THE PHENOMENON OF CHILD DOMESTIC WORK IN ASIA:
Issues and Responses

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INTRODUCTION

This paper does not attempt to resolve this phenomenal dilemma, much less provide answers to all the questions pertaining to the employment of a child in domestic work. It is but an attempt to "organize" what we already know about this phenomenon and identify what we still need to know. The sources are the very few studies and situational analyses on this occupation, conducted in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. It is hoped that these can be representative of the Asian situation. As it is, it is limited by the inability of the child domestic workers themselves to completely participate in this endeavor. At best, this undertaking hopes to represent their situation for it to be made visible and be understood. At the least, this paper hopes to provide the background information practitioners and policy-makers need in reflecting on the gains and pains in reaching out to the child domestic workers.

THE PREVALENCE OF CHILD DOMESTIC WORK

There is a paucity of information on the prevalence of child domestic work. The limited volume of literature available for review in this study is indicative of the difficulty of getting precise demographic information on children in domestic service. Information on the magnitude of this problem is concealed in such formulations as "the entry of children to domestic service is increasing" (SLIMG, 1997), or that "child domestic work is one of the most widely practiced child labor" (CWA and Shoishab, 1997). Whatever available information on the estimated number of children in this occupation is largely provided by labor force surveys, annual census and unofficial estimates.

- **Bangladesh**. For "maids and related housekeeping", the statistical yearbook estimates a total of 1,294,000, of which 140,000 (10.82%) are male and 1,154,000 (89.18%) are female. Under "Employed Children between 5 to 14 years old, 46.23 percent (46.23%) are employed in urban areas and 11.82 percent (11.82%)of children in the rural areas are employed as *service workers* " (Sobhan, 1996).

- **Cambodia**. Reports from the National Institute of Statistics in 2001 show that there are 630,000 child laborers working in all sectors of employment. Unofficial estimates by a 1999 survey conducted by

Victim Contribution and Assistance Organization (VCAO), a local non-government organization, pegged child domestic workers in its capital city (Phnom Penh) alone at 4,000. Eighty percent (80.00%) of this number belongs to the 12 to 17 years age bracket and 95 percent (95.00%) constitutes inexperienced females who are illiterate.

- **India**. India employs the largest number of working children in the world where children under 18 years of age account for 40.40 percent (40.40%) of its 1,027,015,247 population (D'sami, 2002). According to the Asian Labor Monitor, every third household in India has a working child. A survey referred to in the *UNICEF Report on the State of the World's Children 1997* states that 17 percent (17.00%) of domestic workers in India are under 15 years of age. While a study of Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, Mumbai revealed that 40 percent (40.00%) of 400,000 domestic workers is female under 15 years of age.

- **Indonesia**. A 1995 estimate of domestic workers in Indonesia places it at five (5) million (*Kompas,* 1995). But, the studies by Anti-Slavery International on child domestic work in Jabotabek, Indonesia estimates that there are around 2.75 million domestic workers under the age of 18, with almost 1.5 million under the age of 15 years. This is indicative of the underestimation of the 5-million national figure (Blagbrough, 1995:15-16).

- **Nepal**. Studies on Child Labor in Nepal (ILO/IPEC, TU 1997) estimate 2.6 million children involved in different types of work. About 90 percent (90.00%) of these children are working in the informal sector where domestic work is a major occupation.

The Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN) estimates the total child domestic laborers in the urban areas of Nepal at 55,655, a large fraction (76.68%) of which are below 14 years of age. While the latest Rapid Assessment on the Situation of Domestic Child Laborers in Kathmandu (ILO/IPEC, 2000) estimates 21,191 domestic child laborers in the area of which 70 percent (70.00%) is below the age of 14.

- **Philippines**. [Survey of 2002] The Labor Force Survey of January 2002 estimates that there are 1,286,000 local house helpers in the country.

- **Sri Lanka**. The Child Activity Survey Sri-Lanka – 1999 Report based on the Household Based Survey Module on Child Labor prepared by the Department of Census and Statistics estimates 926,037 children in the 5 to 17 years age group are engaged in some form of economic activity. This is 21 percent (21.00%) of the total children in the 5 to 17 year age bracket living in Sri Lanka at the time of survey.

  Of this total number, 19,110 (2.06%) are found to be child domestic workers in their family households or that of their current employers. And, majority (70.82%) is female and the remaining fraction (29.18%) is male.

However, not all countries can obtain data on child domestic workers for analysis and information generation and dissemination. In Thailand, the lack of a national statistical data on child domestic workers has been attributed to the lack of a national survey and researches on the subject. While, in Vietnam, where there is a lack of systematic information about working children in general, the following reasons were cited:

- Employment surveys are generally concerned with the formal sector, neglecting the vast informal sector where increasing numbers of children and youth find part-time and full-time work;

- Surveys rarely attempt to identify working children under age 15, and generally fail to disaggregate the over 15 (years old) working children (Vu, 1997:9)

Similarly, aside form the inability of the Philippine Labor Force Survey (PLFS) to account for the incidence of child domestic workers younger than 10 years old, a possible data bias of PLFS, that may similarly impede that of other countries, is cited by Alcestis A. Mangahas, ILO-IPEC Philippine Programme Coordinator, as follows:

> *"When a household identifies a household resident as a domestic helper, the helper is most likely a wage employee. This excludes relatives who perform housekeeping roles in exchange of room and board or payment for school."*

On the other hand, the very nature of domestic work occurring in "invisible" workplaces such as the child's own or someone else's home makes it difficult for monitoring activities to take place. In Nepal, a child domestic workers registration program is spearheaded by CWISH through its ward offices which is done simultaneously with their advocacy activities. Even so, these surveying and monitoring activities are hampered by "the uncooperative attitude of child workers (often forced on them by their employers) and their parents, who may not be aware of the negative consequences of child labor" (ILO-IPEC, 2000) and the need to rectify this phenomenon.

LANGUAGE, EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY: THE SEMANTICS OF DISCRIMINATION

> *Language is action, and is a vehicle for vision and concrete mission; language expresses in symbols what we are willing to do in practice; language is passion and in this case it does symbolic violence to children. From symbolic violence to direct violence is but a short step* (Cussianovich, 1997a:1).

The performative aspect of language helps mold and shape the experiences of a person. As Cussianovich (1997b:21) puts it, "language and its categories are part of the social dynamic and the construction of identity itself." Language represents the social reality and can have a significant impact on one's self-image. Sadly, the language that exists to refer to child domestic workers devalues their perception of themselves and, thus, affects how they construct their daily lives and develop a profound understanding of themselves.

Even a cursory survey of the labels used to refer to the child domestic workers fully captures the exploitative nature of their situation and how they are generally regarded and treated by society. In Bangladesh, there exist specific terminologies that refer to the typologies of domestic servants, an indicator of the "well-developed sub-culture" around the phenomenon of domestic servants (Rahman, 1992). Needless to say, these terminologies, as can be readily

gleaned from their English translations, are already a critical appraisal of the situation that inhibits the development of child domestic workers as persons with dignity and high self-esteem.

In Bangladesh, there are several labels attributed to child domestic workers and these are:

1. ***Bandha*** literally means "**tied down**" (emphasis ours). These domestic workers are living in and full-time in one household, with wide-ranging activities, and almost no working hour limit. They are provided with accommodation, the quality of which depends on the economic conditions and social attitudes of the employer.

2. ***Chutta*** literally means "**non-bound**" (emphasis ours). These are part-timers, doing several well-defined, labor intensive and often tedious activities such as washing up (of soiled clothes and dirty utensils), sweeping and polishing floors, grinding spices and preparing meals, which may also include cooking.

3. ***Pichchis*** literally means "**the tiny ones**" (emphasis ours). These are domestic workers who have independent association with the employers, with no specific or defined responsibilities, living in with food provided and usually no regular cash payments. They run various errands for all members of the family such as fetching a glass of water, playing with employer's children, running to the corner shop and all other conceivable activities. Their major problem is that this work is perceived as inconsequential, while they face constant conflicting demands from different members of the family throughout the day. There are comparatively more boys in this category.

(Excerpts from: Shoishab/Bangladesh. "Is Servitude the Only option?" in *Child Workers in Asia*, 13(1) 1997:6).

In Nepal, domestic workers are called "***kanchhi***" (or *"kanchha"* for boys), an affectionate term traditionally given to the youngest daughter of the household.

In the Philippines, they are called *"katulong"* which in general usage refers to an extra hand or an assistant. Interestingly, both terms take on a derogatory connotation when used in the context of domestic service. Thus, a *"katulong"* is derogated to the status of an *"alalay"* (servant) or worse, an *"alipin"* (slave).

Similarly, in India, domestic workers are not accepted as "workers" but are called "servants" or "ayahs".

More than words...

The Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. advocates for the term *kasambahay*, a contraction of *kasama sa bahay* (literally "companion at home"), or household partner, to refer to domestic workers.

The term *kasambahay* is laden with both sociocultural and political agenda.

In place of devaluing domestic work and those who perform such work, the term *kasambahay* offers to recognize the dignity of domestic work and of domestic workers.

In place of belittling child domestic workers' perceptions of themselves, the term *kasambahay* proposes to encourage them to develop a profound and positive understanding of themselves, upon which they can build their daily lives.

In place of hamstringing the perceptions of domestic workers to the silent and submissive performance of household tasks, it creates space for making decisions within the bounds of an agreed-upon relationship, effectively giving them back their voice.

In place of the secondary, undesirable and marginal value society places on their work and on their persons, the term *kasambahay* reminds us of the supportive and necessary contribution domestic work and those who perform it provide our household, our lives, and our society.

(Excerpt from Oebanda, et. al. "The Kasambahay- Child domestic work in the Philippines: a living experience." 2001.p. 13-15.)

The dominant culture reinforces the undervaluing of domestic work as an occupation. Foremost is the stereotype of a domestic worker as someone stupid and ignorant as perpetuated by media. Their social and economic contributions remain unrecognized and unaccounted for in statistics, thus, further delimiting their worth and potential as social actors.

The interplay of all these factors, and more, has produced a feeling of inferiority among domestic workers, being in an occupation considered as the "most denigrating and humiliating" (House Workers Movement – India, 1996). They

cope by denying their occupational involvement, which amounts to a denial of their identity. As observed by the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. in its out-reach programs for domestic workers, many of them are ashamed to be identified and called as "*katulong"* (Pacis, 1996).

At the other extreme is the case of Ramrati, an 11-year old domestic worker in Nepal, whose self-identity has been solely constructed on being a *"kanchhi"*. Witness the dialogue, as documented by the Child Wokers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN) (Sattaur, 1993:55-56):

> "What is your name?"
> "Kanchhi."
> "Your real name?"
> "Kanchhi."
> "No, really, your own name. What were you called at home?"

Seeing language as symbolic representations of reality, the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. in the Philippines endorses the use of the term *"kasambahay",* a contraction of *kasama sa bahay* (assistant to the household), to refer to domestic workers and thereby constructing a new understanding and experience of domestic work into one which enhances personal and group dignity. As Cussianovich (1997b:22) rightly asserts, "What must be clear is the fact that we are not talking about capricious preference for one word or another. What is at stake is the concrete life of people, social relations themselves, because *words are actions*."

UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON OF CHILD DOMESTIC WORK IN ASIA

Exploring the Supply and Demand Side

Generally, an interplay of factors, both macro and micro, work to explain the employment of children in domestic service. The phenomenon of child domestic work is rooted in poverty, exacerbated by economic development programs favoring global economic integration. Poverty and the concomitant reasons of wanting to help their parents and siblings, or of sending oneself to school, are commonly cited reasons for working by child domestic workers.

Scholars point to traditional socio-cultural norms regarding childhood and work. Understanding children at work in developing countries necessitates the debunking of the Western notions of childhood as a period of dependence, growth, learning, and innocence under the guidance and protection of adults. Children are expected to contribute to the household economy as part of their socialization, and this almost always includes "helping out" in domestic chores. It is not surprising therefore for children to be sent to domestic service in another household, usually in the homes of relatives, as the family's response to meet their basic needs.

Furthermore, what could be a significant social pattern is the migration of children to work in the cities that is usually associated with the growth of the middle class. As in Bangladesh and Nepal, employment of children as domestic workers has been a common practice throughout the country and "is growing in the cities", as studies point out.

Extreme rural poverty and landlessness in Bangladesh have jumpstarted urban migration at an unprecedented speed. In the capital city of Kathmandu, almost every middle class household employs a child domestic worker. Likewise, a significant trend is noted in Nepal. "It used to be that children would be employed (as domestic workers) in the homes of relatives, but the extended family, at least in the cities, is now breaking up" (Sattaur, 1993:53).

Usually associated with this middle class expansion and the increased demand for (child) domestic workers is the growing employment opportunities for women in the formal sector (Salter, 1995; Blagbrough, 1995; Sattaur, 1993). In Indonesia, it was noted that "(as) incomes are rising, more women are going out to work (in the formal sector), and a growing middle class is emerging in the cities, there is growing demand for domestic workers to fill in domestic responsibilities which have been traditionally fulfilled by wives" (Blagbrough, 1995:5). The lack or absence of support systems for working mothers, e.g., child care facilities, and the prevalence of traditional patriarchal and gender relations in the family and society

Salliah, 14 years old, Indonesia

Salliah came from a large family of seven children in a village called Banjarkerta in Central Java. Her two brothers died a long time ago. She is the eldest in the family. Her father is a carpenter and her mother a homemaker. She finished her six-year primary education and her parents could not afford to send her to the Junior High School because she still has four siblings to take care of. Unable to continue her education, she wanted so much to work to help her parents and her younger siblings. If possible, she would like to continue her study one day.

During the Ramadhan she got to know Mbak Mai, a relative who worked in Jakarta and brought a lot of money home. She would like to be able to work like her. Mbak Mai offered her a job as a domestic worker with a family who live just across from where Mbak Mai worked. She told her parents about her offer and her parents agreed to let her go since she is not left alone in the big city. They trusted Mbak Mai to take care of hteir daughter. Salliah promised her parents that she would send them money from Jakarta and that she would come to visit them at least once a year during Ramadhan. A month ago, Salliah and Mbak Mai departed to Jakarta.

(Atmajaya Research Center, "Child Domestic Workers in the Greater Jakarta Area (JABOTABEK, 1995:15)

which encumbers hopes for women's emancipation despite their increased participation in the waged labor force, apparently, is a rationalization that can equally be associated with this increasing demand for child domestic workers.

Education is a commonly cited variable for the entry of children into the workforce. In the Philippines, a significant portion of the child domestic workers' salary goes to financing their education or to cover school expenses of their siblings. Commonly, they save up their earnings with the prospect of going back to school in the near future (Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., 1996; Camacho, 1997). However, in cases where employers allow their child domestic workers to go to school, their heavy workload and long work hours – which are not adjusted for their schooling – hampers their studies, forcing them to drop out of school (Flores-Oebanda, et. al., 2001)

In the same manner, there is the absence of an affordable quality education relevant to the children's working lives. "Many schools serving the poor are of such abysmal quality, or the chances of upward mobility for graduates are so slim that the expected return is not equal to the sacrifice made. While it is true, many children drop out of school because they have to work, it is equally true that many become discouraged by schools, that they prefer to work" (World of Work, 1996:13-14). Schools, oftentimes, fail to motivate and incite school attendance from these working children. In a survey of child domestic workers in Pakistan, for example, "no interest in studies" was the third frequently cited reason for leaving school (Pervez and Athar, 1994:26). Thus, explaining the number of those seeking employment in domestic service which requires less, or no education at all.

Aside from these, political conflicts such as the wars in Mindanao and East Timor, and economic disparities in the Mekong area, are forcing children and their families out of their communities. Many illegal recruiters operate within

across borders victimizing young girls into the cities using domestic work as a lure.[1]

Exploring the Attitudinal and Perceptional Issues

A number of attitudinal and perceptional issues regarding the employment of a child in domestic service was culled from the studies reviewed. These were usually categorized into the attitudes and perceptions of the child worker, of their parents and of their employers. More often than not, however, children shared the attitudes and perceptions of their parents towards their entry in domestic service.

Attitudes and Perception of Parents

Parents prefer to place their children in domestic service because they see it as a lighter and less arduous task than other employment opportunities available for children in their community. It is a task which requires no formal training or special skills or qualifications, yet, it provides that guaranteed and regular income needed by the household, which no other work in the informal sector can offer.

Moreover, parents feel privileged that they were able to send their children to work for urban families (Shamim et.al, 1995). The chance to work in the city is perceived as a step or a movement in the social ladder. Domestic service is seen not just as a stop-gap employment (Budiharga, 1992), but as a "stepping stone" or "preparation" to more and better opportunities in the city or, if luck prevails, overseas work for the child and later on, for the other members of the child's family, as well (Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., 1996).

[1] Flores-Oebanda, M.C. "Child Domestic Workers (CDWs): A Situational Analysis in Asia," Presented speech, n.p., n.d. 7 pp.

Because of the foregoing reasons, it can be argued that, generally, the parents' decision to let their child work in domestic service is made with the child's (best) interest in mind. Aside from the widely held perception that domestic work is a less exploitative form of child labor, parents also regard life as a domestic worker, especially in the city, as a far better option to life in their rural homes. Domestic service is perceived to guarantee food, clothing, shelter, and sometimes, education, which otherwise the parents feel they cannot adequately provide their children.

However, no matter how well-intentioned these parents were in sending their children for domestic service, an issue arises on whether it was made with or without the consent of the child worker. In a survey of 200 child domestic workers in Pakistan, more that half revealed their work was "either imposed upon them by their parents or were compelled to do, because of their circumstances" (Pervez and Athar, 1994:28). Nevertheless, despite some parents' negative perception towards the employers of their working children, they still feel compelled to send them to work (Pervez and Athar, 1994).

Attitudes and Perceptions of Children

Children, generally, share the attitudes and perceptions of their parents for entering domestic service. What is perhaps distinct is parental or self perception and expectation (not to mention, the child's socialization) of a "dutiful" child of a family living in conditions of poverty as one who bears the responsibility to help the family meet their basic human needs. Thus, it is safe to assume that through the child's own volition, he/she migrated to the city to work in domestic service.

Like their parents, there are children who perceive that life in domestic service, especially in the city, is a better option for them. A document from Nepal for example, cites a case of 11-year old Ramrati who "prefers the life of a servant because she had to do even more work when she was at home. There, she had

the same duties except that she also had to cut the grass and graze the cattle" (Sattaur, 1993:55-56). This is the reality for most of the working children, especially for the girl-child. For instance, in the interviews with parents of working children in Pakistan regarding the after work activities of their children, it was found out that majority of the girl-child worker helps in the household chores whereas not a single boy-child worker was reported to have any responsibility in the household work (Pervez and Athar, 1994:51-52).

For others, the perception of a "better life" is also translated in terms of hope and trust wishfully placed upon their employers as someone who will help them establish their lives. For the boy domestic workers, this usually means a better job, and for girls, a good marriage (Rahman, 1992:9).

Attitudes and Perceptions of Employers

In the studies in Bangladesh (Rahman, 1992) and Indonesia (Blagbrough, 1995), the employers generally perceive the employment of a child from a poor family as a philanthropic act. It is deeply ingrained in the minds and attitudes of these employers to see themselves as "benefactors" rather than "exploiters" of these children (Rahman, 1992).

Why are children preferred over adults as domestic workers?

In Indonesia, scholars have observed that the demand for domestic workers "heavily outstrips" the supply (Blagbrough, 1995) and thus, it could be deduced that labor from children is allocated to meet this demand.

Sha Alam & Hasna

Sha Alam, a boy of 10 years, was brought to Dhaka by his employer from a village in Cornilla district nearly a year ago. His father is a weaver with a meager income of Taka 1,000 per month who has to maintain a large family of nine members. However, his two sons are working as laborers in a factory. The employer stated that he preferred younger boy domestics for two reasons: the young ones were easy to manage, they could be ordered around to do all sorts of odd jobs and particularly because they could be easily sent for errands outside the house as well as do inside-the-house jobs.

Hasna, a girl of 16 years from Matira village in Kishoreganj district, has been working in the present household for the last five years. Her father is involved in agricultural farming in the village home. He earns Taka 300 per month on an average from agricultural farming. Hasna's present employer likes to keep younger girls instead of the older ones because they can be easily ordered about to do all types of odd jobs. At the same time, the employer feels that the girl domestics are trustworthy.

In Pakistan, two distinctive reasons for preference of children over adults as domestic workers were obtained. Primarily, children are perceived to be "manageable" which implicitly means they are more obedient and can be easily "trained" to conform to the requirements or caprices of the employers. As Rahman (1992:9) succinctly puts it, "children are more submissive, complain less, and are cheaper to keep because they consume less than an adult." And secondly, child domestic workers are "easily available" (Pervez and Athar, 1994:27) thus, can be "ordered about" anytime of the day for any reason.

Generally, children are perceived as perfect substitutes for adult domestic workers performing multiple roles and conforming to the expectations of being an employee/servant of the household, an adopted child, in the case of sympathetic employers, and a playmate of the employer's children. For the same amount of work, they can be paid less than their adult counterparts. This is justified by indicating that the child still has to be trained or taught the skills and routines of household work. Yet, this is precisely the reason for employing children.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF WORK

The terms and conditions of work of child domestic workers may vary to some degree among the countries included in this study. It is important to note that employment contracts to embody the terms and conditions of employment of these child domestic workers, oftentimes, is absent. However, a universal commonality exists in the plight of these child domestic workers - it is the fact that these children are still exploited under conditions detrimental to their development as human persons.

Duties

What is perhaps the best description of the duties of a child domestic worker is provided by Rahman (1992:1), as follows: "their (child domestic workers) activities or tasks performed by them, expected or demanded from are open-ended or at best ill-defined." And as Salter (1995:21) asserts, what is perhaps the most important factor that determines the duties of child domestic workers is "simply the nature and whim of the employer."

Even the legislated definition of domestic work in the Philippines conforms to this framework. The Philippine Labor Code (Article 141) defines domestic or household service as:

> *"…services in the employers home which are usually necessary or desirable for the maintenance and enjoyment thereof and includes ministering to the personal comfort and convenience of the members of the employers household, including services of family drivers."*

It is thus not surprising that practitioners in the Philippines have raised serious concern on this definition and demanded that "personal comfort and convenience" be defined explicitly since "it connotes anything and everything employers may desire" (Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., 1996:15). Underlying this is a valid concern that the child is placed legally in a situation that is very prone to abuse and exploitation, especially sexual abuse.

What exactly are the activities of, services rendered by a child domestic worker? The answer could be found in the International Standards Classification of Occupation which lists the duties of a "housemaid" as follows"

> *Housemaid: Cleans rooms, prepares food and serves meals, washes dishes and performs additional domestic duties in private households: dusts and polishes furniture, sweeps and cleans floors and floor coverings and washes windows; makes beds and changes linens; washes, pares, cuts and otherwise prepares food for cooking or eating raw; prepares beverages, salads and desserts; washes dishes and cleans silverware; sets tables and arranges chairs in dining room and serves food; washes linen and other textiles by hand or machine and mends and irons them, performs additional duties such as answering telephone and doorbell, feeding pets and purchasing food and other supplies. May cook meals, bake cakes and pastries and perform other cooking work."*
>
> *(Source: International Standards Classification of Occupation, 1968, Geneva: International Labor Office)*

Sky's the limit...

There is no limit to the amount or kind of work to which child domestic servants are subjected. They will wash dishes, for six people on the average, at least three times a day, hand wash clothes for the whole family and guests, clean the house, baby sit, escort older children to and from school and look after them after school. If there is any construction work (the addition of a new room or the construction of a well or water tank are usual activities), they have to provide a hand as laborers, fetching cement and clearing rubble (Sattaur, Child labour in Nepal, 1993:54).

While it is safe to assume, these tasks were defined with an adult waged employee in mind, and these very tasks are also being performed by, expected or demanded from a child domestic worker. However, the child domestic worker, as documented in the studies, performs far greater tasks than enumerated above.

There have been observed variations in the duties of child domestic workers, according to factors such as the socio-economic status and size of the employer's family, the age and gender of the child domestic worker and cultural norms.

Affluent families, regardless of the size, could afford to hire more domestic workers such that there tends to be specialization, and consequently, lesser workload, among the latter.

Conversely, one observation in Nepal goes, "Surprisingly, the smaller the family, the more the workload appears to be. In large families, washing clothes, cooking and shopping take most of the time. But in smaller families of working couples with babies, for example, the workers have to wash clothes, baby-sit and guard the house as well," (Sattaur, 1993:54).

Among the middle-class households in the Philippines, the prevalent practice is to hire "all-around" domestic workers, or those who can perform all types of household chores (Camacho, 1997). Similarly, in Pakistan, the survey conducted by Pervez and Athar (1994) found various sorts of tasks the child domestic workers perform for their employer's family. However, the survey revealed that boy domestic workers perform more number of duties than the girl domestic workers. No reason was given for this difference.

In Indonesia and Bangladesh, where boy and girl child domestic workers were both employed by an employer, the boy domestic workers were found to be more involved in tasks outside the home that includes taking the employer's children to school, washing the car, making deliveries, cleaning the drain, and gardening; while girl domestic workers were given tasks traditionally assigned to women, such as child-minding, cooking, washing and ironing clothes (Blagbrough, 1995; Shamin et. al, 1995). Needless to say, in households were only girl domestic workers were employed, they are expected to perform all of these tasks, whether inside or outside the homes.

Because of the numerous duties that the child domestic workers have to perform everyday, in all of their waking hours, and sometimes even as they retire for the night (e.g. when the employer's child wakes up and asks for a glass of water), may complain of overwork, which eventually takes its toll on their physical and mental well-being. The nature of their tasks, which are essentially repetitive and tedious, gives them no opportunity to learn new skills which may open a variety of opportunities for them in life after domestic servitude.

A sector of society may argue that domestic work is essentially light work but given the physical, emotional and mental capabilities of children raised in a poor family, and the expectation that they be at the beck and call of everyone at the employer's household at any time of the day and night, the conception of domestic work as light work may be adult-centric. Apparently, it is an erroneous premise to have no distinction between the tasks constituting adult domestic work and child domestic work. No wonder child domestic workers are perceived by the employers as "perfect substitutes" for adult workers, if not a "better substitute" for they are often paid less for the same amount of work.

Remuneration

Domestic work, as opposed to the other occupations in the informal sector, is widely perceived to offer a regular and steady source of income, despite its meagerness, by the child worker and his/her impoverished family. Because of this, life in domestic service is perceived, no less, a better option to the life parents of these child workers can provide them.

In reality, the low wages received by child domestic workers is a common grievance, yet, there are others who are deceived into working as domestic helpers with lures of a monthly wage or free education and bears delayed payments or end up not getting paid at all. In Nepal, a sizeable number (53.00%) of child domestic workers receive no wages, which was similarly reported in India (D'sami, 2002).

Aside from this, child domestic workers also have to bear with the various salary deductions imposed upon them for broken glassware or appliances and assorted items they are enticed to buy from their employer's buy-and-sell business, where they are also at times employed without pay. In Thailand, where children from neighboring countries like Myanmar, Lao Republic and Cambodia supply the high demand for child domestic workers, an agency placement fee, amounting to THB 5,000.00 to THB 10,000 (US$ 116.58 to 233.15)[2] per worker, is even deducted from the child domestic workers' skimpy salaries.

For those child domestic workers provided with remuneration, it comes in different types and is given in various modes. Commonly, child domestic workers are paid cash on a monthly basis.

[2] 1THB Thai Baht = US$ 0.023315 (as of April 21, 2003)

In Thailand, the Foundation for Child Development (2002) reported a starting monthly salary of THB 1,500.00 to THB 2,000.00 (US$ 34.97 to 46.63) for child domestic workers in the urban areas. However, for those immigrant child domestic workers in the rural areas, a monthly salary of THB 700.00 to THB 1,000.00 (US$ 16.32 to 23.32) is provided for.

Compensation rates of child domestic workers varies to some extent and greatly depends on the socio-economic status of their employers as observed in Vietnam where a 14-year old girl domestic worker received VND 200,000.00 (US$ 13.26)[3], aside from accommodation and meals, as a monthly remuneration from a wealthy family she worked for (HCWF, 2002). While in India, child domestic workers receive, at the most, INR 300.00 (US$ 5.88)[4] per month (D'sami, 2002). This is almost similar with that of Cambodia where wages are paid depending on the ability, workload and time consumed working by the child domestic worker that amounts to KHR 20,000.00 to KHR 40,000.00 (US$ 5.14 to 10.28)[5] per month (VCAO & LICADHO, 2002).

Generally, for those who entered in "live-in" or "stay-in" work arrangements with their employers, the monthly wage comes with the provision of food, sleeping quarters, and used clothes, among others. For employers, these "extras" are used as rationale for the relatively low wages of domestic workers such as in the case of Thailand where employers disagree to pay the minimum standard wage of THB 165.00 (US$ 3.84) per day.

In some instances, child domestic workers are provided three meals a day and eat the same type of food as their employer's but usually in smaller quantities of the left-over. Mealtime, however, is erratic, depending on the schedules of the employer or the amount of work done or to be made.

[3] 1VND Vietnamese Dong = US$ 0.000066 (as of January 2002)
[4] 1INR Indian Rupee = US$ 0.019599 (as of April 21, 2003)
[5] 1KHR Cambodian Rupee = US$ 0.000257 (as of January 2002)

Child domestic workers share the same food cooked for the rest of the household. But the portions and quality will be much inferior, as the meal might include leftovers from the previous days' meal. They receive three main meals a day and in between meals, portions of the extra food the family consume but may not be at the same time. Also, someone will hand over every bit of food to them. They have no right to help themselves to any amount of food at any time of the day (Rahman, 1992:12).

In the Philippines, it was observed that domestics working for affluent families do not eat the same type of food as the employer. They eat separately from the members of the employer's family and usually, after their employers' have taken their meals.

In addition to food, accommodations are also provided, however, because of the cost of urban housing, most employers do not provide separate quarters for their child domestic workers. If there is, it is usually cramped and not well ventilated. In Bangladesh, India or in Pakistan, for instance, majority of the employers merely provide a sleeping space for their child workers and this can be anywhere in the house: children's bedroom (often on the floor), living room, kitchen, verandah, dining room, staircase landing, or under the staircase (Shamim et. al, 1996:61-63; Salter, 1995:31-32). Some employers provide beddings ranging from pillows, mosquito nets, mats to quilts, albeit of cheaper quality, during winter (Shamim, 1995; Rahman, 1992).

The lack of sleeping spaces for (adult) domestic workers is cited as one reason for employing children as domestic workers (Salter, 1995). They can easily be accommodated, not requiring much space in the house. In Indonesia, however, all child domestic workers surveyed were found to have their own room or one they share with their co-workers (Blagbrough, 1995:17).

Meanwhile, domestic service in Thai society entails that the workers live in the employer's house. This character makes it difficult for the work relationship to be separated from the personal and private lives of the child workers. Work quantity becomes immeasurable since the nature of this work is secluded in private houses of employers which is hard to reach, monitor and investigate. Apparently, a higher degree of freedom and independence can be observed among "daily workers" who do not live at the employer's house. But these child domestic workers need to find their own accommodation, oftentimes with an older sister staying in Bangkok (Foundation for Child Development, 2002).

The above arrangement is considered as an acceptable term of employment in domestic service. It is difficult to say, however, if this is the most common work arrangement. In Bangladesh, seldom are children found in *chhuta* or part-time (live-out) arrangements (Rahman, 1992:7). While in Sri Lanka, 8,665 (45.33%) of the surveyed children domestic workers were found to be living within their employers' households (SLIMG-Colombo, 2002).

Though, a number of work arrangements based on the type of remuneration abound, some depending on cultural norms, but mostly simply depending, again, on the "nature and whim of the employer." In Cambodia, for example, there are three categories of child domestic workers:

1. Those unpaid but provided with food, lodging and clothing.
2. Those paid with food, lodging and clothing.
3. Those paid and works part-time with/without food and lodging.

The first two categories are often recruited among acquaintances or from the distant native home of the employer's family. While the third, is usually filled up by strangers or acquaintances from nearby households. These are children who offer domestic services on a regular basis but still lives with their families. "Live-out" arrangement like this is common in Pakistan where 47 percent

(47.00%) of the 200 child domestic workers surveyed received remuneration in cash/kind without provision of residence (Pervez and Athar, 1994).

Similarly, many children in the Eastern Visayas and Southern Mindanao regions of the Philippines offer to do domestic services for neighbors, such as laundrying at PhP 5 (US$ 0.10)[6] per piece, mopping the floor, fetching water, and weeding, among others, at the same rate per house. Some do these jobs and get paid in kind such as rice, root crops, used clothes or school supplies (Gloria, 1994; Sumagaysay, 1994).

Evelyn, 16 years old, Philippines

"When I finished Grade VI, my parents asked me if I'd like to go and stay with my distant Aunt in Davao. I was excited about this because I thought I would be able to continue my studies in High School and my Aunt told me I was welcome anytime, as long as I help in the household chores. But it turned out different from what I thought. I cook the food, wash the floor, clean the backyard, wash and iron the clothes and run errands during the day. They told me they are my second family but their children don't treat me as a member of the family. They have their own friends and can go anywhere they want but I'm not permitted to make friends outside and I'm only allowed to leave the house on Sundays when I go to school. At least they pay me PhP 500.00 for my work." (From the case files of Visayan Forum, in Child Workers in Asia, 13(1), 1997:22)

Moreover, children of "live-out" domestic workers or those allowed to live with their parent who is a full-time "live-in" domestic worker are expected to help their parents in their chores, or since they are just around, are also made to run errands for their parent's employer and family. They do not get paid in cash but may sometimes be given food or used clothes, again depending on the "nature and whim of the employer".

Meanwhile, other non-waged child domestic workers render domestic service in exchange for room, food and/or payment for school fees. Child domestic workers in "fostering" arrangements receive this type of remuneration. Though, there are cases of child domestic workers who willingly and knowingly enter into non-fostering arrangements without cash remuneration either, instead are paid in kind. But as Salter (1995:8) rightly asserts, "In traditional societies this approach may indeed have offered some poor children a better future. There is

[6] 1PHP Philippine Peso = US$ 0.019068 (as of April 21, 2003)

considerable evidence, however, that nowadays the practice is generally much less benevolent and indeed sometimes amounts to a form of slavery." Employers/benefactors can claim anytime that they are doing a philanthropic act towards these children, treating them as their sons and daughters, thus, are not entitled to receive wages.

In Pakistan, the practice of direct salary remittance to parents is common. However, in the case of older child domestic workers, the salary was paid directly to the child, who in turn, remits a certain amount to their parents and siblings back home (Blagbrough, 1995; Camacho, 1997). While in Dhaka, Bangladesh, most parents or guardians of the younger child domestic workers come all the way from their villages just to collect the child's salary every month or quarter.

Furthermore, there are instances when parents have taken a considerable amount of money in advance prior to the child's employment, which was regularly deducted from the monthly salary supposedly entitled to the child worker. In the study of Pervez and Athar (1994), many of the children surveyed claimed that they were forced to work as domestic workers by their parents who received their salary which is then allocated to household expenditures and for their parents' "mean petty needs". A more extreme case was reported in Nepal where about 30 percent (30.00%) of child domestic workers are in debt bondage (Dhital, 2002). Thus, the most tragic aspect of the child domestic work phenomenon is: "unknowingly, parents themselves are becoming the greatest abusers of their children. They are using their under-aged children as a commodity. The advances, salary and other benefits (from the employment of their children) are enjoyed by the parents," (Pervez and Athar, 1994:60). More importantly, this practice robs children of the little sense of confidence, independence and dignity they can gain from earning their own money.

Working Hours

There is no fixed working hours for child domestic workers, especially for those in "live-in" and full-time arrangements. What is certain is the expectation from the child domestic worker to wake up earlier and sleep later than everyone else in the household. As Pervez and Atha clarifies, "for the CDS (child domestic servants) the word *full-time* means really full-time, except the few hours when they are really sleeping or sometimes when the employers want to take rest and nap."

The studies in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines reveal that the child domestic workers put in 15 hours of work daily, seven days a week, at times extending up to 18 hours or more especially when there are late night activities in the household (Shamin et. al, 1995; Blagbrough, 1995; Pervez and Athar, 1994; Camacho, 1997;).

Rani, 10 years old, Bangladesh

Rani lost her father at a very early age at their village home in Sylhet. Her widowed mother became even more impoverished after her husband's death and so she and her only daughter, Rani, migrated to Dhaka where she started to work as a live-in domestic helper, but had some difficulties. As such, she had no option but to stay where her daughter could work even without getting any (cash remuneration) salary because she is young. Rani does all the housework just like any adult person such as sweeping and cleaning the floor, going to the grocery store, looking after small children, and throwing of the household wastes in the dustbin by the roadside. This system of keeping domestics in exchange for food and shelter only, taking advantage of their poverty-stricken situation, is still practiced in some households (Shamin, et. al, 1995, in Child Workers in Asia, 13(1), 1997:8).

Sadly in Nepal, about ninety-four (94) every hundred child domestic workers works for 12 to 16 hours daily while five (5) in every hundred work for more than 16 hours daily, and only a small fraction (1%) works less than 12 hours in a day (Dhital, 2002).

In Pakistan, those working part-time in two to four houses work for 8 to 10 hours a day. It is interesting to note that boy domestic workers in Bangladesh and Pakistan were found to work for a few more hours than girl domestic workers (Shamin et. Al, 1995; Pervez and Athar, 1994).

Oppositely, in Sri Lanka, 80 percent (80%) of the female child domestic workers approximately works for seven (7) days in a week as compared to only 65 percent (65%) of the male children. Nonetheless, 45 percent (45%) of all these children was reported working for at least seven (7) hours each working day (SLIMG-Colombo, 2002).

Work hours for these child domestic workers may include time for meals, afternoon rest, or time for study for the working students, all depending on "the nature and whim of the employer." It must be stressed likewise, that "live-in" child domestic workers are expected to be "on-call" at any time of the day, and even at night, because these children are also employed to assist in the businesses of their employers. In fact, the Arunodhaya Center for Street and Working Children (2002) has reported that child domestic workers in India are on duty 24 hours a day, resembling much of a modern-day form of slavery.

With long and unspecific hours of work, most child domestic workers experience and suffer from fatigue and other health problems, which may be the factor behind the errors committed in work or, as perceived by the employer, the laziness of the child domestic worker.

Education and Training Opportunities

In a year 2000 action research by the Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH) of 820 child domestic workers in Nepal, reveal that 464 (57%) were illiterate and 40 percent (40%) had left school for domestic work. These children, most (61%) of whom was found to be attending school prior to their employment as domestic workers (Dhital, 2002), opted to work, or sometimes lured, in the urban areas with the hope of continuing and acquiring quality education and thereby increasing their chances of a better job.

Whereas the probability of sending oneself to school is a major reason cited for entering the domestic service, many child domestic workers are not able to continue their studies after getting employed, primarily because of the sheer volume of tasks employers expect them to perform everyday or the lack of financial resources to pay for the costs of going to school. Few are able to save for future studies because their salary is barely enough for their personal expenses and the needs of their parents and siblings back home.

Cultural norms on gender roles and child socialization, and state policies which make education inaccessible and irrelevant also determine the educational and training opportunities afforded to child domestic workers.

Why Not Send Them To School?

There are many reasons why an employer would not send a child domestic servant to school:

- It is expensive. Even where schooling is "free", there are books and uniforms to buy and other (incidental) costs. Some employers may struggle to meet these expenses for their own children;
- It reduces the child's availability to perform work for the household;
- The employer may not recognize or accept any obligations to provide an education, reasoning that the provision of food and shelter (and in some cases, wages) is adequate compensation for the child's labor;
- It does not increase the child's value to the employer, since the tasks demanded of him/her do not require an education;
- It reduces the child's dependence and makes him/her more likely to leave domestic service. An illiterate child does not have many options, but one that has studied may be able to find a better-paying job with improved prospects (Salter, 1995).

In Thailand, a training program for people aspiring to work in domestic service was arranged by the government to uplift negative impressions towards the occupation, mainly by Thai citizens, and thereby professionalizing it subject to acceptable labor standards. However, this program was recalled because no one applied (Foundation for Child Development, 2002).

Conversely, in Cambodia, most child domestic workers, regardless of gender and age could not read nor write because they have never been to school, or had not been taught by their family members. However, boys more than girls were reported being sent to school (Victim Contribution Assistance Education, 1997). This was similarly reflected in a study conducted at its capital city, Phnom Penh, where 95 percent (95.00%) of the estimated 4,000 child domestic

workers were inexperienced and illiterate female workers (VCAO & LICHADHO, 2002).

Likewise in Pakistan, parents send their boys to school while girls stay at home until they marry-off, sometimes at the age of twelve years (TWWA in Child Workers in Asia 13(1), 1997:18). In Nepal, few children had been to school and some employers claim that they teach their servants the basics of literacy in their homes (Sattaur, 1993). However, there are cases of parents, who have not been to school either, also discourage their children from attending school preferring them to work instead (CWISH, 2002).

In comparison, Philippine society has high regards for education. In spite of this, as the vast majority of child domestic workers come from poor communities where options are few, the choice for girls is between ending their schooling to work full time with their families as tenant farmers or in fishing, or to take up domestic work in a nearby town, which carries with it the possibility of being able to continue with their education (Pflug, 2002:14).

Noor-e-Alam, 12 years old, Bangladesh

Noor-e-Alam hails from the village Shairkhali of Chittagong district. His father has abandoned the family and has married for the second time. His poor mother sent him to Dhaka along with his maternal uncle to find a suitable job for him. Now, Alam had been working as a domestic for two and a half years. He is very happy with his present employment and gets a reasonable amount of 200 Taka per month. Besides, the employer has got him admitted to a nearby school where he is now studying in grade four. Last year, when Alam had done very well in his examination, his employer had given him new books as a sign of encouragement. In addition, Alam's employer assured him of getting a better job in the future (Shamim et. al., 1995:99).

In Sri Lanka a Government Education Policy provides a primary school within two (2) kilometers of the home of every 6 to 10 year old child, and a secondary school within five (5) kilometers of the home of children 11 years and older. However, only 21 percent (21.00%) of those children in the 5 to 17 years of age found engaged in some form of economic activity is attending school or other educational institutions (Sri Lanka Interactive Media Group-Colombo, 2002).

For fortunate child domestic workers allowed to go to school by their employers, they encounter problems such as academic difficulties and lack of money for tuition, books, school supplies and even transportation fare to and from school. Academic difficulties can be attributed to the heavy workload leaving them little time to study their lessons, or too tired to pay attention in class (Camacho, 1997). In a CWISH (2002) study of ten (10) government schools in Kathmandu, Nepal, child domestic workers, comprising 60 percent (60%) of the students enrolled, were experiencing problems in studying. Most of them were observed to come late for class, find it hard to study in their places of work, lacks educational materials and are threatened with a salary diminution if they opt to study. Worst, even teachers exhibited less understanding of the situation of these children and less interest in helping them cope up and acquire better education.

Nonetheless, some child domestic workers are sent to vocational schools to learn or improve their skills such as cooking, child-minding, tailoring, or car maintenance. Child domestic workers employed by affluent families are often the recipients of these training opportunities. Of course, these redound to benefit the employers in terms of improved and professionalized service in the household. In the same manner, these opportunities also benefit the child domestic workers, providing them better bargaining position when transferring employment and/or more options after life in domestic service.

In fact, some successful cases in Thailand can be found, where women who used to be child domestic workers have had understanding employers who took care of them as one of the family members, provided them with educational and development opportunities, and gave time-off for them to make extra income. Later on, these domestic workers had established their own businesses (Foundation for Child Development, 2002).

Family Contact

Child domestic work often entails children to live away from their families. This is especially so in the case of migrant child domestic workers in Thailand who comes from neighboring countries like Myanmar, Lao Republic and Cambodia. Although, the Foundation for Child Development (2002) found that in time, (some of) these workers would have developed their own network and contact with their families. While in Sri Lanka, of the total 19,111 local child domestic workers, 10,447 (54.67%) are living with their families and the remaining fraction (45.33%) are in a "live-in" arrangement at their employer's household.

Fatema, 16 years old, Bangladesh

Fatema has been working (as a domestic) for the last four (4) years in the same household. She has not been to her native village since she started working for her present employer. Though, her parents pay her a visit once every year in her place of work. She has a feeling that if she goes home, her parents will marry her off, but she does not want to get married right now, specially when both the male household head and his wife love her and treat her as one of their own daughters (Shamim, et. al., 1995:129).

Child domestic workers are often separated from their families at a very young age. In a study in Nepal, 15 percent (15.00%) of the child domestic workers are found to have started working at the age of 5 to 9 years old and 30 percent (30.00%) were employed at the age of 10 to 11 years old. As Pflug (1999) emphasizes, this separation maybe for life, as many children are too young at the time to remember their full names or where they come from. They are transplanted into a totally new environment with a culture alien to them, and very minimal (if any) adjustment assistance is provided to them. They are forced to grow into sudden adulthood and many cannot comprehend why they had to leave their parental home and carefree childhood only to be plummeted into a life of hard work and no freedom.

Child domestic workers are able to visit their families, however, only with the permission of the employer. This happens once or twice a year, and usually scheduled on special occasions/holidays such as the Eid Festival in Bangladesh and Pakistan, or the Leberan (Moslem holiday, annually on the

Islamic calendar) in Indonesia. Oppositely, in Nepal, 44 percent (44.00%) of the child domestic workers surveyed were not allowed by their employers to visit their homes during the previous year prior to the study.

The distance between the work (employer's house) and the family's residence is a factor in the frequency of contact between the child domestic workers and their families (SAMIN, 1995) as observed in Indonesia. For example, in a survey of child domestic workers in the Kampong of Termalang (located in the province of Yogyakarta) those working in Yogyakarta had more opportunities to get in touch with their families. They are allowed to go home every month. At times, their families come and visit them in their workplaces. But for those working in Jakarta, they can neither be visited by their family nor go home as frequently as their counterparts in Yogyakarta. Even if allowed by their employers, they find the transportation cost too expensive preferring to take a leave for a few days only once a year, usually during the Leberan, instead. But as Blagbrough (1995:17) notes, "it is unclear how often the employer would allow them if they wished to travel more frequently."

Visits may be made for a variety of reasons (Shamim, 1995). For the child domestic workers, these are made to check on the condition of their parents and siblings, spend the holidays with their family, attend to sick parents, or give salary and gifts to their parents or siblings. On the other hand, parents visit their child to check on the latter's condition; ask money from, or take their child's salary; take their children back home (and often to place in another household with a higher pay); or to bring back the child after a visit.

However, employers may be reluctant to send the child domestic workers home for a visit, as found in a study in Bangladesh. Rahman (1992:13) provides the following explanation: "The few days of holiday is an anxious time for the employers as they dread the domestic (worker) may not return. This happens quite frequently. This is an unwelcome time for the employers because they

loose someone trained to help them and by that time probably some emotional bond has been created between the servant and the master."

If this is so, establishing contact with the family is nevertheless done through letters or telephone calls. Exchanging letters is cheaper than annual visits and thus can be made on a more frequent basis. However, child domestic workers who are unable to read and write are unable to keep in touch in this way. Furthermore, there are cases of employers who screen or intercept letters addressed to their domestic workers (Pacis, 1996). Though more personal, telephone calls are more costly than sending a letter and likewise, there are employers who strictly monitor incoming and outgoing phone calls of the child workers.

Children-victims of trafficking who end up slaving it out as domestic workers and those from far-flung rural areas who migrate to the urban centers or to other countries are completely denied any form of contact with their families. An increasing number of children find themselves in this situation, as documented by concerned groups and organizations.

For whatever reasons or motivations, the importance of family contact is unquestionable. For one, it provides a ready support system for both child domestic workers and their families in times of crisis. Families can check on the situation of their child worker and offer advice for their problems.

Recreation and Social Activities

Opportunities for recreation and to engage in other forms of social activities are not widely perceive as a right of the child domestic workers, both as a worker and as a child. It is considered more of a privilege given out of the good nature of the employer.

The forms of recreation and social activities frequently allowed by the employer are those that can be done without leaving the home, and whenever possible while working at the same time. These are watching television or movies on tape (while ironing clothes or mopping the floor); going to the nearby park (usually with their employer's children); playing with the employer's children (while ensuring that the children do not get hurt or hungry); chatting with the neighbor's domestic workers (while weeding the grass or taking care of toddlers); accompanying the employer's family during their out-of-town trips (and still be at their beck and call anytime); or being invited to special occasions, i.e. a birthday party, in the employer's family (and wash the dishes afterwards)

In Thailand, there are cases of employers who allow their child domestic workers to take day-offs to socialize with their friends. Even so, these children were found to have lesser chances of communicating and associating compared to those children in a different occupation, i.e. child factory workers. In addition to that, since most of the child domestic workers in Thailand are illegal immigrants from neighboring countries, "they have limited access to the places in their vicinity of work mainly due to lack of geographical orientation" (Foundation for Child Development, 2002) and fear of getting caught, and worst, being taken advantage of.

In Pakistan, most child domestic workers are allowed to play with their friends, but were reluctant or were rarely allowed to participate in the activities of their

employer's children. It is interesting to note that the boy domestic workers were more frequently allowed by the employers to play with peers than the girl domestic workers. "Girls are kept in more strict controls by their employers," (Pervez and Athar, 1994:39-40)

With these limitations, watching television has become a form of recreation for these child domestic workers. However, most employers complain of the children's lose of concentration in performing expected chores whenever the latter are allowed to do so. This is probably an indication of their need to escape in a make-believe world of pictures and fantasy (Rahman, 1992:13).

When work is unfinished or when minor accidents occur or an error is committed, the employer is quick to blame it on too much time spent on leisure activities such that this privilege is curtailed for sometime until the child domestic worker gains the employer's favor once again.

Attempts by the child domestic workers to form a relationship and spend time with someone outside the employer's household is viewed with suspicion or strictly monitored. It is in this regard that the right to have a day-off once a week is important. It is the only time for the child domestics to interact with each other, not as workers but as children and as friends, away from the watchful eyes of their employers. It would be interesting to know how many friends these children have made who are into other occupations or undertaking, or maybe, who are not working at all.

This problem of isolation has a negative effect on the child's opportunities for social development. Without opportunities for interaction with other people, especially children other than that of the employer's to whom the child domestic worker is a servant (and worst a property), the child worker is likely to grow up unable to form personal relationships (Salter, 1995:53-54).

There also exist extreme cases of isolation when the child domestic worker is locked inside the house of the employer when the latter goes out for work. Often they are left with insufficient food to last the time while the employer is away. But isolation is not only forced by the employer, child domestic workers can opt to isolate themselves too. With low self-esteem and a negative self-image, these child workers would rather stay at home than interact with others, especially non-domestic workers. It is common for these children to be the subject of rejection by other people upon learning they work in domestic service. Similarly, they would rather not befriend other people when they know before hand, they could not develop lasting friendships because of the uncalled for strictness of their employers.

Health and Sickness Benefits

The physical health and development of child domestic workers are greatly at stake in this worst form of child labor. These are pawned in exchange for a meager sum to augment the incomes of impoverished families of these children or, better yet, for the realization of their aspirations of a far better life than what their families could provide them at present.

Hazardous working conditions, such as heat exposure, the possibility of electrical short-circuits and climbing up ladders as well as long and irregular working hours, poor and insufficient food and overwork, naturally impact on the physical well-being of the child domestic workers. In addition, Black (1996) cites the existence of occupational health hazards, such as, improper work posture and lifting heavy loads that put the normal physical development of these children at risks.

Like the other terms and conditions of domestic work, provision of health, sickness and other benefits for child domestic workers is entirely upon the

"nature and whim of the employer". With this, child domestic workers are easily exposed to health hazards, impairing their growth and development, without any health insurance at all. In Pakistan, at least 20 percent (20.00%) of the children domestic workers exhibited health conditions below average (Pervez and Athar, 1994:59) and more than half (51%)of child domestic workers in Nepal have poor health status (CWISH, 2002).

Interestingly, a study of child domestic workers' health in Dhaka, Bangladesh, reveal a low incidence of child domestic workers with illnesses because "employers hardly continued to keep a child domestic worker that fell ill for a long time," (Shamim, et. Al, 1995:38-41). This simply means that on top of getting ill because of hazardous working conditions, these child workers are also at the mercy of losing their jobs once they are found sick. There is no clear policy if treatment of common ailments should be at the cost of the employer or of the child. It could be argued, however, that some of these ailments are work-induced or work-related, mostly resulting from fatigue and improper nutrition.

> *"Most children we have talked to reported suffering from only minor illnesses like flu, cold, fever in which case the employers treated them promptly at home with paracetamol or such common drugs without having to consult a doctor. Our perception is that this was more due to curing them as quickly as possible for the employer's own benefit than due to goodness of their heart. But it was clear that most employers will draw the line in treating a servant when it is expensive. To be fair with the employers, for a large number of them interviewed by us, it would be very hard for them to go for expensive treatment, even for their own children (Rahman, 1992:12-13).*

More importantly, the diagnostic process on the health status of child domestic workers is limited to physical observation and what they verbally express during health interviews or check-ups. Among the common ailments of these child workers are cold, chicken pox, diarrhea, eye, ear and nose infection, fever,

stomach ache, jaundice, mumps and skin infection. Employers, through first aid medication coupled with temporal work de-loading and/or shortening of work hours, usually provide treatment for the sick child. Only in cases of serious illnesses physicians are consulted.

Tenure and Social Security

Child domestic workers have no security of tenure and generally are not covered by any social security system. In India they can be hired and fired anytime (D'sami, 2002) for any reason the employer see fit. Employers never fail to come up with "justifications" for dismissing child domestic workers. They can concoct situations accusing the child of theft, of non-payment of debt, or simply citing the unsatisfactory performance of these child workers. Aside from constant threat of dismissal, these children face limited options in life, bearing heavy workloads and abuses of the employer. Without a written contract or a national legislation safeguarding the security of tenure of (child) domestic workers, the employers cannot be held liable for unfair dismissals, considering that these children have given up their studies in their home provinces (or country), or have been victimized by trafficking in their search for a better life.

Furthermore, pregnancy or marriage is another ground for the domestic workers' dismissal. Employers consider it as a burden to help in raising the domestic worker's child (aside from the view that child care is distraction from work), while marriage will disrupt the "live-in" full-time arrangement which the employer has been accustomed to. Oppositely, in some regions of the Philippines, children as young as eight (8) years old begin to work in the households of employers where their parents or relatives are doing domestic work (Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., 2002). For whatever reasons, it is not difficult for employers to dismiss a domestic worker for they can be easily replaced.

On the other hand, employers have to put up with sudden decisions by child domestic workers to exit from work. In the experience of Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. the decision to exit from work is determined by "the availability of alternatives (or better prospects of employment), the presence of unsettled obligations, several cases of theft accusations, and lack of contact with relatives/friends in the city (Pacis, 1996:8).

Again, where there is no national legislation or policy regarding the social security coverage of domestic helpers, they are totally dependent on the goodwill of others, especially their employers in cases of illness or disability. They do not have maternity or paternity benefits or can avail of government lending programs or pensions in their old age.

In the Philippines, there is a policy requiring employers to comply with the law providing mandatory social security benefits to domestic workers. In connection with this, one of the more recent direct services provided by the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. is facilitation of access to the Social Security System (SSS) of the Philippines. This was aided by the flexibility shown by the SSS Department who, encouraged to adopt strategies to reach out to domestic workers, conducted a mass registration campaign with the organization in one of Manila's parks where child domestic workers congregate. Many child domestic workers are not aware that the law mandates employers to register them and to make contributions on the child's behalf. As a result of these efforts, more than 500 domestic workers aged 15 and over are now in the Social Security System.

Access to social security solves many of the problems emanating from the employer-employee relationship. For example, in cases of work-related illnesses and accidents, child domestic workers currently pay for their own medication and hospitalization, or have the expenses deducted from salaries. By registering (in the SSS), they can make salary advances and loans to send home

(Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., 2002) aside from the health benefits provided by the system.

Violence and Abuse

Sexually Abused

Ms. X was 15 years old. She had found a job (as a ya-ya) when she was 14. Unfortunately, her employer's 60-year old father raped her in the province at gunpoint. She was terrified. When her employer moved to Manila from the province she tagged along to get away from what had happened. However, since she still works for the same employer, her abuser still had access to her. He followed her to Manila and continued to rape her at gunpoint. She wanted to kill the man but she was afraid. She did not talked about it because she was certain no one would believe her and she knew no one outside the family. This was in March 1992. She got pregnant, gave birth to a baby girl (Gopalen, 1996:32).

It is to the credit of media that the incidents of violence and abuse toward child domestic workers are getting the attention it deserves. As it is, only the severe and serious cases get reported, and readers are repulsed by what they read, shattering the perceived notion that child domestic work is a less exploitative type of work which according to Pflug (2002) is strongly supported by public opinion in many Asian countries. Obviously, this repulsion reflects an ingrained attitude that exploitative relations do not exists within the family.

In spite of the help that child domestic workers offer to free their busy employers some the household chores, a harmonious relationship is far from being realized, in most cases, between the child workers and their employers. This impedes the protection and promotion of the child domestic workers' rights in the work place. Employers oftentimes resort to physical and verbal abuses to intimidate and gain control over these child workers (CWISH, 2002)

The increasing number of abused child domestic workers reported, again, by media or as encountered by government and non-government service-providers is the reason for the development of programs and services for them. Although, systematic documentation of abuses inflicted is quite difficult to undertake, the

reasons for which will be discussed later, among the most common forms of violence and abuse experienced by the child domestics are as follows:

1. **Verbal abuse** – calling names, insults, constant threats, finding faults, filthy language, obscene words, raised voices, shouting, screaming.
2. **Physical abuse** – overwork, pushing, beating, kicking, slapping, pulling of hair, whipping, pinching, shaving of hair, denial of food, being hurt with broom and pots on different parts of the body.
3. **Sexual abuse** – lewd innuendoes, perverse behavior, molestation, incest, prostitution, pornography, rape and attempted rape not only by male members of the employer's household but also by male visitors.

While media reports are teeming with these stories, surveys made on the situation of child domestic workers reveal a low incidence, sometimes absence, of violence and abuse towards them. A situational analysis in Indonesia reveals that verbal abuse is a common maltreatment, but no cases of physical and sexual abuse was reported (Blagbrough, 1995). Similarly, a survey in Bangladesh unveils cases of verbal and physical abuses; with girl domestic workers suffering more from verbal abuse while the boy domestic workers are commonly subjected to physical abuse. Nonetheless, majority (74%) clearly states that they were "not victims of violence," (Shamim et. al, 1995:67-69). In the same manner, a survey in Pakistan mentions various types of "mishaps" and harassments," still, majority (74%) of the child domestic workers reports no experience of harassments (Pervez and Athar, 1994).

Moreover, there are documented cases of poverty-stricken families who found themselves in the position of powerlessness and helplessness, egging on their abused child domestic workers to bear the sufferings unless the latter lose their jobs. In the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse, there are parents who goad their child worker not to file charges or to accept an out-of-

court settlement and withdraw the case filed against the employer (ASK Bangladesh, in Child Workers in Asia, 13 (1), 1997:12).

The adverse effects of the harassment and assaults inflicted to these child domestic workers affect not only their physical health, but also their psychosocial health and development as well. Psychosocially, the discrimination and isolation that a child worker experience are known to have negative effects on the child's self-esteem, sense of identity, ability to socialize and make friends. In the case of actual abuse, verbal or physical, the effects may be even more acute (Black, 1996:14).

In general, employers make little attempt to take on the role of a "parent" other than in disciplinary matters, therefore failing to offer the child encouragement and guidance for personal development. Denying play, recreation, socialization with peers and exploration of interests prevent normal childhood development.

Perceived Inferiority

Any mistake or slip on the part of the child domestic becomes a point of reference for humiliating the child as the employers perceive the domestics as born inferior. Any demonstration of hope, ambition or unwelcome initiative on the part of the domestics is perceived as audacity. The listlessness of the child domestics arising out of fear, over work, lack of nutrition, over all confusion is perceived as cognatic dementedness of an inferior class or at best laziness (Rahman, 1992:9)

The alienation and isolation child domestic workers suffer tend to be greater in the urban areas than in the rural. In urban areas child domestic workers are completely cut off from their known surroundings and are frequently deprived of their access to even environmental resources such as space and open air. Many child domestic workers feel lonely, being immobile and too far away from home, without seeing their family and friends for years (Sharma, 1999:2).

As they watch the employer's children in play, study, enjoy sweets and go on outings – in short, have childhood, the sense of deprivation child domestic workers experience is disheartening. Their social interaction, if not completely prohibited, is limited. They have no coping mechanisms and often experience a

sense of rejection. These conditions, especially when compounded by verbal and physical abuse and harassment can at times result in personality disorders (Pflug and Braganza, 1999:240).

According to Pflug (2002), abuse in work is so prevalent as to be considered "part of the job" by most child domestic workers. Children who run away from their employers because of abuse are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of other worst forms of child labor. So, too, are children arriving in towns, especially in the port cities and big metropolitan centers of Asia who are not met by their prospective employers – and instead are being left stranded. These children are likely to be exploited with many being pulled into prostitution.

LAWS AND ITS GAPS

Despite child protection provisions against exploitation embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Minimum Age Convention (Convention 138), ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention 182) and several legislations and government actions, an issue of major concern is still the difficulty in legally protecting child domestic workers. "Domestic work remains among the least regulated and most poorly remunerated (if at all)"[7] of all occupations, whether performed by adults or children. It is an occupation perceived to be of the lowest status.

In most countries, the employment of children in domestic service is an age-old acceptable practice that required no legal approach to the problems arising from it. Most countries acted as if abuse and exploitation of child domestic workers did not exist. Authorities were reluctant to interfere in matters largely belonging to the private sphere. It is not surprising therefore to find out that child domestic workers, as in most Asian countries, have no legal identity, more so legal protection. This may well be the general statement to describe the state of legal protection of child domestic workers in Asia.

[7] ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Thailand (p.63) shows that the monthly salary range for CDWs is between 3,000-5,000 Baht (approximately 73-121 US$). The ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment in Nepal (p.20) shows 39.3% of those interviewed earning up to 4,000 Rupees (approximately 51 US$) per year while 20% earn above 6,000 Rupees (approximately 66 US$). 40% have an annual salary between 4,000 and 6,000 Rupees.

Why is this so? First and foremost, none of the national codes specifically define the term "child domestic worker". As a common observation, most of the fundamental laws applicable to child domestic workers lack exclusivity of the their circumstances and fail to recognize their special needs.

In the Philippines, where national laws are stringently formulated to address the issue, only two provisions directly deal with the situation of child domestic workers: that employers should allow their child house helpers to complete their elementary education and the limitations on hazardous undertakings for domestic helpers aged between 15 and 18 year old, as covered by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Department Order No. 4, series of 1999.

Nonetheless, several specific laws and regulations are worth citing as relevant to children, in general, in various Asia-Pacific countries, with some countries making varying degrees of advancement in enacting protective measures through policy advocacy efforts of various sectors concerned with the issue of child domestic work, including the domestic workers themselves.

Largely, these laws and regulations guarantee a minimum age for children's employment as one of the essential measures in preventing child exploitation and promoting protection against hazardous work. However, specific provisions for the implementation of this measure in the case of children in the informal sector, such as those into domestic work, needs to be amplified. Specifically, written laws of these Asian countries rarely mandate birth registration of children. Birth certificates are viewed as a vital document in monitoring activities as many employers ignore the real ages of children they employ.

In addition, there are also laws and regulations that assure free and compulsory education for children in the national codes of these countries that have made insignificant contribution in preventing children from entering

domestic work. And more often than not, the education system has failed to adjust to the conditions of these child domestic workers, most of whose parents unable to perceive the value of sending their children to school as prompted by their impoverish situation.

More specifically, what accounts for the difficulty in legally protecting child domestic workers? Pervez and Athar (1994) cites the two following reasons:

"Placing children in the domestic service is a widespread, age-old and accepted practice. The rules of tradition, and not the law, perpetuate and regulate this practice."

This is the tradition of "fostering" practiced in many societies whereby children of poor families are placed in the care of their wealthier relatives. They assist in the household work in exchange for room, meals and, in most cases, payment for school provided by their foster families. For Filipinos who place a high regard for education, this is often a strategy resorted to by poor families who are unable to send their children to school. In Indonesia, this is referred to as "sham adoption" (Blagbrough, 1995).

Salter (1997) observes that, "in traditional societies this approach may indeed have offered some poor children a better future. There is considerable evidence, however, that nowadays the practice is generally much less benevolent and indeed sometimes amounts to a form of slavery." In South Asia, for instance, this practice is inextricably linked to the system of debt bondage or consequently, to the problem of bonded child labor. Whereas in the past, the system of bondage adheres to caste lines, now it is more a function of poverty and indebtedness. In Nepal, "when a family is unable to repay the interest on a loan from a landlord/moneylender, it will send a child to bondage, as a servant in the home of the landlord/moneylender," (Sattaur, 1993:53).

Where a child renders domestic service under arrangements of fostering, the terms and conditions of work entitled every worker are unrecognized or considered not applicable and, as such, is difficult to enforce and regulate. Thus, there is no employment contract, regular salary, or defined working hours to speak of. Their tasks are open-ended or ill-defined. They are not entitled to work benefits such as regular days-off, overtime pay, or health and sickness benefits, and if provided, are largely considered a philanthropic act on the part of the employer, who sometimes is a distant relative. Situations of abuse go unnoticed, for reporting it would be considered as being ungrateful or offensive to the kindness of the foster family.

"Domestic servants are considered to belong to the private sphere which is deemed to be the business of the individual. The state ostensibly has no role to play."

Many of the problems facing domestic workers stem from this. Because domestic work takes place in the confines of the employer's home, it is regarded as unskilled work and requires no formal training, thus, it is distinguished by low wages, unsecured and poor working conditions. It is also considered as menial, or at worse, as non-work or an undignified occupation. From these prevailing notions towards domestic work stem the abuses and exploitations, as domestic workers are treated as lowly workers, or at worse, as non-persons eternally grateful to their philanthropic employers.

Whether to regulate terms and conditions of work or to investigate cases of abuse, labor inspectors and other law enforcers feel reluctant to intervene or interfere because of the private nature of domestic work and the belief that child domestic workers are better protected and occurrences of abuse are unlikely in the employer's household. And because it is just domestic work, with no concrete social or economic contribution, it is not a matter of urgency

or priority in policy-making. Child domestic workers therefore have never been in the priority list of policy-makers and enforcers alike.

Policy Responses

In general, policy responses to the problem of child domestic work comes in the form of comprehensive child labor legislations which set the minimum age for employment, establish the terms and conditions of work and ban child labor in certain industries. It can be said that there is a glaring lack of national legislation specific to domestic work. At least, various sectors from the different Asian countries have proposed and lobbied for bills seeking to recognize domestic workers as workers, uphold and protect their rights, and provide penalties for violations. Interestingly, proposals for a national legislation for the protection of domestic workers exist in countries where there are strong domestic workers' organizations.

In India, the struggle of the House Workers Movement for justice and rights of the domestic workers is embodied in the Campaign for a Domestic Workers Bill initiated in 1987. The (Campaign for a Domestic Workers) Bill works for their recognition as 'workers' and for legislation on domestic workers that seeks improved working conditions (for example, specific work hours, rest and leave) and adequate and fair remuneration. It is also involved in creating public awareness of the domestic worker's dignity and rights (Pflug and Devos, n.d:3) Similarly, the Sri Lanka Interactive Media Group-Colombo educates the masses and the children themselves on safeguarding child rights through The Campaign Action Against Child Labor.

In the Philippines, on the other hand, the *Batas Kasambahay* or Magna Carta of Household Helpers (House Bill No. 5804) authored by Representative Jack Enrile seeks to institutionalize and uplift the minimum working parameters and

standards of the household helper industry, and strives to bring this traditionally informal labor sector closer towards the benefits and protection accorded by law to the more formalized sectors of the labor force - without losing sight of the singular peculiarities traditionally inherent in the relationship between the employer and the household helper.

A Few Good Intentions...

Briefly, the Philippine Magna Carta for Household Helpers or *Batas Kasambahay* intends to:

1. Dignify a lowly regarded profession
   Society must reclaim the decent value of domestic work. The proposed bill prescribes new provisions aside from Social Security System registration and four days off monthly in addition to the 14 days paid vacation leave. It raises the minimum wage to PhP 1,500.00, provides for a 13th month pay in addition to salary increases and it makes the employer accountable for the hospitalization needs of the household helper.

2. Clarify roles and expectations
   A written employment contract between the employer and the house helper covering, at the most, two years shall be executed to protect both parties.

3. Ensure third party help
   The Department of Labor and Employment together with NGOs are authorized as third party helpers in cases of abuse. Also, an inspection system is to be developed to prevent abuses from taking place.

4. Give special focus on child domestic workers
   The bill clearly prohibits the employment of children below fifteen years of age into domestic work. With this law alone, it will be difficult to abolish child domestic work, as it is a historically accepted practice. But once applied in concert with other policies, this law is envisioned to address the problem successfully.

(Excerpt from Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. *Kasambahay Journal*: "A Few Good Intentions: Looking at the Magna Carta Inside and Out." April 2003. p. 7-8.)

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, existing child labor regulations are considered as irrelevant to the plight of child domestic workers largely because domestic work is perceived as an informal activity thus, it remains totally unregulated. There is no national law to protect the domestic workers except for the recent Jakarta Municipal Regulation No. 6/1993 (Blagbrough, 1995:20). The Regulation is the first attempt to secure the welfare of the child and adult domestic workers. However, the regulation continues to remain unimplemented. According to this Regulation, children under 18 years of age are not allowed to work as domestic workers unless, they are fostered by the employers (i.e., the employers must treat them like their own children). The penalty for those violating the Regulation is Rupiah 50,000 or three months imprisonment. Unfortunately, there is no attempt in the provision to regulate the conditions of work for domestics—still leaving them vulnerable, and reliant on the goodwill of their employers (Blagbrough, 1995:21). The Jakarta Municipal Regulation was enacted in reaction to a concerted publicity campaign led by Kalyanamitra, a

Jakarta-based women's rights organization also responsible for the advocacy campaign for the mandatory contracts for domestic workers and the drafting of a simple model contract for such workers, as well as for the proper legal protection for child and adult domestic workers (Blagbrough, 1995:21-23).

In Thailand, according to the Foundation for Child Development (2002), the Labor Protection Act 1998 was passed to add protection for domestic work in some aspects that traditionally was dealt upon only by civil and commercial law (employment contract). While most child-domestic workers in Thailand are illegal immigrants from neighboring countries, the Protection and Suppression of Women and Child Trafficking Act (1997) protects the immigrant children in domestic service, children who are victims of human trafficking. These children are not charged of illegal immigration. Instead, they are supervised and taken care of by social services establishments belonging to Public Welfare Department or local NGOs. They are treated by relevant governmental agencies according to guidelines of the Memorandum of Understanding: "Common guidelines for relevant agencies in proceeding women and children who are victims of trafficking (1999).

National Domestic Workers Movement

The National Domestic Workers Movement initiated advocacy and campaign on child domestic work in two states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu, India.

In Andhra Pradesh, a CDW Advocay Project was conducted where the following activities were accomplished:

1. Identification and listing of 4,438 children in domestic work in 20 areas.
2. Established motivation centers in various places to make education accessible for CDWs.
3. Prevention of children recruitment into domestic work through community education.
4. Sensitization of economic, social, educational institutions and government departments
5. Networking and collaboration with all stakeholders.

Meanwhile, in Tamilnadu, a State Level Workshop on Advocacy on Child Domestic Work was initiated in Chenmai, Tamilnadu, India from August 27 to 31, 2002 in cooperation with the Arunodhaya Ceneter for Street and Working Children-Chenmai and Anti-Slavery International-U.K. and other NGOs in the area. There were 47 participants from eleven (11) districts of Tamilnadu and four participants from the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh.

The activity resulted to the formulation of the vision, objectives and action plan of a network to initiate a "Campaign Against Child Domestic Work" with Arunodhaya tasked to lead the network.

(Excerpt from D'Sami, Virgil. National Domestic Workers Movement: "Raising Awareness About and Promoting Sustained Action Against The Exploitation of Children Working as Domestic Workers," 14 December 2002. pp. 8.)

Meanwhile in Cambodia, a draft Law on Domestic Violence has been submitted for implementation to address many forms of domestic violence including cases of child domestic worker abuses (VCAO & LICADHO, 2002). Other Asian countries have already existing laws that address the plight of the child domestic workers to some extent. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, there is the Employment of Children Act, 1991. However, these policy responses need further scrutiny so as to better address the issue it is supposed to straighten out – the exploitation of children in domestic work.

Some Problems in Enforcement

Legislation without enforcement is futile – aside from the fact that national laws do not consider domestic work, as prohibited hazardous labor for children, poses serious difficulties in implementation, monitoring and inspection activities on the problem. Three problem areas have been identified in a research[8] of thirteen (13) Asia-Pacific countries[9] on legal protection of child domestic workers by Atty. Amparita S. Sta. Maria[10].

First, laws on labor inspections are generally focused on monitoring industries and commercial establishments, rather than individual homes where child domestic workers are found. Inspection in households requires child abuse or injury for an immediate verification and action which maybe too late. Harm against the child is already done.

Second, rescue operations take place when abuse on child domestic worker is reported. The report of abuse is usually made through hotline services.

[8] Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. *Kasambahay Journal*: "Study on the Legal Protection of Child Domestic Workers in the Asia Pacific." April 2003. p. 9-10.
[9] Bangladesh, Cambodia, China (plus Hongkong, SAR), Fiji, India, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.
[10] Atty. Amparita S. Sta. Maria is in-charge of the Research Education and Publication Desk at the Human Rights Center, Manila and a faculty member of the Ateneo Law School.

Immediate protective custody has to be provided to the child victims of abuse and rehabilitation measures undertaken by the social workers. Such interventions require manpower and resources which the countries studied lack.

Third, many child domestic workers are unaware of their rights. Accessing justice for non-payment of wages, physical injuries or other acts of cruelty or abuse are very seldom. Thus, most of the time the cases are settled out of court or compromised. Only few criminal cases are filed against the abusive employers as the procedure is too long and children scared. Therefore laws that aim to penalize employers fail to achieve their purpose.

A number of children in domestic labor have indirectly benefited from interventions which tackle the situation of child labor in general. However, the nature of child domestic work as a particularly hidden form of employment, means that the impact of the broader, policy level interventions which are not specifically intended for child domestic workers, is slow, and, in most places, minimal. Bringing child domestic work into the open and to the forefront of the policy agenda, as it is happening, for example, in the Philippines and Nepal, can lead towards the potential benefits of focusing attention on child domestic workers as a major part of interventions that aim to progressively eliminate child labor and urgently combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (Crawford et.al, 2000:7-8).

The difficulties in legally protecting child domestic workers as previously discussed also account for the weakness in enforcement mechanisms in countries where labor laws cover their situation. It must be noted that most of the countries have substantial child labor legislation but all acknowledge the difficulties encountered in enforcing them. This is especially acute in the domestic service and the other occupations in the informal sector which are virtually beyond the reach of government monitoring and regulative bodies.

Enforcement is greatly weakened by the gaps in, or vagueness of the relevant laws and regulations. Salter (1997) cites the gaps in the national minimum age legislations enacted in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan which only applies to certain specified sectors, usually in industrial undertakings. In countries where the minimum age legislation is of general application, exclusion of domestic service is permitted along with work in family undertakings which are generally considered as light work.

In Pakistan, Pervez and Athar (1994:9) note that various laws and acts concerning child labor have been ignored while others are so vague that "they leave the door wide open for legally perpetrated abuse". They underscore the "public/private dichotomy" as one of the major reasons for the lack of government interference on the issue of domestic work, even in the case of abuse. In Bangladesh, Rahman (1992:2) comments that the law intervenes sometimes, usually in cases of extreme and violent forms of abuse, and only after a sensational coverage by the media. Although not stated, the public/private dichotomy could very well explain why less severe but obvious forms of abuse and deprivation often go unnoticed or unreported, or even if reported, not acted upon.

In Indonesia, penalties for violations of child labor laws remain paltry (Blabrough, 1995:12). For example, violation of a 1987 regulation which prohibits the employment of children in dangerous or difficult work and mandates employers to report how many children they employ only amounts to a maximum of three months imprisonment or a fine of Rupiah 100,000.00 (or approximately US$ 50.00).

Other obstacles to the enforcement of child labor laws are the few, underpaid labor inspectors who lack proper training on handling cases of child labor exploitation; lack of awareness of child labor laws and regulations among law enforcers; and widespread corruption in the labor and justice systems.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR THE CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

There exists a range of programs and services for child domestic workers, some designed and developed to respond to their particular needs, but most approaching the issue within the comprehensive framework of protecting the rights and welfare of the working children. However, it could be said that there is a strong and growing direct interest on the issue as manifested by the increasing number of organizations now taking cognizance of the plight of child domestic workers.

The available programs and services attack the problem of child domestic work at different levels and employ a variety of complimentary approaches. This part documents what has been done on the issue of child domestic work, and, based on the studies reviewed, attempts to synthesize the learnings and recommend effective strategies organizations can adopt for the future.

Emotional and Material Support

Organizations offer emotional and material support to child domestic workers, especially those who suffer from abuse and violence. Emotional and material support includes: counseling, emergency shelter, medical care, clothing

assistance, nutritional assistance, sports and recreation activities, family reunification and livelihood and cooperative formation assistance.

Commonly, counseling is used in giving emotional support. Organizations such as Shoishab Bangladesh and Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. serve as round-the-clock venues where child domestic workers can run to for emergency services or simply, for someone who is willing to listen to their problems. In Nepal, the Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) has established a 12-hour Helpline (271000) to address the issues of child rights violations and for emergency relief, support and counseling of children at risk. Majority of the cases registered in the CWIN Helpline comprises exploitation and torture of child domestic workers (Dhital, 2002:5).

Counseling is provided using different approaches and in different settings. The Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. for instance, employs four forms of basic counseling, namely, direct counseling in Luneta Park, a favorite strolling place for Filipino domestic workers and thus a strategic point for reaching out to them; telephone counseling through its telephone hotline; letter-writing; and peer group counseling.

Another form of emotional and material support is the provision of emergency shelters. In an emergency situation, child domestic workers "rescued" or who ran away from their abusive employers may need a safe place to stay. In this case, the Shoishab Bangladesh runs a Half-way House for street children and child domestic workers.

> *"The Half-way House is a residential part of Shoishab activities to provide certain emergency supports to the children in need, which cannot be met through our community based Street Children and Child Domestics Programme…The services provided include short term emergency shelter, medical care, refuge and counseling." (Shoishab brochure)*

For organizations which do not operate a separate shelter or half-way house, their offices double as temporary shelters for the child domestic workers. But these shelters do not only provide refuge but also other services such as medical care, clothing assistance, nutrition, and sometimes, sports and recreational activities. Needless to say, child domestic workers who stay with their employers can also avail of the same services when and if needed.

Moreover, emotional and material support is also provided through referrals to other centers/ organizations. For instance, the Sri Lanka Interactive Media Group-Colombo does referrals to children's homes (orphanages) and conducts family reunification activities. Also, referring the child to crisis or trauma rehabilitation centers usually provides long-term treatment of trauma.

What Works for Filipino CDWs

It is very difficult for these children, disciplined as they are to speak only when spoken to, taught as they are not to complain, socialized as they are into accepting abuse as part of the job, inculcated as they are with fatalism, to open up to us quickly – no matter how sympathetic we appear to be. They taught us about themselves, even as they could not articulate these feelings outright.

Accepting these lessons, we sought for other ways to reach they. Since reaching them at their workplace was out of the question, where else could we find them?

We found them in schools, often with their charges in tow, some as students themselves. We found them in church, going to mass or availing of temporary shelter. We found them in the novitiates, which took them in during their period of crisis. Finally, we found them where they were most numerous: at public parks, on their day off. Here unconfined by the four walls of the house, at very little cost, in the midst of hundreds of people who do not give them orders – here they relax. Here they meet their town mates, relatives, and friends. We have found this true not only in Manila, but in the other regions as well.

Thus we focused on finding them at the parks and other recreational places, churches, and schools. We introduced ourselves, and found that many did not have all Sundays off: we made the Sunday-at-the-Park a regular activity, so that they can find us there whenever they are free. Often, they did not have the entire day off: we soon realized that we had to conduct activities in three hours only, four at most. Since they are tired from their work, we have to be able to grab and retain their attention: our activities must thus be visually engaging and participatory. Disincline as they were to trust strangers, it often took co-child domestic workers to convince them to participate: soon, these children were inviting other children to come along and meet us.

We discussed their rights, using flip charts and flyers; we talked with them about their problems and their goals. We encouraged them to meet other child domestic workers, and to play. We saw them blossom: from being wary and unsure, they developed confidence and assurance. We realized that, with appropriate training, they could become leaders of their own ranks; facilitate counseling, discussions, and data collection; and provide a strong peer support system for their fellow child domestic workers.

(Excerpt from Oebanda, et. al. "The Kasambahay- Child domestic work in the Philippines: a living experience." 2001.p. 67-68.)

Furthermore, child domestic workers also turn to their own peers for their emotional and material needs. In India, Philippines and Bangladesh, there are domestic workers organizations, often facilitated and supported by non-

government organizations, which also functions as support or self-help groups. In the assessment of the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. this is more effective since "domestics can easily relate to fellow domestics."

Aside from child domestic workers themselves, counseling activities also target the employers. The Shoishab Bangladesh conducts "counseling activities with the employers and guardians of these children to help them make the necessary adjustments in their attitudes and expectations." Similarly, the Sri Lanka Interactive Media Group-Colombo targets "household mistresses" to persuade them from harassing child domestic workers.

Other forms of meeting the material needs of these child domestic workers is through livelihood and cooperative formation, and training the child domestic worker on other skills which they can resort to for additional sources of income. In some communities, Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. is exploring strategies in extending micro-finance initiatives since savings and credit schemes, have proven to boost the ability of individuals and the community as a whole to withstand economic "shocks" (Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., 2002:17).

In the same manner, the Foundation for Child Development in Vietnam administers a Saving-Credit Program where about 50 percent (50.00%) of the families of child domestic workers have increased incomes thereby creating flexibility on the part of the parents to allow their children to go to school and have more time for recreational activities.

Education and Training Programs

Most of the child domestic workers say that they work because their parents cannot afford to send them to school. As such, it is widely held that relevant education is the most effective instrument for the elimination of child labor. In

this regard, many organizations work towards providing the child domestic workers the opportunity to continue their schooling, whether formal or non-formal, while working. This is done in many ways.

Educational assistance can be provided in terms of helping the child obtain the necessary papers needed for enrollment, e.g. their birth certificates. Volunteers and staff of organizations can provide tutorial services for free. In addition, the Visayas forum Foundation, Inc. for instance, maintains a collection of textbooks and reference materials in their office for use by the child domestic workers in their schoolwork.

The Working Women's Association

The Working Women's Association (TWWA) of Pakistan runs a Free Non-Formal Education Center and Skills Enhancement Center in the Federal area. They are involved in bringing about changes in attitude of parents and employers regarding the value of education. In addition, they provide an opportunity for a labor free future for the children by exposing them to skills training and income generating activities, as well as useful alternatives and exposure to other vocational possibilities. TWWA has an on-going program of awareness raising and advocacy for working children in domestic service, targeting parents, employers community members and children themselves.

Curriculum

Parents and guardians who perceive child labor, even in hazardous occupations, as a perfectly normal means of survival deprive these working children of their childhood for economic reasons. Most of the parents marry-off their daughters as early as possible, sometimes at the age of 12 years. It is of utmost concern, therefore, to educate these girls the soonest time possible.

For basic education, the Allama Iqbal Open University adult education materials is used to enable the child to cover up to class three in 18 months. After completing this program, regular Urdu medium syllabus is introduced up to class five. In class four, children are introduced to the regular Punjab board curriculum to prepare them for the Board Exam. The curriculum includes a study of health, hygiene, food and nutrition. Games and educational trips are essential parts of our program. The children complete five classes in three years.

(continued…)

In the same manner, with the intervention of Arunodhaya Center for Street and Working Children, a significant number of girl children below 12 years in India are in school. Through organized non-formal education centers, 200 girls are receiving tutorial assistance (Child Domestic Workers Development Project, Arunodhaya Center for Street and Working Children, 1996).

Education programs for child domestic workers include establishing links with government education departments, school authorities and teachers, parents and employers. In India, the staff of Arunodhaya sends the children to pre-

schools run by the government. As such, they "collaborate with the government staff to make it (pre-school) more effective." In addition, Arunodhaya establishes rapport with school-teachers to "facilitate a better follow up on the children's performance at school." Linkages with school authorities are made to inform them of the services that need to be made available for child domestic workers, and to educate them and get their commitment and support on the education of these child workers.

In the Philippines, Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. (VF) has combined the following strategies[11] in its bid to extend educational assistance to child domestic workers.

1. Providing emergency educational support to prevent CDWs from dropping out because they are unable to pay for their tuition. VF pays the school directly upon the recommendation of the teacher, the principal and the local officer of the domestic workers' organization.
2. Engaging in technical cooperation with the school administration, which led to the adjustment of the school curriculum. Since then, teachers have allotted an hour a week incorporating the teaching of domestic worker's rights, life skills, and the like. The teachers also

The Working Women's Association

(…continued)

Skills Enhancement Programmes

1. Basic electricity
   Use and maintenance of household gas and electrical appliances like food processors, toasters, grinder, etc.. Every household uses modern electrical appliances and for most of these young children, it is usually the first time they have ever seen or used such appliances. They are not aware of the dangers of electrical shock or burns. Burning their arms and hands with the electric iron is very common incident. Employers cannot even imagine how dangerous it could be. They just want to get the job done.

2. Food Preservation
   Making jam, pickle and juices with full training of personal hygiene, proper uniform and hand to head covering.

3. Sewing and dress Designing
   Two boys from the center have started working with a master tailor and are making good money. It is believed that all children should know how to sew and mend their clothes. It was observed that children who learn to mend their own clothes do not come to school in ragged and torn clothes anymore.

4. Nanny and Child Care Training
   Realizing the risk involved when these children are look after babies, a child care training program was conceived.

5. Income Generating Activities
   This year more income generating skills are being introduced so that if these children wish to start their own small business, the association will help them get a small loan.

(From Child Workers in Asia, 13(1), 1997:17-18).

agreed to schedule an annual retreat seminar for each class to process the work and family experiences of the children.

3. Conducting training and awareness orientation for teachers about the plight of domestic workers, their role as caregivers, and how to refer suspected cases of abuse. In effect, the teachers have become VF's allies.
4. Intervening on behalf of domestic workers whenever they have problems with their employers to head off any possible interruptions of their academic life.
5. Scheduling group orientations of employers, in cooperation with the school officials, to improve employer-employee relationship, which is crucial to the child's performance in school.
6. Giving tutorials, often needed when they return to the school for the first time after a prolonged absence.
7. Organizing each class as sub-groups of the domestic worker's association allowed VF to coordinate activities like training and field trips, among others. This also facilitated better and faster performance monitoring of each working child, which at the same time served as the child's immediate peer support system sustaining an individual's determination to study when the combined demands of work and studying seem to be excessive.
8. Supporting the establishment of Activity Centers by and for SUMAPI[12] members. This physical lounge served as an important venue for all the services and strategies initiated by VF, together with teachers and other students.

In India, newly admitted child domestic workers in schools took it out during an August 10 Child Labor Day celebration to create awareness on the right to

[11] Oebanda, et. al. "The Kasambahay- Child domestic work in the Philippines: a living experience." 2001.p. 89-90.

[12] Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (Association and Linkage of Household Service Workers in the Philippines), an organization composed of around 5,000 thousand members in 17 core groups nationwide, both children and adults.

education for every child. Prior to this, an enrolment campaign was organized in the months of April, May and June to motivate the parents to enroll their children in schools. The activity also included coordinating with school authorities to simplify the procedures of school admission and to monitor the progress of children at school. (Child Domestic Workers Development Project, Arunodhaya Center for Street and Working Children, 1996).

On the other hand, non-formal education for the child domestic workers includes regular training-seminars on their rights as children and as domestic workers, on relevant laws and policies, on leadership skills, as well as skills training, e.g. cooking, table preparations, child care, tailoring, and computer literacy to improve their prospects of getting better job opportunities, be it in domestic service or outside.

Research, Documentation and Monitoring

The growing number of researches and information materials on the situation of child domestic workers is indicative of the strong interest of various organizations to address the issue of child domestic work.

At the front of child domestic work research is the Anti-Slavery International which has conducted or supported studies on the situation of child domestic workers in Indonesia, Nepal and Bangladesh. However, the "invisible" nature of child domestic work makes it very difficult to implement research projects essential in generating valid and credible information on the issue of child domestic work that could be used by policy-makers and program developers in formulating relevant and responsive actions. Recently, it has organized a gathering of researchers and practitioners on the issue of child domestic work in United Kingdom (UK) to share on the methodologies, concerns and problems encountered in doing research studies and has come out with a handbook for research and action containing the result of the UK workshop.

On the other hand, documentation and monitoring activities are frequently conducted to aid research and direct service work. In the Philippines, the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. maintains a database of domestic workers, both adult and child, it gets in contact with during its outreach programs who later assist in data gathering. The organization also consciously collects news and magazine clippings on this issue. While, the ILO/IPEC-Philippines has linked up with the National Statistics Office in order to incorporate data on household helpers and working children in the annual Labor Force Survey.

In Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka Interactive Media Group-Colombo carries out its monitoring work by meeting some children employed in domestic service once a month and asking them whether they have been harassed by members of the household which they work for. In Indonesia, interviews are carried out by the Secretariat Bersama Perempuan Yogyakarta (SBPY) with domestic workers prior to setting up a support network.

The results of research, documentation and monitoring work are often translated and published into books or as news and feature articles. But what is noteworthy are the number of magazines or newsletters published by Shoishab Bangladesh, *Child Workers News* (in English); Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children, *Sitterumbu Pesudhu* (in Tamil); Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc., the *Balitang Kasambahay* (Kasambahay News) and the Domestic Workers Movement in India, *Domestic Workers Link*. Other publications by child labor-focused and women's organizations have featured the child domestic workers in at least one of its issues, e.g., the *Child Workers in Asia* and the *SBPY Newsletter*. Popularized versions of other printed information include a comic book on the life of a domestic workers and posters.

Legal Assistance

Legal assistance is provided to child domestic workers for cases of violence and abuse, or for violations of labor laws concerning them. This is usually done in coordination with legal rights groups who usually provide legal services for free. In Indonesia, an agreement has been reached between the Sekretariat Bersama Perempuan Yogyakarta and a local branch of LBH (Institute of Legal Aid) to provide legal assistance to domestic workers in prosecuting cases of abuse in court (Blagbrough, 1995). In Sri Lanka, the Interactive Media Group-Colombo helps bring the cases of abuse before the Juvenile Court, arranges free services of lawyers, and provides temporary shelter and other welfare services during the trial. While in the Philippines, the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. (VF) works closely with Adhikain para sa Karapatang Pambata (AKAP), the child rights unit of the Ateneo Human Rights Center in providing a comprehensive legal service to child domestic workers.

AKAP and VF have had training experiences, education and cross-NGO referrals of cases of child domestic workers needing legal assistance. AKAP particularly provides para-legal training and legal advice to domestic workers referred by VF. In general, AKAP as an institution provide services for the advancement of children's rights. VF, on the other hand, has had experiences in providing para-legal trainings for domestics reach out in the field. It has also settled out of court cases between employers and domestic workers. Several pull-out cases of domestic workers have been jointly launched by the two NGOs.

An important aspect of legal assistance is awareness of the legal and protective framework for children and child workers. Thus, organizations teach child domestic workers about their rights and the laws and policies relevant to their situation, thus empowering them to take action in cases of abuse or violation. The Sri Lanka Interactive Media Group-Colombo goes one step further by

providing information to local police stations and women and young persons bureaus on the abuse of domestic workers.

It must be stressed that the legal redress of violations of the rights of child domestic workers does not only serve to punish the perpetrator and protect the victim but also as a vehicle for the psychosocial recovery of the child survivor. As such, it is important that every step of the investigation and prosecution of cases be undertaken with sensitivity.

Advocacy

Advocacy is a basic prevention strategy. Using this premise, all organizations concerned on the issue of child labor are directly and indirectly working towards the prevention of child domestic work. However, there are hindrances in doing direct advocacy work, especially on an occupation largely considered as "invisible".

The basic impediments of conducting advocacy activities on the issue of child domestic work are the stereotypes and attitudes that condone or give rise to exploitation in domestic work. Dilemmas arise from the thin line that delineates the concepts of "work as upbringing" and work as employment" (Black, 1996). Fostering arrangements among relatives has been an age-old practice ignoring the exploitative relationship with in. The House Workers' Movement underscores the following as the prevalent stereotypes and attitudes concerning domestic work.

1. Domestic work is normally considered NON-WORK:
    - Stigmatized as low, dirty, menial
2. House workers often get treated as non-person:
    - Uprooted from the past and the future

- Illiterate, afraid, lonely and abused

3. House workers are victims of INJUSTICE with
   - No recognition as "Worker"
   - No work contract, no just wages, no leisure
   - No legal protection
4. House workers are voiceless:
   - No participation in normal social & cultural life
   - Myths and 'stories' go against them
5. House workers must stay as they are:
   - With no contact with outsiders
   - No necessity to belong to an organization or movement

OFFICIAL

(issued by Archbishop Henry D'souza of Calcutta on April 2nd 1997)

Domestic Workers are some of the most vulnerable persons of the community. Studies show that the girls are overworked and underpaid. Many have to suffer personal indignities, even physical and moral violence. A more organized apostolate among domestic workers of Calcutta, especially the Catholic girls employed in homes of catholics and non-catholics, is an urgent area of pastoral concern.

An attitude of appreciation for the domestic workers should be instilled. People still depend on servants. Many of these girls are coming from rural areas and with little understanding of their rights. Though the law bans child labor, young illiterate girls seek employment due to economic necessity when they should be encouraged to improve themselves by attending literacy classes and acquiring some gainful skills.

The Christian approach would want the intellectual, psychological and human growth of these girl domestic workers. They should not be kept only for the services they can render.

Parish Priests are requested to:

(1) Conduct a survey of the catholic domestic workers in their parishes; and
(2) Gather information about where they work, where they come from, what opportunity they have for attending religious services; hours of work and of leisure; amount they are paid.

The Parish Councils should take this topic on a high priority. The parish unit of the CCWI and other women's organizations in the parish should initiate some organized efforts for this important pastoral need (Domestic Workers Link, VI (2), August 1997:14).

Because of the foregoing, the principal goals of the organization in doing advocacy work are varied. As identified by the United Nations Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (1993:87), these can include the following:

- Raising public awareness on the existence and prevalence (of child domestic work)
- Providing specific information on where to go for help

- Changing (or influencing) public attitudes and values towards the problem
- Promoting action to solve the problem
- Making victims and offenders aware of the role of the criminal justice system
- Providing other relevant information, such as children's rights and labor standards.

In advocating the issues of child domestic work, organizations employ a variety of methods to convey its message according to a specific audience, e.g. general public, national government, employers, parents, or the child domestic workers themselves. Largely considered, is the utilization of the print and broadcast media as effective methods to reach the widest possible audience. Organizations also link up with government, church and other organizations especially in conducting large-scale high-impact advocacy work. Hence, the advocacy strategies of the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc..

> *"Advocacy efforts are largely linked with the IPEC program. The STOP (Trafficking of Pilipinos), in its regional conferences and workshops, regularly invites the VF (Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc.). Several domestic workers were also able to represent SUMAPI (a national organization of domestic workers) by giving testimonies during invitations. VF also had a two-month radio guesting spree at the K-Love 1494 Tinig ng Maralita Program (Voice of the Poor) mainly focusing on migrant domestics, their rights and services offered by Kasambahay (VF's program for children household service workers) (Visayan Forum Foundation, 1996:33).*

The issue in advocacy work can be general or specific. It can be as general that it is subsumed under the campaign on the rights of children, or more specifically, the rights of child workers. The Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children, for example, observes the 10th of April as Child Labor Day

and the 14th of November in the case of India. Organizations capitalize this occasion to highlight the issue of child domestic work and to draw the government's attention to this problem.

Not all the advocacy activities carried out by the government and non-government organizations are nationwide in scope. In fact, some localized campaigns are sometimes considered more effective. But regardless of scope and scale, a prevalent concern has been the involvement of the community, the participation of child domestic workers in the planning, implementation and evaluation, and creativity to cater to the specific characteristics of the targeted audience. Comic books, posters, video documentaries, research studies and newsletters have been produced or published to accommodate all literacy levels and to popularize the issue.

Organizing

Organizations initiate or facilitate the formation of national or local domestic workers organizations/movements. The slogan of the House Workers Movement of India speaks for the rationale in organizing the domestic workers: "together we are strong." However, it is only in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines where there exist organizations of domestic workers. This reality speaks of the difficulty in organizing the domestic workers. As a group, domestic workers are considered invisible. The fact that they are employed in separate, private households makes them scattered and difficult to reach making their situation underreported in employment statistics. To reach them in their workplaces, as the usual tenet of organizing work goes, would be considered an intrusion into a private sphere. In some countries, legal obstacles further aggravate this sociological reality as claimed:

> *(T)he exclusion of domestic workers from labor laws has reinforced the notion that domestic workers are not workers with the same rights entitlements as*

> *other workers. Domestic workers as a consequence, have no right to organize… (D'Cunha, 1995).*

Cognizant of this reality, the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. in the Philippines has developed innovative ways to reach out and help organize the domestic workers, starting out in the capital city of Manila and later expanding to the provincial regions of the country. Their methods proved to be effective as indicated by the launching of the first domestic workers organizations in the Philippines in 1995. Called the SUMAPI or the Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (Association and Linkage of Household Service Workers in the Philippines), the organization now boasts of having around 5,000 thousand members in 17 core groups nationwide, both children and adults.

Following this, in May 1996, the foundation launched the Kasambahay Program to address the needs and problems of child domestic workers. In the course of its work with domestic workers, the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. has developed the following methods:

- ***Shift from office to field operations***
  Reaching domestic workers within the confines of the employers' homes proved to be very difficult. It was soon found that domestics naturally gather in parks and other recreational centers where they meet their town mates and friends from their village. The breakthrough was made in Luneta Park. Domestics contacted there started to make use of the center's program and to get to know the staff.
- ***Implementation of flexible schedules***
  Domestics have limited days-off. They can only go out on Sundays, if permitted by employers, usually for only 3 to 4 hours. So training activities must be flexible and participatory to compensate for the break in formal schooling.
- ***Involvement of the domestics themselves***

Domestics can easily relate with their fellow domestics. They speak the same language (or dialect) and share their experiences. Older ones can vouch to employers for the safety of younger colleagues. So potential leaders were trained to facilitate counseling, orientation sessions and data collection. The group was formalized into SUMAPI or the Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas (Association and Linkage of Household Service Workers in the Philippines)

(Excerpts from Child Workers in Asia, 12(3), 1996:27).

Action of the (House Workers') Movement for Children in Domestic Work

For children in domestic work, the Movement advocates for a reduction in the working hours and makes sure that the child is not asked to do heavy work. We ensure education for the child either through morning school, evening school or open school.

For traumatized children our response is mainly crisis intervention. We network with human rights lawyers and with doctors in case medical care is needed. For the integration of these children, the Movement works with the parents or other family members; this includes counseling for the child as well as the adults.

Lobbying, advocacy and networking is carried out with ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism), CACL (Campaign Against Child Labour) and Child Line.

The formation of the House Workers Movement in India took on a different route. The genesis of the domestic workers' movement can be traced to a paper on Indian domestic workers in the Middle East countries presented at a national consultation of the CBCI Commission of Labor. This was followed up by a national survey completed in 1979, a copy of which was presented by a domestic worker from Mumbai to then Prime Minister, Ms. Indira Gandhi, to which she replied: "I can pass a legislation but without the infrastructure it will be a dead letter. Hence, local level organizations with committed persons are needed to take these workers from their total helplessness." Thus, in 1981, the Domestic Workers Society was formed, and the interest on the situation and problems of domestic workers in India picked up. In 1985, recognizing that most institutions for domestic workers catered to welfare measures, the concept of a Movement was introduced by Sr. Jean Devos, ICM, and the House Workers Movement was born. To date, the movement has started groups in the regions of Mumbai, Delhi, Haryana, Goa, Kartanaka, U.P., Bihar, and Tamilnadu.

In Bangladesh, the Shoishab initiated and continues to support the Domestic Workers Forum, an organization of female adult domestic servants that includes the issues of the child domestic workers in its agenda. What is noteworthy is that although existing domestic workers' organizations carry the issues and have programs and services for its members, as well as their children being at high risk of entering the domestic service, an organization exclusive for child domestic workers is yet to be formed.

Nonetheless, through its own networking efforts, the Domestic Workers Forum was able to source funds to run Day Care Centers in the slum areas for their own children as well as for other disadvantaged children living in the area (Shoishab Brochure).

LIMITING FACTORS OF INFORMATION LIMITATIONS ON CHILD LABOR

What accounts for the low incidence of reporting/disclosure of experiences of violence and abuse among child domestic workers? The following interrelated factors may explain why:

Limitations of the research methodology

In a survey in Dhaka, Bangladesh and in other research studies, there were many instances when the field investigators were not allowed to interview the child domestic workers by the employers. It is surmised that these cases were the ones, which have incidents of abuse and violence that need to be contained.

Even for those interviewed, the children were reluctant to disclose such personal information to someone they barely knew. Moreover, the children were interviewed within the hearing distance from the employer such that they were afraid that once they shared their experiences of abuse, they might be dismissed from their job or face the wrath of their employers.

In the experience of the Visayan Forum Foundation, Inc. child domestic workers would not readily disclose, not even the actual figure of the salary they are receiving, at least not until they had gained their trust. How much more so their experiences of violence?

Wrong Perceptions

Incidents of violence and abuse are considered as mere hazards of the trade. Child domestic workers expect it and therefore there is nothing wrong about it. Their employer, acting as their guardians, has every right to reprimand them. These circumstances often lead to case of mild forms of abuse and violence.

Cultural Norms

Cases of sexual abuse and exploitation are not reported because of the stigma attached to being a victim. Rape victims do not get the sympathy of society but instead are scorned for what happened to them. Survivors of sexual abuse do not disclose such information because they fear that nobody would believe them.

Powerlessness

Child domestic workers believe that they will get nothing from disclosing their experiences of abuse and violence. Nothing will happen, even if they file a case in court against their abusive employers. Their employers are powerful and they have the means to buy out the case. Not only are the hands of justice are slow, it is also partial against them.

Lack of Alternatives

Often times, child domestic workers perceive that there are no alternatives for them. If they report, they will get dismissed. Where will they go? It would be difficult to find employment again. As such, child domestic workers would rather endure the abuse and violence than be thrown out in the streets and go hungry. Working in their employer's households is the best option available to them.

As reported, most surveys reveal a low incidence of cases of abuse and violence towards these child workers, however, there is enough basis to believe that this is not reflective of the real situation. Furthermore, this should not be made an

excuse for not prioritizing or facilitating the services needed by child domestic workers. For as Pervez and Athar (1994:42) rightly asserts, "Even if one assumes that a good proportion of these CDS (child domestic servants) might be treated reasonably well by the employers, it is an abuse of their childhood. These CDS miss their childhood. They live in the environment which keeps them away from family affection, peer socialization, and cognitive stimulation."

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The long-standing historical practices and perceptions, which give social acceptance to child domestic work, contribute to the ever-increasing number of these child workers. Employment arrangements are generally informal which makes these workers grossly underreported. Domestic work is a very old practice from each generation to the next. We just change the names we call them. However, domestic workers still remain the same. They are still slaves, the modern slaves of our globalizing world.

We need these workers to perform tasks which we don't usually like, our household work. We need them so that parents especially mothers can work outside of their homes to contribute to the family's income. Families entrust their properties and the care of their love ones to them. This enables families to earn more and live more comfortably.

Yet we always fail to recognize the contribution of our child domestic workers to our lives, our households and our nation. We live with them, but we never think about them nor care for them.

Child domestic work is a child rights issue

Child domestic work violates a number of child's fundamental rights as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as: the right to education; to be cared for by parents; the right to a condition of living necessary for the child's development, and the right to be protected from physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Very few child domestic workers do socialization activities. Most of them are not emotionally expressive, suffering from very low self-esteem. Their silence, vigilant hesitation and distrust of people indicate lack of self-confidence. They have a strong fatalistic attitude as their natural survival mechanism, so that whatever abuses they encounter at work could be accepted as part of the job.

Moreover, given the nature of their job which is hidden and inaccessible, their right of participation in activities that directly affects their general development is almost impossible. Their voices are seldom heard in the social sphere, in policy reforms, much less included in the government's agenda for children.

The child's basic right to education are sacrificed in many instances. Many of these child domestic workers left their homes filled with aspirations to earn and save for their education, or hope that they can chance upon a benevolent employer who will send them to school. Contrastingly, in reality, this seldom happens and many of these child domestic workers are left with the task of accompanying their employer's children to school, help in their assignments and prepare their school snacks while their own dreams for an education vanishes before their very own eyes.

Child domestic work is a child labor issue

Child domestic workers face economic exploitation with undefined terms of employment and subjected to hazardous working conditions. ILO Convention 182 theorized that the very nature of child domestic work constitutes elements

and characteristics enough to consider it as one of the worst forms of child labor. Many are sold or trafficked and work in bondage or unpaid for long indefinite hours in isolation, often at night. Largely composed of girls, many child domestic workers are exposed to grave physical and emotional risks and health hazards away from their homes.

Child domestic work is closely linked to child trafficking, children I agriculture and prostitution

Most child domestic workers came from poor farming rural areas. These children are employed in agriculture and when farming off-season comes, they shift to household work to augment their families' income. Unfortunately, domestic work is commonly the lure by which children are victimized or trafficked by illegal recruiters. Though, a number may truly end up in domestic work, there are also those who end up being prostitutes. In either case, these children are found to work in a slave-like condition working in bondage to pay for the recruiters' advances or fees. Worst, they suffer extreme physical, verbal and sexual abuse, as they are vulnerably alone with no communication with their families.

Child domestic work is a gender issue

The very nature of domestic work, commonly done by girls, makes this sector highly dominated by women and girls, which is the usual entry point of work for them after leaving school. However, their work is economically disregarded and perceived insignificant because of their traditional role as someone responsible for household chores. With this, the greater need to empower women especially while they are still in their formative years is very crucial as this would facilitate the recognition of their valuable roles in the household in particular and the economy in general. Thus, recognizing them as equal human beings who need to be treated properly without the physical, emotional and sexual oppression.

The challenge

Child domestic work is not a historical accident, it is a tale as old as time, regarded as a boon to many, yet a bane to a greater majority who have suffered and endured its ill effects. The time has come for us to listen to these children's anguish and face the challenges of the times – to change the past and stand firm in our fight for the basic rights of these children.

Venues have to be paved toward the genuine recognition of the contributions these children can make in our society. They must be empowered to become aware of their rights and dignity and be steadfast in every challenge that would defy their basic right as a human being – to live a normal and fruitful life.

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