or are reluctant to send their children to school. Saminur and Kohinur’s two younger brothers and one younger sister are currently in school (Nazrul Academy; Grade 2, Grade 1, the pre-primary level, respectively). Saminur’s income has made three out of six of her siblings’ primary schooling affordable for the family. If Saminur were not engaged in labor, none of them would probably be able to go to school. She says, she is proud of supporting her younger siblings attend schools.

Schooling for the Family and Future

Among the ten children, Ashik, Runa, and Sarifa are the ones who most regularly attend school. Ashik sometimes spends time with Saiful; though he does not seem to be influenced or feel pressured by the peer network (e.g. whether they go or not go to school). Ashik has his own friends, and the girls (Runa and Sarifa) spend most of their free time at home. Ashik, for example, wakes up early in the morning, prays five times a day, goes to school regularly with his friends, helps his grandparents in his free time, cleans the house, and does homework everyday. Ashik was asked to join the BEHTRUWC project in 2008, replacing a boy called Liton who was originally registered in the learning center but left to work in a garment factory. Liton was living with his uncle’s family when I met him in the summer of 2007 and the

early 2009; however, according to Saiful, he is now working in a factory outside Dhaka. When Ashik started the BEHTRUWC project, he was already attending the Matrissaya School; and, after the learning center was closed in November 2009, he still continues his schooling (Grade 5) in the school.

Ashik's schooling is a priority in his family. Since Ashik does not have a father, Ashik's grandfather is especially concerned about Ashik's future; whether Ashik can find a job with a stable income, become independent, and earn and enhance his livelihood even after he and his wife pass away. Ashik's grandfather repeatedly says, "I am old, and cannot live long. My most worry is about Ashik, you know, because he does not have a father." Not having a father means (for them) that Ashik does not have a guardian who can support him financially and socially in the future. Ashik's grandparents believe schooling will help Ashik find and secure a job. Ashik's grandfather pays his school tuition, Tk.450 (US\$6.43) per month. Ashik takes his schooling at the Matrissaya School seriously (in comparison with the other children), and regularly attends the school as well as a local mosque, for which his grandparents are hopeful. Ashik says he wants to go to secondary school if his grandparents let him, and continue staying in Dhaka to find a job and support his grandparents.

Runa's mother also has a strong desire for her children (both sons and daughters) to finish at least primary schooling, even though her neighbors frequently ask why she does not let her children work, and offer job opportunities (domestic work) to Runa and her young sister, Suma. The two elder daughters (sisters) (Bilkis and Sathi) completed five years of primary schooling in the village, and now work as workers in different garment factories. Runa finished Grades 1 to 3, and Suma completed Grades 1 and 2 in their natal village before moving to Dhaka. They are now in Grade 4 and 3 of the Kalanchapur Government Primary School, respectively,

while Runa also participated in the BEHTRUWC project from 2008 to the end of 2009 until the learning center was closed. After school, while her parents and older sisters are working outside of the home, Runa cares for her young brothers, and clean the house. Suma does not help Runa much, but often visits her neighbors' houses to play with her friends and watch TV programs.

For their sons, Runa's parents chose a private school. While Runa and Suma go to the government primary school, Joshim and Oshim attend Grade 1 and the pre-primary level of the Nazrul Academy, respectively. Runa and Suma's tuition is basically free, yet that of Joshim and Oshim totals Tk.600 (US\$8.57) per month. For each son, the school tuition fee is Tk.150 (US\$2.14), and another Tk.150 is charged as an exam fee. The mother explains that even though she has to pay more expensive tuition for two of her sons, she finds it more appropriate and beneficial, because the school distance is shorter, making the commute safer for Joshim and Oshim; and, as the tuition is costly, the Nazrul Academy is considered a "better-quality" school in Joar Sahara. For the youngest son, Korim (one year old), the parents are planning to eventually send him also to the Nazrul Academy, like his big brothers. Runa's parents want all of their children to complete at least primary schooling. The parents can write a little, but have never been to school. In their village, they were given Tk.125 (US\$1.79) a month by sending their daughters to school through the government's school incentive program²² in rural villages.

In Dhaka, Runa's parents must "pay" for their children's schooling; however, they still believe

²² The government offers a school incentive program called the Primary School Stipend (PES) Project, exclusively in rural areas of Bangladesh. It gives cash incentives to parents who have primary school-aged children (Tietjen 2003; Baulch 2010). To be qualified for the PES program, children must keep more than 85 percent of attendance at school, and in addition, they "must ... meet at least one of the following five eligibility criteria: 1) Belong to a landless or near landless household (one that owns less than half an acre of land); 2) Have parents who work as day laborers; 3) Belong to a female-headed household (one where the head is widowed, separated, or divorced or where the husband is disabled); 4) Belong to a household that derives its living from fishing, pottery, weaving, blacksmithing, or cobbling; [and,] 5) Belong to a household that derives its living from sharecropping" (Baulch 2010:1-2). Once qualified, a family of the child can receive Tk.100 (US\$1.43) per month; and, if the family has more than one child in the school, the stipend will be Tk.125 (US\$1.79) per month (Tietjen 2003; Baulch 2010). The government has estimated approximately 5.5 million formal primary school students received the benefits between 2002 and 2008, and is expecting 4.8 million more children to obtain the stipend between 2008 and 2013 (Baulch 2010).

that they and their children have better schooling and employment opportunities in Dhaka.

Like Runa's parents, Sarifa's parents expect Sarifa to engage in both schooling and work, not only helping her mother at home but also earning income outside home. Sarifa goes to two schools: the Nazrul Academy (Grade 4) and *madrassa*, while working as a domestic worker. She also completed the full BEHTRUWC project course, at which time she was attending the three types of schools. Her parents expect her to regularly attend the schools, work and contribute to the household income, help with the household chores, and look after her younger sisters.

Sarifa's parents prefer Sarifa to go to the Nazrul Academy rather than a government school, as they live right next to the Nazrul Academy. They think the government schools are too far and the commute would be too time-consuming and unsafe for Sarifa. Sarifa's parents want to give her best working and schooling opportunities as possible, but within a shorter distance and close neighborhood, because, they say, Sarifa is a girl. Both Runa's parents and Sarifa's parents consider that learning at the BEHTRUWC project learning center was not enough, because it was not a "normal" (regular and formal) type of primary school. Sarifa does not have much time to play with her friends outside of her home, but devotes herself in handling her daily routine of work and school on her own.

In the urban context like Dhaka, parents have frequent contacts with upper and middle class families, and see their children going to local prestigious schools. For example, men (fathers) work as rickshaw pullers and help the middle class children commute to school, whereas women (mothers) work as domestic workers and see and hear their employers' children going to school, coming back home, talking about school, and doing homework. Although the mothers and fathers have never attended school, and experienced "going to school," they learn

“schooling” through observing other families and carrying dialogues about it with their family members and neighbors. How the others see each school option also seems to influence household decisions on which of their children go or will not go to which school.

Conclusion: The BEHTRUWC Project as a “No-Schooling” Path

For low-income migrant children and their families in Dhaka, the BEHTRUWC project is a new form of institutionalized educational opportunities. Some children take the project as their first and only (primary) schooling opportunity, while others utilize it as a “supplementary school” in addition to their formal primary school. The project theoretically only includes “hard-to-reach urban working children,” who are too busy working to go to a regular (formal) school; however, in practice, some of the children have never been engaged in labor, whereas others, like Ashik, Happy, Runa, and Sarifa have been already in school, before starting the project. They were attending the two schools at the same time (double schooling).

Although their expectation toward the project might be higher in the beginning, by the time the 40-month BEHTRUWC project course is completed and the learning center is closed, the children and their families realize that the experience in the BEHTRUWC project would not assure the same level (experience) of school education (e.g. Primary Education Completion Certificate, etc.), lead them to continue (transfer) to the formal primary or secondary levels of education (schooling), or provide them with the better (skilled) employment opportunities. Some of the project “graduates” who had never been in formal school (Arif, Monjirul, Nazmal, and Saiful), for example, sought to continue their schooling and transfer to a formal primary school, though many of them failed, and currently neither work nor attend school. Every government primary school is already filled with a large number of students, and teachers believe that they

would not be able to, or are not responsible for, looking after such unique children coming from the BEHTRUWC project who have never experienced formal schooling (even though the BEHTRUWC project is a government-sponsored NFPE program). Saiful was always referred to as a “model student” of the BEHTRUWC project, but was still rejected by the formal school. The government schools may require the project graduates to begin from Grade 1; however, like Saiful, mature children and adolescents are already above ten years of age, and do not want to sit in a Grade 1 classroom with six-years-old classmates. The BEHTRUWC project helps children learn to write, read, and calculate, and experience the quasi-schooling environment; yet, it is not necessarily an efficient or effective means for children to continue further schooling in the formal “mainstream” education system.

The formal school system in Bangladesh is, like other countries, structured as one continuous system like a “linear rail (or ladder),” whereby, once a child enters and completes (graduates) one level of education, he or she can follow the rail and move up to another level to meet his or her requirements and goals; whereas, the BEHTRUWC project is one-time independent scheme not linked to other NFPE programs or formal schools. Due to the distinctive features of the BEHTRUWC project, particularly the limited number of teaching subjects and no ties to formal schools, children having participated in the BEHTRUWC project are gradually drawn into a “non-schooling” path, unless the children and their families pursue the other opportunity and means of schooling. Such diversification (distinction) in the provision of primary education (schooling) could further make clear distinctions between children, and does not necessarily support the integration of low-income migrant children into the major educational system of the country or enable them to emerge out of the poverty-stricken environment in Dhaka where they are today.

Low-income migrant families in Dhaka gradually learn and are aware of this aspect (nature) of the BEHTRUWC project. Regardless of whether children go or not go to school, or what school they attend, they foremost and generally believe that schooling opportunity is a means for social advancement and economic upward mobility. Some parents that have never been to school consider that schooling will have a positive influence on their children to improve their skills and have a “better” job in the future (than what they do today), and that the “better” jobs eventually lead to economic and social advancement of the family (e.g. a family where elderly parents do not need to work, but stay at home to be looked after by their son(s)). For them, “better” and “modern” jobs imply less labor-intensive occupations with a more stable income. They call, for example, a garment factory job as an “office job,” and say that working in a garment factory is more socially respected and desirable than rickshaw pullers or domestic workers. On the other hand, my informants in Dhaka know that the BEHTRUWC project does not intend to incorporate the children into the formal school system, or can further differentiates and diversifies the children’s schooling experiences and educational paths; and that without having formal schooling opportunities and experiences, it is still extremely difficult for their children to gain more stable and better-paid jobs in the formal sector in the future.

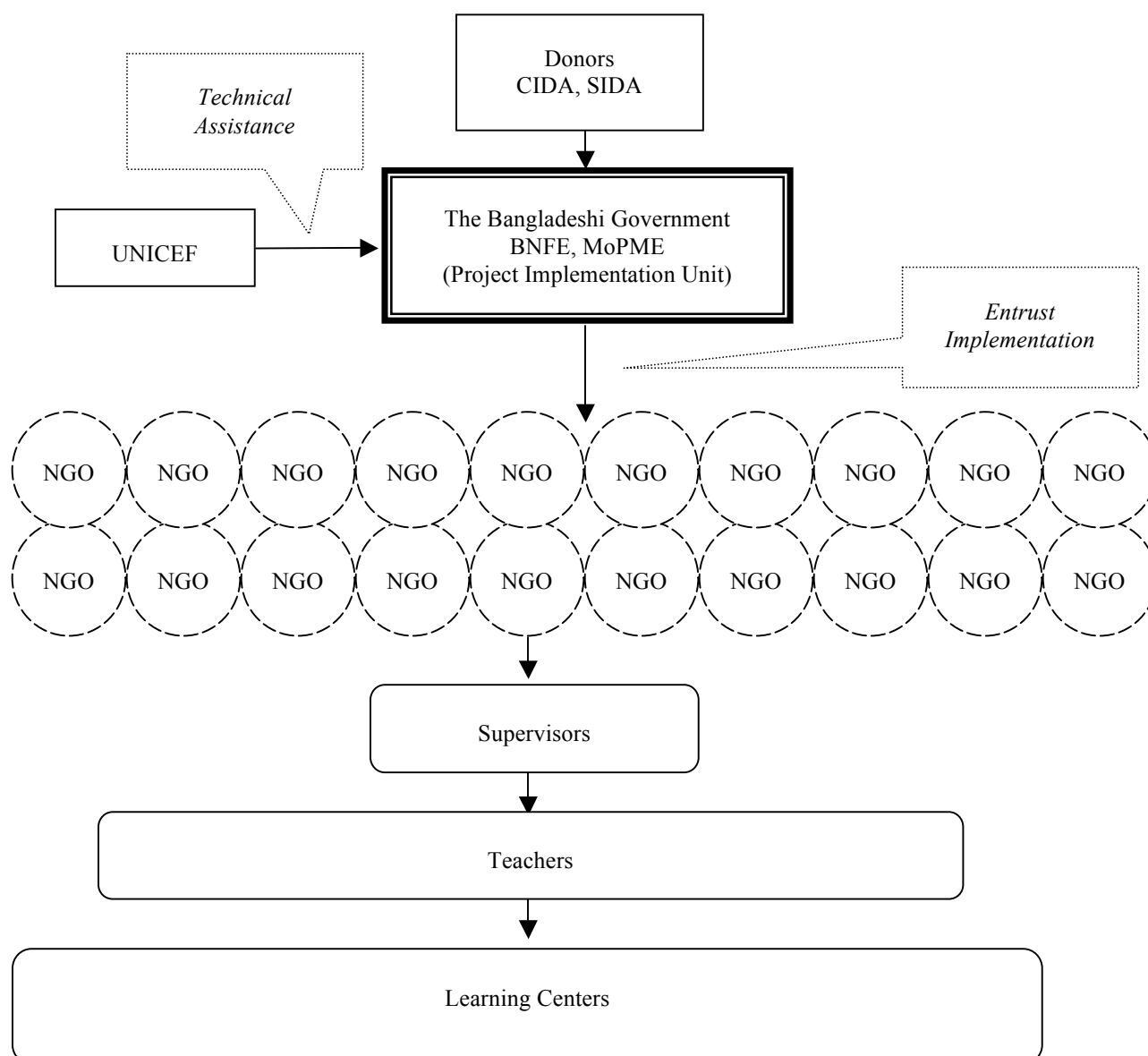
CHAPTER VII.
THE STAGE: PRACTICES IN AND AROUND LEARNING CENTERS

This chapter (Chapter VII) focuses on “what is going on” in and around the learning centers of the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project, and examines how the basic pattern of interpersonal relationships common in Bangladesh can be reflected and applied to the daily practices, interactions, and communications in the learning centers, such as how teachers and NGO coordinators treat and care for children, especially when they want to be accountable to government officials and donors. Throughout the field research, I continuously observed how children, teachers, supervisors, NGO coordinators, and government officials interacted with each other in and around learning centers. While the conceptualization of “working children” and “non-formal primary education (NFPE)” programs may be foreign, implementation of such programs are always undertaken by the Bangladeshi people in the context of Bangladesh; and thus, I would argue that, the “normal order of things” (Comitas 1967) in Bangladesh, such as the hierarchically structured interpersonal relationships and imbalanced opportunities, are further underscored and validated in and through the BEHTRUWC project. The children, for example, may feel socially and morally vulnerable and obligated to teachers, and teachers feel the same to the authority of the program (e.g. NGO officials, government bureaucrats, and foreign sponsors, etc.). As a result, the BEHTRUWC project’s learning centers would not be a place to help children emerge out of the severe poverty environment with the limited choices of employment, as the project objectives claim, but remain as a place to prepare the children for their already-expected particular social position—where they are today in society. The chapter describes fundamental relationships among actors, and discusses their attitudes and behaviors toward children participating in the BEHTRUWC project.

Different Actors of the BEHTRUWC Project

The BEHTRUWC project involves and connects different actors to each other, and each actor plays a certain role at the different tier (level and positions) of project implementation, as shown in the figure (Figure 3) below.

Figure 3. Management Structure of the BEHTRUWC Project



Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) fund the BEHTRUWC project, and UNICEF works with the government to manage the project. CIDA, SIDA and UNICEF officials occasionally visit learning centers and attend various events. The government, particularly officials of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), entrusts 20 NGOs to operate learning centers, and each NGO (coordinator) is in charge of a few hundred learning centers. The NGOs recruit teachers and supervisors: each supervisor looks after ten learning centers (five to ten teachers), and one teacher takes care of one or two learning centers (25 to 50 students). While the NGO coordinators are usually a permanent staff of their NGOs, supervisors and teachers are temporary employees specially appointed for a limited period (40 months) of the BEHTRUWC project. Teachers and supervisors interact most closely with the children, their parents, and local residents, compared to the government officials and NGO coordinators.

Many of the government officials (especially those in higher ranks) and UNICEF officials (technical professionals only and not administrative staffs) come from the affluent and elite families in Bangladesh. They live in some of the most popular (less crowded) areas of Dhaka, own vehicles, employ a family driver and adult servant, have a foreign experience (e.g. studying abroad), have relatives in foreign countries, and can afford to travel to neighboring countries, such as Nepal, India, Thailand and Singapore for their vacation. The other government officials and NGO coordinators are usually from the middle class families. They have university (or higher educational) degrees, live in an apartment (some may own a small apartment building), have an adult or child servant, do not own vehicles but a motorcycle or commute by bus and rickshaw, possibly have experiences of visiting foreign countries as part of study tours funded by

the BEHTRUWC project or other similar programs, and sometimes visit touristic areas inside Bangladesh for their family vacation. Many of the supervisors are also from similar family backgrounds.

Some supervisors and most of the teachers reside in and by *bosti* (slums), yet live in much larger better-established houses than children of the BEHTRUWC project. More than half of the teachers are housewives, and come from lower-middle class local landlords (elite and leader) renting houses to low-income migrant families. The teachers (and their husbands) have a certain extent of political and social influences in the neighborhood. Another half of the teachers are young university (undergraduate and graduate) students, and are sons and daughters of local landlords, using their spare time to teach and to earn an allowance. Landlords of the learning center(s) are also often family members of teachers and supervisors, for example, husbands of female teachers, uncles or brothers-in-law of supervisors, and so on. Some teachers and supervisors are also related. For instance, a supervisor was a brother-in-law of one female teacher, and her father was a landlord of their learning centers. The NGO coordinators point out this situation, and say the BEHTRUWC project is a “real family business,” which can occasionally complicate implementation (e.g. rent a space for a center only from relatives, and ignore the convenience of children, etc.), while it may help management work effectively (e.g. frequent communications among teachers, supervisors and landlords).

Not only the teachers but also the landlords of learning centers can often informally determine whose children can have access to the facility. Children and their families can be also involved in the political games of multiple landlords, supervisors, and teachers; for example, via arguments about whose family obtains the most rent and salaries from the project, and frequent changes in a learning center’s locations. NGO coordinators pay rent to owners of learning

centers (sometimes via supervisors or teachers), while they know and believe that without a sound relationship with local landlords, it is almost impossible to implement such programs as the BEHTRUWC project. NGOs often invite such landlords to many social events held by the BEHTRUWC project.

As explained in Chapter II, in Bangladesh, interpersonal relationships are “characterized by a foremost of rights and responsibilities, social pressures and conventions, detailing what is due to and from whom” (White 2002:734). While the wealthier families are considered to have the obligation of care to their “own poor” (e.g. close relatives, relatives in other districts, neighbors, etc.), the “poorer” have social and moral obligations to the wealthier, and thus, such cares always “come at a cost” (Gardner and Ahmed 2006:5). The ways by which teachers, supervisors, local landlords, NGO coordinators, and the government officials are involved in the BEHTRUWC project also “embody and mold something basic to all interpersonal relationships of power throughout” Bangladesh (Rubbo and Taussig 1983:6). For example, NGO coordinators claim that they sometimes feel difficult to directly and honestly tell to the authority of the project (the government and UNICEF officials) “what is going on” in the learning centers. They want to maintain the “good” relationship with the government, to secure a “good” impression, and to obtain a “good” evaluation, when there are always a large number of competitors in the NGO sector as well as the whole development assistance sectors. For NGOs, the NFPE programs are financial resources to maintain their organization, political and social resources to establish close ties with the central and local government officials. NGO coordinators also value the relationship with local leaders of the areas where they implement the project; and, in order to assure their continued and safe presence in the neighborhood, they tend to prioritize to rent the venues owned by the most influential and popular local leaders. For local

leaders, on the other hand, the BEHTRUWC project is another political resource to give some kind of “charity” to their “poor” neighbors’ children and subsequently increase their authority. For many teachers and supervisors, the project seems an employment and income opportunity, rather than a place to build and secure their status or position as “teachers,” because teachers of NFPE programs are not socially recognized as teachers of formal primary schools whose families are slightly better off than the NFPE program teachers. Different actors of the BEHTRUWC project keep their certain behaviors to each other, according to their own purposes of participating in the project.

The Teacher and Children: Securing the Job as a Teacher

Of 6,466 teachers involved in the BEHTRUWC project, not all of them open and teach at their learning centers six days a week, as required by the project, and some teachers come in late and are occasionally absent from their learning center, due to their personal matters (e.g. if the teachers are university students, they say they have exams and cannot teach on the day; or if the teachers housewives, they say their sons and daughters are sick, etc.). On the other hand, teachers and supervisors are extremely well prepared and look exceedingly tense and nervous, particularly when they have NGO coordinators and the government officials visiting their learning centers. In front of such guests, for example, many teachers and supervisors often “manipulate” children’s registration and attendance records, and ask the children to cooperate in order to present how effective, satisfying, and pleasant their teaching and management are.

Teachers, for example, cover the situation that many children have permanently left their center, by replacing them with random children from the neighborhood. After some children leave the learning centers mid-course of the program (e.g. like Saminuar and Kohinur in

Joar Sahara, due to their new job, move, family matter, and so on), teachers think that they need to find new students. Several teachers are, however, sometimes too reluctant to conduct the assessment (e.g. household survey) again, and they simply ask their old students to bring their brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, or friends, in order to replace children that have left. As a result, non-“working children” as well as children who already attend formal primary school (e.g. like Ashik, Nazmal, and Runa in Joar Sahara) begin coming to the BEHTRUWC project learning centers, just to fill the absent (empty) seats in the learning centers.

Then, when teachers have guests in their learning centers, it is common to “manipulate” attendance of their students, and about such new students. Teachers tell children to pretend and act as if they are registered in the center from the beginning, thereby, enabling them to hide the number of children that have left the center. The teachers believe that the more children that have left their center, the lower their credibility would be, and that such teachers can be labeled as unmotivated or unqualified. They are afraid of eventually being fired by the NGO. When I visited one center for the first time, for example, and asked all of the children to tell me their names and what they did, I felt odd, as some of the children could not even immediately answer their names. I thus asked, “Can you tell me your names again, the names your father and mother call you?” I knew this common practice in which children were given “school names” (originally registered children’s names) by teachers, and teachers told their children to only use the “school names” when they were in the learning centers. When I asked the question, children first looked confused and puzzled. They were carefully looking at their teacher’s facial expression and reaction to my question and request. I understood that while the children did not want to get in trouble with the teacher, the teacher did not want me to report this situation and the attendance of students at his or her learning center to the NGO either (even though many NGO coordinators

already knew this kind of practice). I explained again why I was asking these questions. The teacher smiled wryly, and all of the children started telling me their real names, families, and activities. Their names were all different from the first ones, their “school names.”

In addition, in the Joar Sahara learning center, one day I noticed that one female student, Farzana, stopped coming and a new girl started coming to the center. When I interviewed the new girl, she told me she was Farzana’s cousin, while the teacher was calling her “Farzana.” I began the interview by asking, “When did you start coming to this learning center?” She first answered, “a month ago”, so that I continued asking, “Who informed you about the learning center?” Then this “new” Farzana (Farzana’s cousin) started telling me a story, that because her cousin (Farzana) left Dhaka and returned to her father’s village, she came to replace her cousin. Yet, her teacher stopped her there, and said that the “new” Farzana had been in the learning center for one year just like the other children, implying that the “new” Farzana was not a replacement of the “old” Farzana. The “new” Farzana looked confused, but from that day, she stopped me telling me her story.

In another case, a male student Joynal was called “Joynal” in the beginning of my field research, and he himself said his name was “Joynal.” However, during the few weeks when Joynal did not attend the learning center as his family was evicted from their house, Joynal’s seat was replaced by another boy. When Joynal came back to the learning center, the teacher started calling him “Salam,” replacing a girl named “Salma,” because Salma’s attendance had become irregular. In each learning center, there was a sheet on which the 25 children’s names were listed with their photos. Salam is a boy’s name and Salma is girl’s, but because the two names are similar, the teacher explained to me that Salam’s name was misspelled as Salma on the sheet, and put the photo of Joynal under the name “Salma.” Joynal seemed to eventually accept this

situation. The teacher kept the practice; when I visited the same learning center after a few months and asked the teacher about another student, “Where did Sumi go?” She smiled and replied, “Oh don’t you remember her? This girl is Sumi,” who was obviously not *the* Sumi that I knew. Not only this teacher but also many other teachers switch the names of their students, and give the students the “school names,” in order to be accountable to their employer, NGO, and occasional visitors. When I interview the children, especially for the first few time, teachers also carefully observed my activities in the learning centers, and often controlled and intervened in children’s answers to my questions. They chose with whom I would first conduct the interview, usually with the most active and eldest children who attended the learning center on a regular basis, and spoke up many times in class.

Observing what teachers and supervisors spoke and how they behaved in front of visitors, the children seem to gradually learn their obligations in the presence of visitors (particularly those who supervise and evaluate the learning center management). Farzana’s cousin (the “new” Farzana) was new to such practices, so that she looked uncomfortable with the teacher’s reactions trying to hide that Farzana’s cousin was not a replacement for Farzana. For new children, it always takes more time to introduce themselves (e.g. what they should say, etc.); on the other hand, children that are used to the visitors are “well trained” to answer immediately (e.g. name, work, father’s name, etc.). They know what the visitors want and expect to see and hear from them in the learning centers, and what their teachers want them to be in front of the visitors.

With NGO Coordinators: Appealing to the Government and Donors

NGO coordinators and government officers recognize and accept the disjuncture

between what they see in and around the learning centers (e.g. issues of leaving children, mobility of their families, manipulation by teachers, etc.), and what they must interpret and explain to be accountable to the donors. Latif (2004) claims, “[i]n most cases, a development worker in Bangladesh understands the difference between the truth she [or he] is promoting and the reality of what exists in the Bangladesh context, but the reality of [for example,] an illiterate farmer’s life cannot be translated upwards into the development discourse [or vice versa]” (Latif 2004:280). No matter how long all of the Bangladeshi professionals and experts have been involved in the work of NFPE programs, or more broadly in the “development” work, they generally “fall back into the acceptance notions of illiterate and underdeveloped [urban ‘poor’ children and their families] who do not know anything, and for that reason must be assigned through development programs” (Latif 2004:280). “Foreign aid” is one of the largest industries and businesses in Bangladesh, and many NGOs and their employees need to depend on the “clients” (e.g. foreign donors, the government, etc.) of the industry, even though they may not necessarily agree with the discourse of foreign and international donors.

In the BEHTRUWC project, NGO coordinators face many management issues (e.g. teachers’ manipulation of children’s registration and attendance records; delayed disbursement from the government, etc.); however, NGOs usually hesitate to address such issues in front of their program providers and donors. Meanwhile, it is also compelling for the NGOs to operate the learning centers as the donors want (as written in the project proposal), because the Bangladeshi NGOs are “contractors,” and must maintain sound relationships with their “clients” to survive in the competitive development (aid) sector. For example, when senior government officers, experts from UNICEF and donors, visit learning centers, NGO coordinators (similar to teachers) are eager to demonstrate the “perfect” learning centers. They gather a relevant number,

“25” of children in each learning center, and organize children, families, teachers, supervisors as well as local leaders ready to present its best situation of the learning center as much as possible. It is thus common to find children who are not registered in a certain learning center, but are sitting with registered children to fill the requisite “25” per center. NGO coordinators (and teachers) also encourage children to ask the guests for school supplies, such as desks, chairs, school bags, and uniforms. A girl who spoke out added at the end, “We want to feel like we come to ‘school.’” The “school” she meant is a formal school. She implied that the BEHTRUWC project learning centers were specially designed for children like herself, and were different from formal school; yet, she, teachers, and NGO coordinators also knew that they could “appeal” to these visitors for additional school supplies.

Many children are also accustomed to how to express and explain “stories” about what they have learned at the learning center and to exactly what the authority of the BEHTRUWC project expects to hear from them. Liton gave an example, “When I was lost in town, I thought about what to do. Then, I could recognize a phone-fax shop because I could read the sign. I could also remember a phone number where I could call. It was possible because I learned how to read Bangla and the numbers in the learning center. My father came to pick me up from there.” Farzana also told me that because she could read and count now, she would not be cheated out of change when shopping. She said, “A shopkeeper gave me only 50 *taka*, even though I bought something for 30 *taka* with a 100 *taka* note. I could ask him to give me 20 more *taka* back. I could get the change right.” Later UNICEF selected Liton and Farzana’s stories to be introduced in the brochure of the BEHTRUWC project as “successful” and “model” examples of the BEHTRUWC project.

Children (and their families) are not only the assumed “beneficiaries” but also the

foremost “reason” why the BEHTRUWC project and other NFPE programs exist in Bangladesh; and thus, they play (or are asked and taught to play) such “role” to appeal to the donors. On the other hand, however, children are always the ones who are sandwiched between the exchanges of blames among NGOs, the government, and donors on management issues. The children and their families often have to pay costs for the mismanagement, and sometimes end up crying at the end from politics of the NFPE programs. Toward the end of the project, for example, the government and UNICEF decided to provide school bags, responding to the voices and requests of the children. The bags were not yet ready for the distribution until only a few months before the children finished the full 40-month project course. The government thus made the bags as a “prize” for children who attended a learning center more than a certain number of months. Given the circumstances in which teachers often “manipulate” children’s registration and attendance records, government officials and NGO coordinators carefully planned how to distribute the bags equally and fairly to as many children as possible. They made a list of children per center that could receive the school bag. On the distribution date, the government officers came to the learning centers, and handed the school bag to the children one by one.

Nonetheless, the distribution was still chaotic. Since the list was prepared eight months prior, and distribution was delayed, the names of new children who had joined the center in the last several months were not reflected on the list. When receiving a bag, children were required to sign their names in front of a government officer; and if the officer found children who were not able to write, or could not say their names, he did not allow a bag to be given to such children. The government officer considered such children as “fake” students that did not deserve the school bags. As far as I observed, ten to 20 percent of the children left the distribution venue in tears. An NGO coordinator criticized the government and UNICEF for

using the old list (eight months old) instead of the latest list (a few weeks old) which was also available, while UNICEF claimed that the names of children should not change so frequently, and did not accept the NGO's claim. Teachers and supervisors looked as if they did not want to be involved in the situation, and did not say anything. Mothers of a few children were directly complaining to and negotiating with the government officials why their sons and daughters could not receive a school bag, when children are all from similar households of the same neighborhood, and currently studying in the same learning center.

Conclusion: Embedded in the Interpersonal Relationships

In the BEHTRUWC project, teachers want to be evaluated as “good teachers” to maintain their position, and the NGO wants to be assessed as a “good contractor” for the government to assure their future contracts, while children are expected to help such teachers and NGOs. The BEHTRUWC project may hope to teach children about their “rights” as a child worker and a school student; however, the children are still and always more likely to, in their daily practices in and around the learning centers, experience usual interpersonal relationships, and recognize their own position, and unequal distributions of opportunities in the hierarchical structured society of Bangladesh.

When NGO coordinators conduct their regular learning center visits, teachers and supervisors try to demonstrate how seriously their students are engaged in learning activities and keep regular attendance, while showing what issues they are facing (e.g. a fan is stolen or not working, etc.). Many teachers also tend to hide information about children that have left the centers, because they do not want to jeopardize their employment opportunity. In order to assure their credibility, teachers even tell children to lie about certain things, particularly their

attendance; and, children also cooperate for such teachers. The teachers consider that the more students leave, the lower the credibility they have as a teacher, and moreover, they seem not confident enough to explain the situation well enough for the outsider to believe and accept “what is going” on in the centers. The NGO coordinators act almost the same in front of guests from external organizations, such as government officials and foreign donors. Besides the BEHTRUWC project’s objective (e.g. “providing a schooling opportunity to children who are not in school”), each actor of the project (e.g. children, parents, teachers, NGO coordinators, etc.) has its own purpose to engage in implementation, and builds and works to secure its position in a web of relationships created through the project. The children also “learn” how they are expected to be seen and interact with each other as well as their teachers, supervisors, coordinators, government and UNICEF officials. They learn to situate themselves in the new social arena of the context.

As a consequence, children are often drawn in such relationships and arrangements. One day, when I was visiting a learning center with UNICEF staff, children said, “Yes, you-kind-of-people always say you will come back to visit us again, but you never do,” after asking if the staff would visit the learning center again. Children see “that” kind of person critically as those that come to a center, stay for less than an hour, ask some questions, leave, and never come back. Although the children should be the so-called “beneficiaries” of the project, they seem to be situated in the weakest position in the project, in terms of raising voices to show what they want from the others. Since the BEHTRUWC project can be perceived as a “free” alternative schooling opportunity—something “given” to the “poorer,” the children, and sometimes their families also, feel obligated to follow and behave in favor of teachers, supervisors, NGO coordinators and other “wealthier” actors.

CHAPTER VIII. CONCLUSION

This ethnographic study has focused on the experiences of low-income migrant children with alternative schooling opportunities, and the dilemma of Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) programs in Bangladesh. It has specifically focused on a state-sponsored NFPE program—the Basic Education for Hard-to-Reach Urban Working Children (BEHTRUWC) project, and described how the BEHTRUWC project does not necessarily help children to be integrated to the formal school system, but instead continuously prepares children for and sustains them at the subordinate segment of the society (where they are today). As discussed in this study, it is still extremely difficult for children, having participated in the BEHTRUWC project, to even complete the full course of the program, or for those that stay until the end of the program to further pursue institutionalized educational opportunities, and eventually become employed in the formal sector, which was also never possible for their parents.

Chapter I presented the problem statements and conceptual framework of the research, and introduced three elements of the BEHTRUWC project that this study would examine: 1) exclusive membership and the making of “working children;” 2) distinction from formal schools and meaning of schooling; and, 3) an implementation model and relationships among actors involved in the project that reflect Bangladeshi social structure. Investigating the BEHTRUWC project from these aspects has led to an understanding of the implications of the NFPE program to society; in other words, how the BEHTRUWC project rarely becomes a driving force for children to gain a path to “upward mobility” as the project intends, but plays a role in keeping low-income children not emerging out of the particular position in society. The research

concludes with this chapter (Chapter VIII). The chapter first summarizes analysis and discussions of the previous chapters, and then highlights the dilemma of the BEHTRUWC project. Finally, it outlines some reflections for the future research.

Summarizing Discussions: Legacy and Implications of the BEHTRUWC Project

After the introduction in Chapter I, Chapter II reviewed the context of Bangladesh, including the brief history, the meaning of “poor,” rural-urban (internal) migration, the nature of interpersonal relationships, the migrants’ urban experiences, living arrangements, job opportunities and economic activities. Chapter III then outlined the research methods, and Chapter IV introduced organizations, management structures and basic feature of the five largest NFPE programs in Bangladesh: the BEHTRUWC project, the Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) project, the SHIKHON (Learning Alternative for Vulnerable Children) NFPE project, the BRAC Primary School (BPS) program, and the Up-scaling NFPE through Institutionalizing Qualitative Endeavour (UNIQUE) project.

In Bangladesh, an estimated two to three million children (12 to 18 percent of a total primary school aged children) are currently not in the formal school system. Both the Government of Bangladesh and NGOs take another educational approach for children that do not attend any regular primary school, and design the NFPE programs specially to fit the convenience and “educational needs” of such children. The five NFPE programs introduced in this study share some common or similar features, for example: 1) a short commute distance; 2) flexible timing and hours; 3) increased teacher-student contact hours as well as continuous schooling without the long holiday; 4) a “friendlier” learning environment; 5) the development and provision of original materials other than the government textbooks; and, 6) locally recruited

teachers. These NFPE program providers believe that such features would attract children to participate in an alternative schooling opportunity. In terms of providing quasi-schooling opportunities, regardless of the quality, many NFPE programs have accomplished their objectives.

On the other hand, the BEHTRUWC project has some unique features of its own, such as its objectives and membership, which was of focus in Chapter V. The chapter first demonstrated the labor opportunities of children in Dhaka; then discussed how the BEHTRUWC project limits their participants by the child work (labor) status and offers the limited coverage and level of the country's primary schooling curriculum exclusively to what they label "hard-to-reach urban working children" in urban cities.

Those "urban working children" in Dhaka are first or second generation rural-urban migrants. In Bangladesh, not only due to political and economic confusion, but also as a result of constant natural calamities, an estimated 300 to 400 thousand low-income, landless agricultural labourers and their families leave their rural villages and flow into urban cities every year (World Bank 2007). Rural-urban migration gives each household more opportunities and options for economic security and income-generating activities, such as labor, trade, and business. Men's earning increases, and moreover, women and children can also easily find a job in Dhaka. Young men and women are eligible to become garment factory workers, which is one of the few formal sector opportunities for low-income migrants. Some children and women cannot afford to not work, due to the number of dependents in the household, the *dowry* at the time of their daughters' (sisters) marriages, and schooling expenses for younger brothers and sisters. Arif contributes to his household income because his grandmother and father must look after Arif's aunt and her son in absence of his uncle. Monjirul's mother and his sister work to pay off the loan they took for

their first daughter's (eldest sister's) marriage. Saminur brings a stable income to her household, and has a pride of engaging in a modern "office job" (how they call garment factory work).

According to the household survey I conducted, more than half of migrant children (participating in the BEHTRUWC project) said they were engaged in labor, and income-generating activities, to contribute to their household's immediate income, or to have an individual income of their own. On the other hand, one fifth of the children mentioned "not working." The occupational types of male child laborers are more diverse than those of girls, which is the same as the diversity of employment for adults. Many boys work as employees of a shop, or are self-employed street vendors. On the other hand, the majority of girls work as domestic workers or factory workers. The *tokai* work is popular among both younger boys and girls, as the work does not require much experience or skill to start. Many children have claimed that they give their entire income to their father, mother, or whoever that manages the household expenditure, or the child's employer directly pays to his or her parents.

Male children are generally assumed to gradually become socially and economically independent in the future, have a family, and take care of their parents, whereas female children are expected to get married and eventually leave the family. The implication of son's labor is not only to earn for his family, but also to gain experiences and skills, and become financially independent to secure his own income source in the future. Unmarried working daughters are, on the other hand, asked to contribute to her parents' income, for example, in payment of her younger brothers and sisters' schooling, and also for their dowry at the time of marriage. Assuring the dowry can allow girls to have a marriage with more socioeconomically affluent men (Kabeer 1997; Rozario 2007). In addition, due to the *pardah* (female seclusion) system, many parents of girls want their daughters to work under a strict and safe employer. Female

children prefer a workplace that is inside a building or a house where only a certain number of people would have contact with them, and thus, occupations as garment factory workers and domestic workers are popular among female children and their parents.

Chapter V then described how low-income children that participate in the BEHTRUWC project are labeled as “working children,” and how the project learning center becomes a place for the children to learn the constructed notion of “working children.” Despite of the diverse labor opportunities of children in Dhaka, the particular definition and image of “poor working children” have been constructed through the BEHTRUWC project. The children and their families themselves have probably never read or heard what kinds of notions outsiders often have toward children like them; however, they begin to learn the implication of “working children,” gain experience performing their “poorness” in the learning centers, and sometimes and gradually feel disappointment or even anger toward the project due to the particular implication. Through participating in the project, the children have *become* “working children;” learned to be what others call and expect of “working children.” They try to act out the imagined “working children,” especially in front of their irregular visitors from the government, UNICEF, and international donors. In terms of reproducing and perpetuating the image of “working children,” therefore, the children are not passive recipients of the BEHTRUWC project, but are active participants. They can be considered as actively constructing their social reality using the educational institution given to them as an arena for developing their own set of behaviors and attitudes as a response to the social context.

Next, Chapter VI discussed meaning of schooling shared among low-income migrant families in Dhaka, particularly in Joar Sahara, in order to understand how the families see and utilize the BEHTRUWC project among other schooling options. Living in a severe

poverty-stricken environment, *bosti* (slums), does not mean that every child of low-income migrant families in Dhaka is engaged in labor to earn, or all fathers and mothers make all of their children engage in a possible income-generating activity, or neglect to send them to school. In the same household, some children work when their brothers and sisters do not, instead go to school. Parents do not force all of their children to earn simply to maximize their household income, but calculate the balance of securing immediate income through placing some of their older children in the labor force, while investing in schooling of their other children. In addition, not working does not mean that the children are in school; on the other hand, working outside of the home does not necessarily mean that children are not in school. Some children work part-time and attend school, while others do neither. Some parents make one or more of their children go to school, while others give their children freewill to make a decision about schooling.

Among the ten children in Joar Sahara, Saiful's mother and Arif's grandmother show most concern for the school fees, while the parent(s) of Monjirul, Happy, and Nazmal are all supportive of their children's schooling; yet, Monjirul, Happy, and Nazmal still choose not to go to school, because they do "not feel like going to school." Arif, Saminur and Kohinur are the only ones who quitted their schooling, due to conflicts with their work commitments. On the other hand, Ashik, Runa, and Sarifa's families know or predict the outcome and benefits of certain schooling, and they do not hesitate or are even willing to invest, negotiate, work, and pay a certain amount of their financial resources to obtain the schooling opportunities. Parents I have observed in Joar Sahara do not send children to any available school only because they are free or less expensive, but choose a particular one for each child according to the child's readiness (e.g. gained experiences and age) and gender, and their expectations for the child's future.

Parents and children do not usually consider children's primary schooling either as a right or entitlement assured for free, but as something they negotiate, work, and pay a certain amount of expenses to obtain. They sometimes choose a tuition-based "expensive" local school run by a local middle-class owner, rather than free public schools or free NFPE program learning centers, no matter the financial burden, or the extent that the school is equipped. Parents seem to consider social and political relations in and around the school, as well as the reputation, popularity, and safety of the school zone. Sending children to a local school run by a local elite possibly would imply not only investing in the children's future, but also the significance of human relationships in the local society (neighbourhood).

Chapter VI also illustrated the perceptions, decisions, and dialogues of low-income migrant families toward the BEHTRUWC project. Regardless of whether children go or not go to school, or what school they attend, low-income migrant families foremost and generally believe that schooling opportunity is a means for social advancement and economic and upward mobility. My informants, however, do not seem to consider the BEHTRUWC project, among the various primary schooling opportunities available and affordable in Dhaka, as a regular or ordinary schooling opportunity. Parents that have never been to school believe that schooling will have a positive influence on their children to improve their skills and have a "better" job in the future (than what they do today), and that the "better" jobs eventually lead to economic and social advancement of the family. "Advancement" for them means that a family whose members have "modern," less labor-intensive occupations with a more stable income and have a certain influence on their relatives and neighbors; whose elderly parents do not need to work, but are taken care by their son(s); and, whose children can continuously attend a formal school and have no need to engage in labor.

Like many other countries, the formal school system in Bangladesh is structured as one continuous system like a “linear rail (or ladder),” whereby, once a child enters and completes (graduates) one level of education, he or she can follow the rail and move up to another level to meet his or her requirements and goals. On the other hand, the BETHRUWC project is, for low-income migrant children in Dhaka, a new form of institutionalized educational opportunities. The project is completely independent from the formal school system as well as other NFPE programs, and offers the limited coverage of primary education. The subjects taught in the BEHTRUWC project, for example, do not cover all curricula enough for the children to take the Primary Education Completion exam, while it adds a new subject called “life skills.” The project does not intend to support participants to easily transfer to a formal school, but prepares children to be better “workers.”

Some children take the BEHTRUWC project as their first and only schooling opportunity, while others utilize it as a supplementary school in addition to their formal school. The longer the BEHTRUWC project is implemented in their neighbourhood, however, the less and less children and their families are likely to expect from the project. Many of them gradually learn that they are misguided by what the BEHTRUWC project claims it enables, and that experiences in the BEHTRUWC project would not assure the same level of formal school education, lead them to a formal primary school, or provide them with more skilled employment opportunities. They eventually realize the BEHTRUWC project’s distinction from formal schools, and its feature that over emphasizes and exaggerates their socioeconomic position as “poor working children.” By the time the 40-months BEHTRUWC project is completed and the learning center is closed, therefore, children and their parents become more certain that: though the BEHTRUWC project may help children learn to write, read, and calculate, experience the

quasi-schooling environment, it is not a sufficient means for their children to emerge out of the severe poverty-stricken urban environment. Moreover, the unique and exclusive form of schooling may even reinforce children to remain where they now belong in the city. Due to these implications of the NFPE program, many families in Dhaka ultimately choose formal primary school or even a job over the NFPE programs.

Finally, Chapter VII focused on “what is going on” in and around the learning centers of the BEHTRUWC project, and examined how the basic pattern of interpersonal relationships common in Bangladesh are reflected and applied to the daily practices, interactions, and communications in the learning centers. While the conceptualization of NFPE programs may be new and foreign, implementation of such programs is always undertaken by the Bangladeshi people in the context of Bangladesh; and therefore, the “normal order of things” in Bangladesh, such as the hierarchically structured interpersonal relationships and imbalanced opportunities, are further underscored and validated in and through the BEHTRUWC project. The chapter introduced some examples of how children are treated in the learning centers, for example, for teachers and NGO coordinators to be accountable to the donors. In such relationships and arrangements, children feel socially and morally vulnerable and obligated to teachers, and teachers feel the same to the authority of the program. As a result, the BEHTRUWC project’s learning centers remain as any other places in Dhaka where children realize and gradually learn their already-expected particular social position—where they are today in society.

Conclusion: The Dilemma of the NFPE Programs

This study aimed to offer an anthropological insight and critical analysis of how the people of the lower economic level in Bangladesh understand their conditions, options, and

opportunities, negotiate within social change and constrains, make decisions and future plans, and initiate their own activities and social processes in Dhaka. I have argued that the NFPE program, particularly the BEHTRUWC project, has a dilemma because some particular features and nature of the project generate the unintended consequence. The BEHTRUWC project produces “working children,” by encouraging children to become “working children,” to continue what they are doing (work), and sometimes even to act out “poor working children”—the image attached to and created among the NFPE programs. The BEHTRUWC project is unintentionally, rather than deliberately, serving to systematically reproduce and perpetuate the constructed notion of “working children.” Meanwhile, among the various primary schooling opportunities available and affordable in Dhaka, many of my informants do not consider the BEHTRUWC project as a regular (“normal”) schooling opportunity. Some even attend another school while participating in the project, which can be indicated as “double schooling.” For them, the BEHTRUWC project is indeed a “free” and “informal” opportunity, where they learn how to write and calculate, and hang out with their brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, and close friends.

Many NFPE programs in Bangladesh rationalize and justify their programs by assuming that the “education” (schooling) will help children gain and achieve “upward mobility.” They further claim due to the environment preventing children to attend school, the children need a special, different, and alternative form of schooling opportunity. Nonetheless, in a country like Bangladesh, where the possibility of having schooling has long been determined by which social segment they belong to in the hierarchically structured society, further diversification in educational opportunities is not “revolutionary.” Many Bangladeshi see the inequality in schooling is part of their usual and ordinary orders. What would be “revolutionary” in

Bangladesh is thus, not another NFPE program, but to enroll all the primary school aged children to have exactly the same (or at least the similar) type of schooling with equivalently qualified teachers and facilities.

Some experts in Bangladesh are even against NFPE programs, claiming that all children, no matter their backgrounds, should be integrated in one formal education system. A director and staff of the national network NGO working for people with special needs in Bangladesh (the National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD)), for instance, have strongly refused to establish another NFPE program specially designed for children with special needs. They state that the diversification and distinction in educational approaches have caused the negative perception toward the NFPE programs and children in such programs. The NFPE programs are often acknowledged as “second-class” schools (or charity) for “poor” children, and can double the negative implications of (and toward) the children.

In addition, many NFPE program approaches tend to focus on and exaggerate the reasons of children and their families have for *not going to school*. The classical explanations of the cause of absence from school in Bangladesh, for example, emphasize the economic aspect of individual and family matters: household poverty, unemployment (or underemployment) of a household head, ruptured family ties, family violence, and abusive behaviors. The low quality of local schools and teachers, as well as the unaffordable cost of schooling, are also often added as major reasons (Ahmad and Quasem 1991; Khan 2001; White 2002; Bissell 2004; Hasan 2007; World Bank 2007). On the other hand, in Joar Sahara where children’s primary schooling is not considered as a right or entitlement assured for free, my informants have more apparent and obvious reasons for *going to school*, while those who do not attend school do not have much explanation. For low-income migrant families, it seems critical to understand how such

opportunities (both formal and non-formal schools) would support their livelihoods and future.

Considering the situation that many children face, such as the illiteracy of their parents, being able to write and calculate numbers are significant factors. Yet, I predict their future work will not be much difference to what their fathers and mothers do. One of the reasons is because they have already begun their “careers” in their neighborhood, and too late to begin from Grade 1; many of the children I interviewed seemed not to know how to continue their schooling to secondary school. Moreover, by the time many of the low-income migrant children become able to fully attend a formal primary school, children of wealthier families would also start achieving much higher school education.

It is obvious that the experiences of low-income migrant families in Dhaka cannot be examined through simply focusing on rational economic or materialistic dimensions of life, or situating them in structural inequalities of the national and global society. If the people are economically so “poor,” why are they not willing to participate in free-of-charge development programs available in Dhaka or elsewhere in rural and urban areas, and take full advantage of it (Perelman 2008)? Why do parents prefer to send their children to a tuition-based private school run by a local leader, than a free NFPE program provided by international and national development organizations?

Population, economic, labor, and education (schooling) indices and indicators do not show the inner characteristics and nature of low-income migrant households in Dhaka, or the external consequences on children’s occupational and schooling choices and experiences. An anthropological insight makes it possible to incorporate these critical aspects of the people’s quotidian lives, the complex “intersecting modes” of social relations, politics, economics, religion, and so on (Bond and Vincent 1997; Perelman 2008). This study also incorporated

broader social forces like human relationships and implications of schooling, in order to critically examine the social significance of the NFPE programs in Bangladesh.

Reflections on Future Research

When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred in March 2011, I was in Japan writing this dissertation. Among the endless news updates was that many foreigners immediately left the country. I absolutely understood their decisions, and if I were a foreigner in the country, that would also be my decision. I, however, still strongly felt “being left behind” with a large number of issues, as many of us (Japanese) had nowhere to escape. I then thought of my friends and colleagues in Bangladesh and imagined that they might be experiencing similar feelings toward foreigners and the rest of the world. Under the guise of development aid, many foreign experts come to the country and stay for a few years. Regardless of whether or not development “issues” are solved or their projects are “successfully” implemented, they all eventually leave, whereas many Bangladeshi people do not or cannot leave, and continue to “be left” with the “issues” and in the environment where foreigners (outsiders) have labeled as “problematic.”

As Gardner and Lewis (1996) claim, I also “do not think it worthwhile to spend too much time considering whether aid is or is not a ‘good’ thing,” since development aid efforts “exist and shall continue to exist for some time” in Bangladesh (1996:11). I agree that “[r]ather than condemning [them], what we [should be] concerned with is how anthropology might be used to critique, improve and suggest alternatives to it” (1996:11). Bond and Vincent (1997) give an example of how anthropologists can contribute to making an approach to a social issue “context rich.” Their study focuses on AIDS in Uganda, and demonstrates two types of anthropologists required in the social science study of AIDS: medical anthropologists who deal

with “public health, biomedical and non-western healing issues,” and social anthropologists as “critical analysts” that examine the “crucial, social, political, economic, and religious dimensions of local, national, and religious entities” of the AIDS epidemic, such as natural disasters, social and political disputes, and the implications of welfare services (1997:85). Depending on their specialties and focus, anthropologists can be “handmaidens,” “social workers,” and “social analysts” (1997:86). Bond and Vincent (1997) conclude that in order to make such AIDS issues “context rich,” anthropologists must take a role as social and historical analysts studying the influence of the AIDS epidemic on the very people in their living context (1997:111-112).

The children I encountered in Bangladesh are surprisingly aware of how outsiders see and recognize their situations from a stereotypical lens, and can place themselves in the larger political and socioeconomic contexts; on the other hand, the number of studies that examine how the inner nature, implications, functions, and external unintended consequence of NFPE programs influence the quotidian lives of low-income migrant children in Bangladesh is still limited. My challenges to the critical analysis of the urban children’s social lives in Dhaka and elsewhere will continue. I believe anthropology is one of the promising means to keep celebrating the colorful quotidian lives of low-income migrant children in Bangladesh.

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APPENDIX A. Employment and Schooling Patterns of 25 Households in Joar Sahara

Code	Number of Residents			Occupations and Schooling		Percentage (%) of Earning Members in Household	Notes
	M	F	Total	M	F		
1	2	3	5	FS (1) Grade-3 (1)	GFW (2) 1-year-old (1)	60.00	Relatives of <i>Nazmal</i> (The mother is a younger sister Nazmal's father)
2	2	3	5	RP (1) 9-year-old (1)	GFW (1) Madrassa (2)	40.00	Relative of <i>21</i>
3	4	1	5	FS (2) Mason (1) Grade-4 (1)	DW (1)	80.00+	The youngest son (Grade-4) works part-time helping his father and eldest brother in selling vegetables
4	1	2	3	GFW (1)	Sick (1) HW (1)	33.33	
5	1	1	2	RP (1)	HW (1)	50.00	
6	1	2	3	Not working, praying (1)	DW (1) GFW (1)	66.67	The eldest son lives in Gazipur (the near district city), and works as GW
7	1	1	2	SG (1)	GFW (1)	100.00	
8	1	2	3	Hawker (1)	HW (1) Student (1)	33.33	
9	2	3	5	GW (1) 7-year-old (1)	DW (1) GFW (2)	80.00	Relative of <i>Monjirul</i>
10	0	2	2		GFW (2)	100.00	
11	1	1	2	Mason (1)	Beggar (1)	100.00	
12	2	1	3	RP (1) 3-year-old (1)	DW (1)	66.67	Relative of <i>Nazmal</i> and <i>Saiful</i>
13	4	1	5	Mason (1) Grade-4 (1) 8-year-old (1) 3-year-old (1)	DW (1)	40.00+	The eldest son (Grade-4) sometimes works
14	5	0	5	FS (5)			All work independently, and share a house. Relative of <i>12</i>
15	2	3	5	FS (1) Grade-1 (1)	DW (1) GFW (1) Pre-primary (1)	60.00	
16	1	3	4	GFW (1)	GFW (1) Girl (1) Unknown (1)	50.00+	

17	1	2	3	Recycling goods trader (1)	DW (1) GFW (1)	100.00	Father collects used goods (e.g. plastics, metals, bottles, etc.), and cashes them at a recycling shop
18	3	3	6	Sick (1) GFW (1) Grade-4 (1)	DW (1) HW (1) 1-year-old (1)	33.33	
19	3	3	6	GFW (2) Boy (1)	HW (1) GFW (1) Girl (1)	50.00	
20	1	1	2	GFW (1)	GFW (1)	100.00	
21	1	1	2	Beggar (1)	DW (1)	100.00	
22	2	1	3	Driver (1) 2-year-old (1)	DW (1)	66.67	The eldest son lives in a village with his grandparents
23	2	1	3	Mason (1) 2-year-old (1)	GFW (1)	66.67	
24	2	3	5	FS (1) 5-month-old (1)	HW (1) GFW (2)	60.00	
25	2	2	4	GFW (2)	DW (1) 8-year-old (1)	75.00	
Total	47	46	93	FS (10) GFW (9) RP (3) SG (1) Mason (4) Beggar (1) Driver (1) Hawker (1) Recycling (1) Sick (1) Not working (1) Primary (5) Non-school (3) Under school-age (6)	DW (11) GFW (17) HW (6) Beggar (1) Sick (1) Unknown (1) Madrassa (2) Primary (1) Non-school (1) Under school-age (5)	64.47	--

(Notes: The 25 households (in addition to the nine households focused in the research) are randomly selected in Joar Sahara. M stands for male, and F stands for female. The “occupations and schooling” are written by gender, in the order of age (above-oldest, bottom-youngest). DW stands for a domestic worker; FS for a seasonal fruit or vegetable seller; GFW for a worker in/for a garment factory or washing plant; HW for a housewife; RP for a rickshaw puller; and SG for a security guard. The number in brackets indicates the number of those engaged in the particular occupation from each household. Under “percentage (%) of earning members in household,” the “+” sign indicates one or more children work part-time and their income contributes to the household.)

1. Mamun's House

Mamun is about ten to 12 years old, and lives with his father, mother, elder sister (Raki), and younger sister (Sonia-one to two years old). His eldest sister (Rujina) is married, and lives with her husband's family in the rural village of Mymensingh. His father's natal village is also Mymensingh where Mamun was born. Mamun's father works as a fruit seller, yet since he became sick, his earning has become irregular and little. His mother and sister work as garment factory workers. Mamun now spends most of the day playing with Sonia, dressing her up nicely, and taking her around in the neighborhood.

For Mamun's father, Mamun's schooling seems to be not a priority. Mamun was enjoying going to the Kuril Kuratuli Primary School; however, in the summer of 2010, he said in tears that he had to quit his school not due to the economic burden to his family but due to his father's sickness. Mamun's parents told him to stay at home taking care of his father and younger sister for his working parents and sister.

2. Shirin's House

Shirin is approximately eight years old, and goes to *madrassa* with her sister Salma (about ten years old). Her brother (Pervez, nine years old) neither study nor work, but spends most of the day playing around the neighborhood. Shirin lives with her father, mother, Salma, and Pervez. Her father works as a rickshaw puller, and mother as a garment factory worker.

3. Minal's House

Minal is about the same age as Arif, Monjirul, and Nazmal (ten to 12 years old), and goes to school. After school, he helps his father and brother who work as vegetable seller. He lives with his father, mother, and two elder brothers. His mother works as a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS, and his other (eldest) brother as a mason. They are from Jamalpur district.

4. Buri's House

The children I have interviewed in Joar Sahara do not know much about this house. Buri is an aged woman, and has been sick for sometime. She lives with her son and daughter-in-law. Her son works as a garment factory worker, and daughter-in-law stays at home, and takes care of Buri and household chores.

5. A Young Couple's House

A young couple stays in this house. They do not have children. The husband works as a rickshaw puller, and wife stays at home.

6. Asma's House

Asma is approximately 15 years old, and works as a garment factory worker. She lives with her father and mother. According to the children I have interviewed, Asma's father does not work,

but devotes himself in prayer everyday. Her mother works as a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS. Her elder brother works as a garment factory worker, but does not live with them in Joar Sahara. He stays in Gazipur, Tongi.

7. Nazrul's House

Nazrul is approximately 20 years old, and works as a night security guard of a garment factory. He lives with his mother, and she works as a garment factory worker. Nazrul is not married. The children I have interviewed were teasing him about living alone with his mother.

8. Zakia's House

Zakia goes to school. She lives with her father and mother. She does not have any sibling. Her father works as a hawker, and mother stays at home.

9. Sozib's House

Sozib is approximately seven years old, and does not go to school. He lives with his father (Gamal), mother, and two elder sisters (Shahanaz and Pervin). Sozib's father is an elder brother of Monjirul's mother (Muddia Katun), which makes Sozib and Monjirul are cousins to each other. Gamal is Monjirul's *mama* (mother's elder brother). Sozib's father and two sisters work as a garment factory worker, while his mother is a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS.

10. Nazma's House

The children I have interviewed call this household, "Nazma's," though a person named Nazma does not stay here. She got married and already moved out. Her two sisters stay there, and work as a garment factory worker.

11. An Aged Couple's House

An aged couple stays in this house. The husband works as a mason, and wife is a beggar.

12. Sahin's House

Sahin is approximately three to four years old. He is a cousin of Nazmal, as Sahin's father (Tuta) is the eldest brother of Nazmal's mother (Nazma). Saiful is Sahin's uncle, as Saiful is the youngest brother of Tuta and Nazma. Sahin lives with his father (Tuta) and mother (Nashima), and does not have any siblings. Tuta does not have a stable job, but mostly work as a rickshaw puller. Nashima is a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS.

13. Helal's House

Helal is approximately 12 to 14 years old, and a Grade 4 student. He lives with his father, mother, and two younger brothers (Shamim, eight years old, and Alamin, three years old). His father works as a mason, and mother as a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS. His brothers do not go

to school, but spend their days playing around the neighborhood. Helal sometimes helps Saiful and Kairul (Saiful's brother) in their garment workshop.

14. House of Sahin's *mama*

Nashima's (Shahin's mother (12), Saiful's sister-in-law, Nazmal's aunt) five brothers stay in Joar Sahara. They all work as a fruit seller. It is uncertain that whether if they are married, have families in a village, if so how often they visit their village; however, the reason why they could migrate to Dhaka and settle in Joar Sahara is because of Nashima.

15. Sagor's House

Sagor is a Grade 1 student of the Nazrul Academy. He lives with his father, mother, elder sister (Shahena), and younger sister (Sweety). His father works as a fruit seller, mother as a domestic worker, and Shahena as a garment factory worker. His young sister, Sweety, also attend the pre-primary level of Nazrul Academy.

16. Preti's House

Preti does not go to school or work. She lives with her father, mother, and mother's sister (*khala*). Her father works as a garment factory worker, and mother also sometimes works as a garment factory worker. It is uncertain what Preti's *khala* does (but not a garment factory work).

17. Murshida's House

Murshida is about 18 to 20 years old, and works as a garment factory worker. She lives with her father and mother. Her father collects used goods (e.g. plastics, metals, bottles, etc.), and cashes them in at a recycling shop. Her mother works as a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS.

18. Saidul's House

Saidul is approximately ten to 12 years old, and a Grade 4 student of the Nazrul Academy. He lives with his father, mother, elder brother, sister-in-law, and niece. Though the father's occupation is unknown. His mother works as a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS, and his brother as a garment factory worker. His sister-in-law stays at home, and takes care household chores. Saidul is the youngest among his siblings. He may have other elder brothers or sisters living elsewhere.

19. Shahed's House

Shahed lives with his mother, two elder brothers, one elder and one younger sister. He and his young sister do not work or go to school. His mother takes care of household chores, and his elder brothers and sister work as a garment factory worker. It is uncertain that if his father lives elsewhere, has passed away, or divorced from his mother.

20. Rina's House

A young couple stays in this house. Rina works as a garment factory worker, and so does her husband.

21. House of Shirin's Grandparents

An aged couple, Shirin's grandparents, lives in Joar Sahara independently from Shirin's household (2). The children I have interviewed do not know the names of this couple, and they call this house as "a house of Salma and Shirin's grandparents." Their grandfather is a street beggar, and grandmother is a domestic worker.

22. Raihan's House

Raihan does not live here but in a village; however, the children I have interviewed call this house as "Raihan's." His father, mother, and youngest brother stay in Joar Sahara. His father works as a driver, mother as a domestic worker. His youngest brother, Rabbi is only two to three years old. (It is most likely that Raihan stays with his grandparents in a village, and goes to school.)

23. Sumon's House

Sumon is about two to three years old, and an only child. His father works as a mason, and mother as a garment factory worker. They are from Mymensingh district.

24. Samsunnahar's House

Samsunnahar is approximately 15 to 17 years old, and works in a garment factory, so does her elder sister. Her father is a fruit seller, and mother is a housewife. She has a five-month-old young brother. They are from Barisal district.

25. Rekha's House

Rekha is about eight years old. She does not go to school, but takes care of household chores. Her father and elder brother work as a garment factory worker, and her mother as a domestic worker in Baridhara DOHS.

APPENDIX B. Questionnaire Guideline for Survey

Name:	Gender: M / F	Age:
School	Grade	BEHTRUWC Project

1) Home Village

- Do you visit your village?
- How often do you visit your village?
- When is the last time did you go to your village?
- Birthplace (tomar jonmo kothay hoyeche?):
- When did you come to Dhaka?

2) Work

- Address/Location:
- With whom, working:
- Salary:
 - Who gives your salary?
 - Days (how many days a week, Is Friday a holiday?)
 - From what time to what time (kokun)
- When did you start working (kobe)?
- How long have you been working (koto din)?
- How did you get the job? Is this your first job?
- Do you like the work/job? & Why?
- What are the good/bad things about your work?
- Do you think the work is useful, and/or important for you? & Why?
- Does your employer know you come to the LC? Does he/she support it?
- Workplace Visit?

3) Family

- Develop pattern—When, from where to where, why, how, with who?
- What kind of migration—permanent, temporary (reasons behind)?
- Who pays for food? Who buys food, from where, when?
- Who decides menu, cooks food, when? Who are eating when? Why do you eat together, or not eat together?
- Financial Plan, does family have a financial plan? (e.g. House rent, school tuition, food, etc.)

	Name	Age	Work Employer Salary Use of Salary Since when Reason	Residence Expenditure	Living with you?
Father/Baba					
Mother/Ma					
Guardian					
Chahca/Chachi					
Fupu-Fupa					
Mama/Mami					
Khala-Khalu					

Brothers/Sisters: ___ Brothers & ___ Sisters

Name/Work/Marital Status/Residence:

	Name/Age/Gender	Work	Marital Status	Residence	Living with you?
1	age: m / f				
2	age: m / f				
3	age: m / f				
4	age: m / f				
5	age: m / f				
6	age: m / f				
7	age: m / f				
8	age: m / f				

4) Friends and School

- How did you find the school?
- Why do you go to school?
- Do you like school? & Why? What do you like about the school? What do you not like about the school?
- Which subjects do you like the best (kon subject/boy tomar bhalolage?)? & Why?
- When did you start coming to the school (kobe/koto din age-)?
- Have you been to any other school?
- Who are your friends? Do you like your friends? What do you do with them?
- Do you help your friends? Why & How? Do your friends help you? Why & How?
- Do you think going to the school has changed you/your life, a way of thinking? (How?)

5) Others

- Did you eat breakfast today?:
- What did you eat this morning?:
- What is your favorite food?:
- What is your favorite color?:
- What is your favorite play?:
- Do you have any questions to me?

APPENDIX C. Comparison of the Five NFPE Programs

	BNFE BEHTRUWC Project	DPE ROSC Project	Save the Children USA SHIKHON Project	BRAC BPS Program	DAM UNIQUE Project
Project Period	July 2004 – June 2009 (Extended to April 2012)	July 2004 – June 2010 (Extended to December 2013)	December 2006 – December 2012	Since 1985	January 2007 – December 2010 (With a possibility of extension to September 2011)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the life options (e.g. life skills) of urban working children Provide quality non-formal, life-skills-based basic education to 200,000 urban working children and adolescent Increase awareness, and advocate for education, social and economic policies in favor of working children and their families Protect children from hazardous working environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create opportunity of primary education for disadvantaged out-of-school children Improve quality and efficiency of primary education for those children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and improve non-formal primary education services by NGOs Strengthen linkage between the formal and non-formal education sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote education for disadvantaged out-of-school children—those most in needs, girls, the disabled and the ethnic minority groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an enabling learning environment for out-of-school children Enhance community capacity for effective management Develop a mutually beneficial collaboration network (linkage) between the formal and non-formal education sectors
Donors	CIDA, SIDA, UNICEF	World Bank, SDC, Government of Bangladesh	EC, Dubai Care	DFID, CIDA, UNICEF, Dutch Government, Norwegian Government, NOVIB	EC
Implementing Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annesha Foundation (AF) (Dhaka) Assistance for Slum Dwellers (ASD) (Dhaka and Rajshahi) Bangladesh Development Service Centre (BDSC) (Dhaka) Catalyst (Dhaka) CEDAR (Dhaka) Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) (Dhaka) DSK (Chittagong and Dhaka) Gonoshahajjo Sangstha (GSS) (Dhaka) Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) (Dhaka and Sylhet) Jagorani Chakkra Foundation (JCF) (Khulna) Nijera Shikhi (Chittagong) Piact Bangladesh (Dhaka) 	<p>Education Service Provider (ESP)—an organization such as NGO that supports the community in establishing and managing the center and in delivering quality education (400 NGOs)</p> <p>Education Resource Provider (ERP)—an organization such as NGO that support the center, teacher, and ESP in technical aspects (e.g. teacher training, material development, etc.) (12 NGOs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARBAN CDS Coast Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIVDB (Sylhet Division and Technical Partner) Jagorani Chakkra Foundation (JCF) (Barisal Division) Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) (Rangpur Division) Save the Children UK (Network and Technical Partner) 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) (Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, and Rangpur District) Development Organization of the Rural Poor (DORP) (Bhola, Feni, Laksmipur, and Noakhali District) Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra (Bandaraban, Chittagong, Khagrchari, and Rangamati District) SUROVI (Dhaka, Gazipur, and Naragangonj District)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prodiplan (Barisal and Dhaka) • Resource Integration Centre (RIC) (Dhaka) • RISDA (Dhaka) • Samaj Paribartan Kendra (SPK) (Dhaka) • Surovi (Chittagong and Dhaka) • TMSS (Chittagong) • Ultra Development Program (UDP) (Dhaka) • Voluntary Association for Rural Development (VARD) (Dhaka) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAM • Disha • EADS • Ganoshastho Kendro (GK) • Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK) • GSS • Proshika • Surovi • TMSS 			
Number of Districts and Upazilla Covered	6 divisional cities (Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet)	<p>60 <i>upazilla</i> in 34 districts by 2009</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barisal Division (1) • Chittagong Division (6) • Dhaka Division (10) • Khulna Division (3) • Rajshahi Division (7) • Rangpur Division (5) • Sylhet Division (3) <p>In 2010/11, expanded to 90 <i>upazilla</i> in 48 districts</p>	<p>8 <i>upazilla</i> in 11 districts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barisal Division, 2 districts • Dhaka Division, 2 districts • Rangpur Division, 3 districts • Sylhet Division, 3 districts 	More than 500 <i>upazilla</i> in 64 districts	<p>74 <i>upazilla</i> in 24 districts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barisal Division (4) • Chittagong Division (7) • Dhaka Division (7) • Rangpur Division (6)
Selection Criteria of Project (Program) Sites	Urban Cities	<p>60 "less-advanced" <i>upazilla</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net enrollment rate 80% or less • Gender gap in net enrollment is at least 2% • Cycle completion rate at the primary level is 50% or less • Head count poverty is about 30% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment rate • Leaving student rate • Out of school children • No of education provider • Vulnerability • Geographical remoteness • Rural area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient number of potential students (more than 25) is available • The community is ready to prepare a space for the school • SSC qualified female married teacher is available within 1km periphery of the school 	Geo-physically backward and socio-economically neglected areas; Plus, according to the previous working experiences, and the conveniences of the implementing partners (e.g. where the partners have been actively working)
Local Committee and Establishment of Learning Centers					
Local Committee formed by teacher, parents, landlords, etc. to support learning center management	<p>Center Management Committee (CMC): Total 7 members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local elite as Chairperson (1) • Father (1) • Mother (1) • Male employer (1) • Female employer (1) • Representative from Ward Commissioner • Teacher as secretary (1) 	<p>Community Management Committee (CMC): Total 11 members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson (guardian per year) (1) • Vice chairperson (guardian per year) (1) • Parents (3) • Assistant <i>Upazilla</i> Education Officer (1) • Female member from Union office (1) • Local government primary school head 	<p>School Assistance Group (SAG): Total 9-11 members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair person (1) • Vice- Chairman 1 • Secretary 1 • Treasurer (1) • Member (5 – 8) • Child Member (1) 	<p>School Management Committee (SMC): Total 7 members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson as local philanthropist who is educated, and devotes to the education in the community (1) • Vice chairperson (1) • Guardian (4) • Teacher as secretary (1) 	<p>Center Management Committee (CMC): Total 7 members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guardian (2) • Female member from Union office (1) • Local government primary school head teacher (1) • CAG members (2) • Teacher as secretary (1) <p>Community Action Group (CAG): Total 7 members</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher (1) Local leader who is interested in education—philanthropist (1) ESP (NGO) supervisor (1) Teacher (1) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairperson (1) Local elite/leader (male) (1) Local elite/leader (female) (1) Local youth (1) Female member from Union office (1) Local government primary school head teacher (1) Educationalist—philanthropist (1)
Local Committee Meeting Schedule	Once in every 3 month	Monthly, sometimes twice a month	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly, CMC and CAG jointly held
Local Committee's Major Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the progress of the program and take appropriate decisions Advise on how the center would be managed, how it would operate it, how it would be maintained, what kinds of services and activities it would provide, and how its security would be assured Advocate guardians understand the benefits of education and send their children to the center spontaneously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a center Mobilize and elect CMC to manage the center Locate 25-35 left-school and never-enrolled children who are eligible to enroll in the center Appoint a qualified teacher, preferably female, per center to deliver education following the NCTB curriculum Prepare an annual action plan Visit the center regularly Make all payment of grants, education allowance, teacher's salary, etc. through their bank account opened for the project Prepare item-wise accounts and vouchers, and report to the related offices Prepare activity report to the center regularly Prepare quarterly progress report and submit to the <i>Upazilla</i> Education Office and the ESP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Mobilization Establish community Assistance Group (SAG) Review school progress set dream for the school Prepare School Improvement Plan Capacity building of SAG Establishment of a center Worked / follow-up according to school improvement plan Identify qualified teacher Regular school visit Ensure regular attendance of students SAG regular monthly meeting Exchange visit Arrange parenting meeting Support in Reading for Children activity Support in Vitamin A and Iron tablet distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the school and ensure the safe and child-friendly learning environment Ensure regular attendance of students (Program Organizers are trained to facilitate the meetings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAG finds a site for the center CAG mobilize the local community for opening the center Financial contribution Material and labor contributions (e.g. Toilet facilities, construction materials (wood, ten, etc.)) Monthly evaluation Organize celebration ceremonies of national holidays Discuss the center performance Ensure regular attendance of students Discuss issues such as childcare, cleanness, disciplines, habitual eating, etc. <p>(As DAM decreases its support gradually to increase the community ownership)</p>
Process:	1. Project Implementation Unit	1. Identify the areas where	1. Collect the secondary	1. (September/October)	1. Meeting with Union offices

Establishment of Centers	(of the BNFE), NGO, and the third party of UNICEF jointly conduct baseline survey, database, and mapping to make a list of potential students (name, guardians' name, types of work, etc.) 2. Recruit teachers and supervisors 3. Teachers finalize/shortlist the students, and find a site for the center	disadvantaged children live, and conduct awareness rising of parents and community (workshops, street drama, etc.) 2. Find out the ESP in collaboration with the local community 3. Prepare a list of children—never enrolled or left the formal school 4. Discuss the issue with Assistant <i>Upazilla</i> Education Officer, a member of Union office (female), and a head teacher of the local primary school 5. Conduct meeting with guardians of the potential students 6. Receive an approval of setting up a center from the <i>Upazilla</i> Education Office 7. Finalize the list of students 8. Formulate CMC, and select a site 9. Nominate a quality teacher 10. Submit forms to the ROSC Project Director with the recommendations from the <i>Upazilla</i> Education Committee 11. Materials are collected; Teacher is trained 12. Open a center	information from the local government offices Up Chairman / Member, <i>Upazilla</i> statistics office, Social welfare office 2. Transect worked by Program Organizer in the selected village 3. Rapport building with villagers 4. Conduct meeting with villagers 5. Draw social map in selected villages 6. Prepare Child list of the village (age in-between 7 to 15 years) 7. Selected Household survey 8. Child selection from village child list (never enrolled and left-school children) 9. Teacher recruitment from the village 10. Center site selection 11. SAG formation 12. Materials procurement/supply 13. Teacher is trained 14. A learning center opened	Program Organizers conduct small meetings (at least 3 times) with the community—a potential area of setting up a school; In the last meeting, the community needs to agree of setting up the school 2. Using the BRAC Survey Form, Program Organizers and Branch Manager conduct a survey in the village (During the survey, potential teachers are also listed) 3. Through door-to-door visits, make a list of potential students to BPS 4. Take the list to the local government primary school, have a meeting The primary school verifies the list, and provides NOC (No Objection Certificate) 5. The community selects a site and builds a school 6. Materials are collected 7. Teacher is trained (January in the following year) School starts	to identify villages without a formal primary school 2. Collect data on the villages, wards, and unions where no formal primary school is available 3. Conduct focus group discussion (supervisors, technical officers) 4. Form CMC and CAG, and conduct a community meeting 5. Through social mapping, identify children of age 6-12, and their school status (enrolled, dropped out, never enrolled, etc.) The CAG selects students, and make a list 6. Complete the list and required forms and submit to Dhaka Head Office 7. Land/room is mobilized, and materials are collected; Teacher is trained 8. Construct and open a center
Learning Centers					
Total Number of Centers	Total: 6,646	Total: 22,752	Total: 5,180	Total: 28,170 (June 2010) (Additional 4,000 will open in July 2010)	Total: 2,380
Center Venue Criteria	"Reachable distance" from children's residence or working place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible for the students • Adequate space is available (arranged by the community) • Safe drinking water is available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible for the students. Close to the students' residence • Adequate space for 30 to 33 children • Access to sanitation and safe drinking water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located within 1km periphery of students' residence • No transportation cost required • Adequate space is available (the community 	CAG finds a site considering accessibility of students

			facilities	is ready to prepare the size of the land)	
Land	N/A (included in the center rent)	Provided by the community	Provided by the SAG and community for free of charge	Provided by the community	Rural: Provided by the community for free of charge Urban: Included in the center rent
Building	One-room	One-room	One-room; Constructed by the SAG and community	One-room; Either provided by the community or the rent is paid	One-room Constructed by the project and community
Center Construction Fee	N/A	Tk. 2,000	Community contributions	Tk. 8,000 – 10,000 (one time)	Tk. 10,000 (one time)
Center Rent	Depending on the location (average Tk. 2,500 – 3,500) (The fund provided by the BNFE for each center's rent is Tk. 1,500 per month)	None; however, the CMC can decide to pay the rent in order to secure the center site for 5 years and prevent shifting the center location (e.g. One CMC in Gobindagonj was paying 200tk per month)	Community provides a center	Rural: N/A (included in the maintenance fee) Urban: Depending on the location (average Tk. 2,500 – 3,500)	Rural: None Urban: Average Tk. 2,000 – 3,000 per month
Center Maintenance Fee	Included in the rent	Managed by the CMC	Tk. 250 per month distributed by the project, though the project has provided to only 25% of learning centers	Rural: Tk. 225 per month Urban: Included in the rent	None (included in the center construction/rent)
Minimum classroom size	240 (12'X20') sq. ft. Some exceptions, if such space is not available	200 sq. ft.	504 (18'X28') sq. ft. Some exceptions, if such space is not available	360 sq. ft. Considering the physical growth of the students	288 (12'X24') sq. ft. Some exceptions, if such space is not available
Students per classroom	Maximum 25	Maximum 35	Minimum 30 – Maximum 35	Maximum 25-33	Maximum 30
Equipment and Facilities in and by the centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackboard Floor Mat Light—distributed by the center owner (included in the center rent) Fan—distributed by the center owner (included in the center rent) Trunk (to keep materials) Drinking water (One pitcher and one glass provided. Prepared by teacher everyday) Toilet—desirable with the room 	<p>For all the equipment, CMC decides, and if agreed, purchases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackboard Floor Mat Table Chair/Stool Light Fan Box/Trunk/Shelf Drinking water (arranged and prepared by the CMC) Toilet (arranged and prepared by the CMC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackboard Floor Mat (once in 2 years) Fan (only for some learning centers) Trunk (to keep materials) Shelf (discussed and purchased by SAG and guardians) Drinking water (Arranged by teacher, the SAG and community) Toilet facilities (Mandatory. When arranging the site/building of school, the toilet has to be arranged/built) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackboard Floor Mat (provided, and decorated by teacher, students, and guardians) Stool (provided to teacher) Light (no policy or regulation; however, at least 5 windows and a well lighted (e.g. transparent roof structure) are required) Trunk (one distributed by the project to keep materials) Drinking water (One pitcher and one glass provided. Prepared by teacher everyday) Toilet—mandatory. When 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackboard Mobile Blackboard Project Board Floor Mat 4 Tables—in every center. Each level group/cohort sits around one table, and use the table as a workstation 1 <i>mura</i> chair—provided to teacher (however teacher always moves around among tables/students) Light (Not distributed by the project. Some community supplies on their own initiatives. Or included in the center rent)

				arranging the site/building of school, the toilet has to be arranged/built	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fan (Not distributed by the project; Some community supplies on their own initiatives; Or included in the center rent) • Trunk/Shelf—Distributed to keep textbooks, notebooks, teaching aids, and other materials • Drinking water (One pitcher and one glass; Prepared by teacher everyday) • Toilet (No policy or regulation; however, in general, the center neighbors' is available for the students)
Students					
Total Number of Students	Total: 166,150 Male: 40% Female: 60%	Total: 491,171 Male: -- Female: -- (Of which, 54,000 already graduated in 2009)	Total: 154,879 Male: 48.81% Female: 51.19%	Total: 840,000 (in 2009) Male: 34.25% Female: 65.75%	Total: 88,702 Male: 48.14% Female: 51.86% (Of which, 30,740 already transfer to formal primary schools by 2009)
Student Criteria	Age 10-14 Working children Urban cities/slums Illiterate or left from formal/non-formal primary school; Has not enrolled in any formal/non-formal school in last 3 years Unmarried Guardians, children, employers should have positive motivations for education	Age 7-14 Areas where a concentration of socially degraded communities of different professions, such as tea garden workers, industrial workers, and slum dwellers, is high Geographically isolated areas, such as areas discarded by river, mountain, lake, canal or <i>haor</i> , <i>char</i> or river and disaster prone areas Remote areas where communications are difficult Out-of-school children, either never been enrolled to or left school No criteria for marital status; however, if a student leaves due to early marriage, all the education allowance has to be returned	Age 7-14 Remote rural and landless families, especially those living in disaster prone areas of coastal belts, <i>hoars</i> (marsh land), chars (temporary land masses), and eroding riverbanks and tidal basins Out-of-school children, either never have been enrolled to school or have left Vulnerable (geographical location, economy, ethnicity) children will get priority	Age 8-10 Socio-economically challenged Rural remote (geo-physically challenged) areas, or urban slums Never enrolled or left school	Age 6-12 Geo-physically backward and socio-economically neglected areas like riverine chars, coastal region, <i>hoars</i> (oxbow lake) areas, urban slums, and areas dominated by aborigine people Out-of-school children or have left school

Work of Parents and Family Members	Small business, employed labors of local small stores, domestic labors, garment factory workers, rickshaw pullers, and/or day labors	Farmers, small business, employed labors of local small stores, domestic labors, and/or day labors	Farmers, small business, employed labors of local small stores, domestic labors, and/or day labors	Farmers, small business, employed labors of local small stores, domestic labors, garment factory workers, and/or day labors	Farmers, small business, employed labors of local small stores, domestic labors, garment factory workers, and/or day labors
Schooling Background of Parents	The majority has no or limited schooling	The majority has no or limited schooling	The majority has no or limited schooling	The majority has no or limited schooling	The majority has no or limited schooling
"Access Barriers" to formal schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school environment is not attractive and does not encourage attendance and effective learning for working children Teaching methods are outdated for working children The curriculum is not sufficiently relevant to (working) children's everyday lives The materials are inadequate The number of teacher is insufficient (and for some students, it is difficult to catch up the class) School timings (hours) are fixed, and do not suit the students' daily schedule Links between schools and community is not adequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less or no formal primary schools (government, RNGP, or NGO) available Geographically disconnected area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal primary schools (government, RNGP, or NGO) School exist in long distance No suitable road and transportation Lack of awareness among the parents Children are involved with income generating activities Seasonal barriers, such as water logging, which prevent children physically commuting school The student and teacher ratio is too high and some students have difficulties to catch up the class Socio-economically disadvantaged families/groups cannot afford 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance to the nearest primary school is too far School hours do not suit The student and teacher ratio is too high and some students have difficulties to catch up the class Pedagogy is too difficult for some students to follow Socio-economically disadvantaged families cannot afford 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less or no formal primary schools (government, RNGP, or NGO) available (Poverty, social barriers, insecurity, early marriage, distance of educational facilities, etc.)
"Educational Needs" of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible timing A flexible and contextually appropriate non-formal quality primary education programs, especially designed for working children (e.g. livelihood skills, etc.) Quality and joyful, child-friendly learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible timing Continuous schooling (no long holiday) A flexible and contextually appropriate non-formal quality primary education programs Quality and joyful learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible timing Flexible and contextually appropriate non-formal quality primary education programs Quality and joyful learning environment Non threading environment for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible timing Continuous schooling (no long holiday) A flexible and contextually appropriate non-formal quality primary education programs Quality and joyful learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A flexible and contextually appropriate non-formal quality primary education programs Quality and joyful learning environment Increased contact hours of a teacher and every student A mechanism to mainstream students to the formal primary school
Policy for Children with Special Needs	No policy or regulation. However, the presence of children with special needs observed in some centers	No policy or regulation; however the project encourages children with moderate disabilities to	Children with mild and moderate disability will get priority Total number of children with	With special needs: children who have difficulty in seeing (visual impairment), in hearing (hearing	No policy or regulation; however the project promotes the diversity, and encourages children with

		enroll	special needs: 1,451	impairment), in speech (speech impairment), in moving their limbs (physical impairment), with low intellectual functioning (intellectual impairment) BRAC Education Programme has the CSN (Children with Special Needs) Unit, which supports the special learning needs of those children; Teachers are trained, and assisted devices (e.g. hearing aid, glasses, etc.)	moderate disabilities to enroll
Policy for Children from Ethnic Groups	No policy or regulation	Some of the centers are set up in the Adivasi communities	Children from indigenous communities/ethnic minorities are reached through special language learning needs and cultural accommodations; Total number of children from ethnic groups: 215	BRAC Education Programme has the EEC (Education for Ethnic Children) Unit, which supports the special learning needs of those children Teachers are from the same ethnic group; Contextualized materials (story books, etc.) and teaching and learning methods are developed; Both languages (mother tongue and Bangla) are used in teaching through Grade I to III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote diversity of the children through recruiting children from ethnic minorities, char lands (temporary land masses), and/or marginalized groups In the UNIQUE project, children from five different ethnic groups in Chittagong Hill Tracts participate (Chakma, Tripura, Marma, Tanchyanga, and Khumi)
Education Allowance	None	<p>Grade I to III: Tk. 50 per month; Total Tk. 800 per year (including a fee for a uniform)</p> <p>Grade IV and V: Tk. 60 per month; Total Tk. 970 per year (including a fee for a uniform) (Every 3 month, TO visits each center and pay the allowance)</p>	None	None	None
Teaching and Learning Methods					
Curriculum	NCTB (A child centered, interactive, modular, gender sensitive curriculum; The integration between literacy, numeracy and life skills ensured)	NCTB	NCTB	BRAC/NCTB (Grade I – III) NCTB (Grade IV and V) (Emphasize, for example, life-long, creative, problem-solving, evaluation, and analytical skills)	NCTB
Method	HTR Model	ROSC Model	SHIKHON Model	BRAC Model	UNIQUE Model: Multi-Grade

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerated learning Participatory teaching methodology, especially designed for urban working children to build on their skills Include Life-Skills as a core subject 	Emphasize community management; Community manages the costs of their learning center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerated learning Student centered interactive teaching and learning method Supplement/attached programs for guardians, etc. (e.g. Reading for Children (RFC)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerated learning For Grade I to III, using BRAC textbooks; For Grade IV and V, NCTB textbooks Married female teachers only Girl students are given priority to enroll 	<p>Teaching-Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In classroom, students are divided into four different grade-groups according to levels of their subject knowledge and ability The four subject based grades are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Beginner (Grade I) 2) Advanced (Grade II) 3) Skilled (Grade III) 4) Independent (Grade IV and V) <p>For example, the same student can be "advanced" in Bangla, but "Beginner" in Mathematics</p>
Grade and Subjects Covered	Bangla: Grade I to V Math: Grade I to III English: Grade I to II Integrated Science and Social Studies: Grade I to V Life Skills: Grade I to V	Bangla: Grade I to V Math: Grade I to V English: Grade I to V Science: Grade III to V Social Studies: Grade III to V Religious Studies: Grade III to V	Bangla: Grade I to V Math: Grade I to V English: Grade I to V Integrated Science and Social Studies: Grade I to II Science: Grade III to V Social Studies: Grade III to V Religious Studies: Grade III to V	Bangla: Grade I to V Math: Grade I to V English: Grade I to V Integrated Science and Social Studies: Grade I to III Science: Grade IV to V Social Studies: Grade IV to V Religious Studies: Grade III to V	Bangla: Grade I to V Math: Grade I to V English: Grade I to V Science: Grade I to V Social Studies: Grade I to V Religious Studies: Grade IV to V
Extracurricular activities	Games, music, dance, art and craft, etc. Drawing, dancing, singing, and acting competitions are often held during the social mobilization events	Games, music, dance, art and craft, etc.	Free-play, music, reciting, games, art and craft, story telling, creative writing, sports day, etc.	Games, music, dance, art and craft, etc.	Cultural activities, art and crafts, story reading and listening, disaster awareness lesson (e.g. learning the indigenous knowledge on how to prepare for a disaster during, after, and before it happens)
Course Duration	Total 40 months Cycle I: 8 months Cycle II: 8 months Cycle III: 8 months Cycle IV: 8 months Cycle V: 8 months	Total 60 months Grade I: 12 months Grade II: 12 months Grade III: 12 months Grade IV: 12 months Grade V: 12 months	Total 44 months Readiness: 4 months Grade I: 8 months Grade II: 8 months Grade III: 8 months Grade IV: 8 months Grade V: 8 months	Total 48 months Grade I: 9 months Grade II: 9 months Grade III: 9 months Grade IV: 10 months Grade V: 11 months	Total 39 months (Average a student stays for 2 to 4 years based on his/her competencies, until mainstreamed to local formal primary school)
Center Hours	6 days a week 2.5 hours a day (About 2,400 hours in one cycle/8 months)	6 days a week 3 – 4 hours a day	6 days a week Readiness and Grade I: 3 hours a day Grade II: 3.5 hours a day Grade III to V: 4 hours a day	6 days a week Grade I: 3 hours a day Grade II and III: 3.5 hours a day Grade IV and V: 4 hours a day	6 days a week 3 hours a day (Extra 1 – 2 post session hours for slow students)
Holiday	National Holidays and Festivals, and During Teacher Trainings	Does not follow the long government school holidays	All government holydays	No long school holiday to keep the learning continue	7 extra days in addition to all public holidays

	(does not follow the government school holidays)				
Textbooks	HTR "Textbooks" for Bangla, Math and English HTR "Activity Book" for Integrated Science and Social Studies, and Life Skills (NCTB textbooks (Bangla, Math, and English) are available as supplementary materials, 1 set per center	NCTB	NCTB Bangla Math English Science Social Studies Religious SHIKHON Readiness (ECD) Choray Choray Borno Shikhi	BRAC: Grade I to III NCTB: Grade IV and V	NCTB • For the "Beginners" (Grade I and II) Science and Social Studies, some topics from the Grade III textbook are chosen and supplementary materials are introduced; In addition, "project-wise" (non-textbook) activities (going outside and doing observations) are conducted
Storybooks	6 core readers (2 sets for Cycle 1, and 1 set for each of Cycle 2 to 5) per center 1 set supplementary reading materials (comprising 20 different graded titles) per center	Supplementary reading materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 books of Save the Children USA • BRAC • FIVDB • Patabahar • Purchased from local markets 	BRAC story books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNIQUE (e.g. collect and study indigenous knowledge and practices, and make them into story books) (Storybooks and supplementary materials and materials of DAM and other organizations)
Notebooks	Subject-wise HTR Notebooks for Bangla, Math, English, and Life Skills Total 4 for Cycle 1 Total 12 for each of Cycle 2 to 5	3 subject-wise ROSC Notebooks	Subject-wise SHIKHON notebooks and separate notebooks for homework (The number of notebooks per student is from 10 to 16 for each grade) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangla • Creative writing • Math • English 	Subject-wise BRAC Notebooks Grade I to III: Average total 12-16 per student per year Grade IV and V: Average total 16-22 per student per year	8 subject-wise UNIQUE Notebooks (for 1 Grade) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangla (2) • Math (2) • English (2) • Science (1) • Social Studies (1)
Stationeries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil (every month) • Eraser • Meena drawing book • Crayon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil • Pen • Sharpener • Eraser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil • Sharpener • Eraser • Scales • White paper • Poster paper • Abacus • Blocks for math • Drawing paper and pencil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil • Pen • Sharpener • Eraser • Scale • Small blackboard and chalk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil • Pen • Sharpener • Eraser
Assessments and Exams	HTR Common Assessment: Per cycle (every 8 month)	ROSC Common Exam: 3 times a year	Exam / Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The end of each grade Exam (center base). Conducted in a local government school • Mid-year exam for the comparison using GPS 	In Classroom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per chapter/module, prepared and conducted by teachers • Teachers are trained about how to make evaluation questions 	In Classroom: Daily, weekly or monthly conducted by teacher's initiatives. General instruction in the teaching guidebook

			question papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Organizer attends at the evaluation <p>No Common Exam Monitoring includes assessment of learning outcomes</p>	UNIQUE Common Exam: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly written exam Quarterly written and oral exam (subject-wise) <p>Supplied by the regional office (Master Trainer, Technical Officer, Government Primary School Teacher)</p>
Teachers and Supervisors					
Total Number of Teachers	Total: 6,646 Male: -- Female: -- (Some teachers have double shifts—teaching in 2 centers)	Total: 15,000 Male: 27% Female: 73%	Total: 5,180 Male: 2.07% Female: 97.93%	Total: 28,170 + (Additional 4,000 will open in July 2010) Male: Less than 1% (recruited only when a female teacher is not available) Female: More than 99%	Total: 2,380 Male: 6.05% Female: 93.95%
Teacher Qualification	HSC (In case if no HSC qualified teacher is available, SSC) From local community	SSC From local community Qualified female teacher is given preference; Must be interested to attend all the trainings, and should have an attitude to bear responsibilities as an education facilitator	SSC level From local community Female applicants are encouraged Must be interested to attend all the trainings, Should have an attitude to bear responsibilities as an education facilitator	SSC From local community; Living within 1km periphery of the school Female (preferable) Married	Grade VIII to SSC Teaching experience desirable From local community (For children from ethnic groups, teachers are recruited from Chakma, Marma, or respective community)
Recruitment Process	By NGOs 1. Advertisements are circulated locally 2. Applicants submit CV 3. Interview	1. In collaboration with ESP, the CMC selects potential teachers and prepares the list 2. Applicants submit an application to the <i>Upazilla</i> Education Office (Since 2010, a written exam has been introduced; The CMC selects 2 potential teachers for 1 center; Teacher candidates face a competition to be a teacher, which may help increase their motivations)	1. Advertisements are circulated locally 2. Applicants submit an application 3. Applicants shortlisted 4. A written and oral test 5. Basic training completed	1. During the survey in the community, potential teachers are listed 2. A written and oral exam 3. Approved by Area Manager	1. After communities are identified, teacher recruitment advertisements are circulated locally by the Area Office 2. Applicants submit an application 3. A written and oral exam 4. Send the finalized list to the Regional Office for review, and obtain the final approval from the Dhaka Head Office
Teacher Training	Foundation Training Part I: 21 days (before starting Cycle 1) Management and Technical Supervision: 5 days (before starting Cycle 1)	Foundation Training: 15 days (3 weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role-play of conducting a class Identification and development of teaching-learning 	10 days (before starting Grade I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade I subjects Curriculum and teaching and learning methods (more time is devoted to Math, English, and 	Basic Training: 12 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child psychology Competency of primary education content Assessment, etc. Monthly Refresher	Basic Training: 12 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize pedagogy, joyful learning, child-friendly learning environment, multi-grade teaching learning, etc. For ethnic group children,

	<p>Foundation Training Part II: 7 days (before starting Cycle 1)</p> <p>Refresher Training: 9 days for Cycle II, 7 days for Cycle III, IV and V (the beginning of each cycle)</p> <p>Refresher Training for Management and Technical Supervision: 2 days (the beginning of each cycle)</p>	<p>materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching-learning methodology and discussions on the project <p>Refresher Training: 4 days in 1 year/Grade</p> <p>Math and English trainings: 8 days (before starting Grade IV and V)</p>	<p>Science)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom discipline Children with special needs (e.g. how to respond to the children with hearing difficulties, etc.) <p>Monthly Teacher Training: 1 day (Except the first month of each grade)</p> <p>8 days (before starting Grade II, Grade III, Grade IV, and Grade V)</p> <p>Planned and need-based contents; e.g. The need-based contents include the use of notebooks, etc.</p>	<p>Training:</p> <p>Grade I to III: 1 day or 2 days-every other month</p> <p>Grade IV and V: 2 days and 3 days-every other month</p> <p>(Grade I to III 2 days and Grade IV and V 3 days trainings include a special training on Math and English)</p> <p>Orientation Training: 6 days (before starting Grade I to V)</p>	<p>the training includes how to handle language differences in the classroom, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class management <p>Monthly: 1 day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and learning method Next month planning Problem sharing <p>Need-based Intensive Pedagogic Training: 4 days</p> <p>Need-based Intensive Subject-wise Training (for Math and English): 4 days</p>
Trainers	76 trainers of the local training institute appointed by Project Implementation Unit (of the BNFE) and UNICEF. They are trained by core trainers who have been directly involved in the HTR material development	Master trainers of local training institute (ERP) appointed by ROSC and the community; Total number of trainers: 225	Technical Officers (Trainings of Trainers (TOT) by Save the Children USA)	BRAC trainers	Basic Training: Master Trainer Refresher Training: Technical Officers (sometimes Master Trainers and Monitoring Officer participate)
Teaching Guidebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject and grade wise Developed by the project Methodology handbook for each cycle 	Teaching guidebook (During the trainings, teachers may get some printed papers, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject and grade wise guide books -Developed by Save the Children USA Use of materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject and grade wise Developed by BRAC Education Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One general guidebook covers all (include subject and grade wise daily academic plans, instruction for parents meetings, etc.) Subject and grade wise
Teaching Aids Distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pictures 1 Flip chart divided into 2 parts 1 math chart 5 action song chart for Cycle 1 1 life skills cart (comprising 8 sheets for each cycle) Posters 5 Activity Kits per center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ECD materials) Charts Abacus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posters Handouts Calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pictures Photos Charts for gallery learning Posters
Teacher Compensation	Tk. 2,000 per month (Since Jul 2009) (no increase) (From Jul 2006 to Jun 2009, Tk. 1,500 per month)	Tk. 1,200 per month; however, the CMC can decided to pay more if agreed	Tk. 1,200 per month (no increase)	Grade I: Tk. 1,300 per month Grade II: Tk. 1,350 per month Grade III to V: Tk. 1,400 per month	Tk. 1,500 per month (no increase)
Field Supervision	Supervisor: Each supervisor is responsible	Supervisor: Each supervisor is	Program Organizer (PO): Each program organizer is	Program Organizer (PO): Each supervisor is	Union Supervisor: Each supervisor is

Personnel	for 10 centers	responsible for average 15 centers	responsible for average 16 centers	responsible for average 16 centers	responsible for 10 centers
Supervisor/PO Qualification	BA	BA or Retired government primary school teachers/education officers	Bachelor Degree or HSC with 2 years experience	BA or MA	BA
Supervisor/PO Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On average, visit each center once a week Look after 10 centers and working for full time for the project Provide technical support to the teachers for qualitative monitoring and prepare a complied report Provide CMC members with trainings Facilitate social mobilization and other events with CMC members and teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit each center every month and give advice to teachers Teacher calls Supervisor when a student is absent for a few days Supervisor visits the student's house When Teacher cannot finish the lesson plan on time, Teacher calls help from Supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the school twice a month Support teachers in teaching (students' progress), pedagogy Community Mobilization Conduct and organize parenting sessions Attend SAG meeting Assist RFC book distributions Conduct Monthly teacher training Students home visit Regular monthly formative reporting (SHIKHON) to Field Coordinator Attend monthly Field Coordination meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the school twice a week Support teachers in teaching (Students' progress), pedagogy, and administration (school management) 	Visit each center every week and give advice to teachers
Supervisor Compensation	Tk. 4,000 per month (Since Jul 2009) (no increase) (From Jul 2006 to Jun 2009, Tk. 2,500 per month)	Tk. 2,500 per month	Tk. 5500 per month	(No fixed amount; Following the Level System)	Tk. 5,000 per month
Relationship with Local Formal Primary Schools					
Relationship with Local Formal Primary Schools	(MoPME has issued an administrative order for enrollment of HTR graduates to primary school in Grade IV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government primary school head teacher is a member of CMC, and verifies the ROSC students Cooperate when the ROSC students taking the primary school completion exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect NOC from nearby primary school for establishing SHIKHON learning centers Exchange visit to local government school and to the SHIKHON centers Jointly organize different events (day observation, sport competitions, etc.) 	Before opening the BPS, the local formal primary school verifies the list of BRAC students and provides NOC (No Objection Certificate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with formal schools, to be expanded to become the Learning Resource Centers (LRC) Closely working together with the SMC of the local formal primary school Exchange (exposure) visit of local primary school teachers and UNIQUE teachers

Note: This table was originally created in 2010 by myself. Save the Children Bangladesh Country Office, for whom I helped research “good practices” for NFPE programs, adopted this table in their recent publication, “Save the Children (2011) Study Report Education for All: The Contributions of Quality Non-Formal Primary Education Programs in Bangladesh. Dhaka: Bangladesh.” For the purpose of this dissertation, I have updated some parts of the table.