

*Status of Labour
Rights in Pakistan*



A snap shot of 2010



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Labour Education Foundation

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Introduction

Although ratification by Pakistan of all major international human rights treaties was among the positive highlights of the year, the working class of the country continues to suffer as there are neither any mechanisms for implementing the treaties continued to be overlooked nor the executive and the judiciary is ready to pay any heed to the plight of the poor labourers living under the poverty graph.

The worsening economic conditions took a toll on the people's ability to access basic needs and measures to improve the situation did not seem to be a priority. Economic distress was the cause of many suicides. By the end of 2010, Pakistan's worst natural disaster, the devastating floods earlier in the year, seemed all but forgotten even as millions remained without shelter and livelihood. The floods made many existing challenges considerably more acute, particularly the internal displacement crisis and the situation of health, education, and housing for the people.

For the second year in a row, the number of internally displaced persons in Pakistan was higher than refugees but the official response did not go beyond just some of the immediate needs.

The 18th Amendment to the Constitution, through a consensus, offered a glimpse of what could be achieved when political actors put their mind to it. The amendment acknowledged three more rights, to education, information and fair trial. But, unfortunately, the amendment hit the labourers as the problems facing the working class were not

fully taken into consideration while devolving various institutions to the provinces.

All tiers of government seemed interested in consolidating their hold on power and paid little attention to the people's real problems. The executive and the judiciary came close to confrontation more than once before better sense prevailed. The independent judiciary, for whose restoration the labourers had paid a heavy price, overlooked their plight as they were given no relief in any of the cases pending adjudication with various courts.

In the absence of a solid data and documented bitter realities of the working community, the condition of the labour force is worsening day by day. The Labour Education Foundation is making a humble attempt to put a clear picture of the workers before the authorities that matter by publishing this report based on press reports, surveys and government notifications, etc., with the aims of making it an annual feature. It is thankful to ...

Khalid Mahmood Malik
Director
Labour Education Foundation

Labourers

Constitution

Article 3: *The State shall ensure the elimination of all forms of exploitation and the gradual fulfillment of the fundamental principle, from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.*

Article 17-i: *Every citizen shall have the right to assembly peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order.*

Article 37-c: *The State shall make technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.*

Article 38: *The State shall secure the well-being of the people, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, by raising their standard of living, by preventing the concentration of wealth and means of production and distribution in the hands of a few to the detriment of general interest and by ensuring equitable adjustments of rights between employers and employees, and landlords and tenants;*

Provide for all citizens, within the available resources of the country, facilities for work and adequate livelihood with reasonable rest and leisure;

Provide for all persons employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means;

Provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medial relief, for all such citizens,

*irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment;
Reduce disparity in the income and earnings of individuals, including persons in the various classes of the service of Pakistan;*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23: (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24: Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25(1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his

family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2010: A Year of Dreaded Nightmare

The year 2010 proved to be a dreaded nightmare for the labour class as its social and economic conditions went from bad to worse because of rising graphs of unemployment and prices. A careful estimate put the inflation rate over 23 percent, squeezing the purchasing power of the poor to such a pitiable condition that many a families, after meeting their food requirements, were not left with much to continue education process of their children and provide them healthcare.

The survey released by the finance ministry put that 75 percent of the total population was very poor while an official task force on food security said that over 60 million people were living under the poverty line.

Labour Force

Forty-seven percent of the world population comprises labourers, while in Pakistan 33 percent of the total population are workers, 55.8 million, making it the 10th largest workforce in the world. Eighty percent of them are men and 20 percent women. However, in rural economy a vast majority of women associated with farm sector is not counted among workers, therefore, the actual percentage of working women may be much more than the recorded ratio.

The Federal Bureau of Statistics did the labour force survey for the last time in 2006-07. Then the Economic Survey of

Pakistan released its report in 2008-09 revealing that there existed 51.78 million work force in the country. Of them 40.82 million were men and 10.96 million women. Of the available labour force 49.09 percent were employed and 2.69 million jobless. Most of the workforce, 44.65 of the total, was employed in the agriculture sector. Only 12.99 percent were attached with the manufacturing sector. The agriculture sector registered an increase in the labour force ratio but there was a decline in the manufacturing, social, government and formal sectors. The major reason being recession are high power and gas tariff and their short supplies to the industries.

Formal sector activities in urban areas remained 30 percent and rural areas 25 percent while there was upward trend in informal sector jobs in the recent years. Moreover, womenfolk belonging to rural areas had more opportunities in the informal sector jobs than men.

Bonded Labour: Workers at Agriculture Farms, Brick Kilns

Constitution

Article 11: *(1) Slavery is non-existent and forbidden and no law shall permit or facilitate its introduction into Pakistan in any form.*

(2) All forms of forced labour and traffic in human beings are prohibited.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 4: *No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.*

But, in South Punjab and Mirpur Khas, Sanghar and Omerkot areas of Sindh people, especially children, are forced to work at brick kilns and cloth-making units. According to an estimate, at least 1.7 million people are serving as bonded labourers in the agriculture sector only. Bonded labourers have many a times been recovered from the custody of brick kilns owners and big landholders on the court directions but the accused have never been taken to task. Police claim that the recovered people themselves refuse to initiate legal action against their captors.

Almost one million labourers are working at 13,000 brick kilns in the county mostly owned by influential politicians

and their relatives. The workers include their women and children and most of them are kept under habeas corpus after paying them in advance some amount of their “salaries”. To keep them under their control, kiln owners often get instituted criminals cases against the workers in connivance with corrupt police officers.

In one such case, a court bailiff recovered six people from a privately run torture cell of Lahore police. The victims were from Chicha Watni area and a police inspector had hired them for the construction of his house. They were shackled and locked in a community centre of Federal Colony for demanding their wages.-(Jang/January 1)

Thanks to court interventions, many more people won their release from the captivity of brick kiln owners.

Umerkot and Chhor police recovered at least 66 bonded labourers, including children and women, on the directions of the district and sessions judge. Chhor police raided a farm of landlord Lal Muhammad Soomro and recovered 34 alleged bonded labourers, including 14 children and 12 women. Rughoo Bheel and Wardo Kolhi had through two separate applications pleaded the court that their family members had been detained in the private jail of Soomro.

Umerkot police also raided the farm of landlord Allah Rakhio Rajar near Berchhan and recovered 32 bonded labourers, including eight women and 17 children. The action was taken after Jumoo Bheel filed a petition with the district and sessions judge against the landlord.-(The Nation/January 21)

The Lahore High Court (LHC) got released 55 brick kiln workers after a petition was filed before it in this regard. The petitioner said a kiln owner in Phoolnagar had detained the workers. The court sent a bailiff, which recovered and

produced the workers before the judge. They told the court that they had entered into a five-year agreement with the owner, who, they said, was not abiding by the deal. He detained the workers and deputed security guards to check their escape.-(Jang/February 12)

The LHC set free 22 brick kiln workers, including innocent children and women, recovered from a kiln in Kot Radha Kishan area. It also directed registration of a case against the kiln owner for bonded labour offence. It observed that neither Islam nor the Constitution or law permitted bonded labour. But kiln owners were violating the law by detaining innocent children and women and making them bonded labourers.-(Jang/February 19)

A majority of the kiln workers lack their national identity cards as they neither hold birth certificates nor have permanent addresses. Because of this they are also robbed of their right to vote. They are also not included in any social security scheme or in any other welfare programme the government launches for low-income people.

Most of the bonded labourers belong to so-called low castes or religious minorities, Hindus in Sindh and Christians in Punjab, who often fell victim to physical and mental exploitation of their employers. Human smuggling is another factor behind a strong bonded labour system as labourers are “sold” to the employers.

The Labour Education Foundation in collaboration with the Bhatta Mazdoor Union launched a campaign to mobilize the brick kiln workers get their national identity cards and to facilitate them persuaded the authorities concerned for establishing mobile registration units. It also took pains to organize the kiln workers, build their capacity to negotiate and demand better wages and facilities.

Labour Laws, Policies, Courts

Labour laws were amended but only on papers as the ground realities remained unchanged. Workers remained deprived of justice despite the presence of an “independent” judiciary. According to the National Trade Union Federation, judges of two labour courts of Lahore could not be appointed even in 2010. There were around 1,000 cases pending adjudication in these courts. The democratically elected governments could not end the ban on inspections of workplaces by labour inspectors. However, some progress was made in the establishment of a separate labour court for Islamabad.

To some relief of the working community, President Asif Ali Zardari signed two bills to repeal the Removal from Service (Special Powers) Ordinance 2000 and amend Services Tribunal Act. The repealed ordinance conferred arbitrary powers on the authorities in violation of the fundamental rights of workers, while section 2-A of the Act had snatched the right of the workers to take their dispute to labour courts, appellate tribunal as well as the National Industrial Relations Commission.-(The Nation/ March 6)

NIRC Act Expires Unnoticed

The apathy of the authorities towards the plight of the workers can be gauged from the fact that the Industrial Relations Act 2008 expired silently on April 30, completing its two-year term. The working community faced a constitutional and legal crisis as the labour judiciary system stood disbanded and neither the federal nor the provincial governments bothered about the legal deadline, robbing over 50 million workers of their right to approach any legal and constitutional forum for relief.

The crisis was created when the parliament passed 18th amendment abolishing the concurrent list of the Constitution and, along side other agencies, devolved the labour department to federating units. Now a provincial subject, the federal government would not frame any law on it. The sector was already facing complications as labour courts were under the provincial governments while the National Industrial Relations Commission was run by the federal government.

NIRC chairman Justice (retired) Rashid Aziz says the labour courts cannot function until the governments introduced a new law governing these courts. Labour laws expert Advocate Waqar Ahmad says the stay orders given by the NIRC and labour courts have also lost their validity while with the abolition of the registrar of trade unions, there is a question mark on the status of registration of trade unions and CBA unions.

Changing his stance later and adding to the confusion, Justice Aziz said on May 19 that the 18th amendment passed by the parliament on April 19 gave cover to all federal laws until June 30, 2011. Therefore, the Industrial Relations Act 2008 did not expire on April 30 after completing its two-year mandatory term.

The ongoing legal crisis was solved after eight long months when the Punjab Assembly adopted the NIRC act in its December 4 sitting. The new law conferred the NIRC powers on Punjab Labour Appellate Tribunal, labour courts and registrar of trade unions. Both employers and employees have been given equal representation in the Workers Management Councils and labour appellate tribunals have been formed to separate the labour judiciary. However, the issue of future of CBA unions registered with the federal NIRC could not be resolved as it required another constitutional amendment.

We failed: Admits Government

Political parties and their leadership are non serious in resolving the workers' problems rather they are hands in gloves with the exploiters. An international worker, peasants' conference held in Faisalabad blamed the major political players for playing the game of turn-by-turn-rule instead of putting an end to the exploitation of the working class. It said the labourers would continue to be exploited until capitalists and landlords are at the helms of affairs to form national policies. It urged upon industrial and farm workers to get their own representatives voted to the assemblies for getting their rights.-(Jang/January 30)

Punjab labour minister Ashraf Sohna admitted in the Punjab Assembly that the government has badly failed in protecting workers' rights. Showing his helplessness before the exploiting factory owners and their influential backers in the seats of authority, he said he took up the workers' issue with the chief minister several times but to no avail. He also said that despite being the labour minister he could not inspect a factory without the help of police what to talk of an ordinary official of his department taking action against the factory owners denying the workers their rights. (Express/April 3)

Women Workers

Constitution

Article 25: (1) *All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.*

(2) *There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone.*

Nothing in this Article shall prevent the 'state from making any special provision for the protection of women and children.

Article 27: (1) *No citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth:*

Provided that for a period not exceeding forty years from the commencing day, posts may be reserved for persons belonging to any class or area to secure their adequate representation in the service of Pakistan:

Provided further that, in the interest of the said service, specified posts or services may be reserved for members of either sex if such posts or services entail the performance of duties and functions which cannot be adequately performed by members of the other sex.

(2) *Nothing in the clause (1) shall prevent any Provincial Government, or any local or other authority in a Province, from prescribing, in relation to any post or class of service under that Government or authority, conditions as to residence in the Province, for a period not exceeding three years, prior to appointment under the Government or authority.*

Article 35: *The state shall protect the marriage, the family, the mother and the child.*

Article 37: *The State shall –
promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of backward classes or areas;
(d) make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment;*

Universal Declaration of Human Right

Article 1: *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

Article 2: *Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.*

Article 7: *All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.*

Article 21: (2) *Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*

A majority of women labourers work in informal sector i.e. as domestic maids as usually they are illiterate and unskilled. Labour laws do not cover them although their working hours are longer and remuneration is low. They enjoy no legal cover. Even 1934 Factory Act is not applicable to them. They are unaware of Minimum Wages Act as well as the Industrial Relations Ordinance and Maternity Benefits Ordinance 1958. In a survey conducted by the Labour Education Foundation recently, 100 percent of those workers who responded to the questionnaire were unaware of any labour welfare institutions set up by the government. Ironically, some of the respondents were members of trade unions. This speaks volumes of the work being done by the unions as well as the effectiveness of the government's publicity of its achievements.

More than 60 percent of the workers surveyed either did not have national identity cards or at least, and resultantly, have not got themselves registered as voters. Hence, no claim of political and social rights.

The domestic maids were for the first time recognized as labourers in the labour policy 2002 but no labour welfare organisation is extending them its protection.

Devoid of equal wages, social security cover and other privileges, women workers also do not enjoy basic rights as there is no trade union to look after their collective interest. Of late, the Labour Education Foundation helped organize women workers associated with bangle industry and home-based workers in other informal sectors.

There are no official figures available about the domestic help but media reports suggest the number at 12.79 million.

Law-Making

The Senate passed a bill on February 25 under which women would receive greater protection from harassment at the workplace. Earlier, the National Assembly had unanimously adopted the legislation on January 21. The law empowers the authorities to dismiss from service the offender. A probe committee would be formed to investigate complaints of harassment.

The body comprising three persons must include one woman member and will initiate proceedings within three days of receiving a complaint. If proved guilty the inquiry committee could recommend to the competent authority penalties like demotion, compulsory retirement and dismissal from service. The respective governments will have to appoint an Ombudswoman at the federal and provincial levels who has been judge of a high court or qualifies to be appointed as judge of the high court. The complainant will have the option to refer the complaint to the Ombudswoman or competent authority in her office.

This is welcome. But what was striking about the debate that took place in the Upper House about the measure, which includes a jail term of up to three years for offenders, was the opposition from religious parties. One would have thought that these parties which campaign on the grounds of morality would favour legislation aimed at protecting the vulnerable from abuse. Instead, their representatives argued that the law would allow NGO “employees” to spread “vulgarity”.

Exposing bigotry among the PPP-led coalition too, Sherry Rehman, who had introduced the bill as minister for women development the previous year, told the house that there were a few individuals in the federal cabinet who had

made efforts to block this legislation but are now praising it.-(Jang/February 23)

Now the real focus of the government must be on how to enforce the law on factory floors and in other places where low-income earners work. The issue of harassment is an acute one here. It is rampant even in government offices considered to be relatively having more civilized and educated environment. For example, a PTV producer accused her boss of sexual harassment. Head of Current Affairs wing at the PTV Islamabad centre has been accused of harassing, irritating, threatening and hounding one of his female colleagues to get sexual favours.

The victim complained to the managing director that her boss threatened her with dire consequences if she did not fulfill his lust.-(The Nation/May 5) Workers who complain risk being sacked or penalized in other ways. The success of the new legislation will thus depend on the degree to which it is made a reality at these places, thus offering relief to millions of impoverished women who have for decades suffered abuse in various forms in a bid to support their families.

Musarrat Hilali from Malakand Division was made the first Ombudswoman to provide a legal forum to women for lodging complaints of sexual harassment. The appointment was announced by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani at the Alliance against Sexual Harassment gathering in Islamabad on December 22. He said 38 out of 44 ministries had implemented the law against harassment and others would follow suit. The law was passed by the parliament in February.

To the dismay of women rights activists, the Federal Shariat Court declared on December 22 some clauses of the

Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006 as against the Constitution. The court ruling said clauses 11, 25 and 28 of the Act are in violation of the Article 203-DD of the Constitution as the provisions annul the overriding effect of the Hudood Ordinances VII of 1979. A three-member bench of the court headed by Chief Justice Agha Rafique Ahmed Khan announced the verdict in several identical Shariat petitions challenging the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006.

The verdict earned the ire of human right activists. A joint meeting of the Joint Action Committee for People's Rights, Women's Action Forum, Insani Haqooq Ittehad, National Commission on the Status of Women, rights organizations and several women parliamentarians strongly condemned the ruling, which came on the day when the prime minister appointed the first Ombudswoman to hear complaints of sexual harassment.

They demanded abolition of all parallel judicial systems such as the Federal Shariat Court, Council of Islamic Ideology and Jirgas.

The Punjab Assembly in its July 6 sitting unanimously took up In-House Working Women Protection Bill 2010 moved by the opposition PML-Q's Seemal Kamran. The bill was referred to the standing committee on labour for vetting and reporting back to the house within 30 days.

Women and Politics

Women had been at the forefront in the creation of the country. Their role had been visible and important during the Pakistan movement. But, ironically, after the country

was carved out, the womenfolk the 50 percent of the population were confined to the four walls of their homes.

Their services were considered and their role was recognized but only for a short while when Fatima Jinnah, the sister of the founder of the country Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was made a candidate in presidential elections against then army dictator Ayub Khan in 1960s. Religiously parties traditionally against the leadership of women then also supported Ms Jinnah. Otherwise no public space or political office was considered for women.

Women were given representation in National Provincial Assemblies only in 1985 for a short period of time through reserved seats. The political arena opened up to them only when another army dictator Gen Pervez Musharraf introduced devolution of power plan and reserved 33 percent seats for women in local councils and 17 per cent in the parliament.

This gave a boost to the confidence of the working women. A large number of them, 35,000, in local councils and hundreds in the upper elected houses, made their way to the politics.

The condition of graduation for contesting elections for National and Provincial Assemblies also forced some political families to put up their women members in the electoral bout for saving their political interests as their male members did not qualify the condition. Thus, a number of women were elected directly to the National and Provincial Assemblies. Twenty-two percent National Assembly seats are presently held by women (The Nation/March 9), increasing their space in the public arena.

However, it is not that the womenfolk have overcome all hurdles in their way to stand shoulder to shoulder in all fields with men. Even today there are some areas where women are not allowed even to use their right to franchise what to talk of contesting the elections. They were not allowed to vote in Musakhel by-polls.-(Dawn/November 14)

Home-Based Women Workers

The growth of informal economy with the introduction of neo-liberal economic policies all over the globe, especially in the developing countries, have made adverse effects on organised trade unionism and drastically cut the social security benefits of workers and shifted the work towards informal sector at a fast pace where workers have been denied all rights and social protections. The issue of home-based women workers (HBWW) has been swept under the carpet since long to give a free hand to formal sector industries exploits the hard labour of millions of this down-to-earth section of society.

There are at least 15 million home-based workers. In the agriculture sector, 76 percent work is done by women, but it is not counted.-(Jang/March 5) The profit margin for investors has increased manifold in the informal sector but wages of workers are shamefully meager and insufficient to provide even one-time meal The most vulnerable part of this workforce is the HBWWs who work at their homes for the market and use their own house, kitchen, power and other utilities that are supposed to be provided by the employer in the factory. And in return these poor chaps get nothing—neither are they recognized by the law as workers nor do they enjoy any social security cover and legal support in case of any sort of industrial dispute.

Home Based Women Workers (HBWW) are scattered as their workplaces, brick kilns, are situated at a distance from each other. There is a high rate of illiteracy among the workers who come from the poor stratum of society. Belonging to backward areas they are facing cultural barriers like certain restrictions on going out without accompanying a male family member. Being illiterate and uneducated, they are unaware of their rights enshrined in the Constitution, law and religion.

They are not recognized by law as workers and thus no question of having right to access labour courts in case of any industrial dispute. As the law does not recognize them as workers, so they lack social security cover.

With the support of the Labour Education Foundation (LEF), the first union of HBWWs was got registered in November 2009, representing 600,000 women workers in bangle industry. It has been a unique experience in the history of Pakistan in that women workers led their male counterparts in forming a trade union for securing their rights. With the LEF efforts the Sindh Assembly passed a unanimous resolution in November 2010 in support of the HBWWs and pledged to make law soon to protect their rights. (After the passage of 18th constitutional amendment, the legislation on labour issues has become a provincial subject.)

Following is the text of the Sindh Assembly's resolution passed in its November 3, 2010 sitting moved by **Ms. Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto, Minister for Women Development, Sindh, Ms. Shazia Atta Muhammad Marri, Minister for Tourism, Sindh, Ms. Sassui Palijo, Minister for Culture, Sindh, Ms. Humera Alwani, MPA, Ms. Aisha Khoso, MPA, Ms. Kulsoom Akhtar Chandio, MPA, Ms. Firdous Hameed alias Farheen Mughal, MPA, Ms. Shama Arif Mithani, MPA, Dr. Sajeela Leghari, MPA, Ms. Najma Saeed Chawla, MPA,**

Ms. Rainaz Bozdar, MPA and Ms. Rashida Akhtar Panhwar, MPA:

“To fulfillment the requirement of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) this Assembly resolves and recommends to the Provincial Government to approach the Federal Government to take immediate & proactive steps for the empowerment of 8.52 million Home Based Workers in Pakistan. To recognize the Home Based Workers in different categories of labour laws and in the allocation of funds for their betterment. It is recommended that a campaign at the Union Council level be started to register the Home based Workers. Protection of rights, non-discrimination at work place, elimination of child labour as well as bonded labour, fixation of minimum wages and working hours are needed to be resolved immediately. It is pavement to provide them micro finance facilities to buy the raw materials needed for their work. Facilities of literacy, skill training should also be encouraged to enhance their abilities and provide health and legal cover. Maximum effort should be made to improve the life and working conditions of the Home Based Workers.”

In November 2010, on an initiative of the LEF, a Working Committee was formed in Karachi to draft a bill for legislation on rights and social protections of HBWWs. Headed by the minister for women development; it included members from LEF, National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), ministry of labour, labour department, Sindh Social Security and ministry of law. The NTUF and

Pakistan Workers Federation have also agreed to include the demand for recognizing HBWWs as workers in law and extending them all rights and facilities available to their counterparts in formal sectors.

The following are two case studies conducted by the Labour Education Foundation (LEF) to take stock of ground realities in terms of existing situation of social protection for workers:

Niaz Khan, resident of house No. 28 street 16 Ghazi Mohalla, Ghari Shahu, Lahore worked in a carpet factory. He migrated from Abbotabad, a city in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa province to Lahore to look for work while he was only 12 years old, as his father was not earning enough to support the family of eight members. One of his uncles was already working in a carpet enterprise and he introduced Niaz in the same field.

Niaz left school from seventh standard and started working in 1976. Niaz married in 1986 and has four sons and a daughter. Before starting work, he got some training for cutting carpet wool for three months from an experienced worker. He worked both as employee and under contractor and changed three factories during his job period. The longest span was 20 years until the factory was closed down as the new owner (because the business was divided between three brothers after the death of the father) based in London was not able to compete with the market in terms of designing and strategizing.

Niaz explained different stages of carpet production e.g. weaving, washing, cutting, preparing, edge cutting, knotting of fringes and carpet back cleaning. The cutting work that he was involved was necessary to make the carpet soft and design prominent and visible. He explained

that the factory owners hired contractors in different villages to take care of the weaving of carpets at homes. This is the area where women and families are suffering more due to very low wages as a woman work eight to ten hours and earns around 50-60 Rupees a day. Time of completing a carpet depends on the size and quality of the carpet. The handmade carpet usually takes ten months to one and half year.

Besides weaving carpets at home, women were hardly hired in other work related to carpet production. When Niaz started work in 1976, the rate was twelve paisa per square feet but he got 10 paisa for being a child and his first monthly wage was around rupees 115 against working 10-12 hours a day. His last monthly income was around rupees 6000. Now most of the work of cutting is being done through machines and operators are getting rupees 1.50 per square feet and wages around 10,000 to 14,000 rupees if they work on monthly salary. Wages remained very low and there were no increase in wages even after 5 years. Workers were totally unaware of the existence of any Minimum Wage Act, Industrial Relations Act and other policies and laws that could be beneficial for them.

Niaz started work as a cutter and after working for almost 36 years, retired as a cutter due to the reason for not having information, training or opportunity to enhance his skills in terms of earning more.

During this long span of working, Niaz hardly saw any improvement in his working conditions, benefits and contrary to this he witnessed deterioration in circumstances around him.

He was never a permanent worker so was not entitled to any leave and medical treatment in case of disease and

injuries. He noticed that workers were injured during shifting of heavy wet and dry carpets, got cuts due to use of scissors, burned because of the use of chemicals while washing carpets and developed other diseases like optical infection, respiratory problems, backache etc. But, no leave and medical treatment was provided by the factory owners. The normal excuse in such cases was that the workers were not careful enough while working.

As Niaz Khan was an active worker and participated in different rights' related workshops and seminars, so he felt that though there were a few institutions to provide trainings and benefits to the workers the coverage was very low. This was due to multiple reasons but most importantly because of the owner's efforts not to shift workers in regular category. He specially mentioned the facility of Social Security in terms of getting medical treatment, education for children, death grant, marriage grant, housing etc.

According to the law, every factory having five workers should be registered for Social Security but only big factories arrange and issue Social Security Cards to their few workers and even here, not for all of the workers. There are 49 million work forces in Pakistan and around 2.1 million workers (approximately 3 percent of the total labour force) have been registered with the Social Security thus a large majority of workers remain outside the ambit of this facility. He was of the opinion that military dictator Ziaul Haq's period was the most depressing with bashing democracy, he banned Social Security benefits in carpet industry. Owing to the backing of almost all civilian and military governments, owners became so dominant that the labour inspectors were hesitant and would not dare to enter factories and inspect the working conditions.

Niaz Khan felt that the carpet industry was on peak till 2000 but after that especially during the last four and five years, due to overall recession and intensifying terrorism, buyers stopped coming to Pakistan. The handmade carpet industry was affected the most. Despite this fact, still over half million workers are in this industry and unofficial estimate stands around 1.2 million.

Same was the case with Employees Old Age Benefits. If the workers are registered with this institution, their widows and minor children can claim pension but again very limited number of workers were registered as employers have to contribute a small sum to provide this benefit and majority of the employers refused under the plea that this contribution will increase the price of their products. The lack of awareness about existing laws, policies and schemes remained a main impediment in terms of workers claiming and enjoying their rights.

Training programs conducted under government institutions during the last 10- 12 years focused on health and safety issues; lack the prospect of human rights, gender issues and mechanisms to ensure rights. The crux of these programs were on developing obedient workers (he attended a few) by insisting and promoting that the factory should be profit oriented and the workers should be hard working, not interested in putting forward demands and go on strikes but to continue earning profits for the owners and thus ensure in the process their own salaries.

Razia Liaqat Ali is a piece rate worker in Vandalla Diyal Shah, outskirts of Lahore. Her story depicts the total absence of a social protection system for home-based workers as a citizen and especially as a worker. Her both sons started as garment factory workers at the age of 12 and 14 while two daughters were attending school. She resided

in the area where lots of women were involved in piece rate work for different contractors. The work she started six years ago involved making different decoration items e.g. pots, bolls, garlands, ornaments, and other materials used in wedding functions and religious celebrations. Her elder sister was doing a similar kind of piece rate work and with the idea of supplementing her household income, Razia also started it. An agent to a shopkeeper, who owns shops in a main market, provides this piece rate work.

After doing household chore in the morning, she starts work and stops only for preparing and serving lunch to her family. Her two sons also work with her after lunch. Sometimes, her husband also joins them. There is no specific time to stop the work and sometimes it continued till late night if work was available to earn more money to meet the both ends. The wages were very low and she managed to earn around Rs 2000--2500 in a month with the help of her family members and her average working hours remained between 12-16 hours a day.

There were a lot of challenges and difficulties related to her work. Being seasonal at times she had less work to meet her expenditures and during the season she had to work for long hours to meet the demand. She used hot candle wax and would get her hands burned. She developed health-related problems such as backache, headache and weak eyesight. The contractor also cheated her at different occasions in paying against the finished items under the pretext that the work was not up to the mark. All her negotiations to increase the wages remained futile and she faced risks of losing work on the demand of increase in per piece item rate. The contractor always narrated that how the investor was suffering due to a decline of purchasing power of people so it is next to impossible to increase the rates. She herself was convinced that due to worsening economic

conditions, there were lots of women available around to work on even lower wages.

There were no institutions, network or information dissemination system from the government side to look into the matters of the home based women workers to protect them from the exploitation by the contractors. As these women work in their homes thus have no access to training programs, awareness, workers' rights, employment opportunities and social safety nets to ensure their survival in case of any crises. She was aware that even regular factory workers were suffering because of not having progressive labour laws, lacunas in implementation and denial of access to social protection. It was even more difficult for women working at homes.

She took part in some activities organized by Labour Education Foundation regarding workers' rights in the last couple of years so she had an idea that the government has to install a social protection network for the poor, marginalized workers. She was aware of the fact that whatever facilities like EOBI are available are for regular workers only. "I learnt through some TV programmes that there are schemes for the poor such as Food Stamp Program, Benazir Shaheed Watan Cards etc. but these benefits are only for some unknown people". She was aware about the formation of Zakat committees and the distribution of forms for Benazir Income Support Program and knew that these schemes were very limited and distributed on the bases of political affiliations.

Home-based workers have no concept and practice of sick, maternity or any other kind of leaves and they lose money whenever there are intervals in their work. She questioned how home-based workers could ask and get the benefits of social protection if they are not considered workers in the

eye of existing laws. Women are further marginalized when they enter the labour market. She told that there are no programs of providing food, education and health-related facilities to the poor, and people are subject to pay heavy fee for the education of their children and utilities.

She shared that one organization in her area is working to provide loan for business but she was skeptical about the effectiveness of this loan scheme due to heavy mark-up, cumbersome process of obtaining loan and limited amount offered to start an enterprise. She refrained from taking this kind of loan even in very harsh economic situations and in off-seasons to avoid further difficulties in life.

First convention of the Home Based Women Workers' Federation

HBWW formed a federation that is now at the forefront of the struggle for the recognition of HBWW and their right to cover under social security, having old age benefits and access to other workers welfare schemes. At present HBWWF is the only registered body of HBWW of Pakistan and all of its activities has been organized on voluntary basis and through collection of funds and other fund raising mechanism. After completion of its one year, HBWWF organized its first Annual Convention in Karachi on April 11 which coincided with celebration of 100 years of working women struggle. In this convention, HBWW delegates representing HBWW unions, members of HBWWF, trade unions representatives, provincial and federal legislators, government officials and human right organizations' leaders attended the important event. In this event emphasis was laid on finding new ways to get recognize HBWW through legislation and mechanism to

cover the HBWW under the existing social security networks and also chalk out the extensive plan for 2011 and 2012 to make HBWW Federation a sole representative of HBWW in Pakistan.

Main objectives of the convention were to:

- Highlight the issue of home based workers
- National Policy (NP) on HBWW
- Ratification of ILO Convention-177
- Recognize HBWW as worker and protection under the Labour Laws
- Social Security for HBWW

Pakistan is signatory to various conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), although, unfortunately, implementation of the same is very pitiful. The government has ratified ILO-100 and for Equal Remuneration for Equal Work and 177 for Home Work. They are reproduced here verbatim:

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization,
Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met in its Thirty-fourth Session on 6 June 1951, and
Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value, which is the seventh item on the agenda of the session, and
Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of an international Convention,
adopts this twenty-ninth day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and fifty-one the following Convention, which may be cited as the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951:

Article 1: *For the purpose of this Convention--*

*(a) the term **remuneration** includes the ordinary, basic or minimum wage or salary and any additional emoluments whatsoever payable directly or indirectly, whether in cash or in kind, by the employer to the worker and arising out of the worker's employment;*

*(b) the term **equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value** refers to rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on sex.*

Article 2: *1. Each Member shall, by means appropriate to the methods in operation for determining rates of remuneration, promote and, in so far as is consistent with such methods, ensure the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.*

2. This principle may be applied by means of--

(a) national laws or regulations;

(b) legally established or recognised machinery for wage determination;

(c) collective agreements between employers and workers; or

(d) a combination of these various means.

Article 3: *1. Where such action will assist in giving effect to the provisions of this Convention measures shall be taken to promote objective appraisal of jobs on the basis of the work to be performed.*

2. The methods to be followed in this appraisal may be decided upon by the authorities responsible for the determination of rates of remuneration, or, where such rates are determined by collective agreements, by the parties thereto.

3. Differential rates between workers which correspond, without regard to sex, to differences, as determined by such objective appraisal, in the work to be performed shall not

be considered as being contrary to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.

Article 4: Each Member shall co-operate as appropriate with the employers' and workers' organisations concerned for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this Convention.

Article 5: The formal ratifications of this Convention shall be communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration.

Article 6: 1. This Convention shall be binding only upon those Members of the International Labour Organisation whose ratifications have been registered with the Director-General.

2. It shall come into force twelve months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director-General.

3. Thereafter, this Convention shall come into force for any Member twelve months after the date on which its ratification has been registered.

Article 7: 1. Declarations communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 35 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation shall indicate --

a) the territories in respect of which the Member concerned undertakes that the provisions of the Convention shall be applied without modification;

b) the territories in respect of which it undertakes that the provisions of the Convention shall be applied subject to modifications, together with details of the said modifications;

c) the territories in respect of which the Convention is inapplicable and in such cases the grounds on which it is inapplicable;

d) the territories in respect of which it reserves its decision pending further consideration of the position.

2. The undertakings referred to in subparagraphs (a) and (b) of paragraph 1 of this Article shall be deemed to be an integral part of the ratification and shall have the force of ratification.

3. Any Member may at any time by a subsequent declaration cancel in whole or in part any reservation made in its original declaration in virtue of subparagraph (b), (c) or (d) of paragraph 1 of this Article.

4. Any Member may, at any time at which the Convention is subject to denunciation in accordance with the provisions of Article 9, communicate to the Director-General a declaration modifying in any other respect the terms of any former declaration and stating the present position in respect of such territories as it may specify.

Article 8: 1. Declarations communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office in accordance with paragraph 4 or 5 of Article 35 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation shall indicate whether the provisions of the Convention will be applied in the territory concerned without modification or subject to modifications; when the declaration indicates that the provisions of the Convention will be applied subject to modifications, it shall give details of the said modifications.

2. The Member, Members or international authority concerned may at any time by a subsequent declaration renounce in whole or in part the right to have recourse to any modification indicated in any former declaration.

3. The Member, Members or international authority concerned may, at any time at which this Convention is subject to denunciation in accordance with the provisions of Article 9, communicate to the Director-General a declaration modifying in any other respect the terms of any

former declaration and stating the present position in respect of the application of the Convention.

Article 9: 1. A Member which has ratified this Convention may denounce it after the expiration of ten years from the date on which the Convention first comes into force, by an act communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration. Such denunciation shall not take effect until one year after the date on which it is registered.

2. Each Member which has ratified this Convention and which does not, within the year following the expiration of the period of ten years mentioned in the preceding paragraph, exercise the right of denunciation provided for in this Article, will be bound for another period of ten years and, thereafter, may denounce this Convention at the expiration of each period of ten years under the terms provided for in this Article.

Article 10: 1. The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall notify all Members of the International Labour Organisation of the registration of all ratifications, declarations and denunciations communicated to him by the Members of the Organisation.

2. When notifying the Members of the Organisation of the registration of the second ratification communicated to him, the Director-General shall draw the attention of the Members of the Organisation to the date upon which the Convention will come into force.

Article 11: The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall communicate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations full particulars of all ratifications, declarations and acts of

denunciation registered by him in accordance with the provisions of the preceding articles.

Article 12: At such times as may consider necessary the Governing Body of the International Labour Office shall present to the General Conference a report on the working of this Convention and shall examine the desirability of placing on the agenda of the Conference the question of its revision in whole or in part.

Article 13: 1. Should the Conference adopt a new Convention revising this Convention in whole or in part, then, unless the new Convention otherwise provides--

a) the ratification by a Member of the new revising Convention shall ipso jure involve the immediate denunciation of this Convention, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 9 above, if and when the new revising Convention shall have come into force;

b) as from the date when the new revising Convention comes into force this Convention shall cease to be open to ratification by the Members.

2. This Convention shall in any case remain in force in its actual form and content for those Members which have ratified it but have not ratified the revising Convention.

Article 14: The English and French versions of the text of this Convention are equally authoritative.

Home Work Convention, C-177, 1996

Preamble

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization, having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met in its Eighty-third Session on 4 June 1996, and Recalling that many international labour Conventions and Recommendations laying down standards of general application concerning working conditions are applicable to home workers, and noting that the particular conditions characterizing home work make it desirable to improve the application of those Conventions and recommendations to home workers, and to supplement them by standards which take into account the special characteristics of home work, and having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to home work, which is the fourth item on the agenda of the session, and having determined that these proposals shall take the form of an international Convention; adopts, this twentieth day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six, the following Convention, which may be cited as the Home Work Convention, 1996:

Article 1: For the purposes of this Convention:

- (a) the term [home work] means work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a homemaker,*
- (i) in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer;*
- (ii) for remuneration;*

(iii) which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used, unless this person has the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker under national laws, regulations or court decisions;

(b) persons with employee status do not become home workers within the meaning of this Convention simply by occasionally performing their work as employees at home, rather than at their usual workplaces;

(c) the term [employer] means a person, natural or legal, who, either directly or through an intermediary, whether or not intermediaries are provided for in national legislation, gives out home work in pursuance of his or her business activity.

Article 2: This Convention applies to all persons carrying out home work within the meaning of Article 1.

Article 3: Each Member which has ratified this Convention shall adopt, implement and periodically review a national policy on home work aimed at improving the situation of home workers, in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, with organizations concerned with home workers and those of employers of home workers.

Article 4: 1. The national policy on home work shall promote, as far as possible, equality of treatment between home workers and other wage earners, taking into account the special characteristics of home work and, where appropriate, conditions applicable to the same or a similar type of work carried out in an enterprise.

2. Equality of treatment shall be promoted, in particular, in relation to:

- (a) the home workers' right to establish or join organizations of their own choosing and to participate in the activities of such organizations;*
- (b) protection against discrimination in employment and occupation;*
- (c) protection in the field of occupational safety and health;*
- (d) remuneration;*
- (e) statutory social security protection;*
- (f) access to training;*
- (g) minimum age for admission to employment or work; and*
- (h) maternity protection.*

Article 5: The national policy on home work shall be implemented by means of laws and regulations, collective agreements, arbitration awards or in any other appropriate manner consistent with national practice.

Article 6: Appropriate measures shall be taken so that labour statistics include, to the extent possible, home work.

Article 7: National laws and regulations on safety and health at work shall apply to home work, taking account of its special characteristics, and shall establish conditions under which certain types of work and the use of certain substances may be prohibited in home work for reasons of safety and health.

Article 8: Where the use of intermediaries in home work is permitted, the respective responsibilities of employers and intermediaries shall be determined by laws and regulations or by court decisions, in accordance with national practice.

Article 9: 1. A system of inspection consistent with national law and practice shall ensure compliance with the laws and regulations applicable to home work.

2. Adequate remedies, including penalties where appropriate, in case of violation of these laws and regulations shall be provided for and effectively applied.

Article 10: This Convention does not affect more favourable provisions applicable to homeworkers under other international labour Conventions.

Article 11: The formal ratifications of this Convention shall be communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration.

Article 12: 1. This Convention shall be binding only upon those Members of the International Labour Organization whose ratifications have been registered with the Director-General of the International Labour Office.

2. It shall come into force 12 months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director-General.

3. Thereafter, this Convention shall come into force for any Member 12 months after the date on which its ratification has been registered.

Article 13: 1. A Member which has ratified this Convention may denounce it after the expiration of ten years from the date on which the Convention first comes into force, by an act communicated to the Director-General of the International Labour Office for registration. Such denunciation shall not take effect until one year after the date on which it is registered.

2. Each Member which has ratified this Convention and which does not, within the year following the expiration of the period of ten years mentioned in the preceding paragraph, exercise the right of denunciation provided for in this Article, will be bound for another period of ten years and, thereafter, may denounce this Convention at the

expiration of each period of ten years under the terms provided for in this Article.

Article 14: 1. The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall notify all Members of the International Labour Organization of the registration of all ratifications and denunciations communicated by the Members of the Organization.

2. When notifying the Members of the Organization of the registration of the second ratification, the Director-General shall draw the attention of the Members of the Organization to the date upon which the Convention shall come into force.

Article 15: The Director-General of the International Labour Office shall communicate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for registration in accordance with article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, full particulars of all ratifications and acts of denunciation registered by the Director-General in accordance with the provisions of the preceding Articles.

Article 16: At such times as it may consider necessary, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office shall present to the General Conference a report on the working of this Convention and shall examine the desirability of placing on the agenda of the Conference the question of its revision in whole or in part.

Article 17: 1. Should the Conference adopt a new Convention revising this Convention in whole or in part, then, unless the new Convention otherwise provides -

(a) the ratification by a Member of the new revising Convention shall ipso jure involve the immediate denunciation of this Convention, notwithstanding the

provisions of Article 13 above, if and when the new revising Convention shall have come into force;

(b) as from the date when the new revising Convention comes into force, this Convention shall cease to be open to ratification by the Members.

2. This Convention shall in any case remain in force in its actual form and content for those Members which have ratified it but have not ratified the revising Convention.

Article 18: The English and French versions of the text of this Convention are equally authoritative.

Produced below is an extract from the report of UN CEDAW committee after reviewing Pakistan's report on the situation of women workers. It throws light on the plight of the women workers.

**Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women**
Thirty-eighth session 14 May-1 June 2007
**Concluding comments of the Committee on the
Elimination of Discrimination against Women:
Pakistan**

The Committee expresses concern at the discrimination faced by women in the formal employment, as reflected in their higher unemployment rates, the gender wage gap and occupational segregation. It is also concerned about the situation of women engaged in the informal sector, especially the home-based workers who do not enjoy protection under the labour laws.

The Committee urges the State party to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market, in accordance with article 11 of the Convention. The Committee calls on the State party to provide, in its next report, detailed information about the situation of women in the field of employment, in both the formal and informal sectors, about measures taken, including legislation, programmes, monitoring mechanisms and remedies, and their impact on realizing equal opportunities for women. The Committee also calls upon the State party to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 177 on Home Work.

Child Labour

Constitution

Article 11(3): *No child below the age of fourteen years shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment.*

Despite ratifying UN Conventions on the Rights of Child (CRC) in the 1990, Pakistan is among the countries where child labour is on its peak. Successive governments failed to deliver on this front too during the last over two decades. Price-hike and joblessness are adding to the higher poverty ratio and consequently bringing forward under-age workers who toil day and night to lower, though nominally, the financial distress of their parents. But, in the process, these innocent workers lose their childhood.

In Lahore alone, there are thousands of child-labourers. Many of them wish to join formal schools but cannot as their parents force them to work to earn something for their families. Surveys suggest that many of these innocent workers fall into the hands of criminals, who used them into drug-peddling, thefts and other crimes.

Children working at homes, factories, hotels, workshops and other places including surgical making units, bangle industry, tanneries, coal mines, carpet making and brick kilns total 21 million, says the Pakistan Manpower Survey (2007-08). These children range between the ages 11 to 14 years. The UNICEF in its report in 2003 had reported eight million child workers and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan put the figure at 10 million in 2005.

The wages of these innocent workers range between Rs100 to Rs150 per day, with no medical cover and inhuman attitude of supervisors and trainer-owners (ustad).

The number of child labourers in Pakistan has doubled in the last one decade. A non-governmental organization reports that the number of working children in the country has crossed the mark of five million. Of them 800,000 children are forced to lead a life of squatters, while hundreds of thousands are working at or associated with auto workshops, small hotels, factories, carpet making, fishing, agriculture and waste busting sectors. There are 26 professions considered to be dangerous for children but they are forced to join them.

“...Child-labourers Azeem, Farhan, Asif, Abbas, Rashid, Pappu, Kalu, Kashif and Saeed say that their domestic problems were so enormous that their parents force to work for overcoming these issues. They say their parents also work but their incomes fail to meet both ends meet. “To pay rent of the houses they live in and for twice-a-day meal, we are have to work in the streets from 8am till 11pm. This toiling earns us Rs100 to 150 a day and thus feed our siblings. We are deeply hurt when we see other children clad in new clothes going for recreation along with their parents while we in our tatters have to work even on Eid and other holidays. It makes us to think what is difference between them and us. We want to join schools and enjoy our life but for the sake of our younger brothers and sisters, we have to work as daily wagers for a paltry sum.”-(Express/January 27)

The government is well aware of the fact that it is abject poverty and destitution of the parents that make them to send their offspring to work as child labourers. Punjab Human Resource Director Saeed Ahmad Awan admitted

this fact at a seminar on “Forced Child Labour and Protecting their Basic Rights”. He said that children were being forced to do bonded labour due to poverty and unemployment in the country. He suggested the government should have made district committees operational in order to forestall the bonded labour. He said the children who should have had books and pens in their hands were working in chemical factories and other sectors to earn livelihood for their parents. (The News/February 3) But the question is if just this “confession” of “inaction” and “failure” on the part of the government to look after welfare of the future generations is sufficient!

The organizers of a signature campaign against child labour said there are one million children serving as domestic servants, a hidden form of child labour. Of them most are girls. The “Child Labour Free Sweet Home” signature campaign stressed upon the government to legislate for elimination of children’s exploitation at homes. The campaigners are getting signed a 300-metre banner to be displayed outside the Punjab Assembly on June 12.-(The Nation/June 8) There are no latest official figures available in this regard. The last survey conducted by the government was in 1996 when the number of working children had been put at 3.3 million. But the survey excluded the informal sector. Federal Labour Minister Syed Khursheed Shah claimed at a ceremony in Karachi that child labour had seen a decline of three to four percent. (Jang/June 15) The report lacked a reference to the period and the factors that contributed to this decline.

How these innocent servants are treated by their masters is reflected in this report.

12-year old Nadeem was subjected to torture by his callous masters, who even rolled a heated iron on the victim’s boy.

When Sabzimandi police station SHO raided a flat at Islam Chowk, he found the child servant tied with a rope. The victim was being tortured for three days for his alleged involvement in Rs33,000 theft from the house of his masters. A resident of Rahim Yar Khan, Nadeem was serving the family for the last two years. SHO Raja Tahir said marks of torture and burns were spotted at the boy's sensitive body parts.-(The Nation/August 24)

Sexual Abuse / Homeless Children

Sexual abuse of children is cloaked in silence and is often pushed into the deep and dark corners of our homes and minds, left unattended and untreated. But those who suffer the crime carry its scars throughout their lives. Children who work at homes, offices, hotels, workshops and in streets are vulnerable to the offence and ironically these cases are almost never reported by them to their parents for certain reasons. The most recent findings of report titled "Cruel Numbers" compiled by Sahil, an NGO, revealed a 9.4 percent increase in child sexual abuse cases as compared with the previous year.

At least 2012 cases of child sexual abuse were recorded across the country in 2009, with Punjab province topping the list with 62 percent of the cases. This means 3.3 children were sexually abused per day or one case after every seven hours. Of them, 68 percent were girls.

Karachi and other big cities have become a safe haven for the mafia to use children in distress for the purpose of sex. The victims are being trafficked to different parts of the country for the minimum wage of Rs3,000 per month. A 15-year-old runaway boy told The Nation (November 23) that he was lured into commercial sex from a video game shop in Karachi and was promised a good return. Alleging

the police as patron of the trade, he said he was trafficked to Quetta where most of his clients were Afghans, he revealed that several children were being forced as sex workers by mafias. Those who refuse and resist are brutally tortured. Teenagers living on streets were being recruited from video shops, mini cinema houses and Langar Khanas (free meal centres mostly set up at shrines). Small hotels in Cantonment, Railway Station, Saddar and Lea Market areas are prominent for this ugly business.

A study by Initiator Human Development Foundation reveals that sexual abuse against street children is widespread and that 88 percent children admitted experiencing sexual violence. The research shows police as the main culprit in the crime as 26 percent were abused by policemen, 20 percent by strangers, 22 percent by private guards, 15 percent by commercial drivers, 10 percent by political workers, five percent by shopkeepers and two percent by transgender.

Unions and Federation

Constitution

Article 17 (i): Every citizen shall have the right to assembly peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order.

Trade Unions

Ban on trade union activities has become a menace for the industrial workers. With the approval of the Industrial Relations Act, these restrictions had been tightened as the act is in violation of various conventions of the International Labour Organization and all the trade unions have also rejected it.

The Punjab labour minister said of the six million industrial workers only two million could be registered and issued social security cards in the year 2009. There are 500,000 workers associated with the power-loom sector but only 20,000 have social security cards.

The workers who try to form unions and take part in their activities in the factories are implicated in false cases and got arrested or kidnapped. They are tortured and even killed in some cases. In the year 2009, at least 20,000 workers were dismissed for taking part in trade union activities. In some sectors, including the export processing zones, there is a complete ban on trade unions.

The Senate's standing committee on finance rejected with a majority vote an amendment bill regarding clause 27-B of the Banking Companies Act governing trade union activities in banks and financial institutions. Besides other amendments, it had sought ending the ban on adopting 25 percent office-bearers of a union from outside the organization. Except the disgruntled Senator of PPP Safdar Abbasi, representatives of all other parties, including the PPP, the PML-N, the PML-Q, JUI-F and Jamaat-i-Islami, rejected the proposed amendments. If approved, the step could have strengthened trade unions in the banking sector.

Minimum Wages

Exploitation of and capitalization on the unorganized, or poorly organized, workers continued unabated as the labourers were unable to get implemented Rs6,000 minimum wages notification issued by the government the previous year. The Trade Union Defence Campaign claims in 60 percent factories the workers are being paid Rs4000 to Rs5000 per month. The earnings, it says, are insufficient to run one's kitchen while one has to pay power, gas and water bills as well as fees of one's school-going children too. Lacking a political will and without suggesting a mechanism to ensure execution of its orders, the federal government enhanced the minimum wages to Rs7,000 per month in the budget for 2010-2011. The decision, however, boomeranged for the employees as it made the employers to downsize their staff, while office hours for the rest of the force were increased. Those demanding overtime for the increased timing were removed from jobs. At least 70 percent owners are refusing to implement the government's notification regarding the minimum wages.

Pakistan Workers Federation says industrial units continued to openly violate the Factories Act 1934 and avoided giving

jobs to workers and their offspring under the fixed quota.

Many units refuse to grant leaves to their workers, even gazzeted holidays were denied. Contractual employees have no right to casual and privilege leaves too. Many industrial units do not issue appointment letters because of which these poor souls fail to get registered with the Employees Old Age Benevolent Institution (EOBI) and thus robbed of medical and other facilities.

What to talk of the private sector, **compliance to the minimum wages notification could not be ensured in the public sector too.** The government was paying lady health workers Rs3,200 while it had notified the minimum wages at Rs6000 even for the private sector. Punjab Assembly woman member Zobia Rubab Malik protested the disparity and wrote to the prime minister.-(Nawa-i-Waqt/February 15)

Ironically, under the very nose of the federal government, at least 50 employees working in different departments of state-run Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) were getting their monthly salary ranging between Rs3,450 to Rs5,000 which is not equal even to the minimum wage of Rs6,000 notified in the 2008-09 budget what to talk of a further Rs1,000 raise given in the 2010-2011 budget. The federal government approved the labour policy 2010 on World Labour Day fixing the minim monthly wages at Rs7,000.-(The News/June 22)

Government's apathy towards the needs of the people and a lack of political will to work has caused unnecessary delays in the implementation of standard salary package despite the lapse of two years. In Punjab, at least 1,570 pension cases of government employees are pending adjudication in various courts while 3,000 more pension files are lying on tables of various officers for want of their approval.

Ironically, some of the pensioners concerned have expired in the meanwhile while others have delayed marriages of their offspring and other important jobs for want of release of the pension funds. (Nawa-i-Waqt/January 18)

The lowest ceiling for minimum wages has never been such a puzzling question as it is today, the era of highest inflation as well as recession. For, no increase in wages has matched the ever-rising prices. The workers have been demanding that the yardstick for fixing wages should be the price of 10 gram gold as none can run one's house on a meager income of Rs6,000 or Rs7,000 per month.

A consultative meeting organized by the Women Workers Help Line sought fixing Rs15,000 as the minimum wages.- (Jang/March 25) Workers bodies like the Pakistan Workers Federation also gave a similar recommendation. The All-Pakistan Clerks Association demanded raise in salaries in proportionate with the price hike and making public the recommendations of the Pay and Pension Committee.- (Express/March 26)

Even the Senate Standing Committee on Finance suggested fixing Rs9,000 as the minimum wages and enhancing the minimum pension amount from Rs2,000 to Rs4,000 per month.- (Jang/June 12)

Besides the private sector workers, members of the All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA), teaching community, Parks and Horticulture Authority, Civil Secretariat Employees Union, law-enforcement agencies like police and Rangers, lady health visitors, telecommunication, irrigation departments workers, doctors and paramedical staff, railway workers and others continued protesting throughout the year to press the government for increasing their salaries. Their protest included press conferences, presentations, rallies and

demonstrations, which occasionally got unruly. All their efforts could not bring them more than 50 percent increase. On the other hand, their representatives in the parliament not only continued to receive the raise given to the employees in budgets but, through their own legislation, also laid claims on further raises over and above what was offered to the government servants.

At a time when low-paid employees in both public and private sectors were taking out rallies and staging protest demonstration for a sufficient increase in their salaries, the government was overlooking the demands citing its weak economic position. The Pay and Pension Committee formed by the federal government also made it clear that in view of the financial constraints the raise in the public sector employees would be made only in the next budget (from July). A meeting of the committee met under the chair of former State Bank governor Dr Ishrat Husain invited representatives of various associations of employees to know their points of view. It assured the delegations that the committee would try to complete its recommendations to the government within three months.- (Jang/January 2)

The Pay and Pension Committee, however, developed internal differences on the question of empowering the provinces to decide increase in salaries of their respective employees. The smaller federating units objected the devolution saying it would introduce disparity in the salaries of employees doing the same job in different provinces. This disparity is already evident in the police department as police in Balochistan province went on strike to demand a raise in their salaries equal to that of being paid to their counterparts in Punjab. Some of the protesters even entered the Governor's House in provincial capital Quetta and others staged sits-in on various roads. There was a difference of at least Rs6000 between the wages of both the police.-(The News/January 26)

The exploitation of low-paid workers is evident from this report that the National bank President was given 356 percent raise in salary in four years. While the low-paid employees were not eligible to even get 50 percent raise in their wages.-(Nawa-i- Waqt/January 7)

According to Civil Secretariat Employees Association, since the incumbent governments came in power in 2008, perks and privileges of the parliamentarians have been raised by 80 percent and of ministers and advisors by 100 percent. For the government employees the inflation allowance and ad hoc relief has been contained to just 35 percent.-(Nawa-i- Waqt/April 17)

*Government of Sindh Labour Department
Karachi dated the 15th November, 2010*

Notification

No. L-II- 13-4/78: Prime Minister announced the enhancement of Wages of unskilled workers from Rs.6000 to Rs.7000/- per month on 1st May, 2010.

Due to abolition of concurrent list, and the approval of 18th amendment in the Constitution, this became Provincial subject, therefore a summary was moved to Chief Minister of Sindh to approve the proposal contained therein, the same was approved.

This office then sent a reference to the Sindh Minimum Wages Board (hereinafter referred to as the Board) under section 4 of Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961, vide letter No. L-11-7-2/85-1 dated 6th October, 2010 for recommending the minimum rates of wages of unskilled and juvenile workers employed in the Industrial / Commercial Establishments in the Province of Sindh.

The Board, having considered the objections and suggestion received in pursuance of its Notification No. MWB/58(VI/2010 (unskilled) dated 12-10-2010 has submitted its recommendations (reproduced in schedule) for fixing the minimum rates or wages of adult unskilled and juvenile workers employed in an Industrial/ Commercial undertakings in Sindh, under letter No. MWB/R&S/US 1(1)/88-07/266 dated 12.11.2010 by issuing notification under Section 5 of Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961. The Government of Sindh has accepted the recommendation of the said Board.

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 6(1) (a) of the Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961 the Government of Sindh are pleased to declare that the minimum rates of wages for adult unskilled and juvenile workers employed in an the industrial / Commercial Establishments in Sindh shall be as given in the schedule appended to these recommendations with effect from 1st July, 2010.

Recommendations of Minimum Rates of Wages for Adult Unskilled Workers and Juvenile Workers employed in all the industrial undertakings in Sindh of reference from the Government of Sindh under Section 4 of the Minimum Wages Ordinance 1961.

I. The recommended wages shall apply to all Adult Unskilled and Juvenile workers employed in all Industrial / Commercial establishments/undertakings of any sort (registered or unregistered) located in the Province of Sindh. The minimum rates or wages shall be applicable uniformly throughout the province.

II. These recommendations shall be applicable as per provisions of the Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961 and

the Rules made there under and shall come into force on 1st July, 2010 after approval and notification by Government of the Sindh under section 6 of the said Ordinance.

III. (a) The employers in all the industries shall pay wages to the workers engaged in occupation as classified in the annexed schedule at the rates not less than these mentioned against each category for work of 8 hours a day subject to the provision of the West Pakistan Shops & Establishments Ordinance 1969, Factories Act, 1934, payment of wages Act, 1936 and other relevant Labour laws.

(b) The wages shall mean as defined in section 2(8) of the Minimum Wages Ordinance 1961 [No. XXXIX of 1961].

IV. The minimum rates of wages of other categories of workers (skilled and semi skilled) employed in any industry shall in no case be less than the minimum rate of wages, now, for adult unskilled and juvenile workers in the Sindh Province.

V. The employers shall revise, where necessary the rates of remuneration for piece rated workers so as to ensure that the workers in each piece rate occupation are enable to earn not less than Rs33.66 per hour in any working day,

VI. The rate shall be applicable to time rated/whole time workers including probationary, temporary and piece rated workers.

VII. The minimum wages shall not be regarded as maximum rates and existing wages, higher than the minimum wages now fixed, shall not be reduced: The Employers shall, however be free to pay higher wages either unilaterally on their initiative or by collective agreement in view of any special consideration, including experience or higher cost of living to a particular locality or other reasons.

VIII, An adult female worker employed in above industries shall get the same minimum wages as payable to a male

worker for work of equal value vide Rule-15 of the Sindh Minimum Wages Rules 1962.

IX. The workers in all Industrial / Commercial undertakings shall continue to enjoy all already existing facilities allowed to them regarding residential accommodation, water, electricity, medical aid, recreation Facilities, subsidized food, education or such other benefits/facilities.

X. The provisions of the Factories Act 1934 and the provision of the West Pakistan Shops & Establishments Ordinance 1969, and other relevant Labour laws shall be applicable generally but more particularly with regard to the daily/ weekly working hours, conditions of over time, work on days of rest and similar other matters.

XI. No variable or incentive allowance or value of welfare facilities as mentioned above shall be adjusted against the minimum wages.

XII. The schedule of minimum rates of wages for all Adult Unskilled and juvenile workers employed in all Industrial/Commercial establishments/ undertakings in the province of Sindh is appended below:

SCHEDULE

S No	Category of Worker	Recommended Rates of Wages	Minimum
1	Adult Unskilled Worker Employed in Industrial/Commercial Undertakings in Sindh Province	Rs269.23	Rs7000
2	Juvenile Workers Employed in Industrial/Commercial undertakings	Rs269.23	Rs7000

All Industrial, Commercial and other Establishments registered under any law shall pay wages to the employees through cross Cheque / Bank transfer.

(MUHAMMAD NASEER JAMALI)

Secretary to Government of Sindh

No. L-II-13-4/78: Karachi, dated. the 15th November, 2010

Copy is forwarded to:

- 1) The Superintendent, Sindh Government Printing Press, Karachi for publication in the extraordinary gazette and supply 50 copies of the gazette to the undersigned.
- 2) Private secretary to Minister Labour Sindh.
- 3) The Director Labour Sindh,
- 4) The Chairman, Sindh Minimum Wages Board, Karachi.

(MUHAMMAD YAMIN ANSARI)

Section Officer (Labour-II)

Minimum Wages Not Enough to Survive

By Mansoor Ahmad

The present government fixed the minimum wages at Rs.6,000 per month in 2008-09. But a study points out that families earning as much as Rs12,000 per month live in extreme poverty. Experts point out that it is impossible for an average family of 6.5 to balance its monthly budget even if they earn double the minimum wage.

They said double-digit food inflation coupled with extraordinary increase in electricity and gas rates and a huge decline in rupee value since 2008 has pushed even lower middle class into poverty trap.

Economists agree that the current daily expenses are so high that even a family with double the current minimum wages cannot afford to live comfortably. The first priority of these family heads is to feed their loved ones, the poor do not enjoy life. They toil hard round the year, braving heat during summers and shivering with cold in winters, they too have a right to enjoy life.

They have as much desire to provide good education, amenities of life to their children that are available to the children of affluent families. Appended below are the minimum necessary expenses of families with monthly income ranging from rs6,000 to Rs12,000. Atta (wheat flour) consumption has been calculated as per official figure of 110kg per person per year. The monthly expenses of a national average family of 6.5 persons based on bare minimum needs are:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Income</i>			
	Rs6,000	Rs8,000	Rs10,000	Rs12,000
Atta 60kg	Rs1800	Rs1800	Rs1800	Rs1800
Edible oil 5kg	Rs600	Rs600	Rs600	Rs600
Vegetables/onions	Rs900	Rs900	Rs900	Rs900
Pulses/spices	Rs600	Rs700	Rs700	Rs700
Utilities	Rs600	Rs800	Rs900	Rs900
House Rent	Rs1,500	Rs2,000	Rs2,500	Rs3,000
Sugar 2-3kg	--	Rs80	Rs125	Rs180
Transport	--	Rs300	Rs600	Rs1,000
Milk ½-¾ liter daily	--	Rs600	Rs600	Rs900
Soap toilet/washing	--	Rs120	Rs150	Rs150
Meat/chicken	--	--	Rs400	Rs600
Toothpaste	--	--	Rs25	Rs50
Tea	--	--	Rs150	Rs150
Rice	--	--	Rs200	Rs210
Education	--	--	Rs350	Rs600
Clothing	--	--	--	Rs260
Healthcare	--	--	--	--
Guests	--	--	--	--
Recreation	--	--	--	--
Fruit/toys	--	--	--	--
Total	Rs6,000	Rs8,000	Rs10,000	Rs12,000

It is evident that families with income of Rs6,000 cannot afford even to spend money on education, healthcare, clothing, toothpaste, tea, etc. fruits, entertainment are out of

reach for them. Any guest is an unwelcome burden on their resources. The prices quoted are the minimum. For instance, branded edible oil is priced at Rs750 per 5kg packing and here cheap loose packaged oil price has been quoted. Similarly, average price of vegetables is above Rs40 per kg but, including onions and tomatoes, their price has been quoted here at Rs30 per kg.

Transport charges in big cities like Lahore have shot up to Rs10 for the first 5km distance. But in the table it has been assumed that no member of the family needs transport and even working member will walk to his workplace. We have also assumed that the bread-winning member is not a smoker, which is against ground reality.

House rents have been kept to a bare minimum although finding a decent roofed house is very difficult at minimum of Rs.1,500 and maximum of Rs3,000 per month. Utility tariff has been quoted assuming that the poor households have gas connections otherwise the budget to run the kitchen on LPG cylinder or kerosene oil will double.-(The News/April 27)

Low wages and rising graphs of prices and unemployment forced various labour unions and employees' federations to raise their voice. Protest demonstrations, rallies and even train and long marches were organized to press the government for increase in salaries, restricting retrenchments under various pretexts, opposing hike in gas and power tariff and in prices of petroleum products.

APCA Protest for Raise in Salaries

The All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) has announced a pen strike against failure of the government in implementing recommendations of the Pay and Pension Committee and adopting an "anti-worker" attitude. The

strike, token for the first six days, will become a complete strike from Jan 20 and a full fledged protest by Jan 27 as meetings and demonstrations will be held outside the offices.

If the government remained unmoved, the APCA would give a call for a countrywide strike on Feb 10 and a long march on Islamabad on Feb 12. These announcements were made after a meeting chaired by APCA president Nazar Husain Korai.-(Express/ January 13)

2009: Anti-Worker Year: NTUF

Lahore chapter president of National Trade Union Federation Mian Abdur Rauf has termed 2009 anti-worker year as the democratically elected government has failed to raise wages of workers and making laws for their betterment. 20,000 factory workers were laid off for their only guilt of establishing trade union in their respective units, while 85 percent industrial units are not implementing the Rs6,000 minimum wage notification of the government, which is playing the role of a silent spectator in the process.-(Nawa-i-Waqt/January 4)

Contract Employment

The menace of contractual employment continued to plague the fate of working community as the government too, besides other departments, has resorted to hiring services of even medical practitioners on contract. Such employees are paid a lumpsum amount without any fringe benefits like medical cover, employees old age benefits and pension. There are no laws to provide them shelter against exploitation by their employers.

According to the Labour Federation, 90 percent workers in the private sector in Karachi were on contract owing to which they cannot even form their trade unions. Around 650 coolies work at the Lahore Railway Station who have been hired by various contractors. A contractor receives Rs400 per month from each coolie while he pays Rs50 per head to railway authorities. Under the contract signed by the coolies, they are bound to pay the contractor half of the amount they charge their clients (passengers). They also have to shift free of cost the luggage of railway authorities.

Downsizing / Privatization

A number of industrial units were closed down especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. According to media reports, 25 percent units in Karachi were declared as sick and closed. The world recession also hit hard the local workforce as thousands of them were shunted out of their jobs.

Statistics of the textile ministry say that 94 large units were shut for want of power, high mark-up rate and deteriorated law and order situation. At least three million workers were employed in the textile sector, as claims the All-Pakistan Textile Mills Association, but the power and gas load-shedding cost jobs of 350,000 employees. Ban on two-stroke auto-rickshaw on certain Lahore roads is also depriving thousands of rickshaw drivers of their livelihoods.

The major blow to the labour force came when the government decided to continue with the policy of previous governments of selling off state-run industries and organization to private owners. Federal Minister for Privatization Senator Waqar Ahmed Khan told the media in Lahore on January 20 that the government was distributing 1,000 billion shares of 80 state institutions among their

employees for their privatization. He said neither the World Bank nor the IMF was opposed to this process. In a bid to assure the employees of their secure future, he said the privatization process would not affect their interests. He said he was personally monitoring performance of these institutions to improve their productivity for making them profit earning entities. (Nawai Waqt/January 20) Daily Express quoted the minister as saying that Pakistan Railways, one of the major entities to be offered for privatization, would be made a profit-earning organization before its sell-off. He said the party overtaking the railways would not be given a free hand rather its performance would be consistently reviewed. He claimed that the sell-off was in the best interest of the masses. Daily Jang quoted him saying although work on selling of 80 large entities were going on full pace, no deadline could be for the purpose as their capital and balance sheet would be improved before finalizing the exercise.

Senator Waqar said at a press conference in Islamabad that the government had changed its policy vis-à-vis privatization of national institutions as the party(ies) purchasing 26 percent shares of an entity would be offered only its administrative control while strategic control would rest in the hands of the government. He said Utility Stores Corporation, an entity meant to provide subsidized daily-use items to the poor classes, was among the list of institutions to be disposed of. -(Jang/February 9)

The privatization process caused ripples among the ruling PPP as its labour wing, People's Labour Bureau, opposed the exercise.-(Express/February 15) It also earned ire of the workers assembled under the banner of Anti-Privatization Alliance Pakistan. Its organizer Farooq Tariq warned that selling off just eight large entities would directly hit the livelihood of at least 300,000 people. An irreparable loss to

the agriculture sector and people losing the facility of subsidized food would be other major damages, he said, adding 20-year privatization had already made more than 800,000 people jobless.-(The News/February 20)

The provincial governments are lagging behind the federal administration in getting rid of the national assets or more accurately handing them over to their favourites. The Punjab Assembly passed the Privatization Bill amid opposition protest. The opposition objecting to the language and conditions mentioned in the Bill termed it an open invitation to local and international capitalists to buy the whole province. The Bill said “Privatization includes a transaction by virtue of which any property, right, interest, concession or management thereof or any enterprise, wholly or partially, owned by the government is transferred to any person under the provision of the act.”-(The News/February 19) Under the Act, the provincial government took an anti-education and anti-poor decision of handing over 26 state-run colleges to the private sector. And among their prospective buyers are some known NGOs.-(Express/June 11)

Ironically, the governments were vowing to continue the privatization process despite their “confession” that sell-off of just one telecommunication giant, Pakistan Telecommunication Corporation Ltd (PTCL) caused the national exchequer Rs60 billion losses. The confession was made by none other than Privatization Minister Waqar Ahmad Khan while briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee on Privatization.-(Nawa-i-Waqt/April 22) While independent economic experts had also been opposing the policy, arguing it would add to the unemployment and crime rate as well as the price-hike. Pointing out that privatization of institutions in the past, like the Karachi Electricity Corporation, failed to bring the

desired results, they suggested the government give bail out packages to national institutions and introduce reforms for making them profit-earning entities.-(Jang/June 16)

PROTEST: Workers continued protesting and resisting the government's decision of doling out national assets to local and foreign capitalists for peanuts. However, for want of unity in their various federations and confederations and resultantly a poor strategy and weak show of power did not make any worthwhile impact on the government's policy.

Pakistan Railway Workers Union held a protest demonstration against privatization of the organization and its hospital. The workers also staged a sit-in outside the Mughalpura Railway Workshop.-(Express/January 11)

Closure of Factories for want of Gas, Power

350,000 workers lost jobs owing to gas, power load-shedding only in textile sector in Punjab, claims a report of daily The Nation. It said the textile units had been functioning partially for the last some weeks because of suspended gas supplies and unscheduled power load-shedding, causing a loss of Rs2 billion to the sector daily.

A report carried by daily Nawa-i-Waqt claimed that the power crisis cost closure of 4,000 small units rendering 75,000 workers jobless. The industrial sector is facing Rs250 million cut in production daily because of the ongoing power crisis. Export orders worth millions of dollars could not be met just in the month of March as 125 large and 4,500 small industrial and commercial units were closed for want of electricity. In many factories instead of three, single shift is working. According to an estimate, at least 75,000 workers were rendered jobless owing to closure of factories.

Extraordinary long power shutdown tested patience of the consumers, domestic, commercial and industrial alike. As power utility PEPCO faced 4817 MW shortfall in power generation the consumers had to suffer hours long load-shedding throughout the country. Various unions and workers federations started organizing protests against short supplies of power and gas. The load-shedding duration reached 20 hours in Sargodha forcing the unemployed labourers to take out a protest rally. In Dera Ghazi Khan, Vehari, Khanewal and Ahmed Pur East, traders burnt tyres and staged demonstrations against power outages that were hurting their businesses.-(Express/April 16)

Protest against load-shedding continued throughout the country as workers staged sits-in and blocked traffic against closure of their mills for want of electricity. The unannounced load-shedding for many hours made the people to take to streets. Owners and workers of Ferozpur Road, Lahore, mills blocked the road to traffic for half an hour to protest power outage. Later, they staged a sit-in. Lahore Chamber of Commerce former president Anjum Nisar demanded that like Karachi industrial units in Lahore should also be exempted from load-shedding. Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers Association's former chief Shehzad Azam Khan says the load-shedding has so far caused Rs250 billion losses in Punjab as 150,000 workers have lost their jobs in Lahore only.

The Qaumi Tajir Ittehad threatened to come on roads against the power shut down as Jamaat-e-Islami and Tehrik-I-Insaaf demonstrated at various places in the city against the load-shedding. Reports of protest received from other towns and cities of Punjab too.-(Jang/April 17)

Pakistan Railway Employees Revolutionary Union held its third protest at Mughalpura Railway Power-House Workshop. The participants held continuing power and gas

load-shedding as responsible for bad state of economy and resultant hike in prices and unemployment graph.-(Nawa-i-Waqt/January 11)

The Pakistan Workers Federation urged the President and the Prime Minister to arrange power supply on urgent basis for averting unemployment of hundreds of thousands of workers because of closure of factories for want of power and gas. General secretary Khursheed Ahmad made the demand at a press conference.-(Nawa-i-Waqt/January 13)

Textile bodies rally against costly thread

Various textile organisations took out a rally to protest high prices of yarn. The protestors announced a countrywide strike on January 8 if their demands were not met. Pakistan Textile Exporters Association, Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers Association, Textile Processing Mills Association, Pakistan Cotton Power-Loom Association, Dyeing and Chemical Association and Sizing Association office-bearers and factory owners staged a sit-in in front of the District Council offices. Later, speaking at a press conference they said yarn export had deepened the crisis the industry was facing and that they could also move the Supreme Court if their demand was not met by January 7.-(Nawa-i-Waqt/January 5)

Social Rights

Constitution

Article 26: (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 37: The State shall: promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of backward classes or areas;

remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period;

make technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit;

ensure inexpensive and expeditious justice;

make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment;

Article 38: The State shall: secure the well-being of the people, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, by raising their standard of living, by preventing the concentration of wealth and means of production and distribution in the hands of a few to the detriment of general interest and by ensuring equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees, and landlords and tenants;
provide for all citizens, within the available resources of the country, facilities for work and adequate livelihood with reasonable rest and leisure;
provide for all persons employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means;
provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or un-employment;
reduce disparity in the income and earnings of individuals, including persons in various classes of the service of Pakistan; and

Poverty

Local papers carry dreadful news reports regarding the war on Taliban in which bomb blasts are taking place at various public places and mosques almost on daily basis. But what is missing in the reports, or is not highlighted in the papers, is the problem of poverty closing in on hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis with each passing day, hour and moment. The number of people being pushed under the poverty line is ever increasing. Squeezed between harsh ground realities, unrelenting daily demands of life and a political and economic system indifferent to their woes, the poor are left with no option but to lose their lives.

Government's Confession

The government admitted in the National Assembly that people are killing themselves for their abject poverty and price hike. Federal minister for human rights Mumtaz Husain Gilani told the house on June 29 that so far 200 people have committed suicide in the last six months because of poverty and unemployment. He said the government did not have Alladin's magic lamp to change the economic situation overnight. Speaker Fehmida Mirza directed that an awareness campaign should be initiated across the country to tell the people that suicide is forbidden in Islam to curtail the trend of killing oneself.

(Jang/June 30)

Here are some of the suicide cases reported by various national dailies:

Power-loom worker kills himself for his joblessness due to load-shedding. (Jang/January 22)

An unemployed father in Chak Jhumra, Faisalabad, shot dead his four-year old son and injured his nephew for seeking new clothes. The accused, Allah Ditta, worked at a brick kiln and was unemployed for the last many days. (Express/March 27)

Fed up of their poverty, two youths reached Larkana to sell out their kidneys. Belonging to a nearby village, when disabled brothers Khair Muhammad Chandio and Farooq Chandio reached Jinnah Park carrying placards inscribed with their intention of selling their kidneys, a large number people gathered there. (Express/March 29)

Fed up of their poverty, a newly married couple killed themselves. Javed Machchi and Mumtaz of 109/7-R, Sahiwal, had married six months ago. Because of acute

poverty, their life was very miserable. Riding a cycle, they reached rail track near 7-11-L village and jumped before the Karachi Express holding each other's hands. The train cut their bodies into pieces. (Jang/April 1)

In Faisalabad's Chak 12-GB, Sahianwala village, one Khalid Mahmood hanged himself as he was worried at the economic conditions of his family.-(Express/April 2)

In Kamoke, Gujranwala, an unemployed youth killed himself by lying under a moving train.-(Jang/April 2)

30 years old Ashfaq, the son of Mushtaq, a shoemaker, was living with his parents in a rented house. Failing to find any reasonable job, he was working with his father. The previous day, the family did not have the money to prepare meal. Dejected, he went to the rail tracks and laid on it when Rawalpindi bound Margala Express reached there. The train chopped his body into pieces. (Jang/ April 4)

Five people committed suicide in various incidents as they were disappointed at their unemployment and poverty. Altaf of Gujjarpura, Lahore, swallowed poisonous pills when his father, Liaquat, reprimanded him for doing no job. He died in the hospital. In Darya Khan, one Imam Deen jumped before a moving train and died as he was fed up of his unemployment. In Sialkot, one Osman was anxious on deteriorating conditions of his business. He shot himself to death. In Sargodha, a father of five children strangled himself as he was jobless for many months and was unable to feed his family.-(Nawai Waqt/April 14)

A 40-year old woman and her 14-year old daughter committed suicide by jumping in the canal near Mughalpura. Police investigators said it seemed the two killed themselves due to poverty. -(The Nation/ May 17)

A poverty-stricken labourer killed himself and his two daughters after a desperate attempt to kill his entire family by administering them poison. Akhtar Shah, a rickshaw driver, was a resident of Shahpur Kanjran, Lahore, and was hit by deprivation due to his meagre income.-(The Nation, June 17)

Nadeem, a resident of Ravi Road's Siddique Colony, hanged himself as he was unable to repay Rs700,000 loan he had taken to run his business. The deceased used to sell vegetables in the local market. He was the eldest among five siblings and was the only bread-winner as his parents had died in his childhood.

In Karachi's Gulistan Colony, a woman, her son and three daughters took poison to get rid of their financial distress.-(Jang/June 17)

Ashraf, 50, of Faisalabad took poison as he was dejected at his economic and domestic problems.-(The Nation/June 17)

In Mianwali's Wan Bhachchran area, Abdul Khaliq committed suicide to escape his destitution. He was father of six.-(Express/June 17)

In Muzaffarabad's Kotli area, one Shafiq of Lahore killed himself as he was disheartened at his unending economic woes.-(Nawai Waqt/June 18)

32-year-old Ismael in Rajana and 25-year-old Muhammad Riaz in Ghakkar Mandi killed themselves by taking pills. Both were disturbed at their poverty.-(Jang/June 18)

Ismael of Block 6, Dera Ghazi Khan hanged himself when he could not provide milk to his two toddlers. The deceased was a labourer and could not find work for five consecutive days.-(Jang/June 20)

Fed up of his unemployment and resultant poverty, Ramzan of War Burton, Sheikhpura, took pills and killed himself. - (Nawai Waqt/June 21)

Sultana Gulfam of Kala Khatai station took poison when she could not provide milk to her infant because of her poverty.-(The News/June 22)

30-year-old Manzoor Husain of Faqeerwali Town also took poisonous pills to escape his destitution, a father of three daughters, he ran a vet store.-(Express/June 22)

Manawala's Ashraf took poisonous pills as he was fed up over quarrelling with his family on daily basis because of financial problems. In Lytton Road area of Lahore, an orphan hanged himself. Ahmed, 24 was distressed at his impoverishment.-(Express/June 25)

A mother and her three children were killed when they jumped before a moving train in Rahim Yar Khan. Bashiran was dejected at her domestic financial problems for her husband, a welder by profession, was addicted to gambling and would not give her much for meeting kitchen expenses. The mother took her offspring—Samina, 5, Waqas, 3, and Riaz of six month—and jumped before Lahore-bound Millat Express at Basti Pir Shaheedan rail track.-(Express/June 27)

Unemployment

Media reports 6.1 per cent hike in unemployment rate in 2008-09. But the unemployment ratio, according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan, remained five percent in 2008-09. Some civil society organizations dispute this figure claiming the ratio is much higher. A careful estimate puts the number of unemployed people at 38.4 million, of

them 14.5 million educated. Tens of thousands of people were rendered jobless when dozens of factories were closed for want of power and gas. A cut in the development projects also shut the doors to new employment opportunities. Terrorism acts in various areas and army operations in Malakand and Waziristan also badly affected economic activities in the country.

Rising graph of inflation, ban on second shifts in mills, violation of labour laws and power shortage made the workers to take to streets. Thousands of labourers took out protest rallies in Lahore, Karachi, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Mailsi, Gojra, Kamalia, Multan and other areas.

Health Hazards at Workplace

Thousands of workers are forced to work under inhuman and harsh conditions at their workplaces. A report reveals that at least 24 people lost their lives while working at stone crushing units and more than 400 developed lethal lungs diseases. Ironically, the workers are unaware of the health hazards they are facing at the workplaces.

Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labour Union report says around 100 employees of the power utility are electrocuted and many more injured/burnt every year while rectifying electricity supply problems.

A majority of the industrial units lack fire extinguishers and other safety gadgets in violation of a half a dozen laws regarding working conditions and safety of the workers. More than a dozen workers fainted when a textile unit in Faisalabad caught fire in 2009 as the unit lacked proper fire-fighting facilities.

Labour Flight

Despite strict visa restrictions, a large number of workers are abandoning their country in search of greener pastures abroad. Since 1971, at least 4.5 million skilled and non-skilled workers have left the country, according to an estimate. Middle East was the destination of a majority of them. In the last decade, on an average 225,000 workers went abroad each year while there was an upward trend in the immigration in the last couple of years. They included 2,500 doctors and 1,115 paramedics.

Education

Education sector is the primary indicator of any country's future. But regrettably, this sector is consistently being ignored in Pakistan since decades as the minimum possible funds have been allocated to it year after year. The year 2010 had been a difficult year for education sector. Continuing institutional obstacles (red tapism), ongoing wave of violence and acts of terrorism as well as government's policies like reducing funds for the sector and granting autonomy to various educational institutions badly hampered its performance. The year, like the yesteryears, set in with the promises of the authorities to take a deep interest and solid steps for improving the education sector, but, ironically, no satisfying measure could be taken throughout the year. UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report puts Pakistan among the few countries that failed to achieve even a single goal set for Education for All. UNDP's Human Development Index ranks Pakistan at 141st position out of 182 states while in the year 2005 it was on 135th position among 177 states. That means the citizens' living standard with reference to GDP, average life and literacy rate registered a drastic decline.

The policies adopted usually lack sound groundwork and planning. The Punjab government announced to provide English medium education to each school-going child and the authorities concerned were directed to implement the policy in the provincial metropolis school as the first step. But school authorities evolved their own policy and resorted to pick and choose in selecting the children for English medium, making the parents to protest it as class-based division.-(Express/April 12)

In Punjab, the formation of boards of governors in 26 colleges apprehended students as well as their teachers that the authorities plan to privatize these institutions. The likely victims took to the streets and even vandalized the Punjab Assembly when the authorities concerned turned a deaf ear to their reservations for months. The protestors had also been opposing district education authority, class-based system, increase in fee and time-scale promotion arguing they are badly affecting the education system.-(Dawn/December 9) The decision of forming the boards authorized to fix fees of the institutions too has been taken on the demand of the IMF that sought an end to the subsidy given to state-run educational institutions making them to generate their own resources.-(Express/October 6)

And the situation of this subsidy can be gauged from a media survey. It says the further cut in education budget will render many development projects in the sector incomplete. The Punjab government had formed a committee for the provision of basic necessities in state-run schools during the summer vacation. The vacations are coming to their end but there are hundreds of girls' schools where there exists no bathroom or the toilets are door-less. In more than 3,000 schools there is no teaching staff for subjects like English language, mathematics, physics and chemistry. In rural areas many schools are non-operational

for want of authorities' attention as the premises are being used for conducting marriage and other social events.

The situation in Sindh, the second best literate province, is no different. A survey by various NGOs suggests that 3.8 percent children have never been in schools in rural Sindh. The dropout percentage in urban Sindh is even higher. Over 50 percent children aged between 5 to 15 are out of schools while 70 percent girl students in rural areas fail to attend schools.

The situation is worst in Balochistan where the adult literacy rate is 37 percent and female literacy rate just 19 percent.

Workers' Welfare Board has, especially in Punjab, set up some schools for offspring of the labourers. But the number of these educational institutions, only up to matriculation or 10 years of schooling, is too less or these are located at places far off for a majority of workers. Transporting their children to these schools is too costly for them. The federal government has decided to introduce technical courses at secondary level at these institutions to produce skilled labour but the decision is awaiting implementation.

Health

Pakistan lags behind in the fields that provide mother and child better environment to live. Access to medical healthcare in emergency cases of delivery is mostly limited while malnutrition is a chronic issue. The rising prices of eatables are adding to the problems of the masses, especially those belonging to the down-to-earth segments of society.

Death rate of mothers and children is worryingly high, the highest in South Asia with regard to under five-year age children: 90 per thousand. In India, the ratio is 72, in Bangladesh 61, in Nepal 55 and Sri Lanka 21 per thousand.

The reason is that Pakistan spends only 15 dollars per head in the health sector while the overall ratio in South Asia is 26 dollars per head. The World Health Organization suggests 34 dollars per head. The Pakistan Economic Survey reveals that the government expenditures on health sector declined to 0.55 percentage to the GDP, 0.2 percent down from the previous year. The gradual reduction in health sector budget is making the poor to suffer as they cannot afford treatment at private expensive health facilities.

There is one doctor for each 1212 people in the country, one dentist for 18010 people and one bed in hospital for 1575 people. Almost 50 percent of the health allocation in the budget was for two projects: National Programme for Family Planning and Primary Healthcare Immunization Extension Programme. Ironically, neither the Workers' Welfare Boards are taking interest in developing health facilities for the workers nor the state-run hospitals are accommodating the poor souls as only a meager amount is being allocated for purchase of medicines for the patients in emergencies of the hospitals. The indoor patients have to make arrangements for their treatment: tests and drugs.

And the drugs available in the market are costlier while a majority of these are bogus. The ratio of bogus and substandard drugs can be gauged from the fact that the leader of a political party who had been president of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce, got injured in a road accident a couple of hundreds of miles away from the provincial metropolis, his hometown. The person owns a known pharmaceutical company. The man in question preferred to suffer the pain than getting treatment from even the best private healthcare facility and took the medicines only he had got imported from himself and his family from abroad, revealed a media report without

suggesting name of the businessman and his company.

A survey about the recent hike in prices revealed that 70 percent of the medicines were prepared by a multi-national company whose managing director is the brother of the incumbent director-general of health department.- (Jang/April 17)

Housing

The country is facing a shortage of around eight million housing units as presently there are approximately 23 million housing units—67 percent in rural and 33 percent in urban areas. About 3.15 people share one room. The housing ministry says in the middle of 1980s there was a shortage of 2.8 million housing units and thanks to the lethargy and inefficiency of the government each year added to the shortage. To meet sheltering needs of the increasing population, the country needs 500,000 housing units each year but only around 300,000 units are being added. If the trend persists the demand or deficit of housing units will reach to one million units per year. Rising inflation graph has added to the construction expenses because of which owning a reasonable house has become only a dream for a majority of middle-income class too.

The increasing shortage of housing units has given birth to a network of slums across the country. In urban centres, many a families are forced to live in one-room shanties. Army operations against militancy in Swat and tribal areas forced around 2.5 million locals to take refuge in safer regions, adding to the housing and slums problem. The worst floods in 2010 also made millions of people homeless. The federal government announced the Prime Minister's Housing Scheme while the Punjab took the initiative of introducing low-cost housing for the poor. But

these steps were too meager to meet the demand. According to an estimate, 20 percent of the citizens in urban centres are living in slums devoid of basic amenities. In Karachi, more than 50 percent citizens were living in slums while there were 150,000 plots lying vacant or unused for want of investors.

In Lahore, there were over 310 slums. Of them only 150 were registered with the Lahore Development Authority, while 103 bogus housing societies were operating in the provincial metropolis without permission of the authority. These illegal builders were extracting billions of rupees from the innocent people as the officials concerned were overlooking or rather conniving with this land mafia.

Conclusion

During the period July 2010 to June 2011, people of Pakistan continued suffering from economic crises, intensifying poverty, price hike, shortage of energy supplies and political turmoil. The war on terror and escalating operations against extremists were described as main reason for economic slow down. The state of human rights remained fragile as before and this situation has affected the workers as well. Pakistan suffered devastating floods that began in late July 2010 following heavy monsoon rains in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan regions and affected the Indus river basin. Approximately one-fifth of Pakistan's total land area was underwater. According to government statistics, the floods directly affected about 20 million people, mostly by destruction of property, livelihood and infrastructure, with a death toll of close to 2,000. All these added to the miseries being faced by the working class in the country.

Globalisation, like in any other in the world practicing capitalism, is hitting the labour in Pakistan too. Large multinationals are engulfing the local labour-intensive industries by introducing mechanised production systems. The process is resulting in large-scale lay-offs, adding to the already high rate of unemployment.

To make the matters worse, the government under pressure from World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), the tools of the capitalism to twist arm of those refusing to accept its policies, a deregulation policy is going on for the last couple of decades unabated. State enterprises are being privatised at throwaway prices and that too at the cost of the workers. This is adding to further rise in joblessness rate and in consequence to poverty and increasing the chances of pushing the have-nots towards the traps of extremists and fundamentalists, who have vast funds to lure the people towards their vested agenda. To set the situation right, or to be exact for ameliorating the plight of the poor strata, there is need for the government to reverse its policies viz-a-viz workers.

It should put a stop to the ongoing wave of privatisation and deregulation in the name of giving a maximum space to the private entrepreneurs, reducing the role of the state in businesses. Because private investors almost always go for profits and not for welfare of the mankind or what is most required by the people and their homeland and the planet earth.

It should take labour organisations along while formulating a new labour policy instead of relying only on bureaucrats and influential and dirty-rich employers. The government should not only improve labour laws but also ensure their implementation in letter and spirit. As like the minimum wages notification, these must not remain confined to only

papers rather these should be enforced to ensure protection of the rights of workers. There is also a dire need of changing the attitude of institutions. Regrettably, the independent judiciary, for which the working class had given sacrifices second to none, has not come to its rescue as all the cases pertaining to rights of workers were either decided in favour of the employers or stood pending adjudication. The capitalists should also give a serious thought to the reality that a worker with a peace of mind can prove more beneficial to their industrial/ agricultural empires than the one engulfed in worries about the basic needs of one's family. And the government must also keep in mind that the poor strata of society facing extreme miseries may be misled to extremism by the unscrupulous elements. So act before it is too late and enable, in the first phase, the working class at least to earn two time meals for their immediate families. In the next phase, that must not take too long, all basic needs of the workers should be met. The government must also ratify all the international tools like conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), CEDAW and others, while also ensuring implementation of earlier conventions it had already signed and endorsed. It may be mentioned that Islamabad has so far ratified 46 ILO conventions but, regrettably, enforcement of none of them is satisfactory. To raise the voice for the rights of home-based women workers, these isolated workers should be organized. There is also an urgent need for involving their families to overcome cultural barriers and hesitation of the male members in allowing their women relatives to go out whether for learning a new skill or taking part in trade union activities. Clay brick manufacturing sector contributes 1.5 percent to the GDP and involves about two million people as informal piece rate workers. Being informal workers, brick kiln workers are out of the ambit of whatever social protection schemes and social safety

networks exist at the country level. This policy should be reversed in accordance with the June 2010 the Supreme Court of Pakistan directives to call Chief Secretaries of all provinces directing them to get registered all the brick kilns to enable the workers' access to social security benefits but no development. Their minimum wages should also be fixed and ensure enforcement in all the four provinces. Bonded labour should be banned completely and those violating the laws by maintaining their private jails, especially in the interior Sindh, must be taken to task. The Prime Minister increased the minimum wage from to 6,000 7,000 rupees per month but a large number of workers in specific categories, even in some government sectors, are not getting benefit of this announcement. Set the things right and make the officialdom implement the government declarations.

The ban on labour inspections of working places by the Labour Department in Punjab province has resulted in severe violation of basic human rights at the work places. The ban should be lifted at once.

Workers' rights have been least protected during the last one-year owing to different political, economic and law and order situations. Severe electricity and gas load shedding during the period resulted in reduction in production of many industries, which affected the job security of workers. Many big industrial units laid off workers. But the most difficult situation was faced by the workers of small units mostly working on daily wages or at piece rate. They lost their earnings and jobs. This situation has increased the miseries of working class many fold as the prices of basic commodities in last one year have increased unprecedentedly. The government should ensure uninterrupted supply of power and gas to the industrial sector so chimneys of factories continue to emit smoke, the lifeline of the production.

The Labour Education Foundation (LEF) was established in 1993 as a non-governmental organization. The initiative was led by a few renowned trade union leaders, human rights and gender rights activists. Their aim was to organize, capacitate and advocate for workers rights and provide informed input to trade unions and various civil society organizations for the promotion of workers rights. Although we have offices in Lahore, Karachi and Mardan the LEF conducts activities throughout Pakistan.

We have been devoting considerable resources towards supporting and enabling formal and informal sector workers to organize themselves, develop their knowledge, claim their rights and transform unequal power relations.

We have been honored with the SILVER ROSE AWARD for 2011 by SOLIDAR, a European network of 52 NGOs active in over 90 countries to advance social justice.

Labour Education Foundation believes in democratic, progressive, just, peaceful and developed society where working class men, women and youth are empowered to claim and protect their social, economic and political rights.



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