



**Summary Report**

**Seminar on**

**“Child Domestic Labor & Role of Parliamentarians”**

**Organized By**

**Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights, Pakistan (PCHR)**

**In Collaboration with**

**International Labour Organization (ILO)**

**Held on Monday, August 01, 2005**

**At**

**Holiday Inn Hotel, Lahore**

In Pakistan large number of children from age five to fifteen is found to be involved in domestic child labor. According to the survey of Federal Bureau of Statistics in 1996, total number of children workers is 3.3 million. It is unfortunate that these children are exposed to hazardous working conditions having no access to basic human needs like health, education and other facilities. Child Domestic Labour (CDL) is also one of the worst kinds of child labour. In fact, phenomenon of Child Domestic Labour (CDL) is that of the invisible form of child labour. The pervasiveness of the CDL can be gauged from one ILO research, which states that every 4th HH in Pakistan employs child domestics for help. However being in the informal sector currently there is no law in the country that sets a minimum age for CDL, regulates their work and protects these children in domestic work. The pervasiveness and intensity of the domestic child labour requires immediate measures to protect these vulnerable children. Indeed, it is the national and moral liability and international commitment (GoP has ratified C182 the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor; 2001) to eradicate all forms of child labor that endanger the physical, mental and moral well being of a child.



The Commission believes that the vision to evolve pluralistic human rights culture in our country cannot be accomplished without the active support of legislators. In this connection, PCHR has organized a seminar in collaboration with International Labor Organization (ILO) on the issue of 'Domestic Child Labour and Role of Parliamentarians' in Lahore. In this context, the draft legislative bill prepared by the Ministry of Social Welfare was shared for consultation. A large number of Member Provincial Assembly, government officials and people from civil society organizations participated in the event.

While delivering his chief guest address, Mr. Riaz Fatyana maintained that the child domestic labors are vulnerable to physical and psychological torture in our society. He discussed in detail the deteriorated situation of domestic child workers and demanded sustained and joint efforts by the government and civil society to ensure an environment conducive to children needs. He termed the statistical survey of FBS obsolete. A comprehensive strategy including new and fresh survey is inevitable to deal with the menace, he emphasized. Mr. Chairman added that though the government has taken many steps to curb bonded labor and child labor in the country, but they only concentrated on visible forms of Child Labour, leaving the invisible and much neglected form of Child Domestic Labour.

Officials from ILO also attended a seminar. Ms. Salma Jaffar, Project Manager (IPEC-ILO) gave a detailed situation analysis on Domestic Child Labor in Pakistan.

Executive Director PCHR, Ms. Kashmala Tariq MNA, while delivering welcome address, appreciated the initiative of Ministry of Social Welfare to prepare a proposed bill for improving the conditions of Child Domestic Workers. She said that in Pakistan children working in homes, factories, hotels and shops etc. do not have access to education, health and all those requirements of life necessary for them being a child, and these poor children are unable to experience the life as the children of affluent families undergo. She underlined the need for strengthening the already existing mechanism for implementation of child labor laws, and also added that dire need is to replace child workers with adults and it is possible only if government mitigate poverty and unemployment in the country.

Presenting keynote address, Ms. Riffat Javed Kahlon, Director PCHR and Parliamentary Secretary for IT and Telecommunication PCHR maintained that the situation of child domestic labor is even more worse-off in rural areas due to absence

of basic developmental infrastructure. Expressing her concerns, she said that seventy four percent children in rural areas are engaged in agricultural sector, and these children are subject to exploitation because they have no social or legal protection. Ms. Rifat Javed Kahlon emphasized that by ensuring unanimity in policies and making legislation active, we can curb the menace in maximum.

While participating in discussion, Member Punjab Assembly Ms. Shaheen Atiqur-Rehman extolled the efforts of Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights and International Labor Organization for conducting valuable work on curbing child labor in Pakistan. On behalf of other members of Punjab Assembly, she maintained that to ascertain the accurate number of child labor in Pakistan, it is deem necessary to conduct a new survey in country. The present 3.3 million available statistics on child labor are based on old survey conducted by Federal Bureau of Statistics in 1996. New survey is urgent demand of the time. Unless and until, we do not have fresh and objective data on the issue, we shall be unable to formulate a comprehensive policy tackling the child labor issue in the country.

The participants in the seminar were of the collective opinion that the legislative attempts can prove successful only if we succeed in formulating a result-oriented mechanism for the implementation of law on curbing menace of child labor. New legislation without implemental mechanism will be an attempt in futile. They were of the view that Pakistan has the law against child labor and slavery, but the government has taken very little action to combat it. It is responsibility of the Federal Government to ensure implementation of already available legal mechanism and direct the provincial government to ensure all-inclusive application of labor policy and bonded labor laws in their jurisdiction.



The participants in seminar pointed out poverty as sole reason behind the Child Domestic Labour. Some social and cultural norms are also responsible for the phenomenon. For instance, people prefer to keep a child worker for household work rather to appoint a young boy. However, as long as poverty remains, we cannot control the phenomenon of child labors from our society. Therefore, the government should concentrate on poverty reduction policies.

Our society is experiencing a high dropout rate from primary schools. It often happens, as parents cannot afford the expenses of their children for getting quality education. Resultantly, to keep their family live, the children usually have recourse to

labor. It is estimated that 37 % of population is leading life below the poverty line. They do not have access to pure drinking water, then how they can dream of having even basic education for their children leaving the quality education aside, one member provincial Assembly pointed out? Therefore, we have to strive first for poverty reduction to eliminate other societal evils such as child labour.

It was learnt during the discussion that wage differences between the child laborer and other skilled laborer largely responsible for child domestic labour. It is a fact that child domestic worker cost the people much less as compare to skilled or aged laborer. To remove this wage difference, government should strictly implement the minimum wage criterion. Participants were unanimously in opinion that by removing the cost-benefit difference between child and skilled laborer, we can largely curtail this phenomenon.

