

CHILD LABOUR IN INDONESIA: CAN IT BE ELIMINATED?



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Abstract

Presently, Indonesia has witnessed the high number of child labourers. International Labour Organization (ILO) and Indonesian Statistical Bureau (BPS) reported that the number of child labourer was stood for 1.76 million in 2009. This number remain the same at 1.7 million in 2012. This paper is an attempt to analyse the incidence of child labour, the main causes and the strategies to eliminate child labour. This study found that child labour in Indonesia can be reduced through addressing the main cause of child labour such as poverty, limited access to education services and parental attitudes through indirect and direct intervention. To implement those two approaches, the participation of all child labour stakeholders particularly government, parents, school teacher, parents, labour inspectors, employees and children itself is a must. By participation of those stakeholders the enabling environment supporting child labour elimination will be achieved and in turn reduce and eliminate child labour.

Keyword: Child labour in Indonesia, poverty, limited access to education, enabling environment

A. Background

In recent years, the issue of child labour has attracted growing attention in worldwide. Child labour can be defined as working children who are at the age 5-12 years, 13-14 years who work for more than 15 hours per week, and 15-17 years who work more than 40 hours per week (International Labour Organization & Central Statistic Bureau, 2009). International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Agency concerning labour issues, estimates that more than 115 children aged between 5-17 years work in hazardous jobs globally and 48 million of them are from Asia and the Pacific. Child labour labour is also one major issue in Indonesia since the amount of child labour is high. The Indonesia Child Labour Survey (ICLS) conducted by Central Bureau of Statistic (CBS) in 2009 reported that 4.05 million of 48.8 million children (6.9%) between the ages 5-17 are involved in the labour force (child worker) and 1.76 million (43.3 %) out of them are child labour (ILO & CBS, 2009). Those children are vulnerable to exploitation, greater risks of

illness and injury and can become victims of various abuses that cause their death. This paper aims to examine the main causes of child labour in Indonesia and recommend strategies to stop this. The first part of this paper will analyze the relationships between poverty, parental and cultural attitudes, and access to education with the occurrence of child labour. The second part will explore indirect (creating an enabling environment) and direct (vocational skill training, formal and formal education) intervention to reduce child labour.

B. Factors Contributing to child labour

Many studies have shown that poverty is one of the main causes of child labour. Sharma (2009), for instance, states that poverty is the main cause of child labour. Poverty is very closed to high number of migration, high number of drop out school, lack of job opportunities and lack of education and skills which are contributing to high number of child labour. Because of poverty, children cannot access basic education. As a consequence, they tend to enter the work force in the early ages even they are vulnerable to be involved in the worst form of child labour. According to Statistic Central Bureau, the number of poverty in Indonesia was 31.02 million in 2010 and followed by slight decrease to 30.02 million in 2011 (CBS, 2011). Economic difficulties force many low-income families to rely on the contribution of their children to survive. Child labour in tobacco plantation, for instance, often works in order to improve family's income. The survey conducted by ILO in 2006 in East Java province found that 77% of child labour in tobacco plantation work in order to help their parents economically (ILO, 2007).

The second cause of child labour is limited access to education. As children drop out from school they tend to enter a cycle of poverty since they are likely to work in hazardous work and their work harm their health and safety. The costs of education have been main causes in leading to children dropping out of school. ILO survey in 2006 found that 71% of parents who have drop out of school children stated costs of education are the main causes of drop out school (ILO, 2006). To solve this issue, the Government of Indonesia introduced the School Operational Cost program which was designed to take away basic school fees. The program provides financial support to schools on the condition that there is no charge for basic education. Although this program was a significant

initiative, which makes education technically free, there remain a range of costs taken by many schools for enrolment, tuition, books etc as well as fees of uniforms and other costs (which often total more than actual school fees).

Moreover, these situations are exacerbated by the lack of school facilities in rural areas particularly secondary and senior high school. In the rural areas many children live a far away from their junior secondary school. The journey to school can be long, and also costly for poor families. In some areas, particularly the communities who live around mountains, most children have to walk to go to school for around 1 to 3 hours. This condition may lead to drop out of school and they enter the work place in early age. The research conducted by ILO in East Java Province, for instance, found that 6% of child labourers in tobacco plantation are not continuing their education due to the fact that their school is far away from their home (ILO, 2007).

The third cause contributing to high levels of child labour is a lack of parents' awareness on the importance of education. Some cultures of Indonesian communities tend to prioritize boy rather than girl to access education. ILO refers to United Nation for Children Fund (UNICEF) report on the disparity of girl and boy participation in accessing education found that in 1994 the enrolment rates in Indonesia between children aged 7-12 years were 85% for boy and 83% for girl. While children between the age of 16-18 years, the gap has increase considerably to 25% and 10% respectively (ILO, 2008). Moreover, the child birth order influences parents to place children on study only, study and work, work only and neither study nor work. In Bangladesh for instance, the first born child tend to work as a main activity or at least combination of work and study compared to later-born children are more likely to study (Khanam & Rahman, 2007)

C. Strategies to eliminate child labour in Indonesia

Based on those causes, there are two approaches can be conducted to reduce child labour in Indonesia. The first is strengthening the enabling environment which supports the alleviation of the child labour. This approach includes law enforcement, awareness raising and building the capacity of child stakeholder. Indonesian government has successfully

addressed the issue of child labour through policy approach. There are many regulations has been introduced by Indonesian government including Act 20/1999 on Ratification of ILO Convention 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, Act 1/2000 on Ratification of ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Elimination of the worst forms of child labour, Manpower Act 13/2003, Child Protection Act 23/2002. Those regulations explain that employing children is a criminal and will be sentenced into jail. The Manpower Act 13/2003, for instance, bans engaging children into labour force and anyone who breaks the regulations will be sentenced into jail for a period of between 2 and 5 years, and/or fined by a minimum 200 million or maximum 500 million rupiah. (Manpower Act no 13, 2003).

The prohibition of child labour through legal system is a strategic initiative, but it is likely to be ineffective if the main cause of the child labour is not been addressed. Mainstreaming child labour into legal system need to be supported by mainstreaming child labour into government's or non-government organizations' programs to address the issue of poverty, access to education and lack of parents' awareness. The program should include awareness raising, community mobilization, universal primary education, expansion of social security schemes and capacity building for child labourers' stakeholders including parents, employers, teachers, communities and labour inspectors (Sharma, 2009).

Moreover, cash subsidies and meal for children in school programs are strategic intervention to create child friendly environment in school. Sharma (2009) cites Grooter and Kanbur suggesting creating school more attractive through incentives (cash subsidies and meal for children) is one of the strategies to attract children attending school rather than earning money. This strategy was successful in Mexico where the cash transfers to parents for attending school had significantly reduce the number of child labour. This success story is also experienced in Bangladesh by implementing meal for education project which is aimed to children who attend school (Sharma, 2009). This good lesson learn has been imitated by Indonesian Government by introducing Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program. The CCT program provides the opportunity for children to enter or re-enter basic education (elementary and secondary school). The program will transfer certain amount of cash to enable the recipient families to keep or send their children back to school when

these families have school age children, to have health check up for pregnant women and to have immunization and access to nutrition program for the under five children. The CCT program has successfully decline the number of child labour and hazardous work in Brazil (ILO, 2008).

To support above idea on how to create enabling environment for child labour elimination in school bases, it is also important to ensure that school are free from violence and discrimination and have good teaching quality and a relevant curriculum (ILO, 2008). This strategy is an effective measurement in eliminating child labour since Violence and discrimination in school is the main cause of drop out school children. When they are out of school, the children tend to enter the employment.

Part of enabling environment for the elimination of child labour is market based initiatives through product labelling schemes and companies' code of conduct explaining the products are not made by children. These initiatives are strategic measurements in combating child labour in certain economic sectors and in some cases raise the wages of adult workers so that child labourers become less critical to family income. They also tap additional resources to support the development of alternatives for working children. Lansky (1997) states that 'it is clear that while labelling and other market-based schemes can contribute directly to reducing child labour'. Moreover, trade sanctions are seen as one of effective ways to create enabling environment in labour sector. This initiative has been imposed through inclusion of "social clause" in World Trade Organization (WTO) charter. Although this initiative is not included in WTO charter, the spirit of abolition of child labour in labour standard has been included in the WTO charter (Sharma, 2009).

Poverty alleviation program is also part of efforts to create enabling environment for child labour elimination since poverty is seen as the main cause of child labour (Anker, 2000). Sharma (2009) states that child labour elimination means eliminate poverty. By improving the family income, the vulnerability of children for being exploited as child labour will be reduced since their parents will not force their children to earn money for family survival. Income generating programs for poor families in Pakistan and Bangladesh is a good example for poverty alleviation program.

The second approach is direct intervention targeting children as direct beneficiaries through vocational training, formal and non-formal education. This approach is an effort to eliminate child labour through education strategies. ILO introduced International program on the elimination of child labour (IPEC) since 1992. This program employs education approach as the main strategy to eliminate child labour (Lansky, 1997). The education approach is being used because it has been seen as a strategic media to maintain children in school and out of labour market. When children in school, their chance to enter workforce will be reduced compared to drop out school children who are tending to involve in employment (ILO, without year). There are many researches documenting on the relationship between child labour and education. Inter-agency collaborative research project between ILO, UNICEF and World Bank for instance, found strong evidence those nations with the higher number of child labour are also have higher number of drop out school children (ILO, et al, 2008). It means that affordable education is a key measurement in eliminating child labour. Based on this argument, ILO-IPEC allocated 30 % of its budget to finance direct services program. This number is the highest proportion for budget allocation compared to awareness raising, program and policy development which are accounted for 29%, 22% and 19% respectively (Lansky, 1997).

D. Conclusion

To sum up, child labour in Indonesia can be reduced through addressing the main cause of child labour such as poverty, limited access to education services and parental attitudes through indirect and direct intervention. To implement those two approaches, the participation of all child labour stakeholders particularly government, parents, school teacher, parents, labour inspectors, employees and children itself is a must. By participation of those stakeholders the enabling environment supporting child labour elimination will be achieved and in turn reduce and eliminate child labour.

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Muh Ulil Absor

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