

Children's Parliament Giving Voice to the Voiceless



Our lawmakers have consistently ignored the importance of legislation to boost protection for children, and to ensure that they get at least their basic rights. It is primarily for this reason that efforts were made by SPARC to establish the first ever Children's Parliament, so that the voices of Pakistan's children detailing their myriad concerns do not go unheard.

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SPARC Opens Computer Center in Haripur Jail



SPARC in collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) inaugurated the first ever fully equipped Computer Center on March 6, set up inside the Juvenile Cell of Central Prison, Haripur.

SPARC Peshawar office, in collaboration with the Jail Superintendent and Prison Department established a modern Computer Center in the school area of the jail.

The cell was renovated into a proper classroom, provided with 10 - P4 computers, a printer and a scanner. The cell looks just like any other computer center with clean painted walls and soft cushioned chairs.

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Newly Elected PM Repeals FCR

The new Prime minister of Pakistan's maiden speech came as a breath of fresh air after eight and half years of an oppressive military-led regime as he announced his decision to repeal the infamous British-era Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) applicable to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) on March 30.

SPARC has been demanding for the repeal of the FCR. Sections 22 and 23 of the FCR on territorial responsibility and collective punishments has played havoc with the lives of the tribal people. Juveniles have been detained and arrested under this clause and children as young as two years along with families have been detained for years.

Under the FCR, it is not possible to launch a civil society organization for protecting child rights without the approval of the political agent. Social institutions for children cannot be setup, and newspapers or journals highlighting child protection issues cannot be brought into the tribal belt. ☹

31 Children Killed in Gaza

Defense for Children International-Palestine Section (DCI/PS) has expressed deep shock at the high number of children killed in the February/March 3 attacks on the Gaza Strip.

DCI/PS confirmed the deaths of 31 children as a result of Israel's air strikes and ground military operations against Gaza between February 27 and March 3, including during operation Warm Winter.

An additional 13 reported child fatalities in the Gaza Strip are still being investigated. Most of the attacks took place in northern Gaza. These heavily populated areas came under intense fire from Apache helicopters, air-to-surface missiles, tank shells and small arms fire. Among the 31 children killed were three girls, and five children below the age of 12, including a six months-old baby from Gaza City. ☹

Jail Sentence for Refusing Polio Vaccination

As doctors struggle to eradicate polio worldwide, one of their biggest problems is persuading parents to vaccinate their children. In Belgium, authorities are resorting to an extreme measure: prison sentences as reported on March 12.

Two sets of parents in Belgium were recently handed five-month prison terms for failing to vaccinate their children against polio. Each parent was also fined 4,100 Euros (US \$8,000). Avoiding prison is possible if parents agree on vaccinating children.

Aside from Belgium, only France makes polio vaccinations mandatory by law. The only other case of mandatory polio vaccines is during the Muslim pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

Pilgrims from polio-endemic countries-Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan-must prove they have been vaccinated. ☹

Classroom Inferno Burns 14 Children

Fourteen schoolchildren and their teacher suffered severe burn injuries when gas leaking from the gas heater caught fire in the school on January 17 at Rawalpindi, police and hospital sources said.

Rescue service and neighbors rushed the victims to the nearby hospitals where they were stated to be in "stable condition". The children had sustained 15 to 22 percent burns. Seven of the fifth class schoolchildren had their faces and necks burnt.

The City police arrested the principal of the school after registering a case of negligence against him. Principal was quoted as saying that he had visited the classroom at around 7:45am and had found nothing wrong. The gas explosion occurred some 30 minutes later. Police and rescuers said a bigger tragedy was prevented as less students had turned up at school because it was raining in the morning. A small ventilator in the classroom also saved the day for the small children. ☹

Young Children Dying in Afghanistan: Unicef

About 600 children under five die every day in Afghanistan due to pneumonia, poor nutrition, diarrhea and other preventable diseases, according to the State of the World's Children 2008 report released by Unicef on January 22.

The Unicef report ranks Afghanistan as having the third highest infant mortality rate, after Sierra Leone and Angola. The war-ravaged country is ranked second in the world in terms of its maternal mortality rate with about 1,600 deaths per every 100,000 live births.

Meanwhile, only 14 percent of pregnant women in Afghanistan receive a "skilled attendant" during child delivery. More than half of 6-9-month-old children in Afghanistan are deprived of proper breastfeeding and complementary food. This has resulted in 39 percent of under fives being underweight and 54 percent of them suffering stunting or improper physical growth, Unicef's statistics indicate. ☹

Children of Former Bonded Laborers Face Hardships

Hardship continues to be a reality for thousands of children of former bonded laborers who are among the poorest and most neglected of Nepalese citizens, according to the Freed Kamaiya Society (FKS) report on January 28.

The practice of 'Kamaiya', (bonded labor) which exists in five districts of Nepal and affects some 35,000-100,000 people, was outlawed by the government in July 2000, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center.

It is the children of liberated laborers who suffer the most, with around 25,000 working in hotels and restaurants to support their families, according to Backward Society Education, a local NGO. About 80 percent of them are working as domestic servants in exploitative conditions and most are under-paid according to the Informal Sector Service Center. "State responsibility towards these children remains negligible and it is a root cause for their deprivation," said an activist. ☹

NGO Support Group Formed for NPA

SPARC organized a consultation on April 2, to discuss the formation of a support group to pressure the government to implement the National Child Protection and Plan of Action (NCP&NPA).

Representatives from SUNGI, SPO, Save the Children UK & Sweden, PILER Karachi, SEHER Quetta, ROZAN, World Vision, PODA, Christian Study Center, SAHIL,

Girls' College, School Blown Up

Suspected militants blew up buildings of a girls' college and a primary school in Darra Adam Khel tribal region on March 30.

The sources said that militants planted explosives inside the building of Government Degree College for

SHARP, LHRLA, ITA and VSO participated and proposed to set up a "Child Rights Support Group" to force the government to provide children with their fundamental rights to education, health care, recreation, love and care etc.

Among many other shortfalls the NPA also suffers from shortage of funds or in this case allocation of funds. Given all these shortcomings, presently, the government has no planned strategy to address issues relating to the protection and promotion of child rights., who form over 50 percent of the total population.☹

women which went off with a big bang, destroying several rooms of the building. The girls' primary school was blown up in the Shpinkai Wal locality of the troubled town. The building was completely destroyed. No casualty was, however, reported in both the incidents. Several schools have been damaged in explosions in the area during the last many months.☹

Palestinian Child Day Celebrated

On April 5, Palestinians celebrated the Palestinian Child Day, despite there being little cause for celebration...

Generations of Palestinian children have never known peace or self-determination. Hundreds of children have been killed, thousands injured, forced to leave their homes or their country, separated from their families, arrested and detained for months or years, used in military and intelligence activities, beaten-up, humiliated and harassed on a daily basis, prevented from going to school or from receiving medical care; prevented from playing, laughing and living normal lives.

Israeli occupation policies, violence and discrimination pervades and distorts every aspect of the life of every Palestinian child.

Together, we must seek to hold all duty-bearers and stakeholders of Palestinian children's rights to account for their obligations towards the protection of children under international law and the domestic Child Law, enacted by the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2004.

Stakeholders include us all. Not only Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and EU and UN member states but also militants, police-officers, parents, teachers, doctors and the entire adult community.

Together we must strive towards minimizing the impact of the occupation and conflict on Palestinian children.

Let us start this action today—Palestinian Child Day.☹

Britain to Deport Child Asylum-seekers Forcibly

The Home Office provoked fury after it announced that teenage asylum-seekers, who arrive alone in Britain could for the first time be forcibly deported, as reported in media on February 1.

Refugee groups and children's charities protested that the threatened removals would endanger and distress vulnerable young people fleeing nations in turmoil. Some 3,000 unaccompanied youngsters claim asylum every year, with the largest numbers coming from Afghanistan, Iran, eastern Africa and China.

Children are allowed to remain in the country until they reach 18, when their cases for asylum are considered alongside adult applicants.

The Immigration minister, said the policy was a "green light" to people-traffickers who could promise teenagers they would not be sent home once they reached UK.

Policy adviser for the Children's Society, warned: "This will cause great distress and suffering to many who have fled torture, war and poverty and runs contrary to the Government's aspiration to keep these children safe."

Chief executive of the children's charity, the NSPCC, said: "The Government appears to be turning its back on children who have been separated from their families and who may have suffered trauma or persecution."

Donna Covey, chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: "The Government should not try to force any child to return against their wishes where their safety and welfare cannot be guaranteed.

These are not children who come here seeking a better life, with their families waiting for them in peaceful homes. Many of them are children from war zones." ☹

India to Pay Cash for Baby Girls

The Indian government plans to give cash incentives to the families of baby girls in an effort to limit the number of abortions of females because of a preference for sons. This was reported on March 3 at New Delhi. Staggered payments would be made to families to "encourage them for better upbringing of girl child and to educate her", women and child development minister said.

India has only 927 females for every 1,000 males — far lower than the worldwide average of 1,050 females. UNICEF says India continues to lose almost 7,000 girls every day through abortions while the British medical journal The Lancet has put the loss of females at 10 million over the past two decades.

Under the scheme, a girl's family will get financial benefits -- including insurance cover worth 200,000 rupees (5,000 dollars) until the age of 18 if she is sent to school and is not married young.

Muslim Children Enrollment Lowest at Primary Level

An official survey in India has found that Muslim children were at the lowest ebb at primary and upper-primary levels of education. The survey was reported by media on February 1.

The first-such survey was conducted by the Union Human Resources Development Ministry. According to 'Flash Statistics: Elementary Education in India and Progress Towards Universal Elementary Education (2006-07)', the report said that Muslim enrolment at the primary school level (Class 1-5) was meager 9.39 percent of total enrolment figures for 2006-07, while at the upper primary level (Class 6-8) it was 7.52 percent. Only 70 percent of Muslim children were enrolled in primary schools; the numbers dwindled to 56 percent at the upper primary level.

West Bengal, Chandigarh, Assam, Maharashtra and Goa, suggests a sudden drop in enrolment after primary school. For Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, there is a higher enrolment percentage of Muslims in the upper primary level than in primary school. The survey shows that the community's access to education is poor even in states where it has a large presence.

Juvenile Justice in Shambles

A report by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights on February 16 revealed that around 5,000 cases against juveniles are pending in courts. Over 50 per cent of juvenile homes do not provide counseling services, while over 80 percent of staff is not trained. They are worse than adult jails.

Hundred girls spend their days inside one small room. In 70 percent of care centers, physical punishment is used to discipline children. In 2006, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act was revised to strengthen the previous Act and instill a child-centric rehabilitation and family restoration focused system.

US Guidelines on Child Labor Prompt Action

Proposed US government guidelines on imported goods made using child or enforced labor, issued in October last year, have prompted the Indian government to act, a report on December 5 said.

The ministries of commerce, labor and women and child development have decided to get exporters from five child labor-sensitive sectors; handicraft, carpet, sports goods and gems and jewellery to conduct annual external social audits on child labor. A US textile retail giant GAP stopped sourcing from a New Delhi vendor following reports of child labor in its units.

Panel to Decide Upper Age Limit of Childhood

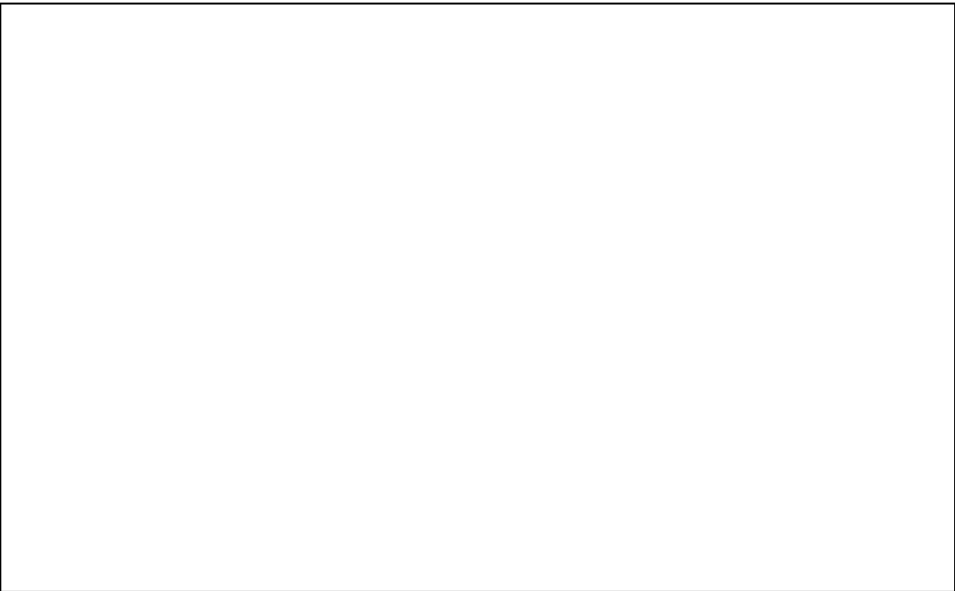
When does childhood end? At 18, when a girl can marry; 16, when she can give consent for physical relationship; or 14, when a person can work in hazardous jobs? These legal ambiguities may soon be history, with moves afoot to hammer out a uniform definition of "child" in India.

The National Commission for Child Rights (NCPDR) has constituted a committee, comprising representatives from ministries of HRD, labor and women and child development, to redefine the upper age limit of childhood in the country.

Having a single definition of childhood age will have far-reaching consequences as there are wide variations regarding the definition of a child in India.

For purposes of legal protection against kidnapping and related offenses, it's 16 years for boys and 18 for girls. But for special treatment under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, the age is 18 for both boys and girls.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 defines a child as any person below the age of 18, and includes an adopted step or foster child.



Child Labor Unabated in Capital

Child labor, be in form of washing cars, windscreens, asking for alms or selling small items on the roads at the twin cities' busy intersections, reflects the society's insensitivity towards children and the weakness of our government's oft-repeated resolve to wipe child labor off the map of the country, according to a report on March 4.

Groups of children are seen idling or chasing people for alms or selling flowers etc., at Peshawar Mor, Karachi Company, I-8, I-9, I-10 and I-11 sectors, bus and wagons stations, taxi stands, hospitals, mosques and shrines.

A child (S) revealed that he was working for a contractor with the 'consent' of his parents. He said the elder boys of his group had abused him many times. "I reported the matter to the contractor but he asked me to keep quiet. He admitted to abusing girls, smoking and sniffing glue."

Private Sector Asked to Comply with Child Labor Laws

"Non-compliance of child labor and safety standards caused Rs 2 billion loss in 2007", said UNIDO official at the workshop organized by Punjab Resource Management Program (PRMP) on March 20, at Rawalpindi.

He said last year; Pakistan had to bear the loss when Nike cancelled its soccer balls export contract with Saga Sports Sialkot due to non-compliance of labor and safety standards. If such cases continue to happen, it would render a heavy damage to Pakistan's overall exports, he remarked.

Federal Ministry of Labor said that realizing the prevalent grave situation, the government along with the ILO and other institutes, has taken initiatives to control child labor and to ensure a healthy working environment for the children.

Education Brings Relief to Bonded Laborers

Over the past some years NGOs and social welfare organizations have persuaded brick kiln owners to set up small schools for children working for them, as reported on January 17.

The education standard is low - and for the most part they depend for their survival entirely on the goodwill of their brick kiln owner. Yet, even these limited facilities offer children, who usually attend them for a few hours a day, some semblance of opportunity. They also offer an escape from the risks and hardships of life at the kiln, where injuries while using sharp implements to carve out mud, or from the hot ovens, are not uncommon.

"We must work here because we are poor. But now I go to school and one day I will be an educated man who can do something else," says Dilawar, 12, who has worked at a kiln with his family. The International Labor Organization (ILO) says 1.7 million bonded laborers exist in Pakistan. Despite laws banning bonded labor, including the Bonded Labor (Abolition) Act of 1992, forced labor, often through debt bondage, remains widespread.

Experts Urge Education for Child Laborers

Child labor is here to stay, argued experts at a seminar organized by British Council on February 24, but that does not mean that they should not get help from the government and NGOs to learn skills or go to school.

Representatives from British Council Provincial Director and Children's Museum for Peace and Human Right (CMPHR) said that the relationship between an adult and a child in our society is that of a colonizer and the colonized.

Sindh Education Foundation, Director said an experiment to give stipends to these children and stopping them from working had failed. Students from 'Children Development Center', shared that most work nine hours a day and after work go to the development center where Mathematics, English, Computers and other subjects are taught. One of the incentives offered here is free medical checkup.

The seminar was held in partnership with Sindh Education Foundation, CMPHR, UNICEF, SPARC, and Save the Children, UK.

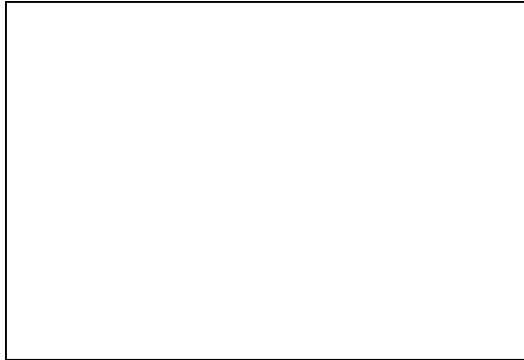
Training on Alternatives to Corporal Punishment

A three days training of trainers was carried out on February 25- 27 in Karachi, jointly by UNICEF and SPARC. The training was based on the toolkit on alternatives to corporal punishment.

The toolkit was developed through national consultations with the teachers, reviewed by experts including professionals from Unicef, Peshawar.

The training was conducted to develop the capacities of the trainers to conduct further trainings at grass roots level.

Training workshop was divided into three parts; developing training skills, understanding child rights and what are the alternatives to corporal punishments with particular emphasis on Pakistani culture and the educational system. ☞

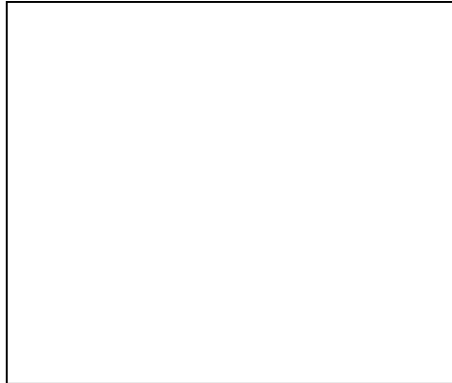


Nestle Investigates Recalled Infant Formula

Food Company Nestle says internal investigations are underway to determine what could have gone wrong in the production of baby formula Lactogen 1. This was reported on March 12.

Nestlé has recalled all 400g tins of Lactogen 1, after tests showed higher than declared levels of the trace elements iron, zinc and copper. It is therefore not suitable for consumption.

Communications Director at Nestle says they are consulting the factory which manufactures the formula for the company. Nestlé says if a baby has consumed its recalled infant formula, Lactogen 1, a doctor may have to be consulted. ☞



Karzai Calls for End to Forced Marriages

Afghanistan President said "I call on religious leaders, tribal elders and particularly men: stop forcing your under-aged girls to marry, stop marrying them to old men, particular to men aged above 50 and to allow them to be educated." This was reported on March 9.

Up to 80 percent of Afghan women face forced marriage, and nearly two-thirds are married before the legal age of 16, according to the UN.

Towards "Sanitation for All by 2010" : In line with the Bangladesh's Millennium Development Goals it has now set a target of achieving "Sanitation for All by 2010", while the year 2008 has been declared the "Year of Sanitation". It also aims at steadily bringing down childhood deaths due to diarrhea and ingesting germs due to open air defecation. While children have little problem defecating in the open, grown-ups especially women face everyday humiliation, according to a media report published on March 4. ☞

Food for Education in Northern Areas

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will distribute food items among students in Mohmand and Khyber Agencies to increase enrollment and reduce dropout rates in schools, according to news on March 9.

The Agency Education Officer said the program would be launched in Landi Kotal tehsil of Khyber Agency, and in Ghalanai, Yaka Ghund, and Prang tehsils of Mohmand Agency, on a trial basis for six months.

If the program has positive results, it would be implemented in other parts of the tribal agencies, he added. Food items, including biscuits, a sack of flour, and cooking oil, will be provided to students. The trial is part of a five-year program, he said, which aims to give female students of primary and middle schools biscuits on a daily basis, four liters of cooking oil a month, and a 25-kilogram sack of flour every two months. The boys at primary schools will be given biscuits on a daily basis and a 25-kilogram sack of flour every two months. ☞

The president also stressed the importance of educating Afghan girls, who were denied schooling under the 1996-2001 Taliban government. "In parts of Afghanistan, Afghan girls can't go to schools because of the terrorism problem," he said. "In other places, like places without terrorism problems, girls are not allowed to go to schools."

Some Afghan families in rural areas, do not see the need to educate girls. Thousands of girls have enrolled in classes since the ouster of the Taliban, but there remains only one girl for every three to four boys in secondary school, the UN said. ☞

SPARC Demands Birth Registration for Newborns

In February, SPARC carried out a nationwide campaign on the importance and implications of Birth Registration.

The campaign was carried out in the Punjab, NWFP and Sindh in which the Union Council nazims were persuaded to encourage parents in their respective localities to get their children registered.

The four offices and SPARC Child Rights Committees carried out the campaign using various communication tools, such as holding seminars, issuing press releases, displaying banners, talks on community and FM radios highlighting the importance of birth registration of children, a fundamental right, and important for the welfare and well being of the child.

SPARC Lahore arranged a seminar on February 28, for the benefit of the union council secretaries on the issue. Mr Sajjad Cheema, Protection Manager said anyone can register the child with the union council, it is not solely the responsibility of the parents. ☺

75% Rapes Occur Within Family in India

About 75 percent of rapes happen within the family, the Indian government has admitted, pointing to the inadequacies of the present laws. Home minister told the Lok Sabha on March 18 that often, parents and relatives were among the perpetrators of the heinous crime.

He said that the challenge was not to have a tough law but to sensitize people about the helplessness of the victims and the terrible consequences of the crime. He said deployment of women police officers to investigate rape cases and take the victims for medical examination was being considered. A member said for every other purpose, 18 years was the age for consent, in case of rape, it was 16. "Because of this anomaly, many offenders in rape cases go free," he said. ☺

Schools Built by Forces Vulnerable to Attack

Schools built and/or reconstructed by international forces are more vulnerable to attack by Taliban insurgents and other radical elements than those built by civilians, according to a report issued on January 2 in Kabul.

"Oxfam is aware of research which suggests that in some areas schools built by international military forces are twice as likely to be targeted by militants as those built by civilian agencies," policy and advocacy adviser for Oxfam International in Kabul, said.

At least 230 students and teachers have been killed and about 250 schools attacked by militants in the past three years, according to the Afghanistan Ministry of Education (MoE).

Owing to these attacks, over 400 schools remain closed, mostly in volatile southern provinces, denying education to thousands of students, MoE officials said. Almost 70 percent of school-age children are not attending schools because of insecurity. ☺

700 Pakistani Jockeys in Race for Compensation

As many as 700 Pakistani child jockeys have submitted applications in response to the United Arab Emirates' announcement that it will provide financial aid to such children as compensation all over the world; this was reported on January 15.

The offer by the UAE government has come two and-a-half years after it imposed a ban on camel races featuring children under 16.

Under the UAE child jockey compensation package, the children appearing in the races after 1993 are eligible for it. A joint board of the UAE and Pakistan interior ministries is authorized to finalize the claims in this regard.

The Child Protection Welfare Bureau, (CPWB) Punjab, will receive applications till December 2008 and the board can finalize the claims by June 2009.

Most applications have been received from Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Muzaffargarh. The UAE interior ministry claims that robot jockeys were now being used for the purpose. ☺

Image

Children Learn About Democracy

Students of a charity school in Muzzafarabad got a rare opportunity here on February 27, to learn the power of vote and thus give a loud message to the movers and shakers in Islamabad and New Delhi that democracy had taken a firm root in their hearts and minds and their voice will have to be taken into account vis-à-vis the future of their motherland.

The idea of choosing representatives through an action-packed electoral process, which involved canvassing, announcements and promises, was put into practice in Sawera Model School.

The school offers free education and all allied facilities to the children of Kashmiri martyrs and refugees, internally displaced persons and the victims of the earthquake.

“I plan to create awareness among students about their rights besides interacting with all those who visit our institution,” said 13-year-old Rida Naeem, who became the president. The general secretary, said the students had learnt the power of vote. “We want that our voice should also be heard and incorporated in any future dispensation of our (Kashmir) issue,” said a 14-year-old.

Student Barred from Wearing Turban

An Australian school refused entry to a Sikh student on February 27, because he was wearing a turban. The family of the 12-year-old boy, have complained to the Anti-Discrimination Commission after the boy was ordered to cut his hair and remove his turban as a condition of entry.

“We’re not asking the family or the boy to turn their back on their religion,” the principal said. “But the question is should the school, or organization, change its standard policies every time somebody comes along with a different set of beliefs.”

163 School Buildings Declared Dangerous in Peshawar

The directorate of education, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), has conducted a survey of the public sector buildings in the seven tribal agencies and six Frontier Regions and declared structures of 163 school buildings unsafe. This was reported on January 15.

The survey, conducted in collaboration with a foreign donor agency in 2007, said that 126 primary, 20 middle and 17 high school buildings were dangerous, while more than 500 public sector school buildings required major repair work.

The report said that of 4,575 primary schools in the public sector in FATA, 1,777 schools were without basic facilities, including drinking water, toilets, electricity and boundary walls. Similarly, 751 community schools in the region have no basic facilities. The condition of schools in six Frontier Regions is pathetic. According to a senior official, the directorate had no resources to carry out repair and maintenance works or provide facilities in schools in FATA and it depended on foreign assistance.

Gunmen Take Students, Teachers Hostage

Gunmen took over 60 schoolchildren and eight teachers hostage in a school on January 28, but freed them unharmed after local elders prevailed upon police to provide safe passage to the hostage-takers and save the lives of the students and teachers.

About eight militants, who had kidnapped a senior health official and his driver in Karak, took the children and teachers hostage in the high school in Bannu.

The militants released the kidnapped men and entered the school. They held the students and teachers at gunpoint to avert a police action.

Sources said that local elders, held negotiations with the militants for the release of the students and teachers. The six-hour standoff ended when the elders persuaded police officers to avoid an armed action and provide safe passage to the gunmen.

Eight-year-old Stopped from Studying Law

An eight-year-old Brazilian boy who passed an entrance exam to study law at university has been blocked from starting because the institution wants him to first finish primary school, a report said on March 6.

Joao Victor won entry into the law school. But the university said he does not qualify because he has not studied at secondary school (high school) level. The father said he was going to take the matter to court.

Missionary School Ends Boarding Facility

Security concerns have forced Jesus and Mary School administration in Murree to end its boarding facility affecting a large number of students from all over the country, according to a media report on March 12.

Jesus & Marry School is functioning at Pindi Point Murree since British era, in late 1930s, and providing quality education and boarding facility to a large number of girl students. But now the school administration has decided to end boarding facility creating restlessness among the parents and students.

Jesus & Mary is a Christian missionary school and a large number of eminent girl students had received education in this school and later got national and international fame. The PPP late chairperson Benazir Bhutto also received her early education in this school.

Notables showed their concerns over this decision of the school administration and said that a large number of people used to get their girls admitted in the institution with peace of mind. Even overseas Pakistanis were utilizing the school's boarding facility. The administration of Jesus & Marry School held the prevailing security condition in the country responsible for this decision. ❧

Girls' Education Under Constant Threat

The seemingly unending series of blasts and threats to girls' education continues unchecked. Militants blew up the nine-room building of a girls' high school in Darra Adamkhel on March 17.

Earlier, handbills purportedly distributed by local militants on March 15-16 again warned women to stop going to schools and join seminaries. Locals of the area said that paramilitary troops were patrolling the area only during the daytime leaving the people at the mercy of militants at night.

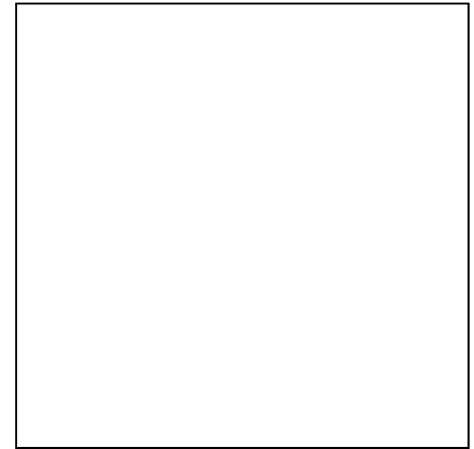
In another case, at Mardan, a new religious group sent a threatening letter on January 30 to the administration of a private school to end co-education or face dire consequences. Students in this private school learn more about sex, than acquiring proper education," states the letter. The group has given the deadline of April 28 for ending co-education in the school. It also offered to the school administration that if they faced any financial problem, the group would provide money for its publicity in leading papers of the country. The school administration has expressed concern over the letter. However, it could not be known if it has informed police about the development. ❧

Providing Education to Dropouts

Non governmental organizations in Peshawar are attracting attention of children who are drop outs from schools and from low-income families by offering education facilities to them, according to media report on March 27.

Orphans and Refugee Aid, an international organization working across the developing world is one such NGO. Its center in Peshawar is called *zama kor*, (my home). The project aims to attract children from poor families towards education. Six-year-old, Hijrat Khan, sick of corporal punishment at the hands of teachers, decided to leave his school to join an education center set up by the organization. "The teachers at my previous schools used to treat us harshly, so I ran away. My father is a truck driver with a large family; therefore he does not really care about our education".

Initially, Khan took to scavenging with other kids after leaving school. However, his future was secured when one of the teachers of the center contacted his father and asked to send him to their child friendly school. Surveys across the country shows that almost 25million children drop out of school due to corporal punishment and the harsh behavior of the teachers and parents. ❧



140 Schools without Headmasters

As many as 2,500 posts of teachers in primary and middle schools in Rawalpindi district are lying vacant while 140 out of 266 high schools are without headmasters causing adverse effects on the careers of the students who were dreaming of a 'Parha Likha (educated) Punjab', a media report said on March 31.

The vacant posts in both girls and boys schools include 1,032 of primary teachers course (PTC), 246 elementary school teachers, 100 senior vernaculars, 264 English teachers, 47 oriental teachers, 120 Arabic teachers.

The sources said under the slogan of Parha Likha Punjab, the authorities had constructed school buildings and distributed textbooks among students. However, they did not pay any attention on appointment of school teachers and the problem continues to deteriorate. ❧

Pakistan's Child Survival Record Poor: Unicef

Despite heavy government spending, there is no tangible improvement in Pakistan's child mortality figures, according to the latest Unicef 2008 report and that the country's ranking in a critical category, under-5 mortality, has deteriorated. The report was shared with media on January 22 at Islamabad.

Pakistan dedicates over 0.5 per cent of its GDP to different programs being run by various ministries for reducing child and maternal mortality. The spending is almost as much as the entire health budget, which is 0.67 percent of the GDP, but experts fail to understand why all this money is not producing results.

According to the report, under five mortality figures remained at 97 per 1,000 births, bettering the previous year's record by just 0.2 per cent, implying that more than 400,000 children continue to die annually in Pakistan from preventable causes before their fifth birthday and many of them do not survive past their first year.

In overall child healthcare ranking, Pakistan fell behind five countries, sliding to 42nd spot. Only Afghanistan and a handful of mostly African countries have a poorer record of child survival than that of Pakistan. ☞

Anti-hepatitis Vaccines Cause Severe Reactions

Several schoolgirls suffered severe adverse reaction, with shoulders of some of them becoming numb, after they were administered hepatitis vaccines during a recent campaign by the Health department in various schools at Mirpurkhas said a report on January 31.

When the local representatives talked to the health teams on complaints, they found that only two or three days were left in the expiry date of those vaccines. Besides the color mark on the vaccine vials had also changed; as they were not placed in the cold environment and the vaccines had lost their efficacy. The Health department hushed up the matter and ended its campaign.

District Officer Health and in-charge of anti-hepatitis vaccine campaign denied that the vaccines were close to the expiry date and claimed the vaccines were valid and effective.

He refused to comment when asked why the schoolgirls had suffered severe reaction and under what circumstances the Health department had decided to use short expiry date vaccines in schools. ☞

Children's Ward Inaugurated

Hyderabad District Nazim on February 25, inaugurated the children's ward, a nursery and a children's emergency center at the Hilal-i-Ahmer General Hospital in Latifabad and provided Rs2 million for the construction of a mortuary in the hospital. He also announced the grant of Rs20 million on behalf of the district government for the construction of a children hospital in Phulelli.

He said that six hospitals were being built by the district government while the existing hospitals were being expanded and new departments were being established to provide comprehensive health cover to the people. ☞

Cousin Marriages Reason for 44pc Thalassaemia Cases

Marriages between cousins is a major reason for around 44 percent thalassaemic children registered in the city, a Punjab based study conducted by the University of Health Sciences (UHS) and reported on February 1.

The researcher interviewed 206 families and found that 89 percent couples were cousins. The 206 families had 720 children, out of which 318 children were afflicted with thalassaemia and 402 were found healthy. Out of the 318 thalassaemia patients, 174 were males and 144 were females. Out of the 420 healthy children, 209 were boys and 195 were girls.

He said that it appears that parents who had thalassaemic children ignored the treatment of their female babies. He said Rs 1,800 were required for a weekly blood transfusion for a thalassaemic child. Parents preferred to give costly medical treatment only to their thalassaemia-affected male children, he added.

He said that in Pakistan about 82.5 percent parents are first cousins, 6.8 percent are blood relatives, 6.3 percent belong to a same caste and family, and only 4.4 percent are married out of their families. ☞

Unicef, WHO Launch Anti Polio Drive

Unicef and WHO launched a special anti polio drive in three districts of Balochistan from April 2, a statement issued here said.

The drive is being launched in Kohlu, Barkhan and Musakhail. Polio teams would administer anti polio vaccine to children below five at various fixed points.

The statement has appealed to the people belonging to various walks of life to ensure vaccination of their children below five. ☞

SPARC CRC ACTIVITIES

SINDH

CRC Shikarpur

Jail Visited

January 5: The district coordinator CRC Shikarpur along with other members visited the juvenile section of the District Jail Shikarpur and held a meeting with the jail officials. The delegation reviewed the quality of the food, accommodation and educational facilities provided by the jail administration to the juvenile prisoners. The CRC took serious exception to the poor quality of food and asked the officials to improve it.

Promote Child Rights

January 25: The CRC in its monthly meeting devised a strategy for including child rights issues in the election campaign. The CRC coordinator and the Union Council Nazim said that child rights will be brought into the notice of every contesting candidate. And pressure the winning candidates to work for the well-being of poor children.

Help Poor Students

January 27: The CRC Shikarpur will provide books and uniforms to the poor students. A CRC member distributed uniforms and books among ten poor students of primary school at village Mureed Sethar. He stated poverty is a major constraint to a child's education. Teachers, parents and villagers attended the event and

appreciated the CRC initiative for promoting child rights.

CRC Kamber

Child Marriage

February 7: The CRC Kamber bailed out two girls, victims of minor marriage, aged four and five years. Illegal marriage of two minor girls and boys had taken place on Jirga's verdict at Kamber District.

The police arrested the cleric and kept minor children in custody for a night. The children were returned to the families on the assurance that they will not be forcefully married again.

CRC Sanghar

CNICs for Bonded Laborers

January 22: The CRC Sanghar organized a consultation with bonded labor stakeholders in its office. Representatives from NGOs, National Database Authority (NADRA), media and Executive District Officer- Community Development Organization (EDO-CDO) were told that the CRC had obtained 1,129 CNICs for bonded laborers last year.

Moreover, 531 votes were registered of the same community and children under 18 years were registered in their respective union councils.

Baseline Survey

January 3-26: The CRC team visited Union Council Chotiaryoon, and other

villages to conduct baseline surveys of bonded laborers to assess the need for national identity cards and birth registration. The villagers were also convinced to enroll their children in schools.

Rally Against Abuse

January 28: The CRC Sanghar organized a protest rally against physical punishment and mental harassment of a teenaged servant from a minority community by a feudal family in Hyderabad. The protestors condemned this grave violation of child rights.

Solidarity with the Victim

January 29: CRC Coordinator visited Sarhari town, Taluka Shahdadpur along with the media representatives to meet the four-year-old-girl child (F) who was assaulted by a 21-year-old youth (I). The CRC representative assured legal support to the affected family.

Help for Bonded Laborers

January 31: CRC conducted a meeting with the District Officer Bait-ul-Maal (Sanghar) for financial support of bonded laborers. The officer assured the CRC team of his support and advised them to submit request forms as soon as possible.

Activating DVC

January 31: CRC Project Coordinator conducted a meeting with EDO- CDO (Community Development Organization) Sanghar for activating District Vigilance

Committee of the area. The officer said, he would take appropriate measures as soon as possible.

CRC Larkana

Corporal Punishment

January 23: The CRC Larkana urged the district education department to ensure strict ban on corporal punishment following a series of corporal punishment cases in Sindh.

The district Nazim, district coordination officer and executive district officers were persuaded to ensure strict measures against the routine corporal punishment in district schools. Education suffers due to high number of drop outs because of teachers harsh behavior and maltreatment.

PUNJAB

CRC Faisalabad

Birth Registration

February 25: The CRC Faisalabad held a meeting with the deputy-director NADRA on birth registration. He was briefed on CRC's active role in pursuing parents to get their children registered. Moreover, the CRC also discussed prospects of joint efforts with the department concerned.

Elections Held

March 10: SPARC Lahore made a follow-up visit of the CRC Faisalabad and also facilitated the CRC election. 38 members including 15 females attended the proceedings. Before the election proceedings, a briefing was given on CRC's activities. Later, through vote count, Mr. Tahir Iqbal was elected as Coordinator, Ms. Syeda Dur-e-Sehwar was selected as Deputy Coordinator and Mr. Basit Hafeez was elected as finance secretary of the CRC for 2008.

Project Reviewed

March 11: The CRC Faisalabad, accompanied by SPARC's Mr Irfan, Mr Waseem and Mr Sajjad visited Borstal Institute and Juvenile Jail Faisalabad. SPARC reviewed the project that aims to provide educational and recreational facilities for the juvenile prisoners

residing there. The superintendent jail was also present on the occasion.

CRC Bahawalpur

Elections Held

January 22: SPARC Lahore made a follow-up visit to CRC Bahawalpur and also conducted election of the CRC office bearers. A total of 25 members were present on the occasion. In the election, Mr. Khurshed Ahmad got re-elected as Coordinator while Ms. Ishrat Fatima was selected as Deputy Coordinator, whereas Mr. Jamshed Kareem was voted as finance secretary of the CRC for the year 2008. Regional and Assistant National Manager Protection supervised the process.

CRC Sargodha

Jail Visited

January 17: To assess the state of juvenile prisoners, a delegation of CRC Sargodha visited District Jail Sargodha, Sub divisional Jail Shahpur and met regional chairman of District Commission for Child Welfare and Development (DCCWD). The list of government schools facing non availability of text books and sluggishness of authorities was brought to his notice. Concern was shown over absence of a Borstal Institute and it was decided that a campaign would be launched in the media for the Institute.

CRC Muzaffargarh

Birth Registration Campaign

February 22-28: The CRC Muzaffargarh visited Alipur Road and Union Council No. 35 to meet with the bonded laborers and convince them to get their children registered. 17 children were registered during the week.

Bonded Labor Project

SPARC's Bonded Labor Project in Sindh focuses on supporting bonded laborers in the rural community through obtaining computerized national identity cards, child birth registration and right to vote.

The CRC Muzaffargarh in compliance with SPARC's efforts, met brick kiln owners and stressed on providing work

place security for them. Moreover, in February, a total of 40 computerized national identity cards (CNICs) of bonded laborers were received from NADRA. ☺

SPARC Observes Red Hand Day

To highlight the evil practice of child abuse by militants, extremist groups and street criminals, SPARC Karachi observed Red Hand Day on February 12, with the rest of the world.

The Red Hand Day is commemorated annually to draw attention towards the fate of children who are forced to serve as soldiers in wars and armed conflicts and by organized urban gangsters in street crimes.

In view of the physical, mental and moral abuse of under-18, SPARC urged Pakistan, a signatory to the UN CRC to take serious initiatives to stop child rights violations by curbing the increasing child militancy in the country.

The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2002) also advocates that State Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that children below the age of 18 do not take a direct part in hostilities/ conflicts and that they are not forcibly recruited to fight in armed forces/ conflicts.

Extremist militants are recruiting child soldiers in South Waziristan, WANA and Swat. A large number of brainwashed children are being prepared as suicide bombers and involved in atrocious attacks that result in huge sufferings.

SPARC's Salam Dharejo said in urban areas, particularly in Karachi, children have been recruited by gangsters and criminals. Consequently several children have died due to gang wars. Similarly hundreds of children are involved in tribal conflicts in Upper Sindh.

An estimated 300,000 children have been recruited into State and non-State armed groups in over 85 countries worldwide. ☺

Teacher Bites Son as Punishment

A teacher, who has adopted biting as a way of punishing his five-year-old son for his poor academic performance, is in the grips of the law after biting the boy, resulting in scores of cuts on his wrists and shoulders, said a news report on February 23.

The boy was spotted by some food vendors, who saw him writhing at school and asked him how he came by such numerous "teeth wounds" on both hands. The boy told them that it was his father who bit him like that, because the father claimed he was not academically good. The vendors, also mothers, reported the teacher's conduct to the school authorities. The boy, told the police that his father, claimed he was not intelligent, and, therefore, made, rules that would compel him to be academically smart.

The boy said whenever his father was teaching him, and he did not get the answers right, he received a painful bite from him. ☹

Pakistan Among 4 Polio Endemic Countries

The technical officer of the World Health Organization, said on February 13 in Quetta that 1,278 polio cases, including 32 in Pakistan, were reported worldwide in 2007.

She said that there were still four polio endemic countries, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan and eight re-affected countries.

She said that the eyes of the world were now on Pakistan for eradication of polio. She said there was need for an active participation of the community in reaching out to all children below the age of five.

She also said both the central and provincial governments were determined to eradicate polio and ensure that polio drops were administered to children everywhere. ☹

SPARC Holds Quiz Contest Among School Children

SPARC organized a Quiz Competition for school children in the schools of Rawalpindi and Islamabad under its School Project. The three part quiz competition was held between 11 teams on the theme of child rights.

The first round of the competition was held on January 24 which was hosted by Government Girls High School, Khayaban-Sir-Syed, Rawalpindi. However, the second and the final round were held in SPARC CRC Center.

The objective of the quiz was to measure the understanding and awareness about child rights among the children who are part of the School Project. It was good to see the preparedness and enthusiasm to answers the difficult questions on Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000, child labor, corporal punishment etc.

After strong competition, in the final round on January 31, the winner of the Quiz was Islamabad Convent H- 9, second position was secured by Girls Elementary School, Katarian, followed by Jinnah Public School in the third place. The winners were presented with the trophy and the runners up were presented books. ☹

Nepal's 'Living Goddess' Retires

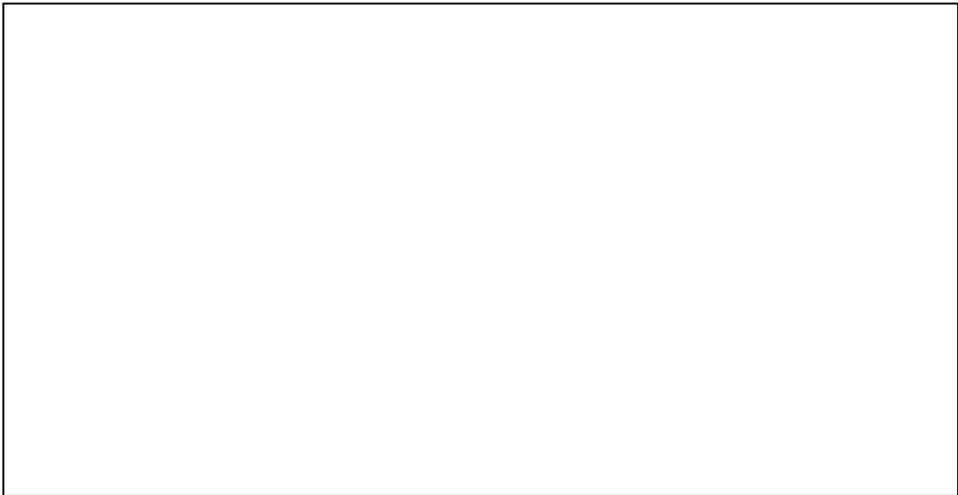
A controversial young Nepali girl worshipped by many Buddhists and Hindus as a Kumari, or "living goddess", has given up her divine position following a request from her family, an official said on March 2.

The 11-year-old Sajani Shakya was revered for nine years as the Kumari of the ancient temple-town of Bhaktapur, in a centuries-old tradition. Kumaris traditionally retire when they reach the age menstruation. Some human rights activists have petitioned the Supreme Court to end the practice saying it denies the girl's right to normal life. ☹

Golden Plough Award For Qazi Azmat

The World Bank awarded the prestigious 'Golden Plough Award' to its team for the effective and innovative supervision of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) stated a press release by the PPAF on March 28.

The PPAF task team leader in the World Bank, Mr Qazi Azmat Isa, (SPARC Chairman) received the award on the occasion of Sustainable Development Network (SDN) Week at the World Bank head office. The team, designed a supervision system for the second PPAF project to build a strong network of practitioners and institutions that will endure beyond the life of the project. ☹



Computer Center Inaugurated

(Contd. from page 1)

At the end of the ceremony, 30 juvenile inmates were presented with the certificates. The inauguration was attended by SDC's Ms Nicole Ruder and Ms Kaneez Fatima, SPARC's Irfan Raza, and Fazila Gulrez from Islamabad and Jahanzeb and Amir Mughal from SPARC Peshawar. Two juvenile inmates, who had taken this training are now working. One of them got a job in Karachi and then went to Afghanistan and the other started his own training centre.

Children Rescued from Racketeers

The Lahore Police on March 18, rescued 10 children from the custody of six racketeers and arrested four of them. Superintendent Police said the police had information that some suspicious people were living with children, in a house at Kot Lakhpat.

He said when a police team raided the house they recovered 10 children who revealed that they belonged to Karachi and six people had brought them to Lahore on the promise of providing them with jobs. However, they detained them here and forced them into pick-pocketing.

The children, aged between 13 and 18, have been sent to the Edhi Home. An Edhi official shared that the children would be reunited with their families soon. The police claimed to have arrested four out of six racketeers while two were absconding.

Tribal People Desire Education, Health Care: Study

Contrary to the general perception, a vast majority of the tribal people want a political change to resolve their socio-economic problems, according to a study conducted by the Community Appraisal and Motivation Program (CAMP) released on March 19.

Fifty-seven per cent of the tribal people believe learning modern sciences and Quran was the preferred Jihad. Less than 25 percent of them understood Jihad as peaceful resistance to oppression and 17 percent subscribed to the armed resistance concept of Jihad. Surprisingly, about 85 percent of the people supported women education. Tribal women wanted the government to provide educational and healthcare facilities and access to clean drinking water. The report said that people wanted more primary, high and middle schools established for girls, with at least one women college for each Agency.

Another surprise was that over 67 percent of the tribal people considered the custom of Swara a criminal act against the 25 percent who thought the custom resolved family feuds. Only one in 100 approved of "the tribal custom". However, the majority of them justified honor killing.

Punjab, CRC Legal Aid to Juvenile Inmates

SPARC Lahore provided free legal aid to 14 juvenile offenders. Out of which 8 were bailed out.

Break down of legal aid given by CRCs is as follows:

CRC	Cases Dealt
Rahim Yar Khan	6
Mianwali	4
Jhelum	8
Okara	8
Dera Ghazi Khan	1
Kasur	14
Muzaffargarh	1
Lahore	14
Total	56

NWFP, CRC Legal Aid

Ijaz Muhammad Khan Law Manager SPARC, NWFP provided free legal aid to 17 juvenile prisoners.

Break down of legal aid given by CRCs is as follows:

CRC	Cases Dealt
Swabi	10
Bunner	6
Swat	3
Chitral	1
Bannu	1
Peshawar	17
Total	38

New Classrooms for Inmates in BI&JJ

SPARC and CRC organized the inauguration of the renovated classrooms at the Borstal Institution and Juvenile Jail Bahawalpur on January 23. The ceremony was attended by the DIG Headquarters and Tehsil Nazim Bahawalpur.

When the SPARC and CRC team visited the Jail earlier, it was found that the juvenile inmates sat on the ground, out in the open.

As part of the SPARC program to improve jail conditions for the inmates, it was decided that two proper classrooms will be built for them. The classrooms are fitted with all the amenities such as fans, lights, whiteboards, tables and chairs and has a capacity to sit at least 30 children.

The DIG Prison expressed gratitude and said that SPARC has transformed the jail into a boarding school. He hoped that this will bring comfort to the juvenile inmates and positive change in their lives. Presently, there are 137 inmates in the BI&JJ. ❧

Partition: Surgery Without Anesthesia Launched

Every year, the people of Pakistan celebrate Independence Day but no one remembers the hundreds of thousands of people who had lost their lives and honor at the hands of murderers and rapists, to obtain freedom, the speakers said at the launch of *Partition: Surgery without Anesthesia* in Lahore on February 5, organized by SPARC.

The book is a compilation of articles on the horrors and sufferings of people during the Partition of the sub-continent. It is a reminder of the trauma that thousands had to go through. It speaks about the ethnic cleansing that accompanied the process of partition – the price both Muslims and Hindus paid for their freedom. The book has been compiled and edited by SPARC Board member and former National Coordinator Mr Anees Jillani.

During the partition, over seven million Muslims were forced to migrate from India to Pakistan and an almost equal number crossed the border in the opposite direction. Lahore's total population prior to Independence was 1.2 million, including about 500,000 Hindus and 100,000 Sikhs. However, after the dust had finally settled, Lahore was left with a total of only 1,000 Hindus and Sikhs. In the areas constituting West Pakistan, the Hindu and Sikh

population accounted for 18.4 percent of the population but in the 1951 census, the proportion had declined to 1.6 percent.

The speakers included known politicians and literary scholars. ❧

Benazir Remembered

On February 4, Coordinators of Child Rights Committees Sukkur, Larkana and Shikarpur welcomed the delegation of civil society organizations from Punjab for paying homage and fateha for Ms Benazir Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bux.

The delegation comprising Punjab NGO Coordination Council (PNCC), lawyers, journalists, intellectuals and laborers, was received by the CRC representatives and a press conference was held at the Sukkur Press Club. In Punjab, CRC Sargodha paid homage to Ms Benazir Bhutto. ❧

SPARC Team Assured help in Protecting Children

The caretaker Sindh Minister for Population Welfare and Women Development, said that all steps would be taken to ensure the recruitment of women probation and parole officers in the province. She said that efforts would also be made to get the Child Protection Bill 2005 passed to ensure that children were protected from violence and abuse.

She was talking to SPARC's Salam Dharejo and Nazra Jahan who called on the minister on January 25. She said that child protection and reformation of juveniles was an important task for which the government would work with credible NGOs and extend assistance to children in jails. ❧

Plight of Bonded Laborers Highlighted

On January 16, SPARC organized a media consultation in Hyderabad with journalists from various print and electronic media.

Participants demanded that the political parties and the government should prepare a joint strategy to address the issue of bonded labor in the province. SPARC's Mr. Akhtar Balouch, said that the Bonded Labor Abolition Act 1992 prohibits all types of forced labor, but due to poor or little implementation and knowledge of the law, bonded and forced labor was increasing in Sindh and Punjab as well as in other parts of Pakistan.

Regional head SPO Sindh, said it was vital to create awareness among the media on such grave violations of human and child rights so that they could take up these issues on regular basis. He called for equitable distribution of resources.

SPARC's Kashif Bajeeer criticized the government functionaries working on bonded labor for neglecting the real victims of bonded labor. He said these officials and organizations should work for the rehabilitation of liberated bonded labor and help them to improve their living standards. ❧

Teenagers Abducted 'for Suicide Attack Training'

Nine Swat teenagers are feared to have been kidnapped by suspected militants "to be trained as suicide bombers", said a report on March 24.



www.goal-uk.org

Of the nine, five teenagers from the Taran, Gharo, and Aligam areas have gone missing from the hostel of the Excellence Academy of Education, Kabal. The Kabal police have registered a First Investigation Report. Three of the missing boys were from Aligam and one each was from Taran and Kalu Dagai.

Father of a missing boy (O) told media that his son had been missing since March 13 when he left for Hadassah Jama Darul Uloom Sharifabad, Swat. "He is not attending his cell-phone," he added.

Police officials say they fear that militants have kidnapped the boys to use them for subversive activities. Meanwhile, a Lahore resident, has brought three youths who went missing in the metropolis back to Swat. ☹

Parents Trafficking Children to Foreign Countries

A disturbing new trend in human smuggling is emerging in Pakistan: more and more children are being sent by their parents on hazardous journeys in a bid to reach wealthier countries, as reported on January 21.

Of the more than 2,200 persons deported to Pakistan in 2007, mainly from Oman or Iran (from where many hoped to reach European destinations), 15 were children under 18, according to figures maintained by Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

Two of the children were sent back and under an agreement between the FIA and the Lahore-based Child Welfare Protection Bureau (CWPB) of the Punjab government, are now at the bureau's premises.

According to the FIA's assistant director, the "trend of trafficking teenage boys" is rising in Pakistan's populous Punjab.

He blamed parents who "paid out large sums of money to agents" for subjecting children to such hazards.

Boys in impoverished parts of rural Pakistan, particularly towns in the southern Punjab, are more likely to be trafficked overseas.

Meanwhile, girls are trafficked more often within the country, and sometimes sold into what amounts to little more than sexual slavery.

There are markets in the North West Frontier Province where these victims are sold like cattle says the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). ☹

Cases of Violence Against Children Rising

Around 1,595 children were abused, kidnapped or exposed to extreme violence during 2007 in the country, more than double the figure compared to the year before, a report released at Islamabad on January 17 said.

According to the Center for Missing Children's report, 617 children were abused, kidnapped or subjected to extreme violence in 2006. But, the situation deteriorated further in 2007. In 2007, 1,062 children had been abused, 327 were kidnapped and 189 children went missing. The category of abused children includes those who were murdered, raped, sodomized or forced to become part of an arm conflict. The data is based on cases reported in newspapers.

According to center's head, police are not well equipped, lack inspiration and have failed to gather data on missing children or the ones being abused. ☹

9-Year-Old Married to Landlord's Son in 'Vani'

A panchayat (village council) in Burewala, Punjab forcibly married a nine-year-old girl with the son of a landlord under "vani" – a conservative rule common in the rural areas. "The council made the ruling after the father (R) of victim (N) married his maternal cousin."

According to the victim's father, family members of the newly married bride were not happy with this wedding. "They, therefore, asked the panchayat to marry R's two minor daughters with two brothers of the new bride." The family said that the council was pressured to give the ruling in favor of the bride's family. They also forced the prayer leader to solemnize the marriage.

Panchayat leader admitted that he had chaired the meeting of the village council, but denied that he had ordered to marry a minor. "Yes. I headed the panchayat, but I made no such ruling. To marry N was his family's decision," he said. ☹

Children Hammered to Death: Five members of a family, including children were found hammered to death in their house in Rawalpindi at People's Colony on January 21, the police said. Investigators suspect all those slain were first poisoned, as a bottle was found lying close to the blunt weapon and the bodies. The gruesome murder came to light on Sunday morning when a female relative came to visit the family. The murders, a cause of panic in the locality was later solved when police arrested the culprits who had killed the innocent children and other family members as part of dispute with the deceased head of the family. ☹

Free Textbooks for Juvenile Inmates Approved

SPARC's demand for providing textbooks to juvenile inmates in Punjab province has been approved by the PESRP (Punjab Education Sector Reforms Program) Program Monitoring & Implementation Unit, Government of Punjab, Education Department (Parha Likha Punjab).

SPARC's Protection Manager, Mr Sajjad Cheema held several meetings with the Program Director and Additional Director of the department to convince them that it was the provincial government's responsibility to provide education to the juvenile inmates.

Initially, the department concerned maintained that books cannot be provided to the jails directly. Such a demand by the Jail Superintendents of different jails had been refused, in the past.

In view of these technicalities, SPARC Lahore proposed that books could be provided through SPARC to which authorities agreed in a letter, 'order of the Additional Director dated 14-02-2008'.

Now unlimited free textbooks (class 1 to class 10) can be procured for the juvenile prisoners from the PESRP.

SPARC Punjab has asked its child rights committees to carry a need assessment for books in their respective jails.

Funds for Juvenile Prisoners Increased

The Sindh government has increased the amount from Rs 50,000 to 100,000 to be paid on behalf of female juvenile prisoners who cannot pay the surety or *diyat*, and remain in the jail, according to media report on January 1.

The secretary of the department informed that not only had the provincial government notified of the doubled amount, it had also reconstituted the committee to include new members who would decide the cases of female juvenile prisoners who may benefit from the revolving fund of the Rs20 million earmarked for the purpose. Similarly, male juvenile prisoners will also benefit from this Sindh government's fund. Through this revolving fund of Rs20 million, 20 prisoners have so far benefited while six prisoners will benefit by June 30, 2008.

64 Babies, 163 Juvenile Prisoners' in Adiala Jail

Around 64 babies, their mothers and 163 juvenile prisoners in the age group 8-18 are facing numerous problems at Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi. Jail sources said on March 31 that children were kept with their mothers in jails for their own protection.

However, these children lack proper diet, playground, toys, books, bags and clean clothes. This was affecting their physical and mental growth. The jail authorities spend only Rs 19.50 per child a day to provide milk, fruit and meat, which is almost impossible within this budget," sources add. They said that the jail environment was damaging these children's "personality.

The children are victims of physical assault, as the jail authorities order them to serve A and B class prisoners

and hardened criminals, they said, adding, the governmental and the NGOs should take steps to protect the future of these children. Many children receive no education and have never seen books, pens and bags. These children who are born in the jail have no idea of the world outside. The government and the NGOs have launched several projects for the welfare of these children but these projects failed due to lack of political will.

The ministries of social and child welfare can play an important role in providing relief to children by setting up hostels to accommodate them outside the jail. However, he said that the shortage of funds was creating problems for them.

Government to Take Over NFEs in Jails

The NWFP government is planning to take over non-formal schools operating in jails, according to a news item on March 26. These NFEs are run by the NGOs.

At present, 210 children between seven to 15 years of age are languishing in jails for petty crimes. The NGOs provide them with text books, lectures, uniform and teachers, especially hired for teaching young jail population.

Political Parties Vow to Provide Quality Education

Seventeen representatives from various political parties unanimously resolved to work for providing free, compulsory and quality education to every citizen of Pakistan.

The "All Parties Conference on Education for All in Pakistan" was jointly organized by the PILDAT and UNESCO on February 6 in Islamabad. The key issues agreed upon by the political parties' leadership included free and quality education at primary level, introduction of uniform educational system and increase in the annual GDP for the education sector.

A joint declaration was signed by the representatives of the political parties, comprising eight points, indicating that the political parties would work for the increase in government funding for the education sector, 10 percent allocation from annual budget, ensuring provision of complete, free and compulsory primary education, achievement of gender equality in primary and secondary education, continuity in non-formal basic education, eradicating political interference, ensuring improvement in the education system and introduction of uniform curriculum and similar facilities.

UNESCO Director in Pakistan appreciated the spirit shown by the political representatives for achieving Education For All targets.

Teenaged Boy Falls Victim to Domestic Violence

A teenaged domestic help, Kishore, who had fallen victim to violence at his workplace was admitted to Civil Hospital on January 26, after police arrested three members of the family who had allegedly tortured him.

Medico-Legal Officer said that the boy had visible marks of violence "he has certainly been tortured but he has no burn wounds. The marks could be the result of torture with some blunt object or iron." Kishore said, "for three days I was kept without food or clothes by my employer, who suspected me of stealing gold items from the house."

He denied having committed theft and said that he had been employed there about 20 days back. The boy blamed his employer and his relatives of torturing him. "I kept denying that I have not done it but they didn't believe me," said the boy whose body bore blackish marks of violence all over his chest, abdomen and arms.

The police have arrested the boy's employer and his wife and nephew. "The boy's condition was serious when I saw him," said the ASI. Meanwhile, SPARC condemned the incident and demanded legal action against the perpetrators. SPARC officials also visited the hospital and met with police officials.

Two Teenagers Among 60 Deportees

Two children were among the 60 people who were deported from Greece and Turkey and brought to Gujranwala, according to a report on January 29. Among the deportees were two boys, in their early teens, who the Federal Investigating Agencies kept separately from the group to investigate how they fell victim to the human smuggling mafia.

FIA inspector quizzed Abdullah, 13, and Mazhar Iqbal, 15, who told the official that agents took them to Karachi by train and later shifted them to Quetta from where their sub-agents helped them cross over to Iran where they stayed for 10 days. They crossed Turkey and entered Greece from where they were arrested and detained. The FIA interrogated the parents who confirmed that they had paid Rs300,000 each to agents to send their sons abroad. Poor families said they greased the palms of the agents by selling gold jewellery and other household valuables.

First Ever Encyclopedia on Children's Issues

From the violent street culture of Nigeria to the crippling poverty in Nicaragua, from child trafficking in Thailand to child marriages in India, this six-volume set explores all these issues and more in an unprecedented look at the world's children at the dawn of the 21st century.

In recent years, while many countries have enjoyed a higher standard of living and improved working conditions, others have been torn apart by war and incapacitated by famine and are struggling to improve life for their children and their future. Recent concern over the world's children has resulted in a global attempt to define what constitutes an acceptable childhood. New attention has been paid, not only to healthcare and secondary education, but also to the right to play and increased access to technology.

The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Children's Issues Worldwide is the first globally focused set of this magnitude, offering extensive, up-to-date coverage of these critical issues. Chapters synthesize current data on key topics such as child labor laws, kidnapping and

gangs, healthcare, and the strength of the family unit.

Each chapter includes a regional map, a resource guide, and a national profile of the country with an overview of the important issues facing children today. Written by an international host of experts, this comprehensive set is an essential research tool for readers interested in the history, education, psychology, and social issues confronting the youth of the 21st century.

SPARC's Sabeen Mohsin and Fazila Gulrez wrote the chapter on Pakistan. ☺

Runaway Kids Re-united with Families

As many as 60 children were reunited with their families by the SPARC Drop in Center located in General Bus Stand area Peshawar. The runaway children, were brought to the Drop-in Center, where they were provided psycho-social counseling besides other facilities. After winning confidence of the children, they were convinced to go back to their homes, which they agreed to do so.

SPARC staff was helped by SPARC district Child Rights Committees, local government representatives and community members in the reunification process. The staff handed over the children to their family members after they promised to take care of them and not punish them. These children were from Karachi, Gujar Khan, Lala Musa, Rahimyar Khan, Chakwal, Swat, Dir, Swabi, Abbottabad, Mardan, Charsadda, Mohamand Agency, Bajaur Agency and Peshawar.

Since January 2008 the project is operating in collaboration with a German donor Kindernothilfe (KNH). Earlier, the Center was established in 2006 with the collaboration of the Save the Children Sweden & UK in General Bus Stand area Peshawar.

The objective of the project is to raise awareness among street children about their rights, risks on the street and empowering them to protect themselves and other children from abuse and exploitation. Besides reunification the center provides educational, recreational and psycho social counseling facilities to street working children. At least 30 children visit the Center daily. ☺

From the Frontline: Qindeel Shujaat

Qindeel Shujaat, 31, SPARC Executive Director in Pakistan was interviewed by CRIN early this year.

SPARC is one of the few civil society organizations in Pakistan specializing in advocacy on child rights, supporting awareness raising, research, capacity building, and service delivery. From its initial focus on protecting breastfeeding against the marketing of baby milks and foods, SPARC expanded its work to include other issues such as child labor, juvenile justice, education and violence against children.

Pakistan has complex problems. Children out of school is the root cause of a lot of problems, because if they are in class that is where their energies are focused.

There are 80 million children in Pakistan, and if half of them are not going to school, that means they are not doing anything. There are potential or actually child laborers.

I used to work in the computer business. It makes me proud that I am contributing to the issue of child rights.

There's a lot missing from the child rights movement in Pakistan. One of the problems is that there is no activism for pursuing child rights.

There is insufficient capacity too; for a start there is no formal training and many people have been working for decades and yet, have no, little understanding of child rights. Good people often move to international organizations.

A lot of donors want charities to work as corporate entities, but then the achievements aren't as good in human and child rights. The civil society needs to be reformed in Pakistan.

We need to bring children into everything we do – we sometimes think

L E T T E R S

Working on the JJSO

Rays of Development Organization (ROD) is a non-profit organization working for the welfare of people regardless of their color, cast, creed, race or dialect. We believe in resources and development for all without discrimination.

In Pakistan, especially in Sargodha we want to begin a campaign in which we will arrange study circles and programs to educate the masses about the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000. We will focus on the police, lawyers, judges, political representatives, schools, colleges, universities, parents and the children on the street and in the jails. We also want to run this on FM radio and our local TV channels. We also want to educate the children and the society through print media.

Could you please guide us in how we can raise funds for these activities. We would also like to work with SPARC for the downtrodden and the under privileged people of rural Pakistan.

*Ferhan Mazher
Chairman, ROD, Sargodha
www.raysofdevelopment.org
info@raysofdevelopment.org*

Literature Requested

I am a social welfare worker and would like to study the magazines and newsletters of SPARC. Please include my name in the mailing list and send me a set of your brochures and other publications and other related material.

*Saeed-ur-Rahman
Abubakar Road, Hamza Street
University Campus Peshawar,
NWFP*

Agents of Change

My friends and I are interested in volunteer work, especially to help young children who are trapped in slavery all over Pakistan and specifically in the North West Frontier Province. My friends and I study in Edwards College, Peshawar and we are ready to help, SPARC in every possible way. Our group of friends may seem small but our work will bring prosperity all over and will bear fruitful results. Please give us a chance and we will do our very best.

*Hamza Shalmani and friends
Edwards College, Peshawar
hamza_mash@hotmail.com*

Seeking Guidance

Sachal Sarmast Educational & Welfare Association Halani is a NGO working in the rural areas of Sindh. We would like to seek your support and guidance in effective running of our organization so that we can help better the lives of the poor and downtrodden. We would also like your cooperation and coordination in capacity building and training of our staff.

*Abdul Sattar Mallah
President Sachal Sarmast
Educational & Welfare
Association, Halani, Distt:
Naushero Feroze*

Useful Literature

I have received the latest issues of SPARC Newsletter, Discourse, CRC Newsletter, Article-13, and table calendar with very simple illustrations on the theme of Child Trafficking. All the material was good, attractive and informative especially the table calendar due to its messages and illustrations.

Discourse is a unique magazine on child rights. Please continue mailing us SPARC publications.

*Dileep Kothari
Raabel Resource, Centre-RRC
P.O Mithi-69230, Tharparkar,
Sindh*

Call for Information

I am the editor of Die Presse, which is a nationwide daily in Austria. I would like to gather some information concerning child workers in the automotive sector. Are you aware of any cases - or could you name me some experts?

*Michael Lohmeyer
michael_lohmeyer@yahoo.com*

Helping the Under-privileged

Khurshid Memorial Foundation (KMF) is an indigenous civil society organization set up in 2004 in West Punjab with the objective of providing basic services to the poor communities. KMF is working in district Sialkot with children, women, and men with a major focus on health, education, water and sanitation, income generation and cross-cultural communication.

KMF is working on various issues such as women and children's rights, labor rights and child labor. It also conducts CRC workshops and creative workshops with children. It also has a theater component and raises awareness on different harmful diseases and issues, like HIV and AIDS, Hepatitis, STI, Reproductive Health, family management etc., through the theater.

KMF launched Early Childhood Care and Development Centers, NFEs and Skill Development Programs. It has also carried out free medical camps in different rural areas, provide regular check ups, tests, treatment and provide free medicine.

KMF also networks with different, CBOs, NGOs, CSOs to share experiences and knowledge with each other in order to improve the quality of work of different organizations. We would like you to cooperate with us and give us an opportunity to get technical assistance through training workshops and published and printed material as well.

*Nasir Javed
Director, KMF
Tehsil Sambrial, District Sialkot*

Good Wishes for SPARC

First, I would like to thank SPARC for inviting me to the launching ceremony of the book *Partition: Surgery Without Anesthesia*. Secondly, thanks for the books and related material on Child Rights and Protection Issues. It is your goodwill gesture for the department and on behalf of Social Work Department, I ensure the same.

I wish that the collaboration between SPARC and Social Work Department may increase and I also hope that your role in this would be the most important one.

I pray for your success in pursuing child rights. SPARC is making invaluable contribution for the protection of children and their and their rights in Pakistan.

*M. Arshad Abbasi (Lecturer)
Social Work Dept., Punjab University,
New Campus, Lahore*

Horrors of Partition

I like to read history books and I am interested in the history of the sub-continent.

I just finished reading the two volume book on Indian History by Romilla Thappar and Percival Spear. I wish to write a history book on the Indian sub-continent after my retirement. I read a short article in an online newspaper about your recent publication on the horrors of partition as narrated by numerous people from Pakistan and India, entitled *Partition: Surgery Without Anesthesia*. I am very interested in receiving a copy of this book.

*Ramu Ramakesavan
5180 West Saragosa St
Chandler, Arizona 85226
USA*

Working for Child Laborers

AASA (Action for Advocacy & Sustainable Advancement) is a Dadu based non-profit organization working in districts Dadu and Jamshoro. We are working with various partners at local level. Since AASA established its office in Dadu city, it has been planning to set up a Child Labor Resource Center, to support those children who are working or are out of school.

AASA has been working on this proposal. It has developed infrastructure for the center where it will provide vocational training, education and involve children in extra-curricular activities. We request you to support our activities so that we can provide education and skills to the poor and needy children. We hope that SPARC will extend its generous support by providing us reading material, advocacy material and books. Please place our name on your mailing list.

*Ibrahim Maznani
Chairman AASA,
Ward # 18, Workshop Road
Dadu, Sindh*

Empowering the Powerless

Ilm-o-Adab Foundation (IAF) is a non-profit, non-political NGO working for community development in Southern Punjab. Our mission is empowerment of deprived and marginalized communities, especially women and children, through literacy, education and economic empowerment to improve their standard of life and enhance their capacity to be self reliant.

Our aim is to promote education at all levels, establish and maintain formal and non-formal schools, colleges, libraries, museums, art galleries and vocational training centers for the promotion of art, education and literature.

Moreover, we would like to identify issues and carry out research, workshops, seminars and policy dialogues.

To create awareness on social issues, network with other organizations, produce literature, and engage in charitable and social welfare activities strictly on non-profit basis.

*Gulfam Mustafa
President - IAF*

Helping Children

I would like to work with your organization as a volunteer. I want to work against child sexual exploitation, child labor and child trafficking. Please guide me on how I can be of service to you for improving the quality of life of children.

*Shahid Khan Youssafzai,
National Bank of Pakistan
shahid_khan306@yahoo.com*

Discourse Appreciated

I work in Save the Children (Sweden) as a community mobilizer. I would like to become a regular reader of your journal Discourse.

*Aftab Ahmad
CMO
House # 206/2, Sector - B, Ghazikot,
Township Mansehra, NWFP*

Excellent Training

I am a student of Anthropology Department at the Quaid-e-Azam, University Islamabad. I had the opportunity to attend one of your training/ workshops on Child Protection and Legal Framework held in March.

It was an eye opener for me. The information and the method applied to train the participants was of high quality in addition to the good behavior of the staff members.

The three-day workshop has changed my whole perspective on child rights and child related issues. It has given a new direction to my life. I would like to request the organization to please invite me to the training and workshops and also I would like to become a member of SPARC and work on improving the life of children in Pakistan.

*Hamid Ali
Quaid-i-Azam University
Islamabad*

National Tragedy

It is a great tragedy that children in our country have to earn bread and butter for their families by selling newspapers, washing cars or begging on the streets. This eclipses their childhood and deprives them from the golden time period when they should be studying at schools. Even Islamabad is not free from this evil. At traffic signals, little children begging in groups can be seen.

This is a clear evidence of our economic bankruptcy and unwillingness of concerned authorities to make serious efforts.

*M Yousaf Badar
Mianwal Ranjha
Mandi Bahauddin*

SPARC Peshawar has Moved

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Hayatabad, Peshawar
Telephone: +92-91-582 2836
Telefax: +92-91-582 5698**

SPARC's New Website: SPARC has launched its website www.sparcpk.org with a new look. A specialized news search engine for child rights has been included along with a special corner for children views and contributions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Death Penalty: On January 24, the Arab Charter on Human Rights entered into force. According to the UN Human Rights chief it contains provisions that do not meet international norms and standards, including the application of the death penalty for children, and the treatment of women and non-citizens. In this paper, Vice Chairman of the Committee, attempts to help understand the issue of the death penalty in Arab States, and the specific legal and cultural difficulties which slow the process towards international harmonization. In the second part of the statement, he concentrates on children's rights, their protection, and the death penalty according to international standards. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/>

NGOs: Reporting on Violence Against Children: A thematic guide for NGOs reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child was released on January 30. The guidelines are designed to help the NGOs to include comprehensive information on the incidence of violence in their reports to the Committee. NGOs have a unique role to play and they alone can give meaning to the data and statistics presented to the Committee. It is by making this information available that corrective measures can be identified that will move us towards our goal of ending violence. http://www.crin.org/docs/NGO_Guidelines_reporting.

Your Right to Education: Education is a human right. No matter where you live - no matter who you are - everyone is entitled to education. Even if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another town or village, a camp for displaced people or outside your country, you still have the right to go to school. Developed with funding from the Pearson Foundation, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children created *Your Right to education: A handbook for Refugees and displaced Communities* to raise awareness of everyone's right to education. <http://crin.org/resources/info>.

Forced Marriage: Secretary-General's Report on forced marriage of the girl child is in pursuant to resolution 51/3 of the Commission on the Status of Women, this report gives an overview of the consideration of the issue of forced marriage at the international level, and the evolving approach for addressing it. It provides information on the legal and policy measures of States and the activities undertaken by entities of the United Nations system to address forced marriage of the girl child. The report concludes with recommendations for future action. www.un.org

Uncounted Lives: Philippines has been embroiled in armed strife with communist and Islamist rebel groups for decades resulting in the deaths and displacement of thousands. But the victims most affected by these conflicts have been children, says a new UN-sponsored study, *Uncounted Lives: Children, Women and Conflict in the Philippines* launched on December 17, 2007. Conducted for UNICEF by the IBON Foundation, the study looked into the various ways the armed conflicts have affected children, women and communities in the countryside. It peeked into the issue of "child soldiers" within the ranks of the rebels. It also asked other children for their perspective of the conflict.

Prohibiting Corporal Punishment of Children: The Global Initiative published a new guide to legal reform to support states in prohibiting all corporal punishment of children in January. *Prohibiting corporal punishment of children: A guide to legal reform and other measures* details the legislative measures states should take to meet their obligations to prohibit all corporal punishment under the UN CRC. The handbook provides examples of legislation – in the home, schools, juvenile justice systems and alternative care settings – which would ensure that children are given the same protection from assault that adults enjoy. info@endcorporalpunishment.org.

Informed Choice? Armed Forces Recruitment Practice: A career in the armed forces brings opportunities and risks unfamiliar in civilian life. This independent report, by David Gee, and released in December 2006, assesses whether the information provided to potential recruits enables them to make an informed choice about enlistment. Benefits can include challenging work, discipline, physical fitness, self-development, a sense of belonging and global travel. Risks include bullying and harassment, career dissatisfaction, the 'culture shock' of changing to a military lifestyle, mental health and relationship problems, serious injury or death, social and economic disadvantages after discharge, and unexpected ethical challenges. Non-officer recruitment draws mostly on young people from 16 years of age living in disadvantaged communities, with many recruits joining as a last resort.

Violence Against Children in Conflict with the Law: A major study of four European countries has prompted alarm over the increasingly repressive policies towards children in conflict with the law, the rising numbers of children in detention, and the prevalence of violence in youth custodial institutions. The report released in March emphasizes that the detention of children is in violation of the UN CRC when not used as a measure of last resort.

The study, *Violence Against Children in Conflict with Law*, is produced by Defense for Children International - The Netherlands (DCI-NL) in partnership with the Howard League for Penal Reform (United Kingdom), DCI-Belgium and DCI-France. The report concludes that children in detention are at particular risk of violence from staff or peers, and self-harm. Children in police custody are at heightened risk of violence, for example, during arrest, interrogation, or while being held in police cells. www.crin.org

Children's Parliament

Contd. from page 1

Children from schools in Karachi and Islamabad took part in the parliamentary sessions held in Islamabad and Karachi on January 17 and March 6 respectively. Poor education, corporal punishment, homelessness, child labor and sexual and verbal abuse are among the issues that need to be sorted out with regard to our children whose participation is required to shake politicians out of their reverie.

As in some other countries, regular sessions of a children's parliament would contribute in instilling a sense of self-worth among the participants, preparing them for leadership roles later in life. A body representing children can get those under 18 years to start taking an active interest in politics, learning more about laws, tolerance and a sense of responsibility in matters of governance.

Sensitized to issues early on in life, and equipped with the knowledge of how governments are run, these young 'parliamentarians' will probably do better than our current lot of politicians when their time comes. ☺

From the Frontline: Qindeel Shujaat

Contd. from page 19

we know everything about children and yet harm them and forget that they are not only the future, but present too.

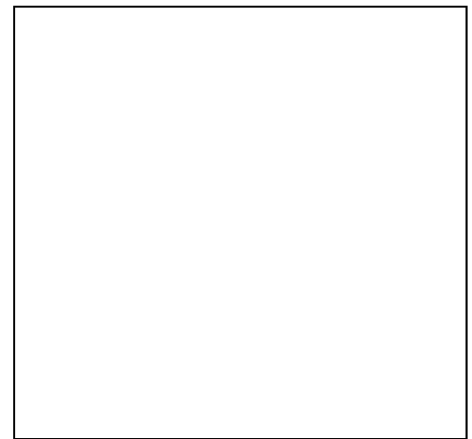
The CRC has not made a huge difference. It has set wonderful guidelines, but governments are so slow to implement and the reporting system is weak.

If I was not working in child rights, I think I would still be working in development, maybe for labor rights movement.

The best thing about my job is that sometimes you see that you are making a difference. The worst thing is that you don't see the results immediately.

I think I have a vision. We are working on commercial music related to child rights – it's a good way to raise the issue and reach lots of people.

If I could sum up child rights, I would say it is about love, care and equality. ☺



Kailash re-elected President

Contd. from page 24

The campaigners allege that illiteracy is the biggest scandal of our times, and education is in serious crisis. The so-called war against terror has been used as a tool for reparations, and globalization is adding to impoverishment of over billion people. The presence of 72 million out-of-school children and 700 millions illiterate adult is proof of gross human right violation, which is intolerable and unacceptable according to delegates.

The delegates demanded that the rich countries must honor their promises made to the world's children by enhancing the Official Development Aid (ODA) to \$18 billion for ensuring Education For All for children of good quality. ☺

Government to Take Over NFES

Contd. From page 17

Most of the schools are based in large jails such as Dera Ismail Khan, Haripur, Peshawar and Bannu where three-hour-long classes are held. The subjects taught include Urdu, English, Pakistan Studies and Mathematics.

After regularization of these schools, the provincial education department is planning to bring schools under its charge.

Schools in jails are being run by SPARC at Kohat, Swabi, Mardan, Bannu and Haripur (with a computer literacy center). More than 70 juvenile inmates are languishing in Haripur jail. ☺

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(Including Postage & Handling)

	Local Rs	Asia US\$	Europe/ N. America US \$
SPARC Newsletter	200	10	15
SPARC Newsletter with Discourse Quarterly Magazine	300 (per annum)	15 (per annum)	20 (per annum)
The State of Pakistan's Children	300	20	25
Books:	(per copy)	(per copy)	(per copy)
◆ Cries Unheard: Juvenile Justice in Pakistan	850	40	45
◆ Lengthening Shadows: Poverty -Affected Children	150	10	20

Please send your payments to SPARC or transfer in the following accounts:

SCF, Pak Rupees Account No. 7775-1, Habib Bank Limited, Jinnah Avenue Branch, Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan.

SPARC, US\$ Account No FCCD 8004, First Women Bank Limited, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan. Routing No: 706431 Swift No: AMXAEI BUS 33A, American Express Bank, New York.

Teenage Bomber Wreaks Havoc in Peshawar

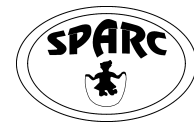
At least 12 people were killed and 25 others injured on January 17 at Peshawar, when a suicide bomber blew himself up in a religious congregation.

The dead included a cleric and a police constable who had tried to frisk the suspect, but he pushed him aside and detonated the explosive vest he was wearing. Witnesses said the bomber was wearing white shalwar and black shirt. "He pushed the security guards aside and

rushed in," said another witness, "immediately afterwards, we heard an explosion."

According to interior ministry spokesman, "the bomber was 15 or 16 years old who blew himself up after entering the gate leading to the prayer hall."

Heavy rain created difficulties for rescue workers and an enraged crowd broke a police cordon to reach the hospital where the injured and bodies had been taken.



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SPARC is an independent NGO founded in 1992, working for systematic & concerted action to promote & protect the rights of the child. This newsletter is part of SPARC's endeavors to give voice to the plea of millions of children dwelling in a state of abject poverty and neglect. SPARC is in consultative status with ECOSOC & UNDPI, & is a partner of Child Workers in Asia, Global March, Anti-Slavery, DCI, GCE & IBFAN.

Editor: Fazila Gulrez
Assistant Editor: Asiya Arif
Design & Layout: Kashif Mirza
Website: www.sparcpk.org

ISSN 1680-7979
Library of Congress Card No
99921515

Supported by:



Royal Norwegian Embassy

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Girls Schools being Used as Truck Stands in NA

Ironically enough, trucks were found at a girl's school in the town of Mazidkhel, which had apparently served as a headquarters for the militants, according to a report issued on February 4.

It is obvious that the extremists who have forced the closure of so many schools for girls in Darra and elsewhere have seen it as expedient for themselves to take over these premises for their own nefarious purposes.

Perhaps, their actions against the institutions had been motivated by a desire to take them over! In the days ahead, it can be hoped that the beleaguered and still terrified residents of Darra Adam Khel and its surrounding regions can look forward to a re-opening of the many girls' schools shut down over the past year in the area.

Kailash Satyarthi Re-elected President

The world's largest civil society coalition on Education For All, Global Campaign for Education re-elected Kailash Satyarthi, Chairperson of Global March Against Child Labor and founder of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement) as its President. The meeting took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil from January 22- 24. The participants have reaffirmed their strong commitment to realize the Education For All goals without giving any excuse to the international community.

Contd. on page 23

Wave of Young Suicides in UK: Media Attacked

The British media is under the spotlight, accused of encouraging a flurry of apparent suicides by impressionable teenagers in and around the small town of Bridgend in the south Wales valleys. In little over a year, 17 young people have been found dead, 16 of them hanged — a rare method for suicide particularly among young girls — and one hit by an oncoming train.

The latest was a 16-year-old who was discovered hanging from a tree near her home. Two cousins were found dead within hours of each other. With so many deaths of young people — the press has begun to talk of Internet suicide pacts and the area as "suicide county".

But the assertion has been strongly rejected, with police, families, lawmakers etc., all accusing the media of encouraging copy-cats and sensationalism.

Flickr