

Situation Analysis of CHILD LABOUR IN PUNJAB



Introduction | Search for Justice

Search For Justice is a registered non-governmental organisation in Pakistan working for the upliftment of marginalised groups in society, particularly violence against children, gender based violence and youth engagement through multidimensional interventions i.e. capacity building, awareness raising, advocacy, provision of legal aid and psychological counselling to the victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. Search for Justice's head office is located in Lahore, Pakistan

Introduction | National Commission for Human Rights-Govt. of Pakistan

The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) in Pakistan is an independent, statutory, quasi-judicial body responsible for investigating human rights violations and abuses and reviewing laws related to human rights principles. It also monitors the government's implementation of human rights, makes technical recommendations on treaty obligations, produces reports and research on human rights, and advises the government on policy matters. The NCHR actively contributes to human rights awareness and advocacy initiatives in the country and is involved in the development of a national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights in Pakistan.

Author

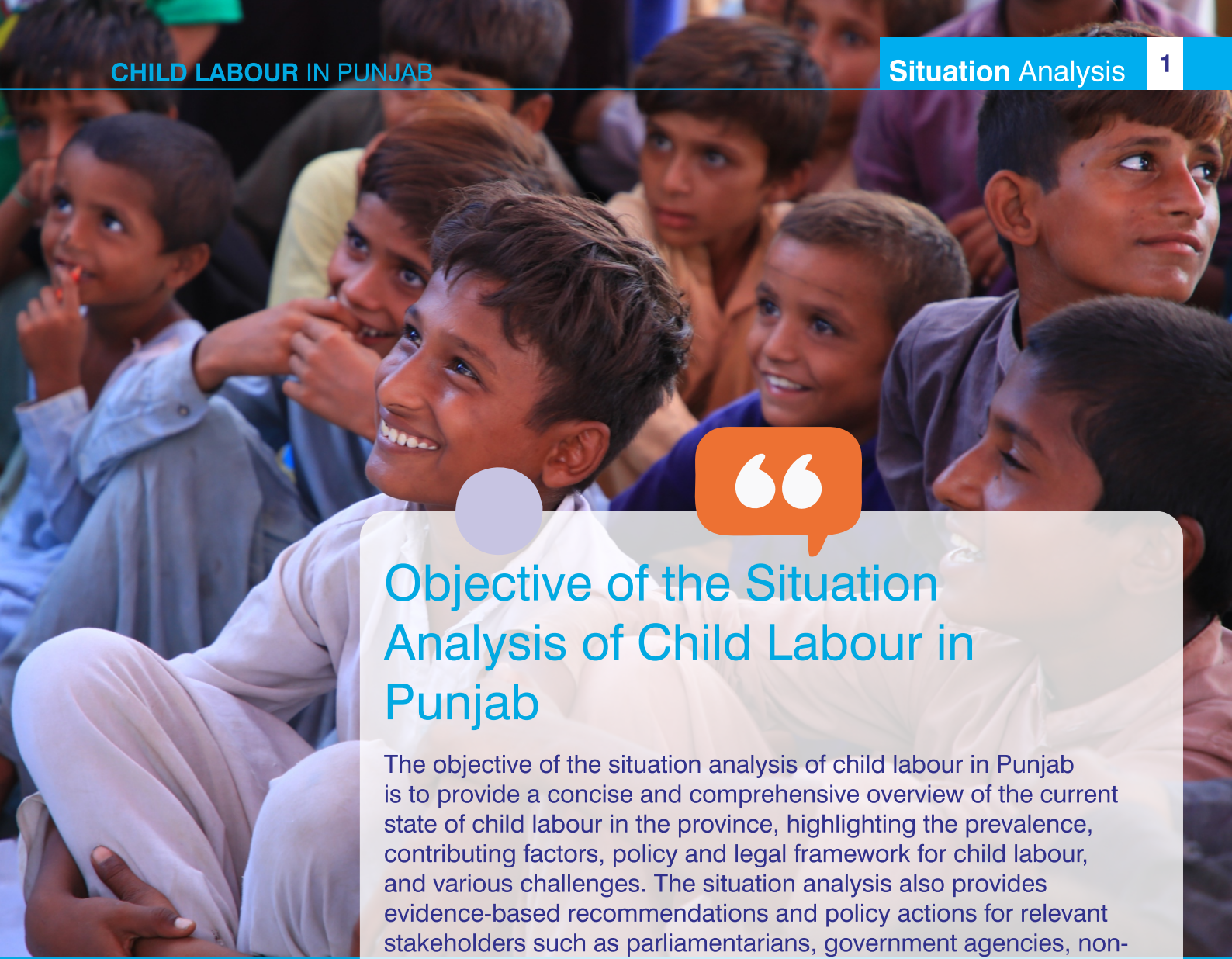
Qindeel Shujaat

Design & Layout

Jahangir Ali

Acknowledgment

This report is published with the financial support of Kindernothilfe



Objective of the Situation Analysis of Child Labour in Punjab

The objective of the situation analysis of child labour in Punjab is to provide a concise and comprehensive overview of the current state of child labour in the province, highlighting the prevalence, contributing factors, policy and legal framework for child labour, and various challenges. The situation analysis also provides evidence-based recommendations and policy actions for relevant stakeholders such as parliamentarians, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and the public to promote a deeper understanding of the issue and facilitate the development and implementation of effective strategies to combat child labour, protect children's rights and promote their well-being.

Methodology

The methodology for preparing the situation analysis of child labour in Punjab involved a structured process. An extensive literature review was conducted, including documents such as the Punjab Child Labour Survey 2019-20, federal and provincial legal frameworks, reports from governmental and non-governmental organisations, and relevant studies on child protection systems in Pakistan. An agency mapping exercise was conducted to identify the role of government agencies at different levels. Assessment tools were then developed based on the preparatory information and meetings. Field visits and in-depth interviews were conducted in June 2023 with key stakeholders including government agencies, UN, civil society organisations and a consultation in Lahore to better understand their role and identify gaps in the legal and policy framework. The insights gained from the discussions were used to assess the situation and draw conclusions. Finally, the information was compiled, analysed and presented in the form of a report, which was reviewed by stakeholders and published as a final draft.

TERMS OF CONTENTS

04 Preface

06 Executive Summary

- 07 • Key Challenges and Problems in Dealing with Child Labour in Punjab
- 08 • Recommendations for Action

11 Punjab's Profile

- 12 • Educational Indicators of Punjab

14 Child Labour in Punjab

- 14 • Prevalence of Child Labour in Punjab
- 21 • Circumstances and Causes of Child Labour
- 23 • The Impact of Child Labour

24 International Obligations

- 25 • UN Conventions
- 27 • ILO Conventions
- 28 • Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- 29 • Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+)

30 Policy Framework for Child Labour in Punjab

- 31 • National Policies
- 32 • Provincial Policies

34 Legal Framework for Child Labour in Punjab

- 35 • Constitution of Pakistan, 1973
- 35 • National Laws
- 36 • Provincial Laws

40 Institutional Framework for Child Labour in Punjab

- 41 • Provincial Government Agencies
- 46 • Federal Agencies
- 46 • UN Agencies
- 47 • Civil Society Organisations
- 48 • Punjab's Efforts against Child Labour

51 Challenges and Gaps

- 52 • Intergenerational Poverty and Lack of Viable Alternatives
- 52 • Lack of Access to Quality Education
- 52 • Lack of Systems Approach
- 52 • Limited Accessibility and Outreach
- 53 • Economic Inequalities
- 53 • Gaps in Punjab's Legal Framework
- 53 • Weak Enforcement of Laws
- 54 • Disconnect between Policy Formulation and Implementation
- 54 • Social Acceptance
- 54 • Lack of Investment in Social Sector
- 55 • Impact of Internal and Inter-Provincial Migration
- 55 • Lack of Population Control
- 56 • Dominance of the Informal Sector
- 56 • Gaps in Data Collection
- 56 • Sustainability of Project Interventions
- 56 • Lack of Political Will
- 56 • Lack of Children's Representation

57 Recommendations for Action

- 58 • Policy and Law Reforms
- 59 • Laws Enforcement
- 60 • Investment in Social Sector
- 60 • Capacity Building and Awareness Raising
- 61 • Research

62 References

63 Acronyms



PREFACE

Iftikhar Mubarik

Executive Director
Search for Justice

In Punjab, we witness numerous children engaged in various industries and occupations, including agriculture, manufacturing, and services. These young souls toil in fields, factories, workshops and in domestic settings under harsh conditions, often performing tasks beyond their physical capabilities. Instead of playing, learning and dreaming, they carry the burden of supporting their families and are deprived of the opportunities they should have been entitled to from birth.

Child labour is a cruel practice that steals away children of their childhood, their potential and their dreams. Instead of being nurtured, educated, and protected, they are forced into hazardous and exploitative work. These innocent souls are subjected to long hours, physically demanding work and denied access to education and the joys of a carefree childhood.

The ramifications of child labour go beyond the affected individuals. It weakens the fabric of our society perpetuates inequality, social injustice and an underprivileged class. It also hinders economic development, because a society that fails to educate and nurture its children cannot develop and compete globally.

We cannot afford to be indifferent to this problem. We must recognise the gravity of the situation and take decisive action to eradicate child labour in Punjab and Pakistan. The multi-faceted nature of these challenges requires a comprehensive

approach that includes poverty alleviation, better legislation and effective enforcement, educational opportunities and compulsory schooling for all, gender equality, prohibition of hazardous work, social protection and increased awareness.

We must act swiftly and resolutely to create an environment where every child can grow, learn and thrive. This requires collaboration between government and civil society organisations, and leadership must take the lead to address the problem holistically. It is in this spirit that Search for Justice, in collaboration with the National Commission for Human Rights, is issuing this Situation Analysis to highlight the major challenges and gaps related to child labour in Punjab and the need for comprehensive solutions. I hope you will find this Situation Analysis useful.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Nadeem Ashraf, Member Punjab-National Commission for Human Rights, for his support, Kindernothilfe for their financial assistance and Mr. Qindeel Shujaat for preparing this Situation Analysis of Child Labour.

It is important to remember that ending child labour is not an impossible task. It is undoubtedly a challenge, but one that we can overcome. With sincere commitment, we can create a world for our children where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.



Message from

Nadeem Ashraf

Member/Commissioner (Punjab)

National Commission for Human Rights

As Member (Punjab) NCHR, it is a source of immense satisfaction for me to oversee the collaboration of NCHR with Search for Justice in such an important field as child rights, especially child labour. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantees welfare and provision of rights to the children of the country; may it be the right to education; protection against abuse; provision of conducive environment. The various provincial laws enacted from time to time prohibit child labour and prescribe penalties for the offenders. Pakistan's International Commitments under United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC); United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UNICCPR); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 138, 182 as well as our Commitments under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) entail obligation to eliminate child labour. However, despite these obligations under the local laws as well as International Conventions, child labour is rampant with 6.67 million under the age of 17 and 3.83 million children under the age 15 still in child labour in Punjab (PCLS 2019-20).

The above situation has deprived millions of children of their basic rights besides exposing them to frequent physical, psychological and sexual abuse. These

children are deprived of their legitimate right of vertical social and economic mobility. As such, not only children suffer but the whole social and economic fabric of the society is badly shattered.

Unfortunately, there is an absence of a holistic approach for ensuring child rights in the Province. Various Punjab Government Departments are working in silos. There was an imperative need to have an effective Commission on Child Rights headed by the Chief Executive of the Province with heads of all the concerned departments as its members.

It is high time that an effective implementation of child rights including prohibition of child labour takes place. Search for Justice has indeed taken up this very challenging issue and have, with this situation analysis provided a very pragmatic analysis of the task in hand. The challenges and gaps in the existing legal, procedural, administrative, cultural and social framework have been logically and expertly analyzed culminating into a solid set of recommendations for action. The passion and commitment of Mr. Iftikhar Mubarak, Executive Director, Search for Justice and his team are indeed appreciable. The situation analysis would provide a guideline to the policy makers, legislators and the implementers a positive direction to move forward for eradicating the menace of child labour.



Executive Summary

The aim of the situation analysis of child labour in Punjab is to provide a concise, comprehensive assessment of the current state of child labour in the province.

Punjab is the most populous province with over 127 million inhabitants, where about 44 per cent of the population is under 18 years of age. Child labour is a cruel practise that deprives children of their childhood. The impact of child labour goes beyond the lives of children and also weakens the fabric of our society by perpetuating inequality, social injustice and an underprivileged class.

The Punjab Child Labour Survey (PCLS) 2019-2020, released in October 2022, shows that the prevalence of child labour among 5-14 year olds is 13.4 per cent, while the prevalence of child labour and adolescent hazardous work (CLAHW) among 5-17 year olds is 16.9 per cent. The survey shows a disturbing trend of escalating child labour compared to the results of the 1996 Child Labour Survey.

The Punjab government has constitutional, national and international obligations to prevent and protect against child labour. However, there are many challenges and issues that need to be addressed in fulfilling these commitments.

Key Challenges and Problems in Dealing with Child Labour in Punjab

Intergenerational Poverty and Lack of Viable Alternatives

Poverty drives child labour, as families rely on children's income for survival. Breaking this cycle requires immediate support for poor families, sustainable solutions, and accessible alternatives for working children. Existing initiatives like free education fall short of covering all expenses, making it challenging for families to prioritize education over work.

Lack of Access to Quality Education

Limited access to quality education is a significant contributor to child labour. Inadequate school infrastructure, unqualified teachers, and associated costs discourage attendance. Promoting education access is crucial for empowering children and breaking the cycle of child labour.

Lack of Systems Approach

The lack of a functioning system that addresses child labour is a significant obstacle in addressing this critical issue. The Labour Department handles regulation and monitoring, but the Education Department is critical to ensuring that all children aged 5 to 16 have access to education, which reduces child labour. In addition, a robust child protection system does not exist necessary for rehabilitation and non-formal education opportunities when child labour is identified. The challenge is to develop a coordinated and systematic approach involving all key government agencies.

Limited Accessibility and Outreach

There are challenges related to accessibility and outreach of existing institutions in Pakistan. There is insufficient coverage in monitoring child labour across sectors due to inspectors' focus on specific industries, and underutilisation of existing structures. This calls for a reevaluation of their roles in enforcing child protection and education.

Economic Inequalities

Urban-rural and regional disparities contribute to economic inequalities, making vulnerable populations more susceptible to child labour.

Targeted development programmes are necessary to improve infrastructure, employment opportunities, and access to education and social services in economically disadvantaged areas.

Gaps in Punjab's Legal Framework

Inconsistencies in child labour laws, incomplete coverage of occupations, and inadequate aspects like referral and rehabilitation pose challenges. Addressing these gaps and ensuring alignment with compulsory education laws is essential for effective child labour prevention.

Weak Enforcement of Laws

Low awareness, insufficient resources, inadequate personnel, and overlapping mandates contribute to weak enforcement of child labour laws. Lack of accountability, low conviction rates, and minimal deterrence further hinder effective implementation.

Disconnect between Policy Formulation and Implementation

Failure to integrate international treaties and policies into actionable plans highlights a disconnect between policy formulation and implementation. This undermines the impact of well-intentioned policies and their potential for meaningful change. Based on current indicators, Pakistan is unlikely to achieve many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 8.7.

Social Acceptance

Cultural norms and social acceptance of child labour perpetuate the problem. Traditional beliefs and the normalization of children contributing to family income hinder eradication efforts. Widespread awareness campaigns are needed to change societal attitudes.

Lack of Investment in Social Sector

Declining allocations to the social sector limit resources for vulnerable groups. Insufficient investment hampers poverty reduction and child labour prevention efforts, making it difficult to break the cycle of exploitation.

Impact of Internal and Inter-Provincial Migration

Internal and inter-provincial migration impacts children, both positively and negatively. Overcrowding and lack of resources in urban areas expose children to exploitative work. Lack of registration systems leaves migrant children unprotected.

Lack of Population Control

Continued population growth strains available resources and infrastructure. Rapid population growth makes it challenging to effectively implement child protection measures, increasing the likelihood of child labour.

Dominance of the Informal Sector

The unregulated informal sector, with its low-skilled, labour-intensive work, significantly contributes to child labour. Low wages and lack of regulations make child labour prevalent in this sector.

Gaps in Data Collection

While the successful completion of a child labour survey is commendable, regular data collection and monitoring are essential. Integrating child labour data collection into existing surveys and encouraging data sharing between agencies can provide timely insights for targeted interventions.

Sustainability of Project Interventions

Project interventions show success during implementation but often lack continuity and sustainability. Long-term solutions require sustained engagement with target groups and policy makers.

Lack of Political Will

Child labour in Punjab is hampered by lack of political will and inadequate government attention and resources. The lack of political representation for children's issues further exacerbates the problem. Nevertheless, historical precedents show that tangible results can be achieved if the government is truly committed to combating child labour.

Lack of Children's Representation

The absence of children's representation in Punjab's political arenas hampers efforts to combat child labour. Their concerns are sidelined amidst politicians' competing priorities, leading to overlooked discussions and actions vital for reforms.

Recommendations for Action

Policy and Law Reforms

- Appoint a Child Protection Advisor in the Punjab Cabinet to advocate for child protection in policy formulation and law drafting.
- Harmonise and align Punjab's labour, education, and child protection laws to create a comprehensive legal framework.
- Raise the minimum employment age to 16 in relevant acts, aligning with constitutional and educational provisions.
- Extend the scope of the Punjab Restriction on Employment Children Act, 2016 to cover all sectors.
- Consolidate different child labour laws into a single comprehensive law.
- Strengthen the powers of labour inspectors and incorporate the roles of different departments in child labour laws.
- Expand the scope of the Punjab Domestic Workers Act, 2019 to include all children needing protection.
- Amend the PDNCA, 2004, or its rules to create a robust and effective case management and referral system.
- Notify rules for various child labour-related acts.
- Define and specify "light work" in the Punjab Domestic Workers Act, 2019.
- Review and revise the hazardous occupation list in the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016.
- Enhance penalties for child labour violations and integrate child labour prevention strategies in education policies.
- Adopt a child protection and child labour policy that provides a framework and structured approach to dealing with child protection and child labour issues.

Laws Enforcement

- Develop SOPs and enhance inter-agency cooperation to address child labour and enforce laws.
- Establish mechanisms to address overlapping responsibilities and ensure resource sharing among departments.
- Create child-friendly reporting mechanisms and link them to case management and referral systems.
- Improve monitoring through collaboration among various agencies and community-based organizations.
- Ban child domestic labour for public office holders and introduce a neighbourhood watch system for reporting.
- Train labour inspectors for effective enforcement of child labour laws.
- Mobilise and engage various departments of Punjab that do not have a direct mandate for child labour but can play an effective role in the fight against child labour
- Utilize PCLS 2019-20 findings to formulate region-specific policies and increase incentives in targeted areas.
- Promote gender equality through initiatives empowering girls and providing equal educational opportunities.
- Address dropout rates and provide essential educational goods to marginalized communities.

Investment in Social Sector

- Develop long-term economic plans emphasising social sector investments for human capital development.
- Prioritise the social sector by increasing budgetary allocations for education, health, welfare, and child protection.
- Allocate higher development budgets for education infrastructure and quality improvements.
- Develop an incentive-based approach to encourage families to send their children to school instead of pushing them to work.
- Increase the Labour Department's budget to enhance its capacity for child labour eradication.
- Encourage partnerships with NGOs, INGOs, donors, and private sector for social sector investment.

Capacity Building and Awareness Raising

- Enhance capacity of duty bearers, law enforcement, government, and civil society on child protection laws.
- Engage media for effective child rights and child protection awareness.
- Conduct regular campaigns to raise awareness on child labour's unlawfulness.
- Create targeted campaigns explaining the benefits of education and risks of child labour.
- Involve local leaders and influencers in promoting education and child protection.
- Advocate for law reforms and social sector investments through advocacy efforts.
- Raise awareness through Information Department, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, and PEMRA.
- Empower children and youth for advocacy and participation in decision-making.
- Integrate child rights education into school curricula.

Research







PUNJAB's PROFILE

According to the latest census released by the Government of Pakistan in 2023, the population of Punjab is 127,688,922 as compared to 109,989,655 in the 2017 census, indicating high population growth. Most of Punjab's population lives in rural areas, 59.3 per cent of all households, though this is lower than in 2017 (63%), indicating a trend of migration to urban areas. Of the total population, men account for 51 per cent and women 49 per cent (2017 census)¹. Punjab has a young population, with about 44 per cent of the population under 18 years of age².

Muslims form the largest religious group (97.77%), while the largest non-Muslim minority are Christians, who make up about 1.9 per cent of the population. Hindus make up about 0.2 per cent of the total population³.

Punjab is the economic hub of Pakistan, contributing about 54.2 per cent to the national GDP and employing about 37.6 million people. Punjab is the most industrialised province in Pakistan (Planning & Development Board, 2023). Manufacturing industries include textiles, sporting goods, heavy machinery, electrical appliances, surgical instruments, vehicles, auto

parts, metals, sugar mills, aircraft, cement, agricultural machinery, bicycles and rickshaws, flooring and processed food.

Punjab enjoys the reputation of being relatively prosperous and has the lowest poverty rate of all Pakistani provinces. Nevertheless, there is a clear disparity between the northern and southern regions of the province. The northern districts are more developed and economically affluent compared to the southern districts.

The Punjab Provincial Government administers the Punjab province in Pakistan. Its powers and structure are laid down in the provisions of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973. The Punjab Assembly is a unicameral legislature with 297 elected members, of which 66 seats are reserved for women and 8 seats for non-Muslims (Provincial Assembly of Punjab, 2023). The Chief Minister heads the provincial government and appoints the provincial cabinet, which consists of ministers heading various departments. The Governor represents the federal government in the province. Punjab is administratively divided into divisions and districts, each headed by commissioners and deputy commissioners respectively.

¹ The 2017 census figures have been used as the government of Pakistan has not yet published complete figures for the 2023 census at the time of writing this policy brief

² *ibid.*

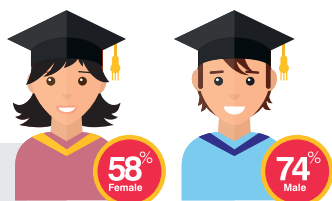
³ *ibid.*

Educational Indicators of Punjab

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23,

The Literacy Rate
in Punjab was

66.3%



66 per cent of the population who have ever attended school, with males accounting for 73 per cent and females 58 per cent.

The gross enrolment rate in Punjab for primary (5-9 years), middle (10-12 years) and matric (13-14 years) is 90, 61 and 65 respectively, while the net enrolment rate in Punjab for primary (5-9 years), middle (10-12 years) and matric (13-14 years) is 56, 25 and 16 respectively⁴. The differences between the gross enrolment rate and the net enrolment rate show the frequency of enrolment of overage and underage pupils⁵. The disparities between GER and NER highlight the importance of addressing barriers to enrolment and improving overall access to education for children in the respective age groups.

The MICS Survey 2017-18 of Punjab findings reveal that the completion rate at the primary level is 66 per cent, indicating that attainment of universal primary completion remains a significant goal that is yet to be realised. These disparities become evident when examining the data based on urban-rural differences and socio-economic backgrounds. Completion rates drop as students progress to higher levels of education, to 56 per cent in middle school, further steeply to only 39 per cent for junior secondary and finally to 30 per cent for senior secondary level. It is noteworthy that the completion rates of rural and underprivileged children are consistently below the overall Punjab average, whereas urban and more affluent children exhibit completion rates above average. Addressing these discrepancies in completion rates across levels and social strata is critical to improving the educational landscape and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children in Punjab.

⁴ Government of Pakistan. (2023). Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23. Retrieved July 22, 2023, from https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_2023.html

⁵ Glossary | DataBank. (n.d.). Glossary | DataBank. <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/millennium-development-goals/series/SE.PRM.NENR>

Out-of-School Children in Punjab

Out-of-school children and youth are those who are in the official age group for a particular level of education and are not enrolled in school. In Punjab, about 13% of children eligible for primary school (1,921,000) are currently out of school. In middle school, the percentage of children not in school rises to 21% (1,652,000) and in junior and senior secondary school to 34% (1,617,000) and a disturbing 47% (2,149,000) of children respectively.

At all levels of education, out-of-school rates vary widely by district. At the primary level, the rate is lowest in Narowal at 3 per cent, while it is highest in Rajanpur at 33 per cent. In middle school, out-of-school rates are increasing in all districts. In Chakwal and Gujrat, the rate is lowest with 7 per cent of children in lower secondary school age, while in Rajanpur, 45 per cent of children in this age group are out-of-school. At the junior secondary level, out of school rates continue to rise in all districts. Rajanpur, in particular, has the highest out-of-school rate of 64 per cent. At the senior secondary level, the out-of-school rate continues to rise. In Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan and Muzaffargarh, almost 70 per cent of children remain out-of-schools.

The dropout rate for rural children is also higher than the Punjab average at all levels of education. At all levels, at least 70 per cent of out-of-school children are in rural areas. Also at all levels, the rate of the poorest children not going to school is about twice the average for Punjab as a whole.

These figures underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the growing number of children who are out of school at various levels of education in Punjab, as this significantly affects their lives.

Source: MICS Survey 2017-18





بچوں سے مشقت نا منظور



چلڈرن ایڈوکیسی نیٹ ورک

SEARCH FOR JUSTICE

Child Labour in Punjab

The sight of children doing various forms of work is all too familiar. Whether on the busy streets, in the fields, in workshops or in households, the image of boys and girls doing arduous work has become frighteningly familiar. However, this widespread child labour raises a troubling question that requires urgent attention: Is this work really a path to a better future for these young people, or does it cast a dark shadow over their childhood, education and general well-being?

Child labour is undoubtedly a very concerning issue. It is the employment of children that is mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful to children, that interferes with their education by depriving them of the opportunity to attend regular school⁶, and that is performed by children who have not yet reached the minimum age set by national laws or international standards.

Difference Between Child Labour and Child Work

It is important to recognise the difference between child labour and child work. According to the ILO, child labour is considered exploitative and harmful, while child work refers to non-exploitative and acceptable forms of work. The key factor distinguishing them is the negative impact of child labour on children's well-being, education and overall development, while child work recognises that certain types of work can be beneficial to children's growth, such as light household chores or age-appropriate tasks that promote healthy development⁷.

Hazardous child labour is defined as any form of work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to endanger the health, safety or morals of children. Hazardous child labour goes beyond the general definition of child labour and refers specifically to work that poses a direct threat to the physical and psychological well-being of children, such as work that exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse, work with dangerous machinery or tools, heavy loads, hazardous environments, extreme temperatures, long hours or night work on the employer's premises, etc.

Prevalence of Child Labour in Punjab

The Punjab Child Labour Survey (PCLS) 2019-2020, released in October 2022, is the second child labour survey in the Punjab after the national child labour survey in 1996.

According to the laws of Punjab, the term child labour refers to persons aged 5 to 14 years, while persons aged 15 to 17 years are classified as adolescents. The term Child Labour and Adolescent Hazardous Work (CLAHW) refers to the population aged 5 to 17 years in the survey.

“

The PCLS
2019-20
reveals that the
prevalence of
child labour in
Punjab among
5-14 year olds is

13.4%

The prevalence
of CLAHW
among
5-17 year
olds is

16.9%

”

⁶ What is child labour (IPEC). (n.d.). What Is Child Labour (IPEC). <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

⁷ Ibid.

The PCLS 2019-20 reveals that the prevalence of child labour in Punjab among 5-14 year olds is 13.4 per cent, while the prevalence of CLAHW among 5-17 year olds is 16.9 per cent.

The comparative review of child labour in Punjab based on two different time periods: the Child Labour Survey 1996 and the more recent Punjab Child Labour Survey 2019-2020 shows that the total number of working children in Punjab has increased significantly during these years. In 1996, a total of 1,943,305 children in the 5-14 age group were in the labour force. However, in 2019-2020, this number had increased to 3,834,264, indicating a disturbing trend of escalating child labour.

CHILD LABOUR IN PUNJAB		
Age (Years)	Child Labour Survey 1996	Child Labour Survey 2019-2020
5-9	217,817	780,122
10-14	1,725,488	3,055,834
Total	1,943,305	3,835,956

Source: Child Labour Survey (1996) and Punjab Child Labour Survey (2019-20)

According to PCLS 2019-20, the incidence of child labour is significantly higher among boys than girls: among 5-9 year olds, it is 6.2 per cent in boys and 4.1 per cent in girls, among 10-14 year olds it is 28.1 per cent in boys and 15.9 per cent in girls, and among 15-17 year olds it is 42.4 per cent in boys and 18.5 per cent in girls.

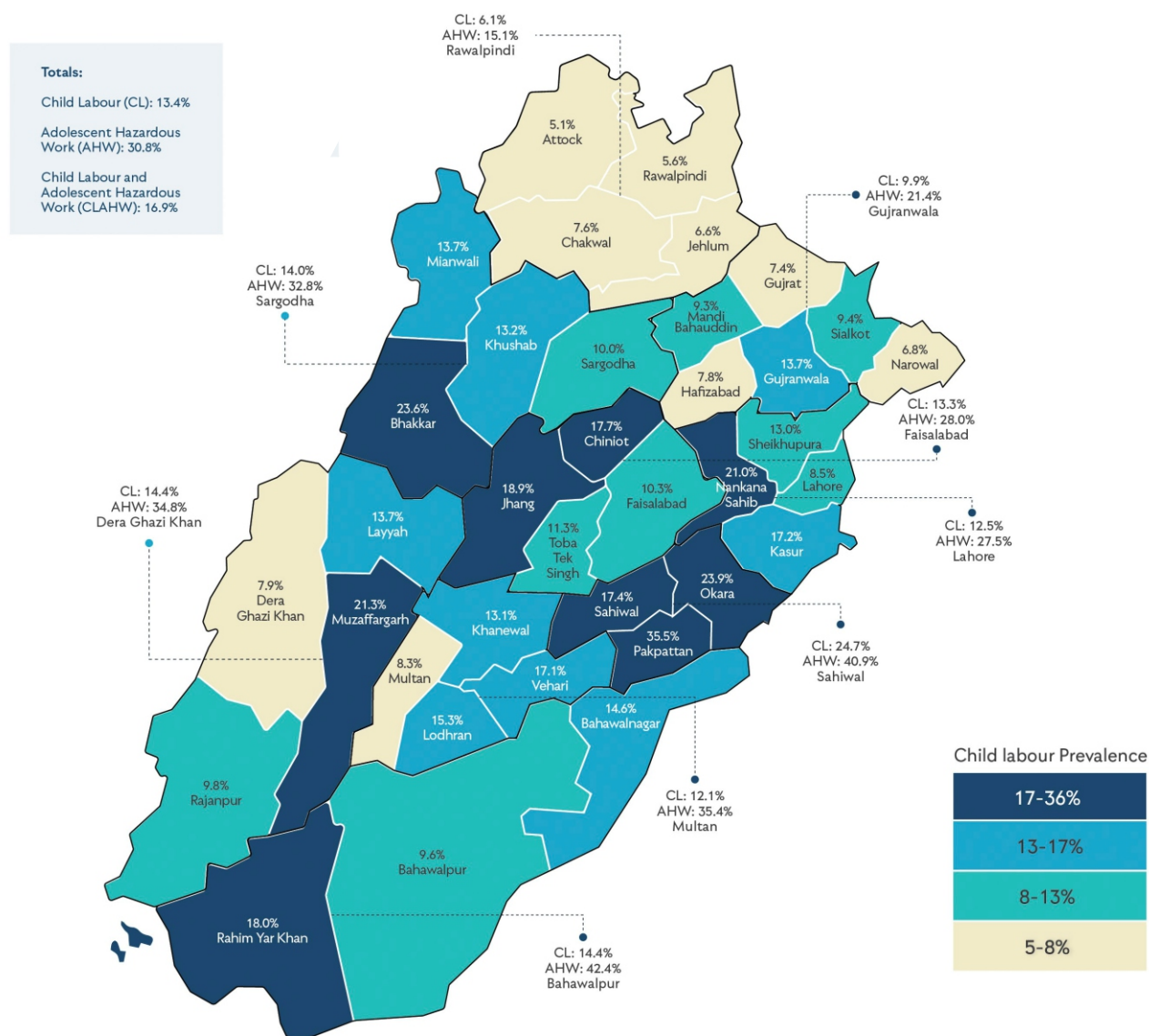
At the district level⁸, Pakpattan records the highest prevalence of child labour for children aged 5-14 years (35.5%), while Attock has the lowest (5.1%). For children and adolescents aged 5-17 years, the prevalence of child labour in these districts is 39.2 per cent and 7.3 per cent respectively. At the divisional level⁹, Sahiwal has the highest prevalence of child labour for children aged 5-14 years (24.7%), while Rawalpindi has the lowest (6.1%). For children and adolescents aged 5-17 years, the prevalence in these districts is 27.9 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

Although the percentage of children in Rawalpindi might appear small, their actual numbers are substantial due to the large population.

A large proportion of children (5-14 years) are employed in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industry group. More than three out of four children in agriculture are involved in activities related to animal production (79.3 per cent). Of the remaining 20.7 per cent, 10.5 per cent are engaged in support activities for agriculture, 6.9 per cent in logging, 2.8 per cent in cultivation of non-perennial crops and 0.5 per cent in other activities including mixed farming, cultivation of perennial crops, plant propagation and fishing.

⁸ Districts are the most common administrative units that directly interact with local communities, and are further divided into tehsil and union councils.

⁹ A division is a higher-level administrative unit in Pakistan. It is one level above the district in the administrative hierarchy.



Children and Adolescent working in Industries (in %)

Industry Type	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-17 years
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	63.0	61.2	46
Manufacturing	4.9	10.6	19.5
Water collection	23.9	13.4	7.7
Construction	0.2	1.0	4.8
Wholesale and retail trade	4.7	7.7	10.8
Accommodation and food service activities	0.8	1.5	2.4
Domestic work	1.3	2.0	1.5
Other industry	1.2	2.6	7.3

Consistent with the findings for industry, majority of children (aged 5-14 years) and adolescents (aged 5-17) are employed as skilled agricultural, forestry and fishing workers followed by elementary occupations.

Children and Adolescent working in Occupations (in %)

Industry Type	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-17 years
Service and sales worker	4.5	6.8	10.1
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery worker	44.5	44.6	34.4
Craft and related trades workers	5.0	11.9	22.9
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	0.4	1.9	4.1
Elementary occupation	45.5	34.5	26.6
Other occupations	0.1	0.5	1.9
Punjab Child Labour Survey 2019-20			

The literature review also highlights the worst forms of child labour in Punjab¹⁰. Children are forced into hazardous labour in agriculture, brick making, carpet weaving, domestic work, auto mobile workshops and forced begging where they are trapped in exploitative situations with little chance of escape. Many of these children are not represented in the PCLS 2019-20, as it is a household survey and children who do not live in their homes were not included.

In agriculture, children are used for harvesting, herding animals and other manual labour. They have to endure long hours under the scorching sun and are often exposed to pesticides and other harmful chemicals. In the brick kiln industry, children have to carry heavy loads of bricks and

mix cement, endure long hours in hot and dusty environments and are exposed to hazardous materials. In industries such as carpet weaving, where children are valuable for tasks requiring nimbleness are subjected to gruelling working conditions in dusty, poorly ventilated workshops, often exposed to harmful chemicals. Domestic work puts children in a precarious position in households where they are often forced to live with the employer full-time, leading to abuse and mistreatment.

In addition, cases have been reported in past where children became victims of commercial sexual exploitation, including the production of pornography¹¹. Children are also forced to beg or sell goods on the streets, exposing them to dangerous situations on the streets and making them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

¹⁰ BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR AFFAIRS. (2022). 2021 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR.

¹¹ National Commission on the Rights of Child . (2023). Policy Brief on Child Online Protection.

Child Labour in Automobile Repair Workshops in Punjab

According to a study conducted by ILO on children in automobile repair workshops (ILO 2023), there are 50,000 automobile repair workshops in Punjab employing about 100,000 adolescents (15-17 years old) with an average of two adolescents per workshop, and 50,000 children under 14-15 years old with an average of one child per workshop.

The study sheds light on the multiple adversities faced by children working in automobile repair workshops. According to the young respondents, the challenges include unhygienic work environments, disrespect from customers, reprimands from technicians and senior workers, low income, exposure to harsh sunlight, long training periods, strenuous work and extended working hours.

All the children who work in these automobile repair workshops are paid. Most children receive nominal wages, often less than 5,000 rupees per month, while some adolescents aged 15 to 17 also fall into this income bracket. As children gain more experience and their skills improve, the older age group tends to receive higher wages.

Interestingly, the survey shows that most children receive their monthly earnings independently and in many cases cede a significant portion, if not more than half, of their earnings to their parents. This financial dynamic underscores the dependence of families on child labour to meet the consumption needs of the household.

There is no specific provincial legislation that classifies child labour related to automobile repair workshops as hazardous. Yet the Schedule of the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016 lists at least three processes that are considered hazardous and likely to occur in these workshops. These include work involving the bottling of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) filling for cylinders (e.g. for vehicles with compressed natural gas cylinders), exposure to toxic, explosive and carcinogenic chemicals (e.g. in vehicle batteries), and lifting or transporting heavy weights of more than 15 kilogrammes (e.g. handling substantial loads during vehicle maintenance and repair).

Source: ILO Rapid assessment of child labour in automobile repair workshops in Pakistan

Behind Closed Doors

A 14-year-old girl named Rizwana in Islamabad was severely abused by her employer, the wife of a civil judge, over a period of six months. After initial hesitation, the police registered an FIR on 26 July 2023, initially citing criminal intimidation and wrongful confinement, and later expanded to include murder, among other charges. On 7 August 2023, the District and Sessions Court rejected the offender's plea for bail, leading to her arrest.¹² Rizwana is being treated at Lahore General Hospital for various physical and psychological problems, including broken bones, infections and head injuries, though her condition has improved slightly after an initial critical deterioration.

This case highlights a recurring problem of violence against child domestic workers in Pakistan. There have been several cases of abuse and even deaths in the past, including cases such as Rafiq Qabool in Karachi, Zohra Shah in Rawalpindi, Uzma in Lahore, Tayyaba in Islamabad and Shazia Masih in Lahore.¹³ Data from Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) shows that there were 74 reported cases of violence against underage domestic workers in Punjab between January 2019 and February 2021, mostly involving girls aged 7-16.

Child domestic labour remains widespread in Pakistan and often leads to abuse and exploitation behind closed doors. Many cases go unreported due to societal normalisation, including the employment and abuse of minors, or the taboo nature of sexual assault cases, leading to a need for more awareness and intervention.

¹² Child Domestic Labour as Modern-Day Slavery – The State of Children in Pakistan. (2023, August 18). <https://stateofchildren.com/child-domestic-labor-as-modern-day-slavery/>

¹³ *ibid.*

According to PCLS 2019-20, children mostly work as unpaid family workers (81.1 % for 5-14 and 70.4% for 5-17). Girls are more often unpaid family workers than boys (85.4% versus 78.8% for 5-14 and 80.5% versus 65.5% for 5-17).

Children and Adolescent working in Occupations (in %)

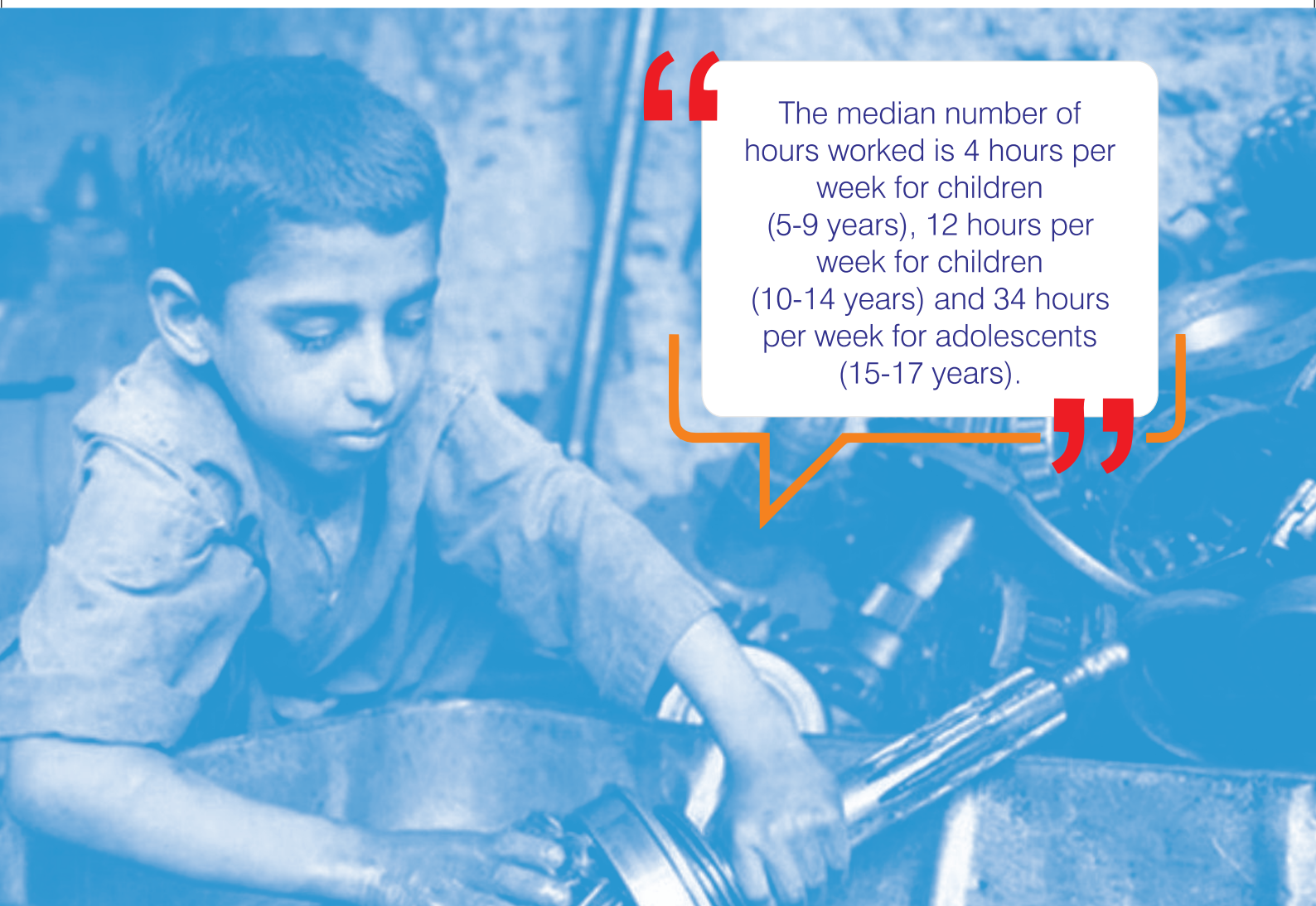
Work Status	5-14 years		5-17 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Unpaid family worker	78.8 %	85.4%	44.2 %	70.2 %
Apprenticeship	7.9 %	2.3 %	17.8 %	6.6 %
Labourer (Non-agriculture)	5.1 %	3.1 %	18.4 %	4.4 %
Labourer (agriculture)	2.7 %	4.5 %	4.1 %	8.3 %

Punjab Child Labour Survey 2019-20

“

The median number of hours worked is 4 hours per week for children (5-9 years), 12 hours per week for children (10-14 years) and 34 hours per week for adolescents (15-17 years).

”



Circumstances and Causes of Child Labour

The reasons why children are engaged in child labour and hazardous work are influenced by various socio-economic factors. The PCLS 2019-20 shows that an important factor is the educational level of the household head, with the prevalence of child labour decreasing as the educational level of the household head increases. In households with a head of household with at most pre-school education, the prevalence of child labour is 41.9 per cent, while in households with a head of household with higher education, it decreases to 11.9 per cent.

Furthermore, the incidence of child labour is closely related to household wealth, with the percentage of households in which at least one child or adolescent is engaged in child labour or hazardous work decreasing with increasing wealth. In the poorest quintile of households, the prevalence of child labour is 49.2 per cent, while in the richest quintile it falls to 12.2 per cent. Interestingly, children and adolescents in households receiving support from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) are more likely to be affected by child labour (26.8%) than children in households not receiving support from BISP (15.5%). This suggests that economic vulnerability plays a role in the prevalence of child labour.

Another influential factor is the composition of the household. Children and adolescents who engage in child labour are less likely to live with

both parents (86.4% versus 88.7% for 5-14 year olds and 87.6% versus 89.6% for 5-17 year olds), suggesting that family dynamics and household composition can significantly influence the likelihood of a child engaging in child labour. When both parents do not live in the household, there is a higher risk of children being pushed into work at a young age, possibly due to economic constraints, lack of proper care and supervision or other factors. On the other hand, children living with both parents seem to correlate with a lower likelihood of child labour, suggesting that a stable and supportive family environment may act as a protective factor against child labour and hazardous work.

Experiencing a natural shock in the household also increases the likelihood of child labour. Children in households that have experienced a natural shock are more likely to experience child labour (19.8% among 5-14 year olds) than households that have not experienced such a shock (13.4%).

For children between 5-17 years engaged in child labour, the most frequently cited reason for parents or guardians to have them work is to help in the household enterprise (38.8%). Other frequently mentioned reasons are to support the household, fetch water or collect wood (18.4 %) and to supplement the family or household income (30.5 %).



Vulnerable Populations to Child Labour in Punjab

The literature review suggests that in Punjab, certain population groups are particularly vulnerable to child labour due to various socio-economic factors (PCLS 2019-20, CLS 1996, PLFS 202-21, MICS 2017).

1

Poverty stricken families

Children from economically disadvantaged families are at a higher risk of falling into child labour. Poverty forces families to rely on the income generated by their children, resulting in them becoming involved in various forms of labour.

2

Out-of-school population

Limited access to quality education, including schools and learning resources, contributes to children's exposure to the risk of child labour. When education is not easily accessible, children are more likely to go to work instead.

3

Rural communities

Rural areas in Punjab often have limited access to educational facilities and economic opportunities. As a result, children in these communities are more inclined to work in agriculture, domestic work or in the informal sector activities.

4

Marginalised communities

Certain marginalised communities, such as religious minorities, ethnic minorities and socially excluded groups, face discrimination and limited access to resources. These conditions increase their vulnerability to child labour.

5

Migrants and refugees

Punjab is a populous province and attracts migrant workers and refugees seeking employment opportunities. Children from these communities can be exploited and forced into labour as they are vulnerable and in case of Afghan nationals, they have limited legal protection.

6

Urban slums

Urban slums are characterised by overcrowded living conditions, lack of basic services and limited employment opportunities. Children living in these areas are often at increased risk of performing hazardous work to contribute to their family's income.

7

Children growing up without parents or disabled parents

Children from broken or disadvantaged families, such as those with separated or divorced parents or those growing up without one or both parents, and/or where their parents are disabled, are particularly vulnerable to economic exploitation. The challenges faced by disabled parents, including difficulties in finding stable employment and accessing social protection, often force children to seek work at a young age to support their family's income or survival.

The Impact of Child Labour

Children engaged in child labour or hazardous work experience a multitude of detrimental effects. These impacts range from physical harm to emotional and psychological suffering.¹⁷ In addition, child labour deprives children of their childhood and hinders their overall development and potential to break the cycle of poverty.

The **PCLS 2019-20** shares that children who engage in child labour face multiple negative consequences that significantly affect access to education, as children aged **5-14** years in child labour are **25.2** percentage points less likely to attend school (**62.7%**) than children who do not engage in child labour (**87.9%**). Among **5-17** year olds, the gap is even wider: children who do child labour or hazardous work are **35.8** percentage points less likely to attend school (**49.5%**) than children who do not engage in CLAHW (**85.3%**).

This shows that child labour interferes with educational opportunities and perpetuates the cycle of poverty and limited opportunities for these children for upward mobility. Without education and skills development, they are more likely to remain trapped in low-paying, exploitative work in adulthood.

Child labour disrupts the normal physical and mental development of children. Extreme fatigue is the most frequently cited consequence in **PCLS 2019-20** (ranging from **8.1%** among **5-9** year olds to **17.5%** among **15-17** year olds), followed by injury or poor health (ranging from **6.1%** among **5-9** year olds to **11.7%** among **15-17** year olds). The prevalence of mental health problems is also higher among children and young people involved in child labour, with **19.2** per cent of **10-17** year olds in CLAHW reporting such problems.

In addition, children who perform hazardous or strenuous work or who are frequently exposed to harmful substances, heavy lifting or dangerous machinery put their well-being at risk from physical injuries, accidents and long-term health complications, leading to both immediate and

long-term health problems. According to **PCLS 2019-20** children who work in particularly hazardous conditions (a subset of hazardous work) are more likely to be injured or ill as a result of their work. Among children aged **10-14**, **45.4** per cent of those who work in hazardous conditions injure themselves or become ill, compared with **11.8** per cent of those who work but not in hazardous conditions, a difference of **33.6** percentage points. In the **15-17** age group, the difference is similar at **32.6** percentage points (**50.6%** compared to **18.0%**).

Child labour often isolates children from their peers and social support systems.¹⁸ Instead of playing, learning and experiencing the joys of growing up, they are burdened with adult duties and the harsh reality of work. They miss out on the social interactions necessary for healthy emotional and social development, leading to a sense of disconnection and limited social skills.

According to the **PCLS 2019-20**, about **16** per cent of children between the ages of **5** and **14** involved in child labour have experienced psychological, physical or sexual abuse while at work. It is worth noting that this percentage is slightly higher for boys, at **16.7** per cent, than for girls, at **13.4** per cent. Furthermore, if we consider adolescents aged **15** to **17** who perform hazardous work, the percentage of those who have experienced abuse rises to **19.1** per cent. Among these adolescent workers, the percentage is also higher for boys at **19.8** per cent than for girls at **17.4** per cent.

Child labour has a profound impact on society, with far-reaching consequences that manifest themselves in various aspects. Economically, it hinders a nation's progress by perpetuating low wages, reducing productivity and impeding the development of human capital, thus preventing sustainable economic growth. Moreover, child labour is both a consequence and a cause of poverty, as it exacerbates income inequality and perpetuates a cycle of hardship within families. This not only deepens social inequalities but also hinders social progress. It also undermines the social fabric of communities as child labour normalises exploitation, weakens social cohesion and undermines solidarity. Most alarmingly, child labour is a fundamental violation of human rights, resulting from systemic failures to protect the rights of the most vulnerable members of society.

¹⁷ Child labour - World Vision Australia. (n.d.). Child Labour - World Vision Australia. <https://www.worldvision.com.au/global-issues/work-we-do/child-labour>

¹⁸ Fernandes Faria. (2010, September). Why is child labour detrimental for children? Institute for Educational Development.

International Obligations

There are several international obligations and conventions that Pakistan, as a member of the international community, is expected to adhere to in order to combat child labour.



بچوں سے مشقت

حکومت کا یہ فرض ہوگا کہ وہ بچوں کو ایسے کاموں سے بچائے جن سے ان کی صحت، تعلیم یا جسمانی ترقی میں رکاوٹ پڑسکتی ہو۔ حکومت روزگار کے لیے کام کرنے کی کم از کم عمر مقرر کرے گی اور ملازمت کی شرائط طے کرے گی۔

قوام متحدہ کا معاہدہ برائے حقوق اطفال (آرٹیکل ۳۲)

UN Conventions

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and ratified by Pakistan in 1990, sets out the rights of children and the obligations of States to protect and promote those rights. Article 32 of CRC states that "States Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." Article 32 of CRC also calls upon States to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from economic exploitation and to promote their physical and mental well-being.¹⁹

Pakistan has also ratified two optional protocols of the CRC, including the Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.²⁰

*In its concluding observations on Pakistan's 5th periodic report in 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about child labour victims in the informal sectors. The Committee called on the State party to take several measures, including the development of programmes and mechanisms to identify and protect children subjected to forced labour, particularly in bonded labour and informal sectors such as domestic work. They also called on Pakistan to conduct a survey or study to assess the prevalence of child labour, with particular attention to the worst forms of child labour, such as bonded and forced labour. In addition, the Committee stressed the need to move forward with the harmonisation of labour laws to establish a minimum age for employment in line with international standards.*²¹

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), 1966

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) is a major international human rights treaty adopted by the United Nations in 1966. Pakistan signed the CCPR in 2008 and later ratified it in 2010. Article 8 of the CCPR explicitly prohibits slavery, practises similar to slavery-like practices, enforced servitude and forced labour in all situations, aiming to protect individuals from these exploitative practices.

In August 2017, the Human Rights Committee, an independent body of experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the CCPR by States Parties, raised several concerns in its Concluding Observations on Pakistan's periodic report. The Committee expressed concern about the low level of birth registration in Pakistan, which has adverse consequences for children. In addition, it expressed serious concerns about the high number of children working in hazardous and slave-like conditions, particularly in the brick kiln industry and in domestic settings. The Committee also pointed to inadequate labour inspections in relation to child labour and noted that perpetrators of child labour violations are rarely brought to justice, while victims do not receive adequate support and rehabilitation.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), 1966

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is another international treaty that Pakistan signed in 2004 and later ratified it in 2008. Under Article 10 of the CESCR, it recognises the right of children and young people to protection from economic and social exploitation. It specifically mentions that children must not be subjected to any form of economic exploitation and must be protected from performing work that could be hazardous or interfere with their education.

¹⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child. (n.d.). OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

²⁰ UN Treaty Body Database. (n.d.). UNITED NATIONS Human Rights Treaty Bodies. Retrieved July 10, 2023, from https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=131&Lang=en

²¹ CRC/C/PAK/CO/5: Committee on the Rights of the Child - concluding observations. (n.d.). OHCHR.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/crcpakco5-committee-rights-child-concluding-observations>

In July 2017, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concerns about the economic exploitation of children in Pakistan in its Concluding Observations on Pakistan's periodic report.²² The Committee highlighted that the minimum age for child labour is set at 14 years, while the Constitution guarantees free compulsory education until the age of 16. It also expressed concern about the large number of children between the ages of 10 and 14 who are engaged in work, with 28 per cent of them doing hazardous work. Most of these working children do not go to school and are at high risk of sexual and economic exploitation.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), 1966

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is another international treaty that Pakistan signed in 2004 and later ratified it in 2008. Under Article 10 of the CESCR, it recognises the right of children and young people to protection from economic and social exploitation. It specifically mentions that children must not be subjected to any form of economic exploitation and must be protected from performing work that could be hazardous or interfere with their education.

In July 2017, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concerns about the economic exploitation of children in Pakistan in its Concluding Observations on Pakistan's periodic report.²³ The Committee highlighted that the minimum age for child labour is set at 14 years, while the Constitution guarantees free compulsory education until the age of 16. It also expressed concern about the large number of children between the ages of 10 and 14 who are engaged in work, with 28 per cent of them doing hazardous work. Most of these working children do not go to school and are at high risk of sexual and economic exploitation.

The Committee recommended that Pakistan strengthen legislation prohibiting child labour and improve their enforcement through increased labour inspections. It also urged the prosecution and punishment of those who exploit children for

labour, while stressing the importance of supporting working children and their families to facilitate their access to education. In addition, the Committee advised Pakistan to undertake a national survey to assess the extent and nature of child labour to enable targeted action and intervention to effectively address the problem.

Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), 1984

Pakistan ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) on 23 June 2010. The CAT aims to prevent and prohibit torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Although the CAT itself does not specifically address child labour, but in some cases, child labour can involve cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of children, which would fall within the scope of the CAT. Child labour can expose children to dangerous and exploitative working conditions that cause physical and mental harm, potentially violating the CAT prohibition on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The Committee against Torture (CAT) considered the initial report of Pakistan in April 2017, and expressed concern at the continuing reports of high levels of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation and forced or bonded labour, including the exploitation of children as domestic workers in slave-like conditions. As part of its recommendations, the Committee called on Pakistan to take measures to combat human trafficking and forced labour, to conduct thorough investigations, and to ensure adequate prosecution and conviction of perpetrators with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crimes. In addition, the Committee called for the establishment of mechanisms for the systematic and regular monitoring of workplaces, both in the formal and informal sectors, including domestic work.

²² National Commission on the Rights of Child . (2022). Policy Brief on the Legal Framework for Child Domestic Labour in Pakistan.

²³ *ibid.*

ILO Conventions

As a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Pakistan has ratified several conventions aimed at addressing child labour, demonstrating its commitment to upholding these standards.

ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

The ILO Minimum Age Convention, No. 138, adopted in 1973, establishes the minimum age for employment and work.²⁴ Pakistan ratified this Convention on 6 July 2006. The Convention requires member States to set a minimum age for admission to employment or work that is not less than the age at which compulsory education is completed and in any case not less than 15 years. However, an exception is provided to allow developing countries such as Pakistan to initially set a minimum age of 14 for light work as part of their development plans.

Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 (No. 146)

This is a non-binding recommendation that complements Convention No. 138. It calls on member states to take measures to effectively implement the provisions of the Convention. The Recommendation encourages countries to devise a national policy and plan of action to eliminate child labour, improve labour inspection, focus on education and training, and protect young people from employment in hazardous occupations. It also stresses the importance of supportive measures such as poverty reduction, job creation, social security and welfare measures.

ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182, adopted by the ILO in 1999, aims to combat the worst forms of child labour. This includes all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, forced labour, the use of children in armed conflict, child trafficking and any work that may harm the health, safety or morals of children. Pakistan ratified this convention on 11 October 2001. The Convention call upon member states to take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including identifying and removing children from such work and providing appropriate rehabilitation and social services, and address the root causes such as poverty, lack of access to education and social exclusion.

Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

Pakistan ratified ILO Convention No. 29 in 1957, which requires ratifying States to combat all forms of forced or compulsory labour. Countries must also ensure that forced labour is criminalised and that penalties are genuinely proportionate and strictly enforced.

Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)

Pakistan ratified ILO Convention No. 105 in 1960, which explicitly prohibits five types of forced labour imposed by state authorities: forced labour as a punishment for the expression of political views, for the purposes of economic development, for participation in strikes, as a means of racial or other discrimination, or as a form of labour-related discipline.

²⁴ Convention C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). (n.d.). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ilo_code:C138

²⁵ Recommendation R146 - Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 (No. 146). (n.d.). [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312484#:~:text=\(1\)%20Measures%20should%20be%20taken,conditions%20should%20be%20supervised%20closely.](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312484#:~:text=(1)%20Measures%20should%20be%20taken,conditions%20should%20be%20supervised%20closely.)

²⁶ Convention C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). (n.d.). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ilo_code:C182

²⁷ Convention C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). (n.d.). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ilo_code:C029

²⁸ Convention C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105). (n.d.). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ilo_code:C105

²⁹ Messages | Sustainable Development Goals. (n.d.). Messages | Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sdgs.punjab.gov.pk/messages>



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

As a participant in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Pakistan is bound by several important commitments regarding child labour. SDG 8 aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. This includes target 8.7, which specifically focuses on the elimination of child labour in all its forms by 2025. Pakistan is required to take significant measures to eliminate child labour and ensure that children are not engaged in hazardous work. In addition, SDG 4 emphasises the provision of quality education for all children, which plays a central role in preventing child labour by providing opportunities for learning and personal development. Furthermore, SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, as eliminating gender inequalities is crucial in addressing child labour, especially for girls who often face additional vulnerabilities.

The Planning & Development Board, Government of Punjab supports the Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support (MAPS) for the SDGs by aligning provincial plans and policies. The Punjab SDGs Unit, P&D Board supports provincial departments in aligning their development plans with the SDGs by providing technical assistance in strengthening Punjab's data ecosystem and developing statistical capacity for SDG monitoring and reporting.²⁹

²⁹ Messages | Sustainable Development Goals. (n.d.). Messages | Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sdgs.punjab.gov.pk/messages>



Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+)

Pakistan was granted GSP+ (Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus) status by the European Union in January 2014. Pakistan's GSP+ status provides the country with preferential access to the European Union market for a wide range of products, offering economic benefits to the country's exporters.

The European Union's GSP Plus scheme specifically requires beneficiary countries to effectively implement and enforce core international conventions related to labour rights. This includes the elimination of child labour as set out in International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions such as Convention No. 138 (minimum age for admission to employment) and Convention No. 182 (worst forms of child labour).

In September 2021, the EU extended Pakistan's GSP+ status for two years and introduced six new conventions, including child labour. To maintain its GSP+ status, Pakistan must demonstrate significant progress in eliminating child labour and ensuring the protection of children's rights in the world of work.

In October 2023, EU further extended GSP+ for another 4 years for Pakistan, until 2027.

“

The European Commission's Directorate General Trade has proposed priority areas for action in its 4th biennial review of GSP+ in 2022, including child labour.³⁰ These areas include publishing completed child labour surveys and accelerating upcoming surveys, developing action plans based on completed surveys, and strengthening the capacity of labour inspectorates to conduct unannounced inspections by increasing the number of inspectors, including women, and providing the necessary equipment and training.

”

³⁰ National Commission on the Rights of Child . (2022). Policy Brief on the Legal Framework for Child Domestic Labour in Pakistan.

Policy Framework for Child Labour in Punjab

The main objective of policy development is to provide a well-structured framework and approach to address the problem. In Pakistan, both the federal government and the Punjab government have formulated labour, human rights and protection policies that include provisions to combat child labour. Important policies adopted after the 18th constitutional amendment in 2010 are discussed in this chapter.



National Policies

National Strategy to Eliminate Child and Bonded Labour in Pakistan, 2016

The strategy provides a framework for coordinating efforts to eliminate child and forced labour. It aims to achieve this through capacity building, policy integration, resource mobilisation, mainstreaming the issue of child and bonded labour, strengthening laws, improving law enforcement, improving data collection, analysis and use of data, forging partnerships and spearheading Information, Education and Communication (IEC) initiatives. The strategy was developed by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development.

National Labour Protection Framework, 2018

This time-bound document covers seven thematic areas: child labour, forced labour, labour inspection, freedom of association, non-discrimination, occupational safety and health (OSH), and social dialogue. For each area, it addresses legislative, institutional, reporting and capacity-building issues. The framework consists of Provincial Implementation Plans (PIPs) that highlight promising legislative and policy initiatives, address specific actions at the provincial level and include timelines for child labour and bonded labour.

National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights 2021-2026

The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which aims to ensure Pakistan's compliance with its duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including businesses, and to create an environment that promotes respect for human rights by businesses.

This five-year National Action Plan on Business and Human rights 2021-26 classifies child labour as a priority area. The plan aims to establish child protection courts in all districts, empowering them to direct rehabilitation of child labour victims. In addition, amendments are proposed to the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act 1992, aiming at stricter punishment for violations of the law and introducing government relief and rehabilitation programmes for bonded labour victims. The plan also proposes to amend the Pakistan Penal Code to increase the penalty for unlawful forced labour to a maximum of life imprisonment for serious violations. To combat child labour more effectively, it proposes to amend the Children (Pledging of Labour) Act 1993 to increase penalties for parents, guardians and employers involved in the pledging and employment of children. In addition, the Employment Act is to be amended to raise the age of a child to sixteen, prohibit hazardous work for persons under eighteen, increase penalties for violations and include domestic work in hazardous occupations. A national study is proposed to monitor progress towards the elimination of child labour in accordance with UN SDG 8.7 and nationwide awareness-raising campaigns are proposed to promote children's fundamental right to education and eradicate child labour.

³¹ International Labour Organization. (2021). Pakistan's journey towards the elimination of child labour: A timeline.

Provincial Policies

Punjab Provincial Action Plan to Eradicate Bonded Labour, 2013

In 2013, Punjab developed a Provincial Action Plan to abolish bonded labour with the assistance of the ILO. The Provincial Action Plan is based on the recommendations of key stakeholders and recommends legal, administrative, financial and social measures to address and eliminate bonded labour in the province.

Punjab Labour Policy, 2018

The Policy commits Punjab to the effective implementation of labour standards, social dialogue, improved workplace safety, an objective living wage and the elimination of child labour and bonded labour. This includes awareness raising, strengthening of labour inspection, quality technical training, simplification of labour laws, provision of medical facilities for workers registered with the Punjab Social Security Institution - even after retirement - and gradual extension of labour protection to all workers.

Punjab Human Rights Policy, 2018

The Punjab Human Rights Policy 2018 makes important recommendations on child labour and bonded labour. The policy calls for the formulation of a child rights strategy and the review of existing legislation to strengthen the protection of children's rights. It highlights the need to sensitise custom barriers on violence against children and to implement integrated projects on birth registration and enrolment of children of brick kiln workers. In addition, the policy aims to develop and strengthen the legal framework for child rights in Punjab, establish effective complaint redressal mechanisms and protect children from all forms of violence and exploitation. It underlines the importance of ensuring the right of every child to free and compulsory education, especially for out-of-school children, and of combating discrimination to promote equal opportunities. The policy emphasises early childhood care, protection and safe environments, and special protection measures for vulnerable children affected by migration, disasters or violence.



Punjab Child Protection Policy: Work-In-Progress

The Child Protection & Welfare Bureau has drafted a Punjab Child Protection Policy (pending government approval). The Punjab Child Protection Policy aims to provide a framework, direction and guidelines to ensure the protection of children from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation by strengthening existing systems and mechanisms and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of duty bearers to take collective, integrated and harmonised action to realise the child's right to protection.



Punjab Education Sector Plan (PESP) 2019/20 - 2023/24

The Punjab Education Sector Plan (PESP) 2019/20 – 2023/24 was launched by the Punjab government to address the persistent challenges in the education sector in the province, including issues related to access to education, marginalised children and out-of-school students. The Education Sector Analysis (ESA) for the PESP pointed to three persistent challenges in Punjab that prevent the public school system from achieving its vision: i) educational equity and inclusion (ii) quality (iii) governance and management. The interventions proposed in the PESP address these issues and challenges and are implemented with the following objectives: i) promoting quality education in a safe, inclusive and conducive learning environment for children ii) improving teaching and learning practises for better learning outcomes iii) providing adequate and sufficient access to education for children from pre-primary to secondary level (including marginalised children and children with special needs) and youth/adults iv) Strengthening the governance of the education sector for equitable access and quality education.

It is commendable that there are policies that show the commitment of both the Federal Government and the Punjab Government in the fight against child labour. However, a closer look at these policies reveals significant gaps in their implementation and ownership among the departments concerned. To make substantial progress, it is necessary to ensure that all relevant stakeholders take ownership of the initiatives and work together towards their successful implementation. The integration of child labour elimination goals into annual plans and budgets is critical to ensure adequate mainstreaming and resource allocation that will ultimately enable the realisation of planned targets.



Legal Framework for Child Labour in Punjab

Provincial governments are primarily responsible for combating child labour in Pakistan after the 18th amendment to the constitution in 2010. However, certain forms of child labour fall under the criminal law, allowing both the federal and provincial governments to legislate.



Constitution of Pakistan, 1973

The Constitution of Pakistan prohibits all forms of exploitation in Article 3. Article 11(3) prohibits the employment of children under 14 years of age in factories, mines or other hazardous workplaces. The Constitution also guarantees in Article 25-A the right to education for all children between the ages of five and sixteen. Article 37(e) provides that the State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and to ensure that women and children are not employed in occupations not suited to their age or sex. Article 38(c) guarantees social security, either through compulsory social insurance or other means.

National Laws

Pakistan Penal Code, 1860

The Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), 1860 is primarily concerned with prescribing criminal offences and their punishment in Pakistan. It does not specifically address child labour as an offence. Section 328-A of the PPC of 1860 criminalises the offence of cruelty to a child. Under this section, whoever inflicts cruelty on a child either by exposing him to a situation in which his life or health is endangered or by doing any act which causes him physical or mental suffering, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine or with both. In addition, Sections 370, 371A, 371B and 374 of the Penal Code 1860 regulate the prohibition of forced labour. Sections 292(B) and (C), 366A, 366B, 371A and 371B of the Penal Code 1860 govern the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

National Commission for Human Rights Act, 2012

The National Commission for Human Rights Act, 2012 establishes the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) as an independent and autonomous body responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights in the country. The Act empowers the NCHR to investigate human rights violations, has suo moto powers, can inquire into complaints and take appropriate action to protect and uphold human rights. The Commission monitors the implementation of Pakistan's international human rights obligations and makes recommendations for policy improvements. The Commission has a national jurisdiction, including Punjab.

National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017

The National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017 is an Act that established the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC). Similar to the NCHR, the NCRC is also an autonomous body mandated to promote and protect the rights of children in Pakistan. The Commission is empowered to investigate cases of child rights violations and abuses, examine policies and laws, investigate violations of children's rights, conduct research and raise awareness about children's rights. The Commission has provincial representation as a full-time member and the Child Protection & Welfare Bureau is also an ex-officio member of the Commission.

The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018

The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018 aims to combat human trafficking across the country. Anyone who recruits, harbours, transports, provides or obtains another person, or attempts to recruit, harbour, transport, provide or receive another person for the purpose of compelled labour or commercial sexual activity using force, fraud or coercion commits the offence of trafficking in persons. This is punishable by imprisonment of up to seven years, a fine of up to PKR 1 million, or both. Trafficking in a woman or child is punishable by 2-10 years imprisonment and the offence is deemed cognizable and non-bailable. Cross-border trafficking is under the jurisdiction of the FIA, while internal trafficking is under the investigative jurisdiction of the police.

Provincial Laws

Punjab Restriction on Employment Children Act, 2016

The Act defines a child as a person below the age of 15 years and prohibits the employment of children in any establishment. It states that adolescents - i.e. persons between 15 and below 18 years of age - shall not be employed in any form of hazardous work specified in the Act's Schedule of 38 occupations and the employer shall not employ or permit an adolescent to perform any hazardous work in the establishment.

The Act requires the occupier to arrange the working hours of an adolescent in such manner that they do not conflict with the timings of the educational or vocational training institution in which the adolescent is enrolled. Workers must be given a one-hour break each day and one day off per week and are not allowed not work between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. The Act requires employers to keep a register with information

about their adolescent workers, including name, age, daily working hours, break times and the type of work performed.

Violations of the Act are punishable by imprisonment of not less than seven days and up to six months and fines of not less than 10,000 rupees and up to 50,000 rupees. The penalties are harsher if a child or adolescent is engaged in any form of slavery, forced labour, debt bondage or human trafficking. In such cases, imprisonment of not less than three years and up to seven years and fines of not less than 200,000 rupees and up to 1 million rupees can be imposed. Penalties are extended for repeated offences. Under Section 14, a labour inspector can seal an establishment that violates the provisions of the Act. The Act provides that the government shall appoint a committee to be known as the Provincial Committee on Child Labour to advise the government on appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to eradicate child labour.

Features of the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016

Definition of a child	a person less than 15 years
Definition of an adolescent	a person above 15 years and less than 18 years
Minimum age for work	15 years old
Weekly Holidays	At least one whole days in a week
Prohibition on employment	A child cannot be employed in establishment and adolescent is not allowed to perform any hazardous work in establishment
Hazardous work	A schedule attached to the law identifies 38 occupations of work as hazardous
Prohibited working hours	Between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m.

Adolescent work record register	The register must contain information about the adolescent's name, age, daily working hours and break time, and the nature of work performed.
Punishment for not notifying a labour inspector or not maintaining a record of adolescents' work	Maximum 1 month imprisonment, or a fine of 10,000 rupees, or both
Punishment for employing children	Maximum 6 months imprisonment (not less than 7 days), and a fine of up to 50,000 rupees (and no less than 10,000 rupees)
Punishment for employing adolescents in hazardous occupations	Maximum 6 months imprisonment (not less than 7 days), and a fine of up to 50,000 rupees (and no less than 10,000 rupees)
Punishment for engaging children or adolescents in the worst forms of child labour	Maximum 7 years imprisonment (not less than 3 years) and a fine of up to 1 million rupees (and no less than 200,000 rupees)
Punishment for a second offense violating the law on employing children and adolescents	Maximum 5 years imprisonment (not less than 3 months) and a fine applicable for the nature of the offense

Source: The Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016

Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children's Act, 2004

The Act was enacted in 2004 by the Punjab government to protect destitute and neglected children in the province. A "destitute and neglected child" under this Act is a person below 18 years of age who meets certain criteria such as being found begging, being abused or exploited, being beyond parental control, being vulnerable due to disability or child labour, etc. The Act focuses on the rescue, custody, care, protection and rehabilitation of destitute and neglected children. These functions are carried out by the CP&WB, which operates child protection units, child protection officers, drop-in centres and child protection institutions.³² The CP&WB has also established a Child Helpline (1121) to provide prompt assistance and support to children affected by violence, exploitation,

abuse or neglect. The Bureau is also responsible for registering and monitoring child protection institutions across Punjab.

In addition, the Act mandates the establishment of Child Protection Courts, which have the power to order the appearance of a child in court, award custody to appropriate persons or institutions, issue search warrants for a child's whereabouts, and require parents to provide financial support for their child in protective custody. So far, however, only one such court has been established, located in the CP&WB premises in Lahore.

Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2014

The Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2014 aims to provide free and compulsory education to all children between 5 and 16 years

³²Child Protection & Welfare Bureau. (n.d.). <https://cpwb.punjab.gov.pk/>

of age in Punjab in accordance with Article 25(A) of the Constitution of Pakistan. The Act makes it the legal duty of parents to ensure that their children are enrolled and attend school. It also provides for the establishment of a monitoring and enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance with this obligation. The Act also provides for the establishment of a fund to support the education of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and the appointment of education officers to monitor the implementation of the Act. The Act also contains provisions for the punishment of parents who fail to fulfil their legal obligation to provide for the education of their children. If a child over the age of five has not been admitted to any school or has not been able to complete education after admission, the local government has the responsibility to develop a mechanism to ensure the child's admission to a school according to age, previous grade and other circumstances.

Punjab Social Protection Authority Act, 2015

The Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA) has been established under this Act. The PSPA is a statutory body responsible for formulating and implementing social protection policies and programmes in the province for poor and vulnerable sections of the society. This includes the formulation and implementation of social protection policies, which may include food, education, health, social assistance, social inclusion and labour market regulations. The Act aims to provide a comprehensive social protection framework that ensures identification of beneficiaries, effective coordination and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, collaboration with stakeholders, research and data collection to address poverty and inequality, and provides essential support to improve the welfare of those in need.

Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, 2016

This Act defines a child a person who has not completed the fourteenth year of age. Under this Act, it is unlawful for any person to employ or permit the employment of a child in a brick kiln or to permit or allow a child to work in any capacity in a brick kiln. Section 3 of the Act states that every engagement or appointment of a worker

requires a written contract - using a prescribed form - between the worker and the occupier/employer. This contract must specify the terms and conditions of employment or engagement, including the amount of any 'advance' (peshgi) given to the worker - i.e. money paid in advance to brick kiln workers as a form of loan that obliges the worker to provide services until he repays the advance. The contract must also specify the wage the worker will receive and the schedule for repaying the advance. The contract can be terminated by either party. The employer may give the worker an advance, but it should not exceed 50,000 rupees.

If a child older than 5 years is found working in a brick kiln during school hours, he/she shall be deemed to be employed, engaged or admitted to work in the kiln unless proved otherwise. Violation of the provisions of the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, 2016 shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than seven days and not exceeding six months and with fine which shall not be less than 50,000 rupees and not exceeding 500,000 rupees. A parent or guardian who permits his child to work in a brick kiln shall be equally liable, in addition to the employer, for the offence.

Punjab Domestic Workers Act, 2019

The Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019 aims to protect the rights of domestic workers in the province, including their wages, working hours and working conditions. The Act strictly prohibits the employment of children as domestic workers. Section 3 of the Act specifically states that no child below 15 years of age shall be employed as a domestic worker. Furthermore, a child between 15 and 17 years of age may only be employed for light work. If an employer is caught employing a child as a domestic worker, he can be fined up to 50,000 rupees. The wage of domestic workers must not be less than the minimum wage set by the government. A copy of the employment contract of each domestic worker must be sent to the labour inspector of the area where the domestic worker is employed.

Punjab Home-Based Workers Act, 2023

This Act was enacted to provide protection to rights of home-based workers. Under this Act, 'home-based worker' means a person who performs home-based work but does not include a worker engaged in explosives, poisonous or harmful chemicals and allied substances, whereas 'home-based work' means the production of goods or rendering of services by a person in his or her home or other premises of his or her choice, other than the employer's workplace, for remuneration under a written contract of employment either directly with the employer or indirectly through a contractor or intermediary. Every employer must enter into a written contract of employment with a home-based worker. Under this Act, no employer shall employ a person who has not attained the age of fifteen years as a home based worker and no employer shall also employ a person who has attained the age of fifteen years but has not attained the age of eighteen years in any employment prohibited under the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016.

Other labour laws in Punjab that apply to children at work, includes:

Mines Act, 1923

The Mines Act, 1923 deals with the working conditions and safety of workers employed in mines. The Act aims to protect workers, including children, from the hazards and risks associated with mining. It regulates conditions for the health, welfare and working hours of mine workers to prevent accidents, injuries and occupational diseases, and includes provisions for mine ventilation, adequate sanitation and the appointment of mine inspectors to monitor and enforce compliance with safety standards.

Punjab Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969

This Act regulates working conditions in shops and establishments and applicable on children working in such establishments by enforcing reasonable working hours and other work-related provisions.

Punjab Factories (Amendment) Act, 2012

This Act improves workplace safety, working conditions and welfare measures for workers, including children employed in factories. It introduces stricter regulations and safety standards to protect children and other workers from hazardous work practices. Whoever contravenes the provisions of the Mines Act, 1923, the Punjab Factories (Amendment) Act, 1934, and the Punjab Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969, relating to children or adolescents, they will be liable to the penalties specified in Section 11 of the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016.



Whoever contravenes the provisions of the Mines Act, 1923, the Punjab Factories (Amendment) Act, 1934, and the Punjab Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969, relating to children or adolescents, they will be liable to the penalties specified in Section 11 of the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016.



Punjab Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1992

This Act aims to abolish bonded labour and free people, including children, from exploitative labour arrangements. The Act was amended in 2018. It strengthens the legal provisions for the rehabilitation of bonded labourers and imposes stricter penalties on those involved in such practices.

Institutional Framework for Child Labour in Punjab



Provincial Government Agencies

Labour and Human Resource Department

The Labour and Human Resource Department in Punjab plays the leading role in the prevention and regulation of child labour in Punjab and is responsible for formulating and implementing labour-related policies, laws and regulations in the province. Its main role is to protect the rights and welfare of workers and to promote healthy labour management and labour relations, with emphasis on housing, health, safety and security of workers. It implements the government's policies and programmes for the progressive elimination of child labour and coordinates the government's efforts to combat child labour and bonded labour. The department monitors workplaces and conducts inspections to identify cases of child labour. The department also conducts surveys to collect data on child labour in the province and works to raise awareness on the issue.



There are over **100** labour inspectors in Punjab who have conducted a total of nearly **50,000** inspections in 2021. During these inspections, **1,029** cases of child labour violations were found.

However, the exact number of convictions resulting from these cases is not available. The information provided by officials indicates that the conviction rate was low.

Department of Social Welfare & Bait-ul-Maal

The Department performs its functions in sub-divisions, including Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal.

➔ Social Welfare

The Social Welfare is primarily responsible for the welfare and social development of the people in the province. Its role encompasses various social issues, including the protection and support of vulnerable groups, poverty alleviation and the promotion of social justice. It provides welfare services to women, persons with different abilities (PWDs), children, the elderly, beggars and drug addicts, etc. The department runs a number of child care institutions including model children homes (orphanages), shelter homes for destitute girls (Kashana), Centre for mentally challenged children (Chaman) and home for persons with different-abilities (Nasheman).

➔ Punjab Bait-ul-Maal

Punjab Bait-ul-Maal focuses on various areas of assistance, including providing financial assistance to the needy and PWDs, supporting non-governmental organisations, providing marriage grants to deserving individuals, facilitating medical treatment for those who lack resources, and providing educational stipends to ensure access to education for the underprivileged.

³³ Bureau of international labour affairs. (2022). 2021 findings on the worst forms of child labour.

Home Department

The Punjab Home Department is responsible for maintaining law and order, protecting life and property and administering the police. It also plays a role in protecting children from exploitation and abuse. It oversees the implementation of laws and policies relating to children in contact or in conflict with the law and ensures their fair treatment and protection of their rights throughout the criminal justice process.



In 2019, Rules of Business of Home Department were amended and the following clauses were added:
(46A) Formulation of child protection policy **(46B)** Training, sensitisation, advocacy and capacity building of stakeholders on child protection.

→ Punjab Police

The Punjab Police is the executive law enforcement agency of the Home Department. Its main functions are to maintain public safety, investigate crimes, prevent criminal activities and apprehend offenders. In child labour cases, the police are involved in both rescuing and investigating crimes when children are economically exploited in hazardous/ prohibited work, forced into work or commercially sexually exploited, or when children are trafficked domestically.

→ Child Protection and Welfare Bureau

The Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CP &WB) is an autonomous body established under the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children's Act 2004 with the objective of promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of children. It is under the administrative control of the Home Department. CP&WB provides care, rehabilitation, education and training to destitute and neglected children.

The CP&WB has established Child Protection Institutions in Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Multan, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan. It provides various services such as shelter, health care, counselling, education, vocational training and family tracing and reunification to support the children's recovery and successful reintegration into society. The CP &WB has also set up an permanent and mobile Open Reception Centres (ORCs) at strategic locations that also serve as referral points for locating and providing information on lost, runaway or abandoned children. A Children's Helpline 1121 has also been established to provide advice, assistance and coordination for the rescue and protection of children.

School Education Department

The School Education Department performs various functions including legislation, policy formulation and planning in areas such as primary education, elementary education, secondary education and higher secondary education. It is responsible for maintaining educational standards through the formulation of curricula and syllabi, the preparation and publication of textbooks and the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system that includes the distribution of free textbooks, development schemes, and ensuring the presence of teachers and non-teaching staff. The department also focuses on promoting the quality of education through assessment systems, student evaluations, scholarships and the production and distribution of educational and scientific films.

Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department

The function and role of the Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department is to promote literacy, provide non-formal education opportunities and improve basic education for those who have not received or have no access to formal schooling. The department's main focus is to meet the educational needs of marginalised populations, including youth and adults, through innovative and flexible learning approaches, including adult literacy. The department is responsible for developing

appropriate curricula, instructional materials and learning resources for literacy and non-formal basic education programmes.

Human Rights and Minorities Affairs Department

The Human Rights & Minorities Affairs Department in Punjab, is tasked with promoting and protecting human rights while upholding the rights of minority communities. This includes formulating policies, harmonising and monitoring of laws, legislation and practices with international human rights covenants and agreements, advocating for human rights and the rights of minorities, complaint handling, ensuring legal protection, raising awareness, establishing and managing the Punjab Treaty Implementing Cell.

Punjab Treaty Implementing Cell

The Punjab Treaty Implementing Cell (PTIC) has been established to fulfil the reporting obligations of the Government of Pakistan, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), UN core human rights conventions and GSP+ (Generalised System of Preferences Plus). The TIC aims to facilitate the effective implementation of the ratified conventions and ensure regular reporting on progress made. Its main tasks include: (i) developing effective mechanisms for the implementation of ratified conventions; (ii) preparing protocols for provincial line departments to document progress in implementation; (iii) assisting and guiding line departments in the preparation of standardised reporting templates and reports; (iv) coordinating with line departments in the collection and compilation of reporting data; and (v) establishing a liaison mechanism with relevant federal ministries (Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) for reporting and monitoring purposes.

Local Government and Community Development Department

The Local Government Department in Punjab plays a crucial role in governing and administration of local government systems at the provincial level. It is responsible for overseeing and coordinating various functions related to local government, urban and rural development and service delivery to communities and is also responsible for registering all births, marriages and deaths in the province through the Union Councils.

Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA)

The Punjab Social Protection Authority is an autonomous body established under the PSPAA, 2015. The Authority is mandated to formulate a social protection policy and consolidate, coordinate and implement social protection initiatives in the areas of nutrition, education, health, social assistance, social inclusion and labour market regulations. The Authority has also launched the Punjab Ehsaas Programme, based on the federal Ehsaas Strategy, to provide protection to the socially and economically vulnerable groups in Punjab.

Public Prosecution Department (PPD)

The Public Prosecution Department (PPD) was established in 2005 to structure the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service (PCPS), which is responsible for administering and recruitment of prosecutors, officers and staff through BPS -16. The performance of the PCPS is an essential component of the criminal justice system, ensuring fair trials, bringing criminals to justice and strengthening the authority of the government. PPD comprises four attached departments: the Prosecutor General Punjab, which is responsible for effective prosecution in criminal courts; the Centre for Professional Development of Prosecutors, which provides training for efficient handling of criminal cases; the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service Inspectorate, which conducts inspections focusing on compliance with laws, codes of conduct and prosecution standards; and the Punjab Legal Aid Agency, which provides legal aid to needy persons.

Planning and Development Board

The Planning & Development Board in Punjab plays a role in guiding and monitoring planning and development initiatives and is responsible for formulating development strategies, policies and plans in line with the government's vision and goals. The department coordinates and monitors development projects, assesses their feasibility and ensures their effective implementation. It conducts research, data analysis and evaluation to make evidence-based decisions. The P&D Board manages various budgets and plans related to provincial development, including the annual development programme, provincial development budget,

medium-term development framework, sectoral development plans, public sector development programmes, foreign aid and development assistance.

➔ Bureau of Statistics (BOS)

The Bureau of Statistics (BOS) is an attached department of the Planning & Development Board, Govt. of Punjab. It is the hub for statistical data activity in the province and is responsible for the collection, processing and dissemination of statistical data through periodic publications and electronic media. Standardised by the National Statistical Council, the functions of BOS are to collect data at the provincial level, coordinate and support statistical activities throughout the province, collaborate with the federal statistical system and prepare and disseminate provincial indicators by collecting information from institutional sources and conducting new censuses and surveys.

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Department

The Law & Parliamentary Affairs Department has an important role in the province's legal and legislative landscape. It provides legal support and expertise to the government, advises it on legal matters and assists in the formulation and drafting of laws. The department conducts government business in the Assembly. It also monitors and facilitates the business of private members in the Assembly. The department has a mandate to promote legislation for the public good, contributes to the administration of justice and protects and promotes the rights of citizens. The office of the Advocate General is a special institution and the Punjab Judicial Academy is an autonomous body under the administration of Law and Parliamentary Affairs Department.

Information and Culture Department

The Punjab Information and Culture Department serves as the main source of government information and disseminates news and updates through various media channels. The department maintains relations with the media, facilitates press briefings and maintains public relations to promote transparency and accountability. It promotes and preserves Punjab's cultural heritage through cultural festivals, exhibitions and

support to artists and performers. The department also promotes the development of art and literature, manages archives and museums, supports the film and entertainment industry, conducts research and documentation and uses information technology for effective communication.

The Department can play an important role by leveraging its media outreach to raise awareness about child labour, advocate for child labour eradication policies, and highlight success stories and initiatives to combat child labour in the province.

Population Welfare Department

The Population Welfare Department plays an important role in promoting and implementing family planning and reproductive health programmes. Its responsibilities include providing access to family planning services and contraceptives, providing reproductive health counselling and education, ensuring quality maternal and child health services, conducting awareness campaigns, training health care providers, conducting research and data collection, collaborating with stakeholders, participating in policy development and implementation, and monitoring and evaluating population welfare programmes.



A high population puts immense pressure on limited resources and places a significant financial burden on the government as it has to allocate significant resources to essential services such as education, health care and social welfare programmes. When resources are scarce due to the sheer size of the population, it becomes difficult for the government to adequately invest in programmes and initiatives to eliminate child labour.

Youth Affairs & Sports Department

The Youth Affairs & Sports Department in Punjab plays promotes the holistic development of youth and encouraging their active participation in various spheres. Youth is defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 years. The department focuses on youth development through programmes and training, promotes sports activities, supports youth engagement in decision-making and community development, provides skill development and employment opportunities, advocates for youth rights and concerns, promotes talent in arts and culture, and collaborates with stakeholders to effectively implement youth-related initiatives.

The Youth Affairs Department can initiate programmes that target adolescents (15-17 years) who are in hazardous employment and provide them with skills training opportunities, including professional sports, as an alternative pathway to sustainable livelihoods.

Punjab Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority

Punjab TEVTA is a government agency, established under the Act, responsible for overseeing technical education and vocational training programmes to improve the skills and employability of the region's workforce. TEVTA has a strong presence in every tehsil and district of the province in more than 150 disciplines to transform Punjab's skills landscape by providing need-based qualifications.

Provincial Committee on Child Labour

Under the Section 4 of the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016, the Punjab Government has constituted a Provincial Committee on Child Labour to advise the government for appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the eradication of child labour. The Committee consists of a chairperson, and eight members representing the government, employers, workers and civil society.

Provincial Vigilance Committee and District Vigilance Committees (DVCs)

Under the Punjab Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1992, the government is required to constitute the Provincial Vigilance Committee (PVC). The

committee is mandated to review the implementation of the Act and the action plan for abolition of bonded or freed labour and rehabilitation of persons released from bonded labour and to monitor the working of the District Vigilance Committees. The Department has already notified District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) in all districts of Punjab. The DVCs help in the implementation of the Punjab BLSA, 1992 and support the rehabilitation of bonded labourers.

Ombudsman Punjab

The Punjab Ombudsman receives and investigates complaints of injustice and maladministration, serves as a mediator between complainants and the authorities and strives for amicable settlement. The Ombudsman exercises oversight over government agencies, advocates for better government governance and raises public awareness of citizens' rights.

➡ Office of the Chief Provincial Commissioner for Children (OCPCC)

The Office of the Chief Provincial Commissioner for Children (OCPCC) works under the aegis of the Office of Ombudsman Punjab. The OCPCC has established a special redressal and response system for complaints by and about children against maladministration by government agencies, institutions or public bodies. It also advises the provincial government on systemic issues affecting children's rights and undertakes research, advocacy and collaboration with various stakeholders.

Provincial Task Force on Human Rights

The Punjab Government has set up a Provincial Task Force on Human Rights to implement and review progress of the Action Plan for Human Rights 2016. The Action Plan was prepared by the Federal Ministry of Human Rights which identifies six thematic areas for action, and identifies four priority human rights areas focusing on vulnerable sections of society, namely protection of women's rights, protection of children's rights, protection of the rights of minorities and protection of the rights of persons with different abilities (PWDs). The task force is chaired by a provincial minister of Human Rights

and Minorities Affairs with representation from all major departments and 3 members of the provincial assembly.

District Human Rights Committees

In 2019, the Governor of Punjab has set up District Human Rights Committees in all the districts of Punjab, with the Deputy Commissioner as the Chairman, while the members include Head of Prisons, District Police Officer, representatives of Health, Education, Social Welfare and Women Development and two representatives from civil society. The task of the committee is to monitor the human rights situation in the district, investigate cases of human rights violations, visit prisons, detention centres, shelters, schools and hospitals, mobilise the population and submit reports to the provincial and national task force on human rights.

Standing Committees for Government Departments

There are standing committees entrusted with important responsibilities related to government oversight, legislative scrutiny, accountability of government departments and public engagement. These committees, made up of members of the Provincial Assembly, play a central role in reviewing the performance and activities of the various government departments in the province. Some of the committees relevant to child labour and protection are the Standing Committee on Labour and Human Resource, the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Minorities Affairs, the Standing Committee on Home Affairs, the Standing Committee on School Education, the Standing Committee on Local Government and Community Development, etc.

Court System

The Labour Courts provide a specialised forum for labour-related issues, such as disputes between employers and employees, unfair labour practices, wage disputes and breaches of labour laws, including those relating to child labour. Then there are other courts in districts with general jurisdiction. They deal with a wide range of civil and criminal matters, including property disputes, contract disputes, personal injury, family matters and criminal offences.

There is the Child Protection Court (CPC), a special court established under the PDNCA, 2004 to hear and decide cases involving

destitute and neglected children. At present, there is only one Child Protection Court in the premises of CP&WB.

Federal Agencies

There are several federal agencies working with or supporting the Punjab government to address the issue of child labour. These agencies include federal ministries such as the Ministry of Overseas & HRD, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training. The federal ministries often coordinate with the provincial government to provide oversight and facilitate the implementation of national policies.

In addition, the role of Federal Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety is to develop and implement policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty and ensuring social welfare and safety nets for vulnerable populations. The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), is a safety net, operates under the Ministry, provide financial support to vulnerable and marginalised segments of society, including those in Punjab. The programme focuses on poverty alleviation and targets low-income households, especially women, through the provision of cash transfers.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) is the main official agency of Pakistan responsible for collecting, compiling and disseminating reliable and up-to-date statistical information and providing information to federal ministries, provincial governments and other organisations

UN Agencies

There are several UN agencies operating in Pakistan, focusing on different areas, but the ILO and UNICEF are specifically dedicated to child labour and child protection in the country.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

ILO has played a significant role in supporting Pakistan's efforts to eradicate child labour. In 1994, the ILO and the Government of Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the progressive elimination of child labour.³⁴ This agreement laid the foundation for the ILO's comprehensive support to combat child labour in Pakistan. The ILO has worked with the

³⁴ ILO in Pakistan (ILO in Pakistan). (n.d.). <https://www.ilo.org/islamabad/lang-en/index.htm>

Government of Pakistan, employers, workers, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to develop and implement various initiatives aimed at eliminating child labour and promoting decent work. These include direct interventions, research and data collection, capacity building, awareness raising and advocacy, social dialogue, development of policy and legal frameworks, promotion of ethically sustainable supply chains, and monitoring and reporting.



The Memorandum of Understanding on the National Programme for the Progressive Elimination of Child Labour in Pakistan

Under the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the Government of Pakistan and the ILO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the progressive elimination of child labour in June 1994. By 1997, IPEC Pakistan was the largest of more than 20 IPEC country programmes worldwide. The programme successfully completed initiatives in Pakistan's export sector (related to football production, carpet weaving and surgical equipment) and at the local level (related to deep-sea fishing, leather tanning, domestic work, coal mines, rag-picking, automotive- workshops, glass bangles, brick kilns, etc).

UNICEF

UNICEF engagement in Pakistan encompasses a wide range of programmes and initiatives aimed at improving the lives of children and protecting their rights.³⁵ UNICEF Education programme focuses on improving access to quality education for all children. UNICEF Child Protection focuses on safeguarding children's rights and protecting them from exploitation and abuse. It supports policy and legal reforms, strengthens child protection systems and provides support for vulnerable children. UNICEF Social Policy Programme supports social protection programmes that target vulnerable children and families. UNICEF has also played an important role in supporting provincial governments to conduct child labour surveys; two surveys have been published so far, in Punjab and GB.

Civil Society Organisations

In Pakistan, there are a large number of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working for child rights and child protection in Pakistan. Some work at the national level, some at provincial level and other at community with all having different set of expertise and contributing by level of their expertise such as by conducting research and developing knowledge-base, public mobilisation, advocacy, legislative and policy reforms, direct support to vulnerable families, and the opening of regular or non-formal schools that ultimately aim to eradicate this harmful practise of child labour. There are also other civil society organisations working for decent work and trying to raise the issue of child labour, including employers' organisations, trade unions, the media, etc.

The collective efforts of civil society organisations in Pakistan are helping to create a safer and more inclusive environment for children, promoting access to education for all and empowering vulnerable communities to break the cycle of child labour.

³⁵ UNICEF Pakistan. (2023, July 18). UNICEF Pakistan. <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/>

Project Partnership Between Better Cotton and Search for Justice

Better Cotton's partnership with Search for Justice in 2023, supported by the Better Cotton Growth & Innovation Fund's Knowledge Partner Fund, aims to prevent child labour in Rahim Yar Khan,³⁶ Punjab. This 18-month project primarily focuses on improving the skills of 195 field workers. The project aims to differentiate between age-appropriate child involvement and exploitative child labour at the farm level. In addition, field staff will be mentored and trained to enable them to identify, monitor and take corrective measures against child labour, including increased awareness of the relevant legal and institutional frameworks.

Punjab's Efforts against Child Labour

Child labour is a complex issue involving different agencies according to their roles and responsibilities. While it is not possible to enumerate all the projects and efforts undertaken by governments, UN and civil society organisations, a number of important interventions and initiatives have emerged from reviewing the literature and key informant interviews. These notable efforts shed light on the diverse approaches being taken to combat child labour and its related challenges in Punjab.

The tragic murder of child labour activist Iqbal Masih in a small village in Pakistan's Punjab province in 1995 served as a catalyst for change in the carpet weaving and football industries in the region. His death attracted international attention and condemnation, prompting industries to take action against child labour. With the support of organisations such as the ILO and the UNICEF, industries committed to eliminate child labour from their supply chains.

- In the football industry of Sialkot, a city in Pakistan, a programme was launched in 1997 to eliminate child labour from the football sewing process. As part of this initiative, companies opened their factories to monitoring. Today, more than 95% of football exports from Pakistan come from companies that were part of this programme, effectively eliminating child labour in the industry.³⁷ The success of the programme has led to improved working conditions, better product quality and a positive image for the industry.
- While the football industry has largely succeeded in eradicating child labour, carpet weaving has faced greater challenges as the work is decentralised and home-based. Nevertheless, concerted efforts have been made to curb child labour in carpet weaving. The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association, with the support of the ILO and NGOs, established over 300 schools to provide education to some 14,000 children involved in carpet production. Although progress has been remarkable, the industry acknowledges that there is still more work to be done.



³⁶ Ndure, I. (2023, August 11). Better Cotton, Search For Justice to combat child labour in Pakistan. Just Style. <https://www.just-style.com/news/better-cotton-search-for-justice-to-combat-child-labour-in-pakistan/?cf-view>

³⁷ Keyinformant interview with ILO representative in Lahore

- The Punjab Labour Department has set up a legal aid office to provide legal assistance to bonded labourers in the brick kiln industry. Two bonded labour elimination projects were also successfully completed in six districts of Punjab (Lahore, Kasur, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Gujrat and Sargodha).³⁸ These projects helped workers acquire computerised national identity cards and supported non-formal basic education, hygiene facilities and access to micro-credit and legal aid services. In addition, a special drive was launched to enrol workers' children in schools. The Punjab Social Protection Authority provided cash benefits to the families of about 80,000 children.
- Since 1995, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal National Child Labour Rehabilitation Centres have been established across the country.³⁹ The aim of these centres is to lift children out of child labour, including its worst forms, and to enable vulnerable children to access education. Bait-ul-Mal's initiatives also include a pioneering child support programme.
- Number of initiatives were launched in Sialkot to address hazardous and exploitative labour in surgical manufacturing which has helped reduce child labour in one of the country's major export industries. Direct action programmes had offered non-formal education and pre-vocational training to children working in surgical instrument workshops. Participation in these programmes has led to a significant reduction in children's working hours, and improvement in working conditions for workers.
- Take a Child to School (TACS) was a flagship programme of the British Council. It was launched in 2014 with the aim of enrolling

185,000 out-of-school children across Pakistan.⁴⁰ Seven and a half years later, the programme celebrated the successful completion of the II phase with a list of achievements including the enrolment of 471,269 out-of-school children from Pakistan's most rural and remote areas. The programme maintained a minimum enrolment rate of 75% since its inception. The backbone of the programme was formed by the 24 local civil society partner organisations that act as implementing partners and three strategic partners spread across four provinces and 65 districts.

- In 2015, the ILO and the Government of the Netherlands formed a partnership to revitalise Pakistan's labour inspection machinery to revitalise it. This project helped strengthen the legal framework and institutional capacity of the labour inspection apparatus in Punjab and other provinces of Pakistan to advance the implementation of labour laws, including those on child labour.⁴¹
- The European Union co-funded project "CLEAR Cotton – Eliminating Child Labour and Forced Labour in the Cotton, Textile and Garment Value Chain: An Integrated Approach" contributed to the elimination of all forms of child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains.⁴² It combines integrated area-based and value chain approaches to work with governments, social partners, farmers, communities and industries. It has contributed to (i) research, knowledge and policy development, (ii) capacity building and awareness raising, (iii) the implementation of laws against child and forced labour, (iv) the development of monitoring and remedial mechanisms, (v) the direct withdrawal of child labourers and the prevention of child labour, (vi) improving children's access to education, and (vii) strengthening alternative skills in cotton producing communities.
- The initiative, "Mazdoor ka Ehsaas", is part of the national Ehsaas programme and aims to develop social protection measures for workers in the informal economy. It envisages providing these workers with a monthly unconditional cash transfer of PKR 4,000 to motivate them to keep their children in school.⁴³ This approach is intended to combat child labour, especially in the brick kiln sector.

³⁸ International Labour Organization. (2021). Pakistan's journey towards the elimination of child labour: A timeline.

³⁹ Government of Pakistan. (2023). Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23. from https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_2023.html

⁴⁰ 7 years of ILMPOSSIBLE | British Council. (n.d.). <https://www.britishcouncil.pk/7-years-ilmpossible>

⁴¹ International Labour Organization. (2021). Pakistan's journey towards the elimination of child labour: A timeline.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ A. (2019, May 1). 'Mazdoor Ka Ehsaas' programme launched for workers' social protection: PM Imran. The News International. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/465653-mazdoor-ka-ehsaas-programme-launched-for-workers-social-protection-pm-imran>

⁴⁴ Meeting with Key Informant (Executive Director) of Search for Justice

- Search for Justice (SFJ) specialises in child protection and has been tirelessly engaged in continuous advocacy and lobbying, which has significantly raised awareness of the issue of child domestic labour (CDL) as a grave concern. SFJ established the Provincial Coordination Forum for ending child domestic labour and promoted networking among civil society organisations under the umbrella of the Children Advocacy Network (CAN Pakistan) and capacity building among implementers and the media.⁴⁴ These efforts have borne fruit as Search for Justice is now working closely with the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau to initiate legislative reforms and administrative measures to protect children. This significant change will facilitate the speedy rescue and recovery of CDL victims.

These and many other projects have played a crucial role in bringing about positive change in several key areas. One notable achievement has been the improvement of the Punjab legal framework, as these projects have led the government to revise and improve laws on child labour and worst forms of child labour. This progress reflects the growing recognition of the urgent need to address the problem of child labour and create a protective environment for children. In addition, these projects have contributed significantly to raising awareness and fostering a deeper understanding of child labour among various stakeholders.

Despite the success, there have been a number of challenges in implementing the projects due to the complex and multi-layered nature of child labour. One major challenge is the timeframe and scope of the time-limited projects, which are often unable to fully address the deep-rooted problem within their limited duration. These interventions struggle to make a lasting impact, as sustainable change requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the timeframe of the project. Moreover, ensuring government ownership and long-term commitment to the cause remains a hurdle, reflected in a lack of consistent funding and dependence on the ILO and other donors.

Furthermore, the nature of child labour is diverse and interconnected, requiring a multi-faceted approach. While some actions focus on awareness raising and advocacy, others must require effective regulatory enforcement and policy enforcement to address hazardous and exploitative practises. Withdrawal of children from work requires not only educational opportunities but also livelihood alternatives for families. The interconnectedness of these challenges underscores the need for coordinated efforts across sectors and stakeholders to comprehensively address child labour, as we have seen in the case of Sialkot, where even private sector companies, including manufacturers and exporters in the soccer ball industry, have adopted ethical practises and made efforts to eliminate child labour from their supply chains. However, this cooperation and collaboration between the various authorities remains one of the greatest challenges to be overcome, as projects carried out in isolation have little impact on the province as a whole.



⁴⁴ Meeting with Key Informant (Executive Director) of Search for Justice

Challenges and Gaps

In Punjab, despite policies, laws and different departments to address child labour, a significant number of children still remain engaged in labour, including hazardous work, as reported by the Punjab Child Labour Survey 2019-20. Moreover, a large population of children being out-of-schools are at risk of being forced to work in the near future. This situation highlights a disconnect between existing efforts and their practical implementation. This chapter examines the causes and factors contributing to child labour and identifies the key gaps and challenges that perpetuate this problem in Punjab.



Intergenerational Poverty and Lack of Viable Alternatives

Poverty plays an important role in driving child labour. Limited work opportunities and low wages for adults trap families in a cycle of poverty, resulting in children being pushed into labour at a young age with little access to education and social protection to escape this misery. Child labour, in turn, perpetuates poverty by hindering children's long-term development. Furthermore, families in extreme poverty are highly dependent on their children's income for their daily survival, making it difficult to invest in education and skills development. The PCLS 2019-20 also highlights the strong link between household wealth and child labour.

To break this cycle of poverty, it is important to address immediate needs and implement sustainable solutions to empower poor families and improve their socio-economic conditions for the future. However, the real challenge is the lack of rehabilitation and viable alternatives for working children. Free education initiatives provide some relief but do not cover all education costs, leaving families struggling to meet the financial requirements for their children to attend school. When children contribute to the family income, it becomes even more difficult for parents to pull them away from work. In addition, the short-term economic pressures many families face lead them to prioritise immediate survival needs over the long-term benefits of education. Available government schemes such as Bait-ul-Maal and the Ehsaas programme, while useful, often reach only a small proportion of the population, leaving a significant number of needy people without adequate protection. The limited reach of these social protection schemes is not sufficient to address and eliminate child labour.

Lack of Access to Quality Education

Access to quality education plays a crucial role in reducing child labour any part of the world. Limited access to education is a major contributing factor to child labour, as inadequate school infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers and the associated costs discourage children from attending school and leave them with few alternatives to work. Findings from the PCLS 2019-20 survey underscore the crucial link between education and child labour. They show

that children and adolescents in households where the head of household has no schooling are more likely to have no schooling themselves. Moreover, the percentage of child labour decreases as the level of education of the household head increases. 41.9 per cent of child labour takes place in households where the household head has at most a pre-school education, compared to 11.9 per cent in households where the household head has a higher education.

Lack of Systems Approach

The lack of a functioning system that addresses child labour in a holistic and comprehensive manner is a significant obstacle in addressing this critical issue. It is important to recognise that child labour is not an isolated problem, but a complex issue with deeper causes. While the labour department plays an important role in addressing the problem through regulations and monitoring, preventing child labour requires the active involvement of the education department. By ensuring that all children between the ages of 5 and 16 have access to education, the number of working children can be significantly reduced. In addition, financial constraints that impede children's education or force them to drop out of school or when the labour department rescues or recovers children from labour, should trigger the involvement of social protection systems. However, these systems often lack connectivity or clear eligibility requirements, and departments face financial constraints that benefit only a few. Child labour is further exacerbated by the lack of coordination and collaboration between government agencies. To address child labour comprehensively, there is an urgent need for a robust case management and referral system enforced across Punjab, allowing for seamless case transfer between departments.

Limited Accessibility and Outreach

The review of literature identified two significant challenges within the current institutional framework. Firstly, concerns arise about accessibility and coverage. Labour inspectors predominantly focus on specific industries, resulting in gaps in monitoring child labour across diverse sectors. Additionally, the CP&WB does not have physical presence in every district. Secondly, a notable challenge stems from the underused potential of existing structures, like

Local Governments present in all districts, in addressing child labour and overseeing child protection issues. Notably, despite Punjab's compulsory education law mandating support for the Department of Education, local governments seem to underutilize this responsibility. This situation calls for a reassessment and rejuvenation of their roles in enforcing child protection and education.

Economic Inequalities

The cumulative analysis of rural/urban poverty in all the provinces shows that the poverty level in Punjab has decreased as compared to other provinces between 2006-07 and 2018-19. However, the comparative analysis of South Punjab and North Punjab shows that the poverty level in South Punjab districts is much higher than North Punjab districts, including Rajanpur, D.G. Khan, Muzaffargarh, Bhawalpur, Bhawalnagar and Rahim Yar Khan.

The same problem exists between urban and rural areas. 59 per cent of Punjab's population lives in rural areas (2023 Census), which have higher poverty rates and lower socio-economic indicators compared to urban districts. The urban-rural divide makes the population more vulnerable to economic hardships, which further increases the likelihood of child labour.

It is extremely important to expand and implement targeted development programmes in economically disadvantaged regions to improve infrastructure, create employment opportunities and increase access to education and social services.

In addition, the survey also highlights the impact of maternal education on school attendance. It shows that children whose mothers have no education are less likely to attend school. Conversely, school attendance increases with the mother's level of education. These findings underscore the importance of promoting access to education as a means of empowering children, breaking the cycle of child labour and promoting a better and more promising future for the children of Punjab.

Gaps in Punjab's Legal Framework

Despite commendable progress in Punjab with the introduction of laws to prohibit and regulate child labour post the 18th Constitutional

Amendment, there are still inconsistencies that require attention. The different ages for children in different laws create confusion and lack of harmonisation. For example, while the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016, the Punjab Domestic Workers Act, 2019, and the Punjab Home-based Workers Act, 2023, define the age of child as below 15 years, the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, 2016, defines the age as below 14 years. This age discrepancy of child labour laws is in further conflict with the compulsory school age of 5 to 16 years as per the Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2014, and Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan, which calls for alignment and clarity of the legal framework.

Existing laws do not cover all occupations, leaving certain vulnerable sectors unregulated and children exposed to exploitation, where there is no employer - employee relationship, with most children working in agriculture. In addition, crucial aspects such as referral, recovery and rehabilitation are not adequately addressed and guided in the existing laws. The lack of robust complaint mechanisms also hinders timely intervention and redress for affected children. Child labour laws have not been notified leading to ambiguity and inefficiency in enforcement, while the role of different government agencies in combating child labour is not sufficiently identified.

In addition, there is an urgent need to regulate the rights of children aged 15-17, as they are often not adequately protected and supported, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Moreover, the scope of the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2004, concerning child labour, is limited and does not adequately address the issue. Finally, the institutional frameworks proposed in each law may not be fully functional or available in all districts, further hindering the effective implementation and protection of children's rights.

Weak Enforcement of Laws

The weak enforcement of child labour laws in Punjab is influenced by several factors. First, compliance with laws prohibiting child labour is hampered by lack of awareness and sensitivity among the population. Many parents and employers are unaware of the existence of laws

against child labour. Secondly, institutional arrangements for enforcing child labour laws are either inadequate or in some cases non-functional due to a lack of coordination between different government agencies.

There is a chronic shortage of labour inspectors, resulting in an insufficient presence on the ground to effectively monitor and enforce the regulations. Also because the Punjab government allocates inadequate resources and investment in social sector to combat child labour. This scarcity of resources impacts operations such as lack of inspectors to conduct inspections regularly and limited support for rescued children. Many of the allocated government funds are used for non-development related expenditures.

In Punjab, there are also concerns about overlapping mandates and management of resources between different departments and agencies which affects implementation. Overlapping responsibilities and similar mandates lead to inefficiencies and leakages in resource utilisation and should be addressed. Departments and agencies should complement each other rather than compete with each other.

Another challenge is the low conviction rate in child labour cases. Obtaining evidence can be cumbersome and penalties for violations of these laws are relatively low, further undermining deterrence. The lack of accountability of officials responsible for enforcing child labour laws compounds the problem. Similarly, parents are not penalised for not sending their children to schools, despite legal provisions mandating compulsory education.

Disconnect between Policy Formulation and Implementation

The government's failure to integrate international treaties and policies into actionable plans in its annual planning process is a significant obstacle to effectively addressing important issues such as human rights and labour standards. This lack of integration not only hinders the potential for meaningful change, but also highlights the disconnect between policy formulation and implementation, raising concerns about the seriousness of the government's commitment to these important issues. Although significant resources have been allocated to the

development and adoption of such policies over time, their impact remains limited due to the lack of a coherent and coordinated approach to implementation. Based on current indicators, Pakistan is unlikely to achieve many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 8.7.

Social Acceptance

Social norms and cultural factors play an important role in perpetuating child labour in Punjab and throughout Pakistan. Traditional beliefs and the expectation that children contribute to the family income normalise child labour practices and hinder efforts to eradicate it. The worrying social acceptance of child labour in Pakistan further exacerbates the problem, as many employers justify it and are unaware of its illegality and harmful consequences. Parents may also find it acceptable to have their children work, as they have grown up with child labour and have no idea of protective laws and measures. These views fail to recognise the long-term harmful effects of child labour on their children and as well as on society.

Lack of Investment in Social Sector

The declining allocations to the social sector over the years, from 19.43 per cent in 2016-17 to 15.13 per cent in 2020-21, coupled with a real decline of 5 per cent, indicate a worrying scenario.⁴⁵ This situation has serious implications for vulnerable groups in Punjab, making it difficult for them to break out of the cycle of poverty and exploitation.

While Punjab's expenditure on education has increased somewhat in the financial year 2021-22 compared to the previous five years, the increase in development expenditure has been relatively small. Given the overall economic situation and currency depreciation, the budget leave a limited a scope for improvement in key reforms.

⁴⁵ Ejaz. (n.d.). Social Sector Budget Allocation in the Punjab 2016-17 to 2020-21 . Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives.

Punjab Expenditure on Education (in Million)

Years	Current Expenditures	Development Expenditures	Total
2016-17	221,049	39,593	260,642
2017-18	295,893	44,910	340,803
2018-19	339,402	32,413	371,815
2019-20	337,562	35,378	372,940
2020-21	348,560	32,964	381,424
2021-22	389,264	46,535	435,799

Source: Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23

It is worth highlighting that the budget allocated to the Punjab Labour Department, which is not part of the social sector budget, remains inadequate to effectively fulfil the Department's mandate in managing the large labour force. With an annual budget of only 777 million in 2021-22 and a revised budget of 1022 million for 2022-23, the available resources were insufficient to adequately address child labour and improve the labour situation in the province.

Impact of Internal and Inter-Provincial Migration

Punjab is the most populous province of Pakistan and experiences considerable internal and inter-provincial migration. People move from rural to urban areas, from smaller towns to large cities and from other provinces to Punjab in search of better opportunities and living conditions. Seasonal factors such as agricultural cycles also influence migration patterns. For example, during the harvest season, there may be a temporary migration of labour to agricultural areas to meet the demand for agricultural work.

However, these migration practices have a notable impact on children. While some children benefit from the better opportunities and access to better education and health care in urban areas when parents can afford it, others face challenges due to overcrowding and limited resources. The influx of migrants puts pressure on urban infrastructure and makes it difficult for the municipality to provide basic services to the

growing population, especially those living in urban slums without essential amenities, many of whom are illegal. A major problem is the lack of a system to register or report to the authorities. This leaves children unprotected and without access to education or other facilities. This difficult economic situation forces them to work and support their families financially.

Lack of Population Control

Continued population growth and the lack of effective population control measures is a worrying situation that could lead to a possible increase in child labour in the coming years. Families with financial resources tend to have smaller family sizes, while economically disadvantaged families often have larger families. In 2017, Punjab's population was 110 million, but according to the latest estimates by the Population Welfare Department Punjab, it has now crossed 125 million. This rapid population growth is putting immense pressure on available resources and infrastructure in the region. As

population density increases, the challenges of combating child labour become even more complex as resources are scarce, making it difficult to effectively implement and enforce child protection measures. Concerted efforts are needed to prioritise population control measures that safeguard the welfare and future of children in Punjab.

Dominance of the Informal Sector

The informal sector in Punjab contributes significantly to child labour due to its unregulated nature and the prevalence of low-skilled, labour-intensive work. The informal sector includes agriculture, construction, street vendors, home-based and domestic work, seasonal and temporary work, family farms and informal supply chains etc. Low wages are often paid in this sector, making it attractive for employers to hire children at even lower wages than adult workers contribute to the persistence of child labour.

Gaps in Data Collection

The Punjab government deserves credit for undertaking the child labour survey (PCLS 2019-20), an important initiative to build understanding about child labour in the region. The fact that this survey was conducted more than two decades later underlines the need for regular data collection and monitoring. To ensure a more comprehensive and coherent approach, the collection of information on child labour should be included in the regular surveys of the Bureau of Statistics. In addition, local authorities should also play an important role in collecting data at the municipality level since they have presence at the grass-roots level. It is recommended that data collection and sharing should be encouraged between agencies, for example polio workers visit regularly to all households for vaccination, and information they collect can be used by other agencies. This will enable the government to gain timely insights into child engagement, out-of-school children and child labour in order to identify emerging trends and develop targeted prevention and intervention strategies.

Sustainability of Project Interventions

A review of the projects initiated in Punjab over the last ten years on the issue of child labour and bonded labour reveals the issue of sustainability and continuity beyond project period. While

these projects demonstrate impressive results and positive impact during their implementation phase, the real challenge arises when the external funding comes to an end. Without continued financial support and resources, it becomes difficult to maintain the momentum and progress made. In many cases, the success of these initiatives depends on the uninterrupted continuity of direct interventions and engagement with target groups as well as with policy makers over extended period, especially in areas where long-term solutions are essential. Project closures not only hinders the ability to achieve their intended goals, but also undermines the positive changes they have brought to target communities and beneficiaries.

Lack of Political Will

The problem of child labour in Punjab reflects a lack of political will to tackle this pressing issue. Child labour is often a low priority on the government's agenda and receives limited attention and resources. While international commitments and pledges such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are bringing the issue into the spotlight, progress in addressing child labour remains remarkably slow.

Nonetheless, historical precedents show that tangible results can be achieved when government is truly committed to combating child labour. A compelling example is the transformation in Sialkot, where child labour in football and surgery has been significantly reduced thanks to the priority the government has given to the issue. By implementing targeted initiatives and promoting cooperation between different stakeholders, the government has achieved success in protecting children.

Lack of Children's Representation

The lack of political representation for children or their protection concerns in the Punjab Assembly or at the cabinet level is another obstacle to effectively tackling child labour. Amidst the myriad competing priorities and agendas of politicians, children's concerns are often marginalised. This lack of dedicated representation marginalises important discussions and actions to combat child labour and hinders the prioritisation of necessary reforms and actions in this critical area. This overlooks the critical need to strengthen children's voices and rights within legislative and policy-making spheres.

International Day of the Girl Child

11th October, 2023

INVEST IN GIRLS' RIGHTS:
OUR LEADERSHIP, OUR WELL-BEING



Recommendations for Action

The elimination of child labour should be of paramount importance as it has irreversible consequences for present and future generations. Effectively addressing and combating child labour requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged, integrated and collaborative approach. And it requires sustained efforts and commitment.

Policy and Law Reforms

- It is strongly recommended that Punjab's labour laws, education laws and child protection laws be harmonised and aligned to provide a comprehensive legal framework.
- It is important to raise the minimum age of employment to 16 years in (i) Punjab Restriction on Employment Children Act, 2016, (ii) Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act, 2016 (iii) Punjab Domestic Workers Act, 2019 (iv) Punjab Home-Based Workers Act, 2013, which should be in line with Article 25 (A) of the Constitution of Pakistan and Punjab Free and Compulsory Education, Act, 2014.
- It is recommended to amend the Punjab Restriction on Employment Children Act, 2016 to extend the scope of the term "establishment" to all occupations and various types of work so that no vulnerable sector or work remains unregulated e.g. agriculture.
- It is recommended that all laws on child labour in Punjab and the provisions dealing with the employment of children in various labour laws be combined into one law.
- Make amendments in labour laws to strengthen the powers of labour inspectors. Labour inspectors should be given more powers to carry out on-site inspections without prior notice or information.
- The role of the various departments dealing with the different aspects of child labour should be incorporated in child labour laws.
- The scope of the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2004 should be widened and not limited only to destitute and neglected children as CP&WB is the main child protection agency in Punjab and all children in need of protection should be added to the mandate of CP&WB. It is suggested that the term 'child abuse' be included to cover various types of child abuse including economic exploitation, child trafficking and/or exploitative, domestic or commercial child labour.
- The Punjab government should either amend the PDNCA, 2004, or its rules to create a robust and effective case management and referral system in Punjab.
- The Punjab government should notify rules for Punjab Domestic Workers Act, 2019, Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016, Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns, 2016 and Home-Based Workers Act, 2023.
- Light work should be defined in the context of child labour in domestic work. The details of the work that does and does not fall under light work should be explicitly stated in Punjab Domestic Workers Act, 2019 e.g. the type of work that is permitted or not permitted, working hours, etc.
- Review and revise the hazardous work defined under "Schedule" appended to the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act, 2016. The schedule does not enlist all types of hazardous work e.g. auto workshops. It is also recommended that the Schedule is reviewed every year.
- Review and revise penalties for child labour violations to ensure that they serve as effective deterrents.
- There is a need to integrate child labour elimination and prevention strategies in the education and social protection policies of the government.
- The Punjab Government should adopt a Child Protection and Child Labour Policy that provides the provincial government and other stakeholders with a framework and structured approach for dealing with child protection and child labour issues.

Laws Enforcement

- It is recommended that SOPs be developed while strengthening the inter-agency cooperation among the labour department, CP&WB, education department, literacy and non-formal basic education department, social welfare department, local government, law enforcement agencies, etc. These concerted efforts should create a robust case management and referral system that is accessible to all children in need of support and protection and allows for seamless referral of cases between departments for comprehensive support.
- Create child-friendly and accessible reporting mechanisms for child labour and child protection violations, linked with case management and referral system.

- It is important to promote collaboration while addressing overlapping responsibilities and mandates between different departments and agencies and establish a mechanism for resource sharing and coordination to optimise efforts and minimise duplication with agencies with similar mandates.
- There is a pressing need to improve the monitoring and inspection system to identify and report child labour through a collaborative approach involving police, social workers, local government officials and community-based organisations.
- There must be a ban on child domestic labour for public office holders, public representatives and political office holders. Admission to public places such as hotels, restaurants, wedding halls, parks, playgrounds, public transport and car parks should be banned for adults accompanied by child domestic labour, and these prohibitions should be publicly displayed.
- A neighbourhood watch system should be introduced so that individuals can report cases of child domestic labour to the relevant authorities. A neighbourhood watch system should not replace the state monitoring system but complement it.
- It is recommended that a sufficient number of inspectors be trained in all districts to be responsible for the enforcement of child labour laws.
- Leverage the collective strength of Punjab's various departments, including those that do not have a direct mandate on child labour, such as Information, Youth Affairs and Sports, Population Women's Development, etc to actively contribute to the fight against child labour through strategic engagement and collaboration.
- The government must use the findings from the child labour survey to formulate region-specific policies that effectively close education gaps and expand the reach of safety nets. The government should increase financial incentives and conditional cash transfers for families in economic hardship to encourage school attendance in targeted areas especially districts in South Punjab.
- Implement initiatives to empower girls and provide equal opportunities for education and skills development to combat gender-based child labour.
- Implement targeted reforms to address the root causes of dropouts and out-of-school children, particularly in marginalized communities and also provide essential educational goods to reduce the financial burden on families.

Investment in Social Sector

- Develop comprehensive long-term economic plans that emphasise the role of social sector investments in human capital development and economic growth.
- Increase the development budget of the Labour Department to strengthen its capacity to effectively implement labour laws and initiatives to combat child labour.
- The Punjab government should prioritise the social sector and increase budgetary allocations for education, health, social welfare and social protection to adequately address the needs of vulnerable groups, including CP&WB, as they are the lead child protection agency in the province.
- Allocate a higher percentage of the budget towards development expenditures in the education sector to improve infrastructure, teacher training, and access to quality education.
- The government should develop an incentive-based approach to encourage families to send their children to school instead of pushing them to work.
- Engage NGOs, INGOs and donors and encourage public-private partnerships to boost investment in the social sector and to provide additional support and resources in addressing child labour challenges.

Capacity Building and Awareness Raising

- Capacity building of duty bearers and stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, legislative bodies, government departments and civil society organisation on the legal framework for child protection in Punjab.
- Enhance public awareness and education on child rights and child protection through effective media engagement.
- Campaigns on the unlawfulness of child labour should be conducted regularly. Just as with other crimes, people should be made aware that the employment of children is unacceptable. Disseminate information about the legal provisions prohibiting child labour and the importance of children's education and well-being.
- Conduct targeted awareness campaigns to inform communities about the long-term benefits of education and the dangers of child labour.
- Involve local leaders, influencers and community members in promoting the importance of education and protecting children from exploitative labour.
- Law reforms advocacy with the members of provincial assembly to address inconsistencies with the Punjab legal framework on child labour.
- Policy advocacy to highlight the importance of social sector investments in poverty reduction and sustainable development.
- Engage with Information Department Punjab, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, PEMRA to raise awareness about child labour issues and the importance of educating children.
- Empower children and youth to advocate for their rights and participate in decision-making processes through child-led initiatives and forums.
- Integrate child rights and child labour education programmes into school curricula to inform students about their rights and the consequences of child labour.



Research



Conduct a comprehensive study to explore the role of local government in developing child protection services at the Tehsil and Union Council level. This study should include a thorough analysis of successful models from other countries to provide valuable recommendations and best practises.



The Bureau of Statistics conducts regular child labour surveys to assess the prevalence and patterns of child labour in Punjab. Furthermore, it is important to assess the impact of the various programmatic interventions, whether they improve the situation and reduce child labour in the province.



Integrate child labour questions in household surveys and other relevant data collection exercises with existing surveys and data collection efforts by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and Punjab Bureau of Statistics.



Encourage collaboration and data sharing among different government agencies, such as polio workers, local government, labour department, education department, Social Welfare Department and child protection agencies, etc to leverage and share data for child labour insights..



Conduct a study on the effectiveness and efficiency of District Vigilance Committees in Punjab in eradicating child labour in Punjab.



Conduct a study on migration patterns in Punjab and linkages to education and child labour.



It is recommended that follow-up research be conducted on child labour in industries and occupations, highlighted in the PCLS 2019-20, to gain further insights into child labour in these sectors.

REFERENCES

- Punjab Child Labour Survey 2019-20 Report. (2022). Labour & HRD, Bureau of Statistics, UK Aid, UNICEF.
- International Labour Organization. (2022). A study of deficits in the fundamental principles and rights at work in the brick kiln supply chain.
- National Commission on the Rights of Child . (2022). Policy Brief on the Legal Framework for Child Domestic Labour in Pakistan.
- Fernandes Faria. (2010, September). Why is child labour detrimental for children? Institute for Educational Development.
- National Commission on the Rights of Child . (2023). Policy Brief on Child Online Protection.
- Government of Pakistan. (2023). Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23. from https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_2023.html
- International Labour Organization. (2023). Rapid assessment of child labour in automobile repair workshops in Pakistan.
- BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR AFFAIRS. (2022). 2021 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR.
- International Labour Organization, Group Development Pakistan. (2022). Ethical & Quality Reporting on Child labour.
- National Commission on the Rights of Child . (2023). Policy Brief on Street-Connected Children
- International Labour Organization. (2021). Pakistan's journey towards the elimination of child labour:A timeline.
- UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange. (2022). Pakistan (Punjab) Education Fact Sheets I 2022.
- Ejaz. (n.d.). Social Sector Budget Allocation in the Punjab 2016-17 to 2020-21 . Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives.
- ILO, UKAID. (2023). Rapid assessment of child labour in waste-picking in Pakistan.
- ILO, UKAID. (2023). Assessing the capacity of law enforcement agencies to address child labour in Pakistan.

ACRONYMS

BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme	PCPS	Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	PDNCA	Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children's Act
CCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
CESCR	Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	PESP	Punjab Education Sector Plan
CLAHW	Child Labour and Adolescent Hazardous Work	PIP	Provincial Implementation Plan
CLS	Child Labour Survey	PPC	Pakistan Penal Code
CP&WB	Child Protection and Welfare Bureau	PPD	Public Prosecution Department
CPC	Child Protection Court	PCPS	Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Child	PTA	Pakistan Telecommunication Authority
DLC	District Labour Committee	PTIC	Punjab Treaty Implementing Cell
DVC	District Vigilance Committee	PSLM	Pakistan Social & Living Standard Measurement Survey
ESA	Education Sector Analysis	PSPA	Punjab Social Protection Authority
EU	European Union	PSPAA	Punjab Social Protection Authority Act
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency	PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences	SFJ	Search for Justice
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory	SWD	Social Welfare Department
ILO	International Labour Organization	TEVTA	Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation	UN	United Nations
LAJA	Legal Aid and Justice Authority	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys	WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labour
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding		
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly		
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority		
NCHR	National Commission for Human Rights		
NCRC	National Commission on the Rights of Child		
NGO	Non-government Organisation		
OCPCC	Office of Chief Provincial Commissioner for Children		
OOSC	Out-of-School Children		
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health		
PAP	Provincial Action Plan		
PCLS	Punjab Child Labour Survey		



Reforms needed to promote child protection

Our correspondent
LAHORE

LEGISLATIVE reforms, administrative actions and coordinated forums are needed to promote the protection of children.

Consistent and unintermittent legislative and administrative measures are needed to protect children especially those who fall victim to cruelty as domestic workers.

Executive Director of Search for Justice Iftikhar Mubarak shared that a case management and referral system for child domestic labour and child abuse is a critical component of protecting children in these vulnerable situations.

Such a system should be developed with aim to ensure that cases of child abuse are properly identified, reported, and managed, and that appropriate referrals are made to relevant organisations and agencies for assistance and intervention.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

Rashida Qureshi, child rights activist and Focal Person for Children Advocacy Network-CAN Pakistan, stressed the need to establish collaboration between different organisations involved in child protection, such as child welfare services, law enforcement, healthcare providers, legal aid organisations, and NGOs.

She stressed for defining clear protocols for information sharing, joint investigations, and coordinated interventions.

Member National Commission for Human Rights (Punjab) Nadeem Ashraf demanded the government focus on devising and implementing a programme which are designed with aim to economically empower marginalised segments of society.



LAHORE
Sunset 06:28 pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 05:37 am
NEXT 24 HRS
Minimum 28.0°C
Maximum 35.0°C
AQI Sunny Weather
Maximum (Yesterday) 35.0°C
Staff Reporter

Plea for effective legislation to outlaw domestic child labour

LAHORE: Law, rights, psychological experts and representatives of children have jointly urged the government to take urgent legislative measures to effectively outlaw domestic child labour.

During a provincial policy dialogue jointly arranged by a non-profit organisation in collaboration with the civil society, media celebrities, government departments, parliamentarians, stakeholders, and speakers of organisations, the speakers said that domestic child labour is not only a clear violation of children's rights recognised by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Sustainable Development Goals but a violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution of Pakistan.

"The children are compelled to work in domestic settings due to a myriad of reasons, including economic struggles that force families to seek additional income sources. Lack of awareness about children's rights, coupled with limited access to education, perpetuates a cycle of vulnerability. In some cases, traffickers exploit children's economic dependence on their parents, and gender disparities further exacerbate the issue," said Rashida Qureshi, the focal person for Children Advocacy Network-CAN Pakistan.

Ayesha Raza Farooq, the Chairperson National Commission on the Rights of Children (NCRC), shared that child domestic labour constitutes a grave violation of children's rights according to international human rights law. "Such labour denies children their right to a safe and nurturing environment, impedes their education, and hinders their access to health and development," she said.

Former parliamentarians Mehmas Akbar Aziz, Faiza Malik, Anna Sardar and others endorsed the suggestion to amend the Punjab Domestic Labour Act to bring the issue of child domestic labour under the purview of Child Protection & Welfare Bureau so in such cases where children under the minimum legal age are employed by labour to perform domestic CPWB can be responded by the Member National Commission on the Rights of Children and co-host of the event Mr. Nadeem Asraf emphasised the effective implementation of the existing legal framework around child protection. Iftikhar Mubarak, Executive Director Search for Justice shared that prohibition of child domestic labour carries immense significance from a child protection perspective.

Chairperson Child Welfare Bureau Sarah Ahmad said her remarks shared that recent incidents of helpline violence and abuse, from different parts of the country are evidence to establish that the child domestic labour is hazardous for children.

Children Advocacy Network (CAN) Pakistan stressed collaborative efforts among child welfare service providers, legal aid organisations and government departments for enforcement of the law. "We need to strengthen monitoring, investigation and coordination mechanisms for child domestic labour and ensure that appropriate referrals are made to relevant organisations and agencies for assistance and support," she said.

Children Destitute & Neglected (CDN) shared that the issue of child domestic labour is a critical component of protecting children in these vulnerable situations.

Such a system should be developed with aim to ensure that cases of child abuse are properly identified, reported, and managed, and that appropriate referrals are made to relevant organisations and agencies for assistance and intervention.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

Such a system should be developed with aim to ensure that cases of child abuse are properly identified, reported, and managed, and that appropriate referrals are made to relevant organisations and agencies for assistance and intervention.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

Efforts stressed to eradicate child labour

Our correspondent
LAHORE

CHILD labour and child domestic labour continue to persist as pressing issues in Punjab, compromising on children's well-being and future prospects of countless children.

On World Day Against Child Labour, Search for Justice Children Advocacy Network (CAN) Pakistan, in collaboration with the National Commission for Human Rights (Punjab), organised a joint press conference to demand immediate actions to eradicate child labour.

Executive Director of Search for Justice, Iftikhar Mubarak, said that child labour is a violation of children's rights, hindering their development, education, and overall well-being. In Punjab, children are engaged in hazardous work instead of enjoying their right to education and a nurturing environment.

Child domestic labour, in particular, places children at significant risk, subjecting them to various dangers, including sexual abuse, exploitation, and hazardous work conditions. He said that child domestic labour is a violation of children's rights, hindering their development, education, and overall well-being.

For the enactment and enforcement of robust laws and regulations to protect children from labour exploitation, with specific provisions ensuring appropriate penalties for violations and measures to monitor compliance. He added to prioritise education as a fundamental right for every child in Punjab.

He added to prioritise education as a fundamental right for every child in Punjab. He added to prioritise education as a fundamental right for every child in Punjab.

Legislation demanded to outlaw child domestic labour in Punjab

THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, LAHORE
Experts say traumatic experiences can have severe, long-lasting psychological effects on children.

The participants analysed the legislative and administrative environment for effective implementation of laws to outlaw child domestic labour in Punjab. Search for Justice Executive Director Iftikhar Mubarak said a case management and referral system for child domestic labour and child abuse is a critical component of protecting children in these vulnerable situations.

Such a system should be developed with aim to ensure that cases of child abuse are properly identified, reported, and managed, and that appropriate referrals are made to relevant organisations and agencies for assistance and support.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.

He demanded all administrative and legislative interventions to establish a robust referral and case management system in Punjab backed by the legal framework.



SEARCH^{FOR}JUSTICE

40-A, Waris Road (First Floor),
Lahore-Pakistan

☎ Ph: +92 (0) 42 3540 4037

☎ Cell: + 92 (0) 3 111 935 925

✉ Email: sfj@sfjpk.org

🌐 www.sfjpk.org