

Introduction

The global estimates for children in labour stand at a staggering 218 million children. These include children aged 5 to 17, among which 152 million are victims of child labour. Almost half of them, 73 million, work in hazardous occupations and in absolute terms, almost half of child labour (72.1 million) is to be found in Africa; 62.1 million in the Asia and the Pacific; 10.7 million in the Americas; 1.2 million in the Arab States and 5.5 million in Europe and Central Asia¹.

In terms of prevalence, 1 in 5 children in Africa (19.6%) are in child labour, whilst prevalence in other regions is between 3% and 7%: 2.9% in the Arab States (1 in 35 children); 4.1% in Europe and Central Asia (1 in 25); 5.3% in the Americas (1 in 19) and 7.4% in Asia and the Pacific region (1 in 14). Hazardous child labour is most prevalent among the 15-17 years old. Nevertheless, up to a fourth of all hazardous child labour (19 million) is done by children less than 12 years old.

Among 152 million children in child labour, 88 million are boys and 64 million are girls. Whereas, 58% of all children in child labour and 62% of all children in hazardous work are boys. Boys appear to face a greater risk of child labour than girls, but this may also be a reflection of an under-reporting of girls' work, particularly in domestic child labour.

The global prevalence of child labour is concentrated primarily in agriculture (71%), which includes fishing, forestry, livestock herding and aquaculture, and comprises both subsistence and commercial farming; 17% in Services; and 12% in the Industrial sector, including mining.

Pakistan is among the countries with the highest prevalence of child labour, with an alarmingly high number of millions of out of school children². The ratio of out of school girls is higher than males, further endangering their chances for economic empowerment. The last

¹ Child Labour Facts & Figures, ILO: <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang-en/index.htm>

² <http://library.aepam.edu.pk/Books/Pakistan%20Education%20Statistics%202015-16.pdf>

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Child Labour Survey in Pakistan was conducted back in 1996, which estimated child labour to be at 3.3 million³. Since then, there has been no nationwide child labour survey. However, efforts to initiate a comprehensive child labour survey were initiated in 2017 across three provinces of Pakistan, namely; Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The most substantial effort in this regard was taken by the Government of Punjab, which initiated the survey with the help of UNESCO and completed data collection tasks by the end of 2017.

In the absence of nationwide results from official child labour surveys, the next best alternative is the Labour Force Survey of Pakistan, which estimated children aged 10-17 in labour. Based on the national Labour Force Survey 2010-2011, a publication titled Understanding Children's Work (UCW) in South Asia by ILO, UNICEF and World Bank indicated that 5.7 million 10-17-year-olds, representing almost 20% of all children in the age group are involved in labour in Pakistan⁴. Among these children, more than two-thirds of those engaged within the agricultural sector in Pakistan. A similar proportion were estimated to be doing unpaid family work. The surveys in the following years showed a dramatic decline in these figures with the Labour Force Survey 2014-15 estimated 3.7 million children (aged 10-17) engaged in the workforce⁵. Since the national Labour Force Survey does not cover children below the age of 10, a large proportion of child labour is not accounted for in the survey. Furthermore, it can be hard to use the survey as an estimate for determining the working conditions for adolescents aged between 14-17 years; which is the age bar for permitting children to work in Pakistan under certain limitations laid out in laws regulating work for children in the country.

International Framework

There are two major ILO (International Labour Organization) conventions that act as international instruments to curb child labour. These include; C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973, and C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999. These two

³http://kpcode.kp.gov.pk/uploads/2015_19_THE_KHYBER_PAKHTUNKHWA_PROHIBITION_OF_EMPLOYMENT_OF_CHILDREN_ACT_2015.pdf

⁴http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_440164.pdf

⁵ <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/labour-force-survey-2014-15-annual-report>

conventions are quite comprehensive in laying out labour laws and regulation for employment for children, however, these are accompanied by various other conventions such as; C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930, C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958, C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and C189 - Domestic Workers Convention, 2011, which Pakistan is yet to ratify.

Minimum Age Convention, 1973, (C.138)

The **Minimum Age Convention, 1973** is meant to ensure that ratifying nations pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons⁶.

The Minimum Age Convention sets the minimum working age at 15 years and 13 years for light work. The convention also restricts the minimum age for employment for work that is deemed 'hazardous' to 18 years, (or 16 years under exceptional circumstances).

The convention also provides a provision for developing economies to initially set the minimum working age at 14 years (and 12 years for light work), until there is adequate development of the economy and educational facilities.

The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 has currently been ratified by 170 countries⁷.

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, (C.182)

The **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999**⁸ defines anyone below 18 years of age as a 'Child'. States that have ratified this convention must ensure steps that can eliminate the 'worst forms of child labour', such as; slavery, sale and trafficking of children, serfdom, and bonded labour. Furthermore, the convention prohibits

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http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312283

⁷ Ratified ILO Conventions, Pakistan:

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0::NO::P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312283

⁸ IBID

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forced or compulsory labour for children; e.g. recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, pornography, child prostitution, and use of children in illicit activities, or any activity which harms the health, safety and morals of children

The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 requires ratifying states to ensure the provision of direct assistance for children's suffering from the worst forms of child labour, as well as to offer services that can help rehabilitation and social integration. Additionally, ratifying states are required to ensure access to free basic education, and vocational training for children removed from labour that can be deemed as 'worst forms of child labour'.

The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 has currently been ratified by 180 countries⁹.

Pakistan has ratified both Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (C 138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (C 182), however, proper legislation and implementation of existing child labour laws in line with both conventions has long been a subject of much debate in the country.

ILO Conventions Ratified by Pakistan

Pakistan has ratified 36 ILO Conventions, including all 8 of the Fundamental Conventions, 2 of the 4 Governance Conventions, and 26 of the 177 Technical Conventions.

Out of 36 Conventions ratified by Pakistan, of which 32 are in force, 1 Convention has been denounced; 3 instruments abrogated.

No	ILO Conventions	Status
Fundamental		
C029	Forced Labour Convention, 1930	Ratified
C087	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948	Ratified
C098	Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	Ratified
C100	Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951	Ratified

⁹ Ratifications of C182:
http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0::NO::P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312327

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C105	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	Ratified
C111	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	Ratified
C138	Minimum Age Convention, 1973	Ratified
C182	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	Ratified
Governance (Priority)		
C081	Labour Inspection Convention, 1947	Ratified
C122	Employment Policy Convention, 1964	Not Ratified
C129	Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	Not Ratified
C144	Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	Ratified

ILO Conventions Recommended for Ratification

There are a number of Technical Conventions that Pakistan can ratify to ensure adequate legislation and regulation of labour laws in Pakistan, particularly related to children. This includes conventions like C189- Domestic Workers Convention. Pakistan not only has no adequate laws to regulate child domestic labour but also domestic labour in general. This has led to widespread deprivation of rights for domestic workers, as well as an increased employment of children as young as 7-8 year olds as domestic servants.

ILO Conventions C077, 078 and C124 are meant to ensure medical examinations for adolescents engaged in industries, non-industrial work and underground work. These conventions are meant to ensure that child work is regulated and adolescents are protected from employment under circumstances that they are not medically fit to perform.

The conventions recommended below provide social security, regulation of working conditions and employment benefits that affect children in some way. However, Pakistan has ratified a number of Technical Conventions relate to children and young person's such as; C006 - Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1919, C016 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention,

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1921, and C090 - Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948.

No	ILO Conventions	Status
Children Related Technical Conventions Not Ratified		
C077	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1946	Not Ratified
C078	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946	Not Ratified
C124	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work) Convention, 1965	Not Ratified
C189	Domestic Workers Convention, 2011	Not Ratified

Child Labour in Pakistan

National Laws Prohibiting or Regulating Child Labour

There was a time when the apex law concerning the regulation of child labour in the country was the Employment of Children Act 1991. However, after the 18th Constitutional Amendment legislation regarding labour laws became a provincial subject. Hence, provinces have enacted their own laws to regulate child labour, with the exception of Balochistan.

Below is a list of the major laws regulating child labour in Pakistan.

Major National Legislation Regulating Child Labour
Employment of Children Act 1991
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015
Punjab Restriction On Employment Of Children Act 2016
Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act
Balochistan (Pending Legislation)

Employment of Children Act 1991

Age Bar for Employment

The Employment of Children Act, 1991 (ECA)¹⁰ was a major piece of legislation in the country which helped prohibit engagement of children below 14 in labour and restricted working conditions for adolescents to ensure suitable working conditions that can protect them from hazardous occupations. This Act is in accordance with C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973¹¹, hence setting the working age bar to 14 years.

Punishment

Currently applicable to Federal territory, The Employment of Children Act, 1991 prohibits the employment of anyone below the age of 14 in any occupation, establishment, or process defined as 'hazardous'. The punishment for noncompliance with this law can result in up to a year in prison, a fine of Rs 20,000 or both. Anyone employing a child in a hazardous occupation is punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than 6 months but which may extend to 2 years.

Hours and Period of Work

According to the law, the period of work on each day shall be so fixed that no period shall exceed 3 hours and that no child shall work for more than 3 hours before he has an interval of at least 1 hour for rest. Furthermore, the period of work of a child shall be so arranged that inclusive of the interval for rest, it shall not exceed seven hours, including the time spent in waiting for work on any day.

The law also states that no child shall be permitted or required to work between 7.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m., no child shall be required or permitted to work over-time and no child shall be required or permitted to work in any establishment on any day on which he has already been working in another establishment.

¹⁰ The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992:
<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/102096/123301/F-1719753875/PAK102096.pdf>

¹¹ IBID

Criticism

The Employment of Children Act, 1991 was a groundbreaking law back in the day because it brought to light the phenomenon of child labour and called for its prohibition, as well as restricting child work. However, as is the case with all laws in the country, ECA has been plagued non-compliance. Furthermore, ECA does not cover various sectors where employment of children is most common. This includes; agriculture, the informal sector, and engagement in work by family. No specific mention of the aforementioned makes ECA rather weak, especially because the aforementioned have the highest ratio of children employed in hazardous occupations. For example, child domestic labour has been deemed hazardous by many child rights experts and a glance at the list of hazardous occupations defined in ECA clearly shows that child domestic work, agriculture and even many tasks assigned to minors by their family members is a clear violation of ECA, as they require engaging in 'Processes' defined as 'hazardous' in the law. It is also worth arguing that despite no specific mention of the informal economy, agriculture or family work related regulations, if ECA is indeed implemented in letter and spirit, the aforementioned can fall under the umbrella of hazardous work defined in the law.

Another major criticism of ECA is that the minimum working age should be raised to 16 in line with Article 25-A¹² of the Constitution of Pakistan, under which the state is liable to provide free and compulsory education to children aged 5-16¹³.

In light of Article 25-A, it can be argued that ECA should be amended to raise the minimum working age bar. However, since child labour is a complex phenomenon, it might not be possible or realistic to simply raise the minimum working age bar without addressing some of the deep rooted problems associated with child labour such as poverty, social attitudes, unemployment, and improvement of access to education for children in the country.

The Employment of Children Act, 1991 has been instrumental in giving legal protection to children and adolescents in the absence of

¹² The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan:
http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf

¹³ IBID

major provincial laws prohibiting child labour in Pakistan, considering most of the provincial legislation related to child labour is a recent phenomenon in the wake of the 18th Constitutional Amendment.

After the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the provinces were empowered to pass their own laws to regulate child labour. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa passed legislation prohibiting and regulating child labour in 2015, whereas the Government of Punjab came up with a similar legislation in July 2016, followed by Sindh in 2017. Unfortunately, Balochistan has lagged behind in child rights related legislation, let alone a proper law to restrict employment of children.

Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992

Children in many developing, particularly in South Asia have long been victims of forced labour. The Bonded Labour System Abolition Act, 1992 was introduced to abolish bonded labour across the country for people of all ages. The act was instrumental in the Iqbal Masih case, where a minor boy escaped bondage from an employer in the carpet weaving industry and eventually freed thousands of other children engaged in slavery in the same trade.

The bonded Labour System Abolition Act was adopted by Punjab after the 18th Constitutional amendment, whereas, The Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015 and The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015 was introduced a few years later.

The Factories Act, 1934

Chapter 5 of **The Factories Act, 1934** specifically deals with employment of children and adolescents in factories, by clearly defining the criteria for employment, regulation regarding safety standards, as well as healthcare provisions for children and adolescents employed in factories¹⁴. KP, Sindh and Punjab passed a version of this act. The minimum age for admission to work is set under the Factories Act 1934 as well as its provincial variants

¹⁴ The Factories Act, 1934:
<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WBTEXT/35384/64903/E97PAK01.htm#c5>

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enacted after devolution (14 years)¹⁵, with the exception of Punjab (15 years)¹⁶.

The West Pakistan Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969

The West Pakistan Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969¹⁷ outlines the rules and regulations regarding the employment of children and adolescents in shops and establishments. Section 20 of this act prohibits employment of children in establishments.

According to the Shops and Establishments Ordinance 1969, no child shall be allowed or required to work in any establishment (section 20). It also requires that no young person (this term has been used collectively for children and adolescents i.e. between 14-18 years) shall be employed in any establishment other than between the hours of 09:00 a.m. and 07:00 p.m. (section 7). In accordance with section 8 of the act, no young person is permitted or required to work more than 7 hours a day (these include one hour of rest) and 42 hours a week¹⁸.

This clause states:

“Prohibition of employment of children – No child shall be required or allowed to work in any establishment.”¹⁹

The act defines children as anyone below 14 years of age:

“Child means a person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age”.²⁰

A ‘young person’ in this act is defined as follows:

“Young person” means a person who is not a child and has not completed his seventeenth year of age.”²¹

¹⁵ <https://paycheck.pk/main/labour-laws/fair-treatment/minors-and-youth/child-labour>

¹⁶ <http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/168a.html>

¹⁷ WEST PAKISTAN SHOPS AND ESTABLISHMENTS RULES, 1969 :
<http://punjablabour.gov.pk/file/laws/The%20WEST%20PAKISTAN%20SHOPS%20AND%20ESTABLISHMENTS%20RULES,%201969.pdf>

¹⁸ IBID

¹⁹ IBID

²⁰ IBID

²¹ IBID

Provinces have passed a variant of this ordinance, including the The Punjab Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969, The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shops and Establishments Act, 2015 and The Sindh Shops and Commercial Establishment Act, 2015.

Laws Regulating Children in Employment (ICT)
Employment of Children Act 1991
Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992
The Factories Act 1934
The West Pakistan Shops and Establishments Ordinance 1969

Provincial Legislation Prohibiting and Regulating Child Labour

Punjab

Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016

On July, 14th, 2016²² the Government of Punjab banned employment of children with the enactment of its own variant of ECA, namely **Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016**. The law was introduced as an ordinance, which later became an Act.

Age Bar for Employment

The law prohibits the employment of children and restricts the employment of adolescents for hazardous occupations. The ordinance defines adolescents and children in line with ILO's C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973²³, keeping the age bar for employment of children at the age of 15 in line with ILO's recommended guidelines. Punjab is the only province to raise the age bar to 15, following the best practices defined in the Minimum Age Convention. The law defines a child and adolescent in the following manner:

Child: "Child means a person who has not attained the age of fifteen years"²⁴

²²THE PUNJAB RESTRICTION ON EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN ORDINANCE 2016:
<http://www.punjabcode.punjab.gov.pk/public/dr/PUNJAB%20RESTRICTION%20ON%20EMPLOYMENT%20OF%20CHILDREN%20ORDINANCE%202016.doc.pdf>

²³ IBID

²⁴ IBID

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Adolescent: “A person who has attained the age of fifteen years but has not attained the age of eighteen years”²⁵

The Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016²⁶ also protects children and adolescents from slavery, and related practices such as sale and trafficking, bonded labour, bonded and forced labour, recruitment for armed conflicts, and serfdom. Furthermore, the Act protects children and adolescents from being used for prostitution, in pornographic productions, as well as use in trafficking of drugs, and other illicit activities.

The punishment for hiring child below 15 years of age, as defined in the law is mentioned below.

Punishment

Employing or permitting to work a child in an establishment is punishable with up to six-month imprisonment which shall not be less than seven days, and with up to Rs 50,000 fine which shall not be less than Rs 10,000. There is also provision for imprisonment up to 6 months, a fine that can be up to Rs 75,000 or both for employing or permitting any adolescent to indulge in any hazardous work.

The guardians or parents in whose immediate presence the children and adolescents are found working in contravention of this act can be equally held responsible and punished along with the employer.

The Act also lays down strict punishment for employing children or adolescents in any form of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as trafficking of children or adolescents, debt bondage, serfdom, forced or compulsory labour. The latter is further defined in the act as: recruitment of children or adolescents for use in armed conflicts, the use, procuring or offering of a child or adolescent for prostitution or for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances, procuring or offering of a child or adolescent for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs. The punishment for the aforementioned includes: imprisonment for a

²⁵ IBID

²⁶IBID

term which can extend to 7 years (not less than 3 years) and a fine of up to Rs 1 million (not less than Rs 200,000).

Hours and Period of Work

The Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016 has the same working hours as the Employment of Children Act, 1991. According to the law, the ‘occupier’ shall fix the period of work of an adolescent on each day which shall not exceed 3 hours and if the hours are exceeded, the adolescent may work 3 ore hours after 1 hour of rest. Similarly, the Act disallows work of an adolescent between 7pm and 8am, or overtime. Moreover, working hours must not clash with the school or educational institution timings of the adolescent, allowing him a weekly holiday.²⁷

Criticism

Like ECA, Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016 does not account for the informal sector and agriculture. Furthermore, there is the problem of laws not aligning within the same provincial territory. For example, Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, 2016 has an age bar of 14 years, unlike the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016 which sets the age limit to 15 years. Similarly, work at brick kilns isn’t classified as ‘hazardous’. However, the latter is a flaw that extends to all major child labour specific laws in the country which address hazardous occupations. This is in fact one of the flaws of The Employment of Children Act, 1991 which other provinces seem to have adopted by default.

Laws Regulating Employment of Children (Punjab)
Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016
Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, 2016
Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992 (Adopted by Punjab)
The Factories Act, 1934 (Adopted by Punjab)
The Punjab Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969

²⁷ IBID

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015²⁸ was passed in year 2015, prohibiting child labour in the province. Among all the child labour specific laws in the country, this law sets the minimum standard prescribed by ILO for employing children in labour.

Age Bar for Employment

In line with ILO's C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973, the Act allows the employment for 'adolescents' (14 to below 18 years), with provision for 12 year old children to be employed for light work. This is the lowest standard set by ILO for countries which suffer from economic difficulties.

Light Work

Since the Act allows 12 year old children to engage in 'light work', the Act also defines 'light work' and the associated criteria. The law defines light work as work which likely to cause harm to health or impede the physical or mental development of a child engaged in such work.²⁹ The law further states that no child shall be employed or permitted to work in any establishment: Provided that a child not below the age of 12 years may be engaged in the light work, alongside his family member, for a maximum of 2 hours per day mainly for the purpose of acquiring skills, in a private undertaking, or in any school established, assisted or recognized by Government for such purpose.³⁰

Punishment

Breach of The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015 by employing children can result in a penalty of up to 6 months, or a fine of Rs 50,000, or both. The penalty for employing children for 'hazardous work' under this act is punishable by up to 3 years' imprisonment, with a fine that can be as much as

²⁸ The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015:
<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/102082/123282/F2062068876/PAK102082.pdf>

²⁹ IBID

³⁰ IBID

100,000, (at least Rs 10,000). Similarly, employment of adolescents under conditions in breach of the act can result in a 1 year imprisonment, a fine of Rs 75,000 or both.

Hours and Period of Work

Children Aged 12-13: According to The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015, children aged 12-13 years are allowed to engage in light work, alongside family members, for a maximum of 2 hours per day. This work is meant to be mainly for the purpose of acquiring skills, in a private undertaking, or in any school established, assisted or recognized by Government for such purpose

Adolescents: The working period prescribed for adolescents are the same as Employment of Children Act, 1991, i.e. a maximum of 7 hours of work with a 1 hrs break after 3 hrs, at least one day off during the week and prohibition of work between 7pm and 8am.

Criticism

Among all the child labour regulation laws related to hazardous occupations, The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015 sets the lowest age bar, which some would argue shows the acceptance of child labour in the province. KP is one of the provinces where child labour is arguably least looked down upon. During a 2017 survey by SPARC in District Haripur, children were found to be working for as long as 12 hrs for a mere remuneration between Rs 50 – Rs 200.³¹

Laws Regulating Employment of Children (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Factories Act, 2013
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shops and Establishments Act, 2015

³¹ <http://www.sparcpk.org/2015/images/COMPARISON-OF-CHILD-LABOUR-HARIPUR.pdf>

Sindh

Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017

In 2017, The Sindh Assembly passed the Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017. The Act has an age limit of 14 for children allowed to work, with details regarding allowed working hours and penalties. The Act has tougher penalties in cases where children do dangerous jobs or are forced into prostitution, pornography and slavery.

Age Bar for Employment

The age bar for employment in this Act is the same as ECA, i.e. 14 years. While light work is mentioned in Part 1 of the Act, there is no further explanation about it in the entire document.

Punishment

The punishments described in this law is imprisonment for a term which may extend to 6 months or with a fine which may extend to Rs 50,000 or with both. For children employed in hazardous occupations the employer may be leveled with a fine of Rs 100,000 but not less than Rs 10,000 and imprisonment which may extend to 3 years.

For children engaged in the use, procuring or offering of a child or adolescent for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs; the fine may extend to Rs 10,00,000 but not less than Rs 200,000 and the imprisonment may extend to 10 years but not less than 5 years. Moreover, whoever employs any adolescent or permits any adolescent to work in hazardous occupation shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 1 year or with a fine which may extend to Rs 75,000 or with both.

Criticism

Sindh has often been called the province that is the 'first' to enact laws. However, Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017 too conveniently lacks provision for agriculture and the informal sector. Moreover, like other laws of its kind it does not declare brick Kilns as hazardous for children to work in. Considering the epidemic of bonded labour in agriculture and brick kilns in Sindh, the Sindh Prohibition of Employment of

Children Act, 2017 seems all but too redundant for a majority of children engaged in labour across the province.

Laws Regulating Employment of Children (Sindh)
Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017
The Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015
The Sindh Factories Act, 2015
The Sindh Shops and Commercial Establishment Act, 2015

Balochistan

The Balochistan Child Protection Act, 2016 was passed back in November, 2016. However, no child protection mechanism has been developed under the law till date. Furthermore, in the absence of legislation by the Balochistan assembly, currently, the Employment of Children Act 1991 is applicable in Balochistan.

Laws Regulating Children in Employment (Balochistan)
Employment of Children Act 1991 (Currently Applicable)

Bonded Labour

The Global Slavery Index 2016: Pakistan ranks No 6 (Prevalence Index Rank) out of 167 countries). More than 2.1 million estimated to be living in modern slavery in Pakistan: 2,134,900. Estimate percentage of population living in modern slavery in Pakistan: 1.13%.³²

ILO Conventions Against Forced Labour

Bonded labour is a major issue across Pakistan, especially in the brick kiln industry, agriculture, mining, tanning, carpet weaving and more recently, in the form of domestic labour. Children fall prey to all of the aforementioned forms of bonded labour. Bonded labour is prohibited in Pakistan by law and Pakistan is also signatory to

³² <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/country/pakistan/>

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Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (105)³³ and Forced Labour Convention (C029)³⁴.

National Laws Against Bonded Labour

A number of laws in Pakistan prohibit forced labour, including The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act and its provincial variants passed by numerous provincial assemblies. Furthermore, Pakistan Penal Code Section 374 clearly prohibits forced labour, whereas numerous other sections protect individuals from other forms of slavery. Section 371 for example, prohibits buying individuals for prostitution.

PPC 374 - Unlawful compulsory labour. Whoever unlawfully compels any person to labour against the will of that person, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both³⁵.

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992 has long been the apex law for prohibiting bonded labour in the country. After the 18th constitutional amendment, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh passed their own versions of the law.

According to the Bonded Labour Systems Abolition Act, 1992, slavery was completely prohibited. The text from the parts of the law prohibiting bonded labour are as follows:

"3. Act to override other laws, etc.— The provisions of this Act shall have effect

notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force or in any

instrument having effect by virtue of any such law.

4. Abolition of bonded labour system. — (1) On the commencement of this Act, the bonded labour system shall stand abolished and every

³³ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C105

³⁴ http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029

³⁵ Pakistan Penal Code: <http://www.fmu.gov.pk/docs/laws/Pakistan%20Penal%20Code.pdf>

bonded labourer shall stand freed and discharged from any obligation to render any bonded labour.

(2) No person shall make any advance under, or in pursuance of, the bonded labour system or compel any person to render any bonded labour or other form of forced labour.

5. Agreement, custom, etc., to be void.— Any custom or tradition or practice or any contract, agreement or other instrument, whether entered into or executed before or after the commencement of this Act, by virtue of which any person, or any member of his

family, is required to do any work or render any service as a bonded labourer, shall be void and inoperative”. – The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992³⁶.

This Act gives protection to children from bonded labour by clearly abolishing bonded labour for people of all ages, as well as defining children among the parties which cannot be enslaved under debt bondage. The primary aspects tied to prohibiting children from debt bondage can be found in the way the act defines a ‘family’, covering all households including children which cannot be hired for debt bondage. By specifically identifying ‘children’ among the prohibited parties to be employed for bonded labour, the Act closes the loophole of employing ‘children’ for bonded labour by employers.

Laws Against Bonded Labour in Pakistan
Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992
Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, 2016
Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992 (Punjab)
The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015
The Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015

³⁶ The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992 <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/102096/123301/F-1719753875/PAK102096.pdf>

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SPARC's 2017 Study Finds Bonded Labour in Sindh Among Minorities

In a recent study in District Tando Allah Yar revealed that the agrarian Hindu minority communities in the district are living under conditions of what can be deemed as forced or compulsory labour. The households are poor and have no alternative means of earning other than relying on feudal landlords that own even the very roof over their heads.

The local people are reluctant to take any steps against their oppressors out of fear of becoming homeless and without a means to earn a livelihood³⁷.

This baseline survey report has attempted to analyze information regarding the minorities', in particular women's status of political participation in the context of KP and Sindh. Taking representative samples of Christian and Hindu minority communities in KP and Sindh respectively the study was designed to assess the degree of awareness of minorities representation and interest in participation in the electoral processes. Specifically, it has provided baseline values for indicators in a range of areas, including: education, employment, birth and voter registration status, minority representation in legislatures, women's participation in voting and political involvement and freedom and inclusion of minorities in the regions. The findings from this study are expected to be used as the benchmark against which progress made by SPARC's initiatives and activities in the target communities can be established.

Given the vastly differing cultural, political and socio-economic circumstances of the two identified regions, likewise the respective responses by the participants differed in significant measure. The cultural landscape of Tando Allahyar (Sindh) is largely governed by a typical landlord-serf dynamic which makes meaningful political inclusion, particularly on the part of minorities a challenge. While in Peshawar (KP) minorities are not burdened by servitude or indenture to influential political or economic elite, there problems involve a discrimination or exclusion of an institutional nature. These fundamental differences therefore can explain the diverging

³⁷ Strengthening Diversity and Democracy through Minority Engagement in Electoral and Political Processes (District Tando Allah Yar and Peshawar)

indicators of academic qualification and employment status. Attainment of education being a powerful indicator of development highlights this reality clearly with 75% of respondents in Peshawar being educated while only 23% of those in Tando Allahyar had acquired some level of education. The education levels for women were relatively unfavourable vis-à-vis their male counterparts in both Peshawar and Tando Allahyar.

Similarly, the employment statistics also relay the socio-economic landscape of the two regions and highlight the differing needs of the minority populations in both. Occupation of the Hindu minority in Tando Allahyar mainly revolved around agriculture while in Peshawar for the Christian minority, a more diversified sample of urbanized forms of employment was found. These indicators are commensurate with the level of meaningful political participation that was recorded for both regions, with people in Peshawar being relatively more aware of their political rights and the process of political participation while for those in Tando Allahyar the exercise was mostly a compliance with their landlord's wishes.

The lack of education and awareness in Tando Allahyar also explains the non-existence of birth registration certificates which could principally allow the respondents access to social security and social protection mechanisms.

SPARC's History of Liberation of Bonded Labourers

SPARC has in the past worked extensively on freeing entire families from debt bondage. SPARC currently has an Anti-Bonded Labour Cells in the District Labour Office, Multan, which provides necessary assistance and legal support to bonded labourers. Similarly, SPARC also undertook direct interventions to uplift bonded laborers and alleviate the suffering of their children including free legal aid to more than 4500 families in bondage (freeing 16,500 people between 2005-2017); Birth Registration Certificates for their children, provision of Computerized Identity Cards (CNICs), facilitation in voter registration.

Between 2012-2015 SPARC also established six skill development centers in 4 districts in Sindh including Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Badin and Mithi. The project was designed to provide skills training

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courses to freed bonded laborers to ensure a secure and sustainable future for them.

For victims of bonded labour, SPARC's experience in reducing the instance of bondage in the past has been based on effective provision of legal aid, ensuring access to essential registration of their national identity (e.g. by acquiring CNIC's), alternative vocational training and activation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs). However, bonded labour has taken a life of its own over the years and child domestic labour is a new pandemic in urban centers of Pakistan resulting in compulsory labour of minors.

SPARC has been advocating the prohibition of child domestic labour by amending existing child labour laws in the country and mentioning child domestic labour, as well as agriculture and the informal sector to plug the loopholes in existing laws. SPARC's 2017 Position Paper³⁸ has been a major document for advocacy that has been shared with various government and non-government organizations for this purpose.

Causes for Bonded Labour in Pakistan

Bonded labour since long has been a problem in Pakistan in various sectors due to extreme poverty, feudal system, internal trafficking where often parents are involved in selling children to bondage, weak mechanism for addressing labour rights, etc.

Bonded labour in Pakistan has its roots not only in the decay in the legal system of the country but also the historical precedence set from the British colonial era, which encouraged forced or compulsory labour at the hands of powerful individuals; strengthening a system of master and slave in the region. Hence, bonded labour is not only a Pakistan specific problem but can be seen across South Asia and also other parts of the world, with arguably similar footprints of an inhumane system encouraged to further the goals of colonial powers through their henchmen.

In order to eradicate bonded labour in Pakistan a multi-faceted approach is needed. There is not only a need to focus on poverty

³⁸ SPARC's Position Paper on Child Domestic Labour: <http://www.sparcpk.org/2015/Other-Publications/Position-Paper.pdf>

alleviation but also emphasis on improving the legal system for ensuring implementation of laws, proper rehabilitation of workers trapped in bondage, increased livelihood opportunities, revival of dead capital, encouragement of community based monitoring and reporting of bondage, and emphasis on child and victim support for individuals who have suffered violence, abuse, and exploitation.

SPARC's Research on Street Children (2017)

Street children is a term used for children for whom the street has become a habitual abode. The abundance of street children across all major cities of Pakistan is a worrying sign, however, they seem to have become the visibly invisible segment of our society. A 2010 SPARC survey estimated the number of street children in urban centers to be between 1.2 to 1.5 million³⁹; a figure that has likely increased by now. Street children are vulnerable to all kinds of hazards including; sexual abuse, street violence, psychological trauma, drug addiction, and falling victim to communicable diseases. In order to highlight the plight of street children, and to raise this neglected issue, SPARC conducted a survey across 3 provinces of Pakistan, namely Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study was titled 'State of Street Children in Pakistan'⁴⁰.

By targeting over 100 households, the survey aimed to assess the state of health, education, access to basic utilities, safety and security of these children. During the survey both children and their parents were interviewed to gather qualitative and quantitative data to identify key issues.

A common pattern observed during the research was the high percentage of extended and joint families that these street children were a part of. This means that there are often a large number of dependents, including very young or very old individuals in the household being financially catered for by usually 1-2 people. The average number of family members employed per household in all surveyed areas was 2, whereas the average number of dependents was 7. This trend was noticed across all the centers indicating the financial burden and onus of responsibility on the breadwinners

³⁹ Surviving the Streets: <http://www.sparcpk.org/2015/images/Surviving%20the%20streets.pdf>

⁴⁰ State of Street Children in Pakistan: <http://www.sparcpk.org/2015/images/State-of-Street-Children.pdf>

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within these households. It also shows how hard it is for these children and their families to climb out of this vicious cycle of poverty, by focusing on any form of savings and/or increases in wealth.

Causes Identified for Child Labour

When asked why parents send their children to work, the most common cause was identified as poverty or the lack of interest of the child in studies. The study also focused on the parent's attitudes towards child labor by posing the question of why they think their children should be put to work.

The results cited mainly poverty/financial constraints and a lack of interest of the child in studies as the primary causes given by parents. Once again however, it was poverty that stood out as the primary reason why parents thought their children should work. This argument is further supplemented by the previously discussed data, particularly the dependent to breadwinner ratio discussed above, which is a clear indication of the poverty trap faced by the families of these children.

Key Observations

It is no surprise that the prevalence of child labour among street children was found to be quite high; as was its acceptability among parents. Considering we are talking about the individuals situated at one of the lowest quintiles of income distribution, an average contribution by a child to the household of Rs 1,315, against an average monthly income of Rs 11,110 evidently shows the opportunity cost for poor households by substituting work with education for their children. It is worth pointing out that the children in SPARC's CSCs are only a reflection of the street children syndrome prevalent in the country. The average monthly income calculated in this survey might be higher than children in remote areas of Pakistan. Nonetheless, with an average of 9 individuals per household and an average of 2 of the 9 engaged in some type of work, average daily household income of Rs 365 (\$3.47) stands at \$0.38 per member of the family. This is way below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day⁴¹.

⁴¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/global-poverty-line-faq>

SPARC's Independent Child Labour Survey in District Haripur (2017)

Haripur with its large employment opportunities, burgeoning population and the availability of multiple industries, particularly in Hattar, attracts a large pool of labour. This is one of the contributing factors for the prevalence of child labor in Haripur, since the availability of jobs and acceptance of child labour makes it a hotspot for child labour.

In year 2015, Provincial Child Labour Unit (PCLU) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa conducted a rapid assessment survey. The report of the assessment ranked District Haripur number 2 in the prevalence of children engaged in the worst forms of child labour. In 2016 the Education department conducted OSCS (Out of School Children Survey) which indicated that around 9,787 children of the district from different age groups were out of school.

In order to assess the level of prevalence of child labour in District Haripur and to assess its correlation with school dropout rates, SPARC conducted a survey across District Haripur, with special focus on the industrial area of Hattar and Central Haripur. The research study was called, 'A Comparison of Child Labour & School Dropout Rates in District Haripur'⁴².

The targeted area for the survey included Haripur District, with special focus on the industrial zone of Hattar and Central Haripur. The survey included children engaged in labour, parents and employers from business establishments across the targeted area.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Employment of Children Act 2015 sets the age bar for children in work at 14, with the possibility of engaging children in 'light work' from the age of 12. However, the working hours and conditions defined in the law are not being followed in the province.

Chapter 3, section 7 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act states that the period of work for

⁴² A Comparison of Child Labour & School Dropout Rates in District Haripur:
<http://www.sparc.pk.org/2015/images/COMPARISON-OF-CHILD-LABOUR-HARIPUR.pdf>

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adolescents shall not exceed three hours and that no adolescent shall work for more than three hours before he has an interval of at least one hour for rest. Furthermore, it states that no adolescent shall be permitted or required to work between 7.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. of the following day, with no provision for making adolescents to work over time. The law also limits work in any other establishment for the adolescent in case he/she has already worked in another establishment on the same day.

During the survey conducted by SPARC, children as young as 5-8 year olds were found to be engaged in labour, whereas, the prescribed working hours, rest interval and safety guidelines were being ignored by employers. The working hours of children engaged in labour in Haripur was an average of 12 hours. The average age of children engaged in some type of work was 14, with each child required to work for at least 6 days at an average. This is clearly a violation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act.

When children engaged in labour were asked about their aspirations for acquiring education, a mammoth 44% did not show any interest in taking the academic path. While 56% of children responded affirmatively, however, these stats point towards a nationwide trend that has been observed by SPARC over the years. While the availability of facilities for public schools have gradually improved, the interest of children to substitute education with labour has declined.

During FGDs conducted with school dropouts engaged in child labour, one of the primary reasons for leaving school for these children was the physical and verbal abuse they had to face day in and day out. Instead, these children are now working for a mere PKR 20 to 30 (\$ 0.20 to \$0.30) for 10-12 hour shifts. Despite the low wage, 98% of children during FGDs did not want to resume education.

Among the respondents, 11% of children reported the prevalence of violence and sexual abuse among children engaged in labour. During FGDs with employers and parents, sexual abuse and violence was identified as one of the major threats to children engaged in labour, especially children who face scorn and neglect at the household level.

A more comprehensive assessment is needed to truly judge the true extent of prevalence of violence and sexual abuse among children employed in the district.

While 81% of the employers during the survey claimed to pay children the same remuneration as adults, digging a little deeper allowed are team to acquire information that was quite the contrary. Not only the children but employers during FGDs accepted that children are cheaper to hire as they are ready to work for as low as PKR 30-50 (\$0.30 to \$0.50) per day for long working hours.

Poverty and The Conundrum of Social Acceptance of Child Labour

During the session one of the major reasons for prevalence of child labour in Haripur District were cited as poverty, illiteracy, inflation, high rates of unemployment among adults, lack of quality education limiting future prospects of children and the high level of social acceptance of child labour. The latter is not only true for people engaging children in labour but also among parents and the district populace in general.

Scattered Boundaries Make Regulations Difficult to Impose

Talking to the SPARC team, Mr Faiz Ullah Khan explained that the district has scattered boundaries, as it is connected to Abbottabad, Mansehra, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The labour Department currently does not have the resources to cover the entire scattered territory to regulate business establishments for curbing child labour. He further explained that District Haripur was also home to many Afghan refugees, who have settled in the district over the years. Many of the poverty stricken families, (including these refugees) lack the skill and education for jobs with a higher remuneration. Hence, these families often engage children in labour to make ends meet.

Case Studies

Tayyaba Case Still Pending Conclusion

Child domestic labour has many hazards for children, including the potential to fall victim to individuals looking to exploit or abuse the children. Cases of child domestic workers getting raped or suffering from accidents is all too common, and have been highlighted more frequently by the media after the Tayyaba case⁴³. Tayyaba was punished by her employer on suspicion of theft and deprived of food for 4 days. She was also kept on the terrace without any quilt and left in the cold. The neighbor reported that they heard her weeping from the terrace, and upon asking her learned that she was wounded and hungry. The neighbors gave her some food and a quilt. They helped her for four days, after which she disappeared from the terrace on the fifth day. After a request from the neighbors, SPARC helped recover the minor girl.

The Supreme Court took Suo Moto action after widespread media coverage of the case after which the case went through many hoops. The case is yet to reach a conclusion. As of February, 2018, Islamabad High Court (IHC) has accepted Islamabad Advocate General's plea to make Tayyaba disappearance report a part of the record in the Tayyaba torture case. A single bench of IHC, headed by Justice Amir Farooq, has taken up the case for hearing.

In the proceedings of February, 2018, Sector I-9 Station House Officer (SHO) Khalid Mehmood appeared in the court in person. During the recent proceedings, the defence counsel completed his cross-questioning of Khalid Mehmood in relation to the case. Mehmood told the court that section 201, related to the concealment of evidence, was added to the final report.

Tayyaba disappearance report was filed on December 18, 2016, and section 201 was added to the charges of concealing evidence on the basis of the report.

⁴³ SPARC's Fact Finding Reports: <http://www.sparepk.org/FFR.html>

Two Arrested for Employing Children at Brick Kiln

In January 2018, Okara police registered a case against a brick kiln owner and his assistant for employing children at brick kiln during school hours.

Police said Shahbaz, the owner of the brick kiln Dilawar and Company employed Saba Bibi, 11, her brother Ameer, 12 and Abid, 12, at his brick kiln against the rules stated by government. When police raided, the children were working at the brick kiln during the school time.

Police arrested brick kiln owner Shahbaz Ahmad and Munshi Muhammad Iddress Khokhar and registered cases against them under Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act 2016, which prohibits children under 14 to work at Brick Kilns.

Despite legislation, bondage at brick kilns, including children falling victim to compulsory remains common, particularly in Sindh and Punjab province.

Recommendations

- Surveys across all provinces of Pakistan must be conducted to determine the true percentage of child labour across the country; so that proper legislation and planning can be formulated to better cater for the needs of child labourers. Currently, Punjab is the only province to have completed data collection on child labour.
- Laws prohibiting child labour should be passed in Balochistan.
- Legislation regarding the rights of domestic workers should be formulated, with specific details regarding prohibition of child labour and the rights of adolescent domestic workers.
- Existing Provincial and Federal laws should be made more robust, with needed amendments that can account for loopholes. For example, ECA currently does not account for domestic work and children engaged in the agriculture sector.
- Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act states that the owner of a brick kiln is under no obligation to put a child to labour if his parents so desire. While this attempts to minimize the employer's liability, it leaves room for exploitation.

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- In line with Article 25-A of the constitution, existing child labour laws should be amended to raise the working age from 14 to 16 years.
- The state should provide support for children who have been victims of the worst forms of child labour and slavery.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of child labor seems to have evolved in a more troubling form, i.e. street children. No longer are children merely limited to establishments and indoor facilities, as a rapid rise in urbanization, extreme poverty, internal migration due to conflict and bad governance has resulted in a pool of vulnerable children found abundantly across the streets of urban centers of Pakistan.

The majority of these children seem to be employed not because of lack of willingness on their behalf or that of their parents to educate them. Instead, employing children is a coping mechanism for poverty stricken households. A common counterargument of parents employing their children in labour is that 'at least it's better than begging'. At the same time there is a budding 'begging industry' which is increasingly employing trafficked children for which there are inadequate laws in the country⁴⁴.

While there have been a number of federal and provincial laws enacted to curb child labour, they not only need to be harmonized but the lack of coordination between various child protection bodies in the country too is troubling. The domain of child protection often dwindles between different ministries and departments, with no clear and coordinated response for putting in place concrete mechanisms and strategies which can have a long-term effect.

Child protection bodies are often asked to round up street children, which results in their temporary removal from the streets and makes the children even more vulnerable in the wake of hasty measures which do not meet child protection standards. Many a times this type of removal is done using police officials, which have been notorious in abusing little children. Furthermore, there is no proper governmental strategy to addressing access to basic utilities for poor

⁴⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1302825/alarmed-150-trafficked-children-murree/>

households, including children on the streets. The rehabilitation process for victims is often barred with red tape, as many civil society organizations often find it hard to get much needed protection and psycho-social support for children without appropriate care.

The entire blame however cannot be placed on government bodies, as there is an inherent lack of sympathy for street children and children engaged in labour. This collective ignorance is imperative to address to bring about real change in the lives of impoverished children and households. Furthermore, the average educated individual seems to lack even basic information on child rights and child protection. Majority of people have no idea about the age bar set in state laws for child labour or a clear idea regarding which child protection institutions to turn to in the wake of the discovery of a victim. This is why many cases of such victims are immediately referred to civil society organizations like SPARC by the concerned citizens.

In order to sensitize the general population, it is necessary to include the subject of child rights on a mandatory basis in the curriculum of educational institutes, as well as to harmonize national laws and functioning of child protection bodies across the country. Poverty alleviation is another important aspect of addressing the plight of street children. This can include stipend programmes for educational initiatives, mobile healthcare vans to offer free healthcare to children on the streets, robust child protection units across all districts of Pakistan with a well-coordinated response between provincial and federal child protection bodies, as well as coordination between other relevant ministries and departments tasked with the provision of child protection, healthcare, education, etc.

Improving the state of street children in Pakistan is a collective responsibility which needs a coordinated response from government bodies, civil society organizations, and volunteers to raise awareness, formulate concrete strategies and assist in its implementation.