Child labor and access to education: An investigation of the situation in Bangladesh

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Oslo, April 2005
Mahad Awaleh
Abstract

Child labor is regarded as one of the most serious problems of human rights violations in the contemporary world. Millions of children around the world have their rights violated every day and this is of great concern for the international community. This study will mainly focus on worst forms of child labor in a Bangladeshi context, nevertheless also touching upon other aspects of child labor both positive and negative. In doing so I found it important to investigate how a concept such as ‘globalization’ influences three important factors, child labor, education and poverty.

The role of the government is immensely important since they decide the political agenda and possess the power to make important decisions on behalf of the country and consequently, make a direct impact on millions of people locally, nationally and internationally. In terms of education, I would argue that it is not only very important for an individual’s development, it is important for a country’s development. Education and knowledge can make the difference between success and failure, in term of reaching the goals which the country sets and in terms of reaching the EFA goals which they have agreed to follow. Therefore, this study will attempt to show how the cooperation between Bangladesh and the international community is going. Hence, I will look at how the international community is supporting Bangladesh and how Bangladesh is following recommendations from the international community. Moreover, I will look at what Bangladesh is currently doing towards child labor and importantly looking at reasons that may exists for the country not to follow some recommendations. Hence, this study will focus on analyzing the relationship between child labor, education and poverty. If Bangladesh is to successfully achieve meeting these goals depend upon how the country addresses the relationship between the three factors above, and their willingness and/or ability to act accordingly to the challenges they meet and have met.
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1. Introduction and contextualization

1.1 Introduction

IPEC – Investing in every child

Fully develop their talents and strengths, which are the key to the future of their families and societies. We must strive for children to enjoy their childhood, playing learning and preparing for a decent working life as adults and parents. It is our responsibility to ensure that this is the last generation to be exploited as child labourers.

Frans Röselaers, Director
International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour – IPEC

Child labor is regarded as one of the most serious problems of human rights violations in the contemporary world. Millions of children around the world have their rights violated every day and this is of great concern for the international community. The purpose of this study is to offer a contribution to the understanding of the linkage between education, child labor and poverty. As interest in child labor has increased over the years, so has the understanding of the relationship between education, child labor and poverty. According to Bruns et al. (2003) education is known to be one of the most powerful instruments one can use towards combating child labor and poverty. Through education the poor children and their families are given a new chance, a chance to control their own future and destiny. They have the possibility to learn about their rights and that they have other options besides working. Importantly the community and the employers can through information from the schools get better understanding of the benefits education bears with it. The area this thesis will focus on when it comes to child labor is the ‘worst forms of child labor’. According to ILO (1998:9) “worst forms of child labor involves children being enslaved, forcibly recruited, prostituted, trafficked, forced into illegal activities or exposed to hazards”.

1
1.2 **Objective and aim of the study**

The main objective of this study is to evaluate child labor in Bangladesh and how it affects children’s ability to access education. The study intends to take a closer look at three central concepts in relation to each other; education, child labor and poverty. The aim of this study is to research the awareness of the consequences of child labor in Bangladesh and to look at what has been and what is being done in Bangladesh to address child labor both, from the local and international arena. In the light of this objective and the aims, the following research questions will guide this study:

- What has been done to reduce child labor both from local, national and international stakeholders in the last decade?

- Has the international community been active in supporting the local and the national authorities?

- What role does the NGO community play in reducing child labor and promoting education?

- Have the local and the national authorities followed recommendations from the international community?

- What kind of barriers exist which cause children to either not enroll, or drop out of school?

The questions above are meant to guide this study towards understanding the complexity of education, child labor and poverty, how the three concepts can influence a child, its family, the community and the society in general. In understanding these issues we can get an insight in the relationship between the concepts, and importantly how we act upon those challenges and implications that we meet. The goal is to improve people lives and create opportunities which they have not had before. Moreover, in order to grasp the complexity and the implications, I wanted, within the frame of this study to find out what the child labor situation in Bangladesh is like and what measures are taken towards child labor. The theoretical framework presented in chapter two sets the conditions for which we can start the analyses from. The analyses are based on a certain theoretical understanding and the gathered facts can hopefully give this study the answers to the questions asked. Before I discuss the theoretical framework, methodological issues and gathered data of the project, I will briefly present a contextualization and historical background.
1.3 Contextualization

If we take a historical glance at Bangladesh one will find that the country got off to a ‘shaky’ start in the 1970s when the country got its independence. After independence the country lacked stability, both politically and economically, due to the war which lead to their independence. According to National TBP (National Time Bound Programme Framework, 2006) the country is still struggling and is yet to settle in terms of stability. Statistics provided by the Bangladesh Bureau of statistics in the Government report National TBP (2006), show that Bangladesh with a population of over 130 million, is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Though the country is in close proximity to India, it is predominantly Muslim, not Hindu. Further the National TBP (2006) claims that:

About half of the population (63.3 million) is children under 18 years of age. Bangladesh has been ranked 139th among 177 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI, 2005). Its economy is characterized by low levels of income, and the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2003 was estimated at USD 376, with a GDP growth rate of 5.3 per cent in real terms (National TBP, 2006:1).

The statistics provided above give us an idea of the situation in Bangladesh. Even though the national poverty incidence fell from 59 per cent in 1991/92 to 50 per cent in 2000, Bangladesh is still considered to be one of the poorest countries in the world. Importantly, there is a significant difference in the country between the urban and rural areas. The poverty in the rural areas is 53 per cent compared to 37 per cent in the urban areas. In addition to this a big problem is that migration from the rural areas to the urban areas causes economically and socially constraints to the country and is underpinning the instability (National TBP, 2006).

If we look at the issue of child labor in Bangladesh in the light of socio-economic factors, the fact is that the situation affects and influences towards the use of children as child laborers. If we look closer at the statistics above one can argue that Bangladesh is dependent upon children working, since children representing almost 50 per cent of the total number of people living in the country. According to Jillani (1998), countries such as Bangladesh are dependent on using children as child laborers in order to increase the economic productivity. For years the country has, according to ILO (1998), been experiencing less growth rate and less economic activities. This is of great concern and is in many ways increasing the country’s depending on using children to meet the demand. In addition to this Bjerkan et al. (1997) believe that because of this pressure and dependency children are used unwillingly and at any cost to meet these demands. The children also represent a labor force which is cheaper and
less likely to complain on poor and hazardous work conditions. According to United Nations (1982) the children are more likely to be at risk of being abused and exploited, as long as Bangladesh is in a ‘face’ of socio-economic instability.

Moreover, it is important to look at the linkage between poverty and child labor (ILO, 2004; Jillani, 1998). Extreme forms of poverty play a crucial role. Child labor is part of a vicious circle and it is very important to understand how poverty is a main cause as well as a main consequence. Further, one also has to understand that there are other factors that contribute to swell the problems and consequences which constraints children and their families, for example low quality and un-relevant education. That is why one cannot deal with matters of child labor isolated and from other socio-economic issues (National TBP, 2006). I agree with ILO (2004) and Jillani (1998) in that it is important to understand the complexity of child labor. The purpose of this study is to understand this phenomenon and the inter relationship with other the socio-economic factors.

1.3.1 Child labor in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is considered to be a third-world country and this is mainly because of its large population of 130 million living in one of the worlds most densely populated countries. Although child labor is illegal in Bangladesh, ever since Bangladesh got its independence child labor has been present. In this study the focus will be on the worst forms of child labor, which impedes the mental, physical and emotional development of these children. If we look at child labor in a global perspective it is estimated that 191 million children aged 5-14, one-sixth of all children in this age group, are economically active world wide. Among these, 166 million are child laborers, and 74 million children are in hazardous work (National TBP, 2006). According to the Bangladesh Bureau of statistics stated in the National TBP (2006:4) “the total number of child workers in Bangladesh between 5-14 years of age was then estimated to be 6.3 million, out of which 3.8 million were boys and 2.5 million were girls”. If one compares the number of child laborers in Bangladesh to the total number world wide, the Bangladesh Bureau of statistics found that 2.6 per cent of the world’s child laborers are found in Bangladesh and that is 19 per cent of the entire child population in Bangladesh. Moreover, hazardous means all children that are abused or/and exploited as child laborers. According to
ILO (1998) exploitation is when someone takes advantage of a child’s situation, systematically taking advantage of children who represents a cheap labor force.

Having in mind that some take advantage of children as child laborers, what is the protective legislation like in Bangladesh? According to ILO (2004) the existing legislation in Bangladesh is antiquated and fragmented. In addition to this it only covers the formal sector and not the informal sector were most of the worst forms of child labor exists. It is alarming that the legislation, which is meant to protect children from getting abused, is not present and when it is, it is not functioning properly. Further, ILO (1998) believes that some people in Bangladesh exploits the system which is not punishing the ones that break the laws, and when they do get punished, the punishment is not strict enough and they can actually calculate on benefiting from breaking the laws. Jillani (1998) argues along the same line as the United Nations and he assesses the legal situation in Bangladesh as a serious problem. He believes that a weak legal system in a country can act as a boost in creating an ‘oases’ were people can exploit the situation of not having a legal system which functions properly. Further, Grote et al. (1998) argue that the implementation and enforcement of both laws and international conventions is a huge problem in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, if we look closer at another aspect of exploitation, one has to look at families which is the greatest use of child labor is found. Why would families use children as child laborers? Importantly, it is not only the children’s own families that take advantage of children as child laborers. A lot of times households use other family’s children as domestic workers. Jillani (1998); ILO (1998) argues that is not only the child that is exploited, however, the whole family. Bjerkan et al. (1997) believe that society and the general social system, both economical, socially and culturally in Bangladesh, set the conditions in such a way that children and their families are in a position were they can get exploited or/and abused. Jillani (1998) argues that child labor in a social context is very complex and it involves a lot of different aspects in society in term of socio-economic perspective. In order to grasp this fully I would like to look to the past and show what happened in Bangladesh and the children that worked in the garment industry in the 1990s. The focus on using child labor was set on the political agenda with the US in front of passing legislation to ban importation of goods made using child labor. This automatically put pressure on the factory owners and the government in Bangladesh, which lead to an immediate stop of the use of child labor. All of the children lost their jobs. At first this sounded like a good thing, however, the US, neither
the factory owners nor the government had thought about the consequences this decision would have on the children and their families. Kamal Siddiqui (2007) reflects further on the incident in the garment industry:

The decision to fire the children made a bad situation even worse. Over 45,000 children were suddenly out of job or income. What options were the children left with? The truth is that many of the children seek to the streets and became child prostitutes. The fact is that nobody did anything in preventing the situation in getting worse. What about rehabilitating the children and providing options for them? (Kamal Siddiqui, 2007).

What Kamal Siddiqui expresses above and the situation which occurred in the garment industry in the 1990s clearly shows the complexity of child labor and the need to deal with child labor properly. One must provide rehabilitation and options for children after they have been withdrawn as child laborers. Bjerkan et al. (1997) and Jillani (1998) share Kamal Siddiqui’s view in terms of the necessity of creating opportunities and help the children and their families in getting rehabilitated.

Furthermore, to understand the effect poverty has on child labor. Jillani (1998) argues that poverty is one of the major causes of child labor. Knowing that Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world and where approximately 50 per cent of the population lives under the national poverty line is crucial in understanding the current situation in the country (ILO, 2004). According to Grote et al. (1998) it is necessary for many to force their children to work in order to survive. The priority is not to be mistaken, first and foremost they strive to feed their children. Some people talk about education as an option instead of working, the reality for the children and the families that are at the very end in society in terms of poverty do not have the ‘luxury’ to think about education. This leads us to look at education in Bangladesh.

1.3.2 Education in Bangladesh

One hundred and eighty-nine countries including Bangladesh have started off on a path in achieving Education for All in their respective countries. Ever since they started on their journey towards universal free primary education the challenges has been many and it has been times when it has looked difficult for all the countries to achieve the goals which were set (UNESCO, s.a). Is it unrealistic to believe that universal education is possible? This study
looks at Bangladesh and the current situation in the country in terms of education and child labor. I will try to get an overview of the educational situation in the country. Before I go into the analysis of the research findings in this study we first need to look at education in Bangladesh historically. What role does education play and how does education affect a country’s development? According to the UNICEF (Unicef, 1997 A) education is the key to improving the life and quality of living people. Further, Jillani (1998) believes that illiteracy and lack or inadequacy of education goes hand in hand with poverty, one reinforcing the other, both a cause and effect. The fact is that Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world and has low level of education.

Primary education develops the capacity to learn, to read and to use math, and the ability to think critically about information (National TBP, 2006). Further, primary education can open ‘new’ doors, such as higher education and other levels of education that can develop your skills. Having this in mind, what is the educational situation in Bangladesh like? The primary education in the country is compulsory and free. Bangladesh offers formal education at four levels, early childhood education, primary education, secondary education (comprising junior secondary, secondary and higher secondary) and tertiary education. Primary education covers a cycle of five years (grades I-V) and secondary education covers seven years (grades VI-XII) (National TBP, 2006). The primary school enrolment rate has increased from about 73.3 per cent in 1992 to 86.6 per cent in 2001. The primary completion rate raised from 62 per cent in 1994 to 65 per cent in 2001. According to Bjørkan (1997) a problem in Bangladesh has been that there has been a focus on looking at the number of children getting enrolled and a lack of focus on the number of children that complete. It is important to focus on improving completion rates and the students learning outcomes. Bruns et al. (2003) addresses another aspect, the enrolment rates might have increased over the years, however they are concerned over the quality of the education provided. The National TBP (2006:3) report highlights the same concern and they write that “the reasons for the lack of quality in education services include insufficient contact (120 minutes per day for grade I-II and 240 minutes per day for grade III-V) and unfavorable pupil-teacher ratio (59:1)”. Further, the report is concerned with the percentage of the total public budget that is spent on education. It has increased from 1.5 per cent in 1990 to 2.4 per cent in 2002, however, the report argues that there is a need for more resources and that the resources must be allocated towards improving the educational situation for the underprivileged children, in particular, for the working children. This leads us to the education system in Bangladesh. The education structure consists of both a formal sub-
system and a non-formal sub-system. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education is responsible for formal primary and non-formal basic education. In addition the Ministry of Education is responsible for secondary and higher education, and looks after the Madrasah (Islamic) and other religious streams of education. When it comes to non-formal education, NGOs such as Save the Children present in Bangladesh are very active in providing education and some of them also organize and manage formal primary schools as well (National TBP, 2006). Importantly, the National TBP report (2006) believes that the education structure and system in Bangladesh is highly inconsistent in term of coherent national curriculum and standards of national education measures. A lot of different schools teach different from each other in term of, methods and in term of materials decided upon in their curriculum (National TBP, 2006).

1.4 International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The International Labor Organization (ILO) works internationally against child labor. The organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations that deals with labor issues. It was founded in 1919 and it became the member of the UN system after the end of World War II (ILO, 1998). Every year the ILO hosts the International Labor Conference in Geneva, and on the agenda during the conference is the, Conventions and Recommendations, which are drafted and adopted by majority decisions. One of the most important tools this organization has available towards combating child labor is the adoption and supervision of international labor Conventions and Recommendations. They work towards adapting conventions which are to prohibit child labor in different sectors and under different conditions (ILO, 1998).

Whilst, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a convention that expresses that children have rights in the same way as other human beings and that they also need special care and protection. According to UNICEF (2007) the Convention is universally agreed and comprises non-negotiable standards and obligations. Importantly, the Convention is a legally binding instrument which is the first set of instrument to incorporate human rights, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. If we look at the Convention in relation to Child labor and education in Bangladesh, which the two previous sections addressed, the goal of the Convention is the best interest of the child:
Devotion to the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for views of the child. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children’s rights by setting standards in health care; education and legal, civil and social services (UNICEF, 2007:1).

The goal is to put the rights of the children on the agenda and to increase the awareness around the world. The key is to get people to understand that children are human beings to and that they should have the same rights as adults. Importantly, we must not hinder the children’s ability to develop under an environment which protects their rights to live a healthy life, the right to pursue an education and the right to being a child.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The theoretical framework sets the conditions for this study. This is discussed extensively in chapter two. The concepts of ‘child labor’, ‘education’, ‘poverty’, ‘globalization’, ‘social exclusion’ and ‘culture relativism’ are defined. The emphasis of the over all discussion consists of the linkage between child labor, poverty and education, looking at both positive and negative aspects. Further, it also consists of a discussion of child labor laws and legislation from an international point of view, in comparison to the laws and legislation currently present in Bangladesh. The discussion and the theory presented are meant to help in to answering the research questions which are posed.

Chapter three examines the methodological aspects of this study emphasizing the use of qualitative methods to better grasp the view of the participants in the study. I discuss factors such as design, sample, different qualitative research methods used, reliability, and validity. In addition I give an insight in the process of the field work and how the role as a researcher influenced the study conducted.

The analysis of the data is performed in chapter four. The chapter looks at the national system of education, the child labor situation and the children’s rights, looking at how children as child laborers gets exploited and abused, and excluded from society. Hence, the awareness and the commitment of the government towards child labor and education, was important to look at. In addition, implementation of laws and legislation is also addressed.
Chapter five contains a final discussion trying to tie the theoretical perspectives used, methodology and data obtained together in order to answer the principal research questions asked in this study.

1.6 Limitations

The context of which the research data for the study was collected had ‘naturally’ obstacles which caused limitations. The reason for that was that the researcher, the interpreter and many of the informants do not have English as their mother tongue, and still this is the only common medium in which to communicate. In most cases the quality of the English was so poor that I had to use an interpreter and this caused an obvious limitation to access of information. Arguably, when the conversation went from me to the interpreter and from the interpreter to the informant, and than back again, it created a risk of loosing some of the rich description of the issues at hand. The vocabulary is limited and the conversation can not go on as fluently as if everyone had the same mother tongue.

Another aspect was constraints due to limited time in this study. In the five weeks the research data was collected it is impossible to become very familiar with the society investigated, as is often the case in ethnographic studies. Preparations in advanced were important, necessary and done when conducting the literature review and an extensive use of the internet.

However, time did not allow me to visit many of the NGO’s and the schools more than a couple of times and the UCEP Schools only once. The UCEP Schools consists of several schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location: Bangladesh</th>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>Vocational Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Schools:</td>
<td>Number of Schools:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittagong</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajshai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(UCEP, 2000)
Furthermore, an ongoing political election whilst I was there made it difficult for me to travel around, with strikes one and two days a week and parts of the city closed with road block hindering me in getting around.

Importantly, one also has to remember that the essence in a quality study lies in how the researcher analyzes data. It is the researcher’s own interpretation of the date at hand. Consequently, this makes the conclusion in this study a reflection of my own interpretation and not necessarily the ‘truth’ (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).
2. Theoretical framework

Theory serves as an orientation for gathering facts since it specifies the types of facts to be systematically observed. This is so because the elements or variables of a theory are logically interrelated, and if relevant theory exist, hypotheses or research questions can be deduced based upon particular relationships between elements (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:19).

All research is based on certain theoretical understanding. As noted above by Blanche and Durrheim (1999) the theory can guide us in gathering facts that can give us the answers to the questions we have asked. Often we start off with an interest in a certain topic and we start to develop and formulate a research problem. In this study I developed a research design, chose data collection- and analyzing methods, so that I best could conduct my research study. It was an ongoing process where the theoretical framework gave my study the right ‘frame’ in order for the study to evolve and take its shape. Through the framework and the relevant theory that existed I tried to answer the research questions and to be within the objective of the research study, both presented in chapter one. First I will look at the laws and legislations concerning child labor and at the international community. Further I want to clarify what kind of child labor issues this study is focusing on and the relationship between child labor, poverty and education, also looking at different aspects of child labor, both negative and positive. This followed by a brief look at the concept of ‘globalization’. In the last part of the chapter, I elaborate on the concepts of ‘Social exclusion’ and ‘Culture relativism’, and different aspects of their relationship to child labor and poverty.

2.1 International Organizations and Legal aspects

The United Nations defines everybody under the age of 18 years is a child (ILO, 1998). However, many countries around the world have not legally defined what a child is, which means these are children are not protected by the international laws and conventions (ILO, 1998). Furthermore, child labor around the world has large dark numbers. Nobody knows exactly how many children that are involved in child labor. A problem in many countries is related to the registrations of births. The lack of functional birth registrations systems causes problems in combating child labor, since it complicates the work in monitoring and coordinating a system that can make it easier to asses the progress achieved and the difficulties encountered (ILO, 1998).
The United Nations (UN) and the international community have since the UN was founded in 1945 been working with human rights and rights concerning children all over the world. In 1948 the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights\textsuperscript{1} which consists of a total of thirty articles and below is a list of the major principles:

- The right to life, liberty and security of person
- The right to an education
- The right to participate fully in cultural life
- Freedom from torture or cruel, inhumane treatment or punishment
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The objective of the human right principles was to form a common standard of achievements of all people and all nations. Every individual and organ in society constantly should have the declaration in mind. The key is to respect one another, to strive towards teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms. And to apply this thought among your fellow citizens. Unfortunately, this is not the reality we are faced with. Too many people around the world are living under circumstances which deprive them of their rights. Today there are children around the world that are exploited as cheap labor and are experiencing violations of their rights.

The first ILO adapted convention was the Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (No.5) from 1919, which prohibits the work of children under the age of 14 in industrial facilities. There has since then been many conventions concerning child labor. One of the most recent one and comprehensive ILO instrument on child labor are the Minimum Age Convention (No.138) from 1973, and Recommendations (No.146). Below is a table of the Minimum Age Convention No.138:

\textsuperscript{1} After eighteen years, it was decided that the rights in the Declaration were to be separated into two separate covenants: the International Covenant on Civil, and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The two covenants were adopted in 1966, and have since been ratified by over 130 countries. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two covenants form the “International Bill of Rights”.

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Table 1. Minimum Ages In Accordance With Convention No.138

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General minimum age (Article 2)</th>
<th>Light work (Article 7)</th>
<th>Hazardous work (Article 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In normal circumstances:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 years or more</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Not less than compulsory school age)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(16 years conditionally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16 years conditionally)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ILO, 1998:24)

The member states are obligated to ratify the Convention to set a minimum age for children working and that the national policies are developed to ensure that abolition of child labor is achieved. The goal is to encourage a dynamic process were one improves the standards and promotes continuous action towards achieving the objectives set. The Recommendation No.146 is to complement the Convention No.138 and to present the broad framework in addition to policy measures for both prevention of child labor and its elimination (ILO, 1998). The next convention is the Convention from 1999 called the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No.182). According to ‘The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention’ (No.182):

The worst forms of child labour comprise: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery and forced or compulsory labour; (b) use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for production of pornography; (c) use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities such as production and trafficking of drugs; (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. Effective and time-bound measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour include preventive measures, removal from work, rehabilitation and social integration through among others, access to free basic education and reaching out to children at special risk and taking account of the special situation of girls (ILO, 1999).

At the middle of the 1990s there was a shift within the UN and the international community to also target the worst forms of child labor. They saw that there were needed new instruments which would prohibit and eliminate worst forms of child labor. The idea was that the Convention No.182 was to compliment the Convention and Recommendation concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. Further, to also compliment the Convention No.138 and Recommendation No.146. They were looking at the importance of using education as a tool for combating child labor and to remove children from hazardous work
and to provide rehabilitation and social integration. In addition to this one also had focus on helping the children’s families (ILO, 1999). In the next section I will look at the Conventions and Recommendations, and why ensuring enforcement is important in order to be successful in combating the worst forms of child labor.

2.1.1 Ensuring laws and conventions

The ILO Conventions and Recommendations set the legal framework for the member countries to adopt in order to combat issues such as child labor. Some countries do not ratify the conventions and the recommendations, and the ones that do have sometimes problems ensuring that the child labor laws actually are followed and that the ones that break them get punished. The conventions and recommendations require the governments to take all necessary measures, including the provision of penalties, to ensure effective enforcement. Importantly it also requires the employers to keep a register or documents showing the name and age of everybody under the age of 18 working there (ILO, 1998). It is essential for the countries to actually ensure that the conventions and recommendations are being implemented. Ratifying without ensuring the enforcement takes away the chance of successfully combating the worst forms of child labor. Many countries has an inspection system in place, however, because of lack of resources they often experience difficulties in monitoring and ensuring. According to ILO (1998:81) “Virtually all countries have some form of labor inspection and, indeed, 118 countries have ratified the Labor Inspection Convention, 1947 (No.81). Even so, in practice many encounter serious problems in enforcing child labor laws”. ILO (1998) provides a list over difficulties labor inspectors encounter:

- Lack of material resources including scarce transport;
- Understaffing of inspection offices;
- Overwork and low pay for inspectors;
- Inspectors’ perception of child labor;
- Lack of appropriate training on the special vulnerability of children, child labor and hazards to which children are exposed;
- Powers limited by law and lack of appropriate techniques;
- Lack of motivation;
- Hostile environment;
- Lack of cooperation and support from other government agencies, including the education system;
- Clandestine nature of child work.

The state has the primary and general responsibility for making sure the laws are enforced. Normally this is done through the labor inspection system. However, due to difficulties such as the ones mentioned above by the ILO it is a challenge for many countries to effectively protect against child labor as a result of the weakness of the enforcement mechanisms. According to the ILO (1998):

Enforcement problems are acute in the informal sector, away from main cities and in agriculture, in small businesses such as shops and hotels, in street trading, and in domestic service and home-based work. Since most working children are found in agriculture, domestic service and the informal sector, most of them work where child labor law enforcement is virtually absent (ILO, 1998:87).

The fact that most working children are found in the informal sector was there are no enforcement mechanisms, implies that children are not protected in these areas. This is a huge challenge for the international community and the countries that are experiencing these problems. The tools which ILO talks about using to combat child labor have limited effect reaching much of the hazardous child work. This leads us to the work ILO does and their advocacy towards member countries and ratification.

### 2.1.2 ILO and the challenges with the Conventions

If we take a historic glance at the end of the 1980s, the fight against child labor entered a new phase. ILO was concerned with the slow ratification by member States of the Minimum Age Convention C138 (ILO, s.a), the normative basis for national and international legislation concerning child labor. In 1989, Member states of the United Nation (United Nations, 1989) adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The approaches of the CRC define child labor not according to type of work or activity, but according to the effect of the labor activity on the child (Bjerkan, 1997). This means that the approach defines child labor in term of how hazardous it is for the child and/or if the child is in a situation where they are exploited.

Furthermore, some countries do not adjust themselves according to the international legislations concerning child labor. This makes it difficult for the international community to co-operate with the governments that either need or seek help when they do not fulfill their duties. This is also one of the reasons for why things are going much slower than the international community had anticipated. However, the international community is
negotiating and co-operating with the governments that are involved and one can sense some optimism, even though the challenges ahead are many and highly complex.

Further Bjerkann (1997:7) states that the international community was now focused on combating child labor and entered into a discussion of how best to do so. The rights based approach of the CRC established the basis for rethinking child labor and reformulating responses deployed by multilateral organizations and governments. In response, UNICEF changed its approach from one that targeted children’s needs to one that focused on the children’s right. In 1992, the ILO launched its International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC, 2004). The progress of combating child labor has been slow during the 1990s. In spite of the growing concern, international initiatives and actions were hampered by differences in approaches to child labor by key stakeholders and by government’s reluctance or resistance to implement laws and legislations. The challenge for international policy-making was to respond in a manner that would enable a more coherent approach by all stakeholders as well as greater attention to the problem by governments (Bjerkann, 1997).

In addition to establishing a more coherent approach, it is also important that all the stakeholders stick to their promises. They need to move passed the use of words and move into action. One thing is to talk about what needs to be done, another is to actually go through with it. If one is to successfully eradicate child labor and poverty, one need to start changing the attitudes of the policy makers. The policy makers at all levels, local, national and international, all need to step up and work hard towards achieving the goals. In the next sections I will look further into the relationship between education, poverty and child labor.

2.2 Education for All (EFA)

As interest in child labor has increased over the years, so has the understanding of the relationship between child labor and education. According to Bruns et al. (2003):

> Education is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth. It is fundamental for the construction of democratic societies and dynamic, globally competitive economies. For individuals and for nations, education is the key to creating, applying, and spreading knowledge (Bruns et al., 2003:26).
What Bruns et al. (2003) write here are really important. I believe the key word is knowledge and how knowledge is gained through education as a starting point. Through education the children have the possibility to learn about their rights and that they have other options besides work. In addition their parents can gain knowledge through increasing their understanding of the value of education. The community and the employers can gain a better understanding as a result of information from the schools. Furthermore, according to Jillani (1998) child labor is related to poverty. The poor children work in order to survive or/and to help their families to survive. If one succeeds in reducing poverty, one can also reduce child labor. Through education the poor children are given a new chance, a chance to control their own future and destiny (Jillani, 1998). Education can open new doors, giving boost to society; economically and socially, for both the individual and the nation. The individual can instead of being a burden to society, contribute by using the education to for example get a job, which again can make the individual less dependent on support from the Government and the community. Instead of being excluded they can get the opportunity to participate in everyday life. As a direct result of this, the society and the nation will benefit from the ‘fruits’ education bears with it. The Government can, as an example, in the long run allocate money from helping the poor just to survive and to boost their options such as access to education and jobs. Nevertheless, how can the individual persons that do not have access to education achieve opening new doors? Is education for all possible? I will try to answer these questions in the following sections.

The international community has acknowledged that something needs to be done so that education can be for all. This is really important to achieve since education is an efficient way of reducing poverty and inequality (Bruns et al., 2003). In 1990 the World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand. The conference wanted to globally recognize and emphasize education as a fundamental right and necessity for overall human and national development (UNICEF, 1997:5 A). There were different stakeholders involved in the process and the conference was convened by the executive heads of UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the World Bank. The 155 nations involved made a commitment to ensure that the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults were to be met by the year 2000, which now has been extended until 2015 with extra measures to reach the goals.
The EFA Goals are the following:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to a complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;

- Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;

- Improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills (UNESCO, s.a).

The six EFA goals were set by UNESCO in co-operation with the international community. Furthermore, a study which was done by Bruns et al. (2003) addresses some of the reasons for why many countries have problems in reaching the EFA goals and the report show 47 low income countries which are far from reaching the goals:

The 47 low income countries that were part of their analysis were far from reaching the goals. These countries had an average primary completion rate of only 57 percent, and their poverty, fragile domestic resource base, and institutional weakness make them priority claimants on international support (Bruns et al., 2003:26)

Further, there are a lot of countries that will have difficulties reaching the goals within year 2015. However, there are still countries that will reach the goal, countries such as Norway. Does this mean that the international community has succeeded? The answer to this question is no. If only a few countries achieve reaching the goals set, one has not achieved Education for all. One can not be satisfied before all countries achieve Education for all. If we take this a bite further and look at it from another ‘angle’, an interesting question to ask ourselves is what does reaching the goals mean? Is the goal 95 per cent of the population in each country? All

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of these questions are important to answer. Such as I see it is not necessarily the goal to have 95 per cent reaching the goal and that is not the intention by the international community. However, it is an on going process were they work towards achieving the goals and importantly putting the issues on the agenda. Countries such as Norway are on a good path, other countries such as Bangladesh are struggling more.

This leads us to the role of donors in achieving the goals. The donors play a very important role since different countries trying to achieve the goals are dependent on help from donors. The study done by Bruns et al. (2003:118) showed that even with a maximum domestic effort, these 47 countries plus Afghanistan would not be able to achieve the Education for all by 2015. Bruns et al. (2003) view is that one of the reason for not achieving the goals before the year 2000 was because of insufficient donor support. I share Bruns et al. view that the donors’ needs to increase their support targeted towards education and towards the most needing EFA priority countries. In addition Bruns et al. (2003) believe other changes must be in place as well, such as:

Greatly increased efficiency of aid transfers, transfer of funds via new mechanisms, and more effective monitoring of progress, increased research and faster diffusion of knowledge about what works (Bruns et al., 2003:118).

This brings us to the role of the countries that are dependent of donors to help them. Here it is important to stress that, before the donors can contribute with help, it is essential that the different countries that need help have made the necessary adjustments and changes themselves. One important adjustment is to have a monitoring mechanism in place which can ensure that the laws and conventions actually are being followed. In addition to this the government must prioritize child labor on the political agenda and also have money ‘ear mark’ for combating child labor. Furthermore, current problems within the international community are that different approaches to achieving the goals have been implemented, making the international community pulling in different directions. In addition many governments have been reluctant to or resisted implementation of international standards. Education needs to be taken into account in development policies and programmes at all levels; local, national and international. If one is to achieve the EFA goals by 2015, the countries, the international community, and the donors must cooperate (Bjerkan, 1997). In the next section we will look further into the relationship between child labor and education.
Those concerned with access to education had noted that work commitments are a major reason for children’s non-participation in education, and the lack of educational opportunities is also a cause for why children enter the world of work (UNICEF, 1997 B).

Education is a right, which enables children and adults to exercise many of their other rights throughout their lifetimes. According to UNICEF (1997 B):

When it [education] is readily available in terms of access, affordability, quality, and relevance it is a crucial factor, both in preventing child labor and in providing children who have been removed from child labor, with more appropriate environment in which to grow and develop. Children tend to be available for and more ready to participate in child labor when education is not available or when the available form of education does not meet the criteria of affordability, quality, and relevance (UNICEF (1997:2 B).

In other words, education services need to be in place and they must be free, compulsory, relevant and attractive. One needs to stress that all children have the right to education. It is important to change the way people see education. Children and parents need to assess school as a better option than work. Equally important is it that governments need to ensure that all children have access to compulsory education and that the content of the educations is of a good quality. Furthermore, international development assistance can be significant in supplementing national investments in basic education, but only if quality education is also a demonstrated priority of assistance organizations (Unicef, 1997 B).

2.3 Child Labor

It is estimated that more than 250 million children are involved in income generating activities worldwide. Concern over the issue of child labor has increased in intensity during this decade and so has the understanding of the relationship between education and child labor. One of the issues that is of concern is that many of the children that are involved in income generating activities are working under conditions that pass a high risk to their physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development (Unicef, 1997 A). It is important to emphasize that, UNICEF does not assess all child work as negative. They are not opposed to children working. As long as the work the children are doing are not negatively affecting their health and development or interfere with their education, they see work often as positive. When it comes to child labor the concept is narrow and refers to children working in contravention to ILO standards contained in Conventions 138 and 182. The Conventions
includes all children below 12 years of age in any economic activities, and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labor (Bjerkan, 1997). The concern worldwide among governments and civil society is growing rapidly and calls are being made to take immediate steps towards protecting children from detrimental work activities and removing them from hazardous situations. It is important to also emphasize that children have rights in the same way as adults, and that one must protect children from people that violate their rights (UNICEF, 1997 A).

Defining child labor is problematic. The definition given by the United Nations (1982) is the following:

Work may mean many kinds of productive activities. Some children are in paid employment, and nothing, but age distinguishes them from adult workers. Others are in training for which they receive payment. Others do piece work at home for outside employers. While others perform unpaid work within the family, or render services for which they are tipped varying amounts. Child labor is in fact a “portmanteau” term covering the most diverse situations (United Nations, 1982:5).

Furthermore, if we look at exploitation of children, one can say that there is an exploitation of the child when the employer takes advantage of the child’s situation. There is exploitation because the financial remuneration or payment in kind, is systematically less than would have been made by the employer had they been dealing with adult employees organized in trade unions, capable of defending themselves and insisting on their due. More important, it is likely that if the employers had to pay the same remuneration to children as to adults, they would not use of the services of young persons (United Nations, 1982). According to the United Nations (1982) family related work like farming makes the greatest use of child labor, especially in the context of unpaid family assistance. In this type of labor it is not so much the child who is exploited by the general social system as the whole family; the economic, social and cultural situation of the family obviously has repercussions on the child, but he/she at least remains integrated in a social context that is in principle protective. This leads us to what the causes are for child labor, which I will address in the next section.

2.3.1 The Causes of Child Labor

According to Jillani (1998) poverty is a major cause of child labor. The fact is that poor children work to survive and to contribute to the subsistence of their families. This is not an ideal situation for the children involved, the fact that they have to work denies them of choice.
and increases the hold employers have over them. How can one justify child labor? Everyone who tries to justify child labor on grounds of poverty fails to realize that impoverishment is not only the cause, but is also caused by child labor (Jillani, 1998):

It is a succession of situations and events which are interrelated through a type of vicious circle. No one has heard of any country that has successfully eradicated poverty through child labor, or of any family that has been able to get rid of destitution through child labor (Jillani, 1998:18).

Furthermore, the situation is often that the child labor in fact results in depressing the already inadequate adult wages to a point where a father and a child together earn less than the father alone would. Thus as long as children are put to work, poverty will spread and standards of living will continue to decline (Jillani, 1998). One cannot justify child labor by saying one is depended on child labor in order to eradicate poverty. The reality is that a lot of families are depended on their children to work so that they can contribute to the family’s general income, which is crucial for their survival. Nevertheless, the reason why the family depends on their children to work is because they are poor. It is a good description of the reality in what Jillani (1998) says, there is a vicious circle, which is very difficult for the families to get out of. In order to get a view of how complex it may be to find a solution to that question, I will like to address a few more causes of child labor.

According to Jillani (1998) there are other causes as well:

Provision of compulsory primary education is the state’s main method of controlling child labor. Schooling, however, must be affordable and relevant to the child’s circumstances, and should provide practical skills and knowledge if it is to be seen as a worth while investment by the child’s family… Ineffective enforcements of laws hardly helps in controlling the issue of child labor, inadequate awareness of people perpetuates the problem (many do not see some forms of child labor), child labor is also allowed to prevail due to public apathy, another cultural cause leading to child labor is the restriction of women to homes, children may also work due to cultural traditions, children represent a cheap and compliant work force, resource crunch is another popular argument with governments for perpetuation of child labor… and rapid population growth coupled with general commercialization of agriculture and fast industrialization has given rise to the development of land less peasantry, and consequent migration of rural families to urban township (Jillani, 1998:18,19,20).

I mentioned in the section, 2.2 Education for all, that education is one of the most powerful instruments known to reduce poverty. If one is to successfully use education as an instrument, there are a lot of things one needs to consider. In order to be able to get out of the vicious circle, one has to consider all the causes of child labor Jillani (1998) mentioned above.
Education needs to be affordable and relevant to the child, and it is essential that the children can be provided with practical skills and knowledge which is valuable to everyday life. A starting point will be to ensure that school fees are history, education should be free of charge. The parents and the children need to feel that the investment in education is not a waste of time, and the financial loss the families get from taking their children out of work must be covered. If not, the families may as a result of the financial loss experience becoming poorer than they were before their children started education. One has to estimate how much resources that are needed to support the families that decide to pull their children out of work and into education. I will address this issue more thoroughly in the section, 2.3.4 Implications of elimination of child labor.

In addition, not all children work because they need to support their families. Many children enter the work force for other reasons; like learning a trade at an early age, due to family traditions, child performing poorly in school, the parent’s desire for the child to work, unemployment of adult members of the family, or when the adult earnings members of the household are poorly remunerated (Jillani, 1998). The general idea is often that child labor is negative, however, in the next section we will investigate this further.

2.3.2 The Benefits of Child Labor

There are a lot of important questions one has to consider when it comes to child labor. A study made by Center for Development Research University Bonn (Grote et al., 1998) addresses a number of these questions;

• Why might a family choose to send a child to work rather than invest in human capital accumulation in form of schooling?

• Is this choice always sub-optimal from society’s point of view?

• Is it an irrational choice on the part of the family in the sense that their long-term interests would always be better served by schooling? (Grote et al., 1998:9).

This study (Grote et al.,1998:9) showed that “most researchers (in the study) agreed that the household decision to send children to work was generally driven by economic need, rather
than greed”. Nevertheless, what was interesting was if the idea of deciding to let children work might be optimal for the household, had not been considered to any degree (Grote et al., 1998). The research done by Grote et al. (1998) raises interesting questions and thoughts. I would believe that the one of the most important question would have to be if the decisions of sending their children to school would to be better than letting them work. Moreover, how can one recommend or force families to take their children out of work, if letting them work is the most optimal for them? This is a really difficult question to answer, nevertheless, a really important one. I believe that education is important, but I also believe that in some cases work can be beneficial for families as well. As long as the children work under conditions that are good and that the work is not in violation of children’s ability to access education and other rights. Here the Government has to step up and take responsibility. They will have to look at the cost of removing children from work. They have to be able to provide education for those who want to pursue education and they have to assure that those that decide to work, work under conditions that are good and that their rights are not violated. I address these issues further in the section, 2.3.4 Implications of elimination of child labor.

In many developing countries child labor has several important functions. The most important function may be facilitating the survival of the poorest families. In India research conducted in 1993 found that each working child was contributing an average of 20-25% of the family income (Grote et al., 1998). This is quite considerable and this could make the difference between survival and starvation. Certainly it is important to find out what children working are contributing on an average to the total income of a family. In addition, the work experience gained by children may even enhance the chances of both the child and the family surviving in the future, more than a few years of formal education might be able to provide (Grote et al., 1998).

2.3.3 Globalization and its effects On Child Labor

Globalization is a highly complex term and it can be used to explain almost every aspect of human relations and structures. The term globalization is often used in different contexts, either it is in economical perspective or a social perspective. Having this in mind I am going to look at globalization in the context of child labor. Massive movements of capital depend on information, communication, and knowledge in global markets (Carnoy, 1999). Furthermore it is important to understand that globalization can be divided into at least two categories. The
first category is the negative way it can affect, through increasing social differences and through growth in capitalism. The second category is the positive way it can affect, through increasing understanding, increasing freedom and improving communication between people (Grøtterud, 2001). Globalization changes a lot of aspects of society; the work place, changing human relations and social life, and increasing competition at the market place.

One can definitely argue that globalization is having a major impact on child labor. As mentioned in the study done by Bruns et al. (2003:15) “the links between national, regional and global investment in eliminating child labor are particularly important in a world where globalization is impacting upon markets and work”. Furthermore the competition between different actors in the world market has increased and has become tougher. Labor has in many ways become “globalized”, and Bruns et al. (2003:15) continue, “where the competition for the perceived increased returns available in globalized markets is keen, however, it has become obvious that unscrupulous parties will seek a comparative advantage by exploiting child labor”. This is something that is of great concern to me. A lot of international companies look to move their production or services abroad. One of the reasons for this is the benefit from the low costs of employing cheap labor and in many cases children are being used. It is easier to exploit children as a result of their inability to negotiate fair terms or conditions, which makes them particularly vulnerable to exploitation (Bruns et al., 2003). Further Bruns et al. (2003:15) “believes that the focus on the child’s well-being have slowed down as a result of globalization”. The increasing competition at the world market place and the race between the different actors to succeed seems to be more important than the well-being of the child. This is something that I believe needs to be changed. It is necessary to change the attitude of the actors that operate in the world market. There must be different ways to go about it in order for the actors to succeed and at the same time looking at the well-being of the child. I think the answer here lies in the international community’s ability to agree on laws that can both protect the free market place and the rights of the child.

Furthermore, Bruns et al. (2003) claim:

Ironically, research also shows that an education is of vital importance in harnessing the potential positive impact of globalization. Upgraded working methods and quality control, more sophisticated management procedures and documentation, and better understanding of and compliance with legal frameworks have increased (Bruns et al, 2003:15).
The result from the study shows that one can benefit from having education in light of globalization, nevertheless, it also means that the people without education will have more difficulties than the ones that have. Bruns et al. (2003:15) write further, “the demand for literate [will continue to increase], educated workers even at the level of family business. This also has implications for child labor and for family decision-making about educating children”. In other words, families may be forced to send their children to school in the long run and the consequences for that can be tremendous. In many ways one can say that they are faced with a “loose-loose” situation. The situation they are faced with can be described as being a paradox were they are faced with the option to accept to ‘loose’ in the short run by choosing education or to loose in the long run by deciding to let their children work instead. The family will risk losing a part of their income which is vital for their survival if they decide to send them to school. And if they decide not to send them, they might in the long run be forced to stop working, as a result of globalization impact towards workers having to be more and more educated.

According to Bruns et al. (2003), the international community is again becoming more interested in looking at the linkage between child labor and globalization, with the broader conceptual framework of Decent Work. ‘Decent Work’ implies non-hazardous work that deprives children of their rights to being a child. In many countries childhood is not considered as important or having value on its own. The important thing has been to protect the children against dangers in the same way as with grown ups. Bruns et al. (2003) further write that:

The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization has recommended decent work for all should be made a global goal and be pursued through complementary national and international policies, noting that addressing the need to speed up the creation of jobs in all countries would help reduce social tension in a country and economic friction between countries (Bruns et al. 2003:15).

I believe that creating jobs for everybody in the world at first sounds like something positive. Nevertheless, how would creating new jobs help with issues related to child labor? Will creating new jobs help children that are exploited as child laborers? I believe that one need to see things more in perspective and nuanced to do things in the right order. First one has to make sure that the jobs that are already in place have the appropriate working conditions, which will have to be ensured through laws. The laws must protect all workers both children and adults. I will address the laws and the legal framework more thoroughly in the section,
2.3.4 Implications of elimination of child labor. When the necessary laws and the framework are in place, I believe one can start to look at ways of creating new jobs for all. Furthermore, Bruns et al. (2003) writes that:

The benefits of globalization can only reach everyone if the informal economy – where many child labors are to be found – is brought into the economic mainstream where poverty and workers rights are protected, and where increased productivity and access to markets are more likely to result (Bruns et al., 2003:15).

It sounds really good, to move poor into the mainstream, where they can be protected against poverty and against violation of their rights at work. Nevertheless, I think this is easier said than done. They treat words like ‘poverty’ and ‘workers rights’ as something physical, which they can move from one place to another. It might be so that there is more child labor in informal economies compared to formal economies within a society and that it is easier to protect the workers rights in a formal economy. However, I would argue that one would find difficulties in creating clear boundaries between informal- and formal economy. In countries that have child labor, you will find child labor in many aspects of the societies, which again makes it very difficult and complex to deal with poverty and child labor. This lead us to the next section, 2.3.4 Implications of elimination of child labor, which deals with the complexity of child labor and issues related to eliminating child labor.

2.3.4 Implications of elimination of Child Labor

2.3.4.1 Elimination of child labor

At first eliminating child labor sounds like something both society and the people that are involved in child labor would benefit from. Nevertheless, some important implications have to be considered when discussing eliminating child labor. The work children contribute with in many household is crucial for the survival of the family. Taking away the income and/or ‘man power’ the children are contributing with, can be devastating to some of these families. Therefore it is really important to attach an economic value to the labor of the children in order to estimate the financial loss the families involved will have due to their children not working, which I have mentioned earlier. This is called income transfer program. This program will estimate how much resources it will take to pay the families back what they have lost financially as a result of eliminating parts of their income as a result of their children being pulled out of work (IPEC, 2004). Households, particularly those in poverty, cannot afford to loose the contribution made by their children. Unfortunately, there is little systematic
evidence regarding the value of child labor, and the information available may not always be sufficient. The Government and the public sector will have to consider the cost related to eliminating child labor and to estimate the cost of administering the income transfer program. Furthermore, the Government and the public sector will need to consider the cost related to targeting the children in the worst forms of child labor and how work or lack of schooling is tied to social exclusion (IPEC, 2004). This is important in order to estimate how much resources are needed for addressing the worst forms of child labor. Without doing so one would operate in the ‘blind’, not knowing how to best make use of the resources, and were to best allocate the resources towards so that one can target the ones that need it the most.

2.3.4.2 General implications of child labor

According to Jillani (1998:vii) “Elimination of child labor involves at least three steps: (1) an analysis of the present laws that affect child labor; (2) updating of existing laws according to the needs of society and framing of new laws; and (3) a strategy to effectively implement the needed legal framework”. Bjorkan (1997) has mentioned many of the same things, however, Jillani (1998) takes it a little bite further. The governments that have child labor in their society have to be willing to make the necessary changes in order to eliminate child labor. In addition to allocating resources towards education, starting income transfer programs, and analyzing the costs as a result of eliminating child labor, each of the countries involved need to look at their laws affecting children working. As mentioned earlier the countries need to agree to the ILO conventions, so that the rights of the children are taken serious and that children by law are protected. I agree with Jillani (1998) when he says that laws protecting the children are necessary in order to combat child labor. Nevertheless, what good are laws, if parts of a society do not see child labor as a problem? Jillani (1998) also mentions that in some societies one does not see some forms of children working as child labor. This is something that is of a great concern and which tells me that it is not enough to only change the laws, one also need to change the way people think. This leads us to the question of how one can create awareness and how one can change the way people are thinking.

2.4 Global Strategy

I some societies there are people that do not see some forms of child labor as a problem. This has to do with the mentality of the people and the way a society over generations have lived
with accepting things as they are (Jillani, 1998). I thoroughly believe that through creating awareness and through using knowledge, one can over time achieve changing the way people are thinking, and then I believe the laws that by then would be in place would be much more effective. In addition one needs to create awareness throughout the world. In many ways this has been tried before without any success, especially by looking back at international campaigns, which I will explain further in the section below.

According to the United Nations (1982) the general consensus among researchers is that a global strategy has to be worked out, of which only the main lines can be traced here, and this strategy has to be implemented over a sufficiently long period, for example five years. They believe it is a limited objective, nevertheless, attainable within a reasonable time, would lead to an appreciable improvement. It is further important to create awareness locally, nationally and internationally. A lot of different stakeholders are anxious to do something and many parties are strangely silent. I will try to use an example to show how it in the past has been tried to create more awareness towards child labor.

In 1979 the UN started a campaign called the International Year of the Child. It was an excellent initiative, but it did not take long before people had forgotten it. What went wrong? It was a good initiative, however, the goal was to create a lasting awareness and here one can say that they failed. It was in the news papers for little over a year and then the issue was dropped. However, the problems were still there, even growing in magnitude, but the issues concerning the Child was slowly forgotten. This is something that must be changed in the future, one must focus on creating awareness over time and focus on handling the problems one face related to the issues at hand.

Having this example in mind, the international community needs to agree on a common strategy platform, in addition they need to implement ways to evaluate how things are going and how much resources that are needed to achieve the goals that they set. If we take the discussion further in term of strategy and look at international conventions, it is important that the different stakeholders agree on a global strategy to achieve ratification of all the necessary conventions. Furthermore, one has to ensure that all stakeholders contribute to achieving the goals. It is no longer enough to use big words, now it is time to step up to the challenge and work hard towards achieving the common goals (United Nations, 1982). The question will then be how is it possible to ‘pressure’ countries to ratify? Is merely ‘pressure’ the solution or
are there other solutions? Is a global strategy realistic to develop? These questions are
difficult to answer, nevertheless, these questions are important to ask and hopefully
stakeholders in the future will strive to answer these questions. Further, the International year
of the Child was a good initiative, however, one year with focus on the awareness is arguably
not enough and in a future campaign the focus must be set for a longer period of time.

2.5 Social exclusion

The definition of ‘social exclusion’ has developed over the last decades and the European
Commission has adapted a term of social exclusion closely related to the idea of inadequate
realization of social rights. As noted by Gore et al. (1995:2) “in relation to the social rights of
citizens… to a certain basic standard of living and to participation in the major social and
occupational opportunities of the society”. The concept ‘social exclusion’ is related to the
concept ‘poverty’. However, it is seen in much more multi-dimensional terms than just
income and expenditure. The central question here is to link the standard of living with the
possession of social rights to employment, housing and health care etc. As Gore et. al
(1995:2) sees it “to study the evidence that where citizens are unable to secure their social
rights, they will tend to suffer processes of generalized and persisting disadvantage and their
social occupational participation will be undermined”. Moreover, Silver (1995) lists a few
things people might be excluded from:

A livelihood; secure, permanent employment; earnings; property, credit, or land;
housing; minimal or prevailing consumption levels; education, skills, and cultural
capital; the welfare state; citizenship and legal equality; democratic participation;
public goods; the notion or dominant race; family and sociability, humanity, respect,
fulfillment and understanding (Silver, 1995:60).

The list provided by Silver (1995) shows the complexity and the range of the term ‘social
exclusion’. The term touches a lot of different aspects of life in a society and can indeed
appear in a variety of ways, and it is important to recognize the versatility of the term and its
reach. The concept of ‘social exclusion’ is seen as covering a remarkable wide range of social
and economic problems. Silver (1995) in an example uses France to show social groups and
individuals that potentially are of risk of being excluded:

Mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children,
substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal,
asocial persons, and other social misfits (Silver, 1995:63).
These social groups are at great risk of being socially excluded from society as a direct result of their social and economic problems. Moreover the problems these social groups and individuals are experiencing can be assessed as a ‘vicious circle’, since being excluded from social relations can lead to other deprivations as well, thereby further limiting their living opportunities. For example, being excluded from the opportunity to be employed or to receive credit may lead to economic impoverishment that may, in turn lead to other deprivations such as undernourishment or homelessness. The number of problems that potentially can increase as a result of being socially excluded makes it very difficult to escape the ‘long arms’ of the ‘vicious circle’ ones it gets a hold of you.

Furthermore, social exclusion can be divided into two directions, active and passive exclusion. When for example, immigrants or refugees are not given a usable political status, it is an active exclusion, and this applies to many of the deprivations from which minority communities suffer in Europe, Asia and elsewhere. When, however, the deprivation comes about through a social process in which there is no deliberate attempt to exclude, the exclusion can be seen as a passive kind. A good example is when you do not have any place to live and you cannot afford to either rent or buy a place. This is an example of passive exclusion (Silver, 1995).

Having this in mind, if we look at child laborers around the world they are a good example of a group in society which are at great risk of being socially excluded. The fact is that many children are forced to work and very often also abused. Looking at the kind of work and work environment they have to endure, I would argue that they do not receive the proper treatment and payment they deserve. The fact that the children are exploited and abused puts them in a situation were they are at high risk of experiencing other deprivations. The direct or indirect consequences often are that these children are excluded from participating fully in society and a good example is their ability to pursue education. The ‘vicious circle’ which Silver (1995) talks about has a ‘stronghold’ on those children and it is immensely difficult for the children to ‘escape’ the ‘long arms’ of the ‘vicious circle’.
2.6 Culture relativism

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown of my feet by any.

Mahatma Gandhi

These words by Mahatma Gandhi illustrates how important it is to have an open mind to other cultures, however, not unwillingly bow for other cultures and not to force others to undertake your own cultural belief. The concept of culture has theoretically been used to look at the human conduct. Hartung (1954) argues that cultural relativity is one of the most important concepts over the last years in which anthropology and sociology has devoted a lot of time towards. The culture relativism theory looks at the human conduct using observational studies of different cultures and different societies. Over the years there have been many debates on how one sees individuals as individuals and individuals as members of the social group and society which s/he is part of, and how one should view culture relativism in respect to the individual, the social group and the society. Hartung (1954) defines culture relativism as the following:

Cultural relativity, briefly stated, asserts that any set of customs and institutions, or way of life, is as valid as any other… Cultural relativism is a philosophy which… lays stress on the dignity inherent in every body of custom, and on the need for tolerance of conventions though they may differ from one’s own… the relativistic point of view brings into relief the validity of every set of norms for those people whose lives are guided by them, and the values these represent… The very core of cultural relativism is the social discipline that comes of respect of differences- of mutual respect. Emphasis on the worth of many ways of life, not one, is an affirmation of the values of each culture. Such emphasis seeks to understand and to harmonize goals, not to judge and destroy those that do not dovetail with our own (Hartung, 1954:118).

Hartung (1954) emphasizes the importance of tolerance and respect for other cultures. That one should respect ones differences mutually. He believes that there is more than one way of life and that no culture is a conformation of ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Try to emphasize on seeking towards understanding other cultures and not seek to demolish those that culturally are different from you. Furthermore, I know that the concept of culture which I here use is over 50 years old however I would argue that it is still very relevant. In the next paragraphs I will try to show how the concept has been playing a central part of the preparation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
The concept of culture relativism was used as a ‘heuristic tool’ by the UN Commission of Human Rights to develop and prepare the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Executive Board AAA, 1947). Since then there have been many debates about the Statement of human rights. One of the debates has been related to the concern that the Declaration of Human Rights has primarily been prepared by people from Western societies and that they therefore express values that are far from universal and that they are influenced by the ‘West’. According to Executive Board AAA, 1947:

> Today the problem is complicated by the fact that the Declaration must be of worldwide applicability. It must embrace and recognize the validity of many different ways of life. It will not be convincing to the Indonesian, the African, the Chinese, if it lies on the same plane as like documents of an earlier period. The rights of Man in the Twentieth century cannot by circumscribed by the standards of any single culture, or be dictated by the aspirations of any single people. Such a document will lead to frustration, not realization of the personalities of vast numbers of human beings (Executive Board AAA, 1947:1).

As I understand it the key here is that one includes all cultures to reflect the view of the Declaration and that not only one culture should be the dominant reflection. The Commission must involve people of diverse cultures to influence the policy decision process and the organizations as a whole. The decisions must be taken from the stand of the whole Commission and not just a few members. Only then can the Declaration fulfill the criteria of being worldwide applicable. Nevertheless, this could prove more difficult than it sounds. Especially considering the number of countries represented in the UN and the number of different cultures.

Further, I will be looking at the issue of applicability and discuss it in relation to another central debate when it comes to culture relativism. The debate has been about laws and conventions the international community has agreed upon and how it is supposed to be applicable to all member countries. Here the core of the debate has been if we can expect something that is relevant and applicable in country A, necessarily is the same for country B. Frankena (1973) shows this well and she argues that:

> What is right or good for one individual or society is not right or good for another, even if the situation are similar, meaning not merely that what is thought right or good by one is not thought right or good by another... but that what is really right or good in one case is not in another (Frankena, 1973:109).

If we look at laws and conventions concerning child labor, many countries in the ‘West’ do not have child labor and many countries in the ‘South east’ have child labor. Therefore the
understanding of what child labor is and how it affects the societies which have child labor might as a result of cultural differences be different between countries standing on the ‘outside’ looking at countries that are experiencing child labor. A lot of countries in the ‘West’ see child labor as something negative, and interestingly a lot countries such as Bangladesh does not always share that view. This makes it difficult to make the laws and conventions relevant and applicable for both country A and B (Bruns et al. 2003).

2.7 Concluding remarks

I wrote in the beginning of this chapter that education is one of the most powerful ‘instruments’ known for reducing poverty. This makes me question if education is a right or an ‘instrument’? It can easily be forgotten when faced with problems such as poverty and child labor, that education for children is a right and not just a ‘tool’. However, I believe that under certain circumstances such as poverty and child labor, that education can be used as a ‘tool’ to successfully combat social problems such as these and than giving the children their rightfully rights back. That one should allow education to be used as a ‘tool’ so that one in the future can make sure that children’s right to access education is a reality that does not need to be secured through ‘force’ and advocacy. Furthermore, to the question if educations should be viewed as a ‘tool’ or a ‘right’ can be viewed in respect to what principles and view of human life you have. Meaning that how you answer this question comes down to our values and how we see life.

Furthermore, this theoretical chapter is not based upon any ‘grand theories’, however it is based upon theory which is meant to give an insight in elements and in understanding the particular relationship between these elements (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). Being that it is a case study I have found it important to analyze other research studies, reports and policy documents, which I argue to be theory that is highly relevant. As Blanche and Durrheim (1999) argue that, theory serves as an orientation that can help us when gathering facts. Such as I see it, the key is that the theory that I have chosen to use is relevant and that the research questions can be answered based upon particular understanding of the relationship between the elements child labor, poverty and education. In doing so I found it important to look at these elements in light of different concepts such as ‘globalization’, ‘social exclusion’ and ‘culture relativism’.
3 Research Methodology

Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people’s ‘lived experience’, are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10).

In chapter 1 I addressed my aims and the research questions for my research study which gave me the possibility to set the conditions for which I choose a methodological path. In the extract above, Miles and Huberman (1994) illustrate well how qualitative data can be used as a tool to best grasp the view of the participants in a study. Opening doors in the participants lived lives which might make it possible to get an insight into their reality and how they perceive that reality (the social world) around them. I have chosen to use qualitative research methods because I considered it to be the best tool to conduct my study. I evaluated different approaches and found that due to a lot of barriers such as language, a qualitative approach was best for my study in order to answer my research questions. In addition this chapter will give an insight in the following areas within my research, the design, the process of field work, the sampling, qualitative research interviews, literature review, other data collecting methods, credibility or ‘trustworthiness’, and reliability or dependability. The data in this study plays an essential role and I will try to use the data to give an insight in the relationship between the research questions and the way the participants perceive the world around them. Bearing this in mind, my objective with the data is not to test any theory, though the objective is to discuss theoretical framework and the data itself.

3.1 The role of the researcher

In qualitative research it is said that the best instrument is the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1998). Blanche and Durrheim (1999:126) argue that “…in positivist research one can rely on tried and tested assessment instruments to collect data, and on proven statistical techniques to analyze the data, in interpretative research it is the researcher who is the primary instrument for both collecting and analyzing the data”. However, I would believe that being an interpretative researcher raises a lot of important questions, such as if human begins are well enough suited to conduct interpretative research? Since every researcher is individually different from each other, would not that potentially affect the research outcome, even if the conditions set in advance would be the same? Would the research fulfill the criteria of being
scientific? Interpretative research is based on the researcher’s interpretation of the data collected and the researchers would most likely 10 out of 10 times interpret the data collected differently. Blanche and Durrheim (1999), however argue that:

Interpretative researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting. Concepts such as ‘the real world’ and natural setting’ are not always as straight forward as one might think, but the principle of wanting to study individuals and groups as they go about their lives, rather than under artificially created conditions, should be clear (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:127).

In other words as an interpretative researcher it is important to interpreter the informants whilst they go about their lives. The important thing is to grasp the big picture and not breaking down the information into small pieces. Since this is the main goal, the fact that we as researchers are individually different from each other does not mean that we are not well enough suited to conduct interpretive research, as long as we get the big picture. However, it is difficult to get the ‘big picture’ when doing such a small scale study, as a result of limited time and resources which restricts my chance of fully grasping every aspect. Nevertheless, that does not mean that I am not capable to conduct the study, as long as I manage to get a detailed and tick enough description of the participants in the study. Moreover, as a researcher that has chosen to use qualitative methods I agree with Kvale (1996), that another human begin is the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence. As to the question of for filling the scientific criteria, Kvale (1996) argues further that:

There is a move away from obtaining knowledge primarily through external observation and experimental manipulation of human subjects, toward an understanding by means of conversation with the human beings to be understood… [Participants] formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their lived lives… [This] leads to knowledge that can be used to enhance the human condition (Kvale, 1996:11).

Kvale (1996) argues above that there is a greater acceptance of interpretive research fulfilling scientific criteria. That is why many researcher such as me use qualitative research methods when we want to grasp the essence of the lived lives of other human begins. Moreover, there are some skills required to do interpretive research, skills such as in communicating with the research participants, skills such as listening and interpreting, whilst you also have to make sure that the data you have gathered reflects the ‘voice’ of the participants (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). In addition one has to take into consideration the fact that the researcher is in a position to influence the outcome of the research, and we have to be constantly aware of
this. It is important to consider how we influence the situation we are in and take that into consideration when analyzing data and discussing findings. I will address this further in the view of the different perspectives a researcher may have.

### 3.2 The researcher as an ‘outsider’

When conducting qualitative research there are different perspectives one can have. Our background, such as culture and upbringing, helps forming the perspective we have. In many ways one can argue that our perspectives are constantly changing, as a result of our own gained experience changing over time. The perspectives that I am talking about is referred to in research as ‘insider and outsider’ (Headland et al., 1991). Interestingly, we do not necessarily choose which perspective we want before we go to do our research study, however, it is more or less predetermined. The mere fact that we might have a cultural difference than the participants we are researching will in many ways decide what perspective we have. In addition to this we also have other factors that play an essential role, such as education, gender and sexual orientation, just to mention a few. I will come back to this later on in this section. As a qualitative researcher we report from an investigation that reflects what we expect to find, what we look for, and how we perceive our role. That means that our perspective on our research shapes our interpretation and therefore what we report as knowledge (Headland et al., 1991).

This brings me to the questions, what does it mean to be an ‘outsider’? Is it possible for me to fully grasp the mere essence of the participants and the context that I am observing? As an ‘outsider’ is it possible to grasp the authentic reality of the ones we observe? All of these questions are complex and very difficult to answer. Narayan (1993) believes that the answer to this is not as ‘black and white’ as it is often ‘painted’. She believes that one should try to move beyond the focus of the distinction between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. Instead she argues that we should look at different factors regardless of what perspective we have. She calls it ‘shifting identifications’, based on factors such as “…education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts may different times outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider status” (Narayan, 1993:672). Narayan (1993) believes that the cultural background of a researcher is not enough in case of stating if one has the ability to be authentically observing the participants. I agree with her that if you have
other factors that the context you are in can be identified with it can help distinguishing if the researcher has the ability to observe authentically. As an example I am male, I have a degree in economics, and I am also a Muslim. Many of my research participants had a native Bangladeshi background in my study and had studied economy themselves. They also had a Muslim religious background and they were mostly male. This resulted in a natural meeting ‘ground’ in where I felt that my authentic interaction with the participants increased. It is here illustrated that the cultural background of a researcher is not enough in itself in case of stating the ability to be authentically observing the participants. In addition, Narayan (1993) talks about how important it is that we allow the participants voices, views, and dilemmas, to be heard and that it reflects our thoughts and most importantly our research, is concurrent with the view of Blanche and Durrheim (1999).

Being a researcher in a foreign culture does that make my observations less authentic, and does my interpretation of what the knowledge is become lesser true as a result of my perspective as an ‘outsider’? Does it make me more objective because I am perceived as an ‘outsider’? If we think about what Narayan (1993) said about that we should focus on the individual and that we have ‘shifting identifications’ that is part of our nature as human beings. The different sub-identifications such as me being an economist and a Muslim which I addressed above are more and less relevant depending on the context you are in. In other words, to the question of what is authentic and what is not, should not be decided on the basis of if we are ‘insider’ or outsider’, however it should be decided on the relevance of the sub-identifications we have and the context we are in. However, Headland et al. (1991) argues that one can shift from being an ‘outsider’ to becoming an insider, and vice versa:

Unless one subscribes to total subjectivity in science (e.g., ‘you have to be on to understand one’), there is always the possibility that an outsider can eventually ‘discover native principals’ and ‘grasp the native point of view (Headland et al., 1991:91).

I agree with Headland et al. (1991) when he argues that a researcher with an ‘outsider’ perspective actually can over time discover native principals and grasp the essence of the native point of view. However, the key word here is time and as a researcher doing research in a foreign country with limited amount of time, I would argue that it would be very difficult for a researcher with an ‘outsider’ perspective to actually achieve what Headland et al. (1991) argues for above. Very few master students as me have that ‘luxury’. In the short amount of time given to conduct our research we might understand certain things about the environment
we are researching. Nevertheless, our own cultural believes and knowledge will play an 
essential role in which we interpret the environment we research. As Headland et al. (1991) 
argues further:

An approach by an outsider to an inside system, in which the outsider brings his own 
structure-his own cultural [believes] - and partly superimposes his observations on the 
inside view, interpreting the inside reference to his outside starting point (Headland et 
al., 1991:91)

In other words, our perspectives on our research influence our interpretation and analysis of 
the data. I believe that our focus towards being professional researchers is essential if we are 
to be successful as researchers (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1998). “Researcher has a scientific 
responsibility to his profession and his [participant] that a research project yield knowledge 
worth knowing and that it is as controlled and verified as possible” (Kvale, 1996:118). This 
means that one has to be aware of how we as researchers can influence the situation. However 
one also has to know that it is impossible to be completely ‘value free’ and ‘unbiased’, no 
research ever is. The mere fact that we are part of a society which we observe and we record 
knowledge accordingly shows that it is impossible. This leads us to the research design, which 
contributes to set the conditions and framework in order to answer the research questions.

3.3 Design

Blanche and Durrheim (1999:29) define research design as a “strategic framework for action 
that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the 
research”. In other words, together with theory, design is a framework for collection and 
analyzing of data. The design must be flexible when conducting research on social 
phenomena since the participants and the societies we are dealing with are dynamic entities. 
The main objective with a research design is that it provides a plan that specifies how the 
research is going to be conducted, and that it also answers the research question(s). The 
design stage constitutes the steps where the methodological procedure is planned and 
prepared. In addition, the design has to make sure that all the processes during the study are 
interrelated (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). As in my case the choice fell on interviews, and 
then I had to design the research project in a way that allowed me to choose the best suited 
type of interview.
The main objective in my research study was to investigate the awareness of the negative aspects of child labor in Bangladesh, and to also look at what had been done in Bangladesh to address the problem of child labor, from both the local and national arena. My wish was to study the relationship between child labor and education, in depth and in detail. The best way to do that was to implement a qualitative approach, and I choose to apply the form of a case study, which is a thorough and detailed assessment of a setting or case (Bryman, 2004).

The design I originally chose to use consisted of methods such as semi-structured interviews of local, national and international organizations, government officials, school officials, teachers, parents, working children and children attending school as my main informants, analyzing policy documents and literature review. One of the most important objectives in my research study was to be able to capture an insight to the participants and how they perceived the reality around them. That was the main reason for why I chose semi-structured interviews. This method also allowed me to cover a wide range of instances, and I was able to ask a variation of questions, combining both open-ended and closed-ended questions. In addition, this method gave me the possibility to ask further questions in response to what I saw as significant replies (Bryman, 2004). A literature review was also important since it puts the research study into context by showing how it fits into a particular field. As Silverman (2005) illustrates here:

[Helps] to stimulate theoretical sensitivity ‘providing concepts and relationships that (can be) checked out against (your) actual data, to provide secondary sources of data to be used for initial trial runs of your own concepts and topics, to stimulate questions during data gathering and data analysis, to direct theoretical sampling to ‘give you ideas about where you might go to uncover phenomena important to the development of your theory, [and] to be used as supplementary validation to explain why your findings support or differ from the existing literature (Silverman, 2005:248).

When it comes to policy documents it allows you to get a glance and an idea of the how the policy makers perceive society and the people within that society. The documents reflect the policy maker’s views and thoughts, which is very important for the people that read the documents to be aware of. The policy documents are not necessarily the true ‘picture’ of the reality, however it is their own interpretation of the ‘reality. Further, the policies can be informers about certain trends, the intentions of the politicians and an insight into the process behind the policy documents. All of the ‘ingredients’ that I choose to use in the research design compliment each other, and all of them played an essential part in successfully conducting this investigation.
The overall research design strategy functioned well. Nevertheless, there were obstacles that made it more difficult for me in executing the plan. I will address this further in the section 3.4 The process of the field work. In addition, I unwillingly had to reduce the sample. I wanted to talk to government officials, however, due to circumstances which were out of my control, this was impossible and therefore I had to change my research design accordingly. Nevertheless, I got the possibility to include more participants from the other groups I had in my research, due to the accessibility and the help from the Norwegian embassy. I will address these changes to the sample further in the section 3.5 Sample.

As a researcher you experience that the design is constantly being tested from both internal and external factors. If a research design is good enough depends on how well it can cope with these factors. I would say that the strategic framework in this study laid the foundation for the rest of the study. It is not necessarily the individual methods that are important, but the sum of all the methods put together. In addition Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that the flexibility of qualitative studies precedes the flexibility of a quantitative research most times, which was an essential strength in this research study. This leads us to the next section were I will address the actual process of the field work.

3.4 The process of field work

Qualitative inquiry designs cannot be completely specified in advance of field work. While the design will specify an initial focus, plans for observations and interviews, and primary questions to be explored, the naturalistic and inductive nature of the inquiry makes it impossible and inappropriate to specify operational variables… A qualitative design unfolds as fieldwork unfolds (Patton, 1990:61).

In a qualitative research study there is at least one time that something does not go according to plan. This is very likely to happen since one is dealing with uncontrollable factors, such as humans begin and the power of the nature, the factors may potentially influence the research. Factors such as people not showing up as scheduled, floods, political strikes as a result of political election and malaria outbreaks, just to mention a few. I constantly had to be aware of these factors and that I had to deal with them accordingly, because of how it potentially could influence my research and the research outcome significantly. This was a good example illustrating that qualitative design unfolding it selves as fieldwork unfolds (Patton, 1990).
My study took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh’s capital and largest city with approximately 14 million inhabitants (National TBP, 2006). I knew that Bangladesh had a large population compared to Norway and a large population density. Nevertheless, the first few hours in Bangladesh were very difficult. Before traveling to Bangladesh I had established contact with a person that would function as a guide and an interpreter during my research period in the country. One of my colleges at the University of Oslo is from Bangladesh and he provided to get in contact with people. I had a lot of difficulties the first day of my arrival in Bangladesh and in many ways you can say that my first experience in Bangladesh sat the tone, and I knew from that moment that I had to be prepared for a lot of challenges and new experiences that I previously had not experienced. Moreover, the local conditions made it difficult for me to travel around by myself and I was totally depended on my guide to get around. In most cases I was traveling around in areas that were dangerous for foreigners. Even in some areas my guide hesitated in traveling too because of the difficult conditions. During the period I was there it was considered to be even more dangerous because of the ongoing political election.

Furthermore, one of the biggest barriers was the language. Very few people spoke English and the ones that did, spoke very poorly. This made me even more depended upon my guide. To be depended of others in my research was one of the biggest challenges I had. It was very frustrating and difficult to deal with the circumstances which at times were out of my control. Especially when you know that it can potentially have an indirect or direct impact on your research. Moreover, if I take the discussion of depending on my guide/interpreter further, interestingly, my choice of using an interpreter can potentially influence the credibility of the information which the interpreter ‘communicate’ to me. I would argue that key word here would be ‘communication’, since if the ‘hearer’ gets the messages the same way as the ‘speaker’ had in mind, then there is proper communication (Larkin et al., 2007). Nevertheless, how can I be sure that the ‘line of communication’ is working properly? There is no guarantee I have that the translator actually translates what I want him to translate. In addition to this, I also have to think about the interviewee, what guarantee do I have that they understand or/and are capable of answer my questions? There is no such guarantee. However, there are different measures that I can do to reduce the ‘degree’ of uncertainty and in order to do that we have to understand the relationship between the researcher and the interpreter. Larkin et al.

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3 The guide and interpreter, Tanim Hussein, is a Master student in Development studies at Brac University in Dhaka. He has studied several years in Canada and speaks excellent English.
(2007:468) argues that “researchers have a responsibility to acknowledge their personal impact on fieldwork, and failure to perceive the translator as coworker might inhibit access to understanding of the process and emerging data”. This means that I will have to include the interpreter in the research study, so that he can gain knowledge and understanding about the topic. This way it is a greater chance of the interpreter actually communicating what I as the researcher had intended and in addition a greater chance for the interviewee to understand the translator (Larkin et al, 2007).

Further, I got help from the Norwegian embassy. I contacted them several months in advance before traveling to Bangladesh, and I informed them about my research. I sent them my research proposal and I also sent them a list of the groups of people I wanted to talk to. I will address this matter further in the section 3.5 Sample.

Moreover, I must ad that I experienced people I interviewed recommended other informants as well. As an example when I interviewed a representative from ILO and he knew a colleague of him that had written a report on child labor, he initiated contact with that person for me. Bryman (2004) refers to this as snowball sampling. Were the group you initially was suppose to interview helps you in establishing contact or you fortunately ‘bump’ into people that could be relevant for your research.

3.5 Sample

Sampling involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviors and/or social processes to observe (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:44).

The decisions noted in the quotation above sets the conditions for what the sample should be in our research. The answers to our research question must be found within the chosen sample group. The aim must be that the chosen sample group is representative, which means that the sample will have to represent the population in which I as a researcher aim to draw conclusions about (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). In my case the aim of the research is to observe and analyze child labor in Bangladesh, get an insight of the context and the targeted population. I wanted to look into the dynamics of the relationship between child labor and education in a global context, to examine the awareness and the behavior regarding the actors/stakeholders involved. Further, since I have decided to conduct a qualitative research,
my sampling would be purposefully selected. “Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n=1), selected purposefully” (Patton, 1990:169). The aim here is to select a sample that can answer the research questions and also deal with central issues that are of importance. Now I will look into the process of how I selected my sample.

I started my research by trying to make decisions that would set the right conditions so that I could successful gather data that would both would be rich and representative. I identified the people I wanted to include in the study, children that are both currently working and that had worked as child labors previously, their parents, school representatives, teachers, local and national NGO’s, international organizations and representatives form the Government. As mentioned earlier I decided to use semi structured interviews as the basis for data collecting method. In addition, I also had informal conversations, as well as observing the participants in their regular environment in order to better grasp the setting, events and their behavior. However, the latter (observation) was something I chose in order to see how the children were working and how the hazardous environment affected their lives. It was important to be able to see how some of the participants lived their lives in reality and how they perceived that reality around them (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Moreover, all my interviews with the teachers, parents and the children were selected by me. The others participants mentioned above were chosen for me, which meant that I chose the organization, but the organization themselves decided whom I would talk to. Importantly, the ones that were chosen to talk to me were from schools/departments that worked with issues related to child labor and education, which meant that the interviewees potentially were ‘qualified’ to talk to me. In potentially I mean that not all interviews went according to the plan. In advance I had prepared several questions and the majority of the research participants answered these questions. However, there were few incidents were some participants did not answer the questions. Instead they wanted to ‘lecture’ me with their knowledge about child labor and education. This was not a problem when it came to the size of the sample group, since I had interviewed more participants than I needed so that the interviews that did not go according to the plan could be withdrawn from the research study. Was my sample group large enough? According to Bryman (2004) there is no definitive answer to this question. The most important thing is that the sample group is large enough for you to find the answers to the questions you want to answer. In my case I believed that my sample size was large enough.
Furthermore, looking at the role of the Norwegian Embassy closer, it really surprised me when I met with representatives from the Norwegian embassy in Bangladesh. What I found out was that they had contacted everybody and initiated contact with them for me. They had scheduled all the meetings, and also forwarding my research proposals so that they were prepared to talk to me. This was essential for me and it meant that I had more time to conduct my interviews, and that I also had more time in expanding the depth of the information gathered from the participants. As a result of this I got more relevant and sufficient data for my research study. Here it was crucial for me to have a critical eye on the selection process of the people they selected for my project, especially since the embassy is a donor in Bangladesh when it comes to development issues. Importantly, I was the one that chose who the participants should be and the Norwegian embassy only assisted me in contacting and setting up the meetings for me. I had full responsibility over the decision making process. Furthermore, even with the help from the Norwegian embassy it was almost impossible to get any representatives from the Government to talk to me. Due to the political situation they claimed lack of time. The Government represented a very important group for me to interview. Getting their view and position when it comes to child labor and education, I felt was essential for me in order to get the ‘big picture’. However, I felt I handled the situation well and my co-supervisor set up the initial contact with Kamal Siddiqui. He advises the prime minister about issues related to children and education. My supervisor sent him an e-mail and set up the initial contact with him, which made it possible for me to travel to Geneva and to conduct my interview. This is another example of how fieldwork dynamically unfolds and that one has to constantly adjust the research accordingly in order to cope with the changes one face (Patton, 1990).

Moreover, the sample I had chosen included representatives from UNICEF, Save the Children Sweden/Denmark, and ILO. I also had three children that went to a school called UCEP (Underprivileged Children’s Educational Program) and their parents. Importantly all the

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4 Lucy Smith and Kamal Siddiqui are members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. She used to teach and research at the University of Oslo, as full-time professor in child law, human rights law and law of contracts. He used to teach, train and research as a visiting Professor at two Universities in the United States, Cornell and Southern, within development economics, public policy, human rights, governance and poverty alleviation. In addition he is a policy-maker and has got oversight of policy implementation at the highest level of the Government in Bangladesh.

5 UCEP- Bangladesh was founded by a New Zealand social worker by the name Lindsay Allan Cheyne. The school is financed by support from international donors and NGO’s. They do not receive any financial support from the government of Bangladesh. The school provides general- and vocational education. In addition they cooperate with the local community in providing work for the children under good conditions, whilst they at the same time attend school. After they finish school, UCEP helps the children in getting job placement.
participants at the UCEP Schools were randomly chosen from a class list. Further, I also had recorded the interviews with three teachers and informal interviews with the headmaster and two school officials. The chosen age groups among the children were 10-14 years of age. All of the children had previously been working as child laborers under hazardous conditions, now they worked under conditions that was good and at the same time attending school. This was made possible because UCEP cooperate with the community and the employers. In addition I also interviewed three children that were working in three different sectors, a child domestic worker, a child working at a steel factory and a child working at a car workshop. These children were in the age group 6-9 years of age. I chose these two age groups (10-14 and 6-9), because I wanted the sample to include both children in primary education and in secondary education. The table below shows the demographic characteristics of the children that participated in the study.

Table 3.1- the number of children that participated in the study and the demographic characteristics\(^6\). The letter C followed by a number is the unique number for every child in the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children (C)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently working</td>
<td>C 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C 2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending school and working</td>
<td>C 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^6\) UCEP provides both General- and Vocational Education. The General Education is run at two academic sessions in one calendar year, each session having 6 months, with a target of 135 schooling days. In this approach a child can complete up to grade VIII in 4.5 years, including 6 months of preparatory schooling. The Vocational Education is providing technical education, and they have 12 different skills Units that the children can choose from, as an example tailoring and embroidery. The duration of the different courses is from 0.5 to 2 years.
3.6 Qualitative research interviews

[A] Qualitative research interview seeks to describe and understand the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviews say… [It] seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level. It is necessary to listen to the explicit descriptions and meanings as well as to what is ‘said between the lines’. The interviewer may seek to formulate the ‘implicit message’, ‘send it back’ to the subject, and obtain an immediate confirmation or disconfirmation of the interviewer’s interpretation of what the interviewee is saying (Kvale, 1996:31,32).

As noted above qualitative research interviews is a method were both the researcher and the interviewee interact. The researcher sets the conditions which allow them to communicate, share information, discuss and give their own perceptions to how they see the social world around them. Importantly it is the researcher which sets the agenda and also guides the interaction within a chosen framework (Miles and Huberman, 1994). To guide the researcher through the interview a research guide should be prepared in advance. It could either be an unstructured interview guide with a brief list of areas you want to cover, or it could be a semi-structured interview with a somewhat more structured list (Bryman, 2004). The reason why I chose to use semi-structured interviews as my method in collecting data for my study was because I found it to be the best method for me in order to conduct the research. My goal with this project was to evaluate child labor in Bangladesh and since the target group for my project either were children or/and adults that did not speak English, language became a barrier that limited my choices in selecting methods. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to overcome that language barrier. I solved the problem by hiring an interpreter and it allowed me to get the information that I needed for my research study. All of my interviews were recorded so that it would be easier for me to analyze the data after the interviews were conducted. Learning from other researchers at my faculty at the University of Oslo I always brought my recorder with me, since I never knew when I would need it. I will now show how I conducted the qualitative research interviews in my study.

Before I started to interview the participants I developed an interview guide that was specially develop to fit all the participants individually. The guide included a set of questions and specific topics that guided me while I was conducting the interviews. This method allowed me in having a lot of ‘space’ in how I replied, and also when it came in which order I wanted to ask my questions (Bryman, 2004). All of the research participants gave me their consents to
record the interviews in advance. I was dealing with a lot of sensitive information and I wanted the research participants to know that they could rely on me in guaranteeing them full anonymity if they wanted it. It was important for me to establish the trust of the research participants and that they were comfortable so I made sure that the interviews were held at quiet locations. I provided tea, mineral water and cookies. I spent time at the beginning of each interview by telling the participants briefly about my research and about my personal background. I wanted them to understand that their role in the process was important and that the interview hopefully would be beneficiary for both parties; beneficiary in that the study will create awareness towards child labor problems in Bangladesh and that the voice of the participants can be heard. In addition raised awareness might create a ‘movement’ which puts focus on what needs to be done and the importance of taking child labor seriously. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed in verbatim. I also took notes during the interviews. An individual interview report after each session was developed pinpointing critical (data) points and constraints. When required, the interviewees were contacted in order to provide additional (missing) information, and/or to clarify any remaining issues that surfaced during the face to face encounters. The interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 1 hour.

### 3.7 Literature review

Literature review plays an essential function in qualitative research. The review of literature can help the researcher find the focus in the study. It aims to review the critical points of current knowledge on a particular topic and to identify and also analysis literature relevant for the research. According to Patton (1990:163) “reviewing the literature can present a quandary in qualitative inquiry because it may bias the researcher’s thinking and reduce openness to whatever emerges in the field”. Therefore it is very important that the researcher has a critical mind throughout the research study. Not all literature may be good or relevant and we have to be careful in the use of the literature we find (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). If we look at policy documents, they can give us an insight in to certain trends and the intentions of the politicians. It is important to think about whom the writer(s) of the documents are and try to understand their intentions. This is a good example of how important it is to have a critical mind when reading documents.
In my research study I experienced several situations in which I felt people were holding back information and sometimes also giving me information which reflected their own views on the topic I was researching. Once I was at the Governments’ Ministry of Education office in Dhaka, and I had made an appointment in advanced to come and pick up some documents. When I got there, their attitude had change and they were reluctant in giving me the documents. I had asked for a document that was about child labor and general statistics when it came to issues related to child labor. The documents might have given me an insight in the mindset of the Government when it came to child labor and also how they saw child labor as a social problem in society. However, what they told me when I got there was that they could not give me the documents. I asked them why they had changed their mind and they told me that the documents could not be released. Instead they had prepared other documents for me which was about two projects the government had participated in related to child labor. They assured me that the documents were better than the ones that I had asked for. I took the documents with me, however I knew that their purpose was to try to influence me in a certain direction and also to ‘hinder’ me in getting the information I wanted. I checked the documents that they gave me against other documents that I had got from other sources. This allowed me to see how authenticity, ‘trustworthiness’ and representativeness of the literature that was given to me. Bryman (2004:545) refers to this as triangulation, “the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that the findings may be cross-checked”. This shows how important it is to always be critical in the process of reviewing the literature you find.

3.8 Other methods

At the hotel were I was living half of the building was the head quarter of the largest NGO in Bangladesh, BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advance Commission). The organization works with issues related to development. The environment was an ‘oasis’ for natural occurring data. I was a guest at the BRAC organization and that gave me the possibility to meet a lot of interesting people. I had conversations with the hotel staff, the researchers working at BRAC and also other people living at the hotel, all of whom could prove valuable to my research. According to Silverman (2005:120) “…the beauty of naturally occurring data is that it may show us things we could never imagine”. The data received in this situation helped me in developing and adjusting my research guide so that the questions I asked gave me the
information I needed. In addition the data helped me in understanding the concepts better and also to understand the environment which I was studying. One incident I remember well was when I was in an elevator. I met a person that worked for a television Network Company called ATN Bangla, which is one of Dhaka’s largest television companies. We introduced each other and our purpose for staying at BRAC. Interestingly, she had produced many programs about child labor and we decided to meet over dinner to informally discuss what we had spoken about during our first meeting. Before I knew it I was a guest at the Network and she showed me around, and also provided me with statistical information about child labor in Bangladesh.

Another method I used was field notes. I always carried a note book along with my recorder. The field notes gave me the possibility to cross-check the data collected and also to supplement the data collected. The notes included descriptions of the environment, the participants and my own experience when conducting the research. This proved very helpful when I was analyzing my data later on. I will now look closer at the concepts ‘Credibility/trustworthiness’ and ‘reliability/dependability’.

3.9 ‘Credibility’ or ‘trustworthiness’

The credibility issue for qualitative inquiry depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements: (1) rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that is carefully analyzed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation; (2) the credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self; and (3) philosophical belief in the phenomenological paradigm, that is a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, and holistic thinking (Patton, 1990:461).

The discussion in this section will relate to the quotation above and I will try to elaborate the issues that Patton (1990) addresses. In qualitative inquiry the researcher is the instrument we have to rely on. To the question of how credible a research study is depends very much on the skills, competence and the researcher ability to be flexible. Qualitative researchers have to come to embrace their involvement and their role within the research and it is very important that the researchers test and demonstrate that their study is credible. I will show this later in this section (Patton, 1990).
The term credibility in a qualitative research study is often discussed among researchers. Is it appropriate to use the term credibility? Some researchers have argued that the term credibility is not applicable to qualitative research, but at the same time, they have realized the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research. Credibility is believed to be rooted in a positivistic perspective, thus to redefined for the use in a naturalistic approach. As a result of this many researchers have developed their own concepts of credibility and have often generated or adapted what they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as the term ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). What is trustworthiness?

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985):

> The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:290).

I agree with Lincoln and Guba (1985), in the way they describe and use the word trustworthiness. Such as I see it credibility is about finding ‘the truth’ and there is not only one truth. Another researcher might go about things differently if studying the same as me without it being lesser true than my approach. Patton (1990:372) argues that “however analysis is done, analysts have an obligation to monitor and report their own analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible”.

This leads us to the question of how one can check or measure that ones study actually is trustworthy? Patton (1990:244) argues that “the combination of data types increases [trustworthiness] as strengths of one approach can compensate for weaknesses of another approach… Each type and sources of data has strengths and weaknesses”. This is known as triangulation and it can help in reducing the errors in the study and in strengthening the outcome of the findings. In my case I decided to use interviews, literature review and analysis of policy documents, which I have referred to earlier. The key here is in combining the use of different sources so that one can cross-check if the different findings are trustworthy or not. The aim here is to reduce the weakness of the different sources and to emphasize on the strengths of each of the approaches (Patton, 1990).

After have looked at the trustworthiness of a study one also has to look at the external validity, or the generalizability of a study. Further, if we have found that our study had high
trustworthiness as a result of cross-checking the study through triangulation, the question would then be to myself how applicable is my research findings in another contexts? Many researchers have argued that if the trustworthiness is able to be maximized or tested more ‘trustworthy and defensible’ that it may lead to generalizability. However, in qualitative research the researchers have a tendency to employ case studies and small samples, which I have done in my research study. How then is it possible that the findings from my study can be applicable in another context? Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that:

The establishment of transferability by the naturalist is very different from establishment of external validity by the conventionalist… For while the conventionalist expects (and is expected) to make relatively precise statements about external validity (expressed, for example, in the form of statistical confidence limits), the naturalist can only set out working hypotheses together with a description of the time and context in which they were found to hold (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:316).

As noted above a quantitative study distinguishes itself from qualitative study. In a quantitative study one is expected to make relatively precise statements about external validity, whereas, in a qualitative study this is not possible according to Lincoln and Guba (1985). Therefore I believe that one should instead shift the focus from looking at how generalizable a qualitative study is to look at how transferable it is. The importance here should be if the study is representative and trustworthy enough to be transferred to another study or context. A qualitative study tends to be oriented towards the contextual uniqueness and significance of the context of the social world that one is studying (Bryman, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) argue further that ”whether they hold [transferability] in some other context, or even in the same context at some other time, is an empirical issue”. To the question on my study being applicable and transferable to another study or context, this depends on the representativeness and trustworthiness of my study. If another researcher sees my research study to include findings that s/he wants to include in their own study in the same context or in another that is possible. The only thing I can do is to try to ensure that the data presented in my study is as credible as possible and that the descriptions are thick and detailed enough, which can make it possible for others to use my knowledge as it suits their research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This leads us to the concept of reliability, which one has to look at together with the concept of trustworthiness, since it is important in really establishing if my research study is representative and trustworthy or not.
3.10 Reliability or Dependability

The term ‘reliability’ has just like the term credibility, often been discussed among researchers. The degree of how trustworthy a research study is depends also on the reliability of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) state that “since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]”. Having this in mind, how appropriate is it to use the term reliability in interpretive research studies? In order to answer this one must try to understand the word reliability. The word reliability in a research study is about how repeatable the findings are. This applies to both the results of the research participants and to the outcome as a whole. According to Blanche and Durrheim (1999):

[The] positivist believes that they are studying a stable and unchanging reality, reliability is a highly valued criterion that indicates how accurate and conclusive the findings are. [Whilst] interpretive and constructionist researchers, on the other hand, do not assume that they are investigating a stable and unchanging reality and therefore do not expect to find the same repeatedly (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:64).

In other words if the reality one is researching is considered stable and unchanging, it is possible to study the degree of how repeatable the findings are. However, in a qualitative study such as mine, the reality is completely different. The context is constantly changing and so are the people within the context as well. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985):

…Replicability depends, again, upon an assumption of naive realism… If the thing ‘out there’ is ephemeral and changing, noted instabilities cannot be simply charged off to the inquiry procedure… it is precisely that [the] condition can never be met, just as one can never cross the same stream twice (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:299).

The concept of time is important here, knowing that both the context and the conditions which the researcher is met with are constantly changing. Interestingly, if I was to conduct the same study about child labor and education in Bangladesh in a few years time, most likely my findings would be different as a result of the changes that would have occurred. According to Blanche and Durrheim (1999:64) “[researchers] expect that individuals, groups and organizations will behave differently and express different opinions in changing context. In place of the criterion of reliability, they propose that findings should be dependable”. I agree with Blanche and Durrheim (1999) in using the term ‘dependable’ instead of the term ‘reliability’. Reliability is not possible when you consider the aspect of time and change. However, dependability looks at the degree of how dependable the research findings are and the key here is if the results that one has found have occurred the way we conclude that it has
in our study. This can be assured through our preparation in achieving rich and detailed enough descriptions, whilst we also are able to show how we got to the data we did and that the data are developed out of contextual interaction (Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

I mentioned earlier in the section 3.9 ‘Credibility or trustworthiness’, that other researchers might find my research findings interesting at that they may want to include them in their own study. However, one has to understand that the goal in qualitative study is not to try to replicate a case study. The goal is to investigate the participants one has chosen to study and to observe their reality and how they perceive the world around them. Knowing that the reality and the world around them are changing it is impossible for the same researcher or for other researchers to find identical findings in the same context or in another, and at another time (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Importantly, to ensure dependability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. One has to focus towards establishing good quality through both dependability and trustworthiness. The goal for the researchers in a study is for the dependability and trustworthiness to help in order to eliminate bias and to increase the truthfulness of the researcher’s knowledge and understanding of the social phenomenon they are investigating (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
4. Child labor in Bangladesh from a global perspective and how it affects children’s ability to access education

This chapter intends to look closer at how children in Bangladesh that are/or have been involved in child labor, have been affected when it comes to their right to pursue education. The theoretical framework presented in chapter two guides the discussion and analysis done in this chapter.

Blanche and Durrheim (1999) argue that theory can guide a study and help us in building a ‘path’ that can give us answers to the questions we have asked. The discussion and the analysis together with the theory in this study give us the possibility to build the right ‘frame’ so that the study can evolve and take its ‘shape’. Importantly, when using all the data available to conduct my analysis, I evaluate and take into consideration different approaches and look at the topic from several perspectives (Bryman, 2004). Knowing this however, it is important to understand that there is not only one truth and in social science an objective truth is not necessarily the goal (Patton, 1990). The goal of this section is to grasp the view of the participants in the study, therefore a review of literature and data from, for example, the local, national and international NGO’s and organizations such as the UN, is intertwined with voices of the people populating my text. It is very important that the researcher has a critical mind throughout the research study and triangulation of data from several sources in this way can increase trustworthiness (Bryman, 2004).

4.1 International and legal aspects

Child labor is regarded as one of the most serious problems of human rights violations in the contemporary world. The international community has set guidelines for which they want countries to follow in order to combat child labor and other socio-economic issues related to child labor, such as poverty and education. The priority is set to combat the worst forms of child labor within the year 2015. The UN, other international organizations and NGO’s are using advocacy, pressure and cooperation as means to make countries change their laws or/and make new laws to protect children from getting abused as child laborers. In addition to this ILO has developed conventions and recommendations which they want countries to ratify.
and implement (ILO, 1998). In the next section I will take a closer look at Bangladesh and the current situation related to conventions and recommendations they have ratified and implemented, and which they have not. It will be interesting to see if there is a gap between the international community’s expectations to which conventions and recommendations they want countries to ratify and to look at what have actually been done in Bangladesh. It will also be interesting to get a closer look at the process of implementation of these conventions and the recommendations.

4.1.1 The laws and conventions ratified and rejected by Bangladesh

According to a United Nations report from 2003 (United Nations, 2003 B), Bangladesh started building a strong framework for the promotion and protection of children’s rights during the 1990s. This was made possible through an active commitment from the international community in cooperation with the government authorities of Bangladesh. An important step towards working for the rights of the child was the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The objective of the human rights principals was to form a common standard of achievements of all people within a country and all nations. In 1990 Bangladesh signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and they also signed the Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, and in addition to this they also related a Plan of Action at the World Summit for Children. In 1996 they strengthen this by signing the Rawalpindi Resolution on Children of South Asia. Just after signing of the new declarations and the ratifications Bangladesh added new essential planning and policy adoption of National Plans of Action for Children in 1992 and in 1999. In addition to this they approved the policy of the National Policy in 1994 (United Nations, 2003 B).

According to the UN, the prime Minister of Bangladesh sat aside a time period for the country to focus on the Rights of the Child:

…Inspired by a recommendation contained in the Rawalpindi Resolution, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh has declared the period 2001-2010 as the decade of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 2003:3 B).

As we now are in 2007, well into the period which the Prime minister had set for his own country to prioritize children’s rights, it will be interesting to see if everything has gone
according to his wish and plan. Here is a list over the child related conventions Bangladesh is
signatory to follow:

- ILO Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (No. 182);
- ILO Forced Labor Convention (No. 29);
- ILO Abolition Forced Labor Convention (No. 105);
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

(ILO, 2004:3).

The Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention No.182 is concerning the prohibition and
immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. The ILO Labor
Convention No.29 is concerning forced or compulsory labor, were a person has not offered
him/her self voluntarily. Further, the ILO Abolition Forced Labor Convention No.105 is
meant to supplement Convention No.29 in protecting and upholding that no laborers have
been forced to work. The last Convention on the list, UN Convention on the Rights of the
Child, is to advocate for protecting children’s rights, trying to help them with their basic needs
and trying to make sure they can reach their full potential (ILO, 1998).

Having these Conventions in mind, it is positive to see the commitment from Bangladesh
towards combating child labor and that they have signed and ratified the Conventions above.
However, there are still areas which the International community is concerned about and one
those areas is that they are yet to define what a child is and they are yet to ratify the
Convention No.138 the minimum age a child should be allowed to work. Interestingly, the
UN defines everybody under the age of 18 years as a child. According to a UN report (2003)
the legislation in Bangladesh lacks a sufficient definition of what a child is:

It is deeply concerned at the lack of conformity between existing legislative provisions
and the Convention with respect to the various age limits set by law, lack of definition
of the child… Many laws are inadequately enforced and that most children’s lives are
governed by family customs and religious law rather than by state law (United nations,
2003:2 A).

As noted by the UN a problem in Bangladesh is that the state laws are set aside when it comes
to family customs and religion. Another UN report (United Nations, 2003:6 C) shows how
religion influences, “[to set] the Majority Act 1875, setting the age of majority at 18 years, has
no effect on the capacity of any person in relation to marriage, dowry, divorce and adaptation
or on religion and religious customs of any citizen”. This implies that laws have no practical
implications in people’s lives under the circumstances described above. How can laws then be
effectively enforced? The UNICEF in Bangladesh commented on this during an interview I conducted:

**Q:** You mentioned laws being ineffective. Can you please elaborate on that?
**UNICEF:** …In Bangladesh we often see children being married in an early age, we see religious practices which deprive children and which sets limitations for children to be able to be children. Under these circumstances we see laws being bypassed. This kind of inefficiency creates problems in protecting children’s rights. What is the meaning of laws if one can bypass them as it suits you?
(Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04)

The ineffective enforcement of laws is a huge problem in Bangladesh and creates difficulties for protecting the children’s rights. UNICEF seemed very concerned about the time and resources they spend on commitment and advocacy in order to help the Government to work towards changing and/or making new policies and laws. They felt that the first step would be to ensure that the new political platform with laws and policies was in place. However, they also feel that in order to succeed, the Government would need to continue towards the next step which is ensuring implementation of the laws and policies. UNICEF addresses the problem of commitment:

In Bangladesh commitment is often expressed. The Government talks about what they are doing and how they are to combat child labor. However, the things they talk about, why do we not see them? They clearly must be aware of the problems we have, but we do not see any changes. Only thing we see is lack of political commitment and lack of political commitment is a very big problem in Bangladesh (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).

If we look closer at the concern expressed by UNICEF, the general feeling I get from reading documents from the Government in Bangladesh shares the view of what UNICEF addresses above. There is a feeling of a ‘gap’ between political commitment expressed and political commitment practiced by the government in Bangladesh. I will address the enforcement of laws further later in this chapter under the section 4.1.3 Ensuring laws and conventions.

Moreover, if we look at the concern from the international community when it comes to ‘wholes’ in the legislation and the legal system in Bangladesh, it is not without reason they are concerned. Bangladesh needs to make drastic changes. Save the Children in Bangladesh believes that:

Bangladesh must work towards making the laws in the country count for something. What good is it to have laws if they do not work according to how it was meant to work? The government in Bangladesh must enforce the laws and they must make sure the legal system works. Resources must be allocated towards ensuring that the laws are not set aside when it comes to family values and religion… Early marriage as an
example should not be allowed, especially under circumstances were children a forced to getting married (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

The problem UNICEF and Save the Children are expressing is something that the Government of Bangladesh is aware of. The UN has addressed the issue of ineffective legislation and they have strongly recommended that they ensure that domestic legislation on minimum ages is respected and implemented throughout the country. However, the UN feels that Bangladesh is not doing enough towards meting their recommendations (United Nations, 2003 C). Interestingly, Bangladesh is yet to ratify Convention No.138, the minimum age Convention. The minimum age convention addresses the age in which children are to be allowed to work and also type of work they are allowed to conduct depending on their age. The law also covers different work sectors and the work the children are doing is separated into two categories, light work and hazardous work (ILO, 1998). I have already mentioned the conventions Bangladesh have ratified, nevertheless, it is also important mention the ones they have not. When conducting this research I wondered why Bangladesh has not ratified Convention No.138. I asked this question to ILO in Bangladesh:

I believe it is a major challenge for Bangladesh to ratify Convention No.138. The reason for this is that the government has problems in agreeing on a minimum age, because there are so many socioeconomic dimensions and obstacles. That is why they did not ratify the Convention No.138 (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

It is understandable for a country to have problems and obstacles of a socioeconomic character. However, an important question is what is Bangladesh doing in addressing these problems and obstacles? An ILO report (ILO, 1998) argues that the reason why it is difficult to agree upon a minimum age is because Bangladesh traditionally has had children working from every age group. Children working in Bangladesh have often been seen as a necessity and it is therefore difficult to agree on the minimum age limit for children working. Further, the ILO expresses their concern for the implementation of Convention No.182, whilst Convention No.138 has not been ratified yet:

Convention No.138 is the first step before ratifying Convention No.182, because Convention No.138 already addresses hazardous child labor. If you are not ratifying Convention No.138 it will be difficult to implement the Convention No.182, which the Government has already ratified (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

This shows the importance of ratifying and implementing all the conventions. All the child labor conventions are interrelated and must all be successfully ratified and implemented if one is to succeed in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. In addition, one has to look at the
recommendations that follow the conventions. The recommendations work as broad framework in addition to the policy measures in preventing child labor and in working against elimination of child labor. Recommendation No.146 is for example to complement the Convention No.138.

Furthermore, one also has to look at the cost of ratifying and implementing. I asked ILO about challenges to ratifying and implementing conventions in Bangladesh:

The implementation of the conventions is a challenging task, because if you ratify a convention you have to implement it and that requires a lot of resources and policy formulations, reformation and a lot of changes to the existing system. That also creates a huge impact on the system from a socioeconomic point of view (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

Kamal Siddiqui, which is a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the UN, Geneva, and a policy-maker with an insight in policy implementation at the highest level of the Government in Bangladesh, had this to say when it came to why Bangladesh has not ratified Convention No.138:

The answer to that is simple and that is to do with too many obligations which come along with ratifying a convention. A country with so little resources to start with does not have the luxury to prioritize ratifying conventions that cost more than the country can afford to pay. Not only in terms of economics, but also in terms of realistic chance to actually follow the obligations of the conventions (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).

What Kamal Siddiqui addresses here is very important. Bangladesh is according to ILO (2004) considered to be one of the poorest countries in the world. Knowing this sets things into perspective and provides some understanding of all the problems Bangladesh has in finding time and resources in answering the string of obligations Kamal Siddiqui mentions above. However, interestingly the international community is aware of the situation in Bangladesh and they are of another opinion to why Bangladesh has not managed to ratify and implement some conventions yet:

Q: How are you helping the Government in Bangladesh to ratify and implement the Conventions? Does the Government in Bangladesh believe it is difficult to ratify because of the obligations that follow?
UNICEF: UNICEF basically works with the governments. In every country where there is UNICEF present they cooperate with the governments. The government in Bangladesh has its own national plan of action. UNICEF is providing financial support to the government and to the respective ministries, so that they can successfully achieve ratifying and implementing the conventions. The problem such as
I see it is not lack of resources to address the obligations. However, it is lack of commitment and work from the Government (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).

UNICEF emphasizes cooperation between the international community and the Government in Bangladesh as a key to success, but there is a need for the Government to become more committed and work actively towards achieving the goals which they have set. I will be addressing the cooperation between the International community and Bangladesh further in the section, 4.1.4 ILO and challenges with conventions. Interestingly, there is a difference of opinion between the International community and Bangladesh. Kamal Siddiqui believes that the main reason for not ratifying some conventions is lack of resources to address the obligations that follow, whilst, UNICEF talks about lack of commitment and work from the Government in Bangladesh as one of the problems. I will address this further later in the section, 4.1.3 Ensuring laws and conventions. Now I will look closer at the existing legislation in Bangladesh and how it covers child labor in the formal and informal sectors.

4.1.2 A closer look at national legislation in Bangladesh

Interestingly, an ILO report (2004) shows that the existing legislation in Bangladesh is out of date and fragmented. In addition it only deals with children working in the formal sector. What about the children in the informal sector? According to a government report, National Time Bound Programme Framework (National TBP, 2006), a large portion of the children that are working in Bangladesh actually work in the informal sector. The statistics given from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 1996 below shows:

The total number of child workers in Bangladesh between 5-14 years of age was then estimated to be 6.3 million, out of which 3.8 million were boys and 2.5 million were girls. …83 per cent of the children were employed in rural areas and 17 per cent in urban areas (National TBP, 2006:4).

The statistic given from the Bangladesh Bureau Statistics reveals a serious problem. The efforts made from the Government in Bangladesh is only reaching out to the formal sector, which means that the rural areas were you find the informal sector that statistically stands for 83 per cent of the children working are not reached out to. How is it possible to eliminate worst forms of child labor in Bangladesh when 83 per cent of the child laborers are not catered for in the national legislation? ILO in Bangladesh is concerned with the situation since most of the children working in hazardous environments are working in the informal sector. They believe that the laws and commitment must reach out to these children as well:
What about the children in the informal sector? Some people in Bangladesh speak reaching elimination of worst forms of child labor in Bangladesh within 2015. Do they then mean elimination of worst forms of child labor in the formal sector? I believe that the laws much reach out to all children in Bangladesh and that all children must be prioritized (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

As a result of not reaching all children in the informal sector there are a lot of huge hidden numbers when it comes to how many children who are actually involved in child labor. Most statistics are gathered from the formal sector. In view of the large hidden numbers concerning child labor in Bangladesh, we also have to look at another important issue. A problem in Bangladesh has been registrations of births. According to the ILO (1998) there is a lack of functional birth registrations systems in the country which causes problems in combating child labor. In the UN it is stated that all children are entitled to be registered at birth (United Nations, 1989). However, in Bangladesh this is not the situation and a lot of children are not registered. This causes huge problems and complicates the work in monitoring and coordinating a system that can assess the issue of child labor. How can one eliminate child labor and put in enough resources when it is not known how many child laborers who exist?

Save the Children answered this question:

It is critique worthy that Bangladesh does not have a system in place that registers all children born. It basically causes problems for the country in the long run. They can avoid a lot of problems through ensuring that the system they have for registering children actually registers all children. It must be prioritized if one wants to combat child labor and other socioeconomic issues (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

An UN report addresses the same concern and goes further in saying that:

Though a legal framework for registration exists in Bangladesh, creating a decentralized birth registration system, the rate of birth registration is extremely low as the relevant officials often lack awareness or are incapable of effectively carrying out their duties (United Nations, 2003:18 B).

The critique from Save the Children through their own experience and the facts gathered from the UN report justifies their concern of the poor legal framework for registration of births in Bangladesh. After listening to the situation described by Save the Children and the comments from the UN report in Bangladesh there are a lot of questions I ask myself. It might be that there are other factors involved besides an insufficient legal framework and such as I see it there is a need to look more nuanced at the situation. Do people understand the necessity of registration? Does it cost to register a child? If the children are not registrated can the children still go to school? It might also be that the parents lack sufficient enough information from the
I agree with that it is not enough to have a legal framework for registration that is insufficient, however, one have to look at the ‘big picture’. A system cannot function properly if the people that are supposed to carry out the duties of the system lack awareness and/or are incapable. In addition, it is important to raise the awareness of the people through information. Without doing so it will be very difficult to understand and difficult to solve the problems that arise as a result of insufficient birth registration. In the next section 4.1.3 Ensuring laws and conventions, I will look further at problems related to lack of training and practice of officials, and problems related to enforcing laws and conventions.

4.1.3 Ensuring laws and conventions

The ILO Conventions and Recommendations set the legal framework for the member countries to follow in order to combat issues such as child labor. Importantly, the Government in Bangladesh also has to ensure that the enforcement of the conventions and recommendations are done accordingly. If the legal framework is to work properly the Government must take all necessary measures, including adequate training of staff and provision of penalties to ensure effective enforcement. Ratifying without ensuring enforcement takes away the chance of successfully combating the worst forms of child labor (ILO, 1998).

In Bangladesh they have an inspection system in place. The enforcement mechanism consists of the Department of Inspection which has the regional and zonal offices for enforcement of labor laws. Their functions include the following:

- Inspection of factories, shops, commercial establishments, tea plantations, ports/docks, railways, inland water transport and road transport under labor laws for enforcement of the provisions relating to safety, health, hours of work, rest etc (Daily Star, 2004:1).

The objective of the Department of Inspection is to monitor and ensure that the laws and conventions are being successfully enforced. However, there are a lot of factors which are difficulties labor inspectorates in a lot of countries such as Bangladesh encounter. Such difficulties may be:

- Lack of material resources including scarce transport;
- Understaffing of inspection offices;
- Overwork and low pay for inspectors;
- Inspectors’ perception of child labor;
- Lack of appropriate training on the special vulnerability of children, child labor and hazards to which children are exposed;
• Powers limited by law and lack of appropriate techniques;
• Lack of motivation;
• Hostile environment;
• Lack of cooperation and support from other government agencies, including the education system;
• Clandestine nature of child work.

The situation with the labor inspectorate in Bangladesh reflects many of the difficulties listed above. Kamal Siddiqui believes that there are a lot of factors which are influencing the inspection mechanism, which makes it not function properly. When he commented on a question:

Q: Who ensures that the laws and conventions actually are being followed?
Kamal Siddiqui: The labor ministers office is the political organ that is suppose to ensure that the laws and conventions are being followed. The mechanism that is in place is not cable of ensuring that the laws and conventions are implemented and followed. The people that work there are poorly paid, and are too few to actually cover the whole formal sector, yet alone the informal sector. Without more resources it is unrealistic to make it work. It is impossible to combat child labor if the system is not properly in place (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).

The difficulties described by Kamal Siddiqui are major obstacles for Bangladesh to overcome. Without a proper functioning labor inspectorate one can not effectively protect against child labor as a result of the weakness of the enforcement mechanism. Further, according to Kamal Siddiqui the system does not cover the whole country. It only covers the formal sector. This is a huge problem since the large numbers of children found in the worst forms of child labor are situated in the informal sector. ILO (1998) describes further the problems with enforcement in the informal sector:

Enforcement problems are acute in the informal sector, away from main cities and in agriculture, in small businesses such as shops and hotels, in street trading, and in domestic service and home-based work. Since most working children are found in agriculture, domestic service and the informal sector, most of them work where child labor law enforcement is virtually absent (ILO, 1998:87).

Since the majority of children working in the worst forms of child labor are found in the informal sector, this implies that the system fails in reaching those children. Consequently, these children are not protected from child labor abuse. In many countries the labor inspectorate can be one of the most powerful tools in the government’s efforts towards combating worst forms of child labor. According to ILO (1998) the labor inspectors are often the only ones that get access to working children in workplaces where NGO’s are not
allowed. Earlier in the section, 4.1.1 The laws and conventions ratified and rejected by Bangladesh, I discussed the importance of Bangladesh ratifying the conventions and the consequences for not ratifying. If we look at the conventions in view of enforcement, what good comes out of having conventions and laws in place if they are not properly enforced? The reality is that the tools which ILO talks about to use to combat child labor have limited or no effect in reaching children who are working in the informal sector. Moreover, if we look at the National TBP (2006) government report we can see in detail some challenges the Department of inspection are faced with. According to the report the Department of Inspection have problems in ensuring that the laws and conventions are being followed:

It is not only the substantive provisions of the law that are inadequate; the enforcement and monitoring mechanism are also inadequate and ineffective… There are only sixty three inspectors for an estimated number of 18,622 registered factories in the country with many factories operating without registration. The number of inspectors who work through divisional and regional offices in various parts or the country is evidently inadequate and, therefore, proper inspection and follow-up of the laws are not possible (National TBP, 2006:11).

The report states that one of the reasons for the Department for not functioning properly is because of lack of resources. Kamal Siddiqui mentioned earlier that lack of resources was one of the reasons why Bangladesh had difficulties with ratifying some conventions and dealing with the obligations that followed, whilst ILO and UNICEF believed lack of commitment and political will to be the problem. The report from the National TBP (2006) shows that neither of the parties might be wrong and that not only lack of commitment and political will is a problem:

Like other general law and justice institutions, the labor inspection services are weak and lack required resources- both human and financial- to be effective. Although most of the labor laws either prescribe admission of children to work under specified age (in most cases, below the international standard) or prescribe certain special measures (not adequate) where children are allowed to work, the labor inspectorate lacks the capacity to monitor the child labor situation in the factories (National TBP, 2006:11).

Looking closer at what ILO, UNICEF and Kamal Siddiqui said they all might be right, there are several reasons for why things are not working. The reasons are not contradictory, only different aspects of the same problem. The national TBP (2006) also takes up the issue of lack of resources, i.e. the reason for not ratifying the conventions and the reason for problems with ensuring that the laws and conventions actually are followed might be as a result of both of lack of resources, lack of commitment and political will.
Moreover, if we look further at the relationship between the inspectorate and the labor courts, we can see that the seven labor courts supplement the inspectorate in Bangladesh. They are established under the Industrial Relations Ordinance of 1965 for solving mainly labor disputes, however they have jurisdiction to adjudicate violation of all labor laws as well (Daily Star, 2004). Here is an outline of the structure of the Ministry of Labor and Employment in Bangladesh:

The situation in Bangladesh is that the country is far from reaching the goal set by the Ministry of Labor and Employment of achieving the objective to monitor and ensure that the laws and conventions are being successfully enforced. A question I asked myself was how the Department of Inspection, the seven labor courts and the Ministry of Labor and Employment cooperate? I addressed this issue to the ILO:

**Q:** How do the Department of Inspection, the seven labor courts and the Ministry of Labor Employment cooperate?

**ILO:** That is a very important question and a very big problem in Bangladesh. Like the CRC (Conventions of the Rights of the Child), in Bangladesh you have 11 ministers that are responsible to implement and to ensure the CRC within the country. The problem is that there is no integration and cooperation between the Department of Inspection, the labor courts and the ministers. So that makes it very difficult. As a result of lack of coordination they have huge problems with the implementation and with the ensuring of the CRC. In addition I also believe it is a question of political will. I mean it appears to me that they have all these nice laws, but when it comes to implementation it is not that much political will to actually ensure that these laws are implemented (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

The lack of cooperation between the political organs which is described above is a major obstacle for Bangladesh to overcome. ILO believes that lack of commitment and political
will is the main reason for why the cooperation between the Department of Inspection, the labor courts and the ministers has failed. Whilst, Kamal Siddiqui which is a political advisor for the Government in Bangladesh, believes it is a question of lack of resources and lack of training. Here one can again clearly see that they are addressing the same problem whilst highlighting different causes as the main reason for the problems.

Furthermore, I would like to look closer at problems the courts in Bangladesh often have. Often a problem can be that people have difficulties in getting a case taken up in court. The state has the primary and general responsibilities for making sure the laws are enforced and that the ones that break the laws get punished. Save the Children have experienced many cases were it has been difficult to take a case to court:

    We do have some examples of people trying to use the courts to enforce implementation, but the fact that it is some people that are benefiting from the laws not being ensured. It is a power game between the ones that break the law and the ones that are suppose to uphold the law. This makes implementation and enforcement even more difficult. You have to also consider that it is not that difficult to get influence to policies and the system in Bangladesh (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

The example given by Save the Children above shows another aspect of challenges and difficulties one encounter with the enforcement of the laws. Not only is the system having problems in functioning properly due lack of resource, the system also has problems and weaknesses due to how people take advantage of the system to fit their own needs. Some people are gaining from the problems and weaknesses within the system. A report from the National TBP (2006) illustrates this very well:

    The penalty for violating the legal provisions to stop child labor is not severe enough and therefore lacks the deterrent bite for such offences. The benefit of violating the law, in most cases, outweighs the fear of being penalized (National TBP, 2006:11).

The report above and the examples given by Save the Children illustrate well the concern they have towards the problems and the weaknesses to the enforcement mechanism. The Government in Bangladesh not only needs the conventions and the recommendations in place, they also need other necessary measures, such as better enforcement on penalties, more resources and commitment so that one can ensure that the enforcement mechanism is working effectively.
4.1.4 ILO and challenges with Conventions

In the sections, 4.1 International and legal aspect, I discuss the ILO conventions and recommendations in Bangladesh. I give an overview of the current situation and look at the Conventions and recommendations Bangladesh has ratified and implemented, and which they have not. In this section I will look at the cooperation between the ILO and Bangladesh, and the attitudes of the policy makers. I will also look at ILO and challenges with conventions. An interesting question is if the challenges and problems ILO are encountering in Bangladesh is a result of difficulties with the ratification of the ILO Conventions and/or the implementation?

ILO and other international organizations believe the key to successfully combating the worst forms of child labor in Bangladesh is through cooperation. The role ILO is playing is to use advocacy towards the government. They want to put pressure on them so that they make the necessary adjustments and changes in combating child labor. The three key aspects of their role consist of capacity building, advocacy and direct support (ILO, 1998). I asked Kamal Siddiqui about how he assesses the cooperation between the international community and Bangladesh:

Q: How is the international community and Bangladesh cooperating when it comes to issues of child labor?
Kamal Siddiqui: If you look at organizations such as UNICEF, ILO and Save the Children as an example, they are using a lot of advocacy towards the government. Is it working? NO. The government listens, but they do not act. Nobody in the government likes child labor, but still among all the political issues child labor is not a priority (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).

The way the word cooperation is described by Kamal Siddiqui above is clearly not the kind of cooperation the international community is using advocacy towards. However, it is the reality and the fact that the government is passive, which constitutes a huge challenge in combating child labor. If the key in successfully combating child labor lies in cooperation, the international community and Bangladesh have a serious problem on their hands. I believe that ILO is aware of the problems and that is why they are constantly putting pressure on the Government to make the necessary adjustments and changes. A UN report from 2003 states that cooperation between the parties (or stakeholders) must be expanded:

As a means of tackling the integrated issues of education and child labor, including in the informal sector, the Committee recommends that effective information campaign be carried out to prevent and eliminate child labor, and that the present cooperation between the State party, international organizations such as the International Labor
Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, and non-governmental organizations be expanded (United Nations, 2003:5 A).

The report recommends that the cooperation between the parties (or stakeholders) must be expanded and intensified. In addition, the report recommends using information actively in order to make it possible to cooperation, so that they can effectively work towards preventing and eliminating child labor. Negotiations will play a large part in setting the terms for the cooperation. This can make it clearer for all parties involved in understanding what are expected of them.

Another UN report from 2003 expresses that not only the cooperation must be expanded, but that collaboration is essential:

Collaboration between the Government and the NGO’s is based… on a recognition of the special expertise that NGO’s can offer, which in many years effectively complements the Governments own strengths (United Nations, 2003:9 B).

Collaboration is a key element in which the different parties involved in the cooperation combines their strengths in order to compliment each other. Importantly, all stakeholders have to stick to their promises. Nevertheless, according to Bjerkan (1997) a problem in the past has been that it has been a lack of coherent approach towards combating child labor among the parties involved. The consequences may be ineffectiveness and pulling in different directions. As a researcher I believe that the issue of a coherent approach is a necessity. I share the view of Bjerkan (1997) and my own experience is that even within organizations such as the UN you have sub-organizations which have different approaches and is not even aware of what each organization is doing towards child labor.

I further believe that a lot of the problems and the challenges described above have to do with the mindset of the policymakers, both locally, nationally and internationally. ILO (1998) believes that one of the biggest challenges they have is the mindset of policy makers and planners. Why are different stakeholders working incoherent? And why are some lacking commitment and political will? I believe that some of the answers lie in the attitudes of the policy makers internationally. ILO believes that the attitudes and the mindset of policymakers are a huge challenge:

Here in Bangladesh there are several international organizations working towards combating child labor… One problem that we often have encountered is that organizations are not aware of what each other are doing. That is a problem we in ILO
have tried to work towards for many years now. The consequences are that the organizations and their work become ineffective and that they work in different directions... That is why we are trying to advocate towards changing their mindset and their attitudes (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

The unawareness which ILO expresses above is a problem and they are trying to do something about it. Furthermore, if the international organizations are struggling with this, is it then strange that governments such as Bangladesh often are reluctant and resisting to implement laws and legislations? It might not be that the reason for Bangladesh not implementing is because of the inconsistency from the international community. What about the mindset and attitudes if the Government in Bangladesh? Save the Children believe that the mindset and the attitudes of the Government in Bangladesh is a huge problem:

The mindset and the philosophy of the policymakers in Bangladesh is something that is a huge problem. They think that in Bangladeshi context we are not ready to implement new conventions. So they instead decide to stay passive and to do nothing. Even the conventions they have ratified are not properly implemented (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

Save the Children expresses their concern with Bangladesh not being ready to implement conventions. However, Bangladesh has ratified most of the ILO Conventions, but they are not implemented successfully. A job half done is not well done and things need to be done properly. The government must be committed to achieving full implementation. This is just as important as the work towards establishing a coherent approach towards combating child labor.

4.2 Education for All: The EFA goals 2015

In this section I will try to give an insight to the relationship between Education, child labor and poverty. I will be looking closer at the Education that is present in Bangladesh. What are the challenges Bangladesh is faced with, what are the barriers that exist so that children either do not enter school or drop out? The international community wants education to be for all within 2015. Is this possible in Bangladesh? How does the Government’s attitudes, political awareness and commitment influence in achieving the goals set? In addition I will also look at a success story in Bangladesh, a program called Underprivileged Children’s Educational Program (UCEP) in Bangladesh.
4.2.1 Barriers that exists

If we take a historical glance to the beginning of the 1990s Bangladesh was starting to make some changes to education and according to the Government report, National TBP (2006) they were committed to make efforts towards Universal Primary Education. Sub sequential after the World conference on Education for All in 1990 at Jomtien, Thailand, the Government in Bangladesh prepared its first EFA National Plan of Action. This resulted in new policies in line with the ‘new’ direction the Government in Bangladesh had chosen. At first the international community sat the goal of achieving Education for All by the year 2000. However that goal has now been extended until 2015 with extra measures to reach the goals (National TBP, 2006). In 1992 the government in Bangladesh introduced the Primary and Mass Education Division so that they could ensure compulsory education for all children aged 6 years and above. The results of this was that the government successfully increased the enrolment rates and that they were on their way in achieving one of the EFA goals of ensuring that all children were given complete free and compulsory primary education (National TBP, 2006). However, at the same time the country was experiencing very high drop out rates. According to a report from ILO (2004) there are a lot of barriers and serious consequences that come as a result of the problem related to the high drop out rates:

- Nearly 50 per cent of primary school students drop out before they complete grade 5, and then gravitate towards work, welling the number of child laborers. The high drop out rates are correlated with the low quality of public primary education, low adult literacy, low awareness of the importance of education, teacher-student ratio (sometimes goes up to 1 per 100), non-availability of didactic and learning, and the cost of education. Basic primary education is free as far as direct costs and school books are concerned. But many indirect costs are involved as well, such as transport, uniforms, pens, pencils and paper/notebooks (ILO, 2004:2).

At first it looks good that Bangladesh has managed to successfully increase the number of children that enroll in primary education. However, looking closer at the situation, increasing the number of children enrolled is not equivalent to actually have achieved the EFA goal. The idea behind the goal is for every child to finish a minimum of years, usually equivalent to primary education and that is not accomplished when nearly half of the children never finishes grade 5. The example given by ILO (2004) above clearly shows the link between child labor and education, since education which is not of a good quality and relevant can cause children to drop out, which again enlargers the number of children that are left with the only option of being a child laborer.
Another problem is the indirect costs related to attending school. The government is providing free and compulsory education, which is a good initiative in getting the children enrolled. However, when the children are enrolled they are met with other costs which they have problems with covering. One of the mothers of one of the students at the UCEP Schools had this to say about the difficulties in having her daughter in school:

I am very depended upon the children working, especially now that I am getting older and cannot work as much as I could before. But I know that their education is important and I try my best to make it possible for them to go to school. The money we have is very little. The house rent is about 1500 Dhaka a month (40 dollar), and all the other expenses are around 500 Dhaka (14 dollar). After we have paid for all the expenses we do not have any money left. I do not know how to pay for having her in school, because of all of the costs involved. It is very difficult. As you can see my daughter is wearing the same clothes today as she had a few days ago and I am very ashamed of that. However, I know that I and my daughter have a better chance of making it here at the UCEP School than at a public school. (Interview, Parent 1, 2006-09-14).

Another parent at the UCEP Schools also expressed similar difficulties he has encountered when trying to provide education for his son:

At first I was very skeptic in sending my son to school. I had once sent my son to a public school. I was told that the government would help me and the other parents out financially so that we could allow sending our children to school. What happened was that we were not aware of how expensive it would be to have my son in school. The money we got from the government only paid for the tuition fee and some food allowance, however we could not afford the other costs we had to pay and I then had to withdraw my son from school and it did not take long before he had to go back to work (Interview, Parent 2, 2006-09-14).

What both parents have experienced above clearly shows the difficulties which ILO addressed, that there are a lot of indirect costs which the children and their families are met with. The government takes care of the direct costs such as enrolment fees, however, they neglect the fact that other costs are crucial for children and their families to be able to afford choosing school. The mother and father above are doing everything that is in their power so their children can continue to go to school. The mother expressed that she was afraid that soon she would have to withdraw her daughter from school because of the difficulties she had with paying for her daughter’s education.

There are also other barriers many children and their families experience. According to the National TBP (2006) early marriage is a big problem in Bangladesh and a very difficult barrier to deal with. The laws for what age a girl and a boy in Bangladesh can get married, is
fragmented and weak, so that the law can be bypassed by religious personal laws permitting marriage at an earlier age than the state law permits. The lack of a sufficient and effective national law on early marriage paves the way for creating a barrier which makes it difficult for many children to enter or to continue their education. Teachers at the UCEP Schools are very worried and know that the fight against early marriage is a continuous struggle until the laws and legislation in Bangladesh changes. I talked to some of the teachers about problems related to early marriage:

Q: What barriers exist so that children either do not enter or drop out of school?
T1: One of the biggest barriers for children such as I see it is early marriage, especially for girls. In Bangladesh we have a culture for that. Girls get married early quite too often and then they have to quit school because of that. We have tried to help the children, both boys and girls, but it is difficult because the laws can not prevent it from happening. It is very frustrating and hard for us to see children with such a great passion for education gets their chance of creating a better life for them self ruined (Interview, Teacher 1, 2006-09-15).

Another teacher at the UCEP Schools elaborates further on problems due to early marriage in relation to other socioeconomic factors:

T2: There are a lot of barriers that exists for children so that they either do not enter or drop out. The main source such as I see it is poverty. You have to look at the link between poverty and barriers such as early marriage. In families were they are really poor, one solution often can be in succeeding in getting their children married. Through marriage the family often can rely on help from the other family in which their daughter or son is married into. Such as I see it early marriage often is a last solution for poor families. That is why I believe one can not look at early marriage and other barriers without looking at poverty (Interview, Teacher 2, 2006-09-15).

Furthermore, a third teacher at the UCEP Schools elaborates on other barriers:

Q: What other barriers do you believe exists?
T3: I have already mentioned early marriage, poverty and there are many more barriers I believe exists. One problem that we often encounter is related to migration. A lot of children move to the big cities to get jobs and they end up with bad jobs that pay poorly. The conditions are often very bad as well and almost impossible to attend school because they have to work all the time to get enough money. The fact that many children migrate to the bigger cities and leave their families behind, create difficulties for them to succeed, yet alone getting an education. That is why I believe migration to be a huge barrier as well (Interview, Teacher 3, 2006-09-15).

The teachers express frustration and worry over the fact that many children are in a state were barriers hinder them in getting an education. Or more importantly, it hinders them of the rights as a child. The UN has stated that every child under the age of 18 has special rights and that one must secure that their rights are not violated (United Nations, 2003 C). However,
laws and legislations in Bangladesh do not protect the children against getting deprived of their rights. The UN defines a child to be everybody under the age of 18 years. The fact that Bangladesh is yet to define the age of what a child is in combination with not having laws and legislations in place prohibiting children of getting married in an early age, create huge barriers and difficulties for schools and their teachers (United Nations, 2003 B). Understandable the teachers know that things need to be changed and that the key lies in the change in laws and legislation, in combination implementation. Further, one of the teachers draws an important link between poverty and barriers such as early marriage. Jillani (1998) draws some of the same conclusions and he believes that the reason for why many families are depended upon their children to contribute is because they are poor. A consequence of them being poor is that early marriage is a solution which they often can not get away from.

4.2.2 Is Education for All possible?

The World conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand 1990, set the conditions for Bangladesh to work towards making Education for All possible (National TBP, 2006). A lot of countries around the world including Bangladesh have had problems with achieving the EFA goals. I will try to give an insight into some of the challenges Bangladesh has met and what measures need to be taken in order to ensure that the goals are successfully achieved. In addition I will look at the role of the donors and how they can influence countries such as Bangladesh so that they can meet the EFA goals.

The headmaster at the UCEP Schools believes there are a lot of challenges. I asked him about what he saw as the biggest challenges for Bangladesh when it came to the EFA goals:

The biggest challenges such as I see it is to make education more relevant and better. One thing you have to remember is that when we think about making education accessible to all children we are then also talking about children and their families that are at the lowest level in society when it comes to how poor they are. The most important for them is to survive day by day. The ones that actually get access to education are taught things they can not use in real life. They need to be taught things they actually can use. That is why it is very important that the education provided is relevant and of a good quality (Interview, Headmaster UCEP Schools, 2006-09-15).

What does relevant and education of good quality imply? According to UNESCO (2005) there are two principles that characterize the definition of quality in education:

The first identifies learners’ cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all education systems. Accordingly, the success with which systems achieve this is one
indicator of their quality. The second emphasizes education’s role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development. The achievement of these objectives is more difficult to assess and compare across countries (UNESCO, 2005).

Having this definition in mind, we can clearly see that it is difficult for us to assess if the education UCEP provides is of a relevant and good quality or not. The definition of quality acts as an indicator for which educations systems such as the UCEP Schools can see if they are achieving the objectives above (UNESCO, 2005). According to the headmaster at the UCEP Schools he believes relevant and good education to be something the children can use in real life. He states further that the reason for why they provide vocational and general education is because the UCEP Schools believes that the children must be taught something they actually can use after they graduate. The headmaster above talks along the same line as the UNESCO and agrees that the education must be of value for the children and their families. His goal is that all children shall have access to education and that the education provided should be education and knowledge the children can apply in everyday life (Bruns et al., 2003).

Further, UNICEF also believes that one of the major challenges is the Government and their role in addressing the problem of education being irrelevant and of a poor quality:

A major challenge in Bangladesh is the education that is available for children. It is often of a very poor quality and of no relevance to them at all. We are aware of this and we are trying to put pressure on the Government so that they understand the importance of having an education that is good and relevant. However, things take time in Bangladesh. It is only so little we can do and so much that needs to be done. The Government needs to take responsibility. Over the last years we have been seeing some good signs and things are beginning to happen. But is it little to late? (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).

If we have the definition given by UNESCO (2005) still in mind, Importantly, I use the definition of quality as an indicator to try to understand the complexity and difficulties in assessing the situation with Bangladesh. This is something that is difficult to understand and to interpret, however, we can try to assess if the way UNICEF describes education in Bangladesh to be ‘liable’ in view of the definition of quality. Hence, I would argue that there is a gap between what is expected of Bangladesh according to the definition of good quality and the actual situation in the country.
Furthermore, according to ILO (1998) and Kamal Siddiqui, this is a matter of lack of political will and commitment from the Government. A question one can ask is if the gap is intentional or not, or if it is just ignorance? It is difficult to answer such a question. However, the former can be argued since the government clearly has prioritized to focus its efforts towards enrolment and not direct efforts towards combating child labor and barriers resulting in dropout and children not entering education (National TBP, 2006). Kamal Siddiqui (2007) elaborates: “the Government listens, but they do not act. Nobody in the Government likes child labor, but still among all the political issues child labor is not a priority”.

Furthermore, when it comes to the Government’s focus on enrolment, Save the Children addressed further this issue and they argued the importance to look at ‘enrolment vs. quality’ of education in Bangladesh. They are concerned with the Bangladeshi goal of satisfying the international community in terms of increasing the enrolment rate, but not necessarily looking at the quality of the education provided:

One of the biggest challenges we are faced with in Bangladesh is the barriers that exist so that children either drop out or do not enter. The government in the country spends a lot of resources to increase the enrolment rate so that it satisfies the international community and the EFA goals. However they do not think about canalizing some of those resources to ensure that the quality of the education is relevant and good. What are the benefits for the country if the ones that get enrolled do not finish their education? I feel like the government has to focus on the long run and the things that is god for the country and its development (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

The Government must ensure that a good quality level is maintained and that the costs related to the children and their families are dealt with so that no children do not enter or drop out from education because of the costs of choosing to take an education. The government must change focus so that all the barriers which cause children to be excluded from education, especially child labor, are dealt with. In addition, the low awareness of the importance of education and the teacher-student ratio is something that needs to be taken into account. According to the National TBP (2006) report, it can be a problem with the quality of the education if the student teacher ratio is too high. Creating awareness must be prioritized because it is important that the children, the parents, teachers and the community as a whole are aware of the benefits of education. Only through information is it possible to increase the understanding of how valuable education can be (National TBP, 2006). Importantly, the policymakers also needs to increase their awareness towards children not only getting enrolled, but also that they complete their education. If politicians do not prioritize child labor
on the political agenda, it will be very difficult to have a chance in successfully achieve the EFA goals. It looks like the Government has been more focused on increasing the enrolment rather than ensuring the quality of the education. An ILO (2004) document shows that the focus has been towards increasing the number of children enrolled:

In collaboration with the World Food Program (WFP), the Government started the food for Education programme in 1993 with an aim to attract poor children and their families towards primary education (ILO, 2004:3).

The initiative mentioned above is in itself not a bad initiative. However, by itself it will not increase the number of children that complete their education. It only increases the number of children enrolled and that is a problem. It does not solve the number of children that drop out or do not enter education. ILO in Bangladesh believes that the quality of the education is very important and that it has direct affects towards the children and their family’s decision to choose to prioritize education or not:

They do not see the direct benefits from education, because they are poor and their only concern is to survive. They do not see how education can help them in surviving. They do not understand that by deciding to send the children to work you are going through a vicious circle. If you do not take an education the only option many of them have left is to become a low skilled worker. And what will happen then? S/he will be poor and low skilled, again since s/he is poor, his or her children will also become poor and they cannot provide education for their children and they also will be forced to work. So it is kind of a vicious circle, going round and round (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

This is a very good example of parents that do not see the education provided for their children as the ‘best’ option for them. Their goal is to survive and the education that their children are offered is not helping them in preparing them to handle life after school. The education is not relevant and is not a ‘tool’ for them to use outside school. The consequences for the families involved are massive and in many ways it creates a ‘vicious circle’. In many ways it is a bit ironic. We often talk about using education as a ‘tool’ to help against poverty and inequality, however, if the relevance and the quality of the education provided is poor, it can be argued that the ‘tool’ is not helping them at all. In many situations it is actually doing the opposite, since they often are worse off after they are removed from working and put in to school. The reason for this being that the families loose the income the children contribute with and that they become poorer than they were before their children started education (Jillani, 1998).
4.2.3 The role of the Donors

How does the role of the donors affect Bangladesh and towards achieving Education for all? According to a research by Bruns et al. (2003) a lot of countries will have difficulties in reaching the EFA goals even with maximum efforts from donors. This sets things in perspective and gives us an idea of how difficult it will be for Bangladesh achieving the goals, since it is one of the poorest countries in the world. Bruns et al. (2003) believe that the donors play a very essential role in achieving the goals. Having this in mind, there is a program called, EFA Fast Track Initiative, which is a global cooperation between donor and developing countries\(^7\) to ensure progress towards achieving the EFA goals. Interestingly, Bangladesh is not one of the countries who have joined the fast track initiative (World Bank, s.a). It would be interesting to find out why Bangladesh is not a member? Especially, considering the challenges and difficulties the country is struggling with. Moreover, Kamal Siddiqui (2007) argues that it is impossible for Bangladesh to achieve Education for All without help from the donors and he even goes so far as to state that more help is needed, or otherwise it will be impossible to meet the goals. However, the concerns from the donors have been that they see lack of political stability, effectiveness and commitment from the Government in Bangladesh as a huge problem. The Norwegian Embassy had this to say about their role as a donor:

There are huge challenges for us as a donor. The Government in Bangladesh wants more autonomy over the money we give in support. However, that is difficult for us to do since the Government does not guarantee us that the money we give them are spent where it is meant for it to be spent. As long as they cannot show us a record of the money spent as agreed, we have no other choice than to assist in every aspect from where the money is transferred to the project is started. It is not an ideal situation for both parties when this is much more costly and ineffective, but it at least guarantees as fare as it is possible to guarantee, that the money is spent according to the initial plan (Interview, Norwegian Embassy, 2006-09-03).

The cooperation between the Norwegian Embassy as a donor and the Government is very important. Nevertheless, a maximization of the efforts, which Bruns et al. (2003) talk about, is not what I assess as first priority. Importantly, it is not ideal that the donors such as the Norwegian Embassy must put efforts and resources into guaranteeing that the money is spent properly. That extra effort and resources could have instead been spent directly at a potential

\(^7\)The following countries has joined the Fast-Track Initiative: Albania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Djibouti, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Vietnam and Yemen.
project. However, data from my research confirm lack of political stability, commitment, and effectiveness. Therefore, the worries of the embassy seem legitimate. Bruns et al. (2003) further believe that the key lies in the Bangladeshi will to make necessary changes and adjustments, whilst the donors accordingly give the Government more autonomy and fewer restrictions. If these changes and adjustments are done properly it will increase Bangladesh’s chances of achieving the EFA goals.

Further, I asked national and international organizations in Bangladesh how realistic it is to achieve Education for All in Bangladesh within 2015. When I asked ILO Bangladesh they commented:

The current situation shows that this is not possible to do. The way things are going it may not be possible to achieve the targeted EFA goals. There are huge challenges that Bangladesh has in a lot of areas within education and child labor. These challenges must be overcome in order to achieve the goals, but it is not possible to achieve this within 2015 (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

Save the Children Bangladesh also believes it will be impossible:

How can it be possible? The enrolment rate is increasing, that is true. Nevertheless, one has to start looking at the big picture. When over 50 per cent of children dropout before reaching grade 5, what good is it then to have increased the number of children enrolled? In addition to this what about education for children in remote villages, and places were mobility is difficult, and also groups within society who live with disabilities. Without reaching those children, education is not for all (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

ILO and Save the Children do not assess it realistic for Bangladesh to meet the EFA goals with in 2015. They argue that the challenges and the barriers Bangladesh is faced with are hindering the country in reaching the goals. As long as the dropout rates continue to rise, children do not enter education, and Bangladesh does not prioritize child labor and education it will be difficult to achieve the EFA goals. Hence, I share the view of ILO when it comes to looking at the big picture. The Government must shift their focus from only looking at the enrolment, and they have to look closer at the big picture and focus on every aspect of education. According to Jillani (1998) they have to increase their awareness of the interrelationship between education and child labor.

When Kamal Siddiqui was asked about if Education for All was possible within 2015 he had this to say:
I believe that Education for All is possible, but not within 2015. There are too much that needs to be done and so little time and resources available. Huge changes must be done and my concern is if those in charge in Bangladesh are ready to make these changes and if they want to make these changes. That is the question we should ask ourselves (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).

Siddiqui is addressing a very important issue. No matter how much the donors support, or organizations both locally, nationally and internationally use advocacy towards the Government, nothing will successfully be achieved if the Government is reluctant or incapable of making the necessary changes. All countries need to be committed to do the necessary changes themselves. However, what if they are incapable and not just reluctant? Looking back at the data analyzed so far I would argue that the reason for why Bangladesh might be incapable is a political issue. Their incapability is not a direct result of lack of resources, but rather a lack of political stability, commitment, and effectiveness.

Moreover, I asked the headmaster at the UCEP Schools about challenges with achieving Education for All within 2015:

There are a lot of challenges that hinder children in entering school or that they drop out. I have already mentioned a few challenges. If we look closer at the Government and their policies, as an example the Government has a primary education that is for children up to the age of 10 years. The recruitment for primary education is 6 years. What about the children above 10 years that do not have any education and that want to pursue one? How is Education for All for all possible when some children are left out of the equation (Interview, Headmaster UCEP Schools, 2006-09-15).

The headmaster believes that Education for All is not possible. If what he argues above is correct and that children above the age of 10 and that does not have primary education from before, are left out of the Governments plan of getting access to primary education. I would argue this to be contradictory to the Primary and Mass Education Division program the Government introduced in 1992 which was to ensure that all children aged 6 years and above would get access. However, 6 years and above looks to be more like 6 years and not children that have passed the age of 10 years, according to the headmaster at the UCEP Schools, which implies that children above 10 years are excluded.

Further, the headmaster at UCEP finds other major challenges as well hindering in reaching the EFA goals within the scheduled time:

The curriculum is so rigid and very fixed, and the conditions that the children must be able to meet are very difficult as well. Some flexibility is needed and the reality is not
like that at the moment and things definitely need to change (Interview, Headmaster UCEP Schools, 2006-09-15).

Not only are children excluded, but the ones that do get an education, experience that the curriculum is of a poor quality. In many ways the curriculum in relation to the teachers and other staff at the school sets the conditions for which one can ensure that children are been given a education that is of good quality and relevant. Moreover, UNICEF also discusses the relationship between quality and curriculum:

In Bangladesh they do not have any curriculum that actually ensures a quality education. The curriculum is nationally inconsistent which means that the education provided is different everywhere. The education is also not relevant for children that are coming from a poor background. A child that is poor needs a curriculum that fits their reality. The reality is that they need to be able to use what the school is supposed to teach them. They have to be able to apply that knowledge so that they can survive out in the ‘real’ world (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).

How is it possible to meet the EFA goals with a national curriculum that is so fragmented? Looking at the situation in Bangladesh it makes me wonder what the Government in Bangladesh intended when they after the World conference on Education for All in 1990 at Jomtien, Thailand, decided to prepare a new EFA National Plan of Action. Did they not think about a curriculum that actually would be national? The Government in Bangladesh spoke about having new policies in line with a ‘new’ direction. However a very important question to ask is whose ‘new’ line and direction? According to Kamal Siddiqui the problem with having a National Plan of Action is that in Bangladesh they have too many different schools with different curriculums. There are French, English, Hindi, Muslim and other schools that have their own way of doing things. Nobody ensures that the local curriculum provided is according to the National Plan of Action. How then is it possible to have a national curriculum which is within a ‘new line and direction’? Furthermore, the challenges which Bangladesh are faced with needs to be dealt with and included in the National plan of Action. Bangladesh is in a position to assure that the ‘new line and direction’ in the future actually is coherent and effectively applied.

4.2.4 Underprivilegded Children’s Educational Program (UCEP)

What makes UCEP a success story? UCEP- Bangladesh was founded in 1972 by a New Zealand social worker by the name Lindsay Allan Cheyne. He started off by taking a year’s leave of absence from the engineering firm he was currently working. He ended up working at
UCEP for over 16 years until he passed away in 1986. Before his death he had managed to build UCEP to what it is today and after many hard years of negotiations with donors and the government in Bangladesh UCEP managed to become a reality. The school is financed by support from international donors and NGO’s. The Government does not help UCEP financially, however, at the beginning the Government agreed to provide a building. The key to UCEP success lies in the organizational structure, the people working there and their ability to cooperate with the community (UCEP, 2000). I asked the headmaster at the UCEP Schools I visited about the importance of having schools such as the UCEP Schools:

> Just after Bangladesh got its independence the Government had very little resources, which again meant that issues related to child labor weren’t prioritized. Mr. Cheyne recognized that something needed to be done. The poorest children still needed to work, so that is when we developed the module for the children so that they could combine both work and education in form of basic education and skills training. And now this module has proved that child labor can gradually be dealt with, through removing children from hazardous work and providing education and skilled training so that they can be ready to face the life as worker, under conditions that are human and which doesn’t deprive them of their rights as to being a child and at the same time contributing to their families general income which is essential for the family, and also strengthening the countries national economy (Interview, Headmaster UCEP Schools, 2006-09-15).

The headmaster above addresses the same issue as Jillani (1998) i.e. the children need to work. That is why the UCEP program is providing both general- and vocational education. The children learn how to read and write, in addition to a skill which they can use outside of school. I talked to one of the teachers at the UCEP Schools about their role:

> We are not only teachers, but we are also the children’s guardians and that means that we also help the children with other issues they need help with. We provide guidance and support to all the children. I feel this is very important because a lot of the children that start our schools have lost their trust in society, to people and their belief in themselves. We inform the employers, the parents and also others who are necessary to inform. I think this is very important, because everybody that has a direct or an indirect influence on the children must be aware of how they can affect the children and their life quality (Interview, Teacher 3, 2006-09-15).

UCEP teachers cooperate with the local community in providing work for the children under good conditions, whilst they at the same time attend school. This is really important and through the cooperation UCEP can spread awareness about the importance of providing education for children and protecting the rights of the child. The UCEP Schools are in direct contact with the factories were the children are working. All of the children have previously been working as child laborers under hazardous conditions, now they work under conditions
that are good and at the same time attending school. This is made possible because UCEP cooperate with the community and the employers (UCEP, 2000). Such as I see it, the way UCEP work towards the children and community can be argued to be a good example of the definition of quality education given by UNESCO (2005), since UCEP strive towards being good citizens, using education and their role to promote values and attitudes of responsibilities.

Moreover, Kamal Siddiqui believes that the UCEP Schools are very important and that it should be more schools such as the UCEP Schools:

Schools such as the UCEP Schools should have been in every district all over Bangladesh. They provide something that is unique when it comes to education in Bangladesh. They provide technical and skilled education, in addition to a general education, which makes the children more equipped to face the world as a skilled worker instead of facing the world as an uneducated and unskilled worker. The fact is that the UCEP Schools provide a solution. If the education is not relevant and the quality is poor, children and their families tend to see work as the only option. UCEP, through their program, solves this problem by providing an education that is both relevant and of a good quality (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).

Further a little girl the UCEP Schools explains how her life has changed after she started at the UCEP Schools:

The biggest difference is that now my life is full of fun. I have the possibility to play with my friends, both at school and at home. Before I did not have time for that and they did not let me. Now I have the possibility to learn something. The teachers are teaching me lots of things. They have taught me how to read and write. They have taught me about child labor and about my own rights. Before I did not know that I had any rights. Nobody considered what I wanted and needed before. I often cried because I had to work so much. I am glad it has changed and that I am now in school (Interview, Child 4, 2006-09-13).

The way UCEP helps children is clearly shown through the life experience described above by the little girl. I would argue that the reason for why the UCEP Schools are a success story is because the school cooperates closely with the community, the children’s families, factories and the employers.

A father for one of the children at the UCEP Schools explains further:

[In the beginning] I was very skeptic in sending my son to the UCEP School. But I know now that things are different here [at the UCEP School] and that is got to do with the fact that my son both can attend school and work at the same time… They actually teach and educate him a skill he can use ‘out there’ (Interview, Parent 2, 2006-09-14).
This example shows that the children get the possibility to combine both school and work. The education provided for them is both relevant in terms of vocational training and of a good quality. Siddiqui even assessed it as a solution. A question I have asked myself is why the Government in Bangladesh is not financially supporting UCEP? I am yet to get an answer to that question. In the next section I will look closer at the issue of child labor.

### 4.3 Child labor

It is estimated to be more than 250 million children involved in income generating activities worldwide. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics “[there are in Bangladesh] 4.9 million working children, estimated to be 14.2 per cent of the total of 35 million children in the age group of 5-14. [Further], the total of working child population between 5 and 17 old is estimated to be at 7.9 million” (ILO, 2004:1). In section 4.2 Education for All: The EFA goals 2015, I highlighted the relationship between education, child labor and poverty. In this section I will have a closer look at child labor in order to widen the understanding of the relationship between the three issues. The focus will be on children engaged in the worst forms of child labor and in hazardous environments. However, I will also look at other aspects of children working, both negative and positive. I will try to show that schooling is not always the option which is the most beneficiary for children and their families. Furthermore, I will investigate causes of child labor, the benefits of child labor, globalization and its effects on child labor and probable implications of elimination of child labor.

If we start by looking at children working in the worst forms of child labor, according to ILO standards this means all children below 12 years of age engaged in any economic activities (Bjerkan, 1997). ILO introduced in 1994 a new international program called Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC), and the Government of Bangladesh signed that same year the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in addition to cooperating with ILO and its new program (National TBP, 2006). The goal of the program was to eliminate child labor in Bangladesh. According to ILO (2004) IPEC work consists of:

- Developing strategies and models to determine what interventions could contribute to combating child labor effectively. Interventions varied from preventing children from entering the labor market to withdrawing children from hazardous work and finding ways to rehabilitate them: monitoring of workplace; raising awareness and capacity building of partner organizations (ILO, 2004:4).
The MoU was signed 13 years ago and the goal of combating the worst forms of child labor was set to 2015. According to Kamal Siddiqui elimination of worst forms of child labor within 2015 is impossible:

Elimination of worst forms of child labor is not possible. That is unrealistic. There are huge dark numbers and the Government has no idea of how many that actually is child laborers. The formal sector is one thing, however, in the informal sector there are no complete or sufficient registration of child laborers. How then is elimination of worst forms of child labor possible within 2015 (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22)?

The concern and frustration Kamal Siddiqui is expressing is not unjust. Children are still working in worst forms of child labor and the number of children working has not significantly decreased according to National TBP (2006). Historically, Bangladesh has since 1994 experienced a lot of challenges and obstacles. In addition, the concern has been that Bangladesh is yet to define what a child is and that the laws and legislation is weak and fragmented. This is resulting in Bangladesh having ineffective enforcement of laws which causes enormous problems and difficulties for Bangladesh to protect the rights of the child.

Having the legal aspect in mind I will try to give an insight in the working environment of some of the children interviewed in my research study. It is necessary to understand two important aspects of worst forms of child labor, exploitation and hazardous. Exploitation of a child exists when an employer takes advantage of the child’s situation. There is exploitation because the financial remuneration or payment in kind, is systematically less than would have been made by the employer had they been dealing with adult employees organized in trade unions, capable of defending themselves and insisting on their due. More important, it is likely that if the employers had to pay the same remuneration to children as to adults, they would not use of the services of young persons (United Nations, 1982). Whilst, according to the National TBP (2006) the nature of the hazardous work and the circumstances can be the following:

Hazardous due both to the nature of the work (using welding torches, recycling batteries, scavenging, grinding or glazing of metals, working with plasto-rubber materials, handling of certain compounds of lead and other similar substances, working with tobacco, chemicals, and other poisonous materials, etc.) as well as the circumstances (excessive hours, night work and under confinement) (National TBP, 2006:7).

The hazardous work can have a negative effect on the children’s physical, social, emotional and spiritual development, either through detrimental work activities or/and through forcing
the children to work against their will (UNICEF, 1997 a). Children that are working under conditions such as described above can result in hampering a child’s development or worse, leaving him or her stunted and unable to work in the future (National TBP, 2006).

I asked a child that works as a domestic worker about the conditions she had to work under, so that one can get an idea of how children are exploited and how their working environment can be hazardous:

I do not like working here, but I do not have any other option so I just have to do my best. I am feeling sad all the time and the worst moments is when I see the children that live here are coming home from school and playing around the house. I wish that would be me. I have a different life. I wake up at early morning before everybody else and prepare food for the house. I remember in the beginning I used to struggle a lot with the things I was supposed to do around the house and that the family would beat me until I got it correct. Nowadays they do not beat me as much, but they still do. I barely get the chance to go outside and when I do get the chance it is because they want me to get something from the outside or to fix (Interview, Child 1, 2006-09-17).

The life situation which the young girl above describes is a good example of a child that is exploited and that is living under a hazardous environment. The family is exploiting the fact that the little girl does not have any other options besides working for them. In addition to this the working environment is having a negative effect on her and she is clearly deprived of the right of being a child (Jillani, 1998). The sad thing is that according to National TBP (2006) many families tend to use children as domestic workers but fail to see this as exploiting children, however they see it as giving the child an opportunity. This would be true if the environment which the children were working under not to be hazardous and that the children were not exploited. It would be true if the children were allowed to be children and that their rights were not violated. Further, I asked that same girl about her thought about school and getting an education:

I have never had the possibility or the luxury to choose between work and school. However, if I were given the chance to choose between the two, I would choose school. I do not see any future for me working here. Education can maybe give me a better life. I see the children that live here and how they are when they come home from school. I want to experience that too. But now I am just doing what I can to survive (Interview, Child 1, 2006-09-17).

Moreover, I asked one of the children at the UCEP Schools how the working environment was where she used to work:

I do not like to talk about it, but I know that the work you are doing is important so I want to help you. The conditions me and the other children had to work under were
terrible. It is hard to explain in words how it was. We did not get any breaks. The only breaks we got were when the manager ran out of parts for the equipment we used and we had to wait until they got new parts. We had to work long hours and many of the children, including myself often got hurt from operating the machines. I remember how they used to beat me and the other children. I just hope some of the children that still work there get the same possibility as me. I hope my prayers for their safety will be answered (Interview, Child 4, 2006-09-13).

Child 1 was talking about education as something distant and impossible. What is her ability to access education? As long as some people in Bangladesh accept child labor or/and does not do anything against using children as domestic workers and in other types of work which deprives them of their rights, children such as this girl will never have the ability to access education. Sadly, access to education is not an option for many children. It is often a luxury many people in Bangladesh cannot afford, either due to lack of access or/and because they are denied the right. Child 4 talked about her prayers getting answered so that other children could get the same possibility as her. The situation in Bangladesh described so far shows that one must rely on much more than just prayers to solve the problems of child labor. However, prayers is a result of belief and if there is something I am certain of, it is that the problem of child labor in Bangladesh will never be solved if people’s attitudes are not changed and belief is not present. People must believe that eliminating worst forms of child labor is for the better. The combination of hard work and mutual understanding about the importance of eliminating child labor is where the key lies. This leads us to what causes child labor, which is important to understand when combating worst forms of child labor.

**4.3.1 The causes of child labor**

According to Jillani (1998) poverty is a major cause of child labor. This takes the understanding of the relationship between education, child labor and poverty to another level. The fact is that poor children work to survive and to contribute to the subsistence of their families. My question is what causes children and their families to ‘choose’ child labor? How can they justify child labor? In order to answer these questions it is important to understand the relationship between poverty and child labor. Jillani (1998) believes that everyone who tries to justify child labor on grounds of poverty fails to realize that impoverishment is not only the cause, but also caused by child labor.
The issue of child labor is highly complex. The government report National TBP (2006) shares Jillani’s view and they go further in saying that there are a lot of other factors one has to consider that are contributing to and cause child labor. The government report National TBP (2006) mentions a few factors:

Rapid population growth, adult unemployment, bad working conditions, lack of minimum wages, exploitation of workers, low standard of living, low quality of education, lack of legal provisions and enforcement, low capacity of institutions, gender discrimination, conceptual thinking about child etcetera (National TBP, 2006:6).

There are other factors which the National TBP (2006) report addresses that exists as well and they are referred to as ‘push factors’, ‘pull factors’ and ‘interactive factors’. ‘Push factors’ can be when children are forced to work in order to earn money, such as “Extreme poverty, death of the earning member of the family, parental divorce, being abandoned by parents and natural calamities” (National TBP 2006:6). One of the children interviewed works as a result of ‘push factors’. The words told by this young boy illustrate how factors influence children towards working:

To work here is all I know and all I have. I don't have any family, everybody I knew is dead. I live here and I work here, I don't have many options. It is sad to work here. I used to have a friend working here with me, but he had to quit because of an injury. Now I don't know anybody. The only thing I try to do is not to get injured (Interview, Child 2, 2006-09-14).

Furthermore, ‘Pull factors’ refers to children being cheaper to employ and that they will accept lower wages. A good example of that in Bangladesh are the garment factories during the nineties which attracted a lot of poverty-stricken children that was easy to employ. The last factor is called ‘interactive factor’ which consists of a series of psychosocial factors. Here the children are exploited and their vulnerable minds are taken advantage of, leading them to work and earn money. The National TBP (2006) report lists a number of factors which persuade children to work, “e.g. parental disinterest in the child's education, failure in examinations, dropping out from school, social and psychological crisis in the family, punishment by the family members and peer group influence to work with them” (National TBP, 2006:6). The factors which the report mentions are all contributing to the large number of children working under exploitation or hazardous conditions. This clearly shows that one cannot threat matters of child labor isolated and that one must look at all factors involved and assess the main causes and consequences thoroughly.
Further, there are other main causes of child labor and I would like to discuss two of the causes further. The first cause is related to education. Thus so far in the study I have shown that there is a direct link between child labor and lack of education. The example I used was that the high dropout rates ‘paves ways’ for children to become child laborers, since that is the only option left when not entering education or dropping out. Kamal Siddiqui (Interview, 2007) has expressed that one has to look at matters of education in relation to child labor and poverty. Importantly, we have to understand that if the education provided is of a poor quality, it can cause more children to become child laborers. The second cause has got to do with the level of awareness on the issue of child labor and that it is low in Bangladesh. The society in general in Bangladesh has a rather indifferent attitude towards the problem. ILO Bangladesh believes that:

People have to recognize the linkage between education and child labor. They have to recognize that through looking at education and giving children access to a good and relevant education, one can combat child labor. As long as we have child labor, one cannot ensure that we will meet the EFA goals, because when the children are working it means they are not in education. If you want to achieve the EFA goals you have to stop child labor (Interview, ILO, 2006-09-01).

The attitudes and the awareness of people in general in Bangladesh must change. Both of the causes which I have mentioned are very important when trying to understand what causes children and their families to ‘choose’ child labor. How can one justify child labor? In the section next, 4.3.2 Culture relativism, I will further address the matter of poor level of awareness on the issue of child labor and how society in Bangladesh has indifferent attitudes towards the problem further.

**4.3.2 Culture relativism**

A question I asked myself when looking at culture relativism as an aspect of child labor, is child labor in Bangladesh culturally accepted? In the research that I have done so far I found that child labor in Bangladesh is accepted among many people. Previously in this study I used domestic workers as an example to illustrate why people believe child labor not to be negative, since they genuinely believe the children are better off working at their house instead of being poor and not working at all. If we have in mind that child labor might be culturally accepted I will now take a closer look at the concept of ‘Culture relativism’. Hartung defined this concept as:
…the relativistic point of view brings into relief the validity of every set of norms for those people whose life are guided by them, and values these represent… the core of cultural relativism is the social discipline that comes of respect of differences- of mutual respect (Hartung, 1954:118).

One must not mistake the citation from Hartung (1954) as to mean respect in the sense that one quietly can see children being abused and exploited. Importantly, one must respect other cultures, nevertheless, one must also work towards ensuring that all children, no matter what culture they should be in, must be protected against being abused and exploited as child laborers. Kamal Siddiqui gives his thoughts to why he believes child labor is culturally accepted in Bangladesh:

The truth is that many children are treated as outcast. They do not have much to say about their own decisions in life. Children all over Bangladesh have to work. It is not a choice for them to make themselves. One can say that it is incorporated into society that children are supposed to work. Culturally people accept that children work and they see nothing wrong in deciding for the child and that is best for them. Do not take me wrong, a lot of people in Bangladesh work towards combating child labor and protecting their rights. However, the truth is that a lot of people see nothing wrong in exploiting children. That is the problem (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).

It is wrong to take advantage of other human beings, however, one must keep in mind that one must try to maintain respect and mutual understanding for other cultures, since this is important in order to understand how one can solve problems such as child labor (Siddiqui, 2007).

Furthermore, I will look closer at the concept of culture relativism in light of the issue of laws and conventions being applicable to all member countries in the UN. According to Executive Board AAA (1947) there is a problem of accepting the decisions made in the UN to be applicable to all member countries, since a few countries are involved in the policy decision process and their cultures are dominantly reflected in the documents. In this study I found that the problem in Bangladesh was not that laws and conventions agreed in the UN was not applicable, the problem was lack of political will, political commitment and, to some extent, lack of resources in Bangladesh. Frankena (1973:109) states that “what is right or good for one individual or society is not right or good for another, even if the situation are similar, meaning not merely that what is though right or good by one is not right or good by another…”. With these words in mind, I believe the discussion about laws and conventions being relevant and applicable is not the problem and is not were the focus should be. I might be that the policy decision process is contradictory since a few countries influence more than
other during the process of new laws and conventions. However, the important thing is that everyone knows and believes that abusing and exploiting children as child laborers is wrong. No matter what culture one has one must try to understand how child labor is affecting the society and how one can combat child labor. I would argue that a question of applicability and other factors are more prominent when discussing this issue.

4.3.3 The benefits of child labor

The general idea is often that child labor is something negative and not the most optimal for neither the child nor its family. However, children working might actually be the most optimal situation for children and their families. In order to understand the complexity of child labor one has to evaluate closely the reason’s for why children and their families choose to send their children to work instead of investing in human capital accumulation in form of schooling. Is this choice always sub-optimal from the society’s point of view? Is it an irrational choice on the part of the family in the sense that their long term interest would always be better served by schooling (Grote et al., 1998)? The study done by Grote et al. (1998) found that the idea of deciding to let children work as to be the most optimal for the household had interestingly not been considered. What I found in my research study was something similar, that it might be optimal to let children work under some circumstances. The organizations Save the Children, UNICEF and ILO in Bangladesh which I interviewed did not mention work as an optimal option when I asked them about children working compared to schooling. I would believe that one of the most important questions would have to be if the decisions of sending their children to school would be better than letting them work. What would be the optimal decision for the families and their children? This is what UNICEF had to say:

Q: What is the most optimal choice for the children and their families?
UNICEF: The most optimal choice is for the children to get an education. They must be removed from hazardous work. We believe that education can strengthen the lives of the children and their families in the long run.

Q: What if work would be the most optimal for the children and their families?
UNICEF: The way I see it work is not the most optimal. You have to consider that the children are working in hazardous environments and they must be removed from that and education provides a better option for the children and their families (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).
I can understand that a child working in worst forms of child labor in hazardous environments is not a good option. However, what I found interesting was that none of the organizations seemed to have evaluated work as sometimes potentially being a better option. I believe that education, if provided in a form which is relevant and good, is an excellent option. I also believe that one also have to consider that in some cases work can be beneficial for children and families as well. As long as children work under good conditions, they have access education if they want to, and their rights are not in any other ways violated, than they might have a better chance of reaching their full potential as a child. What UNICEF describes above might be the most optimal solution in an ‘ideal’ world. Nevertheless, when discussing what is to be the most optimal one has to remember that one is talking about children and families that are at the bottom of social ladder in terms of life standard and life quality due to poverty. The children and their families interviewed in my study talk about doing what they can to survive. According to Grote et al. (1998) a research study conducted in India showed that working children contributed an average of 20-25% of the family total income. This is quite considerable and makes the difference between survival and starvation. It is important to remember that by choosing to work now might help the children and the family to survive. The work experience gained by children may even enhance the chance of both the child and the family surviving in the future, more than a few years of formal education might be able to provide (Jillani, 1998). When talking about education as a ‘tool’ and a better option, one must not forget that the benefits from taking an education might take years to experience. Do the children and their families have the ‘luxury’ to wait or will they die along the way? These considerations must not be left out when discussing the implications of child labor.

4.3.4 Globalization and its effects on child labor

According to the National TBP (2006) globalization has had a major impact on Bangladesh. More international companies are operating in Bangladesh than ever before. The term can be used to explain almost every aspect of human relations and structures. However, in the context of this study it will mainly describe economical and social factors of the phenomenon. Bruns et al. (2003) write in their study about the increase of competition between different actors in the world market:

Where the competition for the perceived increased returns available in globalized markets is keen, however, it has become obvious that unscrupulous parties will seek a comparative advantage by exploiting child labor (Bruns et al., 2003:15).
In the case of Bangladesh one saw in the beginning of the 90s that the competition between different global actors had increased and become tougher. Bangladesh had problems with large international companies in the garment industry exploiting the fact that children in Bangladesh were a cheap labor force. I asked UNICEF about the situation in Bangladesh during the 90s:

> The garment industry in Bangladesh was a huge problem when it came to child labor. At worst many big international companies exploited the fact that children represented cheap labor. We managed to change the garment industry and got the children out from working. However, we did not follow up the children and the consequences were that the children started to work as prostitutes and on the streets instead. The Government managed to solve one problem, but instead created another problem. And that often reflects the reality of life in Bangladesh (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).

The incident which UNICEF describes is referred to be a result of a ‘vicious circle’ by Jillani (1998). He believes that the consequences of not following up the children after they have been removed from working are enormous. Since the authorities and those removing the children from work are not creating options for the children, the children usually seek to the streets or/and going back to work.

Moreover, Bruns et al. (2003.15) “believes that the focus on the child’s well-being have slowed down as a result of globalization”. What Bruns et al. (2003) addresses here can help in understanding why the Government is not prioritizing child labor on the political agenda. The well-being of the child seems to be overshadowed by the increasing competition at the world market place. Is it impossible to for the actors to succeed financially and at the same time think about the well-being of the child? Interestingly, thus so far in my research I have seen a lack of cooperation between the corporate world such as the trade unions and the international community with the UN in front. Such as I see it there is a need for more laws and legislation which reflects and links the importance of the market place and the rights of the child. It might be that this in fact is present, however, I have yet to see anything so far when analyzing documents for my research.

Furthermore, Bruns et al. (2003) show how globalization influences towards education:

> Ironically, research also shows that education is of vital importance in harnessing the potential positive impact of globalization. Upgraded working methods and quality control, more sophisticated management procedures and documentation, and better understanding of and compliance with [both national and international] legal frameworks have increased (Bruns et al., 2003.15).
This implies that education is necessary in the era of globalization. Furthermore, globalization can cause serious problems because families may be forced to send their children to school in the long run and the consequences for that can be tremendous. In many ways one can say that they are faced with a “loose-loose” situation. They are faced with the option to accept to ‘loose’ in the short run by choosing education or to loose in the long run by deciding to let their children work instead. The family will risk losing a part of their income which is vital for their survival if they decide to send the children to school. And if they decide not to send them, they might in the long run be forced to stop working, because of globalization has increased the demand for educated workers. Moreover, according to the Government report the National TBP (2006) people in Bangladesh without an education, especially vocational education, are worse off than the ones with. The reason for this is that the work market in Bangladesh and employers seek people with vocational education and training. In Bangladesh people at the University level, with for example a degree in history, will have difficulties in getting a job after receiving a degree.

If we look closer at the linkage between child labor and globalization, according to Bruns et al. (2003:15) “the international community is now again considering the link between child labor and globalization within the broader conceptual framework of decent work”. Interestingly, I found in my research that childhood is not considered as important or having value on its own. The important thing has been to protect the children against dangers in the same way as with adults. Hopefully this will change in the future. Further, Bruns et al. (2003) write that:

The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization has recommended decent work for all should be made a global goal and be pursued through complementary national and international policies, noting that addressing the need to speed up the creation of jobs in all countries would help reduce social tension in a country and economic friction between countries (Bruns et al. 2003:15).

Creating new jobs is something Bangladesh must continue to do, however, it is more important to assure that the existing jobs have appropriate working conditions, which will have to be assured through laws. To merely create jobs will not help children that are working in the worst forms of child labor and that are exploited. In Bangladesh one most prioritize having a system in place working properly, both at the informal and formal market place. Importantly, we have to think of the consequences of creating more jobs, without looking at jobs that already exists and that already is taking advantage of children. If not doing so, we
potentially create new jobs which can continue to exploit children and creating environments which are hazardous. In addition to ensuring that those that breaks the laws get punished accordingly. What about moving child labor from the informal sector and to the formal, so that one can better handle poverty and protecting the workers right? This sound really good and it might be so that it is easier to protect children in the formal sector. Nevertheless in Bangladesh this would be very difficult and not a solution to the problem of child labor and poverty. The system that is currently in place does not even cover the whole formal sector, yet alone the informal. That is why one must prioritizes to make the system work properly before creating more difficulties by neglecting to solve the existing problems and pushing the problems further ahead. This leads us to the implications of elimination of child labor and an insight in the complexity.

4.3.5 Implications of elimination of child labor

At first eliminating child labor sounds like a positive thing to achieve, and something that both society and people that are involved in child labor would benefit from. However, it is important to remember that there are implications to take into consideration when discussing elimination of child labor. The income which children provide can be crucial for their own and their family’s survival (Grote et al., 1998). According to IPEC (2004) it is very important to attach an economic value to the labor of the children so that one can estimate the financial loss the families involved will have due to their children not working. IPEC (2004) further refers to a program which is called income transfer program. The program will estimate what the financial loss is for each family. However, I found that the situation in Bangladesh is different from the IPEC (2004) report. I asked ILO, UNICEF and save the Children in Bangladesh about how they estimate the value attached to the working children and how to pay the families back. The answers I got were interesting. What I found was that they did not remove the children completely from work, so that they did not take away the income the children were contributing with. However, the children were removed from the hazardous environments. Save the Children explains:

Q: Do you have a program in place which estimates the value attached to the working children?
Save the Children: No. We do not have a program like you have described. Our goal is not to remove the children completely from work. Our goal is to eradicate all negative forms of child labor, especially the worst forms of child labor. What we are doing is that we are removing the children from hazardous work and providing a new start for the children, both providing work and schooling. The key is cooperation,
cooperation with the community, the government and most importantly the employers and their factories. Therefore we do not have any income transfer program system in place (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

The answer which Save the Children gave is concurrent with the views of ILO and UNICEF. Save the Children explained that since they did not remove the children completely from work, no income transfer program system was needed. However, they explained that they did compensate the children and their families financially, but that was only related to cost of entering school and so on, not compensation for not working. Further, I asked Save the Children about what the Government is doing towards estimating the cost related to eliminating child labor, and the cost of targeting the children in the worst forms of child labor?

I believe that has been one of our most challenging things. We are using advocacy and pressure towards the Government however things take time here in Bangladesh. The Government is trying to target worst forms of child labor however they are not as far as I know estimating the cost related to targeting these children. They have not made any measures in estimating the cost related to eliminating child labor. That is a huge problem for us. Very difficult for organizations such as us to work towards eliminating worst forms of child labor through advocacy towards the government when the Government is not doing enough (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

The situation described here ‘paints’ a picture of the Government in Bangladesh in many ways working in the ‘blind’. The consequences of not estimating how much resource that are needed for addressing the worst forms of child labor can be enormous. Not knowing the estimation means not knowing how to best make use of the resources, and where to best allocate the resources so that one can reach those that need it the most.

Moreover, a very good example of what that can happen is the garment industries in Bangladesh at the beginning of the 90s were the government removed children out of work. However, the government did not think about rehabilitation and to help the children after they were removed out from work. They were left on there own and that had tremendous consequences for the children. Kamal Siddiqui explains the situation back then:

The Government forced the garment sector to stop using children in their production. At first that was a very good initiative from the government. However, the Government did not think about the children options after they had been removed out of work. What about rehabilitation? The government did not provide the children any alternatives and they did not rehabilitate them. The consequences were enormous. The government did not solve the problem of child labor, the problem was only shifted from the garment sector to other sectors. Children started working as prostitutes and on the street (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).
This situation illustrates the importance of following up the children and rehabilitating them. However, the Government in Bangladesh does not, according to Kamal Siddiqui, have any concrete measures and plan in place to do so. ILO (1998) argues that without concrete measures of rehabilitating children and providing other options for them, there will be difficulties in eliminating child labor. I agree with both Kamal Siddiqui and ILO, because without removing the problem and only shifting the problems to other sectors one has not accomplished elimination of child labor and problems which comes along with it. According to (Jillani, 1998) elimination of child labor involves at least three steps. First it is important to analyze child labor laws that are already present, secondly updating the laws accruing to the needs of the society and making new laws, thirdly implementing a strategy for getting a proper legal framework in place. Hence, I agree with Jillani (1998), however, in addition to what he states as important above, I also believe it is important to have concrete measures of rehabilitation and providing children with options in order to successfully achieve elimination of child labor. This leads us to the child labor challenges which one has in Bangladesh.

4.3.6 Child labor challenges

What are the major challenges Bangladesh has in relation to child labor? I asked UNICEF this question and received this response:

The biggest challenges such as I see it is the mindset of the policymakers, planners and the mindset of the society including the employers, the parents and the children, and also other groups of society. If we look at the Government, what are they doing towards child labor? Why is not child labor a priority? If we look at the employers, what are their duties? Everybody must ensure that children’s rights are being protected. The problem is that many employers believe that they are already doing the child a favor by giving them a job and the Government is not doing enough to enforce laws and legislation to protect these children. The ones that break the laws should be punished (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).

The situation which UNICEF describes above is the same as Kamal Siddiqui described when talking about the challenges with meeting the EFA goals. Child labor, education and poverty are all interrelated issues and must be treated as such to gain improvement. Moreover, I asked Kamal Siddiqui about what he saw as the biggest challenges:

Such as I see it Bangladesh has huge challenges when it comes to child labor. A lot needs to be done. The government needs to step up and take progressive action towards combating child labor. They must implement a plan of action; (1) they need to implement a family planning. The government, the community and the families must
come together and co-operate; (2) they need to actively work towards motivating the children. In addition to informing the children, the families and the employers about why eliminating child labor is important; (3) They need to intensify the improvement and the accessibility of education for children. This is really important; (4) they need to implement a ‘step by step’ program for eliminating worst forms of child labor, which means they must incorporate a plan for how to rehabilitate the children withdrawn from child labor (Interview, Kamal Siddiqui, 2007-01-22).

The challenges described above clearly show the importance of addressing the issues education, child labor and poverty together. The political leaders in Bangladesh must go in front and lead the country in the right direction. They also need to lead by a good example. If one is not to work in the ‘blind’, a plan of action is very important. The plan cannot only laws and legislation, it also needs to include the ones the laws and legislation will affect. Everybody must be included in the plan. Importantly one must try to avoid what happened in the Garment industry in the 90s. So the plan must include how to eliminate child labor, which also means that one has work towards solving the problems and not just shifting the problems to other sectors. The children and their families need support and they must be given the chance to rehabilitate. Without a plan and a common direction it will be very difficult for Bangladesh to meet these challenges and new challenges that most definitely will come in the future.

4.6 Social exclusion

What does it mean to be excluded from society? To be excluded means that one is indirectly or directly excluded from participating in society (Gore et al., 1995). Further, by being excluded from one part of society we are at risk of being excluded from other parts of society (Silver, 1995).

This in mind I will now look closer at the situation in Bangladesh and what it means to be socially excluded for children who are child laborers. I asked Save the Children about the reality of children being excluded from society in Bangladesh:

Personally I have experience with children that are forced into a life of hard work. It is sad to see another human being deprived of the right to be a human being. The fact that the children are forced and that their choice in all of this is not taken into consideration means that they are unwillingly excluded from society and the saddest part of the whole child labor aspect is that it is a vicious circle. By forcing them into a life as child worker the children are automatically deprived of their right to fully
function in society, which means that they are excluded from almost every aspect of society (Interview, Save the Children, 2006-09-03).

The situation described by Save the Children clearly illustrates how a person that personally has experienced children being excluded from society see sadness and frustration over the fact that many children are excluded. The vicious circle is something Silver (1995) also talks about. He lists children that are abused as a social group that potentially are at risk of being excluded. He believes that since children are being excluded from social relations that it can lead to other deprivations as well, thereby further limiting their living opportunities. Here is a good example of a child who is excluded from society. I talked with a young boy who worked at a car workshop about his life there:

Q: What is it like to work here?
Child 3: I do not like working here, because they treat me very bad. They beat me whenever they think I am not doing well. I also get very little food and I never get the possibility to go outside (he pauses). I am very sad and I do not know what to do
Q: If you had the chance, would you go to school?
Child 3: Who will send me to school? They will never let me go to school.
(Interview, Child 3, 2006-09-14).

The situation described shows us what consequences it may have for children such as this young boy when they are forced to work. In the case of this boy we can clearly see that being excluded from social relations can lead to other deprivations. The boy has little food, no possibility to go outside and no chance of being allowed an education and most importantly deprived of the right to be a human being.

Furthermore, Silver (1995) talks about how social exclusion can be divided into two directions, active and passive exclusion. When for example, immigrants or refugees are not given a usable political status, it is an active exclusion. When, however, the deprivation comes about through a social process in which there is no deliberate attempt to exclude, the exclusion can be seen as a passive kind. A good example is when you do not have any place to live and you cannot afford to either rent or buy a place. This is an example of passive exclusion. I agree with how Silver (1995) divides social exclusion into two categories, however, I also believe that there is a need to see the two directions active and passive exclusion, in different levels in society and also more nuanced, for example a mother who chooses to withdraw her child from school might be seen at first to actively exclude her own child. However, one has to take in to consideration, the social process, were the mother does this because she believes it is in the best interest for her child and the family. I would describe
this to be an ‘indirect’ active exclusion. Whilst, on the other hand if a factory employer exploits a child and forces it to work, that could also be seen as active exclusion. However, here the fact that the employer deliberately exploits the child is such as I see it ‘direct’ active exclusion. If we take this discussion further and look at the Government, they provide an education which is of a poor quality and is un-relevant, that could lead to children either not entering or dropping out of school which would be a passive form of exclusion. One a passage from the interview with UNICEF in Bangladesh touched me deeply:

It makes me sad to see the results of the worst forms of child labor. The crucial reality of what the children are faced with. It saddens me to see the consequences of their life strained as a child laborer, depriving them from a life. It is sad to say it but a lot of the children are already dead. Consciously they are dead and just working like a ‘machine’ without anything to say and any rights (Interview, UNICEF, 2006-09-04).

This illustrates how child labor can lead to social exclusion and violation of children’s rights.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter data surrounding the relationship between child labor, poverty and education has been presented, and I have also looked at different aspects of child labor, both negative and positive. Furthermore, looking at different aspects and issues concerning child labor, such as laws and legislations, children’s rights, education, and how concepts like globalization, social exclusion and culture relativism is viewed in relation to child labor and poverty.

I have tried in this chapter to show how the current situation in Bangladesh is like and to show the path for which Bangladesh is heading towards in terms of combating worst forms of child labor. Although Bangladesh has signed and ratified many conventions, there are still some conventions they are yet to ratify and implement. Hence, I have argued so far in the analysis chapter that it will be difficult to successfully ratify and implement all the conventions that are currently in place. The reason for this being that the child labor Conventions are all interrelated and must be all implemented in order to succeed in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. It is very important that the implementation of the laws and legislation is ensured. Moreover, the Government and the politicians in Bangladesh play an essential role in combating child labor. A huge problem such as I see it is the lack of commitment, political will and prioritization of child labor on the political agenda. Interestingly, what I found in this study is that child labor in many aspects of society life in Bangladesh is accepted, not only on
a political level, also among the general population. I will now in the last chapter, 5 Bringing it to a close, discuss these issues and also other issues further, and I will try to put the ‘pieces’ together.
5. Bringing it to a close

The main objective of this study was to evaluate child labor in Bangladesh and how it affects children’s ability to access education. The intention was to look closer at three central concepts: education, child labor and poverty, and to see how these concepts are intertwined in children and their families’ lives. Education is an important part of a person’s development, both spiritually and physically. The knowledge gained through education is the basis for human development, which is the essential for a person to improve their life quality and creating opportunities for themselves and their loved ones. A society is in this way dependent on education and knowledge. Furthermore, the three central concepts are a highly political, thus one has to take into consideration the complexity and implication that follow when evaluating the issues surrounding children’s ability to access education.

The principal research questions asked in this study are used as titles in the following subsections. This is used to structure the content in order to clarify the answers and arguments.

5.1 What has been done to reduce child labor both from local, national and international stakeholders in the last decade?

In 2001 the Prime Minister of Bangladesh at that time declared the period 2001-2010 as the decade of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 2003 A). He had a wish and a plan for how to prioritize children’s rights, however, what has actually been accomplished? In order to answer this question we have to look back to what I have analyzed in this study.

Historically, Bangladesh in the 90s had huge problems with the garment industry when it came to child labor. As a result of co-operation between Bangladesh and the international community such as the UN, they were able to remove the children from work. However, what happened was that the children had no other options ‘created’ for them after they were removed from working. The consequences were enormous and the children had to seek to the streets and working as child prostitutes instead of the garment factories. This example shows in many ways how important it is to solve problems and challenges properly by providing alternative options for the children. Jillani (1998) described this as a ‘vicious circle’ and
argues creating options for the children, the families and the community must be part of the solution, otherwise, it will be impossible to solve these problems and challenges. Interestingly, what I found in this study was that other projects were the Government was removing children from work had similar outcomes as the case of children in the garment sector in the 90s. This shows that what both Kamal Siddiqui and the ILO (1998) report expressed was right, i.e. there is a need for looking at every aspect of removing children from work and that includes rehabilitating the children and their families, and to create better options for them.

Furthermore, it has been argued by a lot of different sources/stakeholders, that the Government in Bangladesh is not doing enough against child labor. They will have to politically prioritize combating child labor. In addition, they will also have to be more committed to the ‘case’ of eliminating child labor. Importantly, they must work towards increasing the awareness among fellow politicians and the people of the country in general.

Moreover, what has the International community such as the UN, Save the Children and other organizations, done towards combating child labor? The issue of child labor has for years now been on the political agenda internationally. In 1994 ILO introduced a new international program called Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). As a result of this and other similar projects, projects to combat child labor were set up in Bangladesh. Since then there have been several projects in Bangladesh, both locally and nationally. However, what I found in this study was that a lot of projects initiated internationally or/and locally, have had some problems. The planning of the projects tended to go well even though it took a lot of time, however the implementation of the projects often did not. Save the Children in Bangladesh argued that one of the reasons for having problems with projects was because the government in Bangladesh was working in the ‘blind’. They do not know how many child laborers that exist and they do not know the cost of eliminating child labor. Understandable, without knowing these facts and figures it will be almost impossible to best allocate the resources available. The key is to allocate the resources so that one best can successfully implement and ensure that the projects are finalized according to the plan. This leads us to how the international community is supporting Bangladesh.
5.2 Has the international community been active in supporting the local and the national authorities?

In Bangladesh there are several international organizations daily working towards combating child labor. All of the organizations, including NGO’s, donors and governments, such as UNICEF, ILO, Save the Children, the UCEP schools and the Norwegian Embassy, which were interviewed during this study expressed that the key to successfully combating child labor in Bangladesh is based on cooperation between the international community and the Government in Bangladesh. Interestingly, what I found in the study was that the organizations above cooperated or/and gave support through using advocacy and pressure. ILO in Bangladesh is explicit about their role: capacity building, advocacy and direct support (ILO, 1998). This means that they financially support projects. However, the international organizations often want some degree of control, especially in order to monitor that the money is spent according to plan. Interestingly, Kamal Siddiqui questioned the ‘line’ of communication between the stakeholders involved and that a lot was said and very little often was done. He believed that the organizations expressed what they wanted Bangladesh to do, Bangladesh listened and that was it. Bangladesh often took advise willingly, however they most of the times had their own ideas of what they wanted and how they wanted to do it.

Furthermore, if we look closer at the role of the donors, I found in my research that donors such as the Norwegian Embassy in Bangladesh is concerned with what they see as lack of political stability, effectiveness and commitment from the Government in Bangladesh. They question how it would be possible to give more autonomy over the money they give in support when the Government can not show were the money actually is spent. Interestingly, ILO, Save the Children and UNICEF argues along the same lines, that it is not the most ideal situation for both parties, when the organizations have all the autonomy themselves. It means that they have to assist in every aspect of the projects, consequently making everything more costly and ineffective. Who are the ones loosing from this? Ironically, such as I see it, Bangladesh is the ones that are loosing. Especially when knowing that without maximum support from the donors, it will be almost impossible to accomplish eliminating child labor and achieving the EFA goals in Bangladesh (Bruns et al., 2003).

If we look closer at what cooperation actually means in real life in Bangladesh one get a surprising answer. I asked Kamal Siddiqui about how he assesses the cooperation between the
international community and Bangladesh. What I found interesting is the way he describes the word ‘cooperation’ and the way he express the unwillingness from the government in Bangladesh to act and the unwillingness to prioritize combating child labor on the political agenda. According to Kamal Siddiqui (2007), the government in Bangladesh talks a lot with the organizations such as UNICEF, ILO and Save the Children, however, they remain passive. Such as I see it there is a gap between the way Kamal Siddiqui describes cooperation and the kind of cooperation the international community express as necessary in order to succeed. This leads us to the role which the NGO community plays in Bangladesh.

5.3 What role does the NGO community play in reducing child labor and promoting education?

I have mentioned some of the work NGO’s such Save the Children and the UCEP Schools are doing, and that is along the same line as what ILO and UNICEF are doing, in terms of using advocacy and putting pressure on the Government in Bangladesh. However, in terms of financially supporting the government and cooperating, there is a slight difference in the work organizations such the UCEP Schools are doing in a role as an NGO, compared to the other organizations such as Save the Children. What I found in my study was that the Government in Bangladesh did not support the UCEP Schools in any way and the UCEP Schools does not support the Government financially. Further, I found that the way the UCEP Schools worked with helping to combat child labor and to promote education must have been of interest for the government. However, I did not get the possibility to find out why they were not interested in cooperating with UCEP. On several occasions UCEP expressed during my interviews that they had initiated contact with the government in trying to cooperate on combating child labor, however they did not get any positive responses back.

Furthermore, if we look closer at what role the NGO’s play in reducing child labor and promoting education, a very good example is the UCEP Schools. Further, you have NGO’s such as Save the Children which operate along the same line, however they support schools such as the UCEP Schools, but they do not run schools themselves. Having this in mind, a UN report (United Nations, 2003 B) mentions the key element in succeeding is to collaborate and getting the Government to not only cooperate with NGO’s such as the UCEP Schools, but to also collaborate. To take cooperation to another level and the idea being that the Government in Bangladesh recognizes that NGO’s such as the UCEP Schools have special expertise they
can offer and which can effectively complement the governments own strengths. Importantly, this way of moving from cooperation and towards collaboration could also apply to all stakeholders, NGO’s, donors and governments.

5.4 Have the local and the national authorities followed recommendations from the international community?

An interesting question to ask ourselves here is if there is a gap between the international community’s expectations to which conventions and recommendations they want countries such as Bangladesh to ratify and what Bangladesh has actually done. Although, the country is signatory to several conventions, there are still conventions which is yet to be ratified. What consequences do this have? Interestingly, what I found during my research was that the child labor conventions are interrelated, which means that if they are to be successfully ratified and implemented, all of the conventions must be ratified. As an example, Bangladesh is yet to ratify Convention No.138 and that convention is the first step before ratifying Convention No.182. Since the Convention No.138 addresses hazardous child labor, it will be difficult to implement the Convention No.182. Hence, it can be argued that this example shows that one of the reason for why Bangladesh has problems with following the recommendations from the international community, is because of conventions which are ‘linked’ to each other are not all ratified. However, one has to ask why Bangladesh has not ratified Convention NO.138? What I found in this study was that there was a difference of opinion between the international community and Bangladesh, concerning why Bangladesh had not ratified Convention No.138. Kamal Siddiqui claimed it was due to lack of resources, whilst, UNICEF expressed that lack of commitment from the Government in Bangladesh was the problem. At first one would say that there is a gap between what the two parties are saying and that maybe someone is wrong. However, what I found in my study was that both parties might be right, there are several reasons for why Bangladesh has not ratified and for things to not working properly. The reasons are not contradictory, only different aspects of the same problem. We have to look more nuanced at the situation in Bangladesh and also at things from different perspectives. The international community wants Bangladesh to ratify more conventions, and Bangladesh because of different reasons do not ratify all the conventions. Importantly, such as I see it there is a need for better communication or as the UN argued, better collaboration between the international community and Bangladesh (United Nations, 2003 B). I believe that the reason for why the international community believes their expectations are not fulfilled is
a result of lack of knowledge and understanding between the two parties. Arguably, there is a gap, however, the gap is not as ‘black and white’ as the two parties have expressed, since both parties actually are mentioning different aspects of the same problem and the reasons which they argue upon are not contradictory.

5.5 What kind of barriers exist which cause children to either not enroll, or drop out of school?

In this study it has been found that there are a lot of barriers which exists for children and their families that hinder them into either not enrolling or that make them drop out of school. The country has increased the number of children enrolled in school, nevertheless, simultaneously the country has also experienced very high drop out rates. According to a report from ILO (2004) over 50 per cent of primary students drop out before they complete grade 5 and that they then gravitate towards work. Importantly, the EFA goals do not only say that complete free and compulsory education is important, education which is relevant and of a good quality is important. This clearly shows the linkage between child labor and education, because children that either drop out or do not enter education can potentially gravitate towards work.

Furthermore, I found in my study that in Bangladesh there are a lot of indirect costs linked to going to school. Consequently, the government only covers the direct costs such as school fees and food fees, and the indirect costs such as transport, uniforms, pens, pencils and paper/notebooks must be covered by the respective children and their families (ILO, 2004). Arguably, this is one of the barriers which children and their families experience, since many families find these indirect costs to be difficult to cover themselves.

Moreover, poor legislation is also a barrier to education in Bangladesh. Early marriage is a big problem in the country and a very difficult to deal with. The laws and legislation covering age of marriage is fragmented and weak. Consequently, the laws can be bypassed by religious personal opinions permitting marriage at an early age, for many children this is a barrier for entering or continuing their education (National TBP, 2006). Further, the UN defines a child to be everybody under the age of 18 years. Bangladesh is yet to define the age of what a child is and also lack sufficient laws and legislation in place prohibiting children getting married early. I also found that there is a link between poverty and barriers such as early marriage

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(United Nations, 2003 B). According to Jillani (1998) the reason for why many families are depend on their children to contribute is because they are poor.

It is also important to look closer at the hazardous environments under which child laborers work under. The consequence of children having or are forced to work is a direct or indirect result of the barriers which are mentioned above. I found that the laws and legislation which paves way for children in getting hindered as a result of barriers, also creates additional difficulties for them since the ineffective enforcement of laws causes problems and difficulties for Bangladesh to protect the rights of the child. Consequently, this additionally paves the way for people and the ‘system’ in Bangladesh to exploit or/and force children to work (United Nations, 1982). Sadly, in the study I found that the hazardous environment can have a negative affect on the children’s physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. The consequences being many, resulting in hampering a child’s development or worse, leaving him or her stunted and unable to work in the future (National TBP, 2006).

**5.6 Conclusion**

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh had a wish and a plan for how to put children’s rights on the political agenda. However, how far has the country come in achieving to prioritize children’s rights? What I have found in my study is that during that period from 2001 and up to the year which we are in now, 2007, there has been found no evidence of children being more prioritized than they were before the year 2001. On the contrary what I found was that child labor on the political agenda is not prioritized. The government and the politicians are aware of child labor, nevertheless, they are not doing enough. Arguably, they are doing a few things, such as increasing the educational enrolment rates and working with different projects in cooperation with the international community, however, what I found was that they are too passive in their role in combating child labor. They need to recognize the linkage between child labor, education and poverty. It is not enough to increase enrolment, when almost 50 per cent of children drop out before finishing grade 5.

Moreover, if we look at what Bangladesh already has done towards child labor, education and poverty, the conventions and the policies which they have is only the first step towards achieving the goals. Consequently there is a need to look at every aspect of child labor, education and poverty, all issues must be addressed in relation to each other. The
prioritization of children which the country is talking about must be put on the political agenda. There is a need to move away from using words and towards taking affirmative action in achieving the goals. The next step would be to develop more coherent policies, to ratify and implement more conventions, and addressing all the issues linked to child labor, education and poverty, and ensuring that they are effectively protected by the laws and legislation. Further, there is a need to estimate the cost of eliminating child labor. It has been argued that the government in Bangladesh is working in the ‘blind’ and therefore it has been impossible to initiate measures which make best use of the resources they have available and also to allocate the resources so that one best can have a chance in reaching the goals. I would argue that a key element is the ability for all parties involved to not only cooperate, more importantly, to also collaborate in their task of reaching the EFA goals and also future goals they may have. It will be interesting to see if they can achieve this transition.

Moreover, at the same time the government must try to increase the awareness among fellow politicians and also to the general population. Child labor has for centuries in Bangladesh been culturally accepted and as long as some people believe there is not wrong to make use of child laborers and that they do not see children as having rights in the same way as themselves, I will argue that Bangladesh will continue to struggle in achieving the goals of eliminating child labor and in reaching the EFA goals.

I have discussed the topic of child labor from many different aspects and look at it from different perspectives. The goal has not only been to answer the research questions, the goal has also been to grasp the view of the participants in the study. Through the ‘voices’ of the participants I have got the possibility to explore their world and to get a ‘glance’ into how they at first hand are experiencing the issues which I have addressed. I have seen that the ‘reality’ in Bangladesh is that education is a ‘luxury’ not many people can afford, either due to lack of access or/and because they are denied the right to. If people decide to take an education in the short-run they might end up poorer than they were before as a result of losing a part of their income, and if they do not decide to take an education they might in the long-run be worse off as a result of globalization putting demand on people having more education in order to work. I would argue that education could be a ‘tool’ for development, however, for poor people education can be a way to increase their life quality, it can be the difference between ‘death’ and ‘survival’. Education can give people hope, it can create chances they ‘normally’ would not have and it can give them dignity and liberty. Before this research study
reaches its end, I would like to share with you a story I was told at an EFA conference in Oslo which touched me very deeply, and it is about a mother who just had lost her daughter:

A mother had for days been out looking for her daughter. She was starting to give up hope and the sadness started to overcome her strength to continue to look for her daughter. Finally, she found out that the police had a small girl who just had been found dead and the mother had to go to the police station to identify her daughter. When she got there she saw that it was her daughter which they had found. The police officer asked her why she had not gone to the police when her daughter was missing. She answered; I did go to the police. They did not have time to help me. The police officer asked; why did you not go to seek help from others in the community? I would do so, but how could I address them when I do not know how to read and write? (EFA Forum, Oslo, 2007-02-06).
References


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Appendix – complete list of coding and a record of when the interviews were conducted

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<td>Teachers and educators</td>
<td>NGO’s, donors and the international community</td>
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