

Press Release
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Adoption of comprehensive approach to address the issue of child labour demanded

Child Rights organizations working for promotion and protection of children's rights strongly urged provincial government to take all possible measures to implement available legal framework to address the deep-rooted issue of child labour. This was demanded during an online roundtable arranged by Search For Justice to mark World Day Against Child Labour. World Day Against Child Labour 2020 is focusing on the impact of crisis on child labour. The COVID-19 health pandemic and the resulting economic and labour market shock are having a huge impact on people's lives and livelihoods. Unfortunately, children are often the first to suffer. The crisis can push millions of vulnerable children into child labour. Already, there are an estimated 152 million children in child labour, 72 million of which are in hazardous work. These children are now at even greater risk of facing circumstances that are even more difficult and working longer hours.

Iftikhar Mubarik Executive Director of Search For Justice highlighted the need to devise simplify and accessible mechanisms to report the incidents of Child Domestic Labour. Recent brutal incident to 8 year old Child Domestic Worker "Zohra Shah" is enough to reveal the reality of implementation of "The Punjab Domestic Workers Act 2019" which prohibits to employs any child as domestic worker under the age of 15. Children are working as domestic worker in households in across the country. These child domestic labourers are often denied from their right to Education, Right to contact with parents, Right to Rest and leisure, right to protection from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. Their physical and psychological wellbeing always remind under the bottom line mainly because of the discrimination and neglect. Under Section 31 (2) Whoever employs a child as domestic worker, shall be liable to punishment with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month if he employs a child under the age of 12 years and in case of a child under 15 years by fine which may extend to Rs fifty thousand but which shall not be less than ten thousand rupees. The punishment defines under the act needs to be revisited by the legislatures to maintain the writ of the law. Implementation of law in true letter and spirit, social protection/ security programs, behavior change campaigns, implementation on minimum wages for workers could lead towards a society free to child labour said by Mr. Iftikhar Mubarik.

Rashida Qureshi Program Coordinator Search For Justice and CRM reminded that UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its concluding observation on Pakistan's 5th periodic report urged Pakistan to take appropriate measures for eradication of child labour, in particular the worst forms of child labour by addressing the root causes including poverty and the Committee also urged to establish mechanisms for systematic and regular monitoring of workplaces, where children are employed, in order to prevent-ill-treatment, abuse and exploitation of children. The labour Department (s) are still require to do a lot for making sure the elimination of economic exploitation of children. Beside the important role of the government the citizens must be sensitized through mass media awareness campaigns not to employs a child under the age set by the Government. Muhammad Benyameen from International Labour Organization Punjab shared that COVID-19 presents unprecedented risks to the rights and safety and development of children. World Day Against Child Labour 2020 calls upon countries and organizations to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable during crisis management and recovery. We have a chance to not only defeat this pandemic, but to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. But we have to act now, we have to act decisively, and at very large scale.

Dr. Qais Aslam Professor of Economics University of Central Punjab shared that the covid 19 had negative impacts on Pakistan's economy, so if economy will be affected in a negative way labour class will be primary affectees of that situation and of course ultimately children could also be impacted in a bad way for example more admission in Child Labour, Child Marriages etc. The government in budget 2020-21 must allocate sufficient budget to strengthen social protection programs for support and uplifting of marginalized segments of the society.

Muhammd Shahid from Labour & Human Resource Department shared that from 2017 to 2019 Labour Department conducted 50,000 inspections and more than 5,000 cases were registered against those who were in contravenes on the child labour laws. Government has notified district administration and police officials as inspectors to perform inspection related functions.

Adoption of comprehensive approach covering upgradation and implementation of laws, strengthening of social protection/ security programs, running behavior change campaigns, by ensuring the minimum wages for adult workers and women economic empowerment can lead towards elimination of Child Labour, in view of the participants.