

**Paper**

**On**

**Strategies for the Prevention of Child Labour: An overview of strategy and  
assessment of effectiveness in Pakistan**

**By Shafqat Munir<sup>1</sup> and Hassan Mangi<sup>2</sup>**

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**Strategies for the Prevention of Child Labour: an overview of strategy and assessment of effectiveness in Pakistan**

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***Abstract***

*Child Labour refers to a large number of children, across the globe, who are found to be spending their formative years working in difficult, sometimes even hazardous circumstances. They have to work for long hours in unhealthy and dangerous conditions under extreme physical, psychological and social exploitation and that too without recognition by the employer, society or the state.*

*Child labour today represents the largest single cause of child abuse around the world. Most of it takes place in economically less developed countries, and much of child labour exists in the informal sector of these economies. In a few cases the effects of child labour may be neutral or even positive, such as helping out in a family run shop during school holidays. In recent years, therefore, the emphasis has shifted from the abolition of all forms of child labour to the elimination of intolerable and hazardous child labour. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that worldwide 110 million children aged 5-14 years are engaged in labour that can be described as hazardous or intolerable.<sup>3</sup>*

*The International Labour Organization's Minimum Age Convention in 1919, regulated for the first time the age of working children. This Convention was followed by several national, regional and international conventions and treaties. Most significant of them include the United Nations Child Rights Convention (1989), other ILO Conventions and SAARC treaties.*

*Pakistan's efforts in combating the issue of child labour are rooted in its Constitution, which provides protection to children (Article 35) and prohibits all forms of forced labour (Article 11). To ascertain the state of child labour, the Federal Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey in 1996. Similarly, Pakistan has devised a National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labour and it also has made several other national and international commitments. There are several success stories that tell about reduction in child labour in Pakistan.*

*This paper looks into the fact whether measures taken by Pakistan to combat child labour did produce results and do these initiatives have been effective. The paper analyses the National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labour and Time Bound Programme under ILO-IPEC' as it is the first major policy and programme document of the Government of Pakistan to eliminate child labour besides other initiatives and cross sectoral strategies addressing child labour. The paper also discusses some good practices and strategies by civil society groups targeting the working children with their effectiveness.*

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<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organisation. *World day against child labour*. Press release, 12 June 2002. [www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/childlabour/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/childlabour/index.htm).

## **1. Introduction**

The child labour in Pakistan has been a persistent problem that is harming the lives of children though providing economic relief to some extent to the poor families where these children come from. This issue could not be seen as an isolated problem, it needs to be looked into with an integrated approach by the line ministries in collaboration with ILO and civil society groups. This is particularly important when major players such as the Federal Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis and the Provincial Labour Departments have taken the lead in implementing the Policy.

Pakistan has ratified the ILO Convention 182 on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2001. Pakistan is signatory to the two Optional Protocols to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on, “Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict” and “Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography” and the Yokohama Commitment on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). These commitments have significantly changed the prevalence patterns of the child labour in Pakistan.

The Constitution and existing laws prohibit different kinds of hazardous situations involving children. Under Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) slavery and human bondage is a crime punishable with seven years imprisonment or fine or both. The PPC and the newly promulgated law “The Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance 2002” prohibit kidnapping and trafficking of human beings, particularly women and children. Similarly, hazardous forms of child labour are covered by laws including the Employment of Children Act 1991, Factories Act 1934, Mines Act 1923 and the Merchant Shipping Act 1923.

With the growing awareness about the exploitative and abusive nature of child labour, rehabilitation of working children in the country has been given a serious thought. Both the governments and NGOs have been undertaking several rehabilitation programmes. These programmes will be described in this paper under the Baitulmal, Bunyaad, ILO and Sudhaar models. Most of these models focus on non-formal education, vocational training of children, and withdrawal of children from the worst forms by offering alternatives such as education and sensitization of community leaders on the issue.

Child labour has been a long-existing problem in the industrialized ‘first world’ as well as the developing world. The West has overcome this problem to a large extent. The scourge of child labour becomes more serious in countries such as Pakistan where conditions of extreme poverty force children to become active in the labour market, with little support from family, society or the state.<sup>4</sup> Some of the socio economic policies introduced in the country since independence have been linked to the growing poverty.

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<sup>4</sup> A Review of the National Policy and Plan of Action To Combat Child Labour in Pakistan in light of ILO Convention 182 and Other International Commitment

## **2. Socio Economic Policies in Pakistan**

### **2.1. Land and people**

Located in South Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea, between India in the east, Iran and Afghanistan in the west and China in the north, Pakistan emerged on the world map on 14 August 1947. Total area is 803,940 sq km (*land*: 778,720 sq km and *water*: 25,220 sq km). Terrain comprises flat Indus plain in east; mountains in north and northwest; Balochistan Plateau in west. Land use pattern is *arable land*: 27.81%, *permanent crops*: 0.79% and *other*: 71.4% (1998 est.)

Total population has reached 150,694,740 (July 2003 est.). The age structure has been estimated at *0-14 years*: 39.3% (male 30,463,958; female 28,726,776), *15-64 years*: 56.5% (male 43,571,093; female 41,651,872) and *65 years and over*: 4.2% (male 3,051,674; female 3,229,367) (2003 est.). Hence the median age comes to total: 19.8 years (male: 19.7 years and female: 20 years (2002)). Sex ratio of the population at birth is 1.05 male(s) per female (2003 est.) Total fertility rate is 4.1 children born per woman (2003 est.).

### **2.2. Economic policies and their nexus with poverty**

While the country managed to achieve substantial economic progress since independence, Pakistan faced lack of sound economic management and political instabilities during most of the 1990s. This resulted in slow growth, a worsening fiscal deficit and a precarious balance of payments situation. In October 2000, Pakistan in co-operation with the IMF initiated a far-reaching macroeconomic stabilization and restructuring programme. The macroeconomic situation has since improved, in particular related to the fiscal deficit, official reserves and inflation. Trade performance has increased. However, progress in the social sectors has been largely neutralized by high population growth.

There has been no tangible reduction in poverty levels. Based on caloric requirements the proportion of people living in poverty has increased from 26.4% in 1987/1988 to 28.6% in 1999/2000 (29.29% in rural, 27.56% in urban areas). It is estimated that about 32% of Pakistan's population are below the food poverty line (Government of Pakistan, 2002), and about 44% are below the poverty line on the human poverty index (UNDP, 2002). The available data imply that roughly one third of the population is affected, with poverty rising relatively faster in urban areas. Poor access to basic social services and lack of good governance are cited as underlying reasons for this development. Given the low growth in real per capita income in recent years, inequality has risen.<sup>5</sup>

Pakistan's economic prospects, although still marred by poor human development indicators, continued to improve in 2002 following unprecedented inflows of foreign assistance beginning in 2001. GDP growth will continue to hinge on crop performance; dependence on foreign oil leaves the import bill vulnerable to fluctuating oil prices and efforts to open and modernize the economy remain uneven.<sup>6</sup> The budgetary deficit target of 4.0 percent of GDP, however, may be difficult to realize, mainly because of the

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<sup>5</sup> Website of the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan

<sup>6</sup> Facts on Pakistan- CIA Fact book, August 01, 2003

persistence of large losses by public sector enterprises (PSEs) and the resulting need for subsidies.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.3 Social Sector Development**

The provision of health facilities in Pakistan is inadequate and remains one of the worst in the region. Almost 70% of all deaths and diseases in the country are due to unhygienic conditions, under-nourishment and insufficient care for the afflicted. Infant mortality rates are high and inaccessibility to running water for hygiene purposes and potable water for drinking have made unsanitary conditions unavoidable in many parts of the country. 60% of infant deaths and 40% of all urban deaths are caused by drinking unsafe water<sup>8</sup>. Government provision of health care is deficient in most respects, while private care is too expensive for most of the population. Neglect is especially evident in attitudes towards women and children; infant mortality rates and death during childbirth is high.

The educational system in Pakistan is divided between formalized education and religious schooling at 'madrassas'. A large number of students, especially in rural areas, end up in the 'madrassas' which focus on teaching of Islamic principles and recitation of the Quran, and the medium of instruction is Urdu. They are popular as they also often provide food and lodging for boys studying. The modern schooling system is again divided between English medium and Urdu medium schools. The English medium schools are all private and charge fees that are high enough to make them inaccessible to a large part of the population. Students graduating from Urdu medium schools are not necessarily equipped to deal with professional jobs and more often do menial jobs. A significant part of the population does not attend school at all and the drop-out rate is high, access to education is limited for girls. The drop outs finally end up doing child labour and domestic child work.

Socio-economic policies have not been successful in containing the growing poverty and thus reducing vulnerability of children from poverty stricken families for child labour. In nutshell it could be said that socio economic policies since independence in 1947 have though brought about tangible change in growth paradigm but they could not curtail poverty and demand for child labour.

### **3. Situation analysis of Child Labour in Pakistan**

Though the country's Constitution and certain laws strictly prohibit the child labour, yet we cannot escape and deny its prevalence in different sectors of economy in Pakistan. If we look at the available literature, we find that weak law enforcement, poverty, inequality, lack of education infrastructure and apathy on the part of society and policy makers are the contributing factors that put children in work.

Children are sent to work due to poverty at household level owing to income inequality and lack of livelihood opportunities for elders in the family. At societal level, employers prefer to hire a child on comparatively much less wages instead of an adult on higher wages. The working children are either engaged in household chores (girls) or other hazardous works or in the informal sector. At most of the work places, they are exposed

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<sup>7</sup> Pakistan Economic Update- Asian Development Bank, August 26, 2003

<sup>8</sup> *The News* - June 28 2000

to chemicals and instruments dangerous for children of their age. There are certain misperception and myths around children's work. One such perception is that the talk of pulling the children from workplaces is a western agenda with a protectionist approach or a sort of trade barrier for the developing countries. Such myths and assumptions actually confuse and complicate the issue instead of bringing about a solution to this very human problem. In nutshell the problem is not being accepted as such<sup>9</sup>.

A considerable number of children (29%)<sup>10</sup> of primary school going age group do not attend school due to lack of resources; instead, they are engaged in different income generation activities. Poverty is the main cause of children's absence from schools and their involvement in different labour activities. Low incomes and large family size (6.8 %) exacerbate the poverty cycle which in turn results in greater dependence upon child labour, whereby children, both male and female, enter the mainstream labour force to bring forth supplementary incomes to maintain the economic balance of their families. There is a greater incidence of poverty in rural areas compared to urban areas. Pakistan Poverty Assessment (1995) found that there is a high incidence of poverty in rural areas as compared to urban areas. A research conducted by the Human Resources Management and Development Centre shows that poverty is the main factor in 94 % cases of child labour<sup>11</sup>.

Pakistan's rural areas contain 38.65 percent of its poor<sup>12</sup>. Growing poverty is also a major cause of migration to urban areas. Internal and external migration has added to child labour. Pakistan has hosted more than three million Afghan refugees who have engaged themselves in low or unskilled work. The involvement of child labour among refugees is significantly high. The poorest families prefer to engage children in income generating activities for family survival.<sup>13</sup>

Child labour is found in a wide range of economic activities, including agriculture, non-traded services, the flesh trade, small scale and micro enterprises. Furthermore, a notable majority of children work under exploitative and hazardous conditions<sup>14</sup>.

### **3.1 Child Labour Survey**

The first ever country wide child labour survey (CLS) was conducted in 1996 which shows that there were 3.31 million child labourers in Pakistan, 2.43 million were boys and 0.88 million girls. The number of male child labourers in 10-14 years age group was about seven times greater than the number in the age group of 5-9 years. The CLS revealed that male child labour out-numbered female child labour in rural as well as urban areas. Labour force participation rate accounted for 8.3 percent. (See Table 1 below.)

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<sup>9</sup> SPARC Report (Anis Jilani) "State of Child Labor in South Asia"

<sup>10</sup> Pakistan National Human Development Report 2003, UNDP Pakistan

<sup>11</sup> Fading hopes, Human Resources Management & Development Centre, Peshawar 2002

<sup>12</sup> Economic Survey of Pakistan 2002-03

<sup>13</sup> Rapid Assessment of Scavengers (Rag-pickers) Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) 2004

<sup>14</sup> The ILO defines exploitative child labour as work which: "deprives children of their childhood and their dignity, which hampers their access to education and the acquisition of skills and which is performed under conditions harmful to their health and their development."

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Sector-wise break up shows that 67% of the employed children are engaged in agriculture sector as unpaid family helpers, while manufacturing industry employs 11% children; retail and trade sectors employ 9% and community and social sectors employ about 8% child labour. The province wise breakdown shows that 59% child labourers exist in Punjab, followed by 32% in North Western Frontier Province (NWFP), 9% in Sindh and a mere 0.5% in Balochistan.

**The prevalence of child labour varies among all the four provinces. There seems a huge difference between the percentage of the working children in Punjab province and that of the Balochistan province. NWFP is the second in the row after Punjab in terms of prevalence of child labour largely because of the Afghan refugee children in labour market in this province. Punjab is an industrial province with huge population as compared to Balochistan. According to population census 1998, total population of Punjab is 73.62 million while it is only 6.56 million in Balochistan. Density per square kilometer in Punjab is 359 persons while it is 19 in Balochistan. The labour force participation in Punjab is also much higher than other provinces because of a large number of agriculture labour market. Moreover, in Balochistan's tribal system, children are generally protected by the elders. They are not sent out for work in large number. Another reason for the lowest figure for Balochistan is that less number of house holds report incidence of child labour. In Sindh, Karachi and Hyderabad are two major cities where informal labour market has a large number of child labourers. Similar ratio in number and percentage has been observed in case of domestic child labour in all the four provinces. Majority of domestic child labourers are girls.** Embedded in these figures are thousands of children who are employed in hazardous and/ or exploitative work and situations. These are the worst forms of child labour, from which their immediate removal is necessary.

Table 1: Distribution of economically active children by age, sex and rural/ urban areas 1996

<i>Rural/ Urban</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>5-14 Years</i>		<i>5-9 Years</i>		<i>10-14 Years</i>	
		<i>Economi cally Active [no]</i>	<i>Labour Force Participa tion [%]</i>	<i>Economi cally Active [no]</i>	<i>Labour Force Participa tion [%]</i>	<i>Economi cally Active [no]</i>	<i>Labour Force Participa tion [%]</i>
All Areas	Total	3.31	8.30	0.57	2.66	2.74	19.91
	Boys	2.43	11.81	0.33	2.99	2.10	22.53
	Girls	0.88	4.56	0.24	2.31	0.64	7.18
Rural Areas	Total	2.94	10.29	0.54	3.40	2.41	18.78
	Boys	2.11	14.19	0.30	3.66	1.81	27.54
	Girls	0.24	6.08	0.24	3.13	0.30	9.80
Urban Areas	Total	0.37	3.25	0.04	0.64	0.33	5.97
	Boys	0.32	5.61	0.03	1.08	0.29	10.14
	Girls	0.05	0.82	0.01	0.20	0.04	1.50

(Source: The Child Labour Survey 1996)

### **3.2 Prevalence of more boys in child labour**

In Pakistan's socio-religious context, it has been observed that except for domestic child labour, girls are not encouraged in the child labour markets. It is considered that the girl child workers become more vulnerable to sexual exploitation than the boys. Generally in Pakistani society, movement of women and girls is restricted and limited as compared to men and boys.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) Pakistan in its study on Rag-picker children confirmed initial hypothesis about the presence of fewer women scavengers. It was especially difficult to find girls in age group of 15-18 years at all the scavenging sites as they are usually married off or withdrawn from the profession when they reach puberty. Boys dominate rag-picking and other menial jobs. The level of girls' involvement decreases gradually as the age group increases. Overall, only thirty five percent instead of 50% female respondents were from the 5-9 years age group. This decreased to 15 percent girls in the grown-up age of 10-15 years and decreasing trend continued for the age group of 15-18 years where it was only 11 percent compared to 89% boys.<sup>15</sup> This study and earlier child labour survey and labour participation data indicate that child labour incidence is high in boys as compared to girls because of socio-religious reasons and tribal and family customs.

### **4. Pakistan's commitment to eliminate child labour**

Since promulgation of the Employment of Children Act (ECA) in April 1991, 14 years ago, sincere efforts are being made to eliminate and reduce the prevalence of child labour. The trade sanctions by certain importing countries on goods made out of the child labour also helped reduce the quantum of the prevalence of child labour. Taking further serious steps, Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO-IPEC in 1994 which paved way for specific programmes, projects and policy interventions to combat child labour. The ILO-IPEC initiative in collaboration with the government of Pakistan mobilized government organizations, civil society, trade unions, employers' organizations and all other major stakeholders against the menace.

The successful deliverance of the stakeholders under ILO-IPEC and government initiative proved to be a driving force in the formulation of the National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labour, the first formal policy approved by the cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2000, which lays down strategies and action plans, aiming to achieve the ultimate goal of bringing working children out of hazardous situations.

#### **4.1. National Child Policy and Plan of Action**

Moving further on child rights and welfare, the government and NGOs initiated the preparation of the National Child Policy and Plan of Action (NCP-PA) as part of the follow up of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children 2002. This initiative aims to make comprehensive policy coupled with across the board commitments at the national, provincial, regional and district levels involving all the stakeholders. NCP-PA

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<sup>15</sup> Rapid Assessment of Scavengers (Rag-pickers) Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) 2004

provides a unique opportunity to the government and the civil society to make holistic interventions to make for realistic policy, backed by a plan of action that brings together commitment from across the nation and various actors working for children. The policy makers aim to back the NCP-PA with solid financial commitments and linkages with larger policy documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategies being prepared by the government.

## **4.2. National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labour**

The National Policy and Plan of Action (NP & PoA) to combat child labour is the first major policy initiative on the serious issue of child labour in Pakistan. It provides a broad framework to all the stakeholders to act to move towards the goal of elimination of child labour. The NP & PoA calls for an effective and cross-sectoral strategy to combat child labour. The lead role remains with the Federal Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis and the Provincial Labour Departments, while the other ministries and departments and the civil society is called on to support various components of the Policy and the Plan. The policy highlights of the NP & PoA are:

- Progressive elimination of child labour from all sectors of employment
- Immediate eradication of the worst forms of child labour
- Regular monitoring and inspection systems to supervise implementation of National Policy and Plan of Action
- Prevention of entry into labour market of underage children, by offering the alternative of education
- Ensuring at least primary education and skill training to the children at the target of the plan
- A programme of action that aims to eliminate child labour through short, medium and long term strategies supplemented the policies. These strategies include:

### **4.2.1 Short Term**

1. Awareness raising; development and dissemination of information
2. Community mobilization
3. Analysis of situation
4. Establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems
5. Withdrawal of children from exploitative labour on priority basis
6. Special protection to the most vulnerable groups of child labour

### **4.2.2. Medium Term**

1. Education and skill development of working children
2. Institutional capacity building
3. Strengthening of inspection services, skill development and vocational training of working children

### **4.2.3. Long Term**

1. Universalization of primary education
2. Full implementation of the law
3. Expansion of social safety nets

## **5. Implementation**

For implementation, the National Policy and Plan of Action takes along various stakeholders in the fight against child labour. They include government line departments, human rights groups, the judiciary, NGOs, lawyers, employers, workers organizations and teachers both as agents of change and as a vehicle for monitoring and facilitating effective enforcement of the action plan. The non state actors especially the International Labour Organization and major Non Governmental Organizations working in the field on the issue are aware of the National Policy and Plan of Action, and in most cases display a sense of ownership.

“The National Plan of Action for elimination of child labour is a very good document theoretically and contains all the good things that one can say or perceive about elimination of child labour. The NGOs own the document and take a lot of pride in the fact that the Government of Pakistan has taken a lead on the issue and is amongst the countries that do have a National Policy and Plan of Action”.<sup>16</sup>

The civil society organizations and leading national NGOs working on child related issues have been actively involved in tackling the problem even before the National Policy and Plan of Action was initiated. “The general level of awareness about the issue has shown dramatic increase and the reason for this is both, international pressure and efforts to highlight the issue as well as the activities of the national civil society organizations.”<sup>17</sup>

### **5.1. ILO-International Plan for Elimination of Child Labour**

The Memorandum of Understanding, for International Plan for Elimination of Child Labour or ILO-IPEC Action Plan in Pakistan was signed on June 21, 1994. The Programme functions under a National Steering Committee chaired by Federal Secretary Ministry of Labour with members from other ministries, workers, employer organizations and civil society organizations. Presently four large projects and nine action programmes are operational in Pakistan. The projects are in the areas of surgical instruments and carpet weaving in the province of Punjab and an education project including teacher training in NWFP. The smaller action programmes are being carried out in all the four provinces. Training workshops with media, local governments and others are also being conducted to apprise them of the child labour situation and its impacts on children.

In line with the proposed strategies of the Plan, the ILO-IPEC developed close alliances and partnerships with various national and international organizations. As outlined in the National Policy and Plan of Action, employers have a very important role to play in tackling the issue and it is encouraging to know that the Employer Federation of Pakistan,

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<sup>16</sup> Fawad Usman, Chief Executive Sudhar, NGO working for the betterment of child labourer

<sup>17</sup> Zarina Jilani SPARC

Skill Development Councils, Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other employer organizations also remained active in the field during the Plan period.<sup>18</sup>

### **5.1.1. ILO-IPEC Time bound programme**

In addition to the actions under the NP and PoA, the ILO commenced the Time Bound Programme (TBP)<sup>19</sup> for elimination of the worst forms of child labour in the year 2002. This was done in the wake of Pakistan having ratified the ILO Convention 182 Against the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2001. The Convention 182 became effective from October 2002, hence the need to start a programme to operationalize actions to bring the country in conformity with the requirements of the new Convention. A national list of hazardous work identified 29 occupations for children.

## **5.2. Strategic activities under the National Policy and Plan of Action**

The National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labour envisage a variety of strategic activities that focus on progressive elimination of child labour. Different activities are described below.

### **5.2.1. Strategic communications, Lobbying and Policy Advocacy**

Strategic communications for awareness raising of the stakeholders and people in general and lobbying and policy advocacy with the policy makers and key functionaries are being used as tools to address one of the biggest challenges of our society, the child labour as a main thrust of the NP and PoA. The line ministries and departments and NGOs organize seminars to share key findings of research studies and decisions taken to eliminate child labour and publish them for wider dissemination. They also arrange special events on child related issues on International Children's Day. Provinces have also participated in awareness raising activities by arranging conferences and workshops.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in collaboration with ILO is holding strategic workshops with Media with a view to motivate media to take up the child labour agenda in the best interest of the working children. These workshops are proving to be an effort to take along the media as a stakeholder in the fight against child labour. The joint ILO-Ministry of Information Project includes a number of programmes and strategies including plays, discussions, slogans, media interaction and capacity building, spots and documentaries.<sup>20</sup>

Though in this awareness campaign, the National Policy and Plans of Action has not provided any role for civil society, yet the civil society, including NGOs have been active in this area and frequent events and campaigns have been organized by the leading NGOs, including SPARC, LHRLA, PPA, Rozan and Sahil, Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) and some others. These organizations have also developed and disseminated material on important aspects of child labour to sensitize the public to improve understanding on the subject. A valid critique on this communications and

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<sup>18</sup> Child Labour National Portfolio

<sup>19</sup> Interview with National Coordinator ILO-IPEC

<sup>20</sup> Written response to questionnaire by the Ministry of Information and Media Development.

lobbying effort is that it has only targeted urban centres while ignoring remote rural areas. Research has shown that there exists a need to launch a truly national level campaign in the country - one that can create an impact across the board. The fight against child labour cannot produce desired results unless all stakeholders and communities are linked to an effective network. But available evidence suggests that very little progress has been made in community mobilization for achieving the objectives of the National Policy and Plan of Action.

### **5.2.2. Expansion of Educational Opportunities**

Expansion of education opportunities to limit chances of child labour has been adopted as a major strategy both by the government and NGO sectors. A comprehensive education policy has been developed by the government under the DACAAR framework. The Education Sector Reforms (ESR) are in process. The Education for All (EFA) model is being implemented through National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) leading up to 100% enrolment through community based-NGO initiatives. The government's focus, however, remained universal primary education and now it has been targeting the elementary and secondary education bracket in which most of the child labour falls in.

### **5.2.3. Income generating schemes for poor families**

This strategic initiative envisaged launching of job generation schemes, provision of loans for establishing family business and provision/expansion of safety nets. The Rural Support Programmes at the national level and in the provinces are supporting this initiative. The government is not only providing communities an enabling environment but also contributing financially in terms of endowment funds to cover their administrative expenditures. The Programmes are being successfully implemented through participatory development methodology. Recently the government, with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank, launched a microfinance bank, Khushhali bank, to provide micro-credit to the poor people in both the rural and urban areas of the country. Other micro-finance facilities are also available.

The Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Bank is another such initiative. The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is operating at the retail level by providing funds to local implementing partners for participatory development. A number of Public Sector Development Programmes (PSDP), including Khushhal Pakistan programme, aim to create a momentum for development and create jobs in the urban and rural areas. While the full impact of all these initiatives is difficult to assess in the short term, it is understood generally that they are contributing to the empowerment of the rural and urban poor and would go a long way in working on the supply side to achieve the ultimate aim of elimination of child labour.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)

## **6. Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **6.1. Law Enforcement**

The National Policy and Plan of Action calls for orientation and training programmes for field staff of the labour and human resource departments and district administrations and provision of adequate logistics to them to speed up eradication of child labour. Resource Centers have been setup in the provincial departments of labour and reporting is being carried out. It has been observed while scanning the reports by certain provincial labour departments that the quality and frequency of reports is questionable and the staff had been quoted as suggesting that better logistic and office facilities are required for improved reporting. It has been suggested that such initiatives be encouraged through innovative financing arrangements such as hire purchase, creating ownership and sustainability.

Various impediments to effective implementation of child labour eradication strategies were identified and following remedies suggested to improving the situation:

- Delays in prosecutions can be overcome by designating a labour judge to specifically hear and decide child labour cases in a prompt manner.
- Modules on child labour related issues should be developed for training and capacity building of law enforcement personnel such as police and lawyers.
- Job specialization is needed for enforcement and inspecting staff by creating posts of labour inspectors responsible for dealing with child labour issues as against the current structure in which the labour inspectors are engaged in industrial reconciliations only.
- Rehabilitation and withdrawal of children from hazardous and exploitative situations

The signing of the Convention 182 led Pakistan to identify a list of hazardous occupations and types of work for children. The list consists of over 30 processes and occupations. This was a major step forward in the ongoing fight against child labour. ILO played a key role in mapping and identification of these areas.

## **7. International Commitments**

Pakistan signed and ratified the ILO Convention 182 on the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour in September 2001. Pakistan also signed the two Optional Protocols to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on “Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict” and “Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.” The two Protocols seek additional commitments from State Parties to the CRC, in eliminating use of child soldiers and effective action to curb sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

In December 2001, Pakistan also became a party to the Yokohama Commitment as agreed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (C-SEC). The Yokohama Commitment, inter alia calls for preparing and implementing plans of action on C-SEC. Last, but not the least the United Nations General Assembly met in a Special Session on Children in May 2002 with a view to reviewing and renewing

commitments arrived at in the World Summit for Children 1990. Seventy one Heads of State and Governments participated in United Nations Special Session for Children, 2002. 'World Fit for Children (WFFC)' was the outcome document of the special session.

## **8. Review of Legislation**

A number of laws are in place to ensure compliance with government's policies regarding child labour. Some of these laws are specific to employment of children and bonded labour, while other laws focus on the worst forms of child labour as well as other social menaces, such as beggary, that expose children to and place them at risk of exploitation and abuse.

Pakistan's major chunk of labour laws is inherited from its colonial past with some modifications. These laws have an inbuilt bias in their assumed subject, which is a man rather than a child or a woman. This bias springs from the conception of man as the main bread earner who performs productive work in the public sphere. There are no such labour laws that apply to the non-factory workplace in Pakistan. As such, the home and open streets and bazaars seldom come under any kind of legislation as workplaces where most of the children work in hazardous circumstances.

### **8.1 Trafficking of children**

Trafficking and kidnapping is a crime under Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) which makes the culprits liable to 10 years in prison and fine for transport or import of a girl under 21 years of age for the purpose of prostitution. Under PPC taking a male child below the age of 14 years and a female child below 16 years outside Pakistan or away from his/her lawful guardians or parents without their consent is punishable with 7 years imprisonment or fine. In case, kidnapping is meant to lead to murder and or grievous hurt or slavery or lust or to put in danger of any of these circumstances than the punishment is raised to death or 14 years.

Now the government has promulgated 'the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance 2002' that covers trafficking and kidnapping. The law carries up to 10 years imprisonment. Gravity of the offense leads to higher punishment.

### **8.2 Hazardous forms of child labour**

Employment of Children Act 1991 sets the child age at 14 years, adolescents up to 18 years. It prohibits the employment of children in hazardous occupations violations of which leads to punishment of one year and fine of up to 20,000. The law regulates the working conditions of children. The law says no child shall work for more than 3 hours at a stretch, not to work for more than 7 hours a day, not to work between the hours of 7.00 p.m. and 8.00 a.m.

### **8.3 Factories Act 1934**

The Factories Act 1934 is a comprehensive law; it prohibits employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory. It allows employment of children 14-17 years provided they have a certificate of fitness. It restricts working hours, disallows a child to work in a factory for more than 5 hours.

### **8.4 Mines Act 1923**

The Mines Act 1923 prohibits employment of children less than 14 years in all mines and oil fields. It disallows even their presence in underground mines

### **8.5 Merchant Shipping Act 1923**

The merchant shipping Act 1923 also prohibits the engagement of children less than 14 years of age at sea.

## **9. Strategies for rehabilitation of child labourers**

With the growing awareness about the exploitative and abusive nature of child labour, a number of different approaches have been adopted for rehabilitation of working children in the country. Both the government and NGOs have been involved in developing such rehabilitation programmes. International organizations such as UNICEF and ILO in its IPEC programme have also played an active role in developing strategies for the rehabilitation of child labour.

Following is an overview of various existing rehabilitation strategies.

### **9.1. The Pakistan Bait-ul-mal (PBM) strategy**

Pakistan Baitul Mal has established over 100 schools known as National Centers for Rehabilitation of Child Labour (NCRCLs) throughout the country. These Centers aim at the rehabilitation of children removed from labour through a system of non-formal education and vocational training. Each Center has four classes with four teachers. For effective functioning, the centers are further supported by 'Management Committees' comprising of representatives of PBM, Provincial Labour Departments, Industry, parents and teachers.

Children (aged 8-14 years) involved in hazardous work or exploitative labour are identified, withdrawn from work and enrolled in every district through a selection committee headed by the District Officer PBM. At the centers, children are provided with various incentives; each student receives two uniforms annually, one each for winter and summer. All stationary including books are given free of cost and a cash payment of Rs. 10 per day, and monthly payments of Rs. 300 is given to the parents of the students. The students also have to undergo periodical monthly checkups and they receive medicines out of the budget. They also receive sports kits and important events such as National Days are celebrated in these schools.

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The Non Formal Education Centers are all registered with the Provincial Education Departments and the syllabus used is a government prescribed one, recommended by the respective Provincial Text Book Boards. The instruction material is also purchased through the Provincial Text Book Boards. The uniforms are purchased through open tender. The schools have a 3-year programme during which 5 years primary course is taught in a compressed manner. Thus the first 4 classes are 6 months each and the 5<sup>th</sup> class is 1 year. There are no holidays during the year and the schools remain open even during the summer vacations.

A center with 120 students has a budget of 1.9 million rupees. Thus the total spending on the 36 Centers per year is 68.4 million. The students that pass out of the NCRCLs receive a higher education package consisting of a lump sum payment of Rs. 4100.<sup>22</sup>

### **9.2. BUNYAD strategy**

Bunyard Literacy Community Council (BLCC), a Lahore based NGO, was assigned the task of organizing non-formal education centers for children removed from soccer ball stitching. BLCC established a total of 156 non-formal education centers known as 'Umang Taleemi Centers'. Bunyard has adapted the government's formal curriculum to the needs of the working children, which facilitates the mainstreaming of the children into higher educational level. The 60-month syllabus has been compressed into twenty-four months with emphasis on recreational activities, sports and improving the health of children.

To ensure maximum participation from the community in managing these Centers, Bunyard has established two types of committees, namely the 'Village Education Committees' (VECs) and the Family Education Committees (FECs). While the VECs are for males only, the FECs are only for women. These Committees keep a check on the attendance and curb the drop out trend from schools, ensuring all the time that the community effectively addresses this issue through active involvement in the centers.

Taking BLCCs rehabilitation programme for children in the soccer ball industry as an example, BLCC has divided Sialkot district into seven clusters/zones. A councillor is appointed in each zone. The councillor identifies specific areas where children are involved in stitching. The councillor then contacts the parents and the local community leaders to sensitize them on the hazards of child labour and the benefits of education. Through a process of community mobilization, the community is involved in selecting a site for the centers, identifying teachers and finally setting up the 'Umang Taleemi Center'. BLCC also attaches a lot of importance to trainings and through master trainers provide condensed trainings to teachers in the target areas.

### **9.3. ILO Strategy**

In NWFP, the International Labour Organization (ILO) designed a project titled 'Combating Child Labour through Education and training' to support the government in addressing the issue of child labour. The aim of the programme was to develop effective strategies to combat child labour by involving government and non-government actors, and by integrating child labour issues into economic and developmental policies. It also

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<sup>22</sup> Baitul Mal document

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endeavoured to promote universal primary education and develop a skilled labour work force in an institutionalized manner.

In Phase I of the programme, nine rehabilitation centers were established, and 1060 children were enrolled. The objective of these centers is to provide rehabilitation services to working children through counselling and non formal education with the goal of either mainstreaming these children into formal schools (complete withdrawal) or referring them to basic education and skill training (partial withdrawal). Training standards for auto engines, tailoring, and domestic electric wiring were developed and implemented. Teacher information kits on child labour were developed and master trainers of the Department of Primary Education trained along these kits on the issue of child labour. 2,500 Primary school teachers have already been trained and a database on the target group of the project has been developed to monitor project activities. Awareness workshops were also held for employers, parents, government officials, teachers, students, lawyers and general community.

Under Phase II of the project, child labour issues are being addressed both through direct action and in an institutional manner. At the direct level, the project intends to establish rehabilitation centers, pre and post vocational training schemes for children, basic business and skill training for parents of working children (especially mothers), and mobilize trade unions, employers, teachers, and communities to address the issue of child labour. At the institutional level, the project intends to build the capacity of the Directorate of Technical Education and Manpower Training GoNWFP, Directorate of Schools and Literacy GoNWFP, Directorate of Labour Welfare GoNWFP, Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR), Pakistan Workers Confederation and NGOs, to combat child labour.

### **9.4. UNICEF strategy**

Unicef is active in supporting efforts to eliminate child labour in the export related industries in Sialkot. In this regard a Universal Primary Education model is being supported that is community based and with the help of civil society, seeks to bring all school age children into primary school. This strategy is now being replicated in many of the districts of Pakistan through the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD).

### **9.5. SUDHAAR strategy**

Sudhaar is a non governmental organization formed in 1994 and registered in 1995 with the vision “to make quality education accessible to all children in Pakistan and bring the child labour growth to zero” and is focusing on the improvement of quality education in formal and non formal sectors. Sudhaar is working in the cities of Kasur, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Sheikhpura and Toba Tek Singh and is supporting educational models that include working with the rural and urban schools in government and municipal sectors, private schools and non formal education system. Sudhaar is supporting local initiatives including activists, CBOs and NGOs in its operational areas.

Sudhaar believes that the child labour issue is linked to other social and economic issues and that a holistic approach is required to effectively address the problem. Working

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closely with implementing partners, Sudhaar sees the Non Formal Education (NFE) system as a bridge to formal education of reasonable quality, to which the state is committed. In this regard, NFE Centers have been established for the rehabilitation of children in Sialkot.

The idea of evolving model schools in existing government schools was initiated to improve the quality of education. This idea fits in well with Sudhaar's strategy to develop effective partnerships, work in synergy with partners and utilize the available resources effectively, instead of investing in brick and mortar structures. In district Kasur, Sudhaar has launched an evening programme that includes classes in government and municipal schools for working children managed by CBOs.

Sudhaar also works on strengthening of the school councils and grass-root planning in collaboration with the local government in Kasur. Moreover, it supports schools in organizing children activities such as children's writers club, children's magazines and arranges meetings with parents, vendors and school management committees to mainstream children from NFE centers to formal schools. Sudhaar also develops linkages with vocational and technical education training centers, like in Sialkot. Besides, it has organised communities and facilitated the formation of Village Education Committees (VECs) that are also involved in monitoring of the NFEs and at some places in arranging donation of premises for the NFE centers.

Sudhaar is working with 485 Non formal and 3450 government primary schools in above mentioned districts. In two districts of Punjab Kasur and Sheikhpura there are 3136 boys and 4935 girls up to age of 12 enrolled in NFE centers under ACL-QEFA program. These working children are involved in a variety of trades like Agriculture, Brick Klin, carpet weaving, factories, fire work, needle work, production, services like cart driver, cobbler, dish washing etc, shops, tailoring , tannery, unskilled labor, vendors etc. The children studying in these schools from picked from various trades including non formal sector such as agriculture, brick kiln, carpet weaving, needle work, production, service, shop , tailoring , unskilled work, vendor and in workshops etc. these children belong to poor socio economic class.

Sudhaar is using government syllabus for their non formal education system, but their approach is very innovative as they engage whole community and main stakeholders before setting up non formal education center. Sudhaar does not have proper database for street children getting benefit of its NFE programs and are unaware of how many street living children got enrolled in their centers in previous years but they are now establishing their data for new enrollments of street living children in their non formal educational classes. The classes are open and there is no prohibition for street living children to get admitted in any center in their nearest locality.

They closely work with government non formal education and literacy departments. They are using government resources as well as community resources for the sustainability of their programs. They are providing training opportunities not only to government school teacher but also to different civil society organization for their capacity enhancement. One of their program is providing training to teachers of non formal education centers content of training program includes role of teacher, child psychology, basic concepts of child labor and child work, classroom decoration, teaching aids, formal and non formal educations systems, classroom management, lesson planning, syllabub division, reading and writing skills, record keeping, this programme is generally comprised of seven days.

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Currently they have funding of 5 million US dollars from US department of labor for Accessing Child Labour through Quality Education for All (ACL-QEFA) programme for the period of 2002 to 2006. The aims of this project are the implementation of Education Sector Reforms (ESR) and National Plan of Action on child labor leading to quality education for all children.

### **9.6. Child Care Foundation strategy**

The Child Care Foundation (CCF) was conceived, organized and launched as an NGO through public-private partnership in October 1996 with an Endowment Fund of Rs. 20 million at a time when propaganda against Pakistan on the child labour issue was at its fiercest. A high profile 18-member Board of Governors, drawn from respected human rights organizations in Pakistan such as Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Edhi Foundation, etc, nominees of UN agencies and three export industries namely carpet, soccer-ball and surgical industry was set up. The Government was represented on the Board by Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and the Ministry of Labour.

The establishment of CCF was a timely initiative and a positive response to the child labour situation that was assuming threatening proportions. It demonstrated the government's commitment to tackle the child labour issue in a comprehensive manner and went a long way to defuse the propaganda that Pakistan was not doing much on the child labour issue. UN agencies, donor bodies and the foreign embassies, especially of those countries where the child labour issue was being agitated, took note of the establishment of CCF and the US State Department in its Annual Human Rights report on Pakistan made a positive reference to CCF.

CCF was assigned to set up a network of welfare projects in education, vocational training and health sectors to improve the living and working conditions of children and their families and to launch an awareness raising campaign to mobilize public opinion against the menace of child labour.

In 1997, CCF, with funds provided by ILO, carried out an all Pakistan survey to find out the best form of intervention to rehabilitate and eliminate child labour in the carpet industry. In accordance with the findings of the survey CCF has in last 6 years set up more than 390 non-formal schools in Lahore, Sheikhpura, Faisalabad, Attock and Karachi districts where about over 13000 children belonging to carpet weaving families are being provided education, vocational training and recreational facilities. Non-formal schools for carpet children is an ongoing project which CCF is running with its own resources, donor funding and sponsors' help.

CCF has successfully mobilized carpet manufacturers and exporters 25 of whom have joined its rehabilitation program for carpet weaving children. CCF has been working closely with ILO which has launched a major rehabilitation program for combating child labour in carpet weaving areas. With ILO's help CCF set up 115 non-formal schools for carpet weaving children in Sheikhpura and is now setting up 100 new centers in Faisalabad. Canadian International Development Agency has collaborated with CCF in setting up 25 rehabilitation centers for working children in Sheikhpura. After successful completion of the project CIDA has asked CCF to set up 25 new centers. STEP Foundation, a Swiss NGO, is collaborating with CCF to sustain 50 non-formal schools. AusAID, a department of Australian Government, is working with CCF for the

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rehabilitation of working children. Delegations from USA and European Union have regularly visited CCF centers and appreciated their contribution for the rehabilitation of working children.

Another area of activity of Child Care Foundation is to create awareness among the public on the child labour issue in the country and disseminate information nationally and internationally about the measures being taken by the public and private sectors in Pakistan to combat the child labour problem. To achieve the objective CCF has taken the following steps:

- Reports about the activities of CCF are regularly released to the Press. Both English and Urdu Newspapers publish from time to time news about the activities of CCF including those of its schools.
- Information about the establishment of Child Care Foundation and its underlying aims and objectives has been widely disseminated both in the country and abroad. CCF has published Annual Reports, several brochures which have been circulated inside the country as well as among UN bodies, donor agencies and diplomatic missions in Islamabad.
- CCF regularly publishes a Newsletter giving details of activities for the betterment of children.

### ***CCF AT A GLANCE***

*396 non-formal schools set up*

*13,160 working children provided education*

*1,996 children mainstreamed into govt. schools*

*3,967 children have completed primary education*

*39 pre-vocational centers set up*

*1,350 girls provided vocational training*

*7,500 children provided medical care*

*1,000 children of CCF centers vaccinated against Hepatitis*

*250 rural women employed and trained as teachers*

*178 families provided micro credit*

*294 Village Education Committees set up*

*258 Family Education Committees set up*

*15 Citizen Community Boards set up*

*12 Community Based Organizations formed*

*31 CCF centers sustained by the community*

*368,000 people in 92 villages taught principles of community organization*

### **10. Review of policies and strategies with recommendations**

The following are certain recommendations that place a special emphasis on those areas that do not clearly fall under the ambit of responsibilities of the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis. The areas include: children in armed conflict and trafficking that not only need to be looked at afresh but are also in the serious danger of being left out of the action matrix under the ILO IPEC Time Bound Programme.

### **10.1. Recommendations**

- The international commitments on worst forms of child labour, entered into by Pakistan since May 2000, need to be clearly reflected in the state policy.
- The Plan of Action targets, in specific, children falling in the age group 5-14 years, who are economically active and form part of the labour force, and in general those who are not in schools. The new commitments, however, raise the upper age to 18 years, in line with the definition of the child under the UN Child Rights Convention. As such the National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labour and other documents dealing with the worst forms of child labour must clearly focus on this age group and consequently, gaps in the data need to be filled on priority.
- For improved implementation and coordination, Provincial Plans of Action need to be prepared, followed by district level planning to combat child labour. This would be in line with the devolution of administrative and financial powers to the district governments.
- New and updated data is essential for planning, implementation and monitoring of plans and programmes. As such new surveys and micro level mapping of geographical and sectoral distribution of child labour is recommended. Desegregated data needs to be generated covering various sectors of child labour up to regional and district levels. A system to keep the data up to date is also proposed. Management Information Systems can be developed at the district levels to monitor status of child labour. This can be used to generate provincial and national data at regular intervals.
- Raising awareness amongst stakeholders and the community is important. A concerted media campaign can be launched, aimed at bringing into focus child labour as an issue that affects the society at large and one that requires action by all, including the decision makers, politicians, NGOs, civil society, opinion leaders and the general public.
- Capacity building and training of enforcement staff is crucial and more focussed attention needs to be paid to this. The technical and logistical capacity of the Labour field staff needs to be improved through allocation of resources, as this is vital to the implementation of the relevant laws.
- There is a need to improve the capacity of the NGOs and the civil society groups. The partnership initiatives must focus on large national NGOs as well as the district-based local NGOs and CBOs, including the Citizen Community Boards. The definition of civil society includes not only the NGOs but political parties, intelligentsia, media, academia, workers, employer organizations, as well as children
- Child participation is a new concept and is now taken as an important process for policy making. The absence of child participation is conspicuous in the National Policy and Plan of Action. The importance of participation of this segment cannot be overemphasized. Thus any initiative to review and revise the Plan should take into consideration the views of children.
- Pakistan being a signatory to the World Education Forum in Dakar has agreed to provide primary education that is of good quality, free and compulsory. Special

- emphasis is needed on high risk groups such as the girl child, the poorest, those from ethnic and linguistic minority groups, working children and children with special needs. The Education Sector Reforms (ESRs) currently under implementation are quite comprehensive and plan to bring fundamental changes in the education system of the country. The Plan needs to be implemented in letter and spirit thus contributing to combating child labour on the supply side.
- There is a very intricate cause and effect relationship between poverty and child labour. Child labour is both a manifestation of poverty as well as a major cause of perpetual intergenerational poverty, trapping a certain class in a vicious cycle. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper is a comprehensive policy document demonstrating commitment of the government. It builds on the I-PRSP and marks a paradigm shift in the anti-poverty efforts based on the realization that poverty reduction requires a holistic effort that should target all the elements that cascade into inequality, human deprivation, and social exclusion. The Strategy mentions elimination of child labour as a part of protection of the vulnerable. As such any efforts for elimination of child labour will be futile unless the problem of poverty is addressed.
  - Over three million Children aged 5-14 years were engaged in economic activities on full time basis. The economic activity participation rate of children was estimated at 8.3%. Of the total child labourers, 2.9 million were found in the rural areas and 0.4 million in the urban areas. The concentration of child labour in the rural areas was thus about eight times higher than in the urban areas. Also as per the survey, 66.96% were engaged in elementary occupations such as agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing.<sup>23</sup> Indigenous programmes need to be developed in partnerships with District Governments, NGOs, CBOs, CCBs, as well as RSPs to tackle the problem in the rural areas where apparently there seems to be little external support.
  - In recent years beggary as a form of child labour/child exploitation has reached alarming proportions. There is reason to believe that organized mafias are involved in kidnapping children and using them for beggary. In the northern parts of the country and also to an extent in Karachi, the Afghan war has also contributed to the rising trend. There is an urgent need to sensitize the law enforcing agencies, Social Welfare Departments, media, elected local Governments and the NGOs to tackle the problem on war footings.
  - Child labour is a factor of numerous influences brought to bear on a society. These include social, cultural, economic, psychological and ethnic. As such policies leading to better education and health as well as controlled and manageable family size are as central to eradicating child labour as any other sectoral policies. Similarly rights based programmes such as women's advancement and gender mainstreaming as well as care for the elderly are important ingredients of any recipe to improve child labour situation in Pakistan.

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<sup>23</sup> The Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS) survey 1996

## **11. Conclusion**

Both government and non government sectors in Pakistan coupled with targeted initiatives by International Labour Organization, UNICEF and other donor, have been active to eliminate child labour from Pakistan. These efforts over the years have gradually been impacting the situation. Though there is no ideal situation but it is an undenying fact that the situation has been improved to a larger extent. The realization of hazardous impacts of child labour over the children and over all society is there and as a result there are certain commitments that are producing positive results.

Both the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan have pledged to change the plight children in Pakistan. The government at the highest level observed the outgoing year as a child rights year. National Commission on Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD) has been the focal point for all child related activities at national level. Not only the federal government but provincial governments have also expressed commitment towards the cause of elimination of child labour. For example, the government of Punjab province has adopted flexible enrollment of child workers in the schools. Now there is no age restriction for enrollment of children withdrawn from child labour. Similarly the forthcoming Labour Protection Policy also covers child labour issues.

The government and non government sectors are focusing on expansion of education and that too of vocational/skills education so that the children withdrawn from child labour could learn life and livelihood skills in addition to formal education. These efforts are being done through non formal schooling in different parts of the country. The above mentioned recommendations need to be given a serious thought if we really want to improve child rights situation in Pakistan.

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