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Eradicating child labour in Pakistan

Nilofar Vazir
Aga Khan University

Yasmeen Mehboob Meghani
Aga Khan University

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Eradicating Child Labour in Pakistan



No child below the age of fourteen shall be engaged in any factory or mine or in any other hazardous employment." and, "All forms of forced labor and traffic in human beings are prohibited.

The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973)

Child Labour is a serious and important global issue and is very common in Latin America, Africa and Asia. According to some reports, in several Asian countries one tenth of the labour force consists of children. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) the daily income of 65.5% people of Pakistan is below 2 U.S. dollars a day. According to Asian Development Bank (ADB) Report, 47 million people in Pakistan are leading lives below the line of poverty, whereas the Social Policy Development Centre (SDPC) Karachi has stated in one of its reports that the percentage of people living in poverty in Pakistan was 33% during 1999 that increased in 38% within two years.

The Federal Bureau of Statistics released the results of its recent survey funded by the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPECL, ILO). The findings revealed 3.8 million children between the age group of 5-14 years are working in Pakistan out of a total of 40 million children in this age group; fifty percent of these economically active children are in ages 5 to 9 years. Even out of these 3.8 million economically active children, 2.7 million were claimed to be working in the agriculture sector. Two million and four hundred thousand (73%) of them were said to be boys.

This is an alarming situation for any country. Poverty, lack of education, unemployment, larger households and uneven distribution of wealth and resources have contributed greatly to the increase in child labour. Following are some suggestions and recommendations, we as individuals can pursue, individually or collectively

to eradicate the presence of child labour from our society:

- ✧ Create mass awareness among parents about the detrimental effects of child labour; If circumstances mandate children to work, it is important to advocate that they are employed in safer vocations;
- ✧ Encourage sustainable employment/vocation options for those who need to generate income to support a family;
- ✧ Assist domestic helpers in making their ends meet by offering clothes, food, and medicines;
- ✧ Equality in the workplace and social justice must be ensured;
- ✧ Factory owners and industrialists must ensure that children are employed in processes and working environments which comply with health and safety regulations;
- ✧ The Government should integrate basic education and skill development in order to ensure an educated work force in the future;
- ✧ Ensure that child labour laws are strictly observed.

Child labour is one of the major examples where human rights of children are exploited. It is therefore important for every member of the society to play a pro-active role in preventing children from entering exploitative forms of child labor and empowering them through education and skill enhancement.

About the Writers:

- ☆ Dr. Nilofar Vazir is currently an Associate Professor and Coordinator of ECED Programmes at AKU-IED. She is associated with the field of education for more than 30 years. She has vast experience in teacher education, curriculum studies and qualitative research methods, particularly childhood research.
- ☆ Ms. Yasmeen Mehboob Meghani is a faculty member at AKU-IED. She has been working for Early Childhood Development Programmes for the last 14 years.