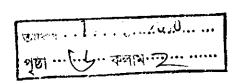
The Daily Star



Laila Karim

ACK in 1972, my husband brought home Mugal, a boy of about 10 or 11, to assist me in household chores. Mugal's father handed him over to us saying. "I am giving my only son to you for his future". Perhaps my husband's office assistant had promised that one day Mogul would be placed somewhere in the government pay roll- a common practice in those days, particularly in government households. Even the office peons, chaprashis, pankha pullers (dedicated staff sitting outside the room who pulled a special kind of ceiling fan with a long rope) used to perform household jobs.

changed. From a housewife I became a of my jewellery drawer were found in now feel ashamed writing this) and keys walk in the lawn, playing with her, and In the past forty five years, the world has one of his pockets. I was furious; I beat months, I found things going missing; our one and a half year old daughter to development worker, speaking out and biscuits given to him for my daughter (I ighting for the rights of children since him back. It was a relief to be rid of him nim and called his shocked father to take helping me in daily chores. After a few lent haunt me often. 986. Today, Mugol's face and that inci Major tasks of Mugal included taking

I feel guilty when I have to compromise with real life situations. I failed to knock at the door of my neighbour when

married her off later. But she came back own, and nowhere else to go. This is her cause problems to the family members breakfast table; any deviation would make rotis, clean utensils, prepare the morning to finish the kitchen work, Only later did I learn from her employer little girl working as a domestic helper. less domestic aid. No longer an embaragain - this time more timid and a flawparticularly the school going children. She was expected to wake up early in the she was shouting and screaming at the that she often wets her bed. She was tiny rassment for the family. fate. As an obligation, the employer The girl, an orphan, has no time of her

Do we even know how many these children number to? No, because they live inside our four walls, working 15/16 hours a day; they sleep on the kitchen floor or in the balcony corner, even guest bathrooms.

Before buying a piece of furniture, we decide where to put it. But when we bring a young child for our personal comfort, not many of us consider a place for him/her. Sometimes they become news items, drawing our attentions when things go grossly wrong - when they are tortured, sexually abused, about to die or killed in most bizarre ways.

Tk. 5/6 per thousand pieces

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As a development worker, I can testify that things haven't changed that much despite the policies, laws in hand, and the international treaties and goals we signed. Our relentless roundtables, talks

and speeches, rallies and campaigns, and work in the field have yet to bring a visible change in the scenario. We are yet to come out from this medieval practice that causes harm not only to the child, but ties the family to an intergenerational poverty trap. We are nurturing this practice as it fits our need and add some extra to the profits.

World Day Against Child Labou

rolled. Their small fingers are just right wages of Tk. 5/6 per thousand pieces in the workshops and glass factories; in to do the job well and fast. We see them rolling bidi (handmade cigarettes) for where. In Kurigram, these little hands are cities and towns. The prevalence is thousands in the old part of Dhaka city. our birthdays, tiffin boxes for our chilmaking. The number has risen to milwork and places has expanded. Now hands are making colourful balloons for fries; market places; or hanging on to the the saw mills, in the rivers catching fish but have become a part of our profit percent) of Lalbagh Thana. Dhaka city, it is higher, at 16.6 percent, than in the rural areas (5.1 percent). In dren. The list is endless. We see them in ions and their little hands are everychildren work not only for our comfort,/ over 30 percent) and in ward 71 (43.85 han the national level of 6 percent. The nigher in the urban areas (9 percent) .albagh, Kamrangir Char - and in other numan haulers or tempos. The little iighest concentrations are in Ward 61 In past 45 years, the range of their

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) report 2013-2015 states that over

34 lakh children are engaged in child labour - about half of them directly engaged. Twelve lakh children are doing harmful work and 2.6 lakh of them work in extremely hazardous and harmful situations. They are forced to leave home because of natural calamities and due to familial troubles. Like Mogul, they are also taken away from their village homes and parents with the promise of a future. This scenario has an impact on the number of non-enrolments and drop-outs, children on the streets, child trafficking, and alarmingly, over child marriage (Child Equity Atlas).

We want to see action and implementation of the above laws, policies and protocols to realise our goal of no child having to work before the age of 14 and the removal of children from hazardous labour by 2021, a new deadline of the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010-2015, and the formulation of the National Plan of Action (NPA) to meet the deadlines of Vision 2021.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is our mandate. We made our obligations by signing it in 1989.

Let's keep the promise to these children they occupy about half of our total population. Otherwise we can't reach our ambition to be a middle income country by 2021. Let children have their childhood and grow well with education, be healthy, have leisure, and be protected from harm. Say no to children working for the comfort and profit of adults.

The writer is a development worker