

Vol:1, Issue: 4 pp: 397-406

JEL Codes: I2, I20, I24

SHAMEM A.S.M., ISLAM S. (2020). "Problems and Prospects of Street Children Schooling; an
Empirical Study from Bangladesh Perspective",

Vol: 1 Issue: 4 pp: 397-406

Keywords: *mobile assessment, mobile assessment tools, mobile devices, mobile learning, m-learning, chromebooks*

Article Type Research Article

**Problems and Prospects of Street Children Schooling; an Empirical Study from
Bangladesh Perspective***

Arrived Date
01.09.2020

Accepted Date
06.09.2020

Published Date
31.10.2020

A S M Shamem[†] Md. Sahidul Islam[‡]

ABSTRACT

The education system for the street children in Bangladesh has been revealed in the research. There are many reasons in the way of education for street children which are called problems in education for those children. Here we have focused most common problems in education for street children. There are some of the issues also that should be addressed. Those problems which are not noticed yet or these problems are still avoided. Some of these problems are not deniable but still these are unsolved. If we remain unknown about these problems, then it would be very difficult to make Bangladesh as a successful and strong backboned nation. This research shows those opinions over the problems. Apart from all problems we can see and realize the possibilities and prospects in education for street children in Bangladesh. Because not only Bangladesh government but also our young educated conscious generation are concerned in the education for street children in Bangladesh which can help to build a specious Bangladesh.


INTRODUCTION


Bangladesh is one of the over populated countries in the world. Many kinds of people live in Bangladesh. Street children are one of the most common facts in Bangladesh. In general meaning, street children mean those children who have no house to live in and so they live in street. Sometimes they are seen to live in slums on road.

A quote from Pope Francis

"No child chooses to live on the streets. Sadly, even in our modern, globalized world, many children continue to be robbed of their childhood, their rights and their future. Lack of legal protection and adequate structures only aggravates their state of deprivation: they have no real family or access to education or health care. Every child abandoned or forced to live on the streets, at the mercy of criminal organizations, is a cry rising up to God, Who created man and woman in His own image. It is an indictment of a social system which we have criticized for decades, but which we find hard to change in conformity with criteria of justice."

* The summary of this article was presented as a paper at the 1st International Conference of Social Science, Innovation and Educational Technologies (ICSSIET 2020) held online on 30 September 2020. The completed version was not published before.

†  Assistant Professor, Department of English, Asian University of Bangladesh/ Bangladesh, asmshameemaub@gmail.com, asmshameem@aub.edu.bd

‡  Research Fellow, Asian University of Bangladesh/ Bangladesh, bgdislam@yahoo.com

(Audience with International Symposium on the Pastoral Care of the Street, Sept. 17, 2015)

The most common definition of a street child or is “any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults” (Inter-NGO, 1985). This definition was formulated by Inter-NGOs in Switzerland in 1983. The term “street children” is used to refer to children who work and/or sleep on the streets.

(Street Children – UNICEF)

According to Prime Minister’s statement,

“34 Lac street children exist in different cities of the country while the report from Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) projects the numbers of street children are 1.5 million in 2015 and it will reach to 1.56 million in 2024. The given situation clearly reveals that there are no comprehensive and reliable statistics available on the actual numbers, living conditions, needs and interests of children living on the streets. But the fact is street children constitute one of the most vulnerable and marginal groups in Bangladesh. Though several acts and policies have been formulated to protect the rights of the children; the number of the street children and their vulnerability are increasing along with the rapid urbanization. In 6.2 section of National Children Policy, it has been stated that the Social Safety Net has to be expanded to ensure the rehabilitation of all poor children and street children. In addition, the National Plan of Action for Children (2005-2010) also clearly emphasizes the urgent need for "education and empowerment." Education is one of the most pressing needs for the street children that clearly been ignored over the years. The role of appropriate education for empowerment of children – especially the disadvantaged groups like the street or working children – has been unequivocally established. Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes the right to education for all including the disadvantaged children”.

(Mohammed Norul Alam Raju & Mahfuja Sharmin, the independent; Monday, 25 November, 2019)

“A child is a beam of sunlight from the Infinite and Eternal, with possibilities of virtue and vice, but as yet unstained.”

— Lyman Abbott, American Congregationalist minister

The role of appropriate education for empowerment of children -- especially the disadvantaged groups like the street or working children -- has been unequivocally established. Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes the right to education for all -- including the disadvantaged children. The National Plan of Action for Children (2005-2010) also clearly emphasizes the urgent need for "education and empowerment." Along the same vein, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy of the country provides for education as a means of "empowerment of disadvantaged groups" -- including children. Notwithstanding the above official rhetoric, and despite a growing recognition of their vulnerability and disadvantaged status, there have been strikingly limited efforts to improve the condition of street children -- especially by providing them with appropriate basic education. It will not be an exaggeration to note that this section of our society has largely remained outside the main ambit of developmental interventions.

(Niaz Ahmed Khan ,The Daily Star; Monday, 25 November, 2019)

The general characterization of homeless or street child is a child who lives on the street, in particular one that is not taken care of by a parent or other adults and who sleeps on the street because he or she does not have a home. Homelessness, among children, is one of the major problems in Dhaka city, capital of Bangladesh, like others cities of the world. Dhaka is now experiencing an increase in the

number and proportion of homeless children living on the streets and in public places due to the increasing pressures of internal migration and rapid urbanization. They are visible by day and invisible by night. During the day they scramble for living with the rest of us. They beg, they hustle, they peddle, they scrounge and they grunge. Then the sundown sets them apart. We return home and they return to nature. It is impossible to calculate exactly how many homeless children there are in total but Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies said that an estimated 3,80,000 homeless children live in Bangladesh and 55 per cent of them are in Dhaka city alone. These floating kids of our country don't have proper accommodations, no bedroom, no bed, no kitchen and no washroom. They have no holding number, postal code, telephone number, TIN or email address. They live in suspended animation, non-entities between statistical figures and human existence. At night they sleep under the open sky on sidewalks, park benches, railway stations, launch terminals, bus depots, steps of shops and houses and mid-islands on the roads. Factors leading to their helpless situation include urbanization and overcrowding, family breakdown, poverty, natural and man-made disasters. However, they are often blamed for crime and other antisocial activities that occur in cities, including begging and drug abuse. Because of the lack of regular employment and being trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, deprivation and social ostracism, with barely sufficient income to keep them above starvation level, some turn to crime.

(Md. Abdullah-Al-Helal , Tale Of Homeless Children In Bangladesh; 2 June, 2017) .

According to UNDP (2001) it is estimated number of street children in Bangladesh: 445,226 (of which 75% are in Dhaka city); 53% boys, 47% girls. All categories of street children are called *Tokai* ('rag pickers') by the general public, although they may be engaged in a range of petty trading / employment / criminal activities. Average daily income of street children is approx. USD \$0.55.¹ Another statistics estimated that there's over 600,000 street children living in Bangladesh, 75% of these children live in capital city Dhaka. But the recent official study by the Appropriate Resources for Improving Street children Environment(ARISE- 2002) some 500000 children are living on street in the country's main cities in Bangladesh and they warned that the number of the street children is set to raise as the urban population grows by 9% a year.

(Assignment point , Report on Educational Condition of the Street Children in Dhaka City)

Education is a child's basic need, but in Bangladesh, more than half of street children have no education. It can be a cause of great destruction for the future of the country. On the other hand, this problem also can be solved. There are many prospective in education for street children. Bangladesh government is already working on it.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Well, there are many more researches on street children in Bangladesh. But most of these are focused on overall problems of street children. This research contains a specific content and that is problems and prospects in education for street children.

Article 28 (4) of the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh states that the government can make special provision for the progress of children. In 1974, the children act was enacted aiming at compressive child development program. Bangladesh is one of the first 22 countries who are the signatory of CRC. However, the national children policy (NCP) defines children: under 14 years. This is a sensitive issue and those who handle the criminal aspects of law, find ways to escape and takes advantages at the cost of inhuman suffering of the children. The Act of 1974 and the rules there of in 1976 are the main base for the investigation, protection and adjudication for all those who have come to contact with law. The national children policy, 1994 aim at among other, as its objectives, ensuring food, shelter less children. In pursuance of fundamental principles of constitution, UNCRC and national children policy the GOB has decided to formulate and implement a national policy for street children also to ensure safety, security, welfare and development of street children: with four basic rights

cluster as contained on the CRC are: Survival Rights (Basic Needs): Food, shelter, Health Care, Environmental friendly Development Rights: Education, standard of living, Leisure and Recreation Protection Rights: Children exposed to all kinds of Abuses, children living at Risks, legal coverage and protection etc. Participation Rights: Recognition of children views and social promotion And six sectoral programs undertaken by the government of Bangladesh (MSW, DSS/ARISE-BGD/97/028) Safe Shelter; Health Care; Education and Awareness; Skill Development; Psychological Counseling; Legal Aid. In Rahamn, H. 1991. Child Exploitation, Abuse and Street Children in Bangladesh say they are in street, because they are either neglected or physically tortured. Most of the cases if one of the parents passes away, because of the cruelty of the other parent forced them to come on the street. In many cases those who are subjected to migration, come to big city with their parents and then rejected by their father which pushed them to come on the street to live life. On the other hand their mothers take begging as profession. Deceived children who do not have relation with their family, they work and sleep in the street. Because of severe poverty many children come to the city to work and to support their family.

(Md. Alamgir Kabir, A study on the effectiveness of the activities taken for Street children in Drop in Centers, December 2008)

The absolute and relative size of the population of children in Bangladesh is quite big as a share of the national population. The estimated total population in Bangladesh is 130 million (2001). Among them about 42 million (32.2% of total population) are 5-17 years old. The distribution of population and children are given in Table 1. According to the labor force survey conducted by BBS, 5.8 million children aged 10-14 years were working in Bangladesh in 1990 -91 and this constituted 11.3 percent of the labour force. All the studies conducted so far show that working children live in severe poverty and the number shows an increasing trend. Surveillance data gathered by UNICEF in 1995 show that one million labours are employed in garments industries of whom about 90 percent were female and 1 percent were children below age 14 years. In rural Bangladesh, children traditionally worked on land. However they had the conventional protection of the families. Today's children are more vulnerable in the urban areas, in informal work sectors, where neither the family nor the law accord protection. On the contrary the employers have vested interests in engaging children, since their labor is cheapest, their working hours can be longest and their bargaining power is nonexistent. The education of children for long-term life skills has always been underrated for economic gains both by the employers and parents. A substantial percent of child laborers work minimum 9 hours to as long as 18 hours (on average 10 hours a day). About 70 percent of the child laborers do not attend schools, 30 percent get education in addition to their jobs. Of these who are not attending schools, 48 percent gave economic constraints as the reasons. About 68 percent of the children not attending school expressed interest in acquiring education. A study conducted by a donor funded team (Blanchet), depicted a gloomy picture of children's rights especially of girls in Bangladesh. About child labor, the study cited that most of the laboring children themselves do not mind having to work. What they object to are the humiliation, scorn and the various abuses they have to endure from their employers and clients. The study revealed "Girls in particular are denied of right for a wage. National statistics show their presence in the labour force to be 10 times lower than the boys. This does not reflect the real situation. Girls are massively present in domestic service and commercial sex work." However, very poor families were often forced to send their children to work for others. "Misplaced childhood", a study of the RED BARNET, Danish Save the Children revealed that street children are involved in the following work:

* Street sex workers * Occasional workers at hotels, restaurants etc * Transport labors * Coolies * Workers in informal sectors * Rickshaw Pullers/ Van-driver etc * Tokai * Hawkers and others

The Government, NGOs and donor agencies have been concerned over the rapid growth of the child workers and they are looking to find ways and means to gradually and progressively eliminate child labor in Bangladesh.

(Dr. Kazi Saleh Ahmed, Dr. M. Mosleh Uddin ,Mrs. Shamima Islam, Mr. M. Nazmul Huq, Mrs.

Shamsun Nehar, Mrs. Zahurun Nessa, Prof. Obaedu Huq, A Baseline Survey of Street Children in Bangladesh, December 7, 2003)

Table-04 provides information about the health status of the respondents. Regarding the diseases respondents usually suffer from, it shows that all the respondents reported that they suffered from cold fever and influenza. Moreover 82.54% usually suffered from stomach upset while 61.90% suffered from skin diseases. In addition, 88.89% respondents suffered from other types of diseases. Besides, due to the habitual drug addiction, they were also prone to HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infection (STI) and other reproductive diseases. As per treatment is concerned, the table shows that the highest portion of respondents, which stand at 31.35%, took treatment from pharmacy. A slightly lower number of them amounting 23.81% went to the government hospitals for treatment, while 19.05% and 11.11% took kabiraji and homeopathy treatment during their illness.

Furthermore, the table also represents that 73.02% respondents reportedly got services from others during their illness while the remaining portion amounting 26.98% accused that they did not get any services during their illness. 49.21% of the children getting services from others stated that their friends helped them during their illness. The rest usually got services from their coworkers, volunteers, owners and their families though very small in numbers.

(Shekh Farid, Lives and livelihoods of children living in street situation in Dhaka city of Bangladesh, April 2015)

This research only provides educational side of street children in Bangladesh. Second thing, most of the other researches do not reveal the exact point in the field of problems in education for street children. And most importantly, other researches do not give any complete idea about the possibilities and prospects in education for street children. On the other hand, I will discuss about some exact problems with some suitable solutions. I will also provide in this research the opportunities and prospects in education for street children.

So the main gap between this research and other researches on this same topic is most of those researches have not tell the behind story and the path to solve problems and the prospects in education for street children in Bangladesh. My research also will provide the opinions and the analysis of general conscious people of Bangladesh. Lacking of NGOs and agencies also will be provided. I can strongly say that this one can make clear about the whole present and past situation in the land of education for street children in our beloved country, Bangladesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the path through which researchers need to conduct their research. There are three basic types of methodology to carry out any research;

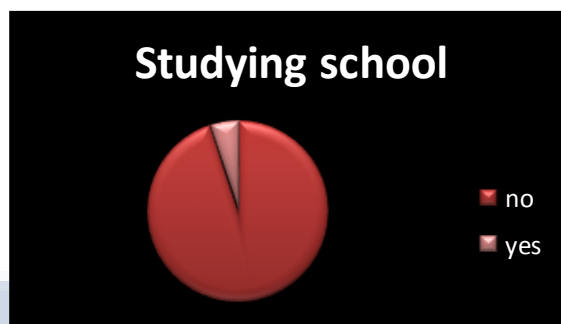
1. Quantitative method
2. Qualitative method and
3. Mixed method

To achieve the key research objectives, this research has adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods and combination of primary and secondary sources. The qualitative data supports the quantitative data analysis and results.

The descriptive study was done using secondary data collected through quantitative method, and observation of general citizens.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

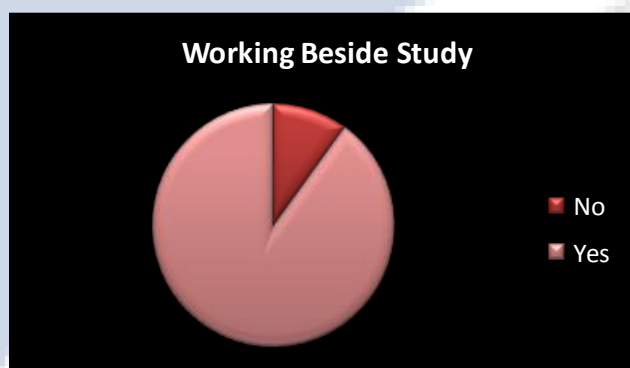
Is he/she studying in school?



- a. Yes
- b. No

95% of interviewed street children said that they are not studying in any school. Besides, only 5% of interviewed street children answered positive.

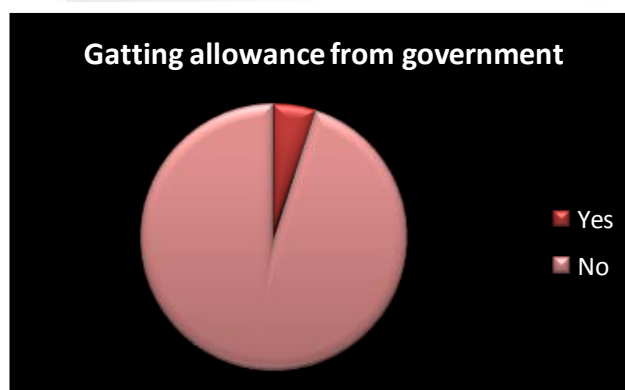
Do you work beside your study?



- a. Yes
- b. No

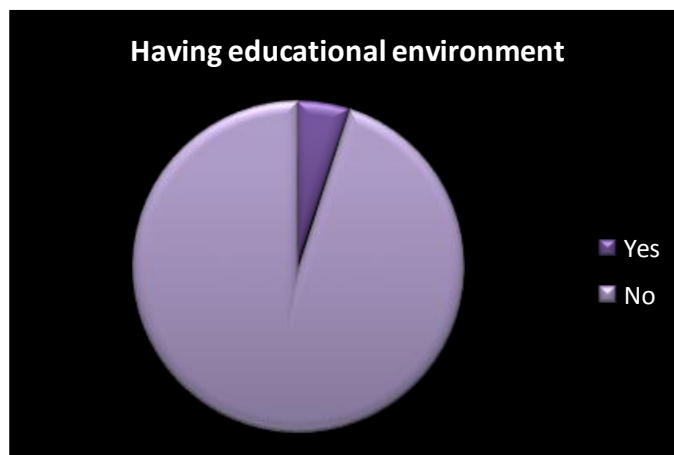
90% of them have said that they are also work beside their school. Whereas,10% street children whom I took interview said "no".

Do you get allowance from Bangladesh government for your study?



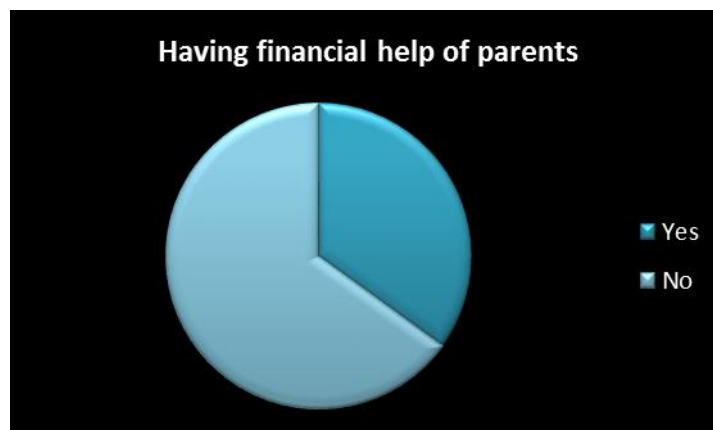
- a. Yes
- b. No

Unfortunately, 95% interviewed street children have us negative answer in this question. Only 5% of interviewed street children said "yes".

Do you have an educational environment?

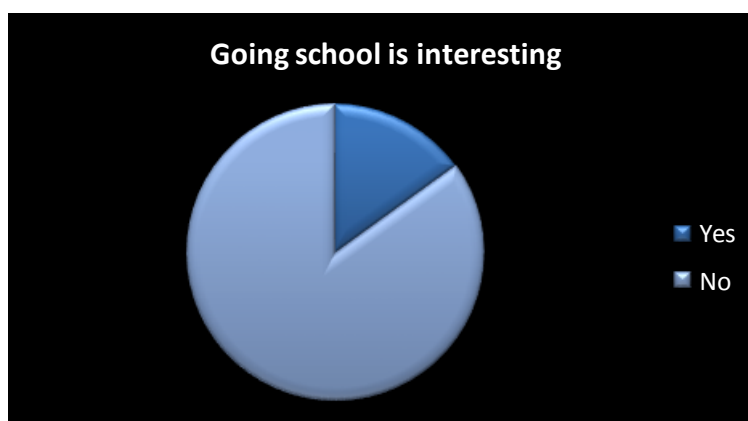
- a. Yes
- b. No

When we were taking interview of street children, most of them, at least 95% of them answered "no" in this question. We got only 5% children who agreed in "yes".

Do your parents help for your education financially?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Very sadly, we got to know that only 65% of interviewed street children get financial support from their parents. On the other hand, 35% of them agreed in "yes".

Is schooling is interesting to you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

In this question, what we have got as answer that is 85% of them are not interested or they have found no interesting and encouraging facts to go to school. And 15% of interviewed street children answered "yes".

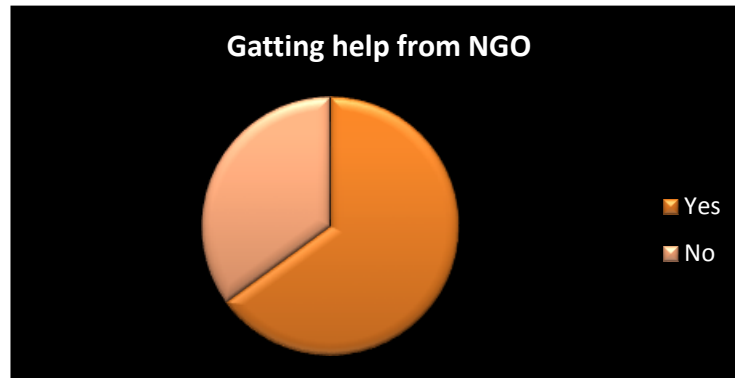
Do you have any future plan after schooling?



- a. Yes
- b. No

Some of interviewed street children are studying and some are not but still they have their future plan or dream. When we asked about their future plan after school, 75% chose to say "no", and other 25% said "yes".

Does any NGO help you for your study?



- a. Yes
- b. No

We have got a lot of positive answers in this question, 65% of interviewed street children gave us positive answer in this question. On the other side, 35% street children answered "no".

FINDINGS

What I have found through this research that contains some good and some sad news. Some match with my predictions and some do not match. Such as, I realize that in Bangladesh, street children are so helpless. They have nothing, not even hope of light. They literary live in darkness. They do not have seen the actual light of education yet. The value and usefulness of education they do not know about. They are so poor to buy a book for their own purpose. At the beginning, I assumed that there are many

opportunities but at this level of research I can see that the unstable situation of street children and their family could be a cause of great fall of the educational side of Bangladesh.

Most of the street children do not have father or mother. Or their father lives in village, gets married with someone else. They have no food to eat, no home to live in. To eat twice a day these children get busy in various labor or street works, which is totally illegal. Most dangerous thing is that they also get involve into many types of crimes. They put themselves into danger to earn some money. Education is not their concern at all (most of street children).

Some children had been in school till class two, three or five, and then they left school. I have seen their living environment. In this kind of environment, it is natural for a child to feel absurd or funny or too much exclusive to go to school. They have no one beside them who can inspire them for education. They get inspiration to get into work, good or bad, hard or easy, to earn money before their adulthood. Another pathetic fact is that most of the girls are not allowed to go to school. At a time of their life, most of these girls get involve into prostitution. Some of these girls are victim of gang rape.

On the other side, I have also seen some good things which I previously assumed and that is Bangladesh government is trying to develop their situation. Bangladesh government is providing free education with allowance. Some agencies and foreign NGOs are also working on it. They are providing basic education to street children no free of cost.

This thing now I am going to tell I did not predict at all and that is there are many young generation people who want to teach street children for free, in open place, in open air. But they face many problems such as, place management problem, donation problem. Some of these young entrepreneurs are still trying hard at their level best. They says that if Bangladesh government provides them financial help for the equipments as like black board, books, places, then they can take the responsibility of providing education for free for street children. It seems like a magical moment when a street child speaks in English. I found it so heart touching. These kinds of children have a lot interest towards education. They have some dreams in their eyes. They want to become educated and want to something good for their family. But still they have lacking of government's proper help, proper family environment.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this research, some pictures in education for street children; problems and prospects in Bangladesh are very clear. Some citizens of Bangladesh are hopeful with the present situation in education for street children. On the other hand, most of the citizens are not hopeful about this fact at all. They are still blaming on Bangladesh government. In Bangladesh though child labor is illegal, still more than half of the street children are involved in many kinds of labor and crimes. As like these poor street children, the lion's share people of Bangladesh are hopeless about education for street children. But still, we can see that many Bangladeshi and foreign agencies, NGOs are working on it. Some of the schools are providing free education with free books and with allowance. If these schools, agencies, NGOs and educated young generation keep their work on it, then this can bring a great future for Bangladesh. But this is also true that above all these help, only government can help the best as government can strictly band child labor in Bangladesh and make a rule for every child to take part in basic education would be must. Bangladesh government also can help these street children in their education by bringing foreign donation and make Bangladeshi financially well and stable people to donate money in the purpose of education for street children of every city and villages in Bangladesh.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. K. "A Baseline Survey of Street Children in Bangladesh". (December 7, 2003). Bangladesh Rural & Advancement Committee (BRAC). "School for Street Children". (March 03, 2016).
- Francis, P. "Audience with International Symposium on the Pastoral Care of the Street". (September 17, 2015).
- Farid, S. "Lives and livelihoods of children living in street situation in Dhaka city of Bangladesh". (April 2015).

-
- Helal, A. A. M. "Tale of Homeless Children in Bangladesh".(June 2, 2017).
- Kabir, A. M. "A Study on the effectiveness of the activities taken for Street Children in Drop in Centers". (December 2008).
- Khan, A. N. "The Daily Star".(November 25, 2019).
- Raju, A. N. M., & Sharmin, M. "The Independent".(November 25, 2019).
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).Street Children.
Retrieved at ;
(Assignment Point. Report on Educational Condition of the Street Children in Dhaka City)
<https://www.assignmentpoint.com/arts/modern-civilization/report-on-educational-condition-of-the-street-children-in-dhaka-city.html>
- (Lyman Abbott's citation) <https://www.compassion.com/poverty/famous-quotes-about-children.htm>
(Save the Children-Education) <https://bangladesh.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/education>.