In Bangladesh 1 out of every 17 children between the ages of 5 and 17 works for a living. While Bangladesh is committed to ending child labor, and has ratified the Child Rights and ILO Conventions, the reality is that many poor children have to work not only for their own survival but sometimes to provide support to their families. Working children are employed as day labourers in shops and restaurants; as helpers in garages and workshops, as street vendors, rag pickers, as agricultural labourers or domestic help. Their daily income varies from Taka 50 to Taka 110 (less than a 0.70 cents to $1.50 a day). Of the 7 and a half million children who work for a living, only 2.4 million attend school. They are deprived of education, health care, and early childhood development and often become victims of abuse and violence.

Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK), founded in 1986, is a human rights and legal aid organisation that offers legal protection to the disempowered particularly workers, women and children. ASK runs 12 drop-in centres in Dhaka, which offer education classes, health services and legal protection to working children. ASK caters to the needs of approximately 1500 working children. The centres are open between 9 am and 5 pm, five days a week and are a place where working children can come to learn, play, rest and find an environment for free expression. Working children go to the centres in their free time and are provided with lunch. The drop-in centres also have mini-libraries.

The education programme at the drop-in centers is especially designed to suit the irregular hours of working children. The curriculum focuses on child centered learning which encourages independent learning as opposed to rote memorization. Teaching methods include various ways of learning such as role-play, game play, question and answer time, problem solving and group exercise. Art, music and theater are used to facilitate learning and therapy. Teachers use locally available low cost resources as learning aids. Children are encouraged to make a range of creative products from paper and paints, such as greeting cards, which are used as an income generating activity for them. The system of non-formal education, jokhon tokhon shikha, literally 'anytime learning' has proved to be a great success. In 2010, 276 children from the drop-in centres were admitted into formal schools. Thirty children have passed their grade 5 exams, 18 with first division marks.

Health services are provided to the working children. ASK has made links with local health care institutions that offer their medical services free of cost. Expenses for prescribed medicines or surgery are borne by ASK. Complaints of exploitation received from working children are taken up by ASK's team of pro bono lawyers. ASK also works to create awareness in the society about the lives of working children and tries to expand their opportunities and protect their rights. ASK raises issues about working children in the public arena, by holding workshops and through street theatre. By showing working children at close quarters as hard-
working, responsible members of society, rather than as vagrants, ASK tries to persuade the community to protect working children from exploitation and abuse. ASK also campaigns for reform of policies and laws that address child labour.

When working children attend the drop-in centres, they show promise of doing well and are stimulated. Many are also keen to continue their studies in formal institutions, but they do not have the funds to do so. As a result many talented students drop out before completing the higher secondary school. Fifty working children who currently attend ASK's drop-in centres are eligible for entry into different levels of formal schools if they could find sponsors. We ask you as a caring person, to give the gift of education to a child worker. Sponsor a grade 1 - 5 student at a cost of Taka 7000/year (US$100) or grade 6-10 student for a cost of Taka 12,500/year (US$180).

Criteria For Selection:
From the child workers at the drop-in centers, ASK selects candidates for sponsorship based on specific criteria. There is a preference for girls, for children who earn less than Taka 3000/month (US$ 42), who are orphans, who live with single mothers or with stepmothers, and those who are physically challenged or work at hazardous jobs. The children must also have a desire to study and an interest in both success and obtaining vocational training.

To sponsor a child or for more information please contact:
Gita Chakroborty/Md. Moqsud Maleque,
Child Rights Unit, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK),
7/17, Block- B, Lalmatia, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Tel. +8802.8126047/+ 8802.8126134/+
8802.8126137
Email: ask@citechco.net
Website: www.askbd.org

SUCCESS STORY: SUMAIA
Many of Bangladesh's approximately 4 million child domestic workers do not have the opportunity to study. They are sometimes found in slave-like working conditions and are at risk of mental, physical and sexual abuse. Most child domestic workers live in other people's homes in total isolation; the majority of domestic workers are girls. Sumaia comes from a single parent home. Her father left her mother before she was born, and she and her mother lived on the streets, struggling to survive. Sumaia works as a domestic help. She first came to one of ASK's drop-in centers when she was 8 years old. She was very bright and eager to study. She quickly completed her first level of education. ASK was then able to enroll in a residential school facility, and with the help of her a sponsor was able to pay full tuition, board and lodging for her. Sumaia is currently 10 years old and in class 2. Despite the difficulties she has to face on a daily basis, she hopes to continue to study as long as she can. She knows that education is one of her few roads out of poverty. Child domestic workers coming to ASK's (and other working children) are getting access to quality education and are protected from abuse and exploitation. By being able to read and write, children like Sumaia are able to create a better future for themselves, and can take control of their own lives.

What You Can Do: